



Community Council

Final Report of the

Enhancing Outdoor Recreation Opportunities

Implementation Task Force

Kate Bobrow-Strain, Mike Denny, and Kevin Mills, Co-chairs

November 2018



Community Council

The following individuals participated in the advocacy process for the Enhancing Outdoor Recreation Opportunities study. Their interest and dedication are sincerely appreciated.

Implementation Task Force

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From the Co-chairs

This Community Council study sought to increase appreciation for and use of the beautiful land and waterways for outdoor recreation in our region in order to improve quality of life and economic vitality. As such, it was a bit unusual in the history of Community Council studies because its goal was not to solve a problem per se, but rather to build on a strength. The study committee met weekly for 16 weeks, learning from 30 speakers, and met for another 10 weeks to synthesize ideas and develop the study report. Outdoor recreation was defined as leisure activities within a natural resource-based setting, as opposed to those activities occurring in a built environment such as a pool or golf course. The study utilized a framework from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service that views sustainability of outdoor recreation based on the healthy interaction and balance of three spheres: social, environmental and economic.

We delved into topics such as making outdoor recreation accessible to senior citizens, non-English speakers, and people with disabilities, and the challenges of cost and transportation faced by low-income families. We learned how outdoor recreation can serve as a boost to the local economy, and the many physical and mental health benefits of outdoor activities. Several speakers impressed upon us how engaging children and youth with quality outdoor education can instill a lifelong appreciation of our natural areas and a conservation ethic, which is key to preserving these spaces for future generations.

The study culminated in nineteen recommendations for action. A committee then formed, known as the Implementation Task Force (Task Force), which spent three years promoting these recommendations to decision-makers with nonprofit and governmental organizations, encouraging them to build these recommendations into their own work.

Within months of the study report's release, meetings began with representatives of more than ten community planning, economic development and health departments in our region who each brought genuine interest in working together to develop a regional trail network. It was amazing what was accomplished by getting the right people in a room together. They shared information about funding and other resources, including their own knowledge and experience from working in other communities. Over the next two and a half years, Community Council continued to provide support to this group,

which eventually included over 30 entities, embraced several of the recommendations in the study report and ran with them. It has been truly exciting to watch!

Around the same time, the land trust serving our region made outdoor recreation a pillar of its work and increased its commitment to outdoor education, thereby becoming a key partner of the study's implementation. A local destination marketing organization has become another key partner, particularly in addressing the study finding that the region would benefit from being known as an outdoor recreation hub.

Many people in our region, including those who volunteered during this study process over the past four years, are passionate about the benefits of non-motorized outdoor recreation, whether it's bird watching, hiking, biking, fishing, horseback riding or a myriad of other pursuits. That shared passion extends to the natural resources—mountains, rivers, lakes, fields, forests and all the organisms and creatures—that make up this place we call home.

Caring and thoughtful people came together throughout this process. It is empowering to realize that together we make choices that contribute to a vibrant, healthy and prosperous community for future generations. This study's implementation benefited tremendously from a happy confluence of circumstances, leaving us with optimism that the entities who have stepped forward so far, and others, will continue enhancing outdoor recreation activities in our region for years to come.

Kate Bobrow-Strain
Mike Denny
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Recommendations and Outcomes of Advocacy Efforts

Recommendation 1

Conduct a region-wide survey and use existing data to determine demographics, usage patterns, preferences, and barriers to access of outdoor recreation users and potential users.

Outcomes

Not implemented.

Recommendation 2

Make outdoor recreation programs and activities accessible to low-use groups with respect to identified barriers, and encourage participation from isolated and/or underrepresented populations such as minorities, youth, seniors, and people with disabilities.

Outcomes

When this study began, there were outdoor recreation programs in place that were already successfully reaching some underrepresented groups. This study spurred expansion of outdoor recreation programs, development of new outdoor recreation programs, and more outreach.

Learning on the Land and *Nature Kids* are two educational programs developed by the Blue Mountain Land Trust (BMLT) (www.bmlt.org) to build a connection between people and the land.

The *Learning on the Land* (<https://bmlt.org/learning-on-the-land/>) program includes tours and events where experts take people to places throughout our region. The program has grown exponentially in the last few years and BMLT hopes to extend its opportunities to people with disabilities, and other underrepresented groups.

