



Photo courtesy of Blaine County Recreation District

## Chapter 3 - Recreation

**Vision** Blaine County, from the Snake River to the Sawtooth Mountains, will be a place to find world-class, year-around recreational opportunities that respond to the needs of the community.

### Key Guiding Principle

- ◆ *Recreation is a centerpiece of the life experience for both local residents and visitors.*

Blaine County residents and visitors are fortunate to enjoy a remarkable variety of recreational opportunities. Sustaining and enhancing public recreation is a goal of our community. As population and visitor numbers grow, the County will need to balance competing interests among multiple and diverse user groups. At the same time, upholding important County values such as preserving access to public lands and waters and protecting the natural environment will remain central.

### Setting

Recreation is an activity done for enjoyment, often of a physical nature such as walking, hiking or skiing. Nationally, the desire for recreation has increased because of greater longevity and affluence, and the availability of commercial offerings such as downhill ski areas. Wellness is linked closely to recreation. For the purposes of this chapter, recreation is considered to be active indoor and outdoor activities.



*Horseback riders out Bullion Gulch in fall - Carol Waller*

While Blaine County government is generally not a direct recreation provider, the County has a variety of important roles including:

- ensuring access to public recreational lands through the land use process and the transportation network
- providing and maintaining docks and boat launches at lakes and reservoirs
- providing law enforcement such as Marine Patrol
- grooming snowmobile trails
- participating in federal planning processes such as the BLM Travel Management Plan
- supporting grants
- partnering with direct recreation providers.

The subarea pages at the end of this chapter include tables summarizing location-specific County services related to individual subareas.

The Blaine County area has a long history of recreation. The Union Pacific Railroad brought visitors to the area in the mid-1880s to relax in the Guyer Hot Springs. The Sawtooth National Forest

was created in 1905 by President Theodore Roosevelt, and the Civilian Conservation Corps built campgrounds, roads and trails in the early 1930s. These early actions established a land use and recreational pattern that is reinforced and expanded upon today. The Sun Valley Resort, developed by the Union Pacific Railroad in 1936, brought downhill skiing and highlighted other outdoor recreational activities such as hunting, fishing, and hiking. The vast public lands and the ski resort put Sun Valley and Blaine County on the national radar as a recreation destination.

Three important events in the 1970s solidified our access to and commitment towards recreation: the Sawtooth National Recreation Area was created, the first Boulder Mountain Tour Nordic race was held, and the Blaine County Recreation District was formed. The County now is known for its abundant natural and developed recreational opportunities and its community-based, experiential recreational assets.

## Benefits of Recreation

Nationally, outdoor recreation is a tremendous economic driver, accounting for \$646 billion in consumer spending in 2010. It is behind only financial services and insurance and outpatient health care.<sup>1</sup> Nationwide, outdoor recreation employs more than 6 million people, more than the finance and insurance industry and the construction industry.<sup>2</sup>

In Idaho, outdoor recreation generates \$6.3 billion in consumer spending and 77,000 direct jobs with \$1.8 billion in wages and salaries. At least 74 percent of Idahoans participate in outdoor recreation each year, and this figure does not include hunting, fishing and wildlife viewing.<sup>3</sup>

Locally, the County's remarkable and diverse recreational opportunities draw thousands of visitors to the area each year, representing a strong, multi-season, non-polluting industry in our economic base. There are more than 490,000 user days for snow sports annually, and approximately 729,000 user days on our extensive trails systems.<sup>4</sup> Recreation and tourism dollars are closely tied, and Sun Valley Economic Development reports that approximately 75 percent of all Blaine County sales are moderately or highly correlated with tourism.

In 2015, Congress created the Boulder-White Clouds Wilderness, of which a portion lies in northern Blaine County. Also in 2015, Blaine County Commissioners passed a resolution supporting the designation of a portion of the Craters of the Moon National Monument as a national park, recognizing the "significant beneficial economic impact on neighboring communities." See Chapter 7, Economic Development, for more discussion of the vital

connection between recreation, tourism, and our economy.

Recreation has also been shown to have measurable health benefits, both physical and mental. A growing body of research has confirmed a link between physical activity that takes place outdoors and positive health outcomes, and has provided evidence that being outdoors and viewing natural scenes can reduce stress.<sup>5</sup>



*Photo courtesy of Blaine County Recreation District*

## Recreation Assets

Our County enjoys a multitude of diverse, year-round recreation opportunities that contribute to a healthy lifestyle and excellent quality of life for residents and visitors. Our current recreational assets number in the hundreds. These range from public assets such as Alturas Lake's camping and boating facilities to private assets such as Zenergy's tennis courts and swimming pool. Prior to the creation of this chapter, no county-wide inventory of recreational assets had ever been developed. Through strong teamwork with recreation providers and crucial assistance from the Blaine County Recreation District, a comprehensive inventory has been developed for this Plan and assets within eight

---

<sup>1</sup> Bureau of Economic Analysis, Personal Consumption Expenditures by Type of Product (2010 data)

<sup>2</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011

<sup>3</sup> Outdoor Industry Association, 2011/2012

<sup>4</sup> 2014 Blaine County/BCRD User Data

---

<sup>5</sup> Outdoor Recreation, Health and Wellness: Understanding and Enhancing the Relationship, Godbey, 2009

subareas of the unincorporated County have been mapped (see subarea pages at the end of the chapter and the Appendix for the inventory spreadsheet).

Not surprisingly, most of the developed, active recreational facilities are located within the incorporated cities, while the majority of trails, fisheries, campgrounds and public lands are in the unincorporated County.

It is impossible to discuss the vast subject of recreation without considering the assets that are in cities. Understanding the breadth and distribution of all recreational assets and facilities helps the County and its partners to better plan for future needs, to develop or improve public access, and to negotiate contributions from new developments that will further recreational goals in the appropriate locations.

## Public Recreational Assets

There are approximately 1.3 million acres of federal land in Blaine County. The two largest public land managers are the United States Forest Service (USFS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The National Park Service administers cooperatively with BLM the Craters of the Moon National Monument & Preserve, which spans Blaine and Butte Counties.

The Blaine County Recreation District (BCRD) is a public entity with multiple assets county-wide. Its Wood River Trail spans multiple jurisdictions, and a high numbers of visitors and residents use it both summer and winter, as shown in the user data charts below.

Blaine County's Waterways Division administers and maintains approximately 60 docks on five lakes and reservoirs. Other public assets are State of Idaho, municipal and school district lands. Public lands outside of city limits are shown on Map 3.1 and on each subarea map. More detail on the management of these public lands is found in the Appendix.

Access to public lands and waterways in and adjacent to Blaine County is extensive. This is shown in the recreation asset inventory and on subarea maps, which identify only selected access points and trailheads. Protecting access to public lands is deeply imbedded in the culture of County residents. Current subdivision regulations seek to maintain access to public lands whenever new development is proposed adjacent to public lands or waterways.

## Semi-Public Recreational Assets

A variety of providers own or manage semi-public recreational assets, including the YMCA, Hailey Ice, Rotarun and numerous land conservation organizations.

## Private Recreational Assets

Sun Valley Company owns the most valuable private recreational assets in the County. These include the day lodges, lifts, snowmaking and other infrastructure associated with the 2,054 acre<sup>6</sup> Bald Mountain ski area, the Dollar Mountain ski area, two golf courses, a combined Nordic/golf clubhouse, approximately 25 kilometers of Nordic ski trails, one indoor and one outdoor ice rink, a tennis center, an equestrian center, several swimming pools and hot pools, and a bowling alley. These facilities are available to the public for a fee.

