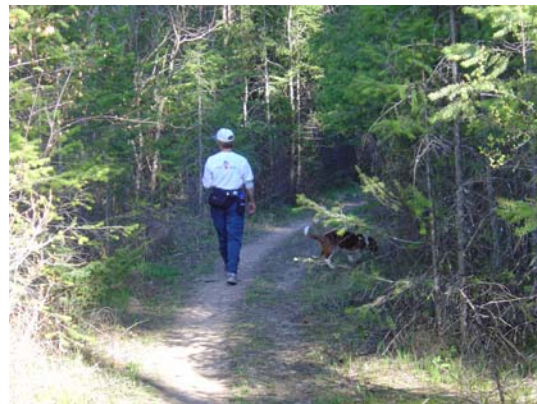




A TRAIL RUNS THROUGH IT

Master Plan

August, 2006



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MASTER PLAN

Draft – August 2006

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A TRAIL RUNS THROUGH IT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction

- Background
- Planning Process
- Public Input – Survey Highlights & Baseline data

2. Framework for Action

- Vision Statement
- Conservation Values
- Users
- Partnerships
- Opportunities
- Challenges

3. Trail System

- Overall Trail System
- Lion Mountain Segment
- Skyles Lake Segment
- Spencer Mountain Segment
- Beaver Lakes Segment
- Swift Creek South Half & Adjoining Properties
- Swift Creek North Half
- USFS Taylor Creek Rd. – Big Mountain
- Haskill Subarea
- Happy Valley Subarea
- KM Subarea

4. Design

- Applicability of Design Standards
- Difficulty Levels
- Construction Standards
- Alignment
- Conceptual Elements
- Signage

5. Implementation

- Management
- Organization & Staffing
- Funding & Costs
- Action Plan

Appendix

Detailed survey findings

Guiding Principles

Maps of other trail networks that will connect to this project

Trail resources

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

I. Background

For generations, community members and visitors have enjoyed recreating on 13,000 acres of State Trust Land in the Whitefish area. For hikers, bicyclists, cross-country skiers and other outdoor enthusiasts, this forested land offers stunning views, premier wildlife habitat and challenging terrain. With the rapid urbanization that is occurring nationwide and in Flathead County, opportunities to enjoy nature just minutes from town are becoming increasingly rare.

To ensure this privilege will be available for future generations, the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) and the Whitefish community formed an unprecedented partnership to plan for these lands. After two years of meetings, the State Land Board adopted the Whitefish Area Schools Trust Lands Neighborhood Plan. This plan established a framework for making decisions regarding the management and conservation of the State Trust Lands. One recommendation was to establish a recreational trail system that will connect the various State Trust Land parcels and create a main trail corridor encircling the greater Whitefish area.

In the fall of 2005, the City of Whitefish and Flathead Gateway Partners (a local non-profit group), signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that created a partnership to implement the recommendation for a recreational loop trail. In January 2006, an 18-member planning committee began working on this Master Plan.

Elements of the trail system include a main corridor, secondary trails, trailheads, links to other trail networks and trail amenities. This Master Plan describes each of these components and how they will interface with one another. It contains design standards, management strategies and an action plan to make the trail vision a reality. This Master Plan was developed with input from a wide range of stakeholders. Accomplishing the vision will require their on-going involvement, as well as continued reliance on partnerships with public, private sector and non-profit entities that have been leaders in developing this plan.



View of Boyle Lake



Trail in KM Subarea

Insert Trust Lands Ownership Map

II. Planning Process

In December 2006 the “A Trail Runs Through It” Steering Committee appointed an 18-member citizen committee to develop the trail Master Plan. Committee members represented various user groups and neighborhoods in the vicinity of the trail system.

The planning committee met twice a month beginning in January 2006. The planning process has emphasized public involvement throughout the process. Following are major milestones in this process.

- The Planning Committee held a public meeting in February, 2006 that was attended by approximately 130 people.
- In February/March 2006 an on-line survey received 260 responses.
- Property owners adjacent to State Trust Lands as well as every postal customer in the Whitefish zip code received a postcard inviting residents to participate.
- A media campaign has included routine press releases, newspaper articles, web site updates, and radio/television coverage. A monthly e-newsletter is being sent to an e-mail list of over 300 people.
- The Planning Committee conducted an all-day design charette in March 2006 to determine the preferred trail alignment. The Committee conducted field trips throughout May and June as part of the planning process.
- In August 2006 there will be a public meeting on the Master Plan. The Whitefish City Council is scheduled to adopt the Master Plan soon thereafter.
- The DNRC and State Land Board are scheduled to review the Master Plan and proposed management agreement in fall 2006.



February public meeting



Viewing maps at the public meeting

III. Public Input

The public survey provided information on current usage and preferences that was helpful in identifying the desired components of the trail system and in determining guiding principles for design and management of the trail. Following is a summary of the key findings from the survey.

- Spencer Mountain and Big Mountain are the most heavily used areas. Skyles Lake and Happy Valley subareas receive the least recreational use.
- The most popular activities for recreation in these areas include:
 - Hiking (88%)
 - X-Country Skiing (76%)
 - Mountain Biking (66%)
 - Walking with Dogs (57%)
 - Nature Walks (52%)
 - Running or Jogging (43%)
 - Snow Showing (42.1%)
- Policies that received the strongest support include:
 - Limit or prohibit motorized uses
 - Connect trail to other recreation areas and trails
 - Keep dogs on leashes near roads and congested areas
 - Control litter and vandalism
 - Mitigate environmental impacts
- Trail amenities that received the strongest support include:
 - Trail rules posted at trailhead
 - Trail map posted at trailhead
 - Native – natural surface
 - Garbage disposal
 - Directional signs

Sample Survey Comments

“I would like to see the trail system as a multiple use trail. Many people have different perspectives of the trail use and we need as many people as possible interested in such a project to make it a success.”

“The trails project is a fantastic opportunity for our community. Let’s make it happen.”

“Trail maintenance must be addressed on an annual basis. Many of these areas don’t receive much maintenance except from users. Erosion and creation of side trails are two problems that can be seen throughout the area.”

“The trail system should connect developed trail systems such as Spencer Mountain. Multiple vista points add to trail enjoyment. If possible, connect trail loops or spurs to offer varied trails and difficulty levels.”

CHAPTER 2: Framework for Action

I. Vision Statement



A Trail Runs Through It will be a recreational trail network that includes a continuous corridor encircling the greater Whitefish area. This network will enhance access to public lands and other trail systems while respecting traditional uses and promoting public interest in forest health. Primary goals of this trail network will be to provide opportunities for relaxation and outdoor recreation close to town, promote open space, increase revenues for the School Trust Lands, and support the local economy.

- This is a community-driven project implementing a strategy of the Whitefish Area School Trust Lands Neighborhood Plan to conserve access to nearby recreation areas and to create partnerships to achieve this vision.
- This trail will contribute to the conservation values of wildlife habitat, water quality, and forest health.
- This trail will include a safe, integrated, well managed system of trailheads that will offer a variety of trail segments accommodating a wide array of abilities and recreationists.
- This trail will be designed to avoid user conflicts and will use existing management practices to guide policy decisions.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Guiding principles provide a framework for developing the master plan and establishing policies for trail management. The detailed guiding principles are in the appendix. Following are the topics they address.

Trail Siting/Location/ Access

Trail Conflicts

Maximizing Visitor Experience

Trail Design

Ecological Considerations

Management & Maintenance

II. Conservation Values

The 13,000-plus acres of State Trust Lands near Whitefish have tremendous natural resource value. These lands provide open space, wildlife habitat, water resources, and scenic and recreational opportunities to people in adjacent neighborhoods, residents of the county, and visitors. Conserving these resources was a primary objective of the Whitefish Area School Trust Lands Neighborhood Plan and is a primary objective of the trail system. Trail design, management policies, and user education materials will emphasize these conservation values. As noted in the Neighborhood Plan:

“Firebreaks, trail maintenance, forestry practices, and wildlife-habitat management are not just DNRC issues, but issues that could be constructively addressed by partnerships between the community, businesses, users, neighborhoods, and DNRC.”

Trail design, construction and management practices will protect and enhance the following natural resource assets:

1. Open Space

Open space provides public access to natural and recreation areas. Open space is a key aspect of the scenic quality that makes an area desirable. Open space and forested areas contribute to improved air quality and improved water quality by reducing urban run-off. It provides wildlife habitat and migration corridors. The trail system offers an opportunity for the community to enjoy this open space and learn about the natural resources on these lands.

2. Wildlife

Much of the State Trust Land is habitat for mule deer, whitetail deer, moose, and elk. There is also mountain lion, black bear, and grizzly bear habitat on part of the lands where the trail system will be located. Swift Creek and Lazy Creek harbor westslope cutthroat trout and Swift Creek is occupied by bull trout. It will be important to disturb as little habitat as possible and to educate trail users to respect wildlife. Controlling dogs and possible seasonal closures of some trails may be necessary to avoid conflicts with wildlife.



Forest land



Black bear

3. Water Resources

The State Trust Lands around Whitefish have numerous lakes that provide significant fishery and recreation resources. There are six lakes in the Beaver Lakes subarea and Spencer Lake and Skyles Lake are visible from US 93. Streams such as Lazy Creek and Swift Creek are tributaries to Whitefish Lake. Water quality for these creeks, lakes, and associated wetland areas is an important consideration. Unless designed properly, a trail system might have negative impacts on these water resources. Erosion control is one of the most important aspects of protecting water quality.



Lazy Creek

4. Forestry

DNRC manages most of the State Trust Lands for forestry. This traditional use will continue and the trail manager will coordinate with foresters on trail design and operation. This may require seasonal closures of some trails and locating logging operations so as not to interfere with heavily used trail areas. Agencies may need to develop joint policies on trail usage. The trail system will also be coordinated with fire mitigation strategies.

5. Vegetation

The State Lands around Whitefish are characterized by mature forest with mixed conifer stands. Much of the land has been managed for timber harvesting and, depending on the amount of time that has elapsed since the last harvest, the appearance may be that of a mature forest or recently logged area. Wetland areas are characterized by aquatic plants. There are some small meadows where the trail system may traverse.

Common noxious weeds are one of the biggest concerns in maintaining the diversity of native plant species. Non-native plants out-compete most native plants, including species that wildlife rely on for food. Noxious weeds can have deep taproots that rob native vegetation of moisture and nutrients. Weed control will rely on educating users to contain the spread of weeds and assist with their removal.



Wildflowers in KM subarea.

III. Users

It is necessary to define the characteristics of users and the types of recreation activities in order to develop appropriate design standards and management practices for the trail. This trail system is primarily in wooded areas with hilly terrain. People enjoy these areas because of their natural environment and want to maintain those features. These areas currently attract outdoor enthusiasts with a range of physical abilities from families and seniors seeking less strenuous hikes to competitive athletes seeking challenging terrain.

“I would like to see some of the trails be designated as family friendly – where I could go with my family and have it be usable for biking or walking with my children.”

(Survey Comment)

Public input indicated strong support for allowing a variety of non-motorized activities on the trail. Currently, the DNRC policies for recreation on State Trust Lands provide for multiple recreational uses but prohibit motorized vehicles, except for snowmobiles. Trail design will accommodate multiple uses and policies will promote management practices to minimize conflicts among activities. Community education regarding trail etiquette will be a critical strategy to maximize user experience.

“As long as everyone is aware that the trail is multi-use, and respectful of other users, there should be very little conflict.”

(Survey Comment)

Specific types of activities on the trail include:

1) Hikers/Walkers

According to the community survey, hiking and walking were the most popular activities on the State Trust Lands. Almost nine of ten people responded that they had hiked on these lands in the past year. Spencer Mountain was the most popular area for hikers followed by the Haskill and Beaver Lakes subareas. Hikers and walkers may also include activities such as walking with dogs, nature walks, bird watching, and wildlife viewing.

“I go to places to get exercise, fresh air, and enjoy nature and a quiet place. Please don’t pave it. Keep it natural”

(Survey Comment)

2) Mountain Bikers

Of the non-winter sports, mountain biking was the second most popular activity with 68% of respondents engaging in this sport in the past year. Mountain bikers tended to be a slightly younger demographic than the general respondent to the survey. Spencer Mountain and Haskill subareas were the two most popular areas for the mountain bikers.

3) Runners

Runners accounted for 43% of the respondents to the survey. This group also represented a younger demographic than the general trail users. The Haskill area was the most popular spot for runners, followed closely by the Spencer Mountain subarea.

4) Equestrians

Only 17% of respondents to the survey indicated that they currently use the trail for horseback riding. This group represented an older demographic than the average trail user. The Spencer Mountain and Beaver Lakes subareas were most popular with this group.

5) Cross Country Skiers

Cross country skiing was the second most popular activity on the trails with 75% of respondents indicating that they had participated in this sport on State Trust Lands within the last year. Haskill Basin, Spencer Mountain and Beaver Lakes subareas were the most popular places for this activity. Beaver Lakes subarea offered groomed trails for cross country skiers.



*Cross country skiing in
Beaver Lakes subarea*

6) Snowmobilers

Thirteen percent of respondents indicated they had been snowmobiling on State Trust Lands within the last year. This demographic was more likely to be male and more likely to have children under 18 living at home. Typically this group prefers groomed trails and consequently, the Swift Creek area is the most popular. The Beaver Lakes and Spencer Mountain areas also received use from this group.

7) Visitors & Commercial Outfitters

In addition to the local population and Montana residents, out-of-state visitors will use trail. Trail information for visitors will be at convenient locations. A commercial horseback operation is currently licensed in the Spencer Mountain subarea. Commercial outfitters for horseback riding and bicycle tours can significantly add to traffic on the trail and potential degradation of heavily used areas. The licensing procedures for commercial operations will address these management concerns.



*The trail may attract bicycle
touring groups*

IV. Partnerships

1. Lead Agencies

In October 2005 the City of Whitefish and Flathead Gateway Partners (FGP) signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to establish a recreational loop trail as generally described in the Whitefish Area School Trust Lands Neighborhood Plan. The parties agreed to work together to oversee development of the Master Plan and to process proposals through the DNRC and the State Land Board.

In order to make joint decisions during the project and provide oversight to the planning process, the City of Whitefish and FGP each agreed to contribute two members to a four-member Steering Committee and one alternate member each. The Committee meets monthly and coordinates with public agencies that will be partners in implementing the Master Plan. The city will be the trail manager.

2. Project Partners

Partnerships will be the key to realizing the trail vision. The Master Plan anticipates that multiple agencies will be involved in management, design, construction, and funding for the trail. Partnerships are necessary to create linkages with other trail networks in the area, to coordinate with other projects, and to create cost efficiencies. Following are partners that will be involved in implementing the Master Plan.

- Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC)
- United States Forest Service Tally Lake Ranger District - Flathead National Forest
- Whitefish Fish Trails
- Flathead County – Planning Department, Parks, Road
- Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks
- Montana Department of Transportation
- Big Mountain Resort
- United States Fish and Wildlife Service
- Private Land Owners
- Commercial Outfitters



3. Coordination with Area Planning Efforts

- Whitefish Growth Policy Plan

In June 2005 the Whitefish City Council adopted an amendment to the existing 2020 Master Plan to include the Whitefish Area School Trust Lands Neighborhood Plan. The city is currently developing a Growth Policy to be completed in early 2007. The neighborhood plan and trail Master Plan will be incorporated into this update.

- Whitefish Pedestrian and Bicycle Trails Master Plan

The City of Whitefish has a Pedestrian and Bicycle Trails Master Plan that envisions construction of 14.85 miles of asphalt and concrete paths within the general vicinity of the Whitefish community. "A Trail Runs Through It" trail system will interconnect with the Whitefish pedestrian and bicycle trail system.

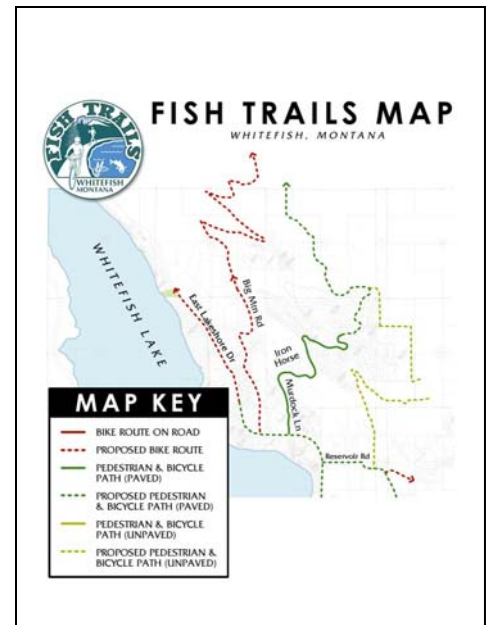
- Flathead County Growth Policy Plan

In June 2005 the Flathead County Commissioners adopted the Whitefish Area Schools Trust Lands Neighborhood Plan as a revision to the Flathead County Master Plan. The county is currently developing a Growth Policy that is scheduled to be completed in the fall of 2006. Once the growth policy is adopted, the Neighborhood Plan will be reviewed relative to the new growth policy. As part of the growth policy, the county is engaging in county-wide trail planning. "A Trail Runs Through It" project is being coordinated with this planning.

