

The Seawall Trail

Project Overview

The Seawall Trail Society



www.seawalltrail.com

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Introduction

Cape Breton Island is a wonderful place to explore on foot: expansive valleys, hidden waterfalls, majestic old growth forests and a rugged coastline are just a few of the natural features waiting for the curious and intrepid hiker. While it has plenty of wonderful day hikes, Cape Breton lacks a true long-distance hiking trail.

We are proposing the Seawall Trail: a epic trek along the coast and cliffs of Northern Cape Breton. We believe that, when completed, the Seawall Trail will attract hiking enthusiasts from around the globe and will help establish Nova Scotia as a world-class hiking destination.

Trail Description

The Seawall Trail will be a three to five day wilderness hike. The main north-south branch will expand upon existing trails, completing a walking route from Meat Cove to Pleasant Bay. An east-west spur trail will begin near Cape North following historical paths. These access points connect the trail to communities in both Victoria and Inverness counties.

Accommodations will be huts and tent sites and users will be charged a trail access fee. Revenues from accommodations and trail access will be used to maintain and service the path, to hire staff and to fund trail promotion and administration.

Hikers will be supplied and sites will be maintained by established, local guides and outfitters via horseback and boat as the trail will be located in a protected area with limited vehicle access.

We see the trail being used by many groups: foreign backpackers and visiting tourists who want to experience an authentic coastal wilderness adventure; hikers and explorers from Cape Breton and across Canada; educators and scientists for teaching and research; community groups for programming and skills development; First Nations as a way to get back to the land and to pass on traditional activities; and local residents as a way to further explore their “back yard.”

Impact

A 2014 report examining the socio-economic impact of the *Overland Track* (Tasmania, Australia) demonstrates the economic potential of a world-class trail. Hiked by almost 8000 people a year, the *Overland* generates over \$16 million annually in direct and indirect expenditure, sustains over 80 full time equivalent jobs, supports dozens of businesses and is self-sustaining: annual revenues from trail fees, site fees and merchandising are used to maintain the trail and employ staff.

The Seawall Trail also has tremendous potential to generate millions of dollars in economic activity, create new jobs and support small businesses. Local communities will provide the following services: access and fee administration; parking and car shuttles; equipment rentals; provisioning and supplies; boat transfers; pre and post hike dining and food services; visitor information and souvenirs; accommodations in motels and campgrounds; and general support for visitors before and after their hikes. The economic impact will be felt province-wide however much of the benefit will accrue to Northern Cape Breton, an area in need of economic growth.

Like the Skyline Trail, The Seawall Trail will become part of Nova Scotia's brand and will provide a differentiating identity when compared to other locations. Local residents will develop a sense of pride and ownership: they will associate their success with the success of the trail.

Other benefits include: opportunities for increased health and wellness through active living; research and educational programming by universities, community groups, governments and First Nations; improved access for participation in traditional activities; opportunities in capacity building in the tourism, recreation, justice and community sectors; and potential winter tourism.

Development Plan

Stage One (Planning and Development): includes all activities before any actual construction begins: public consultations; trail management agreements; fundraising; trail development plans; flagging and alignment; initial marketing; and other planning activities. We hope to complete all aspects of Stage One in 2017. It is estimated that Stage One will cost between \$75,000 and \$125,000, dependant on the division of labour (consultants versus the use of volunteers). The Seawall Trail Society hopes to raise the necessary funds through private fundraising campaigns, corporate donations and grants from various levels of government.

Stage Two (Construction): involves the actual building of the trail and any associated infrastructure: parking facilities, signage, huts and tent sites, bathroom facilities, etc. The Seawall Trail Society currently evaluating the potential capital cost of this stage of the development.

Stage Three (Maintenance): is a critical step and incurred costs depend largely on the initial quality of construction and actual foot traffic. Other jurisdictions successfully maintain their trails by reinvesting income from fees and merchandising and we also plan to employ this model.

We are currently writing grant applications at the municipal, provincial and federal level. We have completed public consultations in Northern Cape Breton and across the province. We have formed an advisory group that will assist us with private fundraising, industry partnerships and economic analysis. Our board is focused and working hard to make the trail a reality.