

# REPORT OF W Y O M I N G

## GOVERNOR'S TASK FORCE ON OUTDOOR RECREATION

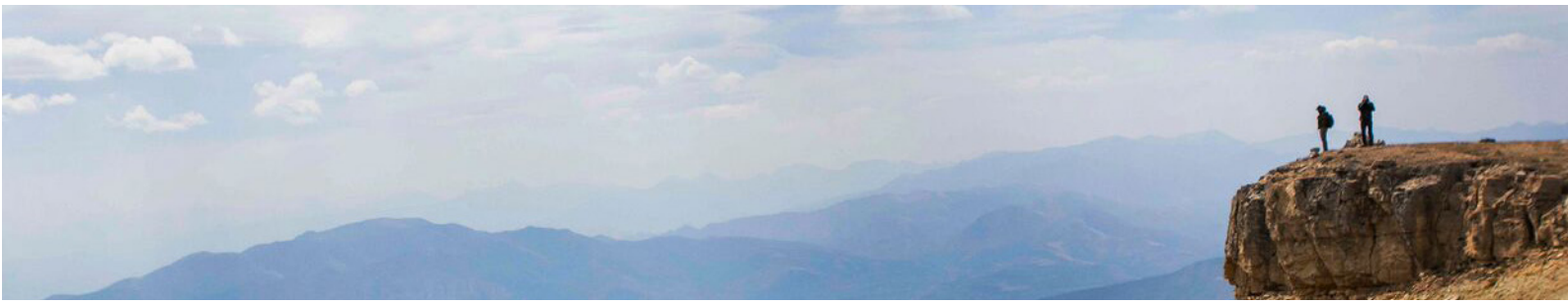


If they ever saw a sunrise on a mountain mornin'  
Watched those cotton candy clouds roll by  
They'd know why I live beneath these Western Skies

— Chris LeDoux

OCTOBER 2017 REPORT





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Outdoor recreation is integral to Wyoming's historical, cultural, and economic identity and has incredible potential for industry growth and diversification. Recognizing this opportunity, Governor Matthew H. Mead charged the Wyoming Department of State Parks and Cultural Resources (SPCR) with spearheading an Outdoor Recreation Task Force. The 26 Task Force Members from around the state represented a broad spectrum of businesses, government agencies, non-profit organizations, and outdoor recreation interest groups.

The Task Force generated their recommendations over five multi-day meetings across the state. The Task Force incorporated public input received via comment periods at each meeting, statewide listening sessions, written comment cards, and a comment form on the Task Force website. The Task Force focused on two major themes: (1) enhancing the outdoor recreation economic sector, and (2) recreation use and access. The Task Force members identified subtopics to focus on each theme.

The goal of the Task Force was to provide information and recommendations for the Governor's consideration. To be effective, these recommendations need to be translated into action. To this end, the Task Force report includes ideas for implementing recommendations. Over 500 initial implementable options were generated. The Task Force consolidated those into eleven major recommendations with 59 sub-recommendations. It is our hope that this report also informs decisions made by the Wyoming Legislature, business leaders, federal agencies, local governments and other interested parties.

The final recommendations passed a consensus vote of the Task Force. While all of the recommendations are important, at the end of the process the Task Force rated recommendations 8, 1 and 10 as the highest priorities. These three recommendations are core to implementing all other recommendations. The Task Force's recommendations and associated sub-recommendations, along with ideas for implementation, are detailed in the pages that follow.

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# GOVERNOR'S TASK FORCE ON OUTDOOR RECREATION

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The expansion of outdoor recreation was a recommendation of the Governor's 2015 Task Force on Forests:

*Develop a comprehensive plan to expand on the outdoor recreation programs and frameworks that currently exist in Wyoming's forests to support Wyoming's travel and tourism sector and the outdoor recreation economy.*

Based upon this recommendation, NOLS proposed the creation of a dedicated task force to improve Wyoming's outdoor recreation industry. Members would provide the Governor with insights and recommendations to assess, address and improve the Wyoming's outdoor recreation sector. Members would look at the current status of outdoor recreation, opportunities for the future, and public lands relationships. They would also consider the concept of an Office of Outdoor Recreation, including its utility, purpose and challenges.

## FORMATION

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In the fall of 2016, Governor Matthew H. Mead asked Director Darin Westby of the Department of Wyoming State Parks and Cultural Resources (SPCR) to develop the Outdoor Recreation Task Force (ORTF). Director Westby issued a statewide call for volunteer participants. Over 200 applications were received which resulted in the selection of 26 Task Force members representing themselves, interests of similar organizations and similar constituencies (Table 1).

## OUTDOOR RECREATION TASK FORCE

TABLE 1: TASK FORCE MEMBERS, ALTERNATES AND AFFILIATIONS	
TASK FORCE MEMBERS	AFFILIATION/ORGANIZATION
<b>Gary Wilmot-Co-Chair</b>	Wyoming Outdoor Council
<b>Regina Woodhouse-Co-Chair</b>	Business and Business Development
<b>Wes Allen</b>	Retail Business
<b>Melanie Arnett</b>	Non-motorized Recreation/Wyoming Pathways
<b>Erik Aune</b>	Outfitters (North Platte Lodge and The Reef Fly Shop)
<b>Domenic Bravo</b>	State Parks, Historic Sites, and Trails
<b>Ben Bump</b>	Office of State Lands & Investments
<b>Nephi Cole (Jessica Crowder, alternate)</b>	State of Wyoming - Governor's Office
<b>Ogden Driskill (Jim Magagna, alternate)</b>	Senator, State of Wyoming/Private Land Interests
<b>Mark Jenkins (Matthew Burkhart, alternate)</b>	University of Wyoming/Climbing Interests
<b>Lee Livingston</b>	Outfitter (Livingston Outfitting), County Commission
<b>Mark D. Lyon</b>	City Recreation Providers (Rock Springs)
<b>Renny MacKay (Rebekah Fitzgerald, alternate)</b>	Game and Fish Department
<b>Cade Maestas</b>	Business (Maven Vice President Sales and Operations)
<b>Rick Manchester</b>	City Recreation Providers (Cody)/Wyoming Recreation Planners Association
<b>Janet Marschner</b>	Conservation Groups
<b>Joe Milczewski</b>	Government Affairs Manager- Black Hills Corporation
<b>Bert Miller (Matthew Burkhart, alternate)</b>	Motorized Recreation/Wyoming State Snowmobile Association
<b>Tricia O'Connor (Sandra Henning, alternate)</b>	United States Forest Service
<b>Jared Oakleaf (Keith Brown, alternate)</b>	Bureau of Land Management
<b>Shawn Reese (Lisa Johnson, alternate)</b>	Wyoming Business Council
<b>Cameron Ross</b>	Wyoming Office of Tourism
<b>Clair Smith (Evan Reimondo, alternate)</b>	NOLS
<b>Melissa Turley</b>	Resorts (Teton Village Resort District)
<b>Mark Weitz (Josh Law, alternate)</b>	Business (Antelope Butte Foundation)
<b>Chris Wichmann</b>	Department of Agriculture

## COMMON GROUND

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The Task Force represented and expressed a wide range of interests and opinions. Task Force members agreed that outdoor recreation can:

- Create a diverse economic engine to help stabilize and enhance the State of Wyoming and its communities.
- Mitigate the cyclical nature of boom and bust dynamics.
- Attract and retain people, especially youth, and businesses to our state and build and educate a sustainable workforce.
- Provide mental, spiritual and physical health and wellness and quality time for families and individuals.
- Create livable communities and enhance social capacity by connecting all residents to the outdoors.
- Engage people in conserving natural landscapes and resources.
- Maintain and support Wyoming's culture while including new technologies and activities. How we play in Wyoming is who we are!
- Connect young people and school children to the outdoors so they continue enjoying the outdoors as adults.
- Maintain and improve access to lands and recreational opportunities.
- Feature and acknowledge the abundance and value of public land in Wyoming.

Furthermore, the Task Force felt Wyoming recreationists, businesses, communities, and governments at all levels should:

- Support outdoor recreation access and opportunities close to local communities.
- Recognize the state's scenic, wildlife and recreation resources as irreplaceable national treasures.
- Reach out to outdoor associations and trade groups and include them in decision-making processes.
- Recognize the link between outdoor recreation and public health through partnerships, tools and education.

## PROCESS

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The Task Force met five times in three-day blocks from December 2016 to May 2017 to develop recommendations. The group had two appointed co-chairs (Regina Woodhouse and Gary Wilmot). Facilitators from the Ruckelshaus Institute at the Haub School of Environment and Natural Resources guided discussions based on procedures and a charter adopted by the Task Force members. The facilitators' drafted agendas, organized information and presentations, and ensured that work stayed on task and on topic.

