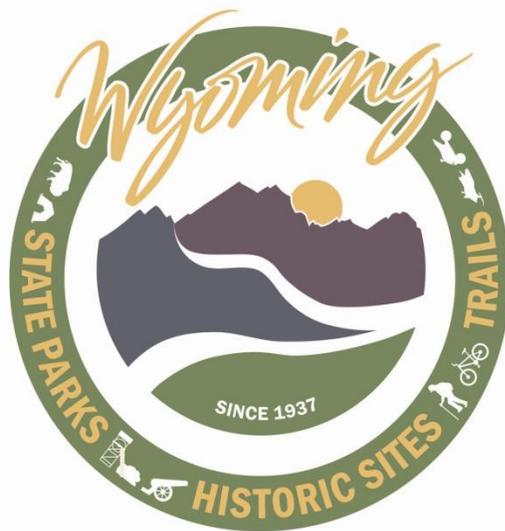


# **WYOMING STATE TRAILS PROGRAM LONG-RANGE PLAN 2012 – 2021**



Prepared by Trails Work Consulting for the  
Wyoming Department of State Parks & Cultural Resources  
Division of State Parks, Historic Sites & Trails  
And the  
Wyoming State Trails Advisory Council

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# STATE TRAILS PROGRAM LONG-RANGE PLAN

## **PART 1: BACKGROUND AND SETTING**

### **DIVISION OF STATE PARKS, HISTORIC SITES AND TRAILS**

The State Trails Program operates within the Wyoming Department of State Parks and Cultural Resources – Division of State Parks, Historic Sites and Trails (SPHST). SOAR 2021 is SPHST’s ten year strategic plan which incorporates public and staff input into policy development, priority setting and budgeting. SOAR is a dynamic document which will be augmented by a bi-annual implementation plan tied to the state’s biennium budgeting process. Important guiding principles from SOAR for Trails Program functions include:

#### **SPHST Philosophy**

- A. First and foremost we are a significant part of Wyoming’s infrastructure and an important contributor to the economy, outdoor recreation and cultural heritage.
- B. We strive for excellence in customer service, resource protection, interpretation, education, and facility development and maintenance.
- C. As an agency that supports quality of life, we strive to connect the public with the natural and cultural environment by providing sustainable and high quality facilities and events.

#### **SPHST Functions**

- Provide high quality recreation facilities and opportunities.
- Administer the State Trails Program which operates large snowmobile and ORV trails programs funded by user fees; the majority of these trails are located on federal lands which require cooperative agreements with the Forest Service and BLM.
- Administer the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) grant program which provides funding assistance for motorized and nonmotorized trails.
- Manage trails within Wyoming State Parks with Park staff and volunteer programs.

#### **SPHST Mission Statement**

Wyoming State Parks, Historic Sites and Trails protect and enhance the natural and cultural environment by providing enjoyable, educational and inspiring experiences for present and future generations.

#### **SPHST Vision Statement**

Wyoming State Parks, Historic Sites and Trails offer exceptional and safe experiences that enhance the overall quality of life. Our guests gain an understanding and appreciation for the well-maintained amenities we manage, while exploring and enjoying Wyoming’s natural and cultural heritage. Dedicated and professional employees provide outstanding customer service at adequately staffed and financed parks, historic sites and trails.

#### **SOAR 2021 Goals**

1. **CULTURAL AND NATURAL RESOURCES:** Sustain, restore and enhance SPHST’s recreational, cultural, natural, scenic, and scientific assets to minimize user impacts and ensure these resources remain intact for future generations.
2. **EXPERIENCE RESOURCES:** (Interpretation, Education, and Marketing) Provide outreach that fosters public awareness, knowledge, appreciation, volunteerism and stewardship of the SPHSTs recreational, cultural, natural, scenic, and scientific assets.
3. **VISITOR RESOURCES:** Provide the public with high quality and sustainable opportunities and facilities that nurtures a connection with the cultural and natural environment.
4. **FINANCIAL RESOURCES:** Provide effective long-term financial and program management, while assisting statewide recreation providers and achieving financial stability for SPHST.
5. **HUMAN RESOURCES:** Recruit, motivate, and enable a dedicated, professional, and customer-focused workforce that is safely, efficiently, and professionally able to perform their job responsibilities.

## **PURPOSE OF THE TRAILS PROGRAM PLAN**

This Plan tiers to SOAR 2021 by providing specific goals and objectives which can be used to guide the Program's Bi-Annual Implementation Plan and action strategies. It addresses critical issues identified through a review of the Program and on-going public and partner input, and provides a framework to help the Trails Program fulfill its niche in providing recreational trail opportunities in Wyoming.

Since the State Trails Program does not own any property or directly control any single trail, this Program Plan must be implemented in coordination with partners and other plans, including but not limited to federal land management agencies' land use or travel plans, state and local agencies' management and master plans, as well as numerous federal, state and local laws, regulations, and policies.

It is also important to note that the Trails Program is only one of many entities which provide recreational trail opportunities in Wyoming; consequently this Plan is not a comprehensive plan for all trails within the state. For a better understanding of the full range of statewide trail opportunities and trail providers, please refer to the Wyoming Statewide Trails Plan and the State Trails Inventory found at <http://wyotrails.state.wy.us/index.asp>.

## **THE STATE TRAILS PROGRAM NICHE**

### **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 the funds that are generated to "administer the snowmobile trail program." The State Snowmobile Program dates back to 1984; its day-to-day operations are assigned to the Trails Program and include regular collaboration and partnerships with federal and state land managing agencies, private landowners and businesses, the Wyoming State Snowmobile Association and local snowmobile clubs.

### **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 the funds that are generated for "administration of the off-road recreational vehicle trails program." The State ORV Program was created in 2001; its day-to-day operations are assigned to the Trails Program and include regular collaboration and partnerships with federal and state land managing agencies, private landowners and businesses, and local ORV clubs.

