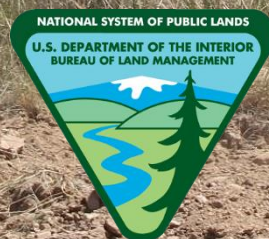


# Making Community Connections

Using the RTCA program to develop strong partnerships through trail planning in rural Idaho

Presentation by: Katy Kuhnel, Outdoor Recreation Planner  
Bureau of Land Management, Challis Idaho



# Trail map



❖ **The need and desire...**

❖ **The opportunity...**

❖ **The planning...**

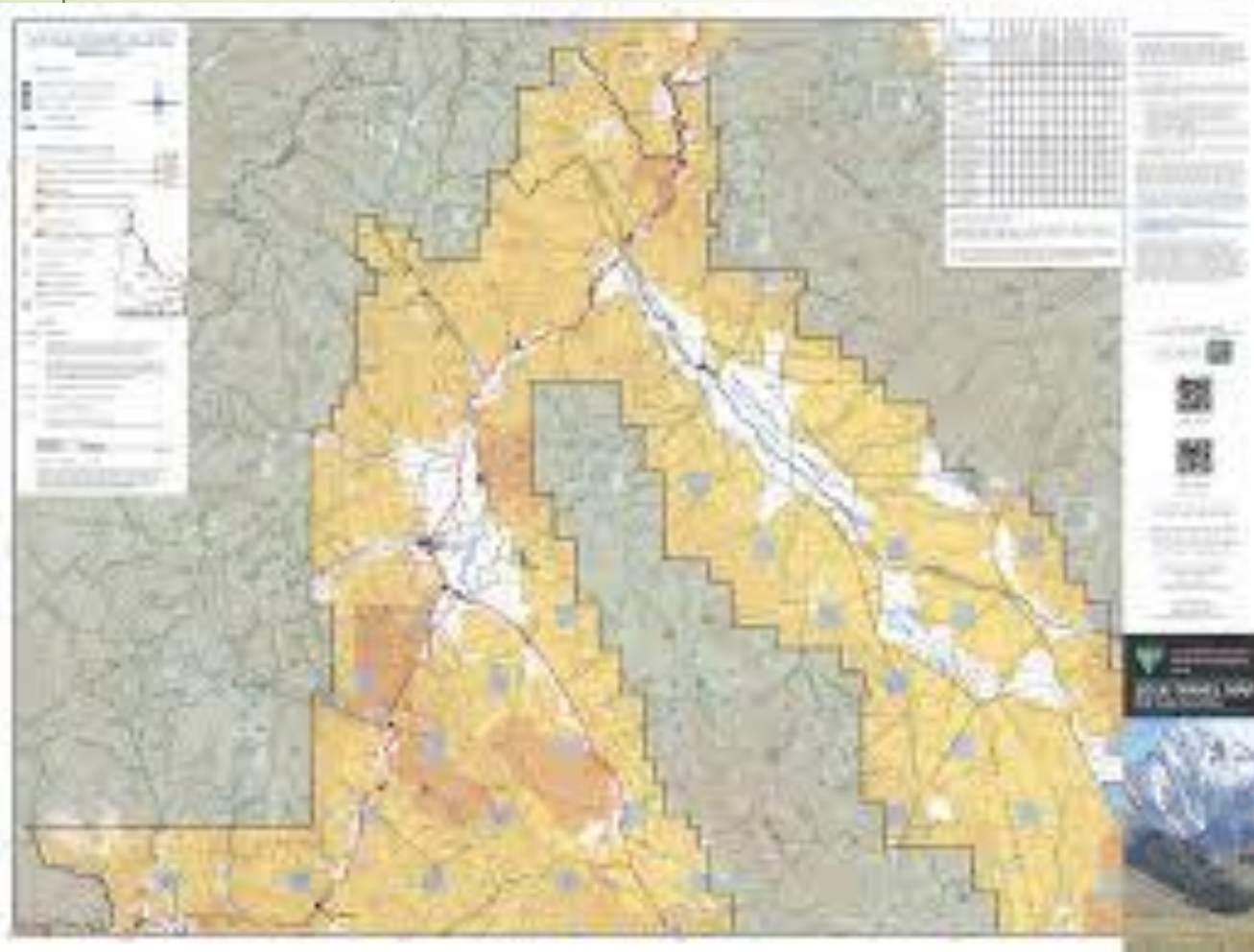
❖ **The implementation!**

# The Need...



- ▶ Public lands total approximately 90% of land area in Custer County
- ▶ Historical uses of natural resource extraction (mining, logging, etc) no longer fueling community financially
- ▶ Abundant recreation opportunities
- ▶ City of Challis surrounded by BLM and Forest Service lands
  - ▶ Extensive ATV and hiking trails existing, **gaps in connections** from town

# The Need...



- Bureau of Land Management Travel Management Plan (TMP) 2008
  - Identified areas near town to develop mountain bike and hiking trails, connecting to existing trails in the community.
  - Plan provided for development of ATV trail connecting the local State Park to ghost town/ mining town attractions on Forest Service Lands, through BLM lands. ATV trail completed in 2015.

# The Desire...

- ▶ Interest from community members in developing more opportunities for outdoor activities near and around town, both non-motorized and motorized
- ▶ Maps of recreation opportunities requested from outdoor shops/ businesses to give to visitors
- ▶ Desire to “get ahead” of the people moving to town from larger cities and to make sure that the community voice is put down on paper



# The Opportunity...

- National Park Service outreach for Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program application
- BLM and City of Challis co-applicants
- Assistance grant awarded in October 2017



BLM Recreation Strategy

# Connecting with Communities



2014-2019