- Montana Department of Transportation

The proposed trail alignment indicates that the trail will connect with the proposed pedestrian and bicycle trail being planned as part of the improvements to US 93 from Baker Avenue to west of Spencer Lake. A member of the Steering Committee is on the Citizen Working Group and will assist in coordinating the US 93 improvements with the "A Trail Runs Through It" project.

The State of Montana is also completing a road reconstruction project on Big Mountain Road. The new road will be wider, have bigger shoulders and fewer curves. "A Trail Runs



Through It" system is anticipated to interconnect with the Big Mountain Resort trail system through this road.

- Existing Easements & Licenses

The DNRC manages a variety of leases, commercial licenses, and easements in the subareas that are included in the Whitefish School Trust Lands Neighborhood Plan. The trail system will be managed so as not to interfere with the operation of these existing uses and measures will be taken to minimize any potential conflicts. Examples of the existing uses include the following:

- Access and right-of-way easements
 - Utility easements
 - Grazing leases
 - Timber leases
 - Cabin leases
 - Recreation licenses (horseback riding, snowmobiling, cross country skiing and dog sledding)
 - Trapping License
 - Firearm range and buffer zone
-
- USFS Flathead Forest

The main trail corridor that surrounds the greater Whitefish area includes a segment of Flathead National Forest. A portion of the proposed main trail corridor will link the valley floor, State Trust Lands and the Flathead National Forest using the Taylor Creek Road, FS #9790. The Taylor Creek Road is a year-round open road that provides an access route to the Big Mountain Resort permit boundary. This portion of the trail will be subject to the United States Forest Service NEPA review process.

V. Opportunities

- The planning process and Master Plan will be a model for other communities in the state.
- Developing the trail system will offer many opportunities to partner with other government agencies, non-profit, and private entities to form partnership for this project as well as future related projects.
- The trail system will create an outstanding recreational amenity for the community that will have economic spin-off effects through increased property values and increased tourism.
- The trail will offer an opportunity for community education on conservation values.
- The trail system will promote the recommendations of the Whitefish Area School Trust Lands Neighborhood Plan.
- Through the trail management agreement, there will be increased revenue for the state from better administration of recreational permits.
- Existing trails will be better managed to mitigate environmental impacts.
- The trail system will connect with other trail networks in the county to be part of a comprehensive county-wide trail system.
- The trail system will promote fitness and a healthy lifestyle.
- The trail will have a variety of segments that can appeal to users with varying physical abilities.
- The trail will offer an opportunity to provide long term public access to the State Trust Lands.
- The trail system will offer opportunities to leverage resources and funds for other conservation efforts.
- Trail management will involve the various user groups as volunteers inspiring a sense of ownership of the trail.

VI. Challenges

- Increased activity in the area from trail users might have negative impacts on the natural resources in the area.
- To reduce potential conflicts between different activities on the trail, there will need to be user education, coordinated enforcement with participating agencies, and a well developed set of policies and rules.
- Garbage disposal is a major concern for trail users.
- Parts of the trail system may cross private land and will require easements negotiations.
- Private land owners adjoining the trail have concerns regarding vandalism, litter, theft, erosion, and trespassing.
- Potential conflicts between user groups are more likely to occur at congested areas such as trailheads and popular trails close to town. Parking areas should be designed to minimize such conflicts.
- There should be better enforcement to curtail unauthorized motorized use and partying on the State Trust Lands.
- Recent logging activity in the Happy Valley area has diminished the aesthetic value of this area. This should be avoided in other areas where the trail is located.
- There will need to be coordination with the Montana Department of Transportation and Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) railway on pedestrian crossings.
- There are a number of recreation and transportation projects competing for the same funding sources. These efforts will need to be coordinated.
- Design standards and informational materials should incorporate safety concerns.
- Noxious weeds need to be controlled.

I. Overall Trail System

The proposed recreational trail system will result in a trail network that includes a contiguous corridor connecting State Trust Lands per the Whitefish Area Trust Lands Neighborhood Plan (WATLNP), a system of secondary trails on these lands, and connections to nearby trail systems and recreation areas. Adjoining trail systems include the City of Whitefish – Fish Trails network, Flathead County Bicycle and Pedestrian Trail System, USFS Flathead National Forest and Big Mountain Resort. Additionally, the trail will cross a limited amount of private land to connect the various segments of the trail.

The trails are within or pass through the Spencer Mountain, Skyles Lake, Beaver Lakes, Swift Creek, Haskill, Happy Valley, and KM subareas. The map designates a main corridor and parking areas while the narrative for each segment generally describes issues, features and the system of secondary or adjoining trails that will connect to this corridor.

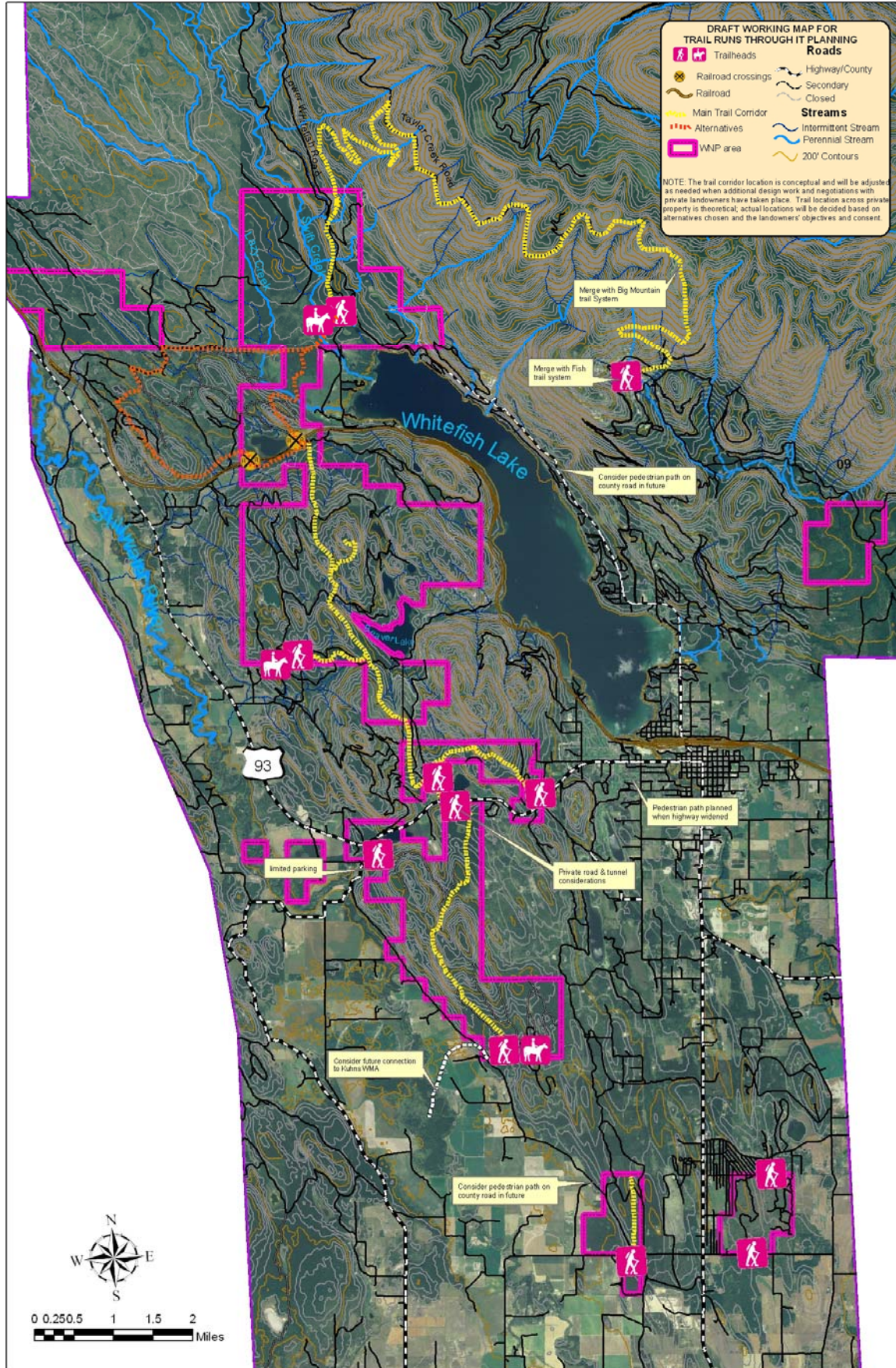
The addition of secondary trails to this system will be based on recreation and conservation criteria. The secondary trail system will consist of some existing trails, trails that have been reconstructed for better functionality, and some new trails. Not all existing trails will be included in the system. There are existing trails that will be vacated due to poor design. A technical appendix includes an inventory of existing trails to be evaluated for this purpose.

The guiding principles (see Appendix) call for primarily single-track, natural surface trails. Additionally, the map indicates proposed pedestrian and bicycle crossings at US 93 and at the BNSF railway right-of-way between the Beaver Lakes and Swift Creek subareas. The design, exact location, and easements for these crossings still need to be negotiated with the jurisdictional agency. The Master Plan also indicates the location and size of parking areas.

The three subareas of Happy Valley, KM, and Haskill do not directly connect to the rest of the trail system. The plan identifies a trail system within each of these areas with recommendations that there be continued effort to explore the means to connect these areas to the other State Trust Lands.



Looking at a map of the State Trust Lands



II. Lion Mountain Segment

A. Subarea Description

Lion Mountain is part of the Skyles Lake subarea. There is an informal trail network from Lion Mountain Road, which follows the ridgeline through the DNRC lands to private property. Using existing trails, a short 20 minute hike will lead to an overlook with views of Skyles Lake. This segment has some relatively steep grade but is used regularly by hikers, runners, and persons with dogs. It does not appear to have regular equestrian use. The trail network will benefit from improved drainage, erosion control, and switchback design in steep sections.



*View of Skyles Lake from
Lion Mountain*

B. Trail Usage

The trailhead in Lion Mountain is the closest access point to the City of Whitefish. Due to its proximity to town, this trail receives heavy use. It is popular with hikers, runners and persons with dogs. Illegal dumping, off-road motorized uses, and underage parties occurs in this area.

A new trail along the southern edge of the subarea will have more gradual elevation gains and still offer views. The difficulty level will generally be classified as moderate with some segments that have steep pitches classified as difficult. Overall trail width may be wider than more remote areas due to the heavy use of this area.

C. Access Points

There is an existing trail off of Lion Mountain Road and a nearby gravel parking area that can accommodate about five cars. The plan recommends expanding this parking to accommodate ten to 15 cars.

D. Main Corridor

From the Lion Mountain trailhead, the main corridor will generally go west along the south part of the subarea to a bench where there are views of the Skyles Lake and Spencer Mountain subareas. From this point, a newly constructed trail will switchback a short way to the north portion of the subarea where it will continue west and descend down Lion Mountain to connect with the trail system in Skyles Lake.



*Rock outcropping in
Lion Mountain*

E. Secondary Trail System

There is an existing secondary trail system in this subarea. These trails will be evaluated to determine which trails are suitable to be included in the trail system.

F. Linkages to Other Trail Networks

Montana Department of Transportation is developing plans for improvements to US 93. The initial plans indicate a paved bike path along the north side of the highway from Whitefish to Spencer Lake. This bike path will be located less than a quarter mile from the Lion Mountain parking area. Bicyclists could depart from the Lion Mountain trailhead and exit at Skyles Lake Lane and head back into town along US 93 to form a loop ride.

G. Issues

- Due to heavy use, litter and vandalism can be a concern
- There is a history of illegal dumping in this area
- Private residences are near parts of the trail, so user education and enforcement of trail rules are important



Existing trail in Lion Mountain



Illegal dumping of yard waste

III. Skyles Lake Segment

A. Subarea Description

The Skyles parcel consists of approximately 600 acres in a U-shape around Skyles Lake. Access to the west side of Skyles subarea is from US 93. The lake is visible from the highway. Skyles Lake is surrounded by a large number of private parcels, both developed and undeveloped. Along US 93, the residential development has smaller lots and higher density. Going north along Skyles Lake Lane, there are five, ten, and 40 acre residential lots. Within the Skyles Lake area, 7.38 acres are leased for residential purposes to three lessees.

B. Trail Usage

The west access point will attract multiple groups such as bicyclists, equestrians, runners, hikers, and walkers. Bicyclists will likely share Skyles Lake Lane with auto traffic that is driving to the existing parking area. Hikers, walkers, and equestrians will be more likely to drive to the parking area and head north from this point. Due to its close proximity to the City of Whitefish, it is anticipated that this will be a high use area. Trails will vary from easy to moderate.

C. Access Points

There is an existing parking area with space for about 20 vehicles and possibly a few horse trailers. This parking area will require little improvement from its existing configuration.

D. Main Corridor

The main corridor will begin at the south end of this sub-unit at US 93. It is proposed that a pedestrian underpass be constructed to connect the Skyles Lake subarea to the Spencer Mountain subarea near Skyles Lake Lane. This gravel road is a private road but public access is allowed for the first one-half mile to an existing parking area located on State Trust Land. There is currently a gated road that provides access to an adjacent landowner and DNRC. In a reciprocal access agreement, there is no public motor-vehicle access north of the gate other than use by private landowners and state land-management personnel, but bicycle and pedestrian access is allowed. The trail is proposed to be re-routed and fully reconstructed off of the road through this area. This section of



*Skyles Lake subarea
parking area*

trail will head north crossing DNRC and private lands until it reaches the Beaver Lakes Road.

E. Secondary Trail System

There are limited secondary trails in this part of the subarea.

F. Linkages to Other Trail Networks

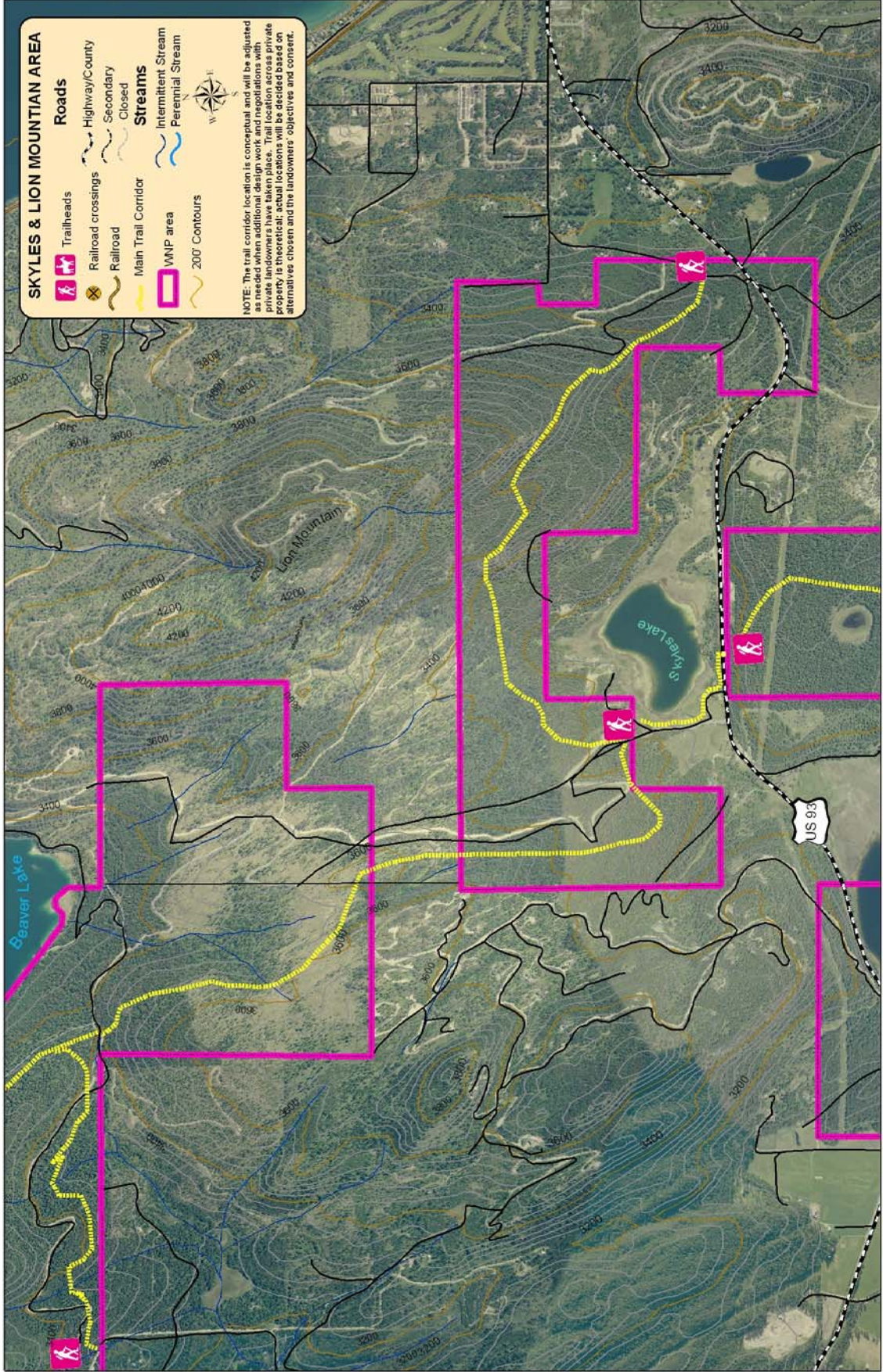
Montana Department of Transportation is developing plans for improvements to US 93. The initial plans indicate a paved bike path along the north side of the highway. This bike path will provide access to Skyles Lake Lane and the proposed pedestrian underpass to access the trail system in the Spencer Mountain subarea.