### **3. Facilitate Nonmotorized Trail Opportunities**

The Division assigned a Nonmotorized Trail Coordinator position to the Trails Program in 2011. This position facilitates nonmotorized trail development on state park and historic site lands and works with public land managing agencies and user groups across the state to further funding and favorable policy development for nonmotorized trail uses.

### **4. Coordination of Wyoming Trails Advisory Council Activities**

The Department is required by W.S. 31-2-703 (d) (iv) to "consult with the Wyoming trails advisory council to assist the department to establish and maintain adequate off-road recreational vehicle trails." As the day-to-day manager of ORV Program funds, the Trails Program works with the Trails Council to fulfill this consultation role. While no similar statutory consultation is required for other trail uses, the Program still coordinates snowmobile and other trails management issues with the Council. The Trails Council also fulfills an important federal advisory requirement for the Division in its management of RTP grant funds.

### **5. Facilitate 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, ATV's, off-road motorcycles and light duty trucks used in an off-road setting. Since all other motorized trail funds are managed by the Trails Program, all Motorized RTP grant projects are sponsored by the Program to ensure an integrated approach to furthering priority goals for snowmobile and ORV trails across the state. Additionally, all Diversified RTP grant projects currently must include a component which provides for snowmobile or ORV use, or both, and also be sponsored or co-sponsored by the Program. The Nonmotorized Coordinator also helps prioritize projects that utilize the Nonmotorized category of RTP funds.

## **PART 2: SPECIFIC ISSUES, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

### **SNOWMOBILE TRAILS PROGRAM**

#### **CRITICAL ISSUES**

- 1. Permit Sales have decreased.** Snowmobile permit sales have decreased by 19% (nearly 8,000 permits) since 2003 and currently total about 33,000 per year; consequently \$400,000 in anticipated revenue growth from the \$10 fee increase in 2005 has largely been lost.
- 2. The future of RTP Grant Funding is uncertain.** Federal legislation authorizing the RTP Grant Program expired and has been operating on a series of short extensions since 2009; if this grant program is not reauthorized by Congress the Snowmobile Program will lose \$300,000 to \$700,000 per year in existing operating funds.
- 3. Operating Costs continue to escalate.** Snowmobile Program operating costs continue to increase:
  - Snowmobile trail grooming contracts have increased by 62% since 2004 and 89% since 1999, driven by increased costs for fuel and equipment; the average grooming contract cost per mile was \$9.75 per mile in 1999, \$11.37 in 2004, and has increased to \$18.42 per mile in 2011.
  - The snowmobile program's share of Trails Program permanent staff's payroll costs have increased by 68% since 2004; these payroll costs, which are shared 50/50 with the ORV program, totaled \$220,500 for 10 shared positions in 2004 compared to nearly \$370,000 for 12 shared positions in 2011.
  - The cost of snow removal continues to increase as larger and more parking areas are developed to provide improved and safer access to snowmobiling areas; total costs will approach \$50,000 in 2011-2012 while they totaled only \$17,500 in 2004.
- 4. Spending cuts or/and more revenue is needed.** The Snowmobile Program has been in a deficit spending mode the past several years; consequently either deep cuts in spending must be made or an additional \$700,000 to \$1 million per year will be needed in additional revenue to cover current operating costs going forward. If no accompanying spending cuts are made, a fee increase of at least \$20 and perhaps up to another \$30 to \$35 would be needed to replace RTP funding, to maintain continued labor and grooming contract cost increases, and to keep up with inflation and growing needs for services. This could bring the total cost of resident and nonresident snowmobile permits to at least \$45 and perhaps up to \$55 or \$60 per year.

#### **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

- 1. Address funding and expenditure issues**
  - A. Work with Wyoming's Congressional delegation and national interest groups to secure continued federal funding for trails, through either the RTP program or some other new program, that returns a portion of federal gasoline taxes paid on fuel used by motorized recreational trail vehicles
  - B. Continue to review and evaluate snowmobile program operating costs including: labor, grooming, signing, staff travel, shop space rental, vehicles, equipment, education, and other services; determine the cost of core/minimal services and develop four scenarios by July 1, 2012 that would identify and outline the implications of reducing total annual operating costs by approximately 5% (\$100,000), 10% (\$200,000), 15% (\$300,000) and 20% (\$400,000)
  - C. Identify and evaluate additional opportunities whereby operating costs could be shared with the ORV Program
  - D. Continually track, monitor and evaluate snowmobile revenues, expenditures and issues
  - E. Contract with the University of Wyoming to update research on snowmobile issues and economic impacts through the Wyoming Snowmobile Survey every five to seven years, beginning in 2012
  - F. Continually evaluate snowmobile tourism marketing and promotion efforts to ensure Wyoming snowmobiling opportunities are properly advertised and are positioned to compete well with other regional snowmobiling destinations; partner as appropriate and as needed with state, regional and local tourism groups to help sustain and increase non-resident revenues
  - G. Continually evaluate education and enforcement efforts pertaining to snowmobile permit requirements; partner as appropriate and as needed with federal and county law enforcement agencies

- H. Evaluate proposing an increase in the snowmobile registration and user fees during the 2013 Legislative session to fund shortages caused by inflation, revenue shortfalls, increased grooming costs, etc.; the amount of the fee increase needed should be determined based upon analysis and outcomes related to Objectives A through E above, and in consultation with and support from the Wyoming State Snowmobile Association and the Trails Advisory Council

**2. Protect and enhance access for snowmobiling**

- A. Continually nurture and enhance positive working relationships with the Forest Service and the BLM to provide trails, facilities, and services for snowmobiling on federal lands (location of over 98% of the snowmobile trails in Wyoming)
- B. Actively participate in federal and state land managing agencies' land use planning and travel planning processes to advocate for continued and enhanced snowmobiling access; emphasis should be on trail routes that connect to trailheads, services, and backcountry open play areas as well as on preserving and enhancing areas where off-trail, cross-country snowmobile travel is allowed
- C. Pursue the enhancement of parking and trailhead facilities for snowmobilers; top priorities include but are not limited to the Green Rock area in the Snowy Range and Horse Creek in the Wyoming Range
- D. Continually manage existing and pursue new written easements for snowmobile trail routes across public and private lands as needed to ensure annual and long-term access