# What is the RTCA program?



## ➤ RTCA- Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program

- “The program supports community-led natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation projects across the nation. Our national network of conservation and recreation planning professionals partners with community groups, nonprofits, tribes, and state and local governments to design trails and parks, conserve and improve access to rivers, protect special places, and create recreation opportunities.”
- “NPS community planners provide free facilitation and planning expertise. They will define vision and goals, inventory and map resources, engage partners and stakeholders, help develop concept plans, set priorities and build consensus, and identify funding sources.”
- Show of hands: Has anyone worked with RTCA?



# The Work



Assistance grant awarded

October 2017

January 2018

May 2018

August 2018

October 2018

December 2018

January 2019

April 2019

May 2019

...

First CTC Meeting- success!

1st Annual Trails Summit

Community Trails Questionnaire Closes

October 2018

December 2018

January 2019

April 2019

May 2019

...

1st Draft of Challis Trails Action Plan

December 2018

January 2019

April 2019

May 2019

...

2nd Draft of Action Plan- out for public review

January 2019

April 2019

May 2019

...

1st Action item completed- new ATV trail

April 2019

May 2019

...

2nd Annual Trails Summit

May 2019

...

# Beginning

- Co-applicants (City and BLM) began coordinating team meetings with NPS Community Planner in October 2017
- Developed draft work plan and draft vision, mission, goals
- Began reaching out to potential committee members and interested stakeholders



# Middle

A dirt trail winds through a dry, hilly landscape. The foreground is dominated by a wide, unpaved path that leads into the distance. The surrounding terrain is covered in sparse, dry vegetation, including yellow wildflowers and small shrubs. In the background, there are rolling hills and mountains with a reddish-brown hue, suggesting a volcanic or mineral-rich region. The sky is overcast with soft, grey clouds.

- Committee members gathered together for the first Challis Trails Committee (CTC) meeting in January 2018
- Press releases and information in local newspapers to promote interest and engagement in community
- Meetings held monthly, open to anyone and everyone interested

