

WYOMING

STATEWIDE TRAILS PLAN

2004

Prepared by
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Wyoming State Trails Advisory Council
and
Trails Work Consulting

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Purpose

The 2004 Wyoming Statewide Trails Plan has been prepared as an element of the 2003 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). SCORP serves as a guide for local, state and federal agencies in the development and provision of future outdoor

recreation and natural resource development. As an element of the SCORP, the Trails Plan narrows the planning focus to recreational trails and serves as a guide to direct recreational trail development and management statewide.

There are a large and varied number of recreational trail providers in Wyoming. Some cater primarily to non-motorized trail users while others provide motorized trail opportunities and others are multiple-use providers. The State Trails Plan attempts to bring together the wants and needs of the recreational trail users to help the numerous trail providers avoid duplication and establish priorities for their trail management efforts.

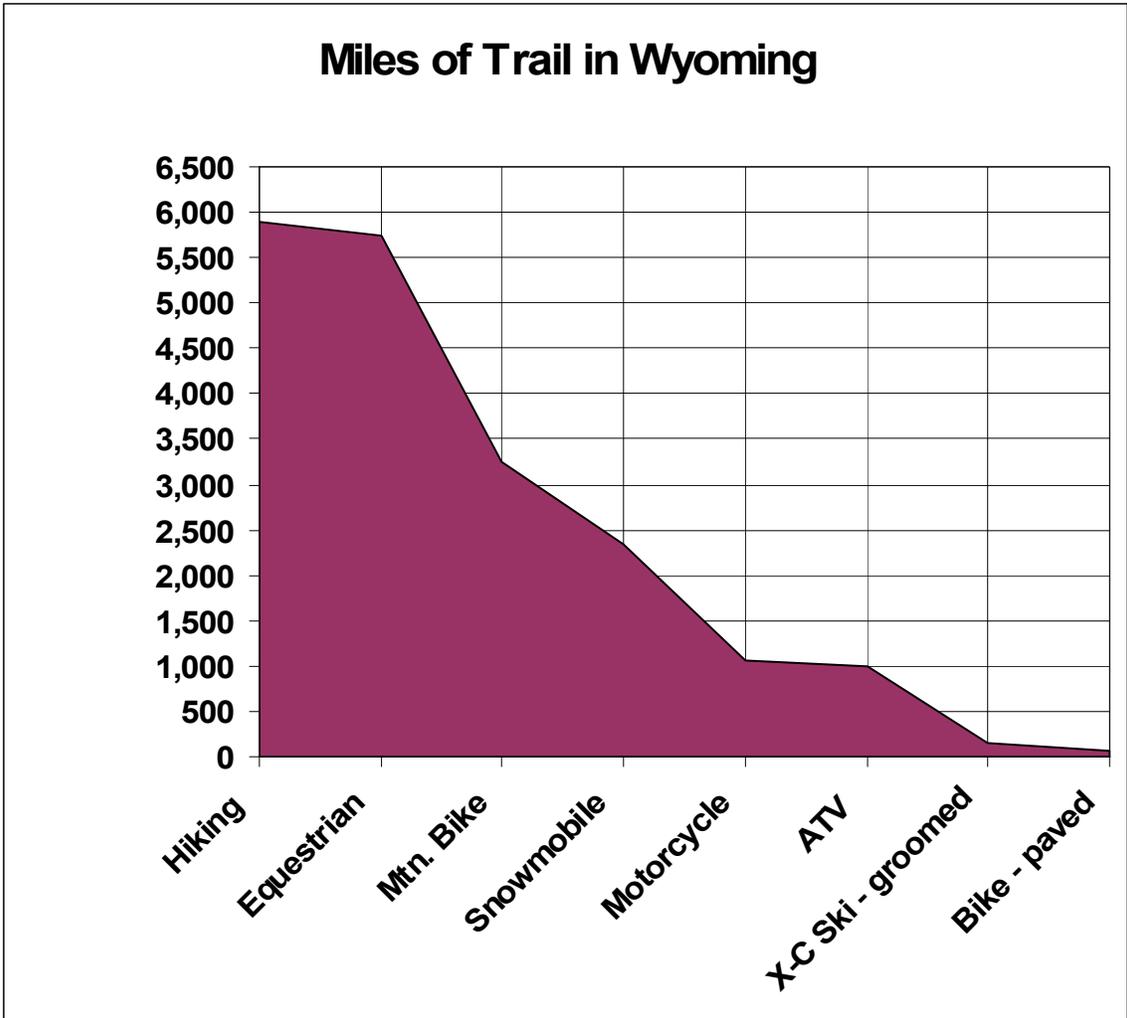
This Trails Plan is also intended to qualify Wyoming for federal Recreational Trails Program (RTP) grant funds administered by the Federal Highway Administration. RTP provides funding for the development, improvement and maintenance of recreational trails within Wyoming. Applicants for these grant funds must demonstrate that projects further a specific goal of SCORP and the priorities of the State Trails Plan. Funding for the preparation of this Trails Plan was provided by RTP state administrative funds.

CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

Trail opportunities in Wyoming are many and diverse. Outdoor recreation has been an important part of the State's way of life for many years. Participation in outdoor recreation in general and trail recreation specifically has grown dramatically in recent decades. Wyoming's trails are located in areas ranging from deep river canyons to high desert plains, to high mountain crags and alpine meadows, to community greenways. Hikers, bicyclists, equestrians, skiers, snowmobilers, ORV riders and community pathway users all use Wyoming's statewide system of trails.

Wyoming has over 8,500 miles of trails managed by a variety of agencies. Over 6,000 miles are managed primarily as summer-use trails while over 2,500 miles are managed primarily for snowmobiling and cross-country skiing during the winter season. Additionally, there are over 50,000 miles of roads in Wyoming open for use by off-road recreational vehicles (ORVs).

***Figure 1 – Miles of Trail Open to Various Types of Trail Uses in Wyoming
(Source: 1998 Trails Inventory)***



DEFINITIONS

There are several common terms that will be used throughout this Plan. To help the reader better understand these terms, a list of definitions has been provided. These definitions are not intended as the sole meanings for the terms, but instead give the proper context intended for use within this document.

Trail – a regularly maintained transportation and/or recreation pathway typically used by hikers, cross-country skiers, equestrians, bicyclists, and/or motor vehicles less than 50 inches wide

Road – a regularly maintained transportation and/or recreation route typically used by motorized vehicles greater than 50 inches wide

Wyoming State Trails Advisory Council (Trails Council) – a ten-member recreational trail advisory committee appointed by the Governor to advise the Department of State Parks and Cultural Resources on the management of recreational trails within Wyoming. Members represent both motorized and non-

motorized recreation users groups and are appointed for 4-year terms to represent specific users including hiking, bicycling, equestrian, cross-country skiing, snowmobile, ATVs and off-highway motorcycles

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) – the federal agency within the U.S. Department of Transportation that administers the Recreational Trails Program

Recreational Trails Program (RTP) – a federal grant program funded by the federal fuel taxes paid on gasoline used by off-highway vehicles, including snowmobiles, ATV's, off-highway motorcycles and four-wheel drive light utility vehicles. Monies are distributed to states based upon a formula where half goes equally to all states and the other half goes to states based upon estimates of their off-highway fuel use. States use to funds for grants to local, state and federal agencies and to qualifying private organizations for the purpose(s) of: environmental benefit/mitigation, education, maintenance of trails, equipment acquisition, new trail construction, development of trail-side/trail-head facilities, and/or community trail/pathway construction or maintenance. By mandate, 30% of the funds must be used for motorized trails, 30% for non-motorized trails, and 40% for diversified trail use. The program requires a 20% local match.

Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) – a federal grant program that provides 50% matching grants for the development of public outdoor recreation activities, which can include trails. Funding is derived from revenues associated with Outer Continental Shelf mineral receipts. LWCF requires states to have a Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan.

Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) – a guide for local, state and federal agencies in planning for future recreation and natural resource development that is required by the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 in order for a state to receive LWCF funding. Elements that are required to be discussed in the SCORP include: the methodologies chosen by the state to meet the guidelines it sets forth; opportunity for public participation; identification of high demand outdoor recreation uses; identification of strategies, priorities and actions that will be undertaken to apportion the LWCF funding; and an implementation program of the identified priorities.

Off-Road Recreational Vehicle (ORV) –

Type 1: a recreational vehicle primarily designed for off-road use which is fifty (50) inches or less in width, has an unladen weight of nine hundred (900) pounds or less and is designed to be ridden astride upon a seat or saddle and to travel on at least three (3) low pressure tires;

Type 2: any unlicensed motorcycle which has an unladen weight of six hundred (600) pounds or less and is designed to be ridden off road with the operator astride upon a seat or saddle and travels on two (2) tires;

Type 3: any multi-wheeled motorized vehicle not required by law to be licensed and is designed for cross-country travel on or over land, sand, snow, ice or other natural terrain and which has an unladen weight of more than nine hundred (900) pounds.

Snowmobile – any mechanically driven vehicle of a type that utilizes sled type runners, or skis, or any endless belt tread or combination of these, designed primarily for operation over snow.

PAST PLANNING EFFORTS

The Wyoming State Trails Plan was originally written in 1985 and contained information accumulated through user surveys. It covered a variety of motorized and non-motorized trail uses including hikers/backpackers, horseback riders, snowmobilers, cross-country skiers, off-road vehicle users, river users, bicycle riders and runners/joggers. The plan presented extensive information about socioeconomic characteristics, nature and amount of participation, user concerns, trail resources/standards, management viewpoint and projections/trends for each trail use. While the 1985 plan presented a wealth of baseline information regarding the numbers of users and trail uses in Wyoming, it did little in the way of long-range planning for the development of trails in the state.

The survey for the 1985 Plan was based upon 1984 participation days and survey data, so it is twenty years old and has little value in regard to the trails in Wyoming today other than to look back and see how significantly things have changed since that time.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

Extensive public involvement was a key component in this effort to update the 1985 Wyoming State Trails Plan. Several new surveys were completed to gather information on the Wyoming trails users and will be discussed in a later chapter. Surveys of snowmobilers, ORV users, federal land agencies and input from those who attended public scoping meetings, along with input from the Wyoming State Trails Advisory Council, provided the majority of public involvement data collected for this plan. This data was used to develop a vision statement, goals and objectives.

Since 98% of Wyoming's trails are located on federal lands, information from federal land managers was especially important for the development of a long-range trails plan that will continue to enhance the statewide system. A discussion will be included in a later chapter to summarize the needs of these land management agencies and to illustrate the importance of their participation in developing and maintaining Wyoming's trail system.

