Whitefish Trail and Spencer Trails

Department of Natural Resources and Conservation

Management and Operations Plan

2024-2025

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Introduction

This Management and Operations Plan (Plan) provides the purpose, objectives, development, and management strategies for the City of Whitefish (City) in its administration of the Whitefish Trail and Spencer Trails and implementation of the mutual goals of the Whitefish Area Trust Lands Neighborhood Plan (Neighborhood Plan), a 20-year land use plan adopted by the City of Whitefish, Flathead County, (County), MT Department of Natural Resource and Conservation (DNRC), and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP).

To ensure outdoor recreation opportunities will be available for future generations, many partners collaborated to establish the Whitefish Neighborhood Plan, a framework for decision-making regarding the active management and conservation of these trust lands. These partners included the Montana Board of Land Commissioners (Land Board), DNRC, FWP, the U.S. Forest Service, Flathead National Forest, County, City, private landowners, and community groups and interested individuals. The Land Board approved the Neighborhood Plan in 2004.

The goals of the Neighborhood Plan emphasize transactions that conserve Montana's plant, fish, and wildlife habitat, protect clean water, minimize wildlife risk, enhance rural character, provide quality public recreational access, and generate long-term and full-market economic return for Montana's trust beneficiaries.

The Neighborhood Plan covers 13,000 acres of State Trust Lands adjacent to the Whitefish area which have been used by past generations of community members and visitors for recreation. For hikers, bicyclists, cross-country skiers, and other outdoor enthusiasts, this forested land offers stunning views, premier wildlife habitat, and challenging terrain. Opportunities to enjoy nature just minutes from town are becoming increasingly rare, making the preservation of areas such as those occupied by the Recreation System of vital importance.

In 2005, the City and Whitefish Legacy Partners (WLP) initiated the Whitefish Neighborhood Plan recommendation to establish a recreational trail system to connect various State Trust Land parcels and thereby create a trail corridor encircling the greater Whitefish area. The State of Montana, through the DNRC, the City, and other partners developed the Trail Runs Through It Master Plan (TRTI) in 2006 to guide the planning and development of the Whitefish Trail as a revenue-generating endeavor on State Trust Lands. The Trail Runs Through It, now known as the Whitefish Trail (WT), was licensed under Land Use Licenses in 2009 and the Whitefish Trail Grand Opening at Lion Mountain was in 2010. The WT has developed into a community outdoor recreation asset enjoyed by locals and visitors alike currently comprised of 47-miles and 15 trailheads.

In 2013, the City and Flathead Fat Tires (FFT), now known as Flathead Area Mountain Bikers (FAMB), collaborated to sign a 10-year Special Recreation Use License (SRUL) agreement at Spencer Mountain with the DNRC to develop and maintain sections of the Whitefish Trail (managed by WLP), Spencer Trails including trails with Technical Trail Features (TTFs) managed

by FAMB. This important recreation asset is an unprecedented partnership to plan and manage a trail system surrounding Whitefish and Whitefish Lake. Today, FAMB continues to be a partner at Spencer Mountain where they build and maintain their Freeride trails and are responsible for maintenance and upkeep of the Spencer Trails and associated Technical Trail Features (TTFs). In 2024, the City and DNRC signed a 10-year Land Use License (LUL) at Spencer Mountain to maintain the existing recreation system.

The Whitefish Trail and Spencer Trails Management and Operations Plan encompasses a variety of licensed activities for authorized use and management of public recreation on the Whitefish Trail, covered by four land use licenses (LUL) – Lupfer and Swift Creek/Smith Lake trail, Lupfer and Swift Creek/Smith Lake trailhead, Smith Lake Lakeshore, and Spencer Mountain. The Lupfer and Swift Creek/Smith Lake sections are managed by DNRC Stillwater Unit and Spencer Mountain is managed by the DNRC Kalispell Unit. Whitefish Trail users do not need an annual MT Conservation License to recreate on the Whitefish Trail, except at Spencer Mountain, users must have purchased an annual MT Conservation License to use the trails.

The Whitefish Trail also includes segments on US Forest Service land known as Forest System trails, segments through private land secured through trail easements held by the City of Whitefish, and at Lupfer, the lands are additionally encumbered by a conservation easement held by Flathead Land Trust (FLT). As a result, this Plan is subject to the terms of the LULs, system trail regulations, and other easements which control the rights and responsibilities of the parties for the areas covered by the licenses and easements. The portion of the Whitefish Trail and Spencer Trails referenced herein is identified on the map in Exhibit E. A map of the entire Whitefish Trail and Spencer Trails system, which includes the portions of the trail not guided by this document (Beaver Lakes Public Recreation Use Easement, WT Haskill, and WT Holbrook Overlook), can be found in Exhibit F. Separate operations and management agreements exist to guide decision making for these segments of the Whitefish Trail.

This Plan provides the City and its partners with a working operations manual to assist in planning, constructing, and maintaining the Whitefish Trail and Spencer Trails under Land Use Licenses #3053193, #3053194, and #3052400041 in cooperation with DNRC.

I. Land Use Licenses

The City is licensed by the DNRC through LULs to occupy and use State Trust Lands for the purpose of constructing, maintaining, and managing a recreational use trail (Land Use License #3053193, #305200041) and to occupy and use lands for the construction of trail-related amenities, such as parking lots, trailheads, and restrooms (Land Use License #3053194, #305200041). The recreational use trail and trail-related amenities are referred to as the "licensed area".

1. <u>LUL #3053193 – Swift Creek, Smith Lake, and Lupfer Trails</u>

The licensed area for planned trail construction, maintenance, and operations under LUL #3053193 covers Phase II Lupfer and Phase III Swift Creek as follows:

a. Phase II Lupfer: The City is authorized to construct, maintain, and operate Phase II, identified on the attached Whitefish Trail map. Phase II Lupfer is a loop system of trails located in Sections 2 and 11 of Township 31 North, Range 23 West. It comprises approximately four miles (approximately ±2.1 trail miles and approximately ±1.9 road miles).
b. Phase III Swift Creek: The City is authorized to construct, maintain, and operate Phase III, Swift Creek, identified on the attached map. Phase III, Swift Creek is a system of trails located in the SW 1/4 Section 29, NE 1/4 Section 31, Section 32, Township 32 North, Range 22 West. It has approximately three and one-half miles of trail and provides access to Smith Lake.

2. <u>LUL #3053194 – Swift Creek and Lupfer Trailheads</u>

The licensed area for planned trail improvements under LUL #3053194 covers the Lupfer Trailhead and Swift Creek Trailhead as follows:

a. Acreage for Lupfer Trailhead: Tract(s) of land situated in Section 2, Township 31 North, Range 23 West, in Flathead County, Montana, and being further described as follows:

   A tract of land comprising the Lupfer Trailhead, parking lot, kiosk, signs, and access road, comprising approximately ±0.10 acres, more or less, as identified on the attached map.

b. Acreage for Swift Creek Trailhead: Tract(s) of land situated in Section 32, Township 32 North, Range 22 West, in Flathead County, Montana, and being further described as follows:

   A tract of land comprising the Swift Creek Trailhead, parking lot, kiosk, signs, brochure racks, garbage facilities, and vault toilet (approximately ±0.53acres, more or less), as identified on the attached map.

3. <u>LUL #305200041 – Spencer Mountain</u>

The licensed area for planned trail improvements under LUL #305200041 covers Spencer Mountain, including the Twin Bridges Trailhead, South Spencer Trailhead, and Spencer Trail Network including the Spencer Mountain Whitefish Trail and Spencer Trails as follows:

a. Acreage for Twin Bridges Trailhead: Tract(s) of land situated in Section 5, Township 30 North, Range 22 West, in Flathead County, Montana, and being further described as follows:

   A tract of land comprising the Twin Bridges Trailhead, parking lot, kiosk, signs, brochure racks, and access road, comprising approximately 0.303 acres, more or less, as identified on the attached map.

b. Acreage for South Spencer Trailhead: Tract(s) of land situated in Section 15, Township 30 North, Range 22 West, in Flathead County, Montana, and being further described as follows:

A tract of land comprising the South Spencer Trailhead, parking lot, signage, kiosk, approximately 0.146 acres, more or less, as identified on the attached map.

c. Acreage for Trail Network: Tract(s) of land situated in Section 4, 5, 9, 15, and 16, Township 30 North, Range 22 West, in Flathead County, Montana, and being further described as follows:

A tract of land comprising of a 10-foot trail corridor for 9.01 miles, and signage, approximately 10.921 acres, more or less, as identified on the attached map.

A tract of land comprising of a 16-foot trail corridor for 12.95 miles, technical trail features, and signage, approximately 12.955 acres, more or less, as identified on the attached map.

4. LUL #3052300069 – Smith Lake Lakeshore
The licensed area for rehabilitation and partial reclamation of trails under LUL#3052300069 covers an area accessing Smith Lake and Smith Lake Dam as follows:

a. Acreage for Smith Lake Dam: Tract(s) of land situated in Section 32, Township 32 North, Range 22 West, in Flathead County, Montana, and being further described in the Smith Lake Site Plan (Exhibit G).

II. Development of the Whitefish Trail in Land Use License areas.

1. <u>Lupfer Trailhead and Trail</u>

a. The Lupfer trailhead and trail network is located on Stillwater State Trust Lands approximately eleven miles north of Whitefish. This trailhead is accessed via the Flathead County road, Lupfer Road, off Highway #93 North. The WT Lupfer trails are not currently connected to other sections of the Whitefish Trail system although there is interest for the trails to connect in the future. Lupfer totals approximately 4 miles of trails and consists of an outer loop trail and a spur trail to a viewpoint inside the loop. The trail system is a combination of pre-existing logging roads and single-track trail. The logging road network crisscrosses the Lupfer parcel, however only a portion of the road network is included in the trail system. The trailhead provides parking for approximately 6-8 vehicles and is not consistently maintained in the winter. Due to the proximity of this trailhead to Whitefish, amenities are limited to an informational kiosk with no garbage can, mutt mitts, or toilet facilities.

b. The Lupfer Unit of Stillwater State Trust Lands is encumbered by a conservation easement held by the Flathead Land Trust (FLT) to maintain the Conservation Values of the property. Additionally, the conservation easement allows for development of three

single family residences with 20-acre building envelopes and driveways to access housing sites on the parcel. The potential building locations are all north of the Lupfer WT loop. General locations of future housing sites were determined in a 2008 survey, but exact sites are to be determined, if necessary, with consideration given to maintaining optimal Conservation Values on the property. The conservation easement also grants that the non-motorized public access recreational trail system is an allowed use. Any group or commercial activities must be approved by DNRC and FLT. Reasonable prior notice is necessary to facilitate approval. DNRC assumes responsibility to notify and secure approvals with FLT.

c. The DNRC access road to the Lupfer TH and WT trails has an easement on it owned by an adjacent landowner to maintain access to their property. This easement guarantees their access in perpetuity, restricts DNRC and City/WLP activities at Lupfer from restricting their access (a poorly planned TH expansion, for instance), and presents the opportunity for shared maintenance of the road, which WLP is exploring.

2. <u>Swift Creek Trailhead and Swift Creek/Smith Lake Trail</u>

a. The Swift Creek trailhead and trails are located on Stillwater State Trust Lands approximately six miles north of Whitefish via Flathead County roads: East Lakeshore Road and Del Rey Road. The trailhead supports a variety of recreation uses on the State Trust Lands including walking, hiking, biking, access to hunting, and winter access including grooming and snowmobile use. Target shooting is a historical use in the area that is being discouraged by DNRC for the first 1-1/2 miles along Lower Whitefish Road due to safety concerns over the proximity to the trail. Substantial improvements to the existing trailhead and parking area include 12 pull-in parking spots, one handicap-accessible vault toilet, covered informational kiosk, a wildlife resistant garbage can, “mutt-mitt” pet waste bag dispenser, and a Whitefish Trail Monument.

b. The Swift Creek trailhead is managed by WLP, as the City’s designee, for the Whitefish Trail and the DNRC for winter groomed trail access. Flathead Snowmobile Association (FSA) maintains a groomed trail system and the DNRC supports winter activities including snowmobiling. Prior to every winter season, WLP and FSA should agree upon trailhead plowing needs, parking issues, and restroom facilities management.

c. The Swift Creek trailhead includes DNRC’s management of gravel pit mining as permitted by DEQ under a 20-year permit. The DNRC’s 20-year DEQ permit granting the right to permit gravel mining was renewed June 20, 2024, allowing continued gravel extraction for road repair work. The gravel pit mining is located at the north end of the parking area and the pit area is not part of the licensed trailhead acreage. The permits are open to bidders annually until the remaining gravel is removed and reclamation will not be completed until gravel removal is complete. The current DEQ permit expires December 31, 2040.

The Swift Creek trails are currently separate from other sections of the Whitefish Trail. The Swift Creek trails total approximately 3.5 miles of trails and consists of a ½-mile handicapped accessible trail starting at the Swift Creek trailhead, a loop trail, and a trail segment that accesses Smith Lake and the Smith Lake parking area. The trail system is a combination of pre-existing logging roads and single-track trail. Signs are posted at the Swift Creek viewpoints to inform users to stay on the trail. Large boulders are in place to buffer the edge of the embankment. Signs are also posted on the ½ mile handicapped accessible portion of the trail asking users to leash their dogs while the trail is closer to Swift creek.

3. Spencer Mountain - <u>Twin Bridges and South Spencer Trailheads and Trail Network</u>

a. There are two trailheads located on State Trust Lands approximately 4.5 miles west of Whitefish. The Twin Bridges trailhead is accessed via Twin Bridges Road, off Highway 93 North, and the South Spencer trailhead is accessed from Rifle Range Road, via KM Ranch Road, via Twin Bridges and Highway 93 North. Rifle Range Road is also used as access by eight private landowners and the Rifle Range. The Twin Bridges trailhead provides parking for approximately 15 vehicles. Amenities include an informational kiosk, garbage can, mutt mitts, and toilet facilities. The South Spencer Trailhead provides parking for approximately 6-8 vehicles. Amenities are limited to an informational kiosk only, with no garbage can, mutt mitts, or toilet facilities.
    a. At South Spencer, the DNRC reserves the right to require the City and WLP to share in the maintenance of up to ¼ mile of the TH access road along with the other landowners further up the road, including but not limited to weed management. In support of this, as good neighbors, WLP and the City have conducted weed management at South Spencer and contributed regularly to road grading and snow plowing on Rifle Range Road.

The Spencer trail network is a separate section of the Whitefish Trail system comprised of approximately 9 miles of the Whitefish Trail and 6.7 miles of the Spencer Freeride Trails. The Whitefish Trail system consists of a north to south loop trail and a crossover east-west connector trail and is a combination of pre-existing logging roads and historic single-track trail. The nine designated Freeride Trails are primarily designed for downhill mountain biking and the trails include technical trail features (TTF's) and ride arounds. These trails and features are managed exclusively by FAMB. Technical trail features (TTF) at Spencer will be evaluated on an annual basis by FAMB staff. FAMB will then submit an updated inventory of trails to the City, including reports on any rebuilt or modified structures.

b. The City of Whitefish, FAMB, and WLP have developed recreation amenities, including FAMB's freeride trail network, a ~9-mile Whitefish Trail loop trail network circumnavigating the area maintained by WLP, and trailhead amenities shared by FAMB

and WLP in the 2,500-acre DNRC Spencer Mountain unit. The Whitefish Trail at Spencer is different than other sections of the WT as the area utilizes historic, informal trails combined with re-routes and new construction and requires users to have a MT Conservation License.

