

WYOMING STATE TRAILS PROGRAM

5-Year Plan for Motorized Trails & Recreation Grants

2023 to 2028



Trails Program Mission Statement

We provide high-quality motorized recreation opportunities and promote safe and responsible use of motorized recreational vehicles while also providing grant funding for all types of recreational trails.

October 2023

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NOTE: This is the 4th in a series of long-range Priority Action Plans for the Wyoming State Trails Program, dating back to 2004. It has been prepared by Trails Work Consulting (TWC) for the Wyoming Department of State Parks & Cultural Resources – Division of State Parks, Historic Sites & Trails (SPHST) and the Wyoming State Trails Advisory Council. This plan update included public input received through three stakeholder surveys, one conducted by TWC and two by the University of Wyoming.

MOTORIZED TRAILS & RECREATION GRANTS: 5-YEAR PLAN

MOTORIZED TRAILS PROGRAM: OVERALL OPERATIONS – CRITICAL ISSUES

1. ISSUE – Implementation of an electronic permit sales system:

- A. Over 90% of resident and nonresident snowmobile and ORV permits are currently sold by local selling agents using an outdated, hand-written, triplicate carbon copy form. This process is quite cumbersome for selling agents as well as the public permit purchasers.
- B. All commercial snowmobile registrations are currently sold directly by SPHST, which requires considerable handwork. Additionally, commercial snowmobile operators are required to report their snowmobile fuel use monthly, which also requires significant handwork.
- C. This antiquated system results in considerable handwork for agents and SPHST accounting – which ultimately results in up to 6-month delays for reports and other data needed by the State Trails Program (STP) for budgeting, as well as long delays in access to vehicle ownership information by law enforcement agencies.

GOAL: Place high priority on implementing a fully electronic permit sales system.

OBJECTIVES:

- i. Implement the initial electronic sales system for all snowmobile permits (resident, nonresident and commercial) by September 1, 2023. Failure to meet this deadline could potentially result in a full season delay.
- ii. Incorporate monthly electronic reporting of commercial fuel use in the electronic system.
- iii. Implement the initial electronic sales system for all ORV permits by January 1, 2024. Failure to meet this deadline could potentially result in a full season delay.
- iv. Evaluate integration of the permanent staff position funded by STP and currently assigned to Concessions & Revenue in Cheyenne into the Lander Trails Office to assist with operation of the new system and help ensure Legislative intent of dedicated STP funding.
- v. Continually monitor the new electronic permit sales system to ensure start-up bugs are quickly addressed to avoid potential revenue loss. Also have a back-up plan in place in the event of catastrophic failure during early phases of implementation.
- vi. Continually pay close attention to making continued refinements and improvements during initial implementation years.
- vii. Continue to closely monitor system operations and make annual adjustments/improvements as needed over the long-term.

2. ISSUE – A high level of staff turn-over due to low salary scales is affecting the Field Office workforce:

- A. The Field Staff has not been fully staffed for a complete summer or winter work season the last several years due to staff leaving for other local, higher paying jobs.
- B. Field staff turn-over has been affecting the Program's ability to accomplish all scheduled work projects.

GOAL: Continue implementation and refinement of Field Staff reorganization. Initial focus included reclassification/class upgrades for the Field Operations Manager, Program Support Manager, and two Field Foremen positions. Additional focus should also assess any potential staff needs as well as also continuing to monitor and refine job responsibilities for the Shop Foreman and Trade Specialist positions.

OBJECTIVES:

- i. Continue to develop and refine job responsibilities of the Field Operations Manager.
- ii. Continue to develop and refine job responsibilities of the Program Support Manager.
- iii. Continue to develop and refine the job responsibilities of the Field Foreman positions.
- iv. Continue to evaluate and refine the classification and the job responsibilities of the Shop Foreman and Trade Specialist positions.
- v. Continually assess additional staff needs, including for potential clerical/accounting tasks.

3. ISSUE – Lack of affordable housing for staff is also affecting trail crew staff retention:

- A. For permanent staff, this relates to low salary scales mentioned in #2 above and the high ‘cost of living’ in Lander.
- B. For seasonal staff, it’s a combination of tight rental markets, high cost of rent, and low wage scales.
- C. This issue also involves the high cost and tight availability of lodging in some communities while crews are traveling performing field work across the state during their work week.

GOAL: Pursue potential solutions to staff housing issues:**OBJECTIVES:**

- i. Continue to advocate for increased salary scales for permanent and seasonal staff to help them be able to afford to live in Lander and work for the Trails Program.
- ii. Pursue installation of RV sites within the Lander shop complex for housing seasonal staff with their own RV. Also, consider the feasibility of adding state-owned RVs at the Lander shop complex for seasonal or year-round staff housing.
- iii. Investigate the feasibility of constructing an employee dormitory within the Lander shop complex.
- iv. Investigate the feasibility of renting homes on a monthly or year-round basis in areas near regular field work sites (Dubois, Star Valley, Snowy Range as examples – depending upon annual work plans for snowmobile and/or ORV field work) to help combat high seasonal pricing and lack of lodging availability issues for field staff.

4. ISSUE – With high staff turn-over rates, as well as a growing number specialized needs, staff training continues to gain importance and will require additional investments of time and money:

- A. There continues to be a shortage of field staff who have a Commercial Driver’s License (CDL certification) which is required to operate the semi-tractor to transport Sno-Cats and construction equipment to and from field locations.
- B. The list of important or required training needs includes, but is not limited to: saw certification, snowmobile and ORV operation training, basic and advanced first aid, avalanche training, groomer operation, backcountry survival, etc.

GOAL: Place higher emphasis on an on-going staff training program.**OBJECTIVES:**

- i. Utilize experienced internal staff to provide annual staff training on snowmobile, ORV and Snowcat operation.
- ii. Utilize external resources to ensure all employees are regularly trained on all pertinent topics according what is encountered through their normal work duties.
- iii. Create and implement a plan for additional field staff to achieve their CDL certification ASAP.

- iv. Create and implement a plan to achieve on-going required training to meet a wide range of needs, including but not limited to: saw certification, snowmobile and ORV operation training, basic and advanced first aid, avalanche training, groomer operation, backcountry survival, etc.

5. ISSUE – As the Program’s fleet of vehicles and equipment continues to grow, there is a growing need for more efficient fleet management as well as insufficient indoor storage space for snowmobiles, ORVs, Snowcats and a variety of other equipment that needs to be stored out of the weather:

- A. The fleet inventory database needs to be improved and expanded to better track location and use of the full range of the STP’s vehicle and equipment fleet.
- B. Beginning with the 2025 Biennium, all equipment purchases must be included in a B-11 Exception Request – which will require a higher degree of pre-planning.
- C. Snowcats need to be stored out of sunlight to protect their rubber tracks from UV light deterioration.
- D. Snowmobiles and ORVs need to be stored indoors during their off-season to protect them from damage from sunlight and rodents.
- E. Many other pieces of trail construction and maintenance equipment would benefit from indoor versus outdoor storage, ultimately helping prolong their life cycle.

GOAL: Pursue improved fleet management procedures and potential solutions to storage needs at the Lander shop complex.

OBJECTIVES:

- i. Develop an improved electronic fleet management system to track the location, use and maintenance of all STP owned vehicles and equipment.
- ii. Develop a turn-over schedule of all STP-owned vehicles and equipment to aid planning for Biennium equipment exception requests.
- iii. Investigate the feasibility of replacing the current Cat House/lean-to shed at the Lander shop complex with a new fully enclosed storage building – and also possibly incorporating dormitory space for seasonal staff into this same structure.

6. ISSUE – The State of Wyoming recently purchased the Collins Building in Lander – a significant portion of which has been leased by the Trails Program for over 25 years and used as its Field Office and shop complex. Other portions of this building have been, and will continue to be, leased to other State and Federal agencies:

- A. Trails Program funds/Snowmobile and ORV funds were used to fund 100% of the building complex’s purchase.
- B. Overall management of the facility will be handled by the State of Wyoming’s Facilities Management Office in Cheyenne, with the ‘other portions’ of the office building not currently used by the Trails Program continuing to be leased to the existing other State and Federal agencies.
- C. Since this is a new ownership/management system, it will likely take time to work through identifying all transition issues and developing long-term property management coordination needs and protocols.

GOAL: Work closely with Building Services for a smooth management transition of the Lander shop complex while also working to maximize long-term benefits of the Program’s financial investment in this important infrastructure.

OBJECTIVES:

- i. Develop a set of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the Lander shop complex as this management transition progresses.
- ii. Consider developing a master plan for potential future STP space needs related to shop/office/storage/staff housing/etc. within this complex.

SNOWMOBILE TRAILS PROGRAM – CRITICAL ISSUES

1. ISSUE – Operating Costs have continued to increase since the last registration and user fee increase was in authorized in 2014:

- A. Trail grooming is the largest Program expense, currently costing about \$2.6 million per year (51% of the Snowmobile Program budget) with over \$1.85 million of that work (37% of the Snowmobile budget) performed by private contractors. Contract grooming remains the most important tool for delivering winter grooming across the state even though grooming contract costs have increased by an average of 3.9% up to 11.3% per year over the last 23 years (19.5% since 2017, 38% since 2012, 123% since 2004, and 160% since 1999), driven by increased equipment and operating costs. The average ‘per mile’ grooming contract cost was \$9.75 in 1999, \$11.37 in 2004, \$18.42 in 2012, \$21.25 in 2017 and has increased to \$25.39 per mile groomed in 2022. So, based upon trends over most recent years, this means that the ‘contractor-operated’ portion of the grooming budget must generally be increased by at least \$72,000 per year to keep pace with current grooming levels – or, alternatively, overall statewide grooming efforts would need to be reduced by at least 2,800 miles of grooming each subsequent year.
- B. State-operated grooming, as well as situations where state-owned equipment is provided to contractors for their operation, has expanded over the last fifteen years in an effort to address trail grooming needs more effectively in smaller trail areas and where there are contractor challenges. Consequently, there are currently six areas which are wholly state-operated with another four locations state-owned grooming equipment is provided to contractors or federal agency partners. Consequently, there are currently a total of thirteen Program-owned trail grooming units in the State grooming fleet. This number of units continues to challenge current infrastructure and staffing abilities for funding equipment replacement, maintenance, operation, and storage, as well as timely transportation to and from filed locations by CDL certified staff.
- C. Snow removal at parking areas is an added cost for winter operations and continues to increase as larger and additional parking areas are developed to provide improved, safe access to snowmobiling areas. Snowmobile Program snow removal budgets totaled only \$17,500 in 2004, were \$90,000 in 2017, and increased to \$138,700 for the 2022-2023 winter season – a 54% increase over 5 years. This cost factor will only continue to grow as more winter parking improvements continue to come on-line in high-use areas across the state.

GOAL: Pursue an increase for the resident snowmobile registration fee, nonresident snowmobile user fee, and commercial snowmobile registration fee.

OBJECTIVES:

- i. Work with the Wyoming Trails Advisory Council, the Wyoming State Snowmobile Association, Governor’s office and the Legislature to pass a fee increase bill within the next one to three years. A fee increase is overdue since the fees were last raised 10 years ago (was in 2014 and 2024 is the earliest that Legislative approval could be achieved). Additional revenue will be needed to help catch up from rising costs, as well as to help keep the Snowmobile Program self-sufficient and healthy over the next 5 to 10 years

- ii. Perform a regional market analysis prior to the 2024 Legislative session to compare current snowmobile fee trends in surrounding Midwest and Western states to determine a reasonable/doable fee proposal package. The 2014 Legislature raised resident and nonresident permit fees, from \$25 to \$35, and commercial registration fees, from \$75 to \$105.
- iii. Brief the Governor's office and the Travel, Recreation, Wildlife & Cultural Resources (TRWCR) Legislative Committee on the need for a snowmobile fee increase prior to and during the 2024 legislative session, with a goal of, hopefully, having TRWCR adopt it as a 2024 interim study topic – and (again hopefully) ultimately resulting in their sponsorship of a fee increase as a 'Committee Bill' during the 2025 legislative session. If unsuccessful in initial attempt, continue monitoring and stay engaged until successful.

2. ISSUE – Federal land managers have limited personnel for winter partnerships:

- A. Since SPHST does not have law enforcement authority on non-SPHST lands, partnerships with the USDA Forest Service (USFS) and other agencies are essential for providing law enforcement and on-the-ground monitoring of snowmobile use. However, the USFS typically has lower staffing levels during winter.
- B. While the importance of STP providing grants to the USFS (by far its largest federal land manager partner) to help fund winter-season agency employees has grown, the USFS sometimes struggles to fully take advantage of this State funding and provide an adequate number of staff to fulfill Program needs.

GOAL: Pursue new, more creative staffing partnerships with the Forest Service.

OBJECTIVES:

- i. Expand OHV grant funding for both snowmobile and ORV related Trail Ranger work to include funding USFS career seasonal '18 & 8' positions in an effort to hopefully bring longer-term stability to this workforce partnership on a year-round basis.
- ii. Continue to monitor success and issues with current staffing partnerships while also continually evaluating other potential new staffing partnerships with the USFS, as well as the BLM.

3. ISSUE – Forest Service Land Use/Forest Planning, Travel Planning, and other localized NEPA planning processes continually pose potential challenges to current snowmobile access opportunities, particularly for cross-country travel.