STATE TRAILS ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Wyoming State Trails Advisory Council has been an integral part of this planning process. The Trails Council is a ten member board appointed by the Governor to advise the State Trails Program within the Wyoming Department of State Parks and Cultural Resources regarding trail policies, functions and priorities. Their duties include advising the department regarding priorities for managing the Snowmobile Trails Fund and the Off-Road Recreational Vehicle (ORV) Fund. They also advise regarding application guidelines and distributions of grant funds from the federal Recreational Trails Program (RTP) grant program.

The Council evenly represents both motorized and non-motorized trail users. Additionally, the ten positions represent specific trail use activities such as snowmobiling, ATV's, off-highway motorcycles, equestrians, hiking, bicycling, cross-country skiing or multiple uses. Therefore, members are very much in-touch with the constituents they represent and are able to provide extremely valuable information both to the operation of the Council as well as to this planning process.

Mission Statement of the Wyoming State Trails Advisory Council:

The Trails Council will serve as a representative voice for the appropriate and diverse use of Wyoming's trail resources.

CHAPTER TWO – WYOMING LAND MANAGEMENT AGENCIES THAT PROVIDE TRAIL OPPORTUNITIES

United States Forest Service

The United States Forest Service (USFS), within the U.S. Department of Agriculture, administers approximately 8.8 million acres of land in Wyoming which represents 25% of the total public lands in the state. It is the largest single provider of trail opportunities in Wyoming. The 1998 Wyoming State Trails Inventory identified over 6,100 miles of designated trails on national forests within Wyoming, which represents 73.5% of all inventoried trails in the state. Additionally, there are thousands of miles of non-designated trails and primitive roads available for recreation on USFS lands in Wyoming. National Forests are managed for multiple uses and provide timber, minerals, range, recreation, water, fish and wildlife.

There are fifteen designated Wilderness Areas totaling nearly 3 million acres (about 34% of USFS lands) in Wyoming available solely for non-mechanized recreation use such as hiking, horseback riding and long-distance backpacking. The use of Wilderness is an attraction for Wyoming residents, but is particularly captivating to out-of-state visitors.

The Forest Service in Wyoming is administered by two different USFS Regional Offices, the Rocky Mountain Region (Region 2) headquartered in Denver, Colorado and the Intermountain Region (Region 4) headquartered in Ogden, Utah. There is one National Grassland (Thunder Basin) and four National Forests (Bighorn, Bridger-Teton, Medicine Bow and Shoshone) located entirely within the state and an additional four National Forests (Ashley, Black Hills, Caribou-Targhee and Wasatch-Cache) located partially within Wyoming. The on-the-ground daily management is done by 21 Ranger Districts.

Bureau of Land Management

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), within the U.S. Department of Interior, administers approximately 17.8 million acres of land in Wyoming, which is approximately one-third of the total state. The 1998 Wyoming State Trails Inventory identified only 32 miles of designated trails on BLM land, which represents 2.4% of trails in the state. However, tens of thousands of miles of non-designated trails and primitive roads also exist on BLM land which makes the BLM an extremely important provider of trail opportunities in Wyoming.

BLM land in Wyoming is administered through the State Office in Cheyenne, with ten Field Offices located in Buffalo, Casper, Cody, Kemmerer, Lander, Newcastle, Pinedale, Rawlins, Rock Springs and Worland for on-the-ground management. The BLM's resource management responsibilities in Wyoming are heavily influenced by the minerals, oil and gas industries, but also include recreation, timber, range, water, fish, wildlife and fire protection.

National Park Service

The National Park Service (NPS), within the U.S. Department of Interior, administers approximately 2.3 million acres of land in Wyoming that contain 261 miles of designated trails. These trails represent 19.2% of the trail opportunities in Wyoming and are significant for their historic, geologic and interpretive values.

NPS lands conserve the scenic, natural, historic objects and the wildlife therein, and provide for the enjoyment of the same by such manner and means that will leave them unimpaired for future generations. The NPS manages seven areas in Wyoming: Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area, Devils Tower National Monument, Fort Laramie National Historic Site, Fossil Buttes National Monument, Grand Teton National Park, the John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway and Yellowstone National Park. The recreational opportunities on NPS lands in Wyoming are particularly significant since Yellowstone was the nation's first national park and Devils Tower was the first national monument.

The NPS is also the primary administrator of the National Trails System as authorized by the National Trails System Act of 1968. This system consists of three types of nationally designated trails: National Historic Trails, National Scenic Trails and National Recreation Trails. Various other agencies administer, operate and maintain the National Trails System within their jurisdiction in consultation with NPS.

National Scenic Trails are designated by an Act of Congress through a recommendation of the managing agency. They maximize outdoor recreation potential while providing for the conservation and enjoyment of nationally significant scenic, historic, natural or cultural qualities of areas through which the trails pass. Wyoming has one such trail, the 3,100-mile Continental Divide National Scenic Trail that follows the Continental Divide from Canada to Mexico with approximately 550 miles being located within Wyoming.

National Historic Trails are also designated by an Act of Congress. They are extended trails that follow original trails or routes of national historic significance. Since these historic routes cross a checkerboard of private and public lands within Wyoming, there is often no public access to the trails themselves so auto tour routes often parallel the historic routes. Wyoming has four National Historic Trails whose original routes total over 2,600 miles: the Oregon National Historic Trail (491 original route miles in Wyoming), the Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trail (511 original route miles in Wyoming), the Pony Express National Historic Trail (540 original route miles in Wyoming) and the California National Historic Trail (1,088 original route miles in Wyoming including two alternate routes).

A National Recreation Trail is a designation that can be obtained for trails managed by public or private agencies as a component of the National Trails System. They must be fully developed and available for use at the time of designation and the administering agency must certify that the trail will be available for public use for a minimum of ten years. These trails do not require an Act of Congress, but rather can be designated either through the Secretary of Interior or the Secretary of Agriculture by a recommendation of the managing agency. There are fourteen National Recreation Trails totaling 138.3 miles in Wyoming: Beartooth Loop – Shoshone National Forest, 9.7 miles; Blackwater Fire Memorial – Shoshone National Forest, 6 miles; Bucking Mule Falls – Bighorn National Forest, 12 miles; Rock Creek/Deep Creek – Medicine Bow National Forest, 14 miles; Shell Falls – Bighorn National Forest, 0.2 mile; Wyoming Range – Bridger-Teton National Forest, 70 miles; Muddy Mountain Interpretive – Casper BLM, 2 miles; Grassroots – Torrington, 0.9 mile; Headquarters – Medicine Bow National Forest, 3.5 miles; Lee McCune Braille – Natrona County, 0.3 mile; Morning Glory – Yellowstone National Park, 1.5 miles; Sheridan – Bridger-Teton National Forest, 9 miles; South Rim – Yellowstone National Park, 9 miles; Three Senses – Yellowstone National Park, 0.2 mile.

The National Park Service also operates a Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA) that works with community groups and local and State governments to conserve rivers, preserve open space, and develop trails and greenways. Their focus is on helping communities help themselves by providing expertise and experience from around

the nation. Their assistance in greenway efforts is wide ranging and includes planning help with trails along abandoned railroad rights-of-way and regional water trails. Their assistance can be requested through the NPS Intermountain Region Office in Denver, Colorado.

Bureau of Reclamation

The Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), within the U.S. Department of Interior administers approximately 62,000 acres of land in Wyoming. The BOR has played an active role in the economic development of Wyoming by providing facilities that generate irrigation and power. The day-to-day management of these lands is, for the most part, delegated to state or county government. Therefore, the discussion of trail opportunities on BOR lands is covered below in the discussion of the Wyoming Division of State Parks and Historic Sites and Local Agencies.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), within the U.S. Department of Interior, administers approximately 81,000 acres of National Wildlife Refuge lands in Wyoming. However, public access to National Wildlife Refuges is very limited. Lands managed by the Fish and Wildlife Service are highly valued for their potential interpretive and wildlife viewing opportunities. The two primary USFWS areas within Wyoming with trail opportunities are the National Elk Refuge which has an accessible boardwalk behind the visitor center in Jackson and the Seedskadee National Wildlife Refuge where there is a fully accessible interpretive trail at the Lombard Ferry Historical Site.

Wyoming Game & Fish Department

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGF) manages approximately 35,000 acres of land. The purpose of these lands is to provide fish and wildlife habitat. In some cases, these lands also provide access to other public lands. There are few designated trails on WGF lands, but a variety of paths and roads used as trails exist.

Office of State Lands and Investments

The Wyoming Office of State Lands and Investments manages 3.6 million acres of state trust lands in Wyoming. It is the administrative and advisory arm of the Board of Land Commissioners and the State Loan and Investment Board and is responsible for implementing the policies and decisions of those boards.

These state lands are not “public” lands in the same sense as those properties managed by the federal government. These lands were granted to the state on its admission to the Union to produce income for the support of public schools and institutions. Generally, state lands, other than cultivated crop lands, are available for public hunting, fishing and recreational day use.

There are few designated trails on State Lands, but a variety of paths and roads used as trails exist. While motor vehicle use off roadways is prohibited, all established roads have been enrolled in the state ORV Program.

Wyoming Department of Transportation

The primary role of the Wyoming Department of Transportation (WYDOT) is to provide a safe, reliable transportation system that serves the needs of the traveling public, commerce and industry. However, WYDOT also serves an important role in providing trail opportunities since it routinely considers bicycle and pedestrian needs when designing transportation facilities, particularly in urban areas.

WYDOT also administers the Transportation Enhancements program which allocates up to 10% of a state's federal surface transportation funds for special "enhancements" that can include trails and bicycle/pedestrian facilities. WYDOT's Transportation Enhancement Activities Local (TEAL) grant program has been a primary funding source for many greenways and pathway projects located in or around Wyoming communities.

Wyoming Division of State Parks & Historic Sites

The Wyoming Division of State Parks and Historic Sites (SPHS), within the Wyoming Department of State Parks and Cultural Resources, manages 46,455 acres of land in Wyoming. The majority of this land is managed as reservoir parks leased from the Bureau of Reclamation. The park system has about 35 miles of designated non-motorized trails. Additionally, about 60 miles of park roadways are open to ORV use.

