



## **Chilliwack Outdoor Club Trail Maintenance 2023 Report**

**by Jim Alkins**

Again this year, COC members worked with Trails BC members on trail maintenance that was fun and very rewarding for the participants of all capabilities. The climate and terrain in our beautiful area make ongoing trail maintenance some of the most demanding in the country; — and without it many of the trails we love and enjoy would be impassable in a very short time. The remaining flood damage caused by the “atmospheric river” of November 2021 followed by the 2023 high-risk fire season limited access to large sections of the TCT. Therefore, a major focus of the COC this year was the construction of replacement and new bridges on the TCT in the Chilliwack River Valley spawning channels. The Emil Anderson Group donation of repurposed timbers was instrumental in the COC’s ability to proceed with the bridge projects. Once again, the COC stepped up with energetic members to take on the trail clearing and bridge work. The COC welcomed members who had a few hours when the call was made to come out and enjoy doing some feel good trail work in a safe environment with a healthy dose of laughter, camaraderie and friendship. After every trail maintenance day, the crew had a sense of accomplishment which was very gratifying. As is often stated - a day working on the trails renews the spirit and health of the participants.

### **Here’s what was accomplished in 2023:**

- **Total Volunteer Hours\* - 2,370**
- **35 individuals from COC participated on at least one day**
- **60 total work days**
- **319 worker days**

\* Includes time at site, travel time, preparation time, equipment maintenance time. There were also 9 Trail BC participants that also joined on a number of the days however, their time has not been included in this total.

### **The COC focused on the maintenance and upgrading of the:**

- ❖ **Vedder Mountain Ridge Trail (4.5km one-way)**
- ❖ **Pierce Lake Trail (3.8km of the lower section up to the log bridge)**
- ❖ **Trans Canada Trail (TCT) –**
  - **Liumchen to Chilliwack Lake (36km)**
  - **Paleface Pass (4km from both ends but not the centre 6km section due to fire risk)**
  - **Through the Coquihalla Canyon where accessible**
    - **Sowaqua to Carolin Mine Road and Shylock sections, (about 16km)**
    - **In addition there were various hikes to assess alignment options from Britton Creek to Brookemere (36km)**
- ❖ **The Slesse Memorial Trail from the parking area to the propeller cairn – (about 7 km one-way)**

## Trail Maintenance Activities

### Bridge East of Emil Anderson Group Pit:

In January, eight members of the club participated in the one-day bridge construction project on the TCT west of Emil Anderson Group (EAG) pit in the Chilliwack River Valley. EAG repurposed timbers located at the pit were used for the bridge. The project was a bit of a training exercise to confirm the tools and connectors required and the suitability of the repurposed material.



### Construction of Pier and Bridge 1km East of Riverside Campground

The 1995 bridge across the spawning channel was failing so a new pier and two span bridge was constructed with approval of DFO in a new location. The repurposed timbers from Emil Anderson Group were used and the construction was completed in February and March. Cedar logs from Wayne Furnass were used for the base of the pier and 10 inch timbers were fastened above them to achieve the required height. Boulders were added to hold the pier in place. Due to the winter conditions the water level was low which allowed easy access for the pier construction. The frozen ground prevented the completion of end ramps and railings which were complete in April and June. Signage was added at three bridge sites to recognize the donors and volunteers.







### Replacement Bridge on Tolmie Section

An old bridge over a narrow stream bed collapsed so the deteriorated material was removed and a new cedar bridge was constructed across the gap. A cedar tree was used for the abutment seats and stringers and seasoned wood from an old growth log was split to create the decking.





**Two new bridges at Angel Wing Fish Channel**  
Using the repurposed material from Emil Anderson Group two new bridges and approaches were constructed across the outlets from the spawning pond as shown below. Both bridges were over 35 feet long including the approaches.





