Latah Trail
Concept Plan
Spring 2003

A Celebration of People & Place:
A linear park tying our communities to each other, the past, and our surroundings.

Project Partners

City of Troy
Moscow
University of Idaho

RIVERS, TRAILS & CONSERVATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
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Dear Trail Friends,

The Latah Trail, like countless other community projects worldwide, is all about the people--people like you, interested in making their “home” a better place to live, getting to know and interact with their neighbor and perpetuating good health and a healthy environment. As the author Willa Cather wrote, “Happiness is being immersed in something greater than yourself.” And so it is with the Latah Trail.

The Spokane and Palouse Railway Company sowed the seeds of this organization in 1890 through acquisition of right-of-way for railroad purposes from Moscow through Troy, Kendrick and Juliaetta to Arrow Junction on the Clearwater River. In 1984, Burlington Northern, the successor owner, formally abandoned railroad use.

A crisp, serene January ski tour through Bear Creek Canyon between Troy and Kendrick served as the motivation for several trail enthusiasts to preserve the 38-mile long right-of-way for public, recreational use. The Latah Trail Foundation (LTF) was then formed as an Idaho not-for-profit corporation in April 1998, for the purpose of promoting trail use in Latah County. LTF’s seven directors held a public meeting in June 1998 to establish a volunteer base, conducted a petition drive to demonstrate community support, and began working with Latah County officials to develop a plan to acquire and develop the right-of-way between Moscow and Troy. Right-of-way could not be acquired in a “rails to trails” conversion under Federal law because the railroad use had been abandoned so long ago. Instead, Latah County, with financial support from the Latah Trail Foundation, purchased the railroad’s interest, which accounts for most of the right-of-way, and acquired the several remaining property interests directly from owners.

Numerous committees work tirelessly to address every aspect of the project. Latah County’s Latah Trail Committee has hosted several landowner forums and continues to advise the Board of County Commissioners on land use and regulatory matters. A National Park Service grant helped local volunteers develop a trail concept plan and educate the public about the Latah Trail. LTF conducts fundraising and public awareness activities and actively supports Latah County in funding and planning efforts.

This document is a glimpse into the Latah Trail, a collective vision born from the efforts of people, like you, dedicated to making the “home” we love an even better place to live. Enjoy!

Ron Landeck, President
Latah Trail Foundation

Andy Grant, Director
Latah County Parks & Recreation
Frequently Asked Questions

Throughout the planning process, members of the planning team and the general public raised several recurring questions. The following questions and answers provide insight into how various issues were addressed.

Why not leave the old railroad alone?
Some people have suggested that the trail just be left alone and not "developed;" they enjoy walking on it as it is right now. They wonder why we can't just leave it that way. In order for a non-motorized trail to be useful for a wide variety of users, issues of ownership, safety, and public access must be addressed. If the rail bed were just left alone, it is likely that neighboring landowners would treat it as they saw fit for the piece of ground adjacent to them. Some may choose to purchase it and convert the rail bed to a motorized or non-motorized trail past their property; others may convert it into other uses. By maintaining the rail bed as one unified trail between Moscow and Troy, a standard treatment for a trail can be established, and members of both communities will have access to this alternative transportation/recreation corridor. Trail users will be using County-owned land for non-motorized transportation, crossing safe bridges and staying off the highway. More people will reap the benefits.

Is this a "rail trail?"
While this trail is being built upon a former rail bed, it is not considered a rail trail as defined by the federal law that allows for "rail banking." That federal statute requires that provisions for setting aside land for the trail occur within a short period of time after the rail line is abandoned. Rail banking means that a railroad can come back and convert the trail back into a rail line. This was the case for the Bill Chipman-Palouse Trail. In contrast, the Latah Trail was abandoned in 1984. Trail discussions didn't start in earnest until 1997, about 13 years too late for rail banking protection. Therefore, Latah County purchased much of the rail bed from the railroad salvage company and acquired permanent easements for the remaining parcels from neighboring landowners.

Who is going to use the trail?
The Latah Trail provides non-motorized users a safe route between Troy and Moscow. Many non-motorized users have already started using parts of the trail, including bicyclists, walkers, runners, in-line skaters, wheelchair users, strollers, and cross-country skiers. Equestrians and runners have been involved in trail planning with hopes that a parallel path along portions of the trail could include horses and provide a softer surface for runners. (See the discussion on surfacing below.) Motorized users will continue to use State Highway 8, and/or county roads.

What type of surface will be on the trail?
When the tracks were removed, the railroad salvage company left a variety of surfaces along the route of the trail. Different users prefer different surfaces, but asphalt is a commonly used surface for bicyclists, walkers, runners, in-line skaters, wheelchairs, and strollers. As a surface to accommodate a variety of non-motorized transportation and to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards, asphalt is the most versatile, because it is firm, smooth, durable, affordable, and available.
Will there be a dirt or natural surfaced path?
Although the most desired surface was asphalt, the community survey demonstrated that a sizeable minority of the community would like to see a second parallel path adjacent to the asphalt one. This path could potentially allow for trail running, equestrian use, and mountain biking. However, issues of parking (for horse trailers) and potential user conflicts still need to be worked out. After considerable discussion, the planning team decided that the best course of action would be to construct the asphalt trail and then hold some planning meetings and field trips to determine the feasibility of a dual path.