The Wyoming State Trails Program (STP), a program within SPHS, serves as the lead in the state to coordinate the planning, development and implementation of a statewide trail system among federal, state and local agencies and the private sector. The State Trails Program does not own any land in Wyoming, but rather facilitates and manages cooperative agreements that provide trail opportunities on lands owned by other agencies.

The State Trails Program administers the snowmobile and ORV registration programs and utilizes funds collected to develop and maintain snowmobile and ORV trail opportunities across the state. The Snowmobile Program provides day-to-day management for 2,350 miles of snowmobile trails. The ORV Program has over 400 miles ORV trails and over 50,000 miles of ORV roads enrolled across the state.

The STP also administers the federal Recreational Trails Program (RTP) grant program that provides grants to agencies and organizations for motorized, non-motorized and multiple use trail projects. It also operates the State Trail Crew that provides on-the-ground trail construction and maintenance to federal agencies at no cost to the agency.

The STP also provides technical assistance to land management agencies, cities, counties, recreation districts and the public regarding trails management and development. The program also monitors federal agency land-use planning initiatives such as USFS travel

plans and forest management plans, BLM resource management plans, and numerous environmental assessments to ensure recreational trail opportunities are properly considered and protected.

The State Trails Program is charged by Wyoming state statutes 31-2-402 and 404 to sell snowmobile registration and user fee permits and to use the funds that are generated to “administer the snowmobile trail program”. It is also charged by state statutes 31-2-702 and 703 to sell off-road recreational vehicle (ORV) permits and to use the funds that are generated for “administration of the off-road recreational vehicle trails program”. The Trails Program has also been appointed to administer the federal Recreational Trails Program (RTP) grant program which is funded by the federal fuel tax paid on gasoline used by motorized recreational vehicles including snowmobiles, ATV’s, off-road motorcycles and light duty trucks used in an off-road setting. The result is that 99% of the funding for the State Trails Program is derived from a motorized recreation source.

With this in mind, the primary and secondary purposes of the State Trails Program are:

Primary Purpose

- Serve as the primary facilitator of motorized recreational trail opportunities in Wyoming by providing funding and day-to-day services through the snowmobile and ORV registration programs, along with funding through the RTP grant program.
- Actively facilitate collaboration and partnerships with federal, state and local land managing agencies that provide trail opportunities, with emphasis upon the federal lands that host 98% of all trails in Wyoming.

Secondary Purpose

- Support non-motorized recreational trail opportunities in Wyoming by providing funding through the RTP grant program to the federal, state and local agencies who are the primary non-motorized trail managers.
- Provide technical assistance that furthers recreational trail opportunities and management in Wyoming.
- Provide tourism opportunities that benefit Wyoming’s economy.

Local Agencies

Wyoming’s cities, counties and recreation districts manage approximately 101 miles of trail which comprises about 3% of the designated trails in the state. These local-agency trails are extremely important since they provide close-to-home trail opportunities many residents desire for health and fitness.

CHAPTER THREE – EXISTING CONDITION

1998 Wyoming Statewide Trails Inventory

The *1998 Wyoming Statewide Trails Inventory* (University of Wyoming, Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics, 1999) identified 1,361 trails in Wyoming totaling 8,176 miles. It is important to note that this survey was completed prior to 2002 when the State ORV registration program was started. Therefore, the number of ORV trails and roads were substantially underreported in the Trails Inventory as compared to what exists on the ground today.

The 1998 Trails Inventory found that 98% of all trails in Wyoming are located on federal property and that the majority of those trails are managed by the Forest Service.

Figure 2 - Trail Managers

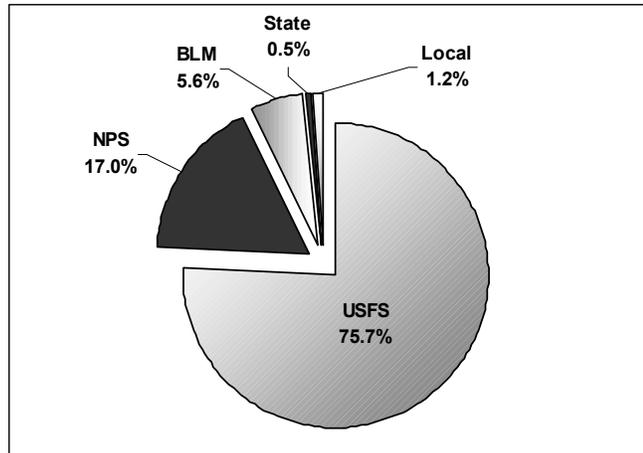


Table 1: Trail Locations (Source: 1998 Trails Inventory)

AGENCY	NUMBER OF TRAILS	OF MILES OF TRAILS	PERCENT
U.S. Forest Service	1,000	6,185.73	75.7%
National Park Service	261	1,390.27	17.0%
BLM	32	456.75	5.6%
Local Entities	41	101.42	1.2%
State of Wyoming	27	41.51	0.5%
TOTAL	1,361	8,175.68	100.0%

According to the 1998 Trails Inventory, the average length of a trail in Wyoming is 6 miles. The BLM seems to administer the longest trails with an average length of 14.3 miles, followed by the Forest Service with an average of 6.2 miles, 5.3 miles for the National Park Service, 2.5 miles for local entities and 1.5 miles for the State of Wyoming.

The 1998 Trails Inventory categorized trails by the setting of the surrounding area that the trail passes through. The trail setting was classified as Urban (cities and towns), Rural (areas surrounding cities and towns), Natural (areas with roads) or Primitive (areas without roads).

Table 2: Trail Setting (Source: 1998 Trails Inventory)

SETTING	NUMBER OF TRAILS	PERCENT	MILES OF TRAILS	PERCENT
Urban	29	2.1%	45.92	0.5%
Rural	32	2.4%	376.75	4.5%
Natural	849	62.7%	5,309.36	63.4%
Primitive	445	32.8%	2,644.55	31.6%

While peak use of most trails may occur during one or two seasons of the year, most trails in Wyoming are available for recreational use throughout much of the year. In terms of numbers of trails, well over 80 percent of the trails are open for recreation during the summer, fall and winter months. The lower number of trails open during the spring season is due to closures while trails dry out from the melting of the winter snowpack.

Table 3: Season of Allowed Use (Source: 1998 Trails Inventory)

SEASON	NUMBER OF TRAILS	PERCENT*	MILES OF TRAILS	PERCENT*
Summer	1,168	85.8%	5,961.98	72.9%
Fall	1,166	85.7%	5,952.78	72.8%
Winter	1,199	88.1%	7,307.84	89.4%
Spring	1,040	76.4%	5,805.01	71.0%

* Sums to more than 100 percent due to multiple responses

The Trails Inventory found that non-motorized trail uses like hiking, equestrian, backpacking, cross-country skiing on groomed trails, and biking on paved trails were popular in the state. Motorized uses, such as hunting access, snowmobiling and ORV use, were also listed as main trail uses. Overall, motorized recreation is permitted on 17% of Wyoming's trails while approximately 87% of the state's trails are managed predominately for non-motorized recreation while essentially 100% of Wyoming trails allow at least one type of non-motorized use.

Current trail uses on Wyoming trails include (but are not limited to) snowmobile, ORV, hiking, equestrian, bicycling, mountain biking, backpacking, running, hunting access, walking and cross-country skiing.

Table 4: Allowed Uses (Source: 1998 Trails Inventory)

ALLOWED USE	NUMBER OF TRAILS	PERCENT*	MILES OF TRAILS	PERCENT*
Hiking	1,096	80.5%	5,884.18	72.0%
Horse	1,016	74.7%	5,731.92	70.1%
Backpacking	994	73.0%	5,593.47	68.4%
XC Ski – ungroomed	935	68.7%	4,947.25	60.5%
Running	888	65.2%	4,630.26	56.6%
Hunting Access	811	59.6%	4,161.87	50.9%
Walking	766	56.3%	4,141.18	50.7%
Bike – unimproved	580	42.6%	3,257.37	39.8%
Snowmobile – ungroomed	387	28.4%	2,309.75	28.3%

Snowmobile – groomed	108	7.9%	1,532.05	18.7%
Motorbike	153	11.2%	1,052.32	12.9%
ATV	140	10.3%	1,001.02	12.2%
XC Ski – groomed	25	1.8%	143.80	1.8%
Bike – paved	36	2.6%	59.99	0.7%
Handicap Accessible	31	2.3%	48.88	0.6%
Other	17	1.2%	30.98	0.4%

* Sums to more than 100 percent due to multiple responses

The 1998 Trails Inventory also measured the level of management of trails in the state in terms of the frequency of patrol or maintenance. The management level for most trails in Wyoming is less than once per week with the most common level being “one to six times per year.”

Table 5: Level of Management (Source: 1998 Trails Inventory)

MANAGEMENT FREQUENCY	NUMBER OF TRAILS	PERCENT	MILES OF TRAILS	PERCENT
1-6 times per year	475	34.9%	2,465.10	30.2%
7 or more times per year	527	38.7%	2,929.77	35.8%
3 or more times per month	266	19.5%	2,325.78	28.4%
4 or more times per week	93	6.8%	455.03	5.6%
Total	1,361	100.0%	8,175.68	100.0%

River Trails

In some parts of Wyoming, River Trails are also popular recreation facilities. The 1998 State Trails Inventory identified a total of 62 river access points maintained by federal, state or local agencies. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department maintains the largest number of river access points with 26 sites (41.9% of total). BLM has the next largest number of access sites with 23 (37.1%), the Forest Service has 5 sites (8.1%), the National Parks Service has 4 (6.8%) and Local Government agencies maintain 4 sites (6.8%).

The following information summarizes river access points in Wyoming by river:

Table 6: River Access Point by River (Source: 1998 Trails Inventory)

RIVER	NUMBER OF ACCESS	PERCENT OF STATE SITES
-------	------------------	------------------------

	POINTS	
Big Horn River		
National Park Service	1	
Bureau of Land Management	4	
Wyoming Game & Fish	<u>2</u>	
Total: Big Horn River	7	11.3%
Clarks Fork Yellowstone River		
Bureau of Land Management	3	4.8%
Encampment River		
Bureau of Land Management	1	
U.S. Forest Service	<u>1</u>	
Total: Encampment River	2	3.2%
Green River		
Bureau of Land Management	4	
Green River Parks & Rec.	2	
Wyoming Game & Fish	<u>1</u>	
Total: Green River	7	11.3%
New Fork River		
Wyoming Game & Fish	1	1.6%
North Fork Shoshone River		
Bureau of Land Management	2	3.2%
North Platte River		
Bureau of Land Management	2	
U.S. Forest Service	1	
Wyoming Game & Fish	<u>19</u>	
Total: North Platte River	22	35.5%
Salt River		
Wyoming Game & Fish	2	3.2%

Shoshone River

Cody Parks Department	2	
Wyoming Game & Fish	<u>1</u>	
Total: Shoshone River	3	4.8%

Snake River

National Park Service	3	
U.S. Forest Service	<u>3</u>	
Total: Snake River	6	9.7%

South Fork Shoshone River

Bureau of Land Management	2	3.2%
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Sweetwater River

Bureau of Land Management	5	8.1%
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Wyoming Total:	62	100.0%
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2003 Wyoming SCORP

The 2003 SCORP included a study of Wyoming recreation that also provided information on the types of trail use occurring in the state. The SCORP research listed many non-motorized issues and localized recreational issues as priorities. Additionally, motorized recreation was mentioned and included as a statewide priority for the first time ever.

Current Funding

The predominant funding for motorized trails in Wyoming is administered by the State Trails Program. Although there are more trails available for non-motorized recreation in Wyoming, 98 percent of the funding for the STP comes from motorized use – primarily snowmobile and ORV registration/user fee sales and snowmobile/ORV gas tax distributions – and therefore must be spent solely upon their management.

The Snowmobile Registration Program has been in place and administered by the Department of State Parks and Cultural Resources (and its predecessors, the Wyoming Recreation Commission and the Department of Commerce) since 1969. *The current snowmobile resident registration fee is \$15.00 per year per snowmobile, \$1.00 which is retained by the License Selling Agent and \$14.00 which is deposited into the Snowmobile Fund for the administration, management and maintenance of snowmobile trails in Wyoming. In 1994, a Commercial Snowmobile Registration was established at a

cost of \$50.00 per year per rental or guided snowmobile, all which is deposited in the Snowmobile Fund. In 1996, a non-resident snowmobile user fee was established at a cost of \$15.00 per snowmobile per year, \$1.00 which is retained by the License Selling Agent and \$14.00 which is deposited into the Snowmobile Fund. Additionally, \$16.25 (125 average gallons of gas/snowmobile/year x \$0.13/gallon state gas tax) for every resident and non-resident snowmobile registration/user fee and \$32.50 (250 average gallons of gas/snowmobile/year x \$0.13/gallon state gas tax) for every commercial snowmobile registration that is sold is transferred to the Snowmobile Fund from the State Gas Tax Fund.

In 2003 there were approximately 40,000 snowmobile permits sold which included approximately 21,000 non-resident permits, 18,000 resident permits and 1,000 commercial permits. Snowmobile program revenues from these 2003 permit sales totaled nearly \$1.3 million per year, with over \$600,000 coming from the sale of snowmobile registrations and user fees and over \$675,000 from the state gasoline tax allocation.

The Off-Road Recreational Vehicle (ORV) Registration Program was established in 2002. The current ORV registration fee is \$15.00 per year per vehicle, \$1.00 which is retained by the License Selling Agent and \$14.00 which is deposited into the ORV Fund for the administration, management and maintenance of ORV trails in Wyoming. Additionally since 2003, \$10.40 (80 average gallons of gas/ORV/year x \$0.13/gallon state gas tax) for every ORV permit that is sold is transferred to the ORV Fund from the State Gas Tax Fund.

In 2003, the first full year of ORV permit sales, a total of 26,467 ORV permits were sold. This generated over \$645,000 in revenue for the ORV Program, over \$370,000 which was from permit sales and over \$275,000 from gas tax.

***The 2005 Wyoming Legislature increased the resident and non-resident snowmobile fee to \$25.00 per snowmobile and the commercial snowmobile registration fee to \$75.00.**

Figure 3 – State Trails Program Motorized Funding Sources

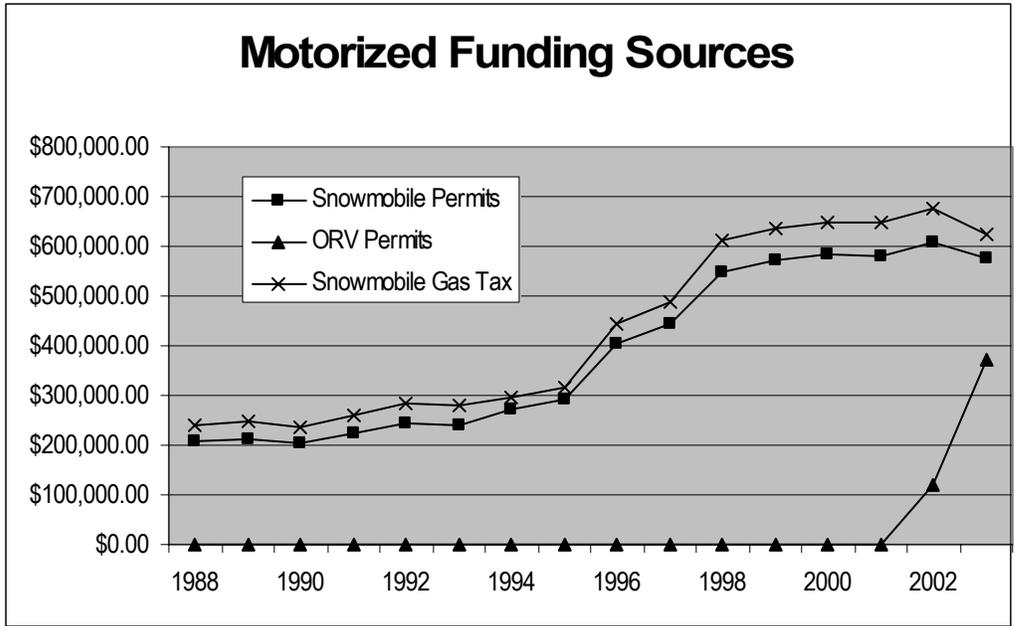
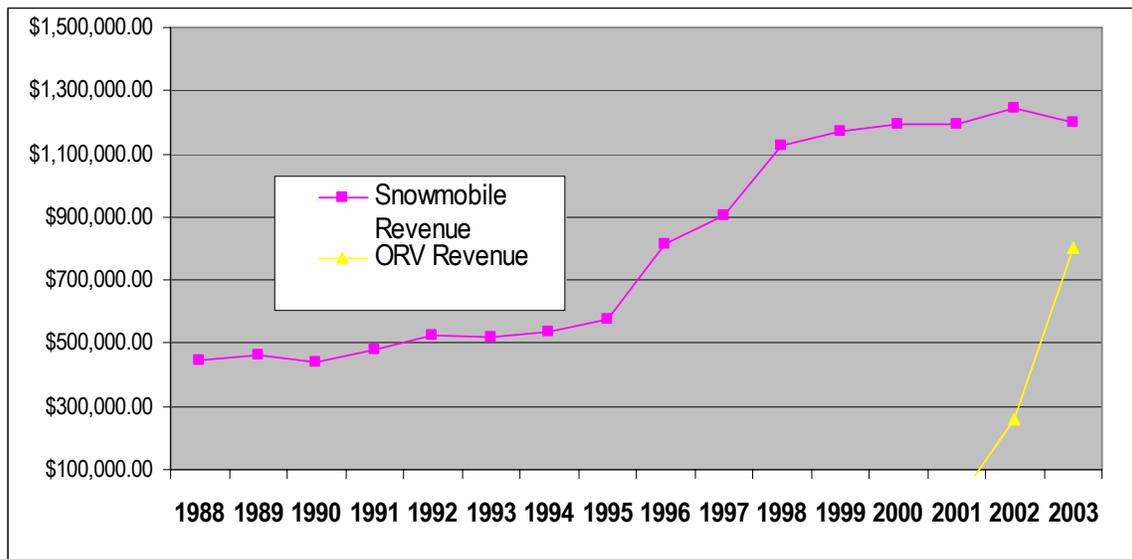
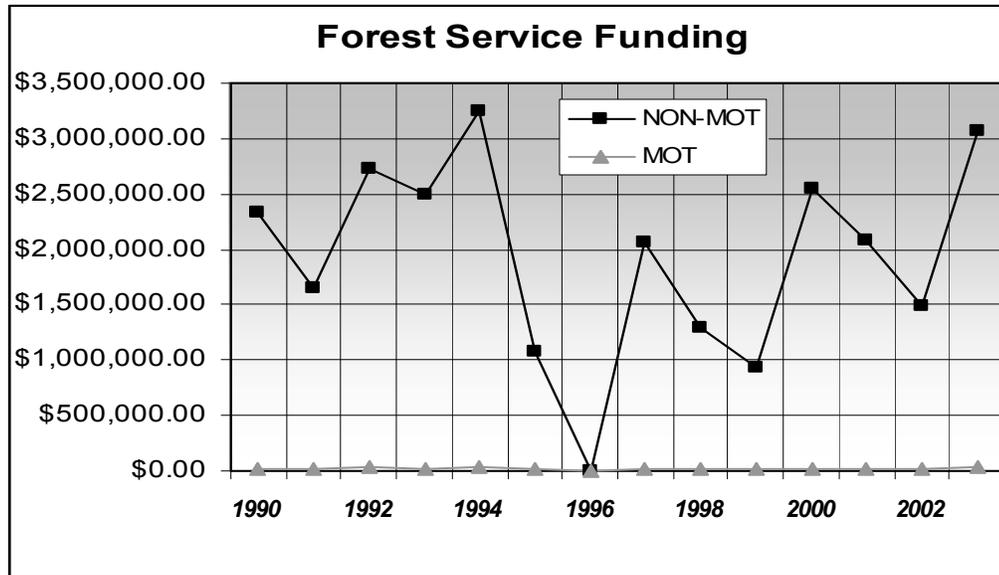


Figure 4 – State Trails Program Motorized Revenue



Conversely, the federal agencies generally have budget allocations for non-motorized trails but lack funding for motorized trail management. This makes it is even more important that the STP and federal agencies work together in collaborative partnerships to ensure that both motorized and non-motorized trails in Wyoming are properly managed. Figure 5 illustrates that, even though non-motorized trail funding has fluctuated from year to year, there has generally been two to three million dollars per year allocated to non-motorized trails on Forest Service lands. At the same time, Forest Service funding for motorized trails has remained constant and nearly non-existent.

