

Greater Bragg Creek Trails Association (GBCTA)

Position Statement on Proposed West Bragg Creek (WBC) Logging

Version: January 5, 2012

The proposed logging will directly affect at least 25 km of winter and summer trails and 90 percent of the trails will be directly impacted. See attached map compiled, with permission, from Spray Lakes Sawmills' General Development Plan <http://www.spraylakesawmills.com/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=N4C5jKdhzBY%3d&tabid=202&mid=609> and trail mapping developed by the GBCTA.

Many proposed logging cutblocks will have very destructive impacts on ski trails if logging practices are not modified in these sensitive areas. The GBCTA's general concerns with proposed logging include the potential negative impact on trails, trail sustainability, trail maintenance, and recreational user experience.

The GBCTA is currently in negotiations with Spray Lakes Sawmills (SLS) under the auspices of the West Bragg Creek Land Users Agreement (WBCLUA) (See backgrounder below) to mitigate damage that the proposed logging will have on recreational trails. The WBCLUA was negotiated in April 2011 to allow development of 45 km of new All Season Trails.

Current negotiations under the WBCLUA are intended to minimize logging impacts on all WBC trails. This process started in mid-Nov 2011 when SLS provided the GBCTA with an overview of their proposed logging. At the request of SLS, the GBCTA has agreed not to discuss specific mitigation plans in public as they are currently under negotiation.

We are negotiating in good faith, and our general concerns are that the proposed logging will have large, significant, and destructive impacts on the trails that will be difficult to remedy if an agreement cannot be reached. The GBCTA is providing recommended actions that SLS should take to minimize the impact on summer and winter recreational trails. As a general approach, the GBCTA is asking SLS to minimize the impacts on recreation by providing significant, wind-firm buffers to trails. This is important for the user experience on All Season trails and critical for snow retention and sun/wind protection on ski trails.

The GBCTA recognizes that SLS has a Forest Management Agreement with Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (SRD), and logging is part of the landscape. However, land use in K-country has shifted from a predominantly industrial base to watershed protection and recreational use since K-Country was established, and as such, logging practices should accommodate these activities. While a small portion of the winter ski trails use old logging roads, the majority of the trails have been purpose built for recreational use.

GBCTA would like to communicate details on the proposed logging to our member users, but SLS has requested that we do not at this time. We are respecting this request, but this puts the GBCTA in a difficult situation with our members.

We believe that the proposed logging will also have a negative impact on the Elbow watershed and that current SLS logging practices needed to be upgraded to meet the best available watershed protection practices recommended by qualified professionals. This is based on seeing negative watershed impacts caused by recent SLS logging in other parts of Kananaskis.

We would like to see future, cumulative logging plans, to see how recreational opportunities will be impacted over the next 20 years. Previous FireSmart logging recommendations indicated further, significant logging over the entire west Bragg Creek landscape over the next 10 years.

The GBCTA has requested that SLS conduct a proper public consultation on their proposed logging in WBC including a public open house in Bragg Creek (which they are doing on Jan 26, 2012). This is to ensure that the public is informed, has an opportunity to provide feedback and that SLS then incorporates that public feedback into the final logging plan.

Sustainable Resource Development, as the land manager, will provide the final decision on logging in west Bragg Creek.

Backgrounder

1) In early 2009, the GBCTA and Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation (TPR) negotiated and signed a ten year partnership agreement covering WBC trail maintenance and development. In that agreement, the Alberta Government committed to the creation of an All Season Trail Plan for WBC. The intent was that the GBCTA would lead the creation of Plan and provide the necessary funding required for implementation in partnership with TPR.

2) In September 2010, after a one year process that included chairing a Public Advisory Committee and 2 rounds of public consultation, the GBCTA obtained Government of Alberta approval for the West Bragg Creek All Season Trail Plan. That Plan provides for the expansion and upgrading of the West Bragg Creek Trail System in K-Country to better meet the needs of all types of non-motorized users while reducing impacts on the local watershed. The Plan includes 40 km of new all season trails for hiking, biking, snowshoeing and horse-back riding, 8 km of new snow shoe trails, 17 km of new ski trails, widening of an existing ski trail for skate skiing and other improvements. The GBCTA has subsequently raised \$ 260,000 and initiated implementation of that Plan including coordination of over 2,400 hours of volunteer effort. The plan was approved by TPR, and Sustainable Resource Development.
<http://tpr.alberta.ca/parks/consult/braggCreek/FinalWestBraggCreekTrailsPlan.pdf>

3) In order to obtain final approval to build each new trail in the Plan, the GBCTA was required by Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (SRD) to contact all other land users, such as grazing allotment holders and Spray Lakes Sawmills (SLS), to document their specific concerns with the new trails. As a result, the GBCTA was requested by SLS and grazing allotment holders to first negotiate the West Bragg Creek Land Users Agreement. This was completed from January to April, 2011 and provided a master agreement to guide the creation of specific agreements required by SRD on concerns and mitigations. This master agreement was not required by SRD, and was signed by the GBCTA, SLS, SRD, grazing allotment holders, Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation, the Calgary Mountain Bike Alliance, and the Bragg Creek FireSmart Committee.

4) Specific agreements were subsequently negotiated and signed for all new trails that included both specific concerns of SLS and grazing allotment holders with the new trails and specific mitigations to address each concern. This was required by SRD in order to obtain final construction approval for the new trails.

5) The Greater Bragg Creek Trails Association (GBCTA) was formed in 2004 to support trail development in the Bragg Creek Area. The GBCTA is a provincial not for profit society and a federally registered charity. In 2007, the GBCTA completed the 1.4 km Centennial Trail from the Hamlet of Bragg Creek to the Bragg Creek Provincial Park. In 2010, the GBCTA completed the 1.7 km Banded Peak School Trail from the Hamlet of Bragg Creek to the Banded Peak School. In 2007, volunteer ski trail track setting and trail maintenance in WBC in partnership with Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation (TPR) was initiated by the GBCTA. Volunteers spend hundreds of hours each year on ski trail grooming and maintenance.

Maps and Links

West Bragg Creek All-Season Trail Plan:

<http://tpr.alberta.ca/parks/consult/braggCreek/FinalWestBraggCreekTrailsPlan.pdf>

Spray Lakes Sawmill General Development Plan map:

<http://www.spraylakesawmills.com/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=N4C5jKdhzBY%3d&tabid=202&mid=609>

SLS General Harvest Plans Map (compilation with recreational trail and Google map overlay):

Clearcut in yellow.

Recreational trails in red.

P is parking trailhead at West Bragg Creek.

