

Chapter 3. Recreation

Public Recreational Assets

Forest Service

Of the 488,538 acres in Blaine County managed by the U.S. Forest Service, the Ketchum Ranger District administers 322,000 acres. The Sawtooth National Recreation Area (SNRA) is 750,000 acres with approximately 166,000 acres in Blaine County. Within the SNRA, about 12,000 acres of the Sawtooth Wilderness Area lie in Blaine County. Most of Bald Mountain Ski Area lies on U.S. Forest Service and BLM land and is administered by special use permit with the Sun Valley Company.

Forest Service Travel Management Plan: The current travel plan for the SNRA consists of a detailed Motor Vehicle Use Map that identifies areas designated as open to motorized travel. It also displays allowed uses by vehicle class, seasonal allowances, distance allowances and other information on travel rules and regulations. Planning efforts have been underway since 2014 to update a summer travel plan which aims to bring road and trail use into compliance with the forest plan, provide a system of roads and trails for public access and recreational travel, manage unacceptable resource impacts due to the use of road and trails and restore non-system routes.

Bureau of Land Management

The Shoshone District of the BLM manages approximately 790,000 acres of land in Blaine County. Developed recreation opportunities on BLM lands range from the River Run side of the Bald Mountain Ski Area to boat ramps, picnic areas and semi-developed camping sites. Most of the scenic hillsides south of Hulen Meadows, along State Highway 75, U.S. 93 and U.S. 20 in Blaine County are managed by the BLM. All of this land is open to recreation.

BLM Lands Benefit Study:

In 2006, Blaine County, the BLM, and Arizona State University worked cooperatively to complete a study to understand the value and importance of Wood River Valley lands to the communities of Sun Valley, Ketchum, Hailey and Bellevue. Fourteen focus groups met over the winter and summer, and the "Final Report of the Wood River Valley Lands Benefits Study" was released in October 2006. The focus groups verified the benefits of opportunities "for all to participate in recreation activities, which make healthy individuals, lifestyles, homes and communities." The report is referred to in this chapter as the "BLM Lands Benefit Study". [ADD LINK HERE](#)

BLM Travel Management Plan: "North Hwy 20 Travel Management Plan History and Status"

March of 2005 the Blaine County Commissioners contacted the BLM Shoshone Field Office about damaged vegetation, soils, riparian areas and hillsides in the Wood River Valley due to increased recreation activities. The County Commissioners requested that all vehicles be confined to designated routes within the County to prevent cross country travel by motorized and mechanized users. They also requested that user-created motorized, foot and horse trails on BLM managed lands be curtailed.

- September 2005 - An Assistance Agreement was signed that allowed the County to initiate a Cooperative Conservation Recreation and Travel Planning effort. The Blaine County Cooperative Conservation and Travel Plan began with an effort to provide recreational opportunities for the increasing number of outdoor enthusiasts in the Wood River Valley while reducing natural resource impacts on public lands. The County Commissioners hired Arizona State University to conduct a series of focus groups gathering data to better understand the type and degree of recreation demand within their planning area. Public meetings were also held and notifications published in the local newspapers, including the Idaho Mountain Express and the Wood River Journal, and posted on the Blaine County website and County

Commissioner meeting agendas. This information was used to formulate a recreation and travel plan recommendation from the Blaine County Commissioners to the BLM.

- January 2008 - The County submitted their recreation and travel plan recommendation to the BLM Shoshone Field Office.
- October 2008/March 2009 - Two additional recommendations were submitted to the BLM Shoshone Field Office. The first provided more specific information pertaining to road designations; the second provided detailed trail designs/corridors within proposed Special Recreation Management Areas.
- BLM initiated the North Highway 20 Travel Management Plan by conducting public meetings/open houses were held during August 2011. Early 2013 the BLM notified the Blaine County Commissioners that the Travel Management Plan would be delayed indefinitely.
- In late 2015, the Travel Management Plan process was re-started.

National Park Service

The Craters of the Moon National Monument & Preserve spans Butte and Blaine Counties. The National Park Service administers over 462,000 acres within Blaine County. The Craters of the Moon is managed cooperatively by the National Park Service and the BLM. In 2015, the Board of Commissioners passed a resolution supporting the redesignation of the Craters of the Moon from a National Monument to a National Park.

Other National

Other national protected areas in Blaine County include a small portion of the Challis National Forest and part of the Minidoka National Wildlife Refuge.

