



Cobble Hill Mountain Trail Survey Summary

Thank you to all those who submitted a survey! The information you have provided is of great value to trail planning initiatives on Cobble Hill Mountain. Although the survey is closed, your ongoing feedback is encouraged and appreciated. If you have questions, concerns, or comments regarding any initiatives by the Cowichan Valley Regional District Parks and Trails Division please contact us at 250-746-2620 or via Email at parks@cvrld.bc.ca.

This document summarizes the responses collected from the Cobble Hill Mountain Regional Recreation Area Trail Survey, open from September 25th to October 25th, 2013. The purpose of the survey was to gather information on trail user trends and preferences. This information will be used to identify and prioritize projects for inclusion in the Cobble Hill Mountain management plan update that is currently underway by CVRD Parks and Trails. This management plan document will serve as the guide for the next ten years of CVRD Parks and Trails management of the Cobble Hill Mountain Regional Recreation Area trail network.



View from the South Summit towards Shawnigan Lake



INTRODUCTION

In 2003, the management plan for Cobble Hill Mountain was finalized by CVRD Parks, endorsed by the Ministry of Forests, and adopted by the CVRD Board as the guiding document for CVRD management of the mountain's trails located on Provincial forest lands. Since that time, CVRD Parks and Trails has managed the development and maintenance of the trail network on Cobble Hill Mountain. Through significant support from the community and stakeholder groups, Cobble Hill Mountain has developed into a fixture for the local recreational community and a desirable destination for hikers, mountain bikers, and equestrians from the Cowichan Valley and beyond.

The 2003 Management Plan has served as a guide for trail improvements and maintenance for the past ten years. To effectively manage the mountain trails for the next decade and beyond, it's time to take a look at what's been accomplished, the current state of the mountain trails, and where the network could be further improved, if supported, to continue providing high quality recreational trail opportunities to the public.

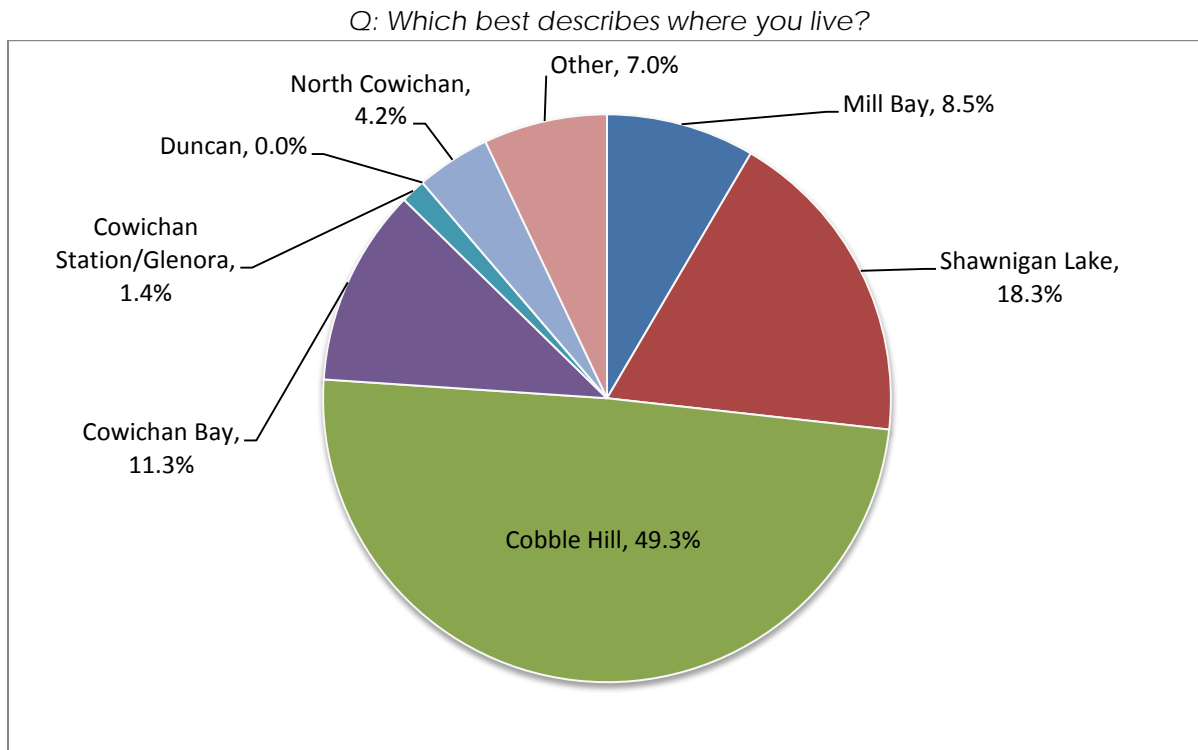
This survey was advertised to the public during three open house sessions at Quarry Nature Park (at the base of Cobble Hill Mountain), on the CVRD website home page, and via posters at the South Cowichan Community Dog Park, Quarry Nature Park kiosks, and the Cleasby Bike Park. The survey was available both online and in paper format. In total, 72 responses were received by the closing time on October 25th, 2013.





