

Lower Clark Fork Trail System Concept Plan



Executive Summary
June, 2003

Trail Types

The lower Clark Fork trail system will consist of multiple trail segments throughout the region that have varying degrees of development, surfacing, location, and levels of accessibility. The trails are organized into three categories:

- **Pedestrian linkage/transportation:** multi-use trails mainly alongside roadways to provide safe pedestrian transportation connections.
- **Designated routes:** Signed routes along existing roads and streets for bicycle/pedestrian safety and route finding purposes.
- **Recreation trails:** Trails designed primarily for recreation use (e.g., nature trails; horseback riding staging areas; water trails; other multi-use trails).

Corridor Wide Opportunities

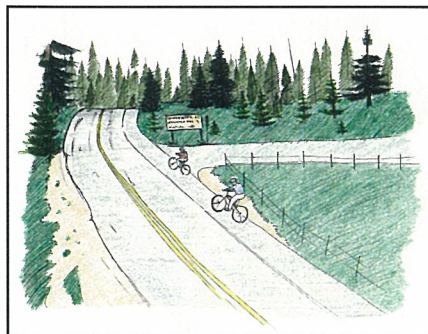
A goal of the trail plan is to provide long and corridor wide trail opportunities for diverse uses and purposes including pedestrian transportation and recreation.



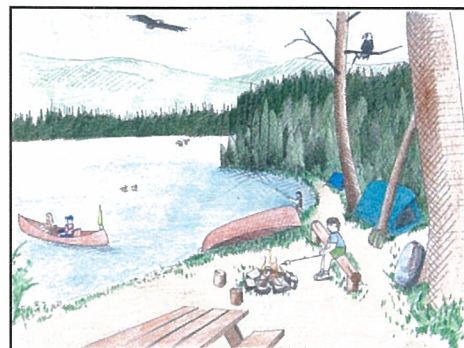
Bicyclists riding along Hwy 200

County Road Bicycle Route:

A signed and designated bicycle route along existing county roads from Thompson Falls, Montana to Clark Fork, Idaho, approximately 65 miles.



Artist sketch of the conceptual County Road Bike Route



Artist rendering of a water trail put in and campsite.

Water Trails:

Water trails are envisioned along both the Noxon and Cabinet Gorge reservoirs and the lower Clark Fork River. A map of the trails would be developed that designates put in and take out sites, campsites, and public areas to portage around the dams.

Vision

The lower Clark Fork trail system will become a quality regional resource that enriches the lives of residents and visitors and fosters a sense of community. This system of recreational trails allows people to experience the rural and rustic environment, while preserving the corridor for the next generation's enjoyment.



Special Recreation Opportunities

A goal of the trail plan is to provide trail routes that meet the needs of a diverse set of trail users and also provide residents and children educational and interpretive opportunities.



A sketch of the conceptual Finley Flats Nature Trail

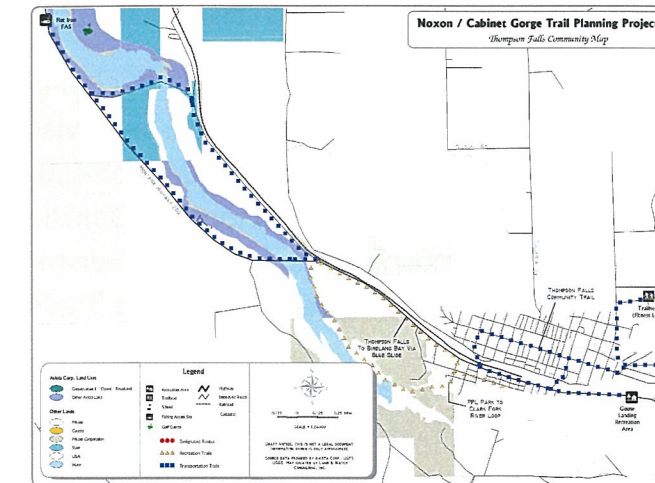
Nature trails that provide interpretation and education opportunities are possible at both Finley Flats and Bull River.



A view of the reservoir from the conceptual walking trail near Big Eddy campground.