4. Smith Lake Lakeshore
   a. This license is for the rehabilitation and partial reclamation of informal trails accessing the Smith Lake and Smith Lake Dam which has led to erosion and sediment runoff issues. Improvements at Smith Lake were added in 2023 including crib steps, viewing platform, bench, rock retaining wall, dock with ramp, and a split rail fence was added to block access to the Smith Lake dam as required by the DNRC.

II. Roles and Responsibilities

A. The State of Montana, through the Land Board exercises general authority, direction, and control over the care, management, and disposition of School State Trust lands. The State holds for the benefit of the public, the right of and duty to the public to access State Trust Lands for general recreation use. Under the direction of the Board, the DNRC is responsible for the leasing, management, sale or other disposition of the State Lands to their highest and best use. The State Lands referenced in this Plan are classified as "Forested" and their primary use is to be managed for revenue generating forestry operations. "Recreation", i.e. licensing for the management of recreational use, is a secondary use. The Neighborhood Plan was developed to address the State's interest to generate revenue on behalf of the State's Schools and Universities and to support the need to seek the appropriate balance between forestry, recreation, School Trust beneficiaries, and the local economy.

B. The Legacy Lands Advisory Committee (LLAC) and Whitefish Trail Operations Committee (WT Ops) are joint committees formed under an MOU between the City and WLP. LLAC members include City Councilors, or the Mayor, appointed by the City Council and WLP Board Members appointed by WLP's Board of Directors.

1. The LLAC, which meets quarterly and is managed by WLP staff who produce meeting agendas, advises and assists the City and WLP in achieving the recreation, conservation, and revenue goals and objectives of the Neighborhood Plan. This includes developing and implementing the annual work on the Whitefish Trail, providing input on the planning, design, construction, and management of the Whitefish Trail, approving the annual WT budget, and reviewing proposed projects and proposals. LLAC consults with DNRC and FWP to develop a structure to include DNRC and FWP as ex-officio members of the joint committees and include other key partners as technical advisors.

a. The annual WT New Construction and Operations & Maintenance budget is approved by the WLP Board of Directors and LLAC. WLP, not the City, holds the fiscal responsibility for this budget. To align with WLP's calendar year budget and the City's fiscal year budget, WLP makes two transfers every 12 months to the City to pay for budgeted WT expenses. The WT Grant Fund is the City account that houses WT budgeted income and expenses.

2. WT Operations Committee, which meets monthly on the last Tuesday of each month at the WLP office at 4pm and is managed by WLP staff who produce meeting notes and program reports/agendas, oversees the Whitefish Trail and advises and informs the LLAC on the planning, design, construction, and management of the Whitefish Trail Recreation System.

C. The City's primary contribution to the WT and the Spencer Freeride Trails is in the form of legal status as a municipality under Montana law, time, non-financial resources, and the professional talents of its staff, such as the Parks and Recreation Department Staff, the City Attorney and the Finance Director. The City is responsible for providing appropriate public notice and conducting any necessary public hearings.

1. City Staff
   i. Community Services Coordinator (CSC): The CSC is the primary point of contact between the City and WLP, FAMB, and the DNRC. The CSC oversees insurance coverage of WT assets, WT expense payments and reimbursements, development of WT construction, operations, and maintenance contracts, and other WT licenses and agreements.

2. Project Specialists are contracted by WLP through a City small works and/or consultant contract to provide planning, design, construction, maintenance, and ongoing management services for the Whitefish Trail. The Project Specialists are responsible for organizing professional contractors, when necessary for trail construction and maintenance.

WLP is responsible for facilitating transaction-related and recreation-related methodologies, fundraising, and supporting all activities associated with the advancement of the Whitefish Trail (events, education, volunteers, grant writing, etc.). Additionally, WLP supports the City in its duties related to the Whitefish Trail in accordance with the MOU between the City and WLP. This support is accomplished through in-kind work in the form of staff and volunteer efforts funded by WLP. WLP is devoted to creating a lasting legacy for the Whitefish community and is dedicated to acting as a catalyst to create innovative and unprecedented solutions to permanently protect Whitefish's important places.

1. Whitefish Legacy Partners Staff

a. Program Director (PD)
    i. The PD is a WLP employee who leads WLP's recreation and educational programs and partnerships. The PD leads WT new construction projects, operations & maintenance work , and oversees the WT budget. The PD works with the PM, TC, and partners to ensure the WT is operated and maintained effectively.
b. Program Manager (PM)
    i. The PM is a WLP employee who assists with WLP recreation and outreach efforts. The PM, with the PD, oversees operations and maintenance of the WT and volunteer programs, and trail events.
c. Whitefish Trail Coordinator (TC)
    i. The TC is a WLP employee who plans and carries out trail maintenance projects on the 47-mile Whitefish Trail. The TC works independently and collaboratively to assess trail maintenance needs, perform required work, and coordinate and supervise volunteers. When new trail construction projects are underway, the TC may work with contracted trail builders as needed. WLP recruits volunteers to support the Whitefish Trail.

2. Volunteers may assist with trail construction, maintenance, and sustainable trail construction techniques, noxious weed pulling, sign installation, and other areas. WLP will administer the volunteer program in cooperation with the City.
    a. Whitefish Trail Ambassador Program: Trail Ambassadors will assist in maintaining the trail system, providing information to visitors, and reporting problems and vandalism. Trail Ambassadors will be a presence on the Whitefish Trail to answer trail user questions and to report to WLP with areas in need of maintenance or other problems seen on the trail. Trail ambassadors will pick up garbage and check restrooms for cleanliness and supplies. Trail Ambassadors may also provide the Whitefish Trail support at fundraising events and other general Whitefish Trail events.

    b. Whitefish Trail Patrol: Trail Patrol volunteers ride authorized trails individually or in teams. The WLP Program Director will provide instruction and schedule the Trail Patrol volunteers to be visible on the Whitefish Trail. Trail Patrol volunteers will help gather visitor information data and assist other trail users.

    c. Whitefish Trail Adopt-A-Trail Program: The Whitefish Trail's Adopt-A-Trail Program focuses on engaging members of the community to help maintain the growing trail system. Seventeen trail segments and trailheads have been identified for adoption. Individuals, businesses, and organizations can adopt a section of the Whitefish Trail as either financial sponsors or a volunteer trail crew.

d. Trail Construction/Maintenance: Volunteers who sign up for trail construction and maintenance will receive instruction in International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) Guidelines and WT construction techniques. Through the efforts of trail volunteers, and maintenance of the licensed trails may be completed more efficiently and requiring fewer public resources.

D. FWP provides requested technical assistance in the planning, development, and management of the Whitefish Trail and associated recreation amenities and the State's wildlife, fish, and use of the lands and water under its jurisdiction and control.
   1. Wildlife Management – FWP was part of a collaborative effort to shape the WT Ops Wildlife Protocols (Exhibit C) As part of those protocols, FWP provides requested technical assistance when issues regarding wildlife come up on the trail, such as bear sightings.
   2. Abandoned Vehicles - Through an MOU between the DNRC and FWP, abandoned vehicles will now be ticketed by FWP and removed in five days. WLP can report abandoned vehicles to the DNRC.

E. Flathead Area Mountain Bikers (FAMB) is a non-profit organization and partner of the City of Whitefish responsible for managing the Spencer Trails and Spencer Trail TTFs on behalf of the City as per an agreement between FAMB and the City. FAMB provides labor, materials, and equipment to construct, maintain, and decommission the trails and technical features as authorized by the Spencer Mountain LUL. FAMB provides financial support and fundraising for the Spencer Trails and FAMB ensures the Spencer Trails meet the TTF guidelines as identified in Exhibit D.

   While FAMB works closely with Whitefish Legacy Partners and participates in WT Ops meetings, the Spencer Freeride Trails are managed independently from the Whitefish Trail system and are not governed by the Legacy Lands Advisory Committee (LLAC). FAMB supports broader trail efforts by encouraging its members and volunteers to participate in Whitefish Trail events and patrols.

III. Whitefish Trail Operations

A. <u>Trail Planning and Management Activities</u>

   1. LLAC is responsible for the ongoing vision, planning, and overall management of the Whitefish Trail. WT Ops is responsible for the day-to-day management and operations of the Whitefish Trail. To assist in executing the plans of the LLAC and WT Ops, WLP may contract with project specialists, volunteers, and other third parties when necessary to plan, design, construct, and maintain the Whitefish Trail.

2. Trail maintenance includes:

    a. The trail corridor should be kept cleared of non-merchantable woody debris, brush and branches to a width of up to ten feet and a height of up to ten feet above the underlying ground and may occur without DNRC's authorization. Upon notification from WLP, the City will notify DNRC of any merchantable timber across the trails (greater than seven inches in diameter, measured four and one-half feet from the ground on a standing green tree) prior to removing same and DNRC will promptly provide direction on removal of the timber. Compensation may be required from the City WT Trail account to the State upon removal of any green merchantable timber and would be determined by a DNRC forest officer.

    b. Drainage should be maintained at all times on the trails.

    c. Trail use should be limited during wet periods, as necessary.

    d. Posting and maintenance of approved signage.

    e. Any trail construction, reconstruction, relocation or abandonment would require the written consent of the DNRC unit manager from either Kalispell or Stillwater depending on activity location. This would include submitting design standards for trail width, grade, erosion control features and location for approval.

    f. Any activities that require power equipment (heavy equipment) for soil moving would require written consent of the DNRC unit manager from either Kalispell or Stillwater, depending on activity location.

    g. Technical trail features (TTF) at Spencer will be evaluated on an annual basis by FAMB staff. FAMB will then submit an updated inventory of trails to the City, including reports on any rebuilt or modified structures. See Exhibit D for Spencer Lake Freeride Trail Guidelines, which outlines specific standards for TTF maintenance.

B. <u>Fire and Forest Management Activities</u>

1. DNRC specifically reserves its administrative rights to access State Trust Lands for fire emergencies and forest management services, subject to the terms of the LULs. For licensed areas, DNRC may require the City and its partners to relocate portions of the

trail system to minimize conflicts with land management activities subject to the following:

a. A minimum of one-year's notice will be given to the City by DNRC of pending management activities affecting licensed activities.

b. The City will be invited to participate in the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) review through the scoping period of a project that is within the license area to develop a solution that minimizes impacts to licensed activities while meeting Trust Land Management goals.

C. New Construction – Trails

1. WLP will construct and maintain new trails in accordance with the land use license terms and conditions, MEPA stipulations/mitigations, this Plan, and IMBA Guidelines, as applicable.

2. Trail mitigations include:
   a. Clearing for new trails (tread) should occur in a narrow swath, not to exceed 39 inches for standard tread and 48 inches for handicap accessible tread.

   b. Back slopes (cut slopes) should be at a stable angle.

   c. Wasted material must be spread to a depth that would not inhibit existing vegetation. Additionally, waste material will not be placed in a draw or location that could facilitate erosion to a draw.
   d. Grass seed mix prescribed by the DNRC should be used for trail cut slopes and wasted material. Bare soil must be seeded within seven days to stabilize soils and reduce the risk of weed infestations.

   e. Drainage must be maintained at all times on the trails.

   f. Trail use will be limited during wet periods as determined by DNRC.

   g. WLP will avoid trail construction, relocation, and reconstruction activities that involve ground disturbance during wet conditions as determined by DNRC.

   h. All tracked and wheeled equipment will be cleaned of noxious weeds prior to beginning trail construction. A DNRC representative will inspect equipment periodically during trail construction.

i. Any new TTF's will be built and maintained by FAMB according to the Spencer Lake Freeride Trail Guidelines (Exhibit D) which outlines specific standards for TTF design and construction.

3. Motorized access for the purpose of constructing, maintaining and repairing the trail, including the transport of equipment and supplies necessary to support the above listed work, will be allowed only upon prior approval of the appropriate DNRC Unit Manager. Legal right of access to private, federal, or other lands must be secured by City.

4. Unless authorized by the LUL, detailed plans and timing for proposed new trail construction in the licensed area must be submitted one (1) year in advance for review and prior approval by DNRC.

D. <u>New Construction -Trailheads and Parking Areas</u>

1. Trailheads always include parking, information kiosks, and may include a vault toilet, mutt mitts, bearproof trash cans, boat access, picnic tables, lake access, etc.

2. All trailheads will have consistent and clear signs approved by the DNRC that should include information on trail locations, multi-use trail etiquette, forest management rules, and current fire hazards.

3. Based on use and funding, parking lots may be plowed for winter season access.

4. Trailhead improvements will be maintained and checked for maintenance needs and supplies.

    a. WT Adopt-A-Trail and WT Ambassadors will assist with picking up garbage, checking restrooms for cleanliness and supplies, providing information to visitors, and reporting vandalism.

    b. WT Patrol and WT Ambassadors will assist with reporting trail use, supporting trail users, providing information to visitors, and reporting vandalism.

    c. Trailheads may include wildlife resistant trash receptacles for garbage.

    d. Trailheads may include mitt dispensers for pet waste. There will be postings at trailheads regarding rules on pet waste.

    e. Trash will be removed to prevent accumulation and overflow.

f. Wildlife resistant trash receptacles will be constructed of metal and maintained free of major holes, major dents, and graffiti, attached to the ground, and wildlife resistant.

E. Guidelines

1. The Whitefish Trail corridor will be ten (10) feet in width and the Spencer Freeride Trails corridor will be up to sixteen (16) feet in width and may be widened as necessary to accommodate ride-arounds and fall zones.

2. Trails may use an additional five feet in width with a length of ten feet, at intervals no more frequent than approximately 1000 (one thousand) feet for the installation of benches and trail passings, where minimal grade work and clearing are necessary. WLP will maintain maps showing the location of new trail construction and the installation of new trail improvements.

F. Noxious Weeds

1. Noxious weeds are a serious issue in Montana that displace native plant habitat and threaten ecosystem health. The LULs require the City and its partners to help eradicate noxious weeds along the trail system. Some noxious weed species can be hand-pulled and bagged to eliminate spread by seed. Other species (such as Canada thistle) spread by rhizomes and typically cannot be hand-pulled. To minimize spraying of herbicide, WLP will instruct its volunteers to identify and hand-pull noxious weeds to the greatest extent feasible. A certified applicator will complete minimum annual weed treatment each spring for the treatment of weeds during the rosette stage. Treatment of both trailheads and the WT corridor will be completed by applicators equipped with backpack sprayers using the spot-spraying method. Applicators will use minimum quantity of appropriate chemicals, including Tordon and Opensight, to target invasive species, such as Mullein, Hawkweed, Spotted Knapweed, and Houndstongue. Locations of invasive species are documented for annual reporting and for reference for future planning to ensure consistent tracking of progress of ongoing eradication methodology. Each year, WLP will send the City reports of the completion of noxious weed control measures. The City will update DNRC upon receipt of the reports from WLP.

