

Outdoor Recreation Prospectus

for the Yellowstone-Teton Region



the Case for Collaborative Investment

prepared by the Yellowstone Business Partnership

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Introduction

The Yellowstone Business Partnership (YBP) represents a variety of businesses that operate within the 25 Idaho, Montana and Wyoming counties surrounding Yellowstone and Grand Teton national parks. Our 200 members are dedicated to preserving a healthy environment and shaping a prosperous and sustainable future for communities in the Yellowstone-Teton region. The Partnership promotes scientific understanding, regional dialogue and collaborative approaches in resolving our region's most complex socioeconomic and natural resource challenges.

The Partnership's Outdoor Recreation Initiative was launched early in 2005 with a \$20,000 planning grant from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. This *Outdoor Recreation Prospectus* is the culmination of the project's initial planning phase that explored the need for more sustainable outdoor recreation in our region and the need for greater public and private investment in recreation services, innovation and infrastructure. Information needed for this report was secured from more than 100 individuals between February and October 2005 by the following means:

- ◆ Voluntary opinion surveys from interested YBP members.
- ◆ Member forums held in Idaho Falls, Jackson, Cody, Bozeman and West Yellowstone.
- ◆ Presentations and small group discussions at the YBP annual conference, the theme of which was *Prospects for Public Land Recreation in the Yellowstone-Teton Region*.
- ◆ Two meetings with the Recreation Subcommittee of the Greater Yellowstone Coordinating Committee (representing two national parks, six national forests and two wildlife refuges).
- ◆ A series of one-on-one consultations with federal, state and local agency officials who are familiar with the recreation challenges and opportunities across the region.
- ◆ Two meetings of our tri-state Outdoor Recreation Task Force.

The Outdoor Recreation Task Force has served an important advisory function for this project and has shaped the recommendations advanced in this Prospectus. As a result, this document:

- ◆ Discusses the challenging nature of outdoor recreation provision and management in the Yellowstone-Teton region.
- ◆ Explores the resource implications of current recreational use trends across multiple jurisdictions, thus providing a basis for regional action and investment.
- ◆ Identifies opportunities for public and private investment that will: 1) sustain our region's high-quality recreational experiences; 2) respect the recreational capacity of our public land and water resources; 3) integrate/expand our information/education programs and facilities; and 4) expand and upgrade recreation infrastructure to handle increasing visitation.
- ◆ Suggests new mechanisms to financially support and monitor outdoor recreation activities and improve coordination of recreation management across jurisdictional boundaries.

We appreciate the assistance of the Outdoor Recreation Task Force, the YBP membership and cooperating agencies in making this report possible. Thank you also to the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation for funding this project and to the staff at The Nature Conservancy of Montana for serving as regional grant administrator.

Regional Recreation Demand

The Greater Yellowstone ecosystem is often defined as the 18 million acres of mostly public land that include and surround Yellowstone and Grand Teton national parks. Combined with important private lands in the 25 counties in Idaho, Montana and Wyoming that comprise the Yellowstone-Teton region, this diverse landscape is truly one of the last wild places in North America. Its recreational amenities include blue-ribbon trout streams, abundant wildlife for viewing and/or hunting, miles of recreational trails and roads, and abundant snow for winter sports enthusiasts.

As documented by the Sonoran Institute in its recent regional studies, the Greater Yellowstone area is rapidly growing in population and shifting towards a more service-oriented economy. As the population in the area grew by 62 percent from 1970-2000, land consumed for new housing has grown by 350 percent. The authors cite natural amenities, such as rivers, sweeping vistas, and protected public lands as factors attracting this growth, and note that high amenity towns are more likely to attract nearby rural development. While the economic benefits of such growth are evident across the western states, the authors note that there are negative consequences to wildlife and recreation resources:

New development bordering the national parks and adjacent public lands poses a barrier to migrating wildlife. Pronghorn antelope, moose, elk and mule deer that migrate to winter ranges on private lands are especially vulnerable. Occupied grizzly bear habitat, songbird hot-pots, and riparian areas have been disproportionately impacted by rural development. In fact, most habitats are likely to undergo substantial conversion (between 10-40%) to rural development by 2020.¹



In 2005 a number of studies and conferences focused on the changing demographics of the western states and the impacts to public land recreation. In May nearly 130 people attended a forum on the outlook for public land recreation sponsored by the Western States Tourism Policy Council. Presentations by agency officials and academic researchers underscored the following:

- ◆ Travel and tourism is the number one or two industry in most states and will soon be the leading industry worldwide. Tourism in the U.S. is a half-trillion-dollar-a-year industry that employs more than 15.5 million people directly and indirectly.²
- ◆ The West leads the nation in outdoor recreation participation with over 80% of those in Idaho, Wyoming, Montana and Utah reporting that they regularly participate in at least one outdoor recreation activity.³
- ◆ The top seven recreational activities (out of 26) cited by those visiting Western national forests are: viewing scenery, relaxing, hiking/walking, viewing wildlife, driving for pleasure, downhill skiing, and fishing. The same top five are reported in the six national forests in the Greater Yellowstone area, with “viewing wildlife” ranked #2.⁴
- ◆ Many national parks are icons that are on “must see” lists for domestic and international travelers. Today the National Park Service is challenged to protect park resources in the face of unprecedented visitor demands, particularly in the high use portions of the most heavily visited parks.⁵
- ◆ The U.S. Forest Service views unauthorized recreation use and loss of open space as two of the biggest threats to their mission. Because more funding is not forecast in the near or mid-term future, USFS will need to rely more on volunteers and commercial partners to provide recreation services and integrate infrastructure with surrounding communities.⁶
- ◆ Recreation is the fastest growing economy within the Bureau of Land Management, with an annual 2-3% growth and an increase of 65% since 1986. The agency challenge will be identifying where new sports and opportunities can be accommodated without creating conflicts.⁷

Recreation use trends in the Greater Yellowstone Area (GYA) have been examined recently by specialists from Yellowstone and Grand Teton national parks, six national forests and two national wildlife refuges (Greater Yellowstone Coordinating Committee)⁸. Their review of recreation trends in the spring, summer and fall months revealed that:

- ◆ The national forests in the GYA, which receive visitation primarily from local areas, are likely to see significant increases in recreation use as adjacent communities expand their populations. Semi-primitive front country near these rapidly growing communities is already showing the result of cumulative pressure from both residents and visitors. These are the places that will require focused attention in the near future to prevent unacceptable resource damage and visitor conflict.
- ◆ Management standards need to be in place to gauge when recreation resource conditions (both biophysical and social) are at risk. Such standards create a baseline upon which to base corrective actions to remedy a deteriorating situation. This baseline also indicates what recreation uses and practices may be sustainable over the long term.

- ◆ Recreation managers expect to confront three major challenges in the future: 1) the need to proactively address issues associated with new types of recreation due to changing technology; 2) the need to manage social conflict, particularly between the growing interest in “quiet,” accessible recreation and the growing interest in adrenaline/challenge recreation; and 3) the need to secure alternative sources of funding for recreation infrastructure needs, planning, use management and monitoring.

In view of these challenges, federal land managers may benefit by collaborating with the business and nonprofit sectors to retain those public land values that help make communities vital. In the process, managers may learn of new opportunities to cooperate with non-traditional allies in ways that can be mutually beneficial.



The Business Response

Members of the Yellowstone Business Partnership are prepared to respond to the changing demographics of Greater Yellowstone and the increasing interest in resource-based recreation. While this situation presents some promising economic opportunities for the private sector, we are concerned that higher recreation demand poses a genuine threat to our most sensitive natural resources—those that make our recreational experiences so special. This becomes especially serious as fewer government resources are being dedicated to outdoor recreation in the region.

A coordinated response is needed to improve communication across the Yellowstone-Teton region and to remove unnecessary obstacles to interstate recreation for visitors and residents alike. Businesses must form more cooperative relationships with the public and nonprofit sectors to resolve conflicting recreation interests and pursue more equitable, performance-based permitting policies. Our reasons for supporting a more regional approach to recreation management are:

- ◆ We need information on resource capacity and recreation use trends that is current and comparable across all three states and multiple federal jurisdictions.
- ◆ We recognize that certain policy and infrastructure issues may be more effectively addressed at the regional level, e.g. coordinating visitor education/outreach, linking trail and transportation systems, and updating permitting and licensing policies.
- ◆ We need a regional perspective if we are to consider social and economic equity when responding to new recreation opportunities and the latent demand for commercial services.

We believe the business community has a responsibility to address the expanding demand for recreation services in the Yellowstone-Teton region and to recognize the importance of preserving high-quality outdoor experiences for our own and future generations. Our actions must be regional in scope, inclusive in approach, and based on the best information available. This *Outdoor Recreation Prospectus* describes how the region should address our collective funding and stewardship challenges in four different areas:

RESPECTING RESOURCE CAPACITY

CELEBRATING OUR WILDLIFE

ENHANCING REGIONAL MOBILITY

SECURING SUSTAINABLE SUPPORT

This report outlines the goals, desired returns on investment, and implementation strategies for 10 collaborative projects for the Yellowstone-Teton region. It also describes how private investment in resource recreation over the next 10 years could make a significant difference in the region's quality of life for the long term.

Respecting Resource Capacity



Responsible business leaders across the Yellowstone-Teton region recognize that our high quality of outdoor recreation is a direct result of having a healthy and functioning ecosystem. These business owners—many of whom are YBP members—know it is essential that our rivers, forests, rangelands and wildlife populations be protected to ensure that quality recreational opportunities are available to their customers and employees. In addition, they understand that many sensitive habitats in our national parks and forests have user thresholds that must be respected and are willing to abide by reasonable regulations that limit user numbers or shift use to areas of greater resilience.

Given this understanding, most special use permit holders are prepared to work constructively with resource agencies to provide for the long-term viability of their commercial recreation operations. Permittees who belong to YBP have expressed their willingness to go beyond minimum requirements to help agencies fulfill their resource or visitor monitoring requirements. They also seek service opportunities where they can demonstrate their stewardship ethic or assist with interpreting the region's natural legacy, and introduce others to the value of practicing stewardship. Most just want a level playing field where large and small commercial and nonprofit operators are treated equitably in policy and permitting processes, and they are viewed as partners in meeting the growing demand for public recreation services.

In support of its members who are permittees, the Yellowstone Business Partnership wants to ensure that resource capacity data are consistently collected, integrated and analyzed across all resource jurisdictions and that current user trends are understood

and publicized. We will encourage federal, state and local agencies to work creatively with the private sector to fairly reconcile recreation management and capacity issues that could affect the long term viability of the region's recreation industry. We will work with willing agency managers and elected officials to facilitate agreements that would allow special use permit holders to earn additional user days through outstanding service and performance on the ground.

RECREATION STEWARDSHIP AGREEMENTS

Project Goal: In cooperation with resource agencies, create and demonstrate a recreation stewardship agreement that would mutually benefit the natural resource, recreation manager, and special use permittee.

Desired Return: Permitted recreation providers will help government agencies achieve and maintain the appropriate level of recreation use, especially in areas where activity thresholds have been reached or exceeded.

Implementation Strategies:

1. Work with the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (comprising the GYCC) and the Bureau of Land Management to design a stewardship agreement that could be used by recreation businesses that currently operate under special use permit.
2. Find examples of how such performance-based permitting works elsewhere and where such agreements are being applied successfully.
3. Recruit YBP member businesses interested in piloting this program with willing park or forest districts.
4. Negotiate a suite of desirable performance-based incentives that would benefit the permittees and result in measurable improvement of natural resource conditions, especially in areas of high recreation use.

