

II. Lion Mountain Segment

A. Subarea Description

Lion Mountain is part of the Skyles Lake subarea. There is an informal trail network from Lion Mountain Road, which follows the ridgeline through the DNRC lands to private property. Using existing trails, a short 20 minute hike will lead to an overlook with views of Skyles Lake. This segment has some relatively steep grade but is used regularly by hikers, runners, and persons with dogs. It does not appear to have regular equestrian use. The trail network will benefit from improved drainage, erosion control, and switchback design in steep sections.



*View of Skyles Lake from
Lion Mountain*

B. Trail Usage

The trailhead in Lion Mountain is the closest access point to the City of Whitefish. Due to its proximity to town, this trail receives heavy use. It is popular with hikers, runners and persons with dogs. Illegal dumping, off-road motorized uses, and underage parties occurs in this area.

A new trail along the southern edge of the subarea will have more gradual elevation gains and still offer views. The difficulty level will generally be classified as moderate with some segments that have steep pitches classified as difficult. Overall trail width may be wider than more remote areas due to the heavy use of this area.

C. Access Points

There is an existing trail off of Lion Mountain Road and a nearby gravel parking area that can accommodate about five cars. The plan recommends expanding this parking to accommodate ten to 15 cars.

D. Main Corridor

From the Lion Mountain trailhead, the main corridor will generally go west along the south part of the subarea to a bench where there are views of the Skyles Lake and Spencer Mountain subareas. From this point, a newly constructed trail will switchback a short way to the north portion of the subarea where it will continue west and descend down Lion Mountain to connect with the trail system in Skyles Lake.



*Rock outcropping in
Lion Mountain*

E. Secondary Trail System

There is an existing secondary trail system in this subarea. These trails will be evaluated to determine which trails are suitable to be included in the trail system.

F. Linkages to Other Trail Networks

Montana Department of Transportation is developing plans for improvements to US 93. The initial plans indicate a paved bike path along the north side of the highway from Whitefish to Spencer Lake. This bike path will be located less than a quarter mile from the Lion Mountain parking area. Bicyclists could depart from the Lion Mountain trailhead and exit at Skyles Lake Lane and head back into town along US 93 to form a loop ride.

G. Issues

- Due to heavy use, litter and vandalism can be a concern
- There is a history of illegal dumping in this area
- Private residences are near parts of the trail, so user education and enforcement of trail rules are important



Existing trail in Lion Mountain



Illegal dumping of yard waste

III. Skyles Lake Segment

A. Subarea Description

The Skyles parcel consists of approximately 600 acres in a U-shape around Skyles Lake. Access to the west side of Skyles subarea is from US 93. The lake is visible from the highway. Skyles Lake is surrounded by a large number of private parcels, both developed and undeveloped. Along US 93, the residential development has smaller lots and higher density. Going north along Skyles Lake Lane, there are five, ten, and 40 acre residential lots. Within the Skyles Lake area, 7.38 acres are leased for residential purposes to three lessees.

B. Trail Usage

The west access point will attract multiple groups such as bicyclists, equestrians, runners, hikers, and walkers. Bicyclists will likely share Skyles Lake Lane with auto traffic that is driving to the existing parking area. Hikers, walkers, and equestrians will be more likely to drive to the parking area and head north from this point. Due to its close proximity to the City of Whitefish, it is anticipated that this will be a high use area. Trails will vary from easy to moderate.

C. Access Points

There is an existing parking area with space for about 20 vehicles and possibly a few horse trailers. This parking area will require little improvement from its existing configuration.

D. Main Corridor

The main corridor will begin at the south end of this sub-unit at US 93. It is proposed that a pedestrian underpass be constructed to connect the Skyles Lake subarea to the Spencer Mountain subarea near Skyles Lake Lane. This gravel road is a private road but public access is allowed for the first one-half mile to an existing parking area located on State Trust Land. There is currently a gated road that provides access to an adjacent landowner and DNRC. In a reciprocal access agreement, there is no public motor-vehicle access north of the gate other than use by private landowners and state land-management personnel, but bicycle and pedestrian access is allowed. The trail is proposed to be re-routed and fully reconstructed off of the road through this area. This section of



*Skyles Lake subarea
parking area*

trail will head north crossing DNRC and private lands until it reaches the Beaver Lakes Road.

E. Secondary Trail System

There are limited secondary trails in this part of the subarea.

