

GRANT COUNTY

Comprehensive Outdoor
Recreation & Trails Master Plan

Grant County, NM – Fall 2022



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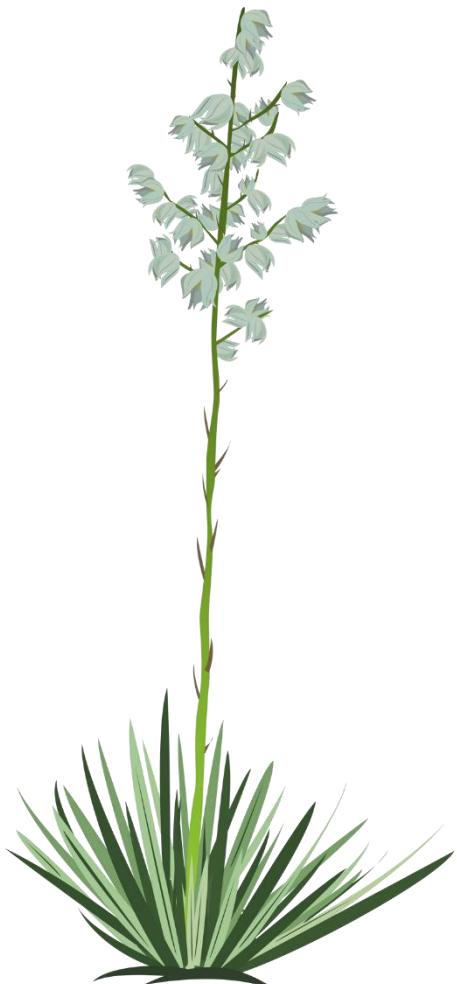


Image Credit: Bones Wolbach

This plan is dedicated in memory of Priscilla Ann Shoup, who was a steadfast advocate for Grant County's people and landscape. As the leader of this Recreation and Trails Master Plan project for just over a year, she shaped much of the process and vision for this planning effort. She led this project with passion, optimism, and dedication; she was deeply committed to reaching Grant County's many communities and perspectives through the planning process. The planning team would like to express our profound gratitude to Priscilla for all she did to guide this plan and establish a bright future for Grant County.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Executive Summary

THIS EXECUTIVE SUMMARY PROVIDES AN OVERVIEW OF THE PLANNING PROCESS, THEMES, AND KEY PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE 2022 GRANT COUNTY OUTDOOR RECREATION AND TRAILS MASTER PLAN.



ABOUT THE PLAN

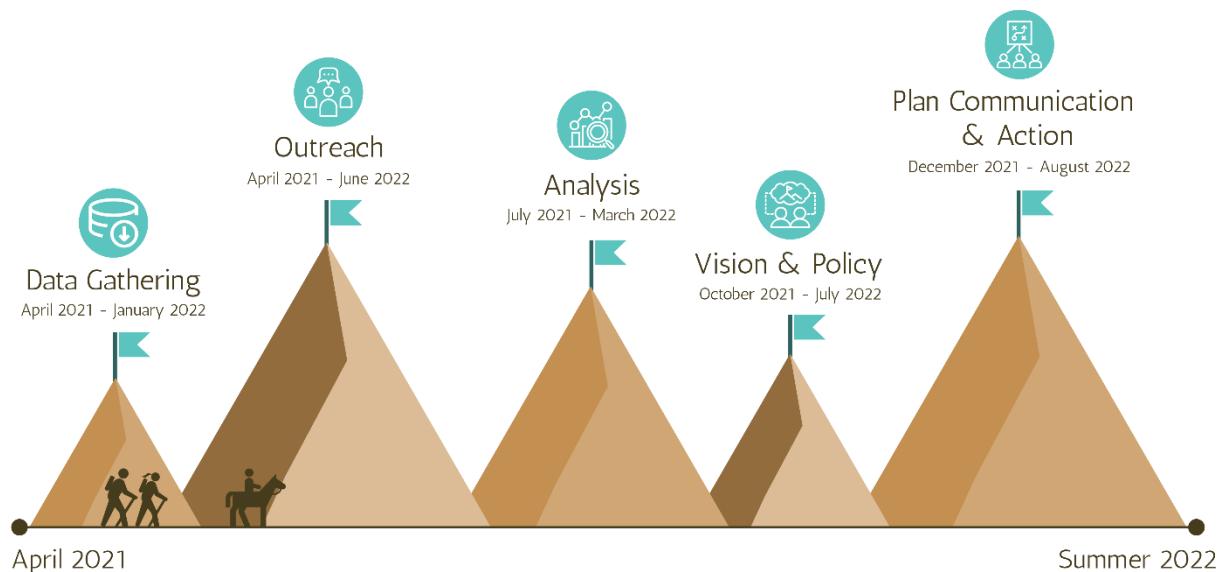
Outdoor recreation is an integral part of life in Grant County. The County contains many unique and special trails and recreation areas, including the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, the Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument, the City of Rocks State Park, and the community trails at Boston Hill. Grant County contains large portions of the Gila National Forest and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands, where residents and visitors can enjoy various recreational activities.