G. Wildlife -

1. The lands around Whitefish, where the WT passes through, feature a wide variety of fauna, including large carnivores and endangered species. All trails and trail operations have been designed to minimize impact to these species. Refer to Exhibit C, Wildlife Protocol for coordinated guidelines for managing the Whitefish Trail in situations with potential wildlife conflict.
    a. FWP was part of a collaborative effort including the DNRC, City, and WLP, to shape the WT Ops Wildlife Protocols (Exhibit C). As part of those protocols, FWP provides requested technical assistance when issues regarding wildlife come up on the trail, such as bear sightings.
2. DNRC reserves the right to institute seasonal trail closures if deemed necessary and may institute temporary closures if conflicts occur.

3. Signs at the trailheads will inform users of recreating in an area with large carnivores and proper behavior around wildlife.

H. Signage

1. Whitefish Trail signs will be designed and installed in a consistent fashion throughout the trail corridor, and all sign designs, content and plans will be reviewed and approved by DNRC prior to installation. Specific sign design, content, and plans are specified in the land use license and must be met and maintained. Appropriate signage will be installed to notify trail users to stay on the trail. Interpretive sign content may include education regarding Trust Lands, forest ecosystems, forest succession, plants (native, non-native, and medicinal), birds, geology, fire, and other topics as needed. At Spencer, recreationalists will be reminded that a Montana Conservation License is required.

2. WLP will install such approved signage at trailheads, parking lots and on all trails within the licensed area. Prior to the installation of any signage the WT Ops will review the sign's contents and location with the designated representative of DNRC:

DNRC – Kalispell Unit, 655 Timberwolf Parkway, Suite 2, Kalispell, MT 59901-12 15: Unit

Manager:	Dave Poukish	751-2263	dpoukish@mt.gov
Forester:	Alexander Golden	751-2265	alexander.golden@mt.gov

DNRC – Stillwater Unit, PO Box 164, Olney, MT 59927-0164:

Unit Manager:	David Ring	881-2663	dring@mt.gov
Real Estate & Spec. Uses Manager:	Dan Dobbin	881-2666	daniel.dobbin@mt.gov

WLP will maintain a log identifying the signage and its installation and maintenance and a map showing the location of all signs in the licensed area. This includes donor

recognition plaques, the sizes and locations of which have been agreed upon with the DNRC in the 2015 Whitefish Trail Donor Recognition map.

I. Commercial and Special Events

1. Commercial Events: The DNRC may authorize commercial activities and events on the WT. The DNRC will provide Prior Notice and consultation through the WT Ops Committee. The City shall receive Use Applications preferably 30 days in advance of commercial activities and events to be held on the WT. Such commercial activities and events will be compatible with existing public recreation use. The DNRC shall mitigate the authorized use so as to not cause damage to existing developed trail-related improvements.

2. Special Events: The City and it's partners may hold non-commercial events periodically to support the WT. The City will notify DNRC in advance (preferably 20-30 days when possible) of scheduled special events and will request approval from the DNRC prior to the event. State of Montana administrative policies and process for special events will apply and may require additional licensing.

3. If any such events and activities generate additional traffic, stipulation P of the LUL #3053193 (parking management) will be implemented.

J. Trespass

1. Although extreme care has been utilized to protect personal privacy, portions of the trail pass through private property on trail easements. In addition, segments of the trail pass in proximity to various private properties. While passing through private property, trail users will be required to stay on the trail. For those portions of the trail that are on State lands but come near private property, WLP may install signage, in appropriate locations, that indicates nearby private property and encourages trail users to stay on the established WT corridor. WLP may also provide "Private Property" signs for interested landowners to place along property boundaries. Through appropriate signage, trail users may be deterred from trespassing. All WT signage will be designed in a consistent fashion that meets approval of DNRC.

IV. DNRC's Reservations and Right to Entry

DNRC reserves all rights and interests to the land under the licenses other than those specifically granted by license.

A. DNRC's Access: Representatives of DNRC will have the right to enter into and upon the licensed area and all parts thereof for the purpose of responding to fire emergencies, managing the land and/or inspecting and examining uses thereof.

B. State Historical Society's Access: Representatives of the State Historical Society of the State of Montana will at all reasonable times, upon written notification to DNRC prior to entry, have the right to enter into and upon the licensed area for the purpose of carrying out the duties assigned the Historical Society by the State Antiquities Act, MCA §§22-3-421 through 22-3-442.

C. Cultural Resources: The City and/or its partners/contractors will not disturb any cultural, archeological, historical or paleontological resources on these licensed lands. Should any of the above listed resources be found within the licensed area, all activities and uses surrounding the resources will stop and the City will contact the appropriate DNRC unit office. DNRC will contact DNRC's Archeologist to investigate the resources and to develop any stipulations required of the City and/or its partner/contractors if necessary to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts to said resources.

V. Complaint Procedure

A. All complaints should be directed to the City of Whitefish or WLP for resolution.

1. Individuals may raise complaints by contacting the City Parks and Recreation Department by contacting Parks and Recreation Administrative Assistant, at 863-2470, or by contacting WLP at 862-3880.

   Individuals may also choose to notify the City in writing addressed to Parks and Recreation Department Director, PO Box 158, Whitefish, MT 59937-0158, or by completing forms available online at the City's website, www.cityofwhitefish.org, under the Parks and Recreation Department.

2. If a complaint is not resolved to the individual's satisfaction, the individual may contact the City Manager, City Mayor, or the City Council through the City Clerk's office for resolution:

City of Whitefish, PO Box 158, Whitefish, MT 59937-0158:
City Manager: Dana Smith 863-2406 dsmith@cityofwhitefish.gov
City Clerk: Michelle Howke 863-2402 mhowke@cityofwhitefish.gov

If the complaint is elevated to an LLAC or City Council meeting agenda item, DNRC will be notified as much in advance of the meeting as reasonably possible.

B. For complaints which are directed to DNRC activity or which require a DNRC policy change, the complaints will be forwarded to DNRC for resolution.

DNRC – Kalispell Unit, 655 Timberwolf Parkway, Suite 2, Kalispell, MT 59901-1215:
Unit Manager: Dave Poukish 751-2263 dpoukish@mt.gov
Trust Lands Program Manager: Michelle Anderson 751-2244 manderson@mt.gov
Forester: Alexander Golden 751-2265 alexander.golden@mt.gov

DNRC – Stillwater Unit, PO Box 164, Olney, MT 59927-0164:
Unit Manager: David Ring 881-2663 dring@mt.gov
Real Estate & Spec. Uses Manager: Dan Dobbin 881-2666 daniel.dobbin@mt.gov

C. As outlined in section VII below, the City and DNRC will review citizen and agency comments the City and DNRC received the previous year in its scheduled Annual Public Comment process.

D. Emergency Services:
   1. To report an emergency, call 9-1-1. The 911 call center will dispatch the appropriate agency(ies) emergency response, which could include fire trucks, ambulance, law enforcement, and FWP wardens.

      To report wild animal incidents and problems, refer to the Whitefish Trail Guidelines for Managing Recreational Trails to Minimize Hazardous Wildlife-Human Encounters, Exhibit C.

      To report other incidents, call the Flathead County Sheriff, 758-5585. The entire Whitefish Trail and Recreation System is located outside of Whitefish city limits, and as such, the Flathead County Sheriff is primarily responsible for law enforcement.

   2. Additional law enforcement along the trail and on State Trust Lands will be provided by the FWP Wardens. The Trust Lands Warden is responsible for law enforcement on all State Trust Lands in the Whitefish area:

Whitefish/Stillwater Unit Trust Lands Game Warden: Tyler Melville 406-249-6231

VI. To Report a Problem

Report problems concerning the Whitefish Trail, trailhead, bathrooms, parking lots, signage, and garbage containers to the City's designee, Whitefish Legacy Partners, 862-3880. For information on how to address a deceased animal on the trail, please refer to Exhibit C. Abandoned vehicles should be reported to DNRC, who will notify FWP. FWP will ticket abandoned vehicles, which will be removed after 5 days.

VII. Annual Public Comment

The City will annually collect public comment, input, and concerns in order to maintain good relations, minimize conflicts, maintain existing recreation opportunities and provide the best

possible user experience. The City will send an annual request for comments to the DNRC, and to other licensees and lessees for which DNRC has provided the City names and addresses in advance. The City will make its best effort to send an annual request for comments to neighboring landowners and/or residents. Upon the City's request, DNRC will assist in providing what neighborhood contact information that it may have available to support that effort. The City will also provide published notice of the comment deadline. The public comment shall be scheduled in time to collect input and determine solutions to be incorporated into that year's updated Operation Plan, which must be submitted to DNRC no later than November 1st.

VIII. Annual Meeting between the City and DNRC

The City and DNRC will conduct at least one meeting per year, which will include annual review of the Whitefish Trail Management and Operations Plan, at a mutually convenient date and time to promote clear communication and discuss any issues related to the licensed area and Easement area. DNRC may review the City's records of maintenance and construction work, which are available to DNRC at the City Parks and Recreation Department at any mutually agreeable time. DNRC may also schedule an annual meeting with the City and other licensees and authorized users to coordinate shared maintenance responsibilities where applicable and when necessary.

IX. Annual Review of Whitefish Trail and Spencer Trails Management and Operations Plan

At the annual meeting between the City and DNRC, the parties will review and update the Whitefish Trail Management and Operations Plan as required per the land use license for submission to both the Kalispell and Stillwater Unit Managers for review and agreement. The review should include (but not be limited to) the following items:

A. An assessment concerning the progress of licensed work and summary of trails and improvements installed to date.

B. New proposals for construction of trail and trail improvements anticipated for the next year.

C. A summary of current operation and management procedures.

D. Proposed DNRC plans for timber management, timber harvest activities, commercial activities, and lease and license activities anticipated for the next year.

E. A DNRC summary of current timber management, timber harvest, commercial use, and lease and license operations and management procedures.

F. Identification of complaint resolution procedures.

G. Identification of construction and operation procedures unique to specific phases of the project.

H. Identification of MEPA mitigation procedures unique to specific phases of the project.

I. Identification of Easement and right-of-way compliance management procedures unique to specific phases of the project.

This Whitefish Trail DNRC Management and Operations Plan is intended to be a "living" document that will grow and change to meet the needs of DNRC, the City, volunteers, surrounding landowners, and trail users.

X. Visitor Management

A. Permit and Fees: A State of Montana conservation use license is not required for areas and amenities within the Whitefish Trail, other than at Spencer Mountain, where it is required, as of 2024. A conservation use license is required for use outside of the developed and under easement Whitefish Trail in accordance with MCA §§77-1-203 and 77-1-804. The permit is available at State designated locations.

B. The DNRC, City, WLP, and their partners will encourage locals and visitors to purchase Montana Conservation Licenses. Signs will be posted at the trailheads informing users of licensing requirements.

C. Requirements for fishing and hunting licenses apply throughout the Whitefish Trail.

CITY OF WHITEFISH

By: Dana Smith _____ Date: 9/24/2025

Dana Smith, City Manager

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

By: _____ Date: _____

Dave Poukish, Kalispell Unit Manager

By: _____ Date: _____

Dave Ring, Stillwater Unit Manager

G. Identification of construction and operation procedures unique to specific phases of the project.

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I. Identification of Easement and right-of-way compliance management procedures unique to specific phases of the project.

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CITY OF WHITEFISH

By: _____ Date: _____

Dana Smith, City Manager

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

By: _____ Date: 10/21/25

Dave Poukish, Kalispell Unit Manager

By: _____ Date: 10/21/25

Dave Ring, Stillwater Unit Manager

Exhibit A
Contact Information

City of Whitefish

City Manager: Dana Smith	863-2406	dsmith@cityofwhitefish.gov
Parks and Rec. Director: Maria Butts	863-2471	mbutts@cityofwhitefish.gov
Parks and Rec. Admin Asst.: Jennie Bradford	863-2470	jbradford@cityofwhitefish.gov
Community Services Coord.: Carla Belski	863-2470	cbelski@cityofwhitefish.gov
Fire Chief: Cole Hadley	863-2491	chadley@cityofwhitefish.gov
LLAC City Council members:		
Andy Feury		afeury@cityofwhitefish.gov
Steve Qunell		squnell@cityofwhitefish.gov

DNRC Kalispell Unit

Unit Manager: Dave Poukish	751-2263	dpoukish@mt.gov
Program Manager: Michelle Anderson	751-2244	manderson@mt.gov
Kalispell Unit Forester: Alexander Golden	751-2265	alexander.golden@mt.gov

DNRC Stillwater Unit

Unit Manager: Dave Ring	881-2663	dring@mt.gov
Special Uses Forester: Matt Lufholm	881-2666	mlufholm@mt.gov
Stillwater Real Estate & Special Uses Manager:		
Dan Dobbin	881-2666	daniel.dobbin@mt.gov

Emergency Services

Emergencies:	9-1-1	
Flathead County Sherriff's Office	758-5585	
Flathead County Office of Emer. Services	758-5562	
911 MSAG Spec. Jason Singleton	270-3591	jason.singleton@flatheadoes.mt.gov

Fish, Wildlife and Parks

Region 1 Park Manager: Dave Landstrom	751-4574	dlandstrom@mt.gov
Whitefish/Stillwater Unit Trust Lands Game Warden:		
Tyler Melville	249-6231	Tyler.Melville@mt.gov
Grizzly Bear Biologist: Justine Vallieres	250-1265	justine.vallieres@mt.gov
Black Bear Biologist: Eric Wenum	250-0062	fwpwenum@centurytel.net
Goshawk Biologist: Chris Hammond	249-1641	chammond@mt.gov

Whitefish Legacy Partners

Board/WT Ops/LLAC Member:		
Michael Meador	212-5024	info@whitefishlegacy.org
Rachel Schmidt	261-4039	info@whitefishlegacy.org
Executive Director: Heidi Van Everen	862-3880	heidi@whitefishlegacy.org
Program Director: Jedd Sankar-Gorton	862-3880	jedd@whitefishlegacy.org

Program Manager: Nathan Tuebner	862-3880	nathan@whitefishlegacy.org

Flathead Area Mountain Bikers

Executive Director: Ron Brandt	579-3450	director@flatheadamb.org

WT Project Specialists

Forestoration: Greg Gunderson	863-2470	greg@forestoration.com
Forestoration: David Noftsinger	863-2470	david@forestoration.com
Forestoration Project Manager: Keith Schmoll	863-2470	keith@forestoration.com
Forestoration Project Manager: Kody Coxen	863-2470	kody@forestoration.com

Flathead Area Snowmobile Association:

Dave Colville	President	897-4082	davidcoville@gmail.com
Rick David	Grooming Chair	212-1230	tammydavid4@gmail.com

Flathead Valley Disc Golf:

David Trussell, President	(769) 798-3506
Chad Colby	(406) 253-4928

Exhibit B

Emergency Response Plan

Overview

The Whitefish Trail (WT) is a multi-use trail system located on state, federal, and private lands surrounding the community of Whitefish, MT. Since 2010, natural surface trails have been constructed and are open to the public. The trail system will continue to grow over the next several years across varied terrain.

