

Beaverhead Trails Coalition Strategic Plan Communications

Communications Goals

Beaverhead Trails Coalition has identified the following goals for its communications efforts:

- Create public awareness and support for BTC's mission, goals and projects.
- Make sure all target audiences have access to up-to-date, accurate, easy-to-understand information about BTC's efforts.
- Connect with important demographics in the community to broaden and diversify BTC's membership – specifically women, families and young adults.
- Increase awareness of BTC's in-town projects – trails projects, the Bicycle Recycle Program, and the Walking School Bus.
- Improve BTC's branding to achieve a consistent look and feel with all of its materials, website, etc.
- For all BTC projects, develop messages that will inspire enthusiasm and support by communicating the important community benefits BTC is seeking to achieve, and the core values behind BTC's work.
- Use photographs effectively, and build a collection of good quality images that illustrate BTC's projects, accomplishments and vision.
- Launch an e-newsletter.
- Effectively use all available communications strategies.

Communication Principles

Always Lead with Values

People are strongly motivated by values, because values connect on an emotional as well as a rational level. For any communications effort, it is important to identify the values that underlie the goals you are trying to accomplish. Once you have identified those values, any communications about that effort should lead with engaging values language.

Some of BTC's core values include community, health, safety, fun, and environmental and economic vitality and sustainability.

Identify Powerful Themes and Stories that Will Sell Your Work

An important goal over the next three years is to identify the themes and stories that will be most effective in the Dillon community, and decide whether to adjust BTC's communications to emphasize these messages.

A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words

The images you use are at least as important as the words you choose. An image that sparks an immediate, positive emotional reaction will motivate people far more effectively than many paragraphs of information. BTC will make it a high priority to get the images we need to sell our mission and projects.

BTC's Mission Statement

BTC's current mission statement is:

To promote a healthy lifestyle in our community by creating, maintaining and supporting a system of safe routes, trails and programs which encourage walking, bicycling and other forms of outdoor activity.

Communications/Marketing Plans

For important programs and projects, it is important to be systematic and intentional about creating marketing plans to ensure that opportunities are not missed and that the organization is using the most effective sales pitch to achieve its goal.

Framing

It is important to start by asking, "How should we 'frame' this project for maximum impact, and to effectively convey how it fits into BTC's big picture vision and the underlying values of our mission". For example:

- The North-to-South project would be framed as providing a critical connection in the trail system for the north end of the community.
- The Highway 41 crossing would be framed primarily as a safety and connectivity project. In contrast, the High Trails could be framed primarily as providing fun, quality of life, and potential economic benefit.

Target Audiences

Identify target audiences and the framing, themes and stories that will be most effective with each audience. For example, to appeal to those interested in conservation the most effective framing for the High Trails might be conserving habitat and preserving an undeveloped viewshed.

Target audiences BTC has identified include existing members; current trail users; UMW faculty; cross-country running teams; runners, mountain bikers and equestrians; YMCA members; members of the new regional Montana Wilderness Association chapter; large donors; grant funders; business supporters and potential business supporters; decision-makers (local, state and federal government agencies); landowners; and partner organizations.

Messages & Images

Identify the images we need, and wordsmith effective messages for the most important target audiences incorporating values and framing.

Implementation Strategies

For each project and program decide which strategies will be effective, affordable and achievable.

An organization's members can be its best salespeople through one-on-one conversations with their friends, family, and colleagues. A significant benefit of good communications is that active members who are paying close attention will be inspired and feel confident explaining and discussing the organization's projects, goals and values.

Branding

At the most basic level, branding is an organization's use of a logo, fonts, and colors across all its communications to create a consistent, unique and easily recognizable look and feel. At a deeper level, branding is much more complex and nuanced, involving the choice of images, language and messaging the organization uses to shape public perception of its values, its story, who members and leaders are, and what it is trying to achieve.

Logo

The BTC will discuss its current logo, and if we feel it serves its purpose, or if it needs to be revisited, discussed, and possibly changed. Ideas and thoughts on logos in general and how it can apply to BTC can be found in the appendix.

