



Summer 2016

Take A Hike! The ITA Newsletter



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The Economic Value of Quiet Recreation on BLM Lands

Article Courtesy of Dani Mazzotta/ICL, Photo Courtesy of Ed Cannady

A newly released study that looks at the economic value of quiet recreation on BLM lands found that in Idaho alone, 3.9 million people visited the state’s 11.9 million acres



of BLM lands in 2014 to enjoy nonmotorized outdoor opportunities.

Communities near Idaho landscapes managed by the Bureau of Land Management benefited in 2014 from millions of dollars in spending as the result of visitors who came to enjoy nonmotorized recreation such as hiking, hunting and camping, according to a new study by the independent firm ECONorthwest. *Quiet Recreation on BLM Managed Lands: Economic Contribution* is the first-ever study to focus entirely on the economic contribution of nonmotorized recreation.

This study found that in 2014 there were 3.9 million quiet recreation visits to Idaho’s BLM lands alone. These visits generated \$189 million in direct spending within 50 miles of the recreation sites. These dollars then circulated through the state economy, resulting in \$56 million in employees’ salaries, wages and benefits. The study shows 2,368 Idaho jobs are supported locally as a result of quiet recreation visits to BLM lands.

“This study is significant because it is the first ever to quantify both the amount of quiet recreation and the spending associated with quiet recreation specifically on BLM lands,” said ECONorthwest’s Kristin Lee, who

led the research. “We found that the majority of visitors to BLM lands enjoyed non-motorized recreation; in the process, they spent \$1.8 billion in the economies of local communities—which resulted in \$2.8 billion of economic output at the national level.” Lee continued, “This study shows that in addition to providing non-motorized recreational opportunities enjoyed by millions of people, these lands also provide local economic opportunities and contribute billions of dollars to the U.S. economy.”

Researchers calculated the local economic contribution (jobs and income) generated by spending visitors who engaged in “quiet” recreation on BLM lands in 11 Western states; Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming and Alaska. They based their calculations on 2014 visitation data from the BLM and spending data from the National Visitor Use Monitoring program. The study was commissioned by The Pew Charitable Trusts. Other reports have examined the economic impact of nonmotorized recreation across the nation, but have not considered the contributions of visitors engaged in these activities on BLM lands alone. Read the full *Quiet Recreation* report here:

http://www.pewtrusts.org/~media/assets/2016/03/quiet_recreation_on_blm_managed_lands_economic_contribution_2014.pdf

Volunteer Spotlight – Bella Martin!

By Bella Martin

Photo courtesy of Travis Olson

Growing up fascinated with the outdoors and mountains, I spent hours upon hours during the summer in the mountains. I explored, backpacked, camped and day-hiked in the wilderness. I fished in mountain lakes and crawled around boulder fields with my siblings. Often my dad, brother and I would go out into either the Sawtooths or the White Clouds for backpacking trips to new, breathtaking places. When I was younger, it felt like going to summer camp for a week. There were no baths, plentiful stars for nightly stargazing, and best of all I got to be with my family in the mountains. During the summer when I was 13 my dad brought up the offer to



work on a trail crew for a week. I was hesitant at first. I didn’t understand why trails needed maintenance, and I especially was not looking forward to working while I hiked. Little did I know my perspective on backpacking and trails in general was going to be completely re-shaped. On that trip we worked on waterbars, cut out trees that were over the trail and moved “ankle-twisting” rocks out of the trail. I was introduced to tools like the Pulaski and the cross-cut saw, which soon became my best friends during the week. After that first trip I was hooked. This last week I completed my 4th year working on the Alice-Toxaway trail with ITA. Now at 17 I am realizing the importance of youth like me being in trail crews and witnessing what it takes to keep trails clean. Through trail building I have gained an appreciation for all that it takes to maintain a trail, an appreciation that most teenagers my age lack. I have been fortunate enough to start into trail maintenance at a young age. But more teens are needed on the trails—not just cutting water bars, but learning as I have about the importance, construction and conservation of trails. Young adults are needed in trail crews to learn and manage the long-term preservation of our wild places. This starts with maintaining and caring for what we have. Building trail

isn't for the lumberjacks and diehard mountaineers; it is an opportunity unlike any other for youth to collaborate and learn from experienced sawyers and foresters and become stewards of the wilderness.