Grazing permittees who employ best management practices on public lands and improve range health are often rewarded with higher animal stocking rates. In a similar manner, recreation permit holders who want to reduce costs or increase their allotment of recreation user days would have an incentive to negotiate an innovative recreation stewardship agreement with the administering agency. Required measures could include employing strict no-trace camping requirements or adjusting locations seasonally to alternate sites or drainages to reduce overall human impact.

Permittees also could agree to engage in resource monitoring tasks in cooperation with the agency or perform certain educational or training services for agency employees. Compliance with the agreement could be rewarded with benefits such as less frequent renewal requirements; a reduction in permit cost or payment percentages; or preferential consideration if recreation user days were reallocated. A recreation stewardship agreement could be one means for a high-performing permit holder to strengthen or expand their business while demonstrating respect for the long-term health of the recreation resource.

Project Goal: Ensure that the region's recreation trends and the health of its recreation resources are regularly measured, analyzed and understood by a regional consortium of resource agencies and recreation providers and that implications are presented annually to their constituencies.

Desired Return: Private and public entities will have the information they need to protect recreation resources in the Greater Yellowstone ecosystem and to make wise, cost-effective decisions on business investment and recreation management to meet public needs.

Implementation Strategies:

1. Team with the GYCC Recreation Subcommittee in exploring further the challenge of measuring/evaluating resource capacity and integrating trend data across multiple jurisdictions.
2. Invite a variety of recreation interests to join the public-private monitoring consortium.
3. Select sensitive areas in at least three locations to demonstrate new approaches to measuring resource health and monitoring recreation thresholds with the cooperation of multiple partners.

It is in the interest of the private sector to ensure that conditions on all public lands are well monitored so that recreation management decisions will be made with the most current information in hand. A recent look at recreation trends in the GYA was an important first step in assimilating condition and trend data across our three states—but it did not include public lands and waterways administered by the Bureau of Land Management, the Bureau of Reclamation, the states of Idaho, Montana and Wyoming, or any local government. There is already a GYCC-charted assessment of winter use, and it too does not include any land base beyond the GYCC federal land management units. Thus we have concluded that:

- ◆ There is a need for clear management standards and condition monitoring to determine what level of change may be tolerated by a given resource, and when the threshold has been reached. We are concerned with the lack of specific protection standards in current and proposed federal land management plans that would help managers know when recreation resource conditions are at risk.
- ◆ Without adequate inventory and monitoring of recreation settings, facilities and trends, managers tend to react to specific issues as they arise. This can result in solutions that fail to consider the broader context or unintended consequences.

To remedy these limitations, the Yellowstone Business Partnership proposes to facilitate the creation of a Recreation Monitoring Consortium for the Greater Yellowstone region. Together federal, state and local governments, universities, and nonprofit interests will ensure that public recreation trends and resources in the Yellowstone-Teton region are regularly monitored, results analyzed, and findings and implications made available to all constituencies on a timely basis. The regular and widespread publication of trend data related to recreation numbers and resource condition will serve to generate public awareness, assist businesses with their operational and investment planning, and equip agencies to perform their recreation management responsibilities.

Project Goal: Support YBP business members as they engage in agency-sponsored decision processes and build the organizational capacity to facilitate collaborations among diverse recreation interests.

Desired Return: Responsible business leaders throughout the region will be more active and effective in public participation processes and in collaborations designed to resolve recreation issues.

Implementation Strategies:

1. Assess the current level of engagement of its members in regional processes that address resource recreation issues and user conflicts.
2. Evaluate barriers to their involvement and explore strategies for supplying information, training and financial resources.
3. Recommend to resource agencies that they employ participatory processes that move towards greater public involvement, collaboration and empowerment in decision making.
4. Give special attention to the recreation needs of disadvantaged populations, evaluating what economic, cultural and physical barriers exist to their full enjoyment of the region.
5. Offer to facilitate collaborative processes that would help resolve issues between competing recreation sectors.
6. Encourage demonstration projects on private lands that would illustrate the viability of shifting some services off the public resource as a means of resolving conflict.

The National Park Service is currently re-evaluating winter use in Yellowstone and Grand Teton national parks with the decision to take effect December 2007. This agency decision will have significant implications to the entire region and especially the recreation and tourism sectors. Other examples of government-sponsored projects with potential regional consequences include forest travel plans that affect recreation users across state lines; road construction projects that disrupt the regional flow of tourist traffic; and energy developments that can impact the region's air quality, water availability, recreation use patterns or migrating wildlife.

Such projects would benefit from the perspectives of innovative regional business leaders at the earliest planning stage. To achieve this agencies need to consider extending their public involvement efforts well beyond the forest, county or state boundary. It is the responsibility of the Yellowstone Business Partnership to encourage and equip its members to engage in these regional decision making processes that may affect their business interests or the well being of their employees. Under this program, YBP will increase its capacity to support business participation in recreation-related issues of regional significance.

Facilitating discussion of regional recreation policy or resolving a conflict between competing recreation interests is another service being contemplated by the Partnership. We believe that application of the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum as developed by the International Association for Public Participation (www.iap2.org) would be especially helpful in this circumstance, particularly if there are several different authorities involved in a multi-jurisdictional recreation conflict or decision. Among the tools YBP proposes to demonstrate is shifting to private, local or state lands certain recreation activities that are impacting sensitive resources on our federal jurisdictions.



Celebrating Our Wildlife

The Greater Yellowstone ecosystem is world-renowned for its diversity and abundance of wildlife. From the microscopic organisms living in near-boiling thermal features to bull bison exceeding 2,000 pounds, the variety of wild animal species coexisting in their native habitats is unsurpassed on this continent.

Visitors to Yellowstone and Grand Teton national parks name wildlife viewing among their top recreational pursuits, as do visitors to the rest of Idaho, Montana and Wyoming. Studies such as those compiled by the Montana Challenge⁹ have verified that fishing, hunting, photography and bird watching are among the most popular regional activities and all are dependent on healthy wildlife populations, seasonal habitats and migration corridors.

