

# LANDER AREA MASTER TRAILS PLAN

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**Lander Cycling Club**

**19 January 2012**

The following is a portion of the early stages of the Master Trails Plan for the greater Lander area, created by the Lander Cycling Club (LCC). We are submitting this portion to the BLM as a request to accommodate these goals in the Lander Field Office RMP that is currently in the revision process. The completed Master Trails Plan will include specific details, maps and explicit strategy for achieving these stated goals. The complete plan will address areas controlled by other land managers including, but not limited to, the areas listed below. This submission represents the gathered opinions of the LCC which has over 100 members, and we hope it will be given careful consideration.

As mountain biking opportunities in the Wind River Basin region are expanding, it is critical to maintain trail development in a planned and cohesive capacity. There is significant opportunity to implement a region-wide plan that employs a lateral planning process and, incorporates a multitude of local stakeholders. In order for trail development to occur in this manner, an organized plan is essential.

This document focuses largely on trails created and maintained for bicycle use. This does not imply that all trails referenced are intended or designed with only cyclists in mind. Trails designed for mountain biking are often superior trails for many different forms of non-motorized use. The LCC recognizes the importance of sharing the gift of public land use with a multitude of responsible users.

This document outlines LCC's vision of how trails can be created and maintained with the approval and assistance of land managers (i.e., BLM, U.S. Forest Service, State of Wyoming, etc.). The LCC intends to manage trails as necessary to maintain good cycling conditions and assist in organization and providing labor as necessary to create and improve trails.

There are three overarching goals of the Lander Area Master Trails Plan:

1. Develop sustainable new trails within and around existing systems while improving sustainability of existing trails.
2. Reduce trail user conflict through effective communication strategies (signage, interpretation, and outreach).
3. Provide recreational opportunities for a variety of user groups and skill levels.

## Introduction

Lander is located on the eastern slope of the Wind River mountain range along the Middle Fork of the Popo Agie River in central Wyoming. The city of Lander is immediately surrounded by privately owned land. The Wind River Indian Reservation is located north of Lander, lands administered by the BLM are located south and east, and lands administered by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) are located west of Lander.

Current recreational opportunities in the Lander area:

1. **Johnny Behind the Rocks (JBR):** This area includes approximately 10 miles of existing single-track trails on BLM land. The area can be described as high desert with primarily sagebrush and juniper vegetation, many rock outcrops, and high topographic relief.
2. **The Bus Loops:** The Bus Loop area is located on BLM and Wyoming State Land Trust land and consists of primarily user-created trails among juniper and sagebrush vegetation. This area is located in the foothills just west of Lander.
3. **Twin Creek:** This area includes user-created freeride and downhill single track trails on BLM land in a high desert setting.
4. **Sinks Canyon:** This area includes a combination of USFS- and user-created trails in a forest setting on USFS land.
5. **South Pass:** The trails found along the South Pass highway consist of trails that were created by the USFS, users, and cattle, and also consist of ski trails developed by the Lander Nordic Ski Club. Some of these trails are on BLM as well as USFS land.
6. **Government Draw:** This area consists of many interlacing single- and double-track trails largely created by motorized recreation. The trails are located in high desert with large amounts of sagebrush.
7. **Lander city limits:** Lander has bike lanes, skate parks, dirt jump parks, and in-town trails. These areas consist of forested mountain, foothill, and high desert landscapes. Many of these areas have current trail systems, most of which have been user-defined and are in great need of improvement. These trails have drainage issues and would be benefitted by periodic clearing and maintenance of corridors.

## Visitor Profile

The Lander area, although relatively small, is home to many athletes and outdoors-men and women. Trails in the Lander area currently host many users such as hikers, mountain bikers, horseback riders, trail runners, hunters, and cross-country skiers.

There are many types of riding styles and all require a different set of skills and terrain; many riders consider themselves members of multiple categories. There is a need in the Lander area to accommodate all riding styles in order to reduce trail conflict and keep trail users happy.

## Benefits to the Community

Improving cycling trails in the Lander area will provide many potential benefits for the community as well as the individual bike enthusiast. With improvements, users will enjoy a safe, convenient, and fun experience while increasing physical fitness and interest in the outdoors. This would in turn help create a happier, healthier community.

There is also considerable potential for economic benefit for the community. Popular mountain bike destinations draw riders from neighboring states, many of whom will seek restaurants, hotels, bike shops, and general services. An increase in visitors will help out local business as well as increase tax revenue for Lander and Fremont County.

Trail improvement and construction relies on cooperation from the community, land managers and individuals. Prior to any action, approval is required from land managers as well as archaeologists, biologists, hydrologists and other parties. Also important to take into consideration are terrain, soil types, seasons, and weather conditions.

