

SASKATCHEWAN Trails Association

2019

Annual REPORT

INTRODUCTION

This year marked the implementation of our strategic plan that was completed last year (the plan can be found on our website at: www.sasktrails.ca/about-us). This plan helped focus our efforts on achievable goals, and we have made some significant steps forward in 2019. This year marked progress on trail developments throughout the province with a special emphasis on the north.

To gain a better understanding of concerns within the trail community, we completed a *State of Saskatchewan Trails* report, which surveyed trail users and operators on their opinions about the network. We worked closely with volunteers and stakeholders on the Churchill River Water Trail Legacy Project, which is developing proper stewardship of trails in the north.

We continued to promote the latest in trail information through our social media sites and promoted trails through our Give Us Your Best Shot photography contest and Saskatchewan Trails Day. We also supported youth in the province by hiring a summer student to work on our blogs, newsletter and social media posts.

The STA advocated for trails at the provincial level and worked with our counterparts on the Canadian Trails Federation and National Trails Coalition for increased funding for trails across the country. We also worked with local trail groups on their fundraising programs and provided trail building resources to assist in their efforts.

Thank you to all trail enthusiasts and supporters for your hard work and dedication this year.

YEAR IN REVIEW

GOAL ONE:

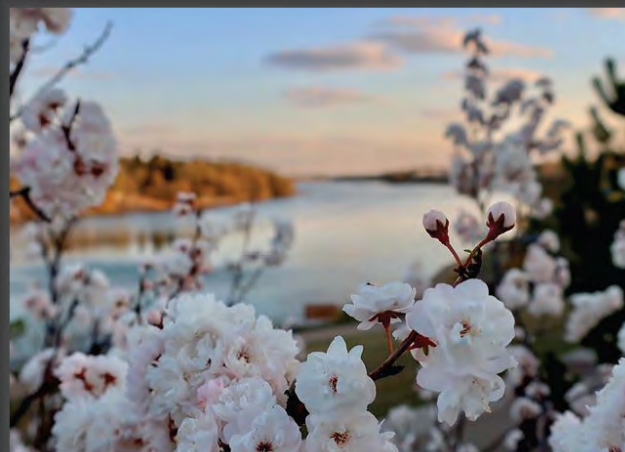
Continue to be an effective and well-governed board

The board met 10 times this year to discuss STA business operations. Most meetings occurred via teleconference calls and detailed backgrounders were prepared in advance of each meeting for the board to conduct due diligence on issues that affected the trail community. In addition, the association's financial statements were audited by an independent agency to ensure proper financial controls were in place.

Part of being an effective and well-governed board is understanding the needs within the trail community through documented research. The STA partnered with the University of Regina's Community Research Unit to complete the research on a **State of Saskatchewan Trails** report which featured comprehensive surveys to trail users and operators. The survey was distributed to 856 individuals representing a variety of users and operators. This report created a better understanding of trail issues within the province and the necessary tools to maintain and enhance the trail network.

Feedback from trail enthusiasts included:

- **Number of trails:** Many people indicated that Saskatchewan does not have an adequate number of trails.
- **Development of new trails:** The survey showed mixed results where new trails should be constructed, but there was a consensus that new trails and methods to find new trails should be undertaken.
- **Safety:** The majority of survey participants felt safe on the trails.
- **Signage:** Many commented they would like more signage, maps and signs to show point of interests (POIs) on their journey.
- **ATV use:** There seems to be disagreement between two groups of people regarding ATV use. One side argues there are not enough ATV trails and information, while the others argue that ATVs wreck the trails, are dangerous and don't respect the land.



- **Leave No Trace:** One survey taker recommended it would be nice to see Saskatchewan adopt the Leave No Trace principles in all their trails.

The response from trail operators included:

- **Construction:** Trail construction was noted as being a difficult process with concerns raised about funding, length of time/amount of work to construct a trail, the use of heavy equipment and volunteers, required skills, knowledge and amount of trail grooming.
- **Funding:** Trail operators mainly commented on the lack of money/consistent grants for trail upkeep, as well as the difficulty they face with low funding in regard to maintaining current trails. Funding for trail development comes mostly from donations or out-of-pocket with few government grants and corporate sponsorship to assist. The heavy majority of trail operators agreed there is not adequate funding for trail building and maintenance.
- **Maintenance:** Due to this lack of funding, most trails are updated and groomed only once a year, if not less. This upkeep is targeted to address weather deterioration and signage. Most trail clean-up is done by volunteers and eco-friendly trail users.
- **Best Practices:** Trail operators seem to have a strong network with many operators consulting with one another to solve problems and answer questions.

SECTOR VISION

We envision a sustainable coordinated network of rural and urban trails throughout Saskatchewan which are designed and maintained to standards that meet a diversity of user needs and enhance the health, tourism and economic prosperity of Saskatchewan communities.

ORGANIZATIONAL VISION

We envision the Saskatchewan Trails Association (STA) as being the key resource in the province for trail information in the areas of best practice, standards, funding and usage.



GOAL TWO:

To be a resource for accurate trail location and operational information accessible to the public and the membership

The STA was very active on social media over the past year, sharing information on trails that people should visit and illustrating these posts with videos, photos and the perspectives of people who have visited them.

