

2.5 PROCESS FOR OPENING CLOSED TRAILS

The approach to trail closures has been highly variable from province to province, territory to territory, municipality to municipality and between trail operators. Some trail operators were required to close their trails, while others may have chosen to close their trails to help limit the spread of COVID-19. It is also possible that some jurisdictions that may be opening their trails will face future closures should the virus resurge.

Reopening the trail to the public isn't as simple as removing the closure signs. It is important that trail operators take a strategic approach to reopening. At a minimum, the following steps should be taken:

- 1** Become familiar with provincial or territorial public health orders and directives and any local bylaws or orders.
- 2** Evaluate your trail characteristics (e.g. width, amenities, volume of use) and identify risks for transmitting COVID-19 on the trail and through trail amenities.
- 3** Identify management tools that will be applied to manage the risk of transmitting COVID-19 and develop the materials to support implementation of those tools (e.g. signage, education program, physical infrastructure).
- 4** Update / develop safe work practices to help protect staff and volunteers from COVID-19 while working on the trail.
- 5** Train staff and volunteers in the updated / new safe work practices.
- 6** Undertake a physical inspection of the trail and resolve serious public safety and maintenance deficiencies and install management infrastructure required to mitigate risk of transmitting COVID-19.
- 7** Prepare and implement a communications campaign to promote the reopening of the trail.
- 8** Consider reopening the trail in phases that are aligned with the respective provincial or territorial open plan:
 - i. Phase 1 – promote local visitation only
 - ii. Phase 2 – promote both broader local and intra-provincial visitation
 - iii. Phase 3 – promote local, intra-provincial / territorial and inter-provincial / territorial visitation
 - iv. Phase 4 – resume regular visitation including promotion of international visitation
- 9** Monitor the effectiveness of management tools, public health and local orders and directives and adjust as necessary.

2.5.1 Recovery Marketing & Communications

Even as isolation and lockdown measures are beginning to be relaxed, some residents may remain fearful of spaces where people gather. They may worry that others are infected, physical distancing is ineffective, and that sanitation is insufficient. Deliberate efforts are likely to be required to help rebuild trust and confidence of visitors to enjoy trails.

- Trail operators should work with partners (e.g. Destination Marketing Organizations, Economic Development Organizations, Sector Organizations) to develop marketing and communication campaigns to reinforce the relative safety of enjoying the outdoors and to communicate the steps the trail operator is taking to help protect the safety of visitors and mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission. See [Appendix A.3](#) for an sample web and media release.

2.5.2 Commercial Use of Trails

Some trail operators may permit commercial businesses (e.g. guides, equipment rentals, food and beverage services) to operate on or adjacent to the trail and in parking lots.

- Trail operators should remind these businesses that they are required to know and follow the provincial or territorial public health orders, directives and guidelines that are relevant to their business.



“Ensuring visitors are aware of the steps that trail operators are taking to help keep them safe will be essential to giving visitors, from near and far, the confidence to return to our trails. Building visitor confidence and trust is fundamental to restarting our trails tourism economy”.

– Justin Ellis – Trails Specialist