Who is paying for the trail?
Major funding for this trail has been provided by the Idaho Transportation Department, with local match from Latah County and private contributions secured by the Latah Trail Foundation. Additional funds have been awarded through the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, with matching funds from the Latah Trail Foundation and the City of Troy.

The Idaho Transportation Department money is made available from the Federal Highway Administration for the purpose of improving non-motorized transportation. For this enhancement project, federal regulations required that the state of Idaho spend at least 0.25% (one quarter of one percent) of its budget on alternative transportation. Every year, through an application process, towns from Idaho have competed for these funds. (As of this writing, similar funding for future projects is uncertain.) If the Latah Trail had not received these funds, another community in Idaho would be using the funds for a different project.

Money from the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation is made available for non-motorized recreation purposes from fees collected by the department. County money comes from the County general fund.

The Latah Trail Foundation has raised over $100,000 in private donations from the area. That money has been used for acquisition of right-of-way and matching funds for construction, but future donations will help pay for amenities such as rest areas, benches, drinking fountains, and trees. Our trails system is beginning to take form, but it needs your continued support.

When will the trail be built?
The trail is being constructed in sections based on availability of funds. The City of Moscow recently paved the Paradise Path from Blaine to the beginning of the Latah Trail near Carmichael Road. Thanks to an Idaho State Parks Department grant, the first mile of the Latah Trail, beginning at Troy City Park, was paved in September 2002, and the second mile should be paved in September 2003. Paving the section from Moscow's city limits to Eastman Acres will begin in the summer of 2004. The final section, connecting the two ends of the Latah Trail, is scheduled for completion in the summer of 2005.

Our county officials deserve thanks for their efforts to keep the Latah Trail project on schedule. After the environmental study was approved, engineering for the right-of-way plan was completed, land was appraised, and rights-of-way were acquired from adjacent landowners.

How will the trail affect farming practices and private property issues?
Historical approaches across the trail will be preserved so that farmers can easily access their fields on both sides of the trail. Farmers who apply pesticides to their crops will continue to abide by the current laws requiring a buffer zone.

Regulatory signage will alert trail users to trail boundaries and remind them of the importance of respecting private properties adjacent to the
trail. Revegetation and vegetative screening with shrubs and trees will ensure that neighbors retain their privacy. In some areas, fencing may be considered. Permission is required to hunt or hike on private property. There will be no hunting or shooting on the trail itself.

**How can volunteers help?**
We continue to be moved by the enthusiasm of individuals, groups, and businesses that donate their time, energy, and resources. In spring 2002, thanks to a $2,250 grant from Latah County’s Community Forest Program, the Palouse-Clearwater Environmental Institute organized a planting of 680 native trees and shrubs along the Latah Trail at Eastman Acres; volunteer groups included the University of Idaho's Saturday of Service, WSU's Community Service Learning Center, and the Latah Trail Foundation.

In addition to plantings, volunteers assist the Latah Trail Foundation with planning and organizing fundraising events, staff the Latah Trail booth at the Moscow Farmer's Market on Saturdays, research grant opportunities, and help build community awareness about the Latah Trail. Volunteers created the Latah Trail Foundation web site <www.latahtrailfoundation.org> and have helped plan and design the trail. If you wish to volunteer, contact the Latah Trail Foundation at <latahtrail@moscow.com> or P.O. Box 9344, Moscow, Idaho 83843.
Public Planning Process

National Park Service Assistance
Community involvement in planning the Latah Trail has been emphasized throughout the design process. Before beginning project planning, Latah County applied for and received assistance from the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program of the National Park Service in Seattle, WA. RTCA’s primary role has been to facilitate a fair and open planning process actively involving the general public and key stakeholders (groups, people, and entities that have direct interests in the trail).

Planning Team
The first step taken toward developing the trail was the formation of a key stakeholder group comprised of representatives from the Cities of Moscow and Troy, adjacent land owners, prospective trail users, students and staff from the University of Idaho and Moscow High School, the Latah Trail Foundation, and other interested parties. This group acted as the primary planning body that worked to develop the concept plan. The planning team met monthly for over a year to help plan the trail. Decisions were based on public input from the survey and open house, direction from the County’s Parks and Recreation Department on the feasibility of alternatives, and the planning team’s firsthand knowledge of the trail corridor.

Public Input
Throughout the planning process, newspaper articles and electronic updates kept community members informed and invited them to participate. An information-gathering questionnaire was distributed through two area newspapers and at an open house held at the Moscow Farmers’ Market. Information from over 250 questionnaires helped the team make more educated decisions. Many amenities that have been incorporated into the design of the trail were included because of the public’s desires expressed through the survey. Some noteworthy results from the questionnaire include: 72% of respondents said they would use the trail one or more times a month; 93% of respondents said they would use the trail at least several times a year; mountain biking, walking, road cycling, cross country skiing, and running were the
top five activities listed by respondents as probable uses for the trail. In another study, University of Idaho students from the Department of Resource Recreation and Tourism conducted a user intercept survey along the Bill Chipman-Palouse Trail, a rail-trail project between Moscow and Pullman. That study provided additional insights to the needs and preferences of potential Latah Trail users.

In 2002, University of Idaho students in the Department of Resource Recreation and Tourism conducted an unsolicited study of perceived benefits of the Latah Trail. They began by interviewing 140 randomly selected members of the general public in the Moscow-Troy corridor to become familiar with attitudes, perceptions, and overall feelings about the trail. Based on analysis of those interviews, they developed a questionnaire and administered it to 199 randomly selected residents in the Moscow-Troy area. Ages of respondents ranged from 17 to 90 years, with an average of 33.5 years. Fifty-two percent were male and 48% were female. 89% of respondents agreed that, by getting bicyclists off the highway, the Latah Trail would create a safer environment for people who drive on the Troy-Moscow highway. For a full report of this study, visit the Latah Trail Foundation Web site <www.latahtrailfoundation.org>.

Inventory
The planning team conducted an intensive inventory of the rail corridor. The inventory consisted of researching the cultural and historical resources of the area, an assessment of the trail’s natural resources, and a section by section analysis by a University of Idaho (UI) Landscape Architecture class.

Open House
The first open house was hosted at the Moscow Farmers’ Market, frequented by people representing diverse segments of the community. Over 250 people stopped by the open house and looked at results from the inventory and analysis, filled out surveys, voted for one of several trail logos created by graphic design students from the UI, asked questions, received information about the trail and the design process, and were able to engage in discussions with members from the trail planning team.

Site Visits
After the inventory and public input phases of the planning process, the planning team conducted several organized trail hikes designed to elicit recommendations on a site by site basis. Four hikes took place over a period of two months, with meetings following to discuss recommendations. Trail access points, rest stops, trail
crossings, and other important features for the Latah Trail were discussed. The team created a preliminary concept map with design recommendations.

Design Charette
Graphic designs and visual renderings of trailheads, rest-stops, trail crossings, bridges, vegetative screening and other areas needing special design consideration were generated in an intensive design workshop, or charette. The charette partnered landscape architects, park planners, and artists from UI and the professional community with members of the trail planning team. Sites to receive design attention were selected from recommendations generated through the planning team site visits. Designs were developed to incorporate input from the community survey, questionnaires and open house.
Pre-Settlement History
By the time American and European settlers first moved westward to the Palouse, Native Americans sparsely populated the area through which the Latah Trail winds. It is believed that the Nez Perce Indians camped near what is now the Elks Golf Course to harvest camas roots. In accordance with the rhythm of the seasons, moving south to the valley of the Clearwater River in the winter and north to the mountains surrounding Lake Coeur d’Alene in the fall, the Nez Perce followed the thousand-year-old Great Nez Perce Trail, starting near what is now Lapwai. The Great Nez Perce Trail cut through the southeastern edge of Latah County near Tomer Butte, then turned north toward Coeur d’Alene and Spokane.

In 1937, Cornelius J. Brosnan, a professor of History at the University of Idaho, led an expedition of students to discover evidence of the ancient trails used by the Nez Perce, who referred to the area as “Tatkinmah,” the place of the young or spotted deer. He concluded that the Nez Perce followed two primary trails through the area: the Nez Perce Trail (also known as Red Wolf Trail, Black Hawk Trail, or Stevens Trail) and the Great Nez Perce Trail. In 1938, a group of citizens known as the Worthwhile Club erected a monument at the intersection of these two trails. The monument, a plaque affixed to a large boulder on top of a block of concrete, still exists and may be found at the junction of Lenville and Mill Roads.

In 1855, Issac Stevens, governor of the Territory of Washington, explored the watershed of the Palouse River as a possible railroad route over the Bitterroot Mountains. Stevens was not the first white man in the area; he was preceded by trappers of the North West Company as early as 1810 and by missionaries Father Joseph Cataldo and Reverend Henry Spalding, around 1830. In the late 1860’s, gold miners prospected the Hoodoo mining district in the northeastern part of Latah County, and although it is reported that over a million dollars worth of gold was taken from the Hoodoos during the 1880s, another sort of gold attracted a different sort of settler to the area in the late 1870’s and early 1880’s.

