

# **VISION 2010**

## **WYOMING STATE TRAILS PROGRAM PLAN**

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# Table of Contents

	<u>Page</u>
<b>Introduction</b>	3
<b>SPHS Mission Statement</b>	3
<b>State Trails Program Purpose</b>	4
<b>Trails Program Goals and Objectives</b>	5
Snowmobile Program	5
ORV Program	7
RTP Grant Program	9
Registration Program	10
Education and Safety	10
Non-Motorized Trails	11
Statewide Administration	11
Internal Communication	11
External Communication and Public Relations	12
Training	12
Planning and Monitoring	13
Staffing	13
Infrastructure	14

# WYOMING STATE TRAILS PROGRAM PLAN

## Introduction

This plan is intended to clarify the role and mission of the Wyoming State Trails Program (STP) in providing recreational trails across Wyoming. The plan is intended to spell out strategies and an action plan by which the Program can work toward accomplishing its priorities, goals and objectives between 2004 and 2010.

Since the Wyoming State Trails Program does not own any property or directly control any trail, the plan will be implemented in coordination with other plans, including but not limited to land management agency's land use plans, travel plans and master plans.

Because the State Trails Program is only one of many entities involved in providing trails in Wyoming, this is not a comprehensive plan for all trails in the state.

## SPHS Mission Statement

The State Trails Program is a program within the Wyoming Department of State Parks and Cultural Resources – Division of State Parks and Historic Sites (SPHS). The Mission of the Division of State Parks and Historic Sites is:

- Provide a wide range of recreational opportunities at state parks, historic sites and trails.
- Provide responsible stewardship of the natural and cultural resources for present and future generations.
- Manage the division's grant programs in the development of recreational opportunities.
- Interpret the state parks and historic sites and educate the public about Wyoming's history, heritage and natural resources.
- Develop partnerships with local communities, public organizations and entities that facilitate recreational and educational opportunities.

## **State Trails Program Purpose**

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

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

### **Primary Purpose**

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

### **Secondary Purpose**

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

# **TRAILS PROGRAM GOALS and OBJECTIVES**

## **Snowmobile Program**

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

1. **Improve Snowmobile Trail Signing:**
  - A. Annually review snowmobile signing guidelines and update as needed to stay current with management issues, program direction and International Association of Snowmobile Administrators (IASA) guidelines.
  - B. Update the snowmobile trail signing guidelines regarding the use of directional arrows prior to the winter of 2005-2006 and implement any new guidelines on-the-ground prior to the 2007-2008 winter season.
  - C. Pursue opportunities for the installation of permanent signing to the greatest extent possible where feasible to minimize labor costs and to provide more effective trail signing.
  - D. Pursue opportunities to expand snowmobile trail staking contracts with local clubs and organizations.
  - E. Pursue opportunities to expand the use of volunteers to accomplish snowmobile trail staking and maintenance.
  - F. Establish a training program to train STP staff, volunteers and contractors in proper snowmobile trail staking guidelines and techniques.
  - G. Investigate new/better equipment and materials to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of snowmobile trail staking.
  
2. **Improve Snowmobile Trail Maintenance:**
  - A. Pursue the overlay of snowmobile and ORV trail routes to the greatest extent possible where feasible and compatible to provide more cost-effective and efficient trail maintenance.
  - B. Ensure summer snowmobile trail maintenance, improvement, rerouting and signing continues at a level that meets management guidelines and assures the proper management of resources.
  - C. Investigate new/better equipment and materials to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of snowmobile trail maintenance.
  
3. **Improve Snowmobile Trail Grooming:**
  - A. Establish a snowmobile trail groomer operator training and certification program based upon IASA guidelines.
  - B. Analyze the cost-benefit of grooming snowmobile trails with STP staff and equipment versus grooming trails with private contractors.

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

# **ORV Program**

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

## **1. Improve ORV Trails:**

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

## **2. Improve ORV Trail Signing:**

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

## **3. Improve ORV Safety and Education:**

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

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

## **RTP Grant Program**

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

- A. Work with the State Trails Advisory Council to annually review and update program guidelines and selection criteria to keep current with Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) requirements for the program.
- B. Continue to require a “motorized” use presence in all Diversified funding category projects since motorized users fund 100% of the grant program.
- C. Continue funding the State Trail Crew with Diversified RTP funds as a tool for STP to help federal agencies statewide improve and maintain trails.
- D. Since the STP is the primary facilitator of motorized trails in Wyoming, continue requiring that STP must be the primary sponsor of all Motorized project applications and that STP be either the primary sponsor or a co-sponsor of all Diversified project applications to ensure the limited amount of funding is used to accomplish priority projects.
- E. Develop criteria to ensure snowmobiling receives its “fair share” of RTP funding in respect to what snowmobilers contribute as compared to the heavy interest in ORV projects influenced by the young ORV Program that could potentially overwhelm and overshadow snowmobile projects.
- F. Utilize Non-Motorized grant funds as STP’s primary tool to support non-motorized trails in Wyoming.
- G. Annually nominate Wyoming RTP projects for national Coalition for Recreational Trails (CRT) awards.
- H. Regularly provide current Wyoming motorized recreational vehicle data to FHWA to ensure their apportionment formula properly allocates Wyoming’s fair share to the program.
- I. Manage the program to ensure that FHWA guidelines are followed, that proper project monitoring and inspections occur, and that the program makes timely draw-downs and reimbursements.
- J. Develop a sign to be posted at all project locations recognizing that: 1) RTP funded the project and 2) that the RTP funding source is from the federal gas tax paid by motorized recreational vehicles.
- K. Work to increase awareness of the RTP Grant Program through the STP website, use of on-the-ground signing and regular news releases about RTP Program functions and projects.

