Sechelt Grove Society
Hidden Grove Handicap Trail Phase One
Final Report

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OBJECTIVE:

The objective of this project was to build an accessible trail system for those with mobility issues to experience wilderness values in a very special preserved medium and old growth forest.

The Hidden Grove and Sechelt Heritage Forest are both under special mandate from the District of Sechelt and the Sunshine Coast Community Forest to develop and maintain a network of natural trails in the two forest areas. This responsibility has been discharged by volunteers for nearly eleven years primarily from the Sandy Hook community on the east side of Sechelt Inlet and in the District. Most of the volunteers are seniors 60 years old or more who have dedicated time to this project.

It was clear early on that the segment of the population who were confined to wheelchairs or who needed other aids to navigate in the forest were not able to enjoy the wonders of the Hidden Grove and its most lovely place, the Ancient Grove.

The Society undertook to identify if proper accessibility trails might be built and to begin planning for any construction. Two routes were identified and it was decided to concentrate on only one at the start. It would be a challenge to raise even enough funds for one trail and also there was a caution not to wear out the volunteers with too ambitious a schedule.

The objective therefore became the funding and construction of a Phase One accessibility trail to a standard approved by the accessibility committee of the District of Sechelt and penetrating as far as the Ancient Grove. This report tells the tale of the trail.

PROJECT INITIATION:

Before starting the Society Board decided that there must be an indication of sufficient funds to at least make a worthwhile start on the project. The Society had in hand some membership fees and donations to the general trail work of the Society and these are needed to maintain the usual day to day work.

Grant and other applications were sent out. In May, 2011 a grant of $3000 was confirmed from the BC ReHab Foundation. In June the Sunshine Coast Community Foundation confirmed funds. A Grant-in Aid from the District of Sechelt was received and although it was not dedicated to the Handicap Trail the Board elected to consider those funds part until additional funds were received. There was now enough in hand to begin some work. Additional funds followed from TD Friends of the Environment and the Island Coastal Economic Trust.

June, 2011 - Experts in the field were called in and after considerable surveying and assessment a route was chosen and flagged.
STAGE ONE – Preparation of route

**August 5/11** - Provincial approval to take down the trees as needed on the new route was formally received

**August 9, 2011** – Ministry of Forest Fire Suppression crew provided tree clearing for Handicap Trail as a training and volunteer exercise.

**August 31, 2011** - Basic hand clearing of Trail by volunteers started near the parking area

**September 19, 2011** - Big Day - Machine work starts on the Trail using special Bobcat provided at a very special rate.

**October 21, 2011** - The machine gets to the end to the pad for wheelchair turn around. On way out it will smooth trail. Next is compressing and crusher dust hauled in and compressed - lots of work.

STAGE TWO – Hauling in and spreading and compressing Crusher Dust

**January/12** - Special machine is to arrive that can haul the crusher dust and spread it on the new trail but it turns out to be defective and an alternate must be arranged.

**Feb 7/12** – A wheeled Bobcat arrives in the afternoon but over the next few days it is found to dig serious ruts in the route that will require a lot of work to repair.

**Feb 11/12** - More expensive tracked Bobcat is brought in and the workparty begins work in earnest to fill ruts and distribute crusher dust.

Website Detail at: [http://secheltgroves.com/](http://secheltgroves.com/)
Feb. 27/12 - Work on hold pending replacement machine but over 70% done. It looks like about 5 days or so to finish trail hauling and spreading.

March 24/12 - Finally back to work with the distribution of the crusher dust with the tracked machine over a 2 day period. Then the gang starts spreading and compressing it to finish the trail.

MARCH 26-28 - The last of the crusher dust is spread and the Trail is essentially finished. There is some dressing up and some final compacting to go.

April - will be a cleaning up some of the holes and disturbances along the Trail so it all looks better. A re-racking as weather allows and prep for opening.

The first load at the end of the trail. The expensive but good machine

Just one shot of some of the wonderful volunteers at work. Spreading and smoothing.

Website Detail at: http://secheltgroves.com/
The wonderful last day of smoothing and compacting the start of the Trail.

The start of the Trail as seen from the parking lot. Signage and some finishing touches to go.
The Display Kiosk to hold a large sign listing donors to the project that will be put in place soonest after the Official Trail Opening – depending on volunteer time allotments.

**OFFICIAL OPENING REPORT – Saturday, May 12, 2012**
Over 70 people turned out for the Opening Ceremony and ribbon cutting for the New Trail. It all went wonderfully well.
Our website has much more detail including a complete album of photos but a few special ones:

The Trail beginning and the signs in place.

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Dave Lasser of the Sunshine Coast Community Forest announced that they are proceeding to apply for Section 56 protection for the Hidden Grove. This will give a virtually permanent protection to the area like the Sechelt Heritage Forest.

Mayor John Henderson spoke praising and thanking all the Society volunteers and the efforts made to create such a wonderful area. He couched his remarks both as a representative of the District of Sechelt but also as the official rep for the Island Coastal Economic Trust.

Bonnie Klein cut the ribbon in fine style and led the parade up the new trail.