Spurred by the Homestead Act of 1864, homesteaders were attracted by Latah County’s vast fields of grassland and stands of timber. The area’s first permanent white settlers were brothers Asbury and Noah Lieuallen who arrived in 1871 from the Walla Walla, Washington area. The brothers homesteaded
in the area north of what is now the Elks Golf Course on State Highway 8 just east of Moscow. J. Wesley Seat was the first person to homestead in the heavily forested northeastern part of Latah County, near what is now Troy. Although the first homesteaders practiced subsistence farming, growing vegetables, fruit and animals for their own use, around 1877, farmers discovered that the rich loess soil of the steep Palouse hills produced bumper crops, especially wheat. Extension of rail service to the area in the late 1880’s proved to be of particular significance to the farmers. The area’s first rail link came via the tracks of the Oregon Railway and Navigation Company in 1885. The Northern Pacific arrived in 1890, linking the area to Spokane. By 1897, the Northern Pacific had built another line, which ran to Troy, then southeast into the Potlatch Canyon, and on to Kendrick. The community of Joel was formed in 1890, when the Northern Pacific extended its line eastward from Moscow and bypassed the established community of Cornwall because it lacked the “running start” needed to climb the steep grade to Troy. Moscow merchant William Kaufmann donated the land once the railroad agreed to name the station after his son, Joel. The Northern Pacific also placed a depot in the community of Howell, approximately four miles northeast from Joel. In the latter half of the twentieth century, freight and passenger rail service gradually declined on lines throughout the nation. The Northern Pacific discontinued passenger service in 1966 and freight service in 1986.

During the latter half of the 20th century, as service to the area’s farmers and loggers became increasingly centralized in Moscow, several small, once thriving communities in Latah County fell upon hard times. Joel, Cornwall, and Howell, communities along the rail line, have all but disappeared, and Troy, at the easternmost end of the Trail, serves as a bedroom community to Moscow. The property along the Trail is now a mixture of large family farms and “hobby farms,” and several pockets of rural residential development have emerged over the past twenty years. The area immediately east of Moscow is in transition, moving away from agricultural to more urban uses.
Waterways and waterbodies
The Latah Trail winds east from Moscow to Troy mostly alongside State Highway 8. Between Moscow and a ridge just West of Eastman Acres (known locally as Buffalo Hump), the trail is located in the Palouse River drainage, first paralleling Paradise Creek within Moscow and then crossing through the South Fork of the Palouse River. Along this area, and from Eastman Acres to Howell Road, the trail is located near farmlands that produce wheat, lentils, and peas. The trail then descends to Troy City Park along the West Fork of the Little Bear Creek, part of the Potlatch River drainage. The valley is mostly forested, with a few small farms located among the trees. Small patches of woodlands are found along the entire length of the trail, with some wetlands present.

Potlatch River Drainage
From Buffalo Hump to the City of Troy, the trail is located in the Potlatch River Drainage. From the summit of the old rail corridor near Howell, the trail descends to Troy City Park along the West Fork of Little Bear Creek.

Near Arrow Junction, the Potlatch River flows into the Clearwater River, which flows into the Snake River at Lewiston. The Potlatch River and its tributaries once hosted anadromous fish. Anadromous fish are born in creeks and rivers, spend their adult lives in the ocean, then return to fresh water to breed.

The trail will be constructed on top of the rail bed and should not disturb wetlands or the creek. Since use of the trail will be limited to the trail corridor itself, increased use of the area should not negatively affect the creek or wetland areas.

Landforms
The following landforms can be seen from the trail corridor:
- Moscow Mountain
- Paradise Ridge
- Tomer Butte
- Dove Hill
- Buffalo Hump
  (Palouse/Potlatch Basin Divide)

Soil Types
The trail is sited on the abandoned railbed between Troy and Moscow. In general, the soil is silt loam of the Southwick-Larkin type, with some clay subsoils existing where the railbed cuts into hills, and gravel fills where the railbed has been built up.

Wildlife and Vegetation
The Latah Trail attracts wildlife watchers. The ecosystem includes farmlands and forests and several species of flora and fauna. The trail will allow casual and serious nature enthusiasts opportunities to observe the major ecosystems of North Central Idaho by way of a convenient and easily accessible route. The Palouse area is home to many wildlife species, ranging from big game to songbirds. The Latah Trail travels through many different habitat types as it winds from Moscow to Troy.

According to researchers, “More than 97% of wetlands and 94% of native vegetation have been lost since 1900 on the Palouse”. Major
Habitat types on the Palouse include cropland, riparian, forest, shrub and grassland.

Cropland is the most prevalent habitat type in the area and provides the least diverse plant community type. The lack of multi-story riparian vegetation is probably the most limiting factor to restoring wildlife species diversity in the watershed.

Other less represented native riparian habitat types within the watershed are Ponderosa pine / Douglas fir (Pinus ponderosa /Pseudotseuga menziesii) and Western red cedar (Thuja plicata) forests near the eastern edge of the trail. The Douglas hawthorn / quaking aspen (Crataegus douglasii/Populus trichocarpa) association is found along much of the upper riparian areas within the region, and a willow / red-osier dogwood (Salix Drummondii, S. Bebbiana, S. Mckenziana, S. lasiandra, S. exigua – Cornus sericea) association is found along the river at lower elevations.