## **Registration Program**

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

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

## **Education and Safety**

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

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

## **Non-Motorized Trails**

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

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

## **Statewide Administration**

Statewide Administration includes functions that are required to help the STP coordinate between sub-areas within the Program to ensure it meets its responsibilities in providing recreational trails across Wyoming. Goals and objectives for the Trails Program's efforts related to Statewide Administration include:

### **Internal Communication**

With a growing Program, it is important to establish "time-outs" that are sacred so there is opportunity for communication (input and output) between and within work groups. These time-outs should be structured so the time given from "work" functions is respected by all and focuses only on high-points and issues versus rehashing old business or routine functions. Goals and objectives to improve internal STP communication include:

- A. Establish three separate weekly staff meetings that include: 1) all field staff, 2) the Program Manager and all Regional Field Supervisors (conference call), and 3) the Program Manager and all Cheyenne office staff.
- B. Establish a monthly staff meeting/conference call that includes the Program Manager, all Regional Field Supervisors and all Cheyenne office staff.
- C. Establish All-STP staff meetings that are held three times per year and involve all full-time STP staff: two meetings could tier to the SPHS spring and fall staff

meetings and the third meeting could tier to the summer Trails Advisory Council meeting.

- D. Increase involvement by field Trades staff in project development.

### **External Communication and Public Relations**

Numerous surveys show there is a general lack of understanding by the public and agencies as to the role and functions of the STP. Goals and objectives to improve external STP communication and public relations include:

- A. A STP representative should attend all regularly scheduled meetings of statewide motorized trail user groups (currently WSSA for snowmobiling and MRCOW for ORVs).
- B. A STP representative should attempt to attend one meeting per year in each area where there is an organized local snowmobile and/or ORV club.
- C. The STP Program Manager or Trails Planner should attend meetings hosted by non-motorized trail user groups at their request dependant upon scheduling and availability.
- D. The STP should participate in national motorized user group meetings to stay current on issues (currently IASA and ACSA for snowmobile and NOHVCC for ORV).
- E. Develop Public Service Announcements (PSAs) that promote functions and activities of the Snowmobile and ORV Programs.
- F. Utilize snowmobile and ORV maps and brochures, and the STP website, to increase awareness of the State Trails Program and what it does.
- G. Produce and distribute regular news releases (average of 2 per month for 1st year of this plan and then increase to an average of 1 per week beginning in 2006) that focus on Trails Program functions, activities and projects.
- H. Utilize the STP Education Coordinator to tell the STP story and promote Trails Program functions, activities and projects.
- I. Periodically host a statewide Trails Summit/Conference or regional listening meetings to solicit public input while also telling the STP story.

### **Training**

The employees of the STP are recognized as one of the Program's greatest strengths. It is important that the STP continually invests in staff development and training to help employees provide the best services possible to Wyoming's trail users. Goals and objectives for STP staff training include:

- A. Provide annual training opportunities for all employees through one of the All-Staff meetings in topics related to: communication, customer service, leadership, supervision, team building, time management and/or general computer applications.
- B. 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, trail construction and maintenance

- techniques, equipment maintenance and repair, welding, snow trail grooming and/or trail signing.
- C. Provide monthly safety training to all field staff, facilitated by the STP Education Coordinator, in topics including but not limited to: first aid, avalanche awareness, chainsaw operation, snowmobile operation, ATV operation, off-road motorcycle operation, truck driving, trailer towing, etc.

### **Planning and Monitoring**

Goals and objectives for the Trails Program's efforts related to statewide Planning and Monitoring include:

- A. Manage the Trailmaster data collection program to provide information related to snowmobile trail use for STP and partner agencies in a timely manner.
- B. Survey ORV users annually through STP staff surveys to assess issues and priorities for the ORV Program and to identify use trends.
- C. Survey Snowmobile and ORV users once every five years through the University of Wyoming to assess economic impacts, user trends, issues and priorities for each program.
- D. Collect snowmobile gasoline consumption data by the summer of 2006 so it is available for efforts to increase the snowmobile gas tax distribution formula.
- E. Collect ORV gasoline consumption data prior to the summer of 2007 so it is available for ORV gas tax re-authorization legislation that sunsets on June 30, 2008.
- F. Annually monitor and measure progress of this plan and update as needed to stay current with any new issues facing the STP.

### **Staffing**

Goals and objectives for the Trails Program's efforts related to meet Staffing needs include:

- A. Continue to use At-Will Employee Contract (AWEC) employees to staff the summer Trail Crew and for hiring snowmobile groomer operators.
- B. Continue to increase hourly wages for AWEC employees to aid in recruitment and retention.
- C. Work to convert the Education Coordinator position from an AWEC to a full-time position and other future full-time positions as needed and warranted.
- D. Consider creating a shop/office manager/mechanic position for the Lander Field Office to facilitate travel, scheduling and project logistics and coordination.
- E. Continually evaluate position functions and workload to ensure efficient and effective program staffing and consider adding part-time or full-time AWEC staff as needed to meet program needs.
- F. Evaluate the feasibility of consolidating all administrative and support functions of the STP in Lander to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the overall program and to improve communication logistics.

## **Infrastructure**

Goals and objectives related to meeting the Infrastructure needs of the Trails Program include:

- A. Evaluate the feasibility of building a program-owned office/shop/storage facility in Lander.
- B. Continue to pursue the construction of satellite shop and/or storage buildings in partnership with land managing agencies across the state to augment facilities in Lander and Casper.
- C. Continue to use partnerships between the Snowmobile, ORV and RTP programs to provide vehicles and equipment for the STP.