- A. Implementation of the 2015 USFS Over-Snow Vehicle (OSV) Travel Rule – Subpart C reopens all snowmobiling areas statewide to access and management scrutiny by land managers as well as a wide range of 'quiet use,' conservation and environmental groups.
- B. The Bridger-Teton National Forest is embarking on an update to its Land and Resource Management (Forest) Plan which will bring in-depth review and analysis of current and future recreation needs, along with renewed debate over motorized and nonmotorized use zones and subsequent area allocations.
- C. There is a backlog of Forests across the state who have not yet fully implemented travel and mapping requirements prescribed by the 2015 OSV Travel Rule.
- D. When multiple planning processes occur simultaneous across the state, it can be challenging for the STP to become and remain fully engaged in planning processes that typically span several months up to several years. Yet, the Snowmobile Program must actively participate in all agency planning processes (forest-wide, district-wide and/or localized projects) to retain a full range of snowmobiling opportunities for users.

GOAL: Continually stay fully engaged in all levels of federal, state and local land use planning which could potentially affect snowmobile access.

OBJECTIVES:

- i. Continually nurture and enhance positive working relationships with the Forest Service, as well as the BLM on a much more limited basis, to provide trails, facilities, and services for snowmobiling on federal lands (location of over 98% of Wyoming's snowmobile trails).
- ii. Actively participate in all federal and state land managing agencies' land use planning and travel planning processes through staff and consultant involvement to advocate for continued and enhanced snowmobiling access. Emphasis should be on providing trail routes that connect to trailheads, services, and backcountry open play areas, as well as preserving and enhancing areas where off-trail, cross-country snowmobile travel is allowed.
- iii. Utilize the entire State parks agency throughout the process to ensure the messaging and comments provided during the planning processes are consistent and agreed upon unanimously.

- 4. ISSUE – There are a number of small access routes to historically popular snowmobiling areas on USFS lands in the Teton, Sublette and Lincoln County areas of western Wyoming which are not groomed or signed. Continued high local use causes these currently unmanaged areas to become increasingly rough as winter progresses. Consequently, public requests have increased over recent years to have some local access sites plowed, maintained and groomed by the Snowmobile Program for a short distance from parking areas.**

GOAL: Assess the feasibility of adding STP maintenance and grooming at historic local access points in the greater Jackson-Bondurant areas.

OBJECTIVES:

- i. Evaluate the potential interest and financial feasibility of working with private contractors to provide periodic trail grooming and parking lot snow plowing at historic local access locations. This would likely require the contractor to be equipped for 'mobile grooming' whereby the company would truck a small groomer to each contracted site as per a state-regulated schedule.
- ii. Evaluate the range of potential areas where 'mobile grooming' may be desirable, acceptable to the USFS, and financially feasible/sustainable.

- 5. ISSUE – Some of the most popular riding areas across the state experience extremely rough trails from concentrated traffic volumes leaving from and returning to popular parking areas and lodges. These rough trails have a negative effect on visitor satisfaction, particularly when the 'rough trail experience' occurs at the end of a visitor's day or trip.**

GOAL: Assess the potential to disperse traffic onto multiple egress/ingress routes leading from busy parking and lodge locations, in an attempt to provide improved trail conditions and increase visitor satisfaction.

OBJECTIVES:

- i. Investigate the potential and feasibility, as local topography allows, to add new alternate routes for short distances in and out of busy parking and lodge areas to disperse traffic impacts.
- ii. Investigate the potential and feasibility, as local topography allows, to provide additional side-by-side travel lanes (like 2-lane roads versus 4-lane roads with median separation) for short distances in and out of busy parking and lodge areas to disperse traffic impacts.

OFF-ROAD RECREATIONAL VEHICLE (ORV) TRAILS PROGRAM – CRITICAL ISSUES

1. ISSUE – Federal land managers are struggling to fill partnership staffing positions:

- A. Since SPHST does not have law enforcement authority on non-SPHST lands, partnerships with the USDA Forest Service (USFS) and other agencies are essential for providing law enforcement and on-the-ground monitoring of ORV use.
- B. While the importance of STP providing grants to the USFS and BLM to help fund spring-summer-fall-season agency employees has grown, these federal agencies sometime struggle to fully take advantage of this State funding and provide an adequate number of seasonal staff to fulfill Program needs.

GOAL: Pursue new, more creative staffing partnerships with the Forest Service and BLM.

OBJECTIVES:

- i. Expand OHV grant funding for both ORV and snowmobile related Trail Ranger work to include funding career seasonal USFS ‘18 & 8’ positions in an effort to hopefully bring longer-term stability to this workforce partnership on a year-round basis.
- ii. Continue to monitor success and issues with current staffing partnerships while also continually evaluating other potential new staffing partnerships with the USFS and BLM.

2. ISSUE – Forest Service and BLM Resource Management Planning and Travel Planning processes pose potential challenges to ORV riding opportunities:

- A. The Bridger-Teton National Forest is embarking on an update to its Land and Resource Management (Forest) Plan which will bring in-depth review and analysis of current and future recreation needs, along with renewed debate over motorized and nonmotorized use zones and subsequent area allocations.
- B. The Bighorn National Forest is planning to start revision of its Travel Management Plan, which will require full engagement and participation by STP.
- C. When multiple planning processes occur simultaneous across the state, it can be challenging for STP to become and remain fully engaged in planning processes that typically span several months up to several years. Yet, the ORV Program must actively participate in all agency planning processes (forest-wide, district-wide and/or localized projects) to retain a full range of ORV riding opportunities for users.

GOAL: Continually stay fully engaged in all levels of federal, state and local land use planning and travel planning which could potentially affect ORV access.

OBJECTIVES:

- i. Continually nurture and enhance positive working relationships with the Forest Service, BLM, the Office of State Lands and other local agencies to provide trails, facilities, and services for ORV riding on federal, state and local lands.
- ii. Actively participate in all federal and state land managing agencies’ land use planning and travel planning processes through staff and consultant involvement to advocate for continued and enhanced ORV riding access. Emphasis should be on providing trail routes that connect to trailheads, services, and backcountry destinations.

- iii. Utilize the entire State parks agency throughout the process to ensure the messaging and comments provided during the planning processes are consistent and agreed upon unanimously.

3. ISSUE – The STP needs to be responsive to a full range of ORV uses and keep pace with changing industry trends:

- A. The ORV Program is intended to cover a wide range of ORV vehicle types including Type 1: all-terrain vehicles (ATVs / 50” wide or less); Type 2: off-highway motorcycles (OHMs); and Type 3: all ‘other’ off-road recreational vehicles including utility trail vehicles (UTVs / ROVs/ side-by-sides), jeeps, light duty 4x4 trucks, dune buggies, etc.
- B. UTV/side-by-side ORVs continue to get wider – currently often in the range of 62-inches up to 64+-inches wide – which is too wide for many existing trails on federal lands which were built to only accommodate up to 50-inch-wide ATVs.
- C. There are new State laws which require additional safety equipment on ORVs operated on enrolled roadways.
- D. There continues to be an extreme statewide shortage of narrow, single-track trails designed specifically for Type 2 ORVs / OHMs.

GOAL: Continue to advocate for access to a full range of ORV riding opportunities, with special emphasis on more single-track trails for OHMs and wider trails for UTVs and jeeps across the state.

OBJECTIVES:

- i. Continually nurture and enhance positive working relationships with the Forest Service, BLM, the Office of State Lands and other local agencies to provide trails, facilities, and services for ORV riding on federal, state and local lands.
- ii. Actively participate in federal and state land managing agencies’ land use planning and travel planning processes through staff and consultant involvement to advocate for continued and enhanced ORV riding access. Emphasis should be on providing trail routes that connect to trailheads, services, and backcountry destinations.
- iii. Actively advocate for the USFS to convert more of their Level 2 roads to Motorized trails open to all – which would 1) provide additional riding opportunities for unlicensed youth riders, 2) require less safety equipment on ORVs since they would no longer be operated on a roadway, 3) provide State trail maintenance dollars versus needing to use USFS road funds, and 4) continue to provide full-sized agency vehicle access for firefighting and other USFS maintenance and operational needs.

4. ISSUE – There is a growing need for parking area development to serve ORV users who desire to trailer their vehicles to remote locations not connected to communities and current service areas.

GOAL: Identify potential areas of need and investigate the feasibility and affordability of additional parking area development.

OBJECTIVES:

- i. Actively assess parking needs for ORV riders statewide.
- ii. Investigate potential partnerships along County Road rights-of-way and adjacent to State and private lands.
- iii. Investigate potential development on USFS and BLM lands.

- 5. ISSUE – There is a need to get a handle on the location and quantity of roadways currently enrolled by their managing government agency into the STP’s ORV Trails Program, as well as a need for additional Enrolled Roads being added to connect USFS and BLM trail routes to services and local communities:**
- A. STP currently does not have a complete inventory of all roadways which have been enrolled since the ORV Trails Program was started in 2002.
 - B. There is a growing need and interest for ORV riders to be able to drive their ORVs directly from communities and to be able to drive to services versus having to trailer their units to and from nearby trail areas.
 - C. The need for roadway enrollment into the ORV Program is potentially affected/diminished by ORVs which have Wyoming MPV plates or license plates from their home state, which thereby allows this group of ORVs to be ‘street legal’ on any roadway without a WY ORV permit.

GOAL: Put increased emphasis on the management of Enrolled Roadways.

OBJECTIVES:

- i. Develop a user-friendly database, connected to inter-active maps, of all roadways currently enrolled with the STP.
- ii. Obtain data regarding the number of MPV plates which have been issued to ORVs in Wyoming (by county).
- iii. Work with local user groups and road managers including USFS, BLM, WYDOT, counties, cities and towns to identify key roadways that could safely be used to connect communities, trailheads, services, and backcountry destinations.

- 6. ISSUE – There is a growing need for ORV use monitoring for use in Program management decisions, as well as to ensure there is factual data available for use during agency travel planning processes:**

GOAL: Put increased emphasis on ORV use monitoring.

OBJECTIVES:

- i. Consider installing traffic counters in high use areas and areas of special local concern to track seasonal and long-term use trends. Special emphasis should be placed on areas where agency travel management processes are underway and/or anticipated within coming years.
- ii. Investigate the availability of research studies, from NOHVCC or other peer reviewed sources, which have evaluated the impacts of full-sized vehicle’s (cars, trucks, jeeps, etc.) use of enrolled roadways versus impacts to these same enrolled routes from ORV use.
- iii. Consider conducting photo monitoring at specific locations based upon specific time periods that also includes specific time samplings of traffic use patterns.

- 7. ISSUE – Existing trail areas offer a relatively short season of opportunities:**

- A. The majority of current ORV trails are located on USFS lands which have a relatively short use and construction season due to heavier snowpack in the high-country that often doesn’t dry out until mid-summer.

GOAL: Pursue strategies to diversify and expand year-round ORV riding opportunities in a wider range of statewide settings.

OBJECTIVES:

- i. Continually evaluate new opportunities for ORV trails and riding areas on lower elevation BLM lands and State lands.

- ii. Investigate the feasibility of long-term leases from the Office of State Lands, counties and cities for ORV riding areas in lower elevation locations.

8. ISSUE – Operating Costs have continued to increase since the ORV registration/user fee was implemented in 2002:

- A. There is a single registration/user fee for all ORVs with no differentiation between residents, nonresidents or commercial use vehicles – even though commercial ORVs are typically used on trails significantly more total days than resident and nonresident ORVs.
- B. The ORV fee was initially established at \$15 per vehicle and has never been increased in over 20 years. In comparison, the snowmobile fee is already at \$35 per year for residents and nonresidents – and needs to be raised to cover increased operating costs.
- C. There has been tremendous growth in the number of commercial/rental ORVs since 2002. These vehicles are used substantially more days than privately owned ORVs, which creates substantially more wear and tear on trails where they are operated. Commercial ORVs currently only pay \$15 per year per unit – versus an annual commercial snowmobile fee of \$105 per year.
- D. Since the ORV Program was initiated in 2002, trail construction and maintenance costs, along with growing needs for trail ranger funding, has increased significantly.

GOAL: Evaluate the need to increase fees for resident and nonresident ORVs and consider creating a commercial ORV registration fee.

OBJECTIVES:

- i. Work with the Wyoming State Trails Advisory Council, Governor’s office and the Legislature to consider a fee increase bill within the next two to three years. A fee increase is likely overdue since the fees have never been raised since the Program was created over 20 years ago. Additional revenue will be needed to help catch up from rising costs, as well as to help keep the ORV Program self-sufficient and healthy over the next 5 to 10 years.
- ii. Perform a regional market analysis prior to the 2024 legislative session to compare current ORV fee trends in surrounding Midwest and Western states to determine a reasonable/doable fee proposal package.
- iii. Brief the Governor’s office and Travel, Recreation, Wildlife & Cultural Resources (TRWCR) Legislative Committee on the potential need for an ORV fee increase prior to and during the 2024
- iv. Legislative session, with a goal of (hopefully) having TRWCR potentially adopt it as a 2024 interim study topic – ultimately (again hopefully) resulting in their sponsorship of a fee increase as a ‘Committee Bill’ during the 2025 legislative session. If unsuccessful, continue monitoring needs and stay engaged until successful.

RECREATION GRANTS PROGRAM: OVERALL OPERATIONS – CRITICAL ISSUES

1. ISSUE – There is a need for additional staffing to keep up with timely dispersion of new funds, proper project monitoring, and inspections since there are a growing number of State and Federally funded projects that are continually in either an ‘active application’ or ‘awarded/in-progress’ status:

GOAL: Develop a staffing plan to address current workloads and administrative requirements, as well to be able to properly cover any potential growth in LWCF, RTP and/or State OHV Grant levels.