Based on the stated interests of the group, the Task Force focused on two major themes: (1) enhancing the outdoor recreation economic sector and (2) recreation use and access. Within each major theme, Task Force members identified subtopics around which to orient their conversations (Table 2).

## OUTDOOR RECREATION TASK FORCE

*Table 2. Task Force conversations were organized around themes and subtopics identified by the group.*

THEME 1. ENHANCING THE OUTDOOR RECREATION ECONOMIC SECTOR	THEME 2. RECREATION USE AND ACCESS
Marketing and Technology Innovation Funding Infrastructure Business Support Partnerships Sustainability Education and Awareness Culture	Private Land Partnerships Education, Marketing, and Public Relations Funding Infrastructure, Inventory and Investment Cooperation Across Boundaries Reduce Barriers Conservation

The Task Force members committed to an accelerated process. They worked in subcommittees between meetings. These groups' explored topics related to outdoor recreation business, professional and skills education, non-motorized user fees, and land use and access. Updates of the subcommittee's findings were presented at each Task Force meeting.

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

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Transparency was a primary goal in this process. A public-facing website, e-mail outreach and opportunity for public input were available at all stages of the process. Public listening sessions were conducted at each Task Force meeting in Cheyenne (2), Cody, Lander, and Sheridan. Additional public outreach meetings were held in Casper, Evanston, Jackson, and Gillette. Opportunity for public comments, written and verbal, were made available at each of these sessions. All public input was made available to Task Force members so it could inform the recommendations.

## MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS AND BUILDING CONSENSUS

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The Task Force developed more than 500 potential recommendations based on the expertise of the group as well as public and constituent input. The Task Force ultimately came to consensus on eleven main recommendations with 59 sub-recommendations. The level of agreement for each statement was assessed by the Task Force.

Task Force members who rated a recommendation with reservations or blocked were asked to specify their reasoning in a written statement and are available upon request from State Parks & Cultural Resources at 2301 Central Avenue, Cheyenne WY, 82009.



# WYOMING: A RECREATION-READY STATE

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With its majestic mountains, pristine lakes, vast landscapes, and abundant wildlife, few states can compare to Wyoming. Wyoming has many authentic and diverse recreation opportunities. Yet, according to reports from the Outdoor Industry Association (OIA), Wyoming trails its neighboring states in terms of an outdoor recreation economy.

A robust outdoor recreation industry is a key piece of a diversified Wyoming economy. Nationwide, outdoor-based business and recreation revitalizes communities and insulates them from economic downturns. Economic growth benefits rural communities. **A boost in destination tourism can promote new business development. Growth in outdoor recreation amenities and services has proven to attract an influx of young, skilled workers – an important aspect of economic growth.**

Urban populations are growing, and with this growth comes increased demand for open space and recreational opportunity. Wyoming is poised to meet this need. Many urbanites first encounter Wyoming as tourists. Some decide to bring their talents and economic contributions to the state as residents. In a way, Wyoming's best business recruitment tool is Wyoming itself. Governor Mead recognized that fact when he established the Outdoor Recreation Task Force.

“*There is no better place for outdoor-related businesses than Wyoming. Our business climate, workforce, cost of living and quality of life make Wyoming a great option for new and existing businesses.*”

**OFFICE OF GOVERNOR MATTHEW H. MEAD**

2016

The Task Force took its charge to promote the state's outdoor recreational industry seriously. The group sees Wyoming as a “pacesetter” in this area. Task Force members hope Wyoming can continue to build on strengths, mentor and develop new outdoor recreation businesses, and create a prime destination for outdoor enthusiasts and business leaders.



# A SNAPSHOT OF WYOMING

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Wyoming is the least populated state in the nation with the most rural population. The 2016 United States Census Bureau report reflected the official population of Wyoming at 586,107. At the start of 2017, the employed labor force in Wyoming was 301,000. In February 2017, the unemployment rate was 4.7%, just below the national average of 4.8%.

Demographic factors - age, ethnic makeup, per-capita income and urban versus rural residency - are elements that influence the habits of outdoor recreationists. For example, Wyoming's population is aging quickly – a trend exacerbated by young people looking for opportunities outside of Wyoming. It is critical to stay current with outdoor recreation trends to ensure we are providing the correct services and infrastructure that attract and retain businesses and people.

# WYOMING'S ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE

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In 2015, the overall Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for Wyoming was estimated at \$39.9 billion - 49th in the country. However, the state ranked 7th in per capita GDP. Wyoming has a natural resource-based economy. The importance of mineral extraction is apparent. Mining is the state's largest industry, accounting for 22.2% of the total GDP. Economically significant quantities of oil, natural gas, coal, trona and uranium are found in the state. Wyoming is the leading producer of coal and trona, the sixth leading producer of natural gas, and the eighth leading producer of oil in the United States. Two thirds of the state's and local government revenues come from the mining industry. Wyoming's economic diversification index is the lowest in the nation. Low economic diversity and high dependence on the energy sector are significant challenges to long-term economic stability.

Tourism is the second largest industry in Wyoming and outdoor recreation is a driving component. Outdoor recreation is not measured separately. However, its economic effect is embedded in retail and service sectors such as transportation, food, and lodging. In 2016, the United States Congress passed the Outdoor Recreation Job and Economic Impact Act, requiring the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) to create an Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account. The BEA will begin reporting economic data on the outdoor recreation economic sector in 2018. States are encouraged to start tracking economic data on the outdoor recreation industry over the next few years.

Wyoming has the potential for significant recreation and tourism development. An emphasis must also be placed on innovation and recruitment while maintaining key industry resources (wildlife, natural features, cultural and historic sites, scenic vistas, and more). These steps can aid expansion and revenue generation.

According to a 2016 Outdoor Industry Association (OIA) report, outdoor recreation in Wyoming generates approximately \$5.6 billion in annual consumer spending, \$1.6 billion in wages and salaries, and \$514 million in state and local tax revenue. It accounts for 50,000 jobs. For every dollar spent directly on outdoor products, four dollars are spent on food, lodging, and transportation. Despite these impressive numbers, Wyoming's outdoor economy trails its neighboring states, except North Dakota and South Dakota, by roughly one billion dollars. Wyoming has the potential to become a regional leader.





# AN OVERVIEW OF WYOMING'S PUBLIC LANDS AND ITS MANAGERS

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Wyoming is comprised of 97,813 square miles (62,600,264 acres) of high plains, mountain ranges, basins and river valleys. Water covers less than 1% of the state's land area. Federal agencies (Bureau of Land Management (BLM), United States Forest Service (USFS), United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), and National Park Service (NPS)) manage nearly 31 million acres. State agencies (Office of State Lands and Investments (OSLI), Wyoming State Parks and Cultural Resources (SPCR), and Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD)) manage over 4 million acres.

Access to recreation opportunities emerged as a theme in the Task Force discussions, public comment and listening sessions. These discussions raised concerns about current and potential barriers to land access. Access to recreation opportunities includes available outdoor recreation amenities and outreach to underserved groups like youth or veterans. Maintaining access to public and state lands is key for outdoor recreation in Wyoming. Predictability and stability in management are also critically important to related businesses.



## FEDERAL OUTDOOR RECREATION PROVIDERS

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Managing federal lands with an eye towards outdoor recreation began with the creation of the world's first National Park, Yellowstone in 1872. Later, the Organic Act of 1916 formally established the National Park Service "to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations." The Multiple Use-Sustained Yield Act (MUSYA) of 1960 instructed that USFS lands be administered for outdoor recreation, rangeland, watershed, fish and wildlife values as well as timber. The BLM adopted a similar charge including managing lands for recreation under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) in 1976.