A variety of wildlife inhabits the watershed permanently, seasonally, or on a migrational basis. Approximately 160 avian species, 68 mammalian, 17 reptile, and 6 amphibian species have been observed in the watershed.

Big game in the watershed include white-tailed and mule deer, elk, and moose. White-tailed deer are the most prevalent deer species. Summer range for deer and elk extends into the higher elevations of the watershed. Furbearers in the watershed include coyotes, badger, skunk, mink, bobcat, cougar, beaver and muskrat.

There are historic indications that rainbow trout were prevalent in the South Fork Palouse River. In addition, the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife planted Rainbow Trout and Brown Trout in the South Fork Palouse River from 1949 until 1952 and Beneficial Use Reconnaissance Project monitoring found rainbow trout and brown trout in 1996. The creek presently supports limited cold water biota. Nongame fish species include redside shiner, speckled dace, northern pike, largescale sucker, longnose sucker, and bridgelip sucker.

Riparian areas have direct influence on wildlife diversity in the watershed. Approximately 60% of the mammalian species, 48% of the avian species, and 65% of the reptilian and amphibian species in the watershed utilize riparian areas for all or part of their seasonal needs. Greater habitat types including wetlands, deep pools and riffles, and forested riparian zones are needed to increase the local diversity of wildlife.
Wetlands in the watershed are typically associated with the riparian areas along the river and its tributaries, and can be classified as palustrine and riverine in nature. Many of these wetlands have been drained and tiled or filled to create more agriculturally viable land. It is estimated that since 1900, 95% of the wetlands in Latah County have disappeared. Historically, wetlands served important functions for wildlife and native cultures. Wet Camas meadows associated with riverine areas provided a staple food source for the Nez Perce.
Guidelines & Regulations

Latah County will oversee management of the entire length of the Latah Trail from Moscow to Troy. Latah County Parks and Recreation will assume the role of lead agency for the County. The following general regulations and guidelines will be in effect:

- Special activities on the trail will be coordinated through Latah County via Special Event Permits. A special event application fee and proof of an insurance bonder may be required.
- Hours of operation for the trail will be dawn until dusk (year-round).
- Where appropriate, signage will indicate trail boundaries, rules for use of the trail, and availability of facilities such as drinking faucets, garbage cans, and restrooms.
- Information about the trail, its use, and management will be readily available for trail users.

Maintenance Guidelines

Trailheads & Trail Surfaces
- Asphalt will be swept as needed.
- Snow will not be routinely plowed or removed from the trail corridor.
- Gravel will be raked, leveled, and/or replaced as necessary to maintain a smooth tread surface.

Bridges/Handrails
- All bridges and handrails will be inspected annually and minor maintenance will be performed as necessary. More intensive repairs will be requested through a specially formed committee designated by the Latah County Commissioners.
- Stain, preservative, and/or paint will be applied as needed.

Signage
- Signs will be repaired or replaced as necessary to maintain function and aesthetics.

Creeks
- Creeks and streams will be monitored for high water and damage mitigation will be performed as necessary.
- Bridges, culverts, drainage ditches, and other water channeling devices will be inspected regularly and debris will be cleared and maintenance performed as needed.
Trail Corridor Vegetation
- A weed control program will be developed and implemented in accordance with the Latah County Weed Advisory Committee.
- Trimming, pruning, and other vegetative removal techniques will be employed as needed.
- Vegetation (including weeds) will be monitored regularly and restoration or eradication strategies will be employed on an as needed basis.

Other
- The trail and its infrastructure (including restrooms, benches, tables, etc.) will be inspected regularly for vandalism. Minor repairs will be made. Repairs requiring more intensive labor and funds will be reported to Latah County Parks and Recreation. Vandalism will be repaired as quickly as possible.
- Hazardous condition reports will be responded to on a case by case basis and mitigated as soon as feasible.

Regulations
- Hours of operation will be from dawn until dusk. This includes the trail, parking areas, and related facilities.
- No unauthorized motorized vehicles will be allowed on the trail. Latah County and City of Moscow employees performing maintenance and law enforcement duties will access the trail with motorized vehicles on occasion.
- Trail users must yield the right-of-way to motorized traffic at all intersections designated for motorized vehicle access.
- All animals must be on a leash no longer than six feet in length.
- Animal owners must clean up and remove all solid waste left by their animals.
- Trail users must stay on the trail and respect the private property rights of neighboring landowners.
- Access to the trail will only be allowed at designated points.
- Trail closures may be in effect during high fire danger or at other times as Latah County designates.
- It shall be unlawful for any person, except for peace officers in the discharge of their duties, to discharge any firearm or other projectile firing device within the limits of the trail right-of-way.
- Hunting and trapping are strictly prohibited within the trail right-of-way.
- All organized events must have special use permits issued by Latah County.
- No structures, permanent or temporary, are allowed within the trail right-of-way.
- No consumption of alcoholic beverages will be allowed within the trail corridor.