DEMOGRAPHICS

Responses to the survey indicated that nearly 50% of respondents live in Cobble Hill. Additionally, 70% of respondents indicated they reside in Shawnigan Lake, Cobble Hill, or Cowichan Bay. In comparison, very few respondents indicated living in areas beyond Duncan and Mill Bay, suggesting that a majority of users on the mountain trails are likely from areas close to the mountain.

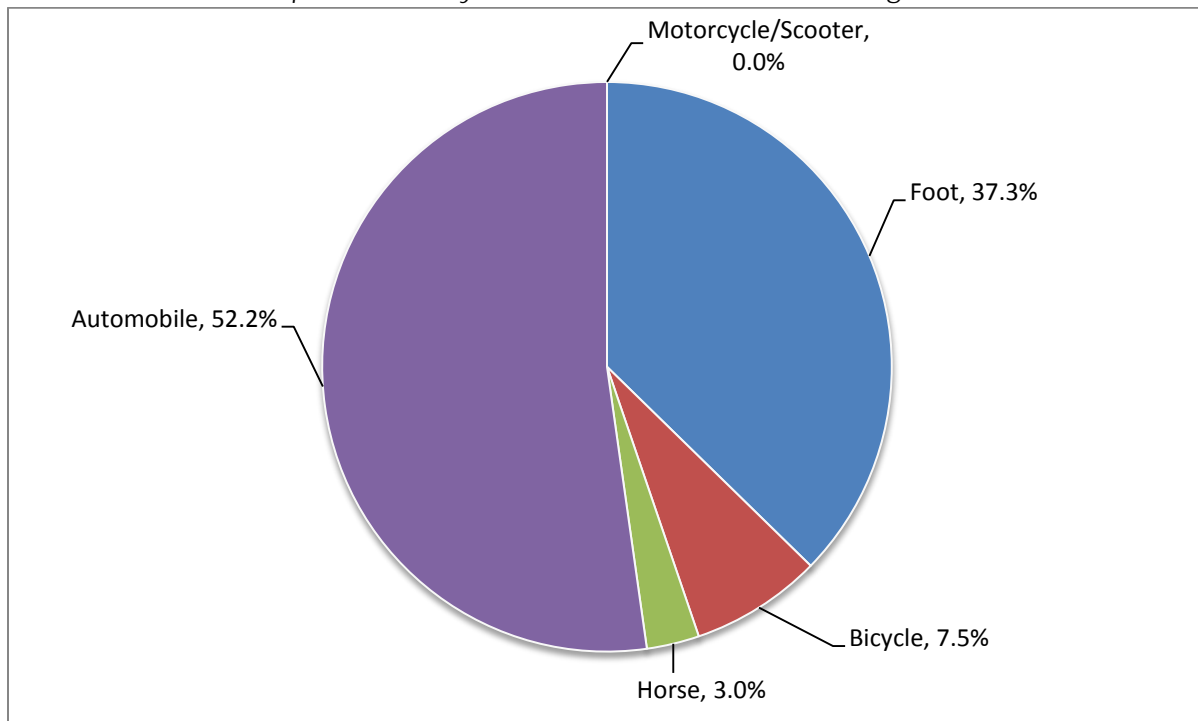


Nearly 80% of survey respondents indicated they are between the ages of 35 and 64, with 17% of respondents aged greater than 65. Only two respondents indicated being younger than 35, with none younger than 19.



Preferred mode of travel to the Cobble Hill Mountain Regional Recreation Area was a nearly even split between automobile (52.2%) and foot/horse/bicycle (47.8% total).