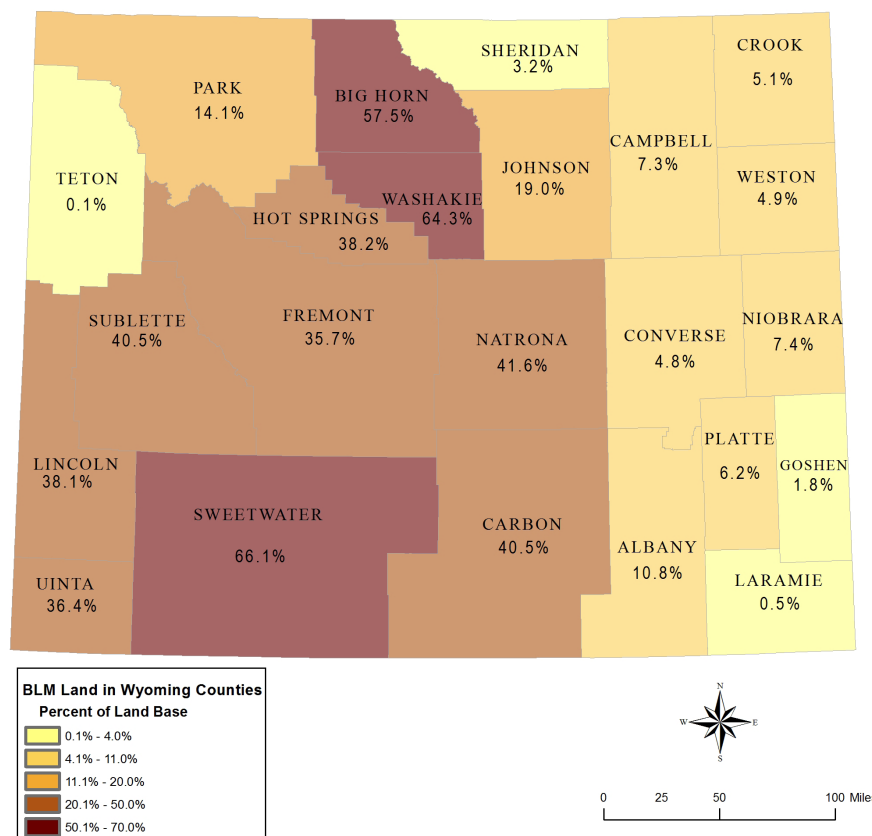
## U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR - BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

The BLM is the largest manager of federal land in Wyoming. They manage approximately 17.5 million acres – slightly less than one-third of the lands in the state (Figure 1).

BLM land use plans are intended to ensure that the public lands are managed in accordance with the intent of Congress for multiple use and sustained yield. FLPMA (43 U.S.C. 1701) states lands must be “managed in a manner that protects the quality of scientific, scenic, historical, ecological, environmental, air and atmospheric, water resource, and archaeological values; that, where appropriate, will preserve and protect certain public lands in their natural condition; that will provide food and habitat for fish and wildlife and domestic animals; that will provide for outdoor recreation and human occupancy and use; and that recognizes the Nation’s need for domestic sources of minerals, food, timber, and fiber from the public land.”

BLM lands provide extensive opportunities for dispersed outdoor recreation. The BLM also administers a number of improved recreation fee sites on BLM lands and on behalf of other agencies like the Bureau of Reclamation.

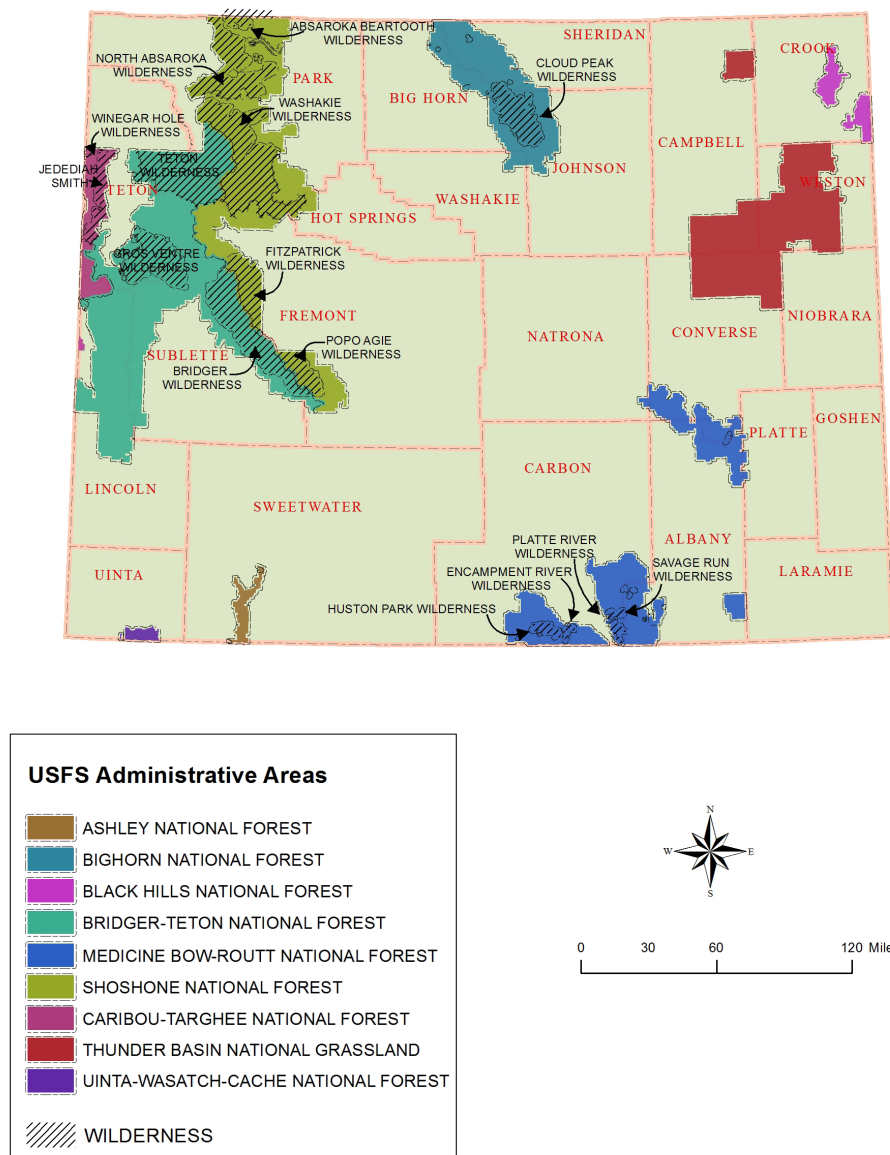
*Figure 1 • The Bureau of Land Management manages approximately one third of Wyoming’s lands.*



## U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE - UNITED STATES FOREST SERVICE

The USFS manages 9.7 million acres (Figure 2) of land in Wyoming – roughly 15% of the state. The Bridger-Teton National Forest is the largest forest in the state at 3.4 million acres. The Shoshone National Forest, encompassing 2.4 million acres, holds the distinction of being the nation’s first national forest. Pursuant to the MUSYA the USFS must develop and administer the renewable resources of timber, range, water, recreation and wildlife on national forest lands. Lands are managed for these multiple uses and the sustained yield of products and services with no one use greater than the other. Under MUSYA our nation’s forest are intended to be managed to best meet the needs of the American people. Lands managed by the USFS provide a variety of experiences from wilderness (no access, hard to access, remote) to areas more easily accessible.

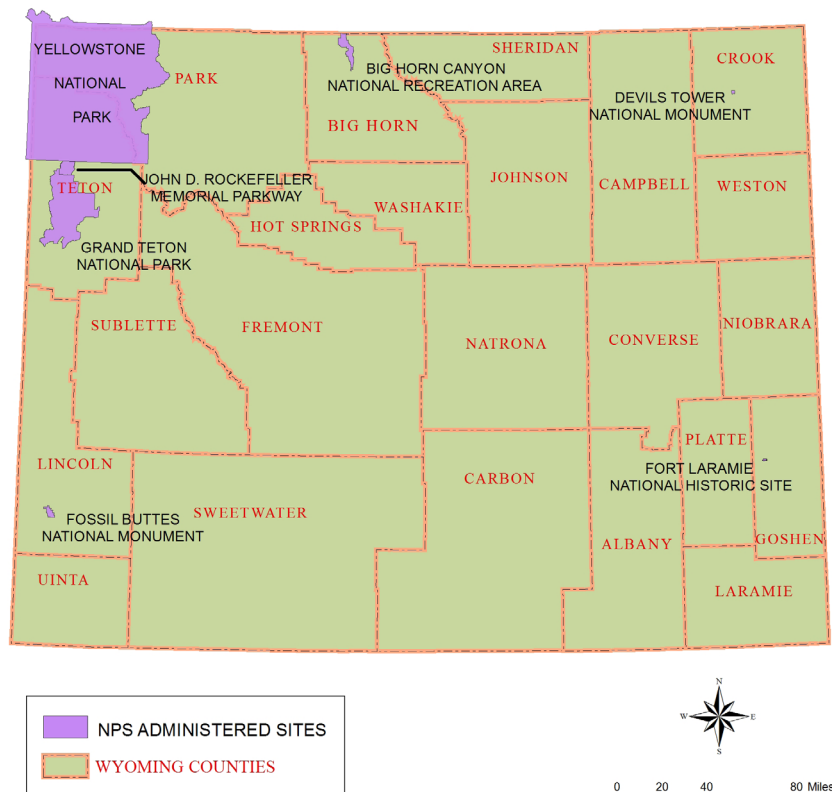
*Figure 2 • The United States Forest Service administers a number of forests, wilderness areas, and grasslands in Wyoming.*



## U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR - NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

The NPS administers some of Wyoming's most renowned outdoor recreation destinations. The agency is responsible for seven different sites in Wyoming consisting of roughly 2,690,000 acres, or about 4 percent of the state (Figure 3). Yellowstone was the nation's first national park and is the largest site administered by the NPS in Wyoming. It is approximately 2,220,000 acres in size. Grand Teton National Park is the second largest site, consisting of 310,000 acres. Unlike the BLM or the USFS, the NPS is tasked with the preservation of the ecological and historical integrity of the lands it manages, while also making them available and accessible for public use and enjoyment.