G. Issues

- Confirm public access on Skyles Lake Lane and work with the county to designate it as a bicycle route
- Work with Montana Department of Transportation to construct pedestrian underpass
- Work with private land owners in area on specifics for trail design and alignment



Gate on Skyles Lake Lane



Map showing the Skyles & Lion Mountain Area, including the trail corridor, roads, streams, and WNP area. The map includes a legend and a note regarding the conceptual nature of the trail corridor location.

IV. Spencer Mountain Segment

A. Subarea Description

The proposed trail in the Spencer Mountain subarea passes through a parcel that encompasses approximately 2,740 acres and is located south of US 93. This subarea is surrounded by a large-lot Whitefish Hills subdivision to the east, the US 93 corridor on the north, and a mixture of large and small lot parcels intermingled with open agricultural lands on the west and south. Spencer Mountain is steep with many slope gradients in excess of 25 percent. Besides the lake, the area is fairly dry with good soil drainage. The southern portion of Spencer Mountain is less steep, has rolling terrain, and provides expansive views to surrounding areas. Spencer Mountain is frequented by a variety of wildlife. The western portion of this land lies within the whitetail deer winter range.



Trail in Spencer Mountain

B. Trail Usage

Spencer Mountain is popular for a variety of recreational uses, including mountain biking, running, hiking, hunting and fishing, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and unauthorized motorcycle and ATV use. Commercial equestrian outfitters have a permit to operate in the area. The trails in this area will have a difficulty level of moderate to difficult for pitch and tread but will require wider trails near the trailhead to accommodate multiple uses.

C. Access Points

- **Twin Bridges** - There is an informal trailhead providing public access to Spencer Lake at US 93 and Twin Bridges Road. The existing parking area can accommodate five to six cars. A curve in the road creates site distance visibility issues and this parking area needs to be redesigned. The map indicates continuing the use of a small parking area with the primary purpose of providing access to the lake.
- **South** - A new parking area is proposed for the south end of the Spencer Mountain subarea. There is an existing DNRC dirt road off of KM Road that currently serves the rifle range. The parking area will be located to the east of the rifle range. This area is flat with new growth in an area that was previously clear cut. The parking area will be large enough for 11 to 30 cars plus additional room for five



Twin Bridges parking

to ten horse trailers. Parking for horse trailers will be designated to avoid conflicts with other user groups.

- **North** - A new parking area is proposed for the north side of Spencer Mountain at approximately mile marker 131 on US 93. There is a flat, wooded area at this location but the steep grade behind flat spot limits the size of the parking area. Consequently, this parking area will be located at the top of the hill about 100 to 200 yards from the highway. It will be a small to medium size area to accommodate ten to 20 cars. Horse trailers will not be permitted due to size limitations and traffic on US 93. The map shows a bike path connecting this parking area to the proposed pedestrian underpass on US 93.



Possible location for parking area off of US 93

D. Main Corridor

The trail will generally travel north and south connecting the two main access areas. The trail will be a combination of existing and new trails. The trail climbs in elevation from each parking area to reach a high point in the middle of the unit.

E. Secondary Trail System

An extensive network of trails exists, some utilizing old roadbeds but more being of the narrow single-track variety. Almost all trails have been pioneered by various user groups and there are a number of unauthorized stunt features in the area. These trails will be evaluated to determine which are suitable for the trail system. There could be a designated bike jump/stunt feature area to replace these trails.



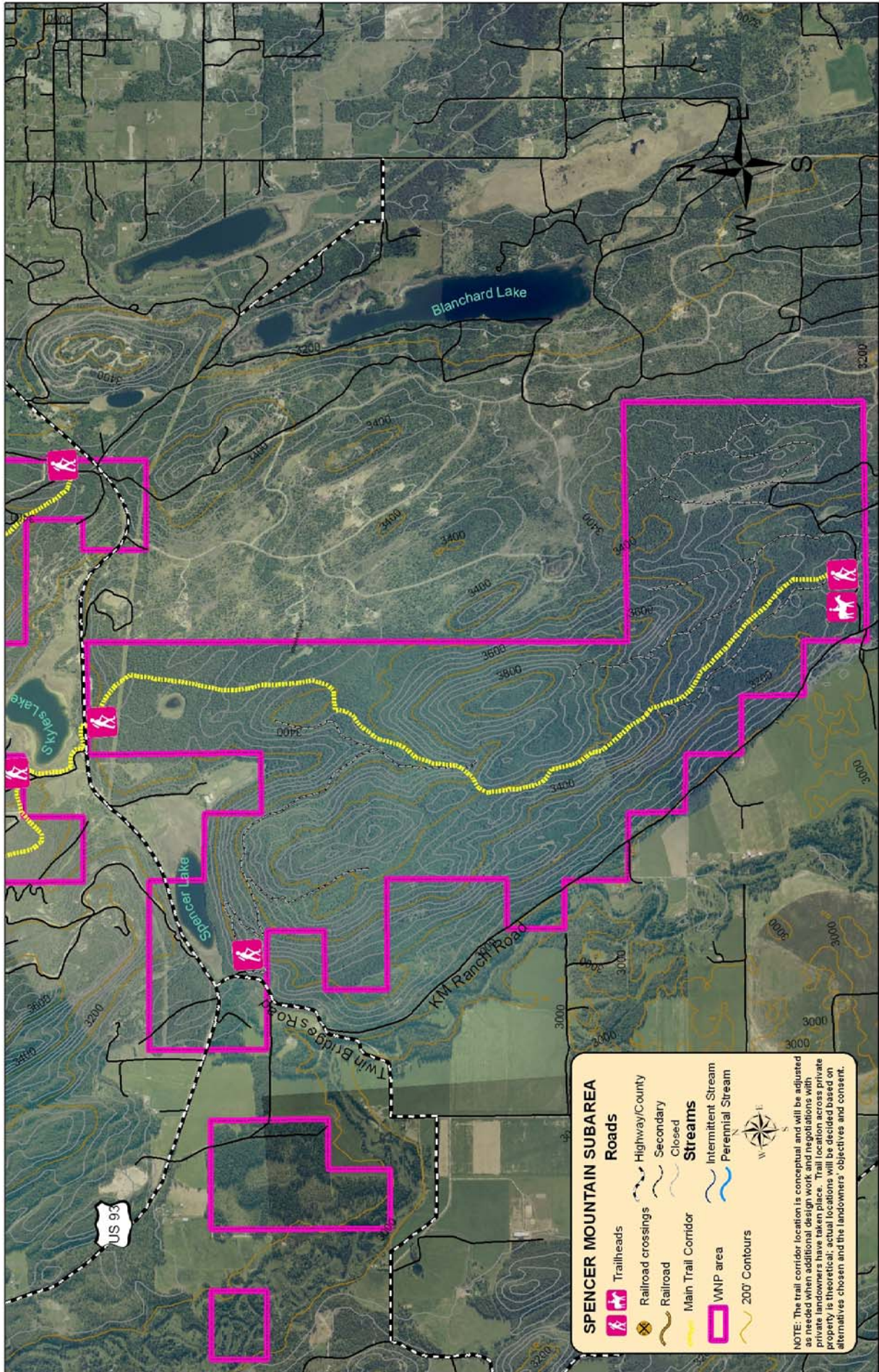
Unauthorized bike trail and stunt feature in Spencer Mountain

F. Linkages to Other Trail Networks

A proposed pedestrian underpass will connect the Spencer Mountain subarea to the proposed bike path on US 93.

G. Issues

- Motorized use requires enforcement of rules
- Unauthorized trails will be evaluated
- Illegal bicycle stunt features will be evaluated and possibly removed
- Twin Bridges parking area will be redesigned
- Determine if the pedestrian underpass should be designed for horses



SPENCER MOUNTAIN SUBAREA

- Trailheads
- Railroad crossings
- Railroad
- Main Trail Corridor
- WMP area
- Highway/County
- Secondary
- Closed
- Streams
- Intermittent Stream
- Perennial Stream
- 200 Contours

NOTE: The trail corridor location is conceptual and will be adjusted as needed when additional design work and negotiations with private landowners have taken place. Trail location across private property is theoretical; actual locations will be decided based on alternatives chosen and the landowners' objectives and consent.

V. Beaver Lakes Segment

A. Subarea Description

The Beaver Lakes subarea consists of approximately 4,210 acres and stretches from Boyle Lake, near the north end of Whitefish Lake, south to the Skyles parcel, just north of US 93. With great scenic beauty, the varied terrain of the Beaver Lakes parcel includes cliffs, ridges, benches, potholes, and six lakes in a relatively remote and pristine mountain environment.

The primary access to the Beaver Lakes subarea is via a county road from US 93 to the southwest corner below Beaver Lakes. The Beaver Lakes and Skyles parcels are surrounded by a large number of private parcels, both developed and undeveloped. There are 20 residential leaseholders in the Beaver Lakes subarea.

Currently, DNRC manages the area for timber, as well as a number of recreation licenses. The lakes have good floating, easy shoreline access, and ice fishing in winter. There are some unauthorized camp sites and trails in the subarea, although not as extensive as in the subareas closer to town.

Due to its large size and high and remote qualities, the area provides habitat for a variety of species, including critical winter range for elk, mule deer, and whitetail deer. Grizzly bears presently use and are expected to continue to use these areas. Loons consistently use Beaver, Little Beaver, and Murray lakes.

B. Trail Usage

Recreational uses in the subarea include mountain biking, running, hiking, hunting and fishing, wildlife viewing, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, backcountry skiing, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, and water activities. Beaver Lakes trails experience relatively heavy use from multiple activities. The difficulty level in terms of tread and pitch will be moderate but the width will need to be wider to accommodate multiple uses. Some short segments or spur trails may be rated as difficult.



The Beaver Lakes subarea is popular for fishing and water recreation



Existing trail in Beaver Lakes subarea

C. Access Points

There is an existing parking area approximately 1.5 miles from US 93. The gravel road that leads to the parking area is a county road. The parking area is a semi-circle configuration that can accommodate approximately 15 cars. There is a trail kiosk at this area with a map of the Beaver Lakes complex. The parking area will be expanded to accommodate up to 30 cars and a designated area for up to five horse trailers.



Beaver Lakes parking area

D. Main Corridor

From the trailhead at the parking area, a new trail will be constructed heading east to connect with the main trail coming from the Skyles Lake subarea. At this juncture, the trail will head north through a heavily wooded area generally following an existing trail. This existing trail system is not well-defined and may require some new construction and widening to accommodate new trail usage. As the trail continues north, it gains elevation and there are opportunities for spur trails that can offer excellent views of the Whitefish Range and Whitefish Lake. After reaching this scenic overlook, the trail descends and exits the Beaver Lakes subarea at the BNSF railway tracks. Options for crossing the railroad are discussed in the section on the Swift Creek subarea.



View of Whitefish Range from Beaver Lakes subarea

E. Secondary Trail System

There are some unauthorized trails in this subarea, although not as extensive as in areas that are closer to town. There is also significant day-use around the lakes. The Whitefish School Trust Lands Neighborhood Plan recommends that a recreation plan be completed for the Beaver Lakes complex. A secondary trail system and other recreation amenities can be explored as part of this planning process and included into management of the trail system.

F. Linkages to Other Trail Networks

This trail system will link to the trail networks in the Skyles Lake and Swift Creek subareas.

G. Issues

- Development of a recreation plan for the entire Beaver Lakes complex will be coordinated with the trail system.



Licenses for commercial recreation uses are issued for a variety of activities

VI. Swift Creek South Half & Adjoining Properties

A. Subarea Description

The Swift Creek subarea is 2,930 acres and is located at the north end of Whitefish Lake and north of the Beaver Lakes subarea. For purposes of this plan, the area has been divided into south and north sections. The south half is bordered by the BNSF railroad tracks to the south and includes section 7 and section 6 in T31N, R22W.

Dominant features of this area include Lazy Creek and Boyle Lake. Both of these water features have associated wetlands with marshy areas and aquatic plants. The topography of the area ranges from relatively flat, rolling bottom lands associated with large riparian areas, to ridges overlooking these features. Higher elevations in the south half are well-drained with dense forest. The diverse habitat in the area is occupied and utilized by many species of wildlife, including big game, a wide range of song birds, and large and small forest carnivores.

Adjoining private land to the west of this area is a combination of larger land owners with some smaller parcels. There may be opportunity to negotiate with these owners to allow a portion of the trails to pass through their properties. These lands include forested areas as well as a potential crossing for Lazy Creek.

B. Trail Usage

This portion of the State Trust Lands is remotely located and receives the lowest volume of recreational use. Hikers, bicyclists, and equestrians will likely use this area. This trail will be rated at a difficulty level of easy to moderate pitch with generally a narrower width. Trail amenities will be more primitive in nature.

C. Access Points

This trail will connect with the trail system in the north half of the Swift Creek unit and the Beaver Lakes subarea. Three potential crossings of the BNSF railroad were considered to connect the trails in Beaver Lakes and Swift Creek subareas. The three alternatives are described below. After field evaluation, **Options B and C were determined to be the preferred alternatives.** Further analysis on the feasibility of



Lazy Creek



Marsh area near Lazy Creek

each crossing and discussions with the BNSF railroad is necessary prior to making a final decision on the crossing.

- Option A - This option will include a multiple use non-motorized tunnel at Del Rey Road in the vicinity of the existing at-grade crossing that is currently used for BNSF railway operations. (The crossing is not currently open to the public and an at-grade crossing for the trail will not be permitted by BNSF Railway.) This was not a preferred alternative because of difficulties with locating a path in the Del Rey Road right-of-way.
- Option B - In this alignment, the trail will cross the railroad just east of Boyle Lake. Due to high groundwater in this area, an underpass-tunnel is not feasible and an overpass will be necessary to allow trail users to cross the railroad. The land on both sides of the railroad tracks at this location is 30 – 40 feet higher than the tracks. There is an abandoned railroad tunnel at this location. It may be possible to take advantage of this grade change by building a pedestrian bridge spanning the embankments on both sides of the railroad without having to construct lengthy approach ramps. The trail will exit the north side of the tracks on a ridge above Boyle Lake avoiding the wetland area and offering views of the lake.
- Option C - In the Beaver Lakes subareas the trail will follow the railroad tracks going west. There will be a minimum 100 feet separation from the tracks. The trail will cross the railroad tracks on State Trust Land at the northwest corner of the Beaver Lakes subarea. There is an old railroad bed that is about 20 feet below grade of the railroad. This could be extended as a pedestrian tunnel under the railroad tracks.

D. Main Corridor

The main corridor will connect the trail where it crosses the railroad parking area in the north half of the Swift Creek unit. The trail will need to cross both Lazy Creek and Swift Creek. There may be a possibility to use an existing bridge on private property to cross Lazy Creek. This will require negotiations with the private land owner. Either of the railroad crossings will allow several options for routing the trail. Potential trail routes need to be further evaluated in the field and by technical specialists to determine the optimum route. Additionally, the



Option B – Potential crossing for pedestrian overpass



Option C – Old rail bed below railroad grade that could lead to pedestrian tunnel

final alignment will depend on negotiations with private land owners. Some possible options and considerations for trail routes include:

- **Option 1** – From crossing B, follow a ridge along the east side of Boyle Lake and connect with an old railroad bed that follows Lazy Creek along the west side. Follow this rail bed for a period then switchback up an old logging road on a ridge above the creek. Follow the ridge northerly to a private road and head east to existing bridge that has a crossing over Lazy Creek. This will require negotiating with private land owner.
- **Option 2** – From crossing B drop down the ridge and cross Lazy Creek on State lands. Head east to Swift Creek. This will require going through wetlands and building a boardwalk.
- **Option 3** – From crossing C, continue west paralleling the railroad tracks through private property to an access area off of Lupfer Road. The trail will circle back to the existing bridge crossing at Lazy Creek. Some of this land is being considered for a land exchange with DNRC. If another alignment is selected, an independent trail system for this land may be possible.

If the existing crossing at Lazy Creek is not feasible, then any new crossing will need to consider a route and trail design that will have minimum impact on the wetland areas around Lazy Creek. There are multiple alignments that are not described. Further field work will be needed to evaluate all of these options. Once across Lazy Creek, the trail will generally head east to a new crossing at Swift Creek. The location of this crossing at Swift Creek is still to be determined.

E. Secondary Trail System

The area does not receive heavy use and the number of secondary trails is limited. Such trails will be kept to a minimum due to the sensitive wetlands and wildlife habitat in the area.