Nature Kids (<https://bmlt.org/nature-kids/>) is a collaborative program between BMLT and the Umatilla National Forest (<https://www.fs.usda.gov/umatilla>) focused on “encouraging children to explore, play, learn about and take action for nature.” The events are free and open to the public. BMLT’s hope, by offering the program for free, is to eliminate any financial barrier to participation. BMLT has reached out to all schools in the region and to The Mom’s Network in an effort to engage more children across the region. All *Nature Kids* material is translated for Spanish speakers. BMLT plans to connect with the Children's Home Society, Friends of Children of Walla Walla, and 21st Century Community Learning Centers to involve more Latino children and children living in poverty.

BioBlitz (<https://bmlt.org/bioblitz/>) is an event that BMLT, in collaboration with the US Forest Service, brought to Walla Walla for the first time in the summer of 2018. *BioBlitz* is a free program designed by the National Park Service and National Geographic Society, to get people outdoors to learn about the natural environment. The *Walla Walla BioBlitz* was held with support from the US Army Corps of Engineers, Whitman College, WWCC Water & Environmental Center, the Blue Mountain Audubon Society, Outside the Lines Art Studio, Walla Walla Watershed Basin Council, Walla Walla County Conservation District, Sustainable Living Center, and Tri-State Steelheaders. The collaborators and supporters conducted a lot of outreach into the Latino community and low-income neighborhoods.

Summer of Exploration Summer Camp, *Community Center for Youth*, and *Milton-Freewater Camp* are three YMCA programs that have outdoor recreation components, among other features, and are intended to reach children who do not have ready access to outdoor recreation programs.

The *Summer of Exploration Camp* provides 11 to 14-year-olds, who might not otherwise have access to outdoor recreation activities, an opportunity to experience a variety of activities, including hiking and kayaking.

YMCA’s *Community Center for Youth* is a free, year-round, evening program for children 11 to 18 years of age. It was created as an opportunity for children from low-income families to gather in a safe place, participate in activities, and expand their horizons, especially through field trips, including outdoor activities such as hiking, whitewater rafting, skiing, and snowboarding.

YMCA's *Milton-Freewater Camp* was created for children who do not have ready access to local outdoor recreation programs. It is a summer day camp for children 5 to 12 years of age who live in Milton-Freewater. The program includes field trips, as well as other activities. It began in 2012 and has continued to expand to serve more children over a longer period of time during the summer.

Skiing and snowboarding opportunities are offered to Wa-Hi Latino Club students through the collaboration and support of Explorers Post 311, Ski Bluewood, and Skyline Adventures. Through the collaboration of these entities, students receive lift tickets, lessons, rental equipment and lunch. There is no cost to the student. This program has offered experiences to children who might otherwise not have had the opportunity to participate in those outdoor activities.

To make outdoor areas more accessible and welcoming to the entire community, Umatilla County has installed more than 20 wheelchair charging stations throughout the county, some of which are in parks.

Recommendation 3

Assess parks and park programs to understand how to enhance use by children and families, and encourage the region's cities and counties to create comprehensive master plans for parks and green spaces.

Outcomes

The region has a number of parks, operated by a variety of public entities, but most community members are not aware of all of them. No formal assessment was completed, but all of the entities with parks in the region were collaborators on the Blue Mountain Region Trails project, which is described under Recommendation 9. Those entities hope that by linking the different parks through a system of trails and marketing of that trail system, there will be an expanded awareness and usage of parks in the region.

One of the goals of Blue Mountain Land Trust's programs is to get people to experience natural areas, including parks. BMLT, in collaboration with the US Forest Service, held the first *Walla Walla BioBlitz* in Rooks Park because it offers a variety of habitats and amenities, yet is very close to Walla Walla. By doing so, children and families were able to discover the natural world right in their backyard. They plan to hold the annual event

in different parks to familiarize community members with parks with large natural areas in the region.

The second part of this recommendation, encouraging the regions' cities and counties to create comprehensive master plans for parks and green spaces, was intended to help develop a cohesive system of parks spread throughout the region. At this time, most of the jurisdictions already have "parks and recreation" or "open space" elements as components of their current or draft comprehensive plans.

