

Linking Landscapes & Connecting Communities



Bonner County Trails Plan

*A subpart of the Transportation Component of
The Bonner County Comprehensive Plan
Bonner County Planning Department
October 18, 2012*

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Acknowledgments

Bonner County would like to acknowledge the following individuals and organizations who contributed their time and creativity to the trails plan:

- ★ Bonner County Planning & Zoning Commission
- ★ Bonner County Board of Commissioners
- ★ Pend Oreille Peddlars
- ★ Panhandle Backcountry Horsemen Association
- ★ Priest Lake Snowmobile & Trails Club
- ★ North Idaho Pathways
- ★ U.S. Forest Service
- ★ Idaho Department of Lands
- ★ Schweitzer Mountain Resort, Jade Smith
- ★ Trails Advisory Group
- ★ Erik Brubaker
- ★ John Linch
- ★ Jack Lamb
- ★ Jan Griffitts
- ★ Don Davis, PE
- ★ Margy Hall
- ★ Wayne Benner
- ★ Jan Rumore
- ★ Jon Saylor
- ★ Mark McNeese

- ★ Mark Savarise
- ★ John Finney
- ★ Mary Franzel
- ★ Marie Duncan
- ★ Brian Dunham
- ★ Diane Arrants
- ★ Ryan Luttmann, PE
- ★ Ryan Fobs
- ★ Roger Conant
- ★ Bruce Demko
- ★ Greg Hetzler
- ★ Bob Carlson
- ★ Larry Davidson
- ★ Marty Taylor, AICP
- ★ Sue & Bob PaDelford
- ★ Rick Price
- ★ Robert Myers
- ★ Susan Drumheller
- ★ Ed Wingert
- ★ Lisa Ailport, AICP

- ★ Friends of Pend d'Oreille Bay Trail
- ★ Dan Spinosa, Bonner County GIS
- ★ David Yarnell, Bonner County GIS
- ★ Ted Runberg
- ★ Bonner County Planning Staff
- ★ Mike Lithgow
- ★ Susan Harris
- ★ Jamie Brunner
- ★ Angela Raymond
- ★ Clare Marley, AICP
- ★ Dan Carlson, AICP
- ★ Saegen Neiman
- ★ KayLeigh Miller

Introduction

Background

Bonner County's 1.1 million acres of private and public lands provide a wide variety of opportunities for trails and pathways, from city sidewalks to mountaintop hiking and snowmobile and horseback trails that bridge winter, spring, summer and fall. The rich array of recreational trails attracts visitors to Bonner County, and provides a quality of life for its residents.

Citizens and community leaders have identified the importance of developing a trails and pathway plan to provide an inventory of existing trails, explore long-term management of the trails and look to the future for expansion and improvement of the county trails system. Trails can link our landscapes and connect our communities. The trails plan is an important tool in developing and documenting the community's vision of a trails system.

In late winter of 2008, at the recommendation of the Bonner County Planning & Zoning Commission (Commission), the Board of Commissioners (Board) formed a Trails Advisory Group (TAG) to assist in the development of a county-wide trails master plan. The county's newly drafted land use code of 2008 offered opportunities for development of trail systems. Local trail enthusiasts met with the Commission in February of 2008 to discuss the code reform work and development of a trails plan. The group identified the importance of a master plan to create layers of trail types and to designate where non-motorized, motorized and mixed-use trails are appropriate. The Commission and core group of hikers, bikers, walkers and riders acknowledged different neighborhoods will want different trail types based upon needs, topographic and local interests. They agreed that forming neighborhood trails groups would be the best approach to developing a good trails/pathway plan. Based upon those early discussions, Bonner County formed TAG and designated six trail neighborhood "sub-areas." TAG and a technical sub-committee represented a wide cross section of trails/pathway users and agencies, including day hikers, snowmobilers, horseback riders, cross-country skiers, mountain bikers, cyclists and ATV riders and various local, state and federal agencies. TAG's job was to formulate a master plan for public review and public hearings before the Commission and Board.

"...from city sidewalks to mountaintop hiking and snowmobile trails that bridge winter, spring, summer and fall..."



Photo: Larry Davidson

Purpose

Simply put, the purpose of the trails plan **IS** to:

- Inventory Bonner County's existing trails network;
- Identify missing links to the current trail system;
- Determine methods to preserve and maintain the county's existing trails/pathway systems;
- Develop a strategy to find and fund new pathways.

The plan is also a specific reference guide for the construction and placement of trails to be developed as part of subdivisions, planned unit developments, multi-family housing, public, and commercial projects in unincorporated Bonner County. The design standards of Bonner County's Land Use Regulations (Title 12) require developers of certain subdivisions and land uses to plan and construct trails consistent with the alignment and design of the adopted trails plan.

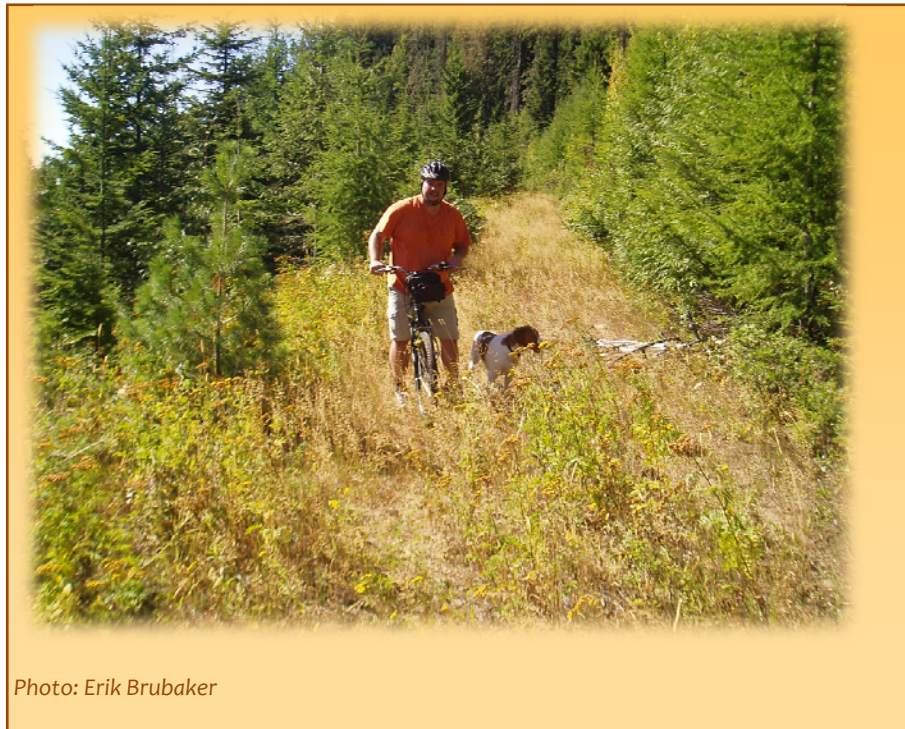


Photo: Erik Brubaker

The plan:

- **IS NOT** a means to acquire land through eminent domain. There is no intention to acquire private land through eminent domain for trails purposes. The plan can help identify priorities and suggest trail routes and extensions as developers or planners lay out new roads and neighborhoods, however.
- **IS NOT** meant to be set in stone. The plan is a “dynamic” document, and should be considered “always under construction” as new investments and ideas arise. Updating of the document should take place frequently to keep the plan current.
- **IS NOT** meant to be an atlas of all Bonner County trails. At this level, the plan cannot map in detail all local, state, and federal trails. Trail locations and desired routes are general. The document will be used as a guide to help evaluate and develop trails and serve as a jumping-off point to more in-depth studies or plans. The plan can aid the community as it seeks grants or funding sources.

Plan's Message:

Northern panhandle residents and visitors love North Idaho's beautiful lakes, mountains, valleys and rocky ridges. As Bonner County grows and changes, it will find both challenges and opportunities for public trail access and connectivity.

Mission:

Bonner County Trails Advisory Group is a broad-based group of volunteers who came together to advise the Bonner County governing bodies in the development of an enduring comprehensive trails plan that works with both public agencies and private property owners to ensure permanent protection of a trails system for current and future generations. Bonner County's mission is to ensure avenues are open for present and future access to this area's plentiful recreational opportunities and bountiful natural resources.

The Bonner County trails plan is a guide for connecting our communities and recreation areas by incorporating existing plans of the county, cities, private developments, Recreation Districts, federal and state lands, other community partnerships and developing a platform for a permanent, inter-connected system of trails and pathways.

Objectives

The objectives of the Bonner County Trails Plan are:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ To provide direction and cooperation among the various governmental jurisdictions, private property owners, and conservation groups to develop a county-wide system of pathways and trails.➤ To examine ways to protect public access to waterways, public lands, and public rights-of-way for recreation, health, transportation, hunting, gathering and fishing.➤ To aid in the creation of a system of trails and pathways connecting our communities from the urban centers to the rural villages, and linking our landscapes from waterways to wilderness.➤ To develop a system for long-term maintenance of public trails and pathways. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ To identify and aid in the development of safe routes and corridors between schools, parks, recreation sites, homes and other community places.➤ To develop construction standards for future trails and pathways to provide for safe travel, easy maintenance and durability, while protecting the natural and historical features of the land.➤ To assist in educating the community about shared use and safety on trails and pathways.➤ To promote community involvement in the development and maintenance of the trails system. |
|--|--|

Trail Benefits

Many factors motivate communities to plan and develop trails. Some are obvious, such as being able to commute from Point A to Point B through a simple, inexpensive mode of transportation or expanding recreational opportunities. Others may not be as obvious, but are just as important. Trails can make a community more attractive to tourists, prospective employers or potential future citizens. A well-planned trail system creates a more livable community and can be a tool to preserve green space and provide access to public places and waterways. Trails can also encourage citizens to live healthier lives.