OBJECTIVES:

- i. Continually monitor and evaluate staff workloads; propose additional staff positions as needed through the Biennium budgeting process.
- ii. The Assistant Director will continue to be the final approval signature on all RTP and State OHV grant agreements and reimbursements.
- iii. The Trails Program Manager will continue to be the ‘Applicant’ signatory for all STP-sponsored RTP grant applications.
- iv. The Trails Program Manager and Program Support Manager will work together to manage all STP-sponsored grants.
- v. The Program Support Manager and Grant Specialist will work together to reimburse all STP-sponsored grants.
- vi. Designate the Program Support Manager and the Grant Specialist to conduct site inspections related to all types of Program-managed recreation grants.

2. ISSUE – Implementation of an on-line grant application and management program:

- A. The current application process involves cumbersome paper shuffling that results in an overabundance of background information still being submitted by some grant sponsors despite directions to limit materials.
- B. All of the current grant programs each have a different application process, with each being located on different websites – so a new on-line site will create a ‘one-stop shop’ for all recreation grants.
- C. Many steps may be able to be streamlined – which could potentially save time for applicants as well as Program staff.

GOAL: Place high priority on developing and implementing an on-line grant program.

OBJECTIVES:

- i. Investigate potential models used by other Wyoming entities or other states to determine if any may be feasible for Wyoming.
- ii. Implement an initial on-line system within one to three years, depending upon availability and suitability of existing systems that could be adapted for Wyoming STP.
- iii. If existing models prove to be unsuitable for STP needs, pursue an RFP for a custom-designed program for STP to meet the ‘within one to three years’ goal.

3. ISSUE – Federal agency staffing and administrative rules seem to be continually changing:

- A. This requires the Grant Program to continually monitor and to be flexible and responsive to their changing conditions in order to continue building and maintaining effective partnerships with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and National Park Service (NPS) staff.
- B. Frequent changes in FHWA and NPS rules requires continual education and training.
- C. An influx of one-time federal funding, coupled with staff shortages, has caused a recent downturn in federal land managing agency applications for State funding.

GOAL: Continue to maintain and build upon federal agency partnerships at all levels which are critically necessary to providing and enhancing recreational trail opportunities across Wyoming.

OBJECTIVES:

- i. Keep grant requirements and application process as simple and least burdensome as possible in order to be adaptive to changing partner situations – while also assuring that all required state or federal grant management and accounting protocols are met.

- ii. Be aggressive with keeping State grants staff up-to-date with all federal requirements through on-going participation in a full range of opportunities including local, regional and national training seminars and conferences.
- iii. Continue to use federal agency spring and fall operating plan meetings to cultivate partnership relationships and educate new and existing staff on the wide range of trail grant opportunities available to them.
- iv. Consider including pre-season field trips, in conjunction with agency operating plan meetings with agency personnel, to look at anticipated scope of work for proposed projects and to identify any additional NEPA needs.

STATE OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE (OHV) TRAIL GRANTS – CRITICAL ISSUES

1. ISSUE – While the involvement of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in trail operations and maintenance has been growing across Wyoming, internal operational policies have generally excluded them from sponsoring State OHV grant projects:

- A. This policy prevents funding some on-the-ground and/or educational partnerships that could potentially benefit local trail operations across Wyoming.
- B. NGOs have the potential to capture new/additional funding from non-traditional sources.
- C. NGOs can sometimes be better positioned to manage or directly accomplish projects in local areas.

GOAL: Monitor and revise policies as needed to allow NGOs to sponsor State OHV grant projects.

OBJECTIVES:

- i. Define allowable expenses for NGO-sponsored grant projects.
- ii. For projects located upon State land or federal land: require that Agency Consent Forms be submitted as part of any NGO grant application to ensure proposed scope of work has been pre-approved by the federal land managing agency/landowner where project is located.
- iii. For projects which include trail routes located upon ‘enrolled roadways’ including within their road rights-of-way and not located within blocks of State land or federal land: require proof of the roadway’s enrollment into the State ORV Program by the agency with jurisdiction over that roadway (city, county, WYDOT) – along with an Agency Consent Form – be submitted as part of any NGO grant application.
- iv. Require that all state and federal environmental clearances are in order (as applicable to proposed project) prior to application submission.

2. ISSUE – The popularity of Trail Ranger Grant applications continues to grow, along with what specific items agencies are requesting to be eligible for reimbursable expenses.

- A. Total demand may begin to exceed available funding.
- B. Sheriff Office partnerships are requesting funding for officer overtime expenses (we already pay USFS LEO overtime costs).
- C. Funding for partner positions may require consideration of allowing payment for permanent staff versus the current practice which is limited to only seasonal staff.

GOAL: Provide maximum funding and expense latitude for Trail Ranger partnerships.

OBJECTIVES:

- i. Re-evaluate the range of allowable expenses for Trail Ranger grants.
- ii. Evaluate funding needs for funding permanent staff or other alternative staffing conventions.

- iii. Evaluate whether a ‘threshold / maximum percentage of total Snowmobile and ORV budgets’ should be established – to help manage overall budget abilities – as Trail Ranger applications continue to grow.
- iv. Develop a ranking system to help award Trail Ranger grants that includes data from UW user studies, historic contact report data from applicant areas, and other pertinent local factors.

FEDERAL RECREATIONAL TRAILS PROGRAM (RTP) GRANTS – CRITICAL ISSUES

1. ISSUE – Wyoming RTP Grants are operated on a ‘Programmatic Match’ basis whereby the required 20% State match is provided by pre-selected projects for a program-wide match versus each individual project providing its own 20% minimum match:

- A. All grants are currently required to be ‘100% State Trails Program (STP) sponsored or co-sponsored’ to provide proper pre-screening of projects to ensure a reliable funding plan for the State’s total 20% match is in place. While this requires a pre-application process, it has worked well and has helped build better projects.
- B. All Motorized and Diversified Use grant project categories are programmatically matched with State Snowmobile and ORV funds, which has worked well as long as there is motorized use allowed in all Diversified Use projects.
- C. All Nonmotorized grant projects have been programmatically matched by Wyoming State Park’s project funds, which at times has become more challenging.
- D. Projects sponsored by a federal agency require a 5% non-federal match directly from the application’s sponsor (that federal agency), which has potential to deter applications from federal units unable to meet that requirement.

GOAL: Evaluate potential different programmatic funding sources for Nonmotorized category projects.

OBJECTIVES:

- i. Continue to use the ‘100% STP sponsored or co-sponsored’ requirement to evaluate and coordinate overall State programmatic match ability.
- ii. Evaluate the continued long-term ability to use State Park funds for all or a portion of the required 20% Nonmotorized category match.
- iii. Evaluate the potential to use Outdoor Recreation Office funds for all or a portion of the required 20% Nonmotorized category match, as well as to potentially help provide funding to federal agencies who are unable to provide their required 5% non-federal match.
- iv. Evaluate the feasibility of using more match from selected (reliable/responsible) local Nonmotorized category grant sponsors to provide a portion of the required 20% Nonmotorized category match.

2. ISSUE – Nonmotorized winter trail grooming projects have been managed by STP staff through State grooming contracts, which has become more challenging:

- A. It has become more difficult to ‘sole source’ State service contracts; current contracts could potentially receive a maximum four more annual 1-year extensions before a rebid will be required.
- B. STP staff who have been helping manage these nonmotorized grooming projects are primarily paid by motorized (snowmobile & ORV) funds.

- C. Annual funding for nonmotorized winter trail grooming has been managed as a set-aside and limited to a total of \$82,000 to \$85,000 per grant cycle (approximately 20% of the typical Nonmotorized category annual apportionment).
- D. The current nonmotorized winter grooming set-aside project has historically funded grooming in only four areas, while there is potential interest from a growing number of entities to also be able to receive this funding.

GOAL: Re-evaluate how Nonmotorized Winter Trail Grooming projects are treated in the RTP project selection process.

OBJECTIVES:

- i. Evaluate whether Nonmotorized Winter Trail Grooming projects should continue to be operated within a set-aside amount of funding or whether they should compete individually with all other Nonmotorized category project applications.
- ii. If Nonmotorized Winter Trail Grooming is continued to be operated as a set-aside, re-evaluate whether a '20%' set-aside or otherwise is the appropriate funding level going forward.
- iii. Evaluate whether it is feasible to continue using State trail grooming contracts after current contract periods expire. If not, develop a transition plan that clearly defines allowable grooming-related expenses for local sponsors.

3. ISSUE – Federal rules require State agencies to have a 'Title VI Plan' in place regarding inclusiveness in order to remain eligible for RTP funding:

- A. The Department of State Parks and Cultural Resources and Division of State Parks, Historic Sites & Trails does not currently have a Title VI plan in place.

GOAL: Adopt a Title VI Implementation Plan, ASAP.

OBJECTIVES:

- i. Create a Department/Division Title VI Implementation Plan in order to remain eligible to manage RTP funds.
- ii. Given current emphasis on Title VI being tied to federal funding opportunities, creation of this plan will also help make the Program competitive for other federal grants.

4. ISSUE – FHWA's RTP rules regarding Buy America and Buy American (BABA) have continued to change and evolve recently. This has limited or eliminated STP's ability to purchase trail groomers and other equipment with RTP funds the past few years. Additionally, rules related to 'manufactured products' has also limited or prevented the purchase of building and maintenance materials with RTP project funds by STP and local sponsors.

GOAL: FHWA issued a 'Waiver of BABA requirements for De Minimis Costs and Small Grants' in August 2023. This new waiver means that 'if the total amount of the project is below \$500,000, the Buy America requirements for iron, steel, manufactured product, and construction materials is waived. If the total amount of the project is over \$500,000, the allowable threshold for noncompliant products is the lesser of \$1,000,000 or 5% of total applicable costs for the project. However, if the noncompliant products include iron, steel, manufactured products, the FHWA's threshold amount of 0.1% of the total contract amount or \$2,500 applies.' Since all of Wyoming's RTP projects are below the \$500,000 threshold, STP can

now adopt new State policies that once again take advantage of the full range of permissible project expenses previously limited or prevented by BABA.

OBJECTIVES:

- i. Be aggressive as possible – to the extent permissible by annual apportionment rules – in using RTP funds toward the purchase of equipment and vehicles utilized directly by STP and through its partnerships. Continue to not allow the purchase of equipment and vehicles with RTP funds by non-STP entities due to life-cycle inventory control issues.
- ii. Be aggressive as possible – to the extent permissible by annual apportionment rules – in using RTP funds toward the purchase of building and maintenance materials with RTP project funds by STP and local grant sponsors.

FEDERAL LAND & WATER CONSERVATION FUND (LWCF) GRANTS – CRITICAL ISSUES

1. ISSUE – State Administrative Costs have recently become an eligible reimbursement expense for the first time in LWCF program history.

- A. New Federal rules allow a state to use up to 7% of its annual apportionment for administrative costs.
- B. Federal reimbursement of administrative costs requires a 50% State match.
- C. Current funding for Grants Program staff and operating costs comes primarily from a mixture of special purpose funds including State Snowmobile funds, State ORV funds, and Federal RTP administrative funds – along with a substantially lesser amount of State General Funds.
- D. State Snowmobile, State ORV and Federal RTP funds cannot be used as match toward LWCF administrative costs, so State General Funds are the only currently allowable funding source for LWCF related grant work.

GOAL: Implement an annual plan for state administrative LWCF cost expenditures that stays under the 7% annual federal cap, meets the 50/50 match requirement and also safeguards the integrity of other dedicated, specific purpose funding sources currently used within the Grant Program.

OBJECTIVES:

- i. Identify State General Funds that can be used to meet the State's 50% annual LWCF administrative match.
- ii. Ensure there is a tracking system in place, and which is continually followed, to ensure the integrity of Snowmobile, ORV and RTP funds as it relates to paying for the Grant Program's administrative staff time as well as any other administrative costs (share of office supplies, phone, networking, travel, etc.).

2. ISSUE – Federal rules require that recreation lands and facilities paid for with LWCF funds must continue to be used solely for recreational purposes in perpetuity.

- A. Historically, there have been a number of 'conversions' in local communities and elsewhere whereby portions of parks, for example, have been converted to other than 'recreational use' (water towers, schools, etc.). Such conversions must be rectified – which is typically a long-drawn-out and very time-consuming administrative process.
- B. Since there has been zero federal administrative funding, the State has been very lax in performing site inspections to confirm continuing recreational use of the hundreds of old LWCF projects funded over previous decades.

GOAL: Implement a plan to prevent future conversions while also performing catch-up LWCF site inspections to identify and rectify any existing conversions.

OBJECTIVES:

- i. Assign staff to perform site inspections while ensuring time and any other associated expenses are covered by LWCF Administrative Funds matched with State General Funds.
- ii. Develop an updated GIS-based mapping system to replace hand-drawn maps used for many of the old projects.
- iii. Develop a digital tracking system for site inspections.
- iv. Identify and rectify all existing conversions.

3. ISSUE – The current application process does not adequately help identify good versus poor projects and sponsor abilities:

- A. Many projects run into implementation problems due to inadequate understanding of grant rules and local sponsors not being fully prepared or equipped to satisfactorily manage project to completion – and for perpetuity.
- B. More background information is likely needed for project selection process.

