

Refurbishing “Old” Crest Creek

The term “old” Crest Creek refers to the crags that were developed between 1982 and 1998, before the Heathers Club began focusing on the more easterly complex of cliffs around Sunrise, or “New Crest Creek”. It is comprised of about twenty, mostly small crags west of the Crest Lake on both sides of the valley. Most of these crags are for free climbing, however aid climbing is predominant at the Emerald Wall / West Wall and accounts for roughly half the climbs in the Crowsnest area.

For the purposes of this plan, I will divide the crags into four separate areas; crags west of the Crest Creek and north of highway 28 (the Original Crags); crags east of the Crest Creek also north of highway 28 (the Forest Crags); crags above Crest Creek just before it flows into Crest Lake (the Gateway Area); and crags west of the Gateway area also south of highway 28 (the Aid Crags).

Though Rob Wood and Doug Scott made climbs at the Black Crag and other locations in the late seventies, the first crags to be developed at Crest Creek were the Original Crags (Crag X, Black Crag, The Projects and Crest Creek Crags - often referred to as the “Main Wall”). The first routes were done by members of the Gold River climbing community led by John and Fred Put, circa 1982. John wrote an article that described Crest’s humble beginnings for the ACC “Island Bushwhacker” (13-2 summer of 1985).

This plan has two sections - the first describing the crags and the work that is planned there; the second describing work planned for the connecting trail system.

The Crags

Crag X and the Black Crag

These most north westerly crags are located in a logged area along a spur road off highway 28. There are fourteen routes at these two cliffs but visitor numbers are currently low due to the arid nature of the southwest facing rocks and no new development is planned. To reopen this area to the once completed trails would need to be re-cleared, but as trees regrow at this location and begin to offer shade, the climbing ability of the routes may improve and the Black Crag and Crag X remain an excellent option if the demand for “new” climbing increases.

The Projects

The Projects and the “Pet Projects” are the westernmost cliff adjacent to highway 28. There are thirteen routes on the main cliff and this area is often used by large

groups for teaching. Staging areas, routes and trails are well established requiring only seasonal brushing and maintenance.

The Crest Creek Crag (The Main Wall)

Located right next to the highway where it crosses Crest Creek. This crag features seventeen routes, of which about a dozen are very popular and will be well maintained. The Main Wall also has satellite crags (highway 28 Boulder and the King's Throne - both currently out of use) and a small area specifically for children (Kid's Corner). Staging areas, routes and trails are mostly complete and also require only seasonal maintenance. Post flood remedial work on the bridge footings destroyed the original access to the crags. A new access is planned along the top of the Creekside berm to Mike Rankin's impressive set of rock stairs. The first route to be completed at Crest Creek (Mental Support, 1982) is located here.

- Work planned for the Original Crags:
 - o Some route re-clearing
 - o Re-establish access to Crest Creek Crag
 - o Minor retro bolting projects
 - o Seasonal brushing and maintenance required.

Note: The Main Wall and the Projects are two of the more popular destinations at the Crest, but there is limited new route potential in these areas.

The Forest Crags

These crags were developed mostly between 1988 and 1998, and are situated in old growth forest northwest of the highway just east of Crest Creek.

The Crowsnest Area

The obvious crag visible from the Crest Lake Day Use Area is the Crowsnest. There are fourteen high quality free climbs on the Crowsnest and its satellite crags "the Dune" and "the Attic". There are also seven very popular aid climbs on the west end of the main cliff that are regularly visited in winter.

Though smaller, the Dune and the Attic also feature fine climbing, even on damp days, but require more frequent cleaning due to their sheltered locations. There are seven climbs in total with limited potential for further developments at both cliffs. A large windfall at the base of the Dune makes access problematic. The Attic is known for its interesting cracks.

There are four small crags situated in the trees between the Crowsnest area and Crest Creek.

The Crag in the Woods

A crag with two aspects: the west face is adjacent to Crest Creek and contains three high quality climbs. The southeast face features five popular lines. Routes and staging areas here were completed in the mid-nineties and require only minor improvements and maintenance.

Cougar Rock

A small cliff just east of the Crag in the Woods with six popular routes featuring a lovely setting and interesting history.

Two Tree Edge

A crag above and east of Cougar Rock with perhaps the best climbing in “the forest” on six more high quality routes.

Canyon Edge

A crag northwest of the Crag in the woods, very close to Crest Creek. It is currently undeveloped with potential for a few new routes and awaits the completion of the Crest Creek bridge project.