Economic benefits

Bonner County's communities have long been touted by national magazines and newspapers for being the best of something: "The Most Beautiful Small Town," best places to ski, live or retire... It is no secret that the area's amenities and natural attractions bring tourist who want to enjoy a respite and people who want to stay for good. The International Selkirk Loop, a 280-mile scenic drive through northern Idaho, eastern Washington and Canada, invites guests to *"Traverse the relatively quiet highways via motorcycle, bike, or car, and check out unique birding locations and picturesque settings."*

By attracting tourists and providing recreational opportunities for residents, the trails systems can create jobs and spawn new businesses. Trail-seeking tourists buy supplies, rent equipment, dine and sleep in trailhead communities. Property values can be enhanced with new, accessible trail amenities. While the numbers might be difficult to measure for the local communities, there are several national studies to support the economic benefits of trails and pathways.

A survey in the Seattle, WA area showed a 6% increase in property values located near trail systems. In Minnesota, 61% of suburban landowners along a rails-to-trails project in Minnesota said their property values were enhanced by the presence of the trail system. (Rivers 1995)

Jackson Hole, WY completed a study in 2011 of the economic impact of trails on its community's economy. Teton County's trail system attracts tens of thousands annually. Significant tourism dollars are generated by the trails attractions. An investment of \$1.7 million has been made in the county's trail system in the past decade. The study estimated nearly \$18 million flowed into the community in 2010 as a direct result of the Teton County trail system. (Kaliszewski 2011)

Health benefits

Surveys conducted by the Bonner County Planning Department prior to the development of this plan overwhelmingly indicated the primary reasons people use trails are for recreation and health benefits. The response is not surprising, since there is an ever-increasing national focus on growing healthier communities. One can check any recent land use planning conference agenda or periodical to see that health is the hot topic of the day. Trails can play a big part in getting people moving toward a lifestyle that includes regular physical activity.

Using data from the National Medical Expenditure Survey, one Nebraska study determined that for every \$1 spent on trails, there was almost \$3 in savings in direct medical costs. Once people began using local trails, they found their overall physical activity increased, one study shows. Easy access and connectivity to neighborhoods, parks or commercial areas play a part in encouraging people to use trails. Another study in Massachusetts found that among 363 adults studied, the likelihood of using a suburban rail-trail decreased by 42 percent for every .25 mile increase in distance from home to the trail. A Minneapolis study also found sharp declines in trail use among bicyclists who had to travel 1.5 miles or further to access the trail. (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation 2011) While it may seem counterintuitive to suggest that if someone has to travel farther to reach a trail, he or she won't use the trail to for exercise, distance and easy access can be a factor that discourages trail use.



Public Input

Formal public input

The Bonner County Trails Plan will be a subpart of Transportation Component of the county's comprehensive plan. Public hearings before the Bonner County Planning & Zoning Commission and the Board of County Commissioners are required as part of the formal process to update the comprehensive plan. In addition, the county has sought public input through open houses, neighborhood trails meetings, surveys, etc.

"Just for fun" Bonner County Fair survey

In August of 2008, Bonner County counted beans to measure interest in trails and pathways. Just for fun and to spark an interest in the trails planning efforts, Bonner County planning staff set up six quart jars and a basket of beans at the Bonner County Fair in Sandpoint so that fairgoers could "vote" for their favorite type of trail. The department also distributed written questionnaires during the fair to gather opinions and seek volunteers for the trails committee. Staff did not monitor bean voting, and results are not considered scientific by any means. The vote noted in the sidebar to the right indicates a greater interest in biking and equestrian pathways. County staff used the handwritten fair questionnaires to develop the Priest Lake and county-wide trails surveys noted below.

Further opinion sampling through surveys

Following the fair, the TAG developed a county-wide survey to sample interest and desires for a trails system in Bonner County. The Priest Lake neighborhood group decided to tweak the survey and use it to gauge specific interests in its area. The surveys queried respondents regarding their support for a trails system, reasons for using trails, favorite path ways, wishes for expanded trail opportunities and willingness to fund trails.

The county distributed the surveys using a web-based surveying tool, (Survey Monkey), hand-written forms at public places and events, such as the 2009 county fair and the National Trails Day, and other means. Again, the surveys were



BEAN COUNT OF FAVORITE TRAIL TYPES:

Walking	701
ATV	1,115
Equestrian	1,465
Biking	1,480
Snowmobiling	712
Cross-country skiing	875

non-scientific and simply offered some additional sampling of public interests and concerns. The surveys had relatively limited distribution and fairly low response rates overall. Results are noted below:

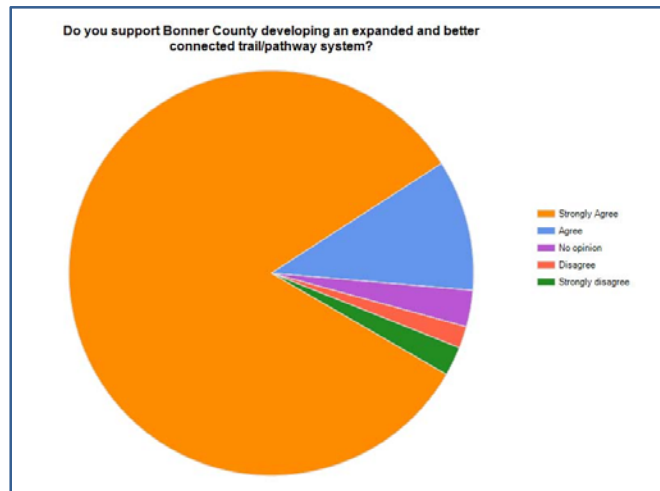
County-wide survey

About 200 people responded to the county-wide survey, using either the on-line survey tool or handwritten questionnaires. The survey ran from early summer to late fall of 2009. The survey can only be used as a general gauge of interest and participation due to the small number of responses.

The survey questions and responses follow:

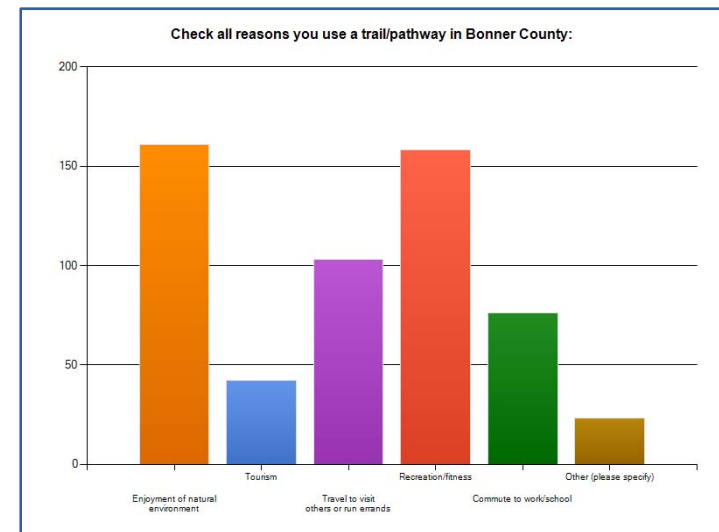
1. Support of an expanded and better connected trail/pathway system

Of the total responding, an overwhelming 82.9% said they “strongly agree” with the development of a better trails system. Another 10.6% marked “agree,” while about 3% had no opinion and 3.5% either disagreed or strongly disagreed.



2. Reasons trails/pathways used in Bonner County

An overwhelming number of respondents used Bonner County’s pathways for the enjoyment of the natural environment (94.1%). Other top reasons were recreation and fitness (92.4%) and traveling for errands or visiting others (60.6%). Tourism, commuting to work or school or “other” reasons rounded on the responses. The questionnaire allowed multiple answers.



3. Types of trail users and adequacy of current trail systems.

Hiking and walking was a universal trail activity for 100% of those who responded to the survey. Nearly three-quarters of respondents found the current walking and hiking trails to be inadequate (71.8%). Equestrian trails were the only trails listed by respondents as being adequate in Bonner County, but only by a small margin of 52%.