GOAL: Evaluate current application process and implement changes as needed to modernize and streamline project application and administration process.

OBJECTIVES:

- i. Continue developing and refining recently implemented preapplication and pre-inspection requirements for all proposed grant projects.
- ii. Provide on-going consultation and guidance to interested applicants.

4. ISSUE – With implementation of the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA), the LWCF grant program keeps adding new sub-categories of funding specifically for new target populations:

- A. Recent additions include new guidance for the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership (ORLP) program that targets economically disadvantaged urban communities and the Readiness and Recreation Initiative (REPI) program that secures acquisitions or easements for conservation purposes on military bases.
- B. Each addition requires more staff time and additional staff training needs.

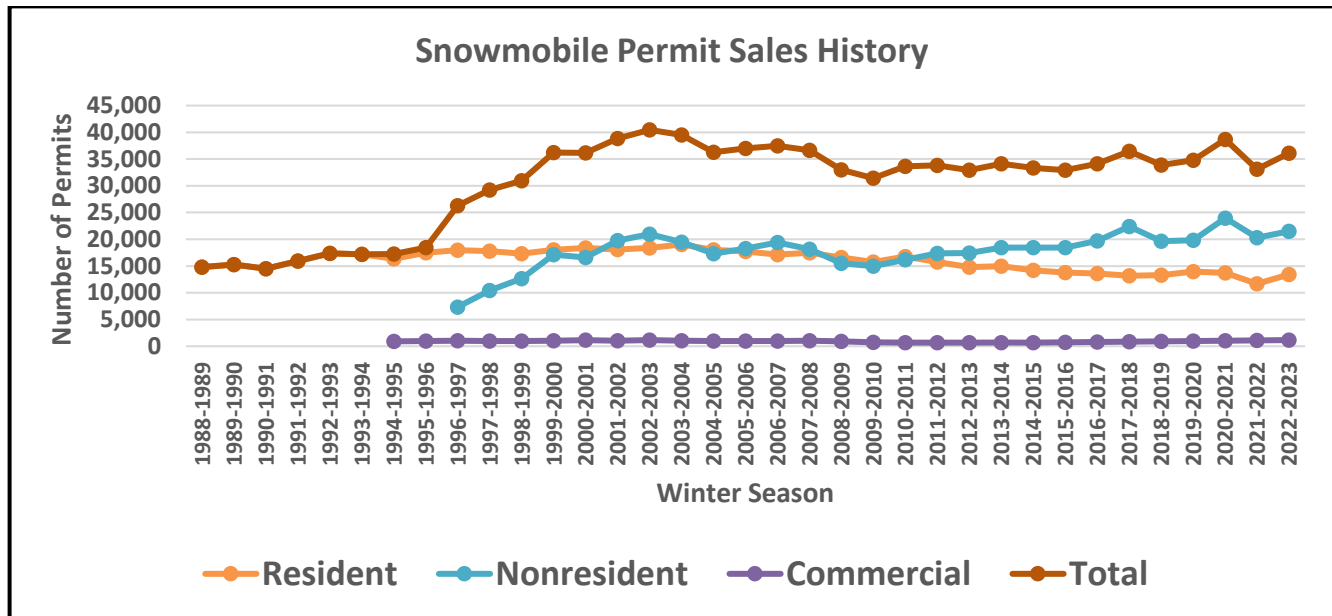
GOAL: Keep up with growing staffing needs required as new components are added to the LWCF grant program by federal administrators.

OBJECTIVES:

- i. Continually monitor work load levels and be aggressive in addressing staffing levels needed to stay in compliance with all federal expectations and requirements.

APPENDIX OF BACKGROUND INFORMATION

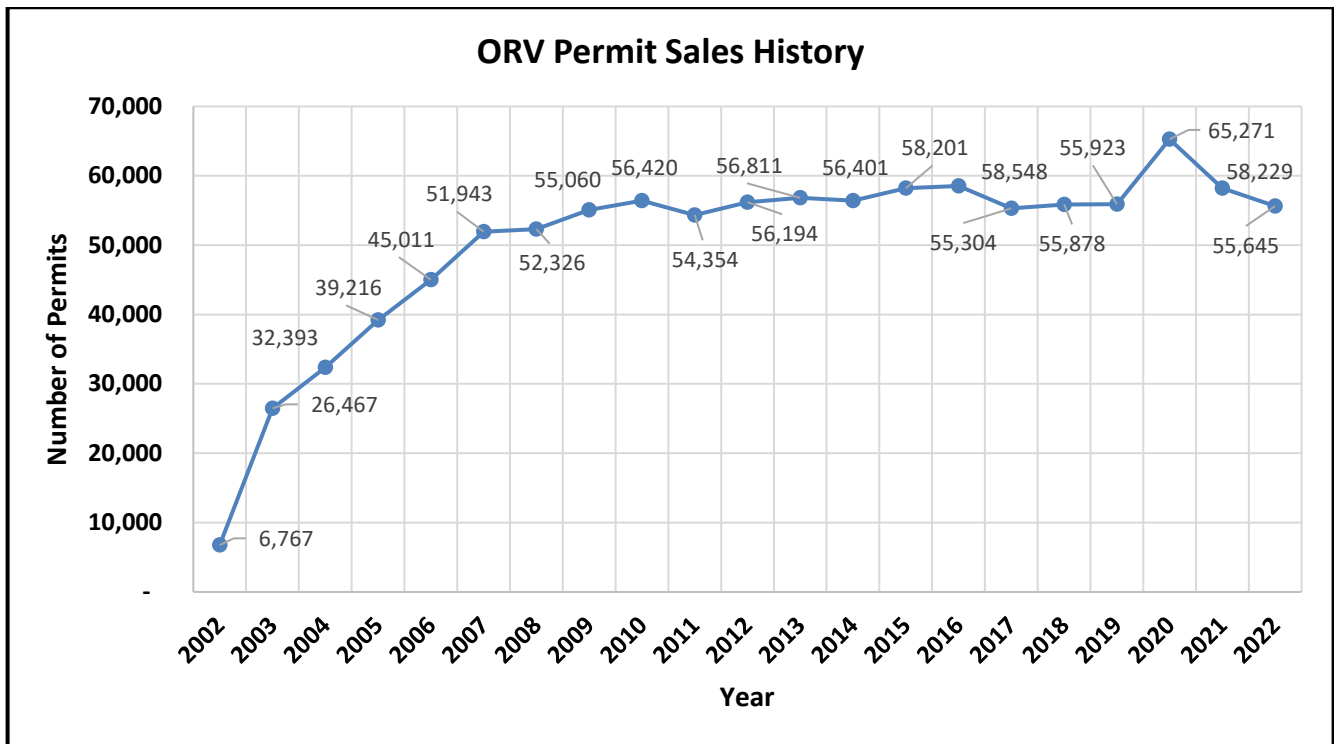
SNOWMOBILE TRAILS PROGRAM REVENUE TRENDS



The Snowmobile Program is 100% self-funded and was created in 1984 with a snowmobile registration fee being established at \$10 per snowmobile for Wyoming residents. In 1990, the cost of a Resident registration was raised to \$15. In 1994, a Commercial snowmobile registration fee was created at a cost of \$50, followed by a \$15 Nonresident snowmobile user fee being added in 1996. In 2005, Resident and Nonresident fees were increased to \$25 and the Commercial fee was raised to \$75. In 2014, Resident and Nonresident fees increased to \$35 per snowmobile and Commercial fees were raised to \$105; this remains the current fee structure as of 2023. The Program also receives a \$28.75 state gas tax distribution for each resident and nonresident permit sold along with a gas tax distribution for commercial snowmobiles based upon gallons of gas used in those snowmobiles each season (2023 avg. = \$25.48 per commercial sled). Additionally, it routinely receives close to \$1 million annually in RTP grant funds from federal gas tax related to snowmobile use. The Snowmobile Program's 2022-2023 operating budget was approximately \$4.5 million.

- **Total snowmobile permits:** total permit sales numbers peaked in 2002-2003 when 40,454 permits were sold. Current 10-year average = 34,739 permits sold; 5-year average = 35,289 permits sold.
- **Resident snowmobile permits:** sales numbers peaked at 19,031 in 2003-2004 but have declined to below 1980's-era numbers the past nine seasons. A historic low occurred in 2021-2022 with only 11,677 resident snowmobile permits being sold (39% below the peak year). The current 10-year average = 13,582 permits sold; 5-year average = 13,215 permits sold – which is 30% below the peak year.
- **Nonresident snowmobile permits:** the peak sales season was 23,967 in 2020-2021, which was 75% greater than resident numbers that season. They have consistently outpaced resident permit sales the past 12 years – and 17 of the past 22 years. The current 10-year average = 20,271 permits sold; 5-year average = 21,524 permits sold – which is 61% of the total average annual permit sales numbers.
- **Commercial snowmobile permits:** sales numbers peaked at 1,137 in 2000-2001, but then fell to the 700± level since 2009 when Yellowstone National Park's commercial snowmobile rules were tightened. However, since 2017, commercial snowmobile permit sales numbers have steadily climbed back to a total of 1,136 in the 2022-2022 winter season. This rebound in commercial snowmobile numbers is totally attributed to commercial rental and outfitter growth outside Yellowstone National Park since the number of snowmobiles allowed in Yellowstone has remained status quo over this same time period. The current 10-year average = 886 permits sold; 5-year average = 1,020 permits sold – which represents 47% growth since the low point of only 696 commercial sleds in the 2013-2014 winter season.

ORV TRAILS PROGRAM REVENUE TRENDS

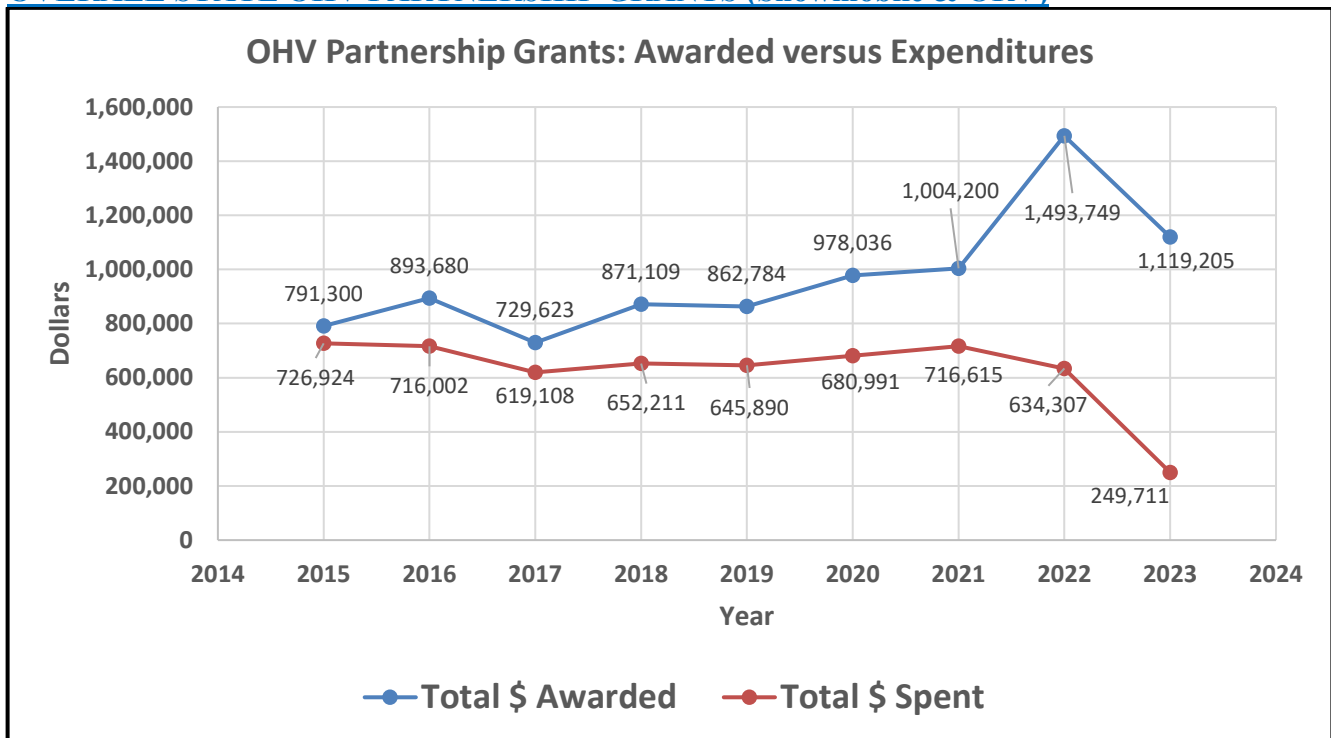


The ORV Program is also 100% self-funded and was created in 2002 when a \$15 registration user fee was established for all ORVs (resident, nonresident and commercial alike, as well as for all three ORV types) and still remains the current fee in 2023. The Program receives \$18.40 in state gas tax disbursements for every permit sold, along with occasional federal RTP grant funding from gas used in ORVs. The ORV Program's 2023 operating budget was approximately \$2.5 million.