Q: Which mode of transportation do you most often use when traveling to Cobble Hill Mountain?



TRAIL USE

Many survey respondents indicated they visit Cobble Hill Mountain at least once per week, with an average response of 86 visits per year.

The majority of respondents (67.6%) indicated they had been visiting the trails on Cobble Hill for greater than five years. Fifteen percent of respondents have used the trails for less than two years.

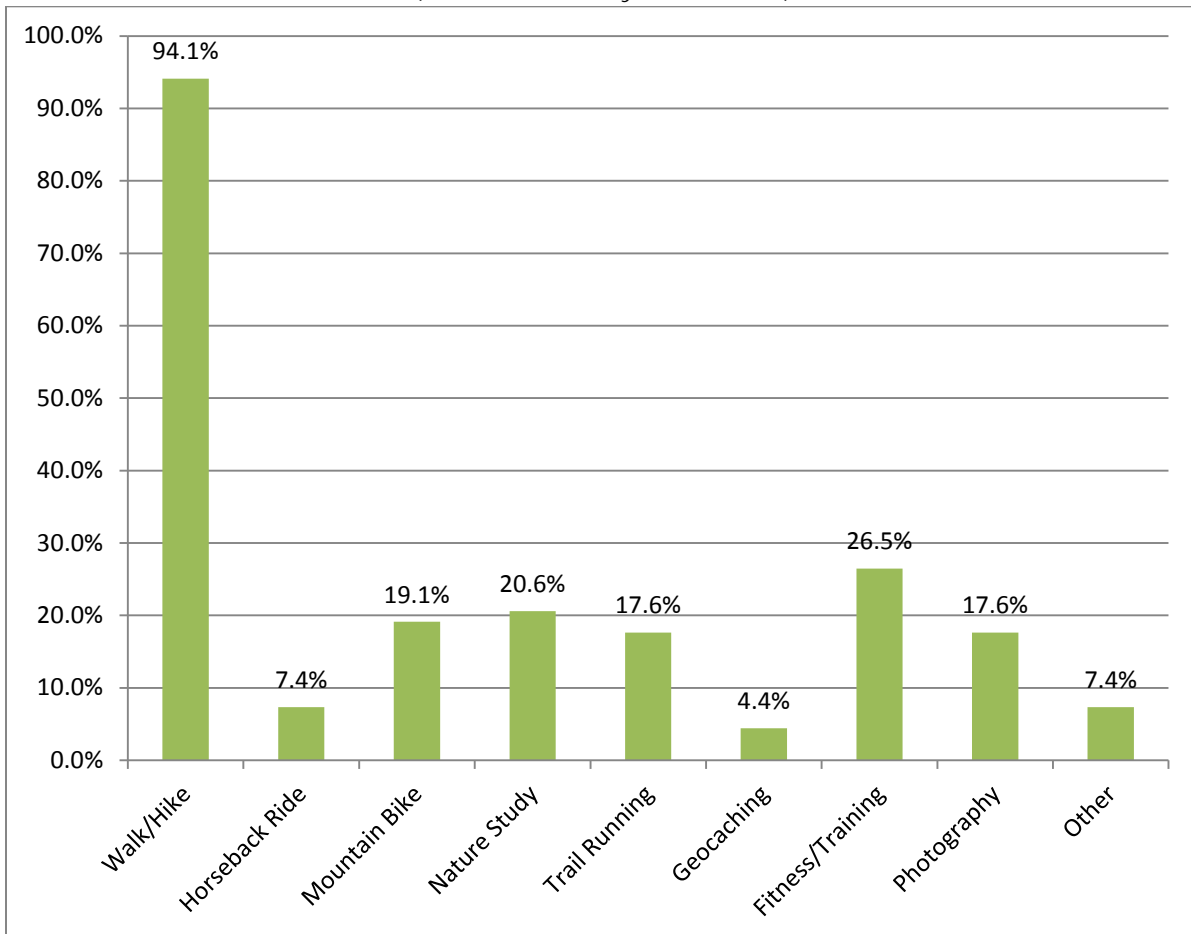
Ninety-three percent of respondents indicated that they visit the trails year round. Those respondents indicating limiting factors that affect their visits to Cobble Hill Mountain selected limited trail opportunities (33.3%), lack of familiarity with the trail system (29.2%), and conflicts with other trail users (20.8%).



