



DRAFT
Valley County Recreation Strategic Plan
Life in Motion – Guiding Recreation for All Generations

January 2025



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A Message to Our Community

Message from Valley County Board of Commissioners

Valley County is the fifth largest county in Idaho by area and has a resident population of 12,000 as of 2023. Located in the central mountains of the state, over 89% of Valley County consists of public lands and includes two state parks: Payette, Cascade and Warm lakes; major forks of the Salmon and Payette Rivers; hundreds of high alpine lakes and streams; and over 64,000 acres of the Frank Church wilderness area. Commercially, it has three ski resorts, an aquatic and fitness complex, a whitewater park, and many outfitters available to escort a wide range of recreational opportunities from rafting to trail-riding. Valley County grooms more than 500 miles of snowmobile trails which provide access to world class winter terrain. **Valley County is indeed a four-season recreation hub for residents and visitors alike.** Recreation contributes over \$4 billion annually to the Idaho State economy and is the primary economic driver in Valley County..

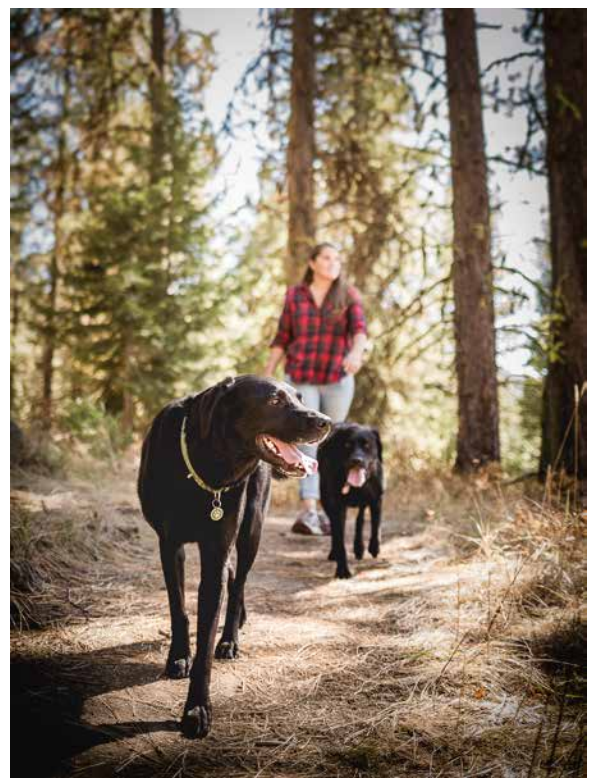
In early 2023, we asked the Recreation Department to work with the newly created Valley County Recreation Advisory Council to prepare a strategic plan for recreation in Valley County. This plan supplements the Valley County Comprehensive Plan by providing more detail for managing outdoor and indoor recreation in Valley County.

The purpose of this plan is to provide a path forward for recreation in Valley County that will not harm but rather enhance the community's residents as well as future generations. A well-thought-out strategic plan will result in improved outdoor experiences, economic opportunities for local businesses, and ensure today's recreation opportunities are available for future generations. Conversely, the risks of not having a strategic plan in place are significant and include missed opportunities to manage overuse and misuse of outdoor areas, water quality degradation, loss of public lands and access to public recreation areas, recreation user conflicts, and not adequately meeting the highest priority needs. With recreation so important to the community, we have to get this right.

Lastly, this plan was developed incorporating public input and insight. Thank you to all for taking the time to provide this. This significantly strengthened the plan, and it will be important to maintain public feedback and make adjustments to the plan as it is implemented. **Together we can work to ensure recreation in Valley County exceeds all expectations.**

Sincerely,

Sherry Maupin, Commissioner Chairman
Neal Thompson, Commissioner
Katlin Caldwell, Commissioner





With Gratitude

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This plan was prepared through a collaborative effort of personnel from the Valley County Recreation Department and the Valley County Recreation Advisory Council. The Recreation Advisory Council is made up of volunteer citizens from across Valley County.

Special thanks are offered to Valley County Commissioner Neal Thompson, the liaison to the Recreation Advisory Council, as well as Commissioner Sherry Maupin, Commissioner Katlin Caldwell, and Commissioner Elt Hasbrouck (Retired).

Special thanks are offered to all of the citizens and organizations who contributed to the initial survey and to review and comment on the Strategic Plan.

Special thanks are offered to the production team in assembling the Strategic Plan including:

Valley County Recreation Department

Larry Laxson Dave Bingaman

Valley County Recreation Advisory Council

Emily Bettin Mike Heyer John Holland

Shane Hinson Drew Kirsch Jeff Mousseau

Cameron Sena Erik Weiseth April Whitney

Our Purpose, Vision, and Mission

PURPOSE

The purpose of this plan is to develop and communicate a strategic path forward for recreation in Valley County that best addresses current issues and challenges as well as capturing new opportunities. The plan will be implemented by the Valley County Recreation Department working in partnership with federal and state agencies, local municipalities, and local businesses and agencies. The plan is built around the following vision and mission and is empowered by the new brand for recreation in Valley County.