Law Enforcement/Emergency Services
Moscow City Police and the Latah County Sheriff’s Department shall be responsible for providing law enforcement and emergency services within their respective jurisdictional boundaries. Emergency contact information will be posted along the trail.
Interpretive Opportunities

Well-placed, thoughtfully worded interpretive signs help people understand a place. Whether you’ve lived here for 50 years or just arrived as an international student, the environment along the Latah Trail provides many opportunities to educate. People who are knowledgeable about a place are more likely to feel attachment to it and to take care of it. Developing an understanding of how plants, animals, and people are interdependent parts of the same system, influenced by geology, climate, water, and heritage, will help shape environmental values. This place is something special and worth celebrating!

The Latah Trail affords uncommon opportunities to share a wealth of historic and natural resource information with visitors and locals alike. Interpretive sites recommended by the planning team, illustrate the potential for historical and cultural education. Additional topics could include the era of the dinosaurs, when Moscow Mountain was molten liquid, or an explanation of how the early Nez Perce traveled to camas fields to the south and crossed what is now the Latah Trail. Other topics include interpreting the 1920’s and 1930’s passenger trains, which in their heyday, carried school bands, visiting dignitaries, and even circus animals between Moscow and Troy, along the Latah Trail corridor. Further topics include the distinct bird-shaped farm field near Cornwall Road (Dove Hill) or 20 wild turkeys roosting in a 100-year-old pine tree alongside the trail. Educational opportunities on the trail abound.

Imagine a fascinated group of third-graders clustered around an elk track discussing the animals that live nearby. These are but a few of the many exciting opportunities for enhancing visitor experiences along the Latah Trail.
Art & Interpretation

Art can be entertaining and is capable of inspiring a range of emotions, but can also be a useful tool for environmental education. Research at the University of Idaho suggests that people may be more inclined to read interpretive signs and to spend more time in the vicinity of those signs when sculpture is present.

Moscow is known as the “Heart of the Arts” and has been listed as one of the top 100 art towns in the United States. The community has a wealth of talent and an abundance of natural beauty from which to draw inspiration. Art can be a celebration of place. It may also invite newcomers and those who are not yet initiated to the Palouse landscape to take the time to notice subtleties in the outdoors.

The Latah Trail Advisory Committee included an Art and Aesthetics subcommittee that considered the overall sensory and emotional appeal of the trail. It looked at elements as overtly artistic as sculptures and imagined the possibility of establishing an open-air art gallery along parts of the trail. The subcommittee considered visually pleasing lines in functional pieces such as benches and bike racks. They thought about siting rest areas not only where people are most likely to grow weary, but also where the sounds of birds or wind in leaves, the smell of pine, or the sight of a mountain vista might be most pleasing. The Art and Aesthetics subcommittee considered the trail as a total experience, accessible and appealing to users with a variety of interests and sensory capabilities.

Further research will tell us if people take better care of their environments when they are emotionally attached to them and whether art can play a role in that attachment. For now, it is interesting to know that what is pleasing to the eye may also be an effective tool in environmental education.

The Latah Trail Design Committee, an outgrowth of the Art and Aesthetics subcommittee, began meeting in the spring of 2003 to develop themes and artistic design concepts for the Latah Trail. Acknowledging the transition from the Palouse (Moscow) to pines (Troy), from wheat to timber, the design team suggests using “Palouse-to Pines” as the overall theme, creating opportunities to celebrate our geographic and cultural connections, while highlighting our agricultural heritage.
CONCEPT PLAN

LEGEND
- PROPOSED LATAH TRAIL
- HIGHWAY 8
- ENTRY POINTS
- ENTRY POINTS W/ PARKING
- RESTROOMS
- BENCHES
- EMERGENCY TELEPHONE
- TRAIL SIGNAGE/INTERPRETATION
- ARTWORK/AESTHETICS
- BUFFER PLANTINGS
2 NUMBERS ON MAP ARE KEPT TO SITE DESCRIPTIONS IN THE CONCEPTUAL PLAN
Site Descriptions
The following pages describe proposed specific sites and amenities along the Latah Trail. They were explored conceptually. Descriptions emphasize visual aspects and planning team recommendations for each site. Prior to actual construction, more detailed plans will be prepared.

Site descriptions are numbered to correlate with numbers and related amenities on the concept plan map (Page 15). For example, the picnic grove featured on page 20 is represented by the number 7 between Larson and Wallen Roads on the concept map. Note the addition of logos representing amenities. The sites on the map are organized in numerical order, from west to east, along the trail.