Helping to maintain Idaho's Non-motorized trails must involve inspiring young people to use and protect trails.

By Alexa Oord, Idaho native and current undergraduate at Harvard University

"This trail sucks!" I muttered to myself. Another downed tree, badly burned by a recent fire, blocked the trail. My attempt to follow a trail half-submerged by a swollen creek waterlogged my hiking shoes. Plans for a three-day hike north of Stanley were turning sour. Given the miserable trail, I turned back, having hiked little more than a mile.

I spent the summer of 2016 hiking trails all over Idaho. Thanks to a university research grant, I traversed the state's various terrains. From the majestic Sawtooths to the rugged Owyhee Desert and sites here and there around the state, I hiked paths practically paved and others nearly impassible. My goal was to assess the upkeep of Idaho's nonmotorized trails. I hoped to raise awareness about the lack of funding to properly maintain them.

Of course, trail users expect to encounter some overgrowth, fallen trees or flooding. If trails are not cleared regularly, however, nature takes over. Lack of funding often means backcountry trails go years without care from a maintenance crew, and once-accessible trails become inaccessible. Eventually, overgrown trails are taken off the U.S. Forest Service map. As the number of trails decrease, the federal government allocates less money to Idaho's Department of Parks and Recreation to maintain trails and upkeep problems are exacerbated.

Lack of federal and state money means not only that fewer maintenance crews can be hired. It also means less money to train volunteer crews in specialized skills, including how to remove trees or rebuild trails. Food, equipment, and transportation for volunteers also require funding. And to make matters worse, the scant resources designated for Parks and Recreation trail projects are often diverted to fight fires.

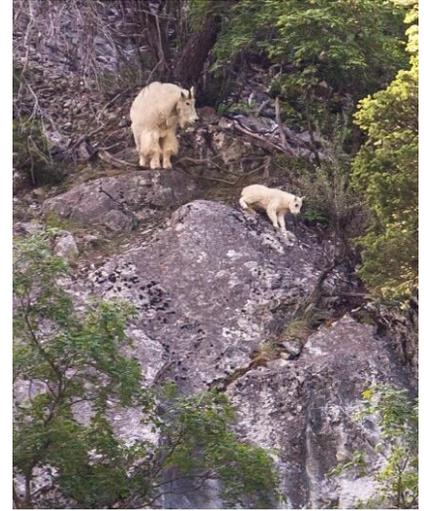
The non-motorized trail community of hikers, bikers, and equestrians have begun working toward solutions. In February 2016 members of this diverse community of trail users, including representatives from the Idaho Trail Association, held a summit meeting to discuss how to protect Idaho's trails. A range of proposals emerged, such as taxing outdoor equipment, charging for trail use, and approaching businesses with outdoor interests. It is not likely that these proposals will generate sufficient funds to solve the problems. But the fact that these various groups are working together is an encouraging development.

As I hiked Idaho's trails this summer, I became convinced that part of the solution must involve inspiring young people to use and protect trails. Many hikers I met on the trail were over 50 years of age. I realized that older people often have more time to hike and more resources than younger people to help with trail maintenance. I worry, however, that without a strong base of young people dedicated to wilderness, the trails will likely not be protected for future generations. Young people need to be encouraged to use, enjoy, and protect Idaho trails.

Not all of my hikes this summer were as frustrating as the trail I abandoned north of Stanley. Hiking to the Palisades Lakes in southeast Idaho, for instance, was a summer highlight. On the 18-mile round-trip hike, I met



college students, a group of older women who hike together, a man with his dog, and five children hiking with their grandparents. In addition to seeing the usual wildlife, I watched a mountain goat nanny and her kid on the cliffs above the Palisades River. The hike was a nice combination of encounters with other hikers, periods of solitude and moments appreciating Idaho's wildlife.



