## EVDS 702 PROJECT PROPOSAL · FALL 2001

- A. Provisional Project Title: "A community-based resolution to the route and nature of the Trans-Canada Trail in the area surrounding the Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park, Alberta"
- *B. Project Proposers*: Hugh Gibbins (283-2346, hmtgibbi@ucalgary.ca) Greg Wagner (937-2084, wagnere@cadvision.com)
- *C. Client(s)*: The Trans Canada Trail Foundation (TCTF); Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park (CHIP)
- **D.** Areas of Interest: Community-level resolution of land-use disputes; interest-based negotiation; social aspects of environmental management

## **Project Proposal**

The Trans Canada Trail (TCT) is a shared-use recreation trail which will ultimately stretch across the length and breadth of Canada. The TCT is a communitybased project which will be owned, operated, and maintained primarily by local organizations (the Trans Canada Trail Foundation [TCTF] is responsible largely for directing the project, and will take no part in future ownership of the trail). Although the route of the Trail has largely been confirmed, several key stretches have yet to be finalized, largely because of the vocal opposition of community groups.

One such region lies in and around the Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park (CHIP) in southeastern Alberta. Various groups, including local ranchers, landowners, naturalists, provincial biologists, and Park personnel, have expressed concerns both to members of the TCTF and to EVDS graduate students relating to the route, nature, and activities which will occur on the Trail as it passes through the area. For instance, interest groups are concerned about how the Trail will affect key elk breeding areas, livestock and cattle pastures within and outside the Park, private property outside the Park, and the ecological integrity of the region. The situation is at an impasse; in the words of one TCTF member, "[w]e...will not likely put much more money into the trail development until this situation is resolved" (Rob Gardner, TCTF, pers. com.).

The proposed project will therefore seek to address this problem. The goal of the project will be to develop and evaluate alternative routes by which the TCT might cross CHIP which are acceptable to all of the stakeholders involved in the process, based on their stated interests. In addition, alternatives will be suggested and evaluated which address other aspects of the Trail which cause concern among the stakeholders. As such, the project will involve two main components. The first (and arguably most important) will involve the formal assembly of interest group representatives and the elucidation in group discussion of the concerns each interest group might bring to the table (this nonvoting process, known as "interest-based negotiation", was studied in some detail in such courses as EVDS 603 and 683.42, and has been privately studied under the auspices of the Alberta Arbitration and Mediation Society by at least one group member). The second aspect will involve a GIS- and field-based analysis of the region in order to suggest alternative routes which conform to the shared interests of the discussion group, as well as to the financial limitations of the TCTF (again, group members have familiarity with both the study area and with GIS techniques). This analysis will, of course, be limited by the duration of the project; however, it is expected that the timeframe will allow the analysis to be of sufficient detail to address the majority of the issues raised by the discussion group. Finally, it is expected that the alternatives chosen by the discussion group will then be acted upon by the TCTF (who will be full stakeholders in the process).

The proposed project is therefore very well suited to addressing the professional interdisciplinary requirements of EVDS 702. As an application of the skills and knowledge gained in coursework throughout the previous year, this project will result in the resolution of a complex "real-world" environmental design problem of some interest to various students. The project will allow students from several disciplines (likely including the environmental sciences, planning, and EVDS general programs) to contribute equally towards a final design goal; the social, economic, and biological aspects of environmental management and planning will necessarily be integrated into a cohesive whole, with room for considerable creativity in approach. Finally, the results of the project could likely be developed into a publishable format by group members as a case-study in environmental dispute resolution, thereby furthering the careers of those involved.