



# The Manitoba Trails Strategy and Action Plan

A Path Towards Healthy People  
and Thriving Communities

*Minister's Message*

Manitoba Natural Resources and Northern Development  
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Manitoba 



## Healthy Trail Networks Equal Healthy People

The past few years have shown us just how important recreational trails are to Manitobans, with trails creating health, social, and economic benefits for trail users and communities across the province. Whether you are a hiker, cyclist, skier, horseback rider, or off-road vehicle enthusiast, our trails have something to offer.

The Manitoba Trails Strategy and Action Plan lays out a path forward to ensure we continue to grow and improve our network of trails, and provide high quality recreation and exercise opportunities for Manitoba citizens as well as visitors to our province. From the boreal forest in the east, to the mountains in the west, to the rivers and lakes in the north, Manitoba's mix of beautiful landscapes provides a tremendous range of opportunities for trail users to discover. Carrying out the vision, goals and actions outlined in the Trails Strategy and Action Plan will ensure that our trails are sustainably managed into the future, and that natural environments so important to the trail experience continue to be respected.

Input from many trail organizations, other stakeholders, and individual trail users was an incredibly important part of preparing the Manitoba Trails Strategy and Action Plan, and I thank everyone who took the time to participate in this process. Manitoba's trail users and volunteers are truly passionate about trails, and this was evident in the feedback and comments we received. Implementing the Trails Strategy and Action Plan will also require a joint effort by many different people and groups. I look forward to seeing its vision come to life.



**Honourable Greg Nesbitt**  
Minister of Natural Resources  
and Northern Development

# Vision

Manitoba will offer a sustainable and high quality network of trails for all user types and abilities that will support happy, healthy and informed trail users, a strong network of trail organizations, and economic and quality of life benefits for Manitoba communities.

## Pillars and Expected Outcomes

### 1 *Partnerships and Collaboration*

- Improved communications across the trails sector
- Reduced conflict between trail users
- Enhanced information and education opportunities for trail users
- Encouragement of new users of trails who have historically faced barriers to participation

### 2 *Development and Maintenance*

- Enhanced information and data about existing trails and trail uses
- Improved processes for the development of trails on Crown lands
- Improved trail connectivity across the province
- More opportunities created for high demand trail activities
- Economic benefits for communities
- Increased availability of trails-related amenities
- Enhanced trail maintenance and clean up

### 3 *Long-Term Sustainability*

- Enhanced financial sustainability for the ongoing operations of Manitoba's trail networks
- Environmental benefits, with environmental integrity ensured
- Enhanced retention and recruitment of volunteers
- Improved enforcement of unauthorized activities on trails, and unauthorized trail development activities

### 4 *Trail Tourism and Promotion*

- Enhanced promotion and marketing to local, national and international visitors
- Increased trail-based tourism and economic development opportunities
- Enhanced highway and wayfinding signage
- Improved access and availability of trails-related information

## Guiding Principles







## The Manitoba Trails Strategy and Action Plan: Summary

If asked to imagine a recreational trail, a wide range of images or experiences might come to mind depending on the individual. Some may first think of a trail as a paved sidewalk running through their local park, while others might call to mind a groomed winter ski trail or a rugged clearing through a forest. All of these would be valid choices, as trails can have many different forms and qualities, and they can mean different things to different people. The physical, social, economic and environmental benefits of trails have become better understood in recent years, and people are increasingly seeking them out for both recreation and transportation purposes.

Growth in the use of and demand for trails has highlighted the need for enhanced planning and management of Manitoba's trail network, leading to the decision to prepare the Manitoba Trails Strategy and Action Plan. The increase in trail use during and since the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has generated significant appreciation of Manitoba's existing trails and the potential of the larger trail network, but also put the spotlight on several trails-related issues that require attention. The Trails Strategy and Action Plan identifies issues and opportunities facing trails in Manitoba, and outlines a variety of actions to address those.