VISION

The vision for recreation in Valley County is to be the model of excellence for Idaho in providing a wide range of well managed outdoor and indoor recreation opportunities in harmony with responsible resource stewardship and responsive to the needs of the community. Valley County will continue to balance the wide variety of recreational needs from a diverse base of users by accounting for a four-season climate who demands a multitude of recreational opportunities.

BRAND

With the goal of empowering Valley County's communities, "Life in Motion" champions the transformative power of recreation. Regardless of age or ability, we celebrate the joy of movement in all of its forms. From exhilarating adventures to exercising with friends, we invite everyone to embrace the abundance of recreational opportunities that enrich lives and foster wellbeing throughout our built and natural environments.

MISSION

The mission is to deliver a diverse variety of sustainable outdoor and indoor recreation opportunities for residents and visitors that enhances public health and well-being, improves the quality of life, preserves the natural environment, and helps sustain the local economy.

Recreation in Valley County



Valley County is considered a recreation paradise. It is ideally suited for nearly every form of four-season outdoor activity while also hosting many indoor venues. Occupying the geographical center of the state, Valley County, with the exception of a few level spaces along the main rivers, is a high and rugged area ranging from rolling wooded plateaus to 10,000-foot peaks on the Middle Fork of the Salmon River. The Boise, West, and Salmon River Mountains are the principal mountain chains. Beautiful Long Valley lies in the western portion of the county and numerous lakes, rivers, springs, cliffs, and meandering creeks enhance the region all giving rise to an abundance of recreational opportunities.

The Plan is based on a shared vision, our core values, current issues, and future needs for recreation in Valley County.

In the spring of 2024, the Valley County Commissioners requested the Valley County Recreation Department to work with the Valley County Recreation Advisory Council to prepare a strategic plan for recreation in Valley County. Sustaining and enhancing recreation is a goal of Valley County. This plan would build upon the

existing *Valley County Comprehensive Plan*, with the purpose of clearly providing the strategic direction for recreation in the county

to benefit current and future generations of residents and visitors. The plan would also incorporate stakeholder input from across the county.

The Plan that has been prepared is based on a shared vision, our core values, current issues,

and future needs for recreation in Valley County. From this, the new brand for recreation in Valley County is appropriately termed **“Life in Motion”**. The Plan is intended to guide future recreation management in Valley County, incorporating active indoor and outdoor activities and both public and private partnership sponsored recreational opportunities and infrastructure. The Plan is based on a five-year period beginning in 2025 and ending in 2030.

The Valley County Recreation Strategic Plan provides a decision-making framework for recreation planning by Valley County officials. Examples include prioritizing work, setting annual budgets, seeking and allotting funding, planning for growth, and evaluating new opportunities. The plan is also a communication tool for those wanting to learn about recreation opportunities in Valley County.

The Valley County Recreation Strategic Plan is structured around five key focus areas. These five focus areas are:

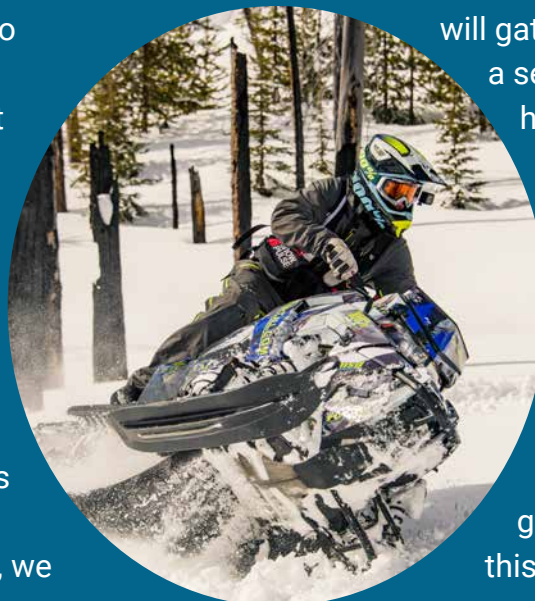
- 
- 1. Collaborative Processes and Partnerships**
 - 2. Programs and Infrastructure**
 - 3. Communication and Engagement**
 - 4. Conserve Public Recreation Opportunities and Open Space**
 - 5. Financial Stability.**

For each focus area, goals are listed, and improvement actions are presented.