Although precautions have been taken to reduce trail incidents through appropriate design and construction, effective signage, regular maintenance, and the presence of a Trail Patrol, inherent risks still exist on the trail.

In order to respond to incidents, an Emergency Response Plan has been established. The Emergency Response Plan acts as an action plan for emergencies occurring along the trail. Trail access data has been provided to the emergency responders to offer increased dispatch support. This information has been integrated into the public safety response system.

The Whitefish Fire Department (WFD) serves as the primary responders and provides emergency medical services and support on the trail. They work closely with the Whitefish Trail Operations Committee, WT Patrol, WT Ambassador and other associated agencies.

Purpose

The purpose of The Whitefish Trail Emergency Response Plan is to identify coordination and response to trail-related incidents and emergencies occurring along The Whitefish Trail.

Background

1. The Whitefish Trail is a non-motorized network of single-track, natural surface, recreation trails. The WT, which is open to the public during all seasons, is designed for hiker, mountain biker and equestrian use.

2. The Whitefish Trail currently consists of 47 miles accessed from the Lion Mountain Trailhead, Skyles Connection, Beaver Lakes Trailhead, Beaver Lake, North Beaver Connection, Woods Lake Trailhead, Lupfer Trailhead, Swift Creek Trailhead, Smith Lake Connection, Dollar Lake Trailhead, Twin Bridges Trailhead, South Spencer Trailhead, Holbrook Overlook Trailhead, Reservoir Trailhead, and Big Mountain Trailhead. The entire length of the Whitefish Trail is located outside the City of Whitefish limits.

3. The Whitefish Trail is located primarily on Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) State trust land. The DNRC authorizes the City

of Whitefish (through licenses and permanent easement) the right to construct, manage, and maintain a 10' corridor and sustainable trail. Portions of the trail are located on private lands.

4. The Whitefish Trail Operations Committee oversees operations of the trail and an Annual Trail Operations Plan is in effect regarding day-to-day management and oversight of the trail system.

5. The Whitefish Fire Department (WFD) is the primary response agency for incidents occurring along the Whitefish Trail. Whitefish Fire Department supplied Knox Boxes are installed at the Lion Mountain and Twin Bridges Trailhead gates to provide improved access for emergency response vehicles.

6. Flathead County Office of Emergency Services (OES) is the secondary response agency for incidents occurring along the Whitefish Trail.

7. The Flathead County Sheriff is primarily responsible for law enforcement at Whitefish Trail trailheads.

8. The following entities have been identified as Partners:
   - The City of Whitefish – Parks and Recreation Department
   - Whitefish Fire Department
   - Whitefish Legacy Partners
   - Whitefish Trail Patrol
   - Whitefish Trail Ambassadors
   - MT Department of Natural Resources and Conservation – Kalispell and Stillwater Units
   - USFS – Flathead National Forest, Tally Lake Ranger District
   - Private property owners who have granted trail easements – Two Bear Properties of Whitefish, the Deats Family, the O'Donnell Family, Iron Horse, F.H. Stoltze Land and Lumber Co, and Winter Sports Inc.
   - Private property owners in proximity to the trail – Wolf Tail Pines, Lion Mountain Loop Road, Elkhorn, Beaver Lake Road, Lupfer Road, and Del Rey Road.
   - Flathead Area Mountain Bikers
   - Glacier Nordic Club
   - Community groups and local businesses.
   - Flathead County
   - Flathead County Sherriff
   - Flathead County Office of Emergency Services

Assumptions

1. While steps have been taken to mitigate potential incidents along the trail, risks may exist.
2. Trail users should act responsibly and use the trail at their own risk. Signs are available at all trailheads informing users of WT information.

3. Incidents occurring along the trail will most likely be associated with the following:
   - Accident-related trauma
   - Medical Emergencies
   - Wildland Fire Emergencies

4. The Whitefish Trail Patrol may be present to support FWD and OES in medical injuries and emergencies. Trail Patrollers are offered training in basic bike maintenance, basic first aid, and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), and all carry a first aid kit. The WT Patrol's primary responsibility is to educate trail users of proper etiquette, inform trail managers, land managers and trail users of trail conditions, offer volunteer services as available.

5. The WT Ambassadors are trained to report emergency situations in accordance with these procedures and are not expected to provide medical assistance. In addition, they educate trail users of proper etiquette, inform trail managers, land managers and trail users of trail conditions, offer volunteer services as available.

Concept of Operations

1. Emergency Response Plan Trailhead Signs – Emergency Response Plan signs are located at all trailheads to inform users of the Emergency Response Plan in place on the Whitefish Trail. The trailhead sign informs users to always call 9-1-1 in case of an emergency on the Whitefish Trail, to be alert, and to remain aware of Emergency Location Numbers along the trail system. An example of an Emergency Location Number sign is also displayed. Additional contact information is also represented at each trailhead.

The Emergency Response Plan Trailhead signs read:

2. Emergency Location Number signs – An Emergency Location Number is a designated point along the Whitefish Trail used to help emergency responders locate injured trail users. Most sign posts on The Whitefish Trail have an Emergency Location Number sign. Trail users will be encouraged to remain aware of these numbers through informative signage at all trailheads.

Image of Emergency Location Number signs located throughout the trail system:

3. Emergency Location Database and Maps - Maps have been created that show the trail system, emergency sign post locations, proximal roads, access points, and gates. These maps have been circulated to WFD and all bike patrol volunteers.

4. Medical Incidents - When calls for medical assistance are received by 911, the Whitefish Fire Department is paged out and follows agency protocol. The Office of Emergency Services follows agency protocol. WFD will contact City of Whitefish Parks and Recreation Department after each incident to provide an incident summary.

5. Fire Incidents - When calls related to fire are received by 911, the Whitefish Fire Department is paged out and follows agency protocol. The Office of Emergency Services follows agency protocol. WFD will contact City of Whitefish Parks and Recreation Department after each incident to provide an incident summary.
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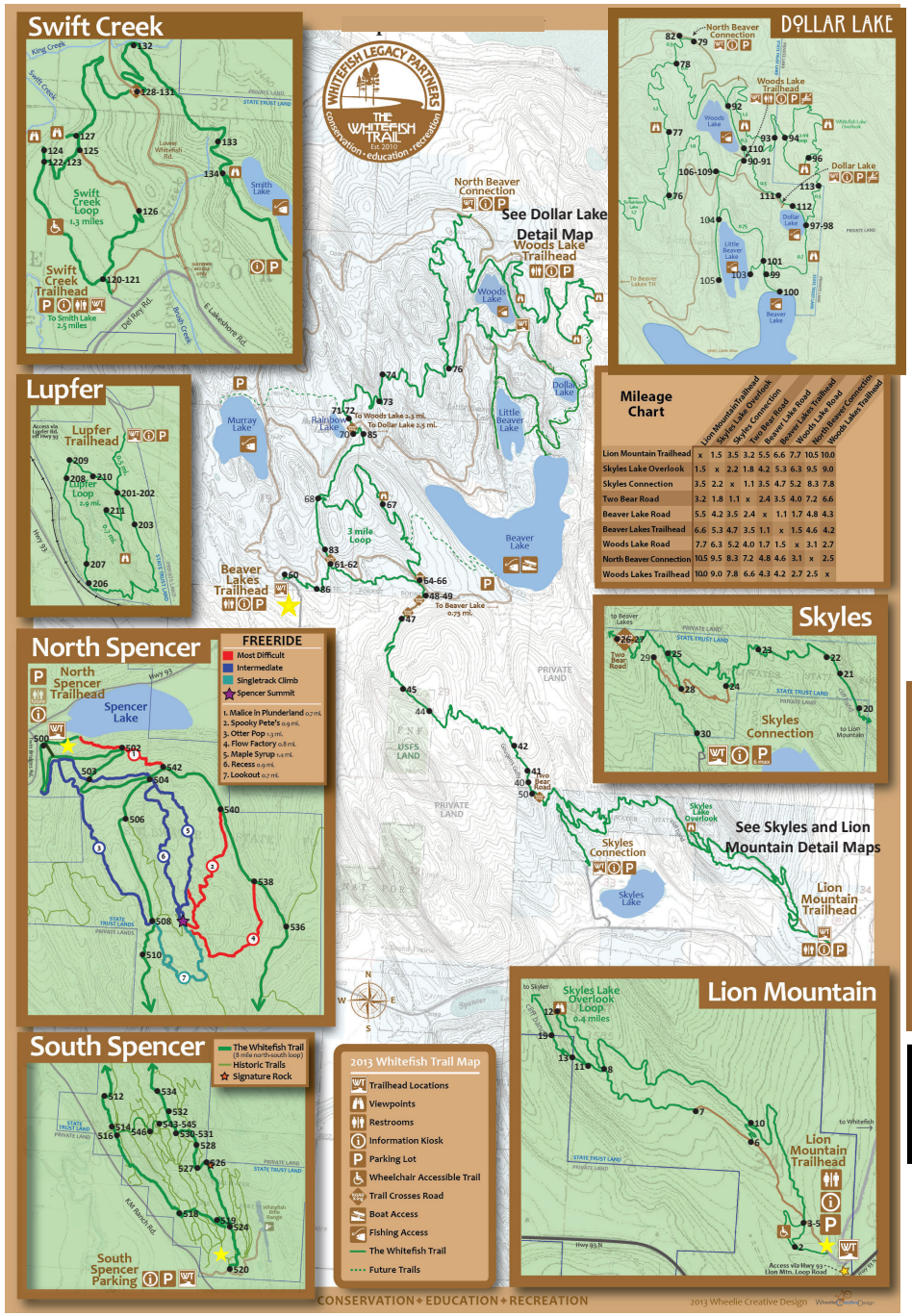
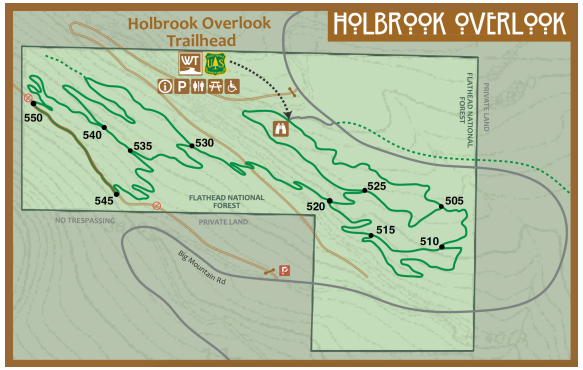




Knox Box Locations ★

Whitefish Trail and Spencer Trails Management and Operations Plan 2024-2025

Exhibit C - Wildlife Protocol

The City of Whitefish (City), Whitefish Legacy Partners (WLP), Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservations (DNRC), Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP), and the United State Forest Service (USFS) have coordinated guidelines for managing the Whitefish Trail and wildlife encounters. Through a collaborative effort with all parties, the following protocols have been established. If during the term of this Operating Plan, the respective agencies determine that additional wildlife protocols are necessary to protect these or additional species, this Exhibit shall be unilaterally modified to address those concerns.

Grizzly Bear Sighting

In the case of a report of a grizzly bear sighting on the Whitefish Trail…

- Obtain as much pertinent information about the encounter as possible by completing the Wildlife Reporting Information Form (below)
- Notify the City, WLP, the appropriate landowner (DNRC, USFS, private, etc.), and the FWP Grizzly Bear Biologist.
- Identification of the appropriate action will be a coordinated effort between all agencies.

Carcass Sighting

In the case of a report of a carcass on the Whitefish Trail…

- Obtain as much pertinent information about the carcass as possible by completing the Wildlife Reporting Information Form (below)
- Notify the City, WLP, the appropriate landowner (DNRC, USFS, private, etc.), and the FWP Grizzly Bear Biologist.
- Identification of the appropriate action will be a coordinated effort between all agencies involved; however, carcasses on the Whitefish Trail may warrant an immediate trail closure until trained professionals are able to remove the carcass or enough time has passed that the carcass is no longer an attractant.
- To close a trail, follow Trail Closure Protocol (below)

Black Bear/Mountain Lion Sighting

In the case of a report of a black bear or mountain lion sighting on the Whitefish Trail…

- Obtain as much pertinent information about the encounter as possible by completing the Wildlife Reporting Information Form (below)
  - If the animal was acting aggressively toward humans on the trail, contact the FWP Black Bear/Lion Biologist and appropriate action will be a coordinated effort between agencies.
  - If the animal was not acting aggressively, retain the information of data collection.
  - If five or more reports have been made within three consecutive days, contact the FWP Black Bear/Lion Biologist and appropriate action will be a coordinated effort between agencies.
- If action is warranted, notify the City, WLP, and the appropriate landowner (DNRC, USFS, private, etc.) of action being taken.

Nesting Goshawk Sighting

In the case of a report of a sighting of a nesting goshawk along the Whitefish Trail…

- Obtain as much pertinent information about the encounter as possible by completing the Wildlife Reporting Information Form (below)
- Notify the City, WLP, the appropriate landowner (DNRC, USFS, private, etc.), and the FWP Biologist.
- Identification of the appropriate action will be a coordinated effort between all agencies.
- If action is warranted, notify the City, WLP, and the appropriate landowner (DNRC, USFS, private, etc.) of action being taken.

Trail Closure and Sign Protocol

Trail Closures

Trail closures on the Whitefish Trail are the prerogative of the appropriate land management agencies. However, since FWP staff possess expertise concerning human-wildlife conflicts and trail safety, they are typically asked to advise the other agencies who must then decide whether to open or close a trail to public use. In addition, FWP staff are usually the first responders to bear encounters, and therefore often assist those agencies by posting trail closure signs on their behalf. When closing trails, it is advisable to construct a temporary barricade, forcing trail users to slow down and notice the closure sign. Temporary warning signs must be posted in clear view and on both sides of hazardous areas at a distance that allows users to safely avoid the area, but close enough to minimize confusion over the exact location of the hazard (Figure 3). The appropriate land management agency should issue a press release within 24 hours of a trail closure to alert the public. Temporary closures are an immediate precaution designed to allow agencies time to coordinate and determine potential solutions while keeping trail users safe.

Reopening Trails

Land management agencies should consult FWP staff regarding when to reopen a trail. It is critical that temporary signs are removed after a closure is lifted. If a closure persists beyond 10 days, a new date should be added to the sign to maintain its currency. Trail users have been shown to ignore the signs when they become accustomed to seeing them.

Signs

Signs are the most efficient, direct method of warning trail users of recent and potential wildlife encounters. Signs should be standardized in terms of size, message and colors to avoid confusion and to phase out the use of informal, “recent bear sightings” signs.

Permanent warning signs - Trail users may encounter bears and lions in natural areas throughout the Whitefish Trail. Permanent warning signs are used at trailheads to remind users that they may encounter bears and lions and advise them how to minimize risk. Permanent warning signs are typically metal or rugged plastic (Figure 1).

Temporary warning signs - Although trail users should anticipate encountering a bear almost anywhere, actual encounters are rare and hazardous encounters even rarer. In situations where the possibility of encountering a bear is high, particularly those situations where the bear may be inclined to attack, temporary signs are used to warn users of unique, short-term risks. Temporary warning signs are a heavy stock of paper and are available in two vivid, Day-Glo colors (Figure 2). The

signs come in various sizes, large enough to be readily seen. A blank space is provided to record details of the specific reason for the warning sign. Temporary signs can be posted by any first responder; however, they must be coordinated as soon as practical.

- **Alert Signs - Yellow** signs, showing wildlife silhouettes and "Alert", are used when the threat is higher than normal, but unlikely to escalate if people are forewarned and use caution. The trail is not closed and people are not expected to avoid the area. Examples include 1) a bear sow with cubs seen once on or near a trail, without threatening behavior, 2) a bear eating berries near the trail, 3) a single bear has bluff-charged someone, 4) repeated sightings of a bear, 5) a bear has acted brazenly or broken into a pack or other container, 6) a bear following or approaching trail users, or 7) goshawks are known to be nesting in the vicinity but have not displayed aggression toward trail users.

- **Closure Signs - Red** signs, showing a wildlife silhouettes and "Danger", are used when the threat is high and may escalate if people continue to use the area. The sign advises that the trail is closed and people are expected to avoid the area or proceed at their own risk. Examples include 1) after a mauling or serious charge, especially if the bear is suspected to remain in the area; 2) a carcass of a large animal on or near the trail that is being defended by or likely to attract a bear; 3) a bear sow with cubs seen more than once within a day or two on or near the trail, 4) a bear sow with cub seen once with threatening behavior or agitation, or 5) repeated sightings of a bear following or approaching within a few feet of people 6) goshawks are known to be nesting in the vicinity and have displayed aggression toward trail users including diving or making physical contact.

Agencies Contact List

Chain of Command – Emergency Action Plan (call in this order)

Emergency encounter, mauling, etc – call 911

Aggressive behavior, carcass near the trail, etc. – call warden

Call appropriate land manager

Call WLP and City

Notify other applicable partners (GNC, FAMB, etc)

Fish, Wildlife and Parks:

For Violations: 1-800-TIP-MONT

Grizzly Bear Biologist: Justine Vallieres, 250-1265, justine.vallieres@mt.gov

Black Bear Biologist: Erik Wenum, 250-0062, ewenum@mt.gov

Wildlife Biologist for Goshawks: Chris Hammond, (406) 249-1641, chammond@mt.gov

Whitefish/Stillwater Unit Trust Lands Game Warden: Tyler Melville, 249-6231 Tyler.Melville@mt.gov

MT FWP R-1 Office: 752-5501

DNRC:

Kalispell Unit Forester: Alexander Golden, 751-2265, alexander.golden@mt.gov

Stillwater Special Uses Forester: Nicole Porter, 881-2666, nstickney@mt.gov

City of Whitefish:

Community Services Coordinator: Carla Belski, 863-2473, cbelski@cityofwhitefish.gov

Parks and Recreation Director: Maria Butts, 863-2471, mbutts@cityofwhitefish.gov

Parks and Recreation General Office: 863-2470

City of Whitefish Police – Defacto Game Wardens – Call before closing trail if you can't reach anyone else

Whitefish Legacy Partners:

Program Director: Jedd Sankar-Gorton, 862.3880, info@whitefishlegacy.org

Program Manager: Nathan Tuebner, 862-3880, nathan@whitefishlegacy.org

Wildlife Reporting Information Form

The following questions must be asked of the reporting party to help agencies gauge the level of threat. Please gather as much detail as possible.

Name and phone number of the reporting party: _____

Detailed location of wildlife or carcass encounter: _____

_____

_____

Date and time of encounter: _____

Type of wildlife species encountered: _____

Distance from the animal: _____

Did a bear or lion act aggressively? _____ (If yes, call 911.) Did you see any cubs, kittens, or other young? _____

If a carcass was found, how far is it from the WT? _____ What type of carcass? _____

Is it visible from the WT? _____ Has the carcass been fed on? _____

Is the carcass partially covered or buried? _____

Please note any other influential environmental factors including nearby huckleberry patches, bear attractants, water sources, etc.: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Please include any photos taken of animal observation or carcasses with this report

Date:

Notice:

Date:

Notice:

EXHIBIT D - SPENCER FREERIDE TRAIL GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION

This document is intended to provide guidelines for the design, construction and maintenance of trails that incorporate technical trail features (TTFs). TTFs are natural or man-made obstacles in the trail or alongside the trail that are intended for mountain bike use and require bike handling skills to ride. They range from easy (such as a 4" rollable drop in the trail or a 3 ft. wide ladder bridge to ride over) to expert (such as a steep rock chute to roll down, a 6" wide ladder bridge to cross, or a large jump that requires leaving the ground).

These Guidelines are established in accordance with the provisions of Mont. Code Ann. § 70-16-301 *et seq*. All users of the trails do so without any assurance from the landowner that the property is safe for any purpose. All users of the trails are required to use the trails and TTFs in a manner that is coordinate with their skill and ability level. These guidelines are adopted with the knowledge that the trails exist in a natural environment and that changing conditions may render trails and/or TTF's unrideable or unsafe at certain times. It is the obligation of trail users to assess conditions and make decisions appropriately.

This document is drafted with the recognition that use of the trails carries inherent risks to the user that can be minimized, but not eliminated. The goal of these guidelines is to ensure proper construction of TTF's and consistency in the difficulty of such features. These Guidelines do not mitigate the necessity for riders to possess the requisite skills to navigate the TTF's discussed herein. Only the riders themselves can accurately assess their ability to navigate a TTF.

PRIORITIES

Priorities for implementation of this plan are as follows:

1. Maintain Trails and TTFs to Guidelines.
2. Prevent unauthorized trail or TTF construction in licensed area where possible.
3. Provide notice to trail users regarding trail difficulty levels so that users may independently exercise judgment and the needed caution regarding which trails to use.

DESIGN FLEXIBILITY

Trails are inherently terrain dependent, and thus a certain level of flexibility is required in developing trail guidelines. The trails will be maintained, as closely as possible, in their present, mapped locations. However, it is acknowledged that, at times, it may be necessary to include re-routes of trails or the movement of TTFs. As such, conditions on the ground and materials will determine the exact trail routing and TTF locations in such situations. Trails will be routed and built according to the guidelines and specifications described in this document. If DNRC deems that unacceptable resource damage is occurring, it reserves the right to require trail work that may include maintenance or

reconstruction to correct the situation. DNRC also may require re-location and decommissioning of problem trail segments.

INCORPORATION OF WHISTLER and IMBA GUIDELINES and STANDARDS

This document is, in large part, based on pre-existing standards and Guidelines. Notably, the "Whistler Trail Standards" provided by the Resort Municipality of Whistler were used as a base for these Guidelines. The International Mountain Bike Association ("IMBA") has also promulgated a series of Guidelines, relative to bike parks and freeriding (http://www.imba.com/resources/freeriding) including "How to Design Challenging Trails", which are incorporated by reference into this document.

If the Guidelines set forth herein are inconsistent with the Whistler or International Mountain Bike Association standards referenced above, these Guidelines shall be deemed controlling.

RISK ASSESSMENT

a. The following is a description of the key risk assessment techniques and practices that should be used when maintaining and constructing the trails from IMBA Guidelines. Trails are built and maintained according to established trail and TTF Guidelines (described herein). Trails and both natural and manmade. TTFs must be durable, and designed to moderate the risk of injury when riders fail to negotiate them properly.
b. Emphasize skill instead of consequence.
c. Provide options and "ride-arounds." When building challenging TTFs, offer easier alternate routes that avoid the feature whenever possible. Don't build advanced technical challenges on trails designed for beginners or intermediates unless they have a ride-around. Offer opportunities for all skill levels.
d. Build skill "gateway filters." Entrances to difficult trails and TTFs should be made challenging (as difficult as the most challenging mandatory part of the trail or TTF). These gateways will cause inexperienced riders to dismount early, before the TTF is high above the ground where the rider is more likely to be injured should a fall occur. This will reduce the risk of less skilled riders attempting a trail or feature that is beyond their ability. By contrast, wide or easy entrances leading to high or narrow exposed features should be avoided.
e. Provide appropriate fall zones. Attempt to clear hazards from areas where riders are likely to land from a fall.
f. Build "choke points." Narrow, difficult and very visible TTFs will slow riders down before a higher risk area. Choke points are built close to the ground with fall zones in case of a fall.
g. Design proper flow into trails. When possible, avoid abrupt transitions from open and flowing to tight and technical.
h. Reduce surprise. Provide clear site lines and don't surprise trail users with unexpected technical trail features. Challenging trails should be properly signed.
i. Make sure that people can see technically challenging trail sections well in advance. The most difficult section of a TTF will be made visible from the entry. By

placing the difficult section in view, the rider can make an informed decision before they may get into difficulty with a TTF that may be beyond their ability.

j. Mark trails and TTFs according to established sign guidelines. Trailhead signs can provide general information about trails and features, but their highest priority is to alert riders to the difficulty level and technical challenges on the trail ahead.

DIFFICULTY LEVELS

The following describes the difficulty rating system used in this document. It describes the general riding experience provided and the types of skills required for each difficulty level.

These ratings are used in setting forth the classification of the trails. The Trails exist in a natural environment, and while reasonable efforts are made to maintain the trails to these guidelines, natural conditions may affect the trails in such a way that the obstacles encountered and difficulty of the trails may change without notice (e.g., trees and/or branches in the trail due to blowdown).

The ratings included herein describe the general types of features to be included on a trail for a given ability level. Trails and the specific features included thereon should be built and maintained in accordance with these ratings. The ratings described herein are relative to one another and may be different from ratings used in other locations. An intermediate trail under these guidelines may be more or less difficult than intermediate trails found outside of the Spencer recreation area.

Trails may have features and TTFs that exceed the rated difficulty of the trail, provided those features and TTFs are optional, and the main riding line of the trail conforms to the marked trail rating.

Novice (Green Circle)

a. Easiest trails with minimum rider skill required.
b. Users need to be competent bicycle riders with experience on basic dirt trails and wide natural surface trails such as the Whitefish Trail
c. Gentle climbs and easily avoidable obstacles such as rocks, roots, and potholes.
d. Beginners will find challenges.
e. Wide trails with good traction and easy turns.
f. Moderate climbs and descents.
g. Unavoidable TTFs are easy (such as small roll-able rocks and wide, low to the ground bridges).
h. More difficult TTFs are easily avoidable (more difficult TTF will be an optional route off the main trail, or the TTF will have an easy ride-around option)
i. No drops, no jumps, and no obstacles with consequences for lack of speed

Intermediate (Blue Square)

a. More difficult trails with more challenging riding with moderate slopes and/or obstacles, possibly on a narrow trail with mixed traction.
b. Users need to be competent bicycle riders and have significant mountain bike experience on singletrack trails such as those found at the Pig Farm Trails.
c. Narrower trails with possibility of poor traction and tight switchbacks.

d. Steeper climbs and descents.
e. Unavoidable TTFs are more difficult (such as roll-able rock drops and roll-able logs, wide bridges, wide log rides, wide teeter totters, and small jumps).
f. Most difficult TTFs are easily avoidable.
g. Small jumps and drops, however, no “gap” jumps or drops.
h. No jumps with consequence for lack of speed.

Advanced (Black Diamond)

a. Very difficult trails providing a challenging riding experience.
b. Could include a mixture of steep climbs and descents, loose trail surfaces, numerous difficult obstacles to avoid or jump over, drop-offs and sharp corners. Some sections may be easier to walk.
c. Requires significant riding experience and fitness.
d. Very narrow trails with the possibility of poor traction, loose trail surfaces, and steeply banked turns.
e. Steep climbs and descents.
f. Unavoidable TTFs are most difficult (such as narrow elevated bridges and teeter-totters, steep chutes, rock faces, rocky terrain, and wall rides)
g. Some TTFs may require mandatory “air” (such as drop-offs that are too high to roll, or gap jumps that cannot be rolled).

Expert (Double Black Diamond)

a. The most difficult trail classification. Expert trails should only be attempted by highly skilled riders. These trails are intended to provide a challenge for the most experienced riders.
b. The most difficult trail classification. Expert trails should only be attempted by highly skilled riders. These trails are intended to provide a challenge for the most experienced riders.
c. Exceptional rider skills and balance are essential to clear challenging obstacles or jumps.
d. Expert level TTFs must have rollable options or ride-arounds. The use of gateways is of paramount importance for these features.
e. Ride-arounds may incorporate “Advanced” level features.
f. Trails are intended for primarily downhill traffic.
g. Trails will often include Steep descents with sharp transitions.
h. Trails may include elevated features, many connected features such as rhythm sections that may require speed and/or momentum to successfully negotiate, and frequent mandatory air, including large gap jumps and large drops.
i. Difficulty exceeds Advanced due to height, widths, and exposure.
j. Difficulty exceeds Advanced due to height, widths, and exposure.

ENVIRONMENTAL GUIDELINES

The benefits of a trail network for recreational use must be balanced with the desire of protecting our natural environment and maintaining site productivity for forest management. The parties are actively pursuing environmental sustainability, which can be described as a condition where we use only as much of nature’s resources that can

be replenished indefinitely. Trail construction must strive for minimal impact on our natural surroundings. Trails, TTFs, and trailheads (trail facilities) that adversely impact the environment will not only have a low aesthetic value, but also incur a high maintenance cost. Trail facilities should be designed with consideration for the specific environment and intended use. All intrusions into the environment have some degree of impact. However, these impacts can be minimized to balance the need for a recreational experience with the impact on the surrounding environment. As many of the trails already exist, these Guidelines will be used when maintaining and improving the trails, re-routing the trails, and for any construction of new trails that may occur.

General Guidelines include, but are not limited to, the following:

a. Avoid sensitive or fragile archaeological or historic sites.
b. Deactivate shortcuts by obstructing access with rocks, branches, fallen trees or new plantings. Provide signs, explaining trail closure rationale.
c. Avoid building trails in community watersheds.
d. Avoid exposing roots or cover exposed roots where possible.
e. Trail placement should avoid hazard areas such as steep ravines, bluffs, cliffs, embankments, hazardous trees, snags, undercut stream banks, etc. as may be appropriate for the Trail's difficulty.
f. Assess the impacts of trail use on wildlife species.
g. Avoid critical habitat of rare or fragile plant species. If there are fragile plant communities next to the trail, delineate the trail edges by using logs or rocks.
h. Avoid unstable slopes, erosion-prone soil and shallow rooted trees with high wind-throw potential.
i. Avoid trail routing that encourages users to take shortcuts where an easier route or interesting feature is visible. If an interesting feature exists, where feasible locate the trail to provide the desired access to the trail user. Use landforms or vegetation to block potential shortcut routes. Alter the shortcut route if it is superior to the original route.
j. Live trees will not be cut without authorization. Cutting of live or dead trees must be approved by DNRC in advance, and approval may be withheld at DNRC's discretion.
k. Route trails on bedrock or hard packed surfaces and avoid organic materials.
l. Use set cobblestones in sensitive areas and steep descents to minimize trail erosion.
m. Use downed Western Red Cedar, Larch or old tight-ringed Douglas Fir for construction material when possible due to their resistance to rot. All such use is subject to prior authorization from DNRC.