An additional factor expressed within the comments portion of this trail survey was a lack of free time available to access and use the trails.

To gain a better understanding of the activities taking place on Cobble Hill Mountain, survey respondents were provided the opportunity to express any and all activities they take part in. Response to the survey was overwhelmingly that of walkers/hikers, comprising 94.1% of respondents. Nearly 20% of respondents indicated they mountain bike while 7.4% indicated that they ride their horse on the mountain. After walking/hiking, the next highest level of use is undertaken by those seeking fitness/training opportunities (26.5%) and nature study (20.6%).

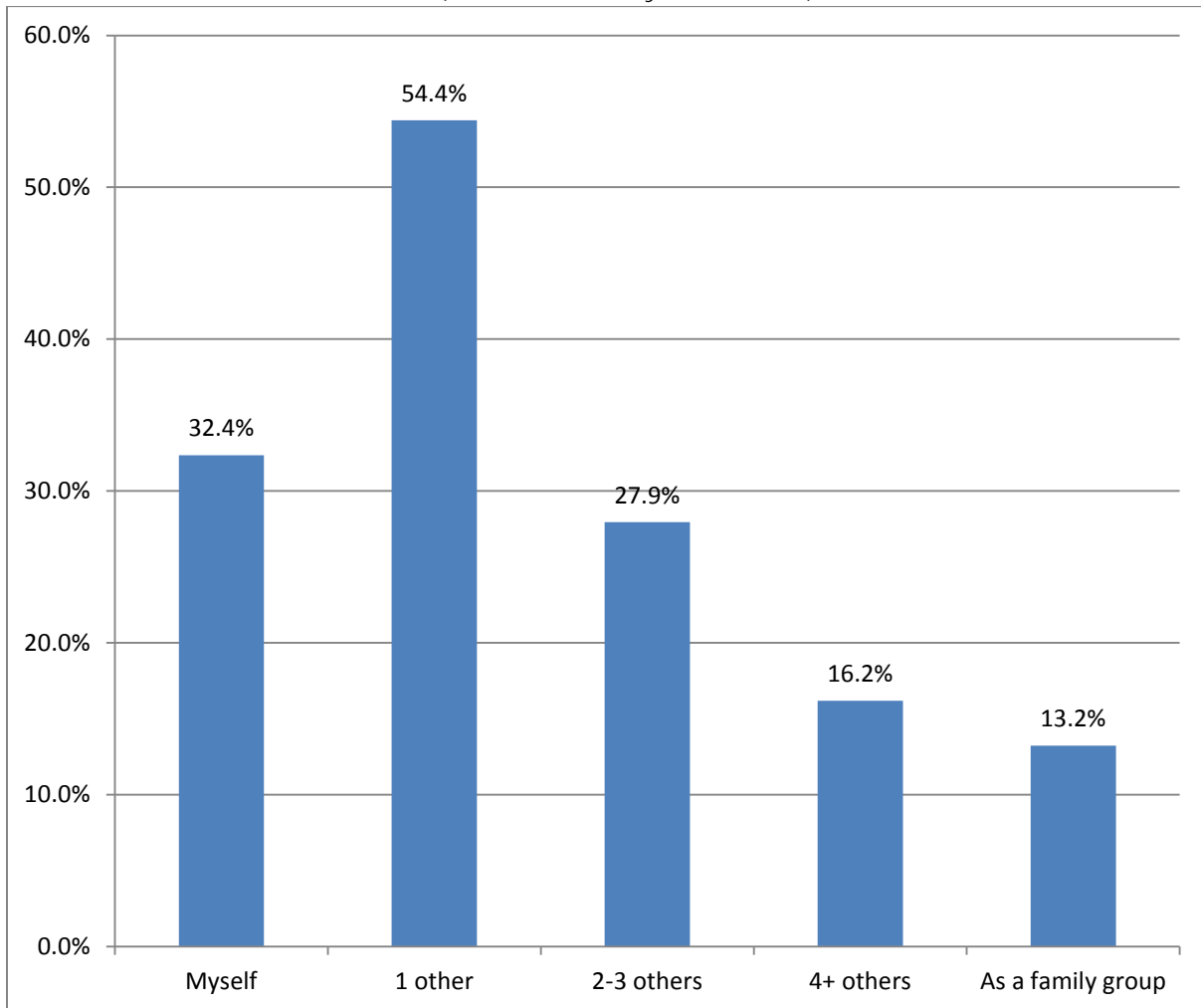
Q: What do you typically do while using the trails on Cobble Hill Mountain?
(choose as many as needed)





More than half of respondents indicated they visit the mountain trails with another individual (54.4%), with 32.4% of respondents indicating they visit the trails alone. 13.2% of respondents utilize the trails on Cobble Hill Mountain as a family group. Nearly 60% of respondents indicated they use the mountain trails with their pet.

