Beaverhead Trails Coalition Strategic Plan High Trails

Program Name, Mission & Vision

The High Trails Project (HTP) currently takes up much of BTC's capacity for program work. This ambitious and highly-successful project encompasses acquisition of 1100 acres; stewardship of the property's conservation values; planning and implementing improvements to provide for access and enjoyment of this new public land; and eventual transfer of property ownership to Beaverhead County. This project's outstanding community value, combined with the significant scope of the opportunities, responsibilities and work involved, suggests that for the next five years it will likely continue to dominate BTC's program work.

The HTP is clearly distinct from BTC's other program work, though BTC has already identified several other projects north, south and west of Dillon that are similar to the High Trails in that they involve improving access and enjoyment of public lands. These projects include linking the High Trails with other public lands to create a trail system that could eventually reach the Pioneer Mountains; improving public access to the Hogsback north of town; and improving access to state lands at the end of Carrigan Lane south of town. Additionally, once ownership of the High Trails property is transferred, BTC expects to continue to play a significant long term management and stewardship role as part of a formal partnership with Beaverhead County.

BTC's current High Trails Management Plan (HTMP) addresses program and project scope in the following paragraph.

The HTP (and this management plan) is an important subset of BTC's wider effort, and is defined to include not only the original purchase and management of the Town Overlook trails area, but also any later expansion surrounding town – acquiring access for the public, developing trails, and preserving natural areas as the opportunities arise, anywhere in the outskirts of Dillon. This would include basically all trails except the urban network – the entire Town Overlook area as it hopefully expands, any trails perhaps radiating outward from Cornell Park, and any future trail networks developing within a short drive from Dillon. These are identified for now as Carrigan Lane, the Frying Pan, the Hogsback, and Badger Pass.

It could be valuable for BTC to consider making a clear distinction between program and project. This approach could benefit marketing, promotion and communications generally, as well as structure organizational governance as BTC grows and takes on more projects and responsibilities. Additionally, it could help clarify BTC's mission and vision for this type of work.

Program Name

Because the scope of BTC's vision for public lands projects extends into the future and beyond the High Trails, BTC should consider public lands work as a distinct program within the organization. While "High

Trails" is an effective name for promoting and marketing BTC's current public lands work, the organization should market this work in the context of the more ambitious and compelling mission of public land access for the Dillon community.

Access to and conservation of public lands is not just a core value for BTC, it is a core Montana value, and it can only benefit BTC to explicitly link its work to this value. Because of the broad, deeply-felt public support for access to public lands, BTC should name this program the "Public Lands" or "Public Lands Access" Program, and market the High Trails as a project of this program. An argument favoring the shorter "Public Lands" name is that, in keeping with BTC's mission, it is broader and encompasses both stewardship and access.

Project Name

There could be great value in describing the High Trails as the flagship project of a Public Lands Access Program. However, at this stage it would probably be unwise to try to rebrand the project itself, since "High Trails" has gained significant community recognition and positive association through the success of Phases I and II.

Moreover, there appear to be no compelling arguments for changing "High Trails" as it is a good name for several reasons. It is short and clearly communicates key attributes of the project, making it both effective and convenient for communications platforms such as the BTC website. Additionally, it has an inspiring element, evoking the spectacular views, the fresh air and the exercise that trail users will enjoy. For most people "High Trails" will at the very least trigger curiosity and a desire to learn more, and for many people – especially those in BTC's target audiences – it will trigger a desire to explore and get involved.

Program Mission

BTC's (High Trails / Public Lands Access) Program works to improve public access, create trails, and promote conservation of public lands in the Beaverhead region. We believe creating opportunities to enjoy outdoor recreation on quiet, scenic, open land will promote health, well-being and community pride. Moreover, it will combine economic, environmental, and social benefits by making Dillon more attractive to visitors and new residents.

Program Vision

Our vision is that the High Trails Project will be a catalyst for further public land conservation, access and trail creation in the Beaverhead Valley. We hope that one day residents and visitors will have a variety of options for easily accessing and enjoying the landscape our community loves – helping present and future generations develop a strong connection to the wide-open spaces for which our region is iconic.

High Trails Project Mission

BTC is working to acquire and permanently protect 1,100 acres of spectacular landscape above the Beaverhead River, just minutes from Dillon. The community will benefit from easy access to quiet outdoor recreation with expansive views, and from the conservation of important wildlife habitat. We are creating a trail system for the community to enjoy this new public land in the foothills west of town.

In the future we will seek opportunities to extend these trails further so that residents and visitors can walk, run, bike, or ride horseback from Dillon to the East Pioneer Mountains through a corridor of conserved habitat.

High Trails Project Goals

BTC's current High Trails Management Plan and other documents include a number of recreation and conservation goals, as well as goals related to the area's long-term sustainability as a public resource. Following are draft goal statements based on these sources. Goal statements such as these could be used on the web and in elsewhere in conjunction with the mission statement to communicate BTC's vision for the High Trails. (see Appendix A)

High Trails History, Accomplishments and Benefits

The HTP is the most ambitious project BTC has undertaken. In addition to significant land and trail easement acquisitions, it includes improving miles of trails, creating multiple trailheads, balancing public use with land stewardship, and ensuring that this quiet and scenic open space is preserved in perpetuity for public enjoyment and conservation.

History

The HTP started nearly ten years ago, when one of BTC's members suggested improving the dilapidated trail leading to Dillon's "M" and a knoll overlooking the town and the Beaverhead Valley. Over the next several years, the Dillon Town Overlook Trail was successfully completed thanks to a collaborative community effort led by BTC that included a trail easement donation from a local ranching family.

Community members began using the trail immediately, and BTC realized there was a need and great interest in expanding public land access near Dillon. BTC began negotiations to acquire 1100 acres adjacent to the Dillon Town Overlook to create the Dillon High Trails.

In August 2014, BTC signed a buy-sell agreement to purchase the property from Otto and Charlene Miller. The land is being acquired in three phases. BTC has completed the purchase of Phases I and II, totaling 781 acres. BTC has a deadline of August 2019 to secure the funding to complete the remaining 327-acre Phase III purchase.

The community has rallied behind the project, donating money, time, and moral support. Major financial support that has made the project possible has come from the Montana Fish and Wildlife Conservation Trust, Patagonia, the Kendeda Fund, Tim Speyer, and others.

BTC should maintain an up-to-date summary of the project's history such as this, including a complete list of major donors.

High Trails Description

Located above the Beaverhead River immediately west of Dillon, the High Trails is a landscape of open, rocky hills, ridges and ravines covered in sagebrush prairie.

Phases I and II

- The primary access to BTC's property is from a trailhead on county land off Ten Mile Road. The trailhead is part of a 80-acres county property in a basin at the southern end of the High Trails area. It is adjacent to a flat area at the bottom of the basin that is an old landfill, which is now closed and used as a county equipment yard. Currently, four trails descend from the hills and converge on this county property.
- The property can also be accessed on foot from Cliff Road via the Cliff Trail.
- The elevation at the Town Overlook trailhead is approximately 5,220 feet and it is about 5,100 feet at the Cliff Trailhead. The property includes (seven or eight) distinct hill tops ranging in elevation from 5,500 feet to 5,850 feet (from Phase I and II topographic map).
- There are currently approximately 7.7 miles of trail.
- Immediately north of the "M", the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) owns a 40-acre parcel including the Town Overlook summit and the top of the Town Overlook Trail.
- In combination, Phases I and II encompass a prominent portion of Dillon's viewshed, including the slopes from the "B" to the "M". The "M" is on BTC's property, while the "B" is immediately adjacent to the property's northern boundary.
- BTC's Phase I and II property is already being extensively used by a broad cross section of the public for hiking, running, horseback riding, and biking.

Phase III

Lying west of Phases I and II, the Phase III property includes similar terrain to the land BTC has already acquired. In the Phase III property, two flat, roughly triangular areas at the base of drainages on the northeast side of Ten Mile Road could serve as future trailheads.

- the City of Dillon has water supply facilities including condemned buildings that it plans to tear down. The City is seeking to buy approximately one acre of land around these facilities.
- The terrain offers opportunities for more gently-graded trails than the existing trails in Phases I and II. This would provide greatly improved access for equestrians, mountain bikers, the elderly, people with disabilities and families with young children.
- The property climbs from 5,350 feet at Ten Mile Road, to six distinct summits ranging from 5,480 to 5,780 feet.
- The northwest corner of this property is in close proximity to extensive BLM lands extending into the Frying Pan Basin. This would create the potential for BTC to acquire easements and/or land through which the trail system could be extended for many miles, possibly reaching the Pioneer Mountains.
- A local rancher holds a grazing lease on the property and this lease would transfer with the title.

Accomplishments

Projects like the High Trails often take many years from concept to completion. BTC has an impressive track record of success in a relatively short period.

Dillon Town Overlook Trail

In the spring of 2014, BTC led a collaborative effort to improve the trail leading to the "M." The trail quickly became a popular community destination, offering a half-mile climb from the trailhead to the hills' easternmost high point. This vantage point overlooks Dillon and the Beaverhead Valley, with expansive views of five mountain ranges.

BTC worked with a variety of partners to successfully complete the following:

- With help from pro bono legal counsel, BTC negotiated a trail easement donation from the Wheat Family so that a segment of the trail could cross their land to reach the ridge.
- Trail improvements were designed and constructed, including installation of a bench at the top of the trail.
- A trailhead parking lot was designed and constructed with labor and materials provided by Beaverhead County. The trailhead location was an old illegal garbage dump. BTC organized a volunteer effort to clean up the site.
- Trailhead improvements were installed including a trailhead sign, a trail users register, bike racks, and a dog station.
- The United Way of Beaverhead County provided $2,000 for the project. Among other things these funds were used for the construction and installation of the trailhead sign.
- During the University of Montana Western's 2014 Student Work Day, over 30 students with 10 community leaders provided 150 volunteer hours maintaining the trail, re-vegetating areas with native seeds, and building fence.

Phase I Land Acquisition

In the fall of 2015, BTC completed the 475-acre Phase I land acquisition. The two Phase I parcels include much of the steep hills above the trailhead and the County parcel. This land includes old two-track ranch roads and livestock trails that comprise much of the current trail system. It also includes the "M," an iconic symbol of the Montana University System.

Of the three phases, the Phase 1 land includes the greatest human impact, with a higher density of old roads, a power line crossing the property, and the old landfill that it surrounds on three sides.

BTC secured $261,500 to complete the Phase I acquisition, including $100,000 from the Montana Fish and Wildlife Conservation Trust and $161,500 from private donations.

Phase II Land Acquisition

In September, 2016 BTC acquired 306 acres just north of the Phase I property. Like the Phase I land, most of Phase II has steep topography including draws, ridges and two small hilltops. At its north end, it includes the south half of a larger hill with the "B" at the top of its eastern slope. Both the "B" and the summit of this hill are on private property adjacent to BTC's property line. Overall, this land feels natural and wild.

Phase II greatly expands the trail system including sections of old two-track roads and some single track trails. Additionally, it creates an opportunity for acquiring land or easements to create an additional trailhead off of Lovers Leap Road.

BTC secured $168,520 to complete the Phase II acquisition, including $75,000 from the Montana Fish and Wildlife Conservation Trust and $93,520 from private donations.