As my summer of hiking came to a close, I reflected on what I had learned and how we might promote and protect Idaho's nonmotorized trails. Perhaps the best way to protect trails is for each of us to actually use them. Hiking Idaho's trails not only curbs overgrowth but also maintains awareness of our state's wonderful wilderness.

Second, we must imagine ways to pass on our love for Idaho trails to more users. As more people hike Idaho's trails, more will come to experience and appreciate the natural beauty of the state's backcountry. Third, we must stay involved in the nonmotorized trails conversation. The recent summit meeting is major step in the right direction. Outdoor enthusiasts are able to accomplish more together than individually. And we who love Idaho's trails need to remind one another of our responsibility to protect what we value. Let's keep these trails for future use through participation, education and advocacy.

Hike it Baby - Encouraging the early exposure of nature to our children.

By Elsa Johnson, Hike it Baby Ambassador

It is the middle of January. The temperatures are in the single digits and patches of snow and frost cover the rolling foothills that rise above Boise. The landscape is just becoming visible in the morning light as the sun is about to appear above the horizon. A small pack of women with young children strapped to their backs and the ground crunching under their feet make their way along the Miller Gulch trail to catch the brilliant sunrise over the frozen city.



It's the middle of June and a large group of parents and their children mull around in the shade of the trees at the Rose Garden in Julia Davis Park in Downtown Boise. At 10am, with the heat of the day already setting in, they are preparing to take off on an urban stroll through downtown. A quick stop in at a local coffee shop for refreshments, and the group heads out for a walk along the greenbelt.

These are just two examples of the kind of events that Hike it Baby Boise has to offer the parents of the Treasure Valley. Hike it Baby Boise is one of six branches of Hike it Baby that Idaho offers. The other branches include Coeur d'Alene, Moscow, Pullman, Sun Valley/Hailey and the newly founded Mountain Home chapter. Hike it Baby is an international organization that was founded in July of 2013 by then-new mom Shanti Hodges. An avid hiker before having a child, Shanti recognized the need for a movement to encourage parents to get outside with their children as soon as they were able. Most people are familiar with the benefits that regular exercise like hiking has for adults. From heart health to reducing diabetes to helping with depression and sleep problems, we are bombarded with encouragement from our doctors, the magazines and books we read and the TV shows we watch. But what about the benefits of hiking for our children? As it turns out, children benefit

from hiking much the same as adults do, with regular hikes lowering the risks of childhood obesity and diabetes.

Yet an even greater benefit comes from exposure to nature and natural surroundings. Taking your child out hiking with you, even when they are too young to walk themselves, creates a curiosity for and a desire to explore the natural world. As they grow and become more comfortable exploring on their own, your children will make discoveries that open up opportunities for education and discussion about plants, animals, ecosystems and the weather (just to name a few) before they even reach school age. Hiking with young children also offers the opportunity for them to evolve an early and deep love and respect for the Earth and all the life it holds, a connection that they can carry into adulthood and eventually pass on to their children. This connection helps the continual effort to protect and preserve the beauty and delicate systems that we encounter in the natural world.

Hike it Baby strives to create a community, accessible to all that encourages this early exposure of nature to our children. Membership and participation in Hike it Baby is completely free and everybody is welcome to join; from parents and their children to nannies, grandparents and other caretakers. Additionally, anyone is welcome to host a hike and is encouraged to schedule hikes at times and places that work for them and their families. With the no-hiker-left-behind policy, families of all fitness level and experience can join in and feel welcomed and supported. “Hikes” with Hike it Baby include rural trail hikes, urban strolls, hikes ending at breweries, snowshoeing, toddler-led adventures, Zoo walks, trips to parks and plays, and so much more! Hike it Baby guidelines are in place to make sure that you will have the same experience at any of the 277 branches in 9 different countries. In addition to the benefit the organization brings to the children, it also provides parents with a strong community and network of like-minded individuals.