Many other private entities deliver a wide variety of recreational opportunities and facilities, generally through fees and memberships. These include the golf, tennis, shooting ranges, health and fitness centers and seasonal alpine skiing.

---

<sup>6</sup> The majority of this acreage is on public (USFS and BLM) land



*Photos courtesy of Sun Valley Ski Education Foundation and Blaine County Recreation District*

## Recreational Organizations

Numerous organizations provide recreational programs, primarily for youth but also for adults. These include the following:

Blaine County Recreation District (BCRD). Created in 1976, the BCRD is a political subdivision and taxing district in the state of Idaho. This is one reason the County itself is not a primary recreation provider. While “the Rec District” receives funding support through property tax revenues, approximately two thirds of their annual budget is raised through other revenues including fundraising support from the community. At this time, the BCRD Board has chosen not to request from taxpayers a greater levy amount, which is permitted under Idaho law. The BCRD has partnership relationships with all of the cities, Blaine

County, other governmental entities and nonprofit organizations. It leads and coordinates a variety of summer and winter programs. In the unincorporated area, the Wood River and Harriman trails, multi-use paths in the summer and groomed Nordic trails in the winter, are of special note. BCRD owns Galena Lodge, a historic building located 23 miles north of Ketchum, and used as a center for skiing in winter and mountain biking and hiking in summer.

Sun Valley Ski Education (SVSEF). Created in 1966 SVSEF serves approximately 600 youth with winter alpine and Nordic ski programs.

Other primary recreational organizations include the Wood River Community YMCA, Ketchum Parks & Recreation Department, Sawtooth United, Hailey Ice, Wood River Baseball & Softball Association.

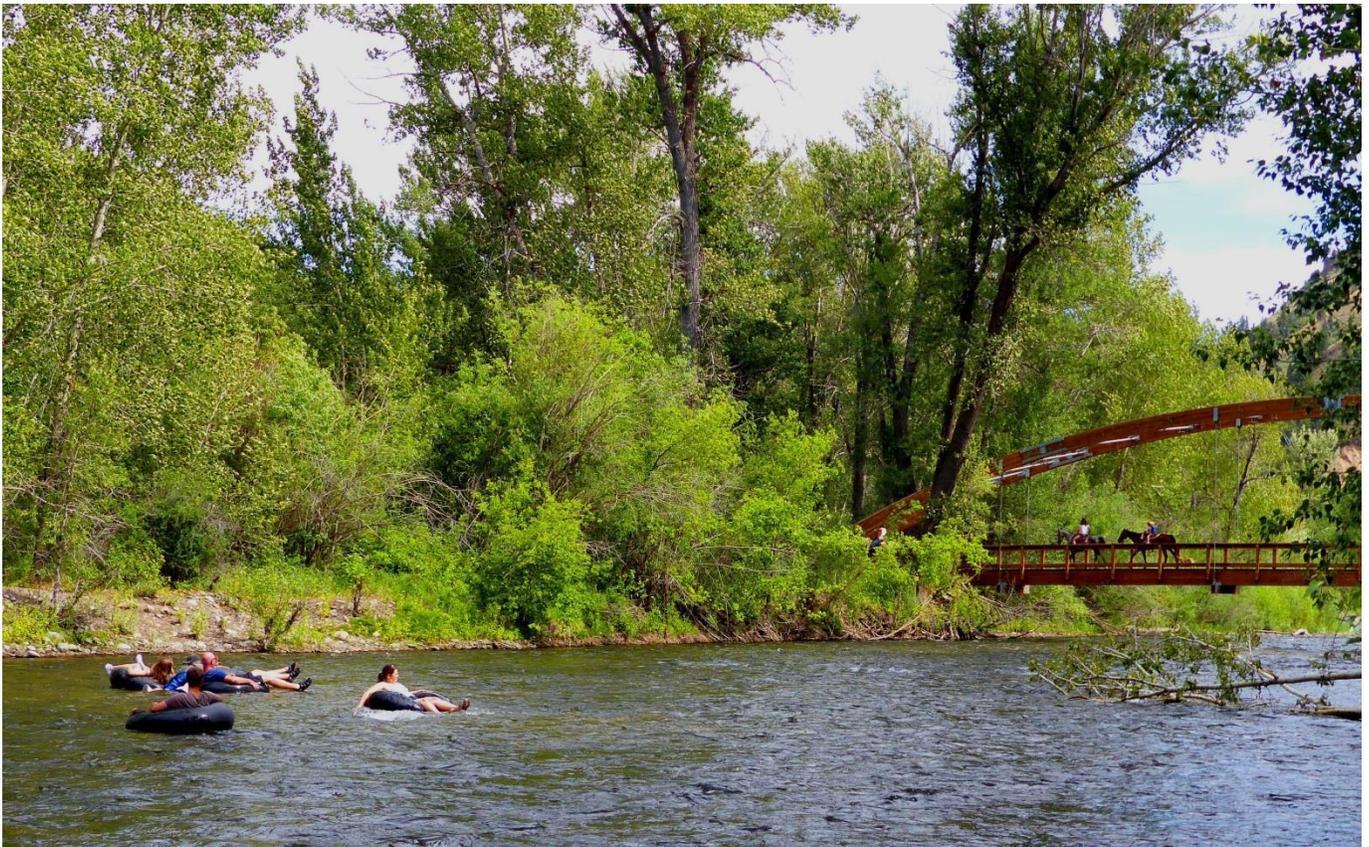
## Recreation Demand

The preceding information describes the “supply” side of the recreation story. This subsection explores the “demand” for recreation countywide.