City of College Place's Comprehensive Plan includes a "Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan", which has a number of goals.

http://www.cpwa.us/departments/planning/comprehensive_plan.php

Equity and Access Goals

Goal 1: Provide for a broad public and private park and recreation plan and system meeting the needs of all age and income groups within the community.

Goal 2: Support a healthy community in which everyone has access to community resources and services.

Goal 3: Provide barrier-free (ADA-compliant) access, where readily available, by modifying existing facilities or when designing or constructing new facilities.

Community-Oriented Goals

Goal CO-1: Ensure the ongoing involvement of community residents in the park planning process.

Goal CO-2: Establish and maintain a shared vision with local institutions of higher education, the Adventist school system, and the public school district serving the College Place community.

Goal CO-3: Promote a family-friendly, community-oriented city that provides residents and visitors with a sense of place and engagement.

Environmental Stewardship Goals

Goal E-1: Preserve and protect the environmental integrity of College Place natural assets.

Health and Wellness Goals

Goal HW-1: Promote health and well-being of College Place residents through the development and improvement of non-motorized transportation networks to promote physical activity and healthy lifestyles.

Goal HW-2: Explore opportunities for recreational programming and/or potential for a shared use agreement with the City of Walla Walla Parks and Recreation, College Place schools, and the Adventist school system.

Goal HW-3: Promote the use of city parks and recreation facilities.

City of Walla Walla's Comprehensive Plan has several goals throughout the Plan that address the importance of parks in the community.

<http://records.wallawallawa.gov:8800/lportal/0/edoc/1115352/Comprehensive%20Plan%202040.pdf>

Community Character Goal 5: Walla Walla incorporates open spaces and natural features as part of its attractions and regional identity.

Land Use Goal 2: Walla Walla coordinates with neighboring communities and state agencies for improvement of the region.

Land Use Goal 5: Walla Walla is a healthy city with opportunities for physical activity.

Parks and Recreation Goal 1: Walla Walla has a system of quality parks and recreational facilities that enhance the quality of life, develop economic opportunities, and meet the community's growing needs.

Columbia County, City of Dayton, and Port of Columbia adopted a Cooperative Park Master Plan in 2014, which includes a list, and condition of, their parks and green spaces. <http://www.columbiaco.com/DocumentCenter/View/1602>

Umatilla County Comprehensive Plan (Plan) has a Recreational Needs Section in Chapter 8. Goal 8 is "To provide programs and facilities to meet the recreational needs of area residents and visitors."

https://www.umatilla-city.org/sites/default/files/fileattachments/planning/page/701/goal_8_-_recreational_needs.pdf.

Significant sections of that Plan, include:

Section 8.3 Recreational Needs Findings

8.3.101 Development of pedestrian and bicycle pathways should be promoted.

8.3.102 A system of pedestrian and bicycle linkages between parks and outdoor recreation areas should be encouraged.

8.3.103 Development of river frontage floodplain areas as linear parks should be encouraged.

8.3.104 The enhancement of the area's recreational facilities and opportunities should be encouraged.

8.3.105 Development of neighborhood parks within walking distance for residential neighborhoods should be required.

Walla Walla County has a Parks and Recreation Element in their June 2018 draft Comprehensive Plan.

https://www.co.walla-walla.wa.us/document_center/commdev/2018%20Update/Draft%20Comprehensive%20Plan.pdf

Goal PR 1: Provide an appropriate level of park and recreation services for current and future Walla Walla County residents.

Goal PR 2: Provide park and recreation services in a cost-effective manner.

Goal PR 3: Encourage the retention of open space that provides recreational opportunities.

Recommendation 4

Create one organization with the primary goal of enhancing regional outdoor recreation through providing access to needed equipment, disseminating information about recreation opportunities, and offering guided outdoor activities and education.

Outcomes

Not implemented.

Recommendation 5

Create a centralized, comprehensive outdoor recreation information portal that maintains an up-to-date inventory of recreational opportunities in the region.

Outcomes

The Blue Mountain Land Trust (BMLT) created a page on their website, called Bound for the Blues (<https://bmlt.org/recreation/>), where people can find a variety of outdoor recreation opportunities, including trails, water and winter activities, birding, climbing, cycling, mountain biking, and more.