The LCC has hosted a number of volunteer-based trail days and has received direction and assistance from International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA). This organization has vast knowledge in trail development and has and will continue to assist LCC in future trail days. These volunteer work days are just one way in which we aim to achieve these goals. Through fundraising and applying for grants the club hopes to contract private trail crews, enlist the help of the Wyoming Conservation Corps, and work with the Wyoming State Trails Board to create areas of new trail. This plan should be achievable using these methods and with assistance from land managers.

## Area-wide Goals and Objectives

This plan aims to improve recreational opportunities for bike trail users of all skill levels and activities in the Lander area, while establishing sustainable trail systems to meet the needs of Lander's growing recreational groups.

Though goals may vary for specific areas, some goals are as follows:

- Goal 1. Create longer and interconnected trail loops
- Goal 2. Reduce trail conflict
- Goal 3. Improve sustainability of existing trails
- Goal 4. Develop sustainable new trails within and around existing systems
- Goal 5. Provide opportunities for all user groups and skill levels

1. **Goals specific to Johnny Behind the Rocks (JBR)** - The JBR trail system consists of about 7 different XC trails which are configured into a loop system. The riding at JBR can be characterized as high desert riding and features trails from moderate to difficult. Varied single track and double track trails supply riding for intermediate to advanced XC riders. Improvements on this trail system were recently approved by the BLM and numerous workdays performing re-routes and trail maintenance have occurred since summer 2010. This trail system is about 14 miles SW of Lander on

Highway 287 and provides up to 4 hours of riding including an out-and-back to a desert waterfall. Many more improvement opportunities exist within or along the perimeter of this system.

- a. *Visitor Profile* - The JBR trails are heavily used by hikers, horseback riders, mountain bikers, dog walkers, and snowshoers.
  - b. *Desired Future Condition* - As a club, LCC would like to see JBR developed to accommodate recreational, cross-country and pedal-accessed freeride cycling, in addition to hiking and horseback riding. All trails will be well-marked with names, difficulties, and appropriate user groups. Trails will be multi-directional, with single-directional spurs and loops to provide jumps, drops, and other technical freeride options, without creating safety risks or user conflict. Recreational cyclists can enjoy shorter loops in close proximity to the parking area, while the majority of the trails will be long, flowy XC trails of intermediate to advanced difficulty. LCC would also like to incorporate an interpretive skills section of trail. This would have basic obstacles and signs instructing the rider of appropriate technique for each obstacle. A total of 40 to 50 miles of single track trail seems to be a reasonable long term objective for the area. The infrastructure LCC anticipates at JBR is listed in order of greatest priority:
    - i. On-highway signage - Preferably a standard BLM sign stating “Johnny Behind The Rocks Recreation Area” and marking the turnoff for parking. This is necessary to assist new and out-of-town users in finding the area.
    - ii. Buck and rail fencing around the parking area. Currently, users must open a gate and close it behind them to use the parking area at JBR. This creates problems for cattle ranchers who use this land when the gate is accidentally left open.
    - iii. A trailhead kiosk. A kiosk to display information which would include trail regulations, user right-of-way, a map of the area, and any archaeological or biological concerns pertaining to the area.
    - iv. The LCC sees the future need for a bathroom facility and a walk-in campground accessible off the parking area. Our hope is that camping fees could offset the cost of the toilet maintenance.
  - c. *Maps and Diagrams* - In progress
  - d. *Implementation* - TBD
  - e. *Funding* - TBD
  - f. *Environmental Impact* - TBD
2. **Goals specific to The Bus Loops** - The public land between Baldwin Creek Road and Squaw Creek Road is commonly called “The Bus” because there is an old bus that became stuck in the sand and abandoned many years ago. The Bus area covers a bit over 2 square miles and is administered by the Bureau of Land Management and the State of Wyoming Land Trust. Cattle are released in May and linger during the early summer months. Motorized vehicles are no longer allowed in the area. The topography of The Bus is characterized by two main ridges which run from NW to SE. The Main Road is a sandy two-track which divides the ridges and heads SW to a four-way dirt road intersection at a saddle (Saltlick Junction). As of May 2011, there are no trail signs marking any of the trails or roads at The Bus. Along with signage, extensive trail work is required to create a more sustainable network and to mitigate for a proliferation of braided and spider web-like trails. Also, new trails are necessary in order to connect trails of more consistent difficulties into loops.
- a. *Visitor Profile* - The Bus Loops are heavily used by hikers, horseback riders, mountain bikers, dog walkers, snowshoers, and XC skiers. This concentration and diversity of usage is

due to the proximity to town; many cyclists ride from town to recreate in this area. Location of a trailhead that is situated closer to town should be considered for this area. In addition to in-town users, the Bus has potential to draw users from outside the area. The Bus is home to a network of about 7 miles of hilly single track, user-created trails ranging from easy to difficult. Currently, there is no official organization as to where different trail difficulties are located or how they interconnect. The unmarked trails, however, lead to numerous dead ends and parallel trails.