Land Donation for Cliff Trail Access

In August 8, 2016 BTC negotiated a six-acre land donation valued at $5000 that added significant value to the Phase I land acquisition. John and Phyllis Erb donated property along Cliff Road and the

Beaverhead River, providing permanent public access to the Cliff Trail. This acquisition includs a small, undeveloped fishing access on the Beaverhead River on Cliff Road.

The Cliff Trail is currently the only alternative access to the High Trails besides the main trailhead on Ten Mile Road. Located approximately one-tenth of a mile from the intersection of Cliff Road and Ten Mile Road, the trail climbs steeply through broken cliffs above the road, then follows a ridge to join the Town Overlook Trail at the overlook. While parking is very limited at this trailhead, it is less than a quarter mile from Cornell Park, a half-mile from the Dillon KOA Campground, and a mile from the YMCA via the Pigtail Trail. This proximity makes it easily accessible on foot for Dillon residents as well as visitors staying at the KOA.

County Access Crossing Landfill

In the fall of 2015 BTC secured trail access from the county from the trailhead around the west side of the old landfill. This access significantly expands and improves hiking opportunities by enabling users to do loop hikes from the parking area, and by providing more direct access into the heart of the hills.

Benefits of the High Trails Land Acquisition

As permanently protected public land, the High Trails area will add great value to the Dillon community, providing outstanding outdoor recreation opportunities, conservation of important habitat, and preservation of the town's viewshed.

Public Enjoyment and Health Values

- **Active Outdoor Recreation** – The area offers many miles of trails for hiking, running, mountain biking and horseback riding. BTC has been documenting steadily increasing use as public awareness of the area increases. Such significant new active outdoor recreation opportunities so close to town enhance Dillon's quality of life and encourage healthy lifestyles.
- **Easily Accessible Public Land** – Unlike many other Montana communities, Dillon has historically been surrounded by private land offering little to no public access. Thanks to the High Trails land acquisition, the Dillon community now has a significant area of public land easily accessible on foot or by bike, and reached by car in just a few minutes. The main trailhead and the start of the Cliff Trail are both only one mile away from the City center.
- **Wild Open Space** – Much of the High Trails is a quiet, wild place where one can find wildlife and solitude. The community has never before been able to enjoy spectacular, natural, open space within minutes of downtown.
- **Scenic Value** – The area offers expansive views of the Beaverhead valley, and the East Pioneer, Blacktail, Ruby, Tobacco Root, and Highland ranges.
- **Access to Landmarks** – The Phase I and II acquisitions provide public access to the 'M' and the 'B' – two important local landmarks on east-facing hillsides above Dillon. Both are popular destinations, the 'B' especially so for runners.
- **Future Expansion** – The High Trails land acquisitions open the possibility for future easements and land acquisitions that could eventually extend public access way to BLM and Forest Service land further west and into the East Pioneer Mountains.

Conservation Values

Important conservation benefits will be achieved by permanently protecting the High Trails area from development and managing it for habitat as well as public enjoyment.

- **Habitat for Diverse Wildlife Species** – A variety of wildlife breed and nest and live in the area. A variety of game species and other wildlife inhabit or pass through the area. Several iconic mammal species such as Pronghorn Antelope (Antilocapra americana), Mule Deer (Odocoileus hemionus), Elk (Cervus canadensus), Long-tailed Weasel (Mustela erminea) and Coyotes (Canis latrans), have been observed. Numerous bird species have also been spotted including Bald (Haliaeetus leucocephalus) and Golden (Aquila chrysaetos) eagles, and a wide variety of hawks such as Swainson's (Buteo swainsoni), Rough-legged (Buteo lagopus) and Ferruginous (Buteo regalis), as well as Prairie Falcons (Falco mexicanus) and Short-eared Owls (Asio flammeus). The Brewer's (Spizella breweri), Vesper (Pooecetes gramineus), Lark (Chondestes grammacus), and Sagebrush Sparrows (Amphispiza belli), have been observed as have McCown's Longspur (Calcarius mccownii), Black Rosy-Finch (Leucosticte arctoa), Mountain Bluebirds (Sialia currucoides), and more common species like Western Meadowlark (Sturnella neglecta) and American Robin (Turdus migratorius). Game birds including Sage Grouse (Centrocercus urophasianus) and Chukars (Alectoris chukar) are also found on the native prairie habitat.
- **Beaverhead River Uplands** – The conservation value of the High Trails area is particularly significant because of the proximity of the rich riparian habitat along Beaverhead River at the base of the hills.
  - The adjacent corridor increases species diversity present in the hills, and makes these uplands particularly valuable for species that use both types of habitat.
  - Protecting these uplands helps maintain a wildlife corridor between the Beaverhead River and East Pioneer Mountains.
  - Protecting these uplands, an important part of the local Beaverhead watershed, helps conserve fisheries habitat.
- **Plant Species –** Vegetation on the project area consists of common species found within the 9-14" of precipitation zone within SW Montana. Dominant plants include Wyoming Big Sagebrush (Artemisia tridentate wyomingensis), Green rabbitbrush (Chrysothamnus viscidiflorus), Bluebunch Wheatgrass (Pseudoroegneria spicata), and Needle-and-Thread (Hesperostipa). The most common non-native species is Cheatgrass (Bromos tectorum L).
- **Educational Value** – Proximity to town makes the hills an ideal environmental education setting for UMW and K-12 students.
- **Viewshed** – Permanently protecting the foothills from the "M" to the "B" preserves the viewshed for the town of Dillon, as the hills frame the horizon from nearly everywhere in town.

Economic Values

These new public lands should provide economic benefit to the community by significantly enhancing Dillon's quality of life and making the community more attractive to visitors and new residents.

Project Prioritization and List Management

Making the best strategic decisions will require monitoring opportunities, having a good prioritization process in place, and managing a master projects list. After Phase III acquisition, BTC's time may be fully invested in the project's next stages including completing the trail system and other property improvements, as well as a potentially major project: acquiring and building an additional trailhead on

Lovers Leap Road. However, depending on the viability of different projects and the timing of opportunities, BTC may want to begin shifting resources into other major projects, e.g. the connection to the Frying Pan.

As with In-Town Trails, at any given time the High Trails Program will have a substantial projects list ranging from minor trail maintenance projects to major land and easement acquisitions. Projects will range from conceptual to in-process. And they will range from small volunteer efforts to major efforts with big price tags. High Trails should create and maintain a project management list as an Excel spreadsheet or a database. A well-designed spreadsheet or database could generate:

- To-do lists for recruiting volunteers and matching specific volunteer groups with appropriate projects.
- Information that would be useful for grant reporting and grant applications as well as marketing in general. Examples of the types of information that could be generated include accomplishments such as how many projects of different types have been completed over a particular timespan, and how many volunteers / volunteer-hours were contributed; and needs such as the total amount of funding needed for projects of different types.
- A master list of projects organized by project type and/or other criteria (e.g., cost) that could help prioritize projects and check workplans.
- Timelines showing target completion dates for projects and subsets of the projects.

High Trails should develop a standardized form for small- to moderate-sized trail maintenance and improvement projects, and for adding projects to the list. It could be used to approve and prioritize projects and information could be entered into the project management spreadsheet or database. It should include categories such as:

- **Project Type** – Signage, bench installation, trail building, trail maintenance, etc.
- **Time** – Could the project be completed in a few hours, or would it require a series of trail work days over the course of a couple months?
- **Volunteer Numbers** – Estimated number of volunteers needed.
- **Volunteer Type** – For example, "pick and shovel" trail building would only be appropriate for fit adults or older teens, while picking up litter at a trailhead could be appropriate for a younger group of Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts.
- **Cost** – Estimate costs of providing snacks and drinks for volunteers and any materials needed.

High Trails Plan

BTC has drafted and adopted a High Trails Management Plan (HTMP) that includes elements of a project plan (discussions of Phase II and III land acquisitions, project promotion, etc.), a master plan (overview of potential trailheads, trail improvements, etc.), and a management plan (discussions of rules for trail users, weed management, etc.). All of these topics are closely interrelated and should be integrated in the same master document.

BTC's current HTMP rrepresents a working document "modified freely and continually", and "written changes to this document… will happen every month or two as needed." It also emphasizes the need for additional, more detailed planning including developing a "comprehensive land management plan."

Overall, the current HTMP constitutes a first draft discussion document. It addresses different topics in varying detail, and overlooks some important topics. Additionally, information about a number of important topics is out of date. The document correctly states that, "The second section is our high trails to-do list, and with any luck at all, will be obsolete in a matter of months."

The following sections include information from the current HTMP; add relevant information from other BTC documents and discussions with BTC members and partners; and raise issues not currently addressed in BTC's documents. This information is organized into the three planning categories suggested above: Project Plan, Management Plan and Master Plan. As noted in the HTMP, much of the content in these three plans will need annual review and updating to remain relevant.

Maps are essential to all three planning areas, but they are fundamentally a communications tool so are discussed in the Outreach and Marketing section.

Project Plan

Completion of the Phase III land acquisition is the only major project for which the High Trails Program has developed a project plan. A project plan should include a summary of the project and all the tasks needed to complete the project. At this stage, the Phase III Project Plan is primarily a fundraising and marketing campaign. Over the next five years, once Phase III has been completed and BTC turns to acquiring easements and possibly land for additional trailheads, project plans should be developed for these projects as well. Until then, for these future projects, short summaries of key project plan elements can be included in the master plan.

Phase III Objective

To complete the purchase of the 327-acre Phase III property, BTC needs to raise $180,000 by August 15, 2019.

Fundraising Campaign

BTC's Phase III fundraising campaign includes the following elements. The budget for this campaign does not include creating the trailhead or any other property improvements.

- Identifying grant opportunities and writing and submitting applications.
- A local fundraising strategy including a direct mail campaign and fundraising events.
- A plan to approach major donors.

There is strong community support for the Phase III acquisition. Ongoing promotion, unsurprisingly, will be important.

Last Resort Purchase Strategies

As the deadline approaches, BTC could explore three options if the organization becomes concerned that it may not be able to secure the full amount in time.

Bargain Sale – BTC could explore the possibility of a "bargain sale" as described in the Long Term Projects section below. The tax benefits of a partial donation could make sense for the landowner if he has a significant capital gain on the property.

Close Early as Incentive – If a substantial portion of the funding is secured within the next year, BTC could offer to close the sale a year early if the landowner would consider a bargain sale.

Conservation Loan – The Conservation Fund, which has an office in Missoula http://www.conservationfund.org/where-we-work/montana, has a conservation loan program http://www.conservationfund.org/what-we-do/land-conservation-loans.

Management & Stewardship Plan

The Management and Stewardship section of BTC's High Trails Plan should focus on policies, rules and strategies for managing the area to achieve BTC's recreational use and conservation goals.

BTC's current HTMP identifies a number of management strategies and potential issues – mostly relating to recreation and conservation. It clearly articulates recreational use goals but is not as explicit about conservation goals. BTC grant applications were the source for most of the conservation goals listed in the Project Goals section above.

Additional management topics include grazing, neighbor relationships, and maintenance of the "M" and "B."

