



Salmon Valley Trails Action Plan

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INTRODUCTION

Trails advocates, federal land management agency staff and non-profit groups in Lemhi County, Idaho are working to preserve and improve multi-modal access to public lands and the Salmon and Lemhi Rivers, as well as multi-modal travel within and between communities.

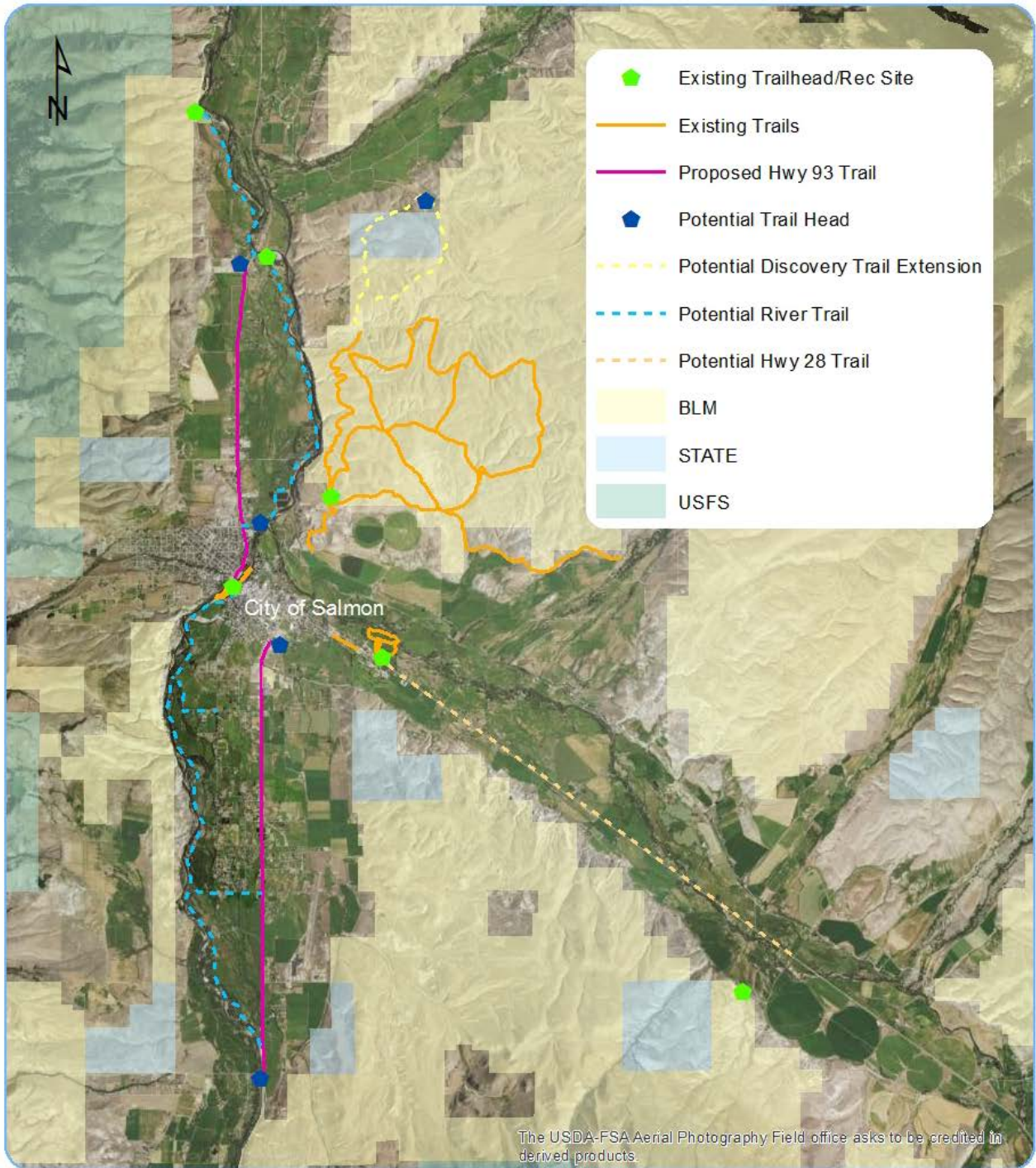
In 2012, this group worked collaboratively to establish a vision, goals and objectives for a regional trail system; explore funding opportunities; discuss potential stakeholder resources, issues and concerns; and outline an action plan. It is recommended that this plan be updated annually.

The region's existing trail system includes facilities with both transportation and recreational functions. The system is comprised of highway corridors, which currently provide the primary means of connecting communities with public land and river access points, as well as a robust network of trails and roadways on lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

This report summarizes the group's recommendations for future development of the regional trail system.