The responses to this question are listed in the following table:

Trail type frequency/adequacy question

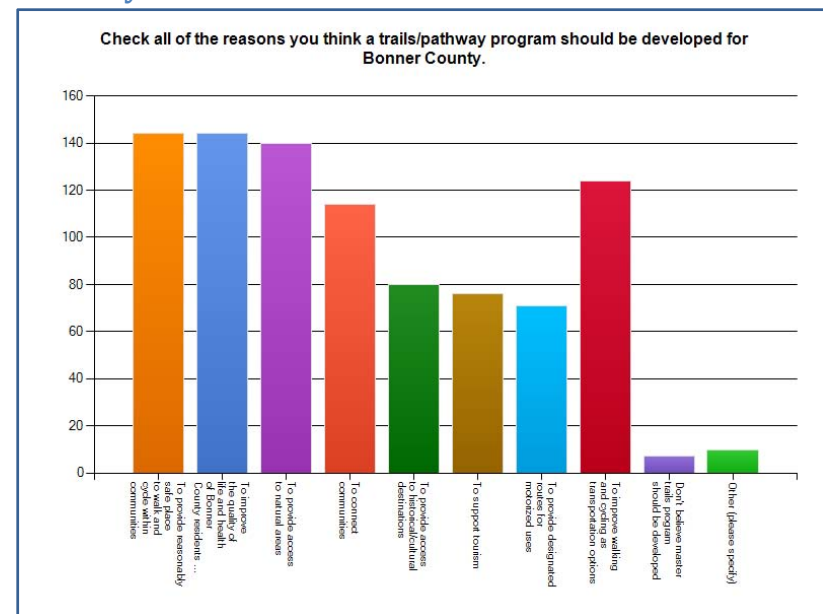
Activity	% Participation reported	% Who considered trail type adequate
Walking/hiking	100%	28.2%
Equestrian	35.8%	52%
All-terrain vehicles	45%	33.3%
Cross-country skiing	80.5%	20.9%
Snowshoeing	79%	30.8%
Cycling	95.4%	18.1%
Snowmobiling	29%	48.4%
Trail amenities (wildlife viewing, benches, etc.)	83.2%	40.8%
Motorcycling	23.3%	41.2%
Mountain biking	85.9%	37.8%
Other trail activities	31.6%	36.4%

4. Location of most frequented trails

The fourth survey question sought input on the area's favored trails and pathways. Respondents listed the Sandpoint area as being the most frequented trail systems at 77.2%. North of Sandpoint ranked as second most popular at 49.6%. Sagle/south of Sandpoint and Dover followed closely behind at 44.1% and 42.5%, respectively. The Priest Lake area was a favorite pathway system for 36.2% of the respondents.

5. Reasons for developing a trails/pathway program in Bonner County

The questionnaire explored people's opinions on why a trails program should be developed in Bonner County. Eight suggestions were listed, along with "other" and "I don't believe a master trails program should be developed." The two main reasons given for developing a trails system were: "To provide reasonably safe places to walk and cycle within communities," and "To improve the quality of life and health of Bonner County residents and visitors." A total of 86.7% of those taking the surveying picked these two reasons. Multiple answers were allowed. Other top reasons for developing a trails program included: providing access to natural areas (84.2%); improving walking and cycling as transportation options (74.5%); connecting communities (68.5%); providing access to historical/cultural destinations (47.9%); and supporting tourism (46.1%). A total of 3.6% of those taking the survey believed a trails master plan should not be developed.



6. Frequency of trail use

The survey asked how frequently respondents used trails in Bonner County. A total of 29.7% reported they used trails 1 to 2 days per month. Another 27% said they used trails 1 to 2 days per week, while 20.9% said they used trails 3 to 4 days per week. Daily users came in at 16.9%.

7. Age of respondents

A total of 60.7% of the survey takers fell between the ages of 36 to 60 years of age. The 18 to 35 year-olds were the second highest group (19.7%) and the 61 years and older came in at 15.4%.

8. Top 3 destinations in Bonner County

Connections between Sandpoint, Kootenai, Ponderay and Dover had the most votes, followed by improved routes to Schweitzer and destinations north of Sandpoint. Respondents commented on the desire to connect with shopping opportunities and employment centers north of Sandpoint. Others encouraged routes to the Bonner County Fairgrounds, existing U.S. Forest Service trails and to “any place flat.” Missing or underdeveloped links that respondents also listed included safe routes to Hope/Clark Fork, Sandpoint to Cocolalla, Dover to Priest River and Sandpoint to Priest Lake.

9. Top 3 destinations outside Bonner County

The survey revealed the majority would like to see connections from Bonner County to Coeur d’Alene, with stops at Bayview and Farragut State Park. Connections to Bonners Ferry and McArthur Lake were listed second most frequently, followed by trails to Montana. Some hoped development of trails to Bonners Ferry would eventually lead to a good cycling trail to Canada.

10. Willingness to allow access across your private land for trails

The questionnaire asked whether respondents would be willing to allow trail access across their private land in exchange for increased development rights. Because Bonner County has created new incentives for trail dedication in its subdivision ordinance, the survey wanted to sample interest in trail dedication. In exchange for dedication of trails to the public or the construction of trails connecting to public pathways, developers can earn additional bonus density. For the majority of respondents, this question was not applicable (43.6%). Of the remaining, 22.7% provided an “maybe” answer, while 20% said yes and another 13.6% said they would be unwilling to allow trails access.

11. Funding a trails system

The survey offered a variety of possible ways to fund a trails program: county taxpayers; federal funds; state funds; private grants or money; volunteer contributions or user fees. The survey allowed multiple choices. Private grants or donations and state funds were the two most frequent choices, at 78.7%, followed by volunteer contributions at 77.8%; federal funds at 70.4% and county taxpayers at 66.7%. User fees came in at 39.8%.

12. Potential trails conflicts

The survey explored potential trail conflicts and how these conflicts might be resolved. More than half of those taking the survey skipped this question. The responses can be separated into two categories: Trail **user** conflicts (“who” uses the trail); and trail **use** conflicts (“how” the trail is used).

“Different trail users have different desires, and these needs and desires conflict,” one person wrote. “We must provide sufficient choices and participation in the public process for all users.” Another noted: “If you think everyone’s needs can be met, you’re having a pipe dream. Trail systems, like everything in life, will always have conflict if there is more than one person involved. If you start to make rules to accommodate one type of trail user, you automatically start to alienate another type of user. And if you make no rules at all...well, we know what happens then.”

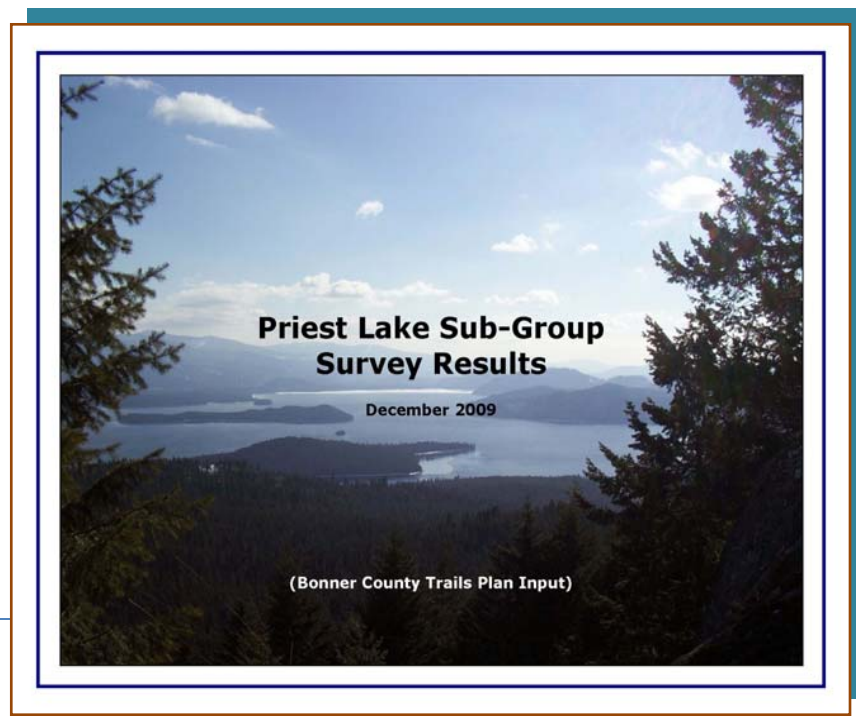
Trail **user** conflicts: By far, the most frequent trail user conflict cited in the survey was the potential conflict between motorized and non-motorized vehicles. Mixing equine uses with motorized was also frequently listed as a potential and dangerous conflict. Trail **use** conflict varied from concerns about environmental degradation to maintenance and property rights issues.

Most felt trail use conflict could best be resolved with completely separate trails, wider trails or separate alignments or locations for motorized and non-motorized. One suggested cycling paths could be integrated with roadways by providing wider shoulders and bike lane markings. The integrated approach would be less expensive than devoting separate trails. Education was listed as key to avoiding conflicts because each trail user will become aware of others’ needs and expectations. A sampling of the potential trail conflict responses follows:

Potential Trail Conflicts	
Who uses the trails	How the trails are used
<i>“Seems the motorized vs. non-motorized would be the largest and most obvious conflict. Probably the most ‘dangerous’ would be equine and motorized. Education and signage would be excellent.”</i>	<i>“ATVs are the big one. They can wreak havoc on trails and disturb the peace of other users. This can be avoided by having special trails for ATVs or good signage to indicate the ‘rules of the road’ so there are no issues and everyone knows that they are to share the trail.”</i>
<i>“I think the biggest conflict is not between users, but between users and non-users. Non-users don’t want the money spent on trails.”</i>	<i>“Private land vs. recreational users who are probably trespassing but mean well.”</i>
<i>“It seems like many hikers get annoyed by bikers and don’t understand how to share the trails safely.”</i>	<i>“Horses do a lot of damage to trails. Try to get more equestrians to help maintain them and promote education and understanding of each user’s needs, responsibilities, who yields to whom, etc.”</i>
<i>“Simply mark the trails well in terms of users –i.e., non-motorized, horse, bikes, etc. Conflicts, in my opinion, only happen when users are improperly using the trail.”</i>	<i>“Dogs running loose and chasing wildlife.”</i>
<i>“I think that no matter how you go, you should be able to enjoy our area. Some people are not physically capable of hiking. Why should they be limited to what parts of our county they can see?”</i>	<i>“Selfishness on the part of specific user types cause conflicts. Awareness efforts and courtesy classes, flyers are needed.”</i>