In addition to their management responsibility, the national parks, forests and wildlife refuges in this region are striving to keep the public informed about their wildlife resources. Most units have interpretive or educational specialists dedicated to this task, in addition to nonprofit associations that manage book sales, operate educational programs and promote wildlife literacy among their visitors. Beyond the federal boundaries there are numerous museums, state refuges, private schools and community-based interpretive centers, many of which interpret natural history and wildlife habitats important to understanding the region's wildlife complexities. There also are many individual naturalists and educational businesses that specialize in guiding wildlife enthusiasts across the Greater Yellowstone ecosystem.

Despite the many facilities and programs available in the region, visitors and new residents in the region often lack the information and attitudes they need to safely view and live compatibly with local wildlife populations. Dangerous human encounters with moose, bison and grizzly bears are steadily increasing as the region's population expands, despite the best efforts of volunteers and federal agencies. Outside the parks and forests, seasonal and residential development is continuing at a rapid pace with many projects impacting critical wildlife habitats and migration corridors. Animals that move seasonally are encountering new obstacles in their path such as subdivisions, road expansion and energy development.

Members of the Yellowstone Business Partnership want to see our visitors and residents be better informed and more responsible when enjoying the fisheries and wildlife resources of this region. We believe that wildlife impacts can be reduced through enhanced interpretive opportunities and repeated, reinforced messages. We propose two projects in which businesses, resource agencies and nonprofit partners can invest that will better coordinate interpretive and educational offerings in the region and emphasize key safety messages on all sides of the national parks.

Project Goal: Develop one unifying guidebook to the region's wildlife that increases visitor and resident awareness of important habitats in all three states and reinforces the appropriate ways to safely view and appreciate the region's complement of wildlife.

Desired Return: Increased awareness of wildlife needs among residents will lead to greater public acceptance of species recovery and habitat protection measures in all three states. Human-wildlife encounters and the resulting injuries will be reduced both inside and outside the national parks.

Implementation Strategies:

1. Recruit businesses, institutions and agencies interested in creating a regional guidebook that will highlight common wildlife themes, and consolidate ecosystem information in one convenient binder.
2. Secure adequate funding from interested businesses, agencies and corporate sponsors.
3. Coordinate with resource agencies and user groups to ensure the guidebook reinforces safety messages delivered by the respective entities (especially at park entrances and forest campgrounds).
4. Advance community outreach efforts to get binders distributed to visitors and new residents across the region.



The Regional Wildlife Guidebook will be a three-ring binder given to any interested individual or family upon arrival at the first participating business or institution. This educational resource will be designed for the visitor as well as the new homeowner who is unfamiliar with special wildlife habitats and refuges on all sides of the national parks. Regardless of their length of stay, visitors and residents will be able to use the Guidebook to plan and help interpret their wildlife viewing activities all across the ecosystem.

Each watershed and national park in the region will have its own tabbed divider in the notebook with space outlined for a passport stamp from each participating business, museum or visitor center. Behind each divider will be sheets giving important directions and contact information for each visitor center and wildlife attraction in that watershed. A map pocket in the back of the binder will hold a regional and/or watershed map highlighting each participating facility, service or scenic byway. The Guidebook also will include safety information for wildlife viewing, emergency phone numbers for resource agencies, and important information on fish and game regulations for each state.

Special interpretive materials to fit into the binders will be sponsored and distributed by interested businesses, parks, museums and refuges that want to highlight certain species or habitats specific to their area. For example, the Grizzly and Wolf Discovery Center could prepare and distribute the most current information on these two recovering species, while the Draper Museum of Natural History in Cody may want to introduce the different wildlife habitats of the ecosystem. These pre-punched materials could be centrally produced on behalf of each participant, but they would have exclusive rights of distribution to those visiting their area, using their services or entering their facility.



Project Goal: The Partnership will serve as a funding and information clearinghouse for interpretive materials, qualified service providers, and entities planning new interpretive waysides or information facilities in the region.

Desired Return: More private resources will be invested in interpreting critical wildlife messages inside and outside the national parks and these messages will be better coordinated across the three states.

Implementation Strategies:

1. Foster relationships with federal information officers, state parks and transportation agencies, chambers of commerce, tourism promotion committees and all others interested in interpreting the fish and wildlife heritage of the Yellowstone-Teton region.
2. Establish a clearinghouse function at YBP to help connect potential corporate and private funders with regional interpretive projects and programs in need of financial support.
3. Work with others interested in certifying/licensing interpretive providers in this region to ensure a reliable, accurate and quality experience.

The Yellowstone Business Partnership supports greater private and public investment in modern interpretive waysides, visitor centers, rest areas, and facilities for the disabled—especially where important fish and wildlife messages can be imparted to the traveling public. As agency budgets for such capital investments diminish, the private sector should be willing to help sponsor materials, informational signage and interpretive facilities in exchange for reasonable recognition and public visibility. This will be especially important at airports, highway rest stops, and in gateway communities where up-to-date information is critical for traveler decision making.

The YBP clearinghouse function will allow one organization to monitor what interpretive programs and facilities are operating or proposed across the entire region and to coordinate what fish and wildlife messages are envisioned for each location. This service will be especially helpful to those entities seeking private matching funds for a capital improvement and those businesses seeking to target potential interpretive markets in all three states.

As interpretive opportunities grow, it will be essential that fair marketing practices be honored between the government and private sectors. Currently the National Park Service restricts in-park marketing of education and interpretive services to those offered by its own concessions and nonprofit institutes. A conflict could arise if these entities try to expand their educational offerings outside of park boundaries, because they would enjoy an exclusive marketing environment inside the park. This situation speaks to the need for licensing and/or performance-based permitting, where certified private operators may be allowed to fairly compete with park concessions and associations across the region.