- ORV permit numbers sold equaled 65% of total snowmobile permit numbers the first full year they were sold and exceeded total snowmobile permit sales numbers by its fourth year of existence – as well as every year since.
- Over 50,000 ORV permits have been sold annually for the past 16 years (and 16 of the 21 total years the ORV permit has been in existence), including a spike to 65,271 permits sold during the 2020 COVID year.
- 10-year average = 57,621 permits sold; 5-year average = 58,189 permits sold

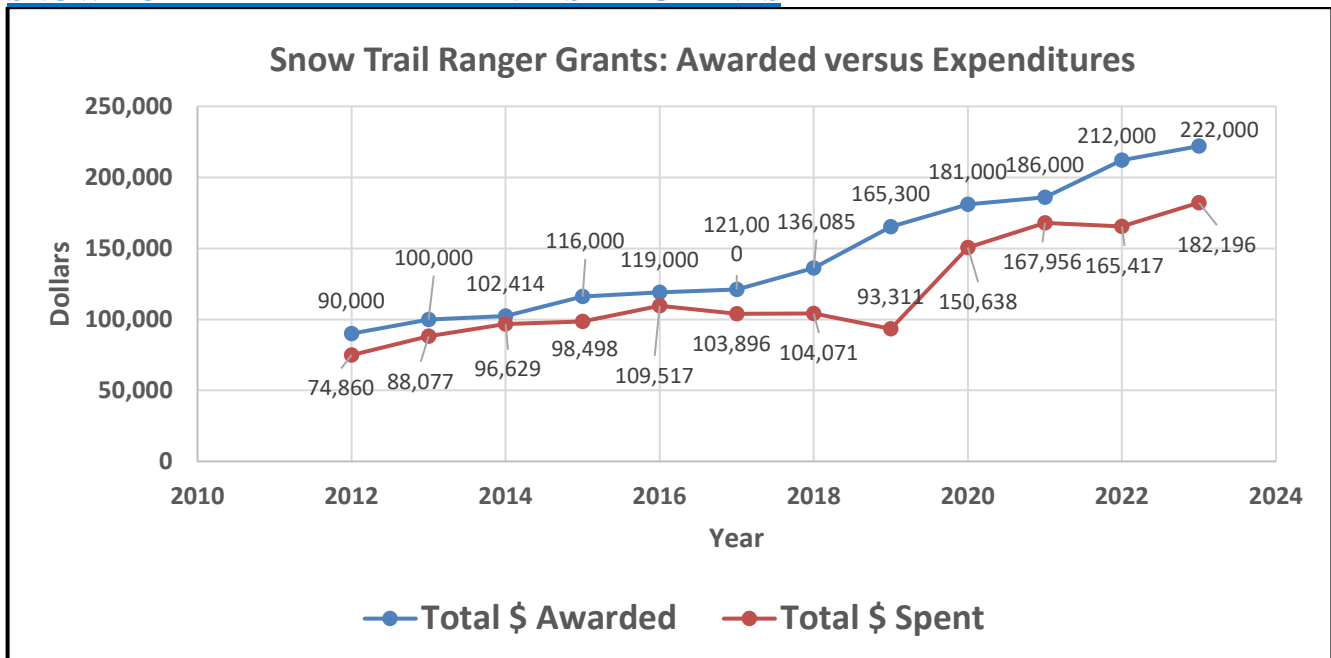
RECREATION GRANTS PROGRAM FUNDING & PARTICIPATION TRENDS

OVERALL STATE OHV PARTNERSHIP GRANTS (Snowmobile & ORV)

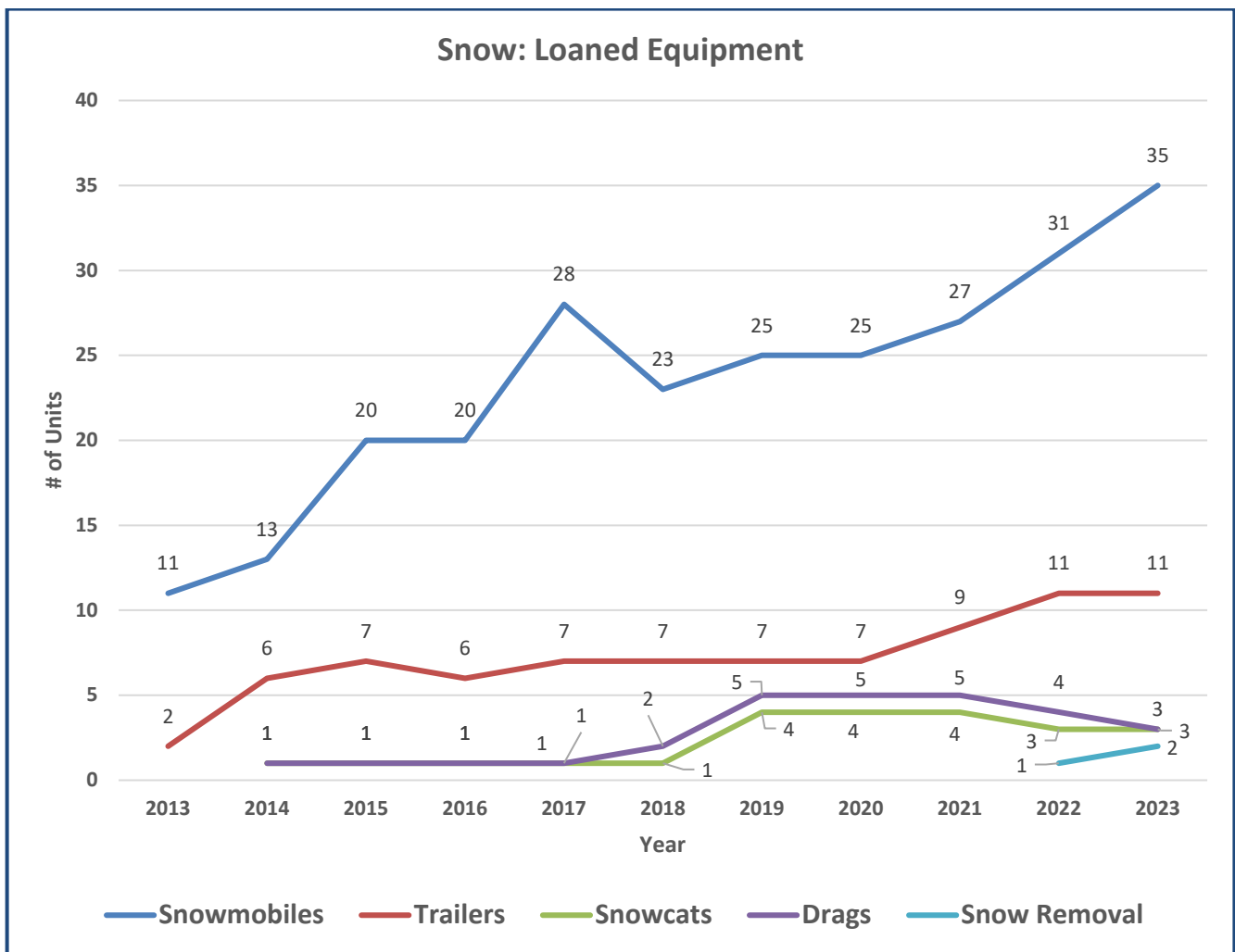


- Overall annual OHV grant dollars awarded have grown to over \$1 million over the past 3 years.
- Total OHV dollars actually spent are consistently lower than awarded dollars. (NOTE: some 2022 and most 2023 grants are still in progress – so those final amounts are incomplete)

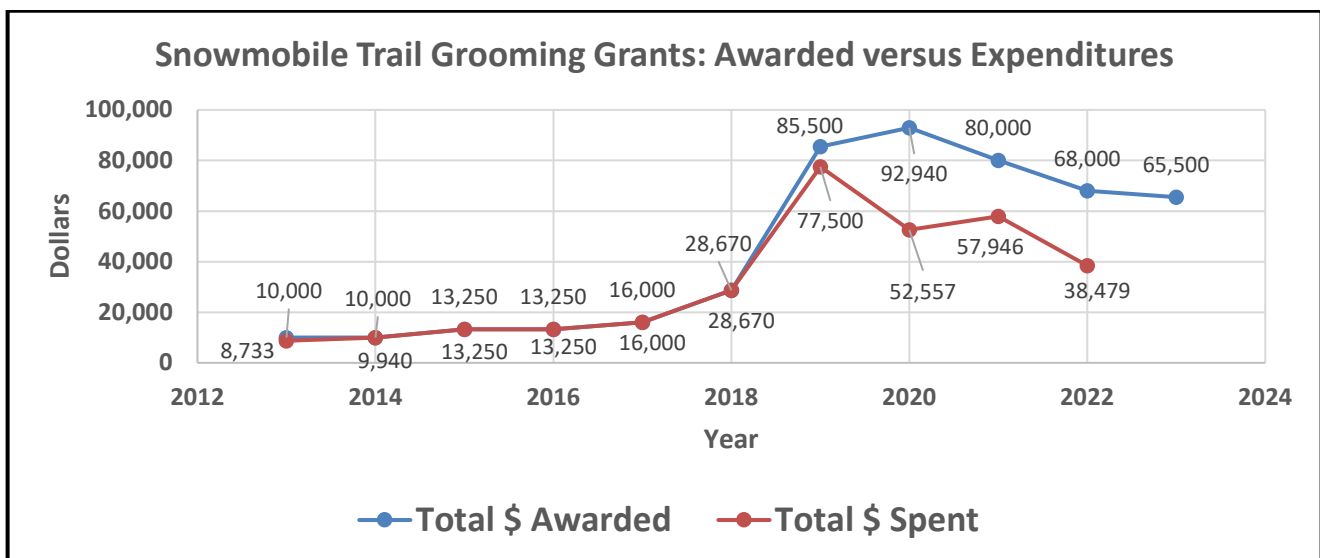
SNOWMOBILE-RELATED PARTNERSHIP GRANTS



- Requests for Snowmobile Trail Ranger grants have consistently grown. These grants have become an important partnership tool; actual use of these dollars is typically slightly less than requested funding due to actual staff availability & scheduling.

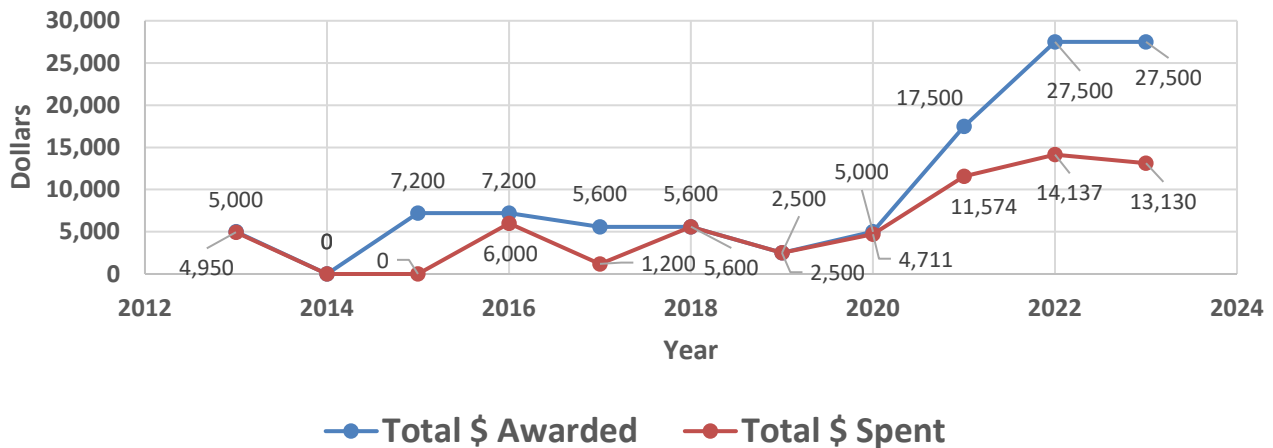


- The demand for loaned snowmobiles continues to grow, to enable partners to get on-the-snow.
- Loans of Snowcats, grooming drags, a plow truck and a front-end loader have been added in recent years to help expand agency partnerships that benefit snowmobiling trails and access.



- Total dollars awarded for trail grooming grants have declined over the past 3 years.
- Actual dollars spent have consistently been lower than what was awarded over the past few years.