Figure 5 - Forest Service Trail Budget Allocations

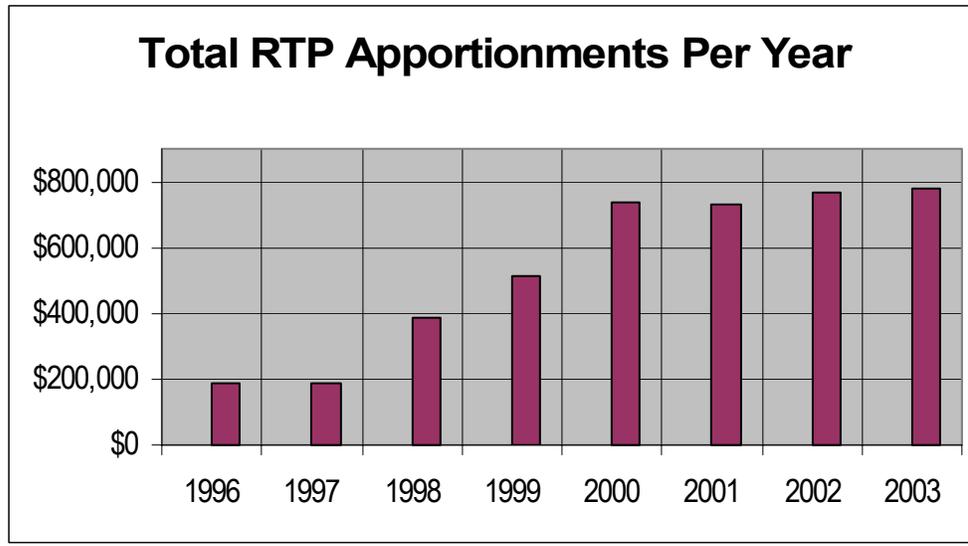


The Recreational Trails Program (RTP) Grant Program is an important funding source for motorized, non-motorized and diversified use trail projects in Wyoming. This federal grant program is funded by the federal fuel taxes paid on gasoline used by off-highway vehicles, including snowmobiles, ATV's, off-highway motorcycles and four-wheel drive light utility vehicles.

Monies are distributed to states based upon a formula where half goes equally to all states and the other half goes to states based upon estimates of their off-highway fuel use. The State Trails Program administers these funds and awards grants to local, state and federal agencies and to qualifying private organizations for the purpose(s) of: environmental benefit/mitigation, education, maintenance of trails, equipment acquisition, new trail construction, development of trail-side/trail-head facilities, and/or community trail/pathway construction or maintenance.

By federal mandate, 30% of the funds must be used for motorized trails, 30% for non-motorized trails, and 40% for diversified trail use. The program requires a 20% local match. Wyoming receives approximately \$780,000 per year for this grant program which is very important to the STP since these are the only funds they have to help facilitate non-motorized trail projects.

Figure 6 – Wyoming RTP Grant Apportionments



The primary funding source for most non-motorized projects located in or around communities (such as greenways) comes from local taxes and/or from grant programs like the Transportation Enhancement Activities Local (TEAL) program. This grant program is administered by the Wyoming Department of Transportation (WYDOT) and is funded by up to 10% of their federal Surface Transportation Funds allocated annually by the Federal Highway Administration. Local cities and counties are responsible for managing trail systems located on their lands and TEAL funds offer over a million dollars per year for paved community pathways, greenbelts, etc. The Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) is another potential funding source for non-motorized trails.

Current Trail Use – Non-Motorized

According to the 2003 SCORP, the non-motorized trail uses that are occurring in Wyoming include: hiking/walking/backpacking, bicycling/mountain biking, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, viewing wildlife/nature, picnicking, fishing, hunting, and visiting historic and/or prehistoric sites/areas (2003 SCORP, p.38-39). Recreation facility providers surveyed by the study ranked the majority of trails in Wyoming to be in “better than fair condition” and horse trails as “closer to fair condition” (2003 SCORP, p. 38). Additional trails were also identified as a need in and around most communities. Overall, communities would like to add a total of 55 miles to the overall trail system (2003 SCORP, p. 49), which would primarily consist of community greenways and park pathways versus backcountry or more primitive trails.

Current Trail Use – Motorized

Motorized trail recreation in Wyoming is also very popular. Included with this category are activities like: driving for pleasure, snowmobiling, and riding ORV’s (which include off-road motorcycles, ATVs and 4-wheel drive vehicles primarily used off-road). Many motorized activities take place in conjunction with non-motorized activities, such as

fishing, camping or hunting. The increasing popularity of motorized trail recreation can also be gauged by the increasing demands placed on the State Trails Program.

In its first two years of existence, the State ORV Program went from zero to over 50,000 miles of ORV roads and trails enrolled in the program. The USFS alone enrolled over 8,000 miles of roads in the program along with about 425 miles of trails, about 92 miles which are single-track trails for motorcycles. The BLM has enrolled 100% of their existing roads and trails which are estimated to be in excess of 40,000 miles. Additionally, 100% of existing roads and trails on State Trust lands and Game & Fish lands were also enrolled.

There are approximately 2,350 miles of snowmobile trails located across the state. During the 2000-2001 winter season, there were over 1.53 million snowmobiling visitor days recorded in Wyoming. (2000-2001 Wyoming Snowmobile Survey, University of Wyoming, 2001) Wyoming is the overall top destination for snowmobilers in the western United States having six of the top fifteen areas on *Sno West* magazine's "Best of the West" list for several years running. In 2004, the Continental Divide Snowmobile Trail was selected as the overall best snowmobiling area in the West. The Cooke City, Montana area, which abuts the Wyoming Beartooths area, was selected the fourth best snowmobiling area. The Snowy Range, Alpine/Greys River and Bighorns areas were ranked sixth, seventh, and thirteenth, respectively. And the Black Hills trail system that Wyoming shares with South Dakota was ranked number fourteen. In this annual survey, Wyoming snowmobiling received high marks for scenery, grooming, signage, maps, snow quality, terrain and off-trail riding opportunities.

The motorized road and trail opportunities in Wyoming lie primarily on federal lands. Thus, federal managers are responsible for directing the opening and closures of roads and trails as well as identifying the distinctions between the two. These types of travel management activities are generally set forth in travel plans, overall comprehensive plans and management strategy documents. Each agency is responsible for designating their own goals, objectives and action items to accommodate the uses, thus leaving a possibility for conflicting policies and a strong need for them to communicate and work together in planning efforts.

Although federal agencies set overall goals, objectives and guidelines for motorized recreation management, oftentimes other uses take precedence as funding priorities. If a particular road or trail does not meet design specifications, it is often easier to close it than to perform the necessary maintenance to bring it up to the standards. Winter grooming of snowmobile trails and snowmobile system maintenance would not be possible without the funding and staff support provided by the State Trails Program and the users willing to pay for it. The ORV Registration Program was created primarily to provide a much-needed funding source to pay for increasing ORV road and trail opportunities in Wyoming that previously have been neglected due to a lack of funding. The motorized funds managed by the State Trails Program works to fill gaps in funding and staffing within other federal and state agencies.

CHAPTER FOUR – SURVEYS AND OTHER PUBLIC INPUT FOR THE PLANNING PROCESS

Public input from trail users and land managing agencies for this plan was collected through the following surveys and dialogue:

- ❖ 2000-2001 Wyoming Snowmobile Survey
- ❖ 2002 Wyoming ORV Survey
- ❖ 2002 Federal Agency Phone Survey
- ❖ 2002-2003 Public Meetings

2000-2001 Wyoming Snowmobile Survey

The University of Wyoming, Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics – Cooperative Extension Program, under contract with the State Trails Program, performed a survey study to determine trends and the economic impacts of snowmobiling on the State of Wyoming. There were four parts to the study and the method of research and information-gathering varied with each group as follows:

- **Snowmobile Outfitters** – 22 out of 39 larger outfitters (those holding higher quantities of commercial snowmobiles) were personally interviewed within the state between November 2000 and May 2001. Their questionnaires consisted of three main sections. Section One asked about the outfitter’s general information, such as length of time in business, etc.; Section Two collected statistics regarding Yellowstone National Park (YNP) usage; and Section Three asked very specific economic questions about the snowmobile outfitter’s operation.
- **Snowmobile Outfitter Clients** – 326 out of 447 outfitter client addresses responded to a mail survey about the status of Wyoming snowmobile outfitters. The survey was divided into seven main sections. Section One was designed to obtain general information on the outfitter client, such as how far they traveled to snowmobile, etc.; Section Two collected information on season trip trail usage; Section Three was included to provide statistics on the outfitter client’s most recent trip to Wyoming; Section Four asked about expenditure information; Section Five asked detailed questions about YNP; Section Six had the outfitter client rate their snowmobile experience in Wyoming; and Section Seven asked for basic demographic information.
- **Resident and Nonresident Snowmobilers** – resident and nonresident snowmobilers who own their own snowmobiles were mailed similar surveys. Out of 1,019 nonresident surveys, 553 were returned and 500 out of 1,073 resident surveys were returned. These surveys were seven sections long and were very similar to those sent to the snowmobile

outfitter clients. Only a few minor changes were made on some of the questions to reference locality differences.

While a vast amount of useful information was obtained from this survey, the most important findings were those pertaining to the needs and wants of the snowmobile trail users themselves. The vast majority of respondents were either “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with Wyoming snowmobiling opportunities (95.6% of residents and 96.7% of non-residents). Most of the respondents of all user groups were very concerned about the issues surrounding YNP. This survey was the first Wyoming winter study to include outfitters and outfitter clients in the process, which helped to complete the snowmobiling picture for the state.

The overall economic impact of snowmobiling was found to be a total of \$234.3 million in Wyoming during the 2000-2001 snowmobile season. Of this amount, 40% came from nonresidents, 40% came from residents, and 20% came from outfitter clients. It was estimated that the “new money” to the Wyoming economy (meaning the dollars that came from all nonresident snowmobilers, including outfitter clients who were nonresidents) totaled \$138.4 million. This dollar figure was estimated to support over 3,800 jobs and over \$50.2 million in labor income. Snowmobiling was also determined to bring in over \$10 million in government revenue for the 2000-2001 season, with about 70% of this revenue being from sales tax, 25% from gas tax, and 5% from user fees. With the possibility of the YNP snowmobile ban occurring at the time of this study, it was estimated that the ban would decrease Wyoming’s government revenue by \$1.3 million.

The survey also identified issues and priorities for snowmobile trail management in the state: Over 28% of residents and 16% of non-residents were not satisfied with parking availability. Nearly 20% of residents and 14% of non-residents were not satisfied with the availability of shelters. Over 19% of residents and 16% of non-residents were not satisfied with trail grooming and maintenance. Over 19% of residents and 5% of non-residents were not satisfied with law enforcement. Over 14% of residents and 15% of non-residents were not satisfied with trail signing.