Blaine County Waterways

Dock Inventory:			
Alturas Lake			
2 sets of docks		ADA accessible	
Pettit Lake			
Shore launch only (no jet skis or watercraft allowed)			
Magic Reservoir			
West Magic boat Launch	4 sets of docks	ADA accessible	
Myrtle Point boat launch	1 set of docks	ADA accessible	
Lava Point boat launch	1 set of docks		
East Magic boat launch	3 sets of docks	ADA accessible	
Hot Springs boat launch	2 sets of docks	ADA accessible	
Moonstone boat launch	1 set of docks		
Little Wood Reservoir			
Main boat launch	1 set of docks	ADA accessible	
Fish Creek Reservoir			
Shore launch - small boat and watercrafts			

Recreation Asset Inventory

Thanks to input from multiple recreation providers and crucial assistance from the Blaine County Recreation District, a comprehensive inventory was developed for this Plan. The inventory can be sorted in various ways including by category, by provider, by designation (public, private, etc.) and by location. The inventory sorted by category can be found here: [ADD LINK to recreation asset inventory \(pdf\)](#)

Recreation Use

Recreation visit data was compiled for each reported asset in the recreation inventory (see “Annual Visits” column in the inventory link above). Each asset was aggregated into relevant categories as merited and those same categories were used to seek additional input through the 2015 Blaine County Recreation Survey. Visit data was compiled for each recreational asset from individual asset provider or associated organization when available. Other data used were the 2012 Wood River Valley Trail Study* and samples and interviews from recreation users and providers knowledgeable about a certain category of recreation. Recreation visit estimates are meaningful and instructive, but by no means completely exhaustive or exact. Locational estimates for certain assets such as the Wood River Trail are approximations only because the activity frequently crosses over subarea boundaries. Current visit inventory can serve as a foundation and comparison for future directional assessments of how and where people recreate in Blaine County. The user day inventory

*The 2012 Wood River Valley Trail Study was a project of the following partners: Blaine County Recreation District, Sun Valley Economic Development (formerly Sustain Blaine), City of Ketchum, Ketchum Parks & Recreation, Wood River Bike Coalition, Wood River Land Trust, Ketchum Ranger District, Bureau of Land Management, Sawtooth National Recreation Area, Sun Valley Company, and Blaine County.

Identified Needs

An online (SurveyMonkey) Recreation Survey was conducted for a period of seven weeks to determine how recreation users perceive assets, where they are most frequently recreating, and what assets they see as most needed in the future. A total of 975 responses was tabulated. Open ended comments were submitted by 281 respondents.

[ADD LINKS](#) to online survey data (pdf) and open ended comments.

History *Here are some of the top moments in Blaine County's long history of outstanding recreation:*

1884 – The Oregon Shortline of Union Pacific Railway begins bringing passengers to Blaine County including visitors to Guyer Hot Springs.

1905 - Sawtooth Timber Reserve is established (changed in 1907 to the Sawtooth National Forest)

1924 - Craters of the Moon National Monument is established (expanded 13-fold in 2000)

1933 - Civilian Conservation Corp comes to the Sawtooth National Forest and approximately 600 young construct roads, trails, campground facilities, and ranger stations.

1936 - Union Pacific Chairman Averell Harriman constructs Sun Valley Resort and introduces ski lifts

1937 - Pioneer Cabin opens

1942 - Bald Mountain opens for skiing

- 1948 - Gretchen Kunik Fraser, Sun Valley resident, wins gold in women's slalom and silver in women's combined at the Olympics
- 1959 - Paved highway opens over Galena Summit, providing easier access to Sawtooth and White Cloud Mountains and the Stanley Basin
- 1960 - Warm Springs Golf Course opens
- 1972 - Sawtooth National Recreation Area (SNRA) is established
- 1973 - First Boulder Mountain Nordic Ski Tour
- 1974 - Galena Lodge operated as a Nordic Center.
- 1975 - Prairie Creek Cross Country ski trail is laid out and groomed by USFS. First such endeavor on National Forest lands in the U.S.
- 1975 - The Nature Conservancy purchases the 479- acre core of the Silver Creek Preserve from the Sun Valley Company.
- 1976 - Blaine County Recreation District is created
- 1982 - Lake Creek Nordic Trailhead is created
- 1984 - Christin Elizabeth Cooper, Ketchum native, wins silver medal in the women's giant slalom at the Olympics
- 1992 - Warm Springs Base Lodge opens
- 1993 - Wood River Trail System (begun in 1984) is completed
- 1994 - Galena Lodge is purchased by the community
- 1995 - River Run Base Lodge opens
- 1998 - Picabo Street, born in Triumph, wins the gold medal in Super G at the Olympics
- 2001 - Harriman Trail is completed
- 2004 - Dollar Mountain Lodge day lodge opens; it also serves as the headquarters for the Sun Valley Ski School
- 2008 - Dollar Mountain Terrain Park opens
- 2009 - Roundhouse Express Gondola is installed and carries non-skiers to the restaurant as well as skiers
- 2012 - Sun Valley Region is designated as a United States Olympic / Paralympic Training Site for Nordic Skiing
- 2014 - Kaitlyn Brooke Farrington, born and raised in Bellevue, wins the gold medal in the women's half-pipe competition at the Olympics.

Chapter References

Outdoor Recreation, Health and Wellness: Understanding and Enhancing the Relationship, Geoffrey Godbey, © 2009 Resources for the Future

Outdoor Recreation Industry fact sheet – Idaho. [ADD LINK](#)