In the Manitoba Trails Strategy and Action Plan, the word "trail" is defined broadly, encompassing routes on land or water used for recreation or active transportation. Trails are found in most areas of Manitoba, including urban, rural, frontcountry and backcountry settings, and on all types of lands, waters and surfaces. The Trails Strategy and Action Plan considers all manner of trail activities and uses, including walking, biking, skiing, horseback riding, off-road vehicle riding, paddling and many others. It has relevance to trails on provincial Crown lands, as well as trails in other areas, including National Parks, private lands, municipal lands and First Nation or other Indigenous community lands.

While preparing the Trails Strategy and Action Plan, the Manitoba government engaged with and invited comment from many different stakeholder groups, community representatives, Indigenous organizations and the public. In general, there is considerable consensus among provincial government departments, trail organizations and the public regarding what the trails-related issues and opportunities are in Manitoba, and what should be addressed in order to sustain and improve Manitoba's trail network.



## The Four Pillars of the Manitoba Trails Strategy and Action Plan

### Pillar 1: Partnerships and Collaboration

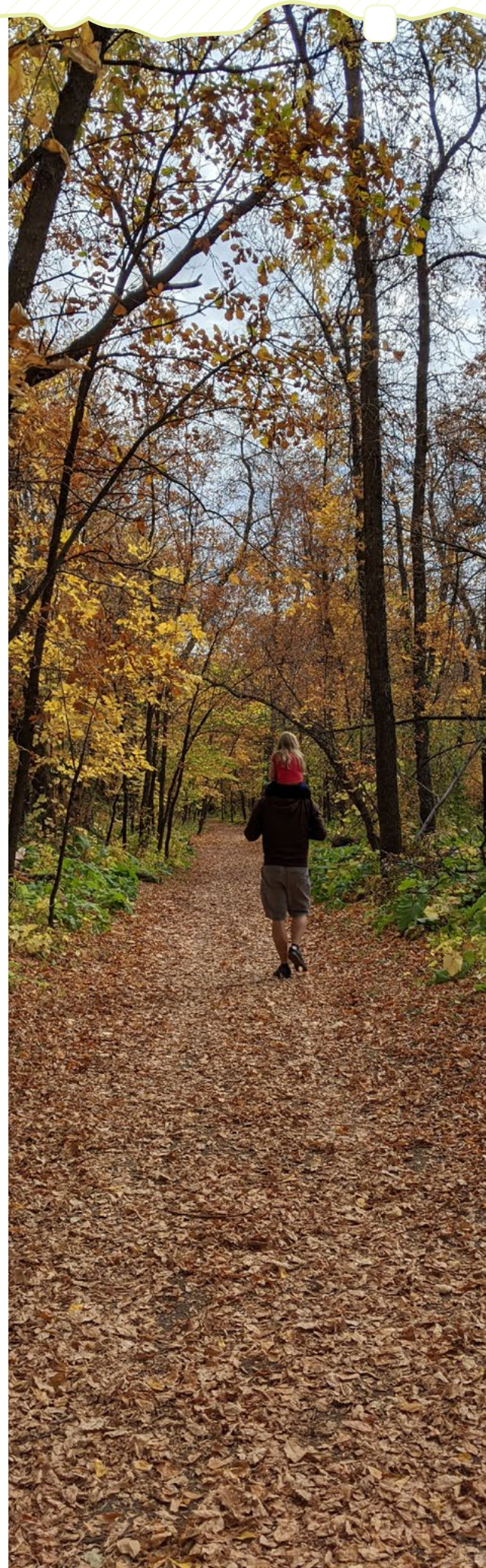
The first pillar of the Manitoba Trails Strategy and Action Plan reflects the need to ensure that all parties with some level of interest in recreational trails have a voice and are engaged in trails-related communications, planning and/or programming, including various government departments and agencies, municipalities, Indigenous communities, trail user groups, the public, and numerous other organizations and businesses. A regular theme in the discussions held regarding the Trails Strategy, and in input received, is that improved communication, and more partnership and collaboration, between trail organizations and the provincial government would be beneficial to all.