F. Linkages to Other Trail Networks

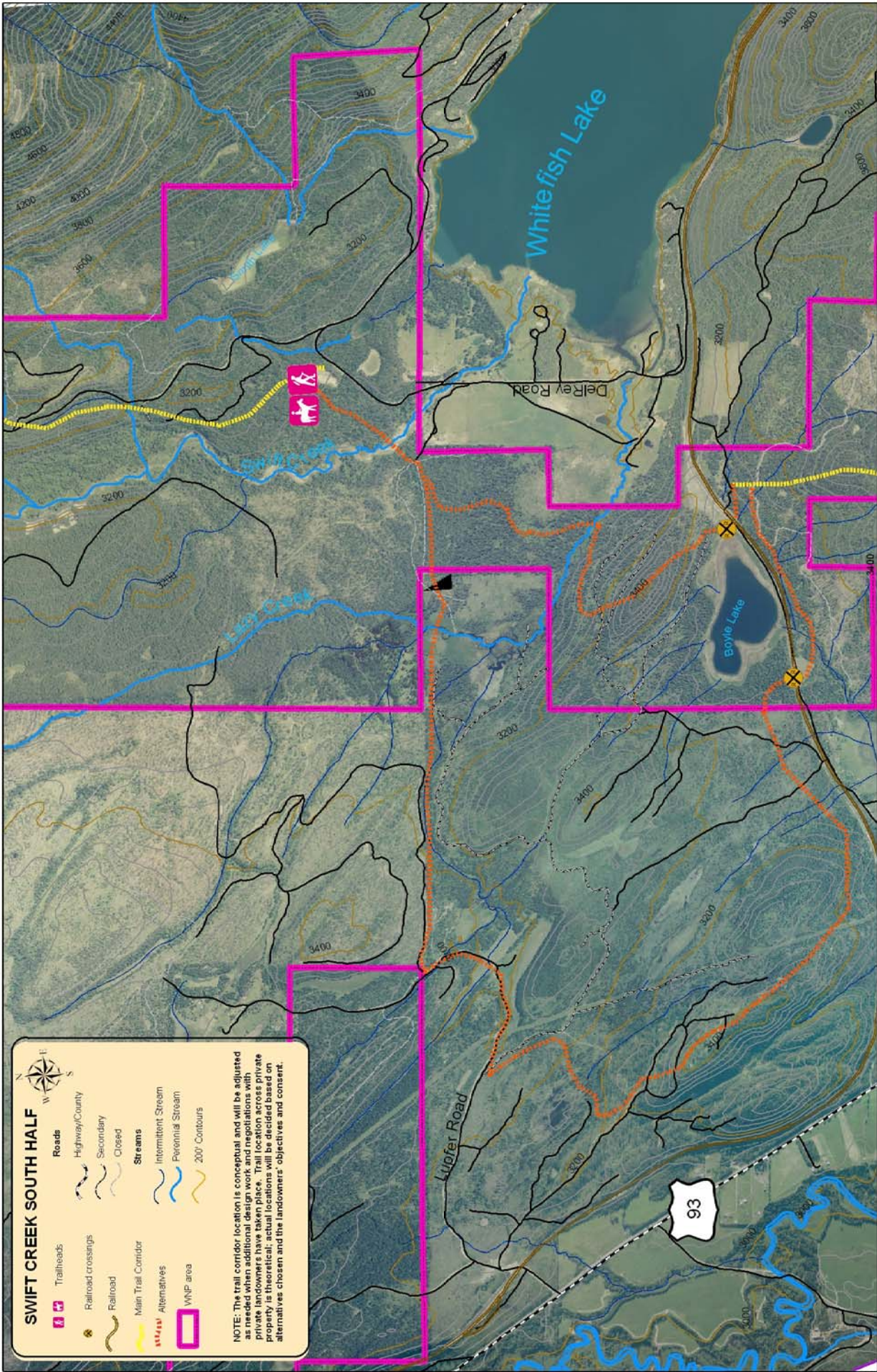
This system will link to other trails on DNRC Land.



*Road on ridge above Lazy
Creek*

G. Issues

- The location of the railroad crossing needs additional analysis to determine the engineering requirements and costs. Additionally, there will be consultations with BNSF Railway representatives to determine their preferences for location and design. Negotiation for a crossing easement over or under the railroad will be required.
- Some challenges to overcome in order to allow horses to cross the railroad include safety and expense. There may be safety issues due to horse behavior in a confined space during a time when a train is crossing the tracks.
- A board walk type trail or turnpike trail used in wet areas can cost from ten to thirty times as much as natural surface trail construction. The cost will be even higher if getting equipment and supplies to the site is restricted by wet areas. Additionally, maintenance of this type of trail is costly, and there are some restrictions in wet areas to not use treated timbers. It is likely that a higher level of environmental analysis and permitting will be required to construct a trail in a wetland area.
- Putting the trail upslope of wetlands reduces environmental impacts, minimizes degradation of wildlife habitat, and will not require additional permit analysis.
- The portion of the trail that is west of the Swift Creek unit may involve negotiations for easements with multiple private property owners.



SWIFT CREEK SOUTH HALF

- Trailheads
- Railroad crossings
- Railroad
- Main Trail Corridor
- Alternatives
- WNP area
- Roads: Highway/County, Secondary, Closed
- Streams: Intermittent Stream, Perennial Stream, 200' Contours

NOTE: The trail corridor location is conceptual and will be adjusted as needed when additional design work and negotiations with private landowners have taken place. Trail location across private property is theoretical; actual locations will be decided based on alternatives chosen and the landowners' objectives and consent.

Whitefish Lake

Lupfer Road

Del Rey Road

93

Boyde Lake

VII. Swift Creek – North Half

A. Subarea Description

Primary access to the area is via Del Rey Road, a county road, and Lower Whitefish Road, a primary open road on Stillwater State Forest. Dominant features of this area include Lazy Creek, Smith Lake Reservoir, and Swift Creek, a major tributary of Whitefish Lake. The area is characterized by densely stocked forestland. Much of the forest consists of mature mixed-conifers stands with considerable structural diversity and lush shrub and forb understories. The topography of the area ranges from riparian areas to steep well-drained southwestern aspects located on the lower slopes of the Whitefish Range. Elevations range from 3,200 to 5,000 feet, a span of approximately 1,800 feet. The diverse habitat in the area is occupied and utilized by many species of wildlife, including big game, a wide range of song birds, and large and small forest carnivores. The northern portion of the subarea is within the recovery zone of the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem for grizzly bears and is outside of the study area of the Whitefish School Trust Lands Neighborhood Plan.



Swift Creek

B. Trail Usage

The north Swift Creek area experiences heavy recreational use that includes mountain biking, hiking, fishing, wildlife viewing, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, backcountry skiing, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, hunting and various water activities. In the winter, trails are groomed for snowmobiles. Trail difficulty will be moderate with some segments possibly being difficult due to steep grade.

C. Access Points

The Lower Whitefish Road is a main access connection between Upper Whitefish Lake and Whitefish Lake, as well as a route to Werner Peak Lookout, Red Meadow Lake, and the North Fork of the Flathead River Basin. A winter trailhead and parking area is located in the Swift Creek subarea at the Del Rey Gravel Pit. This trailhead is used extensively for access to the groomed snowmobile trails on the forest by residents and commercial snowmobile operations. There is a large parking area that already accommodates cars and snowmobile trailers. The gravel pit will be reclaimed and added to the parking area within several years.



Del Rey parking area

D. Main Corridor

The main corridor will generally head north from the Del Rey gravel pit for one and a half miles to a connection with an existing Forest Service road. The trail on State Trust Land will be a newly constructed trail that will parallel some existing logging roads. The grade is level for the south portion of the trail but will have a significant elevation gain as it approaches the connections with the Forest Service trail.



Old road near Swift Creek

E. Secondary Trail System

The secondary trail system in this subarea will be evaluated to determine which trails are suitable for being included in the trail system. There should be minimal disturbance in the grizzly bear recovery area.

F. Linkages to Other Trail Networks

This trail will link with Forest Service land and the Taylor Creek Road area. The city's Fish Trail network designates part of East Lake Shore Drive as a bicycle route. Further investigation on the construction of a bike path along this road to connect with the Del Rey parking area is recommended.



East Lake Shore Drive is narrow and winding - a future off-road bike path will be safest option for traffic on this road

G. Issues

- Coordinating connections with other trail networks
- Minimizing wildlife impacts
- Locating an appropriate crossing on Swift Creek
- See previous section for discussion on wetlands
- Part of the area is in the US Fish and Wildlife Service northern continental divide ecological system for grizzly bear recovery.

VIII. USFS Taylor Creek Rd. – Big Mountain

A. Subarea Description

United States Forest Service land is adjacent to the north half of the Swift Creek subarea. This is heavily forested land with significant elevation gains. It has high wildlife and natural resource value.

B. Trail Usage

Presently, bicyclists can ride up the Taylor Creek Road to the gate located at the saddle and then back down. Downhill bicyclists are not allowed to exit the Big Mountain Resort using the Taylor Creek road due to a Forest Service special order closure. Taylor Creek road is currently an open road for motorized use and part of a groomed snowmobile system.

C. Access Points

The Taylor Creek road is a year round open road that provides an access route to the Big Mountain permit boundary. Bicyclists and hikers could access the trail at the summit of Big Mountain Resort.

D. Main Corridor

A portion of the proposed main trail corridor will link the valley floor, State Trust Lands and the Flathead National Forest using the Taylor Creek Road, FS #9790. The Flathead National Forest proposes to re-consult with the US Fish and Wildlife Service on allowing downhill mountain bike traffic to leave the permitted Big Mountain Resort boundary using the Taylor Creek Road. The trail route will use the existing Taylor Creek road located in T32N R22W SECs 17, 20, 21, 28, 27, 26, and 25. In Section 17, the trail corridor exits the Taylor Creek Road onto a closed FS #9868 road for approximately two miles, then the trail travels onto State Trust Lands.

E. Secondary Trail System

There are currently no secondary trails in this area. Secondary trails will only be allowed subject to Forest Service review and regulations.



View from Big Mountain



Hikers on Danny On Trail

F. Linkages to Other Trail Networks

Big Mountain Resort has mountain bike trails that will link to this network. Bicyclists will ride down Big Mountain Road to connect with the city's "Fish Trail" network. The State of Montana is completing a road reconstruction project on Big Mountain Road. The new road will be wider, have bigger shoulders and fewer curves. Plans call for a realignment of utilities in 2006 with final road construction taking place during the summer of 2007.

G. Issues

- The connection between Taylor Creek Road and Big Mountain Summit will need approval from US Fish and Wildlife service due to grizzly bear recovery concerns. Mitigation may be necessary to allow bike riders to exit the chair lift to Taylor Creek Road.
- There is potential safety conflicts between motorized users and bicyclists on the road.

SWIFT CREEK NORTH HALF



Roads

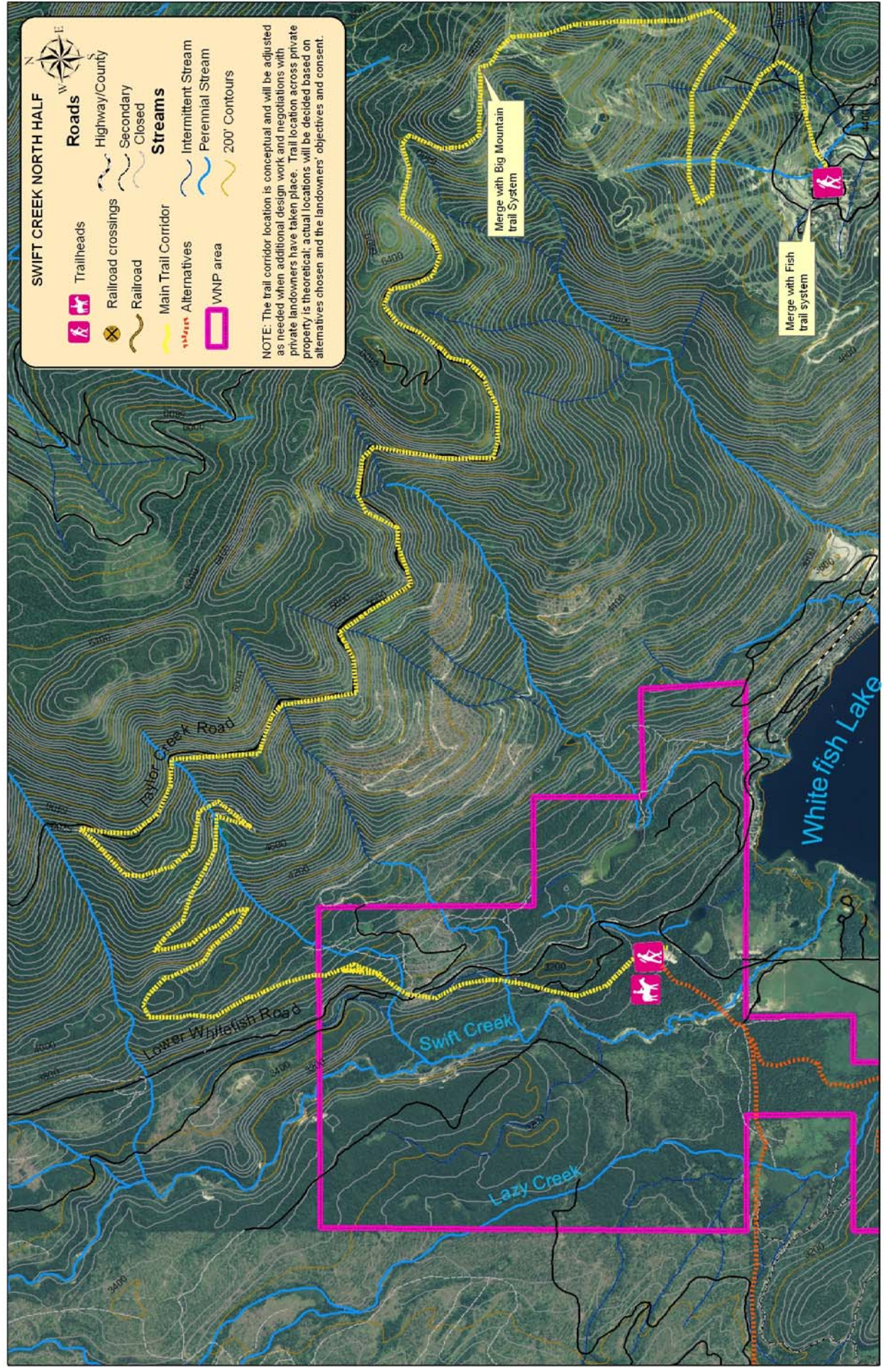
- Trailheads
- Railroad crossings
- Railroad
- Main Trail Corridor
- Alternatives
- WNP area

- Highway/County
- Secondary
- Closed

Streams

- Intermittent Stream
- Perennial Stream
- 200' Contours

NOTE: The trail corridor location is conceptual and will be adjusted as needed when additional design work and negotiations with private landowners have taken place. Trail location across private property is theoretical; a final location will be decided based on alternatives chosen and the landowners' objectives and consent.



Merge with Big Mountain trail system

Merge with Fish trail system

Whitefish Lake

Taylor Creek Road

Lower Whitefish Road

Swift Creek

Lazy Creek

IX. Haskill Subarea

A. Subarea Description

The Haskill subarea contains approximately 520 acres of land in the undulating foothills of the Whitefish Range. Located about three and one-half miles from town, it is one of the closest areas to the City of Whitefish. Haskill Creek bisects the parcel and is a primary source for the city's municipal drinking water. Grizzly bears roam the sensitive wildlife habitat in the spring and fall, and elk, deer, mountain lion, coyote and other forest dwellers are seen year round. There are rolling trails with beautiful views of Haskill Basin and Micho Ridge. It is managed for timber.

B. Trail Usage

This area is popular with runners, hikers, mountain bikers, horseback riders, hunters, cross-country skiers, and other recreationists. It does not get heavy use from non-residents. Trail difficulty levels will range from moderate to difficult.

C. Access Points

There is no parking area to access the trails and the area does not have access from public roads. Current access is from private roads or adjoining public and private forest lands. It is recommended that there be continued communication with the property owners to locate a parking area for the subarea.

D. Main Corridor & Secondary Trail System

The trail system is being inventoried in order to evaluate trails for the best system of main and secondary trails.