Management & Maintenance Budget

BTC plans to develop a land management and maintenance budget that will include:

- Weed control
- Annual maintenance
- Signage/markers
- Perimeter fencing in certain locations
- Unanticipated expenses

Balancing Conservation and Public Enjoyment

Potential and actual conflicts between recreational use and conservation stewardship present management issues particularly complicated for organizations responsible for high-use public open space adjacent to urban areas. It will be important for BTC to identify any such issues in the integrated High Trails Plan and develop priorities and strategies to address them. Inevitably, BTC will need to address tradeoffs between public use and conservation. For example,

Should dogs be restricted during antelope calving and nesting season for ground-nesting birds?

- Should certain areas be closed to all public use at these times?
- What trail density is appropriate in different areas?
- Are there any sensitive areas where trails should not be built?

On public land close to town, restricting public use to achieve conservation goals may prove difficult. Overall, an argument can be made for giving greater weight to public enjoyment due to long term, big picture benefits including:

- Providing the public, and especially children, with easy access and limited restrictions will help develop a strong connection to the land and a conservation ethic that will extend to broad support for public lands and conservation.
- While impacts from public use will probably be inevitable, they provide opportunities for education and outreach about minimizing impacts and restoring habitat. Ideally, these efforts would help instill a stewardship ethic toward public lands.

However, as BTC better understands the area's conservation values, some conservation goals likely warrant use restrictions of various kinds. Overall, BTC and the County will need what restrictions are acceptable.

Coordinating Management with Beaverhead County

Another overarching issue concerns consistent, sustainable management when the property is transferred from BTC to Beaverhead County. The HTMP and other BTC documents outline broad strategies and goals for addressing management issues when the property is transferred from BTC to Beaverhead County.

- Beaverhead County will lease the property back to the Beaverhead Trails Coalition for management. This lease agreement will be separate from the transfer of title and will include weed management, trail maintenance, public information, trail development, insurance, etc. A similar agreement is already in place for the Town Overlook Trail, much of which crosses County land.
- BTC and Beaverhead County will develop use agreements and MOUs to ensure that there is a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities.
- Beaverhead Trails members will continue to regularly monitor the site for issues or needs and these will be incorporated into the lease agreements with Beaverhead County.

BTC needs ongoing engagement with County partners concerning planning and management activities prior to the transition in ownership. This will be important for two reasons:

- To ensure that management policies BTC puts in place are acceptable to the County and do not create a barrier to transferring the property.
- To avoid major changes in management policies and practices following transfer of the property. Such changes could be confusing to the public, and if controversial, could create an unnecessarily difficult transition. Additionally, it could prove difficult to change user behavior after several years with a different management approach.

Even if BTC and the County are in full agreement on policies, there may be simple management practices that would be better to coordinate before ownership transition. For example, BTC's HTMP states that, "Rules will be created only to solve persistent problems that can't get solved otherwise involving conflicts between users. Some rules – littering, shooting etc. – are tacitly understood by the general public and need not be stated." The County may take a more traditional approach, standard on most public lands, and clearly establish a set of rules, post them at trailheads, and publish them on the web and on hard copy maps and other informational materials.

Managing Recreational Use

As stated in BTC's HTMP, the broad recreational use goal for the High Trails is to create, "A free and open public area where any reasonable, non-conflicting recreational use is encouraged."

Incremental Approach to Managing Conflicts

BTC's current management plan implies an incremental approach to managing conflicts: "Rules [will] be created only to solve persistent problems that can't get solved otherwise." While an incremental approach is generally the most effective, BTC may want to modify this policy. A clearly and simply stated rule is often the best starting point, and establishing, posting, and publicizing such rules can help prevent problems from developing in the first place.

Mountain bikes and horses are an excellent example. The simple rule is "Mountain bikes yield to equestrians." However, as discussed in more detail in the Mountain Bikes section, the manner in which mountain bikers yield will make all the difference in potential conflicts. The nuances of the interaction are not easily regulated by rules and would be addressed more effectively through outreach, with use restrictions or prohibitions being a last resort.

What follows is an example of an incremental example of managing conflicts between mountain bikers and other trail users:

- Start with the simple rule that bikes must yield to other users.
- Initiate conversations with bikers and some social media discussion about the need for slower speed and more caution.
- Increase signage targeted at bikers as the next step. In Bozeman, on some hilltops on the trail system, GVLT posted small signs with a semi-humorous graphic and the words, "Yo Dude, slow down!"
- Next, facilitate meetings between user groups.
- Follow with widely publicized warnings that the trail could soon be closed to bikers.
- Next, try a time share arrangement where bikes were only allowed on certain days.
- As a final attempt at outreach and negotiation, close the trail to bikes temporarily.
- As a last resort, permanently close the trail if all the other steps have failed.

Throughout, it would be important to engage the user group as much as possible, identifying influential members and involving them in finding solutions and helping lobby the broader user group.

Monitoring Use

BTC has begun monitoring use of the High Trails by installing a user sign-in log at the Town Overlook Trailhead. This log has documented a steady increase in trail use. BTC also plans to conduct periodic surveys and devise other monitoring to evaluate area use. Surveys may be both quantitative and qualitative.

This user feedback can provide valuable input for management decisions. Types of users, amount of use, trends over time, and other suggestions will help guide updates to BTC management and master plans.

BTC will also monitor trail maintenance needs. The area's rocky soils should result in minimal erosion on most trails. Although, as noted in the Master Plan section, mountain bikes skidding on steep fall-line sections could cause gullying over time. In general, a more significant issue concerns the proliferation of user-created trails and braiding of trails.

Mountain Bikes

As discussed in the Master Plan section, good trail design and routing will help address many mountain bike management issues. These issues are unlikely to develop until Phase III is completed and a trail with moderate grades is built providing access to the northwest portion of the High Trails.

However, preventing user conflicts with bikes necessitates management strategies for ongoing, active outreach to mountain bikers, as well as signage and both web-based and hard copy educational material.

Outreach and education are likely to be particularly important on the High Trails where mountain bikers and equestrians will share the same small area. Many mountain bikers don't know best practices when encountering equestrians on the trail – such as dismounting on the trail's downhill rather than uphill side. BTC could help prevent conflicts by good educational information such as the following two short, well-written web pages on the Silicon Valley Mountain Bikers website:

- A Mountain Biker's Guide to Hikers & Equestrians http://www.svmtb.org/about/a-mountain-bikers-guide-to-passing/
- Getting on with Equestrians http://www.svmtb.org/getting-on-with-equestrians/

BTC may encounter mountain bikers requesting to build bermed turns, jumps, or even an entire freeride trail. Some mountain bikers may not ask permission. BTC may want to discuss whether proactively develop policies about these issues or simply wait and address them if they arise.

Hunting and Shooting

Hunting, trapping, and target shooting are important management issues on all public lands in Montana. BTC's HTMP states that a no shooting policy is "tacitly understood by the general public and need not be stated". As use increases, BTC may want to revise this approach because of significant safety issues involved and because quiet recreation is a core principle in the High Trails Area. Most public lands in Montana have explicit policies addressing hunting, trapping, and shooting and Beaverhead County may want a policy in place before accepting ownership of the land. Finally, having no policy may create liability risks and BTC might seek legal advice on this matter. A policy statement should probably be included on the BTC website, on hard copy maps provided to the public, and on signage.

Motorized Use

BTC's HTMP states that motorized use will never be allowed in the High Trails area and is nonnegotiable for the following reasons:

- The project's stated goal has always been to create quiet, natural public lands for the enjoyment of Dillon's residents and visitors. A large amount of money has been raised from many donors to support this vision. Allowing motorized use would violate the donors' intent and their trust, and would be both unethical and probably illegal.
- It is a relatively small area, close to town that is likely to see fairly high use over time. Motorized use would be incompatible, creating too many conflicts with non-motorized users in this constrained area. For this reason, similar areas adjacent to communities throughout the west are typically closed to motorized use.
- Motorized use would damage trails and the noise would conflict with BTC's conservation values.

As is standard practice, this prohibition should be explicitly stated on trailhead signage, any maps created for public use, and on BTC's website.

Motorized use will be allowed at the discretion of the board of directors.

Dogs

BTC's current management plan states that dogs will probably require special management, including dog waste rules and possibly leash rules.

Potential conflicts with livestock, wildlife and equestrians will most likely need to be addressed. These potential issues need to be monitored.

As a starting point BTC could require owners maintain voice and sight control over their dogs, else dogs must be on-leash. Voice and sight control policies have been adopted for many public areas (e.g. communities like Boulder, CO have published good information for the public defining voice and sight control: https://bouldercolorado.gov/osmp/voice-and-sight).

BTC will provide doggie bags at trailhead parking lots, and as resources allow, clear stray dog waste and other litter from trails.

Camping, Nighttime Use and Fires

The HTMP states that fires are not allowed but doesn't discuss camping or nighttime use – the activities that would be most likely to result in users building fires.

- Most similar areas in other communities do not allow camping. However, this activity may be infrequent and low impact enough that it would not be problematic for to allow it unless problems develop.
- The High Trails area could provide a unique and convenient opportunity for visitors to enjoy the night sky. In keeping with BTC's goal of allowing all non-conflicting uses, nighttime use could be allowed unless problems develop.

But the High Trails area could become a nighttime partying destination. There are two steps BTC should probably take to address this concern:

- It should coordinate policy with the County from the outset, especially if the County has serious concerns with allowing nighttime use.
- If BTC decides to allow camping and/or nighttime use, it should decide whether to tacitly allow these uses or have an explicit (stated) policy. An advantage to having an explicit policy would be that the policy statement could be combined with a message that it is being tried on a trial basis and the area will be closed to nighttime use if abuses occur. This monitoring message could be important for preventing problems.

Stewarding and Assessing Conservation Values

BTC has worked with a variety of qualified partners to identify and better understand the area's conservation values, and develop management strategies to protect and restore these values. These tasks are ongoing.

Conservation Management Efforts

BTC has initiated the following conservation management efforts:

- **Protection from Development** – BTC's completed and planned land acquisitions have permanently protected Dillon's viewshed and this segment of the Beaverhead River watershed from subdivision and other development. As noted below, ongoing study of the area's conservation values may identify other nearby land that would merit protection to preserve key benefits of the High Trails such as wildlife habitat connectivity.
- **Weed Control** – BTC plans to take responsibility for noxious weed control within 25 feet of any of the trails marked for public use. To date, there have been several hours of individual weed-spraying conducted by individuals on ad hoc basis. BTC is also working jointly with adjoining landowners on weed control. Particular weed infestation issues and areas need to be identified or mapped. A small working group of motivated volunteers could be organized to develop a plan and seek funding and in-kind donations to implement it.
- **Habitat Restoration** – Improvements to the "M" have included replanting with native species. In the future, BTC will work to restore areas with poor range health due to overgrazing.

BTC has identified the following conservation management needs though no implementation plans or have been initiated:

- **Fencing** – Installing wildlife friendly fencing. On the Phase III property, the lessee will be responsible for fencing to prevent wandering onto neighboring properties. BTC will be responsible for installing and maintaining stiles where trails cross fences, and for quickly repairing any fence damage caused by users.
- **Dogs** – Managing potential conflicts such as dogs and wildlife.

Conservation Values Assessment

Ongoing study of the area's conservation values will guide management decisions and offer education and outreach opportunities. BTC expects to budget some funding for this ongoing work, and also hopes to secure in-kind donations from qualified professionals in the community.