2002 Wyoming ORV Survey

A survey of ORV users was conducted by the State Trails Program in 2002 to obtain baseline information from people who purchased Wyoming ORV permits the first year they were sold. This will enable the STP to compare this baseline information with data obtained in future years from the same survey. This intent of this survey was to help the STP better understand its constituents so they can better establish priorities for the new program, ensuring that the money received from the ORV sticker program is directed toward projects deemed necessary by those paying the fee.

This survey followed a format similar to the 2000-2001 Wyoming Snowmobile Survey. The questions were designed to be simple and concise while obtaining enough ORV

information to provide a good base data set. Another important consideration was to keep the survey short in order to encourage a higher response rate.

The final survey consisted of 14 questions plus a solicitation for other comments to be attached. These questions were divided into three main sections: General Wyoming ORV Information; Most Recent Trip Information; and Demographic Information. A mixture of “yes/no” questions, ranking matrices, and open-ended questions were used to add variety and flexibility. Since this was the first attempt at an ORV survey, open-ended questions allowed for many different types of answers while the matrices and “yes/no” questions provided a consistency between respondents.

Over 1,000 (510 resident, 500 nonresident) surveys were mailed out between August 2002 and October 2002. The overall response rate was 63.5%, but only 53.8% of the total responses were usable surveys (those who actually reported riding an ORV in Wyoming during the year). Due to the early mailing of the survey being prior to hunting season, it was assumed that the additional respondents were intending to ride but had not yet had the opportunity (Table 7). This was noted and further studies will be mailed out at a later date to include more respondents.

Table 7 - ORV Survey Responses

	Did Ride	Percent Ride	Did Not Ride	Percent Did Not Ride
Total:	538	84.59%	98	15.41%
Resident:	324	50.94%	4	0.63%
Nonresident:	214	33.65%	94	14.78%

The respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with their ORV experience on a scale. Most responded that they were either “Very Satisfied” or “Satisfied”, as the average ranking came in at 1.86 (“1” = “Very Satisfied”, “2” = “Satisfied”, “3” = “Dissatisfied”, “4” = “Very Dissatisfied”). Residents were slightly more dissatisfied than nonresidents (residents = “1.95”, nonresidents = “1.75”).

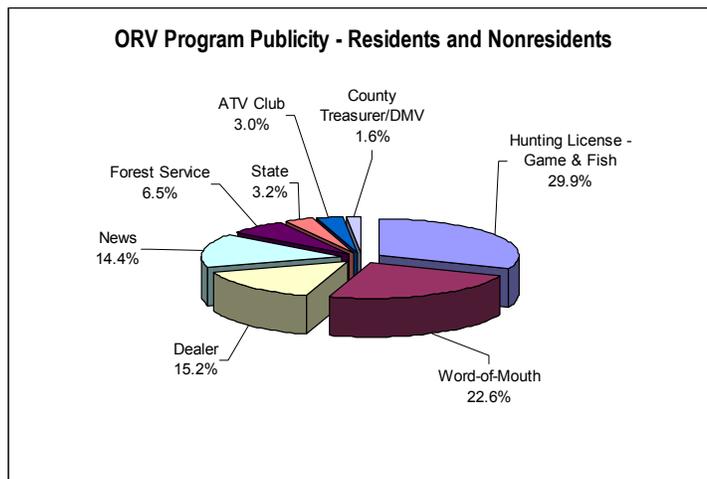
The question asking respondents to list their most preferred areas for ORV riding (Question #5) was intentionally designed as an open-ended inquiry. Since this was the first round of ORV surveying in Wyoming, the flexibility of an open-ended question would provide the respondent with a wide array of possible answers. Some people listed extremely specific areas such as “Penrose Trail – Story” and some left their response very general, such as “BLM Lands” or “Statewide”. The most popular specific answer in all three categories was the “Big Horns” and the most popular general answers in all three categories were “Hunting Areas”, “BLM Lands”, and “State Lands” respectively.

Table 8 - Preferred ORV Riding Areas

	Total Answers	Most Pref. #	Most Pref. %
Most Preferred Area:	440		
Specific: Big Horns		67	15.2%
General: Hunting Areas		44	10.0%
Second Preferred Area:			
Specific: Snowy Range		23	5.2%
General: Forest Service Lands		25	5.7%
Third Preferred Area:			
Specific: Lander/Med Bow National Forest		13	3.0%
General: Mountains		16	3.6%

The State ORV Program was still in its infancy at the time the 2002 ORV Survey was distributed. Since respondents had already purchased an ORV sticker, it was important that the STP understand where they first heard about the program so future efforts could be better targeted to advertise the program (Figure 7). The top four methods of information disbursement were (listed in order): the Wyoming Department of Game & Fish Hunting Regulations; Word-of-Mouth; ORV Dealers; and the Media (“Newspapers”, “TV”, “Radio” and “Other”). Nonresidents primarily heard about the Wyoming ORV Program through hunting information (73% of nonresidents) while residents primarily heard about the program through word-of-mouth (29.5% of residents).

Figure 7 - ORV Program Publicity



Expenditure information was gathered from the survey, although no IMPLAN analysis was conducted to determine primary and secondary impacts from ORV spending as had been done in the snowmobile survey. However, the survey did collect spending information on the participant’s most recent trip. It was found that nonresidents spend three times as much as residents per trip (total nonresident spending was \$322.54 per trip and resident total spending was \$111.35 per trip).

Table 9 - ORV Trip Expenditures

	Gas Ave.	Repair Ave.	Food/Lodging Ave.	Other Ave.	Total Spend Ave.
Total:	\$36.18	\$20.02	\$86.00	\$53.14	\$195.34
Resident:	\$25.43	\$27.77	\$43.02	\$15.13	\$111.35
Nonresident:	\$52.46	\$8.30	\$151.09	\$110.69	\$322.54

This survey provided some good baseline data to compare with future surveying efforts. While it is only a starting point for analyzing ORV user data and statistics, it will become very useful as more ORV recreationists are surveyed. Future analysis will be needed to determine the validity of these statistics and to identify trends across time.

The top three “Important Trail Features” identified by the survey were: trail availability, availability of other recreation and trail location. The next important features were: maps, signing and enforcement. The least important feature was fuel availability.

2002 Federal Agency Phone Survey

A representative sample of federal land managers from both the United States Forest Service (USFS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) were interviewed by telephone between October 4, 2002 and February 4, 2003 to get their input as to the effectiveness of the State Trails Program as a leader in coordinating a statewide trail system. Since the STP does not own any land or trails, and 98% of all trails are on federal lands, the success of the statewide trail system is highly dependent upon cooperative efforts between the STP and federal agencies. Forty-five (45) federal partners were interviewed. Questions were generally left open-ended but a few scale questions were also included to maintain an element of consistency between respondents.

The STP ranked as “fairly good” for an overall program (7.1 on a scale of “1” = “Extremely Poor” to “10” = “Extremely Good”). However, the federal partners ranked the STP lower as a collaborative partner (6.4). The respondents stated that the Trails Program is doing well with providing them additional funding through the RTP grant program, as well as providing additional resources (manpower) that they would not otherwise have. Many also stated that the partnerships involved with the new ORV Program were long overdue.

Improvements that can be made to improve the cooperative partnerships would be more assistance with the ORV issues – federal partners need help with enforcement, education, clarifying regulations and need the STP to take a leadership role. (It should be noted that this phone survey was conducted during the first year of the new State ORV Registration Program – funds and staffing were not yet available and there were numerous “growing pains” associated with start-up of a brand new statewide program.)

Other collaborative suggestions indicated that there are some issues with communication within the federal agencies, between upper management and those at the district level that responded to the survey, especially in terms of the STP involvement in NEPA analysis

and travel planning. It would be helpful for the STP to communicate simultaneously with all levels versus relying on the information filtering down from upper management. ORV trail signing guidelines for the state would be helpful to provide consistency. Federal agencies also expressed a desire to have training workshops available for the RTP grant application process.

2002-2003 Public Meetings

A series of 16 public “listening meetings” were held across the state by the State Trails Program to gather input on issues and priorities for trails in Wyoming. The meetings were conducted in a fairly informal manner to provide ample opportunity for attendees to ask questions or provide comments. Each comment or question was written down on a Verbal Comments Form to ensure an accurate account of each meeting was recorded. For those individuals who didn’t choose to speak in the public forum, General Comment Forms were provided so they could provide written comments. A Public Meeting Survey was also distributed to each person so a consistent set of questions was also presented that could be analyzed later.

Table 10 - Public Meeting Attendance/Locations

Date	Location	Attendance
Wed. Dec. 4, 2002	Riverton	32
Wed. Jan. 8, 2003	Evanston	10
Thurs. Jan. 9, 2003	Kemmerer	12
Tues. Jan. 14, 2003	Laramie	42
Tues. Jan. 21, 2003	Sundance	23
Wed. Jan. 22, 2003	Gillette	22
Wed. Feb. 5, 2003	Jackson	25
Wed. Feb. 26, 2003	Worland	29
Thurs. Feb. 27, 2003	Cody	24
Mon. March 3, 2003	Sheridan	22
Tue. March 11, 2003	Rock Springs	13
Wed. March 12, 2003	Afton	25
Thurs. March 13, 2003	Pinedale	14
Mon. March 17, 2003	Casper	19
Thurs. April 10, 2003	Cheyenne	4
Thurs. May 8, 2003	Saratoga	19
	TOTAL:	335

Although each area had its own unique concerns and issues, the meetings were deemed to be a success since a theme of key issues became clearly identified consistently with every meeting location. Issues related to the new ORV registration and trails program overwhelmed the discussion at every meeting. This matched with input received from the federal land managers who partner with the STP.

When the surveys, general comment forms, and verbal comment forms were all combined, five common topics emerged as the primary issues facing recreational trails management in Wyoming. Since the meeting attendees represented many different user groups, federal and state agencies, as well as representatives of Wyoming's Congressional delegation, there was a strong indication that these topics should become the focus for future goal and priority setting by Wyoming's trail managers. The five primary issue areas that were identified include: ORV Issues, Non-Motorized/Historic Trail Issues, Snowmobile Issues, RTP Grant Issues and Planning/Collaboration Issues.