- Work planned for the Forest Crag:
 - o Route re-clearing as required
 - o Seasonal brushing and maintenance as required
 - o Improve access to top of crags
 - o Resurface staging areas
 - o Improve staging area at Crowsnest aid climbing routes
 - o Re-establish access to the Dune
 - o Improve access to the Attic

Notes: Most routes and staging areas require only minor improvements. Like the Crowsnest crags, provides climbing in rainy weather. The only area at Crest Creek that provides climbing opportunities free of industrial impacts.

Special Consideration: our ultimate goal at Crest Creek as a multi-use destination is to create a loop trail around Crest Lake that passes most of the climbing areas. To facilitate this, we propose a crossing of Crest Creek at the “Canyon Narrows” between the Main Wall and the Canyon Edge. Eventually the trail would extend beyond the Attic to the Hidden Walls trailhead via old growth forest east of Crest Lake (involves a road crossing).

- Work Planned / Proposed
 - o Consult and evaluate
 - o Extend trail from Main Wall upstream to crossing site

- o Extend trail from Craig in the Woods to the crossing site, and develop Canyon Edge.
- o Construct the bridge
- o Extend trail from the Crowsnest area to the Hidden Walls trailhead.

The Gateway Area

The Lakeside/Joint/ Sluice complex of cliffs feature the longest free climbing at Crest Creek, coupled with shorter but very high quality climbs at the Gateway Dock and its satellite crags. Most of these climbs, which number over forty, were established between 1993 and 1998.

The Lakeside Buttress

There are four longer climbs here. We expect that improved access along the berm will increase traffic at this crag, which has some potential for new routes.

The Joint Wall

This is the premier crag at Crest Creek due to the length and quality of the climbs and features. Many of Crest's most loved climbs are here, some offering convenient halfway anchors for practicing belay changeover techniques. Exposure to the elements and climber traffic keep the routes relatively clean but occasional re-clearing is still required, especially the routes above the treed edge. Both the Joint Wall and the Lakeside Buttress also require improved access to the top belays (more delineation than anything else) from the "Lakeview" trail. There are about ten high quality climbs on this cliff. Staging areas are generally complete, requiring some simple rearranging of rocks on the surface of the new berm.

Sluice Wall

This is the cliff west of the Joint Wall recognizable by the small stream that trickles over its upper end and then runs down to the main creek along the cliff base. There are seven excellent routes here (access to which are made problematic in some cases by the water flow) with no potential for additional route development. We plan to remove debris left by BC Hydro clearing crews and rework the switchbacks that wind down along the base with new steps.

Gateway Rock

This popular compact crag located above and to the west of Sluice Wall, features fifteen routes of varying difficulty and beautifully finished staging areas. This is one of the most complete crags at Crest and requires only occasional re-clearing and seasonal brushing. Some work at two top belay stations is necessary to improve safety of access. Last year we removed hazardous debris left by BC Hydro clearing crews that caused extensive damage.

Another World

A small, partially developed cliff above Gateway with three established routes and two more in progress. We plan to improve the staging areas and trail access here in conjunction with work at Gateway.

The Top of the World

Visible above Gateway, this area is composed of one main cliff and two small satellite crags. The main cliff features six quality routes and there are three good climbs on the "Broken Rock and "Lonesome Rock". Trail work and staging areas at these crags are mostly complete requiring only seasonal maintenance and a few improvements.

The Space Wall

This is the large cliff above The Top of the World. To date, the Space Wall is accessed via rough trail only but has lots of potential for new routes and is considered a crag of the future. An alpine route to Wolf Mountain begins from the top of the Space Wall.

Work Planned in the Gateway Area:

- o Re-delineate access to top of Lakeside Buttress and Joint Wall
- o Re work Sluice Wall staging areas and access trail
- o Improve staging areas and access at top of Gateway Rock
- o Improve staging areas at base of Another World
- o Make minor improvements at staging areas and access at Top of the world
- o Improve trail access to Broken Rock and Lonesome Rock
- o Extend rough trail to top and along base of Space Wall
- o Re-clearing as required
- o Seasonal brushing and maintenance as required
- o Arrange berm surface into staging areas at Lakeside Buttress and Joint Wall

Notes: Gateway is essentially a "finished" crag and could be considered a blueprint for completing crags at Old Crest Creek. The joint Wall offers the best long free climbs at Crest Creek.