F. Linkages to Other Trail Networks

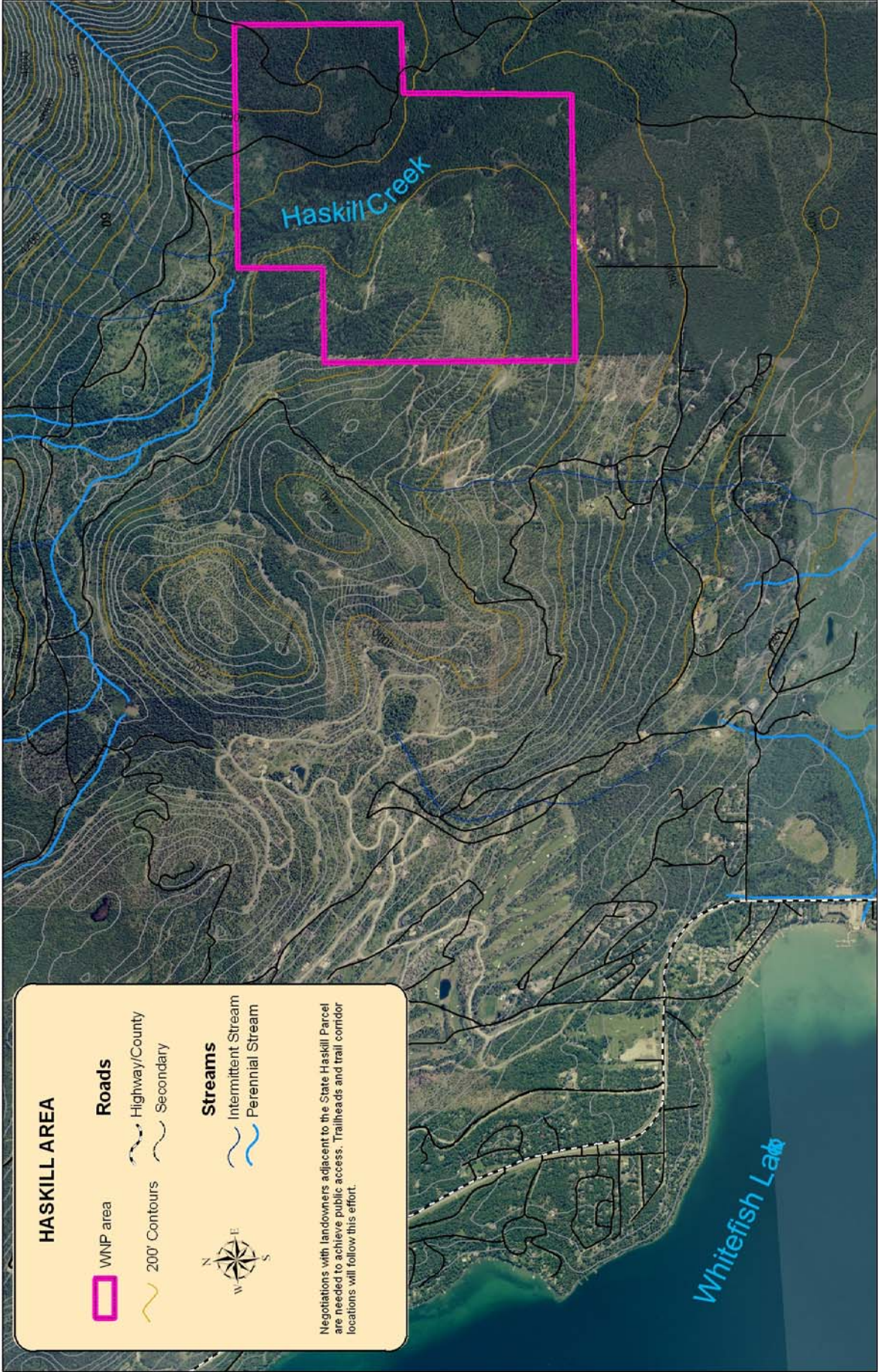
There is an informal system of trails on adjoining private and public forest lands that connect with this area. Iron Horse subdivision has a bike path that connects with parts of this private forest land. The City of Whitefish Fish Trails system may be a future connection.

G. Issues

- Providing public access



Trail in Haskill subarea



HASKILL AREA

WNP area

Roads

Highway/County
Secondary

200' Contours

Streams

Intermittent Stream
Perennial Stream



Negotiations with landowners adjacent to the State Haskill Parcel are needed to achieve public access. Trailheads and trail corridor locations will follow this effort.

X. Happy Valley Subarea

A. Subarea Description

The Happy Valley subarea is approximately 480 acres in size and contains relatively flat, timbered land interspersed with a few small meadows. The area has a high water table and poor drainage. To the north and west are one-half to one-acre residential properties, including some areas zoned R-2 that permit half-acre sites. To the east are larger lots of five to ten acres in size. To the south are large, predominantly undeveloped agricultural and forestry parcels.



Happy Valley

The Happy Valley subarea is heavily timbered and provides a variety of wildlife habitat, including whitetail deer winter range. The site is managed for timber sales.

B. Trail Usage

This parcel of State Trust Lands has historically provided open space, recreational trails, and access opportunities for the surrounding community. Neighborhood residents use the land for running, biking, horseback riding, hiking, cross-country skiing, unauthorized ATV use and snowmobiling. Trails types include roads, overgrown skid trails, and single track trails. In some instances, this heavy recreational use resulted in negative impacts from unauthorized motorized use, vandalism, eroded trails, and trash. Trail difficulty will range from easy to moderate.



Bowdish Drive Parking Area

C. Access Points

Happy Valley is accessed from US 93 and is bounded by Bowdish Drive, Meadow Lane, Elk Trail, and Primrose Lane; all county roads. There is a small parking area on Bowdish Drive and this will be improved to accommodate five to ten cars. There are also access points from streets bordering Happy Valley.

D. Main Corridor

A main corridor will provide a loop trail within the subarea.

E. Secondary Trail System

There are many secondary trails in this subarea. These trails will be evaluated to determine which trails are suitable for being included in the trail system.

F. Linkages to Other Trail Networks

Currently, this subarea does not link to the rest of the trail network. Potential future connections will be through paved bike paths on county or state roads such as US 93 or Whitefish Stage Road. Currently there are no plans for such connections. Proposals for such bike plans will need to be coordinated through Flathead County as part of their trail planning process.

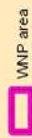
G. Issues

Recent (2005) timber harvest related activities have destroyed many of the trails in this parcel of land. The presence of slash piles and many kelly humps and large pits have severely degraded the trail system in Happy Valley. Roads used for logging were widened with staging areas that now have compacted soils and are devoid of vegetation. Final phases of the logging project will include burning slash piles, cleanup and tree planting. Neighborhood residents are working with DNRC to develop a plan to re-vegetate damaged areas and re-establish trails.



*Kelly hump on trail in
Happy Valley*

Happy Valley Area

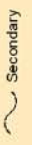


WNP area

Roads



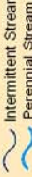
Highway/County



Secondary



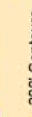
Streams



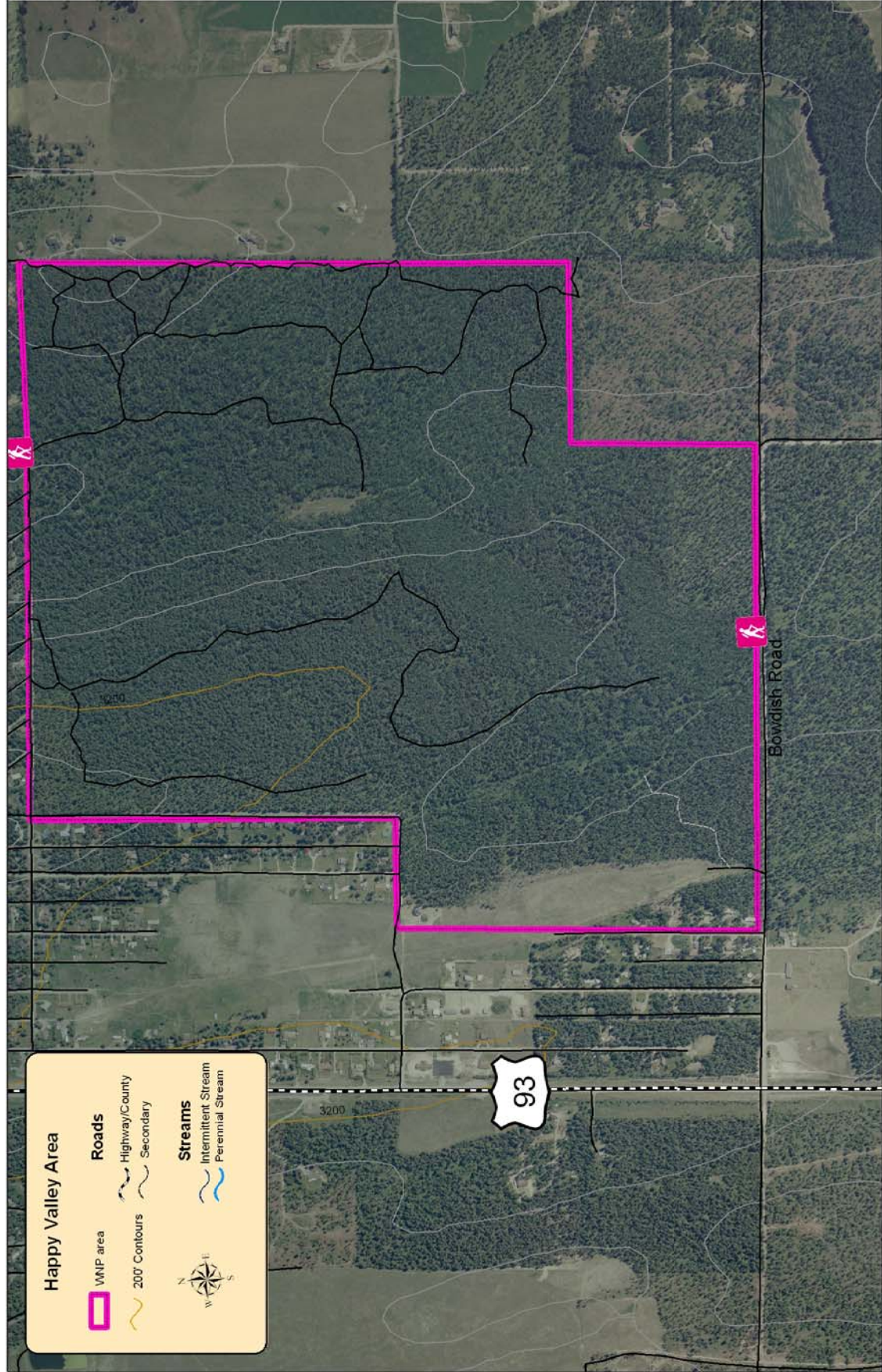
Intermittent Stream



Perennial Stream



200' Contours



XI. KM

A. Subarea Description

The KM subarea is a 480 acre timbered area bisected by KM Ranch and Spring Prairie roads; both county roads. The KM area is surrounded by a variety of large and small private parcels that are interspersed with timber and agricultural lands. The eastern portion of the parcel consists of rolling timberland. Much of the timber is dog-hair lodgepole pine. The west side is timbered and bordered by rural landowners, a trap-shooting range, and the county landfill. Whitetail deer and other wildlife frequent the area. The KM area is used primarily for timber production. The land is currently leased for grazing (165 acres), agriculture (five acres), and residential (five acres) uses.

B. Trail Usage

The public uses old logging roads and skid trails that are accessed from KM Road for recreational activities including mountain biking, hiking, gun club use, hunting, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, backcountry skiing, snowshoeing, wildlife viewing, and snowmobiling. A number of old logging roads are frequented by trail users and unauthorized four-wheelers. Most users live in the vicinity of the area and it does not receive heavy usage compared to areas closer to town. Trails in this area will be moderate in difficulty level.

C. Access Points

Currently, there is no formal parking area serving this area although there is room for a few cars to park near Spring Prairie Road. This area can be expanded to a parking area and formal trailhead with space for five to ten cars.



*Parking area near Spring
Prairie Road*

D. Main Corridor

A main corridor will provide a loop trail within the subarea.

E. Secondary Trail System

There is an existing secondary trail system in this subarea. These trails will be evaluated to determine which are suitable for the trail system.

F. Linkages to Other Trail Networks

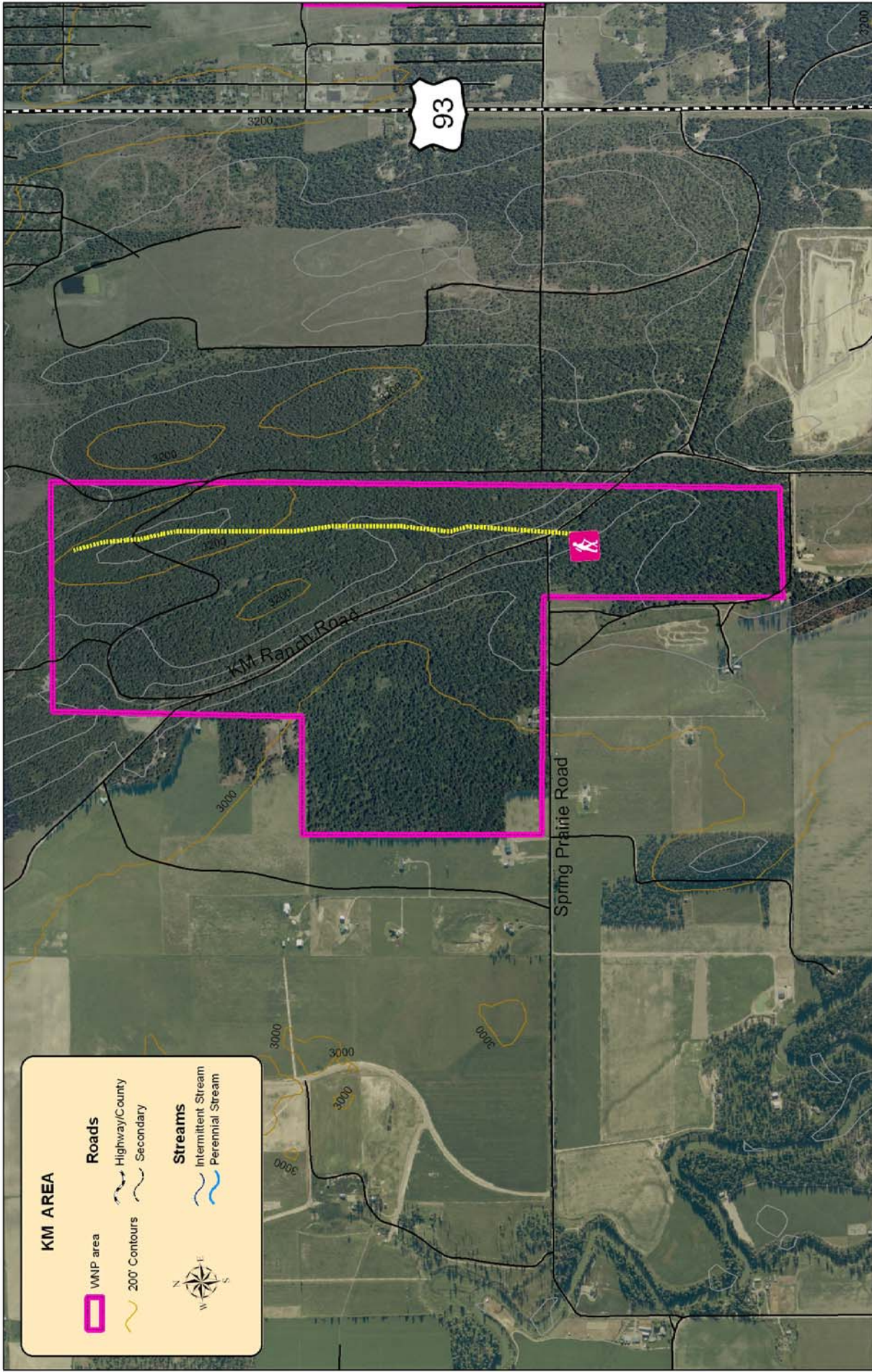
Currently, this subarea does not link to the rest of the trail network. Potential future connections could be made by designating KM Ranch Road as a bicycle route where bicyclists share the roadway with motor vehicles and signs are posted along the route. KM Ranch Road is a low-volume gravel road from the KM subarea to the south end of Spencer Lake. Flathead County has jurisdiction of KM Ranch Road and will be the entity to make this bicycle route designation.



Unauthorized road for motorized use in KM sub area

G. Issues

- Connect this area to the remainder of the trail system
- Rules for unauthorized motorized use need to be enforced



KM AREA

- WNP area
- 200' Contours

- Roads**
- Highway/County
 - Secondary

- Streams**
- Intermittent Stream
 - Perennial Stream



CHAPTER 4: Trail Design

I. Applicability of Design Standards

1. State Trust Lands

The majority of the trails in “A Trail Runs Through It” system will be located on the Montana Department of Natural Resources School Trust Lands. These trails will be primarily multi-use trails with a natural surface. The design guidelines in this chapter apply to these trails.



Trail in Spencer Mountain subarea

2. United States Forest Service

A portion of the trail system will include trails on the Flathead National Forest. Specifically, this will include a link from the summit of Big Mountain Resort following Taylor Creek Road to connect with the trail system in the Swift Creek subarea. This trail and any future trails on Forest Service Land must follow the design standards and specifications of the United States Forest Service.

3. Public Right-of-Way

This Master Plan describes a trail system that links with proposed bike paths in the City of Whitefish and along US 93. These are off-road paved bicycle trails that generally follow standards established by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials. (AASHTO). Additionally, there may be some linkages to designated bike routes along county and city roads. On these routes, bicycles share the roadway with vehicles and there may be signage alerting motorists to bicycle traffic. Whichever local government has jurisdiction of the road will designate the bicycle route and determine the standards for these roadways.



Fish Trails in Whitefish

4. Private Property

Trails that cross private property through an easement for the “A Trail Runs Through It” project would follow the same design standards as the trails on State Trust Lands unless the easement provided otherwise. The trail system may also connect to privately operated trails such as the mountain bike network at Big Mountain Resort. The property owner will establish the design standards for these trails.

II. Difficulty Levels

The physical design of the trail will vary depending on the natural features, volume of traffic on the trail and the types of activity. Heavily congested areas will be designed for ease of use until the trail users have an opportunity to disperse. Trails that are in more remote areas can be more challenging. Additionally, trails that are attractive for a wide range of users will have a wider and more even grade to avoid conflicts.