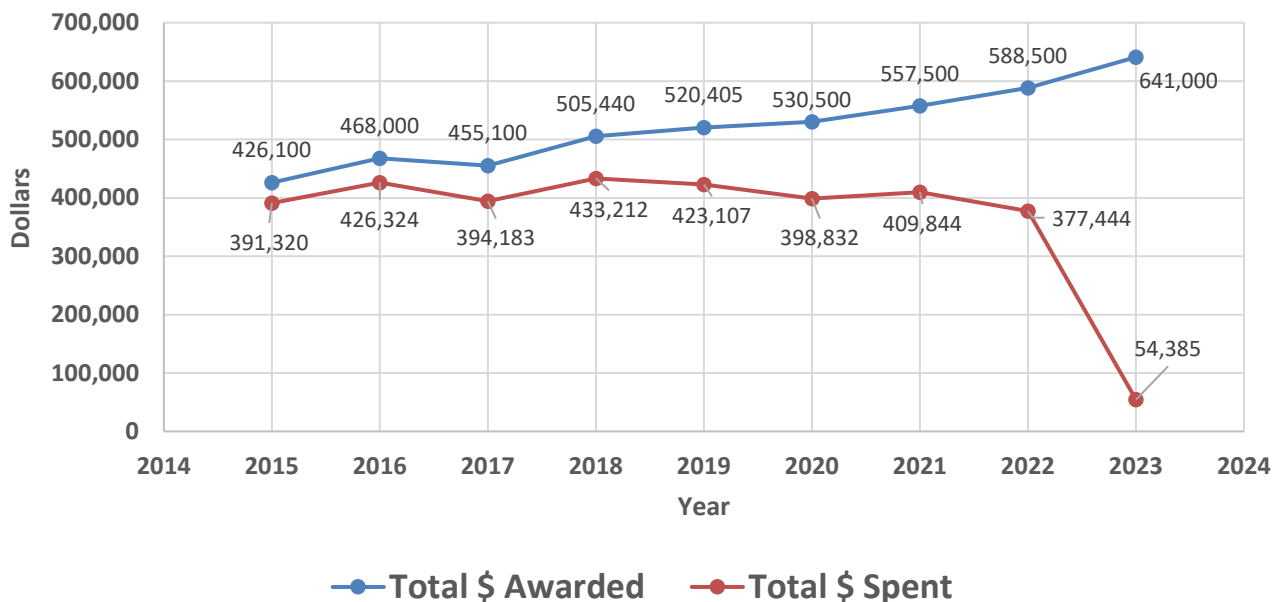
Snow: Parking Area Plowing: Awarded versus Expenditures



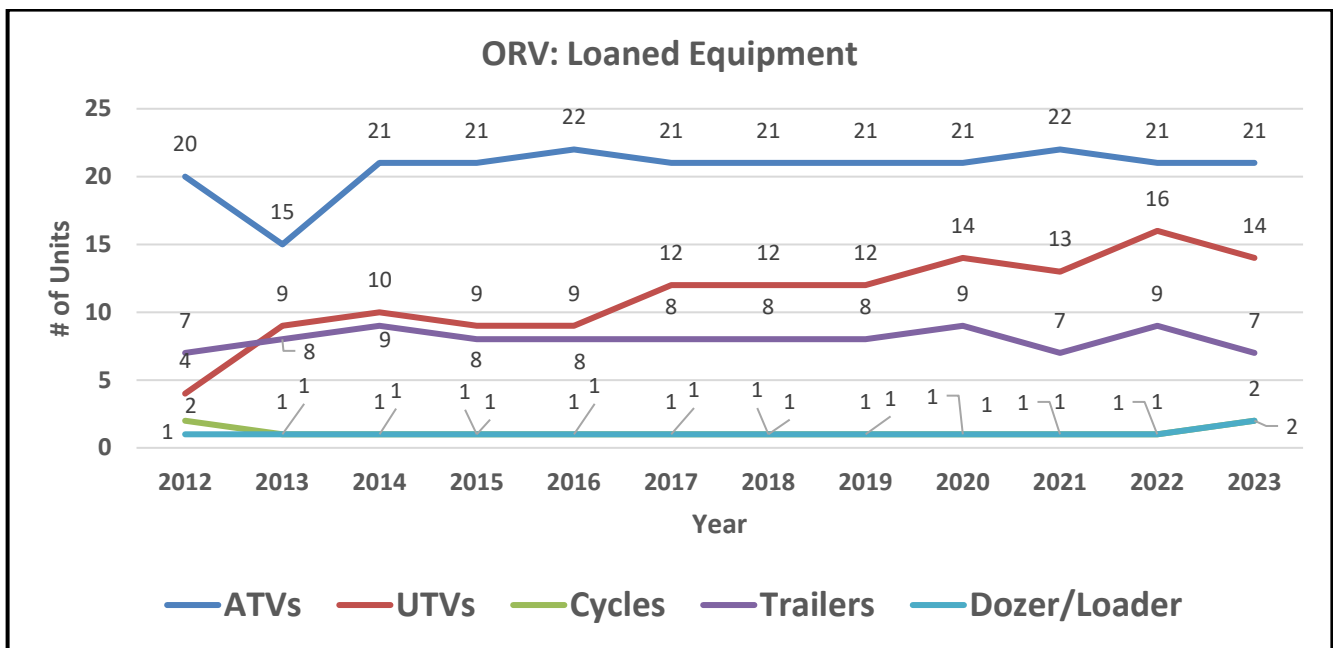
- The demand for parking lot plowing grants has continued to grow.
- Actual dollars spent for snow removal at parking areas is consistently lower than awarded dollars in recent years.

ORV-RELATED PARTNERSHIP GRANTS

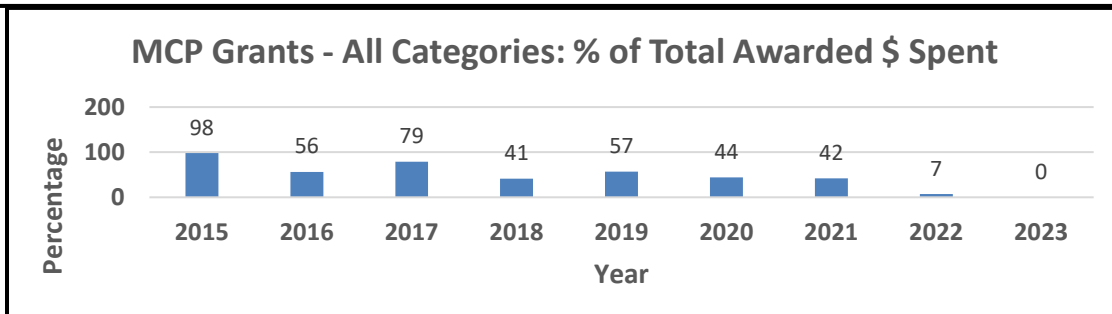
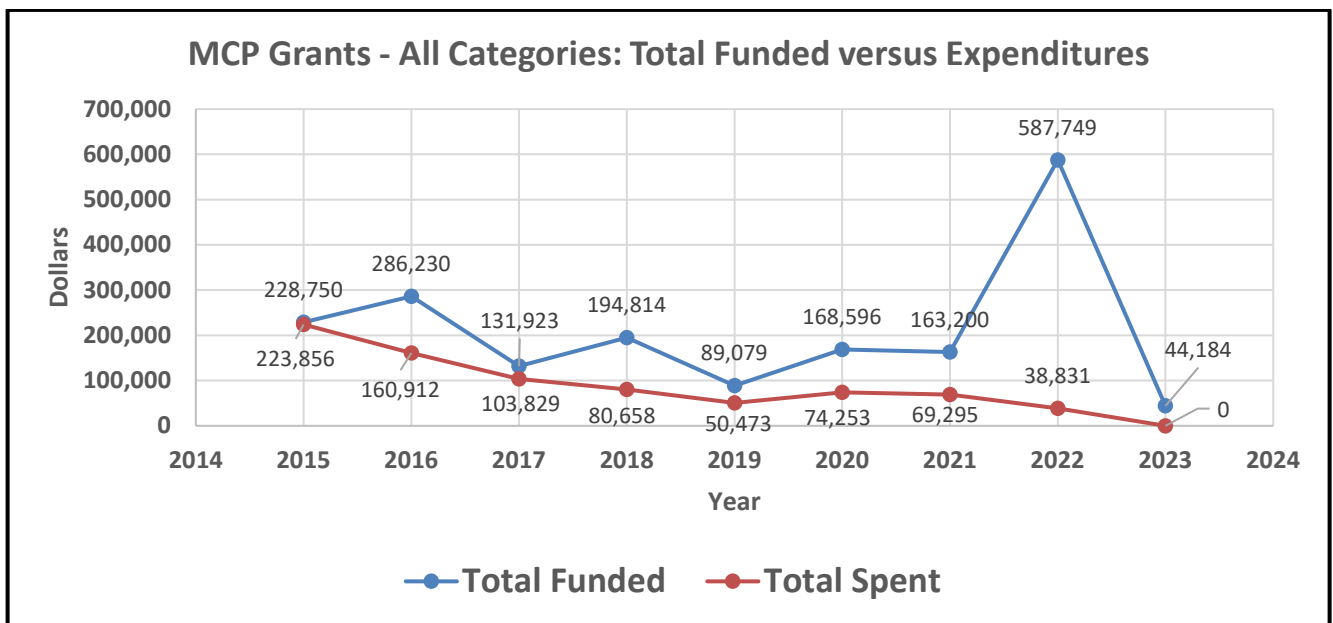
ORV Trail Ranger Grants: Awarded versus Expenditures



- Requests for ORV Trail Ranger grants have consistently grown.
- Actual dollars spent have been consistently lower than awarded dollars, often due to partner agency employee shortages.
- NOTE: some 2022 grants have not yet been reimbursed, while all 2023 grants are still in-progress.

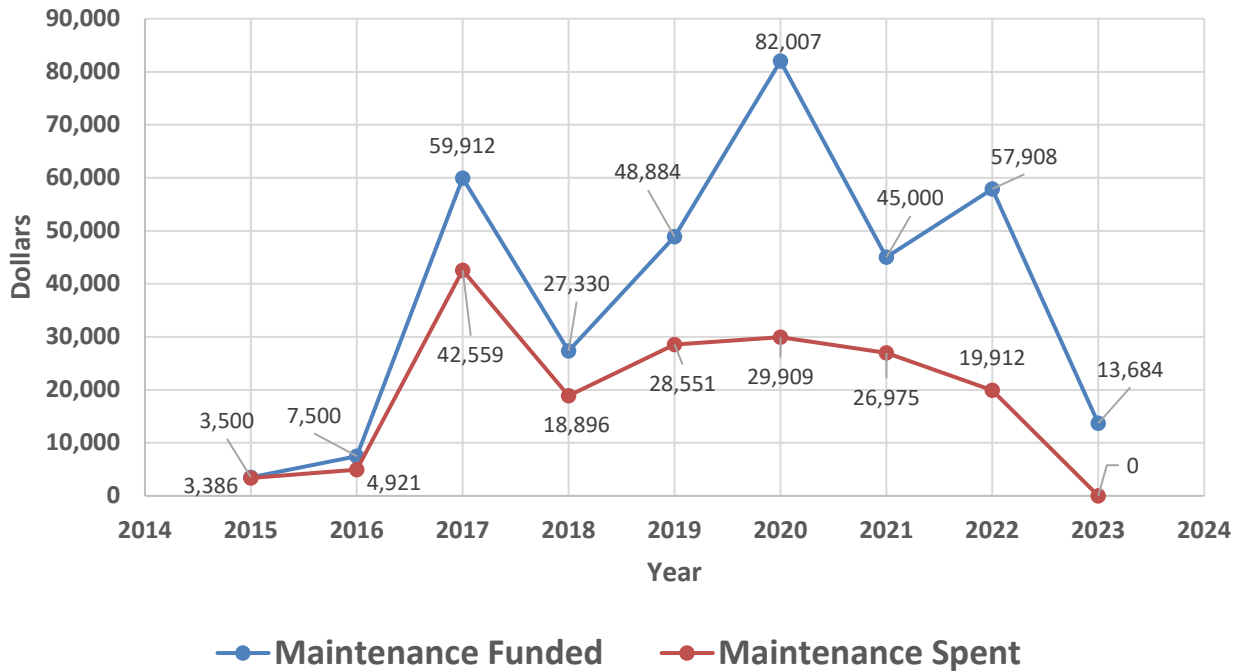


- The demand for loaned ATVs has consistently been high. A slight recent decline in ATV numbers is the result of a growing number of partners switching to/increasing UTV use.



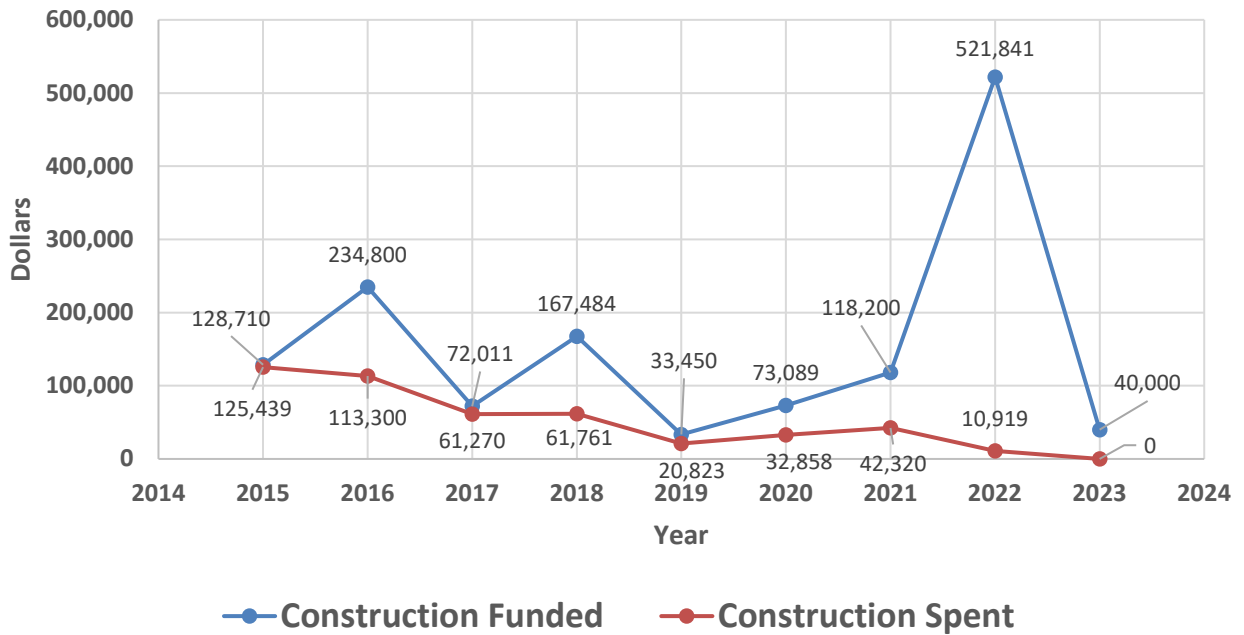
- Interest in overall Maintenance, Construction and Planning grants has been sporadic yet steady.
- Actual dollars spent on MCP grant projects is consistently less than awarded dollars.
- NOTE: 2022 & 2023 grants are still in progress, so have not been closed out.