The Aid Crags

The Oz Wall

Ironically, the Oz Wall is a free climbing crag that has largely fallen into disuse due to seepage. The crag nevertheless features the most difficult free climb at the

climbing area (Lee Harvey Oz Wall, 5.13+). The staging area at “Lee Harvey” is the only one we plan to maintain.

Sunset Roof

The little overhang that is west of the Oz Wall is a very popular training crag and sheltered winter destination. Hundreds of big wall climbing students have made their first aid climb on one of the Sunset’s seven fine routes.

Down Under and the Wizard Roof

Beneath the Emerald Wall even further west, this complex features three little overhanging crags with a couple of established lines.

The Emerald Wall

This is the very large cliff behind a stand of big trees that overhangs fifteen feet in its one hundred and twenty foot height and like Sunset, is an excellent training and winter destination with a dry staging area at the base. There are ten popular aid climbs here, some of which have seen recent free climbing attempts.

The West Wall

Also useful for training, the highest cliff at Crest Creek features eight long routes. There is an additional route on a feature dubbed the “Dangling Goof Root” just to the west beyond the park boundary. The area is accessed via rough trail only from the Emerald Wall staging area.

Work planned for the Aid Crags:

- o Re-establish staging area at “Lee Harvey Oz Wall”
- o Repair broken cribs and improve staging area at Sunset Roof
- o Improve rough trail to Down Under area and the West Wall
- o Build short connector trail from top of Sunset to base of Emerald
- o Improve staging areas at popular aid climbs
- o Seasonal brushing and maintenance as required
- o Flag a route to the top of the West Wall and establish a rappel line

Note: Aid climbs do not require cleaning prior to a first ascent.

The Trails

Before we acquired permission to import solid cedar trail building material we were forced to use only downed wood salvaged on sites. Trails that were constructed with this inferior material have long since rotted out and must be repaired. While parts of the Crowsnest trail were done using cedar, the rest of “Old Crest Creek” (notably the Forest Trail and the base of the Sluice Wall) were built using inferior wood.

It should be noted that the aid trail sees less traffic than trails accessing popular free climbing venues, but that these crags are in use year-round rather than during the dry season only.

The Original Trails

These trails provide access to the original crags from the west parking area across highway 28. The Crag X / Black Crag trail is complete but currently dormant. The Projects just meters from the road, is accessed by a short trail in good condition requiring only seasonal maintenance. The Crest Creek Crag is accessed via a short trail up to the highway (modest improvements are necessary on the shoulder) then along the Creekside berm. These relatively short trails require little maintenance and only modest repairs.

The Forest Trail

We hope to reroute access to the small forest crags to the beginning of the Crowsnest trail adjacent to the Crest Lake Day Use area. Perhaps 80 meters of the new trail would need to be established to connect the trailhead to Cougar Rock. Moderate trail improvements are necessary to re-establish access to their tops and slightly more intensive work is required at the Crag in the Woods to connect the southeast face of the west face. We also plan to upgrade portions of the trail connecting Two Tree Edge with the top of the Crowsnest.

The Crowsnest Trail

The Crowsnest trail, between the day use area and the main cliff, was constructed with solid material and is mostly complete; however the initial 50M section needs to be improved to mitigate erosion issues. Rough trail to the Dune and Attic require modest improvements and a non-slip surface must be applied to a sloped board - walk that ices up occasionally.

The Lakeview Trail

This trail begins at the original parking area and extends past the Gateway complex all the way to the Hidden Walls. As with many of the established trails at Crest, it is largely complete however some sections that were constructed using inferior material have fallen into disrepair and will require rebuilding, notably along the base of the Sluice Wall and approaching Gateway Rock. A small reroute is also necessary to guide hikers away from exposed areas on top of the Joint Wall. Improvements and a short reroute are currently being undertaken to finish the connection between the Joint Wall and "New Crest Creek". This route is a primary feature of the loop trail concept providing scenic views and linking the two main parking areas.

The Top of the World Area

A spur trail leaves the main route above the Sluice Wall and provides access to the top of Gateway and the crags of the Top of the World. This trail totals about 250M in length, about a third of which was completed post 1997 with improved material. The remaining two thirds will require repairs and improvements, but no structures or major reroutes are required. Rough access trail will be extended to the top of the

Space Wall and along its base. There are a few short spur trails leading to small crags nearby; the Alpine route to Wolf Mountain begins with this trail.