At the conclusion, the survey offered respondents a chance to share other comments regarding the development of the Bonner County Trails Plan. The mixture of comments included concerns about financing trails and trail maintenance, enthusiasm about the prospect of connecting our communities, acquisition of trail rights-of-way and words of encouragement to the trail planners. Here are a few samples of what they said:

General Trail Survey Comments	
<i>"More, more, more - life is too short to not enjoy trails!"</i>	<i>"I support any outdoor recreation opportunities that you may be considering. Sandpoint seems to be full of outdoor enthusiasts and it seems to me that the town will only become an even more desirable, wonderful place to live with more trails for all types of users."</i>
<i>"I see a trail system as requiring tax dollars that could be better spent elsewhere. It's not just the money to plan and construct trails but costs of upkeep (maintenance, litter, clean-up, vandalism, repair.) ...Conflict will always exist and with conflict on public trails comes additional costs to the Sheriff's Office."</i>	<i>"Emphasis should be on connecting the county's towns with cycling/walking corridors."</i>
<i>"I think that creating a trail and bike path network in Bonner County is a great idea. I want to see bike commuter paths that link Sandpoint and outlying communities. I also dream of a web of non-motorized recreation trails that stretch from Sandpoint to Schweitzer and over Baldy to Priest Lake. I would like to link Sandpoint to Hope by trails along the water and through undeveloped areas."</i>	<i>"I am thankful that you all are pursuing this information and working towards more trails in this area. We are so set up for more trails and we have so many people who use them and benefit from them. I see it as a win-win situation. Also to have good commuter bike lanes on our roads is a good idea. If we have good trails we will continue to draw tourists."</i>
<i>"This is great. I can't wait to see what could happen in the future!"</i>	<i>"Keep up the good work and brainstorming. This seems like a very daunting task...but if people can at least get to this point of dialogue, there's hope of some sort of alternative travel resolution for the big picture, long-term legacy."</i>



Priest Lake neighborhood survey

Priest Lake's sub-area trail planning group also developed a survey to gather opinions about their neighborhood trail system and the surrounding connectivity. The group posted the survey on the internet using Survey Monkey and distributed copies of the survey to Priest Lake

area businesses and public places. The group also established links to the on-line survey on the Bonner County web site and the Priest Lake community web page, "As the Lake Churns." There were 162 respondents. Of that total, 160 answered all or some of the survey questions. Below are listed the individual questions along with a summary of the general responses to each. Additional specific comments are noted as well.

1. The reasons respondent uses trails in the Priest Lake/Binarch Sub-Area

A total of 160 people answered this question. More than 90% of the respondents indicated that the primary reasons they use trails in the Priest Lake area are for "Enjoyment of the Natural Environment" and for "Recreation/Fitness," with "Enjoyment" indicated by more than 96%. The other major reason trails are used is "Travel to visit others or run errands" (27%).

2. The types of uses that should be considered in the development of a comprehensive trail system for Priest Lake/Binarch Sub-Area

A total of 156 respondents answered this question. The top 4 uses that respondents indicated should be part of a comprehensive trail system are Walking/Hiking (120), Cycling (92), Lake Activities &/or Access Points (92), and Cross-Country Skiing/Snowshoeing (86). A greater number of respondents indicated that there are an "adequate" number of maintained trails for Walking/Hiking and Lake Activities &/or Access Points. On the other hand, a greater number of people indicated that the maintained trails for Cycling and Cross-Country Skiing/Snowshoeing are "inadequate." Of the respondents who checked ATV's (69) and Snowmobiles (66), a greater number indicated that the maintained trail systems are "adequate." A smaller group indicated that Equestrian (35) and Trail Amenities (45) uses should be considered. Equestrian needs are "adequate" for the greater number, but on the other hand, Trail Amenities is considered "lacking."

3. The reasons a Priest-Lake Sub Area trail system should be developed

A total of 156 people answered this question. The top three reasons why a trail system should be developed are to Provide Access to Natural Areas (131); Provide Places to Walk and Cycle within Communities (119); and Improve Quality of Life and Health of Visitors & Residents (119). The third and fourth reasons indicated by people are to Improve Walking and Cycling as Transportation Options (102) and Provide Designated Routes for Motorized Uses (97).

4. Frequency of trail use in Priest Lake/Binarch Sub-Area

A total of 156 respondents answered this question. About 37% of the respondents use the trails 1 to 2 days/month; about 36% use the trails 1 to 2 days/week; and approximately 11% use the trails daily.

5. Age group

A total of 160 people answered this question. Out of this number about 58% indicated their age group is 36-60; another 17.5% indicated they are 61 and older; followed by 12.5% indicating their age range is 19-35. In short, more than 75% of those who responded are older than 60. Approximately 12% of the respondents indicated they had a variety of ages in the household.

6. Relationship to the Priest Lake/Binarch Sub-Area

A total of 156 people responded. Of these respondents, approximately 36% indicated they are full-time residents or live in the Priest Lake area more than nine months of the year. Another 35.3% indicated they have a seasonal – summer/fall relationship to the Priest Lake area. More than 22% responded that they are visitors.

7. Top three desired destinations (communities or other locations) within the Priest Lake/Binarch Sub-Area

A total of 84 people responded to this question. Respondents provided a variety of answers, but general trends indicate connecting key points along the eastside (Coolin, Cavanaugh Bay, Indian Creek, Lionhead), connecting key points along the Westside (Lamb Creek area, Nordman, resorts, museum, library, Upper Lake); and then connecting the east and west sides. People also are interested in connections between Priest Lake and Priest River, and Priest Lake and Schweitzer/Sandpoint area – although these destinations also show up under Question #8.

8. Top three desired destinations (communities or other locations) outside the Priest Lake/Binarch Sub-Area that should be connected by trails coming from, or passing through, the Sub-Area

A total of 64 people responded to this question. A variety of answers were received but general trends indicate connecting key points to the northwest (Metaline Falls, WA); northeast (Bonners Ferry); southeast (Schweitzer/Sandpoint area; and south (Priest River). Answers to this question also reiterated connecting Coolin to Lamb Creek area, and Lamb Creek to Nordman.

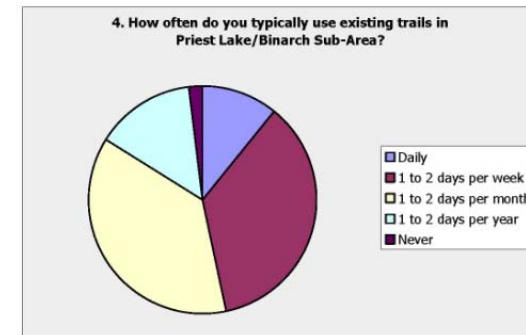
9. Willingness to allow access across private land in exchange for increased development rights

A total of 146 people responded to this question. The greatest number of respondents indicated that this question is “Not Applicable” (42.5%); followed by “No” (26%); another 17.1% indicated “Maybe”; and the smallest number (14.4%) indicated “Yes”.

10. Other comments regarding development of the Priest Lake/Binarch Sub-Area:

A total of 55 people provided additional comments. A summary of these comments follows:

4. How often do you typically use existing trails in Priest Lake/Binarch Sub-Area?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Daily	10.9%	17
1 to 2 days per week	35.9%	56
1 to 2 days per month	37.2%	58
1 to 2 days per year	14.1%	22
Never	1.9%	3
Comment:		36
answered question		156
skipped question		6



General Priest Lake Trail Survey Comments

“The Priest Lake/Binarch Sub-Area has some of the most spectacular scenery and terrain anywhere. With the right plan, it could be a destination point for mountain bikers.”

“I would like to see the focus on maintaining the trails we have, before

“I am so glad this planning effort is going forth. Great for our offspring; great for us if we make some soon-reality.”

“I am concerned that as we provide more development that the wildlife and

<i>spending money on new ones. There are countless trails in the Priest Lake basin that just aren't being cleared each spring. We are losing our trail system due to lack of maintenance."</i>	<i>forested area may be adversely affected by the inroads that people and their machines provide. There needs to be a balance in the number and use of the trails. Perhaps limited when these trails are open and making their use as a seasonal basis is one way of protecting the environment and people's access to them."</i>
<i>"Improving interconnectivity between communities (e.g. Priest to Sandpoint) with 'play areas' designated along the main trail will go a long way towards protecting larger, more environmentally sensitive areas adjoining the main trails. This would be especially applicable to motorized usage."</i>	<i>"Encourage access through private land. Require developers to recognize existing trails before allowing development to happen. Develop a trail plan to allow non-motorized and motorized trail use so there is no conflict. Everyone has different needs and rights, and we need to respect the differences."</i>
<i>"The trail on the west side of Priest Lake, including Upper Priest Lake, is world class in every way. World class is an over-used cliché, but here it fits. All care should be taken to protect and enhance the trail and the habitat it runs through."</i>	<i>"I think any trail system should facilitate many modes of transportation and be inclusive; however, horse trails may need separate trails from other forms of traffic."</i>

Existing trails & connections

Bonner County's land features and existing transportation systems provide a wonderful opportunity to connect its communities via developed asphalt pathways paralleling the highway systems, quiet forested trails, backcountry ATV routes and water "trails" along streams, rivers and bays.