Leadership

Communications/Marketing Plans

Decide who should be responsible for developing and implementing marketing plans for programs and projects.

Spokespeople

Be clear about who your spokespeople should be for different settings. Think about who the best "messenger" is for different audiences. Who will be most effective talking to the agricultural community, speaking before the City or County Commission, presenting to a group of senior citizens, etc.?

For important public speaking opportunities and media interviews, it is a good idea for the spokesperson to meet ahead of time with a couple other organizational leaders to decide on the most important information and messages that need to be conveyed and how they should be stated.

Editing Policy

BTC will consider creating an official editing policy. For any organization, It is a good idea to have an editing policy to ensure that important communication does not go out to the public, decision-makers or funders without at least two people looking at it to review the content, and to check for mistakes in layout, grammar, etc. Similarly, editors/proof-readers can be selected on a case-by-case basis depending on who is available and whether in-depth knowledge of the topic is important.

Building a Photo Library

BTC will continue to build a collection of photos to tell our story and communicate important aspects of its programs and projects.

- For every project and every event take the time to brainstorm a list of photos you would ideally like to get.
- Decide who is going to take the photos, or develop other strategies such as a membership photo contest to try to acquire them.

Budgeting

Communications expenses should be identified and included in BTC's project budgets and its annual organizational budget. Expenses to track and budget for include printing costs, website and e-news costs, paid advertising, t-shirts, etc.

Building BTC's Contact List

BTC will build a contact list to give the ability to reach a wide range of supporters, partners, stakeholders and other who are interested in our work.

- The more individuals, businesses and organizations you can communicate with directly, the less dependent we are on indirect outreach such as media coverage.
- The bigger our list, the more successful our events, activities and fundraising efforts we are likely to be.
- A bigger list will generate more word-of-mouth that will reach people who are not on the list.
- Direct communication through our list lets us "control the spin" of how your work is presented.
 - **Website** – Many website visitors may be interested in joining the mailing list before they are ready to donate and become a member.
- **E-Newsletter** – BTC's e-newsletter and any email communications with our existing list should always include a link that a reader can click to join your mailing list.
- **Sign-up Sheets and Cards** – Any time BTC interacts with the public have hard copy sign-up sheets or cards available along with plenty of pens.
 - **Sign-Up Sheets** – sign-up materials should say "Join our mailing list!" and provide spaces for email and postal addresses.
 - **Cards** – They can be broadly distributed in a variety of ways such as a small stack on the counter of a business that supports BTC. People can take extra ones to give to friends and family. One side of the card can have a pitch for the organization or one of its projects. Cards can include

check boxes or extra space where you encourage people to indicate what projects, events, etc. they are most interested in and whether they would like to volunteer.

E-Newsletters

An important one to three-year goal would be to begin sending monthly e-news emails to BTC's list using a platform such as Constant Contact. Along with social media, e-news is probably the most effective tool for providing timely project updates, recruiting volunteers, and generally staying on people's "radar screens" and keeping them excited about BTC's work.

Keep the e-news upbeat, interesting and focused on the progress you are making towards achieving BTC's vision and mission. People are likely to at least scan what you send out if they know it will contain good news and opportunities to get involved in projects that will improve their lives and their community.

Website

It is important for all the pieces of the website to work together to present a compelling vision; have a strong emotional impact on the visitor; and make it easy for the visitor to find the most important information about everything the organization is doing.