Our **3rd Annual Give Us Your Best Shot** photo contest enjoyed another successful year. We asked people to share photos of their experiences on Saskatchewan trails, and we received more than 200 entries. This contest was sponsored by a \$500 grant from the Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation's Association (SPRA)'s June is Recreation & Parks Month program. Through sponsored posts on Facebook and Twitter, we reached over 52,000 people and significantly increased the number of people interested in our trail network. The winner of the contest was Valerie Horner with her breathtaking shot of Grasslands National Park.

The STA's blogs were also a popular feature on our website this year. New postings that were featured ranged from "A Man's Best Friend on the Trails", "Tips and Tricks for Beginner Hikers" and "Fat Biking in Saskatchewan." You can read all of the posts at www.sasktrails.ca/blog.

We promoted **Saskatchewan Trails Day** through a media release and social media where we encouraged trail groups across the province to submit their event information. This allowed us to bring attention to festivities all over the province and the annual photo contest.

The website continued to grow and develop over the past year. The website provided information on both trail users and operators and included a variety of information, including the online trail directory and how to get involved in supporting the STA.

We continued to distribute important information on a monthly basis about members and key stakeholders in the community to share information, funding and promotional initiatives, and trail updates which go directly to our members inboxes through our regular e-newsletter, **Tails from the Trails**.



Give Us Your Best Shot was once again a huge success. This year's winning entry was by Valerie Horner with her incredible shot of Grasslands National Park.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Paul Lipton – President

– Vice President

GOAL THREE:

To move into greater alignment with the National Recreation Framework and the priorities of the recreation section of the Saskatchewan Lotteries Trust fund

One of the priorities this year was trail development in the north involving Indigenous communities. We partnered with the Saskatchewan Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport, Churchill River Outfitters, and local community members on the Churchill River Water Legacy Trail Project, which was designed to provide proper stewardship of trails in the region. One of the focuses this year was on fundraising to install UDVT toilets. The ministry installed toilets at Robertson Falls and Stanley Rapids, while the STA and various stakeholders raised funds for another toilet on Barker Island.

The **Give a Sh*t! event** held on October 16, 2019 at Outter Limits Saskatoon was a huge success. The event significantly raised the profile and much needed funds for the Churchill River Project. The event was a fun and lively evening with a panel of paddling enthusiasts who expressed their support for the project. Special thanks to all the presenters, including:

- Joe Milligan, Recreation/Interpretation Specialist, Ministry Parks Culture and Sport, who discussed: “What goes in must come out – the down low on wilderness toilets;”
- Theresa Driediger, Psychologist: “Taking your emotional sh*t! into the wilderness;”
- Jana Miller, outdoor educator and owner of Wildernook Fresh Air Learning: “Cultivating passion for the wilderness in the young and not-so-young;” and
- Heidi Seida, food manager for Churchill River Canoe Outfitters: “Eat, pack, love – the joy of sustainable tripping.”

Thank you to all the volunteers, attendees and sponsors for their efforts at the Give A Sh*t! event.

Funds for the Churchill River Water Trail Legacy project were also raised through the STA raffle, which was sponsored by the Saskatoon Canoeing Club, Outter Limits, Eb’s Source for Adventures, Churchill River Outfitters, Back40 Wilderness, and the Alpine Club of Canada, Saskatchewan Section.

Some of the great raffle prizes included:

- Two tickets to the Banff Film Festival (\$40)
- Saskatoon Canoeing Club membership (\$55)
- Classic Outdoors paddle (\$95)



*Give a Sh*t for the Churchill River Project was supported by generous corporate sponsors, including the Outter Limits (above), Churchill River Outfitters (middle, bottom right), and Eb’s Source for Adventures (bottom right).*

- Hand carved Greenland kayak paddle (\$150)
- Back40 Wilderness first aid CPR/AED course and day trip kit (\$300)
- Outter Limits camping package (\$300)
- Eb’s Source for Adventures 60L canoe barrel, harness, small barrel cooler, barrel bucket, barrel pocket, external barrel pouch, two Eb’s 1L Nalgene water bottles, and two Backpackers Pantry ice cream sandwiches (\$350)
- Churchill River Outfitters three-Day whitewater course (\$600)



As part of this project, the STA successfully applied for funding from SPRA's Cultural Diversity Inclusion Grant, which assists members in developing new recreation programs, events, or enhancing existing recreation opportunities to reach out to and reflect the diverse population within the member's community. The grant we received will be used to create signage that will include information on the facilities and sponsorship recognition in English, Cree and Pictographs. Several signs have been created in cooperation with the local community and the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport. Their installation is being administered by ministry staff and local volunteers.

Another aspect of Goal 3 is a commitment to youth. The National Recreation Framework and SPRA encourage youth involvement in recreation. As part of our commitment, the STA believes that youth are the future leaders of our provincial trail movement due to their enthusiasm and love of the outdoors.

We engage youth through our social media, photo contests and by inviting them to share their stories of their time on the trails.