**3. Manage snowmobile trail grooming to provide safe, high-quality trails in the most efficient, cost-effective manner**

- A. Annually provide classroom snowmobile trail groomer operator training for employees and contractors that is based upon International Association of Snowmobile Administrators (IASA) guidelines; also provide a minimum of 20 hours of on-the-ground Sno-Cat operation training for all new STP-owned equipment operators
- B. Continually monitor and evaluate the cost-benefit of grooming snowmobile trails with STP staff and equipment versus grooming trails with private contractors (both contractor-provided and state-provided equipment); ensure good records are kept that properly capture all operating costs (labor, fuel, maintenance and repairs, service, transportation, etc.)
- C. Continually monitor and evaluate the pilot program whereby state-owned Sno-Cats are provided to contract operators; annually review and revise operating guidelines as needed
- D. Continually monitor and evaluate grooming contracts with 'contractor provided equipment' for compliance with all terms and conditions; annually review and revise operating guidelines as needed
- E. Continually manage the state-owned grooming equipment fleet of Sno-Cats and grooming drags to ensure a replacement schedule which keeps the grooming fleet dependable and cost efficient
- F. Annually review and evaluate area grooming schedules to ensure the most efficient and cost-effective routing and daily/weekly scheduling is used to maximize the use of available funds consistent with revenues produced in the area
- G. Continually monitor and evaluate the need for increased 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; balance needs with available funding and with other areas' needs and priorities
- H. Evaluate the need to provide trail grooming on ungroomed trails, where possible, to improve trail safety and quality; balance needs with available funding and with other areas' needs and priorities
- I. Establish a snowmobile trail grooming monitoring and quality compliance program; ensure proper staff training and recordkeeping is provided to ensure consistency

**4. Manage snowmobile trail signing to provide trails that are safe and easy to follow**

- A. Snowmobile signing guidelines should be reviewed annually and updated as needed to stay current with management issues, program direction, and IASA and Forest Service guidance
- B. Establish signing protocols that ensure signing needs are properly assessed, inventoried, installed, monitored, and maintained
- C. Weather, trail and snow conditions permitting, strive to have all basic trail signing and staking installed by Christmas – which will likely require funding for extra staff travel and overtime; end-of-season removal of temporary signing and staking shall begin within one to two weeks of an area's last grooming of the season

- D. Establish a program to train STP staff, volunteers, and contractors in proper snowmobile trail staking guidelines and techniques
  - E. Pursue opportunities for more permanent snowmobile trail route markers and blazers to help minimize annual labor costs, provide more effective trail signing, and provide greater safety for snowmobilers early and late in the season when temporary markers and stakes may not have yet been installed during start-up or have been removed during spring take-down
  - F. Pursue opportunities to expand snowmobile trail staking contracts with local clubs, lodges and organizations
  - G. Pursue opportunities to expand the use of volunteers to accomplish snowmobile trail staking and maintenance
  - H. At least biannually, perform a sweep of primary open meadows and stake line areas to recover snow poles which have fallen down or been lost due to wind or deep snowfall
  - I. Continually monitor and evaluate new/better equipment and materials to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of snowmobile trail staking and signing
- 5. Provide off-season snowmobile trail route maintenance and improvement to ensure safe trails which can be effectively groomed**
- 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 year-round trail maintenance that minimizes costs while benefiting both use seasons
  - B. Ensure summer/fall snowmobile trail maintenance, improvement, rerouting, and signing occurs at a level that meets management needs and assures proper resource protection
  - C. Continually monitor and evaluate new/better equipment and materials to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of snowmobile trail construction and maintenance
- 6. Deliver snowmobile education materials and services that promote Wyoming snowmobiling opportunities, safe and ethical operation, and a proper understanding of Wyoming snowmobiling laws, operating requirements, and issues**
- A. Provide trail maps which clearly display groomed and ungroomed snowmobile trails, open and restricted riding areas, on-trail services and facilities, snowmobile operating requirements, and safety information
  - B. Pursue partnerships with state and regional tourism groups to better promote snowmobiling opportunities; consider budgeting to fund targeted participation in snowmobile travel shows and/or development of advertising campaigns that target prime snowmobile visitor markets
  - C. Use partnerships with federal land managing agencies and other local agencies through the OHV Grants Program to provide on-the-ground education to trail users and enforcement of requirements
  - D. Utilize maps and brochures, the SPHST website, and regular news releases about Program functions, activities and projects to increase awareness of the Snowmobile Program and to let snowmobilers know what they get for their registration and user fee dollars
  - E. Evaluate the need, interest, and costs to develop a volunteer Trail Patrol to provide on-the-ground education to snowmobilers; if need, interest and priorities warrants, develop a funding proposal for consideration in the annual snowmobile budget allocation process
  - F. Continue to depend on the Wyoming State Snowmobile Association's volunteer network for youth snowmobile training and certification (the ORV Education Coordinator is not budgeted or assigned to provide youth snowmobile training)
  - G. The ORV Education Coordinator will continue to rely on outside grants and contributions to provide any snowmobile-related safety and user ethics training
  - H. Maintain safety shelters in key locations with local partners; consider additional shelters as needs and partnerships are identified and funds become available