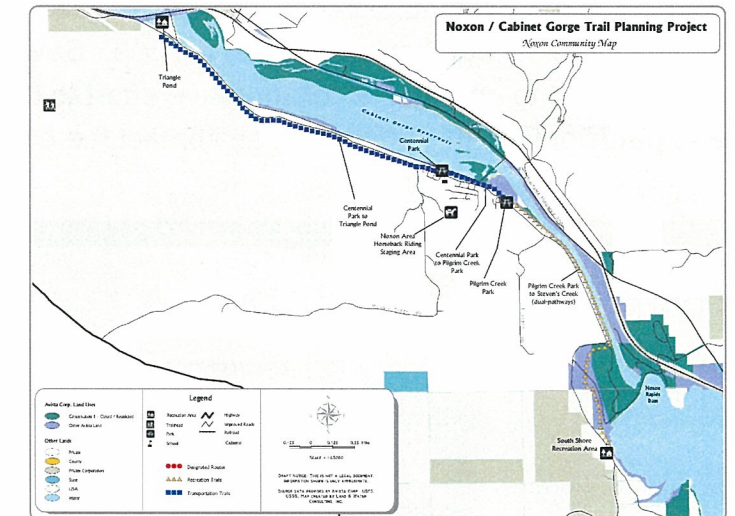
Community Opportunities

A goal of the plan is to provide close-to-home trail opportunities for each of the communities in the valley.



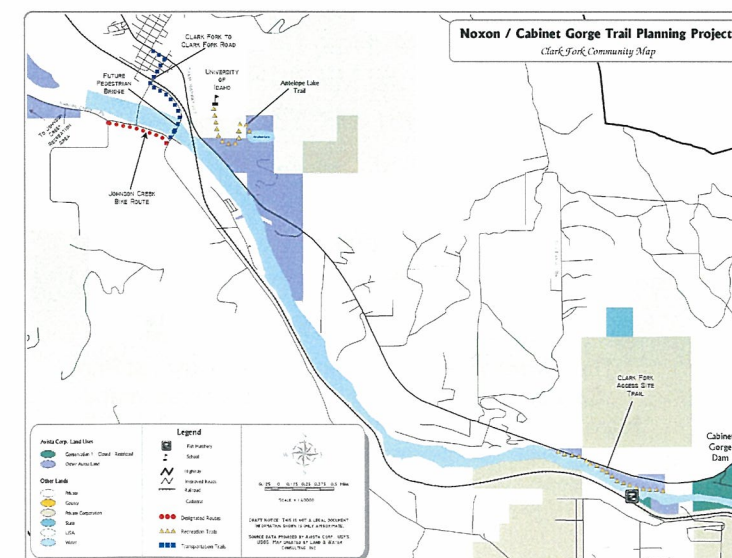
Thompson Falls: (left) Three trails are being considered for Thompson Falls. These opportunities include a loop along the Clark Fork River and then back onto highway 200, a loop trail to Birdland Bay, and a community trail that connects the high school, businesses, and existing trails.

Trout Creek: A community trail could create a system of sidewalks, trails, and safe crossings that connect the business district, school, and the Trout Creek Recreation area.



Noxon: (right) The conceptual trail routes in Noxon connect Triangle Pond to Centennial Park via a trail along the county road, and another trail continues from Centennial Park to Pilgrim Creek Park and then up to Stevens Creek along the abandoned railroad.

Heron: Three trail are considered in Heron. These routes include two designated bicycle loop trails along County roads and a community trail connecting points of interest in the community of Heron.



Clark Fork: (left) Three opportunities were identified for the Clark Fork community: a bicycle route to Johnson Creek Recreation Area, a community trail, and trail improvements along the U.S.F.S. Antelope Lake trail.

Project Partners

The lower Clark Fork Trail plan is the outcome of a two-year open planning process conducted by Avista in cooperation with a forty-person advisory committee. The advisory group consisted of representatives from a broad cross-section of the valley including officials from the U.S Forest Service, Montana & Idaho State Parks, Noxon-Cabinet Shoreline Coalition, Sanders County, trail user groups, community advocates, City of Thompson Falls, and school districts. Technical planning assistance was provided by the National Park Service's Rivers and Trails program. The idea for the trail project originated as part of the consultation process among Avista Corporation and 26 organizations during a four-year planning process to collaboratively develop the Clark Fork Settlement Agreement as part of the relicensing of two hydroelectric projects on the lower Clark Fork River. Avista is the lead organization in this trail planning effort and has a modest amount of funding for trail implementation. However, Avista does not have funding to implement all of the trail opportunities identified. Avista is committed to completing the planning process and to seek grants and partnerships to help fund, build, and manage these remarkable opportunities for trails in the lower Clark Fork Valley, but they can not do it alone. Several potential partners and volunteer groups have been identified to enhance a collaborative effort to build and take care of the trail system. If you would like to participate in this effort, please contact the Land Manager at the Avista Corporation.



For More Information
Or To Get Involved!
Contact

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RIVERS, TRAILS, AND CONSERVATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The *Rivers and Trails* Program of the National Park Service is a national network of conservation and recreation professionals who assist communities at their request with local projects based on natural, cultural, and recreational resources. The program philosophy is based on four principles: community initiative; cost-sharing; cooperation; and results.