Photo courtesy of Dave Lingle



Salmon Valley Trails and Recreation Sites Overview

Lemhi County, Idaho

Areas identified as proposed trails are not formally designated as trail corridors. Public surveys and comments have identified these as potential opportunities only.

1:100,000

Date: 1/13/2015



VALUES AND VISIONING

Planning work began with a look at the reasons why a regional trail system is important to the Salmon Valley. At an initial workshop, the group discussed aspects of life that they especially value and would like to see preserved and supported by the trail system.

Many people choose to live and work in the Salmon Valley because of a deep appreciation and enjoyment of the outdoors, wildlife and scenic resources. Vast areas of public land contribute to a strong sense of freedom and openness in the area. The ability to move freely across large expanses of land is highly valued, especially since these opportunities are diminishing in other parts of the country with surrender of open space to urban and suburban development.

Trails advocates also understand and appreciate that ranching and mining are important contributors to the area's economy. They respect that public lands provide both recreational and economic opportunities, and understand that consideration of different perspectives will be important as the trail system is developed.

Salmon Valley Trails System Core Values

- ◆ Healthy Families
- ◆ Economic Stability
- ◆ Local History and Culture
- ◆ Access to Public Land and our Rivers
- ◆ Ability to move freely across the land
- ◆ Wildlife and Riparian Areas
- ◆ Scenic Areas
- ◆ Rural Character and Quality of Life
- ◆ Safe, Affordable Communities
- ◆ Ability to get around without a Vehicle

Efforts to promote and support a healthy local economy have been balanced by strong desires to safeguard the area’s existing rural character and quality of life. There is a special sense of place in the Salmon Valley. Participants expressed a desire for trail development strategies that preserve the individuality of the area.



Photo courtesy of Dave Lingle

Significant value is placed on healthy families in the Salmon Valley, not only from the standpoint of physical health and safety, but also economic health. The ability to travel safely without a car is important, especially for our children. Trail system development could support more affordable travel options as fuel prices continue to fluctuate.

After considering these values, the group adopted this overarching vision statement for the regional trail system: “A safe system of trails that connects Lemhi County communities and assures access to public lands and rivers for everyone”.

Salmon Valley Trails System Vision Statement

A safe system of trails that connects Lemhi County communities and assures access to public lands and rivers for everyone.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goals and objectives for a regional trail system are built on the core values and vision statement. To the extent possible, goals and objectives were designed to be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely, or “SMART”.

GOAL 1: PROVIDE SAFE ACCESS TO PUBLIC LANDS

- Objective 1A: Focus on developing trail connections to communities, public lands access points and river access points within 10 miles of Salmon over the next 20 years.
- Objective 1B: Provide multi-modal connections to other communities, public lands access points, river access points, scenic and backcountry byway destinations as resources and regulations allow.
- Objective 1C: Advocate and coordinate for ongoing maintenance, retention and improvement of recreational trails on public lands.
- Objective 1D: Provide multi-modal connections to other communities, public land access points, and river access points within 10 miles of Salmon over the next 20 years.
- Objective 1E: Advocate and coordinate for ongoing maintenance, retention, and improvement of recreational trails on public lands.

GOAL 2: PRESERVE AND ENHANCE RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR MOTORIZED AND NON-MOTORIZED TRAIL USERS

- Objective 2A: Create a county-wide public lands recreational trails atlas by 2018/2019, including ski and snowmobile winter trails.
- Objective 2B: Provide an on-going forum for improved coordination and public education regarding the Salmon Valley Trail System.
- Objective 2C: Preserve access to public lands as private property ownership is transferred and property is developed.
- Objective 2D: Encourage connectivity between trails within the city of Salmon and Lemhi County that provide for safe access and support multiple use for trails users and vehicles.

GOAL 3: PROVIDE ACCESS TO AND PROTECT WILDLIFE AND RIPARIAN HABITAT

- Objective 3A: Accomplish improvements at public recreation sites along the river to establish trail heads and provide for trail infrastructure.
- Objective 3B: Identify, improve and encourage use of designated locations for Salmon and Lemhi river access.
- Object 3C: Explore river corridor trail easements that establish setbacks from the river and riparian habitat.

GOAL 4: PROMOTE HEALTHY LIFESTYLES AND INCREASE ENJOYMENT OF LIFE IN THE SALMON VALLEY

- Objective 4A: Leverage local school and community service programs.
- Objective 4B: Create alliances with hospitals and their ongoing community efforts.
- Objective 4C: Design community events to celebrate and encourage alternate modes of travel.