## Recreation Use

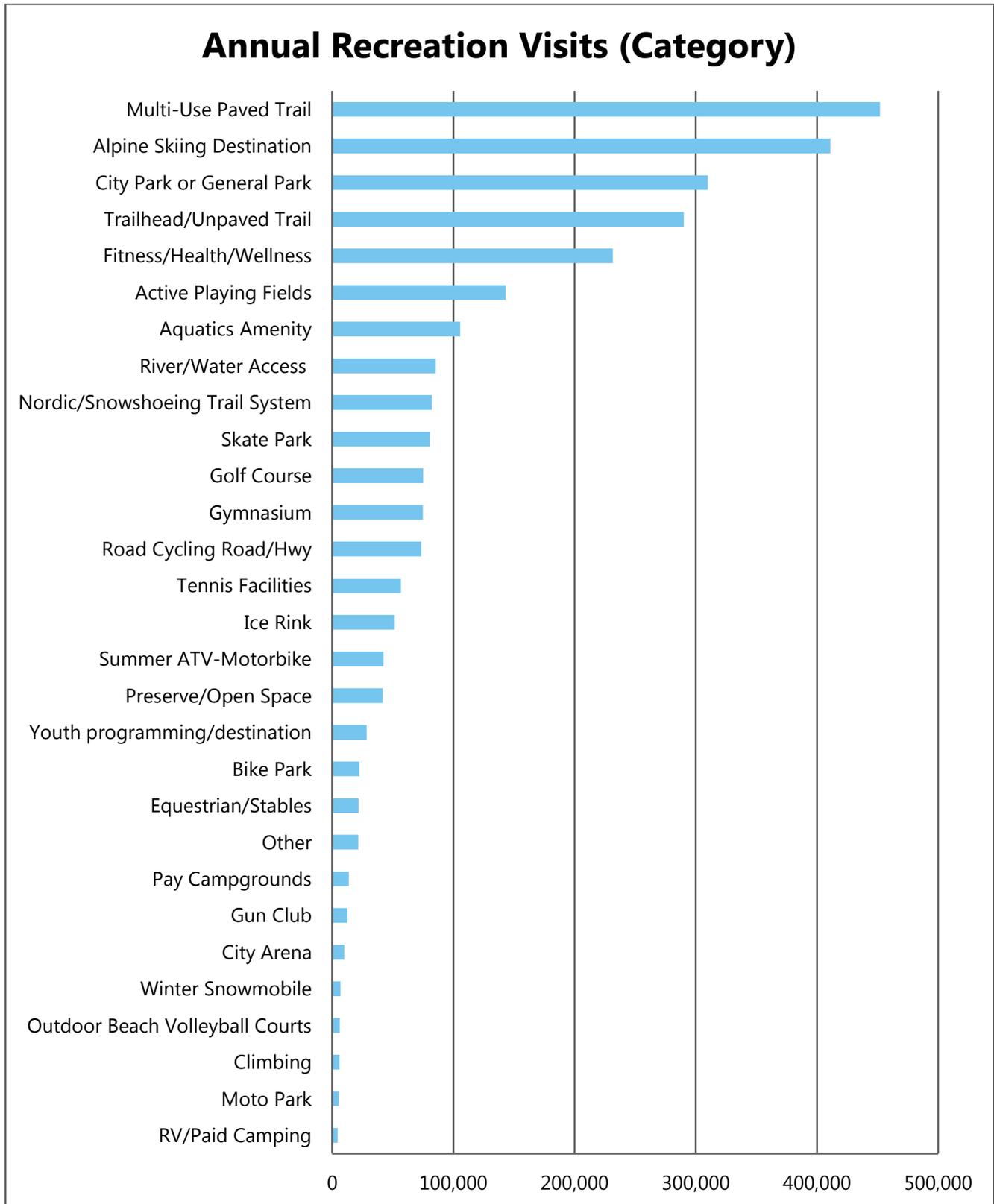
Inventoring the recreational assets in Blaine County is most meaningful when coupled with an understanding of how many people use each asset.

Chart 1 shows an estimate of user days by asset category. Public and private recreational managers in the County provided invaluable assistance in compiling this data. Each visit is counted as one user day. For example, a ride on the bike path is a user day, as is a day skiing on Baldy. (Statistics include use by visitors and County residents.) The Appendix shows assumptions used in the creation of the user day data.



*Summer float on the Big Wood - Carol Waller*

**Chart 1: Estimated Annual User Days (Visits) of Blaine County Recreational Assets (2014)**

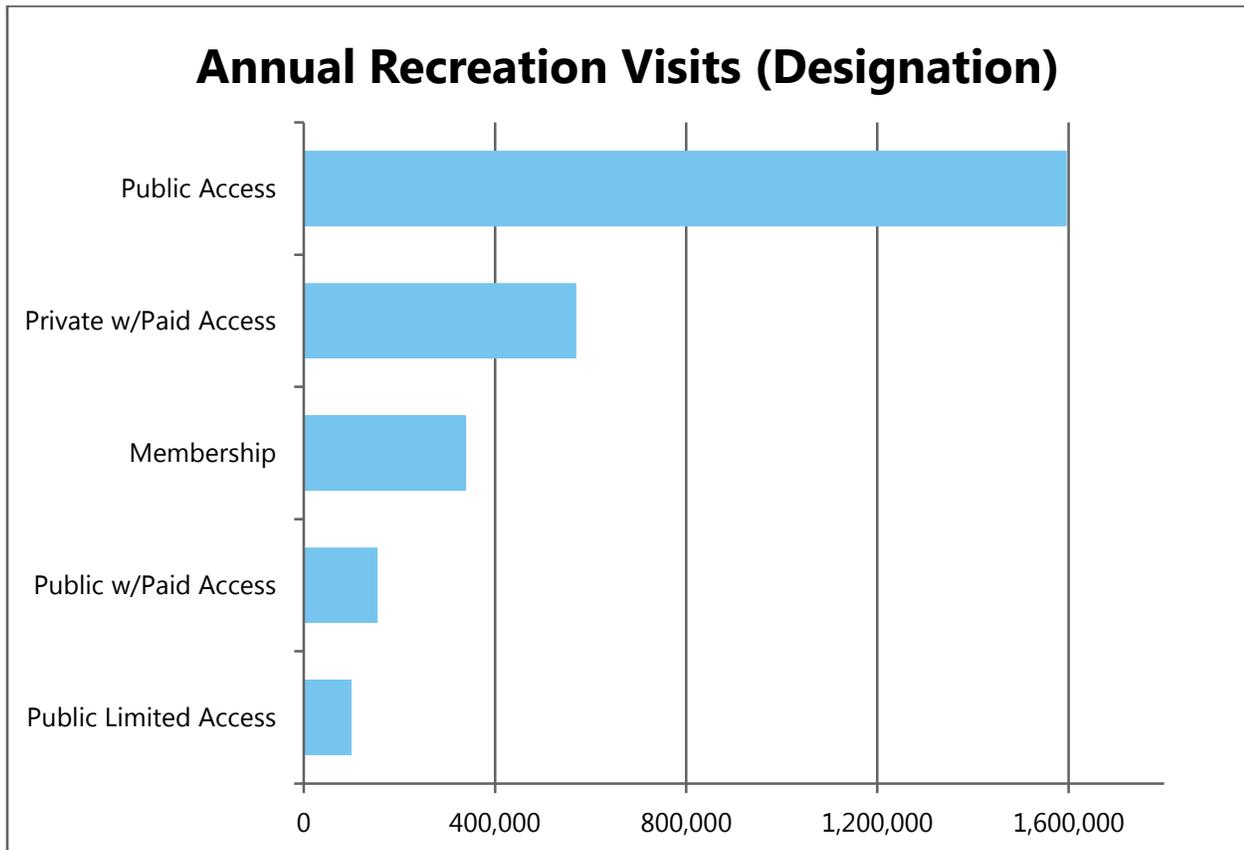


Source: 2014 Blaine County/BCRD User Data

Chart 2 illustrates how the great majority of recreational activities occur where there is public access. This is significant for the County, as much of the public land is reached by roads, trails or

trailheads in unincorporated areas. ("Public Limited Access" in this chart refers to School District facilities.)