These Guidelines are adopted with the understanding that they are applied to an existing trail network, and that the existing trails were not necessarily built using best practices to minimize erosion and other ecological concerns. The potential ecological and environmental impacts include (but are not limited to) soil displacement and erosion, damage to vegetation, weed infestation, and water quality issues. Over time and with increased use, ecological and environmental issues may arise that require mitigating techniques to be employed on the trails. These techniques may include rock armoring, installation of water bars, and/or re-routing the trail. Either party may raise environmental

or ecological issues with the trails, thereby initiating a review process to assess the implementation of potential mitigating techniques. It is envisioned that this will be an ongoing process and is necessary to preserve the trail system in a sustainable manner.

Drainage

Trails should be constructed to maximize drainage and avoid standing water or persistent wetness in the Trail tread. Where possible, Trails should be designed and graded to shed water, and where necessary, water bars should be utilized to direct the water away from the trail. Primary drainage concerns include steep, straight trails that tend to become rutted from use and water runoff.

Mitigation Measures

If resource damage caused by mountain bikes is located, determine the reasons it is occurring and take measures to correct the situation. Consider hardening trails, installing water bars, using seasonal closures, relocating the trail, or recommending alternate routes. Inform riders of the problem and suggest measures they can take to correct the situation. All proposed reroutes or substantial changes in the trail must be approved by DNRC.

TRAIL GUIDELINES

The following describes the guidelines that will be followed for construction and maintenance of trails and TTFs where possible.

Trail Armoring

Where possible, trail segments that are prone to ruts and erosion from riding will be armored using natural rock, concrete or wood materials. Additional trail armoring may also be used in high impact areas. For example:

- TTF take-offs and landings
- Banked turns (berms)
- 1-man rocks, sandstone pavers or logs may be used as a trail border

TECHNICAL TRAIL FEATURE GUIDELINES

TTFs are natural or man-made obstacles or options in the trail or alongside the trail that require bike handling skills to ride. They range from easy (such as a 4” roll-able drop in the trail or a 3 ft. wide ladder bridge to ride over) to expert (such as a steep rock chute to roll down, a 6” wide ladder bridge to cross, or a 12” high rock step-up to climb up onto).

Strength and Stability

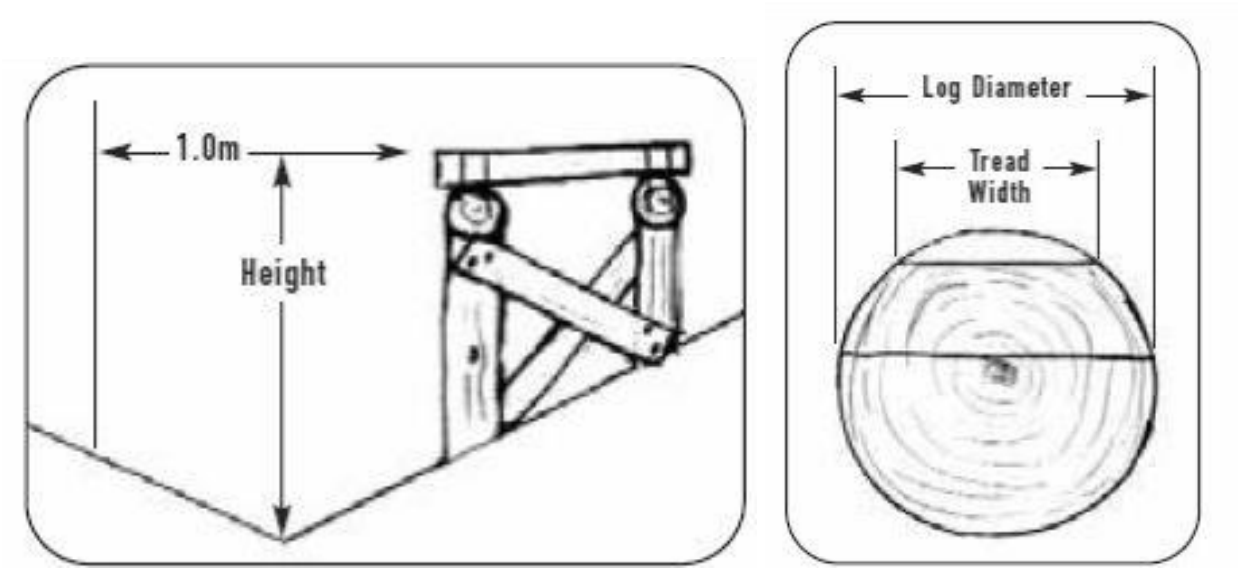
All TTF structures should be built and finished to minimize potential injury to a falling rider colliding with the structure, its supports, or other nearby obstacles. The TTF must be capable of supporting a centered vertical load of 450 lbs. (three adults) and a horizontal

load of a 180 lbs. adult leaning against the constructed feature with less than 2 inches of displacement.

TTF Height And Width

A TTF's difficulty depends greatly on the maximum height and minimum width of the TTF. Maximum height and minimum width are dependent on the TTF's difficulty. As the height increases, the risk of injury in the case of a fall increases.

TTF height is measured vertically from the feature's deck (riding surface) to the lowest point within 3' adjacent to the feature. Tread Width is the amount of flat rideable surface. The following shows an example of the TTF height and width measurements:



Bridges exceeding maximum height guidelines may require alternate methods such as railings. Note: width of handlebars may be as wide as 35 inches.

Materials should be selected, installed and maintained for durability, strength, riding predictability, aesthetics and environmental acceptability. Select wood that is resistant to decay.

The following materials will be used for TTF construction:

- Stringers: logs, split wood, or dimensional lumber. Posts: logs, split wood, treated posts or dimensional lumber.
- Footings: concrete or rock (2-4"cobble +5/8"- crushed)
- Bridge Decking: dimensional lumber or split wood rungs (see below for preferences)
- Other Decking (Riding Surface) materials: split logs, flattened logs or dimensional lumber planks
-

Special attention should be given to abutments and places where the TTF touches the ground. In critical areas, untreated wood should generally not touch the ground directly. Use of foundation materials such as rock, or concrete footings is encouraged in such critical areas. Untreated wood may touch the ground in areas that are easily replaced if rot becomes an issue and in areas where the rider transitions from the natural trail bed onto the TTF. Particular attention should be paid to these interfaces during inspection so that rotted wood can be replaced before it becomes a hazard.

The choice of bridge decking material depends on the probability of it getting wet. Split wood has the advantages of a grippy surface and natural look, but dimensional lumber is easier to work with. The following is a partial list in order of preference:

- Split Cedar (most rot resistant, grippy surface, natural look, splits very easily)
- Larch (high strength, grippy surface, rot resistance, natural look, can be difficult to split)
- Split Douglas Fir (high strength, rot resistance, grippy surface, natural look, but difficult to split)
- Dimensional lumber (easiest material to work with)
- Split Pine or Spruce (grippy surface, natural look, splits easily, but less rot resistant)
- Split Hemlock / Alpine Fir (lowest strength and rot resistance, but has a natural look and splits easily – acceptable, but rungs should be thicker and should be taken from older slower growing trees)

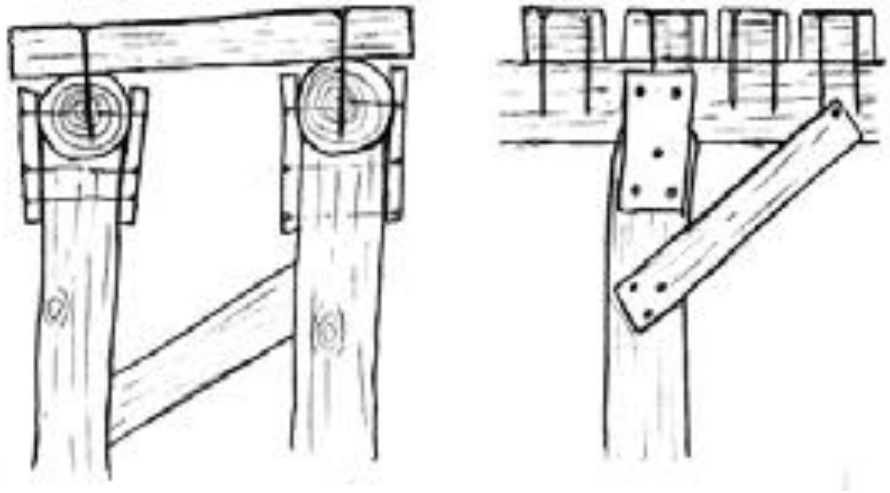
Slippery surfaces such as pressure treated lumber or dimensional lumber should have an anti-slip surface such as diamond wire mesh or roofing material applied to it.

Construction Practices

Cross bracing of vertical members is required. Also, TTFs should not be mounted to living trees because nailing to live trees is harmful to the tree and render them unmerchantable. Notwithstanding the foregoing, certain existing TTFs are already attached to live trees. In certain circumstances, the most feasible option may be to keep those TTFs attached to those standing trees. DNRC reserves the right to authorize such use of trees on a case-by-case basis, and such use will involve compensating DNRC due to rendering the trees unmerchantable.

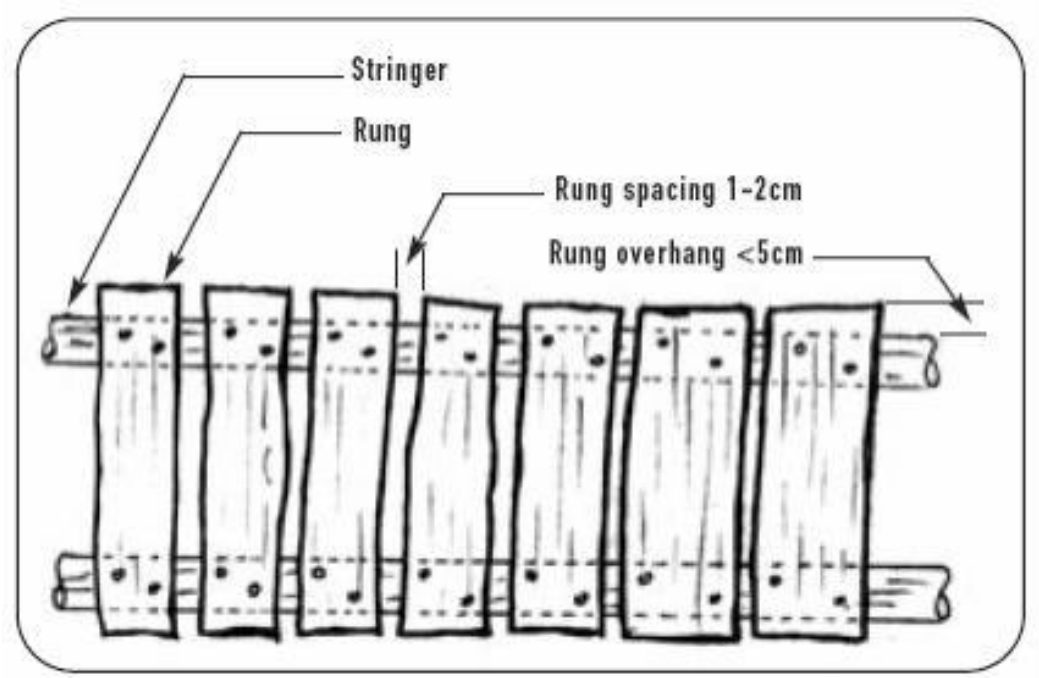
The preferable method of joining members together is nuts and bolts, the second choice is screws, and the last method is ardox nails. Ensure two-thirds of the nail or screw length penetrates the stringer. Loading on member should be done in such a way as not to rely exclusively on the shear strength of the joining method. (see figure below)

Wooden features should be stronger and more stable than the greatest anticipated force and weight. Use cross and diagonal bracing. The strength of the TTF shouldn't rely on the shear strength of the fasteners. The approach to the TTF should be on dry stable ground to help prevent water and mud from being carried onto the wood which can cause deterioration and slippery surfaces.



Bridge Rung Spacing

Deck rungs must be placed tightly so that children will not catch their feet between rungs, arms will not fit between rungs and dogs will use bridges. An appropriate spacing between rungs is 1 inch to promote drainage of water and mud. Rungs should not overhang stringers by more than 2 inches (see figure below).



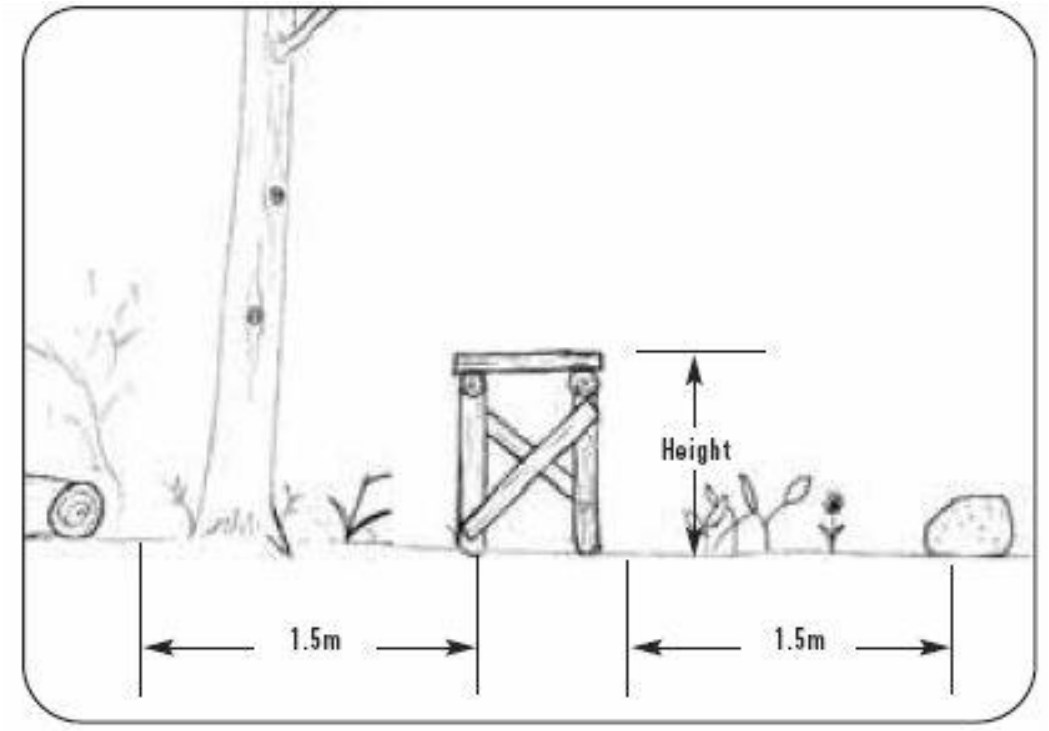
Bridge Surfacing

It is recommended that wood surfaces, particularly those with a slope exceeding 10°, have an applied anti-slip surface. The exception being split wood, having a rough surface finish. Recommended methods are expanded diamond lath or rolled roofing material. Chicken wire, although popular, is not durable.