GOAL 5: TAKE AN “INSIDE-OUT” APPROACH, PUTTING LOCAL NEEDS FIRST.

- Objective 5A: Involve the public in trail and travel planning decisions.
- Objective 5B: Build community ownership, support for, and pride in, the trail system.
- Objective 5C: Emphasize using local workforce in the development and maintenance of the trail system whenever possible.



Sacajawea Center Trails

GOAL 6: PRESERVE RURAL CHARACTER WHILE ENHANCING ECONOMIC VITALITY

- Objective 6A: Leverage outdoor tourism strategies to increase visitor spending in the Salmon Valley.
- Objective 6B: Evaluate economic value of the Lemhi County trail system to local communities.
- Objective 6C: Incorporate interpretive information in trail system development and into comprehensive trail atlas.

GOAL 7: HIGHLIGHT LOCAL CULTURE, CUSTOMS, AND HISTORY

- Objective 7A: Explore tribal and other partnerships to increase cultural awareness.
- Objective 7B: Make trails compatible with livestock and agricultural uses.
- Objective 7C: Recognize local legacies, including mining, ranching and tribal histories. Coordinate with tribes on appropriate access to tribal sites.



FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR TRAIL SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT

Because Salmon Valley communities are surrounded by federal lands, the region is in an excellent position to take advantage of federal funding programs that are not universally available to other areas.

Considering Objective 1C, which is to focus first on developing trails from Salmon to public lands access points within a 10-mile radius of Salmon, three funding programs administered by the Federal Highway Administration deserve consideration:

- **Scenic Byways Program.** Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plans were recently prepared for both US93 (Salmon River Scenic Byway) and SH28 (Sacajawea Scenic Byway) in the Salmon valley. Construction of facilities for pedestrians and bicycles along a these two highway corridors are eligible for funding under this program.
- **Public Lands Discretionary Funding.** Provisions for pedestrians and bicycles within, adjacent to, or that provide access to federal public lands are eligible for funding under this program.
- **Forest Highway Funding.** The portion of US93 between Lost Trail Pass and the City of Salmon is a designated Forest Highway route. Planning, design, and construction of pathway improvements on the Forest Highway system are eligible activities under this program.

While these three programs currently appear to best match the goals and objectives for the regional trail system, other state and federal programs may provide additional funding opportunities. Examples include the Federal Transit Administration's Paul S. Sarbanes Transit in Parks program, or the Federal Highway Administration's Transportation Enhancement program.



Highway 93, Lemhi County, Idaho

MATCHING STRATEGIES

Some federal programs that specifically support public lands initiatives, such as the Public Lands Highways Program or the Forest Highway Program, do not require matching funds. However, most grant programs require that applicants match the grant with cash. In some cases “in-kind” match in the form of services, materials, equipment or property is allowed.

State and private grants could be explored as sources of matching funds. Additionally, the City of Salmon’s Local Option Tax could be leveraged to bring trail project funding into the area. Donations from regional employers and corporate donations from companies such as recreational equipment or outdoor clothing companies could be investigated as sources of matching funds.

The federal Scenic Byways program offers a unique opportunity for revenue generation that should be further explored. It is possible for Scenic Byways projects to generate “program income”, which includes revenue from grant-supported activities, such as fees for services performed, the use or rental of real or personal property acquired with Scenic Byways funds, or the sale of commodities or items produced during the grant period.

If handled carefully, Scenic Byways program income can be used as match. (Advance approval from the Federal Highway Administration is required for this.) In addition, there are generally no restrictions on income generated after a grant or project period has ended. In other words, the Scenic Byways program could be used creatively to establish a sustainable source of funds for trail improvement and maintenance, or for matching future grant applications. Technical assistance opportunities are also inventoried.



Photo courtesy of Dave Lingle

POSSIBLE FEDERAL FUNDING CHANGES

It is important to note that most of the federal funding programs fall under current federal highway and transit programs legislation. The “Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act, A Legacy for Users” (SAFETEA-LU) expired on September 30, 2009, and since then all federal transportation funding programs have continued under a series of short-term extensions by Congress. Congress is now actively working on reauthorizations, which may significantly change the way federal funding is structured.



Lemhi County, Idaho

Regardless of the outcome of congressional reauthorization, it is likely that federal trail funding opportunities will still exist in the future in some fashion. In debating the future of transportation funding, Congress appears to be placing considerable emphasis on good planning and performance measures.

Having an adopted plan and staying focused on the goals and objectives of that plan will be a key to securing federal funds.

