

# **CHAPTER 5: Implementation**

## **I. Management**

### 1. Trails on State Trust Lands

In May 2006 the City of Whitefish submitted an application to the State Land Board proposing that the city assume lead management responsibility for the network of ad hoc, existing, and proposed trails within the neighborhood planning area. The city would explore partnerships with other public agencies and private entities to assist in managing the trails. This would be a long term agreement covering a period up to 99 years. Management responsibilities will include the following:

- Work with the DNRC to identify associated trails that should be closed, maintained, or constructed
- Hire appropriate staff to meet the obligations of the agreement
- Develop a budget and manage funds related to trail construction and maintenance
- Educate the public about trail etiquette and conservation practices
- Ensure that the greatest possible number of trail users have purchased a State Lands Recreational Use License
- Work with DNRC to manage commercial uses of the trail system and to generate additional revenues for the trust
- Enforce policies, rules and regulations
- Oversee construction of new trails and improvements identified in the Master Plan

Prior to taking over management of the trails, this arrangement must be formalized through a Trail System Management Agreement between the Land Board/DNRC and the City of Whitefish. Other responsibilities may be identified through this process.

### 2. Trails on Private Lands

The segments of the trail system that traverse private lands will be restricted to negotiated easements with the land owner. The terms of the easements or other agreements will include a legal description of the trail corridor and detail policies for use and management. The City of Whitefish will be the easement holder and will manage these segments along with the trails on State Trust Lands.

## **II. Organization & Staffing**

### 1. Trail Manager

It is recommended that there be a staff position of trail manager to perform the day-to-day tasks associated with implementing the plan. The trail manager would be an employee of the city and would work with an advisory group on implementing the Master Plan. Roles and responsibilities may include:

- Issue RFP's, develop bid documents and negotiate contracts for work related to the trail
- Oversee trail construction management
- Coordinate community outreach and education
- Write grants
- Act as liaison to county, state and Federal agencies
- Provide administrative support to advisory and working groups
- Draft budget and work plan for trail construction and maintenance
- Coordinate volunteers
- Oversee enforcement
- Develop and implement maintenance program

### 2. Advisory Committee

The advisory committee will be a standing committee to be appointed by City Council. The committee will meet regularly with the trail manager to provide input on policy issues, trail design, trail construction, and other trail related matters. The committee will help set priorities on construction projects and can perform other functions such as producing an annual report on trail progress. Once appointed, the committee will establish by-laws, meeting dates, and other administrative procedures.

### 3. Working Groups

In addition to the advisory committee, periodically there may be a need to establish a working group to perform specialized, short term tasks for the trail. Possible working groups may concentrate on fundraising or producing some of the technical studies that are identified in the action plan.

The planning group identified a need for a working group to conduct field work in mapping and evaluate the secondary trail system. This group will use global positioning system (GPS) technology to accurately inventory existing trails. The field data can then be transferred to a geographic information system (GIS) format to produce maps for the trail system. Trails can also be displayed and analyzed in relation to topography, roads, aerial photos, soil types and other overlays. This database of trails will be valuable in evaluating the existing trail system and determining determine which trails should be maintained as part of the system and which should be vacated to conserve natural resources. It will also provide baseline data so the trail manager can track new unauthorized trails and prevent them from becoming further established.

#### 4. Volunteers

Volunteers can be an important pool of labor for activities such as trail maintenance, community education, and fundraising. According to the survey, 50% of respondents were interested in volunteering for the trail project.

#### 5. Affiliations

There are a number of non-profit groups that have overlapping interests and could be potential partners for the trail project. These groups may be willing to sponsor events, develop joint projects for trail improvements, or help with educational outreach efforts. Members of these groups often have technical expertise that can be valuable in the implementation of the Master Plan. Such groups represent conservation, recreation, and civic interests. Respondents to the survey identified over 50 different groups that were active in the county.

### **III. Funding and Costs**

#### **1. Endowment**

An endowment fund will be established and the interest from the endowment will provide income to fund staff and maintenance costs. For example, an endowment of five million dollars with a five percent return can generate an annual income of \$250,000 per year. Endowments are generally established through donations, planned giving, and fundraising campaigns. Building the endowment will be an on-going endeavor.

#### **2. Fundraising**

Successful fundraising relies on a fundraising/marketing plan that sets goals, targets specific donor groups, creates awareness, and effectively uses an organization's resources. Often, a separate non-profit arm is responsible for fundraising efforts. Fish Trails is a non-profit entity created by citizens and the City of Whitefish to organize fundraising, awareness and support for the Whitefish Pedestrian and Bike Path. Fundraising for the "A Trail Runs Through It" needs to be coordinated with their efforts. To provide this coordination, a marketing/fundraising plan is needed that addresses the following issues:

- Immediate need for revenue to meet monthly operational costs until an endowment is established.
- On-going fundraising strategy to make-up any gap between endowment revenue and operational costs.
- Building donor base for long-term giving.
- Specific capital campaigns for trail construction.

Common fundraising events include annual giving campaigns, web site donations, sponsorships, merchandising, and dues. Events are most effective in increasing awareness and cultivating future donors.

#### **3. Grants**

Grants are available for trail construction, conservation measures, and education. The appendix contains more information on potential grants sources.

