



Wyoming Pathways Partners with Hot City Outdoor Alliance, Bureau of Land Management and Town of Thermopolis to Develop Comprehensive Trail Plan



Organizations Come Together to Develop Vision to Enhance Thermopolis' Outdoor Recreation Opportunities



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Thermopolis, Wyoming – Statewide bicycling and walking advocacy organization, Wyoming Pathways, is partnering with the Hot City Outdoor Alliance, Bureau of Land Management, and the Town of Thermopolis to develop a **Thermopolis Community Trail Plan** that will help guide development of future natural surface trail systems on public lands in the area, and develop a local bicycle route system for paved and gravel road routes. With the success of the recently developed multi-use trails in Hot Springs State Park, Town officials, business leaders and community members have seen the positive impact on the economy and quality of life that a well-planned and professionally-built trail system can have.

Wyoming Pathways supports similar trail planning and development projects throughout the state, and has seen how improved trails can positively impact communities such as Lander and Laramie. When Thermopolis Town Council member Dusty Lewis contacted Tim Young at Wyoming Pathways, the discussion developed on the benefits of first starting with an assessment of local trail opportunities. “The goal is a conceptual-level evaluation of public lands in the Thermopolis area, to identify the best opportunities for close-to-home trail systems and local bike routes, with recommendations for next steps to implement the plan”, Tim said.

The Hot City Outdoor Alliance recognized this as well and has been working in recent years to enhance outdoor recreation opportunities and participation in the Thermopolis area. After seeing the popularity of the new T-Hill State Park trails with the community and how the new trail was drawing visitors to Thermopolis, Town Council Member and Hot City Outdoor Alliance volunteer Dusty Lewis knew that developing additional trails was something the organizations should pursue.

“Thermopolis has been a tinderbox of adventure smoldering for years, with terrific recreational opportunities in the area ready for action. Those who come here are looking for reasons to stay, and many who live here seek improved outdoor recreation.” said Dusty. “This study is yet another big step to ignite the fire of adventure within our community, create a usable legacy for generations to come and improve the health and vitality for both residents and visitors. If recreation takes off the way I believe it could, it may well be a major factor to saving our community while making it a more enjoyable place to live and visit.”

To that end, Dusty began discussing the idea with local land managers and found a willing partner in the Bureau of Land Management. The Worland Field Office is assisting with the planning and contributed to the plan cost. The enhancement of recreation on the public lands that they manage is an important element of the BLM’s mission, so the prospect of planning for the development of a high-quality trail system on BLM land was well received. “This is a great opportunity for us to be part of a grassroots effort to improve recreational opportunities on public land,” said Hannah Fortney, BLM representative for the planning effort. “We look forward to contributing to multiple-use, sustainable trail development in the Thermopolis area.”

Wyoming Pathways will contribute \$5,000 for the project via a grant from the Laura Jane Musser Foundation. The Hot City Outdoor Alliance and BLM will match that for an estimated \$10,000 total investment in the community plan.

The project will begin this summer and will include opportunities for the public to provide input during the planning process. The partners have retained trail consultant Todd Thibodeau to develop the Thermopolis Community Trail Plan. Todd Thibodeau also managed the 2019 development of the well-received new T-Hill Trail in Hot Springs State Park, and he brings a wealth of trail planning experience along with local area knowledge to the project.

The planning process will begin by developing a steering committee comprised of members from the Hot City Outdoor Alliance, Wyoming State Parks, the Bureau of Land Management and the local public. The committee will help to establish direction for the project and provide information on local trail opportunities. The consultant and local public will tour potential trail locations and make recommendations for development. Findings and trail concepts will be presented at an open house. Using this information, a draft report will be developed and made available for public comment. The report will be finalized in the fall of 2020.

To find additional information or provide input, the public can attend the open house, go to the Wyoming Pathways website, e-mail Todd Thibodeau at toddtwyo@gmail.com, or talk to a member of the local steering committee.

With an eye toward improving the outdoor recreation opportunities that already make Thermopolis a great place to “Live, Work, Play and Discover”, the project partners hope that the Thermopolis Community Trail Plan will provide the impetus for future trail development, help secure funding and guide the development of a high-quality trail system that will serve the community and the region well into the future.
