

## Five-Year Strategic Business Plan – Preliminary Draft

**Designated Recipient:** Mount Washington Resort Association  
**Report Completed:** March 2019  
**Community Name:** Comox Valley Regional District (Area C) Mount Washington  
**Date Prepared:** March 2019  
**MRDT Term Expiry Date:** **January 1, 2020**  
**Five Year Period:** **January 1 2020 to January 1, 2025**

Section 1: Five-Year Strategic Overview	
<b>Vision and Mission</b>	<p>Vision: Mount Washington is recognized as the Island’s premier, high alpine tourism attraction for year round outdoor activities.</p> <p>Mission: Expand and enhance destination marketing initiatives and collaborations resulting in increased overnight stays on the Mountain.</p>
<b>Strategic Context</b>	<p>According to Destination BC’s <i>Value of Ski Areas</i> report (2015), skiing continues to be one of the largest economic drivers in the BC tourism industry, with ski areas representing approximately 9% of total tourism revenues in 2013 and contributing approximately 13% of the total real tourism GDP. Despite some challenging snow conditions years, Mount Washington as a destination continues to see recovering growth from challenging seasons, while recognizing room for continued growth. To support the growth, the new ownership group of Mount Washington Alpine Resort, a subsidiary of Pacific Group Resorts Inc., has continued with impressive investment in snow making equipment to support reliability in opening day and regulated snow conditions, while also investing in enhancements to guest experiences such as building improvements and improved services, as well as the implementation of a new RFID system.</p> <p>Relative to summer outdoor experiences, according to the 2009/10 Outdoor Recreation Study: BC Resident Participants, published by Destination BC (2012), the majority of British Columbia residents (91%) participated in at least one outdoor recreation activity during the past year. Of those that had participated, nearly two-thirds (64%) participated in activities at least once a week with the most common outdoor recreational activities of BC residents being day hiking (55%), one of Mount Washington’s stronger assets as it is the gateway to Strathcona Provincial Park.</p> <p>The summer product on the mountain has also benefited from aggressive investment with the enhancement and reopening of the bike park (summer of 2016) and the installation of what will be the Island’s largest Zip Line (summer of 2019).</p> <p>In 2017/18 Mount Washington Resort Assn. (MWRA) undertook extensive stakeholder engagement through its Invigorate MWRA which included three stakeholder sessions, a online stakeholder survey (486 respondents), board meetings, and the production of a deep dive report, all facilitated by a third party contractor.</p>

	<p>The value of maintaining a Resort Association was expressed unanimously by stakeholders and MWRA Board Members. The analysis presented within indicates that a heavy focus on marketing and continued DMO functions, as well as community event facilitation and community advocacy. To reflect that feedback, in 2018/19, six new on-mountain events presented by the Mount Washington Resort Assn, drew surprising numbers of attendees and encouragement to continue building out après-ski family-oriented events to support increased on-mountain stays.</p>
<b>Overall Goals, Objectives and Targets</b>	<p>Increased room revenue amongst the MWRA properties by 3-5%</p> <p>Increased length of stay of overnight visitors to MWRA properties from 1 night to 2 (average to 2 – 3).</p> <p>Increased repeat visitation to MWRA properties</p> <p>Create brand awareness in collaboration with Mount Washington Alpine Resort and Discover Comox Valley</p>
<b>Strategies - Key Actions</b>	<p>Strategic direction will include:</p> <p>Strengthening and building packages with the destination and local experiential products (i.e. marine and outdoor, cultural products) that are unique to the Comox Valley region;</p> <p>Seeking additional marketing revenues through co-op funding and collaborations;</p> <p>Leveraging MRDT funding through third party partnerships to increase visitation to websites promoting overnight stays on Mount Washington (i.e. Mile High Accommodation has agreed to support accommodation listings of individual members and conduct promotional initiatives within their own media platforms)</p> <p>Increasing mid-week winter and summer occupancy;</p> <p>Collaborating with Mount Washington Alpine Resort and Comox Valley Economic Development to develop mutually beneficial campaigns that increase midweek and off-peak period overnight stays;</p> <p>Working with Vancouver Island Visitor Centre to act as call centre for MWRA; selling lift tickets, providing directions and information, as well as attended/hosted events at the resort to increase visitor satisfaction and numbers as well as the community feel at the resort.</p>
<b>Section 1: Five-Year Strategic Overview</b>	
<b>Brand Positioning</b>	<p>Vancouver Island’s premier, all season, all ages, high alpine outdoor adventure and experiences destination. Marketing and branding efforts are undertaken in a collaborative approach with Mount Washington Alpine Resort to ensure complimentary messaging and focus, that doesn’t overlap mandates of each organization. This is further complimented by Discover Comox Valley’s efforts, which include establishing the Comox Valley as a region recognized for its range of outdoor experiences.</p>