**Chart 2: 2014 Annual recreation visits by public or private designation**



Source: 2014 Blaine County/BCRD User Data

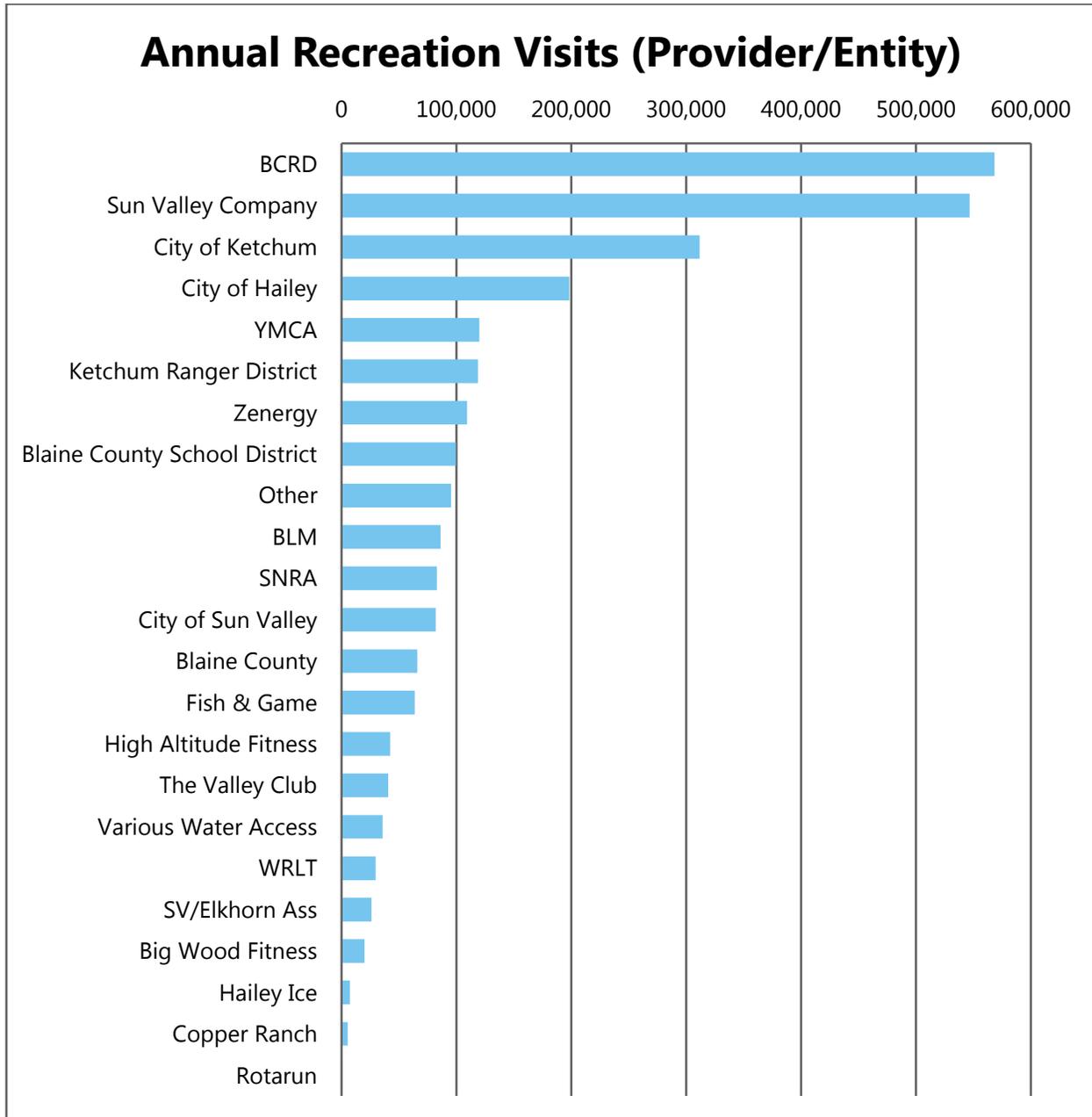


Photo courtesy of Blaine County Recreation District

Chart 3 shows how user days are distributed among recreational providers. Sun Valley Company and the Blaine County Recreation District are the largest recreation providers. However, these figures do not

include the number of user days on public lands, which would likely far exceed the numbers for any one user group shown in Chart 3.

**Chart 3: 2014 User days distributed across recreational providers**

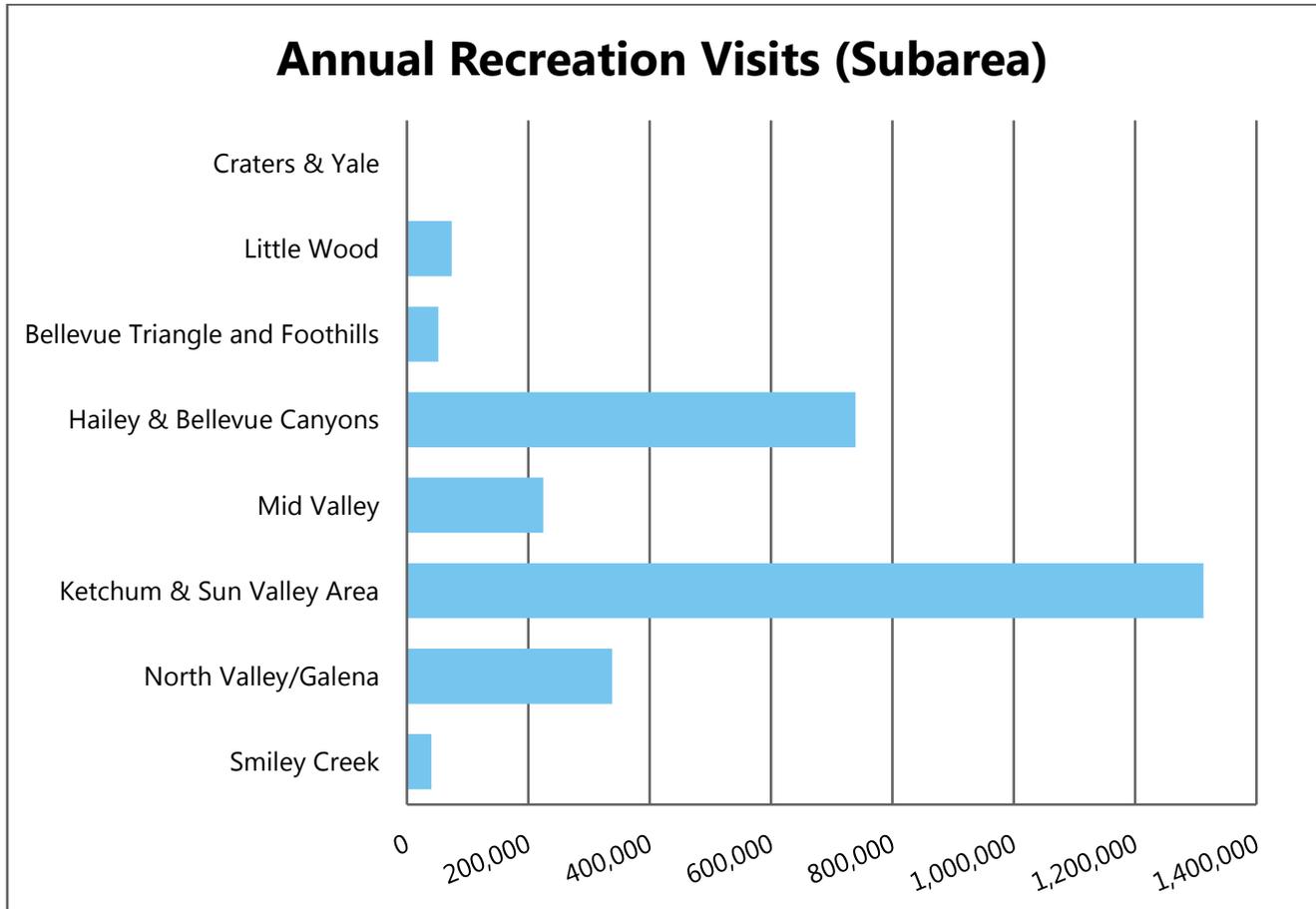


Source: 2014 Blaine County/BCRD User Data

Chart 4, in order of subareas south to north, shows most recreation visits occurring in the Ketchum and Sun Valley Area and in the Hailey & Bellevue Canyons subarea (Carbonate Mountain alone sees

approximately 24,000 user days annually, and the Croy trail system has more than 20,000 user days).