BMLT intends to develop a separate website, called Visit the Blues, showcasing outdoor recreation opportunities. This website, when completed, will cover BMLT's entire service area, which includes Walla Walla, Columbia, Asotin, and Garfield counties in Washington and Umatilla, Union, Grant, Morrow, Gilliam, Wheeler, and Sherman counties in Oregon.

The Implementation Task Force identified a number of trail mapping platforms, including REI Adventure Project (<https://www.adventureprojects.net>), which BMLT determined would be the most suitable trail crowdsourcing application because of the ability to embed the trail map in their new website.

BMLT intends to lead a community-wide campaign to encourage trail users to upload their hikes to the REI Adventure Project platform, which includes: Hiking Project (HikingProject.com), Trail Run Project (TrailRunProject.com), MTB Project (MTBProject.com), Mountain Project (MountainProject.com), and Powder Project (PowderProject.com). BMLT will work with REI Adventure Project staff to upload trails data to the platform. BMLT will then embed maps produced by REI Adventure Projects into the Visit the Blues website.

Recommendation 6

Promote the physical and mental health benefits of engaging in outdoor recreation opportunities to all populations.

Outcomes

In identifying successful models for promoting the health aspects of people who engage in outdoor activities, the Implementation Task Force learned about Blue Zones

communities. Blue Zones, a trademarked business name, are regions of the world where people live longer, healthier lives than average (<https://www.bluezones.com/>). Blue Zones identified nine lifestyle habits common among all of the Blue Zone communities, one of which was that “they lived in environments that constantly nudge them into moving without thinking about it.” <https://www.bluezones.com/2016/11/power-9/>. The Implementation Task Force had several conversations with Blue Zones staff and what they can do for communities.

The Implementation Task Force also learned that Oregon launched a “Healthiest State Initiative” and is using the Blue Zones Project to encourage the requisite changes, with an initial focus on four communities: Grants Pass, Klamath Falls, The Dalles, and Umqua. (<https://oregon.bluezonesproject.com/>). The project was brought to Oregon by Cambia Health Foundation.

An interest in Blue Zones led Walla Walla County Department of Community Health to engage, in collaboration with Providence St. Mary’s and Walla Walla University, in bringing a representative from Blue Zones to Walla Walla in October 2018 for a discussion about the state of health in Walla Walla and best practices that can improve overall health, well-being, and longevity.

Outdoor Rx is another program that promotes the benefits of an active, healthy lifestyle. The concept is for doctors to “prescribe” outdoor activity for their patients. BMLT is hoping to implement this program in our region. The first step is educating the medical community about the program and marketing the program throughout the community, especially in medical facilities’ waiting rooms.

Umatilla County plans to begin a form of Outdoor Rx. They are piloting the program in Hermiston. If it is successful, they will expand the program to the rest of Umatilla County, including Milton-Freewater. The program will focus on patients who are in a high-risk indicator category, such as high Body Mass Index. Providers will “prescribe” outdoor activity, such as walking a certain number of times each week at a specific location, including specific parks or trails. The program may include a tool for participants to survey parks and trails to determine their accessibility for everyone in the community, including all forms of mobility.

Recommendation 7

Explore strategies of successful and relevant programs to implement in the region—those of Gallatin Valley Land Trust, Wallowa Resources, Puget Sound Energy, etc.

Outcomes

Upon the release of the study report, Blue Mountain Land Trust (BMLT) (<https://bmlt.org/>) realized there were many recommendations that could further their mission, and began working on the implementation of those recommendations. Several Task Force members joined BMLT as Board members, Advisors, and/or committee members. As a result, BMLT has expanded their environmental education programs (*Learning on the Land*, *Nature Kids*, and *BioBlitz*), developed a central portal for outdoor recreation opportunities, and is assisting in the marketing of the region for outdoor recreation.

Recommendation 8

Identify organizations and groups to build relationships with private landowners to explore public recreational opportunities on private land.

Outcomes

The Implementation Task Force decided to focus on public trails first, resulting in the Blue Mountain Region Trails project, which is described under the next recommendation and on this website: <http://www.bluezonetrails.org/>.

Recommendation 9

Connect the public to communities and landmarks via a network of trails in the region, such as completing a River Walk from Bennington Lake to the Whitman Mission.