Maintenance Grants: Funded versus Expenditures



- Demand for Maintenance grants has remained fairly stable with one lower and one peak year.
- Actual dollars spent are consistently lower than awarded dollars.
- NOTE: 2023 grants are still in progress, so have not been closed out.

Construction Grants: Awarded versus Expenditures



- Demand for Construction grants has been generally low, somewhat erratic, with one peak year.
- Actual dollars spent are consistently lower than awarded dollars.
- NOTE: 2022 & 2023 grants are still in progress, so have not been closed out.

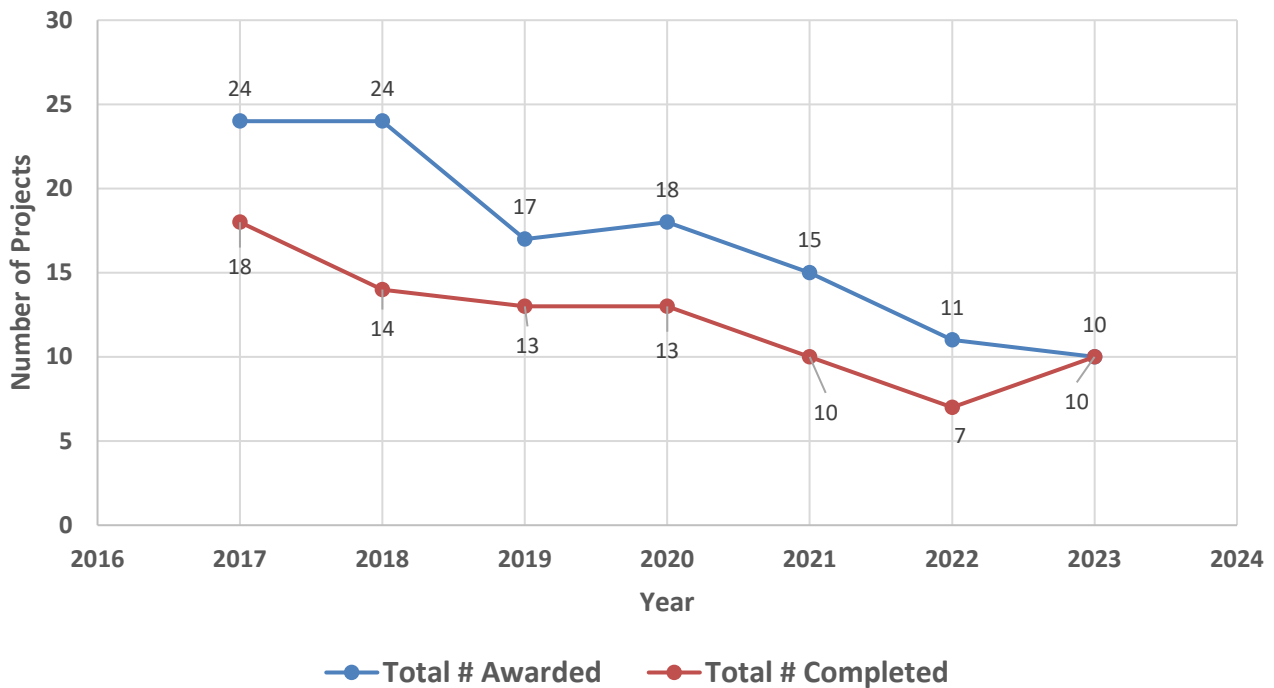
Planning Grants: Awarded versus Expenditures



- Demand for planning grants has typically been low, yet are important for getting new trails.
- The top three highest amounts requested were in the first two years and the most recent year.
- Actual dollars spent are typically close to the total awarded amount.
- NOTE: 2023 grants are still in progress, so have not been closed out.

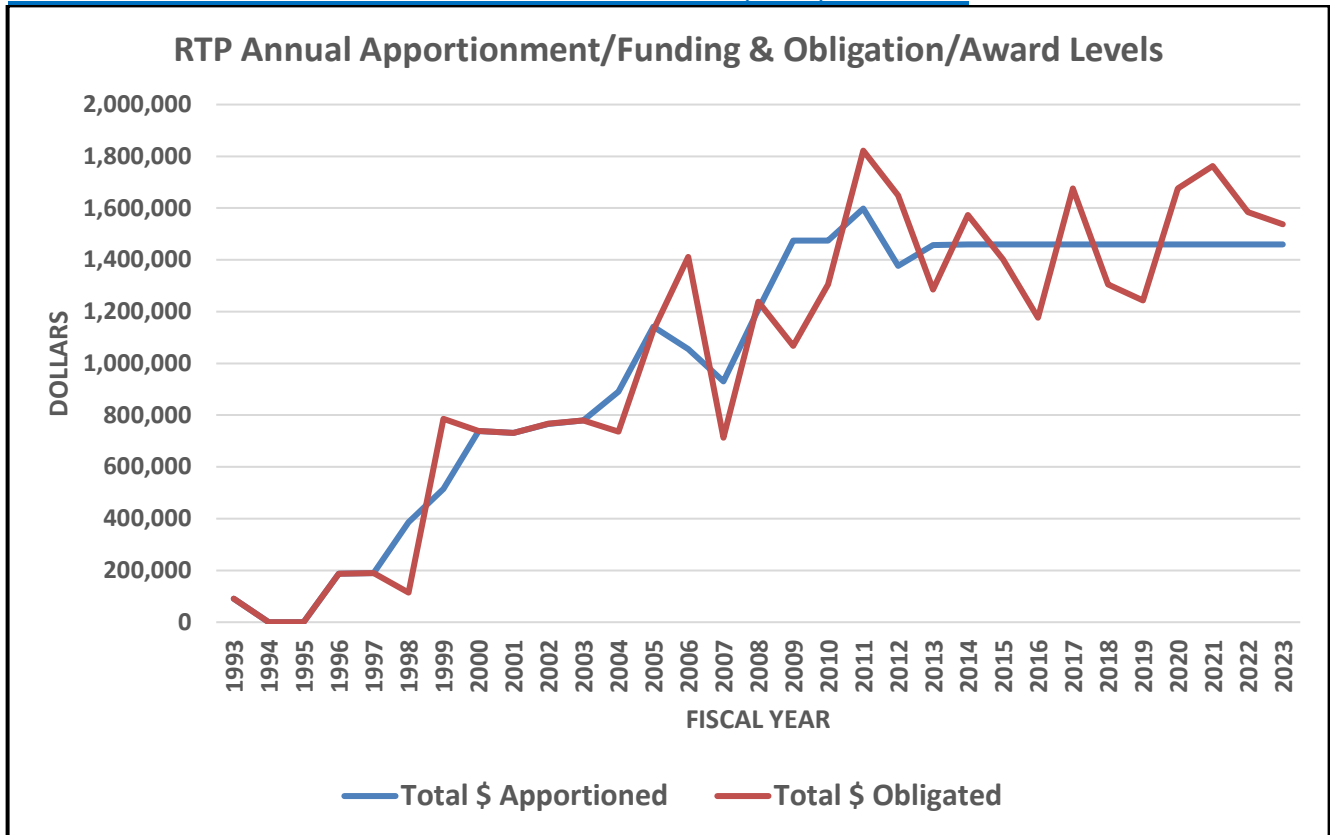
STATE TRAIL CREW PROJECTS

Trail Crew Projects - Awarded versus Completed

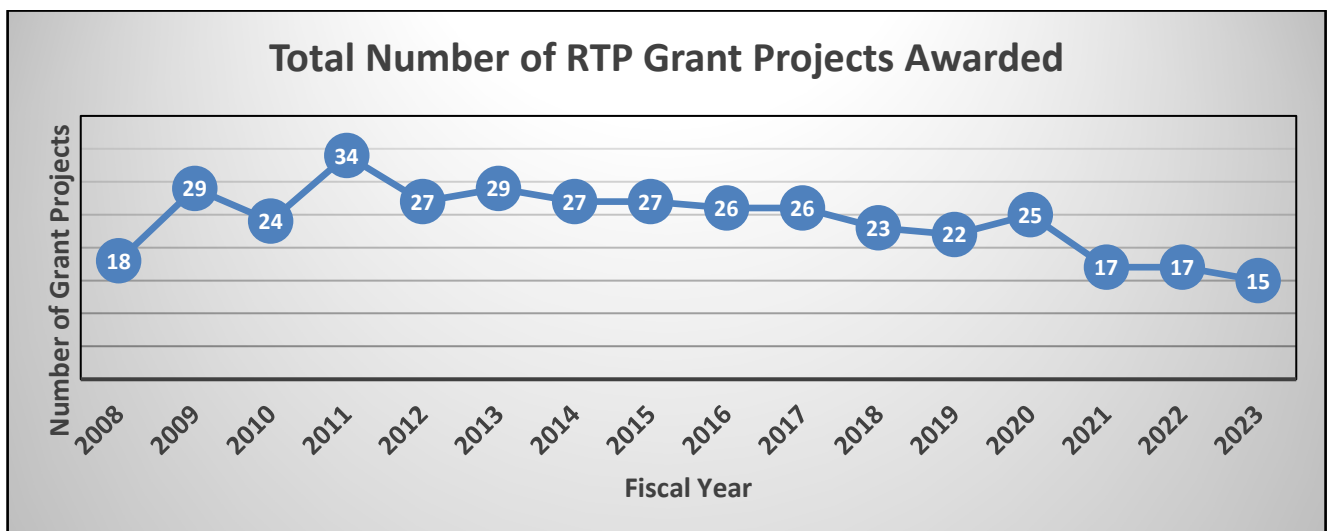


- While the total number of Trail Crew projects have declined over the past 5 years, projects have generally been larger in scope – so the Trail Crew has remained fully utilized.

FEDERAL RECREATIONAL TRAILS PROGRAM (RTP) GRANTS

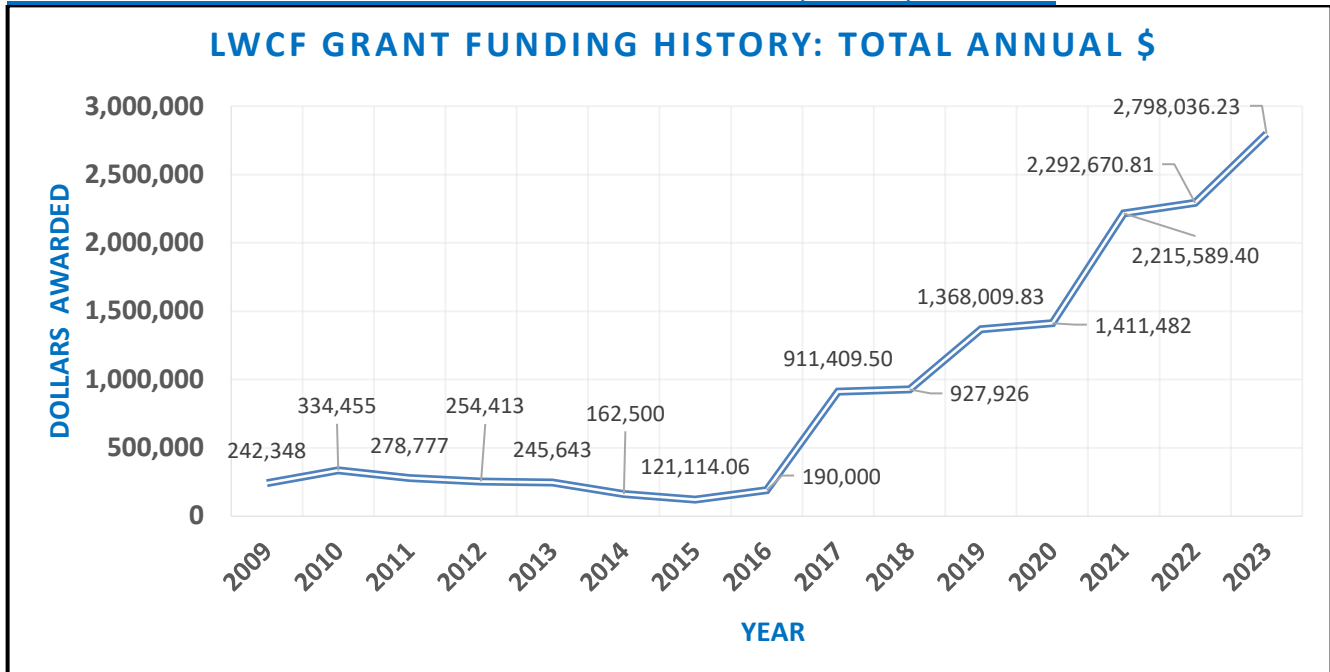


- RTP was created by Congress in Fiscal Year (FY) 1991 but was not funded until FY1993. Wyoming's initial annual apportionment was \$91,291. RTP again had zero funding 1994 and 1995.
- Funding was restored in 1996 at \$187,300 and eventually grew at various intervals to a high of \$1,598,314 in FY 2011.
- Since FY 2014, Wyoming's annual apportionment has consistently been \$1,459,731.
- Since total RTP dollars actually spent on individual projects is often less than approved grant levels, unspent funds that are turned back cause annual Obligation levels (amount awarded in new grants cycles) to periodically fluctuate above Apportionment levels.