Enhancing Regional Mobility

The Greater Yellowstone ecosystem is characterized by rugged mountain terrain, vast high-elevation plateaus and narrow canyon environments. The mobility challenges posed by this topography are significant, especially combined with severe weather conditions that can impede year-round vehicular travel. Still, the area is highly dependent on roads that carry private automobiles since passenger trains no longer serve the region and interstate bus service is limited to charters and private tours. If not on an organized tour, a visitor arriving at any of the region's airports must rent a car as their only viable option for navigating the region.

The Idaho, Montana and Wyoming departments of transportation are responsible for most highway construction and maintenance in the region, except for roads under National Park Service authority and those within national forest, county or city jurisdictions. Most federal highway money available to local communities for upgrading traveler infrastructure and building trails and pathways must be passed through the states using cost-share formulas that may vary from state to state. Given these funding realities, any regional effort to enhance mobility and the recreational travel experience must rely on state support, business participation, and tri-state coordination.

Members of the Yellowstone Business Partnership realize there are many social, economic and environmental reasons to enhance mobility and improve the overall travel experience in Greater Yellowstone. Businesses will have much to gain if workers may commute more reliably and safely; if visitors with a variety of travel options decide to extend their stay; and if residents can benefit from a regional system of alternative fuel providers and a network of recreational trails. To accomplish these goals, YBP will support a regional system of public transportation services and an interstate trail system that links established trails and pathways across the region.

YELLOWSTONE-TETON TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

Project Goal: Organize the business community in each state in support of a regional, market-driven system of clean transportation services, to include transit, pathways and information systems, and help design that system in cooperation with government agencies and other nonprofit organizations.

Desired Return: A system of regional public transportation services will link both national parks with regional airports and major communities in all three states.

Implementation Strategies:

1. Serve on the board of the Greater Yellowstone-Teton Clean Cities Coalition to help develop alternative fuel infrastructure across the region.
2. Build support within the business community for public transportation alternatives (such as the new Yellow Bus) and recruit innovative business leaders to help create a tri-state system of transportation services.
3. Engage in the winter transportation dialogue with Yellowstone and Grand Teton national parks and assist individual communities that want to link their local transit systems with the larger regional system.
4. Explore how regional air service might be improved to directly connect our mid-size communities.

A recent forum, Transit in the Tetons, identified five major problems with transportation between Teton County, Wyoming, and Teton County, Idaho¹⁰. The following problem statements reflect the challenges faced by all 25 counties in the Yellowstone-Teton region as they experience rapid growth and housing inflation that is causing workers to live greater distances from their work.



- ◆ Disconnected Links—Economic development and the regional quality of life are diminished by a disconnected system of transportation investments and potential development opportunities.
- ◆ Displacement Commutes—Workers unable to live near where they work must commute longer distances, increasing expense, risk, and congestion.
- ◆ Workforce Instability—Attraction and retention of qualified employees is made more difficult due to transportation stress and expense.
- ◆ Access and Mobility Inequities—A healthy community and economic structure requires a basic level of social diversity and access. If the only ones who are able to work and play in a park, a community, or a region are those who can afford it, the larger community will not be sustainable except as an anomaly.
- ◆ Rapid Growth—The region's growth is causing stress on physical infrastructures and planning systems. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that the impacts and solutions are frequently regional while the political structures responsible for managing the growth are generally local.

A vision for regional mobility was articulated by over 50 attendees at the transit forum, reflecting a cross-section of business, government and nonprofit attitudes in the region:

- ◆ Our region will be internationally recognized as a place where recreation, natural beauty, quality of life, and transportation are all part of one integrated experience.
- ◆ Any visitor or resident will be able to ride, hike, bike or boat throughout the entire Yellowstone-Teton region without having to utilize a private or rental vehicle.
- ◆ All people in the region will have equitable access to transportation for jobs, social services and recreation.
- ◆ The transportation system of services will minimize energy use, maximize use of clean and renewable fuels and have minimal impact on the environment.
- ◆ The transportation system will allow each community to have neighborhoods where people will not need to rely on a private vehicle.
- ◆ The transportation system will function seamlessly across political and jurisdictional boundaries and be coordinated by a recognizable regional entity.

The Yellowstone Business Partnership will encourage investment in this transportation vision knowing that its business members will benefit from increased regional mobility and maintenance of Class I air quality. Since travel is part of a high-quality recreational experience in this region, it is in the interest of business to foster a new attitude toward public transportation, alternative fuels, and diversified seasonal travel options.

JOHN COLTER TRAIL NETWORK

Project Goal: Promote and link existing and proposed non-motorized trails across the region while encouraging separate trails for motorized recreation where safe and feasible.

Desired Return: A regional network of non-motorized recreational trails will both access and circumnavigate Yellowstone and Grand Teton national parks, offering the region a system of trails that will enhance community well-being, quality of life and economic development potential.

Implementation Strategies:

1. Cultivate relationships with recreational trail organizations in the region including state recreation agencies that build/support biking, walking and equestrian trails.
2. Facilitate development of a regional trails guide to highlight both motorized and non-motorized trail systems.
3. Create a team to explore how existing trail systems could be linked to form small and large loop systems across the region, resulting in a John Colter Trail Network that would eventually access and circumnavigate both national parks.
4. Discuss how scenic byways in the region could benefit from linking to the John Colter Trail Network to promote both motorized and non-motorized systems.
5. Sponsor economic development forums in each state to investigate how communities could cooperate in developing new services for trail users and market their natural and cultural attractions to all recreation travelers.

The Partnership believes that increasing recreational pressure on the “front-country” of our public lands could be reduced by connecting and expanding recreational trail infrastructure across the scenic, peripheral areas of the Greater Yellowstone area. We propose that a team of trail advocates explore how existing local and forest trail systems could be linked to form small and large loop systems across the region, eventually resulting in a John Colter Trail Network that would access and circumnavigate both national parks. Such a regional trail network would be an ideal focus for economic development, particularly for gateway communities near Colter’s route.