# ORV TRAILS PROGRAM

## CRITICAL ISSUES

1. **Permit sales have been increasing significantly and the ORV Fund balance is growing.** ORV permit sales have increased by over 25% (over 11,500 permits) over the past four years, and by 115% (30,000 permits) since 2003, to more than 56,000 annually; consequently the number of ORV permits sold now exceeds annual snowmobile permit sales by more than 22,000 per year. With this rapid growth the ORV Fund's cash balance has grown to over \$1.6 million since Program expenditures have not kept pace getting this additional money to the ground; more aggressive actions are needed to ensure the ORV funding stream is being fully utilized to address ORV issues and trail needs.
2. **Need to be responsive to a wider range of uses and keep pace with changing industry trends.** The ORV Program is intended to cover a wide range of ORV vehicle types including Type 1: all-terrain vehicles (ATV); Type 2: off-highway motorcycles (OHM), and Type 3: all 'other' off-road recreational vehicles including utility trail vehicles (UTV) / side-by-sides, jeeps, light duty 4x4 trucks, dune buggies, etc. Most efforts to-date have primarily been focused on ATV use; more aggressive actions are needed to benefit other vehicle types including OHMs, jeeps and 4x4 trucks, and the growing UTV market.
3. **Lack of an active statewide ORV user association hinders effective communication and coordination.** The Program enlisted assistance from the National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council (NOHVCC) in 2003 to form a grassroots ORV advocacy organization to help advise the Program regarding ORV issues and management; these efforts never took root or spread statewide to effectively represent the full range of ORV users. An active statewide ORV association is needed to help guide the ORV Program regarding management issues for all ORV vehicle types.
4. **Existing trail areas offer a relatively short season of opportunities.** The most popular ORV areas are currently located on National Forests and have relatively short use and construction seasons due to heavier snowpack in the high-country which typically doesn't dry out until mid summer; strategies to diversify and expand ORV opportunities statewide in a wider range of settings should be pursued.

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

1. **Manage ORV funding more aggressively to diversify and expand ORV riding opportunities through prudent partnerships and spending plans**
  - A. Restructure the existing Internal Grants program into a new 'OHV Partnership Grants' program. The term 'OHV' (Off-Highway Vehicle) is more commonly used by the Program's federal partners and typically includes both wheeled vehicles (ORVs) and snowmobiles. This change should help partners more easily identify with this assistance program, as well as be more attractive to them with a broadened range of funding opportunities including:
    - Planning Grants – to support partner agency's NEPA and travel planning projects which improve or expand ORV opportunities
    - Maintenance and Construction Grants – to support partner agency's contractor or staff efforts which protect, improve, or expand ORV opportunities, including hazard tree removal along trails in response to the beetle epidemic
    - Education and Enforcement Grants – to support partner agency's efforts to provide law enforcement and user ethics and safety education that help ensure responsible ORV use
    - Equipment Grants – to support partner agency's efforts to provide ORV-related trail construction and maintenance, law enforcement, and user education
  - B. Continually evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of State Trail Crew efforts versus funding similar ORV trail work through grants directly to local partners; maintain at least one Crew which is properly trained and equipped to continue providing direct delivery of trail assistance
  - C. Evaluate the feasibility of building an ORV park which could enhance year-round opportunities in an area of Wyoming where a sufficient number and combination of resident and nonresident users could support it, most likely in Southeast Wyoming on BLM or OS LI lands
  - D. Continually track, monitor and evaluate ORV revenues and expenditures closely
  - E. Contract with the University of Wyoming to update research on ORV issues and economic impacts through the Wyoming ORV Survey every five to seven years, beginning in 2012

- F. Continually evaluate ORV tourism marketing and promotion efforts to ensure Wyoming ORV opportunities are properly advertised and positioned to compete with other regional ORV destinations; partner as appropriate and as needed with state, regional and local tourism groups
- G. Continually evaluate education and enforcement efforts pertaining to ORV permit requirements; partner as appropriate and as needed with federal and county law enforcement agencies
- H. 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, 2013

**2. Protect and enhance access for ORV recreation**

- A. Continually nurture and enhance positive working relationships with the Forest Service and the BLM to provide trails, facilities, and services for ORV riding on federal lands
- B. Actively participate in federal and state land managing agencies' land use planning and travel planning processes to advocate for continued ORV access and growth in a wide range of riding opportunities
- C. Pursue the enhancement of parking and trailhead facilities for ORV recreation
- E. Continually manage existing and pursue new written easements for ORV trail routes across public and private lands as needed to ensure annual and long-term access
- D. Pursue state land managing agency partnerships to expand ORV trail and riding area opportunities
- E. Encourage land managing agencies to:
  - continually update their inventories of routes and areas open to ORV use
  - consider integrating some user-created routes into legal trail systems since many lead to desirable destinations
  - create more loop routes to replace dead-end spurs
  - facilitate more opportunities for youth riders by creating more 'open areas' and trail routes where a driver's license is not required for ORV operation
- F. Continue to pursue additional "enrollments" of ORV trails and roadways by local agencies

**3. Manage ORV trail signing to provide trails that are safe and easy to follow**

- A. Work with partner agencies to establish statewide ORV trail signing guidelines by May 2013
- B. Establish signing protocols that ensure signing needs are properly assessed, inventoried, installed, monitored, and maintained
- C. Evaluate the use of contractors to perform ORV trail signing and maintenance
- D. Establish a program to train STP staff, volunteers, and contractors in proper ORV trail signing guidelines and techniques
- E. Pursue opportunities to involve volunteers from local clubs and organizations with ORV trail signing
- F. Continually monitor and evaluate new/better equipment and materials to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of ORV trail signing

**4. Perform regular ORV trail maintenance and improvement**

- A. Pursue the overlay of ORV and snowmobile trail routes to the greatest extent possible, where feasible and compatible, to provide more cost-effective and efficient year-round trail maintenance
- B. Work with land managing agencies to provide:
  - more ORV trails versus ORV roads
  - more loop trails
  - connecting links to services and facilities
  - more opportunities for Type 2 OHMs (single-track trails)
  - more opportunities for Type 3 vehicles, including rock-crawling areas for 4x4 trucks and jeeps
- C. Work with land managing agencies to provide ORV trail maintenance that properly manages use and resource impacts
- D. Ensure ORV trail maintenance, improvement, rerouting and signing occurs at a level that meets management guidelines and assures the proper management of resources
- E. Evaluate the use of contractors to perform ORV trail maintenance, including hazard tree removal along trail routes impacted by the beetle epidemic