F. Linkages to Other Trail Networks

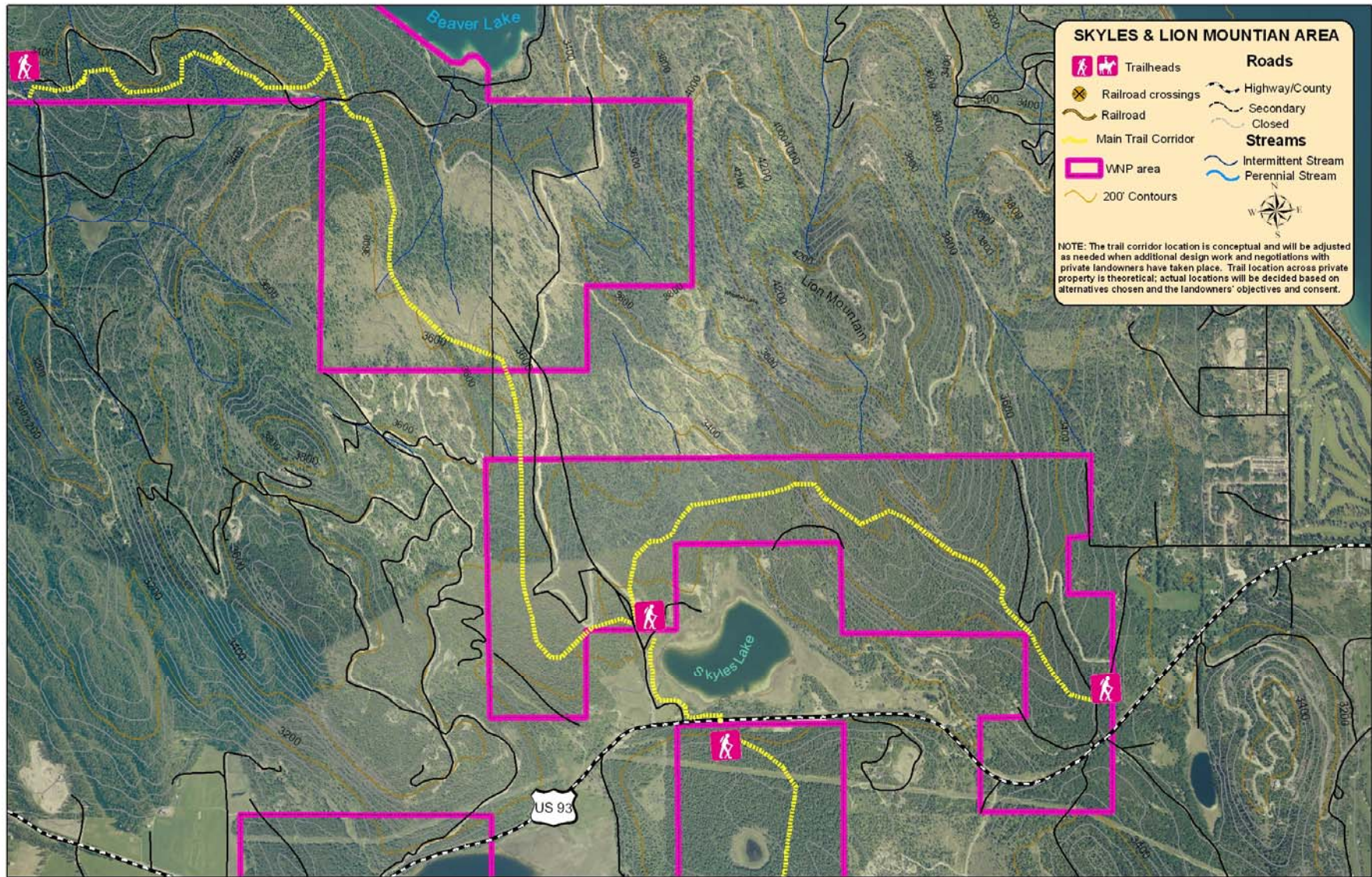
Montana Department of Transportation is developing plans for improvements to US 93. The initial plans indicate a paved bike path along the north side of the highway. This bike path will provide access to Skyles Lake Lane and the proposed pedestrian underpass to access the trail system in the Spencer Mountain subarea.

G. Issues

- Confirm public access on Skyles Lake Lane and work with the county to designate it as a bicycle route
- Work with Montana Department of Transportation to construct pedestrian underpass
- Work with private land owners in area on specifics for trail design and alignment



Gate on Skyles Lake Lane



SKYLES & LION MOUNTAIN AREA

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------|--|---------------------|
| | Trailheads | | Highway/County |
| | Road crossings | | Secondary |
| | Railroad | | Closed |
| | Main Trail Corridor | | Streams |
| | WNP area | | Intermittent Stream |
| | 200' Contours | | Perennial Stream |



NOTE: The trail corridor location is conceptual and will be adjusted as needed when additional design work and negotiations with private landowners have taken place. Trail location across private property is theoretical; actual locations will be decided based on alternatives chosen and the landowners' objectives and consent.