- **UMW**– UMW faculty have helped to research the natural history of the purchased properties. UMW faculty regularly use the property for field studies with their students. BTC members and Montana Western students and faculty will engage in long term monitoring of wildlife and vegetation.
- **Plants Assessment** – Survey sensitive plants listed by the state.
- **Wildlife Assessment** – Identify areas of particularly high importance to different wildlife species.
- **Wildlife Connectivity** – BTC has identified connectivity with the Beaverhead River riparian area as an important conservation value. It may be valuable to work with wildlife connectivity experts to assess threats and opportunities in more detail. For example, to what extent has the development along Lovers Leap Road compromised connectivity, and would similar development south of Ten Mile Road seriously threaten connectivity? Studying these issues could identify high priority for near-town land conservation projects. BTC could work with landowners, the Montana Land Reliance, the Nature Conservancy, or another land trust to explore conservation easements in this area.

Neighbor Relationships

BTC is committed to being a good neighbor. Being responsive and respectful of neighbors' concerns will be critically important for BTC as the High Trails project moves forward and use increases. Working in a small town, with many future projects involving landowner negotiations, BTC's reputation will be one of its most valuable assets.

BTC has identified the following neighbor relations efforts:

- Continue to develop relationships with neighboring landowners, including Wheat, Leonardson, O'Neil, Pauley, Erb, and others.
- Collaborate on weed control efforts.
- Be responsive about addressing trespassing issues when they occur. BTC is posting No Trespassing signs in locations where there have been some minor issues.
- Installing wildlife friendly fencing will need to be coordinated with neighboring landowners.

Maintenance of the M and B

In 2015, BTC gave an easement and planning assistance to UMW to restore the hillside "W" to the historic "M." BTC will continue to facilitate maintenance of the M as well as the B. Most maintenance will occur before UMW's traditional freshman orientation hike where they lead 200-300 freshmen up the Town Overlook Trail.

Grazing

BTC will need to decide how to approach grazing both on the Phase III property and on the entire 1,100 acres.

As stated in the HTMP, BTC's goals for managing grazing include:

- Preserving range health.
- Avoiding overgrazing.
- Minimizing erosion.
- Preserving scenic value.
- Preventing new roads.
- Retiring old roads, gradually working towards eliminating all roads by either retiring them or converting them to trails.

Phase III Property

A grazing lease currently exists on the all the property included in the Phase III land acquisition and will continue after title transfer. The current property owner leases this parcel to a nearby ranch and the lease duration is 2013 – 2023, with an option to extend until 2033.

- Currently the lease holder grazes 140 cows and a few horses.
- Use is limited to a small winter feeding area, light spring and fall grazing, and no grazing in the summer.
- The range condition on part of the property is poor after years of overgrazing. The current lessee recognizes the condition and is modifying grazing practices to allow the range to recover.

BTC will need to work with the lease holder to develop a plan for managing grazing in conjunction with public use and BTC's conservation goals.

- BTC will honor the grazing lease and maintain the positive relationship with the lessee based on trust, honesty, and good communication.
- BTC will treat the lessee respectfully as a neighbor and local rancher with a long history of using the property, for whom the lease is important to his business.
- BTCs will work collaboratively, recognizing the lessee's legal rights and not mandating how he uses the land.
- In the first several years of public use, BTC will carefully identify any issues that arise and work with the rancher and the public to prevent problems. Managing off-leash dogs, e.g., could be challenging.
- Special trailhead signage, as well as signs on stiles crossing into the Phase III property will be needed.
- BTC will need to work with Beaverhead County to decide whether to allow long term grazing on the Phase III property.

Successfully navigating these management challenges could provide BTC with valuable experience and credibility for negotiating public trail access in the Frying Pan and on other public lands with longstanding grazing leases. It will also be an excellent opportunity for BTC to continue to build a positive reputation among cattle producers.

Entire Property

BTC will need to work with Beaverhead County to decide whether to allow grazing on the Phase I and II properties, and if so, how it should be managed. It makes sense to wait to develop policies until the organization has several years of experience with grazing and public use on the Phase III property. It also makes sense to consult with range management specialists and ecologists.

Grazing leases could generate some revenue to help manage the property, and grazing could be managed to minimize ecological impacts and potentially even benefit range health. However, the challenges of managing conflicts between grazing and public use may outweigh the benefits.

Master Plan

A master plan should provide a detailed overview (incl. maps and images) of BTC's vision for the High Trails area when all improvements are completed. This should represent the ideal outcome assuming cost, easements, and land acquisitions are not an obstacle. As such, it should include all possible projects even if some are a long shot – everything from proposed locations for benches and stiles to possible future trailheads.

Short descriptions of each element should include information such as:

- Its value to the big picture of High Trails, i.e. inclusion in the plan.
- Basic information such as the length of a new trail segment.
- Estimated cost.
- Negotiations with landowners and partners such as the BLM, County and City if needed.

Design guidelines for trails and amenities should be included, such as:

- Identifying which trails are expected/planned to have more mountain bike and equestrian use and how that should influence trail design.

- Identifying trails for more benches because they are going to have more elderly users and families with young children.
- Specific designs BTC has chosen for stiles, benches, signs, etc.

Areas where special management issues or policies apply should be identified, e.g.,

Areas leased for cattle grazing.

- Areas where use (e.g. off-leash dogs) is restricted during certain times of year to protect wildlife.
- Areas tagged for lower trail density or no trails to minimize impacts on wildlife.

BTC may want to create two versions of its HTMP. A public version could be helpful to promote different High Trails projects and communicate BTC's vision for the area. A more detailed internal plan would include specific information, e.g. concepts for additional access points that are the subject of sensitive landowner negotiations.

BLM Property

BTC has identified the BLM property north of the "M" as a potential location for an interpretive panorama sign identifying all the visible mountain ranges. The Master Plan should include a summary of any other uses of this property that BTC wishes to coordinate and negotiate with the BLM.

City Water Facility

At the southern end of the Phase III property, along Ten Mile Rd, the City of Dillon has water supply facilities including condemned buildings that it plans to tear down. The City is seeking to buy approximately one acre of land around these facilities. However, this transaction cannot be completed until BTC completes the Phase III acquisition.

This may be an ideal area for a new trailhead, so BTC and the City will likely need to negotiate the configuration of public access, parking and the water facilities.

Trailheads

BTC's current management plan includes a brief overview of existing, planned and conceptual trailheads for the High Trails.

Existing Trailheads

Town Overlook Trailhead – No needs are currently identified for this trailhead.

Joyce's Notch / Cliff Trail – A modest parking area is needed. Because of the very limited parking possible at this trailhead, and because of its easy accessibility from town by bike, installing a bicycle rack may be a higher priority and much less expensive option.

Phase III

Ben Pauley's Gully – When Phase III is completed, BTC plans to create a trailhead accessing this area at the base of Ben Pauley's gully. Because of the more moderate grades of the trails planned for this area, and because this will be the primary access point for equestrians and mountain bikers, this trailhead may see as much or even higher use than the Town Overlook Trailhead. Once Phase III is completed, this trailhead will need to be carefully planned and designed (e.g., accommodation for horse trailers).

Creating this trailhead will likely be BTC's highest priority once the Phase III acquisition is completed. Designing and building this important trailhead is not included in the Phase III acquisition budget and may require a promotional and fundraising effort.

Because creating this trailhead will likely be linked to the City's purchase and modifications of the water facility, these two projects should be coordinated and designed together. This should lead to creative solutions to meet both BTC's and the City's objectives. E.g., could BTC donate the one acre to the City in exchange for the City designing and building the trailhead and possibly installing a vault toilet?

Concepts for Additional Access Points

Lovers Leap Road – The Town Overlook area could potentially be accessed from Lover's Leap Road if an easement and/or property could be acquired. This location would offer more scenic and closer access than the Town Overlook Trailhead, and would create the opportunity for a more gently-graded trail that would be more accessible for a broad variety of users.

Bond Road – If BTC eventually connects the High Trails to public land in the Frying Pan, a trailhead could potentially be created off of Bond Road.

Trail Improvements

BTC has extensively discussed trail improvements. To date, about $10,000 in grant funding has been received for trail work and signage.

Volunteers vs. Contractors

Over its first several years, BTC should decide its approach to more substantial trail projects such as rerouting trails and building new trails. There are two options, and most trail organizations use some combination of the two.

Volunteer Based Approach – Some trail organizations invest in plenty of hand tools and construct most of their trails with volunteer trail crews. This approach could be a good fit for the following reasons:

- **Cost Savings** – Overall, this approach will cost less. However, it is important not to underestimate the cost in staff time to manage a large number of projects.
- **Trail Character** – A hand-built trail will differ in character from a trail constructed with a mini-excavator. Many prefer the narrower, more intimate, natural feel of a hand built trail. Because one of BTC's goals is to maintain the wild character of the High Trails, hand built trails could be a good choice.
- **Volunteer & Supervisor Availability** – Depending on the number and scope of projects planned for a season, successfully completing them may only be realistic if BTC can recruit many volunteer crews, and if BTC can coordinate and supervise the volunteers. Some organizations hire a seasonal contract staff person to coordinate and supervise trail crews.
- **Organization-Building** – While community fundraising efforts for trail improvements present good opportunities for organization-building, involving the community in hands-on trail building will likely achieve a deeper level of personal connection, enthusiasm, and loyalty to the organization, plus a strong sense of ownership in the trails themselves and a long-term commitment to support trail stewardship.

Contractor Based Approach – A contractor-based approach will likely cost more, but fundraising to hire professional trail builders could be a good fit for the following reasons:

- **Speed** – A professional trail builder with a mini-excavator would construct trails much more quickly than a crew using hand tools – especially in the High Trails' rocky terrain.
- **Quality** – A professional would ensure that a high quality trail is created. He may also be able to provide valuable recommendations for improved trail routing. Of course good communication and some supervision is important with contractors. Because of the speed with which they build trails, trail routing mistakes can happen quickly!
- **Liability** – A professional working as a contractor would present less potential legal liability for BCC compared to volunteer crews directly supervised by BCC.
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- **Montana Conservation Corps** – In 2010, an MCC trail crew cost $4,000 per week or $800 per day. An MCC crew can get a lot of hard labor done in a few days and could be a good fit for some projects. http://mtcorps.org/mcc-projects/

Easier Trails

BTC's current management plan states, "…mountain bikers, distance runners, and trail riders on horseback... all share a need for more level, much longer trails across areas of natural beauty." Currently, the trails accessing the hills have steep grades that either prevent or discourage use by many potential users including people with disabilities, families with young children, the elderly, equestrians and mountain bikers.

Completing the Phase III land acquisition provides the best opportunities to open access to terrain with more moderate grades and potentially acquire additional new trailhead access points.

BTC should continue to improve access from the Town Overlook Trailhead for use by a broader cross section of the public. The key question is whether this should be a long term or short term goal.

- **Argument for Long Term** – The effort and potential cost of trail improvements argue for making such trail improvements a long-term goal. BTC's current management plan states that, "We can't afford to get sidetracked into expensive projects that use heavy labor." The cost could be limited to purchasing hand tools if BTC was able recruit a significant number of volunteers for a series of trail work days; and/or if a local business with a mini-excavator and a skilled operator was willing to donate trail construction work. However, planning and coordinating the project requires a big commitment.
- **Argument for Short Term** – These trail improvements could be a good short term investment if broadening access boosted community support and involvement in the project – especially if that support translated into increased donations for the Phase III acquisition. Achieving this result would likely require trail work and a significant promotional effort, e.g. a series of organized group hikes targeting different constituencies within the community.