Outcomes

The Implementation Task Force facilitated the bringing together of more than 30 federal, tribal, regional, state, and local entities in the creation of a plan for a network of non-motorized recreation and transportation trails throughout the region.

In the spring of 2016, Task Force members began contacting local and regional entities, including the Walla Walla Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (WVVMPO). By May, the Implementation Task Force and WVVMPO had contacted the three counties and port districts, and the cities in the region, all of whom were excited about joining

this collaborative effort. As this initial group of 14 entities was still gathering more stakeholders, they learned of a grant opportunity for technical assistance from the National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) Program. (<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/rtca/index.htm>). Community Council served as the point of contact for the grant application. The RTCA had never seen so many co-applicants in a grant application. Initially, the RTCA was concerned about the large scope of the project, because of its many co-applicants and because it included both rural and urban trails, but they awarded the grant to the Blue Mountain Region Trails project. The RTCA grant focused on public outreach, route identification, and plan production. Initially limited to one year, the grant was subsequently extended for an additional year. The National Park Service RTCA was thrilled with this collaborative effort and now refers other communities to learn about this project.

The group of 14 original co-applicants to the RTCA grant grew considerably, as additional stakeholders became involved. By January 2017, more than 30 local, regional, state, federal, and tribal stakeholder entities were part of this collaborative effort, which they named the Blue Mountain Region Trails (BMRT) project. The following is a list of all of the stakeholders in the project:

Local:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ City of College Place, WA ▪ City of Dayton, WA ▪ City of Milton-Freewater, OR ▪ City of Prescott, WA ▪ Town of Starbuck, WA ▪ City of Waitsburg, WA ▪ City of Walla Walla, WA ▪ Columbia County, WA ▪ Umatilla County, OR ▪ Walla Walla County, WA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Partnership for a Greater Burbank ▪ Columbia County Health Department ▪ Umatilla County Health Department ▪ Walla Walla County Department of Community Health ▪ Port of Columbia, WA ▪ Port of Umatilla, OR ▪ Port of Walla Walla, WA
Regional:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Community Council ▪ Palouse Regional Transportation Planning Organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Walla Walla Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization/Sub-Regional Transportation Planning Organization
State:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife ▪ Washington Parks and Recreation Commission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Oregon Department of Transportation ▪ Washington State Department of Transportation
Federal:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ National Park Service - Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance ▪ National Park Service - Whitman Mission National Historic Site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ U.S. Army Corps of Engineers ▪ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service ▪ U.S. Department of Agriculture - Forest Service
Tribal:	Private/Business Interests:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bluewood Ski Resort ▪ Waitsburg Commercial Club

Each of these entities enthusiastically participated in the Blue Mountain Region Trails project because they understood how it would increase the quality of life in the region, including health and economic vitality. Building on the region’s many assets, the Blue Mountain Region Trails stakeholders coordinated their planning efforts in recognition that a single, cohesive plan is the most efficient way to design and begin implementing that vision. Planners and engineers collaborated to expand the number and quality of trails, and improve provisions for walking and biking as a viable form of transportation, in order to realize health and fitness benefits and increase outdoor recreation opportunities. Developing a seamless network of bicycle, pedestrian, and non-motorized trail connections required a multi-layered approach that integrated urban area walking and cycling commutes, intra- and inter-city recreational travel, as well as regional hiking, cycling, and horseback riding linkages to the multitude of cultural, historical, and natural resource sites the Blue Mountain Region has to offer.

The stakeholder entities collaborated to identify solutions to the gaps within the existing non-motorized transportation and trail system; reached out to the public and user groups; built regional consensus on connections to key locations; and developed a plan to create a region-wide trails network.

The Implementation Task Force helped facilitate the stakeholder meetings and assisted in the public outreach, which included ten public workshops in Burbank, Dayton, Milton-Freewater, and Walla Walla. Eight of the workshops were held in the evening and simultaneous Spanish interpretation and snacks were provided. Two of the workshops were conducted in Spanish with simultaneous English interpretation. At the first set of meetings, the public identified where they would like to see connected trails. Between the first and second set of workshops, meetings were held with each jurisdiction to consult their staff, especially engineers, as to what was reasonably feasible. At the second set of public workshops, the public prioritized the trails to be developed or enhanced first. More than 650 people participated in the two sets of public workshops. Stakeholders met monthly for an 18-month period and spent more than 1,500 hours on the project.