- F. Routinely monitor and evaluate new trail construction, major trail reconstruction, and routine maintenance projects to evaluate different construction techniques and materials through periodic follow-up site inspections
  - G. Monitor ORV use impacts on ORV roads and establish guidelines and procedures as to where and how the STP will provide ORV road maintenance associated with ORV road use through grants or contractors
  - H. Continually monitor and evaluate new/better equipment and materials to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of ORV trail construction and maintenance
- 5. Deliver ORV education materials and services that promote Wyoming ORV opportunities, safe and ethical operation, and a proper understanding of Wyoming ORV laws, operating requirements and issues**
- A. Provide printed trail maps and/or links to on-line printable maps which clearly outline enrolled ORV riding areas and trails, on-trail services and facilities, ORV operational requirements, and safety information; expand maps to also cover BLM areas while ensuring existing map series continues to target Forest Service opportunities statewide
  - B. Use OHV Partnership Grants to work with federal land managers and other local agencies to provide on-the-ground education and the enforcement of ORV operating requirements
  - C. Utilize maps and brochures, the SPHST website, and regular news releases about Program functions, activities and projects to increase awareness of the ORV Program and to let riders know what they get for their registration dollars
  - D. Link to federal partners' websites that provide downloadable maps that can be printed by users
  - E. Utilize the ORV Education Coordinator to provide safety and user ethics training for ORV riders statewide; establish an annual ORV Education operating budget tied to an annual work plan for the Education Coordinator
  - F. Review and evaluate the effectiveness of the volunteer Trail Patrol to provide on-the-ground education to ORV riders; if it is deemed to be an effective tool, identify priority areas for expansion and implement wider use of the Patrol as warranted
  - G. Require all STP staff who operate ATVs and/or off-road motorcycles to be current on safety training; provide any required training through the ORV Education Coordinator
- 6. Conduct ORV Program monitoring**
- A. Actively solicit on-going public input regarding this growing program through user surveys, public meetings, on-trail contact logs, and by analyzing permit sales data to ensure public priorities and needs are being met
  - B. Continually monitor and critique successes and failures of on-the-ground projects and partnerships to help develop and revise guidelines, policies, and models to help this program grow successfully

# NONMOTORIZED TRAILS

## CRITICAL ISSUES

- 1. Continued lack of statewide funding.** A dedicated funding source for statewide nonmotorized trails has not materialized, other than federal RTP nonmotorized funds whose future remains uncertain, even though a strong interest and desire have been expressed by the department and Trails Council for well over 15 years
- 2. Reductions in funding for nonmotorized recreational trails on federal lands.** Federal land managers including the Forest Service, BLM and NPS have experienced significant budget cuts which have reduced funding for nonmotorized trails management; since federal lands host the majority of nonmotorized trail opportunities, increased assistance and partnerships with the State, local governments and user groups will become increasingly important
- 3. Lack of organized statewide user groups.** While some local groups have been successful providing mountain biking and hiking opportunities and Back Country Horsemen (BCH) chapters are quite active statewide developing, maintaining and promoting equestrian trails, no statewide organizations other than BCH have emerged to support or advocate for specific nonmotorized uses
- 4. Role of the SPHST Nonmotorized Trail Coordinator.** There has been confusion about the SPHST Nonmotorized Trail Coordinator and how its functions fit within the overall SPHST Division and with its Trails Program and the Trails Council; the future role of this position regarding trails statewide, outside of state parks and historic sites boundaries, should be clarified and enhanced

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- 1. Move supervision of the SPHST Nonmotorized Trail Coordinator position from the SPHST Field Support Section to the Trails Program**
  - A. Redefine the role of the Nonmotorized Trail Coordinator to create a broader, statewide focus on nonmotorized trail opportunities and partnerships
  - B. Develop appropriate internal (SPHST sites) and external (outside SPHST sites) functions for this position
  - C. Evaluate the most effective location (Cheyenne versus Lander) for this position to work from over the long-term
- 2. Analyze nonmotorized recreation opportunities and needs across Wyoming to determine appropriate nonmotorized trail roles for SPHST and the Trails Program**
  - A. Evaluate additional opportunities within State Parks administered lands where nonmotorized trail development or improvement may be desirable and feasible
  - B. Evaluate opportunities for SPHST to develop partnerships with other public land agencies for enhancing nonmotorized trail opportunities and management
  - C. Evaluate long-term needs and functions that may potentially benefit from additional nonmotorized staffing
  - D. Develop a White Paper which summarizes and prioritizes results of this analysis
- 3. Facilitate opportunities and favorable policies for nonmotorized trails statewide**
  - A. Use the Nonmotorized Coordinator and Trails Program Manager to facilitate meetings and initiatives
  - B. Encourage the use of Nonmotorized RTP grant funds to assist local project sponsors
- 4. Pursue long-term funding sources and partnerships for nonmotorized trails**
  - A. Work with the Department, Division and Trails Council to identify and pursue long-term funding sources for nonmotorized trails which could be managed by the Trails Program through grants and/or direct assistance
  - B. Assist the Trails Council and user groups by providing technical assistance and information to aid development of statewide trail user associations
  - C. Encourage nonmotorized groups to partner with the Trails Program and motorized groups to apply for Diversified RTP grant funds

**5. Evaluate the feasibility and need for of a nonmotorized State Trail Crew**

- A. Consider a model whereby the existing State Trail Crew's efforts could potentially be expanded to accomplish appropriate high priority nonmotorized trail projects; since the existing Trail Crew's labor and equipment have been funded with a combination of state motorized (snowmobile and ORV) funds and Diversified RTP grant funds where the grant rules stipulated Diversified Trail Crew projects must provide for at least one motorized use, this would require additional funding from nonmotorized sources to accomplish any projects not open to shared motorized/nonmotorized trail use
- B. Consider a model whereby a new stand-alone nonmotorized State Trail Crew is developed with nonmotorized funding sources and equipment more appropriate for nonmotorized settings