FALL ZONES

The Fall Zone is the area adjacent to a TTF that the rider may deviate into should they fail to negotiate the TTF. Included in the fall zone are the sides of the trail, the bottom of descents and the outside of corners. Risk of injury may be reduced with careful review of the area surrounding the trail. Potential causes of injury are branches or stumps and roots that are not cut flush with the tree or the ground, rocks and debris as well as the TTF itself if it has not been finished to acceptable guidelines. Mountain biking has certain risks that cannot be completely eliminated, and TTFs, particularly advanced TTFs, may increase that risk. All trail users are expected to pay attention to signage and proceed with caution. Trail users are also expected to inspect the trails and TTFs prior to using them to assess any potential hazards or risks that may exist.

Fall zones should be cleared of significant hazards to a minimum of 3’ on all sides of the TTF up to 12” high and 4.5’ on both sides for TTFs that are 12” and higher (see figure below).



Clearing fall zones includes but is not limited to:

- Cutting or digging out any sharp objects
- Trimming tree branches to branch collar or shoulder
- Covering of hazards is another option if material such as rotten logs, bark, mulch, dirt etc. is available. (Areas where falls are frequent may need re-covering).
- Dulling of sharp points or edges of exposed rocks

The fall zone should not be cleared of all foliage, since the purpose of Fall Zone Guidelines is to minimize the chance of injury should a fall occur. Replanting of the fall zone with a durable species may be considered.

The primary focus for fall zone clearing should be in the trails rated More Difficult where a rider is learning how to ride TTFs and their falling skills may not be perfected. The extent of the clearing of fall zones should consider the likelihood and manner in which a fall may occur. Clearing fall zones will generally not include moving large rocks or the removal of live trees. The purpose of clearing fall zones is to address hazards that can be reasonably mitigated, not to remove all potential hazards along the trails.

RIDE AROUNDS

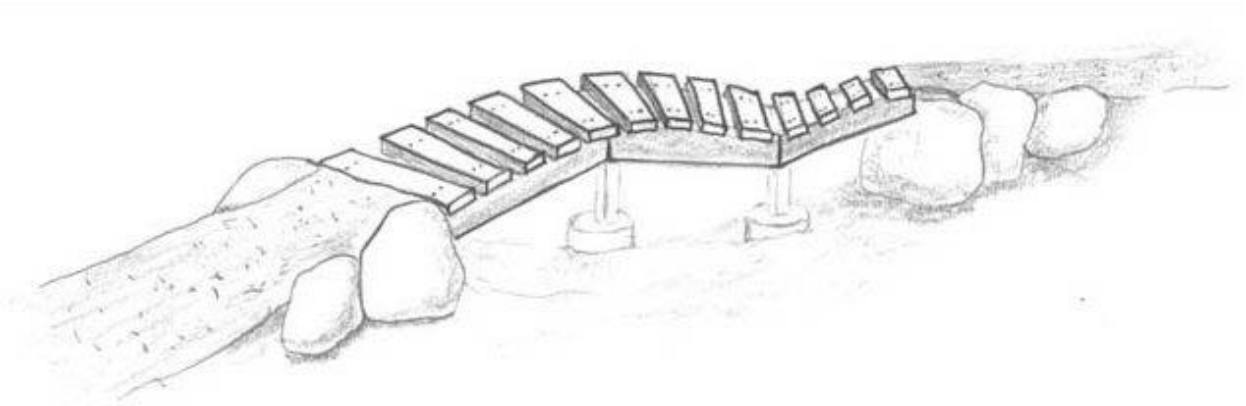
Non-rollable TTFs, and TTFs that exceed the marked difficulty of the trail on which they are located must have a ride around. The ride around must be rollable, and the difficulty of the ride around may not exceed the difficulty rating of the trail on which it is located. For instance, if an advanced feature is found on an intermediate trail, an intermediate ride around must be available.

GUIDELINES FOR SPECIFIC FEATURES

The following Guidelines are applicable to Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, and Expert trails, as indicated below.

Ladder Bridges

Ladder bridges were first used to allow trail users to cross wet areas. Now, they are a common and popular TTF that require certain skills to cross successfully.



Key Not-to-Exceed Specs:

	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced	Expert
Deck Height	< 2 feet	< 4 feet	< 8 feet	<15 feet
Deck Width	> 3 feet	> 2 feet	> 1/4 deck height	At least 20” wide

Bisecting angle between connected sections	Large enough to easily allow transition without wheel lifting techniques	Large enough to easily allow transition without wheel lifting techniques	Tight turn - may require wheel lifting techniques	Tight turn - may require wheel lifting techniques

Skinnies

Skinnies are narrow elevated wooden structures for developing and practicing balance. Balance is a key skill required to negotiate very narrow trail passages and/or trails with exposure to dangerous falls. Skinnies are similar to bridges but are intended to be more challenging to ride.

Key Not-to-Exceed Specs:

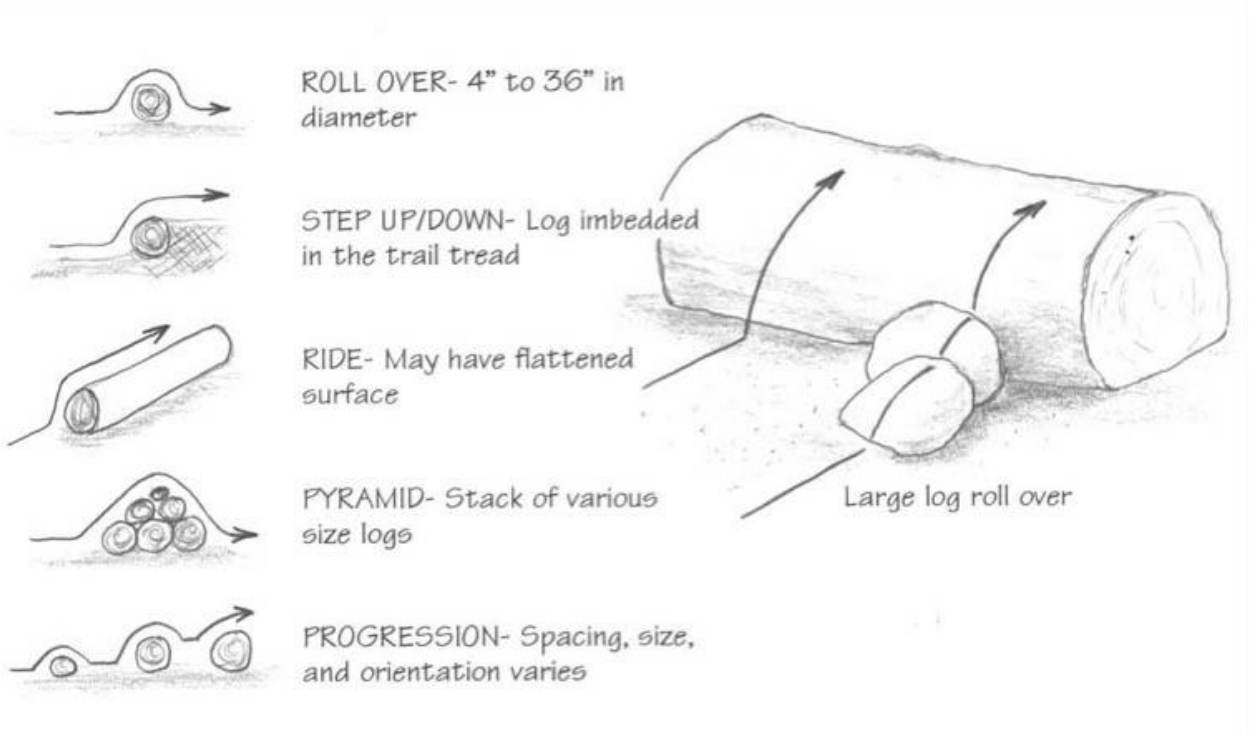
	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced	Expert
Deck Height	N/A	< 2 feet	< 4 feet	<8 feet
Deck Width	N/A	> 8 inches	> 1/6 deck height	At least 6”
Bisecting angle between connected sections	N/A	N/A - straight only	Any turn may require wheel lifting techniques	Any turn may require wheel lifting techniques

Log Rides

Log rides, like skinnies, are used to build and practice balance skills. They may have a narrow rounded riding surface (unaltered), a narrow flat surface etched in the top, or the log may be split in half providing a wider flat riding surface. Logs may be left lying on the ground or elevated by boulders, posts or log rounds with saddle notch joints (“Lincoln Log” joints). Log rides should conform to the same specifications as skinnies, but intermediate log rides may include deck widths of less than 8” for surfaces that are elevated less than 15.”

Other Log Features

Logs are a common natural feature on Trails. TTFs incorporating logs are an acceptable means of addressing logs on trails, and may be favorable to removal of the logs.



Key Not-to-Exceed Specs:

- Rollovers, step-ups and step-downs: <3 ft. high
- Pyramids (log stacks): < 4 ft. high

Steep Rolls

Steep rolls are a common feature on technical and advanced trails. These steep rolls are generally of a shorter duration, and therefore are not considered in evaluating the grade of the trails. The steepness and length of a roll will increase with the difficulty rating of a trail. The pitch and length of the roll will largely depend on the entrance, exit, and surface material of the trail. Steep rolls may be up to 70 degrees on expert trails.

Drops

Drops may be natural or man-made. The deck height is the height from the end of the deck to the ground. The distance to the landing slope and the angle of the landing slope are determined by a number of factors including the location of the drop, the speed at which a rider will approach the drop and turns or obstacles that may exist after the drop. Intermediate level drops should be rollable.

Key Not-to-Exceed Specs:

	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced	Expert
Deck Height	N/A	< 2 feet	< 6 feet	<12 feet
Deck Width	N/A	> 2 feet	> 1/2 deck height	At least 18”
Take off Slope	N/A	0% (flat) to 10%	-10% to 30%	+/- 40%

Take off slopes that exceed 30% are considered dirt jumps and should be built according to dirt jump specifications.

Landing slopes should be built appropriately for the size of the drop. Landing slopes should be at least 1.5 bike lengths long. Larger drops require steeper landing slopes. Landing slopes will also be affected by the distance of the gap to the landing. The larger the gap, the shallower the landing slope should be.

Dirt Jumps

The size and dimensions of dirt jumps are dependent on the location of the jump and the intended skill level of the trail. Dirt jumps on intermediate trails should be table tops or should otherwise be rollable. Steeper jumps actually slow down riders, so can be used as choke points in a dirt jump flow line. Other types of dirt jumps are step-downs (has lower angle take-off and a lower elevation sloped landing), and step-ups (where the rider jumps up to a surface higher than the lip/top of the take off). Dirt jumps should be consistent with the character of the trail. Steep dirt jumps should not be included on trails that generally consist of shallow dirt jumps. All dirt jumps should be at least 2.5 feet wide.

Dirt jump height and steepness will depend on the intended trajectory for the jump as well as the intended distance to be travelled. While the specific height and steepness of dirt jumps will largely depend on the situation found on the trail, the following guidelines should be used. The below numbers are guidelines only, and are not intended to be strictly adhered to, for the reasons set forth herein. The gaps specified are assuming flat ground with moderate speed. Downhill situations where more speed is carried into the jump may require longer gaps, and uphill situations may require shorter gaps. All jumps on intermediate jumps must be rollable. Generally, shallower jumps are easier than steeper jumps.

Easy Intermediate: 3 feet tall, 30 degree take off, 8-10 foot gap.

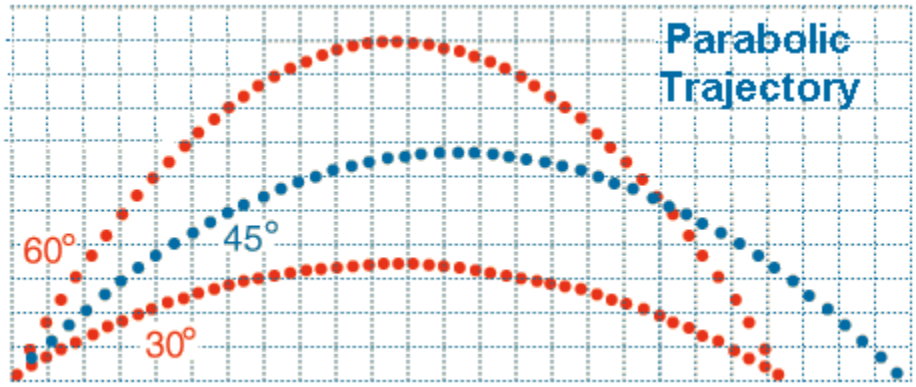
Intermediate: 4 feet tall, 45 degree take off, 10-12 foot gap.

Advanced Intermediate : 4 feet tall, 50-55 degree take off, 10-12 foot gap.

Advanced (shallow angle): 5-6 feet tall, 45 degree take off, 16-20 foot of gap.

Advanced (steep angle): 5-6 feet tall, 55 degree take off, 12-16 foot gap.

Expert: 6-7 feet tall, 60-70 degree take off, 16+ foot gap.



Dirt jump landings should be at least 1.5 bike lengths long. For step ups, the landing will generally be less steep than the take off. For step downs, the landing will generally be steeper than the take off.

In a rhythm section, the distance from one landing to the next take off should be at least 1.5 times the gap of the jump.

SIGN GUIDELINES

Signs are a necessary component of trail management. Signs provide the rider with general information about the dangers and inherent risks of the recreational trail features. DNRC will approve all signage and their location. In order to retain the “primitive” aesthetic of Spencer Lake, signs visible from main trails will be simple, natural posts with arrows, difficulty icons and numbers that correspond with the main sign at the Twin Bridges parking lot.

The current parking area by Twin Bridges will have an entry sign with a trail map, IMBA Rules Of The Trail, and detailed trail information, including descriptions with the name, character, intent and level of difficulty of the trail. The sign will also inform cyclists that any trailwork performed beyond what is allowed in the Special Recreation Use License is illegal and will jeopardize future Freeride opportunities on DNRC land. Recreationalists will be reminded that a general recreation use permit is required. A brief history of Montana School Trust Lands and the cooperative relationship between the DNRC and recreational stakeholders will be included.

Primary Trailhead Signs
Trailhead signs as necessary will inform the rider of the trail technical difficulty and conditions expected.

Signs at the trailhead displays trail information such as:

- Topographical map of area
- Trail length
- Trail elevation gain / loss
- Trail difficulty ratings
- Explanation of Trail difficulties
- Cautionary notes (i.e. Trails may be more difficult when wet)

- Acceptable trail user groups
- IMBA rules of the trail
- Ride on open trails only
- Leave no trace
- Never spook animals
- FAMB web and other contact information for maintenance concerns or how to get involved.
- Background information on the surrounding area and trails
- Bulletin board
- Fire Danger and who to call in case of emergency

Individual Trailhead Signs

These signs are to be located at the entrance(s) of a particular trail to provide the user with the information necessary to make an informed and educated decision whether to proceed or not.