Construction Phases
This concept plan was designed to be flexible to allow for change as needed. The planning team recognizes that implementation of this plan will take time and trail development will come in phases. Beginning with paving and installation of essential signage, subsequent efforts will be determined by community energy and needs that arise.

Design Consistency and Standards
As a follow-up to work on this concept plan, the Latah Trail Design Committee, under the umbrella of the Latah Trail Foundation, will forward specific design recommendations to the Latah County Commissioners for their consideration.

Goals of the design committee include the following:
- Propose a consistent design (thematic throughout, including materials, signage, and art)
- Adhere to ADA standards
- Identify needed trail improvements
- Prepare rough cost estimates for naming opportunities for donors
- Analyze feasibility of a joint Paradise Path/Latah Trail trailhead
- Make recommendations for planting plans

Individual improvements to the trail will be constructed on a case-by-case basis and will be reviewed by a County-appointed trail advisory committee prior to final approval by Latah County Commissioners. This will encourage creative input from the community and the volunteers who will help to make this trail a reality.
1-Start of Trail (West)

Description
The old railbed over which the Latah Trail lies is now part of the same railway system that the Bill Chipman-Palouse Trail and the Paradise Path use. The Latah Trail will tie seamlessly into the City of Moscow’s Paradise Path, which in turn, becomes the Bill Chipman-Palouse Trail. To conserve resources and provide for a smooth transition between trails, the Latah Trail hopes to share an entranceway with the Paradise Path. An arch or similar structure could serve to mark the entrance of both trails. Heading east from Troy toward Moscow, the arch would read “Welcome to the Paradise Path”. Trail users heading east would see a “Welcome to the Latah Trail” sign.

The exact location for this structure should be determined through discussions between the City of Moscow and Latah County. A likely spot would be near Tidyman’s grocery store or at the eastern city limits of Moscow, near Lenville Road.

Amenities
- An archway or similar structure with a dual-sided trail sign.

2- Western Trailhead

Description
Originally, the intersection of Mill Road and Highway 8 was selected as a possible location for the westernmost trailhead because of its easy access to the trail, potential to allow for parking, and proximity to the City of Moscow. A trailhead in view of Highway 8 would probably stimulate increased interest in the trail. Another possible location for the trailhead is within the City limits, closer to the intersection of Mountain View Road and Highway 8.

Amenities
- Parking – Space should accommodate at least four cars.
- Restroom – One or two toilets will be needed to accommodate trail users.
- Bulletin Board and Signage – A large bulletin board will display rules and regulations of trail use.
- Bench(es) – seating for 2-6 people for resting, socializing, and gear preparation.
3 – Sunset Bench

Description
Sunset Bench is the first rest opportunity for trail users heading east (approximately ¾ of a mile) from Mill Road. This rest stop provides quality views of the surrounding agrarian hillsides and Moscow Mountain to the north. The bench’s proximity to the trailhead will encourage use by senior citizens, young children, and others who desire shorter treks.

Amenities
- Bench(es) – seating for 2-6 people for resting, socializing, and gear preparation.

4 – Eastman Acres

Description
This trailhead is about four miles east from the Moscow side of the trail and is a reasonable location for a restroom and emergency phone. The potential exists to develop this trailhead into a small pocket park that would complement the trail and add to neighborhood playground opportunities for families with younger children.

Volunteers have already planted trees and shrubs along the trail in this area. Eventually, vegetation will increase privacy for adjacent landowners, reduce erosion, and provide habitat for wildlife in the area.

Amenities
- Parking – Space should accommodate approximately four cars.
- Restroom – One or two toilets will be needed to accommodate trail users.
- Emergency Phone – An emergency phone will assist those in need along the trail and prevent trail users from having to knock on doors or from having to go to a trail terminus to make an emergency call. This will be the westernmost emergency phone (1 of 2 along the trail).
- Benches – Seating for two to four persons.
- Playground Equipment – Local residents should be consulted about the design of the playground equipment.
5 - Grain Elevators

Description
The Latah Grain Growers Cooperative owns two grain silos immediately west of Butte Road. The trail crosses just behind these structures. This would be a good location to develop an interpretive display on the role of farming in the history and economy of the area. The potential exists for a mural depicting the agrarian lifestyle on the Palouse. Artwork could be placed on a side of one or both of the silos, pending approval by their owners.

Amenities
- Interpretive signage – Displays interpreting the rich agrarian history of the region

6 - Dove Hill Rest Stop

Description
Just east of Cornwall, adjacent to the intersection of Larson Road and Hwy 8. This rest stop offers an excellent view of Dove Hill, unofficially named because of the shape of the tree-line on the hillside facing the trail.

Amenities
- Interpretive Signage – A sign displaying a photograph of Dove Hill that includes the traced outline of the "dove" will allow people to better recognize the image and learn about changes as the hill makes a transition from a grass to pine habitat.
- Bench(s) – Seating for 2-4 people.
7 - Picnic Grove

Description
The Picnic Grove is located just west of where the rail corridor crosses underneath Hwy 8, east of Eastman Acres.