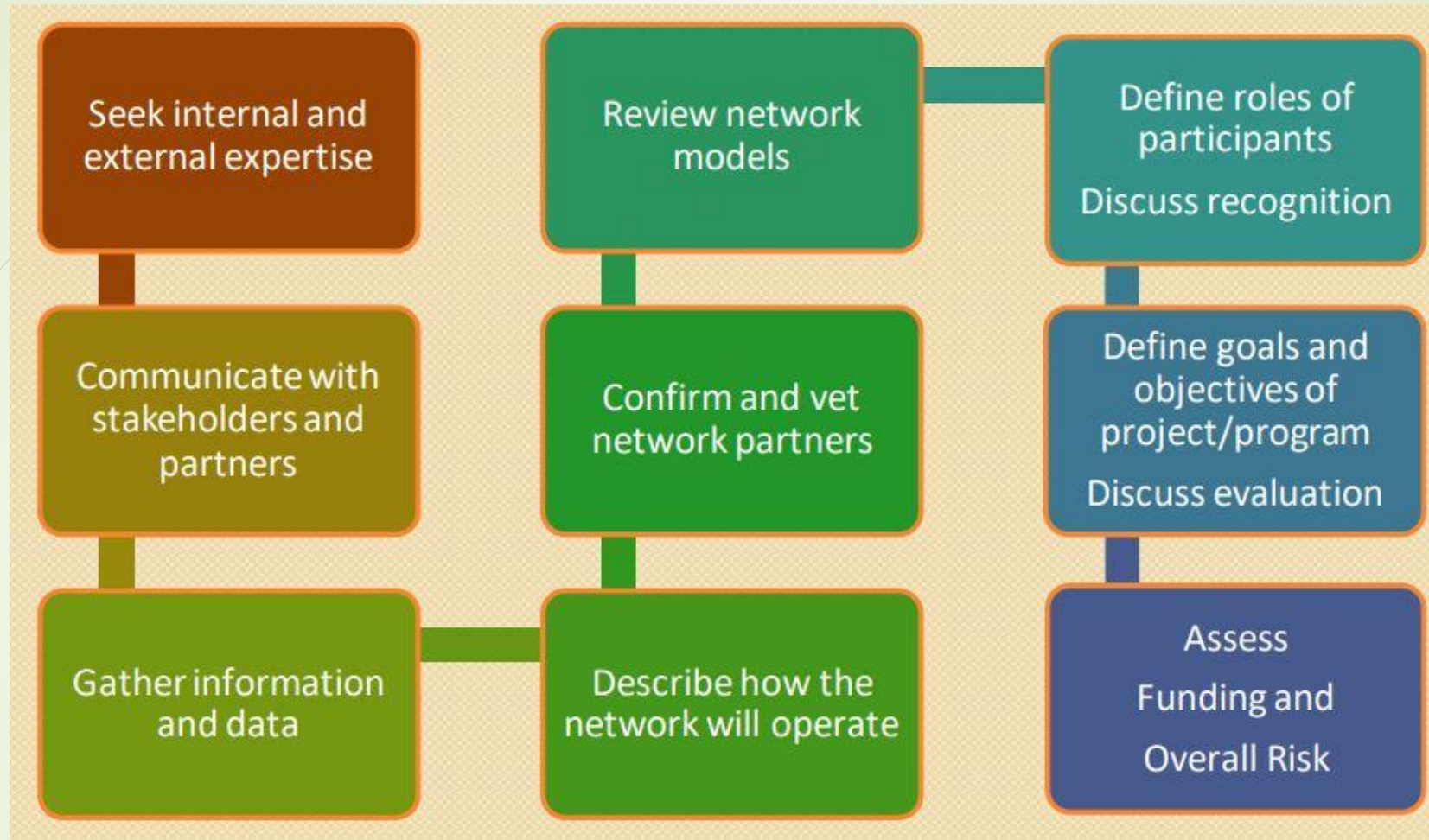
# Action Planning

- Desire to see ACTION. History of community efforts stalling due to government processes, high employee turn-over, seasonal challenges, etc
- Question to class: has anyone seen a partnership or community effort stall out for any of these reasons?
- Type in chat box: describe effects on partnership or perceptions of public when action efforts are not realized.
- 1 year timeframe developed for plan completion... ambitious!
- “Finalized” Vision, Mission, and Goals of the Committee (always adapting to needs/ desires of evolving community)



Question to class: has anyone seen a partnership or community effort stall out for any of these reasons?

Type in chat box: describe effects on partnership or perceptions of public when action efforts are not realized.