*Figure 3 • The National Park Service administers two parks, two monuments, a historic site, and several other sites in Wyoming.*



## U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR - UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

The USFWS manages National Wildlife Refuge lands specifically for wildlife. Refuges provide opportunities to hunt, fish, view wildlife, and hike. There are six National Wildlife Refuge Areas and two National Fish Hatcheries in Wyoming. These include approximately 102,838 acres, or about 0.1% of the land in the state. The largest refuges managed by the USFWS in Wyoming are Seedskaadee (26,400 acres) and Pathfinder (16,807 acres).

## U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR - BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

The BOR administers and/or leases approximately 954,680 acres in Wyoming – approximately 1.5% of the state. The primary responsibility of the BOR is to develop and maintain structures which provide flood control, hydropower and irrigation. As a secondary function, BOR also helps to plan and develop recreation facilities at their reclamation sites. The administration of recreation is generally assigned to other agencies. The NPS, SPHST, local governmental units and in some cases the USFS all have agreements to manage BOR recreation areas in Wyoming.



## NON-FEDERAL OUTDOOR RECREATION PROVIDERS

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The State of Wyoming owns and manages trust lands and non-trust lands across the state. State Trust Lands are managed by the OSLI. Non-trust lands are managed by other state agencies, including WGFD and State Parks, Historic Sites, and Trails (SPHST), to benefit the missions of the agencies and the public.

Outdoor recreation opportunities are also available through Wyoming's municipalities, counties and recreation districts. Private sector amenities include campgrounds, ski areas, golf courses, dude ranches and more.

## WYOMING OFFICE OF STATE LANDS AND INVESTMENTS

Wyoming's 3.9 million acres of state trust lands are managed by the OSLI under the authority of the Wyoming Board of Land Commissioners. Much of this land was granted to the state by the federal government at the time of statehood (1890). These are not "public" lands in the same sense as lands managed by the federal government. These lands are held in trust for the beneficiaries. The largest beneficiary is the K-12 public school system. OSLI manages these trust assets for: (1) optimum, sustainable revenue production, and (2) long-term growth in value.

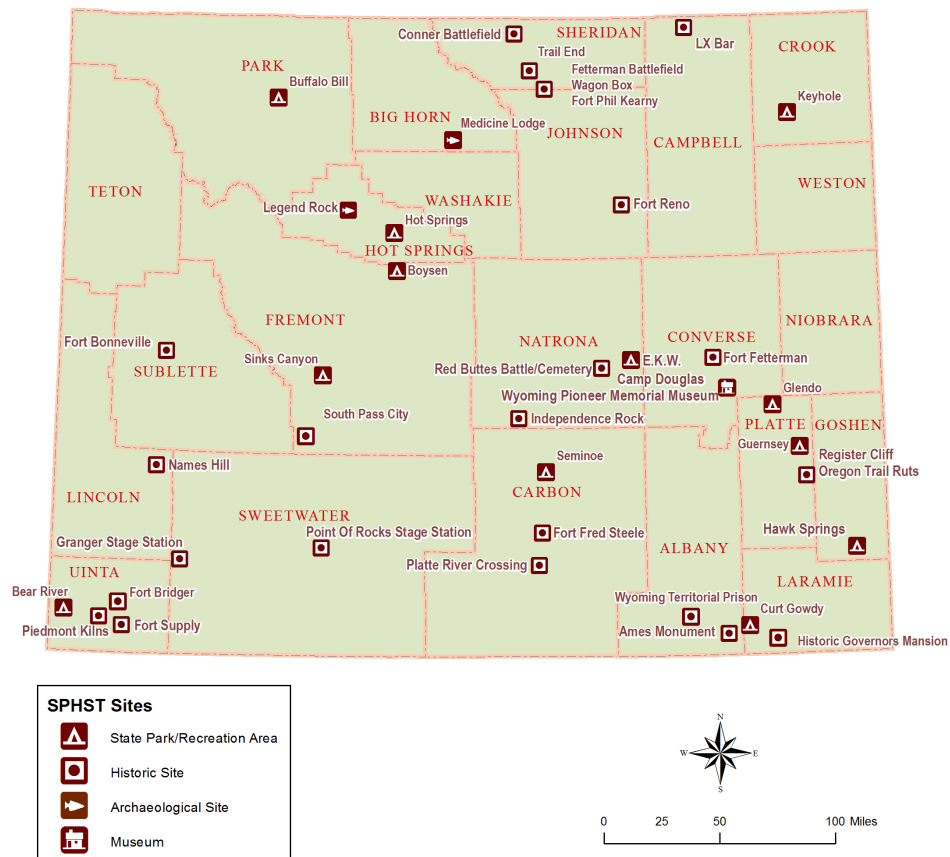
Generally, state trust lands, with the exception of cultivated crop land and areas restricted by the order of the Board of Land Commissioners, are available for public hunting, fishing and recreational day use at no charge. The lands must be legally accessed and users must comply with the Wyoming Board of Land Commissioner's rules and regulations. These regulations prohibit any off-road motor vehicle use, overnight camping, or open fires. Activities that would damage state trust lands, roads, improvements or lessee property interests are also prohibited. Public users of these lands are encouraged to notify the lessee when using these lands for outdoor recreational activities.



## WYOMING STATE PARKS AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

The Division of SPHST within SPCR has legislative authority to manage recreation and historic sites and assist communities in developing recreation opportunities in Wyoming. Currently SPHST manages almost 120,000 acres. The SPHST system includes eleven state parks, one state recreation area, twenty-eight historic sites and two state archaeological/petroglyph sites (Figure 4). The sites in the system range in size from less than one acre to almost 36,000 acres.

Figure 4 • Wyoming State Parks, Historic Sites and Trails.



## WYOMING GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

The WGFD's mission is to provide an adequate and flexible system for the control, propagation, management, protection and regulation of all Wyoming wildlife. The WGFD is the primary entity directly charged with managing and conserving Wyoming's fish and wildlife populations for future generations.

The WGFD provides technical assistance to plan and develop areas to improve wildlife habitat and provide public access for a variety of recreational uses. Hunter management areas, walk-in areas, public access areas and wildlife habitat management areas enhance the outdoor recreation experience in the state.

## MUNICIPALITIES AND COUNTIES

There are 54 park and recreation districts in Wyoming. Each park and recreation district is administered by a municipality or county. The Districts manage community facilities, including city parks, golf courses, rodeo grounds and shooting ranges. These facilities offer convenient, close-to-home, close-to-community recreation opportunities for residents and visitors.

## PRIVATE OUTDOOR RECREATION PROVIDERS

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The private sector recreation industry in Wyoming has great potential. Privately owned campgrounds, dude ranches, hunting lodges, outfitters, river rafters, fishing experiences, rodeos, snowmobile/offroad vehicle excursions, downhill and cross country ski areas, shooting ranges and living history experiences are a few of the services offered on both private and public lands in Wyoming. Private landowners maintain open spaces and provide habitat and access. The private sector is key to expanding outdoor recreation opportunities.



# THE RECOMMENDATIONS

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## RECOMMENDATION 1

### ATTRACT AND RETAIN OUTDOOR RECREATION BUSINESSES

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The outdoor recreation economy was a major focus of conversations, and this recommendation is the second highest priority identified by the Task Force. The Wyoming Business Council (WBC), Wyoming Office of Tourism (WOT), and the proposed Wyoming Outdoor Business Association presented to the Task Force on this topic. Discussions included the need for information specific to the outdoor recreation industry, needs for economic diversification, infrastructure and investment capital. Businesses are the basis of an outdoor recreation economy and this influences all aspects of the industry. Attracting and retaining outdoor recreation businesses must be a priority.