Shaping the Future Together

COMMUNITY INPUT

Community input is important to producing the Valley County Recreation Strategic Plan. Input was first collected through a survey of key stakeholders including businesses that are directly connected to recreation and the recreation economy, user groups, non-profits, municipalities, and the agencies managing the land in our area. Next, over the next few months, we



will gather more information and host a series of community open houses to engage more of the public so that we can be assured we have not overlooked any details. Lastly, we will continue to collect feedback once the plan is issued by hosting an annual public recreation conference. Your feedback is greatly appreciated as we begin this process.

Challenges in Valley County

CURRENT CHALLENGES

The first community survey focused on current issues in Valley County. This input was factored into determining the top issues affecting recreation today. A brief description of the top issues currently facing recreation in Valley County is provided below and has been used in developing the focus areas and improvement actions.

Growth and Overuse

Recreational use in Valley County has increased over the last 10 years as the Treasure Valley population has grown by nearly 200,000 new residents. Valley County is now considered the backyard and a recreation destination to a large population base. In addition, Valley County has also seen steadily increasing population growth over the last 10 years. Our popularity and attraction to new residents comes with a cost. The COVID 19 pandemic added to the

Valley County is now considered a recreation destination to a large population base.

growth of communities close to natural amenities and increased use in all types of outdoor recreation at an unsustainable rate. Popular recreation sites are becoming more crowded, infrastructure that was able to accommodate past use is no longer adequate. Increased use often causes resource damage and other impacts to the natural environment, local infrastructure and is well documented in many areas that have experienced increased demand. When existing resources are at maximum capacity, users create new opportunities such as user created trails, expanded camping site footprints resulting in a larger impact on recreation sites and more resource damage.

Degraded Water Quality

Increased recreation use can have negative impacts on waterways and water quality. Watershed health should be prioritized; water quality





monitoring is needed, watershed management to address the human impacts of recreational uses needs to be incorporated into a cohesive planning, education, and enforcement strategy which should be an immediate priority.

Loss of Public Lands & Access to Public Lands

Valley County is the gateway to two national forests, a large portion of the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness, several state parks, Bureau of Land Management parcels on the Payette River and large tracts of State Lands. Access to public lands and water bodies in Valley County is one of the most important and attractive amenities to residents and visitors alike. Much of the ground on the valley floor that connects to public lands and waterways is either private or managed by Idaho Department of Lands (IDL). IDL lands could be sold or traded in the future and access through private lands continues to be shut down by landowners.

Lack of Indoor Recreation Opportunities

Valley County lacks community indoor recreation facilities that would address the needs of local sports teams, senior citizens and families looking for alternatives to outdoor recreation during the colder months. Community Recreation facilities are important to local communities and can be an amenity to visitors as well.

Lack of Available Resources

Current funding for recreation in Valley County is very limited with individual groups and agencies raising money through separate fundraising efforts and grant writing. Many out of area recreation users do not financially contribute to recreation maintenance or improvement. Available funding falls short of meeting needs and opportunities for sustainable funding should be further explored.

Our Values



CORE VALUES

Five core values help frame the direction for recreation in Valley County. These values are considered in planning the strategic direction, determining needs and actions, and as criteria in decision making. These values are also incorporated internally among Recreation Department staff and county personnel.

Teamwork

We will work cooperatively and in collaboration with both private and public agencies to support missions with shared goals that align with the mission of our strategic plan.

Environmental Stewardship

We strive to respect and care for the natural environment, recognizing that wise use of the landscape now and forward will affect future generations of Valley County recreationists.

Inclusiveness

We strive to create an environment where quality diverse recreational opportunities abound for all ages and abilities.

Sustainability

We strive to create a recreation model for our community at large which requires minimal maintenance and cost to the local community, but also maximizes benefit for the county economy.

Social responsibility

We are committed to the demands of our society at large, but more importantly to the needs of Valley County residents.



ASSUMPTIONS

In addition to the core values, the strategic plan for enhancing recreation in Valley County is also grounded in several key assumptions that consider the primary internal and external factors shaping recreation in our community. These foundational assumptions provide a clear framework for setting precise goals, aligned with our mission and vision, to ensure the sustainable and vibrant future of recreation across Valley County.

- 1. Recreation enhances human health, well-being, and quality of life.*
- 2. Recreation is a key component of a viable and sustainable economy for Valley County.*
- 3. Valley County is recognized as an exceptional locale for year-round outdoor recreation.*
- 4. Recreation use will continue to increase in volume and variety.*
- 5. Valley County residents and visitors share in the benefits of recreation.*
- 6. Recreation opportunities should be affordable for the residents of Valley County*
- 7. Public access and open spaces are essential to outdoor recreation.*
- 8. Indoor recreation warrants special consideration due to our winter climate.*
- 9. Recreation can exist in harmony with land use requirements and responsible stewardship.*
- 10. Sustainable recreation requires intentional planning and management.*
- 11. Sound partnerships between Valley County and the private sector are constructive*



Our Focus Areas

Five focus areas have been established as shown in the figure on the following page to support the vision of providing a wide range of well managed outdoor and indoor recreation opportunities in harmony with responsible resource stewardship that are responsive to the needs of the community as well as addressing current issues. These focus areas were selected through evaluation of the current issues, core values, and assumptions and having the largest positive impact in meeting the vision. Each focus area is supported by goals that will lead to improvement in the that area, and for each goal specific actions are listed to achieve the goal. In total, there are 15 goals and 31 actions within the five focus areas.