**Chart 4: 2014 Annual Recreation Visits by Subarea**



Source: 2014 Blaine County/BCRD User Data

The Asset Inventory and user data provide an understanding of how our recreational assets are being used by locals and visitors. However, they are not useful as static documents. To be of value, this inventory must be updated at least biennially. Similarly, interactive maps of these assets developed for this Plan could be a tremendous benefit to recreation professionals, residents and visitors if updated on a regular basis.

## Identified Needs

In conjunction with the Asset Inventory developed for this Plan, an online Recreation Survey was conducted for a period of seven weeks. The purpose of the survey was 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. There were 819 County residents who completed the survey (others were part-time or frequent visitors), and 70.4 percent of respondents were between 40-69 years old. The survey was developed by the Recreation Chapter working team, using the on line survey tool "SurveyMonkey". While the survey saw a large number of respondents and the sample represents population figures fairly consistent with county census breakdowns, the results should be considered directional in nature versus statistically significant. The complete survey data is found in the Appendix.

Some trends drawn from the survey include:

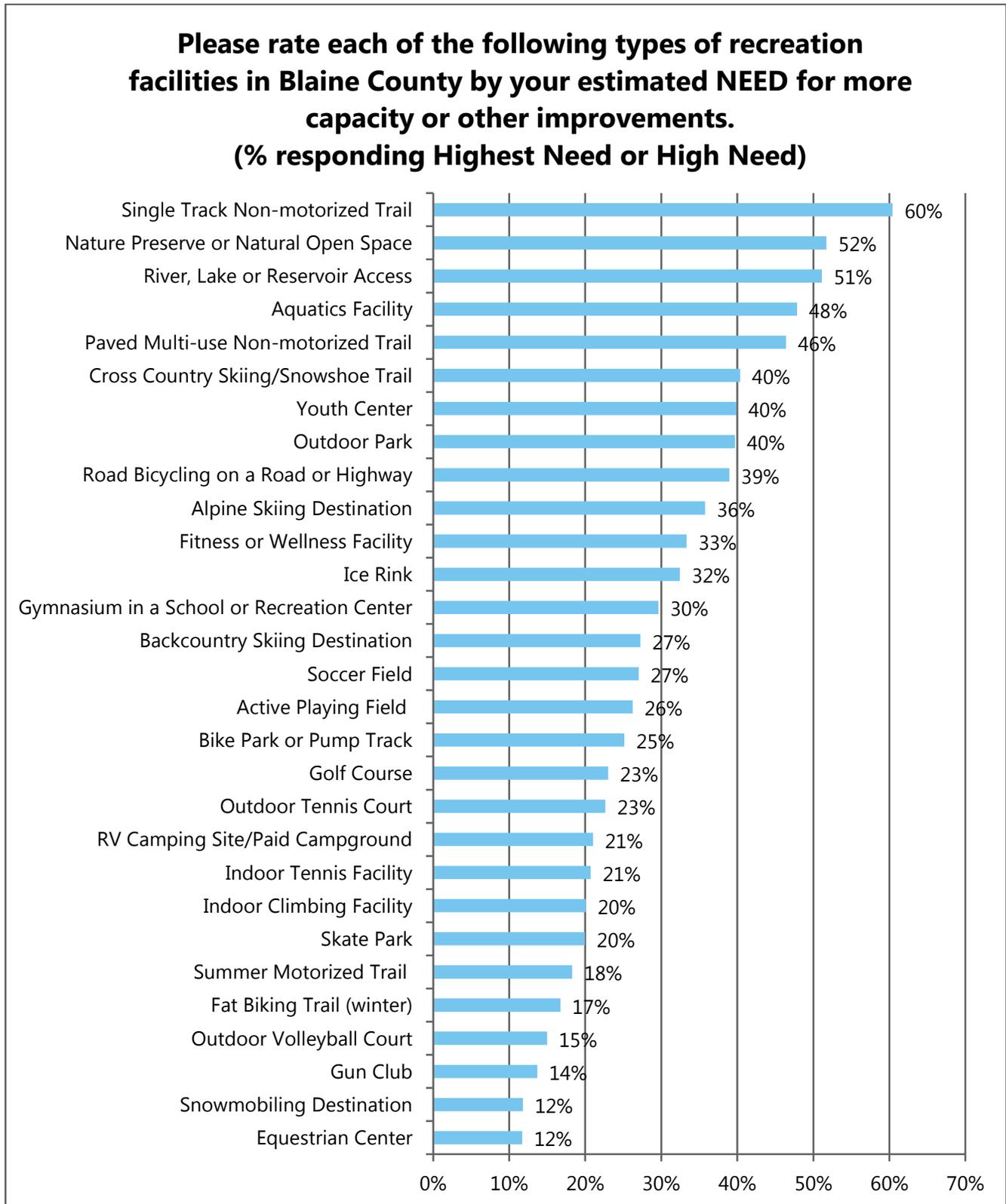
- There is a strong "cluster" of needs around outdoor, nature-inspired activities. These include access to rivers and lakes, trails, nature preserves, parks, and open space.
- Parks, youth centers and aquatic facilities are seen as high needs by 40 to 48 percent of survey responders.
- The highest need for recreational facilities overall is in the Bellevue/Hailey area. This is identified in the survey not only by people who live within the Bellevue/Hailey area, but also by responders who live elsewhere in the County.
- The demand for active playing fields (baseball/soccer) remains high, but is confined to peak seasons and times of day.

Chart 5 reflects the need for additional or improved recreation facilities identified by survey respondents. "More capacity or other improvements" may include such things as trailhead amenities, additional parking, or better maintenance, so survey respondents may have indicated a "need" even for assets that appear to be extensive (e.g. trails).