- RTCA helped navigate the research and development stage
  - Lined out the partnership development steps
  - Steered group through the 4-P's of project management- Plan, Process, People, Power

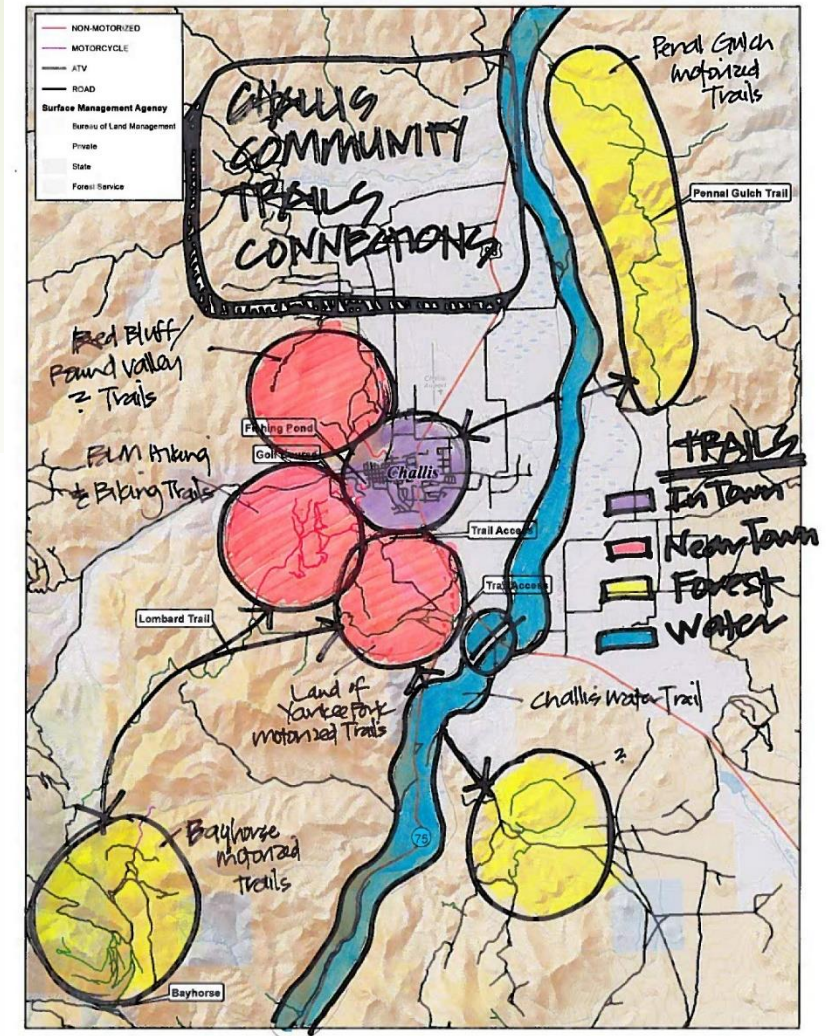
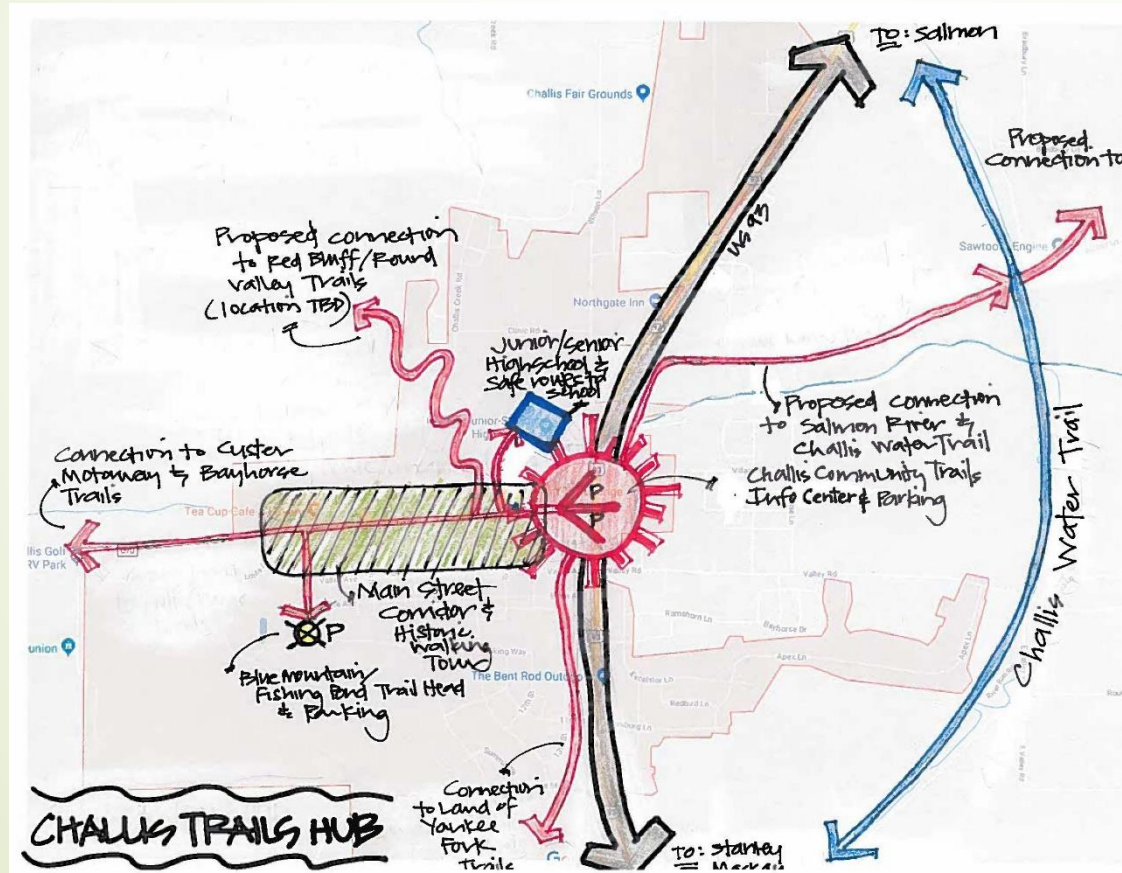
# Community Engagement