Focus Area #1

Collaborative Processes and Partnerships

Goal #1: Increase ability of government agencies to access and share resources for recreation benefits.

Goal #2: Increase support from the private sector, non-profits, and user groups for recreation infrastructure and maintenance.

Goal #3: Ensure recreation opportunities meet public needs.



Focus Area #2

Programs and Infrastructure

Goal #1: Preserve existing recreation opportunities and maintain infrastructure.

Goal #2: Construct new recreation facilities and infrastructure aligned with public needs.

Goal #3: Enhance specialized programs for youth, special needs, and seniors.

Goal #4: Expand motorized and non-motorized pathways.



Focus Area #3

Communication and Engagement

Goal #1: Provide public access to recreation knowledge.

Goal #2: Foster a sense of stewardship among recreation users.

Goal #3: Increase recreation volunteer opportunities.



Focus Area #4

Conserve Public Recreation Opportunities and Protect Land and Water Quality

Goal #1: Develop permanent solutions for preserving state and federal lands.

Goal #2: Protect recreation areas at risk for sale or trade.

Goal #3: Protect existing recreation access and expand access areas.

Goal #4: Protect water quality.



Focus Area #5

Financial Stability

Goal #1: Establish a sustainable recreation budget for Valley County.

Goal #2: Quantitatively define the annual current and projected economic impact of recreation to Valley County..



Focus Area #1

Collaborative Processes and Partnerships

The actions in the strategic plan will not be able to be achieved by Valley County working alone. To be successful, work must be done collaboratively in partnership with federal and state agencies, local municipalities and districts, and local businesses and agencies. This focus area is intended to build and strengthen these partnerships that will be required for success.

Goal # 1 Increase ability of government agencies to access and share resources for recreation benefit.

Action 1 Develop written and agreed partnerships with other agencies including IDPR, IDL, USFS, IDFG, school districts and county cities/towns in Valley County. Implement in 2025.

- Need for streamlined processes, better communication between agencies, regular check-ins (for example a meeting with IDL, USFS, VC P&R, CITRA, TV Trials group and CIMBA to discuss status and updates on trail projects). This should be a priority beginning with the adoption of the plan in 2025.

Action 2 Develop and implement a cooperative agreement with the Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) concerning managing recreation leases in Valley County. Based on the amount of land managed by IDL and the intensive use by the public, a better management plan is needed. Implement in 2024.

- The Boulder Meadows and Little Payette Lake areas are prime examples of local IDL lands that are in need of Recreation Management

Plans to minimize user impacts. Valley County could be the managing partner for these areas but the current Land Use Permitting system would need to be improved with long term provisions for recreational infrastructure improvements. This action is already a priority, Valley County Parks and Recreation should continue to look for other areas that could be included in future agreements. Implement in 2025.

Goal # 2 Increase the ability of the private sector, non-profit organizations, and other user groups to support recreation infrastructure development and maintenance.

Action 1 Develop and implement a written cost sharing policy and process as well as a standardized MOU for groups to help with programs (like snow grooming). Implement in 2026.

- Develop a Recreation District or a Trail Alliance that would allow for fundraising, donations and other contributions to be made and allocated to agency partners or other recreation groups working in the area.

- Prepare a standardized memorandum of understanding with each agency would also allow volunteer labor to be easily available for projects by providing a necessary framework for the boundaries of the partnership. Utilizing existing agreements from other areas that have them in place would streamline this process.

Action 2 Develop and implement an outreach program tied to needs. Implement in 2025.

- Develop a central webpage to be shared with partners that lists all local volunteer opportunities and needs (this could be integrated into a new Valley County Recreation Website that other groups could link to and add volunteer opportunities). It would provide an opportunity for organizations to highlight projects that need funding or other forms of assistance. The creation of a new County wide Recreation website and improving the existing page on the Valley County website should be a priority project between Recreation staff and the Communications sub-committee of the VCRAC.

Action 3 Develop and implement a concessionaire program that supports recreation areas. Utilize programs similar to the US Forest System Camp Host program, Cabarton Shuttles. Implement in 2026.

- Explore a concessionaire for the takeout for the Cabarton section of the North Fork Payette River. From this, other timelines can be created as new opportunities are identified such as construction of new campgrounds and other sites.