The International Mountain Bicycling Association (IBMA) has a rating system that is adapted from the difficulty rating system used at ski resorts. Although the ratings are developed for mountain bike trails, they are also useful for other activities such as hiking and horse back riding. The system focuses on technical challenge, not physical exertion. The following trail features determine technical challenge:

- Trail width
- Tread surface
- Average trail grade
- Natural obstacles and technical trail features

The IBMA has five ratings from Easiest (paved trails) to Extremely Difficult (the equivalent of a double black diamond at a ski resort). The design guidelines for “A Trail Runs Through It” will be for natural surface trails using the three IBMA middle rankings for level of difficulty. (“Easy,” “Moderate,” and “Difficult”). Guidelines for classifying different segments of the trail include:

- Trail segments near trailheads should be “Easy”
- High activity corridors should be “Easy”
- The overall difficulty level for the remainder of the main corridor should be “Moderate”
- Depending on natural features, there may be short segments that would be either “Easy” or “Difficult”.
- Chapter 3 generally describes the difficulty level for each subarea of the trail
- Some secondary trails or spurs may be specifically designated for family, seniors, or disabled populations and designed as “Easy”
- Some secondary trails or spurs may be specifically designated as challenging and be designed as “Difficult”

Survey Responses

83% agreed the trail should be a natural surface.

78% agreed some segments of the trail should be family friendly.

77% agreed some segments of the trail should be strenuous /challenging.

63% agreed some segments of the trail should accommodate disabled users.

71% said it was very important to post trail rules at trailheads.

76% agreed the trail should accommodate mountain biking.

Table 1: Trail Difficulty Rating System

	EASY	MODERATE	DIFFICULT
Trail Width	72 inches or more	36 inches or more	12 inches or more
Tread Surface	Firm and stable	Mostly stable with some variability	Widely variable
Average Trail Grade	5% or less	10% or less	20% or less
Maximum Trail Grade	15%	Max 15% or greater	Max 15% or greater
Natural Obstacles and Technical Trail Features (TTF)	Unavoidable obstacles 2” or less Avoidable obstacles may be present Unavoidable bridges 36” or wider	Unavoidable obstacles 8” tall or less Avoidable obstacles may be present Unavoidable bridges 24” or wider TTF 2” high or less, width of deck is greater than ½ the height	Unavoidable obstacles 15” tall or less Avoidable obstacles may be present May include loose rock Unavoidable bridges 24” or wider TTF 4” high or less, width of deck is less than ½ the height Short sections may exceed criteria

Source: International Mountain Bicycling Association, Trail Solutions – IBMA’s Guide to Building Sweet Single-Track

III. Construction Standards

1. Benefits of Proper Construction

Trail construction activities include clearing, grading, installing drainage improvements, speed control features, and building trail structures. Common trail features that need to be constructed include climbing turns, switchbacks, culverts, bridges, boardwalks, crossings, rock walls, retaining walls and signs. Proper trail design and construction techniques have many benefits such as:

- Lowering maintenance costs
- Lessening impact on the environment
- Resisting erosion
- Improving water quality
- Reducing negative impacts on wildlife
- Blending in with surrounding area
- Creating an enjoyable and safe experience for trail users
- Keeping trail users on trail and away from sensitive areas
- Controlling the speed of bicycles
- Providing appropriate clearance for bicyclists and equestrians
- Reducing conflicts between user groups

2. Construction Standards

There are a number of excellent resources to guide the trail manager on trail layout and construction. Following are some of the more commonly used books:

- 1) International Mountain Bicycling Association, Trail Solutions, IMBA's Guide to Building Sweet Singletrack, 2004, www.imba.com, ISBN 0-9755023-0-1
- 2) USDA, Forest Service, Standard Specifications for Construction of Trails, EM-7720-102
- 3) Student Conservation Association, Lightly on the Land: The SCA Trail Building And Maintenance Manual, ISBN 0-89886-491-7

3. Unauthorized Trails

Currently, there are numerous trails throughout the State Trust Lands that various user groups have constructed without permission or adherence to any standards. Many of these trails are poorly constructed and can create numerous problems including:

- Erosion
- Weed management problems
- Intrusion on sensitive wildlife areas
- Interference with forestry operations
- Unsafe structures
- Higher costs to maintain overall trail system
- Litter and vandalism



Unauthorized bike jump in Spencer Mountain subarea

As part of the trail management agreement, these unauthorized trails will be evaluated to determine if they should be included in the trail system, rerouted or vacated. Some guidelines for making this determination are:

- Trails should reflect the guiding principles in the appendix
- Trails should generally follow the design standards in this section
- Trails should have minimal environmental impact
- Trails should require reasonable reconstruction to bring them up to accepted standards

4. Configuring Loop Trails

A consideration in evaluating secondary trails and spur trails from the main corridor will be creating loops. Trail systems with loops let visitors enjoy trails of varying distances, difficulty and ecosystems all in one outing. Providing loops disperses people and reduces user conflicts. A combination of small and large loops provides the maximum opportunity for users to enjoy the trail network.

A stacked loop system consists of a core loop that is close to the trail head and designed for heavier uses. Loops that branch from the trailhead may get narrower and more challenging the more remote they are from the trailhead. Loops may also branch from point-to-point trails.

IV. Conceptual Elements

Beyond construction standards, there are certain aspects of trails that make them interesting and give them a distinctive feel. Terms found in the public comment section of the survey included “meander,” “sense of discovery,” “vistas,” “overlooks,” and “geological features” to describe desirable trail characteristics. The following summary from the book, Natural Surface Trails by Design, (natureshape.com) provides an overview of these conceptual elements of trail design.

1. Physical Elements

A well designed trail will have a combination of all of these physical elements:

a) Natural Shapes

Natural shapes get their character by being unpredictable. A natural shaped trail will have a variety of curved, winding, irregular, and sometimes straight segments. The trail follows the natural contours, outcroppings and paths that are suggested by the land.

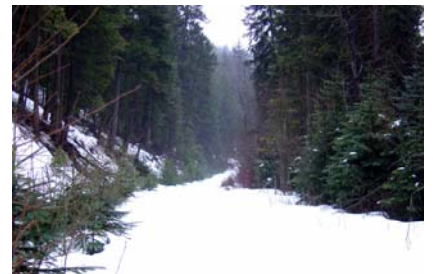
b) Anchors

Anchors are any distinct vertical features in the visible area. Anchors give a trail a visible reason to be “here” instead of “there.” The trail users are drawn to points of contrasts such as size, distance, and distinctiveness. Rocks, trees, cliffs, and water features can all be anchors. Anchors can be natural or constructed.

c) Edges

Common types of edges are the edge between meadow and forest, land and water, valley wall and valley floor, cliffs, and edges between distinctly different vegetation areas or ecosystems with a vertical element. Different edge treatments such as having the trail parallel the edge, angle across the edge, or go back and forth across an edge, make the trail interesting.

The trail meanders through the woods



The trees on the left create a distinct edge



d) Gateways

Gateways occur where the trail is clearly constrained on two or three sides: left, right, and/or above. The more the trail feels like it squeezes through, the stronger the gateway. Gateways create a sense of passage and distance. A gateway near the parking area helps users adjust from the “car world” to the “trail world.”

2. Experiential Elements

a) Safety

Perception of safety depends on the individual’s abilities and comfort levels regarding certain risks. Varying trail segments will represent different challenges but overall, the trail should incorporate the following features to enhance the feeling of safety:

- Sufficiently stable and comfortable tread (stability, smoothness, and traction) for one’s ability
- Sufficient clearance around obstacles and edges
- Comfortable buffer or protection from danger (wildlife, steep drop-offs, site hazards ...)
- Clearly marked trails and thorough maps
- Reduced user conflicts
- Safely constructed features

b) Efficiency

Visitors and stock want to feel that the trail isn’t wasting their time and effort. Efficiency influences user’s willingness to stay on the trail instead of taking shortcuts or avoiding unsatisfactory sections. Problems that occur when trails are not efficient include:

- Avoiding excessively muddy, wet, rocky, or difficult main tread by forming parallel treads
- Bypassing tread structures such as waterbars or inconveniently spaced steps
- Shortcutting switchbacks
- Speeding
- Cutting corners on broad curves
- Traversing meadows and open space

There should be a buffer between the trail and the railroad tracks



c) Playfulness

Playfulness is the main difference between trails and roads. Playfulness has natural shapes, uneven tread, and incorporates site elements. Aspects of playfulness include:

- Anticipation, excitement, curiosity, surprise
- Peacefulness (especially after more energetic trail sections)
- Quirkiness
- Natural shapes
- Variety and contrasts in feelings and physical sensations
- Desire for dramatic spaces
- Appropriate timing, rhythm, and flow between sensations



Mountain views can create a dramatic experience on the trail

d) Harmony

Harmony occurs when everything - the site, tread, trail structures, trail usage, and movement - all work together. Low harmony invites abuse and degradation, while harmonious trails engender a sense of stewardship. Some elements of harmony include:

- The trail and its features seem part of the site
- The trail and tread support movement and modality with the desired speed and challenge
- The trail is not too wide or too narrow for the desired experience
- The trail and its structures have blended over time into the site through weathering, vegetation growth
- Peacefulness – Change happens slowly to accommodate and adapt to natural forces
- Spacing between attractive sensations
- Natural materials echo the site whenever feasible
- Manufactured materials are only visible when necessary
- Harmonious trails have natural shapes and do not have an engineered feel

V. Signage

Although trail users ranked signage as the most important amenity on the trail, it is important that signs be located and designed appropriately so they don't intrude on the outdoor experience. High use areas generally require more signage while fewer signs are necessary in the remote areas. Following are the types of signage that will be useful on the trail system.

- Trailhead Kiosks – Map and description of trail length and relative difficulty. Also include trail rules, trail etiquette, emergency contact information or volunteer opportunities. Information about weeds, wildlife, travel restrictions, hunting and fishing is also be useful.
- Directional Signs – Navigational aids such as trail name and length of the route should be posted repeatedly along the route but not overused.
- Warning Signs – Signs to caution trail users of upcoming hazards should be placed close to the trail and should be easy to see. Use signs for big drop-offs, narrow bridges, wildlife habitat or other elements of increased risk.
- Difficulty-Level Signs – Post at the main trailhead, access point, intersection, or where there is a change in difficulty levels.
- Regulatory signs – Delineate rules such as user group restrictions, seasonal closure and other restrictions.
- Educational Signs – Use to interpret natural or cultural points of interest along the way. Placed roughly four feet away from main tread so they don't interfere with the trail when users stop to read the signs.

Most of the resources for construction standards also have guidelines and design standards for signs. Additional references from the Forest Service are:

- Forest Service Sign and Poster Guidelines for the Forest Service, Engineering Management (EM) Series publication (EM-7100-15)
- Forest Service, “Sign Installation Guide”, 9771-2813-MTDC



Kiosk with map in Beaver Lakes subarea



Regulatory sign in Happy Valley subarea

CHAPTER 5: Implementation

I. Management

1. Trails on State Trust Lands

In May 2006 the City of Whitefish submitted an application to the State Land Board proposing that the city assume lead management responsibility for the network of ad hoc, existing, and proposed trails within the neighborhood planning area. The city would explore partnerships with other public agencies and private entities to assist in managing the trails. This would be a long term agreement covering a period up to 99 years. Management responsibilities will include the following:

- Work with the DNRC to identify associated trails that should be closed, maintained, or constructed
- Hire appropriate staff to meet the obligations of the agreement
- Develop a budget and manage funds related to trail construction and maintenance
- Educate the public about trail etiquette and conservation practices
- Ensure that the greatest possible number of trail users have purchased a State Lands Recreational Use License
- Work with DNRC to manage commercial uses of the trail system and to generate additional revenues for the trust
- Enforce policies, rules and regulations
- Oversee construction of new trails and improvements identified in the Master Plan

Prior to taking over management of the trails, this arrangement must be formalized through a Trail System Management Agreement between the Land Board/DNRC and the City of Whitefish. Other responsibilities may be identified through this process.

2. Trails on Private Lands

The segments of the trail system that traverse private lands will be restricted to negotiated easements with the land owner. The terms of the easements or other agreements will include a legal description of the trail corridor and detail policies for use and management. The City of Whitefish will be the easement holder and will manage these segments along with the trails on State Trust Lands.

II. Organization & Staffing

1. Trail Manager

It is recommended that there be a staff position of trail manager to perform the day-to-day tasks associated with implementing the plan. The trail manager would be an employee of the city and would work with an advisory group on implementing the Master Plan. Roles and responsibilities may include:

- Issue RFP's, develop bid documents and negotiate contracts for work related to the trail
- Oversee trail construction management
- Coordinate community outreach and education
- Write grants
- Act as liaison to county, state and Federal agencies
- Provide administrative support to advisory and working groups
- Draft budget and work plan for trail construction and maintenance
- Coordinate volunteers
- Oversee enforcement
- Develop and implement maintenance program

2. Advisory Committee

The advisory committee will be a standing committee to be appointed by City Council. The committee will meet regularly with the trail manager to provide input on policy issues, trail design, trail construction, and other trail related matters. The committee will help set priorities on construction projects and can perform other functions such as producing an annual report on trail progress. Once appointed, the committee will establish by-laws, meeting dates, and other administrative procedures.

3. Working Groups

In addition to the advisory committee, periodically there may be a need to establish a working group to perform specialized, short term tasks for the trail. Possible working groups may concentrate on fundraising or producing some of the technical studies that are identified in the action plan.

The planning group identified a need for a working group to conduct field work in mapping and evaluate the secondary trail system. This group will use global positioning system (GPS) technology to accurately inventory existing trails. The field data can then be transferred to a geographic information system (GIS) format to produce maps for the trail system. Trails can also be displayed and analyzed in relation to topography, roads, aerial photos, soil types and other overlays. This database of trails will be valuable in evaluating the existing trail system and determining determine which trails should be maintained as part of the system and which should be vacated to conserve natural resources. It will also provide baseline data so the trail manager can track new unauthorized trails and prevent them from becoming further established.

4. Volunteers

Volunteers can be an important pool of labor for activities such as trail maintenance, community education, and fundraising. According to the survey, 50% of respondents were interested in volunteering for the trail project.

5. Affiliations

There are a number of non-profit groups that have overlapping interests and could be potential partners for the trail project. These groups may be willing to sponsor events, develop joint projects for trail improvements, or help with educational outreach efforts. Members of these groups often have technical expertise that can be valuable in the implementation of the Master Plan. Such groups represent conservation, recreation, and civic interests. Respondents to the survey identified over 50 different groups that were active in the county.

III. Funding and Costs

1. Endowment

An endowment fund will be established and the interest from the endowment will provide income to fund staff and maintenance costs. For example, an endowment of five million dollars with a five percent return can generate an annual income of \$250,000 per year. Endowments are generally established through donations, planned giving, and fundraising campaigns. Building the endowment will be an on-going endeavor.

2. Fundraising

Successful fundraising relies on a fundraising/marketing plan that sets goals, targets specific donor groups, creates awareness, and effectively uses an organization's resources. Often, a separate non-profit arm is responsible for fundraising efforts. Fish Trails is a non-profit entity created by citizens and the City of Whitefish to organize fundraising, awareness and support for the Whitefish Pedestrian and Bike Path. Fundraising for the "A Trail Runs Through It" needs to be coordinated with their efforts. To provide this coordination, a marketing/fundraising plan is needed that addresses the following issues:

- Immediate need for revenue to meet monthly operational costs until an endowment is established.
- On-going fundraising strategy to make-up any gap between endowment revenue and operational costs.
- Building donor base for long-term giving.
- Specific capital campaigns for trail construction.

Common fundraising events include annual giving campaigns, web site donations, sponsorships, merchandising, and dues. Events are most effective in increasing awareness and cultivating future donors.

3. Grants

Grants are available for trail construction, conservation measures, and education. The appendix contains more information on potential grants sources.

4. User Fees

Currently, state law requires recreational users on State Trust Land to purchase an annual general recreation license costing \$10. Many recreational users are unaware of this requirement and there is limited resources for enforcing this provision. There is a possibility that the city can partner with Fish, Wildlife and Parks and DNRC to enforce trail regulations. As part of the trail management agreement, the City of Whitefish will collect the recreation fees on behalf of the DNRC for the benefit of the School Trust beneficiaries. These fees are not intended to cover any operational costs of maintaining the trail.

5. Costs

Detailed costs estimates have not been prepared at this time. Specific construction costs can vary widely depending on terrain, soils, condition of existing trails, and labor. There are also unknown factors such the number of secondary trails, costs for pedestrian crossings, and exact alignment of the main corridor. There will likely be technical studies required for environmentally sensitive areas and the costs of acquiring easements will vary from parcel to parcel. The trail will be completed in phases and costs will be estimated for each phase as more detailed information becomes available. The trail system is a long term, dynamic project that will continue to grow and evolve over time. Following are the types of costs that can be expected in the project.

a) Operational

- Staffing – Trail manager, seasonal employees, enforcement ...
- Maintenance Budget
- Administrative – Office space, supplies, meetings ...
- Community Outreach – Web page, brochures, maps, ...
- Professional – Legal, Financial, ...

b) Design and Construction

- Technical, Planning and Engineering Studies
- Construction plans
- Contract Labor to Build trail and improvements
- Materials
- Easement Acquisition
- Financing Costs

V. Action Plan

Action items are those tasks that have been identified throughout the Master Plan that are required in order to implement the plan. The action matrix includes a general time frame for each task as follows:

<i>Immediate</i>	Immediate need. To be addressed within one year.
<i>Near Term</i>	Within 1 to 3 years
<i>Mid Term</i>	Completed in 3 to 6 years
<i>TBD</i>	Phasing to be determined.
<i>Ongoing</i>	Ongoing activity.