Western Bonner County

Eastern Bonner County

Schweitzer Mountain Resort

Federal trail systems

State of Idaho trail systems

City trail systems

Safe Routes to School

Neighborhoods plans

Background

Early in the planning process, as the TAG team began to discuss the make-up of the county's people and places, the group realized Bonner County needs to break the trails plan into neighborhood units. Bonner County's diverse landscaping demands the trails/pathway planning be divided into sub-areas for more efficient and effective neighborhood planning. The sub-area planning allowed the residents of each geographic area to focus on the areas they know best.

The Neighborhood plan



LET'S TALK TRAILS!

What: Join the Bonner County Trails Advisory Group for a discussion of trails opportunities in the Priest River/Oldtown neighborhood.
When: Thursday, September 30, 4-5:45 p.m.
Where: Priest River Library, 219 Main St., Priest River
Why: Bonner County is gathering neighborhood knowledge, ideas and wishes for trails and pathways so that a county-wide trails plan can be developed to link its communities and landscapes.

Visit our web site at <http://www.co.bonner.id.us/planning/index.html> or find us on Facebook.
(Bonner County Planning Department, 1500 Hwy 2, Sandpoint, ID (208) 265-1458)

The county's river and lake systems and east-west and north-south major highways naturally created six distinct neighborhoods. Borrowing names from the prominent landscape features of the area, the trail planners dubbed the six trail sub-areas as: Priest Lake; Hoodoo; Grouse; Blacktail; Baldy; and Beetop. Each of the sub-areas has unique needs and interests. Here is a summary of the sub-areas:

Priest Lake

The Priest Lake Neighborhood contains two high quality lakes: Upper Priest Lake with a surface area of 1,338 acres, and Priest Lake which is the third largest natural lake in Idaho with an area of 23,000 acres. Upper Priest Lake and Priest Lake are connected through the Thoroughfare. Priest River meanders down the valley to the Pend Oreille River, offering recreational opportunities on and along the waterway as well as historic significance for the area. State Highway 57 provides the main link to Priest Lake from U.S. Highway 2 at Priest River, approximately 25 miles to the south.

The majority of the property in this neighborhood is either owned by the Idaho Department of Lands or U.S. Forest Service. The state and federal trail systems are not under the county's jurisdiction, but provide existing and potential links across lands within the county's jurisdiction. The state lands are predominantly located on the eastside of the lakes and river. Located in the northern part of this neighborhood is the Selkirk Crest leading into Boundary County, with an impressive granite ridgeline averaging more than 6,500 feet. The federally owned land, predominantly on the west side of the lakes and river, is generally tree-covered, less rocky terrain. The aquatic and

mountainous terrains, offer chances to see moose, elk, bald eagles and other abundant wildlife of the area.

Seasonal trail activities in the Priest Lake Basin are both motorized and non-motorized. During the summer months, hiking, climbing, ATVing, road and mountain biking, horseback riding, berry picking, fishing and numerous other water activities are the recreational opportunities enjoyed by permanent and seasonal residents and visitors to the area. A variety of boaters, powered and non-powered, enjoy the lakes, while others float the Priest River. Winter activities are also numerous in the Priest Lake Basin, including snowshoeing, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, and dog-sledding. Seasonal community activities also center around pathways, such as fun runs, triathlons, wooden boat parade and show, poker runs, dog sled races and snowmobiling activities.

Starting in 2008, the Priest Lake Sub-area group gathered community input for the plan through a variety of means, including a sub-area on-line and local survey, local meetings, information tables at several community events and festivals and the visitor center at Dickensheet. Comment sheets were made available at various locations at Priest Lake and at the Bonner County Fair. The group conducted tabletop discussions, providing the community an opportunity to indicate desired pathways and linkages. The local news web page, "As the Lake Churns," provided a link to the on-line trails survey. The Priest Lake group made available at the Priest Lake Library a notebook which displayed the sub-area map and survey results. Priest Lake visitors, full- and part-time residents were all invited to comment. Results of the survey are included in this plan, and reflect much of the input the Sub-area group found during its community events. From the community input efforts, the Sub-area group learned:

- The primary reasons for using trails in the Priest Lake area are for "Enjoyment of the Natural Environment" and for "Recreation/Fitness;"
- Uses of the existing trails include both motorized and non-motorized uses;
- Maintained trails for ATVs, snowmobiles, walking/hiking, lake activities and access points are adequate, but those for cyclist and cross-county skiing/snowshoeing are seen as inadequate, and those for equestrian users could be expanded;
- Trail amenities are perceived as lacking;
- The main reasons for developing a trail system would be to provide access to natural areas, provide places to walk and cycle within communities, and improve the quality of life and health of visitors and residents;
- Key links within the Priest Lake Sub-area that should be connected are locations up and down both the east side and west side, and developing a safer, year-round connection between the east and west sides of Priest Lake;
- Key connections to areas outside the Priest Lake Sub-area are to the northwest (Metaline Falls area), northeast (Bonners Ferry area) and to the southeast (Schweitzer Mountain) and south (Priest River).

Hoodoo

The Hoodoo neighborhood extends from the Washington State and Kootenai County lines in southwestern Bonner County to the Fox Creek/Quartz Creek area on the north and the Riley Creek and Clagstone areas to the east. The Pend Oreille River courses through the

center of the neighborhood. Hoodoo has everything from urban sidewalks to suburban paths to backcountry ATV and horse trails on federal, state, city and private properties. Because of the diversity of this neighborhood, TAG members met at Blanchard, Oldtown and Priest River to gather community ideas about trail systems. The group also met with the Pend Oreille County trails planners to talk about water and land connections to the neighboring state trail systems. The top interests of those who attended the neighborhood meetings included:

- Developing bicycle and pedestrian trails over old railroad beds in the Blanchard area;
- Securing access over private timberlands to connect with existing National Forest roads and trails in the Hoodoo area;
- Working with private partners, such as Stoneridge Golf Course or Clagstone, to create connections to walking trails;
- Safely connecting city parks to recreation attractions such as the Mud Hole east of Priest River;
- Partnering with the City of Priest River to see the Priest River “landfill park” (an 8-acre site north of the highway) become a reality and to connect it with water and land pathways to the Mud Hole;
- Connecting the Eastside area with Schweitzer Mountain via a snowmobile trail system;
- Working with the Washington neighbors to develop a water-based trail system with amenities that could someday lead from the Clark Fork delta to Canada and help boost the area’s tourism;
- Expanding on the Safe Routes to School initiative;
- Creating historic pathways between Oldtown and Priest River by land or water;
- Achieving the Millennium Trail dream of connecting Oldtown to Dover along the scenic Pend Oreille River;
- Establishing a water trail on the Pend Oreille River that includes historic or interpretive stops.

