

Partnership Development, Case Study: Pole Mountain Trail Project

Wyoming Conservation Corps (Wyoming)

Partnership Development National Benefit Description: RTP funds contribute to the success of trail projects by encouraging effective partnerships. For many trails the key requirement is cooperation among jurisdictions, such as a rail trail that passes from town to town. In many cases the partnership is between public and private interests that bring volunteers and citizens groups together to assist in building and maintaining trails managed by different levels of government.

Key Terms:

- Bike Trails
- Multi-Use Trails
- Ski and Snowmobile Trails

Project Partners:

- Common Outdoor Ground
- Medicine Bow National Forest
- Wyoming Pathways
- University of Wyoming

DOT Strategic Goal Alignment:

- Accountability
- Infrastructure

Best Practices:

The U.S. Forest Service used Trail Charrettes, or public community meetings of stakeholders, to collect comments on the maintenance needs on the Pole Mountain trail system. Through collaboration and public-private partnerships, work on Pole Mountain had community support. Corpsmembers also gave back by helping educate trail users about recreational opportunities and environmental issues.

Background

The Pole Mountain area in The Medicine Bow National Forest contains trails that were never planned or maintained. Instead, many informal, “social” trails were worn-in by hikers over decades of use. These trails require all-season maintenance: they’re used by hikers, mountain bikers, and equestrians in the summer, and Nordic skiers, snowshoers, and fat bikers in the winter. Pole mountain’s year-round trail use is increasing due to its proximity to growing population centers in the front range of Colorado, its proximity to the cities of Cheyenne and Laramie, and because of the growing outdoor recreation economy in Wyoming.

Increased use of these social trails led to environmental degradation in the area. Forest Service staff identified a need to maintain and build resilient trails. This need was demonstrated through

collaborative public processes, including public comments submitted to the Forest Service and a trail public forum, hosted by the University of Wyoming and Wyoming Pathways, where members of the community brainstormed solutions with Forest Service representatives.

Project Work

Throughout 2017, Wyoming Conservation Corps partnered with Wyoming Pathways and the Laramie Ranger district of the Medicine Bow National Forest to build and maintain trails on the Pole Mountain unit of the Medicine Bow National Forest. Funding came from a \$46,000 RTP grant acquired by Wyoming Pathways and matched with \$26,000 in funding from Wyoming Pathways and local support.

Wyoming Pathways partnered with Wyoming Conservation Corps to hire four Conservation Corps crews for 40 days. This project provided multiple opportunities for community education and involvement. On National Trails Day in June 2017, more than 50 volunteers contributed to building sustainable trails at Pole Mountain. Another volunteer project occurred on September 30, in which the University of Wyoming, Wyoming Conservation Corps, the U.S. Forest Service, Wyoming Pathways, and local volunteers completed critical work to finish phase-one of the overall project. These volunteer events helped spread information about environmental awareness, resilient trail use, and recreation opportunities at Pole Mountain.

The work at Pole Mountain was supported and reinforced by the community. The University of Wyoming (UW) Outdoor Program offered trail construction courses; the UW Service Leadership and Community Engagement Office generated volunteers; local staff from the U.S. Forest Service provided project oversight; and the Wyoming State parks non-motorized trails program provided tools. The development of these rich partnerships will allow this project to grow into a long-term sustainable trail program.

Outcomes and Successes

Outdoor recreation is vital to Wyoming's economy. Due to the success of this project, the U.S. Secretary of Interior announced Pole Mountain as one of 15 priority areas to receive funding as part of the agency's mission to address approximately \$300 million in backlogged trail maintenance.

The project's success also led to the formation of an independent non-profit organization, known as Common Outdoor Ground (COG), that, under an agreement with the U.S. Forest Service, will provide volunteer labor resources for projects on the Pole Mountain trail system. Phase-two of the Pole Mountain project was approved and work began in the summer of 2018 utilizing volunteers and Corpsmembers from Wyoming Conservation Corps.

For More Information

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