



# Valley County Recreation Strategic Plan

Life in Motion – Guiding Recreation for All Generations

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; major forks of the Salmon and Payette Rivers; Payette, Cascade and Warm Lakes; 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 business, 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.

Thank you to all who took time to provide this, which significantly strengthened the plan. We recognize the importance of maintaining public feedback and commit to continued 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.

The VCRAC group would like to thank all the citizens and organizations who contributed to the strategy by sharing their insights through surveys, comments and conversations.

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).

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# 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 designed to be a model of excellence. The county's diverse range of users and dynamic four-season climate requires well-managed outdoor and indoor recreation opportunities, which must be responsive to the needs of the community and remain in harmony with responsible resource stewardship.

## 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. 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 of Valley County Recreation is to deliver a diverse variety of sustainable outdoor and indoor recreation opportunities for residents and visitors alike that enhance public health and well being, improve the quality of life, preserve the natural environment, and help sustain the local economy.



# Recreation in Valley County



Valley County is 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.

In the spring of 2024, the Valley County

Commissioners requested that the Valley County Recreation Department 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 Plan is based on a shared vision, our core values, current issues, and future needs for recreation in Valley County.***

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. It encompasses indoor and outdoor recreational opportunities and infrastructure projects, driven either by the County or by public/private partnerships and sponsorships. The Plan is based on a five-year period beginning in 2026 and ending in 2031.

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. 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 gathered input on current issues affecting recreation in Valley County. This input has been used to develop focus areas and improvement actions. Brief descriptions of the top issues are provided below.

### 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 growth of communities close to natural amenities and increased use in all types of outdoor recreation

**Valley County  
is a recreation  
destination to a  
large population  
base.**

at an unsustainable rate. Popular recreation sites are becoming more crowded, and infrastructure that was able to accommodate past use is no longer adequate. It is well-documented that increased use often causes natural resource damage and negatively impacts the natural environment and local infrastructure. For example, when existing outdoor recreation areas are at maximum capacity, users tend to create unsanctioned trails and inappropriate campsite locations, 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; and 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 land area 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**

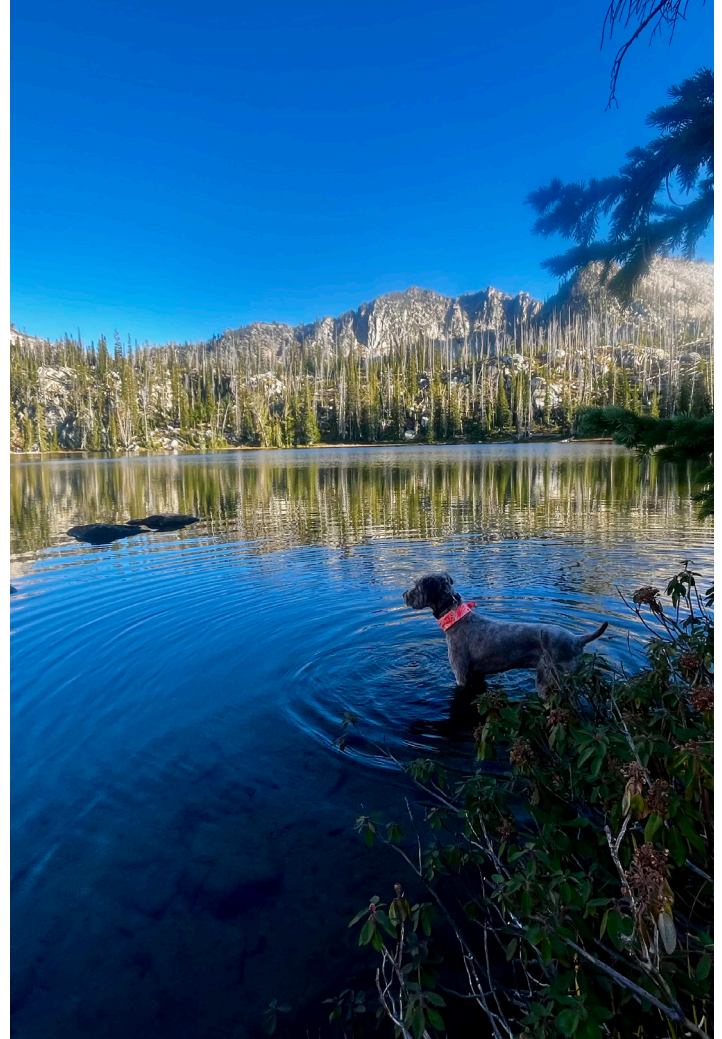
Valley County lacks community indoor recreation facilities that would address the needs of local sports teams, senior citizens, and families looking for alternatives to outdoor recreation during the colder months. Community Recreation facilities are important to local communities and can be an amenity 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 applications. Many out-of-area recreation users do not financially contribute to recreation maintenance or improvement. Available funding falls short of needs, and opportunities for sustainable and adequate 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. These focus areas were selected through evaluation of the current issues, core values, and assumptions. Each focus area is supported by goals that will lead to improvement in 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:** Prevent outdoor public recreation access restrictions and closures

**Goal #2:** Increase public recreation access

**Goal #3:** Prevent land and water quality degradation that may be caused by recreational use



### **Focus Area #5**

#### **Financial Stability**

**Goal #1:** Achieve a sustainable recreation budget and funding sources 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 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 the 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 2026.