DATA, STUDIES AND PLANS NEEDED TO SUPPORT FUNDING REQUESTS

Funding agencies often require assurance that their moneys will be used to address an identified and documented need. Most trail system funding requests will need to be accompanied by a clear explanation of the reason why the project is justified, and may need to be supported by hard data or valid studies.

To help make the case for trail system projects in the Salmon Valley, a regional survey of river and trail users would be helpful to:

- Quantify current users of public lands and river access areas,
- Confirm priorities and needs for access to specific river and public lands access locations, and other regional destinations,
- Gauge attitudes and support for trail system development.

A regional market analysis is also recommended to:

- Forecast the number of potential local and visitor users of a regional trail system, and
- Estimate the potential for increased economic activity that could result from trail system development, and
- Develop strategies for trail system marketing and promotion, including a regional branding effort.

Additionally, before requesting funds for construction of new trails, an initial feasibility study for each potential trail project is recommended. Feasibility studies should include an assessment of alternative alignments, environmental impacts, costs and benefits, including long-term maintenance responsibilities and strategies.

FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION PROJECT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

A primary objective of this plan is to develop trail connections to communities, public lands access points and river access points within 10 miles of Salmon over the next 20 years. This will involve establishing trails adjacent or parallel to US Highway 93 and State Highway 28

Since federal transportation funding programs provide some of the most promising funding opportunities for trails in the Salmon area, it is important to understand and follow the process for federal-aid transportation projects in Idaho. This will be especially critical for implementation of any trails facilities adjacent or parallel to US93 and SH28.

Rather than requesting funding for all phases of a project at once, a phased approach is recommended. Projects typically begin with a funding request for planning, environmental and design work. This allows evaluation of alternative alignments and resulting advantages, impacts and costs. After a preferred alternative is selected and the feasibility of the project is confirmed, a larger funding request can be made for right of way acquisition (if needed) and construction.



Photo courtesy of Dave Lingle

In general, federally-funded transportation projects have these major stages:

- Planning/Environmental
- Design
- Right of Way Acquisition
- Construction

PARTNERSHIPS ARE KEY



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Highway
Administration**



The Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) has staff with significant expertise in federal aid project development. ITD should be engaged early, when funding applications are prepared for any trail improvements adjacent or parallel to US93 or SH28. Similarly, funding requests for projects on or adjacent to federal lands will require close coordination with, and support of, USFS and BLM.

A regular forum for inter-agency coordination of trails system development and funding requests is therefore recommended. The Community Association of Idaho's local mobility management network may provide a forum for this purpose.



Lemhi County, Idaho

LOCAL CAPACITY

There are a number of good funding opportunities available for trail system development. A limiting factor for the Salmon Valley at the present time is the lack of a dedicated grant coordinator. Successful progress toward trail system goals will depend on the region's ability to stay on top of funding opportunities, anticipate application deadlines, respond to federal funding solicitations, coordinate matching funds and prepare applications.

Grant management could be accomplished by the funding of a part-time grant coordinator position at an existing agency, or by establishing a small account for contracted grant coordination assistance. A shared grant-writer for City, County, Federal Land Management Agencies and non-profit groups in the area could be a cost-effective approach.

PATIENCE IS PRESCRIBED

Funding trail system improvements will require patience and diligence over many years. Some projects will require a phased approach with multiple, sequential grant applications. Grant programs are competitive and applications are not always awarded after the first request. It is important not to give up after the first try.



Lemhi County, Idaho

STAKEHOLDER ASSESSMENT

Following a review of potential funding sources, planning participants performed a stakeholder analysis to:

- Discuss possible impacts of trail system development on local community groups, businesses and organizations.
- Identify potential community partners and resources for trail system development.
- Discuss potential opponents to trail system development and the possible reasons.
- Discuss communication strategies for both champions and opponents.

A stakeholder matrix was prepared to set the stage for future outreach efforts. The trails group also identified a member of their ranks who would be willing to serve as the key point of contact for each stakeholder group. The matrix and other materials developed during the stakeholder analysis process are provided in Appendix A.



Salmon Valley Trails Group Planning Meeting, 2012

ACTION PLAN

The regional trail system can only be developed as resources allow, and maintaining focus is paramount. For this reason, this action plan considers phasing as well as short and long term actions:

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (1 TO 2 YEARS)

Immediate actions include completion of trails-related projects that are currently underway; along with other low-cost activities.