Action 1 Hold an annual multi-agency and public entity recreation summit. Implement in 2025

- Provide an opportunity for local recreation groups and agencies to see what each group is working on and where opportunities for mutual support is needed. This would be held at a local venue revolving through each year through one of the communities in Valley County. This would be a roundtable meeting with members of the public invited to attend.

Action 2 Maintain and support the citizen-based Valley County Recreation Advisory Council. Implemented in 2024.

- Add annual updates to the County Commissioners from VCRAC, check-ins with VCRAC on current and forecasted needs or support from County.

Action 3 Develop a web-based recreation user feedback system. Implement in 2025.

- Implement by starting with a simple feedback form on Valley County Recreation Webpage, a physical box for feedback at sites, and add comment section to the fee envelopes at all sites, QR code on kiosks.

Goal #3 Ensure recreation opportunities meet public needs.



Focus Area #2

Programs and Infrastructure

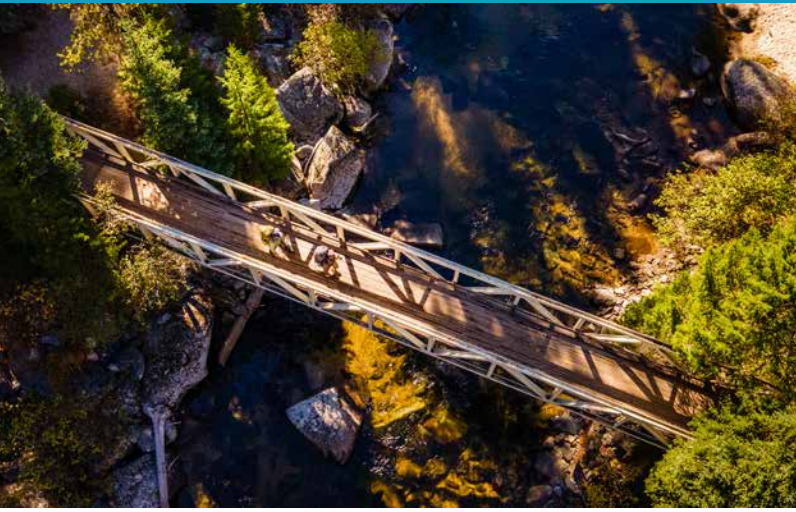


Leading with the acknowledgment that our region is rich in recreational opportunities, our primary goal in this focus area is to preserve and protect those opportunities and the resources that make them possible. Resources include both natural features such as public land, waterways, and fish and game, and infrastructure such as trails, restrooms, and campgrounds. Taking good care of the resources we have is the best model of stewardship and typically the most economically feasible approach. Access to recreation resources is the foundation of equity and inclusion, which is the right of residents and visitors alike.

Next, as recreation is an ever-adapting set of activities, the needs of the public will change over time. Valley County seeks to serve all segments of the population and desires of visitors to the

best of its ability. Improving access, quality, and variety of recreation opportunities will require new facilities and infrastructure. Public involvement and careful planning will lead to long term success in this endeavor.

Acknowledging that not all recreationists have the same needs, we seek to enhance programs that serve marginalized, underrepresented, and specialized groups towards our mission for diversity, inclusion and equity. All ages and abilities can recreate in Valley County. We know that we are not alone in these efforts, so we seek partnership with national groups for support and guidance in these programs. Encouraging the youth of our community is an especially important goal, aiming to support a lifetime of health and well-being through recreation.



Goal # 2 Construct new recreation facilities and infrastructure aligned with public needs.

Action 1 Plan, construct, and open an indoor recreation facility(s) through a collaborative effort with local partners that serves Valley County residents. Implement 2027.

- Evaluate the public interest to identify the scope of the desired facilities.
- Prepare cost estimates and phasing plans, if necessary, to create a feasible approach to constructing this facility or facilities.
- Identify City and County owned properties to evaluate opportunities and constraints for indoor facilities.
- Identify partners to financially support the construction of the facility/facilities.
- Establish a method for construction and maintenance funding for the facility through a recreation tax district or other means.

Action 2 Improve infrastructure (such as parking, restrooms, trash collection) at higher use recreation access points. Implement 2027.

- Inventory existing infrastructure and evaluate the frequency of use and prioritize locations for improvements
- Monitor visitor use and obtain more detailed user information to help determine where improvements and user protection are most needed.

Goal # 1 Preserve existing recreation opportunities and maintain existing infrastructure.

Action 1 Prevent outdoor public recreation access restrictions and closures. Implementation is ongoing.

- Work to reduce threats to public access by identifying each in a timely manner and developing solutions to address the threat.
- Work to formalize easements or ownership where informal public access currently exists.

Action 2 – Develop a maintenance plan for Valley County recreation infrastructure that identifies maintenance tasks, priorities, and costs. Implement 2026.