The Picnic Grove will allow trail users to relax, socialize, and picnic amidst a majestic stand of Ponderosa pines. This site is approximately halfway between Troy and Moscow.

Amenities
- Bulletin Board and Signage – Information displaying the rules and regulations of the trail will be posted.
- Picnic Tables – Two or three picnic tables at this site will allow visitors to enjoy snacks or meals, while enjoying the natural beauty of the area.
- Benches – In addition to picnic tables, one or two benches could be located beside the trail.

8 - Hwy Underpass

Description
The trail crosses underneath Highway 8, slightly more than a mile east of Larson Road. At present, the highway is elevated via a bridge. The Idaho State Transportation Department (ITD) plans to straighten the curve leading into the bridge crossing from the east. Plans include replacing the old bridge with a prefabricated concrete tunnel.

Members of the planning team hope that some elements of the original bridge may be incorporated into this site to retain some of its historic value and aesthetic appeal.

A rest stop at this site would provide an emergency phone, as well as a place to rest and relax.

Amenities
- Bench(es) – Seating for 2-4 people
- Lighting and handrails – Discussions have been initiated with ITD to consider lighting the interior of the underpass and include guardrails for the safety of trail users.
- Emergency Phone – This site is an ideal spot for an emergency phone and is the second (heading east) of two phones recommended for the trail.
9 - Wallen Road Crossing

Description
The Latah Trail intersects Wallen Road just under one mile east of where Highway 8 crosses over the trail. The railroad bridge spanning Wallen Road was removed after the railroad was decommissioned, leaving a 20 foot incline from either side of Wallen Road up to the trail corridor. A bridge, culvert, or a crossing at road level will need to be engineered and constructed to address the elevation changes. University of Idaho Junior Engineering Math & Science students (JEMS) generated several designs for a potential bridge crossing of Wallen Road.

Wallen Road crossing is an ideal location for a trailhead.

Amenities
- Parking – Spaces for 2-4 cars
- Restroom – A toilet out of sight from highway traffic will prevent the trailhead from becoming a roadside rest area.

10, 11 & 12 - Interpretive Sites

Description
#10 – Palouse - to - Forest Interface Interpretive Site
This site is proposed to be located west of the intersection of Howell Road and Highway 8. It is here that the trail’s environment changes from rolling agrarian hills to forest. This interpretive site will display information to trail users about the two ecosystems and their interface.

#11 – Historic Howell Interpretive Site
The trail goes right by the hamlet of Howell. This site has a rich history dating from the early years of white settlement in the area and subsequent farming and logging days.

#12 – Summit Sign
The trail reaches its highest elevation approximately two miles from the east terminus of the trail. A sign erected by the railroad still marks the summit. This site also holds potential for interpretation about the entire railroad corridor and its history.
13 – Wildlife Viewing Area

Description
This wildlife viewing area is situated less than one mile west of the Randall Flat Rest Stop and two miles west of the City of Troy.

The eastern portion of the Latah Trail is wooded and has a secluded feel. As the zone transitions from agrarian to forest, more and more evidence of animals can be seen on or near the old rail grade. The site will focus on interpreting the plants and animals along the eastern end of the Latah Trail. Potential exists for a wildlife-friendly viewing platform with educational signs including information on the types of wildlife that can be seen, habitats of the region, how to be a wildlife-friendly viewer, and identification of animal tracks. Since trail users heading west from Troy have not yet traveled to the sections of the trail surrounded by private landowners, this could also be a good place to educate the public about private property etiquette and responsible trail use.

Amenities
- Environmental Education – Information displaying the types of wildlife and other related materials
- Viewing Platform/Area – Designated area will be created to provide a minimally intrusive means of viewing wildlife and a place to prominently display environmental education signs
- Bench(es) – One or two benches could be located alongside the trail or at the viewing platform/area.

14 – Randall Flat

Description
Approximately one and a half miles west of the trailhead at Troy, this rest stop is aimed at providing casual walkers and others who prefer a shorter trail experience with a good area to take a break.

Amenities
- Bench(es) – seating for 2-6 people, allowing for resting, socializing, and gear preparation.
Description
The trailhead at Troy will be located at Troy City Park, at the western edge of town. The park’s existing amenities include restrooms and parking. Phones can be found at neighboring businesses. The trailhead will be designed to feel as though it is part of the park. An old whistle tower and log gateway could tie the trail with the town of Troy and its railroad and logging heritage.

Amenities
• Bulletin Board and Signage – Information displaying the rules and regulations of the trail will be posted. Interpretive panels featuring the prominence of the railroad and logging industry in Troy’s earlier years are planned for the trailhead at Troy.
Acknowledgements

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To all of the citizens of Latah County who dedicated so much energy toward the goal of making the Latah Trail a reality, we say, “Thank you!” This has truly been a community effort!
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