Blue Mountain Regional Trails Plan public workshop participants work to identify and prioritize trails for future development.

This large, collaborative, community project was celebrated in December 2017, with the unveiling of the Blue Mountain Region Trails Plan (Plan), with more than 200 people from across the region in attendance. The complete Plan can be found at <http://www.bluezonetrails.org/>. The map with the regional overview of existing and proposed trails is attached as Appendix A.



More than 650 people participated in a series of public workshops.



The Walla Walla Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization and the Palouse Rural Transportation Planning Organization have both adopted the Blue Mountain Region Trails Plan, which opens up both public and private funding opportunities for the stakeholders. Port of Columbia's trail along the railroad between Dayton and Waitsburg has been entered into a competitive grant program for funding to complete the design. Several smaller sidewalk and bike lane projects have also applied for grant awards.

In order to ensure the continued regional approach to active transportation and trails planning, the Blue Mountain Region planning partners—encompassing Columbia and Walla Walla counties in Washington and northeastern Umatilla County in Oregon, as well as all of the cities within, and their tribal, federal, state, and regional partners—have expressed a strong interest in continued coordination of their planning efforts, recognizing that a single, cooperative plan is the most efficient way to implement the vision of the Blue Mountain Region Trails Plan. The primary focus of this continuing coordination effort is directed toward the collaborative development of joint grant funding applications and the ongoing maintenance of the region-wide active transportation and non-motorized trails inventory. An update to the BMRT Plan is anticipated to occur before 2024, in order to maintain grant eligibility in the future.

The BMRT project, literally and metaphorically, has built and continues to build, connections across the region. You can read more about the Blue Mountain Region Trails Plan and project at <http://www.bluezonetrails.org/>.

A key component of any trails project is trails maintenance. All of the stakeholders expressed the importance and need for trails maintenance. Yet, at the same time, most of them do not have sufficient budgets to maintain their trails.

The Implementation Task Force discussed trails maintenance programs with the Washington Trails Association (<https://www.wta.org/>) and Blue Mountain Land Trust (BMLT). BMLT established Blues Crew in 2018, with the leadership of Greg Brown, a Task Force member and BMLT Board member. The Blues Crew, comprised of volunteers, works directly with regional agencies such as the US Forest Service, to improve the quality and accessibility of local trails. Its genesis was BMLT's support of the Blue Mountain Region Trails Plan and BMLT's commitment to outdoor recreation. For most of the trails they have worked on to date, Blues Crew has partnered with and coordinated their efforts through the Walla Walla Ranger District of the US Forest Service Umatilla Forest. They have had a great response from local volunteers who are willing to spend a day, and in some cases overnight, to work on trails in the region. They exceeded 1,000 hours of volunteer time by the end of September 2018. They hope to expand their Blues Crew work to other stakeholders who need assistance with trails maintenance.

A summary of the trails they have worked on and upcoming trails maintenance opportunities can be found on their website, <https://bmlt.org/blues-crew/>.



Blues Crew team organized by the Blue Mountain Land Trust in 2018. Photo courtesy of BMLT.

The future success and expansion of the Blue Mountain Region Trails project will depend on sustained community support, the continued engagement of the region's stakeholders, and stewardship of programs like BMLT's Blues Crew.

Recommendation 10

Encourage regional outdoor recreation entities to collaborate and/or form partnerships to accomplish common goals and increase on-site usage through:

- a) Minimizing usage fees.*
- b) Increasing usable and accessible trails.*
- c) Informing the public about underutilized resources and opportunities, such as Camp Wooten.*

Outcomes

The Blue Mountain Region Trails project brought more than 30 stakeholders together, most of which have parks and trails. During that project, the stakeholders collaborated on ways to increase usage of those trails and parks and discussed ways to increase accessibility.

Visit Walla Walla, the regional destination marketing organization, agreed to lead the effort, in collaboration with the stakeholders, other marketing entities, such as the chambers of commerce, and BMLT to promote outdoor recreation opportunities in the region to residents and visitors. BMLT is providing support to that effort in multiple ways, including their Bound for the Blues website page for outdoor recreation opportunities, their educational opportunities - *Learning on the Land*, *Nature Kids*, and *BioBlitz* - and the work of the Blues Crew.