*Q: Do you visit the trails on Cobble Hill Mountain alone or with others?
(choose as many as needed)*

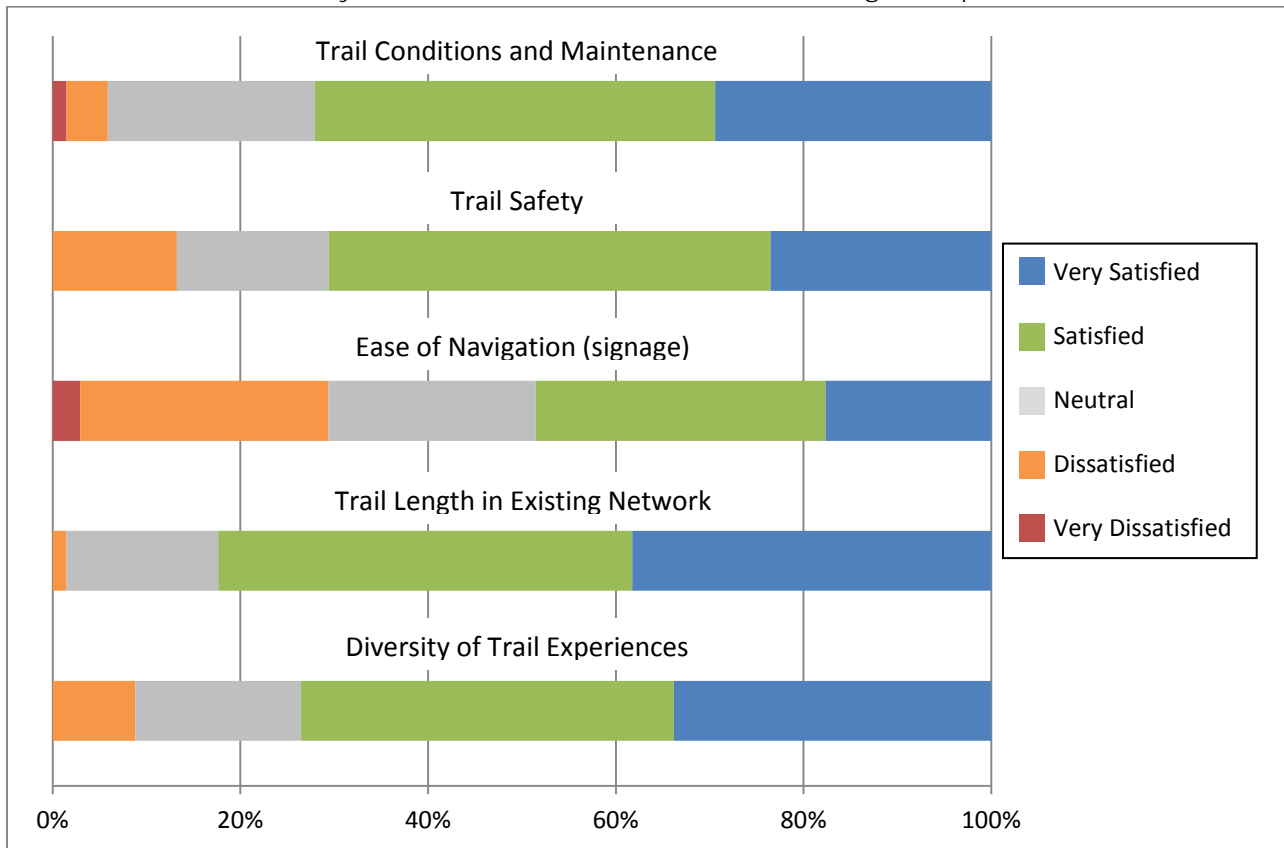




TRAIL CONDITIONS

Survey respondents indicated a positive level of satisfaction with trail conditions and maintenance, trail safety, ease of navigation, length of existing trails, and diversity of trail experiences. The highest level of dissatisfaction (26.5%) was regarding ease of navigation (presence of sufficient signage and maps).