- 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 of trail projects). This should be a priority beginning with the adoption of the plan in 2026.

**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 2026.

- 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 Memorandum of Understanding for groups to help with programs (like snow grooming). Implement in 2027.

- 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 MOU with each agency that 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 2026.

- 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 countywide 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 Service Camp Host program or Cabarton Shuttles. Implement in 2027.

- 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 2026.

- Provide an opportunity for local recreation groups and agencies to see what each group is working on and where opportunities for mutual support are 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. Implement in 2025.

- 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 2026.

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

**GOAL #3** *Ensure recreation opportunities meet public needs.*





## Focus Area #2

# Programs and Infrastructure



Leading with the acknowledgement 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 #1 Preserve existing recreation opportunities and maintain existing infrastructure.***

**ACTION #1** Develop a monitoring plan and schedule to routinely survey recreation areas for overuse/misuse.

- Work cooperatively with land management agencies to develop a site inventory and monitoring plan that identifies the most congested and highest use sites within or connected to Valley County. Work to formalize easements or ownership where informal public access currently exists.
- Monitor sites for misuse, overuse, or other user related issues shall be performed on a routine basis. Issues may include, but are not limited to, 1) soil erosion or vegetation loss from trail use, 2) shoreline erosion or water quality decline caused by boat use, or 3) litter or sanitary issues that may affect land or water quality as well as human health.
- Where appropriate, Valley County recreation staff will help provide recommendations for site changes or adjustments.

**ACTION #2** Develop a maintenance plan for Valley County recreation infrastructure that identifies maintenance tasks, priorities, and costs.

- 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.

**ACTION #3** Strengthen enforcement response and actions concerning misuse.

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





## Focus Area #2 Programs and Infrastructure

### **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 2028.

- 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 2028.

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

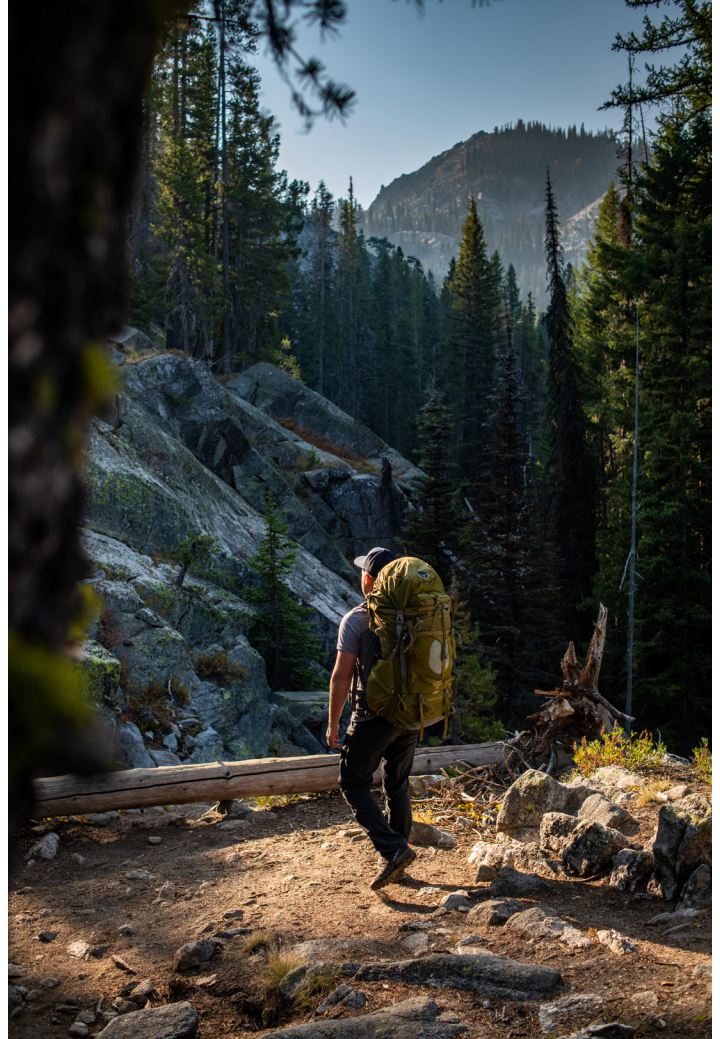
**ACTION #1** Expand trail connectivity. Implementation continues through 2030.

- 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** Form a regional trail alliance that spans different user groups and focuses on a comprehensive vision of connectivity. This group will also support agencies with limited recreational program capacity.

- Foster relationships with individual groups – such as Valley County Pathways, Central Idaho Trail Riders Alliance, and the Central Idaho Mountain Bike Association – working on specific types of trail projects that grow 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.