Baldy

Grouse

http://www.northidahobikeways.com/proj_byway.htm

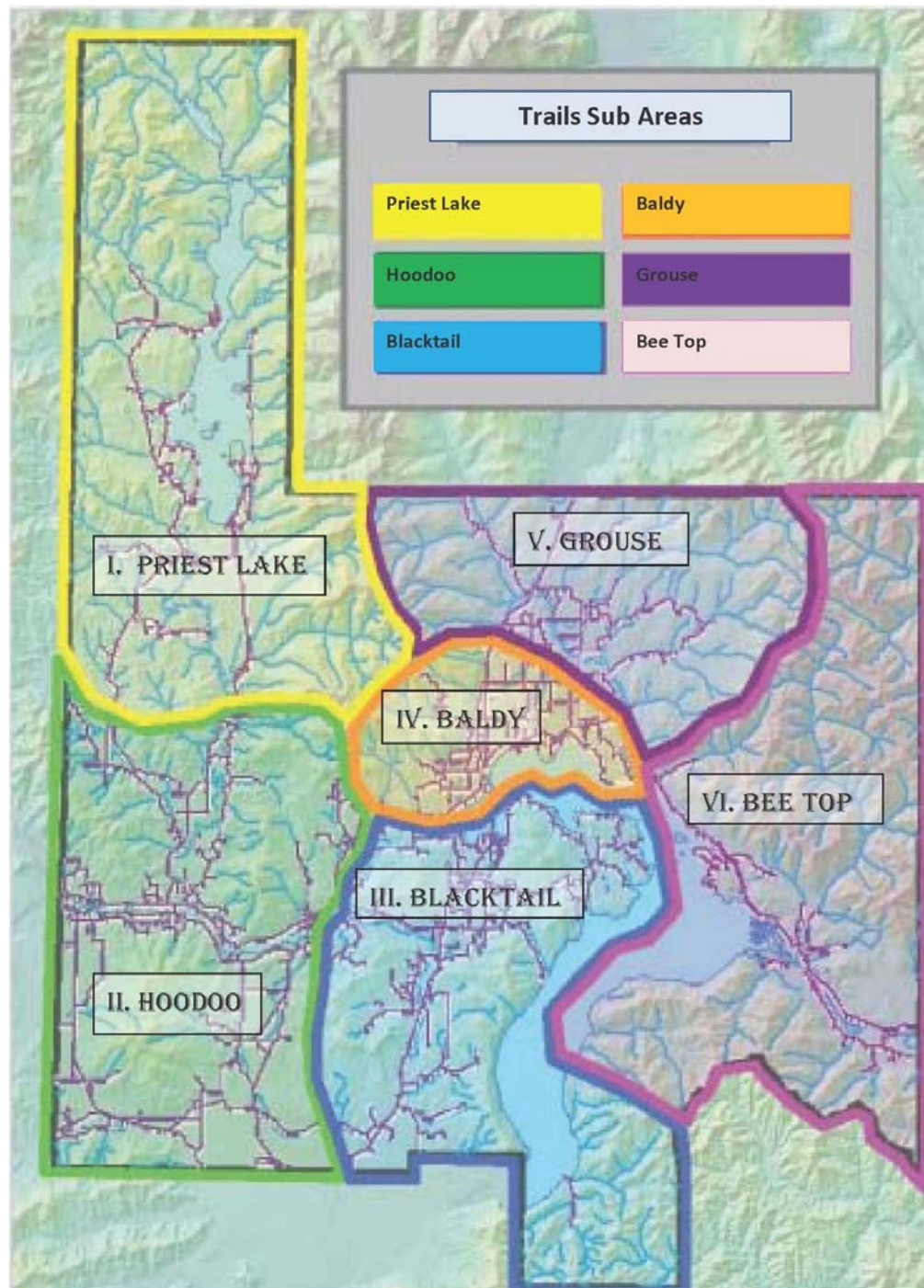
Blacktail

Beetop

Beetop is the most easterly neighborhood unit, extending from the Trestle Creek area east to the Montana border. This area is dominated by steep slopes and narrow valleys. U.S. Highway 200 East edges Lake Pend Oreille and the Clark Fork River system heading into Montana. The narrow, winding highway with limited shoulders poses challenges for safe cycling accommodations. The majority of the property in this

neighborhood is federally owned U.S. Forest Service lands. Hiking, ATVing, horseback riding and mountain biking opportunities abound in the mountainous terrain, offering glimpses of the moose, elk, bald eagles, mountain goats and other abundant wildlife of the area. Kayakers and canoeists will find intriguing water routes winding through the Clark Fork River delta's North, Middle and South Forks and stretching along the base of the Green Monarchs on Lake Pend Oreille. Winter snows beckon snowmobilers to the popular trails, such as the Trestle Creek drainage. TAG members met with trail enthusiasts in the Beetop neighborhood. Their comments and interests included:

- Reviewing the current access and conditions for ATVing from Lightning Creek to Porcupine Lake, Lunch Peak Road, Wellington and Strong Creek (Trails and roads within the National Forest are not under Bonner County's jurisdiction, but the discussion is documented, nevertheless);
- Discussing desired ATV access through Trail 120, Rattle Creek Trail, and public access to Schlecht Lake. If Rattle Creek remains closed to ATV access, exploring access through #1184 and #1030 and further access to Montana roads and trails.
- Discussing a desired foot/bike path along Highway 200, particularly between Lightning Creek and Callahan and between mile posts 56 and 57;
- Marking existing and desired horse, water, foot, bicycle, snowmobile, and ATV trails on a draft map;
-



Trail types, design & construction

Motorized/non-motorized

Pedestrian, hiking/walking

Cycling

Snowmobile

Winter, Nordic (Cross-country, snowshoe)

Water-based trails

Bonner County is a water-rich community, with 183 square miles of surface water (9.5% of the total area), the most of any county in Idaho. Bonner County's Lake Pend Oreille is Idaho's largest natural lake, covering 90,000 acres. Priest Lake is the third largest natural lake in the state. Water trails and paddling paths seem to be amenities that need no planning, since Nature has provided them. Some question whether water courses are even a "trails." But, "What makes a trail is the journey, whether it's on dirt, through a railroad tunnel, over a boardwalk, or along a scenic waterway. Trails in all their variety connect us to our world, our history, and our heritage of wild places." Water trails have been identified as a new network across America. (Macdonald 2008)

If a community wants to attract paddlers to its water ways, then mapping and planning are essential. The community needs to identify opportunities for safe access and intriguing routes and plan amenities such as parking, ramps, restrooms, camping and picnicking spots and portages. This trails plan includes some basic water trail essentials and explores some emerging plans to connect Bonner County's water system to its neighbors.

Avista Corp. examined the concept of a Lower Clark Fork water trail in 2003.

Horse, pack-animals

ATV

Panhandle Riders

Skateboard, roller blade

Mixed use

Rules and common courtesies

Standards for construction

Because Bonner County's existing and potential trail systems cross a wide variety of landscapes and cityscapes, a variety of trail construction standards are proposed. The trail types and construction standards are listed below. Trail construction standards are dependent on the location of the project and the targeted trail users. Standards for connecting a suburban housing development to a nearby park or school will differ from a recreation trail in an alpine village. Based upon the location and proposed trail users, the developer will select a trail type from the tables below. Construction plans, such as lighting, trail width, or surfacing, will vary to meet the design objectives of a particular project. The governing body will adopt particularized conditions of approval for the trail construction as part of the subdivision, planned unit development process or other development project. Selection of the appropriate trail for a given area is important to ensure the trail construction meets neighborhood needs, is attuned to the given environment and can be properly maintained. The trail must also be sustainable for the given project area. To be sustainable, the trail must:

- Support current and future uses with minimal impact to the area's natural systems.
- Produce negligible soil loss or movement while allowing vegetation to inhabit the area.
- Recognize that pruning or removal of certain plants may be necessary for proper trail construction and maintenance.
- Protect the area's wildlife.
- Require little rerouting and minimal trail maintenance. (Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation 2011)

Minimum construction guidelines for all trail types

When considering a new trail, the following minimum standards should be met:

- **Grades:** For multi-use trails, as a general rule, grades should not exceed ten percent (10%) because they become difficult for trail users to negotiate, and lead to trail erosion. Fifteen percent (15%) grades are acceptable for lengths shorter than fifty (50) yards.
- **Trail width:** Trail width is dependent upon the type of trail selected for the project. See the surface type/construction column in the table below.
- **Trail surfacing:** A variety of surface types can be proposed, depending on the type of trail proposed. The Urban/Suburban trail type is hard-surfaced, while the remainder of the trail types may be hard-surfaced, graveled or native materials, as noted below.
- **Clearance:** Clearance of vegetation (brush, branches, etc.) is dependent upon the type of trail being proposed and the environmental setting. Consult the trail type/construction column below for guidance in determining minimum clearance widths.
- **Trail layout:** Wet areas and steep slopes pose extreme difficulties for trail maintenance and should be avoided. Water and motorized road crossings should be kept to a minimum to avoid environmental impacts and traffic hazards. Frequent curves and grade changes add interest to trail settings and are encouraged.
- **Turning radius:** Wide, gentle curves with good forward sight distances are critical for safety, are aesthetically pleasing and are easier to maintain. Avoid sharp-angled turns, turns on steep slopes, or turns at the base of hills.

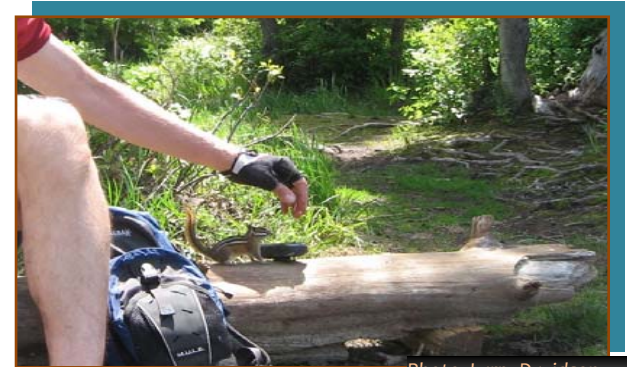


Photo: Larry Davidson

Photos: Mark Savarise



A good balance must be achieved between the recreational benefits of a trail and the impacts of the trail on the environment so that the very beauty that draws the community to a trail system is not degraded or lost.

➤ **Sight distance:** Forward sight distances of one hundred feet (100') are encouraged since the trails will often be shared by a variety of users. Although curves should be carefully designed to maintain good sight distances, turns and bends tend to help reduce travel speeds and add variety to the trail experience.

➤ **Road crossings:** Motorized road crossings should be carefully located, designed and signed one hundred to two hundred feet (100' to 200') in advance to ensure that trail users and motorists are good sight distance in all directions. The private or public entity having jurisdiction over the roadway shall be consulted during the trail design, and shall provide approval for any proposed vehicular road crossings.

➤ **Stormwater/erosion control and grading plans:** All trail construction involving the excavation or fill of more than fifty (50) cubic yards of material is subject to the standards of Title 12, Chapter 7, "Grading, Stormwater Management and Erosion Control."


➤ **Environmental protection:** Design of all trails must take into account the surrounding environment. Consideration must be given to protecting riparian areas, wetlands and sensitive wildlife and fishery habitats. A good balance must be achieved between the recreational benefits of a trail and the impacts of the trail on the environment so that the very beauty that draws the community to a trail system is not degraded or lost. Each trail plan should include an analysis of the plant and wildlife community encompassed in the proposed route, and how these habitats will be protected. Tips to mitigate the effects of the trail development on nearby plant and animal communities include:

- Consider the "swath of impact" a trail creates, which can be up to 100 feet on either side.
- Design trails to discourage wandering off the path into sensitive areas such as nesting or feeding grounds or spawning areas. Planting, screening, grading or signs can help keep trail users on the right path.
- Establish/maintain vegetative buffer along the trail.
- Consider trail closures during sensitive times, such as certain nesting, fledging or spawning events.