Website Principals

Use Good Images – The web is a visual medium, so it is essential to use high quality photos that have strong emotional impact and tell your story. BTC's mission is all about people – improving the quality of life for the community as well as individuals – so it is important to include a mix of photos with people along with scenic photos. **Make Content "Scannable"** – Most people are scanning when they browse a website. Make it easy for them to scan through your information:

- **Small Text Blocks** – Use small blocks of text - generally no more than four or five lines.
- **Bold Subheadings** – Frequently insert bold subheadings. Using frequent subheadings also forces you to organize your information well. If there is no obvious place for a subheading in a series of paragraphs, you are probably rambling or being too wordy, or providing too much detailed information.
- **Use Bullet Points** – If a paragraph is getting too long, it probably needs to be turned into bullet points with a one-sentence introduction.
- **Lead with the Present and the Future** – Web pages should never lead with historical information. It is important to promote your accomplishments; and providing small amounts of organizational history can be valuable for conveying your group's sense of community and organizational culture, its stability, and long term commitment to its mission. However, this information should be included toward the bottom of a web page. The lead should always focus on what the reader can do now, and/or your vision for the future and exciting projects and goals you are currently working to accomplish. Major achievements can be highlighted in a lead sentence that focuses on how they can benefit the reader in the present - for example, something like "BTC has created x-miles of trails in our community that you can enjoy year-round with your friends and family."

What is the Goal/Purpose for Each Page? – For every web page, take a step back and start by asking what you are trying to accomplish with that page. What is the most important message you want a visitor to come away with? What is the most important information you want them to remember? What are you selling – a project, an event, a vision, etc.? What story(s) do you need to tell? What do you want them to feel? What action(s) do you want them to take – donate, become a member, attend an event, volunteer, etc.?

Don't Use Generic Language – Use descriptive language that reinforces your vision and mission – for example, something like “...wishing to improve the quality of life in our community by creating fun, safe opportunities for people to walk, bicycle and get outdoors.”

Keep Information Up-to-Date – Having a website with lots of out-of-date information is one of the best ways to guarantee that a visitor will never come back. Moreover, out-of-date information can create bad impressions on multiple levels. It can make it look like the organization isn't doing anything, or is unstable and doesn't have the resources to do something as simple and important as keeping their website updated. People will come back to the website if they see that you frequently add fresh information about news, events the progress of your most exciting projects.

Make it Easy for People to Get Involved – Provide lots of opportunities for people to join the mailing list, connect on social media, donate and volunteer. Make it easy for visitors to find this information.

Make it a Team Effort – There should also be at least one person in a supporting role who reviews and proofreads new content, including both photos and text. Currently the website has many grammatical errors and typos.

Images - A photo is truly worth a thousand words, and this is especially true on the web where it is important to avoid large amounts of text. Building a good collection of photos for the web and for other uses should be a high priority for BTC over the next couple years.

What does it make you feel? – Ideally, images on BTC's website should make the viewer feel: “I want to be there” or “I want more of that for our community” (for trail and scenic images); “I want to be that person” or “I'd like to do things with those people” (for images with people in them); or “It would make me feel really good support that” (for images such as a kid on a “new” recycled bike or kids enjoying the walking school bus).

How will your target audiences respond to the people in the photo? – An important organizational goal is to broaden BTC's membership to include more women, families and younger people. Ideally when people are included in photos, they should be smiling, making eye contact, looking like they are having fun, or they should be in an appealing setting such as a scenic trail.

What story(s) does it tell? – What story are we trying to tell with the content on this web page? What are the most important things we want the viewer to think and feel? Is the image a good fit with the web page content?

Is it a good quality image? – Images don't need to be professional quality. However poor quality images will have little impact; or worse, they may be distracting or create a negative impression.

Does it help to sell our product? – Approach your image selection as if you are working on a commercial website that is selling a product. Ask yourself if the image is going to be effective for selling your work. Would it make the cut on a commercial website? If the answer is “no” then find a different image.

What images do we need and how should we get them? – Project and program committees should periodically add a photography discussion to their agendas to ensure that when you need good photos to sell your work you will have them available. **Who should review images?** – photos that are used publicly should also be reviewed by at least two people.

Videos

A short video can be an effective way to convey an organization’s vision and goals. Videos can be particularly effective because they can achieve a very high emotional impact. Production does not need to be highly involved or expensive. BTC could create effective videos simply using smartphone and/or GoPro footage edited on YouTube or Vimeo or using the video editing software that comes free on any computer. To achieve a higher level of quality, BTC could explore whether there are people or businesses in the community, or a program at UMW that could donate video production or give BTC a discounted rate on production.

