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## TrailRider program makes Shuswap trails accessible to all



Submitted

*Shuswap resident Debra McDonald, seated, celebrates provincial funding that will support the region's first TrailRider.*

By JASON HEWLETT  
Daily News Staff Reporter

July 22, 2013

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For most of her life, Debra McDonald has enjoyed the great outdoors.

Every chance the former silviculturist had, she'd hike up a mountain or ride down one on her bike. She loved to swim and play outside.

She was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 1997, and everything changed. The disease progressed to where McDonald now uses a wheelchair to get around and can't enjoy the activities she once did.

That's about to change.

Working with the Shuswap Trail Alliance, McDonald has spearheaded an effort to bring three TrailRiders to the region in hope of providing a way for disabled people to hit the local trails.

"To be able to get outdoors again is a huge, huge thing for me. It was my life before," McDonald said during a phone interview from her home in Salmon Arm.

A TrailRider is a non-motorized, one-wheeled device that's a cross between a wheelbarrow and a baby jogger. It holds one disabled person and is propelled with the aid of one or two helpers.

A product of the Sam Sullivan Foundation, McDonald discovered the TrailRider online, and learned that alpine clubs and other organizations provincewide use them.

At a cost of about \$7,000 each, McDonald and the trail alliance approached service clubs, granting agencies and individuals throughout the Shuswap to raise enough money to bring three TrailRiders to Salmon Arm.

The effort raised \$1,300 as of last week, including a \$500 contribution from the Professional Forestry Association.

On Friday, the province contributed \$7,200 toward the first TrailRider through parks enhancement funding. Phil McIntyre-Paul, executive director of the trail alliance, will order the TrailRider this week. He hopes to secure two more by next summer.

With three TrailRiders, mobility challenged people in the region should always have immediate access to the outdoors, he said.

The vehicles will be stored at McDonald's Salmon Arm home, but people will be able to rent them for \$10 a day and take them anywhere in the Shuswap, she said.

"They have to be accessible," said McDonald.

Anyone who wants to donate to the effort can do so through the Shuswap Trail Alliance. For more information, phone 250-832-0102.

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