- Develop appropriate viewing areas or observation points to satisfy the curiosity about wildlife from a safe distance.
- Choose the correct trail surface for sensitive areas.
- Locate higher activity areas, such as trailheads and parking lots, away from sensitive areas. (Ryan 1993)

The trail design standards are as follows:

Trail Class 1: Urban/Suburban multi-use trail:

Trail function	Trail uses	Trail surface type/construction
<p>Non-motorized trail within urban/suburban setting. Located within or adjoining higher density subdivisions which typically contain paved roads. Greatest traffic trail type. Provides access to residences, schools, parks, greenbelts, commercial areas or city centers. These areas are typically zoned Suburban, Commercial, Rural Service Center or Industrial, but could include other higher density developments within the Recreation or Alpine Village districts.</p>	<p>Bicycling, skateboarding, skating, walking/hiking, riding scooters.</p>  <p><i>Photo: Wayne Benner</i></p>	<p>Type A: Hard-surfaced or paved, all-weather surface, 10-12 feet wide. Hard-surfacing to be asphalt, concrete or double-shot BST surface. Interpretive and directional signs, benches, amenities, lighting where appropriate.</p>

Trail Class 2: Rural/urban multi-use trail:

Trail function	Trail uses	Trail surface type/construction
Non-motorized trail in rural residential setting serving larger-acreage subdivisions. Provides limited connectivity to public facilities or other residential neighborhoods. Suitable for areas typically zoned Rural, Ag/Forestry or Forestry. Offers a transition between the urban, more densely populated areas and the rural neighborhoods.	Bicycling, skateboarding, skating, walking/hiking, riding scooters. Where appropriately designed and constructed, the trail could also include horseback riding opportunities. 	Type B: Either hard-surfaced, paved, gravel or packed earthen, 4-10 feet wide. Hard-surfacing to be asphalt, concrete or double-shot BST surface. Compacted gravel, existing logging roads or other road beds where earth has been compacted, or newly constructed packed earthen trails may be proposed. Interpretive and directional signs and lighting if appropriate.

Photo: Wayne Benner

Trail Class 3: Rural multi-use trail:

Trail function	Trail uses	Trail surface type/construction
Non-motorized and motorized trail in rural residential setting serving larger-acreage subdivisions. Provides limited connectivity to public facilities or other subdivisions and to state/federal trail systems. These areas are typically zoned Rural, Ag/Forestry or Forestry.	Generally includes most trail uses not dependent on hard surfaces, such as bicycling, walking, hiking, snowmobiling; ATVing, horseback riding, dirt bike riding, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing. 	Type C: Gravel or packed earthen surface, 8-10 feet wide. Where mixed motorized/non-motorized or equestrian uses are proposed, trail separations or other design features to avoid trail conflicts should be considered. Interpretive or directional signs, where appropriate. No or low lighting.

Photo: Craig Hill

Trail Class 4: Recreation Trail:

Trail function	Trail uses	Trail surface type/construction
Non-motorized trail in natural setting to protect sensitive areas. Can provide connection to state/federal trail systems. These areas may be zoned Recreation or Alpine Village, but could include Rural, Ag/Forestry or Forestry lands.	Mountain biking, cycling, hiking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, hiking or riding with horses or other pack or trail animals. 	Type D: Gravel or native surfaces, 3-4 feet wide. Low-impact design, with no/low-lighting. Steeper trails and rougher terrain possible with this setting. Maintenance is limited.

Photo: Larry Davidson

Trail Class 5: Nature trail:


Trail function	Trail uses	Trail surface type/construction
Non-motorized, low-impact trail in natural setting to protect sensitive areas. Connection to state/federal trail systems. These areas may be zoned Recreation, Alpine Village, Rural, Ag/Forestry or Forestry.	Low-impact uses such as hiking, cycling, snowshoeing or cross-country skiing, to avoid degradation to environmentally sensitive areas. 	Type E: Gravel or native surfaces, 3-4 feet wide. Low-impact design, with no lighting. Boardwalks may be employed to cross sensitive areas.

Photo: Larry Davidson

Trail Class 6: Water trail:

Trail function	Trail uses	Trail surface type/construction
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Non-motorized water trails that follow historical, cultural, environmental or developed community areas of interest. This trail type could occur in any zoning district.

Canoeing, kayaking, or using other such self-propelled watercraft.



Photo: Clare Marley

Type F: The water trail requires no actual construction. But adequate moorage, portage, signage and parking are essential to avoid conflicts with adjoining landowners and to ensure the safety of the trail users.

Other trail construction consideration:

Because of the diversity of neighborhoods and landscapes the Trails Plan cannot design a “one size fits all” trail for all projects. The trail classes listed above set the basic parameters. Depending on the setting, consideration should also be given to the following:

- Handicapped access
- Interconnectivity to other forms of transportation
- Safety features
- Use of existing facilities
- Street diets

Trail maintenance

Maintenance essentials

Maintenance of any trail corridor or added improvements which are retained in private ownership shall be the responsibility of the owner or other separate entity (homeowner association, corporation, resort owner, etc.) capable of long-term maintenance and operation in a manner acceptable to Bonner County.

Paying for maintenance

The county-wide trails survey suggested trail maintenance funding should come from a variety of sources. Private grants, donations and state funding were the most favored means of funding. User fees or tax support were also suggested. Likely, a mixture of funding sources from the private and public sector will be needed to care for trails. Funds for trail construction are covered in the “Funding” section below.

Volunteerism

Similar to the highway clean-up campaigns, many communities have created “Adopt a Trail” programs.

Homeowner associations

Homeowner associations often undertake the upkeep of pathways developed within subdivisions.

User fees

Some communities employ user fees to maintain trails. Cycle or parking stickers or memberships are sold and the money is applied to trail needs. About 40% of those taking part in the Bonner County trails survey favored user fees. There are deterrents to a user fee program, such as administration and collection fees, pursuing “violators” and resistance from some who view paying for hiking or cycling an infringement of their freedoms. Formation of a county-wide trails user association could be one method to collect user fees.

Private grants, donors

There are a number of private enterprises that have encouraged the care of public trail systems through volunteer work. American Canoe Association and L.L. Bean are two examples of water trail stewardship programs, which offer funding to private clubs to carry out a multitude of projects such as signage, erosion control, cleaning up waterways, establishing water trails, removing debris and hazards, etc. (Association n.d.)

Agency cooperation

Long-term maintenance can be handled through joint cooperative agreements among the cities, county and state and federal entities. The Sandpoint to Dover pathway is an example of a cooperative maintenance program for a trail that crosses two cities and unincorporated land within Bonner County. The City of Sandpoint maintains the path year-round within the city limits to the Richard Creed Bridge at Chuck’s

Slough. This stretch includes about 2,000 feet of unincorporated land. Dover picks up on the trail maintenance from the bridge to Dover. Snow removal, trash pick-up and sweeping of the path are included in the routine maintenance of the path, and occasional weed control and mowing is added as need, with assistance from Bonner County. (Kody VanDyk 2011) (e.g.: add The Long Bridge to Sagle)

Other funding ideas

Other community sources can be tapped for ongoing trail costs. These could include:

- Trail membership programs
- Foundation donations
- “Buy” a foot of trail campaigns (Similar to the commemorative brick sales to fund the Panida Theatre)
- Resort community taxes (where authorized)
- Federal highway dollars through ISTEA (Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act) or future funding programs
- Merchandising (such as sales of trails maps, postcards, souvenirs, etc.)
- Challenges grants
- Collection jars

Funding

The trails plan is proposed as a tool to guide organized, efficient development of trails, accesses, or greenways for Bonner County.

The plan is not meant to lay out miles of new trails, buy land and build all at once. This is a common misconception of trails plans, and often a worry for taxpayers who are concerned that adoption of a trails plan means a substantial expense of tax dollars. But a trails plan acts as a guide so that trails and pathways are considered when state or federal roads or private land developments are being considered. If the trails plan paints a picture of the county's current trails system, along with a well-thought-out desire for future connections, there is more likelihood trails will be woven into future neighborhood and transportation projects. This could mean setting aside adequate rights-of-way to accommodate trails when roads are being constructed or reconstructed or including pathways as part of a subdivision design. In this way new infrastructure development does not create barriers to future trail connections or cut off existing recreational assets. A well-thought-out plan is also a key to acquiring funds for trails projects.

Land acquisition and construction funding

There are a number of opportunities available for acquiring and building corridors.

Federal, state and private grants can help communities with trails planning, development and land acquisition. These grants can also help to encourage local investments. Many of these grants require measured and quantifiable use and administration of funds. Having an adopted comprehensive trails plan is a "must" for a community seeking grants funds. An adopted plan demonstrates the community is sufficiently organized and capable of administering grant funds and has a "vision" of its future trails system. Successful grant applications also need to show inter-jurisdictional cooperation between organizations at all levels of government and the private sector.