Additional Improvements to the Town Overlook Trail

Pete Wakeman noted that, "Many people have suggested since the beginning of this project some nice formal switchbacking up the main slope to the Overlook." He also emphasized that "the cost/benefit

trade-off" of tackling this project may be too great in the short term. The strongest argument for switchbacking in the short term is that for many people, the Town Overlook Trail will be their first impression of the High Trails – an impression which may influence their perception of BTC. Based on partner interviews, some community members believe that BTC and the High Trails are "just for hard core hikers." The current Town Overlook Trail reinforces this perception. Re-grading this trail would allow BTC to promote the message that the High Trails are accessible for all community members, thus promoting our mission to create walking and biking opportunities throughout the community."

Improvements to Other Existing Trails

BTC's current management plan notes several areas where trail work could be needed in the short term. The following list should be regularly updated and prioritized as new needs are identified and trail work projects are completed.

- **Braiding** – In some spots user-created trails are braiding, resulting in impacts that would be prevented by clearly establishing a single track.
- **Joyce's Notch Loop** – The short traverse to complete the loop.
- **Grand Canyon** – A short section around the dry fall.
- **Visible Path Across Old Landfill** – This project has now been completed, and BTC should monitor public use and gain feedback from users to determine the level of knowledge of and satisfaction with this trail.

Roads and Trail Classifications

In the section of the HTMP discussing grazing, one of the stated goals is to eventually eliminate all roads –either retiring and reclaiming them or converting them to trails. BTC should decide whether certain trails will need to remain wide enough to accommodate "four-wheeler" ATVs for grazing management and other management needs.

If this is the case, the master plan should identify at least two different trail classifications:

- Single Track
- ATV Compatible

Stiles

Locations where stiles are needed should be added to the projects list, with target dates for completing each stile project.

One or more preferred designs should be chosen and cost estimates determined. BTC may need to choose at least two designs, since different designs may be more appropriate depending on location and expected trail use. For example, a trail that is intended for equestrian use may call for a different and more expensive design than one where only pedestrian use is expected. The US Forest Service and Prickly Pear Land Trust could be good resources for choosing designs. Once one or more designs are chosen, photographs of the design should be included in the master plan for reference.

BTC's current management plan includes the following notes about stiles:

- **Prioritization** – Installation of stiles should be prioritized wherever the trails cross fences.

- **Highest Priority Stile** – The fence where the Big Gully and Quick Gully come together is taking a beating and a stile is sorely needed here.

New Trails

Plans for completely new trails are currently in the conceptual stage.

- There are several high points in Phase III as well as earlier phases without trails leading to them. These include a prominent summit in the northwest corner of Phase III. BTC may want to build sustainable trails to these locations to prevent the development of steep, user-created trails.
- The entire area lacks contouring trails. The benefits of contour trails for mountain biking are numerous, but such trails would add variety and enjoyment for all users.
- BTC may want, e.g., to build a contouring trail roughly paralleling Ten Mile Road, linking the Town Overlook and Phase III trailheads. This connection would allow users to complete long loops from either parking area without having to travel on the road. In this case a wide, machine-built trail could be the best choice.

Designing Trails for Mountain Bikes

The HTMP discusses the fact that good trail design is one of the most effective strategies for managing bike impacts. Because BTC does not currently plan to restrict mountain bike use in any areas of the High Trails, the Master Plan should address trail design and mountain bike use in detail.

The topography of the High Trails area and the current trail system raise issues with mountain bikes for the following reasons:

- Once Phase III is completed, mountain bikers will use the more moderate grades to access the High Trails. Riding north through the Phase III area, bikers will reach one or more points from which they can access the trails in Phases I and II.
- The Phase I and II areas will be appealing to bikers because they are much bigger than Phase III and offer different scenic views and the opportunity for longer rides.
- Most significantly, the Phase I and II areas offer opportunities for loop rides, all of which will be primarily downhill once riders climb to any of the saddles east of Phase III. Riders will be able to start at the Phase III trailhead, come out at the Dillon Town Overlook Trailhead and then complete their ride either by taking Ten Mile Road to the Phase III trailhead, or simply riding back into town.
- Problems are likely in this scenario because currently all of the "downhill" trails, including the Town Overlook Trail, have significant "fall-line" sections. This will encourage high speed descents and could lead to user conflicts, erosion from skidding and the likelihood of bike crashes.
- Currently, the Town Overlook Trail offers the most appealing mountain bike descent as part of a loop starting from Phase III. This would be the longest loop with the most moderate grades, and only one steep fall-line section dropping off the ridge just south of the "M." Unfortunately, this location would likely create user conflicts if it became a popular mountain bike descent.

Some trail reroutes and new construction could address these potential issues:

- While the current trail layout will provide fast, exciting riding that will appeal to some riders, most riders would find much more enjoyment in a more gradual descent, with better "flow," where the

trail design helps them control their speed so that they don't have to rely entirely on using their brakes to skid steep sections.

- If BTC created a trail with these characteristics through Phases I and II, this trail would likely receive 90% of mountain biker traffic descending from Phase III.
- If necessary, this could become the designated bike route and bikes could be restricted from the other, steeper trails.
- A high-quality mountain bike trail linking all three phases could become a destination trail, drawing bikers from out of town, with possible creating some economic benefit for the community.
- The existing ranch road up the drainage along the western boundary of Phase III, if the main access trail into this area, contains benefits and drawbacks for mountain biking. It appears wide and straight with good sight lines, so mountain bikers travelling downhill will see pedestrians and equestrians hundreds of feet before they meet. But the trail appears relatively uninteresting for mountain biking, and the long straight sections will encourage high speeds for descending mountain bikers. In spite of good sight lines, inconsiderate bikers may pass other users at inappropriate speeds.
- It could be very beneficial to encourage a mountain bike loop with the uphill in Phase III and the descent in Phases I and II. Since the Phase III trail is likely to be the preferred route for elderly hikers and families with small children, it would be ideal for mountain bike traffic on this trail to be primarily uphill.

The following bullets discuss important trail routing and design elements to consider for managing mountain bike use:

IMBA's Building Better Trails Manual – The International Mountain Biking Association's (IMBA) trail building manual is an excellent resource for guidance on building trails for bikes. http://www.wnymba.org/static/report/trail_manual/BBT_Manual.pdf

Points of Interest / Control Points – Identify locations mountain bikers are likely to pause in Phases I and II, as well as scenic overlooks or interesting terrain. The concept is to "connect-the-dots" with the "control points" being the dots. For example, the Town Overlook and the big saddle are obvious control points in Phases I and II. Bikers will almost certainly seek out the Town Overlook above the "M". They will probably be happy to ride this as an out-and-back from the big saddle, but only if there is a good descent option from the saddle. Therefore, if BTC wants to discourage bikers from descending the Town Overlook Trail, a fun descent needs to be provided from the saddle.

Flow – A "contour trail" with subtle undulations creates enjoyable flow for mountain bikers and is a sustainable trail design that will minimize the need for maintenance over time (cf. IMBA manual).

Grade Reversals – In addition to creating enjoyable flow, grade reversals make trails more sustainable by reducing erosion from water and from skidding tires. Grade reversals also allow bikers to shed speed without using their brakes, resulting in slower speeds overall and safer riding, especially when there are other users sharing the trails (cf. IMBA manual).

Signage and Wayfinding

BTC has extensively discussed trail system signage and blazing. Because of the wild, wide-open feel of the landscape, an important goal that BTC has identified is to minimize cluttering the landscape with highly visible signs.

Signage is an excellent opportunity for branding. As signage designs are developed, BTC should maintain a consistent look and feel that reinforces public awareness of BTC's lead role in creating the High Trails. To achieve this, signs should consistently use BTC's colors, font(s) and logo, or on small signs, just a recognizable component of the logo.

Signage falls into several categories:

Trailhead Signage

Trailhead signage typically includes maps to orient users to an area, rules for use, and often some history including credit to organizations and funders responsible for trails and conservation. Interpretive information about the area is also sometimes included.

BTC has installed trailhead signage at the Town Overlook trailhead. This signage will need to be updated as the trail network is developed and as BTC identifies new information that should be included.

Signage at the Cliff Trail can be less extensive as most users of this access point are likely to already be familiar with the area. Few if any users will use this trailhead their first time visiting the High Trails. If appropriate, BTC acknowledge the donor who made this access possible.

Wayfinding Signs and/or "Blazing"

Wayfinding poses the greatest challenge for balancing function with minimal aesthetic impact. BTC is leaning toward using creating minimalist signage that is close to the ground. Such signs could be installed at trail intersections, with small markers providing blazing as needed between junctions.

Interpretive Signs

BTC envisions installing some interpretive signs providing information concerning rangeland management, range ecology, wildlife and geology. One idea is to install a panoramic sign on a high point above the "M" identifying all the visible mountain ranges. Interpretive signs will also require a balance between aesthetic impact and the educational benefits. Most interpretive signs could be installed in locations where they will not be silhouetted against the skyline. BTC could create a temporary working group of partners such as UMW professors to create an interpretive signage plan and map with proposed locations.

Private Property Signs

BTC has identified a number of locations along its borders where no trespassing signs are needed. In the short term, standard signs from a hardware store will work. However, in the future it may be worth creating signs with BTC branding and a friendlier message such as, "High Trails Area Boundary. Please respect private property."

Trail System Amenities

Benches

While a large number of benches would detract from the area's wild, natural feel, a limited number of strategically placed benches would make the area more welcoming for a broader cross section of the public. This is especially true given the area's rocky terrain and the prevalence of prickly pear cactus.

- Benches would be particularly appropriate on easier trails where BTC expects higher use by the elderly and families with young children. BTC should build benches with backs as well as flat benches.
- Other locations where benches could make sense are part way up long climbs and locations with exceptional scenic views.
- Benches can be an effective, minor funding source. However, for the amount of funding generated, they are fairly time consuming. Therefore, it is important to limit donated benches to locations where they are needed. At this time, BTC BOD has set the price of a bench at $1000. Many donors are motivated by the opportunity to memorialize a loved one while supporting trails and conservation. Gallatin Valley Land Trust has had considerable success with this strategy. In some cases, friends and family have donated benches as a tribute to someone living, though in most cases they are donated in memory of someone who is deceased. BTC should create a map with designated bench locations before promoting bench donations to avoid awkward situations where a family requests a bench in a specific location that is aesthetically intrusive or a poor choice.
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Picnic Tables

There may be a small number of sheltered, unobtrusive locations where picnic tables could be appropriate. Most of the same considerations, including the fundraising approach, would apply to both benches and picnic tables.

Vault Toilets

At the Town Overlook and Phase III trailheads, vault toilets could be installed as use increases. Porta-potties can be a viable temporary solution as funding is secured for a permanent toilet. Many organizations have been able to secure grant funding for vault toilets. However, it is important to consider sustainable funding to cover maintenance costs.