As the sun sets, a group of hikers is gathered on the side of the trail, one parent on their knees laughing and conversing as another parent changes a dirty diaper. A mom sits on a rock, her baby carrier hanging loosely behind her as she feeds her newborn. A small pack of toddlers stand at the creek bed, sticks in hands, tossing small pebbles into the water and laughing with glee at the splashes and ripples they create. This is what Hike it Baby is all about.

For more information and to find a calendar of hikes near you, visit www.hikeitbaby.com.

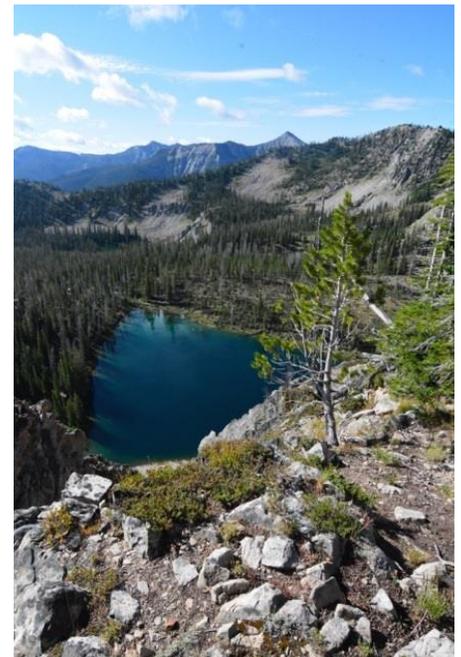
Summer Hiking Destination – Solitude at Cabin Lakes.

By Scott Marchant

The appeal of a trek to Cabin Creek Lakes—beyond its wildflower-covered hillsides, old growth Douglas-fir forest and stunning lake basin—is that it is off the radar to most hikers. Unlike most trails originating along the Sawtooth Mountains' eastern front, the Cabin Creek Trail extends only into the Cabin Creek drainage and does not venture further into the Sawtooth Wilderness.

Midsummer hikers will see a profusion of colorful wildflowers along the trail's lower elevations. Douglas firs, many of impressive size, are prolific along much of the trail. The beautiful Cabin Creek itself is often within sight, and the over-the-shoulder views of the White Cloud Mountains are impressive at higher elevations. Most of the hike is along a modest grade, although the final half mile is a steep climb of 500 feet.

The maintained trail ends at the small, turquoise-colored Lake 8,811. The lake is silhouetted by a rolling granite ridgeline culminating at an unnamed 9,997-foot peak. A well-traveled footpath ascends to the highest Cabin Creek Lake (Lake 9,078) that, although shallow, is surrounded by an



impressive amphitheater of granite peaks. Both lakes offer good campsites. Make sure to bring the binoculars as mountain goats often wander the lofty ridges above Lake 9,078.

Scott Marchant is the author of five outdoor hiking guidebooks including *The Hiker's Guide Idaho's Sawtooth Country*. He also photographs and publishes two Idaho Calendars (The 2017 Idaho Wilderness Calendar and The 2017 Idaho Wildflower Calendar) available at hikingidaho.com, amazon, and many retailers throughout Treasure Valley.

2016 Projects are on our Web Page! Check them out at
www.IdahoTrailsAssociation.org

September 9th - Roman Nose, Panhandle National Forest.

A great project in the Northern Reaches of Idaho!

September 17th – National Public Lands Day, Owyhee Canyonlands, Boise Bureau of Land Management.

Boise Bureau of Land Management, Idaho Trails Association, and REI invite you to join us for some camping, projects, and fun activities for this year's NPLD.

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To become a member please visit: www.IdahoTrailsAssociation.org

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Cover Photo: 2016 Alice Toxaway Crew, courtesy of Tyler Lee