- The 2L Trails Feasibility study, funded by FLAP was completed in 2015. Efforts to obtain construction funding from this resource should be considered a priority.
- Create public and private partnerships to maintain recreational trails on public lands.
- Ongoing coordination and data collection activities are recommended to maintain critical partnerships and position the region for future grant requests and project implementation.
- Work with public lands agencies to coincide with agency planning.
- Actively pursue construction funding to complete north section of Hwy 93 Trail (from Island Park north to the Lemhi County Fairgrounds).
- Coordinate closely with Salmon-Challis Forest Plan Revision Team to communicate trails committee goals and objectives for inclusion in upcoming forest plan development.

NEAR TERM ACTIONS (1 TO 10 YEARS)

- Explore opportunities for connection of public lands trails in Stormy Peak area to Morgan Bar/Hwy 93 North proposed trailhead at Lemhi County Fairgrounds. There is opportunity to coordinate with BLM Salmon Field Office during their trails planning efforts from 2017-2019.
- Coordinate with public lands agencies and local government to develop a comprehensive all-lands Lemhi County multimodal trails atlas, which would be available in print and electronic formats.
- Continue to explore river trail opportunities along Salmon and Lemhi Rivers.
- Within the next 10 years, a trail extension from BLM land to connect Discovery Hill and the Carmen Valley, and Morgan Bar to the Fairgrounds should be pursued. This includes the procurement of easements through private property to retain access to the Salmon River and public lands.

- Securing funding for feasibility analysis of a trail parallel to the SH28 corridor from Salmon to Baker is also recommended. For this segment, potential trail improvements for access to the Barracks Lane trailhead area should also be examined.
- Explore the opportunity to connect the Highway 93 N proposed trailhead at Lemhi County Fairgrounds to the east side of the highway at the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) Carmen recreation site by going under the highway bridge along the south shoreline.
- Since federal transportation funding programs are the most promising sources of money for constructing trail connections adjacent to US93 and SH28, using ITD’s federally-approved “Concept Report” process for feasibility studies is a good idea. Concept Reports prepared for each corridor should:
 - Examine trail alignment alternatives
 - Provide an environmental scan
 - Assess right of way needs
 - Analyze benefits, costs and other impacts
 - Select a locally preferred alternative, and
 - Determine a phasing/funding plan.
- Accomplishing Concept Reports for trails parallel to the US93 and SH28 corridors would position the region for funding to complete design and construction.
- The Salmon Valley Trails system should include safe connectivity to and through the City of Salmon. It is important to work with the City and County to designate pedestrian and bicycle routes through the City that do not conflict with vehicle parking and traffic. These routes should consider City

infrastructure such as schools and parks to provide increased safety for youth.

- Update this action plan annually. Accomplishments and progress made should be acknowledged, and remaining projects and priorities reconfirmed or revised.



Pedestrian Bridge at Island Park

MID-TERM ACTIONS (10 TO 20 YEARS)

- Public comment on potential trail corridors indicates that a trail along the Salmon River is desired; however, private land ownership issues require more planning and coordination, and make this a long term option. As opportunities arise, procuring sections of these trails through easements may provide for future connectivity of this route.
- Within the next 10 to 20 years, to fully implement key trail connections adjacent or parallel to SH28 between Salmon and Baker as identified in proposed feasibility study for that highway corridor.
- Continue to gauge public opinion as trails are developed to adjust priorities and consider new alternatives.

LONG-TERM ACTIONS (BEYOND 20 YEARS)

Long-term actions are beyond the 20-year timeframe, but should be kept in mind as near and mid-term projects are implemented.

- Enhance access to the Continental Divide Trail and Lewis & Clark Backcountry Byway. Trail system extensions to Tendoy could improve multi-modal access to the Lewis and Clark Backcountry Byway. Trail extension to the north could provide multi-modal access to the Tower Creek area, and ultimately to Lost Trail Pass.
- As the regional trail system is developed and gains in popularity, transit strategies could also be deployed to connect travelers with popular public lands areas, river access points, and neighboring communities.

SPECIFIC IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES FOR 2017/2018

- Actively pursue construction funding to complete the north section of the Hwy 93 Trail (from Island Park north to the Lemhi County Fairgrounds).
- Actively pursue funding for feasibility analysis of a trail parallel to the SH28 corridor from Salmon to Baker. For this segment, potential trail improvements for access to the Barracks Lane trailhead area should also be examined.
- Coordinate closely with Salmon-Challis Forest Plan Revision Team to communicate trails committee goals and objectives for upcoming forest plan.
- Update and maintain the existing Sacajawea Historic Byway Corridor Management Plan (developed by LCEDA in 2007).
- Finalize Continental Divide Trail (CDT) Gateway Community activities.
- Complete Carmen Creek trail enhancements to improve CDT access, including the exploration and/or development of a trailhead above McFarland property.