If BTC chooses to explore creating one or more videos, consider the following:

- **High Trails Capital Campaign** – A video could be a highly effective tool for marketing the Phase III land acquisition fundraising campaign. Creating a High Trails video could be a good year-one goal.
- **BTC Overview** – A video about BTC’s vision and all four of its programs could be a good three-year goal.
- **Additional Videos** – BTC may discover that it is fun and easy to create 30-second to two-minute videos in-house to showcase activities and projects. If so, BTC could set a goal of creating two or three videos every year to make the organization’s marketing and outreach more dynamic, interesting and engaging.
- **Music and Words** – Any combination of music and words can be effective. At the most basic level your goal is for the viewer to feel like they are experiencing your vision, so a music soundtrack can be perfectly adequate. To add words, interview clips, a voiceover soundtrack, and or printed words superimposed on the images could all be effective.
- **Drone Footage** – Drone footage with good early morning or evening light would make the High Trails look particularly dramatic with the different mountain ranges and the valley as a backdrop. It should be relatively easy to get drone footage because many people now own drones and drone pilots are typically very enthusiastic about shooting photos and video. BTC should explore whether there are community members with drones who would be willing to donate some filming for a promotional video.
- **Marketing** – Have a plan for marketing each video. This could include placing the video prominently on the BTC website (ideally “above the fold”); embedding it or including a link in emails to your list; including it in presentations to community groups; and posting it on YouTube or Vimeo.

Home Page

Content

Overall, the content of the homepage is good, with a limited amount of information and clean layout. Changes BTC could consider include:

Priority Projects – In place of the About and Take Action photos and links, it could be more effective to provide photos, teaser sentences and links highlighting BTC’s three major projects at that time

- For most visitors, the most exciting and interesting things about BTC will be its current projects. These projects are also the ones you most need to publicize and raise funding for.
- Links to your biggest, most exciting projects are a perfect fit immediately below your mission because they show how BTC is putting the mission into action.

Sponsors List and Logos – The Home Page is a great place for this list. However, many visitors may not scroll far enough to find it. It could be more effective if it is incorporated into one of the Get Involved pages – especially if BTC creates a page specifically for business supporters.

Who We Are

Improving this page should be a very high priority. The Learn More perhaps should go to current projects, not “About Us”.

Banner Image

This is a critical place to have an image (or several different images side-by-side), with smiling people making eye contact or looking like they are having fun in a scenic setting. Alternately, even if you could not see their faces, a decent picture of a family walking on a trail would tell the right story and have the right impact.

Board & Staff Images

Adding board and staff photos should be a high priority for BTC.

Content

Focus on the present, not on the past!

Lead Sentence

Describe BTC in the present tense in a way that will attract and welcome these target audiences:

Board and Staff Intro

Introducing visitors to BTC’s leadership is important and a much higher priority than telling the story of BTC’s founding. The board and staff bios should follow immediately after the introductory paragraphs.

Our Story

BTC will work on a good narrative of a story, or find a way to rework the page.

Maps Page

Banner Image

A scenic image of the High Trails Area, with or without hikers in it would be an effective banner. Alternately, the banner could be a combination of two or three side-by-side images including a High Trails image, a YMCA area gravel trail, and a paved trail or on-street route. This second alternative would illustrate the variety of trails available in the community.

Content

Over the next five years, BTC could set a goal of evolving this page into a more engaging and user-friendly online trail guide.

Our Work

Banner Image

The banner image should always be a good quality image that fits well with the goals of this page – conveying that BTC has a big vision that encompasses both the community and surrounding public lands, and making viewers excited to learn about BTC's work.

Content

Both first time visitors and those who know BTC well are likely to go directly to this page to find out what the group is doing and accomplishing.