**6. Facilitate access for nonmotorized recreation**

- A. Continually nurture and enhance positive working relationships with the Forest Service and the BLM to provide trails, facilities, and services for nonmotorized uses on federal lands
- B. Actively participate in federal and state land managing agencies' land use planning and travel planning processes to advocate for a full range of nonmotorized trail access and growth in mechanized nonmotorized opportunities where appropriate on public lands
- C. Pursue the enhancement of trailhead facilities for nonmotorized recreation
- D. Pursue state land managing agency partnerships to expand nonmotorized trail systems
- E. Encourage land managing agencies to:
  - Gather data on nonmotorized use levels and trends
  - Consider integrating some user-created routes into legal trail systems since many lead to desirable destinations
  - Create more loop routes to replace dead-end spurs

# STATE TRAILS ADVISORY COUNCIL

## CRITICAL ISSUES

1. **How to use the Council more effectively.** Council members need to have a more meaningful role in an advisory capacity for both motorized and nonmotorized trails
2. **ORV consultation role.** There is a statutory requirement that the Program consult with the Trails Council for management and operation of ORV trails; this consultation role needs to be strengthened
3. **Participation in the RTP Grant Program.** Participation in the annual distribution of RTP grant funds has become a primary function for the Trails Council; the uncertain future of the RTP program makes this continued role equally uncertain

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

1. **Reestablish the Trails Program Manager as the lead SPHST staff coordinator with the Trails Council**
  - A. Use the Trails Program Manager, since that position is more directly involved in day-to-day trails issues than the Grants Specialist, to develop and coordinate all Council meeting agendas and activities while ensuring pertinent agenda topics are coordinated with the Division Administrator and other employees within SPHST who are involved with Council-related topics and issues
  - B. Use the OHV Partnership Coordinator to help provide meeting logistics, scheduling, coordination, and support including meeting notices, meeting minutes, and Council travel vouchers
  - C. Use the RTP Administrative budget (0414) as available and the General Fund Trails budget (0420) to fund Council meeting travel and support
2. **Utilize the Trails Council to help guide ORV Trails Program decisions**
  - A. Regularly use Council members as a sounding board on ORV related issues, policies, and budget development
  - B. Involve the Council in the development of annual OHV Partnership Grant guidelines and project selection
  - C. Involve the Council in the development and selection of annual Trail Crew projects
  - D. Utilize the Council to help develop and nurture a statewide ORV user association
3. **Provide more opportunities for Trails Council participation in RTP Grant Program functions**
  - A. Continue to involve the Council in the development of annual RTP Grant guidelines and procedures
  - B. Allow all Council members, if they wish, to participate in the review and rating of annual RTP project applications
  - C. Keep the Council updated on RTP project issues, progress, and changes
4. **Utilize the Trails Council to help develop funding and favorable policy development for all trails across Wyoming**
  - A. Periodically co-host a statewide Trails Summit/Conference or regional listening meetings with the Trails Program to solicit public input on trail issues and needs
  - B. Use the Council for a sounding board for all Program issues and policy development (snowmobile, ORV and nonmotorized trails)

# **RTP GRANT PROGRAM**

## **CRITICAL ISSUES**

- 1. Close coordination is required.** The SPHST Field Support Section, Grants Specialist, and Trails Program staff must work closely to coordinate efforts related to RTP grant program operation and administration.

## **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

- 1. Work closely with the Field Support Section and the Grants Specialist to effectively utilize RTP grant funds to benefit trails in Wyoming**
  - A. Actively participate in the annual revision and development of RTP Program guidelines and procedures, grant application development, and project screening, rating, and selection
  - B. Since the Trails Program 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
  - C. Continue to require a 'motorized use presence' in all Diversified funding category projects
  - D. For all Trails Program sponsored projects: ensure that all FHWA guidelines are followed, proper project monitoring and inspections occur, projects are completed in a timely manner within the scope of the authorized project, and that reimbursements are requested promptly at the completion of projects
  - E. Ensure correct Wyoming motorized recreational vehicle data is annually submitted to FHWA to ensure its apportionment formula properly allocates Wyoming's RTP share, since FHWA apportionment is partially based upon off-road vehicle registration numbers
  - F. Upon completion of the Trails Program Operations Manual; keep the RTP section updated as needed to stay current on priorities, issues, timelines and staff roles
- 2. Develop a contingency plan in the event Congress does not reauthorize the RTP Program**
  - A. Identify exactly how the loss of RTP would impact all facets of the Trails Program (motorized, nonmotorized and diversified trail projects)
  - B. Investigate opportunities to develop a replacement for the RTP funding model with state dollars

# TRAILS REVENUE PROGRAM

## CRITICAL ISSUES

1. **Close coordination is required.** The SPHST Revenue and Concessions group within the Field Support Section and Trails Program staff must work closely to coordinate efforts related to collecting revenues which fund operation of the Trails Program.

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

1. **Work closely with the Field Support Section's Revenue and Concessions staff to effectively manage and collect snowmobile and ORV revenue**
  - A. Coordinate with Revenue and Concessions staff to ensure snowmobile and ORV revenue data and reports are available when needed for Trails Program management actions
  - B. Coordinate with Revenue and Concessions staff to ensure snowmobile and ORV revenue data is transparent, easily accessible, and in a format easily understood by Trails Program constituents
  - C. Coordinate with Revenue and Concessions staff to ensure selling agents have correct Trails Program information and that agents are managed effectively to ensure good revenue collection practices and procedures
  - D. Coordinate with Revenue and Concessions staff to ensure snowmobile and ORV ownership data is compiled accurately and timely to fulfill statutory requirements
  - E. Upon completion of the Trails Program Operations Manual; keep the Revenue section updated as needed to stay current on priorities, issues, timelines and staff roles
2. **Develop information which clearly relates to permit purchasers how their funds are spent**
  - A. For snowmobile: what percentage of total registration and user fee dollars go toward grooming; trail maintenance; signing; facilities including toilets, shelters, trailheads and parking area snow removal; maps and education; law enforcement; and administration
  - B. For ORV: what percentage of total user fee dollars go toward new trail construction; trail maintenance; signing; facilities including toilets, shelters and trailheads; maps and education, law enforcement, and administration

# PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

Program Administration includes a range of internal functions required to help the Trails Program successfully meet its responsibilities in providing recreational trails across Wyoming.