<b>Target Markets</b>	<p>In both winter and summer, the primary geo-markets are Vancouver Island &amp; Lower Mainland, while secondary geo-markets are Edmonton, Calgary, and Seattle. MWRA will focus on two market segments identified under the Destination Canada Explorer Quotient:</p> <p>Free Spirits represent 13% of the Global Market and are highly social and open-minded. Their enthusiasm for life extends to their outlook on travel. Experimental and adventurous, they indulge in high-end experiences that are shared with others.</p> <p>Cultural Explorers represent 9% of the travel demographics in Canada they are defined by their love of constant travel and continuous opportunities to embrace, discover and immerse themselves in the culture, people and settings of the places they visit.</p>
<b>Management, Governance, and Administration</b>	<p>Comox Valley Economic Development and MWRA have agreed to continue to work collaboratively together to advance and strengthen Regional Destination Marketing efforts by entering into a Memorandum of Understanding designating CVEDS to act as the official, designated, Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) for MWRA so as to undertake destination marketing activities that specifically support the promotion of all MWRA member properties. This includes also providing visitor services through the Comox Valley Visitor Centre.</p> <p>In keeping with the Government’s intent, the funds generated will be used to assist the area in marketing its tourism industry and attractions.</p> <p>The collection, management and administration will be the responsibility of Mount Washington Resort Assn. Board of Directors, comprised of 5 Directors with a mandate to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinate the common interests and collective resources of the resort community; and</li> <li>Enhance the overall experience of visitors and maximize the economic benefits through marketing.</li> </ul> <p>As such, the Mount Washington Resort Assn. is well positioned to continue to act as the ‘eligible entity’ and to oversee all matters relating to the MRDT, while Comox Valley Economic Development will manage the execution of the annual plans, including MRDT reporting, including preparing and submitting annual financial statements related to the use of the funds which are held in a separate bank account to assist in maintaining transparency.</p>
<b>Sources of Funding</b>	<p>Funding is mainly from the MRDT, which is then leveraged via DBC Cooperative Marketing Partnerships Program collaborations, as well as partnerships with entities including Mount Washington Alpine Resort, the Comox Valley Airport, as well as Comox Valley Economic Development and Tourism.</p>
<b>Affordable Housing (if applicable)</b>	<p>As noted on the Signatory pages, the stakeholders do not wish to use the funds for Affordable Housing initiatives at this time.</p>

## Section 2: One-Year Tactical Plan with Performance Measures

<p><b>Major Category:</b> Media Advertising and Production</p>
<p><b>Activity Title:</b> Winter Campaigns</p>
<p><b>Tactics:</b></p> <p><b>1. Marmot Newspaper</b></p> <p><b>Time Frame:</b> Season long during winter</p> <p><b>Implementation:</b> General awareness and contesting ad with CTA directed to lead mountain users during winter months to DiscoverMountWashington.com with push to 2-night packages. 10,000 distributions direct to mountain users throughout the Mount Washington community and resort, 10,000 distributions to key transportation and visitor hubs around the Comox Valley region.</p> <p><b>Measurements:</b> MRDT revenue, contest entries, website unique visits and sessions</p> <p><b>2. Mount Washington Alpine Resort Partnered Campaigns</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ski Free Campaign</b> - December</li> <li>• <b>January Ski Stay and Save Campaign</b> - January</li> <li>• <b>Kids Ski Free, March Break Campaign</b> - February to March</li> </ul> <p><b>Implementation:</b> Mount Washington Alpine Resort, the region’s largest stakeholder, runs complementary campaigns that will be leveraged by MWRA to promote Ski and Stays to MRDT producing properties. Additional social media and/or digital ads are purchased through the mountain’s campaign efforts to bolster the reach and directing sales to MRDT properties, plus other stakeholder properties via DiscoverMountWashington.com. Campaign tactics are primarily based on digital and Social Media ads in consideration of value for spend. Demographics differ per campaign but include newer skiers in the Ski Free campaign, traditional skiers and boarder in January and families in March. All campaigns will be focused in regions that are &gt;1.5hr drive to the mountain</p> <p><b>Measurements:</b> MRDT revenue, impressions, click throughs (referrals to partner pages), sales conversions on each campaign through Central Reservations, website sessions and page views.</p>

### 3. Discover Comox Valley Partnered Campaigns

#### Winter Campaign Marketing - January to March

**Implementation:** Leveraging the Discover Comox Valley's winter campaign valued at close to \$80k combined, mountain ski and stays and event winter branding are marketed extensively across Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland through the winter seasons. Campaign tactics include extensive contesting, digital and social media advertising promoting mid-week, holiday and off-peak overnight ski and stays through DiscoverMountWashington.com. Contesting will build subscriptions to the e-news database for remarketing and develop partnerships with regional outdoor and marine adventure companies and airlines, possibly tying into fly, ski and stay packages. Markets targeted include central to south Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland.