With many different assets, several land managers, and a varied recreational offering, Grant County has struggled to develop a centralized vision and plan for the continued stewardship and enjoyment of its recreational resources. This plan was developed over the course of a year and a half and incorporates input from land managers, County residents, and visitors. The final document is intended to provide a thorough picture of recreation in the County today and present a clear vision for the future of Grant County's trails and recreation areas.

THE PROCESS

Project Timeline

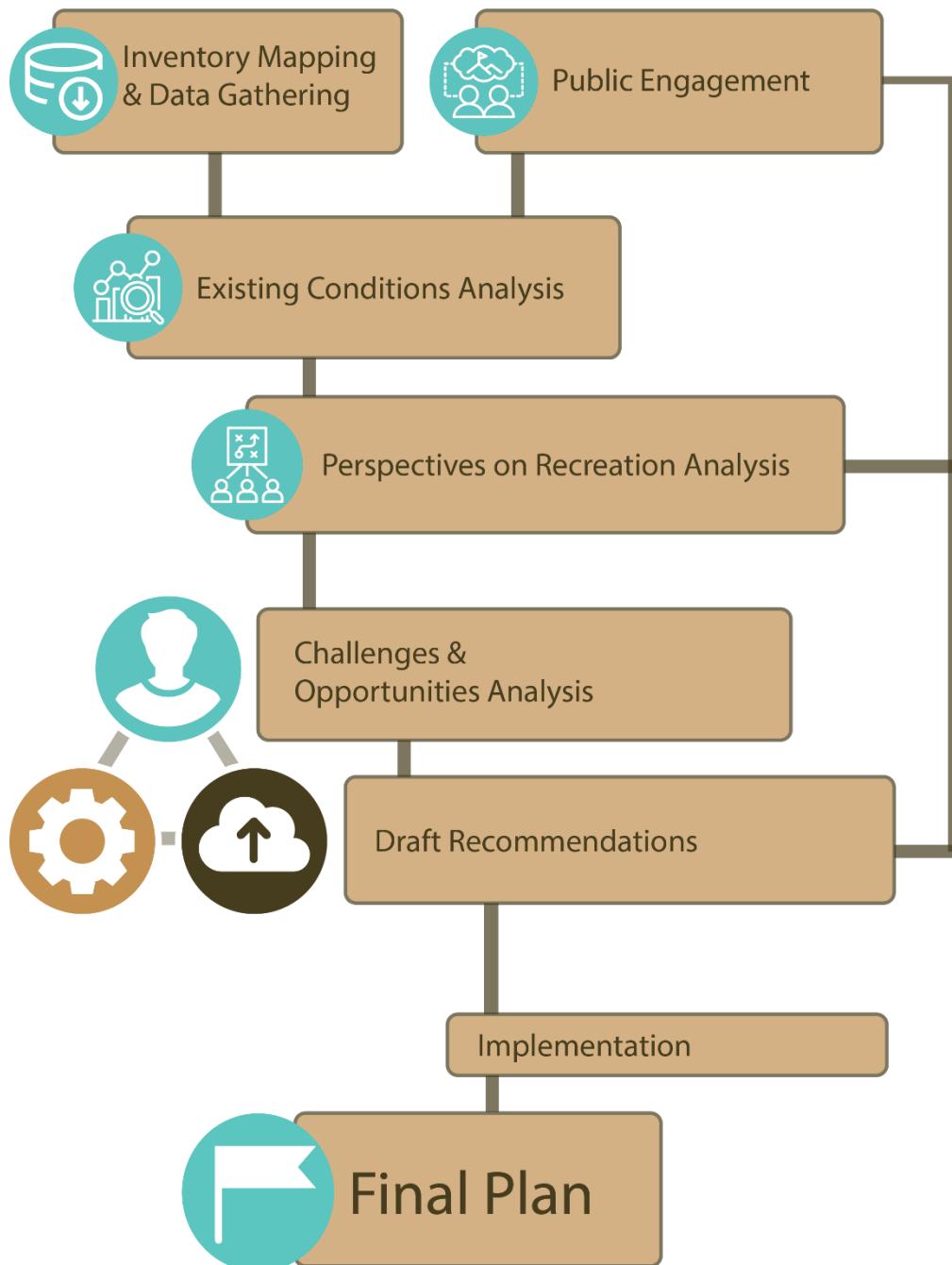
As shown in the timeline below, the planning process took place from April 2021 to August 2022. The Outreach phase, which refers to the public engagement conducted over the course of this plan, was the longest phase of the project.