- b. *Desired Future Condition* - The infrastructure LCC anticipates at the Bus are listed in order of greatest priority:
    - i. Signage must be established to keep traffic to individual trails and allow individuals to successfully navigate the trail system.
    - ii. A kiosk should be erected at the trail head in order to display an appropriate map, trail regulations, and other important information.
    - iii. A larger, better designated parking area should be established that is easily accessible for all users in both winter and summer months.
    - iv. Due to concentration of use at the Bus, a trailhead bathroom may be necessary.
  - c. *Maps and Diagrams* - In progress
  - d. *Implementation* - TBD
  - e. *Funding* - TBD
  - f. *Environmental Impact* - TBD
3. **Goals specific to Twin Creek** - The Twin Creek area currently hosts the Lander area's only freeride / downhill trail. Located just up the road from JBR, the Twin Creek trail is classified as a "shuttle trail." To access the trail, riders use an existing double-track road to drive up to the trailhead. Riders then unload from the shuttle and ride down. The trail is rated as "expert only" and requires the use of freeride or downhill bikes and extra protective equipment. The trail is not an approved BLM trail, therefore it is not known generally by people who don't live in the area and seek freeriding opportunities. As demonstrated by many other areas across the globe, freeride / downhill riding is a relatively new yet very fast growing type of cycling. Located in a small wash which does not receive use by horses, hikers, or XC riders, and which has been impacted by a fire, Twin Creek is an ideal site for future development of additional freeride trails.

The trail is approximately 2.5 miles in length and will occupy a rider for about half an hour per trip. There are portions of this trail which serve dirt jumpers by providing jumps which can be "sessioned" or jumped repeatedly by stopping just after the jump and pushing the bike back uphill. This type of activity only requires a bike and minimal protective equipment.

The need to accommodate this riding style is important due to high speeds of travel, causing dangers that are created by practicing this riding style on multiple user trail systems, the growing number of freeride and downhill cyclists, and the fact that providing trails for this type of rider will greatly help eliminate the conflict caused by rogue trails in the Lander area.

- a. *Visitor Profile* - Freeride and downhill riders are a rapidly growing user group which includes many of cycling's new and younger riders. These riders travel long distances looking for new trails. Jackson Hole (located 2.5 hours from Lander) has put themselves on the map providing these types of trails on Teton Pass. Riders who travel for these types of trails are looking for a selection of well-built trails that can be accessed by shuttle and will spend a half to a full day riding and will ride sometimes ride for multiple consecutive days. Twin Creek is

a relatively small area that could host many lines in a bike park-style of interconnecting loops.

- b. *Desired Future Condition* - The infrastructure LCC would like to see at Twin Creek is minimal. The current objective of LCC is only to see Twin Creek accepted as an appropriate area to build freeride and downhill trails. Any above infrastructure would be created as needed in the long term future. Some future features may include:
    - i. Elaborate, well-built trails.
    - ii. On-highway signage so that visitors can locate the area.
    - iii. A graded dirt road to shuttle (road already exists).
    - iv. A map of existing trails and rules posted at the trail head.
  - c. *Maps and Diagrams* - In progress
  - d. *Implementation* - TBD
  - e. *Funding* - TBD
  - f. *Environmental Impact* - TBD
4. **Goals specific to Sinks Canyon Areas** - Planning in progress
5. **Goals specific to South Pass Areas** - Planning in progress
6. **Goals specific to Government Draw** - The Government Draw area consists of an undocumented number of miles of XC trails. The riding at Government Draw can be characterized as high desert, sagebrush riding and features trails of moderate difficulty. The various double- and single-track trails follow existing roads and cattle trails. This trail system is approximately 6 miles from the town of Lander, accessed from Lyons Valley and Coalmine Roads. The area contains great views of the Wind River Range and some interesting geological features, buttes, The Monuments, several small ponds, and abandoned mines and railroad bed.
- a. *Visitor Profile* - The Government Draw trails are heavily used by motorized users, recreational shooters, and livestock. It is seasonally used by mountain bikers. Currently, there is no official organization as to where different trail difficulties are located or how they interconnect. The unmarked trails often lead to numerous dead ends, usually at a dam or stock tank, and parallel trails.
  - b. *Desired Future Condition* - The LCC has no immediate plans for future development of this area but would like to acknowledge that mountain bike riding is an established use of the area. Due to its location relative to JBR, the two areas could possibly have a connecting single track between them.
  - c. *Maps and Diagrams* - In progress

If you have any questions or comments, please contact the LCC President, Scott Van Orman, at PO Box 1344, Lander, WY 82520, or [singletrackscott@gmail.com](mailto:singletrackscott@gmail.com).

Thank You.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott Van Orman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "S" and "V".

Scott Van Orman  
President, Lander Cycling Club