Bike Racks

Installing back racks at trailheads would be a relatively inexpensive way to support BTC's mission of encouraging walking and biking.

High Trails Property Transfer to Beaverhead County

BTC and Beaverhead County have agreed that ownership of the High Trails property will be transferred to the County as soon as possible to preserve a quiet trail area for Dillon in perpetuity. The transfer may occur within the five-year plan timeframe or it may take longer. The timing will be determined by how much of the necessary work can be completed over the next five years.

The timing of the transfer depends upon key tasks that need to be completed:

Legal framework – The legal framework for long term ownership and management needs to be negotiated, with a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities between BTC and the County.

Management Plan & Policies –BTC may want to manage the property for several years before transferring it, in order to develop (with the County) a long term management plan and policies broadly supported by all stakeholders.

Sustainable Funding – BTC may want to manage the property for several years to develop an accurate estimate for an annual management budget and develop a plan for generating sustainable funding for this budget.

Improvements – After completing a detailed master plan for the property, BTC will need to decide how many of the master plan elements – ranging from trails, to benches, to land restoration projects, etc. – it wants to complete before transferring the property.

City Water Facility – Land ownership of the City Water Facility may need to be resolved before the property is transferred. However, the City and County may prefer to negotiate this issue after the County assumes ownership.

Lovers Leap Trailhead – BTC will need to decide whether to complete this project, including the trail connection to the trailhead, before property transfer.

Connection to Frying Pan Basin – BTC will need to decide whether there are reasons to delay transferring the property until this project is completed.

Long Term Projects

BTC's HTMP discusses of three long term projects, only one of which is directly related to the current High Trails land acquisition. There are potential advantages to giving each project a unique name, and marketing them as separate projects of a "BTC Public Lands Program."

Marketing these efforts as new "High Trails" projects has some drawbacks:

- The public is likely to be confused, especially by the two projects not geographically related to the High Trails area.
- It would diminish the opportunity to brand these projects as new opportunities with their own unique characteristics and benefits.
- BTC would run the risk of target audiences neglecting communications about the projects because they assume they already know all about the "High Trails".

For the following long term projects, it may be helpful to invest time to make preliminary decisions and include these in a five-year plan update:

- Prioritize these projects, identifying which of them may be initiated within the next five years.
- Identify any actions that could be taken over the next five years to move these projects forward, and monitor them to ensure that important opportunities are not missed.
- Expand the following project descriptions to more fully describe their scope, and create compelling short summaries to be inserted in grant applications or marketing materials. Such brief project

descriptions could be help BTC communicate its long term vision and provide compelling examples of public lands access projects beyond the High Trails.

Explore Creative Deal Structures

Whenever land trusts negotiate land conservation deals with private landowners, it is standard practice to strongly encourage landowners to consult with a professional financial advisor so that they fully understand all financial implications of the transaction (incl. taxation).

A significant benefit of the landowner working with a financial advisor is that it can encourage them to consider deal structures such as a "bargain sale," where the landowner accepts payment for land or an easement below fair market value. The balance of the value is treated as a donation with all relevant tax benefits. Bargain sales can greatly reduce the amount of funding that an organization like BTC needs to secure for a land or easement acquisition.

As BTC explores future projects involving landowner negotiations:

- Work with qualified attorneys and financial advisors.
- The Trust for Public Land is an excellent resource for helping to negotiate and structure creative land deals.
- There are a number of good publications available to help BTC's leaders deepen their knowledge and expand their skills, such as **A Field Guide to Conservation Finance** by Story Clark.
- The Pennsylvania Land Trust Association's conservationtools.org website has particularly good trail easement templates and guidance: http://conservationtools.org/library_items/324

Connecting the High Trails to the East Pioneers

Completion of Phase III would bring the trail system within a half-mile (perhaps just one easement) of reaching public BLM and State Land to the west which would enable trail users to travel all the way to the East Pioneer Mountains, and would connect with the extensive BLM land in the Frying Pan Basin.

This is the only long term project that will almost certainly be started within the next five years. Components include:

- Negotiating, fundraising, and completing one or more easements and/or land acquisitions to create continuous trail connectivity.
- Working with the BLM to build new trails and manage recreational use.
- Potentially establishing a new trailhead on Bond Road.
- Early in the planning process, begin discussions with the BLM and possibly other stakeholders about how motorized use will be approached on a trail(s) through the Frying Pan Area.

Carrigan Lane State Lands

This project would potentially include:

- Developing trails on the state land at the end of Carrigan Lane.
- Parking and signage at the end of Carrigan Lane.

Hogsback

Establish formal parking and access at the Hogsback.

Badger Pass

Signage and marking of the hiking and riding routes already existing at Badger Pass

Projects Between Dillon and the Beaverhead River

The HTMP mentions several conceptual trails and land acquisition projects between Dillon and the Beaverhead River, including:

- Erb's Pond
- Stan Smith's Pasture
- Cornell Park expansion to include additional trail easements or land along the river
- An extension of the Hospital trails crossing agricultural land to the west

BTC should decide whether projects in this area would be a good fit for the High Trails Committee, or whether it would make more sense for the In-Town Trails Committee to explore these possibilities.

Organization Building, Leadership, and Decision Making

As the organization's biggest, most prominent program, the High Trails will offer many opportunities over the next five years for achieving BTC's goal of building the organization by expanding the numbers of members, supporters, volunteers and leaders.

Organization Building and Leadership Development

With the many tasks and needs outlined previously, there will be many opportunities for volunteer projects, subcommittees, project teams, and working groups. Creating and delegating small groups to focus on specific efforts would offer opportunities to recruit new members, increase the engagement of existing members, and develop new organizational leaders from among the most active and engaged volunteers.

Subcommittees, project teams, and working groups can be defined however BTC chooses to define them. The following definitions illustrate different approaches to creating small groups. It is likely that each of these structures would be appropriate for different tasks:

- **Subcommittee** – A subset of a larger High Trails Committee tasked with overseeing all aspects of the High Trails Project. A subcommittee would not have any members who are not also on the main committee. Subcommittees would generally be most appropriate for focusing on very high priority, potentially sensitive efforts such as negotiating a Lovers Leap trailhead access – tasks that are best delegated to BTC's most experienced and qualified members.
- **Project Team** –This internal BTC group could include committee members as well as other interested volunteers. Project teams could be a great opportunity engaging new members and developing new leaders.
- **Working Group** – Could include BTC members as well as representatives of partner organizations.

Spreading out the workload by delegating projects and tasks to various small groups may be the only way to efficiently achieve BTC's vision for the High Trails and prevent burnout of existing leaders. However, the challenge will be to pace these efforts so that existing leaders and the ED can adequately supervise them.

Decision Making

It will be important for BTC's leadership to establish good prioritization and decision-making processes for the High Trails and other public lands projects. The current management plan discusses guiding principles for BTC's leadership and outlines some elements of the organizations decision-making process.

Guiding Principles for Leadership

- BTC is committed to a long term vision that requires ambitious projects to achieve significant public benefit. With the High Trails, the organization has accepted a significant, long term responsibility in the public trust. BTC envisions working on similar efforts for many years, requiring hard, slow work negotiating easements and land acquisitions and building long-term partnerships. BTC's long-term success will depend on its reputation for integrity.
- BTC must never make a promise it can't keep, and must resist the temptation to overestimate resources, overpromise and over-commit.
- BTC must never take shortcuts to gain short-term victories.

Decision-Making Process

The HTMP outlines the following elements of a decision-making process. It uses the term "working group" for all small groups focused on different tasks. As noted above, it may make sense to choose different group structures for different tasks as appropriate.

- A Management Plan Working Group will be created.
- Written changes to the High Trails plan will happen every month or two as needed, and can be proposed by anybody anytime.
- Written changes to the plan will be quickly processed by the Working Group.
- The Board would need to approve the changes before they are incorporated into the document.
- BTC will form various working groups which will have wide authority to make on-the-fly decisions and move forward quickly in completion of their goals, as long as their actions are aligned with the goals and principles established in the plan.
- BTC's organizational approach is to favor action and avoid over-planning, and forgive well-intentioned actions that accidentally go too far too fast.

BTC and many similar organizations have a strong entrepreneurial spirit essential to their success. As BTC grows and takes on more responsibilities, it must maintain a passionate organizational culture to pursue an ambitious vision, tackle ambitious projects, and creatively achieve goals.

At the same time, BTC must carefully balance its bias for action with the principle of not overpromising and overcommitting. Having a clear prioritization and approval process is probably the best way to ensure that checks and balances in place mean actions are guided by good decision-making. These checks and balances should be regularly reviewed.

- Decide whether any small group assigned to a task or project should be required to have at least one Board member, or member of the High Trails Committee.
- Decide whether the Development Committee should have representation on any group whose work could affect fundraising or involves significant expenditures.
- Establish some clear thresholds for on-the-fly decisions if those decisions would commit significant funding or time. For example, set a clear dollar amount above which a decision must go through a more formal process. Should decisions to enter into contracts or other formal relationships require a higher level of vetting?
- Create prioritization processes for different types of projects and identify projects in need of prioritization. For example, prioritizing investments in wildlife-friendly fencing vs. a vault toilet would differ from prioritizing two major projects, such as negotiating a Lovers Leap trailhead vs. an easement to connect to the Frying Pan Basin.
- A useful exercise would be to take two potential future projects such as the Carrigan Lane State Lands and the Hogsback, and brainstorm what prioritization criteria and process would make sense when BTC was ready for a new project and had to choose between them.

Marketing and Outreach

BTC's HTMP emphasizes the importance of a continuous and energetic promotional campaign. As with other important elements of the High Trails Project, BTC might implement the following actions to ensure a successful marketing campaign:

- **Project List** – Create and maintain an up-to-date project list of marketing strategies and actions.
- **Project Team** – Create a marketing project team. Because marketing will directly affect fundraising, and because marketing will often be the public face of BTC, this small group would need representation by at least one member of the Fundraising Committee and at least one Board member. This could be the same person.
- **Prioritize and Timeline** – Prioritize and timeline marketing efforts.

Website

With a major capital campaign underway, BTC must use its website to "put its best foot forward." From potential volunteers to foundations and major donors, most people who become interested in the High Trails Project will visit the website to learn more. For some it will be an important first impression. Many will also return to the website periodically for updates. The current web content is unlikely to make a good impression and risks undermining critically important fundraising efforts.

Web content needs to be very short and instantly engaging and compelling. The content on the three Projects pages dealing with the High Trails fails to meet these criteria. The website should include BTC's very best photos and best writing for each project. Creating website content should refine and crystalize messages and descriptions that should then be used consistently in all of BTC's other communications including fundraising.

Here follow recommendations to change the website and more effectively sell High Trails. Short-term actions are suggested first, with some longer term changes suggested at the end of the list.

Put the High Trails Front and Center

The High Trails should be front and center on the website as it is by far BTC's most important and most exciting project.

On the Projects page, the content is too short. People will visit the Projects page for many reasons and may be interested in some or all of the projects listed. However, most people will want to know at a glance, "What is BTC's newest, most exciting project?"

- The High Trails program should be listed first.
- The Dillon Town Overlook Trail should be included as part of High Trails to prevent confusion and distraction, to increase the impact of how the High Trails is presented, and to coherently present the full vision of the High Trails.
- Hype the High Trails. This page currently has only two sentences describing BTC's projects, both vague and uninspiring:

  "Beaverhead Trails Coalition aims to help the community in a variety of ways. Here are some of our past and current projects."