Recommendation 11

Advocate for uniformity in regional public transportation services to enhance access to outdoor recreation through:

- a) Providing on-demand stops along established routes; and*
- b) Including racks on all public transportation vehicles that can accommodate recreation gear.*

Outcomes

The Implementation Task Force learned that Valley Transit provides “on demand” stops on its routes, and provides bicycle racks on all of its buses. Information about Valley Transits’ Bike & Ride system can be found here:

<https://www.valleytransit.com/bike.pdf>. The Implementation Task Force also learned

that Milton Freewater's buses have bicycle racks (https://www.mfcity.com/public_transportation).

Recommendation 12

Implement innovative and practical transportation solutions (e.g., van service) to increase access to green spaces and remote outdoor recreational lands.

Outcomes

Visit Walla Walla has identified a number of existing tour operators and transportation companies in the region and will promote recreational ride/tour services to them as a way to broaden their business model.

Recommendation 13 & 14

Encourage local entities, including both public agencies and nonprofit organizations, to offer environmental and outdoor education programs and activities for all community members.

Promote the incorporation of outdoor recreation and environmental education activities into as many regional programs and school offerings as possible (e.g., Boy Scouts, YMCA, Valle Lindo, Campfire, Quest, senior centers).

Outcomes

When this study began, there were already entities providing environmental and outdoor education programs and activities.

Blue Mountain Land Trust (BMLT), inspired by the recommendations in the study report, took these recommendations and expanded their *Learning on the Land* program, started a new program for children, *Nature Kids*, and collaborated on bringing a new event to *Walla Walla BioBlitz*.

Learning on the Land (<https://bmlt.org/learning-on-the-land/>) is an education series aimed at connecting community members with the land. They offer tours and events on a variety of topics, including outdoor photography and painting, habitat restoration, and geology.

Nature Kids (<https://bmlt.org/nature-kids/>), is a free program that BMLT, in collaboration with the US Forest Service, started in 2018, to serve elementary to middle school children. It is an engaging educational series that encourages children to explore, play, learn about and take action for nature. Activities include hands-on exploration of natural resources, conservation-related activities, presentations by science educators, and fun crafts.

The National Park Service and National Geographic Society developed *BioBlitz*, which is a community-science event that focuses on finding and identifying as many species as possible in a specific area over a short period of time. At a *BioBlitz*, scientists, families, students, teachers, and other community members work together to get an overall count of the plants, animals, fungi, and other organisms that live in a place. The first *Walla Walla BioBlitz* (<https://bmlt.org/bioblitz/>) was put on by BMLT and US Forest Service in the summer of 2018. This first *Walla Walla BioBlitz* was made possible with the support of US Army Corp of Engineers, Whitman College, Water and Environmental Center, the Blue Mountain Audubon Society, Outside the Lines Art Studio, Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council, Walla Walla County Conservation District, Sustainable Living Center, and Tri-State Steelheaders. These collaborators plan to make the *BioBlitz* an annual event, and broaden their outreach each year.

A 13-part television series broadcast on Blue Mountain Television (<http://bmt.tv/>) entitled “Secret Life of the Forest: The Northern Blue Mountains” was created by editor/photographer Daniel Biggs and writer/narrator Mike Denny, who directly credit the study report as the inspiration behind this work. The series explores the natural world of the Northern Blue Mountains of Southeastern Washington and Northeastern Oregon by highlighting the plants and animals that inhabit this area. With the assistance of BMLT, a premier showing of “Secret Life of the Forest: The Northern Blue Mountains” was held in September, 2018 at Whitman College and was attended by over 400 people. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-8ZVPEPlvuk>) The series was made possible through collaboration of U.S. Forest Service, Umatilla National Forest, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, and Fort Walla Walla Museum.

The YMCA was also inspired by the study report and expanded some of its outdoor education programs and activities, including *Summer of Exploration Summer Camp* and YMCA’s *Community Center for Youth*.