1. Intergovernmental Coordination

ACTION ITEM	TIMEFRAME	COMMENT
Management agreement between the City of Whitefish and State Land Board	Immediate	
Coordinate with DNRC land exchange proposal	Immediate	
Work with MDT to include pedestrian underpass in US 93 improvement plans	Immediate	Planning is now underway for highway
Coordinate with USFS on NEPA process for Taylor Creek Road segment	Immediate	The process is underway
Coordinate with Flathead County on incorporating trail system into the county Growth Policy Plan	Immediate	Plan is scheduled to be adopted in Fall 2006
Incorporate trail system into city Growth policy plan.	Immediate	
Coordinate with Flathead County on bike route designations for KM Ranch Road, Big Mountain Road and Skyles Lane.	Near Term	

2. Administrative

ACTION ITEM	TIMEFRAME	COMMENT
Hire trail manager	Immediate	After approval of agreement with State Land Board
Appoint Advisory Committee	Immediate	
Establish strategies for collecting recreation use fees	Immediate	
Establish 5-year capital improvement plan	Near Term	New links, land acquisitions, construction projects..
Grant writing	On-going	
Develop fundraising/marketing plan	Immediate	

3. Technical, Planning, and Design Studies

ACTION ITEM	TIMEFRAME	COMMENT
Create existing trail inventory through GPS mapping	Immediate	
Evaluate existing trails for inclusion in trail system	Near Term	Complete inventory first
Evaluate creek crossing for Swift and Lazy Creeks	Near to Mid Term	
Preliminary engineering and feasibility analysis for railroad crossing options	Near to Mid Term	Coordinate with BNSF
Determine alignment for trail through Swift Creek – South half	Near to Mid Term	Pending railroad crossing analysis
Determine alignment for trail through Swift Creek – North half	Near to Mid Term	Pending analysis of Lazy and Swift Crossings
Investigate future bike route on East Lake Shore Drive.	TBD	
Beaver Lakes Recreational Plan	TBD	Recommendation of Neighborhood Plan
Develop detailed trail design specifications and construction plan	Near Term	

4. Community Outreach

ACTION ITEM	TIMEFRAME	COMMENT
Celebration/kick-off event	Immediate	
Prepare and distribute trail maps	Near Term	
Prepare and distribute educational materials	Near Term	
Create new web site	On-going	Coordinate with city web sites
Establish Volunteer Program	Near Term	
Marketing Program	On-going	Brand identity

5. Trail Construction (Includes establishing final alignment, parking lot design, engineering, construction drawings, bids, permits, and construction)

ACTION ITEM	TIMEFRAME	COMMENT
Lion Mountain Segment	Near Term	
Skyles Lake Segment	Near Term	Coordinate with land exchange
Spencer Mountain	Near Term	Coordinate with US 93 construction
Beaver Lakes	TBD	Coordinate with recreation plan
Swift Creek – South Half	TBD	Pending RR crossing analysis
Swift Creek - North Half	TBD	Pending creek crossing analysis
Taylor Creek Rd – Big Mountain	Near Term	Pending NEPA analysis
Haskill	TBD	
Happy Valley	On-going	Coordinate with DNRC restoration efforts
KM Ranch	Mid Term	
Negotiate Easements on Private Land	TBD	

APPENDIX:

1. Guiding Principles
2. Survey Results
3. Fish Trail Map
4. Grant Resources

Appendix 1: Guiding Principles

1. General

- A. Users should be able to conveniently access the trail system from the town of Whitefish.
 - The trail should be accessible by bicycle.
 - The trail should connect with the City of Whitefish recreational trail system.
 - There should be multiple access points that are a short drive from town.
- B. The trail should provide opportunities for recreation, relaxation, education, fitness and for experiencing nature.
- C. The trail should promote the conservation of open space and enhance access to existing recreational opportunities.
- D. The trail should be an asset for the community that will attract visitors and be an amenity for citizens and nearby property owners.
- E. The trail should connect public lands around Whitefish.
- F. The location of the trail and trail design shall give a priority to protecting natural resources.

2. Trail Siting/Location/Access

- A. The trail's primary purpose will be a trail system that includes a main corridor that encircles the greater Whitefish area as well as secondary trails on the State lands and connects to other public lands, trail networks, recreation areas, and open space.
- B. The trail will primarily traverse State School Trust Lands. Private property owners should participate in the identification of the optimum alignment across their lands to connect to the State Trust lands.
- C. There should be multiple access points to the trail system.
 - Each sub area should have at least one access point with a parking area that provides adequate parking to avoid congestion.
 - There should be multiple access points for heavily used areas such as Beaver Lake and Spencer Lake.
 - Parking areas should be located away from heavy traffic and designed for safety. They should use existing access points as much as possible. Attempts will be made to locate access points/parking areas on public lands wherever possible

- D. To reduce user impacts there should be a dedicated trail system that will be primarily single-track in nature, use existing trails when possible and avoid roads except where other options are not feasible.
- E. The trail system should contain a combination of small and large loop trails throughout the network.

3. Types and Amount of Trail Use

- A. The trail should accommodate most traditional uses that have been allowed in each sub-area and reflect best management practices.
 - Following current management guidelines for State School Trust Lands, motorized uses are not permitted in non-winter seasons.
 - Snowmobiles will be allowed on the trail system in the winter except where there is designated non-motorized areas.
 - Motorized uses on parts of the trail that cross private forest land or United States Forest Service land would follow current management guidelines. Motorized use on private lands would respect the desires of the property owner.
 - The trail will not interfere with forestry management practices.
- B. The trail will be designed for non-motorized multiple uses such as walking, hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, and walking dogs.
- C. There shall be a variety of trail segments to accommodate all ages and abilities, encouraging as wide a range of users as reasonably possible.
 - Parts of the trail near trailheads will be wheelchair accessible.
 - The level of difficulty on the trail will vary from easy to strenuous with the easy to moderate levels being located more conveniently to the more heavily used trailheads.
- D. The trail should periodically provide access to lakes or streams to provide water for horses and dogs.

4. Trail Conflicts

- A. User education will be emphasized with a focus on trail etiquette and principles of “Tread Lightly”, such as:
 - Educate how to share and who has right of way;
 - What to do if you meet a horse, etc.
 - Respect for wildlife & plants;
 - Respect for private property;
 - Responsibilities of bicyclists, equestrians, and dog owners;

- Don't litter or vandalize; and
 - Pack out all waste.
- B. Trail users will be expected to use the trail responsibly and to respect the rights of other trail users and of adjacent property owners.
- C. The trail should be designed to minimize negative impacts on adjacent property owners. Trailheads and other improvements should be located away from private lands.
- D. In order to reduce conflict, dogs may be subject to the following management guidelines:
- Dogs should be on leashes near roads and in heavily congested areas near trailheads.
 - Dogs may have seasonal restrictions in sensitive wildlife areas.
 - Owners should have control over all dogs they bring on the trail. Dogs should be on a leash when wildlife is in the area.
 - Owners should clean up after dogs in more heavily traffic areas and keep dog wastes off the trail in more primitive settings.
- E. Policies should be established for working with Fish, Wildlife and Parks to educate hunters and trail users and to develop trail use guidelines for hunting seasons. Information should be posted at trailheads regarding the opening and duration of hunting seasons and recommendations for trail use during these times.
- F. Potential sites for defined play areas for special interests such as motorized and equestrian users that are separate from the main trail system should be investigated. These groups should be encouraged to work with DNRC to create these areas and integrate them into the main trail.
- G. To reduce conflict, equestrians may be subject to the following management guidelines:
- Design parking areas to accommodate horses and horse trailers in spaces separate from other trail users. This area would include hitching rails for horses.
 - For at least the first quarter of a mile from the trail head, horses should be on a separate trail before merging with the main trail.
 - Post signs in parking areas to spread manure.
 - Horses may be restricted in ecologically sensitive areas.
 - The number of horses in a group may be restricted
 - Riders should be kept to a walking pace especially in heavily used areas.
 - Equestrian groups should be involved in trail maintenance in areas of the trail that are heavily used by horses.
 - Commercial horseback riding operations should develop a trail maintenance, clean-up and weed control plan for the trails they frequently use.
 - There should be separate watering holes for stock and people.

H. In heavily used areas, trails should either be wide enough to accommodate multiple uses or there should be separate trails for bicyclists, pedestrians, and equestrians.

5. Maximizing Visitor Experience

A. The trail shall have safe crossings at roads, highways and railroad crossings.

B. The trail shall follow good design practices to create a safe, interesting, low-maintenance, and functional trail system.

C. The trail shall provide logical destination points for the visitor such as scenic lookouts.

D. The trailheads shall provide adequate parking to accommodate trail users. Parking areas shall be clean and well maintained.

E. Trail users shall be educated in order to promote a positive partnership between land owners and users and to create a positive experience for all trail users.

F. Clear maps and trail rules shall be posted at all trailheads.

G. As much of the natural habitat as possible shall be retained, and natural experience and the conservation of open space shall be promoted.

6. Trail Design

A. The trail should be wider with developed amenities near heavily used trailheads that are closer to town, and should be more primitive and narrow in more remote areas.

B. There should be a varied terrain with undulations, grade reversals and meanders to make the trail interesting.

C. Trail segments should have varying degrees of difficulty.

C. The trail should have a natural surface that includes different surface types such as dirt, rocks, roots, and gravel depending on the surrounding terrain, resources and demand.

E. The trail should have clear signs at the trailheads with maps and rules.

F. Litter should be monitored and a garbage management plan should be developed. Pack-in and pack-out policies should be initiated. Trailheads should be kept clean and free of debris from illegal dumping

G. Sanitation needs at trailheads should be monitored and a sanitation management plan should be developed that may include a need for toilet facilities.

H. Switchbacks should have gentle curves and rideable radius for bicycles.

7. Ecological Considerations

- A. Sensitive areas should be avoided when possible. Wetlands and fragile areas, especially in the Swift Creek area, need to be protected.
- B. Erosion should be prevented, especially on steep grades and near stream crossings. Water quality should be maintained. Seasonal closing of some trails in the spring to prevent erosion should be considered.
- C. Wildlife habitat and sensitive areas should be identified and mitigated. The trail should be aligned so as not to disturb wildlife. Some areas may have seasonal closures to protect wildlife habitat.
- D. Natural vegetation should be protected through weed control and replanting with native species.
- E. Good trail design will minimize environmental impact and should include areas of ecological interest.
- F. Illegal trail construction should be controlled.

8. Management & Maintenance Techniques

- A. Form volunteer groups to assist with maintenance. Start programs such as “Adopt A Trail” and trail cleaning day.
- B. Work with landowners to develop a management plan for parts of the trail that cross private property.
- C. Create a trail manager staff position with the City of Whitefish to oversee development and maintenance of the trail.
- D. Have a trail ranger(s) to educate, coordinate volunteers, monitor, and maintain the trail.
- E. Be prepared to close off areas if they are abused or overused.
- F. All trail easements should be negotiated in perpetuity.



Results Summary

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Filter Results

To analyze a subset of your data, you can create one or more filters.

[Add Filter...](#)**Total:** 256**Visible:** 256

Share Results

Your results can be shared with others, without giving access to your account.

[Configure...](#)**Status:** Enabled**Reports:** Summary and Detail



1. Respondent Profile






1. Please indicate your age group.



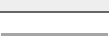


		Response Percent	Response Total
18 or younger		0.4%	1
19-25		2.4%	6
26-40		30.2%	77
41-64		61.6%	157
65+		5.5%	14
Total Respondents			255
(skipped this question)			1

2. Gender?




		Response Percent	Response Total
Male		43.9%	111
Female		56.1%	142
Total Respondents			253
(skipped this question)			3

3. Do you have children under the age of 18 living at home?			
		Response Percent	Response Total
Yes		34.3%	87
No		65.7%	167
Total Respondents			254
(skipped this question)			2




4. Please indicate the name of any outdoor, recreational, or conservation group to which you belong.			
		Response Percent	Response Total
View	1. 	100%	125
View	2. 	51.2%	64
View	3. 	31.2%	39
View	4. 	17.6%	22
View	5. 	10.4%	13
Total Respondents			125
(skipped this question)			131

5. Where do you live? (Please select the answer that most closely matches the address of your primary residence.)			
		Response Percent	Response Total
Within the city limits of Whitefish.		34.9%	89
Within 5 miles of the City of Whitefish		39.2%	100
In Flathead County but farther than 5 miles from Whitefish.		20.4%	52
In Montana but not Flathead County		1.2%	3
Outside the State of Montana		4.3%	11
Total Respondents			255
(skipped this question)			1

6. If your primary residence is not in Flathead County, do you have a second home in the Whitefish area.?

		Response Percent	Response Total
Yes		4.2%	9
No		16.7%	36
Not Applicable		79.2%	171
Total Respondents			216
(skipped this question)			40

7. Do you own land adjacent to any of the DNRC School Trust Lands included in the Whitefish Neighborhood Plan?

		Response Percent	Response Total
Yes		17.6%	45
No		77.6%	198
Don't Know		4.7%	12
Total Respondents			255
(skipped this question)			1

2. Usage Information

8. How often do you use the following areas for recreational/outdoor activities in SUMMER? (A map is available on the Trails web site: <http://trailrunsthroughtit.org/index.html>)

	Weekly	Monthly	Less than once a month	Never	Don't know where this area is located	Response Total
Beaver Lake Area	14% (32)	25% (55)	41% (91)	16% (36)	3% (7)	221
Skyles Lake Area	7% (14)	17% (35)	28% (57)	39% (80)	8% (17)	203
Spencer Lake Area	29% (65)	23% (52)	27% (61)	17% (38)	3% (7)	223
Swift Creek Area	4% (9)	16% (33)	34% (69)	30% (61)	14% (28)	200
Stillwater state Forest	14% (29)	27% (57)	38% (82)	18% (38)	3% (7)	213
Haskill Basin	28% (60)	20% (43)	29% (62)	21% (45)	3% (7)	217
Big Mountain	42% (98)	32% (76)	22% (52)	4% (9)	0% (0)	235
Happy Valley	10% (20)	12% (25)	21% (44)	56% (117)	1% (3)	209

KM Ranch Road Area	16% (34)	21% (47)	32% (71)	28% (62)	2% (5)	219
Total Respondents						241
(skipped this question)						15

9. How often do you use the following areas for recreational/outdoor activities in WINTER?
(A map is available on the Trails web site: <http://trailrunsthroughit.org/index.html>)

	Weekly	Monthly	Less than once a month	Never	Don't know where this area is located.	Response Total
Beaver Lake Area	11% (24)	15% (33)	36% (78)	35% (76)	3% (7)	218
Skyles Lake Area	2% (4)	7% (15)	29% (59)	57% (118)	5% (11)	207
Spencer Lake Area	10% (21)	21% (45)	29% (64)	37% (82)	3% (7)	219
Swift Creek Area	1% (2)	10% (20)	26% (54)	53% (110)	10% (21)	207
Stillwater State Forest	8% (16)	17% (34)	38% (79)	34% (71)	3% (6)	206
Haskill Basin	21% (46)	16% (35)	26% (57)	35% (75)	2% (4)	217
Big Mountain	60% (138)	17% (38)	16% (37)	7% (17)	0% (0)	230
Happy Valley	9% (19)	3% (7)	15% (31)	71% (148)	1% (3)	208
KM Ranch Road Area	7% (15)	11% (24)	24% (52)	55% (117)	3% (6)	214
Total Respondents						237
(skipped this question)						19

10. For those areas that you use, please indicate the reasons you prefer to use the following the areas for recreation/outdoor activities.

	Because it is close.	Because I can take my dog.	Because the trails are easy to use.	Because the trails are challenging to use.	Other	Don't use area.	Respondent Total
Beaver Lake Area	56% (115)	36% (74)	29% (59)	11% (22)	18% (37)	18% (38)	206
Skyles Lake Area	31% (58)	12% (22)	11% (21)	6% (12)	17% (31)	47% (87)	186
Spencer Lake Area	59% (123)	30% (62)	32% (68)	25% (53)	16% (33)	18% (37)	210
Swift Creek Area	26% (46)	13% (22)	12% (21)	4% (7)	18% (32)	50% (88)	176
Stillwater State Forest	38% (71)	24% (45)	25% (46)	10% (18)	22% (41)	26% (48)	186
Haskill Basin Area	53% (106)	30% (60)	29% (58)	14% (28)	16% (33)	25% (50)	201

Big Mountain	63% (138)	10% (21)	34% (74)	31% (69)	16% (35)	4% (8)	220
Happy Valley Area	25% (47)	15% (28)	11% (21)	2% (4)	11% (21)	59% (111)	187
KM Ranch Rd. Area	40% (81)	21% (42)	22% (44)	10% (20)	16% (31)	35% (70)	200
Total Respondents							235
(skipped this question)							21

11. Please indicate which of the following activities you participated in during the last year in any of the areas previously listed.