Just some of the over 70 attendees listening to the presentation where every donor was thanked and given an opportunity to speak.
SUMMARY OF WORK COMPLETED

1) Parking Lot Provisions
   a) Bus parking zone provided and marked for “Buses Only” so there is space for
      buses carrying those with wheelchairs or similar.
   b) Special Reserved Parking for Handicap vehicles. Two spaces have been set up
      close to start of the trail and “Handicap Only” signs mounted on posts

2) Signage marking Accessibility Trail
   a) Main Identification sign – Professionally made – “Take it Easy=ayat-tsut Trail”
   b) Donor Thank You Sign – Temporary laminated sign in place as volunteer working
      on large painted wood sign for kiosk.

3) Main Accessibility (Handicap) Trail Phase One Construction –
   ALL COMPLETED

4) Accessibility Trail Rest Spots and Rest Pull Off Points –
   a) Material has been donated for suitable benches and these are being built and
      assembled by one of our volunteers who is a retired carpenter.
   b) Material is in place for rest spots and will be worked upon in between other jobs
      over next year.

5) GRAND OPENING AND CEREMONY – took place May 12, 2012

Employment from project:
110 hours of machine operator time plus time at materials yards.
10.5 (approx.) truck driver time
Over 700 hours of volunteer time
Permanent Jobs: No permanent jobs unless, as expected, we count those increases in
the hospitality sector.

Economic Impacts:
1. Already the number of visitors to the Hidden Grove has increased with a notable
   number of seniors and those with walkers or other walking issues.
2. The Hospitality Industry – B&Bs and motels have been looking forward to the opening
   and now secure in the knowledge that the Trail is ready for wheelchairs they will be
   promoting this site as another reason to visit the Sunshine Coast and targeting those
   with accessibility issues.
3. The total investment including “In Kind” and volunteer labour has priced out at
   $28,572 for this Phase One. Over $14,000 in actual cash has been spent on the
   project to date.

NEXT PROJECT OF THIS TYPE: Phase Two of the Handicap Trail project with a
Accessibility Trail running from the kiosk to a bluff in the west side of the Grove and
back in a loop of about 450 metres. We have indications of a special donation that will
cover most of the costs.

LASTLY – A SPECIAL THANKS TO ALL THE DONORS AND
VOLUNTEERS FOR ALL THEIR SUPPORT.
ADDENDUM

We felt you might wish to see some of the publicity about your contribution. While a sort of crude display we hope it shows that we have tried and are continuing to try to get our the word about your generosity.

1. **The Current Thank You Sign** – placed at the start of the trail but to be moved in a few days to the new kiosk. A volunteer is working on a permanent painted wood sign to be hung on chains within the kiosk.

   ![](image1)

   **To All the very special Donors who contributed to the building of the “Take It Easy” = “ayat-tsut” Accessibility Trail and Kiosk with Grants, In Kind Donations, Advice and Volunteer Labour.**

   District of Sechelt:
   - Council—past and present
   - Engineering & Public Works
   - Sustainability, Parks, Facilities
   - Finance

   Sandy Hook Community Association

   [Sponsors logos]

   **AND some super individuals who put in the personal touch:**
   - Mike Fourniac - Sonora park technician at SCRD (Michel Parks & Outdoor Services)
   - Rupert Clark
   - Michael Davidson
   - Bob D’Arcy
   - Ken Hall
   - Louis Janke
   - Marilyn & Jay Jones
   - Mike Lane
   - Mike Suttile
   - Gayle Waddell

3. A clipping from the local papers (Copy of PDF submission to avoid problems with the columns in the papers but it was printed as shown) – The Coast Report and The Local (Headline) New Accessibility Trail to Open in Hidden Grove

Another milestone was reached for the Hidden Grove recreation area and the Sechelt Groves Society with the completion of a new trail especially designed and built for those with mobility issues. The Trail is suitable for those with wheelchairs, walkers, strollers and anyone else that normally finds a rough, natural trail hard to navigate.

This Phase One of the accessibility trails is now named Take It Easy = ayat-tsut or “take it easy” in the Sechelt language, to honour the Sechelt Indian Band who were the first level of government to agree to the protection of the Hidden Grove.

Winding over 450 metres from the parking lot through some relatively new forest it finally arrives at the Ancient Grove where trees as old as 750 years proudly stand. The trail has a hard compacted surface and is at least five feet wide throughout. Maximum grades do not exceed accessibility standards of about 5%. It is a truly beautiful and easy trip. Pictures and detail may be seen at www.secheltgroves.com

Almost all the labour for the trail construction was performed by the Society Trailbuilders, a dedicated group of volunteers, most of who reside in the Sandy Hook neighbourhood. This hard working team put in over 700 volunteer hours on this trail alone while at the same time maintaining and improving other trails in the Grove. Including the volunteer labour and “in kind” donations the total budget for the trail was in excess of $28,000. The Society is now gearing up for Phase Two – an accessibility loop trail to run from the main entrance to the south western part of the Grove.

At a formal opening ceremony special thanks will given to all those who supported this project with funding and guidance including some major contributors: District of Sechelt, BC ReHab, Sunshine Coast Community Foundation, Island Coastal Economic Trust, TD Friends of the Environment, Small World Excavating, Lehigh Materials, Swanson’s Ready-Mix, West Coast Log Homes and, of course, the membership of the Sechelt Groves Society.

The opening ceremony will be held in the Hidden Grove on Saturday, May 12th at 2 PM. Mayor John Henderson has agreed to speak as have some representatives of the major donors. The public and especially those with mobility issues are very welcome and are encouraged to attend this important and satisfying event. We look forward to seeing you there.

Submitted – Sechelt Grove Society.