## THE TASK FORCE RECOMMENDS THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS WITH POTENTIAL TO SUPPORT THE PRIMARY RECOMMENDATION:

- 1.1 Promote more geographically, conceptually, and culturally diverse outdoor recreation in Wyoming with emphasis on innovation and sustainability.
- 1.2 Consolidate, inventory, and develop tools and information related to funding, business development, business facilities and shared assets, sourcing of materials, and best practices.
- 1.3 Deliver information on the economic benefits of outdoor recreation in a manner that is compelling to the public and useful to business.
- 1.4 Develop a strategy to recruit existing outdoor recreation-focused events, including conferences, to Wyoming.
- 1.5 Facilitate a network of public-private partnerships to provide outdoor recreation businesses with expert support in the form of mentorships and technical assistance to help with business development.
- 1.6 Direct State and Federal multi-agency groups, like the Recreation Action Team (REACT), to streamline and simplify permitting for outdoor recreation businesses and organizations and to create an integrated toolkit for service providers.
- 1.7 Maintain and enhance a tax environment that supports outdoor recreation businesses.
- 1.8 Direct resources to the Wyoming Business Council to:
  - prioritize outdoor recreation as a growth target industry;
  - partner with successful or existing, diverse outdoor recreation businesses in Wyoming to help business expand and to attract new investment to the state.

## MAKING IT HAPPEN

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Wyoming has all of the pieces to build, attract and retain outdoor recreation based businesses. Each region of the state has distinct opportunities for outdoor recreation. We are limiting opportunities if we only focus on certain areas of the state. The Task Force feels it is important to take advantage of all that Wyoming has to offer and promote the outdoor recreation economy through innovative and sustainable methods incorporating all regions of the state. For example, the northwest corner of the state has some of the gems of the NPS, including Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Park. The south central part of

the state has the best pronghorn hunting in the world. The central part of the state has the Wind River Indian Reservation and all of its unique cultural events and opportunities. The northeast corner of the state has some of the most extensive highland prairie in the country.

The state has a premiere natural recreational landscape and produces many of the raw materials and agricultural resources that are used to develop outdoor recreation products (for example, outdoor clothing made with Wyoming wool or charcoal used for water purifiers). Recruiting outdoor recreation businesses that create products and build on Wyoming resources makes sense.

Wyoming's tight-knit communities are well situated to support strong and diverse outdoor recreation industries. Networking, information sharing and business mentoring are tools that can be employed to help draw companies to the state. There may be opportunities for state government to facilitate these connections and help businesses and consumers embrace those opportunities.

There are areas where the state can play a role, such as gathering data and disseminating information. Communities can benefit from this strategic support. State government expertise can help local decision makers utilize effective tactics to drive their unique outdoor recreation opportunities and economies. Dedicated, accountable teams can analyze assets, infrastructure and traffic – helping each community find their competitive niche.

Tracking the outdoor recreation economy as an industry would benefit the state. Knowing the economic impact, the gross domestic product of Wyoming's outdoor recreation industry would benefit decision makers in government and businesses. Gathering, maintaining and sharing up-to-date and accurate information on the outdoor recreation economy will help ensure its success. Good data can promote the industry and validate its importance.

Wyoming has a tax environment that is inviting to business and it should be maintained. Acquiring financial capital is another hurdle for business start-up or expansion. It would benefit a growing outdoor recreation industry to have information on potential sources of support in a central location. This information should be readily accessible, from a trusted source, and tailored to outdoor recreation businesses. Specific aspects of the outdoor recreation economy, such as market segments, business facilities, best practices and other information can be packaged and provided for those ready to develop or expand.

Hosting outdoor recreation events can be an important component of growing the industry. Outdoor events, activities and conferences will promote Wyoming as a go-to outdoor destination. These events give the public an opportunity to experience the wonders of the state. They improve and grow the outdoor economy. Large events can build beneficial partnerships between private interests and public agencies. Races, festivals, conferences, and other competitions or gatherings lead to full hotels, visited businesses and evenings spent at local restaurants. A holistic approach that promotes outdoor events and activities will result in cooperation between private industry, local government and federal agencies - streamlining the permitting process and optimizing resources. Wyoming should consider developing a "Rendezvous" – working with the OIA to showcase the state as the best destination to host events and design, build, test, market, sell and distribute outdoor recreation equipment.



## RECOMMENDATION 2

### EXPLORE AND IMPLEMENT INNOVATIVE FUNDING STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE THE OUTDOOR RECREATION ECONOMIC SECTOR

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Funding was a critical issue tackled by the Task Force. Consequently, funding needs were identified in two separate recommendations (#2 and #6). The state can play a role by investing in Wyoming companies within the economic development process and by providing technical expertise and guidance. This first recommendation of the Task Force regarding funding emphasizes developing tools that aid with the acquisition of funding for business development, improvement, expansion and stabilization. The recommendation also focuses on programs for outdoor recreation related advertising and marketing.

#### THE TASK FORCE RECOMMENDS THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS WITH POTENTIAL TO SUPPORT THE PRIMARY RECOMMENDATION:

- 2.1** Apply public and private financing mechanisms to address a variety of outdoor recreation business growth needs, for example, venture, angel, and mezzanine capital, investment credits, and loan participations.
- 2.2** Determine a stable funding source –apart from the general fund– for the Wyoming Office of Tourism to enhance marketing efforts for outdoor recreation.

## MAKING IT HAPPEN

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Access to capital is critical for the growth of any business. However, potential entrepreneurs in the outdoor recreation sector often find it difficult to get information on attracting investors and acquiring investment capital. There is a demand for an entity with relationships and knowledge of commercial lenders, banks and private investors that might be interested in outdoor recreation investments. Wyoming should consider fully developing such a mechanism or conducting an inventory of resources, with a focus on the outdoor recreation economy, to meet the needs of business owners.

Wyoming is unique – often described as one town with a very long main street. We work together. Individuals and entities support each other. These attributes allow the use of innovative funding approaches such as public-private partnering, incentives that encourage private investment, and micro-lending matched pools. It makes sense for Wyoming to research, create pilot projects and employ these funding approaches within its business development.

Finally, there needs to be a long-term sustainable funding mechanism for the Wyoming Office of Tourism (WOT). There is a clear tie between tourism and the outdoor recreation economy. Certainty and predictability will allow WOT to enhance current marketing efforts that support outdoor recreation growth in Wyoming. Tourism is our second leading industry. Increased visitation has a tremendous impact on Wyoming's economy. Establishing stability in this area is good for the outdoor recreation sector and Wyoming.

## RECOMMENDATION 3

### DEVELOP TOOLS AND PARTNERSHIPS TO ENHANCE STATE AND LOCAL RECREATION ECONOMIES, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND PLANNING

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The Task Force discussed strategies for improving the livability of communities. To be successful, these efforts have to be locally driven. They involve elements like community buildings, parks and outdoor recreation opportunities close to home. Visitor friendly communities are attractive to young workers and families. Positive feedback increases entrepreneurship, demand, and visitation benefitting the outdoor recreation and other sectors. While local leadership is paramount, outside technical expertise can help those wanting to foster economic growth and increase desirability of their communities. A gap analysis is necessary to assess availability of outdoor recreation opportunities.

Infrastructure is required to grow the outdoor recreation economy. High speed broadband connections are needed in today's world. Closed roads and limited air service make business challenging. Air service is necessary to support the industry and tourism. We need to be committed to a long-term process of finding solutions, including the development of the information, tools, planning and infrastructure that will allow Wyoming communities and their outdoor recreation industries to grow.

#### THE TASK FORCE RECOMMENDS THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS WITH POTENTIAL TO SUPPORT THE PRIMARY RECOMMENDATION:

- 3.1** Conduct comprehensive state and community level inventories of existing outdoor recreation amenities and business resources and a gap analysis of opportunities.
- 3.2** Using an inventory and gap analysis, create a pilot city program as a template for Wyoming communities to improve their outdoor recreation economies.
- 3.3** Commit to the improvement of transportation infrastructure, especially reliable and accessible air service.
- 3.4** Incentivize communities to include amenities like walkable and rideable pathways, as well as alternative transportation links between population centers and outdoor recreation opportunities and facilities.
- 3.5** Improve the reliability, affordability, and accessibility of communications technology.
- 3.6** Work with agencies and other organizations to facilitate and expand volunteer opportunities.

# MAKING IT HAPPEN

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Information on outdoor recreation infrastructure is being collected by a number of entities. Land management agencies including the USFS, BLM, NPS, SPHST, Wyoming Recreation and Parks Association and others are working to gather and provide data. Collection methods vary by agency. Entities do not share a central repository for this information. Wyoming should use its existing expertise and infrastructure to consolidate this data and coordinate its dissemination as useful information. Part of that process should be an inventory of existing outdoor recreation businesses and opportunities. Using existing expertise of the Wyoming Business Council and community economic development entities, key information required by decision makers can be included, for example, available manufacturing, commercial and retail space, number of businesses in each market segment, number of employees, and other information deemed key to business. The state should consider providing guidance to standardize information, ensure statewide information collection, accuracy, and timeliness. This information should be publicly available.