Because this page is simply a gateway to more in-depth pages about BTC's programs and projects, it makes sense to keep it simple, clean and short. Ideally, below each headline on this page would be one or two teaser sentences to help engage visitors make it easier to find what they are most interested in. Including a photo for each link is important, but more normally-proportioned images would be more effective.

Current High-Profile Projects

Use the top of the page to sell your most important, most exciting projects. As discussed below, BTC's high-profile, high-priority projects should each have its own web page. Each bullet point should be a link to a project-specific web page

Project-Specific Web Pages and Fact Sheets

BTC's website will often be the first place funders, partners, decision-makers, volunteers and interested members of the public will look for detailed information about important, high-profile projects. Big, exciting projects build organizations more effectively than anything else. A top priority for the website should be showcasing and selling BTC's most important current projects.

Project-specific web pages and fact sheets are two approaches BTC can use to do this. For very high priority projects BTC should probably use both approaches.

Connecting the North to the South

The Dillon Trail Connectivity page is currently functioning primarily as a project page for the North-to-South project. The North-to-South project could be presented more effectively if it had its own page.

- A more detailed, zoomed-in map could be included.
- Photographs could be included of the proposed trail location, the existing Overland paved trail, the ball park, and the dangerous intersection (maybe with a big truck driving through it).
- A short discussion and link could be included explaining how this project ties into the Laknar/Selway Park.
- A few sentences could be included discussing the future vision for how this trail could be connected further south from Skihi.
- There could be subheads for each of the three bullets and each could get an extra sentence or two providing a bit more detail – for example, what type of trail is envisioned for Noble.

Factsheets

Downloadable PDF project factsheets can be a valuable addition to the website because people can print them and share them, and because they provide an opportunity to include additional information or an alternative donation option. For example, all factsheets could be designed so that the bottom third is a donation form with BTC's address that can be torn off and placed in an envelope with a check. This could be important for people who don't like to donate on the web.

Generally, the main difference between a project's factsheet and its web page is that:

- **Web Page** – While it would be important for the web page to provide a good project overview, the web page would be more dynamic and action-oriented. It would be frequently updated, and would emphasize the latest milestones achieved, upcoming project-related events, other ways to get involved, etc.
- **Factsheet** – The factsheet would be more static. It would be updated infrequently, and its content would be focused on presenting a compelling vision for the project and a basic overview of the project's highlights, timeline, funding needs, etc.

An example of how a PDF factsheet could convey information differently than the website would be to create a factsheet with the Selway/Laknar Park on one side and the North-to-South project on the other side. Each side could include a couple sentences about how the two projects are related, and having them combined in one document would help emphasize the big picture vision.

Finally, while a factsheet should generally follow the same principals as the website, using small blocks of text and lots of subheadings and bullet points, it could also include a larger block of descriptive, promotional text that would be too long for the web. For example, a High Trails factsheet could include intro language something like:

We love our rural landscapes and wide open spaces, and we love to get outdoors. But Dillon hasn't had places where you could easily go for a hike get fresh air, and exercise, enjoy nature, and relax in a quiet place. The Beaverhead Trails Coalition recently acquired over 700 acres and miles of trails in

the hills just west of town. Now you can go for a hike on your lunch break, or after work, or you can hike for hours with spectacular views of four mountain ranges.

*If we can raise another \$180,000, in the next two years, we can expand this area to over 1000 acres with more trails that are a little gentler, and will be better for kids, the elderly, mountain bikers and equestrians. **Please help us complete the High Trails!***

Social Media

BTC is on Facebook and Instagram and posts regularly on both platforms. Social media is an effective tool for building community, promoting events, and creating and maintaining interest in important projects.

