

Slocan Valley Rail Trail – Statement of Significance

March 1, 2020

Description of Historic Place

The Slocan Valley Rail Trail is an approximately 52 km long recreational trail that runs from the trailhead at the confluence of the Slocan and Kootenay Rivers in South Slocan, to the south end of Slocan Lake in Slocan City. The trail is constructed on the former bed of the Slocan Extension of the Columbia & Kootenay Railway.

Heritage Values of Historic Place

The Slocan Valley Rail Trail is valued for its connection to the earliest development and infrastructure introduced in the West Kootenay in the 1890s, and for its ongoing use as an important year-round recreation corridor in the Slocan Valley.

As the original route of the Columbia & Kootenay Railway and Navigation Company's Slocan Extension railway, this historic place is important as a reflection of the early development of the West Kootenay region at the end of the nineteenth century. Opened in 1897, this corridor was a critical connector in the network of rail and steamship transportation routes that were designed to secure the wealth of natural resources in the area and open the West Kootenay both economically and socially at that time. Touted as one of the richest mining areas in the country, this area required modern and efficient infrastructure to ensure that ore, supplies, and people were being



transported where needed, and the Slocan Extension did just that. This historic place is a reminder of the direct and immediate impact that railway development had on the settlement of the area; by creating jobs, transportation options, and seemingly endless economic opportunities, railways such as the Slocan Extension caused the population of the West Kootenay to boom during the 1890s.

Heritage value also lies in the evolution towards redundancy over time that caused this railway to lose its original strength and purpose in the local economy. Abandoned as a working rail line by the Canadian Pacific Railway in the mid-1990s, the loss of original purpose of this historic place is a reflection of the larger phenomenon of a downturn in the natural resource-based economy in the West Kootenay at that time. Its rehabilitation as a recreation trail by the Slocan Valley Heritage Trail Society (SVHTS) is a further reflection of the metamorphosis that many communities and resources have undergone in the face of the major local economic shift that currently places a higher importance on social and recreational economies than on the extraction of natural resources from the surrounding environment. The Slocan Valley Rail Trail is highly valued as a recreation and tourism asset in this area, and its current use can be seen as an important part of the continuum of social and economic benefits that were the intention of the original creation of this route in 1897.

Character-Defining Elements

The character-defining elements of the Slocan Valley Rail Trail include:

- Its route from South Slocan at the confluence of the Slocan and Kootenay Rivers (formerly known as Ward's Crossing) to the southern end of Slocan Lake at Slocan City.
- The width of the trail, reflective of the original railway right-of-way.
- The grade of the trail, reflective of the grade limitations typical for railway construction.
- The presence of four bridges along the route of the trail.
- The association of this trail as part of the Trans Canada Trail route.
- Historical associations of the route with the Columbia & Kootenay Railway and Navigation Company.
- Historical associations of the route with the Canadian Pacific Railway.
- Association of the trail with the Slocan Valley Heritage Trail Society.
- Historical relationships over time between the railway/trail and communities and settlements along its route (such as Slocan Park, Winlaw, Appledale, Lemon Creek and Slocan City)
- Relationship of trail to surviving trail stations along its route.

Slocan Valley Rail Trail

Legend

Address Range
Streams (Large Scale)
Lakes (Mid Scale)

Notes

Map Details

Date Plotted: 5/4/2020

202 Lakeside Drive
Nelson, BC
1-800-268-7325
<http://www.rdck.ca>

0 8,000.00 Meters 10cm
1 : 80,000.00

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