## CRITICAL ISSUES

- 1. Internal communication and coordination of efforts.** Since the Trails Program continues to grow and evolve, it is crucial that there be frequent opportunities for communication and coordination between employees and between work groups located in both Lander and Cheyenne; structured opportunities that allow information input and output must be scheduled and adhered to with regular frequency
- 2. External communication and public relations.** There is a continuing lack of understanding by the public, agencies and even other SPHST work units as to the exact role and functions of the Trails Program; mechanisms for telling the STP story and advertising partnership tools and opportunities to other agencies and user groups need to be structured and implemented regularly
- 3. Teambuilding.** The Trails Program needs to ensure it functions as a part of the overall SPHST Division team while at the same ensuring statutory stipulations tied to dedicated funding sources are respected
- 4. Planning.** More attention needs to be given to on-going long-range planning for the Trails Program, along with effectively participating in and properly addressing on-going land use planning processes conducted by federal land managing agencies and others who provide recreational trail opportunities

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- 1. Provide a staffing plan that enables the Program to meet its goals and objectives while being responsive to changing needs, priorities, and funding abilities**
  - A. The Program should continue to be called the State Trails Program to continue conveying a wide context relative to its overall responsibilities. However its core field operations based in Lander should be renamed to better reflect its solely motorized responsibilities. The field operations group and some staff should use the term 'OHV' (Off-Highway Vehicle) in working titles since it is a term regularly used and better recognized by federal partners to signify 'motorized' recreation and also typically includes both snowmobiles and ORVs. Specific changes which should be made include:
    - Use 'State OHV Program' to refer to the snowmobile and ORV programs collectively, and include field staff currently based in Lander and Casper paid exclusively by snowmobile and/or ORV funds
    - Change the current working title of Regional Field Supervisor to Regional OHV Supervisor; reduce the number of Supervisors from three to two and reallocate areas of responsibility
    - Rename the current Internal Grants Program the OHV Partnership Grants Program; the primary focus of this revised program will be to fund and manage a wide range of ORV-funded partnership grants, along with a few snowmobile-funded grants primarily targeting snowmobile enforcement / education and trailhead snow removal partnerships
    - Reclassify the existing vacant Regional Field Supervisor position to a new OHV Partnership Coordinator position; this would convert the current seasonal Trails Specialist position located in Cheyenne (would remain in Cheyenne to work closely with SPCR Accounting) to a permanent position funded 90% ORV/10% Snowmobile
  - B. Transfer supervision of the Nonmotorized Trail Coordinator from the SPHST Field Support Section to the Trails Program; develop an updated job description and work functions to ensure statewide focus on nonmotorized trail issues and initiatives and continue funding with General Funds; evaluate the best long-term location of position (Cheyenne or Lander) to achieve the most cost-effective and efficient results from this position
  - C. Evaluate the best long-term location (Casper or Lander) of the Trades Specialist position currently based on Casper Mountain to achieve the most cost-effective and efficient results from this position
  - D. The Trails Program Manager should have a wide focus of responsibilities (all trails) versus having an OHV-only focus; consequently a portion of this position must continue to be funded with General Funds; evaluate the best long-term work location for this position (Cheyenne or Lander) to provide the best overall Program coordination and supervision and to achieve the most cost-effective and efficient results for the overall Program

- E. Evaluate the most effective way to cover Program long-range and land use planning needs – whether by assigning to staff, contracting with consultants, or a combination thereof
- F. Continually reevaluate functions, workload, location, and appropriate funding mix (snowmobile, ORV, General Funds, RTP, other) of all positions to ensure efficient and cost-effective Program staffing that addresses changing needs and priorities
- G. Balance changing workloads and priorities between full-time and seasonal positions; as existing full-time field staff positions (OHV funded) become vacant, reevaluate whether the Program can afford the long-term commitment of the position's full costs (salary plus benefits) or whether it would be more cost-effective to replace with seasonal employees
- H. Utilize seasonal employees as snowmobile trail groomer operators and to help staff winter and summer Trail Crews
- I. Continue to use Forest Service partnerships to staff seasonal labor needs, as appropriate with needs and available partnership locations
- J. Ensure seasonal employee salaries remain competitive to attract and retain qualified individuals

**2. Improve internal communication, coordination and team building**

- A. Conduct weekly staff meetings: 1) a Supervisors Meeting which includes the Program Manager and Regional OHV Supervisors, 2) a Monday morning Field Staff meeting which includes the Regional OHV Supervisors and all OHV field staff, and 3) a meeting which includes the Program Manager, ORV Education Coordinator, OHV Agreements Coordinator and Nonmotorized Coordinator. Meeting participation should be mandatory and be conducted by a combination of in-person (preferred if schedules allow) and by-phone; the agendas should focus on priority issues and timely topics, and be kept on-point versus rehashing old business or routine minutia
- B. Conduct All-Trails Program Staff Meetings, at least three times per year, that involve all full-time Trails Program staff in updates on upcoming priorities, the development of new initiatives and policies, brainstorming on long-term issues, etc. They may be scheduled as stand-alone meetings or tier to other meetings such as the SPHST spring and fall all-staff meetings or Trails Council meetings
- C. Work with Division administration to structure spring and fall all-SPHST staff meetings so that agendas are applicable to Trails Program staff to the greatest extent possible and so that meeting scheduling does not interfere with peak Trails work periods; as agendas delve into park- or historic site-specific topics, provide opportunities for trails staff breakout sessions