- Develop a plan that inventories recreation infrastructure; identifies current and upcoming maintenance tasks; estimates costs for all maintenance tasks; prioritizes maintenance tasks based on urgency and budget, and minimizes out-of-use time to the public by scheduling maintenance during off-peak seasons.



Focus Area #2 Programs and Infrastructure

Goal # 3 Enhance specialized recreation programs including youth, special needs, and seniors.

Action 1 Partner with national governing bodies for organized sports. Implement 2025.

- Identify organizations and build relationships

Action 2 Explore implementing a county-wide youth sports program. Implement 2025.

- Evaluate feasibility of county-wide youth sports program
- Plan and present a pilot program

Goal #4 Expand motorized and non-motorized pathways.

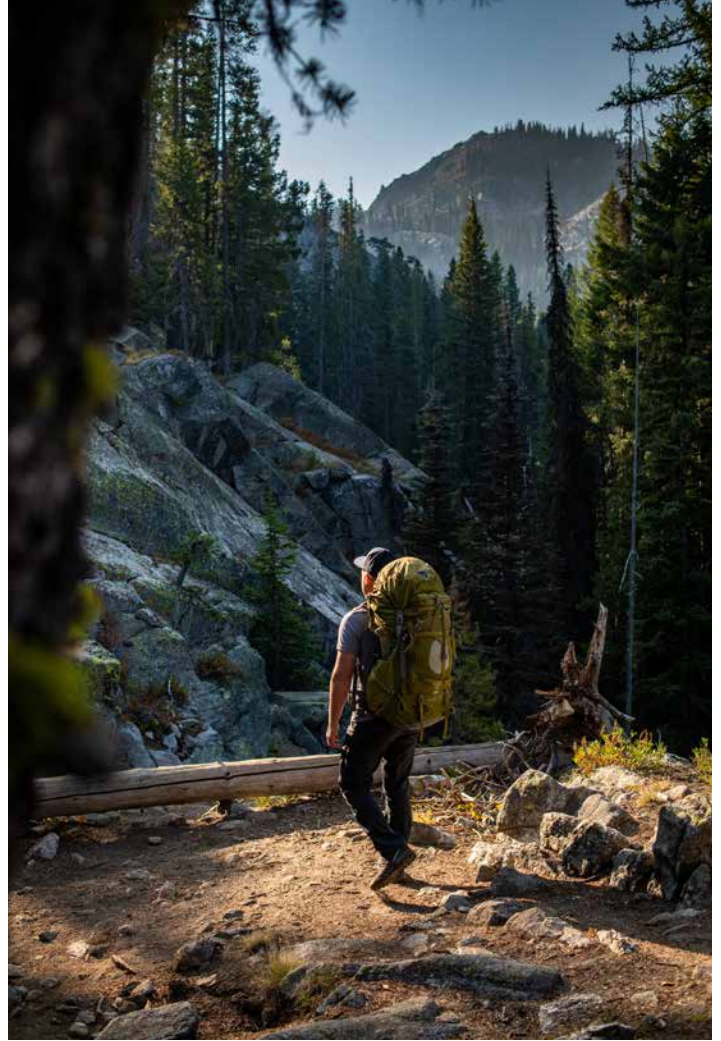
Action 1 Expand trail connectivity. Implementation continues through 2029.

- Utilize previous planning efforts as outlined in the Pathways Master Plan and the Greater Bear Basin trail plan.
- Prioritize design and engineering funding for future projects in these plans.
- Utilize Active Transportation grants, state recreation funds and other large funding sources for both planning and capital expenses.
- Prioritize projects that link communities to each other as well as connections to recreational venues.

Work with local agencies to establish “missing links” across State and Federal lands to connect existing trails across jurisdictional boundaries and increase trail accessibility to towns and neighborhoods.

Action 2 Collaborate with and support non-profit organizations. Implementation continues through 2029.

- Foster relationships with individual groups working on specific types of trail projects like Valley County Pathways, Central Idaho Trail Riders Alliance and the Central Idaho Mountain Bike Association to increase and improve motorized and non-motorized trails in Valley County.
- Work towards the formation of a regional trail alliance where individual groups support a more comprehensive vision of connectivity while supporting agencies with limited recreational program capacity.
- Provide a volunteer calendar on the Valley County Recreation page that highlights volunteer opportunities.





Focus Area #3

Communication and Engagement

Clear, understandable, and easily assessable information to the public about Valley County recreation policies, opportunities, and programs is critical to meet both county and user needs. A community outreach plan can identify the processes and mediums to be used for communication of this information. Successful programs currently in place should be expanded upon; new communication and engagement methods should be explored; and public engagement through volunteerism should be expanded.

Goal #1 Provide the public easily accessible knowledge of existing recreation opportunities.

Action 1 Rebuild and enhance the Valley County recreation website. Implement 2025.