- Trails Questionnaire- Survey Monkey, platform provided by NPS
  - Questionnaire ran for spring/ summer months, results used to inform planning decisions
- Challis Trails Summit
- Other outreach opportunities:
  - School involvement- Natural Resources Day Trail Art
  - Ride the Bayhorse ATV event
  - River of No Return Endurance Run
  - Newspaper articles
  - Merrell and Backpacker Magazine "Lemonade Stand" on the trails



# Plan Drafting

- Youth Involvement- Youth Employment Program helps develop initial outline for plan
- Plan drafts reviewed by committee



- Put to public for review/ comment
- "Finalized" and adopted by partners (January 2019= 1 year!)

# Implementation



- City Conveyances Parcel of land- low-hanging fruit for early implementation successes
- Grants from IDPR received for mountain bike trail construction on BLM with City and Y.E.P.
- Work plan development, succession planning, partnership assessment (Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory activity with Trails Committee)



# Challenges

- ▶ Grant writing and how to implement projects (who can take/ spend the money?!)
- ▶ The “multiple-hat” syndrome
- ▶ Conflict resolution- concerns and comments raised by committee members after implementation
  - ▶ Ulterior motives, past grievances, personal histories
    - ▶ “What story am I telling myself”
    - ▶ Importance of Active Listening
- ▶ Risk Management- community involvement paramount to success and reducing risk of agency involvement



## The earlier you address conflict, the easier it is to resolve



- Lessons Learned/ Best Practices: Importance of active listening and getting all sides of the story before acting on information.
- Avoiding some of the 8 Watch Outs! Of Collaboration
- Have some lemonade!

# Moving Forward



- RTCA assistance only for 2 years
- Monthly meetings will continue, continue seeking funding avenues, update plan bi-annually with priorities completed or changed, etc
- Succession Planning
- Question to class: How do you keep up momentum in a partnership when the “main work” is over?



**questions?**

**questions?**

**questions?**

**questions?**