  More engaging language that clearly communicates BTC's vision would be something like,

  "Beaverhead Trails Coalition is creating walking, biking and outdoor recreation opportunities that Dillon will enjoy for generations to come. In 2016, we expanded the High Trails to 780 acres and (?#) miles of trails, and we have lots more planned this year. Click on the links below to learn about the High Trails and our other projects."

- Each project listed should probably have, along with the project name link, a one-sentence description. This would help viewers identify the projects they are most interested in, and would create the opportunity include some language get people excited about clicking on the High Trails.

Pictures are Worth a Thousand Words

The current website design is not ideal for photos. Both the High Trails and Town Overlook pages have great photos that are buried at the bottom of the text, far "below the fold" where viewers may never find them. Ideally, photos like these would grab your attention and inspire an emotional reaction immediately. Two possible options:

- Put a banner on every page. The banner for second-level pages could be much smaller than the huge banner images on the top-level pages. Banners on second-level pages could also have multiple images instead of a single image.
- Instead of repeating the projects menu on the left margin, this large space could be used for photos. Where possible, these photos could be matched with the adjacent text. This would be a particularly important change on the High Trails page where there will inevitably be a lot of text. A series of photos down the left margin would make a huge difference in keeping people engaged and drawing them down to the page to keep reading.

Finally, while the photos at the bottom of these two pages effectively convey the feel of the High Trails, BTC should also include photos with people in them – showing people enjoying the area and showing volunteers helping with projects.

High Trails Page

The challenge with the High Trails page is that there is a lot of information that needs to be included, but currently the page is a worst-case-scenario, presenting a long, daunting and unengaging series of text blocks. If viewers make it through all the text, they will finally be rewarded with a couple excellent pictures, but many probably won't get there.

- Use subheadings and photos to make the page more engaging. Some ideas for subheadings and photos are included below.
- Instead of leading with history through the present, lead with the latest news and work backward toward the history. For most people, the agreement that was signed in 2014 will be the least interesting information on the entire page.
- To convey this dynamic project with lots of forward momentum, address people's curiosity about the latest developments, and encourage people to keep coming back to this page, BYC should have the following bold-italic heading and three bullet points at the top of the page, below the title and before the first paragraph describing the project:

  High Trails Update:
  - *Next event or volunteer project with date*
  - *Most recent minor accomplishment – "Thanks to the Boy Scouts for doing a trash pickup at the trailhead on June 1st."*
  - *Most recent big accomplishment – "We have now raised $50,000 towards our goal…"*

  As the deadline approaches, it may make sense to simply have a single line with a big bold font stating how close BTC is to reaching $180,000.

- The first introductory paragraph should focus on the big picture vision and the highlights.
- "BTC needs your support" should not be the beginning of the fourth paragraph; this should be a bold subheading with an exclamation mark near the top of the page.
- Phase III and key information about it should be introduced no later than the second paragraph, and should not use weak language "We hope to…" written in passive voice, "…complete the purchase with the acquisition of Phase III…"
- Do not use passive, generalized language,

  "…will further the resources our community has for years to come."

  Instead, reference core values such as public lands and healthy lifestyles; use compelling verbs that convey emotion "enjoy" vs. "further"; and describe the "resources" in compelling terms that will resonate with the accompanying photos. Better language would be something like,

  "For generations to come, our community will enjoy healthy outdoor recreation, spectacular views and quiet, wide open spaces amidst these new public lands."

- Now that there are multiple trails in the High Trails, it would make sense to have a separate page with short trail descriptions. Elevation gain and difficulty ratings might be helpfully added. This could potentially be the same page as the maps page, but with a new name.
- In addition to subheadings, bullet points can break up text blocks on the web. This could be the best solution for telling the High Trails story. This section could have a subheading titled "High Trails History" or "High Trails Story" with bullet points for each of the stages starting with the Town Overlook.

- The High Trails Story might simply be too much text for the main High Trails page. It might be better to have the main page focus on a compelling description of the project and a big pitch for financial and volunteer support. A separate page could tell the story.

Town Overlook Page

This page currently combines three elements. If this page is eliminated and merged with the High Trails page, these three elements could be split up as follows:

- **Trail Users Guide** – Information about the trail, the view, and route could be moved to a new page with descriptions of several of the High Trails as well as the "Trail Tips" and trail maps.
- **Genesis of the High Trails Project** – The Town Overlook's role in launching the whole project should be part of the history section of the High Trails Page.
- **Thanks to Supporters** – Thanking supporters could be combined with thanks to all other High Trails supporters in a section on the High Trails page.

If BTC choses to keep the Town Overlook as a separate project, the High Trails should still be front and center. Reference to the High Trails and the link to the High Trails page should be moved to the first sentence at the top of the page with language such as:

> *"Offering spectacular views of the Beaverhead Valley and four mountain ranges, the Dillon Town Overlook Trail was the genesis of Beaverhead Trails Coalition's 1,100-acre High Trails Project…"*

Keep Information Up-to-Date

To maintain momentum and excitement, avoid confusion, and ensure that funders perceive BTC as organized and capable, avoid having very out-of-date information on the website. In several places, information about the High Trails is badly out-of-date.

- The Town Overlook page states, "The trail system is currently limited to the overlook area."
- The High Trails page leads with a sentence about what happened in 2014 rather than the latest news.
- On the High Trails page, the Phase III deadline is stated as August 2020 rather than the current deadline of August 2019. This will look particularly bad to any foundation or major donor who is looking through BTC's website after received a funding request citing the 2019 date!

Giving Credit

Giving credit to important funders and donors could be addressed several ways:

- It could be a section of the High Trails Page with a subheading.
- It could be incorporated into the trails descriptions page. This could be a good option because this page may get more traffic than the main page.
- It could be incorporated into a separate High Trails Story page.
- A creative option could be to take a vertical/portrait picture that has a little bit of trail leading toward the horizon in the bottom quarter to third of the frame, and clear blue sky taking up the rest of the frame. Text thanking donors and supporters could be overlaid on the sky. This could be effective in the left hand margin or at the bottom of the main text column.

Finally, BTC should take and give credit for the Town Overlook private land trail easement, and the six-acre donation that included the Cliff Trail Access. Beaverhead County should also be prominently included in any list of top level supporters.

Public Lands Program

Ultimately, BTC should consider restructuring the website to present the High Trails as the first of many projects of a BTC Public Lands Program. If BTC makes this change in the shorter term before Phase III is completed, it must ensure that the High Trails stays "front and center."

For example, the main Public Lands Program page should start with a mission/vision statement, but above that, right below the title could be the High Trails Update / Fundraising Update section described above.

Events

BTC's HTMP includes ideas for a variety of events to help build broad community support by directly engaging with community members. BTC is still experimenting with different types of events and event marketing strategies to discover what works best.

While BTC should never stop exploring new event ideas, a practical goal for the next five years would be to move toward an annual events schedule where the majority of events are repeated every year on the same schedule:

- BTC's focus would shift from discovering events that work to improving and refining proven, successful events.
- This approach should save time and effort because an event you've done before, only requiring minor adjustments to an existing plan, will usually be less work than one you've never tried.
- For this approach to work, BTC should develop written plans for events, evaluate it after the event, and retain notes about what went well and what could be improved.

Different types of events differently combine objectives. BTC could use a list such as the following to prioritize event ideas.

- Raising awareness of BTC and its work.
- Recruiting new members and volunteers.
- Fulfilling BTC's mission of promoting healthy lifestyles and increasing use of the High Trails so people grow love the area.
- Promoting specific projects.
- Fundraising.
- Providing education about the natural history of the High Trails.
- Strengthening relationships and building partnerships with other organizations by collaborating on events.
- Accomplishing on the ground work such as trash cleanup or trail maintenance.
- Celebrating achievements.
- Making BTC's work fun.

BTC has held a variety of events in recent years with mixed results. The following sections discuss events BTC has tried, events proposed in BTC's HTMP, and additional concepts.

Past BTC Events & Management Plan Event Ideas

- **Guided Hikes** – It could be particularly effective to organize guided hikes with a wide variety of partners and other community groups. This could broaden BTC's outreach to audiences less aware of the organization's work, and people who have not yet experienced the High Trails.
- **Educational Events** – Educational opportunities concerning rangeland management, range ecology, wildlife and geology could be designed for students of all ages and organized through the different schools. Educational events designed for the community at large could be effective, but to ensure good turnout their marketing plans should probably include outreach to specific audiences and marketing assistance from partner organizations.
- **Trail Runs** – BTC has tried a 5k run that was not very successful, drawing few participants and no substantial donations.
- **Volunteer Trail Work Projects** – Volunteer projects involving specific groups such as clean-up days and trail marking with UMW athletes have been successful at times. However, other volunteer projects such as weed pulling have been less successful. As discussed earlier, it could be effective to maintain a list of needed volunteer projects that could be shared with interested partner organizations in order to find good matches between projects and different types of groups.
- **Silent Auctions** – BTC has held silent auction fundraising events at the Beaverhead Brewing Company which been well-attended and financially successful.
- **Community Meetings** – It could be effective to hold periodic High Trails update meetings for the community and/or occasional community meetings where BTC sought broader public input on important decisions. For example, if BTC had a draft Master Plan completed, this could be an opportunity to hold a public meeting to present the public version and get feedback before it was finalized. This meeting could promote opportunities for community members to sponsor memorial benches, or to announce the upcoming auction of a trail name.

National Trails Day and National Public Lands Day

Holding events on dates such as Earth Day, National Trails Day, and Public Lands Day may help with marketing and turnout because people in BTC's target audiences may already know these dates and may be on the lookout for interesting events. The downside of this strategy is that you may face competition from other events.

Presentations

BTC could create a PowerPoint presentation about the High Trails using lots of good photos and some maps. BTC could set a goal of giving one presentation per month to different audiences in the community.

Name the Hills Events

Designing a series of fundraising events around naming the High Trails hills is a strategy that would probably generate significant publicity and might generate significant funding. However, it would require a substantial time investment and BTC should decide whether it would make more sense before or after the Phase III acquisition is completed. The first question would be whether it made sense in

terms of time investment and the underlying question of viability. This strategy should include the following elements.

Concept

The hills, unnamed on maps, have no current informal name used by the community, nor any historic name. BTC could organize a fundraising contest or auction to name the hills, with the proceeds going to fund acquisition of Phase III, acquisition of additional access, trails and other improvements, management expenses, or a combination of these needs.

Viability Assessment

BTC would need to conduct research through the USGS, the State, and other necessary agencies to determine the process for officially naming the hills. This process could be so time consuming that BTC's time investment would not make sense. On the other hand, perhaps BTC, the City, and the County could simply agree to use the chosen name on their maps, and not pursue a more formal naming process.

Marketing Plan

Because this strategy would inevitably require lots of time, BTC would risk wasting its effort unless it also creates and implements an effective marketing plan, which should include the following:

- Carefully planning the campaign stages and the timing for each stage. Deciding the length of the campaign would be important. There would likely be significant pros and cons between a one-year campaign and a short one (a month or two).
- Crafting the language, including a very clear message about how uses of the funding.
- Designing strategies to engage as much of the community as possible.
- Making sure it's fun.