Wyoming should leverage and replicate proven strategies, for example, the International Mountain Bicycling Association “Ride Center” Program. This program uses criteria to rate destinations based not only on existing trails, but also amenities. The criteria take into account supporting infrastructure for mountain biking, such as bike shops, hotels, brewpubs, and more. Support of events and activities that complement mountain biking are also weighed in the scoring. Once designated as a “Ride Center”, communities can promote and market accordingly. This concept can be used to help communities promote businesses and attract visitors for many kinds of recreation.

A pilot program for outdoor recreation communities can be developed in Wyoming. Criteria for designations should be based on community assets and specific user groups. The state should highlight communities where activities like climbing, fishing, four wheeling, kayaking, mountain biking, snowmobiling, and others are available – attracting participants, businesses and industry. Decision makers should seek means to incentivize or fund these types of efforts. As communities with these attributes are recognized, efforts to promote and market them as outdoor recreation communities should be encouraged.

People choose to live in Wyoming, in no small part, because of available outdoor recreation opportunities. Wyoming citizens are often willing to volunteer to better the resource. Volunteers provide alternatives to augment workforce and are frequently the strongest advocates for outdoor recreation. They can create a relationship of trust that benefits users and agencies. Land managers should use volunteers more, however, it takes more than just willingness to make a volunteer project successful. Land managers can provide assistance in identifying projects, providing supervision, tools, materials and needed training.

## RECOMMENDATION 4

### IMPROVE ACCESS TO RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

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Maintaining and improving access on private, public and state land for recreation is vital to the industry. There are a number of ways Wyoming can maintain and improve public lands based recreation. Opportunities for private land access should focus on incentives and collaborative conversations rather than changes in regulatory policy or law. Further conversation is needed on controversial subjects such as corner crossings and streambed access. The outdoor recreation economy will benefit by enhancing access through landscape level planning, collaboration, and creation of connections that secure access to recreation areas.

#### THE TASK FORCE RECOMMENDS THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS WITH POTENTIAL TO SUPPORT THE PRIMARY RECOMMENDATION:

- 4.1** Develop a prioritization method to secure new access and connectivity to and on public lands, taking into consideration factors such as cost, conservation needs, economic impact, historical use, and value to the public, regardless of age and ability.
- 4.2** Recognizing the importance of private lands and private landowner rights, it is important to encourage incentives and efforts with private landowners to provide expanded recreation access, including streambeds, through easements, property tax breaks, leases, and in-kind compensation.
- 4.3** Explore partnerships as a means to support recreation opportunities on state trust lands.

# MAKING IT HAPPEN

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Working with public and private landowners to improve access is key to growing an outdoor economy. Tools like land trades, sales, easements, and other strategies that secure access and improve connectivity for public access to outdoor recreation should be incentivized. Management of state lands under the Office of State Lands and Investments needs to be understood and discussed. Lands are managed by statute to maximize returns to their beneficiaries. The public has been granted the privilege of hunting, fishing, and general day-use recreation on these lands when legally accessible. Other recreational leases and permits are also granted.

Landowners who want to diversify their business plans are increasingly looking to provide recreational opportunities on their lands. Wyoming has a history of private landowners providing guest ranch services, outfitting, guide agreements, fishing and hunting clubs and public access. There is a growing demand for access to snowmobiling, biking, hiking, hunting, fishing and other recreation activities. Leaders should work to ensure that government is not an impediment to the growth of service providers in these areas. Concepts like the Rocky Mountain Angling club (a network of over 50 leased properties in Colorado, Wyoming and New Mexico where members book private lands for fishing online) could be successfully duplicated throughout Wyoming.





## **RECOMMENDATION 5**

### **INCORPORATE THE CONCEPTS OF CONSERVATION, SUSTAINABILITY AND STEWARDSHIP INTO ALL OUTDOOR RECREATION PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION**

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In Wyoming, our natural and cultural resources define our outdoor recreation setting. They attract visitors, businesses and individuals in the workforce. Stewardship, conservation and sustainability are kindred concepts that ensure the future availability of these resources. These concepts should likewise shape business development efforts in Wyoming. Stewardship includes the responsible use (including conservation) of resources through sustainable practices. Sustainability means balancing the interests of current and future users on the social, environmental and economic aspects of any effort. It is a holistic accountability over the long term.

#### **THE TASK FORCE RECOMMENDS THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS WITH POTENTIAL TO SUPPORT THE PRIMARY RECOMMENDATION:**

- 5.1** Support existing programs and innovate new programs that incentivize private landowners to preserve and conserve intact landscapes.
- 5.2** Incentivize business practices that are ecologically sustainable.
- 5.3** Establish and support local, full-consensus, collaborative processes that seek to evaluate new and existing wilderness and roadless areas in a manner that balances conservation, multiple use, and stewardship.
- 5.4** Use existing and create new conservation tools on public lands, such as adopt-a-trail programs and Ride On Wyoming.
- 5.5** Develop and promote a “Wyoming code of conduct” related to private and public land ethics and wildlife for use across all outdoor activities, considering existing messaging like Ride On Wyoming and Leave No Trace.
- 5.6** Fully fund the corpus of the Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust fund.

# MAKING IT HAPPEN

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Environmental stewardship and conservation ethics should guide land management. Well maintained public lands are an asset to the state. Likewise, private lands that support fisheries, wildlife habitat, and viewsheds add value to the public – even if they are not open to public recreation. A wide variety of programs currently incentivize stewardship on private lands. Efforts led by entities like the Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust Fund provide monetary match for conservation activities on private lands – creating the financial backing to secure public benefits like wildlife habitat, open space and clean water.

National programs like “Leave No Trace” and “Tread Lightly!” have been successful in teaching outdoor ethics and stewardship. The Wyoming State Motorized Trails Program developed the “Ride On Wyoming” for ORVs by building on these efforts. There is room for a more universal message that reaches additional user groups. Wyoming should be the example and voice of that effort.

Land managers have the responsibility to balance the full spectrum of recreation uses. In turn, the recreating public has a responsibility to participate in planning and decision processes. Wyoming has led in developing local, collaborative groups to consider recreation user needs - including within wilderness and roadless areas. The state should continue to support collaborative processes and decision-making.

Growing a sustainable recreation economy will require a stable business environment. Leaders should maintain and improve market conditions that incentivize business and communities to invest in themselves. This may include businesses reinvesting in recreation infrastructure, sustainable construction, re-use of existing infrastructure supporting downtowns and other efforts. Both government and strong business leadership can help growth that will balance resource capacity, quality of life, and revenue.



## RECOMMENDATION 6

### MAINTAIN AND EXPAND FUNDING MECHANISMS THAT SUPPORT ACCESS, INFRASTRUCTURE AND CONSERVATION

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For the outdoor recreation industry to grow in Wyoming, access to lands for outdoor recreation will need to be maintained and if possible, improved. Amenities like trailheads, trails, shooting ranges, cell towers, motorized play areas, boat ramps, and others need to be available. Discussion on funding this infrastructure should occur through collaborative processes that encourage engagement with legislators, the public and affected agencies. A discussion of user fees is appropriate, but fees should benefit the targeted uses – they should build and maintain the trails and associated infrastructure that will benefit resources and users.

#### THE TASK FORCE RECOMMENDS THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS WITH POTENTIAL TO SUPPORT THE PRIMARY RECOMMENDATION:

- 6.1** Convene a collaborative working group(s) including users to investigate ways to fund the development and maintenance of outdoor recreation infrastructure and programs. Suggestions for possible areas to explore include:
  - fee and donation programs;
  - coordinated grant programs, for example, a best-in-class matching grant program;
  - user-funded programs;
  - state matching funds.
- 6.2** Ask for reauthorization of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) consistent with the original intent of the Act.
- 6.3** Advocate for full, recurring funding of the Recreation Trails Program (RTP).
- 6.4** Establish a Wyoming Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund using creative public and private funding mechanisms that provide funding for recreational infrastructure on state and federal lands.
- 6.5** Create a user fee (in-state and out-of-state) for all adult non-motorized users on enrolled trail areas to be used to fund the construction, improvement, and maintenance of enrolled trails. Request that the National Park Service enroll its trails.
- 6.6** Partner with businesses (such as beverage companies) to develop a voluntary, per-unit donation program to fund recreation trails and encourage physical activity.





- 6.7** Introduce an opt-in fee on motor vehicle registration to be used for creating, maintaining, and repairing non-motorized, multi-use trails and paths.
- 6.8** Raise awareness and voluntary participation in the conservation stamp program and/or consider creating a recreation stamp program.
- 6.9** Support local retention of ski area permit fees on federal lands to improve permit administration, which would facilitate private investment.
- 6.10** Explore a user fee program for recreational use of State Trust Lands.