CHAPTER FIVE – TRAIL MANAGEMENT ISSUES

ORV Issues

ORV issues overwhelmingly dominated every public meeting held during this planning process. This was somewhat expected since this is the newest trails program (implemented in 2002) in the state with many growing pains inherent with any new program. The public was clearly stating that there is a lot of work to be done on ORV issues. The five main focal points raised for ORV management issues throughout the planning process were: more trails, more loops, more connections and better maintenance of existing trails; more enforcement is needed, including to help address user conflicts between ATVs and non-motorized users; more access is needed (opening closed roads, access points to trailheads – including trailhead development); better signing/mapping; and more public education provided on the rules and regulations pertaining to ORV use along with safety education. The inherent question with the start-up of this new program is what are the priorities and where do you start.

Non-Motorized/Historic Trail Issues

Many areas of the state felt there needed to be more focus by the state on non-motorized trail management to help advocate for non-motorized trail management on federal lands. There also appears to be support from both motorized users and non-motorized users to implement some type of non-motorized user fees to support a funding program for non-motorized trail projects.

The over-riding issues with historic trails is that there often is no public access to the historic routes so it becomes difficult to use them for a recreational trail experience – efforts are needed to create opportunities beyond auto tour routes.

Snowmobile Issues

Generally, there was a high degree of satisfaction expressed with the snowmobile trails in Wyoming. Some areas expressed a desire for more grooming and others expressed a need to increase fees to keep up with the growing cost of snowmobile trail grooming. While snowmobilers are generally satisfied with the current system, trail managers should strive to provide a level of service that either meets or exceeds the current level, to ensure the satisfaction level remains high. Many concerns with access, snow removal at parking areas, and the ability to continue snowmobiling cross-country were also raised during this planning process. Funding emerged as one of the greatest issues facing snowmobiling.

RTP Grant Issues

There is a high degree of support and satisfaction with the RTP grant program. However, it was recognized during the planning process that this program must be reauthorized by Congress for it to continue. Suggestions were made at a few of the meetings to hold instruction classes on filling out the applications and how to properly estimate project costs and timelines. Many club members and federal partners were interested in applying for future grants and wanted clarification on qualifying projects.

Planning/Collaboration Issues

Some federal partners would like a more cohesive planning effort between the state and federal agencies. The various trail managing agencies should strive for ways to improve communications and to share information. The numerous federal agency planning efforts have the potential to affect recreation access, particularly for motorized trail users.

General Issues

A ranking matrix is one way of measuring opinions about a wide range of topics. This approach was used to analyze responses to Section 1 of the Public Meeting Survey that was distributed at each public meeting. A small minority of respondents commented that

the matrix was hard to answer because they participated in more than one type of trail activity and wanted to rank each activity separately. However, they were instructed to fill out the matrix based on their opinions of the overall rating of the State Trails Program and trails recreation in general in Wyoming. Most of the surveys were from ORV users or snowmobilers rather than other types of recreationists. However, it is important to note that some of the respondents were also non-motorized users and thus rated their experiences based upon the management actions of non-motorized trail systems.

The responses to this Public Meeting Survey showed that Wyoming’s statewide trail system was overall rated in the middle of the road. Wyoming’s trails rated highest for “Trail Difficulty” and “Fuel Availability”. Conversely, they rated lowest for “Enforcement” and “Trail Connectivity”. Although suggestions were made on how to improve the program and many respondents stated they were not currently happy with the ORV Program, the public responded that they were generally “Satisfied” with the overall program and trail system.

Below is a summary of how the statewide Wyoming trail system rated. The higher the number, the lower the satisfaction level of the respondent. These ratings can help guide trail managers prioritize their resources and efforts.

Table 11 - Trail Characteristic Ranking

**Scale: 1=Extremely Satisfied,
2=Satisfied, 3=Not Satisfied,
4=Extremely Dissatisfied

<u>Trail Characteristic</u>	<u>Overall Average Score</u>
Difficulty	2.2
Fuel Availability	2.2
Location	2.3
Condition	2.3
Access	2.4
Signing	2.4
Safety/Education Programs	2.4
Access to Other Recreation	2.4
Resource Protection	2.4
Variety	2.5

Map Availability	2.5
Solving User	
Conflicts	2.5
Communication	2.5
Connectivity	2.6
Increased	
Enforcement	2.8

2003 Wyoming SCORP Issues

The 2003 Wyoming SCORP can also be used by trail managers to help establish goals and priorities. Chapter 6 – Trails can be found on pages 64-70 of the document. Three main studies were conducted to gather input on overall recreation needs in the state. A user survey was randomly mailed to determine future demand on recreation facilities; a provider’s survey was sent to local, state and private outdoor recreation providers to inventory existing recreation facilities; and a phone survey was administered to 15 recreation districts to collect more information on new or expanding facilities. All of the studies provided useful information but will not be discussed in great detail in this document since only a few main issues pertain to trails.

The user’s survey produced results that indicated “Off-Highway Vehicle Travel” didn’t receive a good rating when each respondent was asked to rate the service within their county (SCORP, p. 42, 2003). The provider and phone surveys showed how important recreation opportunities are (SCORP, p. 47, 2003) to their individual communities (ranking second only to “education”). These surveys also showed that communities are interested in adding trails to their existing systems (SCORP, p. 49, 2003).

The main difference between this update of the SCORP and prior versions was that ORV management issues have only recently become a concern – they weren’t even on the radar screen when the previous survey had been conducted. The issue of “ATV control” was listed in the user survey as the #5 issue in response to the question, “What are the top issues or concerns for outdoor recreation in Wyoming?” (SCORP, p. 50, 2003) Also, “Motorized and Non-Motorized Trails” were listed as one of the priority recreation issues for the next five years, meaning that their importance is now officially recognized and eligible for LWCF monies.

CHAPTER SIX – VISION, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Vision Statement

The overall vision for the Wyoming statewide trails system was developed through a series of discussions between the State Trails Advisory Council and the State Trails Program, taking into account the public input received through the surveys and public meetings. This vision was designed to be simple and general enough to complement the overall missions of all Wyoming land managing agencies.

The Vision for this Wyoming State Trails Plan is to present the framework for:

“A trail system that provides diverse recreational opportunities while encouraging responsible use, promoting resource protection and ensuring access.”

Statewide Goals and Objectives to Reach Vision

Since this State Trails Plan is a statewide planning document, the goals and objectives are intentionally very simple and general to allow each agency the flexibility to incorporate them into their own individual planning documents, such as travel plans, management plans or agency-wide planning documents, as they best fit. While it will be up to each land manager as to how they wish to implement the goals and objectives through their own specific action items, the vision, goals and objectives should be followed to the greatest extent possible to provide a cohesive effort for trails planning and management across Wyoming. The single Statewide Goal and accompanying Statewide Objectives for this Statewide Trails Plan are as follows:

Single Statewide Goal:

Provide diverse recreational opportunities for all trail users.

Statewide Objectives:

1. Encourage collaboration to enhance partnerships between agencies and with users.
2. Promote educational awareness that encourages responsible use and promotes resource protection.
3. Identify and protect existing and potential trail opportunities and access.
4. Secure funding resources for the development, maintenance and management of trails.
5. Develop new trails that are designed to enhance user experience and develop loops or link communities, services, features and other trail systems.
6. Mitigate trail impact on the natural environment through redesign, relocation and reconstruction.
7. Provide regular maintenance of existing trails.
8. Consider social and economic impacts of trails.

State Trails Program Goals and Objectives – Vision 2010

In addition to the Statewide Goals and Objectives outlined above, the State Trails Program has set the following more specific objectives and priorities for the Wyoming

State Trails Program in their role as a trail provider/facilitator in Wyoming. Vision 2010 is their plan that spells out strategies and an action plan by which the Program can work toward accomplishing its priorities, goals and objectives between 2005 and 2010. Excerpts pertaining to statewide trails management are as follows:

Snowmobile Program

Management of snowmobile trails is a primary role of the STP. Goals and objectives for the Snowmobile Program include:

1. Improve Snowmobile Trail Signing:
 - A. Annually review snowmobile signing guidelines and update as needed to stay current with management issues, program direction and International Association of Snowmobile Administrators (IASA) guidelines.
 - B. Update the snowmobile trail signing guidelines regarding the use of directional arrows prior to the winter of 2005-2006 and implement any new guidelines on-the-ground prior to the 2007-2008 winter season.
 - C. Pursue opportunities for the installation of permanent signing to the greatest extent possible where feasible to minimize labor costs and to provide more effective trail signing.
 - D. Pursue opportunities to expand snowmobile trail staking contracts with local clubs and organizations.
 - E. Pursue opportunities to expand the use of volunteers to accomplish snowmobile trail staking and maintenance.
 - F. Establish a training program to train STP staff, volunteers and contractors in proper snowmobile trail staking guidelines and techniques.
 - G. Investigate new/better equipment and materials to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of snowmobile trail staking.

2. Improve Snowmobile Trail Maintenance:
 - A. Pursue the overlay of snowmobile and ORV trail routes to the greatest extent possible where feasible and compatible to provide more cost-effective and efficient trail maintenance.
 - B. Ensure summer snowmobile trail maintenance, improvement, rerouting and signing continues at a level that meets management guidelines and assures the proper management of resources.
 - C. Investigate new/better equipment and materials to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of snowmobile trail maintenance.

3. Improve Snowmobile Trail Grooming:
 - A. Establish a snowmobile trail groomer operator training and certification program based upon IASA guidelines.
 - B. Analyze the cost-benefit of grooming snowmobile trails with STP staff and equipment versus grooming trails with private contractors.