Stage One – Collecting Names

The first stage could be collecting proposed names from individuals and community groups.

- Launch the campaign with a public event explaining how it is going to work and including a BTC presentation with lots of great pictures explaining the High Trails.
- At this even and elsewhere, use a PowerPoint presentation about the High Trails to as many groups as possible.
- Some guidelines should be established, e.g.:
    - A name in honor of someone living or deceased is allowed. However names of politicians with upcoming elections are not allowed.
    - Businesses' names are not allowed.
    - People could be encouraged to submit reasons or stories behind their proposed name if relevant.
- BTC could require a $10 donation to add a name to the starting list prior to the first cut. It would be important to clearly communicate how names were going to be screened and how finalists would be chosen.
- BTC could propose good names that would be likely to generate strong community support. Coming up with good ideas could involve researching the history of the hills. This could be a great excuse to have conversations with long time agricultural landowners in the area - something that should

probably be done regardless to ensure that they felt included. Above all, avoid any perception that "The newcomers are doing a publicity stunt to slap a name on something that is a part of Dillon's history."

Stage Two – Screening Names

Screening names would be essential to avoid two pitfalls:

- Moving forward with too many names.
- Having silly or inappropriate names.

BTC could create a panel of community leaders (City and County commissioners; representatives from the hospital, UMW, etc.; prominent business leaders; BTC partners such as YMCA), and hold a public event where the "judges" would vote on the top 5 (or less) names. During the first half of the event, when BTC would give an update presentation about the High Trails with more great photos, anyone could make donations of $1 or more to add weight to their preferred name(s) prior to the vote. The underlying message of the event should be, "Respected community leaders are selecting names that the community can be proud of."

Stage Three – Fundraising Competition

For several weeks or months there could be a fundraising competition between the finalist names, with BTC regularly posting updates on its website and social media. This could get a lot more people visiting the website and following its social media, where they will learn about all of the organization's other projects.

Stage Four – Final Public Event

The campaign could culminate with a final public event with a countdown to the deadline for donations. Ideally, for maximum drama, BTC could have a running tally in real time with an MC calling it like a horse race. With some technological assistance, perhaps the event could be live-streamed and donations could be taken over the web as well as in-person up until the last minute.

Auctioning Trail Names

Prickly Pear Land Trust in Helena has had successful events where trail names were auctioned. BTC could contact PPLT to learn how those events were marketed and designed. This could be a less ambitious version of the Name the Hills campaign. Holding a couple of trail name auction events could provide good practice before launching a big Hill-naming effort.

Celebrations

BTC has held celebrations to mark major achievements, including a Fall 2016 celebration of the Phase II acquisition which was well-attended and clearly identified BTC as the organization responsible.

BTC should continue to celebrate its success. Celebrations build community, maintain momentum, thank supporters, and keep everyone engaged and motivated. Celebrations can be held for major accomplishments and milestones, or simply to mark the end of a successful season of trail improvements.

Maps

BTC has trails maps posted at the Town Overlook Trailhead and on its website, and is continuously improving its maps of the High Trails. Maps are an essential tool for master planning, management and communications. BTC must soon decide whether to invest the time and expense to create and distribute a public hard copy map of the High Trails. Following are some factors to consider in making this decision.

- **A Marketing and Fundraising Tool** – The High Trails are easy and unintimidating to explore without a map. Therefore, it would probably only make sense to produce a map as a marketing and fundraising tool. Such a map,broadly available throughout the community, could be an a very successful marketing tool. Design elements to achieve this goal should include:
  o Several high-quality images including at least one showing people enjoying the area.
  o The cover panel of the map should be very eye-catching and compelling, featuring a great photo and limited text.
  o Glossy paper and high quality printing so that the pictures look good.
  o Good graphic design. It would probably be worth hiring a graphic designer or exploring an in-kind donation from a design professional.
  o A strong pitch for Phase III. Perhaps the entire back side of the map should be a Phase III advertisement including photos, a more detailed map of the Phase III area, compelling language about the many benefits of adding Phase III to the High Trails, and a request for donations.
  o A Prominent pitch for BTC's website and social media as the best sources for updates.
- **Cost** – Producing a good quality map would be expensive. However, business supporters might eagerly fund the project in exchange for having their logo in a "Thanks to Sponsors" section on the map. Because the map would help marketing and fundraising, BTC should not try to recover its costs by selling it. The map could be free but it might make sense to charge $1 per map to prevent them from being wasted.
- **Distribution** – Producing a map would only make sense if there was a good distribution plan, with solid commitments ahead of time from partners and local businesses to help. Contacting businesses about distributing could be combined with asking them to sponsor it.
- **Combine with In-Town Trails** – BTC would need to decide whether to combine the High Trails and In-Town trails on the same map. This may make sense longer term, but during the Phase III capital campaign it probably does not make sense for the following reasons:
  o The map might never get completed in time. While the High Trails map could be fairly easy to create, the in-town map would be far more complicated. Combining the two could simply take too much time.
  o There might not be enough room left to make a strong marketing pitch for Phase III. The logical design would be to have in-town trails on one side and the High Trails on the other. This would eliminate the opportunity to devote one side to promoting Phase III.
  o The Phase III marketing pitch would get lost in all the information. There would be a huge amount of information on the map and this would greatly dilute the impact of the Phase III marketing.
- **Elevation Information and Difficulty Ratings** – Because the current trails are challenging and potentially even dangerous for some users, it would be important to include information about elevation gain for different trails. It could also make sense to create difficulty ratings for the trails. The Cliff Trail would get at least a "black diamond" rating and might warrant a special warning.

Highlighting the steepness of the trails would not only be an important service to users, it would also help make the case for Phase III.

Media

BTC regularly uses the local media to help market its projects and events, and has received good regional coverage in the *Montana Standard* (Butte) newspaper. Media coverage can be a very valuable form of marketing that costs nothing except a generally modest time investment. BTC should continue to take advantage of all opportunities for media coverage. Following bullets summarize BTC's current media outreach efforts and suggest additional strategies.

- **Local Newspaper** – The *Dillon Tribune* runs articles and announcements related to Beaverhead Trails activities.
- **Local Radio** – BTC Board members do interviews with the local radio station.
- **Press Releases** – BTC drafts press releases and distributes them when it completes major projects. These press releases get covered in the *Montana Standard*. The *Bozeman Chronicle* should probably also be added to the press release distribution list. There may be creative ways to package BTC's work to increase coverage. For example, at the end of the warm season, BTC could send out a press release summarizing everything it has accomplished – number of volunteers, number of projects, funding secured toward Phase III goal, etc.
- **TV** – While it may be a long shot to get regional TV coverage for most BTC news, TV stations in Butte should still be included in BTC's press release distribution. If BTC is on their radar screen, a station may decide to send a camera crew at some point.
- **Feature Stories** – A recent story about the High Trails in *Outside Bozeman* Magazine illustrates the potential for getting feature stories in regional magazines. BTC should begin building a list of these types of publications. As the trail system and other improvements are completed the potential for feature stories will increase as the High Trails becomes a more attractive destination for visitors.

Partners

BTC's HTMP emphasizes the importance of direct outreach to local leaders and continuing to build partnerships. BTC's partnerships fall into the following categories.

- **Government** – BLM, Beaverhead County and the City of Dillon are the most essential partners for the High Trails project, as well as for other potential future BTC projects. Other government agencies may be able to offer assistance with management issues and opportunities such as grazing management and habitat restoration projects. In the future, the Carrigan Road project will require a good relationship with the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC). In the shorter term the Montana Office of Tourism and Business Development may have resources available to help market the High Trails once it is closer to completion.
- **Other Montana Trails and Conservation Organizations** – A goal identified in the HTMP is to forge networking and mentoring alliances with the trails and conservation community around Montana. Other sections of the strategic plan suggest opportunities for potential partnerships and outreach with organizations including the Trust for Public Land, the Conservation Fund, Prickly Pear Land Trust, Gallatin Valley Land Trust, Montana Land Reliance, and The Nature Conservancy.

- **Schools** – The High Trails area offers great opportunities for area schools including the University of Montana Western. UMW is a particularly important partner on many levels. Faculty, staff and students are key target audiences for recruiting volunteers and building BTC's membership. UMW faculty also offer expertise to assist with studying and managing conservation values.
- **Community Organizations** – Working with other community organizations can create opportunities for BTC to reach a much broader audience in the community. Partnering on events, hosting presentations, and helping with volunteer recruitment are all potential opportunities. Large organizations like the hospital and YMCA are particularly important community partners because their missions are aligned with BTC's mission and they have access to large numbers of people who may be interested in healthy lifestyles that include outdoor recreation.
- **Business Supporters** – BTC should continue to explore ways to recruit and work with business partners. From in-kind donations, to marketing assistance, to volunteer projects designed as company team-building outings there are many creative options for building relationships with local businesses. Always, look for ways to make the relationship reciprocal by giving business supporters credit and publicity to help with their marketing.

Appendix A

1-year goals:

1. Create a comprehensive Master Plan for the High Trails and other out of town, public lands projects.

   - Should provide a detailed overview (incl. maps and images) of BTC's vision for the High Trails area when all improvements are completed.

   - Establish good prioritization and decision-making processes for the High Trails and other public lands projects.

2. Create a Management Plan for the High Trails.

   - Focus on policies, rules and strategies for managing the area to achieve BTC's recreational use and conservation goals as stated below.

   - Work with the lease holder to develop a plan for managing grazing in conjunction with public use and BTC's conservation goals.

   - Coordinate to every extent possible with neighboring land-owners and interested parties (UMW), Beaverhead County, State and Federal agencies (BLM).

   - Develop a management budget.

3. Create a Project Plan for the High Trails that reflects and is consistent with the Management Plan.

   - A project list created as an Excel spreadsheet or a database may be helpful.

   - Develop a standardized form for small- to moderate-sized trail maintenance and improvement projects, and for adding projects to the list.

4. Review and modify these over time as necessary.

5-Year Goals

   - Complete Phase III, including an additional trailhead more suitable for horse and mountain bike access as well as for people with disabilities, the elderly, and families with young children.

   - Transfer the property to Beaverhead County by completing the trail system and other improvements, and negotiating the ownership and management details that will ensure long term sustainability and permanent protection as public land.

Recreation Goals

   - Create permanently protected, quiet, natural, public lands for the enjoyment of Dillon's residents and visitors, where all non-motorized uses are welcome including horseback riding, running, walking, hiking, mountain biking, picnicking.

- Provide public recreational access within walking and biking distance of Dillon and the Beaverhead River.

- Provide abundant opportunities for exercise, outdoor recreation and nature observation, including an extensive single-track quiet trail network.

- Make the trails inviting and easy for people to use.

- Ensure long-term access and protection of a cultural icon, the Dillon "M" hillside.

- Create connections to other trails and public lands.

Conservation Goals

- Conserve wildlife and wildlife habitat and protect and restore an important piece of the Beaverhead River watershed.

- Protect lands that form the scenic backdrop to Dillon from development, and help preserve the aesthetic values of the community.

Long Term Sustainability Goals

- Foster a strong sense of ownership and responsibility within the community through volunteer projects and donations.

- Generate local donations and grant funding sources to ensure proper maintenance.