The Lower Aid Trail

This trail provides access to Sunset Roof and the Oz Wall. The trail is only about 80M long but a 50M extension is planned to reach Down Under and the Wizard Roof. This trail is mostly in good condition requiring only modest improvements and seasonal maintenance. There is a small bridge that was crushed by a large column of collapsing ice. Fixing this crossing will require a small amount of dimensional lumber. We also plan to re-establish a short section of trail that was destroyed when the Heber penstock was removed.

The Aid Trail

This branch leaves the Lakeview trail just past the large berm where the end of the penstock was located, switchbacking west past the top of the Oz Wall and across ledges above Sunset Roof, providing access to the base of the Emerald and West Walls. In the past this has been a lower priority trail because the number of free climbers has always exceeded that of the aid climbers. Improvements will be necessary, particularly above the Oz Wall and below the West Wall. Much of it is adequate in its current state and would require little attention unless the crags it serves become more attractive to free climbers, or the aid climbing population increases.

Work Planned for the Connecting Trails:

The Original Trails

- Brushing and maintenance as required
- Access reopening of Crag X / Black Crag area
- Add signage

The Forest Trail

- Improve footbed in some locations
- Relocate initial access to Crest Lake day use area
- Improve sections of trail between Two Three Edge and top of the Crowsnest
- Improve access to top of the crags
- Brushing and maintenance as required
- Add signage

- Consider bridge crossing to Crag in the Woods

The Crowsnest Trail

- Improve initial 50M section
- Improve trail between Crowsnest and the Attic
- Add non-slip surface to sloping boardwalk
- Brushing and maintenance as required
- Add signage

The Lakeview Trail

- Complete improved link between main climbing and parking areas
- Repair older sections constructed with inferior material
- Reroute near top of Joint Wall
- Improve slope leading up onto initial berm
- Provide spur trail to top of Lakeside Buttress area
- Brushing and maintenance as required
- Add signage

The Top of the World

- Improve older sections constructed with inferior material
- Extend rough trail to the base and top of the Space Wall
- Improve short access trails to satellite crags
- Short reroute above Gateway for safety reasons (trail close to cliff)
- Improve footbed through 10M bouldering section
- Brushing and maintenance as required
- Add signage

The Lower Aid Trail

- Improve sections at penstock removal site

- Repair boardwalk at Oz Wall
- Repair broken cribs at Sunset Roof
- Extend rough trail to Down Under
- Brushing and maintenance as required
- Add signage

The Aid Trail

- Improve section at Oz Wall
- Extend trail past West Wall
- Brushing and maintenance as required
- Add signage

Summary

It should be noted that plans for trail work at “Old Crest Creek” are mostly remedial. Very few routes or new sections of trail are necessary. There are no major structures or special projects to be undertaken unless our proposal to construct a crossing at Crest Creek comes to fruition.

In the future we hope that our vision for a walk-in campsite at Crest Creek can be realized. We propose the existing site in the alders adjacent to the lake where our summer camps are traditionally held. If this comes to pass then a modest improvement will be made to the campsites and access trails, as well as the removal of dangerous alder snags. We look forward to discussing the bridge and campsite proposals with the Ministry in the upcoming months.

It is our main goal to update these older areas to the standard at “New Crest Creek” (i.e. Sunrise, Skid Row, and the Hidden Walls). The newer crags feature solid cedar cribbing, gravelled staging areas, signage, convenient descent routes and the occasional bench and viewing area. Ideally, trails will be designed to handle the predicted workload easily, steer climbers away from dangerous or sensitive areas, and are sturdy enough so as to not require more than trivial maintenance for an extended period – a long enough interval so that our limited workforce can complete several years of working other parts of the crags without having to return and make repairs. Unfortunately, this is rarely the case, leaving criticisms that our trailwork standards appear to be overkill rather moot. The reality is that if we wish

to meet our goals, trails must be constructed that can endure impacts over an extended time period without requiring maintenance.

As mentioned, we hope to realize our goal of creating a facility that provides recreation opportunities for climbers, hikers, mountaineers, fishers, wildlife enthusiasts, onlookers and casual visitors alike, all at little loss to the tax payer.

We hope that this information is useful to the Ministry and that you approve of our plans for Old Crest Creek. We further hope that our efforts to overcome liability issues at the crags will be successful so that we can continue to work in harmony with the Ministry and other stakeholders. Please contact me if you have any questions about the material or if you would like to schedule a walk through to observe the various future worksites.

Yours,

| Chris Barner / The Heathers

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