## MAKING IT HAPPEN

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Development of consistent funding for access, infrastructure, maintenance and conservation is a challenge that must be met for the continued growth of outdoor industries in Wyoming. It is important to involve as many interests as possible in the discussion. Following the examples of other collaborative efforts in the state, a working group should be considered to specifically address this challenge.

One solution that should be considered is a statewide Recreation Trust Fund, following the example of the Wyoming Wildlife & Natural Resource Trust and Wyoming Cultural Trust Fund. This is a challenge as at this time Wyoming is in a time of economic austerity and may not be positioned to support this effort. However, if an Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund could be created, it should allow for donations and growth beyond state funding. As revenues improve, decision makers could revisit state involvement.

It is important that we work through our federal delegation to support the Recreation Trails Program and Land and Water Conservation Fund. Wyoming should also consider opportunities to support and utilize other federal funding sources that result in the development of public outdoor recreation opportunities.

The end user also has a necessary role in supporting their recreational activities. Wyoming should support opt-in and pay-to-play models where they can be fairly implemented. The Wyoming State Trails Program has excellent examples of pay-to-play models – the snowmobile and ORV programs. Both programs charge annual user fees. This revenue is used to purchase equipment, and maintain trails and to match for grants. This model should be duplicated in other areas.



## RECOMMENDATION 7

### USE GOVERNANCE TOOLS TO ENHANCE OUTDOOR RECREATION IN WYOMING, INCLUDING LEGISLATION, FUNDING, AND COOPERATION

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Governmental entities at the local, state and national levels play a role in the outdoor recreation economy. The current mix of federal and state managed lands in Wyoming highlights that reality. The general public, businesses and agency representatives have all expressed a need and desire for expedited and streamlined permitting and with other decisions on federal land management. The difficulty in obtaining special use permits is a significant obstacle. It affects businesses, volunteer organizations and individuals. Permits become more challenging when multiple management agencies or offices are involved. Land managers are seeing increased demands and decreases in their administrative resources.

#### THE TASK FORCE RECOMMENDS THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS WITH POTENTIAL TO SUPPORT THE PRIMARY RECOMMENDATION:

- 7.1** Pursue legislation that supports outdoor recreation by:
  - decreasing business liability;
  - covering “natural surface” trails under the Wyoming Governmental Claims Act;
  - prioritizing the development of “backyard trails” – trails close to homes and within communities.
- 7.2** Identify areas desirable for outdoor recreation and explore land consolidation and/or cooperative management between private, state, and federal land managers.
- 7.3** Pursue legislation to give Wyoming Game and Fish Commission (WGFC) the authority to set license fees.
- 7.4** Work proactively with federal agencies to increase flexibility and responsiveness in the management of federal public lands.

# MAKING IT HAPPEN

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Recreation providers should be well represented on boards and commissions whose statutory responsibilities affect the outdoor recreation industry. Representatives of user groups should likewise have a voice to ensure that outdoor recreation is considered in policy discussions and legislative processes. Working with boards and commissions, as well as the legislature, representatives of the industry can identify and minimize barriers to growth.

Currently, natural surface trails are not specifically covered under the Wyoming Governmental Claims Act, leaving recreation providers susceptible to litigation. This challenge can be addressed when decision makers move to correct oversights, as the Legislature did in passing the Skier's Safety Act in 2017. In doing so, they reduced liability for operators and established a responsible assumption of risk for skiers. As outdoor recreation opportunities expand and become more popular, agencies and elected officials will need to be prepared. They should rely on their citizens, businesses, boards and commissions to help them shoulder the load.

As industries and population in Wyoming grow, so do the legislative loads and challenges. One solution is to empower those individuals appointed to boards and commissions to a greater degree. Currently for example, a change in hunting license fees can only be accomplished through legislation. The legislature should consider delegating this responsibility to the WGFC, giving them the authority to establish fees for licenses, stamps and permits. Doing so could allow adjustments or "indexing" based on the cost of living creating stability and predictability in a revenue stream that benefits wildlife and outdoor recreation.

Additional opportunities for similar efficiencies can be realized working across silos within government. Improved processes in permitting could be addressed by the Wyoming Recreation Action Team (REACT). REACT is comprised of six state and four federal agencies providing recreation services to the public. They could lead an effort to increase consistency across management jurisdictions, improve the use of technology, explore new methods of fee payment, enhance mapping resources and ultimately streamline recreational special use permitting.



## RECOMMENDATION 8

### DEDICATE RESOURCES AND FUNDING AT THE STATE GOVERNMENT LEVEL TO PROVIDE CONTINUITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY, AND TO ENSURE THAT THE TASK FORCE'S RECOMMENDATIONS ARE IMPLEMENTED

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This recommendation is the highest priority identified by the Task Force. States like Utah, Colorado, Washington, and Oregon have recognized the importance of dedicated state leadership in growing their outdoor recreation economies. In Washington and Utah these entities sit within their respective Governor's Offices. Legislative and executive direction provides authority to staff. Staff numbers and workloads vary. They work with boards, commissions and legislative committees. They provide an informed voice on the issues faced by outdoor recreation providers. They field stakeholder concerns and respond to actions that could negatively affect their states and industries. The state needs to be in touch with outdoor business policy issues and provide assistance in navigating governmental challenges. To be a lead state in the outdoor recreation sphere, Wyoming needs an organizational structure that is up to the task.

#### THE TASK FORCE RECOMMENDS THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS WITH POTENTIAL TO SUPPORT THE PRIMARY RECOMMENDATION:

- 8.1** Expand the charter and rename the Department of State Parks and Cultural Resources to prioritize statewide outdoor recreation. Provide resources to focus on expansion of recreational opportunities, for example, infrastructure, outreach, and streamlining permitting. Identify appropriate staffing and relationships to implement outdoor recreation recommendations.
- 8.2** Designate resources within the Wyoming Business Council to expand and support the outdoor recreation economic sector, similar to current efforts focused on agriculture and industrial development.
- 8.3** Identify staff within the Governor's office responsible for long term implementation of recommendations and to form interagency groups that coordinate with all relevant government agencies and non-governmental organizations.
- 8.4** Create a statewide advisory group, including outdoor businesses, to provide oversight and accountability in implementing these recommendations.



# MAKING IT HAPPEN

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Executive leadership and legislative action will be needed to implement the recommendations of the ORTF. The most logical and efficient action to achieve success would be to charge SPCR with expanded duties, to work with the Governor's office to determine statutory changes required, and to make appropriate recommendations to the legislature. SPCR should then work with the legislature and its committees to effect the necessary changes, secure resources, designate positions and develop appropriate budgets.

Growing the outdoor recreation economy will require input. The WBC adopted the Outdoor Recreation Industry as one of six growth sectors in the state. During the Task Force process, the business subcommittee worked with the WBC to interview businesses across the state. WBC conducted more in-depth business interviews to discuss needs and barriers. An outdoor industry sector report and additional resources specific to the industry are being added to the WBC website. There will also be work done through WBC's Advanced Industries Manager who will be the lead in working with a potential outdoor recreation office in SPCR. Through this work, the WBC will determine how best to partner to accomplish the business related recommendations from the Task Force. There may be a need for additional WBC funding and staffing to make this effort a success.





## RECOMMENDATION 9

### CREATE A COLLABORATION FUND, LIKE THE FOREST COLLABORATIVE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM, TO FINANCIALLY AND TECHNICALLY SUPPORT LOCAL OUTDOOR RECREATION COLLABORATIVE GROUPS

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Communication is key – nothing happens without it. Collaborative efforts allow for information sharing and locally based decision-making. It is important to foster communication between the public, business, interest groups and government.

## MAKING IT HAPPEN

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Wyoming has a history of supporting collaborative processes. From the state level, to counties, to special districts and even the general public, Wyoming works to make sure that local voices are heard. The State should consider creating funding, or expanding the access to existing funds that will support the creation and continuation of collaborative groups that bring land managers and other decision makers to the table on outdoor recreation issues. The funding established through the 2015 Governor's Task Force on Forests can serve as a guide.

Collaboration should engage elected leaders and their staff, subject matter experts, land managers, representatives of organizations and others. These collaboratives should represent multiple perspectives on outdoor recreation related issues. Members should be authorized to make decisions. Collaboration should seek to develop consensus. Discussion should be fair, transparent and recognizably legitimate.



