
RMNP Trail Advocates Group

Hello!

This email may be of interest to all appreciators of Riding Mountain National Park trails. We are inviting stakeholders to join with us to support the park in preserving and improving its great trail system.

In the last twenty years well over 80 km of trails have been closed by RMNP without warning or consultation. More trails appear to be threatened at this time. Along with unexpected trail eliminations, we are seeing long-term unexplained closures, a prevalence of threatening fine warnings to hikers, and this past year some extreme delays of basic trail maintenance. Developments such as these show lack of concern for trail users, and leave us wondering if there is a move towards reduction of trail infrastructure.

As individuals, many of us have experienced a lack of response from RMNP to letters sent. We are hoping that by joining together to express our concerns we might also be successful in improving communications between the park and its trail users.

There are clearly consequences to the visitor experience offered by RMNP when trail infrastructure fails to be given the top priority it deserves. We want to reverse this trend before more trails are lost. We need to remind RMNP that we appreciators of the backcountry, frustrated by the current situation, are still out there and have a voice.

In order to work towards the goal of successful communications with RMNP a few of us have come together under the name of RMNP Trail Advocates Group. We have begun the process of outlining trail concerns by coming up with a list of questions (see below) seeking responses, that will be emailed to RMNP around the end of November, hoping for a reply early in the new year.

If you or your group are interested in supporting this effort please reply to rnptrailadvocates@gmail.com, including your customary trail activity, and we will add your name, activity, and group affiliation, if any, to the letter. Email addresses will not be shared. We welcome comments or questions for the park. Any written response that RMNP sends us will be shared with all who respond to this email.

Thanks for joining us in our project to resume respectful communications with RMNP. Please forward this email to other trail users that you think might be interested in receiving it.

Thanks,

RMNP Trail Advocates Group

Di Ingram, representing Westman Wilderness Club
Bruce McLean, backcountry enthusiast

Questions for RMNP:

1. The Ochre River Trail has been closed now for four years, other than for a brief period in the summer of 2021.

- Are there plans to reopen this trail?
- Why has the trail been closed?
- Are there any plans to reopen Cairns Cabin?

2. Seasonal access to the Moon Lake trail has had restrictions now for over two years.

Reason given: to avoid animal/human interactions. On a recent hike we discovered no signs of bear or moose activity. Will these restrictions be removed for next year?

3. Moon Lake campground was one of only two campgrounds open this summer. Why are a number of the good sites here closed with red ribbon?

4. Moon Lake trail was designated open, but was almost impassible until it was finally cleared halfway through October. Why was this popular trail not given priority for maintenance?

5. Almost all of the Parkway Trails were ribboned off this spring. Some were not reopened until August.

- Why were these popular and accessible trails not given priority for maintenance?
- What are the criteria RMNP uses to decide to temporarily close trails?

6. Trails that were temporarily closed, presumably because the Trail Crew had not yet been able to get around them, were blocked off with orange ribbon accompanied by signs threatening a possible 25 k fine to anyone who dared to enter.

- Is this a common policy in other National Parks?
- Would it be possible to replace this method with posted trail advisories?

7. According to our information the Trail Crew staff has been halved since 2012. Maybe lack of staffing is the root cause of trail closures and reduced maintenance.

- Are we correct in assuming that trail grooming and maintenance occupies a relatively insignificant portion of the RMNP annual budget?
- Trail Steward “volunteers” have been working along side of the park for the last ten years to maintain and track winter trails. In order to alleviate apparent budgetary constraints on trail maintenance, would it be possible to expand the formalized Trail Steward agreement to allow directed volunteers to contribute to three-season trail upkeep and improvement?

8. Crawford Creek Trail has been enjoyed by skiers for half a century. Apparently there is talk of discontinuing tracking of this trail. Will skiers and outdoor groups be consulted before such a decision is made?

9. We have the perception, based on personal experience, that an open channel for communication between trail users and RMNP does not exist.

- What is the park doing to improve two-way communications?
- Does the park value feedback from its users?