Q: What is your level of satisfaction with the following trail aspects?



When asked to prioritize or express interest in projects from the 2003 Cobble Hill Mountain Regional Recreation Area Management Plan, the most popular response was to create a trail connection between Cobble Hill Mountain and Polara Hill north of Thain Road (74.5%). Fifty-one percent of respondents also indicated an interest in a secondary staging/parking area at Thain Road near the Bamberton Quarry and 37.3% of respondents indicated a desire to have the Perimeter Trail of the mountain developed into a multi-use beginner trail if conditions permit.



SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Based on survey responses, the “typical” trail users on Cobble Hill Mountain are walkers/hikers travelling in pairs with at least one pet and reside in the local area. Their visit to Cobble Hill Mountain is part of a weekly routine that has been in place for five years or more and occurs all year round.

It is evident that, although survey respondents indicated a general level of satisfaction with CVRD Parks and Trails management of the trail network, there is room for improvement. Initiatives such as additional trail construction and loop opportunities, improved navigational signage and mapping, and more proactive maintenance are currently underway or planned for the near future.

All results from this survey will be compiled with other information including trail use data, field observations, conversations, and other forms of feedback to form the updated Cobble Hill Mountain Regional Recreation Area Management Plan.





POPULAR COMMENTS/QUESTIONS FROM SURVEY RESPONDENTS:

Comment: *References to Cobble Hill Mountain as a Park.*

CVRD Response: Cobble Hill Mountain is not a park. The only portion of the mountain dedicated as park is Quarry Nature Park at the base of the mountain on the east side. The remainder of the mountain is Crown land managed by Recreation Sites and Trails BC as an Interpretive Forest. The CVRD has a trail license agreement for management of the trails on the mountain under the CVRD's Regional Parks and Trails program. Other tenure holders on the mountain include two woodlot licensees on the southwest and northwest sides of the mountain and Alpine Stables, who holds a commercial tenure for guided horseback trail rides on the mountain.

Comment: *"Horseback riders should be required to remove horse droppings from the trail."*

CVRD Response: To improve the experience of trail users, CVRD Parks and Trails will be displaying and promoting trail etiquette for all users of the Cobble Hill Mountain trail network. One part of this etiquette list will ask equestrians to remove horse manure from the trail if safe to dismount their horse. Alpine Stables, the guiding outfit in possession of a commercial tenure on Cobble Hill Mountain, performs weekly cleanup of horse manure on the trail routes currently utilized by their operations as required under their commercial tenure agreement with the Province of British Columbia.

Comment: *"It seems new/existing trails have been constructed/modified without public input."*

CVRD Response: For the past 10 years, CVRD Parks and Trails has followed the direction of the Cobble Hill Mountain Regional Recreation Area Management Plan. This plan was adopted by the CVRD board in 2003 following extensive input from trail users through several open houses (including an update session in 2008), stakeholder input and surveys. In 2013, regional parks capital funding was allocated to continuing the work outlined in the management plan.

Comment: *"Some trails are becoming too much like highways, making the natural experience less than what it used to be."*

CVRD Response: On the main summit trail, average summer use between 2009 and 2012 increased nearly 200% (67 counts per day in 2009, 131 counts per day in 2012 in the same time period). This large increase in trail use has had a noticeable impact on some trails. For 2013, two new beginner trail sections were constructed to provide alternate opportunities for trail users to reach the summit. Additionally, navigational signage and maps are scheduled for installation in 2014.



Comment: *“There needs to be more trails to spread out use. Access to the back (west side) of the mountain is needed.”*

CVRD Response: The adopted Cobble Hill Mountain Regional Recreation Area Management plan identifies expansion of the existing trail network to the area on the western and northern portions of the mountain via projects including the Perimeter Trail and Polara Hill connection. To date, resources have been focused on developing the higher use areas of the trail network. As part of the management plan update, with trail user input, these trail expansion opportunities are being investigated to determine feasibility and order of magnitude costs for development.

To provide additional comments and feedback regarding the trails on Cobble Hill Mountain, please contact:

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