Summer of Exploration Summer Camp Program (<https://www.wwymca.org/2018-summer-exploration-camp/>) was started in 2011 and provides 11- to 14-year-old

children with the opportunity to experience a variety of activities that encourage personal growth and character development. The program takes the children to different locations and offers different activities each day during eight weeks of the summer. Activities include kayaking, hiking, and visits to college campuses in the region.

The YMCA's *Community Center for Youth (YCCY)* is a free, year-round, evening program, for children who are 11 to 18 years of age. Although all children in that age bracket are welcome to attend, the emphasis is for low-income children and children who do not have a safe place to go in the evenings. The program's activities include whitewater rafting and camping. In the summer of 2018, a survival readiness class was offered, which taught children how to identify plants, safely start and put out fires, and find water.

Recommendation 15

Establish place-based interpretive centers and kiosks in the region.

Outcomes

Not implemented.

Recommendation 16

Develop a marketing plan and brand to promote outdoor recreation in the region.

Outcomes

Visit Walla Walla is leading marketing efforts for outdoor recreation, including the Blue Mountain Region Trails Plan. Visit Walla Walla's first meeting with local entities interested in a joint marketing approach occurred during the Blue Mountain Region Trails stakeholder meeting in August 2018.

Visit Walla Walla has a page on its website, <http://www.wallawalla.org/things-to-do/recreation/>, devoted to outdoor recreation opportunities. They are in the early stages of planning an event that would bring outdoor recreation writers to the area to showcase what our region offers.

BMLT collaborates with Visit Walla Walla and others on marketing for outdoor recreation. Their education programs, (two of which are collaborative projects), *Learning on the Land*, *Nature Kids*, and *BioBlitz*, are all great marketing for outdoor

recreation in the region. So, too, is the page dedicated to outdoor recreation opportunities on their website, Bound for the Blues (<https://bmlt.org/recreation/>).

Blue Mountain Land Trust (BMLT) and Visit Walla Walla have both provided support for the release of the “Secret Life of the Forest: The Northern Blue Mountains” television series. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-8ZVPEPlvuk>) BMLT is publicizing the event and Visit Walla Walla provided consulting services to the creators of the series.

Recommendation 17 & 18

Adopt bicycle-friendly community standards and seek certification for the region.

Encourage regional population centers to seek certification to become bicycle-friendly communities.

Outcomes

Currently, the City of Walla Walla is the only community in the region designated as a Bicycle Friendly Community by The League of American Bicyclists. The City of Walla Walla received a bronze level award in 2016. The Blue Mountain Region Trails Plan, which has been adopted by the two regional transportation planning organizations in the region, will make it easier for any entity in the region to apply for Bicycle Friendly Community certification from The League of American Bicyclists (<https://www.bikeleague.org/bfa>).

Recommendation 19

Explore recreational opportunities in the Blue Mountain foothills, especially near population centers, such as increasing access to the Umatilla National Forest by developing new trail heads.

Outcomes

The Blue Mountain Region Trails Plan, which is described under Recommendation 9, is a region-wide non-motorized trail and transportation network that will integrate existing and planned urban sidewalks and bike routes with urban and regional trails. This network will provide access to outdoor recreation opportunities, increase walking and biking options, and connectivity among community centers and cultural, historical, and natural resource sites throughout the region.

BMLT's Blues Crew trail maintenance work, done primarily by volunteer community members, has focused primarily on trails in the Blue Mountains near population centers.



Community Council gratefully acknowledges the following foundations, trusts and community partners who provided general support for the organization or specific support for this study and its advocacy from 2015 to 2018:

Grantors

Clara and Art Bald Trust
Blue Mountain Community Foundation
Bonnie and Clifford Braden Foundation
Mary Garner Esary Trust
Cape Flattery Foundation
Pacific Power Foundation
Donald and Virginia Sherwood Trust
J.L. Stubblefield Trust
George T. Welch Testamentary Trust
Kenneth B. Wells Trust
Yancey P. Winans Trust

Community Partners

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Anonymous | Jon and Mary Campbell
Larry Clinton | Sharon Clinton
The Clubb Family | Coffey Communications
Columbia Fresh Produce | Columbia REA
Cora and Jock Edwards | Roger Esparza
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Kontos Cellars | Jeff Reynolds
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Appendix A

An overview of the many trails identified by the Blue Mountain Regional Trails Plan.

