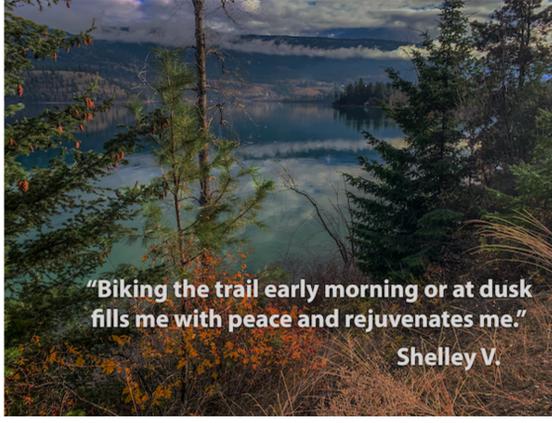




Hello [Name, fallback=Subscriber],

The challenges of 2020 have only served to strengthen our community's connection with the Okanagan Rail Trail and the beautiful trailside environment. When not closed for construction, the trail was used and appreciated more than ever. Much work continued towards making the trail the best it can be highlighting the generosity of donors, and the commitment of owner jurisdictions and Friends of Okanagan Rail Trail (FORT) volunteers.



"Biking the trail early morning or at dusk fills me with peace and rejuvenates me."
Shelley V.

More than a Trail

This challenging year has highlighted the importance of outdoor recreation, trails and natural spaces for relief from daily news, screen time overload, and Covid weight gain! Many people also took to gardening, and on the rail trail focus was on helping nature by planting native plants and pulling weeds.

Rave reviews of the new interpretive sites shows that trail users also appreciate trailside enhancement, and learning more about the area. Most important, the trail is proving to be a model of collaboration and engagement, where trail users are not just a consumer of an experience, but want to give back and be a 'Friend' of the trail.



Northern Gateway (Km 0) Phase One Complete

The Okanagan Rail Trail Management Plan describes trail gateways as:

"...a special access point that acts both as terminus and origin to the entire 52km Okanagan Rail Trail. Gateways anchor the ORT experience and are places of information, orientation and celebration."

The Km 0 gateway in Coldstream will play an important role for a safe and memorable experience on the Kalamalka section of the rail trail. The area is spacious and welcoming, and now, thanks to the generosity of public donations and grants, the site will be a model for trailside restoration. [Learn more](#) about progress towards creating a signature gateway at Kilometre 0. Thank you once again to the Community Foundation of the North Okanagan, and Central Okanagan Foundation for receiving donations on behalf of the trail.

With the natural landscaping now complete, Friends of Okanagan Rail Trail welcome donations towards Phase 2 - to finish the plaza, hilltop viewpoint, and interpretive structures that will tell the story of *K'ekw'miqs* and the rail trail. [You can be part of creating this signature gateway.](#)

One Family's Legacy



The generosity and vision of the Weatherill family and the Edna, Stella and Harry Weatherill Foundation has resulted in a gift to generations of rail trail users, and a model for future development. In October, three interpretive sites were opened, one in each of North Okanagan, Lake Country and Kelowna. [Read more](#) about these interpretive sites, and how they provide not only a trailside rest area, but also an opportunity to learn about the nature and culture along the trail.



Many additional sites have been identified for potential future development as trailside rest areas, and points of interest. Timing for development will depend on priorities within each jurisdiction and fundraising priorities. While there is not currently a program to sponsor individual trail furnishings (like memorial benches), there is an opportunity to contribute towards planned development of specific sites. If you, your group or business feels inspired to add your own legacy to this popular trail, please contact us to discuss your ideas: hello@okanaganrailtrail.ca

Erosion Control and Other Trailside Improvements



The Regional District of North Okanagan continued the big job of repairing erosion damage and protecting edge areas along the Kalamalka Lake shoreline along the trail this fall.

Not only was the shoreline protected with rockwork, but it was also planted to help restore riparian vegetation that is critical for this sensitive ecosystem. Trailside strips were seeded with native seed mixture, and planted with 20,000 shrubs and 3000 pine seedlings.

Trail users are asked to keep dogs, bikes, and feet off of these areas as the new planted and seeded areas become established.

Improvements to the Westkal trail entrance area (Km 1) include reducing the slope of the ramp from parking area, developing a new washroom, and adding some fencing and landscaping.

Friends of Okanagan Rail Trail Volunteers



A growing number of trail users are stepping up to volunteer for the trail. Since August, volunteers have logged more than 1500 hours!

There are now 42 *Trail Ambassadors* trained to welcome visitors and provide the 'eyes and ears' for the trail. A new category of volunteers, *Trail Stewards*, are gearing up to play a 'hands-on' role with caring for the trailside environment. In particular, *Trail Stewards* will be learning how to identify and help control invasive weeds, and tend newly planted areas.

There are many other ways that you could volunteer for the trail such as fundraising and events, communications, grant writing, recruiting and training volunteers, and much more. If you would like to volunteer with Friends of Okanagan Rail Trail or learn more, please contact: volunteer@okanaganrailtrail.ca.



Covid and Winter Safety

As our communities continue to deal with the Covid pandemic, please comply with all current public health orders and recommendations. To avoid risking future trail closures, let's all be careful about physical distancing, and stay home if you are not well.

Winter is a beautiful season to enjoy the rail trail by foot, snowshoe, fat tire bike, and sometimes by ski! Winter opportunities vary between the sections of trail. The Kelowna section is regularly cleared and the northern sections have the best potential for skiing and snowshoeing after a snowfall. The trail can get icy so please watch your footing and dress for the weather.

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