- Consider pros and cons of using internal resources versus an outside contractor to design, develop and implement a Valley County Rec microsite.
- Solicit bids from qualified vendors to make detailed cost comparison.
- Form a steering committee for the website project to identify content priorities and oversee website development process.

Action 2 Develop and implement a community outreach plan. Implement 2025.

- Identify currently available resources and resource gaps (budget).

- Work with County on budget for outreach, acknowledging that the outreach plan should leverage existing tools like email lists and social media channels to promote both the new website and any other rec committee messages.
- Evaluate the prospects for in-person engagement (open house type events) to introduce both the Strategic Plan and the recreation microsite when complete.

Goal # 2 Foster a sense of stewardship among all recreation users.

Action 1 Build on the existing “Recreate Responsibly” and “Leave no Trace” programs. Implement 2025.

- Evaluate more effective education communication methods (virtually and signage at the recreation sites) for the “Recreate Responsibly” and “Leave no Trace” programs.



- Design the new microsite with an emphasis on the role all users play in being caretakers of Valley County’s recreation amenities.
- Incorporate “recreate responsibly” messaging in social media and email strategies.
- Include and promote private property recreation restrictions and responsibilities and restrictions in “Recreate Responsibly” program.

Action 2 Promote volunteer events. Implement 2026.

- Identify community events that have a stewardship component.
- Catalog and advertise volunteer opportunities on the Valley County Recreation website.
- Partner with organizers of those events to explore how VCRCAC can use its communication channels to promote volunteerism and awareness of those events.

Goal #3 Increase recreation volunteer opportunities.

Action 1 Create volunteer opportunities built around specific communities. Implement 2025.

- Identify new County recreation projects and partner organization projects that would benefit from volunteer involvement

Action 2 Establish a recreation stewardship program. Implement 2027.

- Establish a working group to research existing ‘adopt a trail’ and ‘adopt a site’ programs.
- Incorporate that research while developing a plan that specifically addresses the trails, sites and areas in need of stewardship in Valley County.



Focus Area #4

Conserve Public Recreation Opportunities and Protect Land and Water Quality

Continued outdoor public recreation is dependent on public lands and access to public lands. With high demand for land in Valley County, public lands stand the risk of becoming private, and privatized land usually means restriction of access to the public and loss of recreational opportunities. Several past actions have resulted in loss of access to thousands of acres in Valley County. Furthermore, as public spaces for recreation reduce, those remaining will see increased use to the point of overuse with adverse impact to land and water.

Goal #1 Develop and implement permanent solutions to preserve state and federal lands in Valley County.

Action 1 Partner with non-profit organizations to protect state of Idaho endowment lands from private sale or trade. Implementation through 2029.

- The State of Idaho endowment lands make-up some of the most pristine lands in Valley County almost all accessible to the public today. These include lands bordering Big and Little Payette Lakes, lands around Jug Mountain, and land along Lake Cascade. The Idaho State Land Board has approved a Payette Endowment Lands Strategy Plan for the disposition of the endowment lands along Payette Lakes in the next several years. Collaborative efforts protect these lands should include working with groups such as

the Payette Land Trust, United Payette, and the Payette Endowment lands Alliance to put in place permanent protections from privatization for these lands.

- Solutions may include recreation leases, conservation easements, moving ownership to the state of Idaho Parks and Recreation Department or a land trade with the US Forest Service.

Goal #2 Protect recreation areas at risk for sale or trade.

Action 1 Develop a monitoring plan and schedule to routinely survey recreation areas for overuse/misuse. Implement 2025.

- The Valley County Recreation Department shall work cooperatively with land management agencies or partners to develop a site inventory and monitoring plan to address the most congested or highest use sites within or linking to Valley County. Monitoring and inventorying of sites for misuse or other issues shall be performed on a routine basis as described by the schedule in the monitoring plan. Where appropriate, Valley County will help provide recommendations for site changes or adjustments.

Action 2 Strengthen enforcement response and actions concerning misuse. Implement 2026.



- Work collaboratively with law enforcement partners county-wide to address issues associated with resource damage and overstay on IDL and adjoining federal lands within the county.

Goal #3 Protect existing recreation access and increase recreation use access areas.

Action 1 Work with partners for land use/land access/easements/leases/and land acquisition that benefit recreational access. Implementation through 2029.

- In addition to the state endowment lands covered in Goal #1 in this focus area, additional efforts are required to better ensure public access to public lands through private lands, especially access to key recreational trailheads. To implement this action, the Valley County Recreation Department shall prepare a prioritized list of areas that are at risk of loss of public access. From this, potential solutions can be developed, and the department can begin working with public, non-profit, and private partners for implementation. Solutions may include purchasing conservation easements, establishing long-term leases, land acquisition, or other.

Action 2 Prepare, prioritize, and maintain a list of potential land purchases in Valley County that would benefit recreation access. Implement 2025.

