

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	S1
Introduction	S1
A Vision for Montana’s Trail System	S3
Overview of Trails Plan Issues and Goals	S4
Montana’s Trails and Public Lands	S7
Trail Settings and Use Restrictions	S11
Montana Trail Use Patterns	S12
Trail-related Activities	S12
Trail Use	S12
User Days	S12
Trends in State and National Trail-related Participation	S13
Trail User Attitudes	S13
Attitudes About Montana’s Trail Supply	S14
Attitudes About Trail Use and Management	S14
Attitudes About Conflict and Compatibility	S15
Trail Funding	S16
Montana Trail Supply and Demand	S16
View from the End of the Trail	S17

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Rationale For Montana State Trails Plan	1
Overview of Planning Process	2
Definition of “Trail”	4
Overview of Trail Managing Agencies	6
Federal	6
State	7
Local Governments	7
Benefits of Trails	8
Outdoor Recreation	8
Social/Community Benefits	8
Alternative Transportation	9
Conservation and Resource Protection	10
Health Benefits	11
Environmental, Historical and Cultural Education	11
Economic	12
Negative Impacts	14
Trail Plan Components	14

CHAPTER II: INVENTORY OF MONTANA’S TRAIL SYSTEM

Introduction	15
Trail Inventory Methods and Definitions	15
Overview of the Montana Trail System	17
The Evolution of Montana’s Recreational Trail System	17
Federal Trail Managing Agencies	19
State Trail Managing Agencies	61



Local Trail Managing Agencies	62
Other Trail Providers	81
Selected Land and Recreation Management Classifications	81
Wilderness Areas and other Roadless Lands	81
Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) Classifications	85
Use Restrictions	86
Trail Elevations and Elevation Range	88
Trail Lengths	88
Conclusions from Inventory Information	89
CHAPTER III: TRAIL USE, USER ATTITUDES, AND TRENDS	91
Introduction	91
National Trends Affecting Montana Trail Use	92
Montana Trail Use	94
Trail Use Participation Rates and Trends	94
Trail Trip Profiles and Activity Days	100
Montana Trail User Attitudes	101
Major Conclusions from Surveys and Scoping Results	102
Motivation and Satisfaction	103
Attitudes about Trail Supply	103
Attitudes about Trail Use and Management	107
Attitudes about Conflict and Compatibility	109
Barriers to Trail Use	111
Summary of Montana Trail Supply and Demand	111
CHAPTER IV: TRAIL ACCESS AND LINEAR CORRIDOR ALTERNATIVES	113
Access To Trails and Public Land	113
Federal Policy and Legislation Related to Access Issues	114
Public Roads and Rights-of-Ways	114
Private and Unofficial Trails and Trail Access	115
Linear Corridor Alternatives	116
Utilizing Existing Infrastructure for Trails	116
Historic Routes and Trails	121
The National Trails System	130
CHAPTER V: TRAIL FUNDING	133
Federal Trail Managing Agencies	133
United States Forest Service	133
National Park Service	133
Bureau of Land Management	133
Federal Funding Sources Available to Trail and Transportation Management Agencies	133
Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21)	134
Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)	134
Rivers and Trails Conservation Assistance Program	135
Resource Conservation and Development Funds	135
Other Federal Programs	135
State Trails Grant Programs Managed by FWP	135
Recreational Trails Program (RTP)	135
The Montana Off-Highway-Vehicle (OHV) Program	137
The Montana Snowmobile Grant Program	138



Other State Trail Funding Sources	138
Montana Footpath and Bicycle Trail Act of 1975	138
State General Funds	139
Tourism Infrastructure Investment Program (TIIP)	139
The University System	139
Private/Non-Profit Funding Sources	139
Local Trails Funding	140
Potential Future Funding Sources	140
Attitudes About Funding	141
CHAPTER VI: THE DIRECTION FROM HERE: TRAIL ISSUES, GOALS AND STRATEGIES	143
Introduction	143
Goals and Strategies	143
ACCESS	144
URBAN TRAILS	146
RESOURCE PROTECTION	148
TRAIL SUPPLY AND SYSTEM CONFIGURATION	151
FUNDING	153
MAINTENANCE	156
MANAGEMENT AND ENFORCEMENT	159
USER CONFLICT AND COMPATIBILITY	161
SAFETY AND LIABILITY	164
COMMUNICATION, COORDINATION, INFORMATION AND EDUCATION	165
NEW LINEAR CORRIDOR ALTERNATIVES (e.g., rail trails, etc.)	170
ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION	171
DISABLED AND ELDERLY ACCESS/TRAILS	173
TRAILHEADS	174
RESEARCH, PLANNING AND DESIGN	175
Final Thoughts	178
VII: REFERENCES CITED	179
VIII: APPENDICES	185

LIST OF FIGURES:

Figure E-1.	Montana Trails	9
Figure I-1.	Average Expenditures of Spring-Summer Trail Trip	13
Figure I-2.	Average Expenditures of Fall-Winter Trail Trip	13
Figure II-1.	Montana Land Ownership Patterns	16
Figure II-2.	Number of Trails in Montana By Managing Agency	16
Figure II-3.	Miles of Trails in Montana By Managing Agency	17
Figure II-4.	Lolo National Forest	21
Figure II-5.	Flathead National Forest	23
Figure II-6.	Lewis and Clark National Forest	25
Figure II-7.	Gallatin National Forest	27
Figure II-8.	Kootenai National Forest	29
Figure II-9.	Beaverhead and Deerlodge National Forests	31
Figure II-10.	Bitterroot National Forest	33
Figure II-11.	Helena National Forest	35
Figure II-12.	Custer National Forest	37
Figure II-13.	Glacier National Park	41
Figure II-14.	Yellowstone National Park	43
Figure II-15.	Bureau of Land Management, Billings Field Office	45
Figure II-16.	Bureau of Land Management, Butte Field Office	47
Figure II-17.	Bureau of Land Management, Dillon Field Office	49
Figure II-18.	Bureau of Land Management, Great Falls Field Station	51
Figure II-19.	Bureau of Land Management, Lewistown Field Office	53
Figure II-20.	Bureau of Land Management, Miles City Field Office	55
Figure II-21.	Bureau of Land Management, Malta Field Office	57
Figure II-22.	Bureau of Land Management, Missoula Field Office	59
Figure II-23.	Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, State Parks	63
Figure II-24.	Billings Urban Trails	67
Figure II-25.	Bozeman Urban Trails.	69
Figure II-26.	Butte Urban Trails	71
Figure II-27.	Great Falls Urban Trails.	73
Figure II-28.	Helena Urban Trails.	75
Figure II-29.	Kalispell Urban Trails	77
Figure II-30.	Missoula Urban Trails.	79
Figure III-1:	National Participation in Trail-Related Activities	93
Figure III-2.	Trends in National Participation Rates for Trail-Related Activities.	93
Figure III-3.	Projected National Participation Trends in Trail-related Activities.	95
Figure III-4.	Percentage of Montana Trail Users Participating in Various Trail Activities.	96
Figure III-5.	Participation in Select Trail-Related Activities.	96
Figure III-6.	Participation in Trail-Related Activities on Montana’s National Forests.	97
Figure III-7.	Participation Rates by Sex for Select Trail-Related Activities.	97
Figure III-8.	Montana OHV Registration Trends.	99
Figure III-9 .	Summer Visitors Top 22 Reasons for Visiting Montana (1997).	99
Figure III-10.	Average Age of Participants.	100
Figure III-11.	Participation Rates in Other Activities When on a Trail Trip.	101
Figure III-12.	Motivating Factors for Engaging in Trail-Related Activities.	103
Figure III-13.	Trail User Satisfaction.	104



Figure III-14.	Satisfaction with Trail Opportunities.	104
Figure III-15.	Perception of Crowding on Favorite Trail.	105
Figure III-16.	Agreement that the Statewide Trail Supply is Adequate.	105
Figure III-17.	Extent of Support for Converting Abandoned Rail Lines into Trails.	106
Figure III-18.	Satisfaction with Trail Access.	107
Figure III-19.	Agreement that Trail Users Lack Proper Etiquette.	108
Figure III-20.	Agreement that Better Trail Location Information is Needed.	108
Figure III-21.	Agreement that there are Conflicting Uses on Local Trails.	109
Figure III-22.	Approval of Legal Motorized Trail Use.	110
Figure III-23.	Montana Visitor Trends	112
Figure IV-1.	Montana’s Railroad System	117
Figure IV-2.	Montana’s Scenic and Historic Trails	125
Figure V-1.	Attitudes Toward Funding	141

LIST OF TABLES

Table E-1.	Montana’s Trail Inventory	S8
Table II-1.	Number and Total Miles of Trails in Montana’s National Forests	19
Table II-2.	Number and Miles of Trails in National Park Service Administrative Units	39
Table II-3.	Number and Miles of Trails on Bureau of Land Management Field Offices.	39
Table II-4.	Number and Miles of Trail on USFWS Administrative Units	61
Table II-5.	Number and Miles of Trails on FWP Managed Property by Region.	62
Table II-6.	Number and Miles of Trails Managed by City/County Departments	65
Table II-7.	Wilderness Areas in Montana	82
Table II-8.	Recreational Opportunity Classification (ROS) Spectrum	85
Table IV-1.	Rail Trails in Montana	119

NOTE: The maps depicting trails in this document are intended to be general representations only, and are not to be used as trail guides or for locating specific trails. While these maps are based on the best statewide digital trails coverage available, there are many routes marked that are not part of the managed trail system, in addition to designated trails that don’t show up on the maps. Additionally, the Montana trail system is changing constantly (especially in urban areas), and any map will be quickly outdated.