Partnerships between private organizations and area agencies have proven to be powerful combinations for obtaining federal, state and private grants for several area projects. The Rails to Trails Foundation assisted Sandpoint in the exploration of a public trail corridor. The proposed Pend d'Oreille Bay Trail project landed a technical assistance grant from the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program and through a coalition of the trail backers, cities and county, the project cornered a \$650,000 "brownsfield" grant through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to examine the contamination of the trail corridor and clean-up and redevelopment opportunities. (Pend d'Oreille Bay Trail Concept Plan 2010)

North Idaho Bikeways (formerly Pathways) celebrated its first big milestone August 14, 1998, with the official opening of the Carlson-McConnaughey Sagle Community Trail. The trail connected the Long Bridge path to a new path leading south to Sagle Road. Countless citizens, businesses, and government agencies enabled the path to be built as one of the least expensive paved bike paths in the nation. Since 1998, North Idaho Bikeways has been awarded:

- \$30,000 in business and individual donations to qualify for a \$152,000 Federal Transportation Efficiency Grant (Dover Trail)

- \$138,000 State Grant for the Popsicle Bridge and 5th Ave. Corridor
- 20 percent matching fund from the City of Sandpoint
- \$12,000 Grant to deck the Dover Trestle Bridge

In 2000 the Sandpoint and Dover communities worked to deck the Dover Trestle Bridge allowing the path to be walkable and to prepare it for paving. Paving was completed in 2000. Because North Idaho Bikeways is a non-profit corporation, funding the construction of various projects has been through a variety of sources. These include private donations, fund raisers, local businesses, and state grants all in the forms of money, time, and labor.

The “Pend Oreille River Passages Trail,” a visionary pathway along the Pend Oreille River from Washington/Idaho border at Oldtown to Sandpoint, began with a short segment at Oldtown located on highway and city of Oldtown properties. The funding for the start came from federal highway “Enhancement” grant funding for the Oldtown Segment in **year?** (Enhancement Funding was administered by the State, but is currently not available.) Funding allowed for:

- A 10-foot wide, paved, striped and signed trail from the Pend Oreille River Bridge to the Old Mill Road
- Railing
- A 10-foot wide paved handicap accessible ramp from the trail back into Rotary Park
- Concrete stairs with railing from the bridge down to the boat launch area

The \$250,000 grant required a \$25,000 match from the community. Community and Rotary members donated engineering work, environmental planning, a biological assessment and wetland delineation to match the federal dollars. The Rotary Club donated material and fill. With the private donations, the community was able to come up with “soft match” money for all but a few thousand dollars of the required match. (Linch 2011)

Scenic Byway funds can also be used on trails adjacent to a scenic byway. There are three scenic byways in Bonner County: Panhandle Historic Rivers Passage and Wild Horse Trail Scenic Byway, both part of the International Selkirk Loop, and the Pend Oreille Scenic Byway. Projects submitted for consideration should benefit the byway traveler’s experience, whether it will help manage the intrinsic qualities that support the byway’s designation, shape the byway’s story, interpret the story for visitors, or improve visitor facilities along the byway. Without significant cost-sharing from other sources, National Scenic Byways Program funds may not be used for local parks, expansion of park or forest land, or trails or bicycle pedestrian facilities serving primarily local residents or existing visitor attractions. (National Scenic Byways Program 2011)

Funding trails takes the support of the business community, elected officials, government agencies and community leaders. The support can best be obtained by educating trails users and the community about the benefits of good trails system, such as:

- Economic benefits from tourism dollars
- Quality of life
- Recreational opportunities
- Transportation options
- Energy savings
- Safety (Safe Routes to School, dedicated bike lanes, e.g.) (Skye Ridley 2007)

Future connections

Pend d'Oreille Bay Trail

A pivotal connecting point between the cities of Sandpoint, Ponderay and Kootenai is the proposed Pend d'Oreille Bay Trail on the north end of Lake Pend Oreille.

The Pend d'Oreille Bay Trail is a proposed public greenway that supporters hope someday will connect Sandpoint, Ponderay, and Kootenai while providing safe waterfront access to Lake Pend Oreille's north shore. (Pend d'Oreille Bay Trail Concept Plan 2010)

Thanks to the generous permission of private property owners, many residents have enjoyed the scenery, peace and serenity along Pend d'Oreille Bay in recent years, whether to fish along the shoreline, travel between work and home, or just walk the dog. However, many trail users have been unaware that most of this shoreline is privately owned.

Because of the cooperative efforts of public agencies, private organizations and landowners, the communities now have an opportunity to connect where residents work, live, and play through a public, non-motorized corridor that includes approximately two miles of spectacular Lake Pend Oreille shoreline.

Shoreline stabilization over the past decades to keep the lake's shoreline from crumbling into the water created a roadbed along the shore that today functions as a trail. At the south end the trail begins at Sandpoint's water treatment plant, continues north and east, crossing railroad right-of-way, other private property, and land owned by Ponderay. The informal trail ends at Black Rock, the site of a former lead smelter.



Sandpoint citizens, Ross and Hazel Hall, purchased waterfront property in 1966 and immediately recognized the value of this spectacular ground for the community. The family began talks with the City of Sandpoint in 1981 about the possibility of the city purchasing the property for a trail. The city unsuccessfully applied for federal funding to acquire the property in 1981 and 1991. Between 1999 and 2002, Sandpoint did purchase smaller sections from the Halls.

In 2005, the City of Sandpoint hired the Rails to Trails Foundation as a consultant in efforts to plan and acquire land for a public trail corridor. The following year, Sandpoint Mayor Ray Miller formed an ad-hoc trail committee. The committee gathered information about the corridor, created initial maps with possible alignments and met with the property owners and railroad to discuss the project.

The committee chose to call the trail the Pend d'Oreille Bay Trail, based on the historic French-Canadian spelling of Pend Oreille and its appearance on older maps of the bay. In 2008, the committee reorganized as Friends of the Pend d'Oreille Bay Trail, representing the community's interest in a shoreline trail corridor for Sandpoint, Ponderay, Kootenai and Bonner County. Resolutions were passed by the three cities in support of the trail project, and a letter of support was drafted and signed by the Bonner County Commissioners. Many other partners joined in support of the project, including corporate, government, civic, and private organizations and entities.

The Friends obtained a technical assistance grant from the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program. The group also assisted the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), in coalition with the cities and county, with a grant application that secured a \$650,000 federal brownsfield grant, funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The purpose of the grant is to evaluate the extent of contamination in the trail corridor and plan for its clean-up and redevelopment. The redevelopment goals emphasize the intent to create public access to the shoreline and connect the communities with a non-motorized trail.

On September 9, 2009 Idaho's Governor "Butch" Otter visited the lakeshore trail corridor with city and state officials, property owners, and trail advocates. Otter endorsed the collaborative effort behind the trail project and called it a "model" for inter-jurisdictional cooperation.

Friends of the Pend d'Oreille Bay Trail, with the help of the National Park Service's River and Trails program, teamed up with the American Society of Landscape Architects – Idaho/Montana Chapter, and the Idaho DEQ to host a design workshop in November 2009. The design workshop, or "charrette," brought together professional landscape architects, city and county officials, state agency staff, teachers, conservationists, historians, water quality experts, architects, trail users, and students to consider the opportunities and constraints in designing the Pend d'Oreille Bay Trail and led to a draft concept. The map and trail design were reviewed and refined and incorporated into the concept plan. The plan final was completed in May 2010 and circulated for review.

The Friends have identified the most likely steps to be taken to make the Pend d'Oreille Bay Trail corridor a reality. These steps are not necessarily in the order that they will occur, and many are interrelated and could occur simultaneously:

Water trails connecting Montana to the Clark Fork to Pend Oreille County. Starting small by simply “Connecting the Docks” while looking for funding to develop ramps, tie-ups, parking areas.

Dover to Priest River

Legalities

Liability

TITLE 36
FISH AND GAME
CHAPTER 16
RECREATIONAL TRESPASS -- LANDHOLDER LIABILITY LIMITED
36-1604. LIMITATION OF LIABILITY OF LANDOWNER. (a) Statement of Purpose

Dedication

Individuals seeking institutional and private grants and gifts (of land and easement) e.g. Pend Oreille Pedalers

Property rights, takings and compensation

Access through private “license” agreements or easements for trail access, construction and maintenance

Implementation

Members of the Trails Advisory Group acknowledged the trails plan will always be “under construction,” as new paths are forged and new ideas come to the forefront. More work with neighborhoods is needed. Plans will be reshaped as future development takes different directions than expected. True implementation of a plan could take decades, as thoughts are committed to paper, and paper ideas become plans that are eventually funded and built.

The trails plan is a sub-part of the Bonner County Comprehensive Plan Transportation Element. As such, the plan requires the consideration of both the Planning & Zoning Commission and Board of County Commissioners, pursuant to Idaho Code 67-6509. The public will have an opportunity to comment on the plan during the public hearing process.

Once adopted, regular revisits of the plan and updates are needed to keep current with neighborhood development and desires. Adoption of the first master plan establishes the foundation for trails development. TAG members recognized many facets of the plan still need to be explored, but realized a plan needed to be adopted first. They targeted the essentials, such as a basic inventory of the trail systems, funding opportunities, trail construction and maintenance. Among the areas needing further attention are:

- Formation of a continuing Trails Advisory Group or similar organization to continue to advise Bonner County of the needs and desires of trails enthusiasts.
- Mapping work to provide greater detail regarding desired trails and existing trails and connections.
- Connections to neighboring states of Montana and Washington and Boundary and Kootenai County.
- Further neighborhood group discussions.
- Connection to state trail system.

Appendix A

Maps

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