

NON-MOTORIZED TRAIL STRATEGY – BLACK HILLS NATIONAL FOREST

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. Background –

The Black Hills National Forest (BKNF) has collaborated with the National Forest Advisory Board (NFAB) and members of the public to better understand user needs of the current non-motorized trail system on the Forest. As a result, the BKNF has developed a trail strategy document that includes a Trail Proposal Process (TPP) for user groups to recommend new trails to the current system.

B. Goals / Objectives –

The Non-Motorized Trail Strategy document provides a framework for the sustainable management of non-motorized trails across the BKNF. The future success of a sustainable non-motorized trail system relies on the commitment to three main factors:

- 1) Social sustainability
- 2) Ecological sustainability
- 3) Economic sustainability

The sustainable non-motorized trail system will:

- 1) Provide a range of high quality recreational experiences that inspires stewardship and invites people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities to experience the outdoors, while protecting and conserving cultural and natural resources.
- 2) Where feasible, connect Forest Service trails with adjacent public lands and local communities.
- 3) Have a vibrant volunteer and partnership program.
- 4) Have educated and engaged internal and external users on trail issues, management, and opportunities available on Forest and surrounding areas.
- 5) Eliminate illegal trail building.

Success will be accomplished through thoughtful consideration of designed and managed use to meet user experiences, assuring trail sustainability on the ground, and maximizing opportunities for using appropriated funding, grants, partnerships, and volunteers. A sustainable trail system is integral for year round activities and promotes a way to connect with nature.

C. How we will get there –

1. Assessment of the current non-motorized trail system. Currently, non-motorized trails on the Forest fall into one of 3 categories:
 - a) Trails that need standard maintenance
 - b) Trails that need reconstruction
 - c) Trails that need relocation / new construction / are unsustainable
2. Unsustainable trails will be decommissioned from the system.
3. The BKNF will work with local communities and other land management agencies to create connected or “loop” systems where feasible.
4. A Trail Proposal Process (TPP) has been developed that allows individuals or user-groups to request additions or changes to the current system.
5. Develop, maintain and nurture relationships with the public, specifically volunteers and user-group clubs and organizations, to allow open communication and provide empowered stewardship within the trails community to invest in these world-class and diverse trails. Our goal is to strengthen these relationships and develop more effective partnerships to improve volunteer efforts for the future.
6. Ongoing assessment of the trail system to ensure it is sustainable, accessible to people of all ages and abilities, and is meeting user needs is critical for success. The BKNF will continue to collaborate with the NFAB and user-groups to ensure open dialogue and information exchange. The successful future of recreational trails on the Black Hills National Forest relies on a close cooperative and communicative relationship between the Forest Service and volunteer and partner organizations.

D. Conclusion

The BKNF goal is to continue the maintenance and development of a non-motorized trail system that inspires stewardship and invites people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities to experience the outdoors, while protecting and conserving cultural and natural resources.

By applying the principles and actions in this document, the BKNF will achieve our goal of a trail system that is socially, economically, and ecologically sustainable. The newly developed TPP provides a clear process for newly proposed trails to be evaluated for potential construction and included onto the system.

Continued collaboration and open dialogue with NFAB and user-groups will allow the BKNF to prioritize trail proposal projects for consideration and possible implementation. As we work with our volunteer and partner organizations, together we can ensure a lasting trails legacy that will serve generations to come.