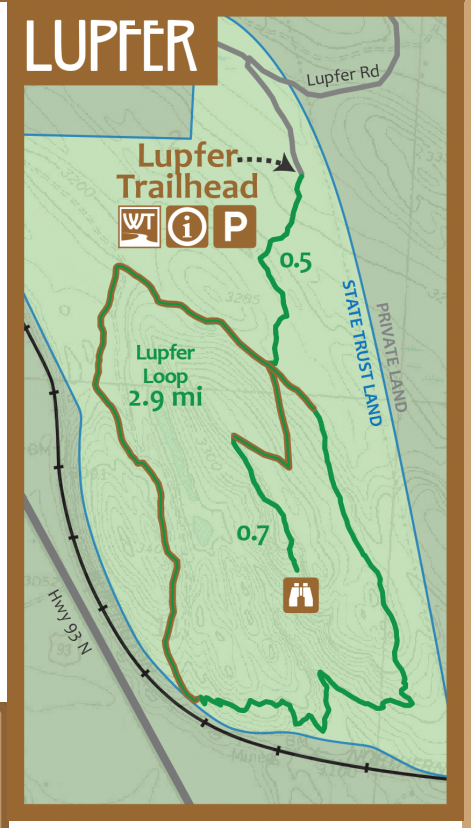
Individual Trailhead Signs display information about a specific trails such as:
Trail name
Difficulty rating
Accepted users / restricted users
Conditions subject to change
Inspect TTFs prior to riding

DEFINITIONS
A-Frame – two ramps (approach and exit) placed together with no level section at the apex. Typically used to bridge deadfall across the trail.
Armoring – lining the trail bed with durable materials to resist erosion.
Berm – built up bank on the outside of a corner to improve cornering.
Boardwalk – a raised walkway made of boards; used to traverse sensitive areas; similar to bridge.
Bridge – a structure that is built above and across a river or other obstacle allowing passage across or over obstacle.
Coffin Jump – a jump constructed from material excavated from behind the jump, leaving a hole.
Danger – likely to cause harm or result in injury.
Dirt Jump – A jump with a positively sloped takeoff and a negatively sloped landing constructed of dirt, rocks, and /or logs, intended to allow bikes to become airborne. Dirt Jumps can be Gap Jumps, Table Tops, Step Downs, or Step Ups.
Drop – a drop in the trail, possibly at the end of a log or off a rock; may require a technique depending on the vertical drop and/or the angle of descent. Drops are generally not Rollable.
Exposure – placing a rider in the position or location that an error in balance or maneuvering may result in an injury; for example, a narrow bridge above rocks, would be exposure and the greater the elevation of the bridge above the rocks the greater the level of exposure.
Face – the steep exposed side of a rock.
Fall-Away – a drop-off which incorporates a turn in the trail.

Freeride **–** A category of mountain biking that places an emphasis on skilled maneuvers, difficult descents, jumps, and drops.
Gap Jump – two ramps placed back to back with a space between them, the rider must travel with enough velocity to cross the space and land on the second ramp.
Gateway – a qualifier placed before a trail or TTF; for example, a 2x4 placed before an elevated bridge or a difficult corner. If the rider can successfully negotiate the more difficult gateway, then they will likely be able to negotiate the TTF.
Ladder – a TTF with rungs attached to sides (stringers) made of wood. May function similarly to a bridge, but a Ladder may be inclined at steeper angles (see Roll Over).
Logjam – a pile of logs placed near perpendicular to trail to make a ramp, usually placed in front of and behind deadfall to ease passage.
Machine Built – constructed with the use of an excavator or other such motorized equipment.
Mandatory Air – a TTF requiring a wheelie drop or other advanced technique to exit due to a steep or undercut exit.
Manual – technique used to lift the front end of a bike up without the use of a pedal stroke; can be used off mandatory airs, etc.; generally requires more forward momentum than a wheelie drop.
Ramp – any inclined structure, typically used as an approach to or exit from a TTF. A ramp can also be a jump.
Rhythm Section – series of gap jumps placed end to end. Most technical form of jumping due to skill, timing, technique and failure consequence.
Rollable – a section that can be ridden without requiring higher-level rider skills; for example, an elevated bridge intersection/corner that can be ridden without having to hop and rotate, or a small Drop that can be ridden without both wheels leaving the ground.
Roll Over – usually a rock that gets steeper the farther the rider advances, to the point where stopping may not be an option and the rider must continue despite not being prepared for what's ahead.
Skinny – A narrow riding surface, often times a tree or bridge, that is elevated above the normal trail grade.
Step Down – A jump where the landing is at a significantly lower elevation than the take off. A Step Down may be similar to a Drop-Off in some circumstances.
Step Up – A jump where the landing is at a significantly higher elevation than the take off.
Table Top – A jump composed of a take off ramp and a landing ramp, wherein the space between the ramps is filled with dirt, wood structures, or other such ridable materials such that the jump can be "jumped" or rolled without leaving the ground
Teeter-Totter – a TTF consisting of a long plank balanced on a central support for riders to cross over, providing an
down motion as the rider passes over the pivot.
Tongue – a steep ramp on the exit of a TTF, often as an easier alternative to mandatory air.
Tread – the traveled surface of the trail.
TTF – Technical Trail Feature – an obstacle on the trail requiring negotiation, the feature can be either man made or natural, such as an elevated bridge or a rock face respectively.
Wheelie Drop – technique used to pedal off drops-off or logs with the back wheel landing before the front wheel.

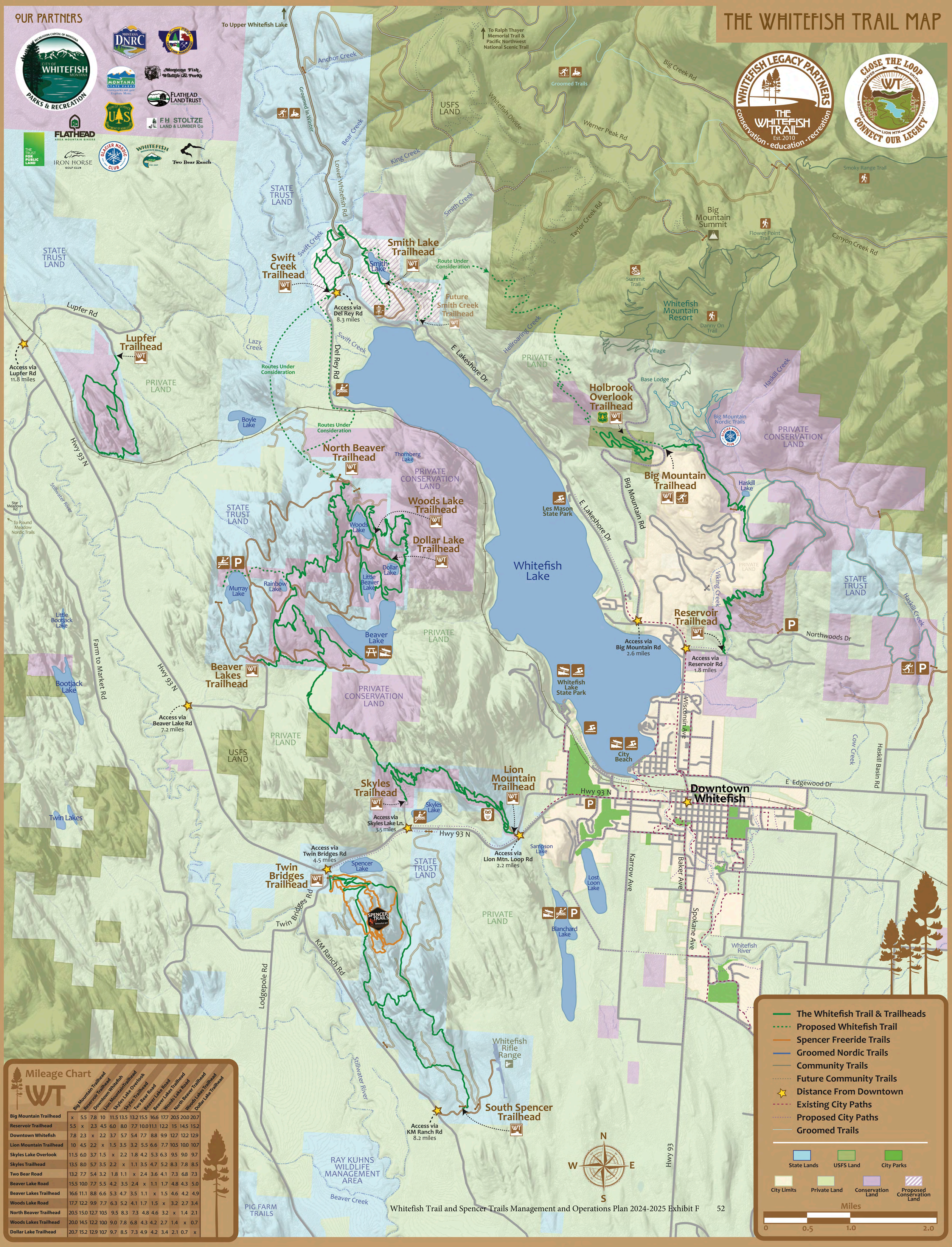
The Whitefish Trail

Swift Creek, Smith Lake, & Lupfer
(2017-2027 LUL)
Spencer Mountain
(2024-2034 LUL)



Whitefish Trail and Spencer Trails Management and Operations Plan 2024-2025
Exhibit E

THE WHITEFISH TRAIL MAP



Mileage Chart

	Big Mountain Trailhead	Reservoir Trailhead	Downtown Whitefish	Lion MountainTrailhead	Skyles Lake Overlook	Skyles Trailhead	Two Bear Road	Beaver Lake Road	Beaver Lakes Trailhead	Woods Lake Road	North Beaver Trailhead	Woods Lakes Trailhead	Dollar Lake Trailhead
Big Mountain Trailhead	x	5.5	7.8	10	11.5	13.5	13.2	15.5	16.6	17.7	20.5	20.0	20.7
Reservoir Trailhead	5.5	x	2.3	4.5	6.0	8.0	7.7	10.0	11.1	12.2	15	14.5	15.2
Downtown Whitefish	7.8	2.3	x	2.2	3.7	5.7	5.4	7.7	8.8	9.9	12.7	12.2	12.9
Lion Mountain Trailhead	10	4.5	2.2	x	1.5	3.5	3.2	5.5	6.6	7.7	10.5	10.0	10.7
Skyles Lake Overlook	11.5	6.0	3.7	1.5	x	2.2	1.8	4.2	5.3	6.3	9.5	9.0	9.7
Skyles Trailhead	13.5	8.0	5.7	3.5	2.2	x	1.1	3.5	4.7	5.2	8.3	7.8	8.5
Two Bear Road	13.2	7.7	5.4	3.2	1.8	1.1	x	2.4	3.6	4.1	7.3	6.8	7.3
Beaver Lake Road	15.5	10.0	7.7	5.5	4.2	3.5	2.4	x	1.1	1.7	4.8	4.3	5.0
Beaver Lakes Trailhead	16.6	11.1	8.8	6.6	5.3	4.7	3.5	1.1	x	1.5	4.6	4.2	4.9
Woods Lake Road	17.7	12.2	9.9	7.7	6.3	5.2	4.1	1.7	1.5	x	3.2	2.7	3.4
North Beaver Trailhead	20.5	15.0	12.7	10.5	9.5	8.3	7.3	4.8	4.6	3.2	x	1.4	2.1
Woods Lakes Trailhead	20.0	14.5	12.2	10.0	9.0	7.8	6.8	4.3	4.2	2.7	1.4	x	0.7
Dollar Lake Trailhead	20.7	15.2	12.9	10.7	9.7	8.5	7.3	4.9	4.2	3.4	2.1	0.7	x

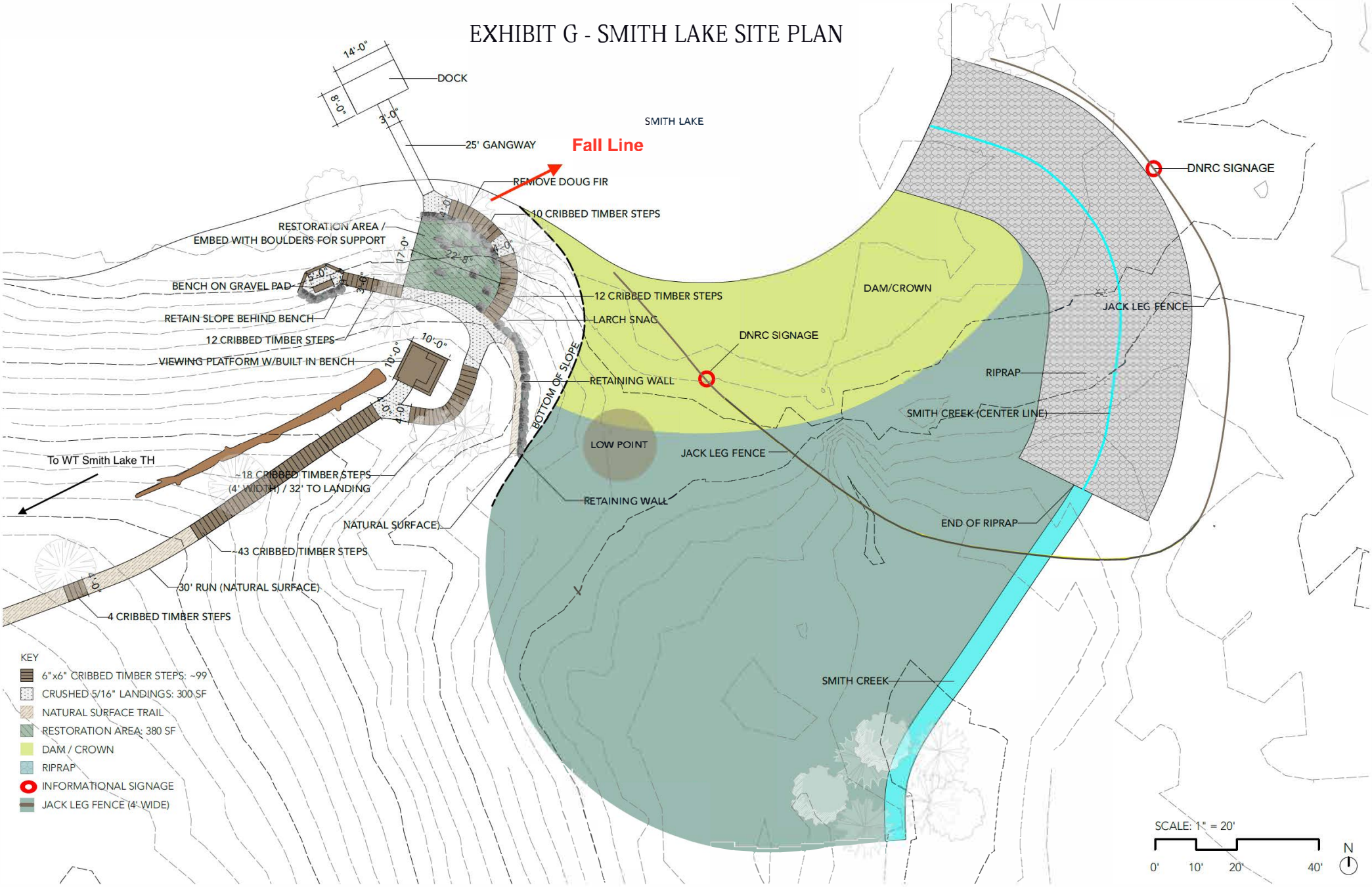



EXHIBIT G - SMITH LAKE SITE PLAN