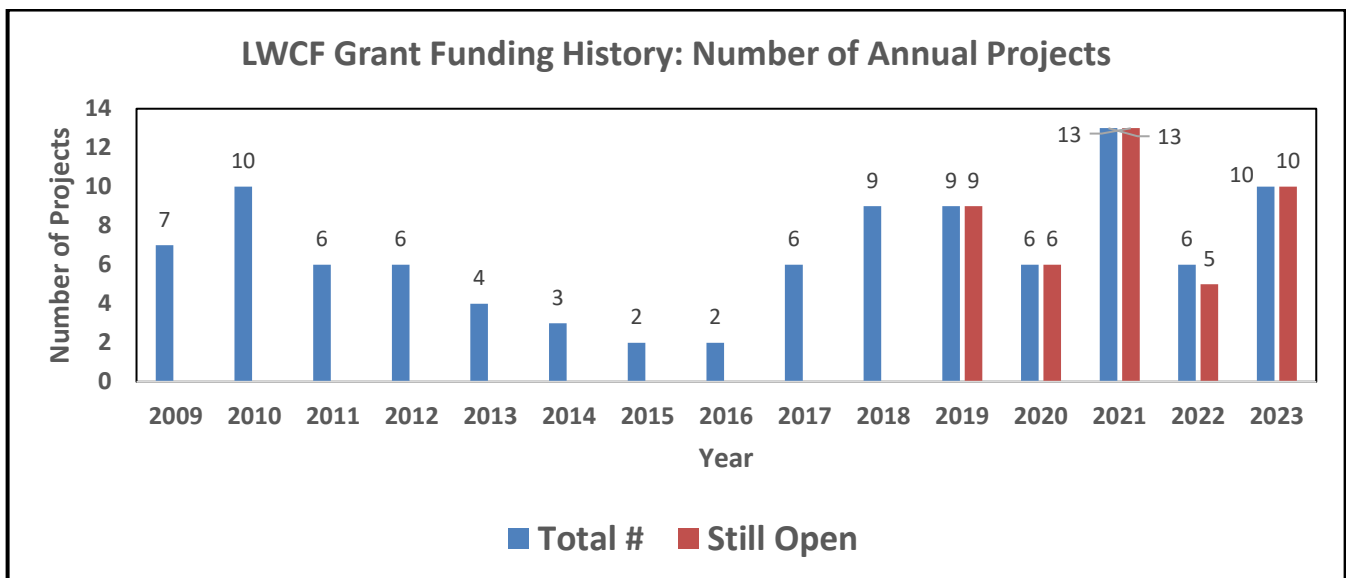


- Total RTP projects awarded have generally declined over recent years as several long-term individual Motorized and Diversified projects have been combined into single larger projects.

FEDERAL LAND & WATER CONSERVATION FUND (LWCF) GRANTS



- From 2009 through 2016, the number of LWCF grants awarded ranged between two and seven projects annually, with the total grant dollars awarded ranging between \$162,500 and \$278,777; the one exception was in 2010 when a total of ten projects totaling \$334,455 were awarded.
- In 2017, the funding level increased to a total of \$911,410 for six projects, followed by nine projects totaling \$927,926 being awarded in 2018.
- In 2019 and 2020, total funding increased to \$1.368 million and \$1.411 million for nine and six projects annually, respectively.
- Since 2021 through 2023, LWCF funding has ranged between \$2.215 million and \$2.798 million annually while funding thirteen, six and ten projects each of those subsequent funding years.



- While a total of 99 projects were approved over this 15-year period, a total of 43 (43%) projects are still active – classified as either ‘need to close’ (10), ‘open or extended’ (23), or ‘awarded’ (10).

2022 PARTNERSHIP ASSESSMENT & 2021 UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING SURVEY RESULTS

Wyoming State Trails Program (WSTP) partners (agencies, businesses and organizations) were surveyed to help guide long-range planning for WSTP over the next 5 to 10 years. Some of these same questions were asked by two surveys recently completed by the University of Wyoming (UW) – one from resident and nonresident snowmobilers and the second from resident and nonresident ORV riders. The tables below show feedback results from partner agencies (USFS and BLM), businesses (selling agents/lodges/dealerships), and motorized trail organizations (WSSA and SWOT) – along with feedback from resident and nonresident snowmobilers and ORV riders through UW.

WSTP's overall performance and delivery of services for each topic were rated on a scale where: 5 = Extremely Satisfied, 4 = Satisfied, 3 = Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied, 2 = Not Satisfied, 1 = Extremely Dissatisfied. **Average SATISFACTION LEVEL by each partner category are as follows:**

SNOWMOBILING / SNOWMOBILE TRAILS							
WSTP Functions and Activities		Agencies (10)	Businesses (22)	Organizations (4)	Resident Snowmobilers	Nonresident Snowmobilers	Overall Average
1	Trail Grooming and Maintenance: Quality and Adequacy	4.6	3.7	4.7	3.7	3.7	4.1
2	Trail Signing: Quality and Adequacy	4.8	4.1	4.3	3.8	3.9	4.2
3	State Snowmobile Trail Map: Quality and Availability	4.6	3.5	5	3.8	3.9	4.2
4	Trail Riding Opportunities in the Area: Availability and Adequacy	4.6	4	4.3	4	4.2	4.2
5	Off-Trail Riding Opportunities in the Area: Availability and Adequacy	4.9	3.9	4.7	4.2	4.5	4.4
6	Winter Parking Areas: Availability and Adequacy	4.6	4	4.3	3.6	3.5	4
7	Winter Parking Areas: Construction, Maintenance and Snow Removal	4.4	4	4.7			4.4
8	Safety/Warming Shelters: Availability and Adequacy	4.1	4.1	5	3.8	3.7	4.1
9	Safety/Warming Shelters: Construction and Maintenance	4.1	3.9	5			4.3
10	Assistance with Providing Toilet Facilities	3.7	4.1	4.7			4.2
11	Assistance with Law Enforcement and Use of Trail Ranger Grants	4.6	3.6	5	3.4	3.5	4
12	Safety, User Ethics, and Avalanche Education	4.3	3.6	4.7	3.3	3.4	3.9
13	Snowmobile Permits: Availability and Ease of Purchase	4.4	3.7	3.7	3.6	4	3.9
14	Overall Coordination and Communication with Staff	5	3.9	4.7			4.5
15	Use of WSTP Maintenance, Planning and Construction (MPC) Grants	4.7	3.7	4.7			4.4
OVERALL AVERAGE:		4.5	3.9	4.6	3.7	3.8	4.1

ORV (OHV) RIDING / ORV TRAILS										
WSTP Functions and Activities		Agencies		Businesses		Organizations		Resident ORV Riders	Nonresident ORV Riders	Overall Average
1	Trail Maintenance: Quality and Adequacy	4.6		3.4		3.7		3.8	3.4	3.8
2	Trail Signing: Quality and Adequacy	4.5		3.4		4.3		3.9	3.7	4.0
3	State ORV Trail Map: Quality and Availability	4.4		3.5		4.5		3.8	3.5	3.9
4	Riding Opportunities on Enrolled Roads: Availability and Adequacy	4.4		3.8		3.7		3.2	3.1	3.6
5	Riding Opportunities on Trails: Availability and Adequacy	4.7		3.4		3.8		3.3	2.9	3.6
6	Parking Areas: Availability and Adequacy	4.5		3.9		3.5		3.6	3.4	3.8
7	Parking Areas: Maintenance and Construction	4.4		3.7		3.5				3.9
8	Assistance with Providing Toilet Facilities	4		3.8		4				3.9
9	Assistance with Law Enforcement and Use of Trail Ranger Grants	4.8		3.8		4		3.9	3.5	4.0
10	Safety and User Ethics Education	4.4		3.8		3.5		4.0	3.6	3.9
11	ORV Permits: Availability and Ease of Purchase	4.7		3.8		4		3.4	3.2	3.8
12	Overall Coordination and Communication with Staff	4.9		3.9		4.8				4.5
13	Use of WSTP Trail Crew Projects	4.9		3.7		4.3				4.3
14	Use of WSTP Maintenance, Planning and Construction (MPC) Grants	4.9		3.7		5				4.5
OVERALL AVERAGE:		4.6		3.7		4.1		3.7	3.4	4.0
RECREATIONAL TRAILS PROGRAM (RTP) GRANTS										
1	Use of RTP Grants for Non-Motorized Trail Projects in Your Area	4		3.3		4.5				3.9
LEVEL OF SERVICE FROM WSTP										
On a scale of 1 – 10 (1 = low, 10 = high), how do you rate the Level of Service you receive from WSTP?		9		8.2		10				9.1
WSTP MANAGEMENT/OPERATIONAL QUESTIONS										
		Agencies		Businesses		Organizations		Grand Total		
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	
1	WSTP’s field operations have operated out of a centralized facility in Lander for over 20 years. Does this centralized location meet your agency/business/organization’s needs?	10	0	17	2	3	1	30	3	

2	Looking ahead for the next 10 to 20 years, should WSTP consider any type of a more regionalized approach to its field operation services?	1	6	8	11	1	3	10	20	
3	WSTP already depends heavily on private contractors for winter trail grooming services. Would you be in favor of WSTP expanding its use of private contractors for winter trail signing as well as for seasonal maintenance and construction work on ORV trails?	5	3	17	2	3	1	25	6	

SURVEY CONCLUSIONS

- There is currently a good/acceptable overall level of satisfaction with the Trails Program's performance related to its functions and activities related to operating snowmobile and ORV trail within Wyoming. Its highest ratings come from its partner agencies and organizations while businesses and individual snowmobile and ORV riders expressed slightly lower satisfaction levels overall.
- Overall average scores showed slightly higher satisfaction levels for snowmobile trail related functions and activities compared to ORV trail related functions and activities. This may be partially related to the maturity of the snowmobile program (nearly 40 years old) compared to the ORV program (20 years old). It may also relate to distinct differences between federal land management policies governing motorized over-snow vehicle travel versus wheeled motor vehicle travel.
- There is a very high level of satisfaction with the level of service currently received from the Trails Program.
- There is an overwhelming degree of support for Trails Program field operations being operated out of a centralized facility in Lander. Conversely, there is a low level of support for the Trails Program to consider a more regionalized approach to its field operation services.
- There is a high degree of support for the Trails Program to expand its use of private contractors to include seasonal maintenance and construction use on ORV trails.

THE MOTORIZED TRAILS PROGRAM NICHE

The statutorily and administratively assigned responsibilities of the State Trails Program include:

1. Operation of the State Snowmobile Trails Program

The Department of State Parks and Cultural Resources is charged by W.S. 31-2-402 and -404 to sell snowmobile registration and user fee permits and to use funds which are generated to “administer the snowmobile trail program.” It also receives State gasoline tax collected on gasoline used in snowmobiles as per W.S. 39-17-111 (c) (ii), along with Recreational Trails Program (RTP) grant funds derived from the federal fuel tax paid on gasoline used in snowmobiles and other off-highway vehicles. The State Snowmobile Program dates back to 1984; its day-to-day operations are assigned to the State Trails Program (STP) and include regular collaboration and partnerships with federal and state land managing agencies, private landowners and businesses, and the Wyoming State Snowmobile Association.

2. Operation of the State Off-Road Recreational Vehicle (ORV) Program

The Department of State Parks and Cultural Resources is charged by W.S. 31-2-702 and -703 to sell off-road recreational vehicle (ORV) permits and to use funds which are generated for “administration of the off-road recreational vehicle trails program.” It also receives State gasoline tax collected on gasoline used in off-road vehicles as per W.S. 39-17-111 (c) (iv), along with Recreational Trails Program (RTP) grant funds derived from the federal fuel tax paid on gasoline used in ORVs and other off-highway vehicles. The State ORV Program was created in 2001; its day-to-day operations are assigned to STP and include regular collaboration and partnerships with federal and state land managing agencies, private landowners and businesses, and local ORV clubs.

3. Facilitates the Effective Use of RTP Grant Funds

The federal Recreational Trails Program (RTP) grant program is funded by the federal fuel tax paid on gasoline used by motorized recreational vehicles including snowmobiles, OHV’s, off-road motorcycles and light duty trucks used in an off-road setting and is managed by SPHST. Up to 7% of the total annual apportionment can be used for State administrative costs. The remaining 93% of the annual apportionment is then required to be distributed: 30% to Motorized projects, 30% to Nonmotorized projects, and 40% to Diversified Use projects (30/30/40 Rule). Up to 5% of that 93% can be used to fund trail-related safety and education projects – with individual education projects being charged against appropriate 30/30/40 categories. Wyoming operates RTP on a ‘Programmatic Match’ basis and requires that all grants must be sponsored or co-sponsored by STP. Additionally, all Diversified category projects must include a motorized use component, given the source of RTP funding, to facilitate integrated coordination by STP. While RTP projects may be co-sponsored by other agencies, pre-coordination and prior approval from STP is required.

4. Coordinates with the Wyoming Trails Advisory Council

W.S. 31-2-703 (d) (iv) requires the department to “consult with the Wyoming trails advisory council to assist the department to establish and maintain adequate off-road recreational vehicle trails.” While this statutory requirement pertains specifically to only ORV trails, the STP regularly works with the Trails Council for both ORV and snowmobile trails management consultation.