### Replacement Bridge East of Riverside Campground

The old bridge across the spawning channel had failed and was washed down stream. DFO approved the construction of a replacement bridge. Abutment seats were cut from a large cedar blowdown and repurposed timbers from Emil Anderson Group were used to construct the 18 foot bridge and 10 foot long approaches.



### Replacement of the 100 foot Boardwalk East of Riverside Campground:

The replacement was carried out using repurposed material from Emil Anderson. The replacement was completed in sections starting with the far bank approach which had deteriorated to an unsafe condition. On November 15, the original material was removed from the first 20ft section to allow construction of new piers and placement of the stringers, decking and curbs.







The curbs were added and the edge of the decking were trimmed.



On November 23 the crew replaced another section of the bridge. New piers were constructed using the 6"x6" timbers and the large stringers. The stringers and blocking were attached using M15 rebar.



The level of the stringers was confirmed.



As the next section was constructed, the decking was cut and secured to the stringers, Final blocking and stringers were secured across the 8 ft deep gap and the new curbs were added.





task of aligning the piers and the stringers very challenging.



Next the decking was secured to the stringers with 6 inch spikes donated by Canex and the curbs were attached along the completed deck.



The process was repeated by removing the deteriorated deck and constructing new timber piers; the old cedar deadfall made the

The ice and leaves were removed from the deck so the expanded metal mesh provided by the Back Country Horsemen Society



could be applied. The metal mesh certainly reduced the slip hazard.



The finished 100 foot long boardwalk/bridge with the curbs and expanded metal mesh with the happy crew that worked on various sections of the project.



On December 15 the crew returned to add the expanded metal mesh to 5 bridges in the Thurston Meadows section of the Trail. At one bridge a beaver dam had to be removed by hand and grubbing tools.





**Pierce Lake Trail:** The focus was the annual trimming of the soft vegetation to improve the sightlines around the parking area on Chilliwack Lake Road, and cleaning of the pit toilet. Numerous blowdowns were cleared from the trail up to the log bridge including the approach to the bridge.



**Mount Slesse Memorial Trail:** The trail was cleared from the parking area to the propeller. The student summer crew, under COC supervision, spent two days on the trail using machetes and loppers. Power tools could not be used because of the fire risk. The COC members also continued the clearing of alders with loppers and handsaws on several hikes to the propeller.





**The Trans Canada Trail:**

Club members worked with volunteers from Trails BC on the TCT to remove deadfall and clear alder brush from Liumchen Creek to Chilliwack Lake. The trail performed as an effective fire break when a wild fire due to a cigarette from a passing car broke out near the Pierce Lake trailhead.



Silver Skagit Road was closed to the public all year due to flood damage. The contractor completing the road repairs allowed the COC crews access for trail maintenance. Deadfall and alder brush clearing were completed on the Hicks Section.



Due to the higher elevation and snow, Paleface Pass section of the trail was scheduled in late June and could only be partially cleared. Clearing and trimming were completed along the first 5km from Silver Skagit Road. In addition, similar work was completed for 4 km from the Chilliwack Lake end of the Paleface Pass section. Due to the high fire risk and an active fire in the area, power trimmers were not used so progress was slow and access to the middle 4km section was not possible. The summer student crew spent a day on the Chilliwack Lake side. Photos below show before and after clearing alder.





In addition, COC members cleared blowdown along the TCT in the Chilliwack River area periodically throughout the year as issues were identified.



The Club also worked with Trails BC members to clear deadfall and repair erosion on the Sowaqua, Jessica, and Shylock sections of the TCT where access was possible. Future work will be required to develop the trail access under Hwy 5 at Sowaqua bridge which was under construction.





Road washouts, pipeline construction and road construction activities limited access in most areas through the Coquihalla from Britton Creek to Brodie Station at Larsons Hill. Re-alignment of the TCT will be required and route assessments were completed with support from the Trans Mountain Pipeline staff. Major trail work will be required to establish the TCT through the Coquihalla section to Brookemere in 2024.