#### 4. User Fees

Currently, state law requires recreational users on State Trust Land to purchase an annual general recreation license costing \$10. Many recreational users are unaware of this requirement and there is limited resources for enforcing this provision. There is a possibility that the city can partner with Fish, Wildlife and Parks and DNRC to enforce trail regulations. As part of the trail management agreement, the City of Whitefish will collect the recreation fees on behalf of the DNRC for the benefit of the School Trust beneficiaries. These fees are not intended to cover any operational costs of maintaining the trail.

#### 5. Costs

Detailed costs estimates have not been prepared at this time. Specific construction costs can vary widely depending on terrain, soils, condition of existing trails, and labor. There are also unknown factors such the number of secondary trails, costs for pedestrian crossings, and exact alignment of the main corridor. There will likely be technical studies required for environmentally sensitive areas and the costs of acquiring easements will vary from parcel to parcel. The trail will be completed in phases and costs will be estimated for each phase as more detailed information becomes available. The trail system is a long term, dynamic project that will continue to grow and evolve over time. Following are the types of costs that can be expected in the project.

##### a) Operational

- Staffing – Trail manager, seasonal employees, enforcement ...
- Maintenance Budget
- Administrative – Office space, supplies, meetings ...
- Community Outreach – Web page, brochures, maps, ...
- Professional – Legal, Financial, ...

##### b) Design and Construction

- Technical, Planning and Engineering Studies
- Construction plans
- Contract Labor to Build trail and improvements
- Materials
- Easement Acquisition
- Financing Costs

## V. Action Plan

Action items are those tasks that have been identified throughout the Master Plan that are required in order to implement the plan. The action matrix includes a general time frame for each task as follows:

<i>Immediate</i>	Immediate need. To be addressed within one year.
<i>Near Term</i>	Within 1 to 3 years
<i>Mid Term</i>	Completed in 3 to 6 years
<i>TBD</i>	Phasing to be determined.
<i>Ongoing</i>	Ongoing activity.

### 1. Intergovernmental Coordination

<b>ACTION ITEM</b>	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>	<b>COMMENT</b>
Management agreement between the City of Whitefish and State Land Board	Immediate	
Coordinate with DNRC land exchange proposal	Immediate	
Work with MDT to include pedestrian underpass in US 93 improvement plans	Immediate	Planning is now underway for highway
Coordinate with USFS on NEPA process for Taylor Creek Road segment	Immediate	The process is underway
Coordinate with Flathead County on incorporating trail system into the county Growth Policy Plan	Immediate	Plan is scheduled to be adopted in Fall 2006
Incorporate trail system into city Growth policy plan.	Immediate	
Coordinate with Flathead County on bike route designations for KM Ranch Road, Big Mountain Road and Skyles Lane.	Near Term	

2. Administrative

<b>ACTION ITEM</b>	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>	<b>COMMENT</b>
Hire trail manager	Immediate	After approval of agreement with State Land Board
Appoint Advisory Committee	Immediate	
Establish strategies for collecting recreation use fees	Immediate	
Establish 5-year capital improvement plan	Near Term	New links, land acquisitions, construction projects..
Grant writing	On-going	
Develop fundraising/marketing plan	Immediate	

3. Technical, Planning, and Design Studies

<b>ACTION ITEM</b>	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>	<b>COMMENT</b>
Create existing trail inventory through GPS mapping	Immediate	
Evaluate existing trails for inclusion in trail system	Near Term	Complete inventory first
Evaluate creek crossing for Swift and Lazy Creeks	Near to Mid Term	
Preliminary engineering and feasibility analysis for railroad crossing options	Near to Mid Term	Coordinate with BNSF
Determine alignment for trail through Swift Creek – South half	Near to Mid Term	Pending railroad crossing analysis
Determine alignment for trail through Swift Creek – North half	Near to Mid Term	Pending analysis of Lazy and Swift Crossings
Investigate future bike route on East Lake Shore Drive.	TBD	
Beaver Lakes Recreational Plan	TBD	Recommendation of Neighborhood Plan
Develop detailed trail design specifications and construction plan	Near Term	

4. Community Outreach

<b>ACTION ITEM</b>	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>	<b>COMMENT</b>
Celebration/kick-off event	Immediate	
Prepare and distribute trail maps	Near Term	
Prepare and distribute educational materials	Near Term	
Create new web site	On-going	Coordinate with city web sites
Establish Volunteer Program	Near Term	
Marketing Program	On-going	Brand identity

5. Trail Construction (Includes establishing final alignment, parking lot design, engineering, construction drawings, bids, permits, and construction)

<b>ACTION ITEM</b>	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>	<b>COMMENT</b>
Lion Mountain Segment	Near Term	
Skyles Lake Segment	Near Term	Coordinate with land exchange
Spencer Mountain	Near Term	Coordinate with US 93 construction
Beaver Lakes	TBD	Coordinate with recreation plan
Swift Creek – South Half	TBD	Pending RR crossing analysis
Swift Creek - North Half	TBD	Pending creek crossing analysis
Taylor Creek Rd – Big Mountain	Near Term	Pending NEPA analysis
Haskill	TBD	
Happy Valley	On-going	Coordinate with DNRC restoration efforts
KM Ranch	Mid Term	
Negotiate Easements on Private Land	TBD	