*Early grooming at Prairie Creek - Frank Rowland*

**Chart 5: 2015 Recreation Survey Overall Needs (n=975)**

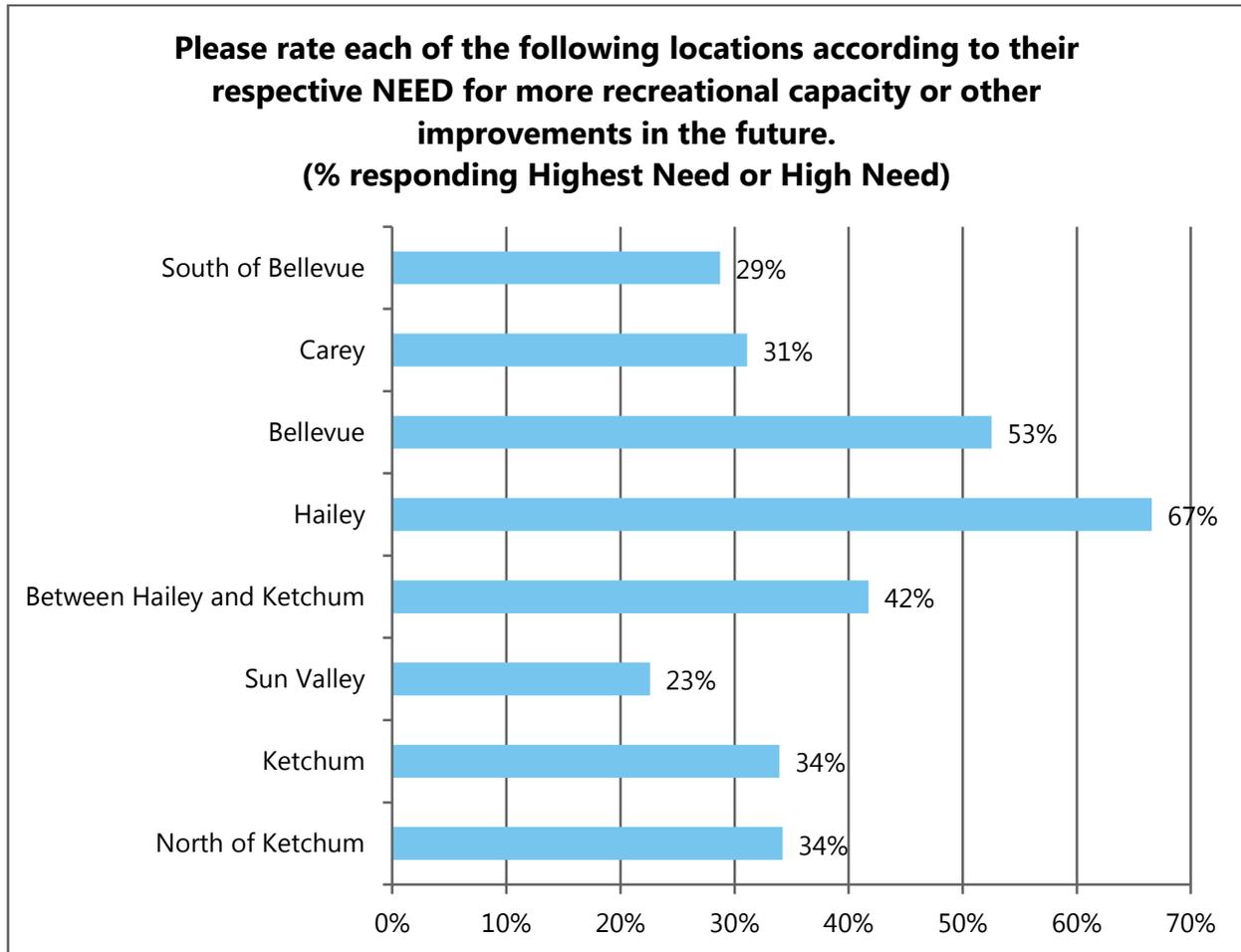


Source: 2015 Blaine County Online Recreation Survey

Chart 6, in order of south to north, shows the locations of identified needs for more recreational capacity or other recreation improvements. The two areas identified as having the greatest need are

Bellevue and Hailey. Interestingly, survey results indicate that recreation needs in Bellevue and Hailey were identified strongly even by people who do not live in those areas.

**Chart 6: 2015 Blaine County Comprehensive Plan Recreation Survey Needs (n=975)**



Source: 2015 Blaine County Online Recreation Survey

## Local Trends

Changing local recreation trends affect how assets are managed and operated. Some trends are related to demographics (aging population or income level, for example), population centers and location of children. Climate change and other factors also play roles. Local trends include:

Private facility trends. Sun Valley Company has noted a trend towards shorter ski days. There is interest in more family activities, and a desire for spa, cultural, dining and shopping activities in addition to active sports. On-mountain terrain parks, downhill mountain biking and snow biking are other trends noted by the company. A destination spa within the Sun Valley Lodge has been built, and offers wellness activities such as massage.

Need for recreational assets near population centers. As the population center has shifted south over the past 20 years, demand for recreational facilities and amenities in the Hailey/Bellevue area has grown. In addition, most youth live in Hailey, and the majority of children are enrolled in schools in Hailey. The Croy trails collaboratively constructed by the BLM and the BCRD have seen heavy use since their creation in 2008. Hailey Ice has constructed a south valley indoor ice rink. (See Chart 1 for city park and skate park user numbers, and the strong survey results showing additional needs in Hailey and Bellevue.)

Increased partnerships. There is a rise in partnerships among entities. These have emerged as a more effective means to share resources, achieve some economies of scale, and complement attributes of different organizations. As an example, BCRD lists over 30 partners on its website.

Growing overlap between recreation and conservation. There is a strong correlation between community investments in recreation and conservation. This overlap expands the use of limited public funds and privately raised funds. As shown in the Recreation Survey, there is a high interest in natural open space and preserves. This has led to creation of conservation areas such as the Draper and Howard preserves. The 5B Restoration Coalition has had strong support from recreation and conservation groups collaborating on restoring trails and repairing the ecological damage after wildfires on both private and public lands.

Trend towards community/group recreation. The social component of recreation continues to grow in Blaine County, with team sports such as baseball, gun clubs, the women's Nordic group called VAMPS, and mentor groups like "Girls on the Run." Family-based recreational activities continue to grow.



*Galena Lodge - Blaine County Recreation District*

# OUR PAST AT A GLANCE

## 1994

### The 1994 Plan set these goals for recreation:

- Protect and enhance the health and lifestyles of residents and visitors.
- Support the goals of the Natural Resource, Historic and Aesthetic sections of the Comprehensive Plan.
- Protect the environmental and scenic qualities in Blaine County.
- Preserve and enhance the recreational opportunities now available.
- Provide a plan to serve the recreation, parks and open space needs for residents and visitors over the next twenty (20) years.

Since 1995, the County has worked toward these goals through such actions as amending zoning and subdivision codes to protect recreational resources including fisheries, wildlife, hillsides, riparian areas and access to public lands. Plans to enhance recreational opportunities have been undertaken by multiple stakeholders. For example, various agencies conducted the Wood River Lands Benefit Study and collaborated to create the recent Blaine County Community Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Plan.

## 1975

Although there was no separate section for Recreation, the 1975 Plan included many references to it. It noted that “Agriculture and recreation form the economic base of the county” and encouraged the expansion of agricultural production and recreational facilities. It also encouraged the private development of “equestrian, pedestrian, bicycle and other recreational circulation systems.”

The Blaine County Recreation District, created in 1976, has provided an ever-growing number of facilities, programs and special events.

Key Statistics from the Past	Skier days on Baldy & Dollar (record: 475,500 in '81/82)	Visitors at Craters of the Moon National Monument	Cross Country Skier Days on BCRD Trails
1975	262,400 (1970s average: 260,210)	275,000	N/A
1994	392,725 (1990s average: 389,850)	237,000	38,800
Most Current	355,628	202,132	65,000 (+15,000 at Sun Valley Nordic)



*Photo courtesy of Blaine County Recreation District*

## Challenges

Even with Blaine County's tremendous recreational assets and opportunities, additional recreational needs still exist and meeting those needs is a challenge. The following broad list was developed by many representatives and users of local recreational assets as well as survey participants. Strong or increasing demand is indicated for:

- Local parks, river access and water parks.
- Recreational amenities such as local parks that can be used by families for picnicking and/or group activities.
- Additional south valley trails and recreational amenities close to the population base, particularly near Hailey and Bellevue.
- Additional camping opportunities, especially in the south/mid Wood River Valley, and more campground amenities, including showers and restrooms.
- More developed trailheads at popular trails, with restrooms, transportation and parking improvements.
- Bicycle and pedestrian projects to enhance safety and available miles.
- Municipal facilities that are affordable to County residents.
- Transit options for users to get to and from recreation locations.

- Active sports fields, courts, swimming pools and indoor active play areas. (Organizations must coordinate user days, and the existing fields are threatened by over-programming. Particular times of day in specific seasons create strong peak demand.)  
(See multiple Desired Outcomes under B, C, D and E.)

Since the County is not a direct recreation provider, many of the needs identified above will not be County-led initiatives. On these types of projects, the County would work in a support role with other entities.

Projects that include access to public land are most frequently in unincorporated areas or neighborhoods. In this way, the County holds a leadership role in planning and implementing access to public lands in these areas.