There may be no better way of honoring the 200th anniversary of John Colter’s exploration of Greater Yellowstone (1806-1810) than declaring and naming a regional trail network in his honor. As regional leaders seek to transcend the stereotypes and communication barriers caused by our artificial state borders, a John



Colter Trail Network would remind us that no such boundaries existed during the mountain-man era. During the years he traversed the region, Colter crossed mountain ranges in the harshest of winters and faced dangers few modern pathfinders would welcome. From Teton Valley to the Wind Rivers, from the Clark's Fork to Yellowstone Lake, the travels of John Colter and his contemporaries would present an educational and recreational smorgasbord that, for travel and tourism promoters, could become a fitting transition from the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial.



The following agencies and organizations are engaged in recreational trail development, management and/or maintenance in the region, and their systems would be the initial focus of YBP's promotional and "linkage" efforts:

- ◆ Backcountry Horsemen (state and regional chapters)
- ◆ Beartooth Recreation Trails Association – (Red Lodge, MT)
- ◆ Billings Department of Parks, Recreation and Public Lands (Montana)
- ◆ Continental Divide Trail Alliance
- ◆ Departments of Parks and Recreation in each state
- ◆ Gallatin Valley Land Trust (Bozeman, MT)
- ◆ Henry's Fork Greenway Committee (St. Anthony, ID)
- ◆ Idaho Falls Department of Parks and Recreation (Idaho)
- ◆ Island Park Gem Community Team – Trails Project (Island Park, ID)
- ◆ Jackson Hole Community Pathways (Jackson, WY)
- ◆ Teton Valley Trails and Pathways (Driggs, ID)
- ◆ Trail coordinators on each national forest and BLM district
- ◆ Yellowstone Heritage Trail Association (Gardiner, MT)

An introductory guide to existing trail systems in Greater Yellowstone would be a first step in conceptualizing the John Colter Trail Network. The latest information on each community's trail system would be featured in the guide, and each of the cooperating organizations could describe their goals in this free publication. A "master map" noting the location of both motorized and non-motorized trails outside the national parks also could be included, with information on how to get specific trail maps online or upon arrival in each community.

Securing Sustainable Support

The latest demographic and recreational use data for the Greater Yellowstone area document the rapid pace of growth in this attractive mountain region. Unfortunately, revenues for our federal and state resource management agencies are not keeping pace with the increasing demands on recreational lands and infrastructure. Many in the private sector are already making sound investments in recreation and tourism enterprises, supporting agency operating budgets, and contributing to worthy cultural and conservation causes in the region. However, new sources of revenue and innovative partnerships are needed to respond to greater demands on recreation infrastructure and to preserve the natural resources that support our high quality recreation.

The Yellowstone Business Partnership envisions two sources of new revenue—a regional fishing license that increases angler income to each state, and a recreation trust fund to help finance public recreation infrastructure at local, state and federal levels. In addition, the Partnership will build its capacity to positively influence agency operating budgets and suggest ways to maximize efficiency in agency administration and public/private ventures.



REGIONAL FISHING LICENSE

Project Goal: Facilitate creation of an electronic system that allows anglers to purchase a multi-state fishing license at one location and support river conservation and recreational access facilities.

Desired Return: State fisheries agencies will increase their operating and conservation revenues as more residents and nonresidents purchase short-term and seasonal fishing licenses that cover Idaho, Montana, Wyoming and/or Yellowstone National Park.

Implementation Strategies:

1. Secure final support of the project from the three state fish and wildlife agencies and from Yellowstone National Park.
2. Coordinate research and planning among these agencies to identify and implement the technology most appropriate for the license.
3. Encourage YBP businesses that cater to anglers to advocate for the license and to serve as demonstration sites.
4. Use contributions from the license sales to support river conservation and angler access.
5. Establish monitoring protocols to measure program success and angler satisfaction.

Several recent studies have documented the economic value of rivers and fisheries in the region. Close to \$48 million was invested by anglers in Fremont County, Idaho, as a result of 164,571 fishing trips to the Henry's Fork watershed just west of Yellowstone Park.¹¹ The resident trout fishery generated \$291 per trip in this #1 angling county, exceeding expenditures in any of the Central Idaho counties where salmon and steelhead fisheries are major economic contributors.

The Snake River corridor from Southwestern Wyoming to Southeastern Idaho also draws several thousand visitors each year to enjoy its angling and boating opportunities. A 2005 study documented a total of 460,418 anglers using the Snake River and its tributaries from May through September 2004.¹² The total economic contribution of fishing that summer on the Snake River (including the Henry's Fork) was estimated to be \$86 million with anglers willing to pay another \$85 per trip to fish these waters rather than not fish them or fish at other rivers.

The concept of having a single fishing license to cover these and other river destinations in the Greater Yellowstone has long been advocated by anglers desiring greater convenience and flexibility in their fishing pursuits. Agencies have speculated that multi-state license could increase their revenues and compliance with Idaho, Montana and Wyoming licensing laws and fishing regulations. The Partnership believes that technology exists to electronically "assemble" such a license to meet individual needs and have payments transferred to multiple licensing agencies in real time.

Requirements of the licensing system would include:

- ◆ The system must be capable of building a multi-jurisdictional license for one's home state, add out-of-state licenses for one or more neighboring states, and include a Yellowstone fishing permit, if desired. While seasonal and multi-week licenses would be best suited to this concept, it would not replace each state's current system for issuing short-term licenses.
- ◆ Licenses should be easy for willing vendors to issue and for enforcement officers to read electronically.
- ◆ Online and telephone purchase options would be desirable.
- ◆ The regional fishing license would be a creative means to contribute to a recreation trust fund, help purchase or improve angler access sites, or help with habitat restoration.

Potential partners for this endeavor would include the following:

- ◆ *Fisheries Agencies in Idaho, Montana and Wyoming*—Department officials consulted in each state have shown initial interest in a regional program, particularly if increased funding would result.
- ◆ *Yellowstone National Park*—Conversations with Superintendent Suzanne Lewis have indicated her preliminary support for the concept.
- ◆ *Private Companies*—Fly shop personnel in gateway communities have expressed interest in the concept and known vendors are marketing new Web-based systems to achieve this purpose.
- ◆ *Outfitter and Guide Associations* in each state.
- ◆ *Angling and Conservation Organizations*—national, state and local.

GREATER YELLOWSTONE RECREATION TRUST

Project Goal: Establish a trust fund to finance public recreation infrastructure and explore a variety of private and public funding mechanisms to achieve this purpose.

Desired Return: The recreation trust fund will provide reliable private dollars to help build and improve public recreation facilities on federal and state lands and in participating local jurisdictions.

Implementation Strategies:

1. Recruit trustees to form the Greater Yellowstone Recreation Trust in anticipation of receiving revenues from multiple private and public sources.
2. Research programs in other states that use a real estate transfer tax or special user fees to fund such recreation trails and facilities.
3. Cultivate support for new recreation fees or taxing authority among local business leaders and elected officials who recognize the economic importance of recreation to the region.

Federal and state agency officials interviewed for this project named funding as one of the greatest obstacles to achieving their respective missions. Several cited the need to replace or supplement the Land and Water Conservation Fund that currently helps agencies finance new recreation infrastructure and upgrade facilities. Local governments also have interest in securing a more reliable funding source for their recreation projects, so it would be necessary to equitably allocate trust fund revenues among qualifying local, state and federal projects.

The Yellowstone Business Partnership will assume a leadership role in establishing the Greater Yellowstone Recreation Trust with the active involvement of those supportive of the concept. A multi-year effort is envisioned to explore all possible funding mechanisms to build the recreation trust fund and fairly allocate its annual income. As the trust grows in size and stature, its supporters will be more effective in advancing any revenue-generating measure or enabling legislation required in all three states.





BUDGET ADVOCACY AND INNOVATION

Project Goal: Develop the capacity for YBP businesses to effectively monitor and influence state and federal resource agency budgets, ensuring that essential operations and capital investments are sufficiently funded in the Yellowstone-Teton region.

Desired Return: Operating budgets for agency services, maintenance, interpretation, scientific monitoring and enforcement will be funded at levels sufficient to implement approved land, wildlife, or unit management plans.

Implementation Strategies:

1. Determine the most effective staffing scenario to simultaneously influence budget legislation in each statehouse and later each year in Washington, D.C.
2. Begin monitoring agency budget performance to determine which agencies appear most responsible in their spending and accomplishments.
3. Emphasize full budget allocations for enforcement and monitoring, areas which are chronically under-funded and yet are essential for managing recreation on public lands.
4. Explore how interagency administration and more cost-effective support of recreation services might be accomplished through a cross-boundary, "Recreation Overlay Zone."
5. Suggest new approaches to private-public partnerships and cooperative agreements that maintain the integrity and good will of all involved parties.

The federal Recreation Enhancements Bill allows individual national forests to retain special use permit fees (including ski area permits), which could make a big difference to certain local forest units. The new recreation fee program also will allow federal agencies to keep money generated at their own facilities, but since so few facilities on national forests are covered in this region, these revenues will be insufficient to meet their growing recreation demands. Businesses associated with recreation in all three states need to be aware how recreation budgets are developed each year so they may better influence where and how government dollars are allocated. Those businesses reliant on government oversight of permits and NEPA processes are especially vulnerable to government cutbacks in administration and management.

In addition to supporting agency revenue budgets, YBP and its partners will monitor agency expenditures and overall performance. We believe that opportunities to enhance government efficiency and innovation will come only with greater cross-boundary cooperation among state and federal entities, and we hope agency officials will welcome approaches that retain their authority while benefiting them financially. This may include new approaches to public-private partnerships or exploring how cooperative agreements with sister agencies in an overlay zone might benefit the management of shared recreation facilities or resources.

Summary and Conclusions

Current growth in residential development and public land visitation is forecast to continue across the Yellowstone-Teton region. A major commitment is needed to preserve quality outdoor recreation opportunities as sensitive resources reach and exceed healthy thresholds of use. Federal land managers have assessed their collective resources and trends, and have concluded that change must be made across all jurisdictions and in cooperation with community and business leaders. They have concluded that:

We cannot expect to create a sustainable future for recreation management without a clearly defined vision. We must spend more time considering, along with our partners and stakeholders, what we want to see in this region in 15-20 years. We need to develop collective answers to questions such as 1) what do we mean by sustainable recreation; 2) how do we know when we have attained our desired condition; and 3) how can we use sustainability indicators to make future decisions?²¹³

This Prospectus has outlined a vision for investment in outdoor recreation that should result in a more positive future for the Greater Yellowstone ecosystem. Acknowledging the increasing pressure on public land resources, YBP members have proposed an approach to providing recreation services that will be sustainable and still allow our businesses and communities to grow and prosper. The Yellowstone Business Partnership is committed to achieving this collaborative vision and these desired returns on our collective investment:

Recreation Stewardship Agreements—Permitted recreation providers will help government agencies achieve and maintain the appropriate level of recreation use, especially in areas where activity thresholds have been reached or exceeded.

Recreation Monitoring Consortium—Private and public entities will have the information they need to protect recreation resources in the Greater Yellowstone ecosystem and to make wise, cost-effective decisions on business investment and recreation management.

Collaboration in Recreation Decision Making—Responsible business leaders throughout the region will be more active and effective in public participation processes and in collaborations designed to resolve recreation issues.

Regional Wildlife Guidebook—Increased awareness of wildlife needs among residents will lead to greater public acceptance of species recovery and habitat protection measures in all three states. Human-wildlife encounters and the resulting injuries will be reduced both inside and outside the national parks.

Interpretive Services Clearinghouse—More private resources will be invested in interpreting critical wildlife messages inside and outside the national parks and these messages will be better coordinated across the three states.

Greater Yellowstone Transportation Services—A system of regional public transportation services will link both national parks with regional airports and major communities in all three states.

John Colter Trail Network—A regional network of non-motorized recreational trails will both access and circumnavigate Yellowstone and Grand Teton national parks, offering the region a system of trails that will enhance community well-being, quality of life and economic development potential.

Regional Fishing License—State fisheries agencies will increase their operating and conservation revenues as more residents and nonresidents purchase short-term and seasonal fishing licenses that cover Idaho, Montana, Wyoming and/or Yellowstone National Park.

Greater Yellowstone Recreation Trust—The recreation trust fund will provide reliable private dollars to help build and improve public recreation facilities on federal and state lands and in participating local jurisdictions.

Budget Advocacy and Innovation—Operating budgets for agency services, maintenance, interpretation, scientific monitoring and enforcement will be funded at levels sufficient to implement approved land, wildlife, or unit management plans.

Advancing these projects will require ongoing dialogue and unprecedented cooperation on a regional scale. The private sector must respond to this “call to action” if we are to preserve our outstanding recreation opportunities for the benefit of our businesses, communities and future generations. Innovation and imagination are our responsibilities in achieving this vision, as is meeting the current and latent demand for commercial recreation services in the Yellowstone-Teton region.

We in the business community must demonstrate courage, integrity, talent, flexibility and prudence in leading our region towards a more sustainable and prosperous future. We invite you to join the Yellowstone Business Partnership in investing in our invaluable outdoor recreation heritage.

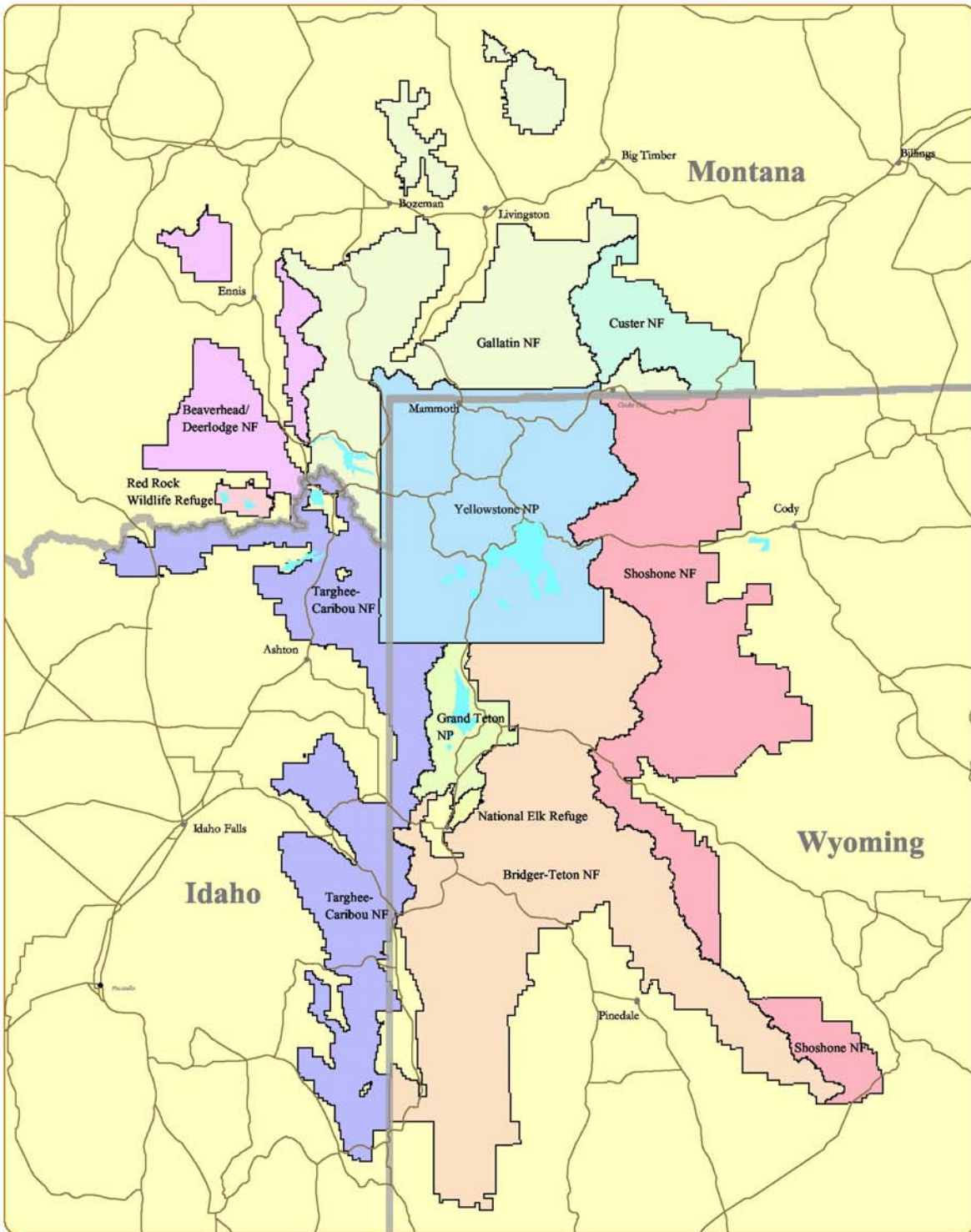
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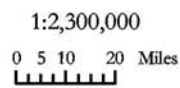
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The Greater Yellowstone Area: Major Federal Administrative Units



Legend	
	Major Lakes
	Major Towns
	Major Roads
	State Boundaries
	NF National Forest
	NP National Park



This map was made from spatial data provided by the Greater Yellowstone Coordinating Committee and the Gallatin National Forest. Map by H. Shovic, Oct. 26, 2004. Version 2.0 gyagycadministrativeUnitsvs2_85x11.mxd