Expected outcomes from actions under this pillar will include:

- Improved communications across the trails sector
- Reduced conflict between trail users
- Enhanced information and education opportunities for trail users
- Encouragement of new users of trails who have historically faced barriers to participation

Key actions under this pillar that will influence the implementation of the Trails Strategy and Action Plan as a whole are:

1. Create one point-of-contact within the provincial government with a new Trails Coordination Office
2. Establish a Provincial Trails Expert Advisory Body composed of the Provincial Trails Coordination Office and trail organizations with province-wide mandates
3. Establish an Interdepartmental Trails Committee within government to ensure a whole-of-government approach to trails management





## Pillar 2: Development and Maintenance

The second pillar of the Manitoba Trails Strategy and Action Plan is focused on trail development and maintenance, the designation of trails for particular uses or activities, trail-related amenities or facilities, and connectivity. Although there is demand for more trails to be developed, there must be a balance between developing new trails and maintaining, improving and fully realizing the value of existing ones. The significant variation in trail types, attributes and intended uses also means that what is appropriate design and planning, or issue resolution, for one trail may not be suitable for another. Long-term planning helps to ensure the sustainability of existing trails, while also accounting for potential future trail development or expansion into new areas. Consideration of trail systems and Active Transportation opportunities is also increasingly recognized as being important in community planning processes.

Expected outcomes from actions under this pillar will include:

- Enhanced information and data about existing trails and trail uses, including recreational as well as resource-based uses
- Improved processes for the development of trails on Crown lands (including provincial parks, provincial forests, wildlife management areas, etc.), and understanding of associated requirements for trail proponents
- Improved trail connectivity across the province for enhanced safety and better experiences
- More opportunities created for high demand trail activities and overnight and backcountry trail experiences, balanced against the need to avoid overuse of certain areas and environmental degradation
- Economic benefits for small communities due to improvements to local trail networks
- Increased availability of trails-related amenities such as signage, washrooms, and staging and parking areas
- Enhanced trail maintenance and clean up







### Pillar 3: Long-Term Sustainability

The third pillar of the Manitoba Trails Strategy and Action Plan involves the sustainability of Manitoba's trails including financial sustainability, environmental sustainability, and the sustainability of the people who do the work to manage and maintain trails. Key in this pillar is providing adequate support for a high quality trail network, while ensuring that consideration is given to environmental stewardship and protection of sensitive ecosystems and wildlife.

Expected outcomes from actions under this pillar will include:

- Enhanced financial sustainability for the ongoing operations of Manitoba's trail networks
- Environmental integrity is ensured by addressing concerns around the use and development of both motorized and non-motorized trails
- Environmental benefits resulting from rehabilitated lands and increased support for nature conservation
- Enhanced retention and recruitment of volunteers to support trail organizations and clubs
- Improved enforcement of unauthorized activities on trails, and unauthorized trail development activities

### Pillar 4: Trail Tourism and Promotions

The fourth pillar of the Manitoba Trails Strategy and Action Plan is focused on the sharing of trails-related information for Manitoba residents as well as visitors to the province, and improving the quality of Manitoba's trail network from a tourism perspective, including related marketing activities. Tourism-related infrastructure for Manitoba trails is underdeveloped and under promoted, despite existing strengths of the trail network and opportunities for growth in this area. There is also evidence that nature-based activities will be a key element to tourism strategies and the Provincial economy going forward.

Expected outcomes from actions under this pillar will include:

- Enhanced promotion and marketing to local, national and international visitors of market-ready trails with high potential to attract users
- Increased trail-based tourism revenue on provincial and local levels
- Economic development opportunities for small towns and local businesses
- Enhanced highway and wayfinding signage
- Improved access and availability of trails-related information for visitors, including a stronger, higher quality online resource



## Implementation of the Manitoba Trails Strategy and Action Plan

Successful implementation of the Manitoba Trails Strategy and Action Plan will require input, cooperation and participation from trail users, trail stakeholder organizations and the many communities that are increasingly recognizing the value of trails for their residents. The new Provincial Trails Coordination Office will develop an implementation schedule for the Trails Strategy and Action Plan, in cooperation with both the Provincial Trails Expert Advisory Body and the Interdepartmental Trails Committee, and these groups will subsequently work together to monitor ongoing implementation. Formal evaluations will be conducted every three to five years.



### To Learn More

Please visit the [Manitoba Trails Strategy and Action Plan website](#).