Other Countywide challenges to providing and maintaining recreational assets include these:

Limited funding for recreational asset management and maintenance. As recreational demands grow and more assets are created, providers struggle to manage and maintain their facilities. More people and user groups utilizing the existing assets create more conflicts and resource impacts. These in turn require additional management. Budgets limit manpower, equipment and supplies needed to care for our assets properly, so it is important to understand ongoing costs and requirements for new ones. With limited funds, it is difficult to stay on the cutting edge of new activities and sports.

Recreation is one of the largest economic drivers in our County, yet public funding dedicated to it is limited. Taxpayers pay a permanent property tax levy for BCRD recreational functions, which equates to approximately \$14 per \$100,000 assessed valuation annually. This is less than the maximum that could be assessed by the district, and is among the lowest of the levy districts on the property tax bill. (Desired Outcomes B-1 through B-4, G-1 through G-5)

Declining federal budgets for recreation. The great legacy of hiking and biking trails in our region is largely due to federal funding. The Ketchum Ranger District in particular has a strong heritage of trail building. Federal budgets have dramatically decreased in the last decade, limiting both new recreational development and maintenance of existing recreational facilities on federal lands. (Desired Outcomes A-2, G-1, G-2, G-3)

Recreation that is affordable and accessible to all segments of the population. The full-time population base is spread predominantly over a 15-mile corridor in the Wood River Valley. Most children are in the southern part of that corridor, while nonprofit organizations have noted that a larger donor base to help fund recreational amenities is located in the north valley. Demographic changes will continue to affect recreational needs and patterns. Aging residents, while wishing to stay active, may have special needs and desires. The growth of the Hispanic population has brought a need for community-oriented gathering places and soccer facilities in park-like environments that allow families to watch and participate. (Desired Outcomes B-1, C-2, C-3, C-4)



*Photo courtesy of Blaine County Recreation District*

Different standards and management practices between entities. Federal, state and local agencies do not have the same management budget,

resources or styles. This may result in different infrastructure, signage, maintenance, and enforcement, causing confusion for the public, which prefers to view the recreation experience as “seamless.” Collaborative planning projects such as the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan<sup>7</sup> represent progress towards consistent standards and practices across jurisdictional boundaries. On the federal level, the various federal land managers in the region may have different management goals and practices related to recreation. Those practices can result in very different outcomes. (Desired Outcome A-3).

Coordination between partners, and participation in key land management planning processes. While all recreational organizations and land managers have a goal of collaboration, various constraints like limited budgets often impact this goal. Because of the high demand for recreational assets and the mix of public and private assets, a clear delineation of responsibilities on new or expanded assets is needed. Additionally, the County has made it a high priority to participate in key land management plans for public lands, such as the BLM travel management planning process. (Desired Outcomes A-1 through A-6)

Impacts to access. Access to public and private lands used for hunting and fishing creates an ongoing dialogue between private landowners and recreationists. While the County has an abundance of public land, access through private land is an important component. The BLM Lands Benefit Study<sup>8</sup> noted that changes to access due to subdivision development were of concern. While some residents may have a more privatized “no-trespassing” land ethic, others appear to believe that every hillside is public land whether or not that is true. Public access is an important discussion point in the land development process. It can create an opportunity for improved or dedicated access in partnership with

---

<sup>7</sup> Blaine County Community Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan (2014). See Appendix (Chapter 1, Transportation)

<sup>8</sup> See Appendix for more detail.

private landowners where appropriate, but potential negative impacts to wildlife or sensitive vegetation must be understood. Trails should be platted in new subdivisions with consideration for signage, public access and parking where appropriate. (Desired Outcomes A-7, D-1 through D-6, F-1)

Maintaining balance between recreation needs and land use/neighborhood values. Just as new development may affect recreation, recreational activities may have adverse effects on nearby land uses. Active recreation next to residential or agricultural uses may create conflicts. Sensitive lands may be impacted. For example, campsites adjacent to riparian areas are popular but can degrade native vegetation and the fisheries. The use of resident-created trails, rather than designated trails, from private lots to public land often creates adverse soil stability, visual and wildlife impacts, and trespass issues. (Desired Outcome A-7, E-4, F-6, F-7)

Climate change. Predicted changes include milder winters with higher snow lines, reduced mountain snowpack, earlier spring runoff leading to lower summer water levels in streams and reservoirs, shorter and wetter springs, drier summers, increased wildfires and insect damage. These impacts will affect skiing, boating, fishing, hunting, camping, hiking, mountain biking, and wildlife viewing. Wildfires dramatically impact many recreational activities; not only during the fire but also after the event (e.g. road and trail closures in burned areas, silted rivers from debris flows). In 2014, the Sawtooth National Forest began a multi-organizational, science-based effort aimed at countywide climate adaptation planning. Through climate-change modeling and vulnerability assessment, this effort will work to educate the public and decision-makers about the potentially adverse effects of climate change and devise adaptation strategies, including consideration of recreation and the potential need for more diversified assets and activities. (Desired Outcome C-2)

Wildlife. The protection of endangered and sensitive species affects existing and new recreation opportunities, particularly on federally managed land. The location of trails, for example, may impact sensitive species. Some trails and recreational areas may be subject to wildlife-related seasonal closures (winter range, calving season, etc.) Chapter 5, Natural Environment, includes more about protection of native wildlife. (Desired Outcome A-7, F-5).

Emerging sports. The emergence of new sports can increase the demand on existing resources, the need for education on sharing the asset, and ongoing maintenance. Potential conflicts between existing recreational activities and new activities may need to be evaluated for compatibility. An example is fat-tire biking on Nordic ski trails. Potential safety and compatibility issues as well as damage to groomed surfaces are management challenges. (Desired Outcomes A-1, A-3, B-1, C-2)

Educating users and responding to evolving uses. As recreation use increases in the region, so does the need for education. Many visitors are inexperienced in mountain environments, and locals trying new activities may lack certain knowledge. Education on trail use and etiquette, respect for wildlife, avalanche and flood safety, and other issues is needed. Education also may help to resolve conflicts between hikers and mountain bikers, recreation uses and cattle/sheep grazing, and dog owners and non-dog owners. (Desired Outcome F-7).

Changing technology. Rapid technological changes and increased use of technology affect how we recreate. Examples include debate over cell tower locations to serve what were once remote areas, cell phone courtesy on trails and in public facilities, and impacts to trails from competitive technological measuring programs such as Strava and Map My Trail. An overreliance on GPS and other technology in the back country strains public resources for back-country rescue. (Desired Outcome F-6)

Geothermal utilization. There is one developed geothermal site at Easley Hot Springs. Other locations (Clarendon, Hailey and Guyer Hot Springs) have been operational in the past. Geothermal is discussed as a natural resource in Chapter 5, but also has potential for recreation. Infrastructure and permitting would be necessary to develop hot springs facilities. (Desired Outcome C-7)



*Greenhorn Gulch hiker - Carol Waller*



*Photo courtesy of Sun Valley Ski Education Foundation*

## Desired Outcomes

Desired outcomes are the intended result of our planning efforts. Each desired outcome includes several active policy statements that will guide future decision-making.