- As with e-news, BTC leaders could follow the Facebook and Instagram accounts of several other similar organizations to observe how those organizations use the platforms and get ideas for using these
- Post regularly to maintain interest in your work and to build a perception that BTC is active and dynamic.
- Make sure that several posts every month relate directly to BTC's highest priority projects and goals.
 - If an important goal is to recruit more families, women and young people, make sure a few posts every month feature these demographics.
 - For the LOR grant projects, BTC has posted about receiving the grant the public meeting about the grant projects. It would be easy to brainstorm many more posts that could keep your followers thinking (and hopefully talking) about these projects – a picture of a semi-truck driving past the Hwy 41/Noble intersection and a couple sentences about the barrier this dangerous intersection creates; a picture of the renovated ball field and a sentence about the Noble Street trail providing improved access; a picture of the future location of the Noble Street trail; a picture of someone riding or walking on the Laknar trail and a comment about how this trail will access the new park; etc.
 - For the High Trails, simply encourage active members to take photos when they are hiking and post the most scenic and interesting ones every couple weeks. Make a point of taking scenic photos from the property boundary, looking into the Phase III property, and posting them once a month with comments about how great it will be to have access.

Hard Copy Communications

Factsheets

The project factsheets suggested above in the website discussion could also have many uses beyond the website. For example, they could be handed out to the public at events; shared with funders and decision-makers; and distributed by partner organizations and business supporters.

Trail Map(s)

The most effective hard copy marketing product that BTC could invest resources into would be trail maps. In addition to being a good marketing tool, maps would help to achieve BTC's mission by encouraging people to get out and use the community's pedestrian and bicycle trails and routes.

Following are factors to consider related to producing trail maps. Each is discussed in more detail in other chapters.

- **High Trails vs. In-Town** – Whether to produce separate maps or combine both areas in one map.
- **Timing** – A target date(s) for publishing a map(s). If BTC decides to include a map in its promotion and fundraising plan for the High Trails Phase III acquisition, it probably makes sense to make the map a year-one objective. The map could be expanded to include In-Town trails and republished once the Phase III capital campaign is completed.
- **Marketing Plan** – Be sure to develop a good marketing and map distribution plan.
- **Cost, Partner Organizations, Sponsors** – *If we decide to produce commercially printed maps in the future...* It would be important to get an accurate map production cost estimate early in the process and decide whether to try to recruit one or more partner organizations to share the cost. Alternately, or in addition, BTC could explore whether one or more local businesses would be willing to sponsor the trail map project in exchange for getting prominent credit/advertising on the map.
- **For Sale or Free** – Decide whether to charge for the maps or give them away for free.
- **Design** – Decide whether to hire a graphic designer. Regardless of whether a professional designer is used, BTC should review a number of maps from other organizations and communities to identify design ideas you want to include.
- **Distribution Plan** – Have a plan for marketing and distributing the maps, and maintain a list of places that will sell or give away maps. BTC currently has a map on the brochure that the Chamber of Commerce gives away, and BTC gives away at events. Hard Copy Newsletters

Annual Reports

Like a newsletter, an annual report can be a great way to market your accomplishments and update supporters, partners and stakeholders about progress on important projects and programs. However, like a newsletter, an annual report can be surprisingly time consuming to produce.

In contrast to a newsletter, an annual report is probably not something to just try for one year. If BTC decides to produce annual reports, it should commit to doing so every year. Publishing annual reports sporadically or inconsistently could create a perception that BTC is not a stable organization or does not take financial transparency seriously.

Brochure

As discussed in detail in the Fundraising chapter, updating the hard copy BTC brochure would be a good objective within the five-year planning period.

Event Flyers

Just as it is important to maintain a media list, it can also be valuable to maintain a list of all the places in the community where event flyers can be posted. This allows the event leaders to quickly and efficiently decide how many flyers to print, and delegate people to post the flyers. Leaders don't have to reinvent the wheel every time there is an event.

It can also be helpful to prioritize the locations on the list and maintain notes about who to contact for permission etc. For example, during a working group meeting for this strategic plan, BTC members noted that the schools will distribute flyers for family-friendly events, and a BTC biking safety event that was publicized by the schools had its best turnout ever.

Events

Events are discussed in detail in the Fundraising chapter and other chapters. Following are a few additional ideas.