**Measurements:** # of accommodation referrals through DiscoverMountWashington.com, MRDT revenue, impressions, click throughs (referrals), contest entries, # of subscriptions - database growth for remarketing, website unique visits and sessions

#### 4. Mount Washington Pride Week - February to March

**Implementation:** Partner in the second year of a three year strategic plan (comment: this one-year plan should be for 2020 not looking forward to year 2) to develop and grow Mount Washington Pride event in early March, to help build an alternative destination for Gay Ski Week for the LGBTQ Winter Sports enthusiast. Developing a compact festival calendar will be undertaken to build capacity and loyalty to attract short-haul and drive market, as well as be considered an alternative to such ski destinations, with Pride weeks, like Whistler.

**Measurements:** # of accommodation referrals, MRDT revenue, website visits around sponsored advertising schedule, # of events and participants

#### 5. BC Ski Areas Campaign - Winter

**Implementation:** Collaboration with all major BC ski resorts to promote Mount Washington Alpine Resort and the mountain destination via major Vancouver Island, BC multi-media marketing campaigns, leveraged by Destination BC Coop funds.

**Measurements:** # of accommodation referrals, MRDT revenue, impressions, click throughs (referrals), social media shares, website unique visits and sessions

**Major Category:** Media Advertising and Production

**Activity Title:** Summer Campaigns

**Tactics:**

**1. Mount Washington Alpine Resort Partnered Campaigns**

**VI Mountain Bike Consortium Campaign** - June to September

**BeerFest and WineFest Campaigns** - July to September

**Implementation:** Leveraging Mount Washington Alpine Resort, the region's largest stakeholder, paid campaigns promoting Ride and Stays and Festival packages are marketed to MRDT properties. Additional social media ads are purchased through the mountain's campaign efforts to bolster the reach and directing sales to MRDT properties, plus participating stakeholders listed through DiscoverComoxValley.com. Tactics will be primarily focused around digital and social media advertising which allows us to hyper-target mountain bikers and beer/wine enthusiasts. The bike sector campaign is a consortium through DBC which includes multiple bike regions in the Central and North Island regions. Approximate leveraged budget of over 35k if application is successful.

**Measurements:** # of accommodation referrals through DiscoverMountWashington.com, MRDT revenue, impressions, click throughs (referrals), sales conversions on each campaign through Central Reservations.

**2. Hike and Stays** - June to September

**Implementation:** Social media and digital advertising campaign directed at the easier hikes for families and those wishing to stroll through Paradise Meadows and Lake Helen Mackenzie, with overnight stays as part of the package. Incorporation of the Strathcona Wilderness Institutes and Vancouver Island Mountain Centre's suite of outdoor programs and potential partnerships will be explored and developed to produce a more robust hike and stay offering to destination visitors.

**Measurements:** # of accommodation referrals through DiscoverMountWashington.com, MRDT revenue, impressions, click throughs (referrals), social media shares, website unique visits and sessions.

**Major Category:** Social Media and Consumer Outreach

**Activity Title:** Annual Organic Posting and E-Newsletters

**Tactics:**

**1. Social Media Organic Posting and E-News Updates - Ongoing**

Reflecting the EQ traveller types, social media content development and curation will be undertaken to engage, inspire and expand interest and interactions via the MWRA social media channels through organic postings. The content will further leverage and enhance the paid online and traditional media marketing campaigns being undertaken throughout the year, as well as be reflected via regular e-Newsletter distribution. The e-Newsletter database will be expanded via more expressed consent, and remarketed through targeted social media and online contesting, to convert additional sales and engagement. Monthly consumer-oriented e-newsletter distribution will occur to present accommodation specials, upcoming events and activities within the mountain community. Community-specific e-news will be sent to stakeholders quarterly and when time-sensitive communications are required to update MWAR initiatives.

**Measurements:** Total followers, Engagement Rate, Reach, Total consumer use and reach of campaign hashtags and related hashtags

**Major Category:** Consumer Shows and Events

**Activity Title:** Event Development and Marketing

**Tactics:**

**1. Movie Nights, Mixers, Pancake Breakfasts and Meet the Clubs Events - Winter and Summer**

**Implementation:** Based on feedback from the Invigorate MWRA, this new tactic will see the develop and marketing of 5-7 on-mountain, pre or post ski events to create more reasons for visitors to extend stays and foster a more vibrant family-friendly après environment on the mountain.

**Measurements:** # of events, # of attendees, MRDT revenue, contest entries, website unique visits and sessions