### A. Recreational Partnerships

**Desired Outcome: strong coordination and collaboration between public and private asset managers.**

- A-1: Continue collaboration of public and private recreational providers through regular meetings, dialogue and partnerships. The County should participate in these collaborations, particularly those involving access to public land from unincorporated areas and recreational uses on unincorporated lands and waterways.
- A-2: Continue strong collaborative efforts with the primary agencies whose assets have the largest impact on recreation in unincorporated lands: US Forest Service, BLM and BCRD, as well as other partners such as cities, Idaho Fish and Game, Idaho Transportation Department, The Nature Conservancy, Wood River Land Trust, Idaho Department of Lands, Idaho Department of Water Resources, and neighboring counties.

- A-3: Cooperate with and encourage recreational asset providers to work toward consistent standards for infrastructure, management and enforcement, particularly with the predominant federal land managers, USFS and BLM.
- A-4: Cooperate with the Sun Valley Company, USFS and BLM in the implementation of the Bald Mountain Master Plan.
- A-5: Engage in the travel management planning process with BLM and USFS. Encourage and support the completion of the BLM Travel Study as a crucial tool in the development of additional trails and management of motorized uses north of Highway 20.
- A-6: In collaboration with BCRD, Sun Valley Economic Development, the cities and other partners, explore the feasibility of creating a web-based map application to provide location and other information about recreation assets county-wide.

## B. Recreational Asset Management

**Desired Outcome: wisely managed recreational assets that respond to user desires and ongoing maintenance needs. Recreational assets and facilities that are accessible, located close to the people they are meant to serve, and sustainable over the long term.**

- B-1: Maintain the asset inventory developed for this Plan as a critical tool for ongoing strategic management of assets, including evaluation of demand, annual monitoring and adjustments. The County should be the leader in this effort, undertaken with other recreational asset managers.
- B-2: Clearly delineate responsibility for provision and maintenance of recreational assets in new developments.
- B-3: Support ongoing development and maintenance of the Wood River Trail System and collector trails by requiring easements or rights-of-way within new subdivisions. Continue to protect the integrity of the Wood River Trail by strictly limiting new crossings of the trail by roadways.
- B-4: Support the Blaine County Waterways Program to help provide recreational facilities and public access improvements on reservoirs, rivers and lakes in cooperation with local, state and federal agencies.

## C. Recreational Asset Needs

**Desired Outcome: recreational managers who are responsive to the needs of the community; new assets added based on community needs and desires.**

- C-1: Support bicycle/pedestrian improvements, with a focus on those identified in the Community Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan. Respectfully consider private property concerns.
- C-2: Support efforts by recreational providers to diversify recreational assets based on changing community needs and demands, and environmental influences such as climate change.
- C-3: Consider affordability of recreational assets as an important value. Assets should be accessible to families.

- C-4: Give high priority to additional recreational assets in the Hailey/Bellevue area.
- C-5: Encourage recreational providers to create additional active-sports facilities.
- C-6: Support additional visitor camping facilities, including showers and restrooms, near valley population centers.
- C-7: Support development of geothermal recreational activities.
- C-8: Improve existing trailheads. Considerations for trailheads in unincorporated area should include the following:
  - improved signage and mapping
  - educational information regarding the natural environment, shared use, trail etiquette
  - restrooms
- C-9 Support new residential development providing recreation opportunities that are appropriate to the size, type and location of development.

## D. Access to Recreation

**Desired Outcome: access to recreation that is maintained and enhanced through the development review process, and through respectful processes with private landowners.**

- D-1: Assure that new developments adjacent to public lands provide access to public lands and waterways, and, where appropriate, acreage for trailhead facilities such as parking. Wherever possible, funding for ongoing maintenance should be established. Work with homeowners associations on ongoing funding.
- D-2: Support design and construction of sustainable trails for motorized, mechanized and non-mechanized use adjacent to cities and County neighborhoods in appropriate locations.
- D-3: Provide connectivity to designated trails on public lands by working to establish easements through private property or other tools that respect private property concerns.
- D-4: Encourage landowners to participate in the *Access Yes!* program which provides respectful access to private property for hunting and fishing.
- D-5: Identify and designate areas where trailhead facilities are necessary to support designated trail systems, on private or public land, in existing neighborhoods and in new subdivisions.
- D-6: Consider including the potential for improved public access as part of any future open space levy programs.
- D-7: Always consider wildlife in travel management and trail planning especially with respect to nesting and wintering wildlife.

## E. Recreation and Transportation

**Desired Outcome: infrastructure and connectivity that support the important intersection between recreation and transportation.**

- E-1: Continue public input on the Community Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan and refer to this plan as a guiding document for recreational access and improvements. Respectfully consider private property concerns.
- E-2: Always consider cyclists and other nonmotorized users as legitimate potential users of County roads. Implement improvements on County roads wherever appropriate to accommodate bicycle and pedestrian access.
- E-3: Always consider pedestrians and other non-mechanized users as legitimate users of non-motorized multi-use paths.
- E-4: Encourage and support the development of trails and recreation sites that are easily accessible from residential areas and communities, especially those that connect to existing trail systems. All new trails should respect the natural environment and private property, as well as be sustainable and consistent with this Plan.
- E-5: Develop a range of transportation opportunities, including public transit, to get people to and from key recreational locations and trailheads.
- E-6: Encourage and support travel-planning efforts of the BLM and USFS to connect existing trail systems and provide a designated trail(s) system throughout the Wood River Valley.
- E-7: Work with ITD on bicycle safety and use issues on state roads.
- E-8: Support an ongoing inventory of public recreational rights-of-way and other public access.
- E-9: Ensure that ways to connect to the Wood River Trail system are identified, developed, and constructed to serve outlying residents.

## F. Environment and Enhancing the Recreation Experience

**Desired Outcome: recreation and conservation opportunities that are enhanced through partnerships, stewardship and education. Encourage and support activities and facilities that enrich public recreation and uphold other community values such as protection of the natural environment and scenery.**

- F-1: Support efforts of public entities and conservation groups and individuals to protect, preserve, and enhance the public access, wildlife viewing, hunting and recreational opportunities. Always account for critical and sensitive wildlife areas that may require protection from human activities on a seasonal basis.
- F-2: Protect and enhance recreational values and opportunities of any river, stream, fishery or connected riparian area, and prohibit development that would harm those values or adversely affect the recharge of springs.

- F-3: Continue to evaluate the floodplains of all rivers, streams and tributaries as possible natural, riparian and passive public recreation areas.
- F-4: Support public dialogue on large-scale public land management issues that affect Blaine County, e.g. land exchanges, wilderness designation, potential national parks and monuments.
- F-5: Monitor endangered species issues as they relate to recreation. Create forums for community education and dialogue regarding endangered and sensitive species in recreational areas as issues arise.
- F-6: Improve the availability of information regarding public recreation opportunities by signage and by the mapping of parks, facilities, pathways, trails, public access points, natural features and points of interest. Make them readily available through a variety of media.
- F-7: Educate users as to how to maintain recreational resources, respect the environment and respectfully coexist with other user groups.

## G. Funding for Recreation

**Desired Outcome: well-funded recreation for the community, with an emphasis on funding for public facilities that serve the local population.**

- G-1: Support efforts to fund public recreational providers at sustainable levels, with an emphasis on maintaining existing recreational assets.
- G-2: Work with federal representatives to reverse the trend of diminishing federal funds for recreation on public lands. This funding directly impacts Blaine County, its economy and quality of life..
- G-3: Coordinate with federal, state and local agencies to ensure that recreational user fees are reinvested to benefit users who contribute towards these fees.
- G-4: Consider implementing a development impact fee program as allowed by Idaho code to fund recreational needs.
- G-5: Support state legislation for adequate recreation funding.



*Photo courtesy of Hailey Public Library Mallory Collection*