Presentations

As discussed in those chapters, creating one or more PowerPoint presentations could be a very effective way to conduct outreach to a variety of audiences in the community. A presentation could focus on one or more of BTC's current projects, or provide a broad overview of BTC's work and the organization's vision for its four programs.

Content in a presentation should be very similar to the related content on BTC's website. Creating effective PowerPoint slides could be a great way to refine and perfect website content. Conversely, if BTC's leadership is happy with the website content, much of it could be quickly cut and pasted into a PowerPoint.

Presentations could be most effective if they are designed to have two objectives:

- 1) Present BTC's work.
- 2) Engage the audience in interactive discussion about BTC's vision, asking audience members for their input on specific projects and goals they believe would have the greatest benefit for the community.

National Trails Day & Public Lands Day

BTC could set a three-to-five-year goal of having major events with a high level of publicity and public participation on National Trails Day and National Public Lands Day. However, there are both pros and cons to this strategy.

Pros

- The themes of these days are a perfect fit with BTC's mission.
- It should be easy to get publicity for events on these days because both the media and the public are expecting events to be planned and are looking for events to participate in.
- It may be particularly easy to get business sponsors for events on these days, since many businesses are likely to be eager to have their names associated these days.

- It may also be particularly easy to recruit partner organizations to help create bigger, higher-profile events.

Cons

There are often multiple events on these days that compete for participation. However, in many communities all the organizations that are holding events will work together to do coordinated, joint marketing for all the events that are planned. This can increase public awareness, resulting in higher levels of participation, and outweighing the downsides of not having an exclusive event. Another coordinated strategy could be to hold separate events during the day, followed by a joint social event in the evening.

Media Coverage

Media coverage can provide very valuable free publicity. It is generally well worth the time investment for an organization to get coverage of its work. BTC has an experienced board member who coordinates press releases and public service announcements (PSAs), and the organization has gotten both local and regional media coverage of its accomplishments. BTC also does occasional radio interviews.

Some considerations for media coverage include:

- **Media List** – Maintain a media list with contact names, deadlines, contact information etc.
- **Regional Publications** – Always include regional publications such as the Butte Standard, Outside Bozeman Magazine, and other monthly magazines. Coverage in some of these publications, such as magazines, can be quite infrequent, but it takes little effort to email them your press releases, and if you keep yourself on their “radar screens” they may occasionally do in-depth feature stories on a project like the High Trails.
- **Letters and Op-Eds** – Letters to the editor and op-ed columns can be effective ways to get publicity. For example, the relaunch of the Bicycle Recycle Program could be a good opportunity to write a guest column for a local publication; or a couple letters to the editor could remind dog owners to keep their dogs under control in the High Trails area when cattle are grazing or when antelope and deer have young fawns.
- **Publicize Milestones as Well as Completed Accomplishments** – Don’t just wait until a project is completed to send out a press release. Important milestones such as BTC’s recent MFWCT grant may get news coverage if you send out press release.

Paid Advertising

There are probably few situations that would justify BTC investing time and money in paid advertising. However, advertising could be worth exploring if there are inexpensive opportunities for local advertising that could generate meaningful visibility for events. For all non-profits, an important consideration is to be very careful not to ask one business for donations if you have paid another similar business for advertising.

Schwag & Stickers

Branded “schwag” like t-shirts, hats, bags, and stickers is used effectively by many non-profits. In a small community like Dillon, using schwag as a membership incentive or as free giveaways could be particularly effective.

An aspirational five-year goal for BTC could be to achieve a degree of stature in the community where, for a “critical mass” of residents and businesses, being a BTC member is something they are proud of as part of their identity – and where they look at BTC as an important part of their community’s identity. One way to begin to achieve this goal is to give supporters an opportunity to “wear it on their sleeve”, or their head, or on their car or the front window of their business.

However, the cost of schwag should be weighed against the costs and benefits of other communications strategies and budgeted accordingly.