## **GOAL #4** *Expand motorized and non-motorized pathways.*

**ACTION #1** Partner with national governing bodies for organized sports. Implement 2026.

- Identify organizations and build relationships

**ACTION #2** Explore implementing a county-wide youth sports program. Implement 2026.

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





## Focus Area #3

# Communication and Engagement

Clear, understandable, and easily accessible information 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 tools to be used for communicating 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 easily accessible knowledge of existing recreation opportunities.***

**ACTION #1** Rebuild and enhance the Valley County recreation website. Implement 2026.

- Consider pros and cons of using internal resources versus an outside contractor to design, develop and implement a Valley County Recreation 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 the website development process.

**ACTION #2** Develop and implement a community outreach plan. Implement 2026.

- Identify currently available resources and resource gaps.
- Work with County leadership on budgeting 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 provide community updates and gather feedback.

### ***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 2026.

- Evaluate virtual and on-site communication methods for these 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 in “Recreate Responsibly” messaging.

**ACTION #2** Promote volunteer events.  
Implement 2027.

- 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 Valley County can use its communication channels to promote volunteerism and awareness.

### ***GOAL #3 Increase recreation volunteer opportunities.***

**ACTION #1** Create volunteer opportunities built around specific communities. Implement 2026.

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

**ACTION #2** Establish a recreation stewardship program. Implement 2028.

- 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 of public lands 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 Prevent outdoor public recreation access restrictions and closures .**

**ACTION #1** Reduce restrictions to public land access via private lands for recreation.

- Identify access challenges in a timely manner and work with others to develop solutions to prevent restrictions and closures, especially important for access to key recreational trailheads.
- Identify informal public access points and work to formalize agreements, easements or ownership to better ensure long-term access.

**ACTION #2** Partner with agencies and organizations to protect public lands from privatization.

- Identify key recreational use lands and access points that may be at risk of sale or trade that would result in private ownership. Work with others including federal and state agencies and conservation groups to maintain lands as public or otherwise protect public access and use through instruments such as easements, leases, or landowner agreements. Keeping public lands in public hands best ensures long-term public access.
- Promote land management trades or exchanges that benefit public recreation use, access, and quality. This includes the state of Idaho endowment lands in northern Valley County managed by the Department of Lands that have been identified for future sale or trade by the state of Idaho in their Payette Endowment Lands Strategy.

### **GOAL #2 Increase public recreation access.**

**ACTION #1** Prioritize land types most needed for recreation variety and implement solutions.

- Based on specific recreation type, complete an analysis of land types/areas that would provide additional access points for that





specific recreation type. This would include activities such as camping, snowmobiling, kayaking, and many others. This should include informal access points, especially those that are high use areas. As a subset, a list of potential land purchases in Valley County that would provide the greatest benefit to recreation shall also be developed.

- From this analysis, prioritize the top opportunities based on need, expected use, cost and funding, resource conservation, and other factors as identified. Next, develop solutions for implementing access points. This may include conservation easements, leases, landowner agreements, land trades, sponsorships, Valley County purchases, or other instruments that may best assure long-term access for recreation purposes.

### ***GOAL #3 Prevent land and water quality degradation that may be caused by recreational use.***

**ACTION #1** Protect land and water quality through user education.

- Educate recreation users on methods to preserve land and water quality. Methods may include on-site interpretive signage, stewardship events, and digital outreach.
- Support other groups in doing similar education work.

**ACTION #2** Monitor high traffic recreation areas for land or water quality degradation caused by recreation.

- Be responsive to specific land or water quality issues identified by users.
- Routinely observe high traffic recreation sites for damage to lands or waters caused by recreation use and make adjustments to curtail damage.

**ACTION #3** Incorporate land and water quality considerations into recreational planning and decision making.

- On new recreational projects and improvements, review potential land and water quality issues. From this, seek to mitigate issues that can be mitigated. Any remaining issues shall be incorporated into decision making. In general, actions with large land or water negative impacts shall be avoided.
- Coordinate recreation actions with other groups performing land and water quality work to better ensure compounding effects are considered and issues are clearly identified.
- Review recreation modalities for adverse effects to land or water health.





## 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. The current Recreation Department budget is limited, therefore, projects and maintenance are dependent on the constant pursuit of grants and alternate funding. Additionally, Valley County outdoor recreation is highly attractive to visitors who do not directly contribute to the tax base that currently funds recreation. At current funding levels, big ticket projects or strategic improvements are not financially attainable or sustainable.

### ***GOAL #1 Achieve a sustainable recreation budget and funding 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 2026.

- 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.

- Consider other types of user supported funding.

**ACTION #2** Aggressively pursue recreation grants and donations. Implement in 2026.

- 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 in Valley County. Implement in 2025.

- We know that recreation brings economic benefits to our community. It’s imperative to quantify that impact in order to properly prioritize County investments in recreational facilities and activities.





## 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 showcases the importance of recreation in Valley County. Recreation benefits residents and visitors by providing abundant opportunities that enrich lives and foster physical and mental well-being. The five focus areas provide the goals and actions needed to ensure recreation maintains its cherished place in the lives of everyone in Valley County. 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



