

MEDIA RELEASE

City of Williams Lake



For Immediate Release

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450 Mart Street
Williams Lake, BC
V2G 1N3

Williams Lake River Valley Targeted for Spring 2023 Reopening

As we move into warmer weather, the City would like to remind the public that the Williams Lake River Valley remains closed from the Comer Street access to the Fraser River as repair and remediation work continues in the area following unprecedented flooding in the spring of 2020.

The catastrophic flooding destroyed natural areas and habitat, with flood waters heavily impacting the River Valley road and City infrastructure, totalling multiple millions of dollars of damage.

“It is unfortunate that one of our city’s critical recreation areas must remain closed, especially as the weather begins to improve and more people are getting outdoors,” said Mayor Walt Cobb.

Work currently underway includes the replacement of 14 bridges that were destroyed or damaged during the flood. Due to construction happening in multiple locations throughout the River Valley, heavy equipment is moving back and forth along the road, making it unsafe for public use.

“Having the public on the road with excavators and rock trucks moving around would be a serious safety concern, which is why we have had to keep the River Valley closed,” Cobb said.

In addition to the road normally being used for recreation purposes by the public, it also provides important access to City infrastructure, including the City’s sewage treatment plant. The City is focused on getting the necessary repair work done as quickly as possible; clean up and preliminary repairs have been occurring almost continuously since the flood, with major bridge works underway since the fall of 2021.

To date, three bridges south of Comer Street have been completed. In addition, much of the channel and abutment work of the 14 bridges requiring repairs has been finished, and engineering design for the bike bridge, along with other bridges accessing City infrastructure are either completed or in the final stages.

The reopening date depends on how smoothly the remainder of the construction goes. Three large bridge replacements have yet to start, pointing to a conservative estimate of a spring 2023 reopening.

“The City is often asked if the River Valley can be used when the contractor is not on site,” Cobb added. “Regardless of whether it seems like construction is underway or not, we ask that the public does not enter the River Valley. The contractor is working hard to get the bridges installed as soon as possible and may be working at any time during the week or weekend without notice. An unexpected meeting between a dump truck and a hiker or biker is the last thing anyone wants.”

The City would like to acknowledge the support and funding provided by Emergency Management BC and Disaster Financial Assistance.

“We’ve seen a tremendous effort by City staff, local contractors, consultants and engineers that have dropped everything to pull together and get our beautiful trail network system in the River Valley up and running as quickly as possible,” Cobb said.

The City would like to thank the public for its continued patience and understanding during the repair and remediation process. **A video update on the work to date can be found on the City’s website at: https://youtu.be/B5qk_bzOr4w.**

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