**3. Improve external communication and public relations**

- A. The Trails Program Manager, and at least one Regional OHV Supervisor as appropriate according to availability, location and meeting agendas, should participate in all regularly scheduled meetings of statewide motorized trail user groups to share project, budget, and current issues information and to use the group as an advisory sounding board for policy development and management decisions; other Trails staff may also participate at the direction of the Program Manager
- B. Regional OHV Supervisors should attempt to attend at least one meeting per year of each organized local snowmobile and/or ORV club in their assigned areas; the Program Manager should also attend local club meetings periodically around the state in conjunction with other travel and meeting functions
- C. Provide assistance as needed to help develop and support strong statewide trail user groups and associations
- D. The Trails Program Manager, the OHV Partnership Coordinator, and Regional OHV Supervisors as their schedules allow, should participate in all Trails Council meetings; other Trails staff may also participate at the direction of the Program Manager
- E. The Nonmotorized Coordinator or/and the Trails Program Manager should attend meetings hosted by statewide nonmotorized trail user groups, at their invitation and dependent upon scheduling availability
- F. The Trails Program Manager, and other staff as appropriate and as budgets allow, should participate in national trail user group meetings (IASA, ACSA, NOHVCC, NAOPM, IMBA, RTC, American Trails, etc.) to stay current on trends, issues, and best management practices
- G. Utilize snowmobile and ORV maps and brochures, the SPHST website, social media, and other new technology to increase awareness of Trails Program activities and opportunities
- H. Generate a minimum of one news release per month that highlights Trails Program activities, opportunities, and projects through the SPCR Information staff

- I. The Trails Program Manager, or other staff as assigned by the Manager, should regularly submit articles (monthly or in accordance with publication cycles) to in-state constituent user group's publications (*Snowmobile Wrangler*, etc.) and other local, regional or national media forums as appropriate to keep them updated about Program activities, initiatives and issues
  - J. Develop Public Service Announcements (PSAs) that promote functions, activities and opportunities related to the Program
  - K. Utilize the ORV Education Coordinator to promote ORV related safety and user ethics information and education
  - L. In conjunction with the Trails Advisory Council, host a statewide Trails Summit/conference or regional listening meetings at least once every two to three years to solicit public input, while also using these forums to increase awareness of Trails Program functions, activities, and opportunities
- 4. Provide on-going staff development and training to ensure specialized skills for job functions, excellent customer service, and proper fulfillment of all Program responsibilities**
- A. Complete development of the Trails Program Operations Manual; update annually or more frequently as needed to stay current on priorities, issues, timelines, and staff roles for all aspects of the Program
  - B. Provide annual training opportunities for all employees through one of the all-SPHST staff meetings in topics related to: communication, customer service, leadership, supervision, team building, time management and/or general computer applications
  - C. Provide annual specialized training opportunities for all employees in topics related to their job functions, including but not limited to: specialized computer applications, record keeping, accounting, grant writing, trail construction and maintenance techniques, equipment maintenance and repair, welding, snow trail grooming and/or trail signing
  - D. Use the ORV Education Coordinator and other staff as appropriate to provide monthly safety training to all OHV field staff in topics including but not limited to: first aid, CPR, avalanche awareness, winter survival techniques, chainsaw operation, snowmobile operation, ATV operation, off-road motorcycle operation, truck driving, trailer towing, etc.
- 5. Provide on-going planning and monitoring of issues and priorities**
- A. OHV field staff should annually collect Continental Divide Snowmobile Trail (CDST) monitoring plan use data through the Trail Master data collection system to provide information related to CDST snowmobile use; data collected by OHV field staff and partner agencies should be forwarded to the Nonmotorized Coordinator (who also handles visitor use data for the Division) for compilation in a timely manner that ensures compliance with the CDST monitoring plan
  - B. OHV field staff should annually use the Trail Master data collection system to collect snowmobile trail use data from other selected locations statewide; data collected by OHV field staff should be forwarded to the Nonmotorized Coordinator for compilation in a timely manner that assists snowmobile trail grooming scheduling and budgeting
  - C. Continually monitor and evaluate upgrades to the Trail Master data collection system, as well as alternatives to the Trail Master system, to ensure efficient and effective trail use monitoring
  - D. Survey Snowmobile and ORV users once every five to seven years through the University of Wyoming to assess economic impacts, user trends, issues, and priorities for each program
  - E. Update the Statewide Trails Inventory through the University of Wyoming, including collecting baseline estimates of nonmotorized trail use across Wyoming. Utilize the Nonmotorized Coordinator to continue gathering nonmotorized use data, economic studies from other states and agencies, and other nonmotorized trail planning information on an on-going basis as it becomes available
  - F. Collect ORV gasoline consumption data prior to the summer of 2012 so it is available for ORV gas tax re-authorization discussions and legislation that sunsets on June 30, 2013
  - G. Annually monitor and measure progress of this plan and update as needed to stay responsive to new issues or priorities
- 6. Provide infrastructure that enables the Program to meet its goals and objectives while being responsive to changing needs, priorities and funding abilities**
- A. Evaluate the feasibility and cost of either purchasing the existing Lander shop/office complex or building a program-owned office/shop/storage facility in the Lander area

- B. Continue to use partnerships between State Parks and the Snowmobile and ORV Programs to provide vehicles, equipment, and staffing for the Trails Program
- C. Ensure good equipment- and vehicle-related records are kept that properly capture all operating costs (labor, fuel, maintenance and repairs, service, etc.) so the Program's vehicle and equipment fleet can be managed with a turn-over schedule that keeps the fleet dependable and cost efficient
- D. Continually evaluate functions, workload, and location of all Program vehicles and equipment to ensure efficient and cost-effective Program operations, along with continued needs