As part of our commitment to youth, the STA successfully received funding from the Student Employment Program with the Government of Canada to hire a summer student for eight weeks. This year we hired Parker Piper, a fourth-year marketing student at the University of Regina. Piper was responsible for administering our social media accounts, creating blogs, and assisting with the *State of Saskatchewan Trails* report.

THANK YOU to all the volunteers, attendees and sponsors for their efforts at the Give A Sh*! event.





GOAL FOUR:

To effectively support and grow the membership.

The STA is responsive to membership needs and concerns. In response to motions at the annual general meeting (AGM), we drafted two letters to the provincial government.

The first letter was addressed to the Hon. Gene Makowsky, Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport, which expressed the community's support for the Churchill River Water Trail Legacy project, which would lead to improved canoe routes along the historic river system. The second letter was addressed to the Hon. Joe Hargrave, Minister Responsible for SGI, reiterating support on the creation of an effective ATV registration system in the province.

Both letters received response letters. Minister Makowsky explained the Government of Saskatchewan is happy to collaborate with the STA and community members to improve canoe routes and reduce human waste along the Churchill River. Minister Hargrave explained that discussions on ATV registration are currently taking place, and they would take into consideration all the issues identified in the letter.

This year, the board decided to reinstitute the STA Member Trail Grant program to assist members in maintaining trails within their community or between communities. The focus of

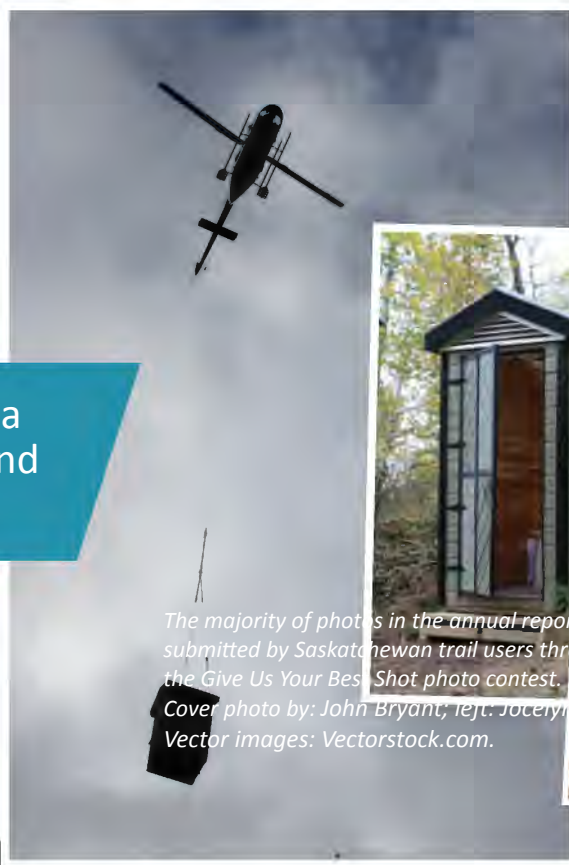
the grant was to fund maintenance activities such as updating maps, GPS trails, signage, purchasing maintenance tools, etc. The grant provided \$1,000 in funding for one project and \$500 for two other projects.

The STA provided professional development opportunities at its AGM. This year the STA held its AGM on March 30 at the Meewasin Valley Authority in Saskatoon. The event attracted trail enthusiasts, builders and administrators for great conversations about issues affecting the trail and outdoor recreation community. Attendees were treated to diverse presentations, which included Joe Milligan of the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport, who presented on how technology and partnerships are being used to address the issue of human waste in northern canoe routes; and Beaver Flat 50 Trail Run's race organizer, Jeff Dudar, spoke about the evolution of the race.

OVER \$10,000 was raised to purchase a UDTV toilet and signage for Barker Island as part of the Churchill River Project.

The majority of the photos in the annual report were submitted by Saskatchewan trail users through the Give Us Your Best Shot photo contest. Vector images by: Vectorstock.com.

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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Trish German - Treasurer

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Russ Hodgins - Board Member

Curt Schroeder - Board Member

Chris Exner - Board Member

Pat Rediger - Administrator/
Ex-Officio Member

Joe Milligan - Ex-Officio Member

Andrew Exelby - Ex-Officio Member

STA recorded

2,546

Instagram
followers in
2019



STA reached over

52,000

viewers and received over
200 entries in the
Give Us Your Best Shot
photo contest



STA logged

1,155

Twitter
followers in
2019

OUR SPONSORS AND SUPPORTERS

The STA would like to thank the following organizations and individuals for their outstanding support of trails in Saskatchewan:

- All those who generously donated to trail projects this past year.
- All of our raffle donors, including: **Saskatoon Canoeing Club, Otter Limits, Eb's Source for Adventures, Churchill River Outfitters, Back40 Wilderness, and Alpine Club of Canada, Saskatchewan Section.**
- And, of course, our funding partners and sponsors, who help ensure the long-term success and viability of our organization:



Saskatchewan
Parks and Recreation
Association





www.sasktrails.ca

SASKATCHEWAN TRAILS ASSOCIATION

Phone: 306-522-9326 | Fax: 306-522-0923

info@sasktrails.ca

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