

Historical Hot Springs Trail – Statement of Significance

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Description of Historic Place

Historical Hot Springs Trail is an 8.5 kilometre trail that meanders along the side slope above Kuskanax Creek from Alexander Road (just outside the Village of Nakusp) up the valley to the Nakusp Hot Springs, following the pioneers’ original packhorse route of 1912. The site includes the trail, its relationship to Kuskanax Creek and the surrounding forest, and a timber frame bridge crossing Kuskanax Creek.

Heritage Values of Historic Place

The Historical Hot Springs Trail is important for its historic, cultural and aesthetic values as the original access to the Nakusp Hot Springs that is still an important recreation trail today.

The historic trail has a connection to earlier First Nation trails along the same route to access the hot springs, which were important for medicinal purposes, as a source of steam for cultural needs and prolonged growth of vegetation due to warmed conditions providing an abundant hunting ground.

By the late 1800s settlers to the area became interested in the hot springs. The success of the hot springs for economic, medicinal, and social purposes was determined by the Historic Hot Springs Trail as everything needed arrived via the trail. The trail was upgraded in 1912 and 1942, resulting in a surge of visitors.

The trail is an important reminder of the hot springs’ economic benefits to the area. By the 1930s and 40s, pack horse caravans met tourists at the docks in Nakusp and spirited them away to soak in the hot spring’s famous mineral waters. By the mid



1950s, Nakusp had changed from a community, which could only be accessed by water to a community linked by roads to Nelson and Vernon. A logging road was put in branching off Highway 23 and continuing 12 miles up to the west side of Kuskanax Creek. A small bridge over the creek was constructed allowing access to the hot springs.

The trail and hot springs are an important example of the ongoing presence of those seeking a quiet life and the counter culture of the West Kootenay up to the present day. The Historical Hot Springs Trail and the Nakusp Hot Springs have been maintained for and by the community for hundreds of years, resisting the commercialization of many similar hot springs across British Columbia with applications to privatize dating back to 1894. Today the trail is maintained by the Nakusp and Area Community Trails Society.

The trail is valued today by hikers as a beautiful recreational trail wandering through lofty cedar and hemlock stands with views of Arrow Lake and Kuskanax Creek.

Character-Defining Elements

The character-defining elements of the Historic Hot Springs Trail include:

- Its route from Alexander Road to the Nakusp Hot Springs.
- The width of the trail, reflective of the original pack horse route.
- The presence of foot bridges and board walks along the trail.
- The timber frame bridge connecting the trail to the Nakusp Hot Springs.
- The natural views of Kuskanax Creek and Arrow Lake.
- The trail's relationship with Kuskanax Creek.
- The trail's relationship to the source of the hot springs.
- Remnants of trappers cabins.
- Historical associations of the route with access to the Nakusp Hot Springs and their present day relationship.

Resources

- [Nakusp & Area Community Trails Society website](#)
- Nakusp Archives
- Village of Nakusp