		Response Percent	Response Total
Walking		88.5%	208
Hiking		88.1%	207
Running or Jogging		43.4%	102
Mountain Biking		67.7%	159
Horseback Riding		17%	40
Trail Riding on Off-trail vehicles		14%	33
Snowmobiling		12.8%	30
Fishing		30.2%	71
Nature walks		50.6%	119
Walking with dogs		57.9%	136
Cross-Country skiing		76.2%	179
Snow Shoeing		42.6%	100
Hunting		17.4%	41
Overnight Camping		17.9%	42
Bird watching/wildlife viewing		34%	80
Photography		30.2%	71
Orienteering		2.6%	6
Dog Sledding		5.5%	13
Canoe/Kayak/boating		38.3%	90
View Any other Activities		12.3%	29
Total Respondents			235
(skipped this question)			21

3. Trail Design & Amenities

12. As a trail user, please rank how important the following trail design elements or amenities would be in creating a satisfying trail experience.

	1 - Not Important	2	3	4	5 - Very Important	Response Average
a. Restrooms at trailheads	24% (56)	12% (27)	27% (63)	14% (32)	23% (53)	3.00
b. Picnic areas	38% (86)	23% (52)	24% (55)	9% (21)	6% (13)	2.22
c. Mutt Mitts	37% (77)	13% (27)	20% (42)	11% (23)	19% (40)	2.63
d. Shelters	50% (111)	17% (38)	26% (58)	4% (8)	4% (8)	1.94
e. Trail map posted at trailhead	9% (21)	4% (8)	18% (42)	26% (59)	43% (98)	3.90
f. Mile Markers on trail	22% (49)	16% (37)	26% (59)	21% (48)	14% (32)	2.90
g. Trail rules posted at trailhead	8% (19)	5% (12)	15% (35)	22% (51)	49% (111)	3.98
h. Interpretive signs	24% (54)	23% (51)	29% (66)	16% (36)	8% (17)	2.60
i. Directional signs	14% (32)	10% (23)	25% (56)	27% (61)	24% (55)	3.37
j. Information on level of difficulty posted at trailhead	19% (42)	14% (32)	27% (62)	18% (41)	22% (50)	3.11
k. Native-Natural surface on trail	8% (19)	7% (16)	18% (41)	23% (52)	44% (100)	3.87
l. Benches - sitting areas	37% (83)	25% (55)	23% (51)	10% (23)	5% (11)	2.21
m. Portions of trail with boardwalk	53% (117)	17% (38)	15% (33)	10% (21)	5% (12)	1.97
n. Garbage Disposal	14% (31)	11% (26)	20% (46)	13% (29)	42% (96)	3.58
Total Respondents						234
(skipped this question)						22

13. Please describe any specific places, geological features, historic places, or views that you think the trail system should include.

View Total Respondents	71
(skipped this question)	
	185

14. Other comments on trail improvements.

View Total Respondents	93
(skipped this question)	
	163

4. Trail Issues & Concerns

15. As a trail user, please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	1. Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5. Strongly Agree	Response Average
a. I am concerned about litter and vandalism on the trail.	3% (7)	8% (18)	20% (46)	21% (48)	48% (111)	4.03
b. I am concerned about my personal safety on the trail.	29% (67)	24% (54)	25% (57)	11% (24)	11% (26)	2.51
c. I am concerned about overcrowding on the trail.	12% (28)	28% (64)	30% (68)	15% (35)	14% (33)	2.92
d. I am concerned about impacts to adjoining private property.	16% (38)	21% (48)	32% (74)	16% (36)	16% (36)	2.93
d. I am concerned about conflicts with motorized users.	10% (24)	7% (17)	12% (28)	19% (43)	52% (119)	3.94
e. I am concerned about conflicts with horses.	28% (65)	23% (53)	24% (56)	14% (32)	10% (24)	2.55
f. I am concerned about conflicts with dogs.	30% (69)	26% (60)	22% (50)	12% (28)	10% (22)	2.45
g. I am concerned about conflicts with bicycles.	41% (94)	29% (67)	19% (43)	6% (14)	5% (12)	2.06
h. I am concerned about conflicts with hunters.	17% (39)	18% (40)	16% (36)	19% (44)	30% (68)	3.27
i. I am concerned about environmental impacts. (Erosion, habitat disruption, ...)	9% (21)	13% (29)	22% (50)	22% (51)	35% (80)	3.61
j. The main trail should connect key recreation areas.	3% (6)	6% (14)	17% (39)	25% (57)	49% (113)	4.12
k. The main trail should allow mountain bikes.	4% (10)	4% (8)	16% (37)	22% (49)	54% (123)	4.18
l. The main trail should allow snowmobiles.	64% (147)	10% (22)	12% (28)	4% (10)	10% (22)	1.86
m. The main trail should allow motorized uses.	72% (165)	9% (20)	7% (15)	3% (7)	10% (23)	1.71
n. The main trail should allow horse back riding.	14% (32)	14% (32)	27% (61)	17% (40)	28% (64)	3.31
o. There should be areas adjacent to the main trail designated for motorized uses.	38% (88)	8% (18)	19% (44)	15% (35)	20% (46)	2.71
p. There should be areas adjacent to the main trail designated for horseback riding.	10% (23)	7% (17)	30% (68)	24% (56)	28% (65)	3.54
q. Trails should be a natural surface.	3% (6)	1% (3)	13% (30)	20% (47)	63% (144)	4.39
r. There should be numerous access points along the trail.	4% (10)	8% (19)	19% (43)	26% (59)	42% (95)	3.93
s. The trail should interface with the City of Whitefish trail system.	6% (13)	4% (8)	23% (52)	22% (50)	46% (105)	3.99
t. There should be separation of user groups (pedestrian, horses, bikes & motorized uses) to avoid conflict.	13% (29)	9% (21)	32% (73)	22% (51)	24% (55)	3.36
u. Some trail segments should be dog-friendly.	3% (8)	3% (8)	13% (29)	26% (60)	55% (126)	4.25



v. Some trail segments should be family-friendly.	6% (13)	3% (8)	13% (30)	25% (58)	53% (122)	4.16
w. Some trail segments should be strenuous/challenging.	3% (8)	4% (9)	16% (36)	20% (47)	57% (132)	4.23
x. Some trail segments should accommodate disabled users.	4% (10)	4% (9)	18% (41)	15% (34)	59% (135)	4.20
y. The trail should include educational opportunities.	8% (19)	13% (29)	25% (57)	20% (46)	34% (79)	3.60
z. Dogs should be on leashes near roads or in heavily used areas.	4% (10)	4% (10)	16% (36)	17% (39)	58% (132)	4.20
Total Respondents						232
(skipped this question)						24

16. Please describe any issues on trail design or policy that you would want the committee to consider.







View Total Respondents	96
(skipped this question)	
	160

5. Participation

17. Did you attend the public meeting on Feb. 21 at Grouse Mountain Lodge regarding trail planning?

		Response Percent	Response Total
Yes		30.6%	68
No		69.4%	154
Total Respondents			222
(skipped this question)			34

18. How did you find out about the Feb. 21 meeting? (Check all that apply)

		Response Percent	Response Total
Postcard		42.6%	84
Newspaper Story		39.1%	77
Letter		3.6%	7
Friend		33%	65
E-Mail		30.5%	60
View Other (please specify)		12.7%	25
Total Respondents			197

(skipped this question)	59
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19. Did you attend any of the meetings on the Whitefish Neighborhood Plan for DNRC School Trust Lands?

		Response Percent	Response Total
Yes		37.8%	85
No		62.2%	140
Total Respondents			225
(skipped this question)			31

20. If you are interested in receiving a monthly e-newsletter with updates on the trail planning process, please enter your e-mail address here.

View Total Respondents	131
(skipped this question)	125

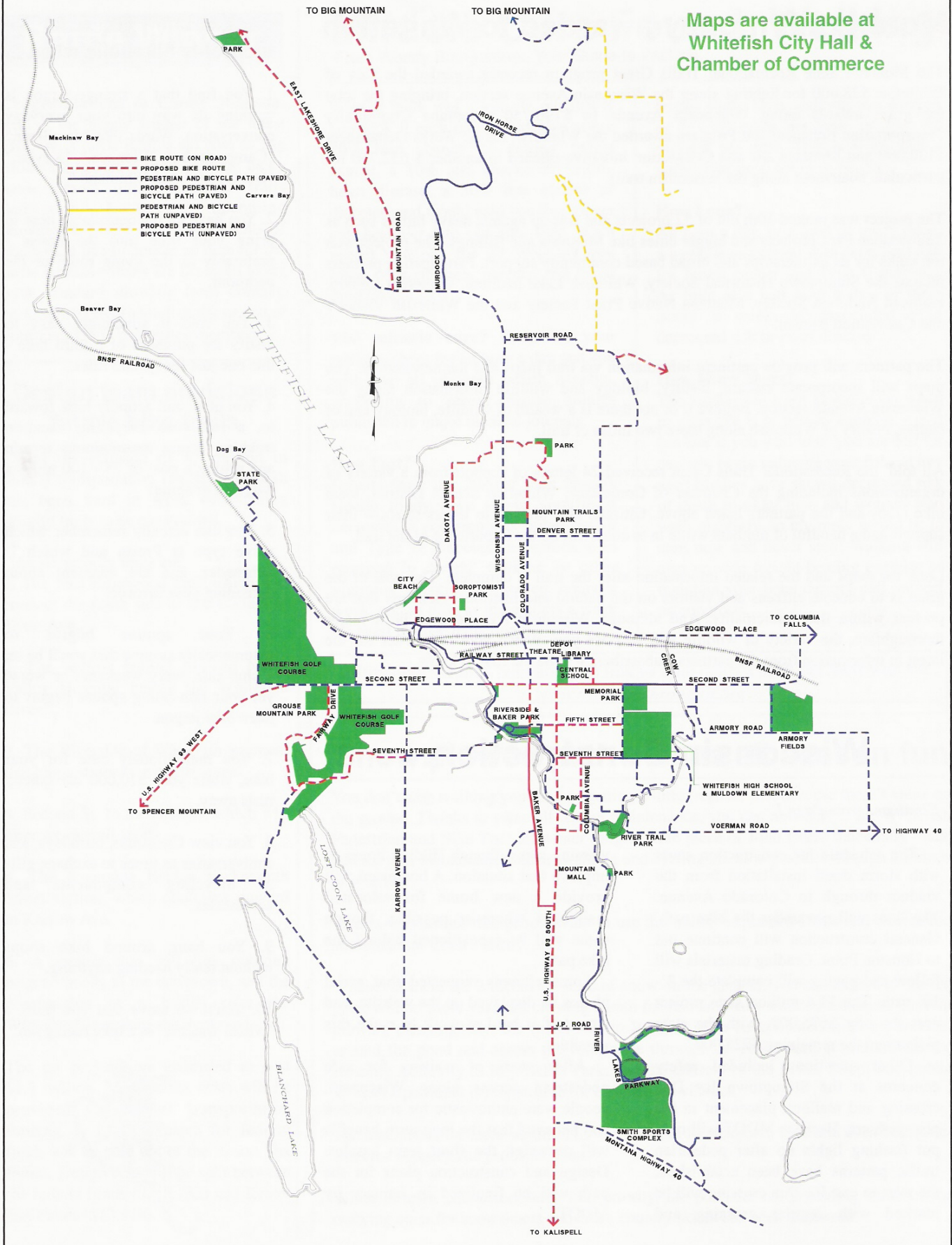
21. Please indicate if you interested in supporting the trail in the following ways.

	Yes	No	Maybe	Response Total
I am interested in volunteering to help out at events related to the trail.	43% (87)	16% (33)	41% (83)	203
I am interested in volunteering for trail building or maintenance projects.	49% (97)	15% (29)	36% (71)	197
I am willing to and/or interested in donating funds to build the trail and/or amenities on the trail.	26% (49)	25% (46)	49% (91)	186
Total Respondents				209
(skipped this question)				47

22. If you are interested in being contacted for volunteer activities, please provide contact information.

		Response Percent	Response Total
View Name:		89.5%	111
View Address:		83.9%	104
View Phone:		78.2%	97
View E-Mail:		88.7%	110
Total Respondents			124
(skipped this question)			132

Maps are available at
Whitefish City Hall &
Chamber of Commerce



Appendix 4: Grant Summaries

1) Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks (FWP)

The federal program titled, "Safe Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users" (SAFETEA-LU) is currently funding the Recreational Trails Program (RTP). Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) administers the RTP funds at the state level, while the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) provides program oversight at the federal level. The State Trails Advisory Committee (STAC) is a council that advises FWP on such things as RTP Program expenditures and a variety of recreational trails issues. An advisory committee such as the STAC is a federal requirement in order for Montana to be eligible for RTP funds.

RTP grant applicants (sponsors) can include federal, state, county or municipal agencies, private associations and clubs. RTP grants may not exceed 80% of the total of an individual project. This is a reimbursement program. After approval of all required documentation, FWP will reimburse the sponsor for 80% of the actual documented costs incurred. Reimbursement of RTP funds will only be approved for project expenditures incurred after the date of the signed project agreement between the project sponsor and FWP.

The goal of Montana's RTP is to distribute money to the best trail projects based upon applications that are complete and of high quality. However, the RTP Program may not be the right grants program in every case. That is why we have listed some of the more important technical and regulatory aspects of the program for your review and consideration. Please be sure you understand RTP rules and regulations BEFORE you begin the application process; it could save you considerable time and money.

<http://fwp.mt.gov/parks/grants/rtp/default.html>

2. Community Transportation Enhancement Program (CTEP)

The long term goals of the Flathead County CTEP is to have a connected system of trails for transportation enhancement opportunities. The CTEP administered by the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT), is a reimbursement program that funds transportation related projects designed to strengthen the cultural, aesthetic, and environmental aspects of Montana's intermodal transportation system. Flathead County receives an allocation of approximately \$200,000 per year. Projects are submitted and administered by the Flathead County Planning and Zoning office. Local projects must commit 13.42% match money and/or in-kind services to 86.58% of reimbursed funds. Groups and organizations may submit an application to the Flathead County Planning and Zoning office at anytime. However, processing not begin until Flathead County has received its allocation amount from the State of Montana. Typically funds are for paved trails along roadways.

3. American Hiking Organization

This web site has an overview of various funds for trails, including federal appropriations, state funds, grants, and private donations. Regardless of administration or funding source, most trails are founded on public-private partnerships and include some form of cost-sharing or leveraging.

http://www.americanhiking.org/news/trail_fund.html

4. **International Mountain Bicycling Association**

The web site has an overview of funds for trails.

<http://www.imba.com/resources/grants/index.html>

5. **National Forest Foundation**

The National Forest Foundation, a private, nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, chartered by Congress, engages America in community-based and national programs that promote the health and public enjoyment of the 192 million acre National Forest System, and administers private gifts of funds and land for the benefit of the National Forests. The NFF believes that communities should play a significant role in determining the future of National Forests and Grasslands. By matching federal funds (provided under a cooperative agreement with the Forest Service) to non-federal dollars, the NFF's Matching Awards Program (MAP) is able to effectively double the resources available to nonprofit partners to implement projects that directly benefit our National Forests and Grasslands.

http://www.natlforests.org/consp_04_map.html

6. **The Paul G. Allen Family Foundation**

The mission of the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation is to transform lives and strengthen communities by fostering innovation, creating knowledge and promoting social progress. The Foundation supports nonprofit organizations located in, or serving populations of, the Pacific Northwest, which includes Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington. The Foundation's program areas that are open for application include: arts and culture, youth engagement, and community development and social change. Letters of inquiry are accepted throughout the year. Visit the website listed above for more in depth information about each of the Foundation's program areas.

<http://www.pgafamilyfoundation.org/>

7. **National Fish and Wildlife Foundation/Wal-Mart: Acres for America**

Acres for America, a partnership between Wal-Mart Stores and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, was established to provide funding for projects that conserve important habitat for fish, wildlife, and plants through acquisition of interest in real property. The goal of the Acres for America program is to offset the footprint of Wal-Mart's domestic facilities on at least an acre by acre basis through these acquisitions. A project's endorsement by appropriate federal, state, and local government agencies and nonprofit conservation organizations that the acquisition is of high conservation value is a primary consideration. Preference will be given to acquisitions that are part of published conservation plans. The deadline for pre-proposals is April 1, 2006; invited proposals are due June 1, 2006. Applicants must apply online through the National Fish and Wildlife website listed above.

<http://www.nfwf.org/programs/walmart/index.cfm>

8. Laura Jane Musser Fund to Support Collaborative Process in Environmental Decision Making

Deadline: September 5, 2006

Through its Initiative to Promote Collaborative Process in Environmental Decision Making, the Laura Jane Musser Fund (<http://www.musserfund.org/>) will support projects by public or not-for-profit entities that undertake consensus-based activities in environmental stewardship or dispute resolution in rural areas.

Up to six grants of up to \$35,000 each will be made through the Environmental Initiative this year. Visit the Laura Jane Musser Fund Web site for complete program information and application procedures.

RFP Link:

<http://fconline.fdncenter.org/pnd/10001908/musserfund>