## RECOMMENDATION 10

### IMPROVE, EXPAND, AND MAINTAIN DIGITAL AND PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE THAT CONNECTS COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL BUSINESSES

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Improving, expanding, and maintaining infrastructure was the third highest priority by the Task Force. We want people who recreate in Wyoming to be explorers. They need to have the tools to find what they are looking for, as opposed to being “along for the ride.” High quality, real-time information directs people to recreational opportunities and experiences they seek. When they have a good experience, they return time and time again. Outdoor recreation users are seeking specific experiences and purpose built (activity-based) recreation amenities. Well-designed amenities can mitigate user conflicts, human impacts and enforcement challenges.

#### THE TASK FORCE RECOMMENDS THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS WITH POTENTIAL TO SUPPORT THE PRIMARY RECOMMENDATION:

- 10.1** Strategically assemble, maintain, and distribute — utilizing innovative and dynamic means — a comprehensive inventory of outdoor recreation infrastructure, opportunities, providers, education programs, and events in Wyoming.
- 10.2** Include statewide outdoor recreation activities on Wyoming Department of Transportation highway maps with assistance from the Wyoming Office of Tourism.
- 10.3** Fund the creation and long-term maintenance of a best-in-class, digital user interface that showcases all outdoor recreation assets in Wyoming.
- 10.4** Expand the existing State Parks and Cultural Resources website to include information on outdoor recreation grants available at the local, state, and national scales.
- 10.5** Designate and develop high-quality, purpose-built motorized areas to increase access for users and to concentrate motorized use, which would provide for conservation and responsible use in other areas.
- 10.6** Build and maintain trails and other infrastructure by capitalizing on youth and veterans’ programs and paying visitors, as well as collaboration through existing programs.
- 10.7** Improve geographic information system data for roads to increase access to public and state lands.
- 10.8** Designate and develop high-quality, purpose-built non-motorized areas to increase access for users.

# MAKING IT HAPPEN

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Information makes a difference in experiencing in the great outdoors. A hierarchy of wayfinding and navigation can be considered when directing users to recreation resources. Quality information is needed at different scales, from statewide maps for general navigation to finer scale products on specific trails. Information could be delivered as hard copy maps, guidebooks and brochures or through technologies like mobile “apps.”

New crowd-sourcing tools allow users to input information digitally on their preferred activities. Their availability is growing exponentially. Users can identify recreation opportunities and share them. Mountain Project and MTB Project are examples that serve the climbing and biking communities respectively. State and federal agencies are likewise developing technology-based ways to show trails, landownership and recreational opportunities. Wyoming should leverage these and other efforts. We should also support the baseline data and information needed to deploy them.

The State of Wyoming has expertise on recreation and tourism. We should inventory recreation amenities and connect users with those opportunities. This information helps reveal gaps in services and opportunities for growth. Building on existing efforts, Wyoming should assess the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) and process. It could be part of a larger effort to acquire data, analyze it and provide detailed information for decision makers.





## RECOMMENDATION 11

### PROMOTE, INCREASE, ENHANCE, AND SUPPORT INCLUSIVE OUTDOOR RECREATION PROGRAMS AND TRAIN A QUALIFIED AND DIVERSE OUTDOOR RECREATION WORKFORCE

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Growing the outdoor recreation economy requires a commitment to workforce development. The workforce must be capable and committed to meeting customers' expectations. Training in the outdoor industry can be both formal and informal – it depends on the need. A workforce with skills in manufacturing, hospitality, general business, experiential providers, volunteer coordination, land management and other areas will be needed. High schools and higher education, technical and trade schools, state agencies and private education institutions can all gear up to support the effort. Apprenticeships and other “non-traditional” education can play a significant role within the outdoor recreation industry. Other activities related to the outdoors also help drive interest and aptitude required in the industry. Outdoor education mentorship and programs for youth and adults have been successful in Wyoming. They should be expanded statewide.

Wyoming Department of Education Content and Performance Standards include outdoor adventure activities (backpacking, rock climbing, orienteering and bicycling). Out of school expeditionary programs for youth and adults, including those who are underserved or at risk, should be offered. These programs provide opportunity and learning.

The challenge facing state agencies, after school programs, city recreation providers, clubs and nonprofits, and others offering outdoor education and adventures are surmountable. Liability issues, lack of qualified or certified staff, difficulty obtaining long term funding and challenges making equipment available impede momentum – especially in underserved areas. Where possible, the state should seek to remove barriers, provide guidance and support that addresses these issues. Doing so allows opportunities to be delivered to groups that may not otherwise have access to outdoor recreation.

### TASK FORCE RECOMMENDS THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS WITH POTENTIAL TO SUPPORT THE PRIMARY RECOMMENDATION:

- 11.1** Increase opportunities and resources available for local school districts to incorporate outdoor recreation and education in K-12 curricula that focuses on creating lifelong recreationists, such as: developing a mechanism to create, collect, and share lesson plans and necessary equipment between Wyoming school districts and other partners including governmental agencies.
- 11.2** Use public-private partnerships to develop more incentive programs to foster a culture of youth participation in outdoor recreation - focused on skill development and creating lifelong recreationists.



- 11.3** Develop and incentivize community (adult and family) outdoor education programs, such as clinics and classes for entry-level outdoor skills through community colleges or state and city recreation programs. Strive to provide public or private grant funding for these programs. Example programs include the National Hunting and Shooting Sports Action Plan and WY Outside.
- 11.4** Implement “train the trainer” certification programs to build capacity for teaching outdoor skill development in public schools and in the greater community by:
- Creating partnerships between education institutions (such as NOLS, Teton Science Schools, and the University of Wyoming, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, State Parks and Cultural Resources) and the state’s educators;
  - Ensuring that training opportunities are available within Wyoming for Leave No Trace, Tread Lightly, and similar responsible use programs.
- 11.5** Support education, training, and retention of a qualified and diverse outdoor recreation workforce by supporting the University of Wyoming and Wyoming Community Colleges in efforts to enhance outdoor recreation-related degree programs.
- 11.6** Develop partnerships between public and private entities to provide workforce development and continuing education to meet the talent needs of outdoor recreation businesses, including equipment manufacturers, the hospitality industry, and experience providers.
- 11.7** Establish a working group to develop, fund, implement, and actively promote programs and events for veterans and active-duty military that increase access to the outdoors and focus on the physical and mental health benefits of outdoor recreation.
- 11.8** Expand funding for and promotion of the Wyoming Conservation Corps and the Veterans Conservation Corps.

# MAKING IT HAPPEN

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A lifelong love of the great outdoors starts at a young age. Schools and other providers should be encouraged to incorporate outdoor recreation activities. Individuals should be encouraged to participate. Outdoor recreation experiences provide great lifelong learning opportunities, as well as mental and physical health benefits. Assistance for providers, such as incentives that help fund equipment, staff training, and program operations are needed to help deliver these experiences.

Wyoming should look at ways to increase access and participants. Fee waivers or low cost opportunities, mentored learning, and programs which reward participation often result in lifelong pursuits. This is an investment in future generations. Programs can be geared toward specific user groups, for example youth hunters. Populations such as the underserved and at-risk youth can benefit greatly from these experiences. The value of outdoor recreation opportunities for today's veterans cannot be overstated. Wyoming should strive to be the national leader in providing these opportunities to both resident and non-resident veterans.

Developing a world-class outdoor recreation workforce will require consideration by educational institutions. The manufacturing, leadership, management and educational aspects of the outdoor industry contain nuances that require specific attention. In the area of education, the University of Wyoming's proposed Natural Resource Recreation and Tourism degree program is an excellent start. Outdoor leadership and enrichment programs at the University of Wyoming and Wyoming's community colleges could also be a part of building the state's outdoor economy related workforce.

Community college curriculum can be enhanced by building and supporting transfer degree programs that feed into the University of Wyoming programs. Scholarships, graduate assistantships and scholarships in exchange for service commitments like those offered through Wyoming Conservation Corp and Veterans Trail Crew, were identified as programs that grow and prepare workers for careers in recreation.

Specific efforts at the University of Wyoming and community colleges could benefit outdoor related equipment manufacturing. A focus on technical drawing, machining, and assembly can ensure the presence of a qualified local workforce. More specifically, a product design and engineering major with emphasis on outdoor recreation equipment might be ideal for Wyoming. Several products have already been initiated at the University of Wyoming focusing on this type of outdoor product design and development. These activities should be valued, continued and supported.



## CONCLUSION

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The outdoor recreation economy has incredible potential for growth. Implementing these recommendations of the Outdoor Recreation Task Force can help with expansion. Implementation will require local leaders to bring businesses, government agencies, organizations and interest groups together.

These recommendations are a starting point. To make a difference for Wyoming, they need to be further developed. These will need to be translated from suggestions into specific, measurable and attainable goals that can drive action over time. We hope that the Governor, the Legislature, business leaders, federal agencies, local governments and other interested parties will consider these recommendations as they make decisions for the future of Wyoming.

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