- C. Establish a snowmobile trail grooming monitoring and quality compliance program.
 - D. Regularly review and analyze area grooming schedules to ensure the most efficient and cost-effective routing and daily/weekly scheduling.
 - E. Increase weekly grooming repetitions in high use areas and on other trails where monitoring indicates a need for additional grooming to ensure safe, high-quality trails.
 - F. Provide trail grooming on ungroomed trails, where possible, to improve trail safety and quality.
4. Improve Access for snowmobiling:
- A. Actively participate in land managing agencies land use planning processes to advocate for snowmobiling access.
 - B. Pursue the improvement of parking and trailhead facilities for snowmobilers.
 - C. Pursue written easements for snowmobile trail routes across public and private lands.
5. Improve Snowmobile Safety and Education:
- A. Pursue additional warming shelters in key locations.
 - B. Require all STP staff to receive avalanche awareness training.
 - C. Use partnerships with land managing agencies and other local agencies to provide on-the-ground education/enforcement to trail users.
 - D. Through the STP Education Coordinator, develop volunteer partnerships that use the Trail Patrol to provide on-the-ground education to snowmobilers.
 - E. Use the STP Education Coordinator to facilitate safety and user ethics training for snowmobilers statewide.
 - F. Use the STP Education Coordinator to provide snowmobile safety training for STP field staff.
 - G. Work to increase awareness of the Snowmobile Program and to let snowmobilers know what they get for their registration dollars through the distribution of maps and brochures related to snowmobiling, the STP website, and regular news releases about Snowmobile Program functions, activities and projects.
6. Improve Snowmobile Funding:
- A. Pursue an additional \$400,000 per year in snowmobile registration and user fee revenue by the 2005-2006 winter season to fund shortages caused by inflation, revenue shortfalls and increased grooming costs.
 - B. Pursue an additional \$600,000 per year in state snowmobile gas tax distributions by the 2008-2009 winter season to provide additional grooming on high-use trails and to provide snowmobile trail grooming on trails that are currently ungroomed.

ORV Program

Management of ORV trails is a primary role of the STP. Goals and objectives for the ORV Program include:

1. Improve ORV Trails:
 - A. Coordinate with land managing agencies to establish ORV trail systems that provide more ORV trails versus ORV roads and to provide loop trails and connecting links along with motorcycle single-track trails.
 - B. Coordinate with land managing agencies to provide trail maintenance that properly manages use impacts to resources.
 - C. Establish guidelines as to where and how the STP will provide ORV road maintenance associated with ORV use impacts.
 - D. Investigate proper ORV road maintenance equipment and acquire as needed to provide maintenance on enrolled ORV roadways according to STP guidelines.
 - E. Pursue the overlay of snowmobile and ORV trail routes to the greatest extent possible where feasible and compatible to provide more cost-effective and efficient trail maintenance.

2. Improve ORV Trail Signing:
 - A. Work with partner agencies to establish statewide ORV signing guidelines by May 2005.
 - B. Annually review ORV signing guidelines and update as needed to stay current with management issues and program direction.
 - C. Pursue opportunities to establish signing contracts with local clubs and organizations.
 - D. Pursue opportunities to expand the use of volunteers to accomplish ORV trail signing and maintenance.
 - E. Establish a training program to train STP staff, volunteers and contractors in proper ORV signing guidelines and techniques.
 - F. Continue to review and evaluate ORV sign materials.

3. Improve ORV Safety and Education:
 - A. Require all STP staff that operates ATVs and/or off-road motorcycles to be current on safety training and provide the required training through the STP Education Coordinator.
 - B. Use partnerships with land managing agencies and other local agencies to provide on-the-ground education/enforcement to trail users.
 - C. Through the STP Education Coordinator, develop volunteer partnerships that use the Trail Patrol to provide on-the-ground education to ORV riders.
 - D. Use the STP Education Coordinator to facilitate safety and user etiquette/ethics training for ORV riders statewide.
 - E. Improve the quality of ORV maps and the distribution to trail users statewide.

- F. Work to increase awareness of the ORV Program and to let ORV riders know what they get for their registration dollars through the distribution of maps and brochures related to ORVs, the STP website, and regular news releases about ORV Program functions, activities and projects.
4. Improve ORV Access:
 - A. Actively participate in land managing agencies land use planning processes to advocate for ORV access.
 - B. Pursue the improvement of parking and trailhead facilities for ORV riders.
 - C. Pursue written easements for ORV trail routes across public and private lands.
 - D. Pursue state land managing agency partnerships to expand ORV trail and riding area opportunities.
 - E. Encourage land managing agencies to update their inventory of routes and areas open to ORV use and to consider accepting/incorporating some user created routes since many were created during “open” cross-country travel periods and often lead to desirable destinations.
 - F. Pursue additional “enrollments” by local agencies.
 5. Manage and Improve ORV Funding:
 - A. Develop broad criteria and guidelines for distribution of ORV Program revenue.
 - B. Collect data regarding average ORV gasoline consumption and pursue re-authorization of the ORV state gas tax distribution prior to its sunset on June 30, 2008.
 6. Conduct ORV Program Monitoring:
 - A. Actively solicit on-going public input regarding this young program to ensure public priorities and needs are being met through user surveys, public meetings, on-trail contact logs and by analyzing permit sales data.
 - B. Actively monitor and critique successes and failures of on-the-ground projects to help develop and revise guidelines, policies and models for this young program.

RTP Grant Program

Management of the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) Grant Program is a primary role of the STP. Goals and objectives for the RTP Grant Program include:

- A. Work with the State Trails Advisory Council to annually review and update program guidelines and selection criteria to keep current with Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) requirements for the program.
- B. Continue to require a “motorized” use presence in all Diversified funding category projects since motorized users fund 100% of the grant program.

- C. Continue funding the State Trail Crew with Diversified RTP funds as a tool for STP to help federal agencies statewide improve and maintain trails.
- D. Since the STP is the primary facilitator of motorized trails in Wyoming, continue requiring that STP must be the primary sponsor of all Motorized project applications and that STP be either the primary sponsor or a co-sponsor of all Diversified project applications to ensure the limited amount of funding is used to accomplish priority projects.
- E. Develop criteria to ensure snowmobiling receives its “fair share” of RTP funding in respect to what snowmobilers contribute as compared to the heavy interest in ORV projects influenced by the young ORV Program that could potentially overwhelm and overshadow snowmobile projects.
- F. Utilize Non-Motorized grant funds as STP’s primary tool to support non-motorized trails in Wyoming.
- G. Annually nominate Wyoming RTP projects for national Coalition for Recreational Trails (CRT) awards.
- H. Regularly provide current Wyoming motorized recreational vehicle data to FHWA to ensure their apportionment formula properly allocates Wyoming’s fair share to the program.
- I. Manage the program to ensure that FHWA guidelines are followed, that proper project monitoring and inspections occur, and that the program makes timely draw-downs and reimbursements.
- J. Develop a sign to be posted at all project locations recognizing that: 1) RTP funded the project and 2) that the RTP funding source is from the federal gas tax paid by motorized recreational vehicles.
- K. Work to increase awareness of the RTP Grant Program through the STP website, use of on-the-ground signing and regular news releases about RTP Program functions and projects.

Registration Program

Management of the Snowmobile and ORV Registration Programs is a primary role of the STP. Goals and objectives for the Trails Program’s management of the Registration Program include:

- A. Manage the Registration Program to ensure proper and timely reporting and accounting by selling agents.
- B. Provide sales data in a timely manner and useable format so information is readily available for Snowmobile and ORV Program management.
- C. Utilize selling agents to provide public information regarding the Trails Program, including: laws, regulations and requirements; trails and riding areas; safety and use issues; special local projects or activities; etc.
- D. Develop criteria and policies for managing permit selling agents, including: desired agent locations, agent selection, agent reporting and auditing, collection of delinquent agent reports and payments, agent termination, etc.
- E. Use partnerships with federal agencies and county sheriffs to provide registration compliance and on-the-ground education and enforcement.

Education and Safety

Providing Education to motorized trail users is a primary role of the STP. Goals and objectives for the Trails Program's efforts related to Education include:

- A. Use partnerships with land managing agencies to provide on-the-ground education to trail users.
- B. Develop guidelines and procedures to establish a statewide Trail Patrol program to deliver on-the-ground education to trail users.
- C. Use the STP Education Coordinator to develop volunteer partnerships statewide that implements a Trail Patrol education program for motorized trail users.
- D. Use the STP Education Coordinator to facilitate safety and user ethics training for motorized trail users statewide.
- E. Use the STP Education Coordinator to serve as the program's safety officer by providing monthly safety audits and training for STP field staff.
- F. Work to increase awareness of the State Trails Program through the distribution of maps and brochures related to the Snowmobile and ORV Programs, the STP website, and regular news releases (average of 2 per month for 1st year of this plan and then increase to an average of 1 per week beginning in 2006) about program functions, activities and projects.

Non-Motorized Trails

Management of Non-Motorized Trails is a secondary role of the STP since other federal, state and local agencies are the primary non-motorized trail managers in Wyoming. Since concurrent non-motorized trail use is allowed on all motorized trails (all motorized trails are open to multiple use whereas non-motorized trails are typically exclusive use/non-motorized use only trails), primary efforts of the STP in respect to motorized trail management result in many indirect, secondary benefits for non-motorized trail users. Goals and objectives for the Trails Program's efforts related to Non-Motorized Trails include:

- A. Continue to support non-motorized trails through Non-Motorized RTP grants to local sponsors.
- B. Encourage non-motorized groups to partner with motorized groups to apply for Diversified RTP grant funds.
- C. Encourage communities to pursue TEAL funding from WYDOT for community pathway and greenway projects.
- D. Support the efforts of non-motorized user groups to pursue non-motorized user fees that could potentially be managed by the STP.
- E. Utilize the State Trail Crew to accomplish trail projects that meet the intent of Diversified RTP funding and where non-motorized groups are partnering with motorized groups to promote multiple use.

CHAPTER SEVEN – IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

This Plan shall take effect upon its publication. Since this Plan involves a commitment from land managing agencies that have been in existence for many years, some of the objectives outlined to achieve the vision and goal for trails in Wyoming are already being practiced.

Monitoring of this State Trails Plan will take place, at a minimum, once every five years. However, the State Trails Program and land managing agencies should make an attempt to review their progress on the plan's vision, goals and objectives on an annual basis.

Particular to the new State ORV Program, the STP should consider surveying ORV users on an annual basis to continually identify user trends and priorities to guide program expenditures during the start-up phase (first five years) of the program.

Snowmobile users should be surveyed every five to seven years to stay current with snowmobiling trends and priorities to guide the STP with expenditure of Snowmobile Program funds.

The STP and Trails Advisory Council should consider holding either a statewide listening meeting/conference once every two to three years to solicit feedback from Wyoming's

trail users and agencies or periodically hold regional meetings across the state to solicit feedback. Regularly scheduled Trails Council meetings could also be used to monitor the vision, goals and objectives by rotating the meeting locations throughout the state and scheduling a time during each meeting for “public input.”

The State Trails Advisory Council, given its make-up and representation of Wyoming’s diverse trail user groups, provides a structure for continual and constant monitoring and feedback to the STP and land managing agencies regarding trail issues and management in Wyoming.

This State Trails Plan should be updated every five to ten years to keep pace with the ever-changing demands and priorities for recreational trails in Wyoming.

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