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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 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.

Citizen and community leaders have identified the importance of developing a trails plan that inventories existing trails, explores long-term management of the trails and looks to the future to expand and improve the 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. Work was underway at that time on a new land use code, which 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 and bikers acknowledged that different segments of the county will want different trail types based upon needs, topographic and local interests. They agreed that neighborhood groups would be the best approach to developing a good trails/pathway plan. From those early discussions, the TAG was formed, and six neighborhood "sub-areas" designated. The TAG and technical committee sub-committee represented a wide cross section of trails/pathway users and agencies, including day hikers, snowmobilers, horseback packers, 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 and forward the document to the Commission.

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



Photo: Wayne Benner

Public Input

Purpose:

Simply put, the purpose of the trails master plan is to preserve and maintain the county's existing trails/pathway systems and to develop new pathways that can be adequately funded and maintained.

Message:

Northern panhandle residents and visitors love North Idaho's beautiful lakes, mountains, valleys and rocky ridges, but traditional access is increasingly limited. As Bonner County grows and changes, the doors to recreation connectivity and public accessibility could close.

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 to access this area's plentiful recreational opportunities and bountiful natural resources.

Goals:

The Bonner County trails plan is a guide for connecting our communities 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. The goals of the Bonner County Trails Plan are as follows:

- ▲ Bonner County will 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.
- ▲ Bonner County is committed to protecting public access to waterways, public lands, and public rights-of-way for recreation, health, transportation, hunting, gathering, fishing.



Connectivity

Existing trails/pathway inventory

Safe Routes to School

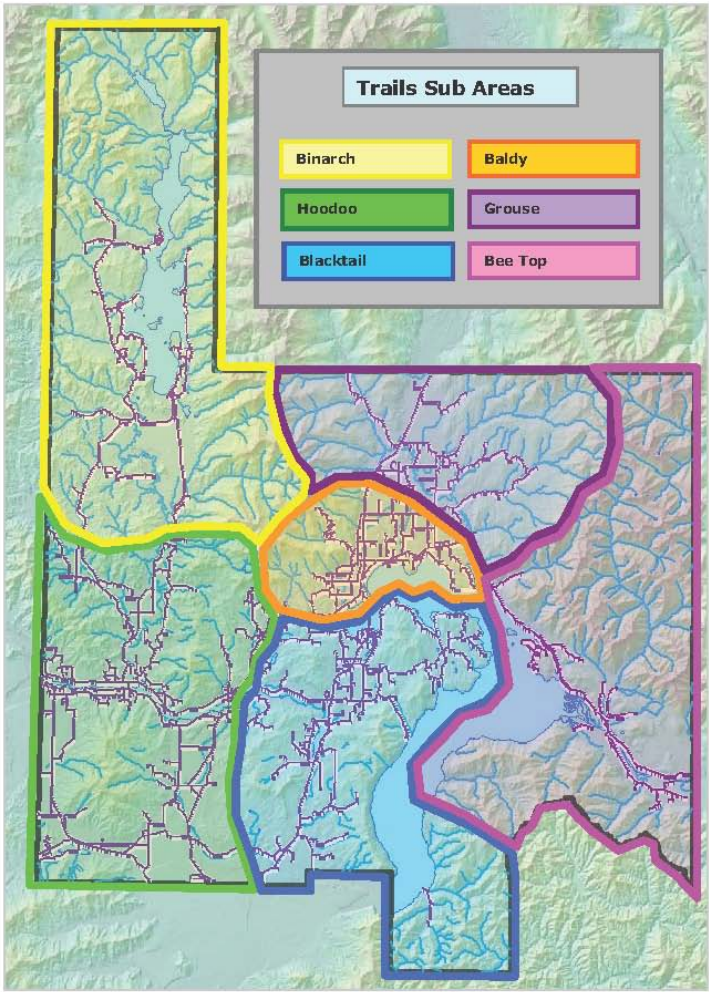
Western Bonner County

Eastern Bonner County

Neighborhoods/Sub-areas:

Background

Early in the planning process, it became evident that Bonner County's diverse landscaping demanded the trails/pathway planning be divided into sub-areas for more efficient and effective planning for each neighborhood. The county's river and lake systems and east-west and north-south major highways naturally created six distinct neighborhoods. Borrowing from the prominent mountains of the area, the following six sub-areas were created: Binarch; Hoodoo; Grouse; Blacktail; Baldy; and Beetop. Each of the sub-areas has unique needs and interests. A summary of the sub-areas follows:



Trail types:

Motorized/non-motorzed

Pedestrian, hiking/walking

Cycling

Snowmobile

Winter, Nordic (Cross-country, snowshoe)

Water-based trails

Horse, pack-animals

ATV

Skateboard, roller blade

Mixed use

Trail construction:

Trail maintenance:

Funding:

Future connections

Legalities:

Liability

Dedication

Implementation:

Appendix A

Maps

Bibliography/Credits: