



# Little Sand Creek Watershed Recreation Plan

2023 | Sandpoint, Idaho

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The City of Sandpoint acknowledges that the Little Sand Creek Watershed is within the traditional homelands of several indigenous tribes including the Kalispel, Kootenai, Coeur d' Alene, and Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT). We offer our respect for their history and culture, and for their wisdom in caring for this place for the generations to come.

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Thank you to key stakeholders who contributed time, information, and support:

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Idaho Department of Lands  
Bureau of Land Management  
Schweitzer  
Selkirk Recreation District  
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Kinnikinnick Native Plant Society: Mark Stockwell  
Selkirk Cooperative Weed Management Area Committee  
Pend Oreille Bay Trail: Jan Griffiths  
Idaho Conservation League: Brad Smith  
Education Advisory Committee: Dr. Liz Wargo, Katie Cox, Regan Plumb, along with Lake Pend Oreille School District and the University of Idaho.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Little Sand Creek Watershed (Watershed) consists of 7,413 acres, with 3,921 acres under the ownership of the City of Sandpoint. The primary uses of the Watershed include municipal water source, commercial timber, and recreation.

While historically there hasn't been very much developed recreation in the Watershed outside the boundaries of Schweitzer, there is an existing trail system that began with user-created trails that have become formalized over time. In 2015, the City entered into an agreement with the Pend Oreille Peddlers (POP) to maintain the existing trails. These 13.15 miles of existing trails are dubbed the "Lower Basin Trails". With the increase in recreational use, the City recognized the need for a recreation plan to define and guide future recreation development that is sustainable, limits damage to resources, and provides a quality recreation experience to those in the community.

In 2021, the *Little Sand Creek Watershed Master Plan* was completed. The plan outlined how the Watershed would be managed, and what physical, biological, geological, and other criteria would guide future activity. The plan defines the primary goal of the Watershed as:

*"To protect or enhance the quality of water generated by the Little Sand Creek Watershed and to insure an adequate and continuous supply of water, in perpetuity."*

The plan further identifies as secondary goals:

*"To provide opportunities for compatible uses of the land that are in the public's best interest and benefit.*

- \* Enhance wildlife, fisheries, and aesthetic values wherever possible;*
- \* Engage the community in planning uses and activities within the Watershed in a comprehensive and thoughtful manner;*

*\* Administer a formal permit process to enable requests for various uses, including but not limited to recreation, education, and special events."*

The plan defines the need for a recreation plan for the Watershed, calling for the City to:

*"Develop, adopt, and maintain a comprehensive recreation master plan for the Watershed to define the long-term vision and locations, based upon a robust public engagement effort and in close consideration of the parameters within this Plan."*

In 2022, the City began a process to develop the recreation plan, including determining what recreation activities are permitted, where those activities could take place, and guidelines for the development of future recreation amenities.

The City worked with the National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program (NPS-RTCA) to conduct a public process and create this plan, and the International Mountain Bicycling Association Trail Solutions (IMBA-TS) to better understand and define opportunities for trails.

The collaborative working group for the Little Sand Creek Watershed includes a unique mix of local, state, federal, and private landowners, and other community stakeholders. Taking a systematic approach that balances various interests and priorities is crucial for achieving long-term success and ensuring that the community's needs are met. Stakeholders have come together to work towards a common goal of providing recreation on Watershed lands, balancing the fundamental goals of protecting the natural resources and clean water, while helping to enhance the quality of life and a sense of community.

This document includes a summary of public input, an analysis of existing conditions, zone-based conceptual trail corridors, recommendations on implementation, and other information that will guide the City and its partners in sustainable recreation development.



## Vision and Goals

At the start of the Recreation Plan process, the planning team brought together key stakeholders including City leaders and staff, POP, Kaniksu Land Trust, the Sandpoint Nordic Club, Schweitzer, Inland Forest Management, the Native Plant Society, the Kalispel Tribe, City of Ponderay, University of Idaho, and other community members. These stakeholders were asked to define their values, concerns, and long-term vision for recreation in the Watershed. The vision and guiding principles for this Plan were crafted from their input and vetted through a public survey. The vision for recreation in the Watershed states:

*The Little Sand Creek Watershed maintains high quality drinking water while providing a quality recreational experience that is in harmony with wildlife and the natural setting.*

The guiding principles further guide what is important to the community when it comes to recreation in the Watershed:

- \* Maintain the quality of Sandpoint's drinking water.
- \* Ensure inclusive access to nature and recreation for all.
- \* Respect the flora, fauna, and natural characteristics of the Watershed.
- \* Protect public health and safety.
- \* Create opportunities to learn about and take care of the Watershed.

## RECREATION PLAN PROCESS

To develop the recreation plan, the City of Sandpoint conducted outreach with key stakeholders and general citizens of Sandpoint, Ponderay, and Bonner County. In addition, the City coordinated with other landowners and managers who have a role in the Watershed including US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Schweitzer, Idaho Department of Lands, and Inland Forest Management.

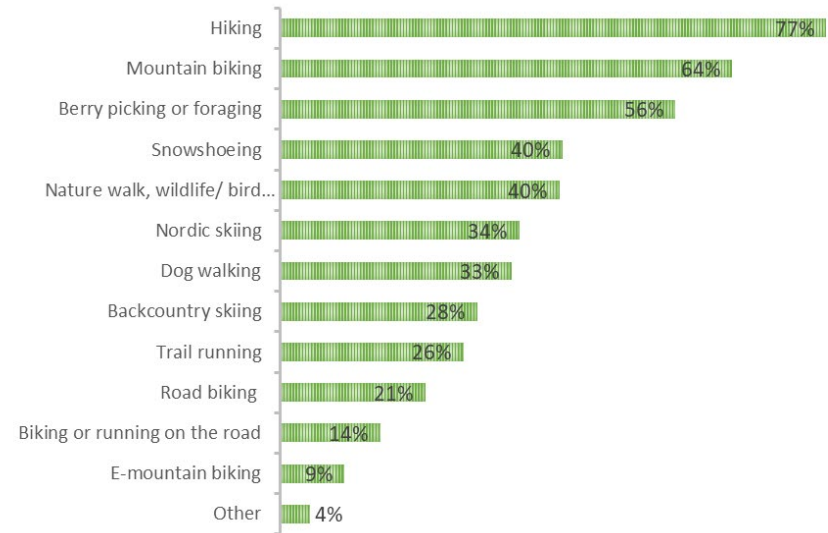
### Community Engagement

In October 2022, the City gathered input from the public through a public survey and two open house meetings. One meeting focused on the larger recreation plan and one focused specifically on trails, and the desired experiences of trail users. The purpose of this outreach was to understand how people recreate in the Watershed, as well as what their interests and concerns are for future recreation.

The public survey gathered information on current recreational use patterns in the Watershed and what people were interested in seeing the City pursue in the future. Responses to certain questions that were particularly important to this planning process are summarized here. The full survey report is available upon request.

Hiking, mountain biking, and berry picking or foraging ranked as the top recreational activities that people enjoy in the Watershed. More passive forms of recreation, such as wildlife or bird viewing, nature walks, and photography are also fairly common. While most people who recreate in the Watershed do so spring through fall, with the highest visitation in the summer, there are some who like to recreate in the winter.

OUTDOOR RECREATION ACTIVITY (ALL THAT APPLY)

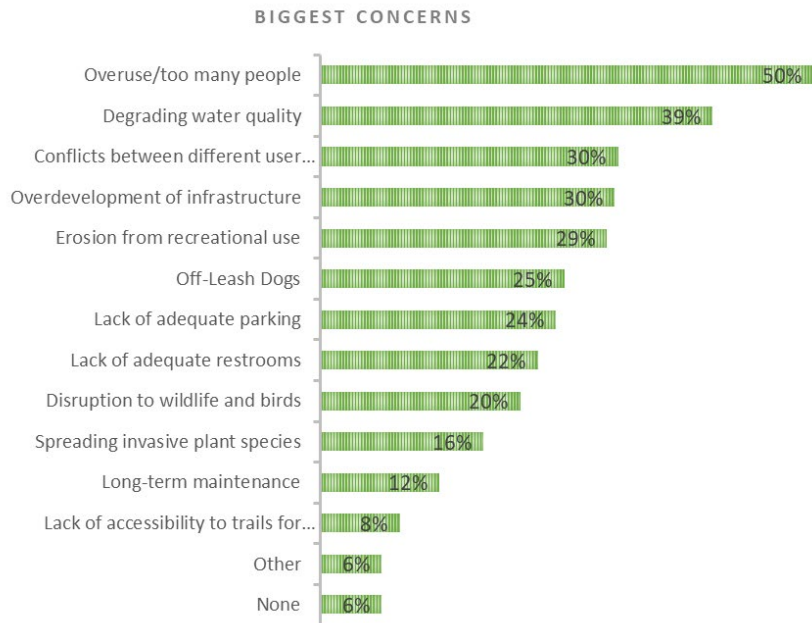


Responses to survey question 20: What different types of recreational activities do you enjoy in the Watershed (select all that apply)?



A trail in the Lower Basin trail network. B Byrne.

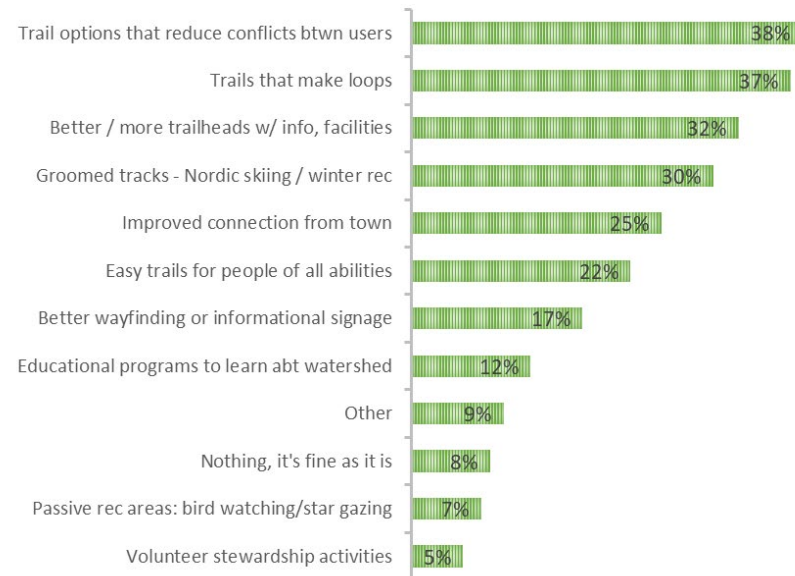
Survey respondents ranked “Overuse or too many people” as their biggest concern, followed by “Degrading water quality”. “Conflicts between user groups”, “Overdevelopment of infrastructure,” and “Erosion from recreational use” were next and ranked similarly.



Responses to survey question 12: What are your biggest concerns when it comes to recreation in the Watershed?

When asked what would improve their recreational experience in the Watershed, “Trail options that reduce conflicts between users” was the most important to respondents, followed by “Trails that make loops” and “Better trailheads with information, facilities.” Groomed tracks for Nordic skiing/winter recreation was ranked as important by 30% of respondents.

#### DESIRED IMPROVEMENTS



Responses to survey question 13: What would most improve your recreational experience in the Watershed?

In the open comment section, many people expressed support and enthusiasm for the recreation plan. Some made requests for trails that improve access for people of different levels of abilities or skills. Others expressed concerns about impacts to water quality and wildlife. These comments confirmed to the planning team that there is a need to balance different and sometimes competing needs.

In addition to the public survey, which asked more general questions about recreation in the Watershed, the trail-focused open house meeting gathered feedback specific to the trail system. The results of the engagement boards developed by IMBA indicated a strong interest in more diverse trails that meet a wider variety of skill levels. More experienced trail users were seeking opportunities to challenge themselves, while less experienced users were looking for more opportunities to feel safe and competent while in the Watershed. Overall, all respondents wanted more user-specific trail offerings.



## Focus Groups and Stakeholder Outreach

In the winter of 2022, the City also conducted multiple focus groups and one-on-one conversations with landowners and key stakeholders to inform the direction of the plan and guide coordination between landowners.

Outreach included meetings with:

- \* Pend Oreille Pedalers
- \* Sandpoint Nordic Club
- \* The Kalispel Tribe
- \* Idaho Fish & Game
- \* Independent Highway District
- \* Schweitzer
- \* Kaniksu Land Trust
- \* US Forest Service
- \* Education working group

These discussions provided valuable insight into current recreation activity in the Watershed, feedback on proposed improvements to the trail system, and issues that would need to be considered while developing the plan.

The meetings with other landowners, particularly Schweitzer and the Forest Service, laid the foundation for future coordination and established lines of communication to collaborate on proposed trailheads and trail corridors.



*Top and bottom photos: Community members shared their thoughts on recreation in the Watershed at an open house at Matchwood Brewery.*



# EXISTING CONDITIONS

## Little Sand Creek Watershed – Planning Area

The Little Sand Creek Watershed is located northwest of Sandpoint and Lake Pend Oreille in Bonner County, Idaho, between Bald Mountain and Schweitzer Mountain. The basin drains to Little Sand Creek, a tributary to Sand Creek, which empties into Lake Pend Oreille near the Sandpoint City Beach Park. The Watershed is defined in the *Little Sand Creek Watershed Management Plan*, which includes all the drainage areas above the City of Sandpoint’s Drinking Water Treatment Plant located 0.83 miles up Schweitzer Mountain Road from the intersection with N Boyer Rd. The road is the main access point for the Watershed and travels west to the approximate mid-point, then north before leaving the Watershed near the entrance to the Schweitzer Mountain Resort.

The primary uses of the Watershed include municipal water source, commercial timber, and recreation.

Three major physical conditions influenced the boundaries and decision making for the Recreation Plan and for IMBA-TS’s conceptual development analysis. These were:

1. The Watershed boundary (the ridges or high points that determine what subbasin surface water will collect in).
2. Schweitzer Mountain Road as it bisects two distinct areas within the Watershed - The Upper Basin and the Lower Basin.
3. The Little Sand Creek. Preserving and improving water quality is the top priority of the overall recreational master plan so understanding the boundaries around development adjacent to the Little Sand Creek and its tributaries was top of mind from the beginning.

## Landownership

The total acreage of the Watershed, which is owned by various entities including the City of Sandpoint, Bureau of Land Management, State of Idaho, Schweitzer Mountain Facilities, US Forest Service, and private

parties, is 7,413 acres, with 3,921 acres under City ownership. The Watershed serves as a transportation corridor for Schweitzer Mountain Resort, a utility corridor connecting power, natural gas, and telecom from the valley to Schweitzer, and for recreational activities such as mountain biking, hiking, and skiing.

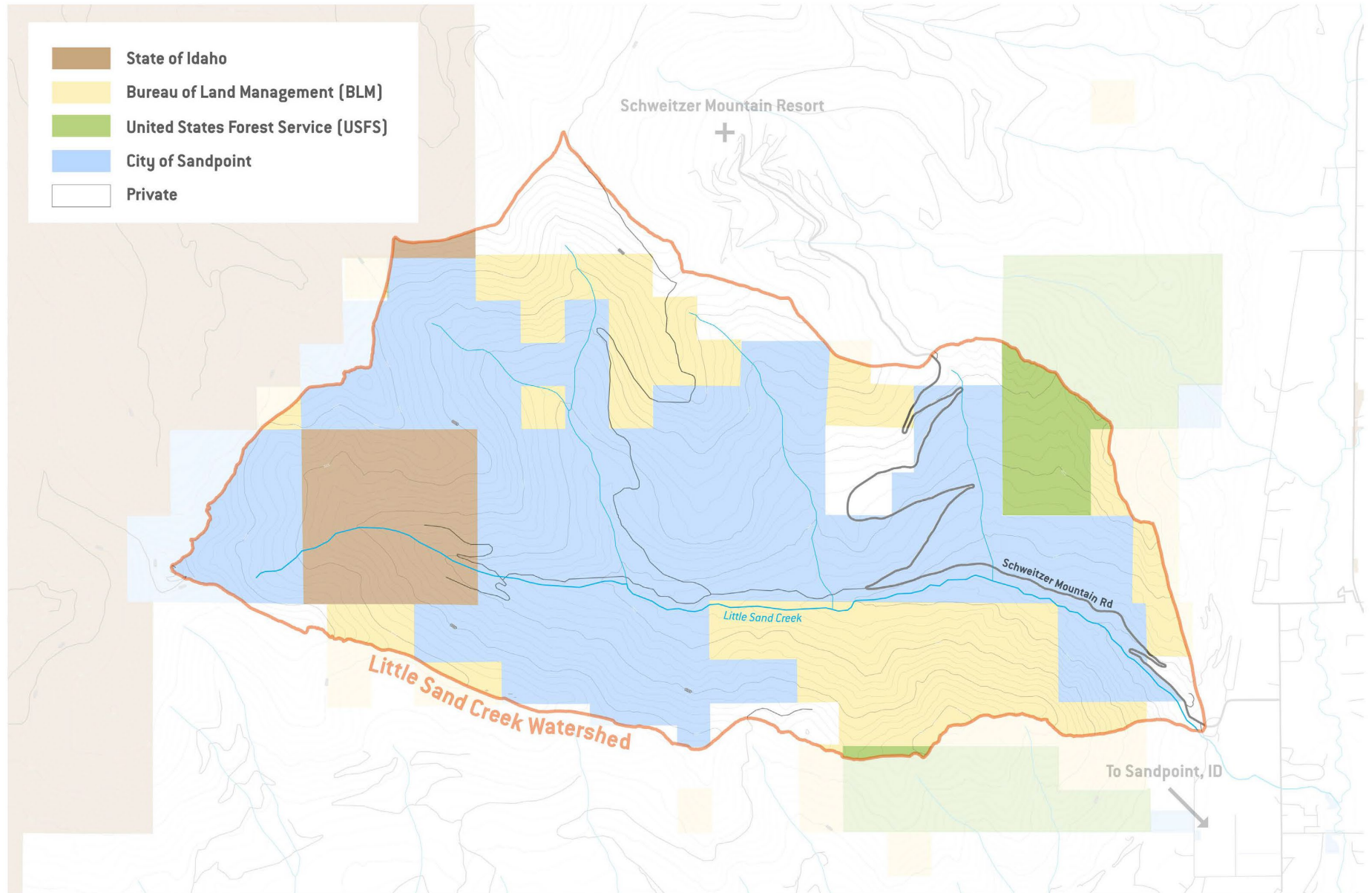
Property Owner	Acres	% of Watershed
<i>City of Sandpoint</i>	3,921	52.5
<i>Bureau of Land Management</i>	1,576	21.0
<i>State of Idaho</i>	670	9.0
<i>Schweitzer Mountain Facilities LLC</i>	657	9.0
<i>US Forest Service</i>	275	4.0
<i>Schweitzer Mountain Real Estate</i>	190	2.8
<i>TT LLC (Bruce Anderson)</i>	80	1.1
<i>Patriot Investments, Inc.</i>	30	0.4
<i>Others (less than 20 acres)</i>	14	0.2
<i>Total</i>	7,413	100

Table 1: Little Sand Creek Ownership. *Little Sand Creek Watershed Management Plan, 2021*

Schweitzer Mountain Road is maintained by the Independent Highway District (IHD) and is the only asphalt surfaced road in the basin. Two primary access points for trails in the Lower Basin are known as “Switchback 2” and the “Roundabout”. Switchback 2 access on City of Sandpoint property and is located at the bottom of the trail network, and is used by riders who are not shuttling and hikers. The Roundabout access is owned by Schweitzer and is located at the top of the Lower Basin trail network and is used by downhill riders and shuttle users, or cross-country riders who continue onto trails onto the Upper Basin trail network.

The Watershed has a series of roads that provide access to timber, water, and recreational resources and for forest fire prevention. These roads are in various states of repair. Gates limit public access to most of the City property. The purpose of the gates is to protect the soils from road-related erosion, reduce the risk of man-caused fires and otherwise minimize activities that could cause damage to the municipal water supply. The gates are posted with signs explaining the access limitations.

# Land Ownership



SANDPOINT, IDAHO

FEBRUARY 2023

Map showing landownership in the Little Sand Creek Watershed. IMBA-TS



## Watershed Hydrology and Water Quality

The hydrology of the Watershed is comprised of Little Sand Creek, its tributaries, and associated seeps and wetlands, which flow through natural channels and courses down to the drinking water treatment plant reservoir. Little Sand Creek then continues to the Sand Creek, which ultimately connects to Lake Pend Oreille in downtown Sandpoint.

The *Little Sand Creek Watershed Management Plan* defines areas critical to water quality and habitat for fish and wildlife. The critical areas within the Watershed are highly sensitive to erosion damage, and therefore, the goal of this Watershed plan is to prevent impacts and erosion in these areas.

The City of Sandpoint defines critical areas as, “areas of environmental sensitivity, which include the following areas and ecosystems ([Sandpoint Comprehensive Plan 2009](#); at the time of this writing the City’s comprehensive plan was being updated):

- \* Wetlands
- \* Areas with a critical recharging effect on aquifers used for potable water
- \* Fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas
- \* Frequently flooded areas
- \* Geologically hazardous areas

In a 2020 analysis as part of the process to create the *Little Sand Creek Watershed Management Plan*, Point Environmental identified 12 potential critical areas for inspection, including potential wetlands, seeps, riparian areas, and steep slopes. Many more critical areas are likely present in the full Watershed. The 2020 survey created a methodology that can be used for further Watershed analysis in the future. Please reference the [Little Sand Creek Watershed Management Plan 2021](#).

### Riparian areas

The Little Sand Creek Watershed has approximately 14 miles of mapped stream channels including four substantial forks of the mainstem, in all eight unnamed tributaries, and many miles of unmapped tributaries. Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) classifies Little Sand Creek as a class 1 stream

because it is a municipal water supply and is documented as an excellent fish habitat.

The riparian areas surrounding Little Sand Creek can be viewed as the primary protection for the municipal water source for the City. Protection of riparian critical areas should be achieved primarily through avoidance, establishment of buffer zones, and implementation of best management practices for interactions with the riparian area. In the *Little Sand Creek Watershed Management Plan*, the City elected to set buffer zone restrictions within the Watershed to 150 feet slope distance on either side of the ordinary high-water mark on fish bearing streams and 75-foot slope distance from ordinary high-water mark on either side for non-fish bearing streams to protect these ecological sites. However, this recreation plan focuses on trails and recreation throughout the Watershed, which includes property under the management of the USFS. The [Idaho Panhandle National Forest’s Land Management Plan](#) (2015) defines riparian habitat conservation areas with buffer zones of 300 feet slope distance from perennial fish-bearing streams, 150 feet slope distance from perennial, non-fish-bearing streams, and 50 feet from intermittent waterways. The [Little Sand Creek Watershed Management Plan](#) provides guidelines, resources, and more information on best practices for interactions with riparian areas.



*Spring snow run-off along the Little Sand Creek. M. Nevins-Lavtar*

### Wetlands and Seeps

Wetlands and seeps are areas with hydric soils, and are saturated by surface or groundwater enough to support a prevalence of hydrophytic vegetation under normal circumstances.

Protection of wetland critical areas should be achieved primarily through avoidance and establishment of buffer areas. All wetland areas should be protected by at least a 15-foot perimeter buffer. Like the riparian area buffers, this recreation plan follows guidelines from the *Idaho Panhandle National Forest's Land Management Plan* which recommends a buffer of 150 feet slope distance from wetlands greater than one acre.



A tributary to the Little Sand Creek. B. Byrne

### Drinking Water

The Watershed serves the area around Sandpoint as a primary source of quality drinking water (approx. 4,600 connections). The City's intake and water treatment facility is located about 0.83 miles up Schweitzer Mountain Road from the intersection with N Boyer Rd. A 1.3-million-gallon storage

dam and an intake reservoir are located about one-half mile upstream from the treatment facility.

The primary goal of management is to protect or enhance the quality of water generated by the Little Sand Creek Watershed and to ensure an adequate and continuous supply of water, in perpetuity. This goal will be achieved by the following objectives listed in the *Little Sand Creek Watershed Management Plan*:

1. Control and manage as much of the Little Sand Creek Watershed, as possible.
2. Protect soils from erosion, contamination, or other damage so water quality can be maintained or improved.
3. Prevent pollution.
4. Reduce the hazard of catastrophic wildfires and increase fire protection.
5. Maximize the overall forest health and environmental stewardship.
6. Regulate activities within the Watershed to minimize human-caused risks.

### Terrain and Soils

A significant portion of the Watershed is very steep, but gentle slopes occur in some areas. Elevation on the City property ranges from approximately 2,320 feet at the lowest point on the eastern boundary to 6,193 feet at the top of Bald Mountain on the western boundary. Most of the property lies between 3,500 to 4,500 feet. The lower elevations occur mostly in the eastern portion of the Watershed, with the highest elevations found mainly on the western side and around the perimeter of the Watershed. Granite slabs and outcroppings were observed on-site, which lend themselves to a multitude of recreational opportunities like a hiking trail destination or a technical trail feature for a more bike-optimized trail.

According to the Soil Survey of Bonner County Area, Idaho, there are 13 soil types located on the City of Sandpoint property within the Little Sand Creek Watershed. All these soils have a granitic component, and the majority formed in glacial till from granite, gneiss, and schist material. All but two are described as having a mantle (top layer) of volcanic ash and loess. These soil types, within the context of trails, can be thought of as

moderately erosive. While on-site, IMBA-TS observed that the higher the elevation, the higher the density of decomposed granite (DG) was in the soil matrix. Soil compositions higher in DG are limited in their ability to compact and form the shapes necessary for more bike-optimized trails while also being highly erosive. Near the bottom of the Lower Basin, pockets of clay and more compactable soils were observed.

## Vegetation

At the higher elevations of the Watershed, subalpine fir dominates the forest landscape. Western hemlock and western redcedar are often the primary tree species at lower elevations, particularly along Little Sand Creek. Primarily two series of habitat types occur in the Watershed: the *Tsuga heterophylla* (western hemlock) series and the *Abies lasiocarpa* (subalpine fir) series.

The *Tsuga heterophylla* series covers the vast majority of the property and occurs at lower and middle elevations where soil moisture and temperatures throughout the year are the most moderate of all habitat types. Western hemlock, western redcedar, and grand fir are the dominant tree species for this series. The warmest and driest habitat types in this series are typically characterized by floristically rich and morphologically diverse undergrowth vegetation (herbs and shrubs) known as the *Pachistima* union. Undergrowth vegetation diversity diminishes in the cooler, wetter areas. In these areas with poorly drained soils, *Oplopanax horridum* (devil's club) or *Athyrium filix-foemina* (ladyfern) are the dominant undergrowth species.

The *Abies lasiocarpa* series is found at the highest elevations in the Watershed. This series is characterized by discontinuous clumps of dwarfed and misshapen trees and "krummholz" vegetation typical of upper timberline areas in higher mountains. Subalpine fir and mountain hemlock are the only climax tree species present. Subalpine fir occurs throughout the series. Mountain hemlock is limited to discontinuous tracts; very little or no mountain hemlock occurs in the Watershed.

On the southerly slopes of the *Abies* series, understory vegetation is dominated by *Xerophyllum tenax* (beargrass) and *Vaccinium membranaceum* (big huckleberry). On the northerly slopes, tall *Menziesia*

*ferruginea* (fool's huckleberry), *Rhododendron albiflorum* (white rhododendron), and *Ledum glandulosum* (Labrador tea) shrubs dominate.

Most of the higher elevation areas show no evidence of previous logging activity. A portion of the lower elevation forest has been heavily harvested in the past, resulting in major impacts to current forest conditions. For example, most of the western white pine has been removed from the landscape over the last seventy years. In addition to logging, white pine blister rust has played a major role in reducing the prevalence of this species.



The Western hemlock habitat type occurs in much of the Watershed. B. Byrne

## Rare Plants of Concern

According to the Idaho Panhandle National Forests Rare Plant Guide, approximately 43 vascular and 6 nonvascular plants are considered rare in northern Idaho. Many of these plants are found in bogs, fens, wet meadows or in moist riparian areas. A few are also found in moist western redcedar habitats; however, no rare plants of concern are known to exist on City Watershed property.

## Common plant species in the Little Sand Creek Watershed

Trees		Ferns	
Black cottonwood	Oregon grape	Bracken fern	
Douglas-fir	Red-osier dogwood	Lady fern	
Engelmann spruce	Redstem ceanothus	Oak-fern	
Grand fir	Shinyleaf ceanothus	Swordfern	
Lodgepole pine	Snowberry		
Paper birch	Spiraea	Grasses	
Ponderosa pine	Syringa	Brome	
Quaking aspen	Twinflower	Blue wildrye	
Red alder	Willow	Idaho fescue	
Subalpine fir	Wild rose	Kentucky bluegrass	
Western hemlock	Forbs	Orchardgrass	
Western larch	Beargrass	Pinegrass	
Western redcedar	Bunchberry dogwood	Timothy	
Western white pine	Fairy-bells	Western fescue	
	Fireweed	Noxious Weeds	
	Hawkweed	Orange hawkweed	
<th>Shrubs</th>	Shrubs	Queenscup beadlily	St. Johns wort
Alder	Solomon's seal	Spotted knapweed	
Currant	Stonecrop	Tansy	
Devil's club	Trillium		
Fool's huckleberry	Violet		
Huckleberry	Western goldthread		
Kinnikinnick	Wild ginger		
Mountain-ash	Wild sarsaparilla		
Ninebark	Wild strawberry		
Oceanspray			

### Noxious Weeds

Noxious weeds are non-native and highly invasive. They can out-compete native herbaceous plants and inhibit conifer establishment and growth. In addition, they have the potential to cause serious environmental problems, including loss of biodiversity, alteration of soil characteristics, threaten rare plants and sensitive areas, and reduce wildlife habitat, just to name a few. Perhaps the biggest concern with these invasive species are their extensive seed source and ability to out-compete native grasses and forbs. When left unattended, they have the ability to take over, resulting in huge economic impacts and fundamental disruptions of entire ecosystems.

Idaho has 71 noxious weeds. Spotted knapweed, mullein, St. Johns-wort, and common tansy were the most noticeable noxious weed species found during analysis for the *2019 Little Sand Creek Watershed Timber Management Plan*. Knapweed, especially, is moderately established in disturbed areas, mostly along roadways, powerline corridors and skid trails. However, aside from these disturbed areas, the majority of the City of Sandpoint's property has little to no noxious weed establishment. This is mainly attributed to the overall lack of development and soil disturbance, and the overall dense forest canopy throughout much of this forest that generally discourages weed establishment and growth.

### Wildlife

Deer, elk, and moose are the most prevalent big game species in the Watershed. Bald eagle, black bear, coyote, various owls, and woodpeckers (including black-backed woodpeckers) are also known to occur. Four Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed species could potentially be found within the Watershed: grizzly bear, woodland caribou, Canada lynx, and gray wolf. The following provides a brief description of the sensitive species within the Watershed.

Although the bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) are no longer listed as an endangered species they are still protected by the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. A bald eagle nest, which was known to be active in the fall of 2006, is located at the second switchback on the Schweitzer Mountain Road. The nest tree and surrounding forest canopy needs to be protected and disturbance must be minimized during the nesting season (April through September) when the birds are present. Minimal timber harvest should occur within one quarter mile of the nest. All harvest activities in the vicinity of the nest should take place during the fall and winter when eagles are not present. For purposes of this plan, "high noise" is defined as sound pressure levels greater than 10 dBA above the ambient as measured by the  $L_{AFmax}$  and  $L_{AFeq}$  at sensitive habitat as shown: Blasting and high noise producing activities are allowed only between September 1 and October 31.

All delineated grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos horribilis*) habitat management units in the Selkirk Mountains are located north and west of the Little Sand

Creek Watershed. Although no designated habitat occurs within the Watershed, there is potential for grizzly bears to inhabit or travel through the area on occasion. Special habitat components that are important to grizzly bears are present in the Watershed, including mountainsides with huckleberries and other berry producing bushes (summer and fall habitat) and lowland habitat containing sedges and other succulent vegetation (spring habitat). It is very important to minimize bear/human interactions, because bears that become accustomed to humans often end up having to be destroyed. Minimizing human influence (pack it in pack it out) and maintaining the natural vegetation to protect the Watershed should provide sufficient habitat protection for grizzly bears.

Like grizzly bears, all designated woodland caribou (*Rangifer tarandus caribou*) habitat is located north and west of the Watershed. It is possible, especially in high-elevation areas, for caribou to inhabit or travel through the Watershed; however, it is not considered likely since their range occurs well to the north of Indian Creek in Boundary County. Management activities that protect water quality will be sufficient to address caribou in the Watershed.

Although no evidence of their presence was found during field inspections, lynx (*Lynx canadensis*) and gray wolves (*Canis lupus*) may inhabit or pass through the Watershed. Habitat quality for both gray wolf and lynx is determined by the quality of prey habitat. Lynx may be present, especially where pockets of dense, small saplings provide habitat for snowshoe hares, the lynx's primary prey species. Deer, elk, and moose are the primary prey species for wolves. In general, management activities that protect water quality (particularly erosion control and fire protection) will protect or enhance lynx and gray wolf habitat. Over time, periodic timber harvests and other activities that bring portions of the forest back to an earlier seral stage will enhance big game and hare habitat, thus enhancing lynx and wolf habitat.

### Common Watershed Wildlife Species

Deer	Coopers hawk
Elk	Golden eagle
Moose	Stellar's jay
Black bear	Ruffed grouse
Coyote	Spruce grouse
Owls	Various songbirds
Woodpeckers	Cougar
Striped skunk	Bobcat
Gray squirrel	Porcupine
Chipmunk	Raccoon
Turkey	Raven
Red-tailed hawk	Bats
Common garter snake	

### Fish

Little Sand Creek and its tributaries provide excellent fish habitat for west slope cutthroat trout, rainbow trout, brook trout, and bull trout (among other resident minnow species). The USFWS lists upper reaches of Little Sand Creek as cold-water natal habitat for bull trout (Young, et al., 2020) (Inland Forest Management, Inc., 2007), this is of particular importance as bull trout are listed as a threatened species.

Little Sand Creek falls within the Columbia Headwater recovery unit for bull trout and though Little Sand Creek is not yet listed as critical habitat for bull trout it is in close proximity to critical habitat (USFWS, 2010). The Clark Fork River Basin is listed as Critical Habitat unit #31. The Clark Fork River Basin includes Lake Pend Oreille, the receiving body for Sand Creek. If bull trout are present within Little Sand Creek any activities within the Watershed should consider potential impacts to bull trout. Those activities utilizing federal funding or that require federal permitting (EPA Construction Stormwater & USACE S404) will be required to comply with the terms and conditions (BMPs) of a programmatic or individual biological opinion in order to carry out the project. Compliance with these BMPs will ensure protection of other trout species as well.

The following table describes fish species within the Watershed.

Species	Status	Critical Habitat Present
Bull Trout ( <i>Salvelinus confluentus</i> )	Native Resident - Threatened	No
West Slope Cutthroat Trout ( <i>Oncorhynchus clarki lewisi</i> )	Native Resident	NA
Rainbow Trout ( <i>Oncorhynchus mykiss</i> )	Native Resident	NA
Brook Trout ( <i>Salvelinus fontinalis</i> )	Planted Exotic	NA

Table 2: Little Sand Creek salmonid fish species. *Little Sand Creek Watershed Management Plan, 2021*

## Historical and Existing Recreation

### *Indigenous Lands – Kalispel Tribe*

Historical evidence confirms that the Upper Kalispel Tribe predominately utilized Sandpoint and the surrounding areas as a Summer Village, for purposes of hunting, fishing, harvesting, and gathering for cultural events<sup>1</sup>. Generational accounts of annual indigenous tribal gatherings with other regional tribes are documented along the shores of Lake Pend Oreille and the Sand Creek area. These gatherings included recreation activities such as playing of the “Indian Stick Game” with documentation up until the 1940s.

Today Sand Creek is a favorite local waterway for fishing and non-motorized boating recreation, and there is a rich history of Indigenous tribes using canoes to access the higher elevations for hunting and gathering. While a cultural assessment has not been completed for the entire Little Sand Creek Watershed area, historical anecdotes points to the likelihood of seasonal trails that would have connected the main Sand Creek with the Little Sand Creek and upper Watershed.

The Upper Kalispel utilized Sandpoint as a tribal camping place during the late spring and summer seasons. They trapped beaver, hunted deer, bear,

mountain goats and fished. Harvesting huckleberries, pine nuts, aromatic conifer needles, foamberry, medicine root, lovage, raspberries, juniper and bark of the western red cedar.

Similar to the Kalispel today, the ancestors recognized and adjusted their camp layout depending on exactly where and how much timber or fuel was available. They also adjusted to the conformation of the riverbank, which was always changing due to the dynamic nature of seasonal water runoff. In addition, they set up their camps with consideration of how many families were camping there, and hence, how many structures were needed. As a result of these decisions, the camp locations would vary as the riverbank changed from one year to the next, and consequently, its boundaries varied.



*An encampment by the lake. Courtesy of the Kalispel Tribe of Indians.*

<sup>1</sup> Deaver, Sherri; 1999 A Kalispel Cultural Geography. Kalispel Natural Resource Department



## Trail System

Historically, several of the existing trails in the Watershed were built and maintained by local volunteers and trail enthusiasts without formal authorization by the landowners. Remnant early 1990's-era style downhill mountain bike trails and associated features are still scattered throughout the existing Watershed trail network. The original Lower Basin XC trail was built by a group of enthusiasts locally referred to as the "Grizzly Ridge Riders," and according to local legend, they earned the name due to their adventurous bear encounters. "GRR" is a trail named in the Schweitzer owned trail network in their honor. The multi-use trail called "Solar Ecstasy," accessible from the top of Schweitzer, is named after a local backcountry ski run that takes skiers from the resort into the Lower Basin.

The original "Watershed Crest Trail" (WCT) was built sometime between 1933 and 1942 by Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) crews to supply fire lookouts, with routes that historically connected Priest River, Priest Lake, Baldy Mountain, and Schweitzer. These historical trails, notably the remnant WCT, were used by hikers for decades before being mostly abandoned. Prior to the CCC, there is documented history of indigenous tribes accessing the Watershed for hunting and gathering, most notably huckleberries.

The local bicycle advocacy group POP developed a master trail plan in 2014 which included an original concept trails plan for the Watershed that is not that dissimilar from the one conceptualized today by IMBA-TS. Portions of the original plan have been implemented in the Lower Basin. In 2015, the City of Sandpoint entered into a formal agreement with POP to allow them to build a new 1-mile trail below Switchback 4 and to formally maintain existing, user-created trails. A subsequent agreement in 2021 allowed POP to build a new 2.3-mile XC trail between Switchbacks 2 and 4, which, together with the 2015 trail and user-built trails dating back to the 1990s, make up the "Lower Basin Trial Network" today. The Lower Basin system includes roughly 6 miles of trails between Switchback 2 and the Schweitzer Roundabout, crossing Schweitzer, USFS, and City of Sandpoint property.

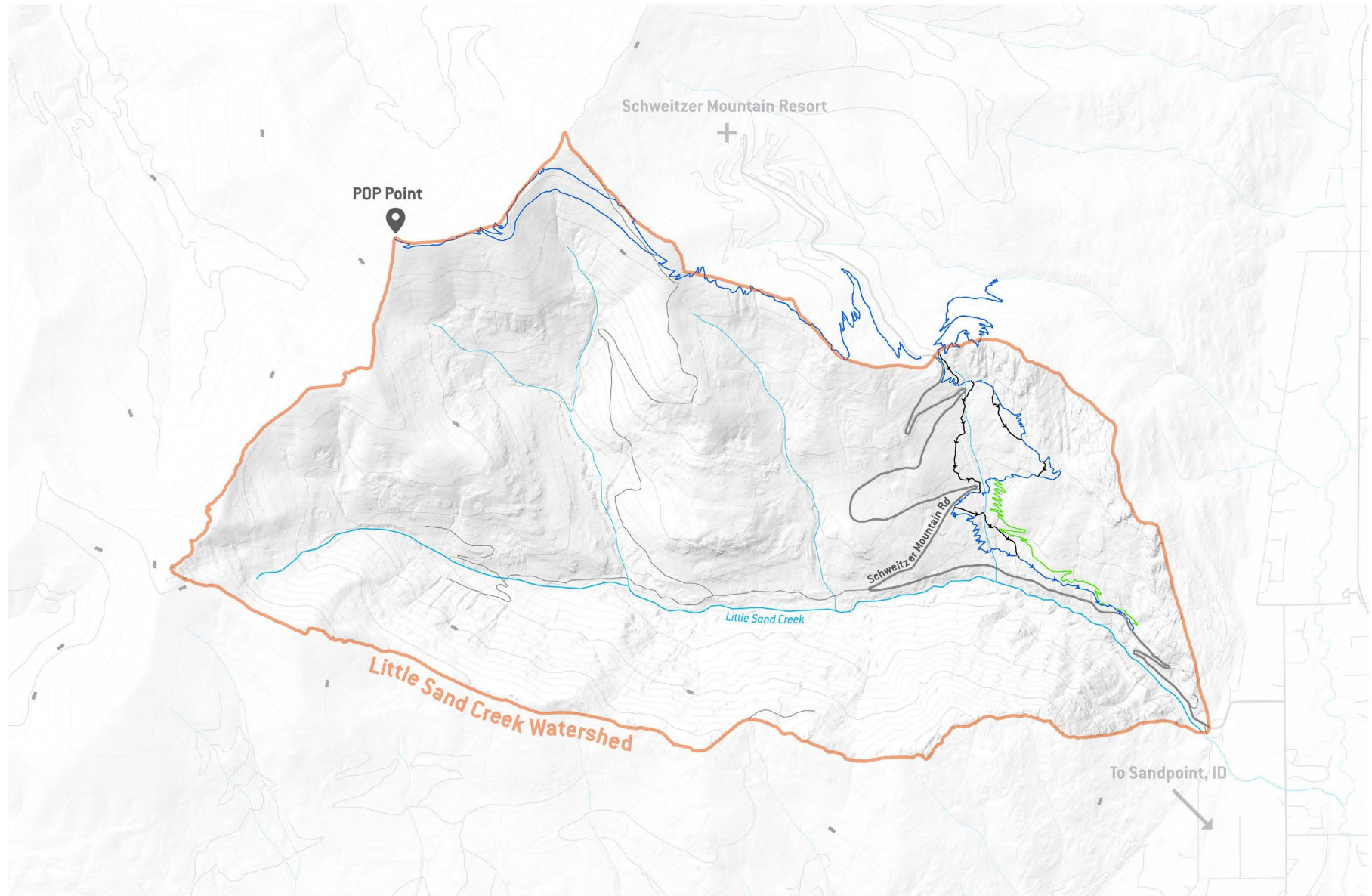
Above the Roundabout, the Selkirk Recreation District maintains an additional four miles of trails on Schweitzer property, known as the "SRD trails," while higher up in the Watershed POP maintains the High Point trail, Solar Ecstasy, and 1.4 miles of the Watershed Crest Trail. All told, around 13.15 miles of trail lie within or just outside of the Little Sand Creek Watershed, stretching from the second switchback on Schweitzer Mountain Road (2,565 feet) to the backside of Schweitzer (6,175 feet).

Of the 13.15 miles of trails, 2.69 miles (20%) are labeled as green [beginner], 8.4 miles (64%) are labeled as blue [intermediate], and 2.06 miles (16%) are labeled as black [advanced]. The map on the next page shows the current trail system. Switchback 2 and the Roundabout are the most common trail access points. Some users access the Lower Basin Trails at Switchbacks 4, 6, and 7, although these areas are not formalized as access points and are used less commonly. The map on page 16 shows the switchbacks and access points into the Watershed.



*Bikers on a trail in the Lower Basin. B. Byrne*

# Trail Use Circulation and Typology



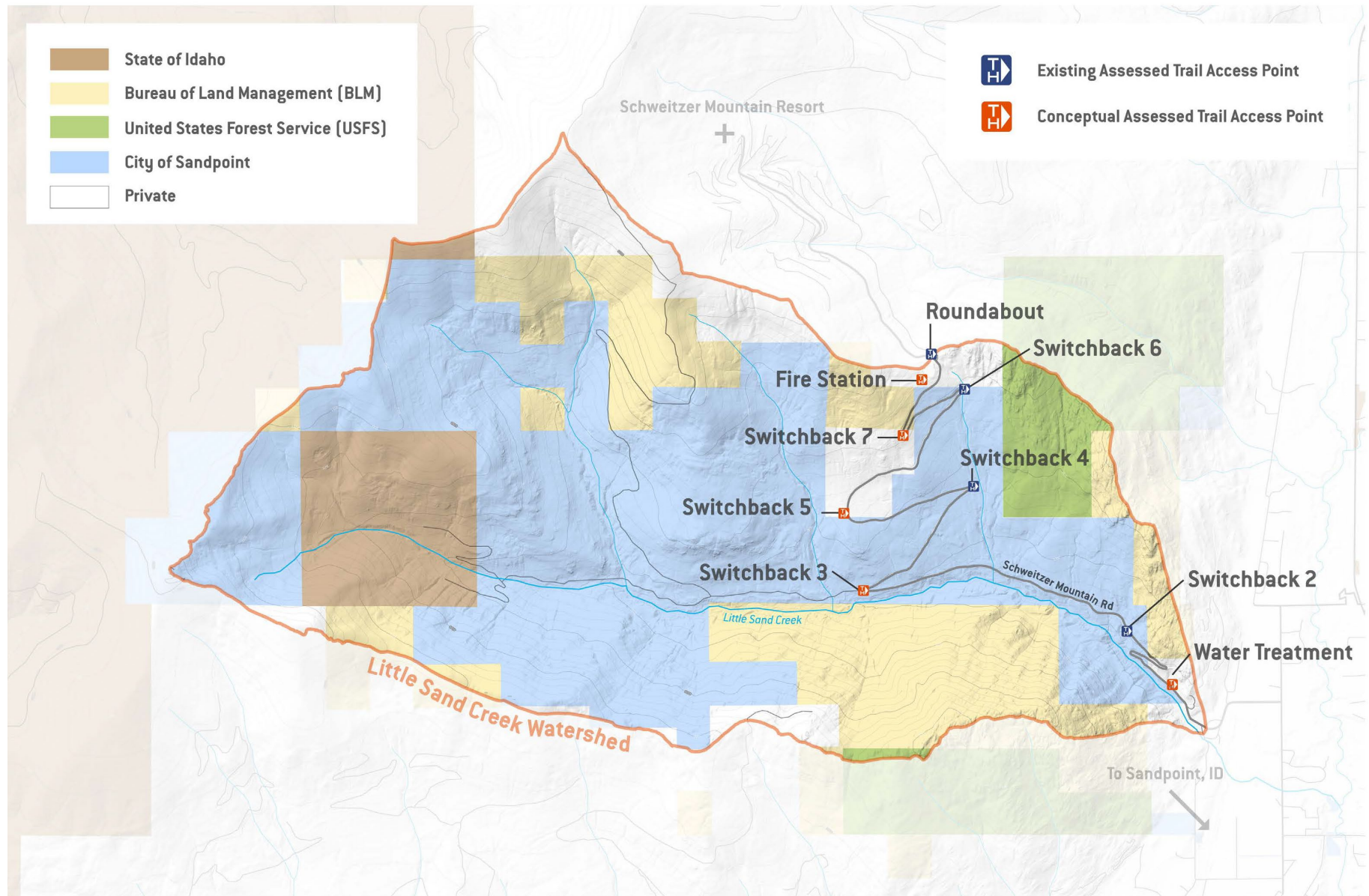
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Map showing the existing trail system. Green indicates beginner trails, dark blue indicates intermediate, and black indicates advanced trails. IMBA-TS



# Key Access Points



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Map showing access points into the Watershed. IMBA-TS



### *Recreational Activities*

Many people who recreate in the Watershed participate in multiple activities. In the October 2022 public survey, hiking, mountain biking, and berry picking or foraging ranked as the top recreational activities that people enjoy in the Watershed. More passive forms of recreation, such as wildlife or bird viewing, nature walks, and photography are also common. While most people who recreate in the Watershed do so spring through fall, with the highest visitation in the summer, there are some who like to recreate in the winter.

Backcountry skiers typically drop into the Watershed from Solar Ecstasy and the top of Schweitzer. Most skiers turn around after 1,000 feet of fresh powder turns and skin back to the in-bounds resort area, but some will lay tracks all the way to Switchback 3. Occasionally Nordic ski tracks have been observed also in the Switchback 3 area. Though motorized vehicles are not allowed in the Watershed without a permit (except for Schweitzer Mountain Road), snowmobilers have long traversed over the Watershed Crest from Baldy Mountain Road and Priest River to Schweitzer. Similarly, dirt bikers have been known to access the Watershed from Baldy Mountain Road and use the original WCT to ride the ridges towards Schweitzer or to access the state lands to the west.

There is a small group of backcountry horsemen who ride up through Schweitzer property and out along the upper elevations of the Watershed. A permitted equine tour company is actively operating from the base area of Schweitzer during the summer, and they utilize the resort's trails and maintenance roads. With limited parking access and steep grades, there was very little interest from the equestrian community during the outreach process, however this should be explored further for future recreational opportunities with a focus on upper basin connectivity towards Priest River.

There is evidence of hunting activities in the Lower Basin, but no recorded incidents with trail users have been documented. Currently hunting is prohibited on City property.

Rock climbing, bouldering, and ice climbing also occur within the Watershed. According to the website MountainProject.com, there are some

easily accessed rock climbing routes located off the View Ski trail with access from the Schweitzer roundabout parking lot. Bouldering activities are relatively limited with the most accessible location near a lower portion of Schweitzer Mountain Road.



*Bouldering from Schweitzer Mountain Road. M. Nevins-Lavtar*

Water access to the Little Sand Creek is very limited, however there is evidence of access to the creek located just below the water treatment facility. Recreation in this area includes swimming, limited fishing, and passive nature walking. Evidence of human overuse, trash, and destruction to the understory and negative impacts to the health of the forest in this site indicates the need for regulated public water access. The 2020 Parks and Recreation Master Plan highlighted that the community's number one priority is more public access to water. This desire poses a significant challenge for land management when considering how to balance protection of the water as a clean drinking resource.



*Trash found along the lower portion of the Little Sand Creek.*



*Bank erosion and trampled understory along the lower portion of Little Sand Creek.*

#### Common Watershed Recreation Activities

- \* Hiking
- \* Mountain biking
- \* Berry picking or foraging
- \* Trail running
- \* Nature walk
- \* Wildlife or bird viewing
- \* Snowshoeing
- \* Nordic skiing
- \* Backcountry skiing
- \* Road biking
- \* Rock Climbing/Bouldering

## PROSPECTIVE RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

The vision for recreation in the Watershed, crafted from the input of key stakeholders and vetted through the public survey, states:

*The Little Sand Creek Watershed maintains high quality drinking water while providing a quality recreational experience that is in harmony with wildlife and the natural setting.*

Several principles further guide what is important to the community when it comes to recreation in the Watershed:

- \* Maintain the quality of Sandpoint's drinking water.
- \* Ensure inclusive access to nature and recreation for all.
- \* Respect the flora, fauna, and natural characteristics of the Watershed.
- \* Protect public health and safety.
- \* Create opportunities to learn about and take care of the Watershed.

These principles demonstrate that the community recognizes the need for a balanced approach to recreating in the Watershed. People in Sandpoint are interested in more trails and recreational activity in the Watershed, but they also want to protect water quality, wildlife habitat, and the ecosystem. The vision and principles were the foundation for the analysis of the Watershed and guided the recommendations contained in this plan.

This chapter outlines proposed changes to the trail system developed through a conceptual trail planning process by IMBA-TS. In addition to the conceptual trails plan, this chapter includes other improvements to the recreational opportunities in the Watershed. It also includes recommendations for future analysis or work, and action steps for implementation.

## Expanded Trail Network

The conceptual trail plan was created by IMBA-TS to provide guidance and recommendations related to trail-based recreational opportunities within the Watershed. The full **Conceptual Trails Plan** is meant to be used as a tool for trail planning and implementation in the future and is included as Appendix A to this plan. The **Conceptual Trails Plan** includes a zone based conceptual trail design with proposed trail corridors to illustrate connectivity, style, and ability level goals.

While these trail corridors are drawn accurately and with user experience in mind, for these trails to move forward a robust and field-based design process will need to take place before being proposed for construction and implementation.

This section on trail system recommendations is pulled from that document (see Concept Development starting on page 15 of the **Conceptual Trails Plan**).

## Trail System Concept

This conceptual trail plan is zone based with conceptual corridors being illustrated as tools for communicating intended connectivity, experience objectives and potential project scale. Ten unique zones (1-10) subdivided among three sections (A, B, C) work together to achieve the goals outlined by the client and derived from community feedback.

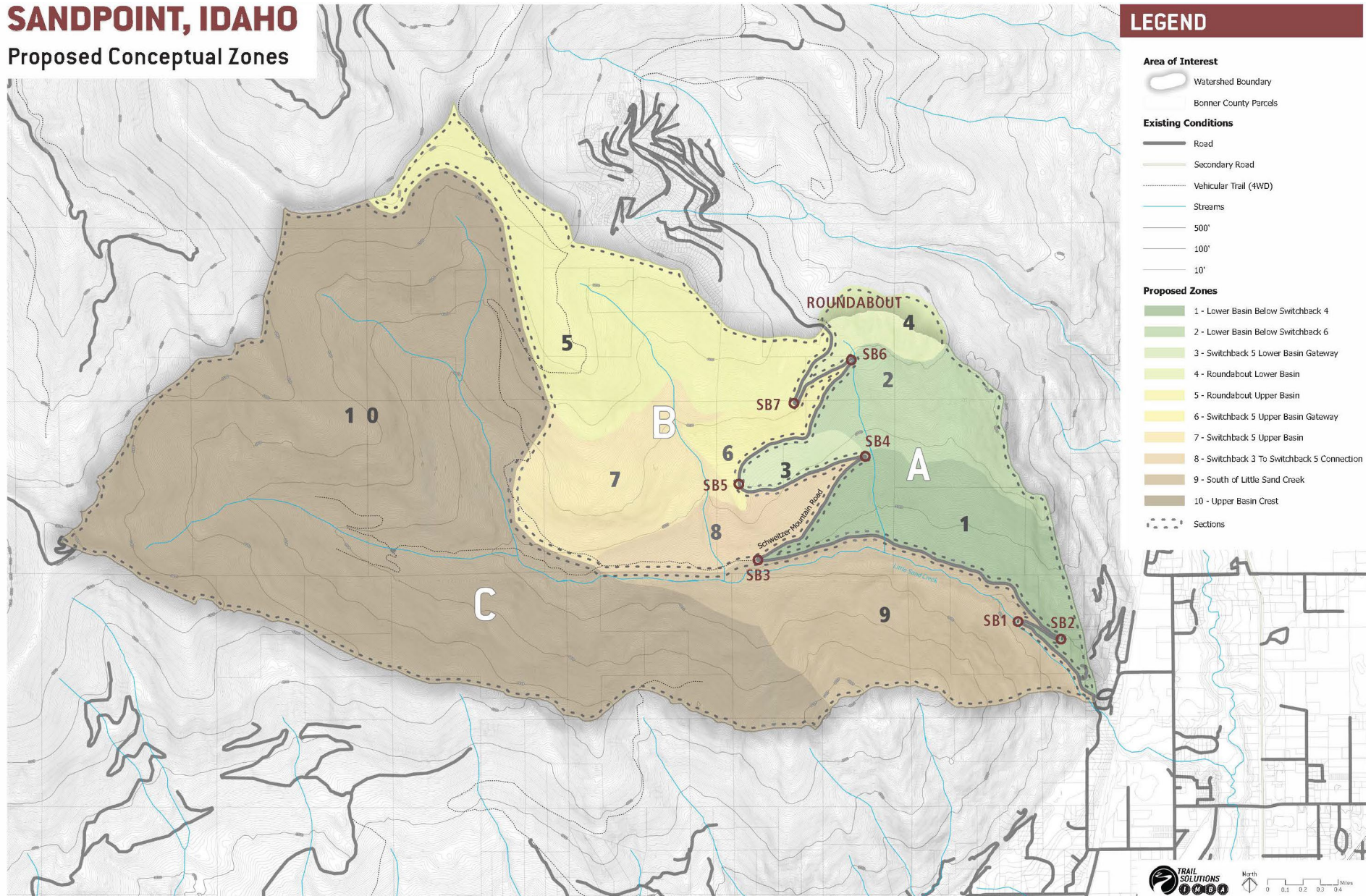
## Project Goals

1. To protect or enhance the water quality in Little Sand Creek.
2. Provide sustainable access and desired experiences for community members to connect with their Watershed.
3. Develop a trail network that appeals to all ability levels.
4. Incorporate both shared-use and bike-optimized trails.

The City of Sandpoint is in a unique position as majority landowner to facilitate the planning for public access to their municipal Watershed. This conceptual plan introduces a mix of trail types that balance the recreational and water quality goals. This planning effort envisions 40-50 miles of new singletrack trails that provide a mix of trail types and experiences.

# SANDPOINT, IDAHO

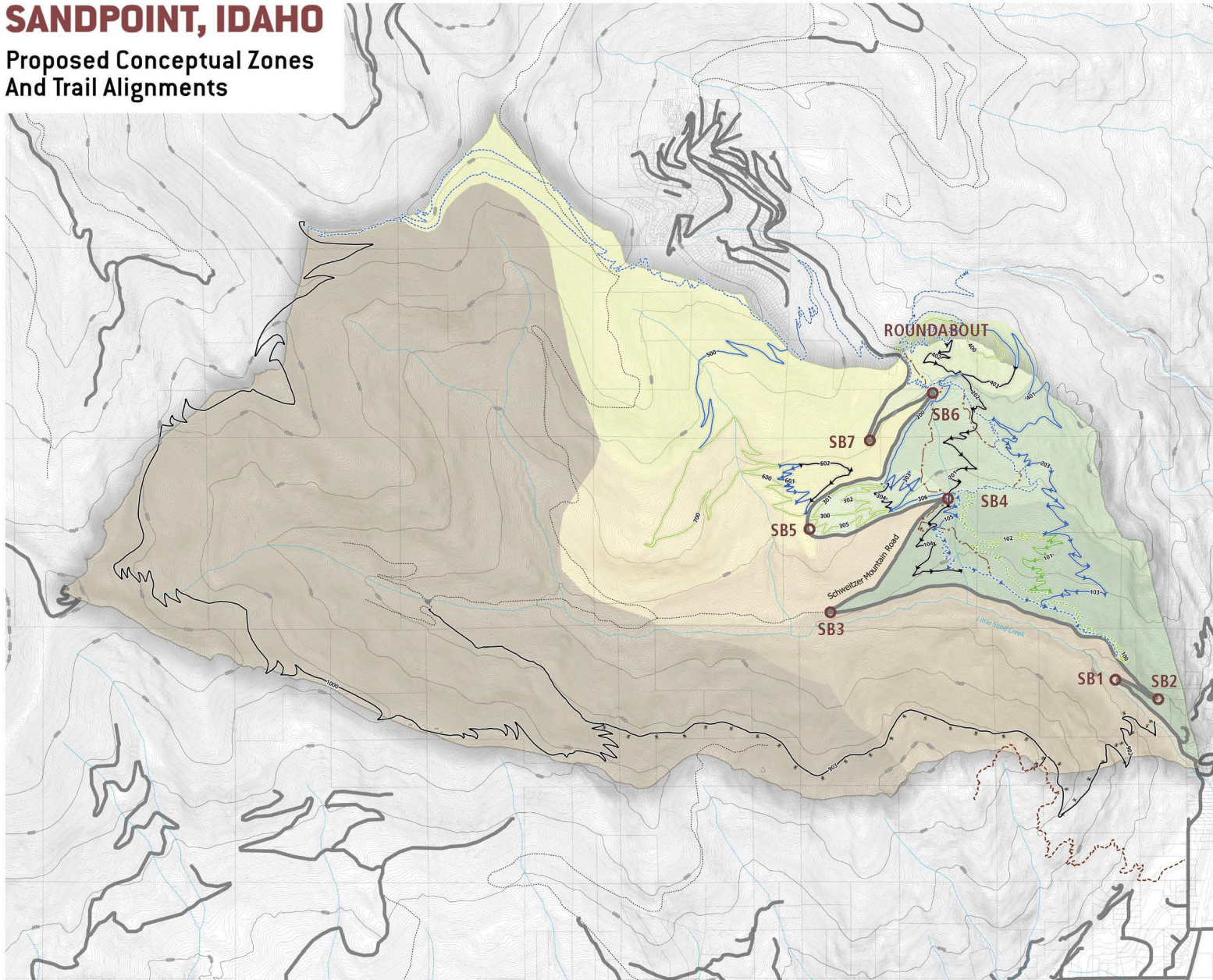
## Proposed Conceptual Zones



Map showing proposed conceptual zones. See Appendix B for all maps. IMBA-TS

# SANDPOINT, IDAHO

## Proposed Conceptual Zones And Trail Alignments



### LEGEND

- Area of Interest**
  - Watershed Boundary
  - Bonner County Parcels
- Existing Conditions**
  - Road
  - Secondary Road
  - Vehicular Trail (4WD)
  - Streams
  - 500'
  - 100'
  - 10'
- Existing Alignments**
  - Existing Green Bidirectional
  - Existing Blue Bidirectional
  - Existing Blue Directional
  - Existing Black Directional
  - Decommission
  - Mickinnick Hiking Trail
- Future Proposed Conceptual Alignments**
  - Difficult, Direction, Planned User**
    - Black, Bidirectional, Hike Only
    - Black, Bidirectional, Shared Pedestrian Use
    - Black, Down, Bike Only
    - Blue, Bidirectional, Shared Pedestrian Use
    - Blue, Down, Bike Only
    - Green, Bidirectional, Shared Pedestrian Use
    - Green, Down, Bike Only
- Proposed Zones**
  - 1 - Lower Basin Below Switchback 4
  - 2 - Lower Basin Below Switchback 6
  - 3 - Switchback 5 Lower Basin Gateway
  - 4 - Roundabout Lower Basin
  - 5 - Roundabout Upper Basin
  - 6 - Switchback 5 Upper Basin Gateway
  - 7 - Switchback 5 Upper Basin
  - 8 - Switchback 3 To Switchback 5 Connection
  - 9 - South of Little Sand Creek
  - 10 - Upper Basin Crest

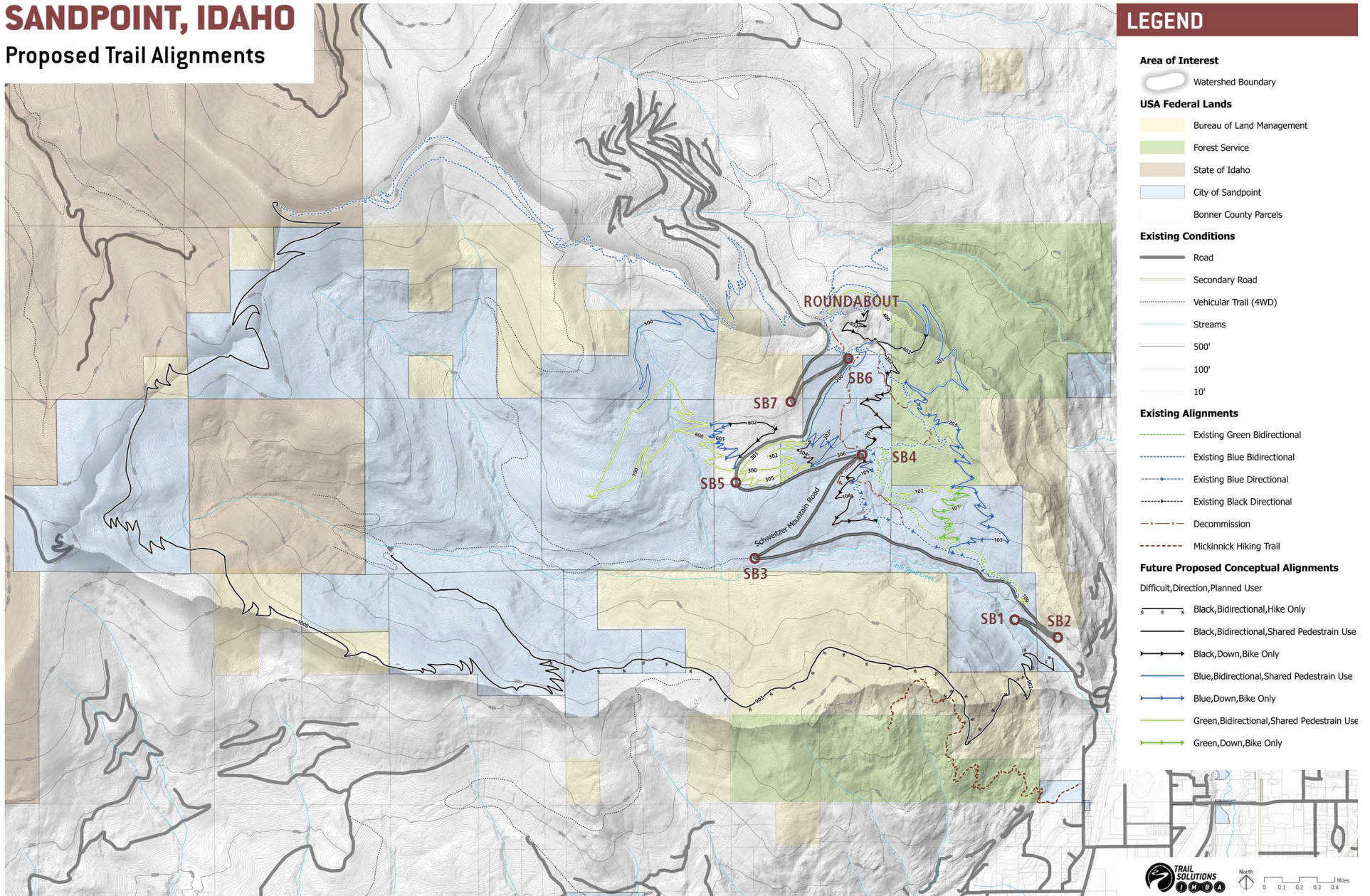


Map showing proposed conceptual zones and trail alignments. See Appendix B for all maps. IMBA-TS



# SANDPOINT, IDAHO

## Proposed Trail Alignments



Map showing proposed trail alignments. See Appendix B for all maps. IMBA-TS

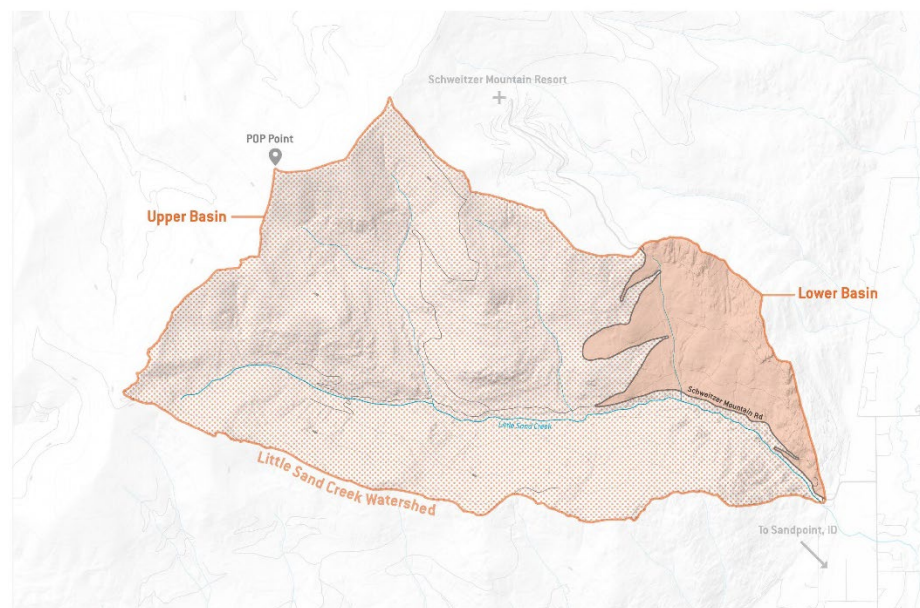
### Upper vs. Lower Basin and Wildlife Considerations

As land managers seek to accommodate recreational demand, it's important to recognize how trails can function as a tool to manage where people go on the landscape. Trail design should minimize the impacts that people have on the natural resources of a given landscape, including both wildlife and their habitat. Good trail design also enhances the visitor experience and provides opportunities to enjoy the natural world, which includes viewing wildlife. Formal studies will be done to better understand the potential impacts specific to the Watershed, but IMBA-TS used certain guiding principles to ensure they made educated decisions within this conceptual design. The guiding principles can be found in [Colorado's Guide to Planning Trails with Wildlife in Mind](#).

This conceptual plan prioritizes the utilization of already impacted areas with precedent for recreation and improving, diversifying, and expanding upon those opportunities. This will reduce the overall impact to the landscape and the wildlife that inhabit the Watershed. The Upper Basin, or the land within the Watershed west of Schweitzer Mountain Road has increasingly complex terrain, and more prominent perennial drainages the present heightened water quality and wildlife concerns.

Based on feedback during the scoping of this effort, more detailed analysis and recommendations are being made for the Lower Basin. Momentum, recreational impact precedent and fewer coordinating parties make trail development more feasible in the short-term. All trail alignments shown shall be considered concepts and will require further field work and refinements through exhaustive future field design efforts.

### Upper vs. Lower Basin



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FEBRUARY 2023



Map showing the lower and upper basins of the Watershed. This plan proposes concentrating trails where there is already trail activity and along Schweitzer Mountain Road. IMBA-TS



The image on the right shows how consolidating trails can be an important consideration to achieve the goal of minimizing habitat fragmentation. From Colorado's Guide to Planning Trails with Wildlife in Mind.

## Zones 1-4 (Section A)

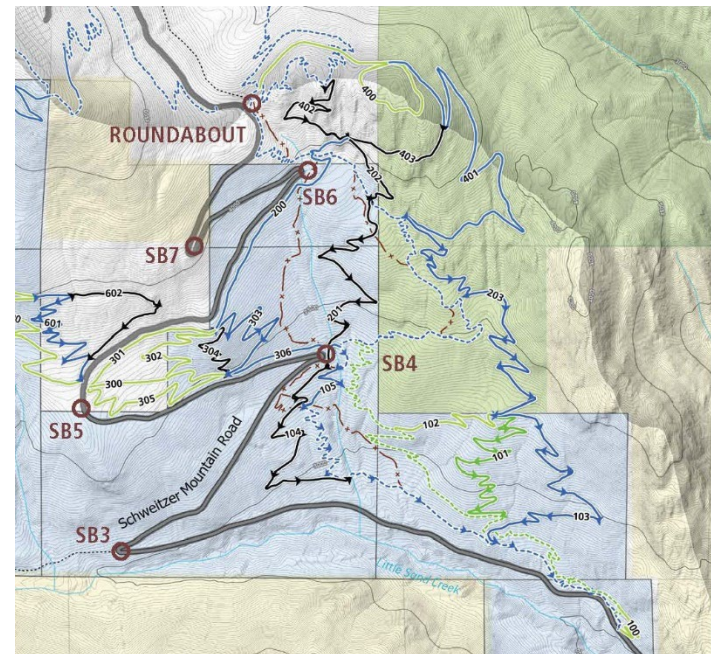
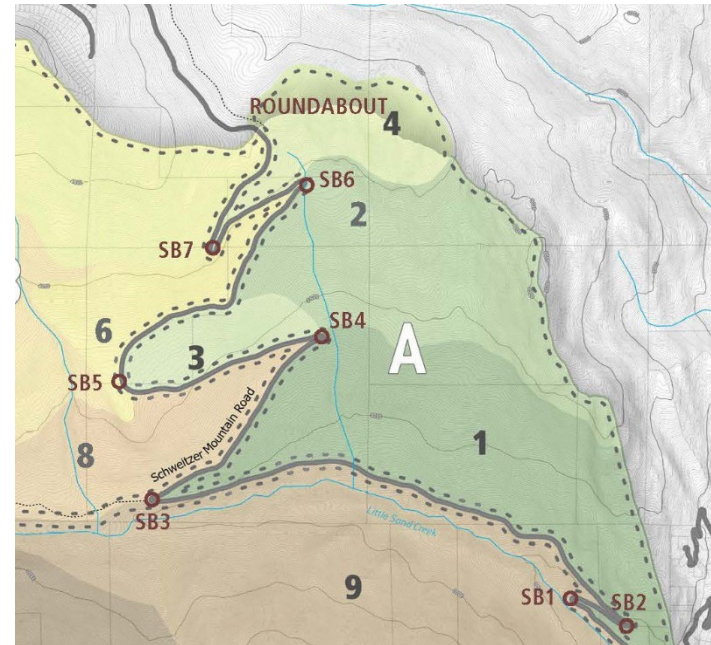
### Zone 1

Section A is the area of land that is commonly referred to as the Lower Basin. Zone 1 begins with access from the existing trailhead at Switchback 2. Following along from bottom to top, a new and separated shared-use climbing trail (segment 100) is proposed to mitigate the conflict on the dual directional trail that exits onto Schweitzer Mountain Road. The old alignment will continue to serve riders exiting the system while the new trail will be a skill level appropriate entry to completely separate directional users on these trails. Improvements to the existing trail will take place during the summer of 2023 under a previously approved and RTP funded effort by POP.

Proposed segment (102) is a bidirectional shared-use green trail that brings riders to the highest point in the vicinity while remaining on City land where riders can choose from a directional bike-only beginner trail (101) or an intermediate directional bike-only trail (103). This creates two progressive, south facing loops less than 3 miles long that riders can session starting in early spring. These loops will reduce pressure on the upper sections of the system while those trails dry out. These loops will also provide truly beginner riders with a short, optimized trail experience that they can lap to gain confidence before exploring the rest of the system. As coordination with the USFS moves ahead simultaneously with design development there is an opportunity for these trails to move north and extend the loops beyond the City's property line.

Proposed segment (105) is an alignment that reroutes the existing blue trail to bring it away from the road and open up a corridor for proposed trail (104) with fewer intersections. These two proposed segments enable the decommissioning of the existing downhill alignment that is impacting water quality and creating safety concerns.

See Appendix B to reference large scale maps.



Top map shows proposed zones in Section A. Bottom map shows conceptual trail network. IMBA-TS

## Zone 2

Access to zone 2 is either up the trail system from Switchback 2, or across from the proposed trailhead at Switchback 5 through zone 3. Proposed trail segment (200) is conceptualized to bring trail users deeper into the Watershed from zone 3. Users can choose to connect up to the Roundabout or take proposed black, directional, bike-only segments (202) and (201) that make up the middle two thirds of the black gravity trail that runs from the top of the lower basin to the bottom. Proposed segment (203) is accessed from the existing trail on USFS land and is the top half of the blue gravity trail that run from two thirds up the lower basin to the bottom. These proposed segments on USFS lands have been introduced to the land manager to potentially include in a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Categorical Exclusion (CE). Those conversations are ongoing.

## Zone 3

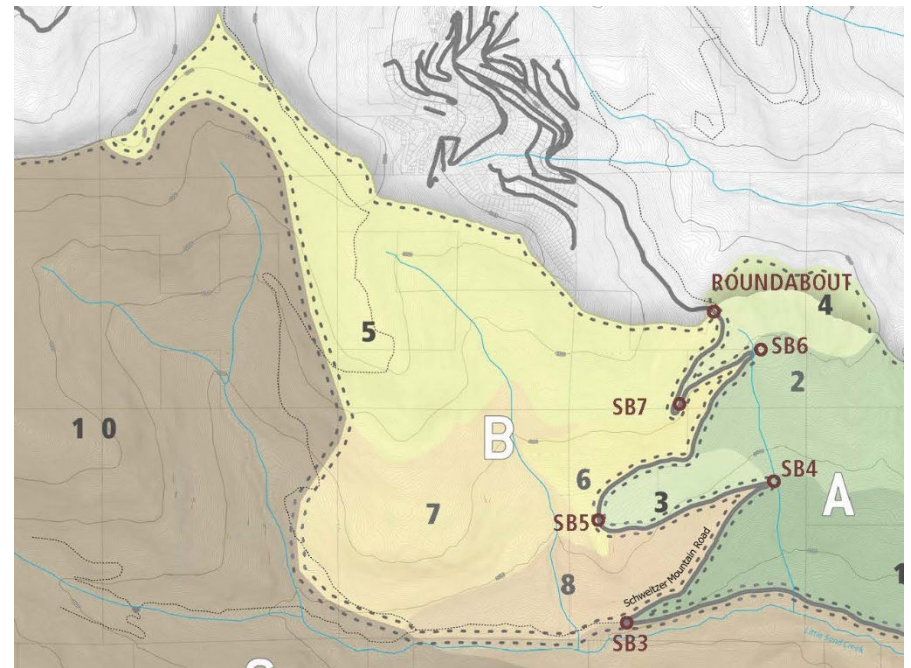
Access to zone 3 is either across the road from the proposed trailhead at Switchback 5, or up the trail system from Switchback 2. All proposed segments in this zone are conceptualized to create a progressive loop system so beginner trail users accessing the Watershed from Switchback 5 can build confidence and skills to take them further into the trail system. Proposed segments (300, 301, 302, 303, and 305) all have the potential to support fat biking and Nordic skiing activities.

## Zone 4

Access to zone 4 is from the Roundabout. Proposed trail segment (400) is a lollipop loop envisioned for beginner trail users to capitalize on the panoramic views from the knob just beyond the existing View Ski Trail. It also has the potential to support Nordic programming in the winter. Proposed segments (402 and 403) are two different launch points for the start of the black gravity trail. Proposed segment (401) provides a bidirectional trail that brings users to a scenic and unique ridge, down into the Watershed. A reroute of the existing blue bidirectional trail should be explored in the design phase of this zone.

## Zones 5-8 (Section B)

Section B expands trail use into what this document refers to as the Upper Basin, or lands west of Schweitzer Mountain Road. The proposed trails in this section are significantly less dense and prioritize shared use trail experiences when compared to the trails proposed in Section A. This is due to the lack of existing trail impacts and the desire to minimize wildlife habitat fragmentation.



Map shows Section B with Zones 5, 6, 7, and 8. See Appendix B to reference large scale maps. IMBA-TS

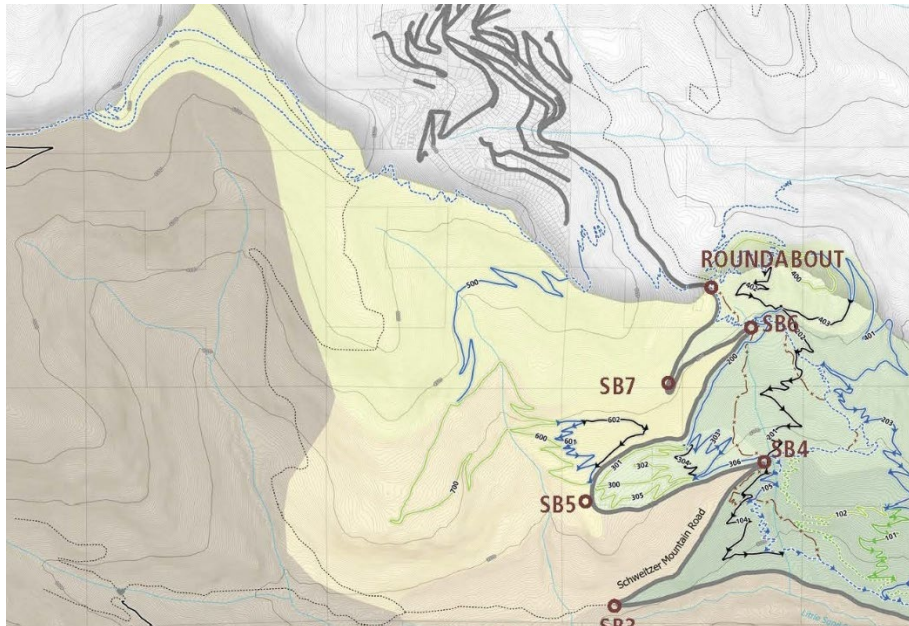
## Zones 5, 6, and 7

Trail segments proposed in zone 5 prioritize connecting trail users from the existing Highpoint and Solar Ecstasy trails down to the proposed trailhead at Switchback 5. Proposed segment (500) is shown to strategically avoid routing on BLM lands for coordination and permitting simplicity. Bringing a downhill specific trail through section B was considered but ultimately ruled out in an effort to separate experience goals. Maintaining the existing use pattern of downhill bike traffic on existing trails and bring high-speed users down to the Roundabout where the continuation of a more gravity

fed bike optimized experience is offered. A new pattern of use is established here where riders looking to access POP Point from the midpoint trailhead can climb through zones 5, 6, and 7, rather than the bottom of the Lower Basin up the same trails they come down. This would be a slightly shorter loop and would reduce the number of high-speed users at the bottom of the Lower Basin. Proposed segments (600, 601, and 602) are conceptualized to create a progressive loop system so beginner trail users accessing the Watershed from Switchback 5 can build confidence and skills to take them further into the trail system.

### Zone 8

This zone does not currently have any alignment shown due to concern about water quality impact and recreational use of the currently closed service road spurring west off of Switchback 3. The timeline to implement this entire plan is long. Activating this zone with a trail or trails that connect proposed segment (700) to the service road may prove valuable and less impactful than initially assumed. These connections would only be necessary when the Watershed Crest Trail is completed - which because of permitting, funding, and terrain constraint is later in the proposed phasing.



Proposed trails in Section B, Zones 5-8. See Appendix B for all maps. IMBA-TS

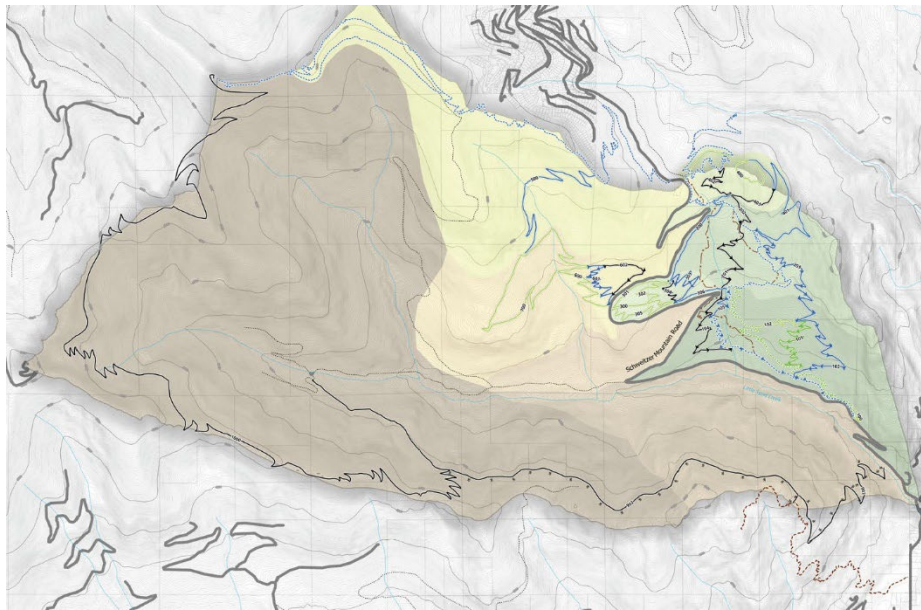
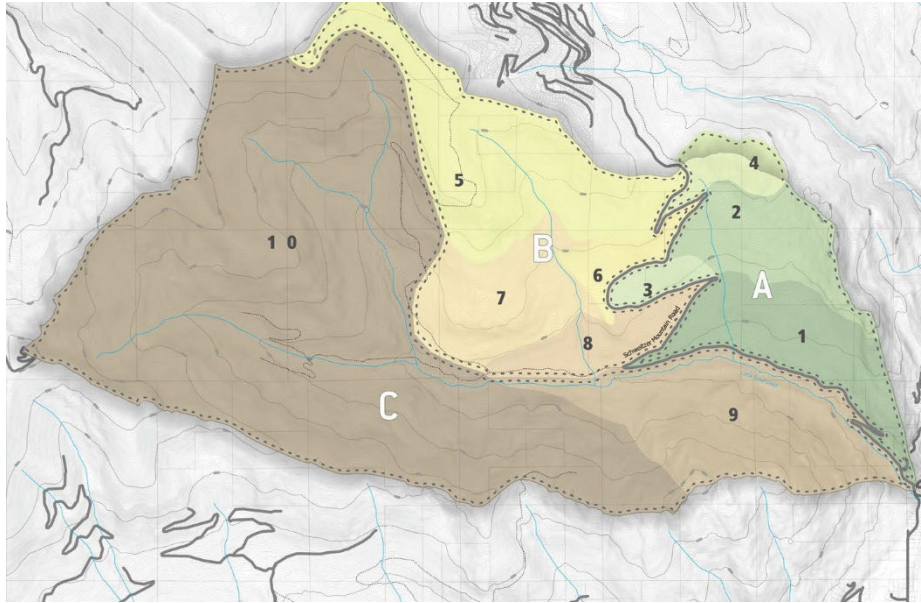
### Zones 9 & 10 (Section C)

Section C expands into the furthest western extents of the Watershed and is the least dense conceptually of all three sections. This is due to the lack of existing trail impacts and the desire to minimize wildlife fragmentation and impacts to water quality considering this section's proximity to Little Sand Creek. There are two major trail system goals for this section:

- \* To realize the Watershed Crest Trail (WCT)
- \* To offer a hiking specific connection from the Watershed to the Mickinnick trail to activate the beautifully rugged north facing slopes south of Little Sand Creek.

Currently the WCT is drawn primarily on public lands. It does, however, cross onto private land in one section where the avoidance of the property corner put the alignment into significantly compromised terrain. The cost to route through or around said terrain necessitates an easement or similar agreement be pursued first with the private landowner. Decisions will need to be made in the future about how the WCT crosses the Little Sand Creek and connects back into the system to Switchback 5. This should be addressed in future design phases.

Proposed segment (902) illustrates a connection from Mickinnick Trail and proposed trail (903) to the water treatment facility. Spanning Little Sand Creek will be a significant effort, likely involving bridge engineers. Because of the potential impacts to water quality, the siting of this crossing is extremely important. IMBA-TS is proposing the crossing downstream of the treatment facilities. This can also be a strategic opportunity to improve supporting infrastructure around the facilities and utilize them as an educational venue. This location from a terrain perspective is one of the best to put a crossing of Little Sand Creek until you get to Switchback 3.



Top map shows Section C. Bottom map shows conceptual trail network. See Appendix B to reference large scale maps. IMBA-TS

### Watershed Crest Trail

In February of 2015, the City provided its first formal support for recreation in the Watershed by resolution (15-16), envisioning a “Watershed Crest Trail” that would wrap around the Watershed, connecting the Schweitzer recreation area, Baldy Mountain, and Mickinnick to the east, totaling approximately 20 miles.

This version of the WCT follows the same visions and at a conceptual level utilizes the most realistic terrain possible. This will minimize the future design and build costs. It prioritizes minimizing permitting constraints that could further slow the process while upholding the overall goal set forth by the Watershed recreational master plan being developed by the city. The Watershed Crest Trail requires more study, and its eventual design alignment is contingent on information we do not yet have.



Views from "POP Point". M. Nevins-Lavtar

## Cost Opinion

Note that the cost opinion on page 28 is for trail construction ONLY. It is intended to set broad and generalized expectations for the cost of professional trail construction. This does not include any other supporting infrastructure like the development of trailheads or a comprehensive signage package. This also does not include costs for design or permitting. It is IMBA's recommendation that all trail design be done professionally and by individuals with experience working with federal land managers and the nuanced expectations and documentation that accompany that process. A general rule of thumb is to budget 5-10% of the cost of a professionally built trail for the design and design documentation of the project.

A keen eye will notice that there are line items in this cost opinion for trail segments that do not appear on the map. Lines on a map can be nonstarters for some individuals. In an effort to maintain the vision setting goals of this plan IMBA worked with partners at the City to identify segments that navigate contentious areas and made the conscious decision not to show them on the map. Instead, they are discussed as desired connections above. These alignments have been drawn and exist on project spatial files to be held by the city and used as steps are taken towards implementation. They are included in the cost opinion to provide the most accurate number associated with this conceptual design.

## Phasing

The following table on page 29 with phasing recommendations is developed with achieving the goals of the plan top of mind. The phases are broken out to appeal to trail contractors and to consider potential fundraising efforts. They also prioritize maintaining access to the system while construction is happening to maintain continuity of use for the community in the Watershed. There are still many unknown factors at this point in the planning process that have the potential to dramatically shift the phasing of implementation.

These phasing recommendations don't necessarily imply construction is happening every year for the next eight years. Several of these phases could be tackled in one build season by coordinating a multi-team effort across several zones. Trail construction could pause for several years to execute design efforts, demonstrate good stewardship, and build relationships with land managers. The overall timeline will depend on fundraising efforts, permitting processes, and the continued demonstration of good trail stewardship.



*City staff and POP members discuss the Watershed Crest Trail on a site visit.*

Cost Opinion

Section A - Zones 1-4													
Number	Zone	Status	Difficulty	Style	Direction	Action	Planned Trail User	Nordic Potential	Mileage	Linear Footage	Low Cost Opinion	High Cost Opinion	
100	1	Proposed	Green	Mountain Bike Optimized	Bidirectional	Design	Shared Use	Unlikely	0.25	1342	\$ 21,726.58	\$ 24,013.58	
101	1	Proposed	Green	Gravity	Down	Design	Bike Only	Unlikely	1.23	6476	\$ 116,522.25	\$ 128,787.75	
102	1	Proposed	Green	Traditional	Bidirectional	Design	Shared Use	Unlikely	0.48	2549	\$ 22,930.01	\$ 25,343.69	
103	1	Proposed	Blue	Gravity	Down	Design	Bike Only	Unlikely	1.21	6368	\$ 114,574.75	\$ 126,635.25	
104	1	Proposed	Black	Gravity	Down	Design	Bike Only	Unlikely	0.92	4860	\$ 87,450.07	\$ 96,655.34	
105	1	Proposed	Blue	Gravity	Down	Design	Bike Only	Unlikely	0.28	1497	\$ 26,940.58	\$ 29,776.43	
200	2	Proposed	Blue	Traditional	Bidirectional	Design	Shared Use	Unlikely	0.86	4521	\$ 40,672.87	\$ 44,954.23	
201	2	Proposed	Black	Gravity	Down	Design	Bike Only	Unlikely	0.99	5231	\$ 94,117.36	\$ 104,024.45	
202	2	Proposed	Black	Gravity	Down	Design	Bike Only	Unlikely	0.32	1669	\$ 30,022.66	\$ 33,182.94	
203	2	Proposed	Blue	Gravity	Down	Design	Bike Only	Unlikely	1.48	7790	\$ 140,152.55	\$ 154,905.45	
300	3	Proposed	Green	Traditional	Bidirectional	Design	Shared Use	Maybe	0.23	1195	\$ 10,749.58	\$ 11,881.12	
301	3	Proposed	Green	Traditional	Bidirectional	Design	Shared Use	Maybe	0.44	2339	\$ 21,039.94	\$ 23,254.67	
302	3	Proposed	Green	Mountain Bike Optimized	Bidirectional	Design	Shared Use	Maybe	0.83	4393	\$ 71,139.85	\$ 78,628.25	
303	3	Proposed	Blue	Gravity	Down	Design	Bike Only	Maybe	0.75	3968	\$ 71,389.27	\$ 78,903.93	
304	3	Proposed	Black	Gravity	Down	Design	Bike Only	Unlikely	0.38	2023	\$ 36,398.97	\$ 40,230.44	
305	3	Proposed	Green	Traditional	Bidirectional	Design	Shared Use	Maybe	0.72	3790	\$ 34,095.03	\$ 37,683.98	
306	3	Proposed	Blue	Traditional	Bidirectional	Design	Shared Use	Unlikely	0.36	1893	\$ 17,025.47	\$ 18,817.63	
400	4	Proposed	Green	Traditional	Bidirectional	Design	Shared Use	Maybe	1.02	5363	\$ 48,242.90	\$ 53,321.10	
401	4	Proposed	Blue	Traditional	Bidirectional	Design	Shared Use	Unlikely	1.70	8988	\$ 80,860.20	\$ 89,371.80	
402	4	Proposed	Black	Gravity	Down	Design	Bike Only	Unlikely	0.61	3232	\$ 58,152.83	\$ 64,274.18	
403	4	Proposed	Black	Gravity	Down	Design	Bike Only	Unlikely	0.36	1920	\$ 34,552.83	\$ 38,189.97	
Total									15.42	81,406	\$ 1,178,756.51	\$ 1,302,836.15	
Section B - Zones 5-8													
Number	Zone	Status	Difficulty	Style	Direction	Action	Planned Trail User	Nordic Potential	Mileage	Linear Footage	Low Cost Opinion	High Cost Opinion	
500	5	Proposed	Blue	Mountain bike Optimized	Bidirectional	Design	Shared Use	Unlikely	1.80	9481	\$ 153,520.38	\$ 169,680.42	
600	6	Proposed	Green	Traditional	Bidirectional	Design	Shared Use	Maybe	1.80	9501	\$ 85,474.35	\$ 94,471.65	
601	6	Proposed	Blue	Mountain bike Optimized	Down	Design	Bike Only	Unlikely	0.95	5039	\$ 81,602.91	\$ 90,192.69	
602	6	Proposed	Black	Mountain bike Optimized	Down	Design	Bike Only	Unlikely	0.55	2900	\$ 46,959.42	\$ 51,902.52	
700	7	Proposed	Green	Traditional	Bidirectional	Design	Shared Use	Maybe	1.63	8614	\$ 77,491.03	\$ 85,647.98	
701	7	Proposed	Blue	Mountain bike Optimized	Bidirectional	Design	Shared Use	Unlikely	2.25	11860	\$ 192,050.10	\$ 212,265.90	
800	8	Proposed	Blue	Mountain bike Optimized	Bidirectional	Design	Shared Use	Unlikely	1.72	9106	\$ 147,449.03	\$ 162,969.98	
Total									10.70	56,500	\$ 784,547.21	\$ 867,131.13	
Section C - Zones 9 & 10													
Number	Zone	Status	Difficulty	Style	Direction	Action	Planned Trail User	Nordic Potential	Mileage	Linear Footage	Low Cost Opinion	High Cost Opinion	
900	9	Proposed	Blue	Traditional	Bidirectional	Design	Hike Only	Unlikely	2.63	13898	\$ 125,029.98	\$ 138,191.03	
901	9	Proposed	Blue	Traditional	Bidirectional	Design	Hike Only	Unlikely	0.37	1975	\$ 17,768.99	\$ 19,639.41	
902	9	Proposed	Black	Traditional	Bidirectional	Design	Hike Only	Unlikely	1.77	9348	\$ 84,099.23	\$ 92,951.78	
903	9	Proposed	Black	Traditional	Bidirectional	Design	Hike Only	Unlikely	2.65	13977	\$ 125,738.68	\$ 138,974.33	
1000	10	Proposed	Black	Mountain Bike Optimized	Bidirectional	Design	Shared Use	Unlikely	10.40	54921	\$ 889,336.80	\$ 982,951.20	
Total									17.83	94,119	\$ 1,241,973.67	\$ 1,372,707.74	
<b>Grand Total</b>									<b>43.94</b>	<b>232025.17</b>	<b>\$ 3,205,277.39</b>	<b>\$ 3,542,675.01</b>	

Table 3: Cost opinion for proposed conceptual trail segments. IMBA-TS



Phasing

Phase 1 - System Circulation												
Number	Zone	Status	Difficulty	Style	Direction	Action	Planned Trail User	Nordic Potential	Mileage	Linear Footage	Low Cost Opinion	High Cost Opinion
100	1	Proposed	Green	Mountain Bike Optimized	Bidirectional	Design	Shared Use	Unlikely	0.25	1342	\$ 21,726.58	\$ 24,013.58
105	1	Proposed	Blue	Gravity	Down	Design	Bike Only	Unlikely	0.28	1497	\$ 26,940.58	\$ 29,776.43
104	1	Proposed	Black	Gravity	Down	Design	Bike Only	Unlikely	0.92	4860	\$ 87,450.07	\$ 96,655.34
201	2	Proposed	Black	Gravity	Down	Design	Bike Only	Unlikely	0.99	5231	\$ 94,117.36	\$ 104,024.45
<b>Total</b>									<b>2.45</b>	<b>12,930.36</b>	<b>\$ 230,234.57</b>	<b>\$ 254,469.79</b>
Phase 2 - Lower Progressive Loops												
Number	Zone	Status	Difficulty	Style	Direction	Action	Planned Trail User	Nordic Potential	Mileage	Linear Footage	Low Cost Opinion	High Cost Opinion
102	1	Proposed	Green	Traditional	Bidirectional	Design	Shared Use	Unlikely	0.48	2549	\$ 22,930.01	\$ 25,343.69
101	1	Proposed	Green	Gravity	Down	Design	Bike Only	Unlikely	1.23	6476	\$ 116,522.25	\$ 128,787.75
103	1	Proposed	Blue	Gravity	Down	Design	Bike Only	Unlikely	1.21	6368	\$ 114,574.75	\$ 126,635.25
<b>Total</b>									<b>2.92</b>	<b>15393</b>	<b>\$ 254,027.01</b>	<b>\$ 280,766.69</b>
Phase 3 - USFS Managed Trails												
Number	Zone	Status	Difficulty	Style	Direction	Action	Planned Trail User	Nordic Potential	Mileage	Linear Footage	Low Cost Opinion	High Cost Opinion
202	2	Proposed	Black	Gravity	Down	Design	Bike Only	Unlikely	0.32	1669	\$ 30,022.66	\$ 33,182.94
203	2	Proposed	Blue	Gravity	Down	Design	Bike Only	Unlikely	1.48	7790	\$ 140,152.55	\$ 154,905.45
401	4	Proposed	Blue	Traditional	Bidirectional	Design	Shared Use	Unlikely	1.70	8988	\$ 80,860.20	\$ 89,371.80
403	4	Proposed	Black	Gravity	Down	Design	Bike Only	Unlikely	0.36	1920	\$ 34,552.83	\$ 38,189.97
400	4	Proposed	Green	Traditional	Bidirectional	Design	Shared Use	Maybe	1.02	5363	\$ 48,242.90	\$ 53,321.10
<b>Total</b>									<b>4.87</b>	<b>25729</b>	<b>\$ 333,831.14</b>	<b>\$ 368,971.26</b>
Phase 4 - Switchback Five Connection												
Number	Zone	Status	Difficulty	Style	Direction	Action	Planned Trail User	Nordic Potential	Mileage	Linear Footage	Low Cost Opinion	High Cost Opinion
200	2	Proposed	Blue	Traditional	Bidirectional	Design	Shared Use	Unlikely	0.86	4521	\$ 40,672.87	\$ 44,954.23
301	3	Proposed	Green	Traditional	Bidirectional	Design	Shared Use	Maybe	0.44	2339	\$ 21,039.94	\$ 23,254.67
305	3	Proposed	Green	Traditional	Bidirectional	Design	Shared Use	Maybe	0.72	3790	\$ 34,095.03	\$ 37,683.98
306	3	Proposed	Blue	Traditional	Bidirectional	Design	Shared Use	Unlikely	0.36	1893	\$ 17,025.47	\$ 18,817.63
303	3	Proposed	Blue	Gravity	Down	Design	Bike Only	Maybe	0.75	3968	\$ 71,389.27	\$ 78,903.93
<b>Total</b>									<b>3.13</b>	<b>16510</b>	<b>\$ 184,222.58</b>	<b>\$ 203,614.43</b>
Phase 5 - Upper Basin Connection												
Number	Zone	Status	Difficulty	Style	Direction	Action	Planned Trail User	Nordic Potential	Mileage	Linear Footage	Low Cost Opinion	High Cost Opinion
500	5	Proposed	Blue	Mountain bike Optimized	Bidirectional	Design	Shared Use	Unlikely	1.80	9481	\$ 153,520.38	\$ 169,680.42
600	6	Proposed	Green	Traditional	Bidirectional	Design	Shared Use	Maybe	1.80	9501	\$ 85,474.35	\$ 94,471.65
700	7	Proposed	Green	Traditional	Bidirectional	Design	Shared Use	Maybe	1.63	8614	\$ 77,491.03	\$ 85,647.98
302	3	Proposed	Green	Mountain Bike Optimized	Bidirectional	Design	Shared Use	Maybe	0.83	4393	\$ 71,139.85	\$ 78,628.25
300	3	Proposed	Green	Traditional	Bidirectional	Design	Shared Use	Maybe	0.23	1195	\$ 10,749.58	\$ 11,881.12
304	3	Proposed	Black	Gravity	Down	Design	Bike Only	Unlikely	0.38	2023	\$ 36,398.97	\$ 40,230.44
<b>Total</b>									<b>6.67</b>	<b>35207</b>	<b>\$ 434,774.15</b>	<b>\$ 480,539.85</b>
Phase 6 - Fill In												
Number	Zone	Status	Difficulty	Style	Direction	Action	Planned Trail User	Nordic Potential	Mileage	Linear Footage	Low Cost Opinion	High Cost Opinion
402	4	Proposed	Black	Gravity	Down	Design	Bike Only	Unlikely	0.61	3232	\$ 58,152.83	\$ 64,274.18
601	6	Proposed	Blue	Mountain bike Optimized	Down	Design	Bike Only	Unlikely	0.95	5039	\$ 81,602.91	\$ 90,192.69
602	6	Proposed	Black	Mountain bike Optimized	Down	Design	Bike Only	Unlikely	0.55	2900	\$ 46,959.42	\$ 51,902.52
<b>Total</b>									<b>2.12</b>	<b>11171</b>	<b>\$ 186,715.16</b>	<b>\$ 206,369.38</b>
Phase 7 - Watershed Crest												
Number	Zone	Status	Difficulty	Style	Direction	Action	Planned Trail User	Nordic Potential	Mileage	Linear Footage	Low Cost Opinion	High Cost Opinion
1000	10	Proposed	Black	Mountain Bike Optimized	Bidirectional	Design	Shared Use	Unlikely	10.40	54921	\$ 889,336.80	\$ 982,951.20
902	9	Proposed	Black	Traditional	Bidirectional	Design	Hike Only	Unlikely	1.77	9348	\$ 84,099.23	\$ 92,951.78
903	9	Proposed	Black	Traditional	Bidirectional	Design	Hike Only	Unlikely	2.65	13977	\$ 125,738.68	\$ 138,974.33
<b>Total</b>									<b>14.82</b>	<b>78246</b>	<b>\$ 1,099,174.70</b>	<b>\$ 1,214,877.30</b>
Phase 8 - Final Connections (alignments in data only)												
Number	Zone	Status	Difficulty	Style	Direction	Action	Planned Trail User	Nordic Potential	Mileage	Linear Footage	Low Cost Opinion	High Cost Opinion
900	9	Proposed	Blue	Traditional	Bidirectional	Design	Hike Only	Unlikely	2.63	13898	\$ 125,029.98	\$ 138,191.03
901	9	Proposed	Blue	Traditional	Bidirectional	Design	Hike Only	Unlikely	0.37	1975	\$ 17,768.99	\$ 19,639.41
701	7	Proposed	Blue	Mountain bike Optimized	Bidirectional	Design	Shared Use	Unlikely	2.25	11860	\$ 192,050.10	\$ 212,265.90
800	8	Proposed	Blue	Mountain bike Optimized	Bidirectional	Design	Shared Use	Unlikely	1.72	9106	\$ 147,449.03	\$ 162,969.98
<b>Total</b>									<b>6.98</b>	<b>544521</b>	<b>\$ 482,298.09</b>	<b>\$ 533,066.31</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>									<b>11.91</b>	<b>62888</b>	<b>\$ 3,205,277.39</b>	<b>\$ 3,542,675.01</b>

Table 4: Phasing for proposed conceptual trail segments. Segment numbers with a yellow highlight represent alignments that IMBA-TS identifies as good candidates for hybrid or volunteer builds. IMBA-TS

## Trailheads

Better access points to the Lower Basin trail system were identified as one of the key needs to improve recreation in the Watershed. This includes improvements to the existing trailhead at Switchback 2 and at the Roundabout on Schweitzer Mountain Road. IMBA also identified the potential for a new trailhead at Switchback 5. These three locations would formalize access at the highpoint, midpoint, and low point of the primary trail system. This would spread users based on ability level and desired experience, and IMBA used these points as cruxes to develop the conceptual design for the trail plan.



*Hikers crossing at Switchback 2 trailhead. M. Nevins-Lavtar*

### *Existing Trailheads or Access Points*

Access to most areas of the Watershed is owned by the City of Sandpoint, with two primary access points for trails in the Lower Basin known as Switchback 2 and the Roundabout. The Roundabout is at the top of the network and is used by riders who plan to shuttle the trails or access the trails on Schweitzer property. Switchback 2 is at the bottom of the trail network and is used by most riders who are not shuttling. The parking area is across Schweitzer Mountain Road from the start of the trail system,

which causes safety issues for people crossing between the trail and trailhead. In addition, sight lines from the end of the trail are limited, making it difficult for trail users to see traffic and vice versa. Switchback 2 in particular needs improvements to make it safer and more functional for trail users.

There is existing access into the Watershed at Switchback 3 by way of a road used by managers of the forest timber. This road parallels Little Sand Creek and eventually crosses it. At this time, this road will remain closed to the public due to concerns that recreational activity will impact water quality through erosion, spreading of invasive weeds, and the possibility of dogs.

### Action Steps:

- \* Analyze the area around Switchback 2 and the bottom of the trail network to determine if there is a better location on the north side of the road for a new trailhead, or if the site is too constrained to establish parking. Work with the Independent Highway District and City of Sandpoint to determine what traffic calming measures are feasible. Develop a strategic plan for both short-term and long-term improvements.
- \* Develop a short-term concept plan for the existing Switchback 2 trailhead that immediately addresses safety issues with the crossing between existing parking and the start of the trail and adjustments to the end of the trail to improve sight lines. Continue to provide a seasonal portable toilet. IMBA will be returning to Sandpoint under a separate contract with POP and the trail connectivity in this location will result in a location-specific concept plan based on field design. The final Switchback 2 Trailhead Concept Plan will be included in this plan as an additional Appendix.
- \* Work in partnership with Schweitzer, the Selkirk Recreation District, the Independent Highway District and other relative user groups such as POP to analyze the existing conditions of the Schweitzer Roundabout and explore opportunities for improving the existing conditions of the trailhead access from that location.
- \* Develop a seasonal shuttle traffic and staging plan that works with all landowners and the Selkirk Recreation District that improves safety for

users, as well as clearly defines the circulation routes for both private and public shuttles.

- \* Collaborate with the Selkirk Cooperative Weed Management Area Advisory Committee on installation of noxious weed boot cleaning stations and “knock it off” educational signage for recreationalists at each trailhead. Additionally, explore options for bikers to clean their wheels.

### *New Trailheads*

IMBA assessed other potential access points along Schweitzer Mountain Road and identified good potential for a new trailhead at Switchback 5. This area was chosen as a possible new primary trailhead due to characteristics such as ample space, relatively safe options for ingress/egress from Schweitzer Mountain Road and appropriate grades for all skill levels and a variety of four-season trail users.

The land at Switchback 5 is under the ownership of Schweitzer. Ongoing coordination and planning between Schweitzer and the City of Sandpoint is needed to determine if a trailhead is acceptable in this location, the type of trailhead design, and what, if any, partnership or agreements should be formalized.

### *Action Steps:*

- \* Develop a concept plan that illustrates size and location of parking, possible amenities such as ADA-accessible bathrooms and information kiosks, and entry points to trails.
- \* Continue exploration with the City of Sandpoint and Schweitzer into the development of proposed trailhead and trails. Identify whether an easement, purchase of land, or other agreements or partnerships work best between the City and Schweitzer.



*Cyclists stop to enjoy the sunset from the top of the Watershed. Scott Rulander*

## Winter Recreation

Winter recreation within the Little Sand Creek Watershed currently includes backcountry skiing, snowshoeing, winter hiking, dog walking on packed trails, Nordic skiing, and limited fat biking (mostly on Schweitzer's groomed trails). There is also evidence of ice climbing. Schweitzer reports an average snowfall of 300" which is typical snowpack depth for the elevations above Switchback 4. The majority of the winter recreation occurs in the upper elevations above the Schweitzer roundabout, with winter camping being allowed on Schweitzer's property at the fire station parking lot.



*Members of the Sandpoint Nordic Club discuss trails with IMBA-TS. B. Byrne*

## Nordic Skiing

Nordic skiing in the form of classic cross-country and backcountry ski touring occurs in the lower elevations, with tracks often seen entering the Watershed from Switchback 3, 4 and above in the Upper Basin. Schweitzer promotes Nordic skiing as one of its activities and as such, they provide the appropriate trail grooming for skate and classic styles. In winter of 2023, a new road was constructed that extends from the round-about and heads northwest toward the ski area's new base area called "Base Camp", where a new high-speed quad is being installed. The road was groomed in 2023, and a variety of winter users frequently used it without the need of a ski pass. Users included Nordic classic and skate skiers, dog walkers, winter runners, snowshoers, and fat bikers. At approximately 20 feet in width, the groomed road proved to be an excellent opportunity to experience a true multi-use trail.

The planning team was unable to fully develop a winter use trail concept plan without a more robust site investigation, but some recommendations are included in IMBA's Concept Trail Plan that speak to the potential for multi-seasonal, multi-use trail opportunities within both the existing and proposed trail network. As the demand for higher elevation winter trails grows and with the accessibility of groomed trails, the development of a winter multi-use trail system is in alignment with the outdoor trends and the level of service goals of the City of Sandpoint *2020 Parks and Recreation Plan*.

The challenge with a winter trail network in the Watershed is the steep terrain within the available landscape. Generally, wider trails on relatively flat or gentle inclines are desired for this trail type. The steep terrain would require significant construction efforts, similar to building a new road. That ultimately is inconsistent with the primary goal of preserving and improving water quality within the Watershed. However, some of the conceptual trail alignments proposed by IMBA-TS should be analyzed for inclusion of classic cross-country touring during the design phase. In particular, the area around Switchback 5 may be appropriate for Nordic skiing and could be explored along with beginner-friendly shared use trails.

The practicality of management should also be considered. Grooming equipment is expensive, requires a maintenance facility and

operator/mechanic, and poses a threat to the Watershed's clean water if anything were to malfunction. The community desires free and accessible Nordic skiing opportunities within the Watershed, and all long-range recreation planning should continue to explore this further.

At the time of this writing, the consensus was to recommend that a short-term solution should include continued discussions with Schweitzer, City of Sandpoint, and the Sandpoint Nordic Club about a potential public-private partnership. Such discussions should result in a cooperative agreement that has the community in mind, while balancing the feasibility of realizing the goal of providing affordable access to groomed wide trails for multi-use trail users. In addition, the feasibility of Nordic ski trails should be considered with all upper elevation access points and trails as the *Conceptual Trail Plan* are further analyzed and designed.

#### Action Steps:

- \* Explore opportunities for public-private partnerships between the City of Sandpoint and Schweitzer for winter recreation trail development, maintenance, and management.
- \* When developing new trails, particularly around Switchback 5, seek opportunities for increased Nordic skiing opportunities in collaboration with relative partners.
- \* Study options for development of an off-the-grid "front country" facility that would be multi-purpose, family-friendly, ADA-accessible, four-season shelter that could also serve as an educational base camp facility for community members of all ages to study outdoor education, natural resources, snow science, and other related programs.

#### Backcountry Skiing

High elevation, consistent snowfall, varied terrain, and an adventurous community make backcountry skiing a popular sport within the upper Watershed and throughout the region. Typically, backcountry skiers will enter the Watershed from the Solar Ecstasy trail and the top of Schweitzer. Most skiers turn around after about 1,000 feet and skin back to the in-bounds resort area, but some will ski out to Schweitzer Mountain Road. Backcountry skiing is a growing sport, however it is also an inherently

dangerous sport. There is a need for additional avalanche education training sites that could accommodate entry-level backcountry users on low-angle terrain. There may be an opportunity for collaboration with the Idaho Panhandle Avalanche Center and/or Schweitzer Ski Patrol to offer local avalanche education classes and introduction to backcountry ski touring courses if safer, low-angle ski slopes can be easily accessed for training. However, it is also noted, that backcountry education often includes multiple day winter camping or touring to remote huts, and currently camping within the Watershed is prohibited on City of Sandpoint property.

#### Action Steps:

- \* Work in collaboration with the Idaho Panhandle Avalanche Center and Schweitzer Ski Patrol, to study the interest, viability and suitability of backcountry skiing opportunities, access for winter snow skills education, and development of a potential hut experience that could also be used as a classroom. The analysis should include slope, aspect, elevation, distance to roads, distance to access points (trailheads, access gates), tree cover, and tree density. Critical wildlife habitat areas should also be shown on a map and developed in conjunction with Idaho Fish and Game.
- \* Install additional avalanche beacon checkpoints and safety and informational signage at popular backcountry skiing trailheads.
- \* Initiate partnerships and promotional efforts that make Sandpoint a place known for its backcountry skiing, safety, and educational offerings.

#### Fat Biking

Fat biking refers to mountain bikes with fatter tires. These fatter tired bikes can be used in both summer and winter season. With the wider tires, the bikes are often more stable on uneven terrain, making them easier to ride and more accessible for the entry-level biker. Adjusting the air pressure for the conditions can help improve the bike's ability to grip the surface, however the lower the air pressure, the slower the bike will travel.

In snowy conditions, trails with less than 6-8" of snow can typically be ridden without being groomed or packed out, however in deeper



*Fat tired bike on a snow trail. IMBA-TS*

conditions, a groomed trail is preferred. In northern climates, winter fat biking has become very popular with skiers as a complimentary winter activity. Grooming can be done by snowshoe, pull-behind grooming rollers, special singletrack grooming machines, snowmachines with a pull-behind trail groomer, or by snowcat. Trails that are maintained for winter use become just as popular in winter as in summer for winter bikers. It is preferred that bikers and hikers use separate trails or separate “lanes” if on a shared-use trail, as hikers will often cause divots in the snow which results in an uneven riding experience, however if the trail is well compacted, then shared trails can withstand a variety of user.

Winter biking has emerged as a popular activity on the groomed Nordic trails at Schweitzer and on groomed singletrack maintained by POP in the Syringa System closer to town, but, as of yet, winter biking in the Watershed has been limited to early season explorations by a hardy group of locals on the Lower Basin trails. The Trails Plan included in this

document envisions the possibility of groomed winter trails open to winter bikers and snowshoers within zones 3 and 6, which would be accessed from the proposed trailhead parking area at Switchback 5.

#### Action Step:

- \* Explore opportunities for winter trail maintenance on existing trails and development of trails within zones 3 and 6 that could accommodate winter grooming operations in the future, with fat bikers, snowshoers, and classic cross-country skiers in mind.

### Road Biking

While the Watershed is known more for its trails attracting mountain bikers, many road cyclists also bike up Schweitzer Mountain Road. Currently there is a limited shoulder on the side of the road and no room for a bike lane in either direction, so the comfort level for road biking is low, particularly for entry-level or less experienced cyclists.

Schweitzer Mountain Road falls under the jurisdiction of the Independent Highway District. To improve the road for bikers, either through a wider shoulder or dedicated bike lane, the Independent Highway District has considered the feasibility of bike lanes, as outlined in their 2019 Transportation Plan. However, additional feasibility studies and regarding future road improvement projects may provide an opportunity to make the road safer for cyclists and connect the projects to Federal funding.

#### Action step:

- \* Coordinate with the Independent Highway District on future road improvement projects to improve safety for bikers. Explore the possibility of a feasibility study looking at wider shoulders or a bike lane that would connect from the mountain to adjacent communities.

### Rock or Ice Climbing

The impacts to the land from rock or ice climbing are seemingly minimal, however there are a number of issues related to the use of crags by rock climbers: trampling of vegetation, erosion on paths to crags and at the base of climbs, loss of ancient seed banks on ledges during “cleaning” of

routes, damage to plants and lichens growing on the cliff face, disturbance of nesting birds, disturbance and displacement of animal species in the vicinity of the crag, and damage to the rock face through bolting and erosion. While this activity has not been as popular as other recreation, as trails expand and climbing opportunities present themselves, consideration for educational signage, trailhead development with support facilities such as pit-toilet restrooms and land management should be considered. Additionally, entry-level rock and ice climbing opportunities should be explored as the sport is often considered more affordable with minimal gear requirements for bouldering and the health benefits complement biking as a synergistic sport. The town of Sandpoint has one rock gym, but with the general appeal of outdoor recreation to the north Idaho region, there is ample reason to consider studying other potential climbing areas in conjunction with trail and trailhead development as an additional recreation asset.

#### Action Steps:

- \* Monitor current climbing routes for impacts to access paths and staging areas. If erosion or damage to surrounding vegetation increases, work with climbers to mitigate damage, formalize access routes, and carry out stewardship projects.
- \* Consider climbing areas in conjunction with future trail and trailhead development.

## Passive Recreation

### *Berry Picking & Foraging*

The huckleberry was designated as the official state fruit of Idaho by the State Legislature in 2000. It's no secret that the Little Sand Creek Watershed is known to produce some of the Panhandle's most bountiful huckleberry crops, as well as many other food sources for humans and animals alike. Foraging is a mode of subsistence food collection defined by its reliance on wild plant and animal food resources already available in the environment rather than on domesticated species that have been altered by human intervention. Subsistence is related to well-being and resilience and has been a way of life for indigenous people for thousands of years.



*Huckleberry pickers. Bill Schiess, East Idaho News.*

The Watershed is both historically and currently a food source of high value to the broader community, as well as the indigenous tribes.

Huckleberry picking and foraging for other foods such as mushrooms are also a form of recreation that occurs within the watershed. Currently the biggest issue with this activity exists around lack of safe parking along the road and limited trailhead access. Additionally, there is a lack of educational information available regarding stewardship practices. Reports of entire bushes being pulled out by aggressive pickers destroy the plant, and should be mitigated through an educational outreach approach.

Commercial gathering of huckleberries is not permitted within the Watershed on City of Sandpoint or on the Idaho Panhandle National Forest property, recreational harvesting is allowed for personal use. For more information about harvesting and the fruit's benefits, visit the Idaho Panhandle National Forest's [webpage dedicated to huckleberry harvesting](#).

This plan seeks to respect indigenous peoples' perspectives on and experiences with subsistence living, support how subsistence living may contribute to well-being, resilience, and cultural connection by promoting physical exercise, a healthy diet, and psychological wellness. Investigations of subsistence living and well-being should be continued as there is

concern for protecting the natural resource of all native plant species and consideration for restricted access should be further explored through a more robust natural resource planning effort.

#### Action Steps:

- \* Develop a natural resources management plan in collaboration with other Watershed property owners and stakeholders that would include addressing management of native plants species and their preservation for generations to come.
- \* Work with natural resource experts, local indigenous tribal experts, and local educators to develop informational education programming and signage to enhance, protect, and preserve the natural resources within the Watershed.
- \* Explore opportunities for designated ADA-accessible huckleberry harvesting opportunities that would provide a safe and inclusive environment for people who may not otherwise be able to access the land. Consider designated areas for accessible harvesting as a complement to the design and development of wider trails and ADA accessible trailheads.

#### Bird and Wildlife Watching

Bird watching is a favorite passive recreation activity predominantly within the main Sand Creek corridor. As the Watershed climbs in elevation, birds are often observed flying in the air thermals high above the ski trails. In the depths of the Watershed's forest, woodland nesting species are often found within the down-fall trees and understory of the landscape.

Nationally, bird and wildlife watching has become its own niche of outdoor recreation and tourism. Birdwatching tourism or "avitourism" refers to travel where the main purpose is to observe birds in their natural habitat. Reference the [Audubon Society](#) for more information and to see an interactive map of the "birding trail" that includes a notable site at City Beach.

In the Little Sand Creek Watershed, birders or wildlife watchers can use the trail system to look for species. There may be areas where watching platforms or bird blinds are appropriate to accommodate wildlife watchers.

As the trail system is built out in the future, it will be important to protect habitat and wetlands or other critical habitat areas to ensure birds and wildlife are not displaced.

#### Action Steps:

- \* Work with the University of Idaho, the Audubon Society or other wildlife researchers to conduct field studies, data collection and analysis on wildlife and bird activity in the Watershed. Use data to identify areas to protect, such as nesting sites, breeding territory, and key migration routes.
- \* Identify areas that may be appropriate for bird or wildlife viewing platforms or bird blinds.



*Viewing platforms in the Watershed would provide opportunities for people to enjoy amazing views of the landscape. B. Byrne*



## Electric-Assisted Bicycles

An e-bike is a bicycle with a small electric motor of less than 750 watts which assists in the operation of the bicycle and reduces the physical exertion demands on the rider. E-bikes are widely defined in a three-tier classification (see graphic on this page). The rise of e-bike's popularity in the region is growing annually and industry trends indicate that this is just the beginning. These types of bikes serve a variety of users, abilities, and all ages.

USFS uses the three classes and considers e-bikes as a form of motorized recreation. USFS trails designated as “non-motorized” do not allow any use of e-bikes, however local Forest Service managers have the ability to assess trails, determine if e-bikes are appropriate, and are encouraged to expand access to recreation opportunities on their forests and grasslands in ways that meet user needs while continuing to protect forest resources. See the [USFS website on e-bikes](#) for more information.

Similarly, BLM land managers may authorize the use of e-bikes on non-motorized trails through a land-use planning process. See the [BLM website on e-bikes](#) for more information.

The City of Sandpoint does not currently have an e-bike policy. The community has shown a strong interest in developing a policy for both asphalt recreation paths within City limits and for their open space recreation management areas, including the Watershed.

### Action Steps:

- \* Develop an e-bike policy for the Little Sand Creek Watershed and other City lands based on input from stakeholders and the public.
- \* Collaborate with USFS and other land managers in the Watershed to establish a consistent e-bike policy for the trail network.

**USDA** **Forest Service**  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

# E-BIKES

Also referred to as an electric mountain bike (eMTB), a type of motor vehicle with two wheels attached to a frame, one behind the other, equipped with fully operable pedals and an electric motor of less than 750 watts that meets the requirements of one of the following three classes.

	DESCRIPTION	PEDAL OPERATED ONLY	MAXIMUM MOTOR-ASSISTED SPEED	LICENSE PLATE	HELMET SUGGESTED
BICYCLE	BICYCLES are two wheeled vehicles with a rear drive and propelled solely by human power using pedals.	YES	N/A	NO	YES
E-BIKE	CLASS 1 E-BIKES are equipped with a motor that provides assistance only when the rider is pedaling and that ceases to provide assistance when the e-bike reaches the speed of 20 miles per hour.	YES	20 MPH	NO	YES
E-BIKE	CLASS 2 E-BIKES are equipped with a motor that may be used exclusively to propel the e-bike and that ceases to provide assistance when the e-bike reaches the speed of 20 miles per hour.	NO	20 MPH	NO	YES
E-BIKE	CLASS 3 E-BIKES are equipped with a motor that provides assistance only when the rider is pedaling and that ceases to provide assistance when the e-bike reaches the speed of 28 miles per hour.	YES	28 MPH	NO	YES

*A graphic describing the different classes of e-bikes. Courtesy of the US Forest Service*

## LIMITED OR REGULATED RECREATION

City Code, Title 7, Chapter 16 defines regulated Watershed activities. It states that certain activities may harm the City's waterworks or pollute the City's water supply. It is unlawful for any person to engage in any of the specified activities within the Watershed without first obtaining a permit from the City authorizing such activity. Recreational activities requiring a permit include:

- \* Hunting
- \* Horseback riding
- \* Campfires
- \* Camping
- \* Use of any motorized vehicles, except on Schweitzer Mountain Road

Anyone proposing to undertake a regulated use or activity would need to file an application for a Watershed Permit with the City on a form prescribed by the City and in accordance with the adopted Watershed Permit Procedures. (Ord. 1383, 12-16-2020). Currently there is not an official Activities Permit application available, and the procedure to enact a permitting process within the City parcels has yet to be administratively developed. Action should be taken to develop a permit and fee structure, if desired, for those activities requiring regulated management.

### Action Steps:

- \* Develop the administrative permit application, fee structure (where applicable), and procedure necessary to allow for limited or regulated recreation.

### Hunting

Public interest for hunting as an allowable use has been expressed during the outreach process, and the City of Sandpoint was approached by the Idaho Fish and Game with an initial inquiry request to allow hunters to access private property via the City's parcels located on the south and southwestern portion of the Watershed. There is evidence that indigenous tribes had historically hunted throughout the region. Currently hunting is prohibited, however there is precedent for permitted hunting to be allowed

in other North Idaho Watersheds and it is recommended that hunting opportunities be explored in conjunction with Idaho Fish and Game wildlife management experts. In other areas where hunting and recreation coincide, often bowhunting is the preferred practice of hunting game animals by archery. Many indigenous peoples have employed the technique as their primary hunting method for thousands of years, and it has survived into contemporary use for sport and hunting. Additional hunting considerations may include ADA-accessible hunting for areas where access could be obtained. The USFS does make some areas available for adaptive hunting, but this topic has not been explored with the regional Forest Service management.

### Action Steps:

- \* Work with Idaho Fish and Game wildlife management experts to explore hunting as a limited use in the Watershed.

### Camping

Camping is a restricted activity within the Watershed, however the opportunity for a front-country, ADA-accessible family camping experience close to the road is desired by some in the community as an introduction to the outdoors. There are many barriers to backpacking and overnight camping in the wilderness, with the cost of camping gear being a significant prohibiting factor for many local youth and families. The challenges with camping for a family are only compounded by the post-covid popularity of destination recreation tourism in Bonner County, which has resulted in a lack of available camping facilities, from RV Parks to campgrounds, to weekend hut rentals. Currently camping is prohibited within City property, but Schweitzer offers camping in their roundabout parking lot and provides pit-toilets and trash facilities to overnight guests. While backcountry camping can pose significant environmental damage and the potential for wildfires is a concern, a "front-country" style hut or simple structure with easy roadside access could be developed with ADA-accessibility included in the design.

### Action Steps:

- \* Collaborate with stakeholders to explore what type of camping, if any, might be appropriate in the Watershed and where it could be located.

### *Vendors, Events and Commercial Activities*

The City of Sandpoint currently requires a permitting process for all businesses seeking to operate on City property. This process is similar for anyone seeking to host an event, such as a bike race, geocache event, or any other special event. It is recommended that a similar process be utilized for anyone seeking to conduct business or host a special event within the Watershed, on City Property.

There is one mountain bike shuttle company currently operating during summer months within the Watershed, however it is stationed out of Schweitzer-owned property and travels between the “Red Barn” parking lot and the Roundabout, both owned by Schweitzer. With limited trail access points located along the road, this type of operation should continue to be supported and monitored. All relative property owners should explore opportunities to realize benefits from revenues generated by shuttles for infrastructure improvements. The shuttle operation reduces safety concerns of having increased biker recreation traffic along the road, reduces congestion at the trailheads, and reduces the vehicular traffic within the Watershed. However, with limited access at Switchback 2, the number of shuttle operators should be managed appropriately. Additionally, existing transportation systems such as the Selkirks/Pend Oreille Transit (SPOT) could be considered as a way to connect the mountain community efficiently and safely with regional hubs.

Educational and/or guiding businesses and non-profits that offer services that would strengthen the community’s level of interest or recreation skills are seen as valuable community resources. Opportunities to improve safety, educate users about land stewardship, and generate funds from which a percentage could be returned to the land management entity are supported by the goals of this planning effort. A similar business license and/or permit system should be established for City of Sandpoint property. Where operators desire to utilize other parcels, the property owners should be contacted, and the process should be communicated to all key

stakeholders within the watershed. It may be possible to develop a permit system that would be collaborative with multiple agencies, but that is likely to take considerable administrative management by one service provider and further research is required prior to recommendation of an implementation strategy.

Special events such as bike races are opportunities to bring in revenue that could fund maintenance, projects, and other improvements within the Watershed. However, with an attractive event comes increased use of the land. An evaluation committee should be established that includes representatives from each property agency, with the goal of establishing a special event criterion that would seek to prioritize the protection of the clean water first and reduce the impacts to the land and management.

### Action Steps:

- \* Develop a permit and policy for all businesses and non-profits seeking to operate on City of Sandpoint property.
- \* Coordinate with other Watershed property owners and establish a committee to explore special event permitting and the potential development of a shared-use permit agreement and process. The committee should also consider implementing a process for monitoring user numbers, impacts to the land and creating a fund that could support projects, maintenance, or other improvements within the Watershed.
- \* Coordination with the current shuttle operator, Schweitzer, and the IHD should continue and opportunities for directing revenue towards Watershed recreation improvements and maintenance should be explored, while also continuing to explore the potential for leveraging the SPOT transit system.

## Unregulated Uses

No permit is required for a person participating in an activity that is lawful and occurs in designated, authorized areas and locations. Unregulated public uses include hiking, berry picking, mushroom harvesting, cross-country skiing, and bicycle riding (excludes any kind of trail construction). These uses will be subject to general Watershed rules. These rules include but are not limited to the following and shall be signed accordingly:

- \* Pack out all trash
- \* No motorized vehicles
- \* No overnight camping
- \* No target shooting or hunting
- \* No equipment or tools
- \* No campfires
- \* No smoking
- \* Clean your gear to prevent the spread of invasive species

Signage illustrating these rules will be posted at Watershed entry points. Boot scrub pads and informational placards describing the importance of protecting the Watershed from invasive species should also be placed at Watershed entry points and other strategic locations. Watershed signage should also clearly define fines for breaking Watershed rules.

## Dogs in the Watershed

Many people who participate in outdoor recreation love to take their dogs along with them. However, dogs can have impacts that affect water quality, such as causing off-trail erosion, trampling vegetation, carrying seeds from noxious weeds, and leaving behind fecal waste that can pollute water and transmit harmful parasites. Treating drinking water can become very costly, so it is important to limit impacts to water quality as much as possible.

Many municipal Watersheds prohibit dogs. In public lands with sensitive ecosystems, dogs may be restricted to certain areas, or there may be a requirement to keep dogs on leash, or under voice control.

Sandpoint currently does not have a dog policy for the Watershed, but one is necessary as the trail system is developed to prevent impacts to the City's drinking water.

### Action Steps:

- \* Develop a policy for dogs in the Watershed. Determine whether it is feasible to restrict dogs to a certain area, or if they should be prohibited and to what extent. Collaborate with other landowners to ensure consistency across the Watershed.



*Cody enjoys his off-leash winter adventures on the View Ski trail, accessed from the Schweitzer Roundabout.*

## PLACEMAKING

The Little Sand Creek Watershed, encompassing land managed by the City, Schweitzer, USFS, and BLM, is envisioned to be a regional recreation hub for four season outdoor enthusiasts. With the diverse ecology and cultural history, there are abundant opportunities to connect residents and visitors to the built environment. Sandpoint area residents have repeatedly expressed their desire to maintain the community's "authentic character" when faced with new development of any scale. It is important that the Watershed's recreation assets maintain a unified look and feel, that can be repeated and subliminally recognized throughout all the Watershed's built projects, while maintaining the authentic regional vernacular. This unified vernacular, theming, and design "language" will enable users to recognize and recall the sense of place, improve safety, and provide an educational experience. Additionally, by connecting residents and visitors to the ecological, historical, and cultural attributes of the land, there exists potential to create improved stewardship of the environment.

Placemaking encompasses the creative design and development of various facilities and elements within a specific area. It aims to incorporate cultural, historical, and scientific expressions to establish a meaningful and authentic connection between people and their environment. By integrating biophilic design principles, which emphasize a deep bond with nature, placemaking can further enhance this relationship by drawing upon indigenous cultural, historical, geographical, and ecological connections.

Designers have numerous opportunities to adopt a holistic approach to placemaking by integrating biophilic references and incorporating indigenous culture, history, and science. Below are some examples of how this integration can be achieved:

1. **Geological Patterns:** Designers can utilize geological patterns found in the area to inspire and inform the design of various elements within the landscape. For instance, natural formations, such as rock formations or geological layers, can inspire the design of seating arrangements, pathways, or viewing platforms.

2. **Ecology and Biodiversity:** Understanding the local ecology and promoting biodiversity is crucial in placemaking. Designers can incorporate native plant species, create habitats for wildlife, and establish wildlife corridors within the landscape. This approach ensures that the design not only complements the natural environment, but also supports and enhances the local ecosystem.
3. **Local Materials:** Using locally sourced materials in the construction of facilities and structures not only reflects the authenticity of the place, but also reduces the environmental impact associated with transportation. Designers can work with local communities to identify suitable materials that align with the cultural and historical significance of the area.
4. **Indigenous Cultural References:** Placemaking can celebrate and honor indigenous culture by incorporating design elements that reflect the traditions, beliefs, and values of the local indigenous communities. This can be achieved through the integration of indigenous art, storytelling, or symbolic representations in structures, signage, or artwork.
5. **Informational Signage and Interpretive Elements:** Placemaking can include informative signage and interpretive elements that educate visitors about the cultural, historical, and scientific aspects of the area. These elements can provide insights into indigenous knowledge, traditional land uses, historical events, or ecological processes, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of the place.

By employing these strategies, designers can create a holistic and meaningful placemaking approach that not only enhances the physical environment but also fosters a strong connection between people, culture, history, science, and the natural world. This integration promotes sustainability, supports the well-being of both humans and ecosystems, and ensures the preservation and celebration of the unique qualities of a specific Watershed landscape.

### Signage

During the outreach process, the community expressed a desire for improved wayfinding and an identifiable theme that cohesively unifies the

entire Watershed recreation offerings, facilitate safe pedestrian and bicycle movement, while also maintaining distinctive design details that would indicate a change in property ownership. The USFS has examples of how they use the same repeated branding to establish a connection to place, while maintaining landowner recognition in the placemaking of their public parcels.

The existing signage within the Lower Basin includes a naming system that was the result of years of unmanaged trail development. Over the last year POP has worked closely with the City of Sandpoint to implement an Emergency Response Safety Signage program that includes using a red cross symbology with a letter and number structure that references the trail and intersection location and is geographically referenced with coordinates provided to the County for integration into the emergency response system.

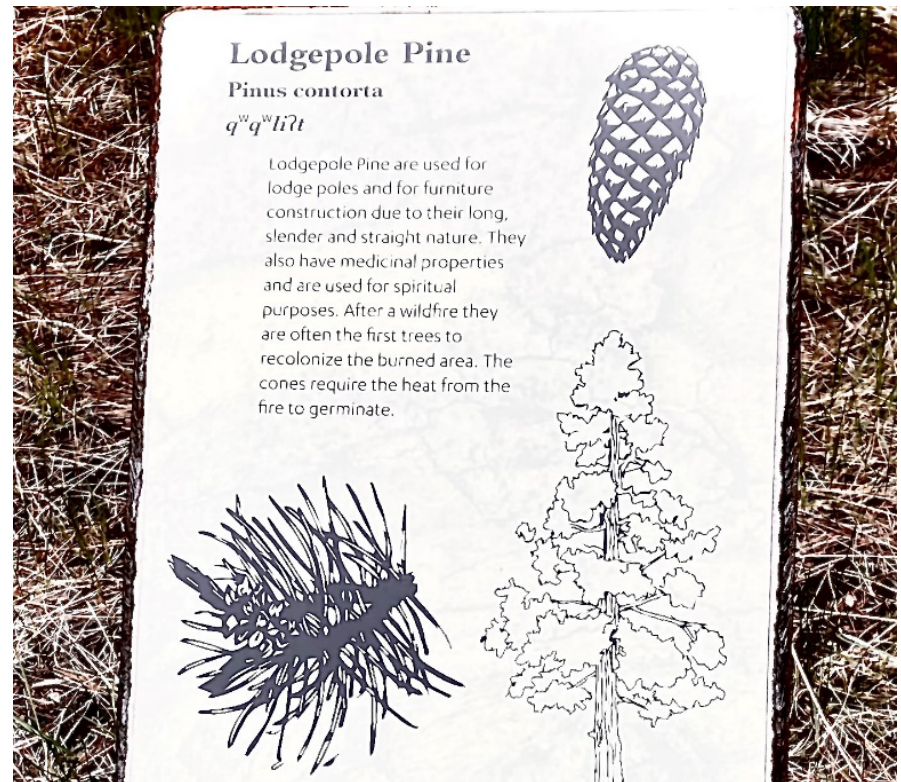
The City will work with partners to develop a signage plan that would incorporate indigenous place names for traditional geographic features or other relative identifiers. This could include trail name signs, and interpretive signs for identifying plants species and other natural resources. In other natural areas throughout North America, there are examples of utilizing both the English and the indigenous name on the same sign. In addition, signs should be designed to be inclusive and with best practices for people with disabilities in mind for all areas that serve the general public such as trailheads, interpretive areas, and accessible trails. Samples of inclusive signage may include using braille, opportunities for QR code integration to allow for technology, or use of other languages. Inclusive signage should include consideration for size and color of font and other graphic design elements that would increase the accessibility for users of all abilities to the Watershed.

Action Steps:

- \* Work with a collaborative group to establish placemaking themes and strategies. Develop design guidelines for recreation infrastructure and amenities.
- \* Develop a branding and signage plan to establish design guidelines for use on all signs and related elements such as kiosks, etc. Develop and

install signage illustrating Watershed use rules and “designated areas,” as applicable. This should include all related infrastructure and amenities. Work with tribal partners to incorporate indigenous place names. Use design techniques that ensure signage meets the needs of people with disabilities.

- \* Create opportunities to bring Sandpoint area residents of all ages, and particularly youth, together for meaningful art-making and creative experiences in the Watershed. Incorporating art will enhance the user experience and activate stewardship of the land.
- \* Use placemaking activities to enhance Sandpoint's identity as a unique cultural, recreational, and ecological destination.
- \* Secure diversified and sustainable funding for placemaking in the Watershed to help provide stability for local artists and arts and culture organizations.



Example interpretive sign from the Kalispel Tribe's Indian Creek Community Forest with name description for a Lodgepole Pine tree in English, Latin and Salish.

## EDUCATION AND CONSERVATION

### Education in the Watershed

As part of the larger recreation master plan for the Little Sand Creek Watershed, it is crucial to prioritize educational access to support active learning about this special place. The Watershed provides a rich opportunity for place-based learning, building knowledge and skills to sustain the area and improve the quality of life for the surrounding community.

As part of the planning process for the Recreation Plan, an Education Working Group explored ideas for infrastructure, youth leadership and involvement, collaborative partnerships, educational programming asset mapping, and learning opportunities.

Potential programming and learning opportunities may include a hands-on and remote stream monitoring and stewardship program, history and ecology of Lake Pend Oreille and how it is impacted by tributaries such as Little Sand Creek, comprehensive Watershed education curriculum for students that emphasizes balance in light of increased human impacts, and an internship and apprentice program hosted by local municipalities and non-profit partners. Learning objectives will focus on experiential and hands-on experience with real world applications. Ideally, learning opportunities will be offered in such a manner that they build progressively from K through 12th grade and beyond. The opportunity also exists to one day construct a Watershed education center to serve as a hub for this programming, either in the Watershed or along Sand Creek.



*The Watershed provides a rich opportunity for place-based learning. Kaniksu Land Trust.*

#### Action Steps:

- \* Investigate opportunities to provide infrastructure such as educational trails, outdoor classrooms, and informational signs to offer hands-on, experiential learning opportunities.
- \* Establish collaborative partnerships to develop education programs that support learning in and about the Watershed.
- \* Collaborate with partners to create an asset map of existing educational programs that educate the community on the Watershed's significance.
- \* Initiate a planning study to explore site options and feasibility for a future education center. The center has potential to also serve as an accessible hut or community center.
- \* Establish a Watershed education advisory committee dedicated to the advancement of outdoor education, who can serve in an advisory capacity to the land management and stakeholders of the Watershed.

## Conservation in the Watershed

The most important function of the Little Sand Creek Watershed is to serve as a municipal drinking water source, and protecting water quality is the top goal of management for the Watershed. A secondary goal is to provide opportunities for compatible uses of the land, and one of the guiding principles of this recreation plan is to look for appropriate recreational experiences while protecting wildlife, vegetation, and natural characteristics of the Watershed.

To develop the recommendations for this plan, the planning team considered the following principles:

- \* Prohibit trail development or recreational activity near the Little Sand Creek as the primary water source.
- \* Avoid wetlands or sensitive riparian areas. Route trails away from secondary creeks except for necessary crossings.
- \* Encourage concentration of use and trails in already disturbed areas, such as the Lower Basin.
- \* Limit erosion through sustainable trail grades, proper design and construction, and regular maintenance.
- \* Consider seasonal patterns and habitat of wildlife in development of future trails.
- \* Explore options to incorporate indigenous-led conservation methods.

### Water Quality

To protect sensitive riparian ecological sites, this plan sets buffer zone restrictions within the Watershed to 300 feet slope distance on either side of the ordinary high-water mark on fish bearing streams (e.g., Little Sand Creek), 150-foot slope distance from the ordinary high-water mark on either side for non-fish bearing streams, and 50 feet from intermittent waterways, in alignment with Idaho Panhandle National Forest guidelines.

Protection of wetland critical areas should be achieved primarily through avoidance and establishment of buffer areas. All wetland areas should be protected by at least a 15-foot perimeter buffer, while wetlands larger than one acre should be surrounded by a 150-foot buffer.

The *Little Sand Creek Watershed Management Plan* provides guidelines, resources, and more information on best practices for interactions with riparian areas.



*Damaged culvert located on lower portion of Little Sand Creek shows need for protection and remediation along creek to protect water quality.*

### Wildlife

Deer, elk, and moose are the most prevalent big game species in the Watershed. Bald eagle, black bear, coyote, various owls, and woodpeckers (including black-backed woodpeckers) are also known to occur. Four ESA listed species of wildlife could potentially be found within the Watershed: grizzly bear, woodland caribou, Canada lynx, and gray wolf. Although bald eagles are no longer listed as an endangered species they are still protected by the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. (See the Wildlife section of the *Existing Conditions* chapter on page 11 for a more complete discussion of species in the Watershed).

There is no designated habitat for grizzly bears or caribou, as delineated habitat units for these species are located north and west of the Watershed. There is the potential for these species to travel through or inhabit this area on occasion, although it is unlikely in particular for caribou as their range occurs well to the north of Indian Creek in Boundary County.



Similarly, no evidence of lynx or gray wolves was found during field inspections for the Watershed Management Plan, but they may inhabit or pass through the Watershed.

Little Sand Creek and its tributaries provide excellent fish habitat for west slope cutthroat trout, rainbow trout, brook trout, and bull trout. Bull trout are listed as a threatened species, and though Little Sand Creek is not yet listed as critical habitat for bull trout it is in close proximity to critical habitat in the Clark Fork River Basin. If bull trout are present within the creek, any activities within the Watershed should consider potential impacts to bull trout. Activities utilizing federal funding or that require federal permitting (EPA Construction Stormwater & USACE S404) will be required to comply with the terms and conditions and best management practices (BMPs) of a programmatic or individual biological opinion in order to carry out the project. Compliance with these BMPs will ensure protection of other trout species as well.

Wildlife habitat and travel patterns are important factors in determining locations for recreation. IMBA-TS used principles found in [Colorado's Guide to Planning Trails with Wildlife in Mind](#) to guide recommendations in the conceptual trail plan, and that document should continue to be a reference as trail alignments are developed in the Watershed. To the extent possible, trails and recreational activity should be concentrated in appropriate areas, preferably where there is already existing activity. New trails should avoid breeding territory and key migration routes and should be planned to limit habitat fragmentation. To make the best-informed decisions regarding trails and recreational activity, more information should be gathered to document wildlife species and patterns of use in the Watershed.

### *Indigenous Led Conservation*

Throughout the public outreach process, a common interest in the community was a desire for inclusion and a call to “welcome home” indigenous people. Historical evidence indicates that the original conservation and natural resource stewardship of the land in the Sandpoint area was led by the local indigenous tribes, including the Kalispel, Kootenai, Coeur d' Alene, and Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT). These tribes carry a deep connection to this place and bring a perspective on stewardship of the land that is informed by traditional

practices. While the tribes don't currently have any claim to any parcels within the Watershed, there is a desire to partner and seek their expertise and guidance on developing a framework to balance recreation with conservation efforts.

### *Action Steps:*

- \* Work with the University of Idaho or other wildlife researchers to conduct data collection and analysis on wildlife activity in the Watershed or impact studies for biodiversity. Update this plan and proposed trail corridors according to new or updated ecological and conservation information.
- \* Support the perpetuation of areas with low or no recreational use in the upper basin of the Watershed, except for the Watershed Crest Trail.
- \* Conduct a study to determine the presence or absence of bull trout in the Watershed. If presence is positive, ensure that USFWS Standard Local Operating Procedures (SLOPES) for bull trout are followed when working around streams within the Watershed.
- \* Coordinate with USFS and BLM to conduct NEPA assessments on trail alignments where applicable.
- \* Work with tribes to develop a framework of collaboration and inform land management strategies and signage.
- \* Develop messaging and educational programs to promote best practices for recreation such as Leave No Trace principles, pack-it-in, pack-it-out and other concepts.



*Juvenile bull trout. Brett High. ID Game & Fish*

## IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

### Framework for Collaborative Management

Recreation development within the Watershed has received very limited funding to date. Much of the trail work including design, development, and maintenance is funded through non-profit advocacy and there is limited support by the City of Sandpoint for annual maintenance. Limited staff capacity is a repeated theme for all government agencies in recent years, and the theme of “do more with less” has taken its toll on the landowner’s ability to take on more work than what is currently on their plate. Navigating the community’s priorities for the Watershed as identified in this plan while balancing the fundamental requirements for effective Watershed and natural resource management calls for creative strategic leadership. No single agency or landowner should have to tackle this in a silo, however due to varying levels of resources, it is imperative that the stakeholders develop a framework for collaborative management of natural resources and recreation.

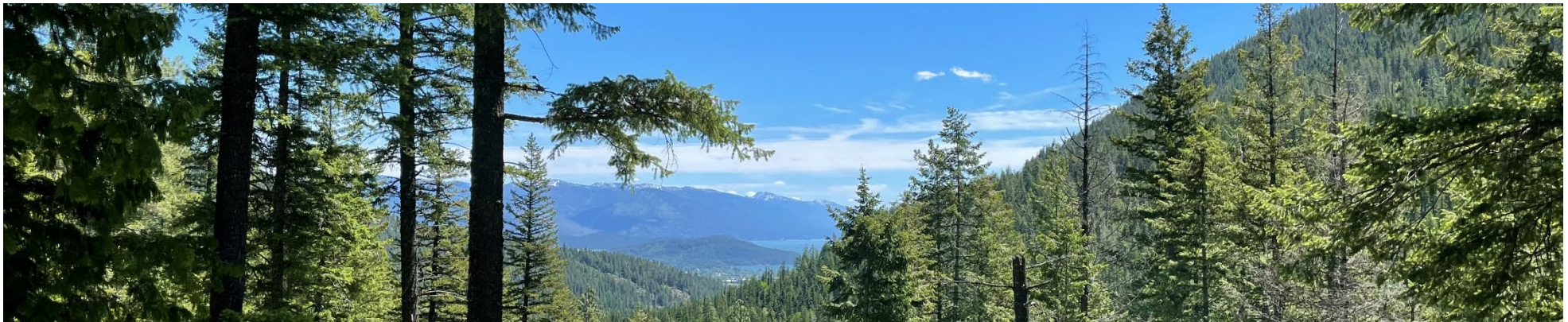
Precedents for strategic partnering and working to solve similar problems have been achieved through other collaborations regionally, throughout Idaho and nationally. Regionally, the *Cooperative Selkirk Noxious Weed Agreement* includes a model partnership between local, state, and federal government agencies, tribal entities, and other stakeholders that works to address the management of noxious weed management. They meet on a

quarterly basis and have a proven quantified track record of successfully managing land across jurisdictional boundaries. A memo of understanding (MOU) serves as a non-binding agreement, with a multi-term. The process to coordinate all parties takes about a year from initial development of the agreement to completion, however once done, the renewal process can be set up to overlap the established term, thus preventing any lag in ability to collaboratively tackle work. The agreement does not have any financial obligation, but it can serve as framework for effective and strategic implementation of planning priorities.

Another sample MOU was established between the US Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, USFS, and National Institute of Food and Agriculture to coordinate activities aimed at supporting the economy of communities that are adjacent to National Forests and Grasslands (gateway communities) and the sustainable development of the recreation economy nationwide. A sample is available in Appendix C.

#### Action Steps:

- \* Establish a collaborative stakeholder partnership agreement to support the holistic and strategic implementation of the priorities as identified in this plan.



## New Trail Construction/Existing Trail Maintenance

New construction of trails and maintenance of existing trails should provide the following information for compliance with the *Little Sand Creek Watershed Management Plan*:

- \* Map of proposed alignment with station increments (feet) starting at 00.
- \* Locations of and amount of ground disturbance.
- \* Existing and proposed drainage patterns for all trail segments to illustrate flow pathways for every foot of the alignment.
- \* Applicants should review the following in preparation for trail design (applicants will list on the application the primary design guidance document):
  - o IMBA's [Guidelines for a Quality Trail Experience](#) (Attached in Appendix E of the *Little Sand Creek Watershed Management Plan*)
  - o IMBA's [Mountain Bike Trail Development](#) Guidelines for Successfully Managing the Process.
  - o [The USFS Trail Construction and Maintenance Notebook](#)
  - o NPS North County Handbook for Trail Design, Construction, and Maintenance (Attached in Appendix E of the *Little Sand Creek Watershed Management Plan*)
  - o Applicants will provide trail design drawings generally according to the attached in Appendix E of the *Little Sand Creek Watershed Management Plan*:
    - National Park Service Appendix 1 Construction Specs for Trail Structures
    - USFS Standard Specifications for Construction of Trails and Trail Bridges
    - USFS Standard Trail Plans and Specifications Step by Step Guide
    - USFS Sample Drawings
    - Or other engineered drawing approved by the City.
- \* Not every specification and design detail is applicable to each proposed trail project. The City will use its discretion to determine if plans are sufficiently complete. Structures less than 8 feet in length and 2 foot above the ground may utilize the simple Park Service

design details in Appendix E of the *Little Sand Creek Watershed Management Plan*. Larger structures must utilize the included USFS Standard Drawings, or other custom drawing designed and stamped by a registered professional engineer.

- \* Erosion and Sediment Control Compliance: All applicants are required to demonstrate how the project will prevent the creation and transport of free sediment. At a minimum, each applicant will be responsible for the stabilization of any exposed soils disturbed during construction using appropriate BMPs listed in the following section. If ground disturbance is under 1 acre the applicant must apply and comply with the Bonner County Grading/Stormwater/Erosion Control Permit (as applicable – see attached application in appendix F of the *Little Sand Creek Watershed Management Plan*). If the project will disturb more than 1 acre it will require a notification of intent for coverage by the [EPA Construction General Permit](#).
  - o Construction General Permit requires:
    - ESA Species Review
    - Archaeological and Historic Review
    - Wetland Determination/Delineation
- \* The following questions will be addressed: How many water crossings are planned? What types of water crossings (stream or wetland)?
  - o Requires a stream/wetland determination/delineation to be submitted to the City.
  - o If the project will impact waters of the state (includes wetlands) the project will require:
    - USACE & IDWR Section 404 Joint Permit Application
    - IDEQ Section 401 Certification

Construction of trails and maintenance of existing trails will comply with the applicable permits from above and shall utilize the following BMP's as applicable:

- \* Ground Disturbance: The following are minimum BMPs necessary for all projects that disturb ground in the Little Sand Creek Watershed.
  - o Utilize BMPs as outline in [the Idaho Catalog of Stormwater Best Management](#). At a minimum:
    - BMP 1: Minimize Land Disturbance

- BMP 2: Minimize Disturbance on Steep Slopes
- BMP 3: Maintain/Provide Natural Buffers
- BMP 7: Restore/Enhance Soils
- BMP 8: Vegetation Restoration
- BMP 36: Construction Timing
- BMP 37: Staging Areas
- BMP 38: Preserve Topsoil and Vegetation
- BMP 39: Clearing Limits
- BMP 40: Vehicle Sediment Control
- BMP 41: Stabilized Construction Roads and Staging Areas
- BMP 42: Erosion Prevention on Construction Roads
- BMP 43: Dust Control
- BMP 46: Spill Prevention and Control
- BMP 52: Mulching
- An Erosion and Sediment Control Plan will be required if the project qualifies for either the Bonner County Grading/Stormwater/Erosion Control Permit or the EPA Construction General Permit. The Idaho Catalog of Stormwater Best Management Practices should guide the ESC planning process.
- \* Waters and Wetlands
  - Establish wetlands and waters buffers as described on page 44 of this plan. If encroachment of the buffer is necessary and approved, implement double BMPs. Comply with permit conditions as listed in the USACE/IDWR in water work authorization and IDEQ Section 401 Certification.
    - In water work timing
    - Streamside erosion and sediment control from above as applicable
    - Pollution control from above as applicable
    - Fish removal and relocation
- \* Threatened and Endangered Species
  - If applicable the project will comply with the terms and conditions of the ESA individual or programmatic opinion for federally listed

species. Construction projects must comply with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.

- Habitat avoidance
- In-water work timing
- Fish removal and relocation
- Tree removal timing
- Construction noise operating hours
- Regulated work areas
- No work areas



*Trail tools set out for POP volunteers.*

### *Environmental Construction Inspection*

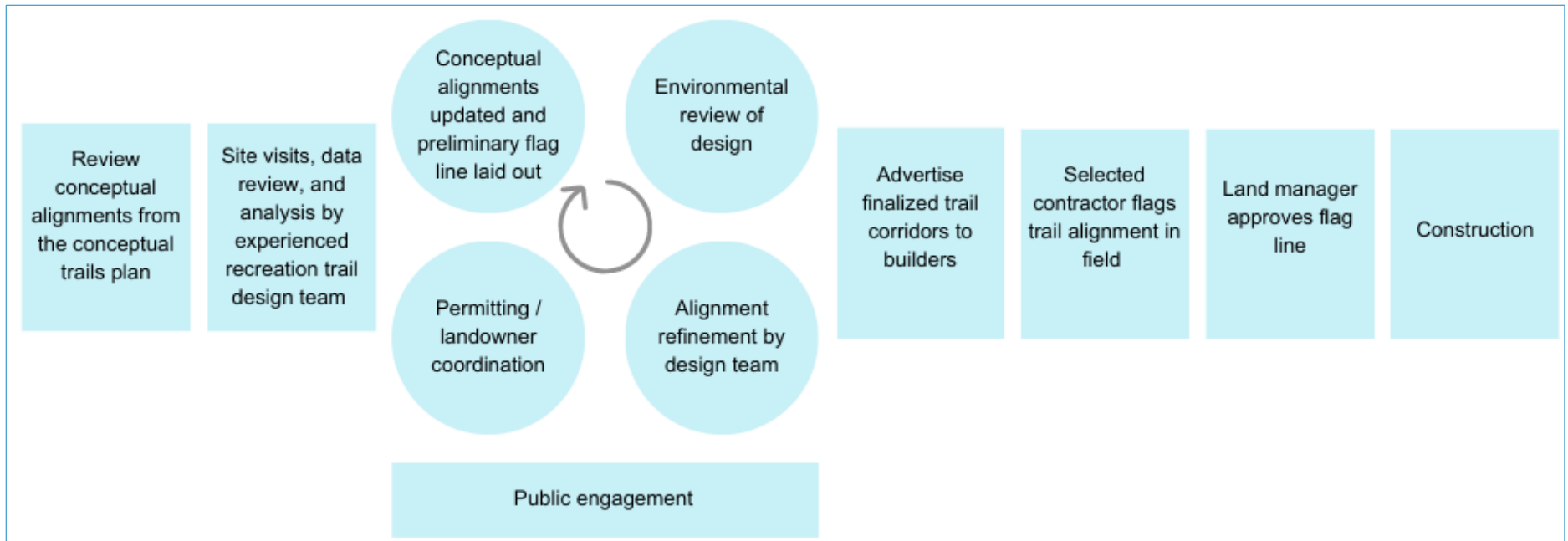
Construction projects within the Watershed shall be inspected by the qualified environmental construction inspector for compliance with erosion and sediment control permits and plans, section 404 in-water work authorizations, section 401 water quality certifications, threatened and endangered species biological opinions, or other environmental permits according to the following schedule:

Project Status	Minimum Inspection Frequency	Estimated Inspection Time
<i>Pre-construction</i>	One inspection prior to starting work onsite.	2 hours per linear mile of proposed project or 1 hour per 5 acres of active construction.
<i>Active Construction</i>	Once every 7 calendar days or within 24 hours of a 0.25-inch storm event.	2 hours per linear mile of active construction or 1 hour per 5 acres of active construction.
<i>Inactive Construction (Unstable Sites)</i>	Once every 7 calendar days or within 24 hours of a 0.25-inch storm event.	Add 1 hour for Bridge Construction Sites. Assume minimum 4 hours of inspection time per day.
<i>Inactive Construction (Stabilized Sites)</i>	Once per month.	
<i>Post Construction</i>	One punch list inspection prior to completion of the work. One additional inspection following completion of the punch list.	

Action Steps:

- \* Coordinate with Idaho Fish and Game to review any and all harvest (hunting) opportunities and necessary associated restrictions.
- \* Perform annual spring Watershed environmental inspection and train accordingly.
- \* Identify a prequalified list of professional resources to assist applicants with permit processes and compliance.
- \* Identify educational opportunities and outreach efforts to support proactive compliance with rules.

Table 5: Environmental inspection frequency and schedule. *Little Sand Creek Watershed Management Plan 2021*



*Proposed process to analyze information, review conceptual alignments, get the necessary permits, and construct new trails.*

## MAINTENANCE

### Maintenance Agreements

Groups, including POP, that want to do work in the Watershed on City of Sandpoint property need to work with the City to develop a license agreement for that work. The City has a template for a license agreement in Appendix D, but this is for reference only and each user group agreement should be customized and typically reviewed by legal advisors.

### Invasive Weeds

Idaho has 71 noxious weeds. Invasive species cost Idaho millions of dollars in control and management each year. It is cheaper and more effective to prevent invasive species invasions than to manage them once established. It's important to focus the limited resources on preventing invasions or treating to remove them early in the invasion cycle.

A successful noxious weed control program is essential to maintaining the health of our native landscapes and consists of the following goals:

1. Prevention of weed establishment.
2. Early detection and rapid eradication of new weed infestations.
3. Stabilization and rehabilitation of disturbed areas.
4. Integration of weed management measures into land management actions/authorizations.
5. Implementation and monitoring of weed control measures.
6. Adaptive management for controlling new weed species and use of new and approved treatments.

### Partnership

Plants don't adhere to land ownership boundaries, so partnerships are essential for successfully controlling weeds at the landscape level. Idaho's 33 Coordinated Weed Management Areas form a partnership of federal, state, and local government agencies, tribes, and landowners to set common goals and pool resources to effectively manage noxious weeds across Idaho. The Selkirk Cooperative Weed Management Area (SCWMA) is located in the North region of Idaho and is the geographic area generally

contained within Bonner and Boundary Counties in Idaho. Landowners and land managers within the SCWMA geographic area have come together and agree to work cooperatively to control weeds. The most effective control is to look at all ownerships and promote an integrated weed management program throughout the SCWMA that includes public relations, education, and training in the noxious/invasive weed arena, along with coordination of weed control efforts and methods, sharing of resources, and designing other desirable resource protection measures relative to weed management.



Example "Play Clean Go" Invasive Species Information Sign. Naisama.org

### Action Steps:

- \* Coordinate with the SCWMA on a prevention and management plan as it pertains specifically to recreation access points and trails.
- \* Collaborate with the SCWMA on installation of noxious weed boot and bike wheel cleaning stations and utilize the "PlayCleanGO" or "Knock it Off" educational signage for recreationalists at each trailhead. Explore options for bikers to clean their wheels with potential for spray stations at Schweitzer and at local bike shops.

- \* Develop a long-term plan to reduce noxious weeds and prevent future infestations.
- \* Schedule a regular, systematic program to continually monitor for weeds.
- \* Employ an integrated strategy of weed control that includes physical (hand pulling) and/or biological (release of approved insects).
- \* Focus control efforts around newly established seedlings and recently disturbed soils, then throughout other parts of the forestland.
- \* Seed exposed soils with grass seed or other native herbaceous plants.

## SAFETY

### Emergency Response

Emergency response to the Watershed recreational area has not been a structured response protocol until recently. Currently there are several agencies that can be dispatched to the area, depending on the incident type. Selkirk Fire, Rescue, and EMS, Schweitzer Fire, Northside Fire District, Bonner County EMS, Idaho Department of Lands, and the U.S Forest service all have some depth of response in the Watershed. Each agency is working on incident response protocols for incident types (i.e., medical, rescue, search, and fire) individually and collaboratively.

Some upgrades have been initiated with the current trail system and agencies are planning several training sessions that will cover various emergency access locations to the trails, as well as focused response efforts on the trails. Focused training will include the mitigation of the incident, to include patient contact, treatment, and evacuation, fire suppression, and wide area search. The overarching mission of these sessions is to create standard incident action plans for the most probable types of incidents likely to occur in the Watershed recreation area. Initial discussions on training evolutions would be to conduct them on a semi-annual basis, one session in mid- to late- spring and the other in late fall. Each session would allow for training on different scenarios, prior to the weather and trail conditions changing for the seasons. Agencies also hope

to identify any needed common or specialized equipment for incident mitigation in the Watershed recreation area.

#### Action Steps:

- \* Support the emergency responders from all agencies and partners in completing the incident response plan and training protocol for the Watershed.
- \* Update all responders with the current trail map and EMS response locator GPS coordinates on a bi-annual basis.
- \* Bi-annually inspect all emergency signage and EMS access locations with coordinating landowners and relative user groups.
- \* Develop a strategic public education program for front country first aid training and EMS response training. As trails get developed in zones beyond access from the road system, coordinate with EMS on appropriate signage for all access points.



*Wildlife warning sign at Switchback 2 access point.*

## Winter Snow Safety

With the increase in winter backcountry skiing, Nordic skiing, snowshoeing, ice climbing, fat biking, and other winter recreation activity the demand for snow safety awareness and avalanche education has increased. Avalanche forecasts are used by experienced backcountry travelers in uncontrolled side country and backcountry terrain. These forecasts and conditions do not apply to open, in-bounds terrain at ski resorts, which is subject to avalanche control by local resort ski patrol. The Watershed is not currently patrolled or monitored by local avalanche forecasts. The Idaho Panhandle Avalanche Center (IDPAC) is the local resource for forecasts and educational opportunities.

General advice for winter recreationalists interested in exploring the backcountry, as provided by the IDPAC includes the following:

“Avalanche conditions change for better or worse continually. Backcountry travelers should be prepared to assess current conditions for themselves, plan their routes of travel accordingly, and never travel alone. Backcountry travelers can reduce their exposure to avalanche hazards by utilizing timbered trails and ridge routes and by avoiding open and exposed terrain with slope angles of 30 degrees or more. Backcountry travelers should carry the necessary avalanche rescue equipment such as a shovel, avalanche probe, a rescue beacon and a well-equipped first aid kit.”

### Action Steps:

- \* Develop a winter recreation advisory committee for the Watershed to develop or explore opportunities for winter recreation development, asset management, education, and safety or risk management.



*Example of an emergency response sign in the Lower Basin. H. Upton*

## Emergency Trail Signage and Conditions Reports

Currently the City of Sandpoint has implemented signage requirements as part of their annual license agreement with POP for the city-owned parcels within the Watershed. This requirement includes the following criteria for emergency response signage:

*POP shall maintain all identified Emergency Response access and updated trail map with emergency locator georeferenced points and related signage. Biannual Emergency Response Training is intended to occur in the trail system and POP shall be available to lead as needed. Trail maps and*



*signage to include all emergency access points and intersection locations with georeferenced points shall be provided and updated annually to the City and Emergency Medical Services.*

While there is not currently a formal trail conditions reporting system, POP utilizes its social media and other web-based platforms to inform trail users of existing conditions, hazards, and wildlife concerns. As part of their license agreement with the City of Sandpoint, they are required to share public information with their users, the City, and the Idaho Fish and Game, and post educational signage at all access points.

Wildlife including bear, moose, and wild cats (cougar, lynx) are native to the region and observed throughout the year. Many of the POP trails overlap and potentially fragment their natural habitat. It is critical that trail users and POP volunteers become educated on recognizing wildlife habitat, safety protocols and conservation practices. Human interactions will likely occur, and POP shall lead as stewards of the land to support the educational efforts for trail visitors about prevention, safety and how to respond in an interaction situation.

Education shall include posting City-authorized wildlife warning educational signs at all trailheads, and in the event of a suspicious activity, such as a moose kill or threatening bear activity, public announcements shall be posted on all media outlets available to POP and shared with the City. It is strongly advised to avoid trails that may be located within moose calving areas, or in locations where other wildlife activity is observed. In all instances, POP shall coordinate with and refer to the Idaho Department of Fish and Game for best management recommendations. City staff will assist with educating trail users, as well as in creating appropriate signage and public announcements on social media outlets. If an interaction occurs during maintenance and/or volunteer activities, the crew leader shall utilize safety protocols and report any incidents or observations directly to Idaho Department of Fish and Game, and then the City. Additionally, if wildlife interactions occur, trails may be temporarily closed or restricted access if recommended by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game in coordination with POP and the City. Protocols will be developed in conjunction with the implementation of the *Little Sand Creek Watershed Recreation Master Plan*, anticipated to take effect in July 2023.

#### Action Steps:

- \* Collaborate with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game in coordination with all stakeholders and user groups to develop a wildlife and recreation management protocol in conjunction with the Wildlife Management Plan.

## Wildfire Risk and Management

The 2021 [\*Little Sand Creek Watershed Master Plan\*](#) contains information on City fire management strategies, a fire response strategy, and protections for water quality in a fire incident. Please reference Chapter 9 of the plan for complete information.



*Old growth trees provide wildlife habitat as part of the healthy forest.*

## FUNDING

Exploration into creative funding solutions for implementation of the priorities as identified within the plan will be the secret to success. While there's no such thing as easy money, with a diversified and strategic approach, maintenance of existing infrastructure can be funded, new trails can be built, and the education community can extend their classroom into the community's most biodiverse landscape.

In 2018 the Headwaters Economics nonprofit research group was commissioned to develop a report on of the Little Sand Creek Watershed, entitled *Best Practices for Watersheds and Recreation*. For Watersheds with managed recreation the reported stated:

*"Many communities find that managed recreation provides an important opportunity for public engagement, leveraging recreational access into educational opportunities, generating new interest in Watersheds, and helping develop a sense of ownership and stewardship over the resources. A public that feels committed to the Watershed and acts as an advocate for Watershed protection can help management agencies ensure that resources are not developed or compromised in other ways. **Finding the balance between recreation and Watershed protection is an ongoing, adaptive process.**"* (emphasis added).

### Public + Private = Proactive

When seeking funding for Watershed recreation, partnerships rise to the top as a means of finding creative solutions. Sandpoint's recreation community has proved to be important stewards of the Watershed over the last decade with their dedication of thousands of volunteer hours and private donations to support the maintenance of trails. The model recreation "user group" with the highest number of documented volunteer hours has been the Pend Oreille Pedalers. However, as Watershed recreation continues to grow in popularity, the responsibility cannot continue to fall on the shoulders of only one user group or non-profit partner.

To ensure success, the City will need to make projects multifunctional, with new programming and new partners from the community. The City and its

partners must work to expand their vision and look beyond traditional sources for funds, casting a wider net of who can benefit from maintaining, enhancing, and protecting the Watershed's recreation.

### Tourism

The Outdoor Industry Association's *State of the Outdoor Market Fall 2022* reported that outdoor recreation is a powerful economic engine, generating \$862 billion in consumer spending, supporting 4.5 million jobs, and accounting for 1.9 percent (\$450 billion) of current-dollar gross domestic product (GDP) for the nation in 2021. [Idaho's outdoor recreation economy](#) generated 34,478 direct jobs, \$2.8 billion total outdoor recreation value added, \$1.4 billion in wages and salaries, and 2.9% share of the GDP.

Connecting the Watershed to the economic opportunities that outdoor recreation development offers has the potential to fund maintenance, resource management, and project implementation. One such opportunity for diversified funding is by directly connecting to tourism.

At one time "sustainable tourism" was the buzz in the eco-tourism realm. While that served its place when a destination sought to preserve a site the way it is, now "regenerative tourism" has taken that concept to a solution-based approach. Regenerative tourism represents a way of travelling and discovering new places, while visitors are striving to have a positive impact on their destination, leaving it in a better condition than how they found it. This concept goes beyond sustaining the environment and seeks to actively revitalize and regenerate it, resulting in a positive impact on local communities and economies: sustainable regeneration *strives to leave a place better than when they found it* through empowering the relationship between visitors and locals.

The word sustainable implies "to enable the continuation of things as they are". We live in a world where most resort communities need some form of repair or restoration – social or natural – and so perhaps the time has come for all tourism to move beyond sustaining, into regeneration. Going beyond the concept of 'sustainable tourism' which focuses on neutralizing tourism's negative impact on the planet, 'regenerative tourism' is based on adding a positive impact to the local community and environment. Three main components to regenerative tourism include improving local

economic growth, social and cultural development, and environmental sustainability. There is an opportunity for the Watershed to benefit from this trending tourism model. Examples from other similar communities include:

- \* Establish an offset fund and consider installing collection stations that could immediately generate revenue and go directly towards a general fund that supports Watershed recreation maintenance and improvement projects, and management staff.
- \* Establish a volunteer labor program that could include replanting native tree species or helping to remove invasive plants off hiking trails.
- \* Explore opportunities within the Watershed to offer experiences that blend education, service, culture, and recreation, such as the [Global Family Travels](#) “Learn, Serve & Immerse” programs in Seattle and the Olympic Peninsula.



Trail maintenance donation meter in Steamboat Springs, CO. John F. Russell, [Steamboat Pilot.Com](#)

The outdoor industry has long been utilized as a powerful tool for protecting and improving public lands. Connecting leaders and action sport athletes from the outdoor recreation community to conservation is one way to ignite and ultimately fund stewardship of watershed lands. There is significant potential for tackling deferred maintenance, future capital improvements and on-going maintenance by fostering a passionate recreation-led stewardship program. Innovative ideas should be harnessed from those with “social” impact within the outdoor recreation community and the responsibility can be distributed with an unprecedented approach to diversified funding.

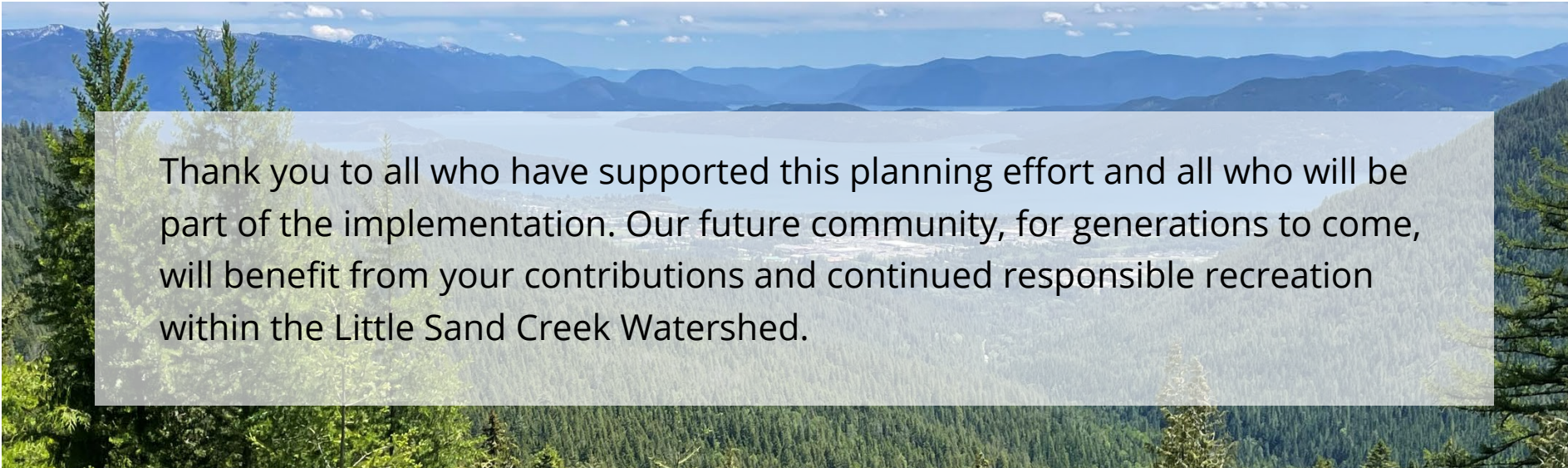
Additional funding mechanisms that could be further explored and considered include:

- \* Carbon sequestration and the sale of carbon credits: This has been implemented in the 3,400-acre forested watershed owned by Astoria, Oregon. *“Already, Astoria has sold more than 260,000 carbon credits. Over the 40 years of sequestration, Ford said the city can expect around \$2 million in revenue. That’s \$2 million to leave trees in the forest.”* ([Source](#)) The sale of carbon credits could generate ongoing revenue to fund trail maintenance and support implementation of the Watershed Recreation Plan.
- \* Conservation easement: While an appraisal of the City’s property in the Watershed would be required, which would be lengthy and costly upfront, a commitment by the City to conserve some or all the parcels in a permanent easement could generate a windfall one-time revenue boost of potentially millions of dollars. These funds could be allocated towards the implementation of the plan and protect the Watershed and its natural and amenity resources in perpetuity.
- \* Utilizing local tourism/visitor taxation options: Routt County, Colorado, provides a successful example in which the community utilized a percentage of existing accommodation tax funds reallocated to fund new trail development and maintenance of existing trails (for more, see [Steamboat Springs’ 2A ballot.](#)) The economics is complex, but the takeaway is that tourists and visitors are the ones paying for this tax.

### Action Steps:

- \* Establish a funding committee with stakeholders to further research potential sources and develop a strategic Watershed Recreation funding plan that will support deferred maintenance, future capital improvements and on-going maintenance.
- \* Collaborate with local and state tourism associations to explore how concepts such as regenerative tourism can help fund priorities as identified within this plan.
- \* Identify local passionate outdoor recreation leaders and athletes, and foster relationship building opportunities that would seek to leverage their forward-thinking knowledge to develop creative solutions. This could take the shape of an alliance and should extend beyond any one single recreation user group.
- \* Explore partnership and funding opportunities from various industries including the health industry sector. See example toolkit [Financing Health and Wellness Programs: A Toolkit for Park and Recreation Professionals](#)
- \* Develop a diversified funding plan in collaboration with stakeholders and utilize the [National Recreation and Park Association](#) Partnerships page as a reference.

The following grant chart identifies funding opportunities that were identified during the plan development. At the time of completion of this document, the Outdoor Recreation Roundtable Association (ORRA) issued an update that [America's Outdoor Recreation Act of 2023](#) is continuing to move forward in Congress and this crucial legislation will help all Americans access their public lands & waters at no additional cost to taxpayers. Funding is available and with the continued support from the Sandpoint community, the goals set forth in this plan can be realized within a realistic timeframe.



Thank you to all who have supported this planning effort and all who will be part of the implementation. Our future community, for generations to come, will benefit from your contributions and continued responsible recreation within the Little Sand Creek Watershed.

## Grants

	<i>Name</i>	<i>Eligible Projects</i>	<i>Process Timing</i>	<i>Local Match Required</i>	<i>Funding Amount</i>	<i>Contact</i>	<i>Website</i>
<b>Local</b>	<b>Innovia Foundation</b>	Community Grant Program and the Equinox Foundation Grant	See website	Varies	Varies	Dig Chrimer, Rural Engagement Manager	<a href="https://innovia.org/">https://innovia.org/</a>
	<b>Idaho Mountain Bike License Plate Fund</b>	The intent of the fund is exclusively for the preservation, maintenance and expansion of recreational trails within the state of Idaho and on which mountain biking is permitted.	Application period open October-January	5% match	Varies	Tiffany Brunson 208-769-1511 Tiffany.Brunson@idpr.idaho.gov	
<b>State</b>	<b>Recreational Trail Program</b>	Construction and maintenance of trails and facilities; trailheads; restroom facilities; trail signage; acquisition of property or easements; purchase / lease of trail construction and maintenance equipment; educational programs to promote safety and environmental protection	Application period open October-January	20% match (cash, in-kind services, volunteer labor, or donations)	Depends on federal funding	Tiffany Brunson 208-769-1511 Tiffany.Brunson@idpr.idaho.gov	<a href="#">Recreational Trails Program   Department of Parks and Recreation (idaho.gov)</a>
	<b>Land &amp; Water Conservation Fund</b>	Trails and park infrastructure, land acquisition for recreation (must relate to the Idaho Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Plan (SCORTP))	Application period open October-January	At least 50% match	Depends on federal funding	Tiffany Brunson 208-769-1511 Tiffany.Brunson@idpr.idaho.gov	<a href="#">Land and Water Conservation Fund   Department of Parks and Recreation (idaho.gov)</a>
	<b>Road &amp; Bridge Fund</b>	Develop, construct, maintain and repair roads, bridges and parking areas within and leading to parks and recreation areas	Application period open October-January	Minimum 5% of the total project cost	\$250,000 awarded annually statewide	Tiffany Brunson 208-769-1511 Tiffany.Brunson@idpr.idaho.gov	<a href="#">Recreational Road &amp; Bridge   Department of Parks and Recreation (idaho.gov)</a>
<b>Federal</b>	<b>Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP)</b>	Improvements to any public highway, road, bridge, trail or transit system located on or adjacent to federal lands. Includes restoration/construction projects, engineering and environmental compliance.	See website	Not required, but recommended to be competitive	Not specified	Patrick Culhane Patrick.Culhane@dot.gov (360) 619-7973	<a href="#">2022-hi-flap-faq.pdf (dot.gov)</a>
<b>Non-profits</b>	<b>People for Bikes Community Grants</b>	Bike paths, lanes, trails, bridges, rail-trails, mountain bike trails, bike parks, BMX facilities, bike racks, bike parking/storage. Can fund engineering and design work, construction costs including materials, labor and equipment rental. Not eligible: trailheads, kiosks, signs, maps, planning.	October 31	Not specified, but request can't amount to 50% or more of project budget	Up to \$10,000	info@peopleforbikes.org 303-449-4893	<a href="#">Grant Guidelines   PeopleForBikes</a>

## Priorities for Action

The following chart summarizes key action items as identified with the planning documents and can be used as a suggested road map for prioritization.

Category	Action Item	Priority	Stakeholders	Potential Partners
<b>Trails (existing/proposed)</b>	Reference IMBA-TS Trail System Concept Plan	Varies by trail project – see plan	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM, IDH	POP, Selkirk Rec. District, Nordic Ski Club, Runners, Arts, Cultural, Historical Community
<b>Trailheads</b>	Analyze the area around Switchback 2 and the bottom of the trail network to determine if there is a better location on the north side of the road for a new trailhead, or if the site is too constrained to establish parking. Work with the Independent Highway District and City of Sandpoint to determine what traffic calming measures are feasible. Develop a strategic plan for both short-term and long-term improvements.	High	IDH, City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer	POP
<b>Trailheads</b>	Develop a short-term concept plan for the existing Switchback 2 trailhead that immediately addresses safety issues with the crossing between existing parking and the start of the trail and adjustments to the end of the trail to improve sight lines. Continue to provide a seasonal portable toilet. IMBA will be returning to Sandpoint under a separate contract with POP and the trail connectivity in this location will result in a location-specific concept plan based on field design. The final Switchback 2 Trailhead Concept Plan will be included in this plan as a future Appendix.	High	IDH, City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer	POP
<b>Trailheads</b>	Work in partnership with Schweitzer, the Selkirk Recreation District, the Independent Highway District and other relative user groups such as POP to analyze the existing conditions of the Schweitzer Roundabout and explore opportunities for improving the existing conditions of the trailhead access from that location.	High	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM, IDH, Selkirk Rec. District	POP, Nordic Ski Club, Runners, Arts Commission
<b>Trailheads</b>	Develop a seasonal shuttle traffic and staging plan that works with all landowners and the Selkirk Recreation District that improves safety for users, as well as clearly defines the circulation routes for both private and public shuttles.	High	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM, IDH, Selkirk Rec. District	POP
<b>Trailheads</b>	Collaborate with the Selkirk Cooperative Weed Management Area Advisory Committee on installation of noxious weed boot cleaning stations and “knock it off” educational signage for recreationalists at each trailhead. Additionally, explore options for bikers to clean their wheels.	High	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM, IDH, Selkirk Rec. District, POP	Selkirk Cooperative Weed Management Area Advisory, ID AG Program – Noxious Weeds (Post Falls Division)

Category	Action Item	Priority	Stakeholders	Potential Partners
<b>New Trailheads</b>	Develop a concept plan that illustrates size and location of parking, possible amenities such as ADA-accessible bathrooms and information kiosks, and entry points to trails.	Medium	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM, IDH	PISDY, LPOSD
<b>New Trailheads</b>	Continue exploration with the City of Sandpoint and Schweitzer into the development of proposed trailhead and trails. Identify whether an easement, purchase of land, or other agreements or partnerships work best between the City and Schweitzer.	Medium	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer	IDH, Selkirk Rec. District, POP, Nordic, KLT
<b>Winter Recreation</b>	Explore opportunities for public-private partnerships between the City of Sandpoint and Schweitzer for winter recreation trail development, maintenance, and management.	Medium	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer	IDH, Selkirk Rec. District, POP, Nordic, KLT
<b>Winter Recreation</b>	When developing new trails, seek opportunities for increased Nordic skiing opportunities in collaboration with relative partners.	Medium	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM	POP, Selkirk Rec. District, Nordic Ski Club, Runners, Arts, Cultural, Historical Community
<b>Winter Recreation</b>	Study options for development of an off-the-grid “front country” facility that would be multi-purpose, family-friendly, ADA-accessible, four-season shelter that could also serve as an educational base camp facility for community members of all ages to study outdoor education, natural resources, snow science, and other related programs.	Low	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM, IDH	PISDY, LPOSD, IDH, Selkirk Rec. District, POP, Nordic, KLT
<b>Backcountry Skiing</b>	Work in collaboration with the Idaho Panhandle Avalanche Center and Schweitzer Ski Patrol, to study the interest, viability and suitability of backcountry skiing opportunities, access for winter snow skills education, and development of a potential hut experience that could also be used as a classroom. The analysis should include slope, aspect, elevation, distance to roads, distance to access points (trailheads, access gates), tree cover, and tree density. Critical wildlife habitat areas should be shown on a map and developed in conjunction with Idaho Fish and Game.	Medium	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM	Idaho Panhandle Avalanche Center, Schweitzer Ski Patrol, Idaho Fish and Game
<b>Backcountry Skiing</b>	Install additional avalanche beacon checkpoints and safety and informational signage at popular backcountry skiing trailheads.	Medium	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM	Idaho Panhandle Avalanche Center, Schweitzer Ski Patrol, Idaho Fish and Game
<b>Backcountry Skiing</b>	Initiate partnerships and promotional efforts that make Sandpoint a place known for its backcountry skiing, safety, and educational offerings.	Low	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, Bonner County, City of Ponderay	Chamber of Commerce, Bonner County Economic Development Corporation
<b>Fat Biking</b>	Explore opportunities for winter trail maintenance on existing trails and development of trails within zones 3 and 6 that could accommodate winter grooming operations in the future, with fat bikers, snowshoers, and classic cross-country skiers in mind.	Medium	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, Bonner County, City of Ponderay	Chamber of Commerce, Bonner County Economic Development Corporation

Category	Action Item	Priority	Stakeholders	Potential Partners
<b>Road Biking</b>	Coordinate with the Independent Highway District on future road improvement projects to improve safety for bikers. Explore the possibility of a feasibility study looking at wider shoulders or a bike lane that would connect from the mountain to adjacent communities.	High	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, IHD	Chafe 150, POP (road biking associations)
<b>Rock or Ice Climbing</b>	Monitor current climbing routes for impacts to access paths and staging areas. If erosion or damage to surrounding vegetation increases, work with climbers to mitigate damage, formalize access routes, and carry out stewardship projects.	Medium	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM, Selkirk Rec. District	Sandpoint Rock Gym
<b>Rock or Ice Climbing</b>	Consider climbing areas in conjunction with future trail and trailhead development.	Low	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM, Selkirk Rec. District	Sandpoint Rock Gym
<b>Passive Recreation</b>	Develop a natural resources management plan in collaboration with other Watershed property owners and stakeholders that would include addressing management of native plants species and their preservation for generations to come.	High	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM, Selkirk Rec. District	ID Fish & Game, POP, Nordic, KLT, Kalispel and other Tribes if interested, SWMA
<b>Passive Recreation</b>	Work with natural resource experts, local indigenous tribal experts, and local educators to develop informational education programming and signage to enhance, protect, and preserve the natural resources within the Watershed.	Medium	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM, Selkirk Rec. District	ID Fish & Game, POP, Nordic, KLT, Kalispel and other Tribes if interested, SWMA, ACH, U of ID, LPOSD
<b>Passive Recreation</b>	Explore opportunities for designated ADA-accessible huckleberry harvesting opportunities that would provide a safe and inclusive environment for people who may not otherwise be able to access the land. Consider designated areas for accessible harvesting as a complement to the design and development of wider trails and ADA accessible trailheads.	High	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM, Selkirk Rec. District	ID Fish & Game, POP, Nordic, KLT, Kalispel and other Tribes if interested, SWMA, ACH, PISDY, LPOSD, U of ID, KLT
<b>Passive Recreation</b>	Explore opportunities for designated ADA-accessible huckleberry harvesting opportunities that would provide a safe and inclusive environment for people who may not otherwise be able to access the land. Consider designated areas for accessible harvesting as a complement to the design and development of wider trails and ADA accessible trailheads.	Medium	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM, Selkirk Rec. District, IHD	ID Fish & Game, POP, Nordic, KLT, Kalispel and other Tribes if interested, SWMA, ACH, PISDY, LPOSD, U of ID, KLT
<b>Bird and Wildlife Watching</b>	Work with the University of Idaho or other wildlife researchers to conduct field studies, data collection and analysis on wildlife and bird activity in the Watershed. Use data to identify areas to protect, such as nesting sites, breeding territory, and key migration routes.	Medium	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM, Selkirk Rec. District	Audubon Society, iNaturalists, IDFG, ACH, U of ID, LPOSD, KLT
<b>Bird and Wildlife Watching</b>	Identify areas that may be appropriate for bird or wildlife viewing platforms or bird blinds.	Medium	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM, Selkirk Rec. District	Audubon Society, iNaturalists, IDFG, ACH, U of ID, LPOSD, KLT
<b>Electric-Assisted Bicycles</b>	Develop an e-bike policy for the Little Sand Creek Watershed and other City lands based on input from stakeholders and the public.	High	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM, Selkirk Rec. District	Chamber of Commerce, local bike shop retailers, POP



Category	Action Item	Priority	Stakeholders	Potential Partners
<b>Electric-Assisted Bicycles</b>	Collaborate with USFS and other land managers in the Watershed to establish a consistent e-bike policy for the trail network.	High	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM, Selkirk Rec. District	Chamber of Commerce, local bike shop retailers, POP
<b>Limited or Regulated Recreation</b>	Develop the administrative permit application, fee structure (where applicable), and procedure necessary to allow for limited or regulated recreation.	High	City of Sandpoint	Schweitzer, USFS, BLM, Selkirk Rec. District
<b>Hunting</b>	Work with Idaho Fish and Game wildlife management experts to explore hunting as a limited use in the Watershed.	Low	City of Sandpoint	IDFG, Kalispel Tribe, Stimson Lumber (Sandpoint)
<b>Camping</b>	Collaborate with stakeholders to explore what type of camping, if any, might be appropriate in the Watershed and where it could be located.	Medium	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM, Selkirk Rec. District	KLT
<b>Vendors, Events and Commercial Activities</b>	Develop a permit and policy for all businesses and non-profits seeking to operate on City of Sandpoint property.	High	City of Sandpoint	Schweitzer, USFS, BLM, Selkirk Rec. District
<b>Vendors, Events and Commercial Activities</b>	Coordinate with other Watershed property owners and establish a committee to explore special event permitting and the potential development of a shared-use permit agreement and process. The committee should also consider implementing a process for monitoring user numbers, impacts to the land and creating a fund that could support projects, maintenance, or other improvements within the Watershed.	High	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM, Selkirk Rec. District	Idaho Conservation League
<b>Vendors, Events and Commercial Activities</b>	Coordination with the current shuttle operator, Schweitzer and the IHD should continue and opportunities for directing revenue towards Watershed recreation improvements and maintenance should be explored, while also continuing to explore the potential for leveraging the SPOT transit system.	High	Bonner County, City of Sandpoint, City of Ponderay, City of Dover, Schweitzer, IHD, Selkirk Rec. District	Selkirks-Pend Oreille Transit Authority, Bonner County, City of Sandpoint, City of Ponderay, Schweitzer, IHD
<b>Dogs in the Watershed</b>	Develop a policy for dogs in the Watershed. Determine whether it is feasible to restrict dogs to a certain area, or if they should be prohibited and to what extent. Collaborate with other landowners to ensure consistency across the Watershed.	High	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS	Local Pet Stores
<b>Placemaking/ Signage</b>	Work with a collaborative group to establish placemaking themes and strategies. Develop design guidelines for recreation infrastructure and amenities.	High	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM, Selkirk Rec. District	Sandpoint Arts & Historic Preservation Commission, Pend Oreille Arts Council, KLT, POP, Kalispel Tribe, LPOSD
<b>Placemaking/ Signage</b>	Develop a branding and signage plan to include design guidelines for use on all signs and related elements such as kiosks, etc. Develop and install signage illustrating Watershed use rules and “designated areas,” as applicable. This should include all related infrastructure and amenities. Work with tribal partners to incorporate indigenous place names. Use design techniques that ensure signage meets the needs of people with disabilities.	High	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM, Selkirk Rec. District	Sandpoint Arts & Historic Preservation Commission, Pend Oreille Arts Council, KLT, POP, Sandpoint Nordic Club, Kalispel Tribe, LPOSD, U of ID

Category	Action Item	Priority	Stakeholders	Potential Partners
<b>Placemaking/ Signage</b>	Create opportunities to bring Sandpoint area residents of all ages, and particularly youth, together for meaningful art-making and creative experiences in the Watershed. Incorporating art will enhance the user experience and activate stewardship of the land.	Medium	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM, Selkirk Rec. District	Sandpoint Arts & Historic Preservation Commission, Pend Oreille Arts Council, KLT, POP, Sandpoint Nordic Club, Kalispel Tribe, LPOSD
<b>Placemaking/ Signage</b>	Use placemaking activities to enhance Sandpoint's identity as a unique cultural, recreational, and ecological destination.	Medium	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM, Selkirk Rec. District	Sandpoint Arts & Historic Preservation Commission, Pend Oreille Arts Council, KLT, POP, Sandpoint Nordic Club, Kalispel Tribe, LPOSD, U of ID, ASLA ID-MT
<b>Placemaking/ Signage</b>	Secure diversified and sustainable funding for placemaking in the Watershed to help provide stability for local artists and arts and culture organizations.	Medium	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM, Selkirk Rec. District	Sandpoint Arts & Historic Preservation Commission, Pend Oreille Arts Council, KLT, POP, Sandpoint Nordic Club, Kalispel Tribe, LPOSD
<b>Education in the Watershed</b>	Investigate opportunities to provide infrastructure such as educational trails, outdoor classrooms, and informational signs to offer hands-on, experiential learning opportunities.	Medium	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM, Selkirk Rec. District	KLT, POP, Kalispel Tribe, LPOSD, U of ID, ASLA ID-MT
<b>Education in the Watershed</b>	Establish collaborative partnerships to develop education programs that support learning in and about the Watershed.	High	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM	KLT, POP, Kalispel Tribe, LPOSD, U of ID
<b>Education in the Watershed</b>	Collaborate with partners to create an asset map of existing educational programs that educate the community on the Watershed's significance.	High	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM	KLT, POP, Kalispel Tribe, LPOSD, U of ID, ASLA ID-MT
<b>Education in the Watershed</b>	Initiate a planning study to explore site options and feasibility for a future education center. The center has potential to also serve as an accessible hut or community center.	High	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM	KLT, POP, Kalispel Tribe, LPOSD, U of ID, ASLA ID-MT
<b>Education in the Watershed</b>	Establish a Watershed education advisory committee dedicated to the advancement of outdoor education, who can serve in an advisory capacity to the land management and stakeholders of the Watershed.	High	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM	KLT, POP, Kalispel Tribe, LPOSD, U of ID, ASLA ID-MT
<b>Conservation in the Watershed Indigenous Led Conservation</b>	Work with the University of Idaho or other wildlife researchers to conduct data collection and analysis on wildlife activity in the Watershed or impact studies for biodiversity. Update this plan and proposed trail corridors according to new or updated ecological and conservation information.	High	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM	Kalispel Tribe (and other regional Tribes( Natural Resource and Cultural Dept., U of ID, ID Conservation League
<b>Indigenous Led Conservation</b>	Support the perpetuation of areas with low or no recreational use in the upper basin of the Watershed, except for the Watershed Crest Trail.	High	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM	Kalispel Tribe (and other regional Tribes( Natural Resource and Cultural Dept., U of ID, POP, Sandpoint Nordic Club

Category	Action Item	Priority	Stakeholders	Potential Partners
<b>Indigenous Led Conservation</b>	Conduct a study to determine the presence or absence of bull trout in the Watershed. If presence is positive, ensure that USFWS Standard Local Operating Procedures (SLOPES) for bull trout are followed when working around streams within the Watershed.	High	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM	Kalispel Tribe (and other regional Tribes( Natural Resource and Cultural Dept., U of ID, ID Conservation League
<b>Indigenous Led Conservation</b>	Coordinate with USFS and BLM to conduct NEPA assessments on trail alignments where applicable.	High	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM	Kalispel Tribe (and other regional Tribes( Natural Resource and Cultural Dept., U of ID, POP, Sandpoint Nordic Club, ID Conservation League
<b>Indigenous Led Conservation</b>	Work with tribes to develop a framework of collaboration and inform land management strategies and signage.	High	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM	Kalispel Tribe (and other regional Tribes( Natural Resource and Cultural Dept., U of ID, KLT, ID Conservation League
<b>Indigenous Led Conservation</b>	Develop messaging and educational programs to promote best practices for recreation such as Leave No Trace principles, pack-it-in, pack-it-out and other concepts.	High	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM	Kalispel Tribe (and other regional Tribes( Natural Resource and Cultural Dept., U of ID, ID Conservation League, KLT
<b>Framework for Collaborative Management</b>	Establish a collaborative stakeholder partnership agreement to support the holistic and strategic implementation of the priorities as identified in this plan.	High	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM	KNPS, KLT, POP, Sandpoint Nordic Club, Kalispel Tribe Natural Resource and Cultural Dept., SCWMA, U of ID, ID Conservation League
<b>New Trail Construction/ Existing Trail Maintenance Environmental Construction Inspection</b>	Coordinate with Idaho Fish and Game to review any and all harvest (hunting) opportunities and necessary associated restrictions.	High	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM	Kalispel Tribe Natural Resource and Cultural Dept., ID Fish and Game, ID Conservation League, KLT, KNPS
<b>Existing Trail Maintenance Environmental Construction Inspection</b>	Perform annual spring Watershed environmental inspection and train accordingly.	High	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM	ID Conservation League, KNPS, KLT, POP, Sandpoint Nordic Club, Kalispel Tribe Natural Resource and Cultural Dept., SCWMA, U of ID, ID Conservation League

Category	Action Item	Priority	Stakeholders	Potential Partners
<b>Existing Trail Maintenance Environmental Construction Inspection</b>	Identify educational opportunities and outreach efforts to support proactive compliance with rules.	Medium	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM	KLТ, POP, Sandpoint Nordic Club, Kalispel Tribe Natural Resource and Cultural Dept., SCWMA, U of ID, ID Conservation League
<b>Maintenance Agreements/ Invasive Weeds</b>	Coordinate with the SCWMA on a prevention and management plan as it pertains specifically to recreation access points and trails.	High	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM	SCWMA, ID Dept. OF Ag
<b>Invasive Weeds</b>	Collaborate with the SCWMA on installation of noxious weed boot and bike wheel cleaning stations and utilize the “PlayCleanGO” or “Knock it Off” educational signage for recreationalists at each trailhead. Explore options for bikers to clean their wheels with potential for spray stations at Schweitzer and at local bike shops.	Medium	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM	SCWMA, ID Dept. OF Ag
<b>Invasive Weeds</b>	Develop a long-term plan to reduce noxious weeds and prevent future infestations.	Medium	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM	SCWMA, ID Dept. OF Ag
<b>Invasive Weeds</b>	Schedule a regular, systematic program to continually monitor weeds.	Medium	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM	SCWMA, ID Dept. OF Ag
<b>Invasive Weeds</b>	Employ an integrated strategy of weed control that includes physical (hand pulling) and/or biological (release of approved insects).	Medium	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM	SCWMA, ID Dept. OF Ag
<b>Invasive Weeds</b>	Focus control efforts around newly established seedlings and recently disturbed soils, then throughout other parts of the forestland.	High	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM	SCWMA, ID Dept. OF Ag
<b>Invasive Weeds</b>	Seed exposed soils with grass seed or other native herbaceous plants.	High	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM	SCWMA, ID Dept. OF Ag
<b>SAFETY Emergency Response</b>	Support the emergency responders from all agencies and partners in completing the incident response plan and training protocol for the LSC Watershed.	High	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM	POP, Nordic, Selkirk Rec. District, Selkirk Fire, Rescue & EMS
<b>Emergency Response</b>	Update all responders with the current trail map and EMS response locator GPS coordinates on a bi-annual basis.	High	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM	POP, Nordic, Selkirk Rec. District, Selkirk Fire, Rescue & EMS
<b>Emergency Response</b>	Bi-annually inspect all emergency signage and EMS access locations with coordinating landowners and relative user groups.	High	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM	POP, Nordic, Selkirk Rec. District, Selkirk Fire, Rescue & EMS
<b>Emergency Response</b>	Develop a strategic public education program for front country first aid training and EMS response training. As trails get developed in zones beyond access from the road system, coordinate with EMS on appropriate signage for all access points.	High	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM	POP, Nordic, Selkirk Rec. District, Selkirk Fire, Rescue & EMS

Category	Action Item	Priority	Stakeholders	Potential Partners
<b>Winter Snow Safety</b>	Develop a winter recreation advisory committee for the Watershed to develop or explore opportunities for winter recreation development, asset management, education, and safety or risk management.	Medium	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM	POP, Nordic, Selkirk Rec. District, Selkirk Fire, Rescue & EMS, ID Panhandle Avalanche Center
<b>Emergency Trail Signage and Conditions Reports</b>	Collaborate with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game in coordination with all stakeholders and user groups to develop a wildlife and recreation management protocol in conjunction with the Wildlife Management Plan.	High	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM	POP, Nordic, Selkirk Rec. District, Selkirk Fire, Rescue & EMS, ID Fish and Game
<b>Funding</b>	Establish a funding committee with stakeholders to further research potential sources and develop a strategic Watershed Recreation funding plan that will support deferred maintenance, future capital improvements and on-going maintenance.	High	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM	ID Panhandle Avalanche Center, POP, Sandpoint Nordic Club
<b>Funding</b>	Collaborate with local and state tourism associations to explore how concepts such as regenerative tourism can help fund priorities as identified within this plan.	Medium	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM	Chamber
<b>Funding</b>	Identify local passionate outdoor recreation leaders and athletes, and foster relationship building opportunities that would seek to leverage their forward-thinking knowledge to develop creative solutions. This could take the shape of an alliance and should extend beyond any one single recreation user group.	High	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM	POP, Sandpoint Nordic, Trail Runners, Climbers
<b>Funding</b>	Explore partnership and funding opportunities from various industries including the health industry sector. See example toolkit <a href="#">Financing Health and Wellness Programs: A Toolkit for Park and Recreation Professionals</a>	High	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM	Bonner County Health
<b>Funding</b>	Develop a diversified funding plan in collaboration with stakeholders and utilize the <a href="#">National Recreation and Park Association</a> Partnerships page as a reference.	High	City of Sandpoint, Schweitzer, USFS, BLM	

## APPENDICES

Appendix A: Little Sand Creek Watershed Conceptual Trails Plan – IMBA-TS

Appendix B: Little Sand Creek Watershed Conceptual Trails Plan Maps (Full scale and resolution)

Appendix C: Sample Cooperative Agreement example

Appendix D: License Agreement example

Appendix E: Trail Design, Maintenance and Construction Resources (Reference Appendix E from the Little Sand Creek Management Plan), in addition to that list, IMBA published a new resource that focuses on mountain bike specific trails was freshly released in May 2023: [Mountain Bike Trail Development Guidelines](#).

Appendix ?: (to be assigned once completed): Switchback 2 Trailhead Concept Plan