- As the population taking advantage of recreational opportunities in Valley County grows, the use of recreation access points will increase. New or expanding existing recreation access points. This includes not only parking access but also associated items such as bathroom facilities and signage. The Valley County Recreation Department shall identify the highest use public recreation access areas and evaluate whether those areas will meet increased use needs for the next five years. This action should begin in the 2025 with a schedule within the plan identifying timing and potential fund sources for each project identified.

Goal # 4 Protect water quality

Action 1 Monitor and control water quality impacts from recreation use. Implementation ongoing.

- Incorporate water quality issues, including those from recreation use, into recreation access decisions.
- Educate recreation users on water quality issues and responsibilities.
- Where recreation use is significantly impacting water quality, make improvements to protect water quality.
- Establish a cooperative relationship with the Valley County Waterways Advisory Board with focus on water quality issues created by recreation use and possible solutions.



Focus Area #5

Financial Stability

To complete the scope of work necessary for recreational infrastructure, programs, and processes in this plan, significant focus on funding is key. Although a limited Recreation Department budget is allocated in the Valley County annual budget, work is always necessary to obtain grants and alternate fund sources. Another issue is that Valley County outdoor recreation is very attractive to visitors, but these visitors do not contribute to the tax base that is used for funding for recreation maintenance and improvement. Lastly, items such as recreational facilities, land purchases, and conservation easements take large amounts of funds not normally available through the county.

Goal #1 Achieve a sustainable recreation budget and funds sources for Valley County.

Action 1 Complete a feasibility analysis for a north valley recreation district and prepare a plan to establish such a district. Implement in 2025.

- Establish a recreation district in north Valley County and establish a balanced tax rate for the district. Use lessons learned from a previous effort to establish a similar recreation district in Valley County. Dedicated funding for recreation projects is not included in the Valley County Annual Budget. Future projects require funding that is currently not available without new funding mechanisms.

Action 2 Aggressively pursue recreation grants and donations. Implement in 2025.

- Work with Valley County Grant Writer and local non-profit groups to develop a list of recreation grants. Create a list of priority projects that are shovel ready when grant opportunities open. A great example is the funding for pathways that is currently available through US Department of Transportation, these are big money opportunities but require projects where design and engineering are completed for consideration of funding. Currently no County funds are being utilized for development of future projects.



Action 3 Complete an analysis of recreation user fees with the goal of expanding fees and having user fees better cover operating costs for each site or facility. Implement in 2025.

- The fee system needs to be clear, uniform and reasonable. All County sites should be covered under the same fee schedule. Efforts to provide electronic payment options should be made and the current season pass needs to be expanded to include all activities and sites. This pass should also be advertised as an affordable way to help pay for recreation maintenance and improvements by the people using them.
- Consider creating a “recreation tax” at area retailers.

Goal #2 *Quantitatively define the annual current and projected economic impact of recreation to Valley County.*

Action 1 Complete an analysis of the economic impact of recreation to Valley County currently and for the next five years



Conclusion

The Path Forward

This strategic plan provides the path forward for Valley County to work with federal, state and local entities to focus recreation policy and plans. The plan puts recreation front and center in importance to Valley County, and the five focus areas provide the goals and actions to guide improvements and bring the vision of recreation in Valley County to reality. Recreation benefits residents and visitors alike in providing an abundance of opportunities that enrich lives and foster wellbeing. Following the path presented in this plan will ensure even brighter opportunities for both current and future generations.



References

The following references were used in developing the Valley County recreation Strategic Plan

1. Valley County Idaho Comprehensive Plan. Adopted June 25, 2001, Last Revised November 26, 2018.
2. Valley County 2022 Strategic Plan, Approved by the Valley County Board of Commissioners on September 12, 2022.
3. Valley County Waterways Management Plan, October 31, 2022.
4. Valley County Recreation Advisory Board Charter and By-laws, 2022.
5. Valley County Idaho Public Survey regarding Public Lands, Open Space and Recreation. Trust for Public Lands, Valley County, August 2021.
6. Valley County Idaho Recreation Strategic Plan Development Questionnaire. 2023.
7. McCall in Motion, 2018 McCall Area Comprehensive Plan, February 26, 2018
8. Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan, City of McCall, June 29, 2023.
9. Idaho State Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan FY2024 – FY2027, June 15, 2023.
10. Idaho Parks and Recreation Survey of Idahoans, Boise State University Idaho Policy Institute, Commissioned by the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, 2022.
11. Payette Endowment Lands Strategy, Idaho Department of Lands, March 2021.
12. Payette Endowment Lands Strategy (PELS) Implementation Plan, United Payette, September 2021.
13. Blaine County Comprehensive Plan, Chapter 3 – Recreation.
14. Utah’s Outdoor Recreation Strategic Plan, Utah Outdoor Adventure Commission, October 2023