Outreach & Engagement

As shown in the diagram below, this planning process was guided by public engagement and an analysis of the existing recreation system in Grant County. Over the course of this planning effort, the project team conducted 3 surveys, 4 open houses, 10 discussions with recreation user groups, and one tabling event.





THE THEMES

Following the analysis of existing conditions for recreation in Grant County and the visioning phase of public engagement, the project team developed the following Plan Themes. These themes are intended to encompass the major priorities and areas of improvement for trails and recreation in Grant County. The policy recommendations of the plan are grouped into these eight categories.



MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS

This plan offers a wide range of recommendations to improve trail and recreation experiences and management in Grant County. This Executive Summary describes six major recommendations of the plan that represent the greatest and most impactful changes to Grant County's outdoor recreation offering and management capabilities. To view the complete list of recommendations, see the Recommendations chapter of the plan.

1. Create A One-Stop-Shop for Outdoor Recreation

What is the recommendation?

Form an inter-agency Trails Partnership that shares funding, resources, and staff to build, maintain, and manage trails on all public lands in the County.



Why do this?

At present, there are many managers of recreation areas and trails in Grant County; this centralized group will help manage the county's recreational resources. This group would be a "one-stop-shop for recreation" responsible for managing and publicizing trail data and information, directing volunteers and maintenance activities, and engaging with Grant County communities, among other duties.

How will it work?

This type of partnership is established through a memorandum-of-understanding (MOU) between different land managers and local governments. Similar agreements have been tested in locations around the Intermountain West and Southwest with positive results. In this case, the County would enter a partnership with key land managers, such as the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. All parties would allocate a portion of the funding and staffing required for the partnership.

2. Establish Critical Trail Connections to Communities

What are the recommendations?

Copper Trails Greenway—Build an inter-community connectivity route that links together communities, parks, trail systems, and other recreational assets in Grant County; ensure the trail system serves a variety of non-motorized users and provides both transportation and recreational values.

CDT Connectivity—Close the gap in the Continental Divide Trail while maintaining connectivity and trail activity through Silver City; strengthen trail connections between the CDT and Silver City and seek to develop new connections between the CDT and other Grant County communities and trail systems such as Pinos Atos, Fort Bayard, and Santa Clara.

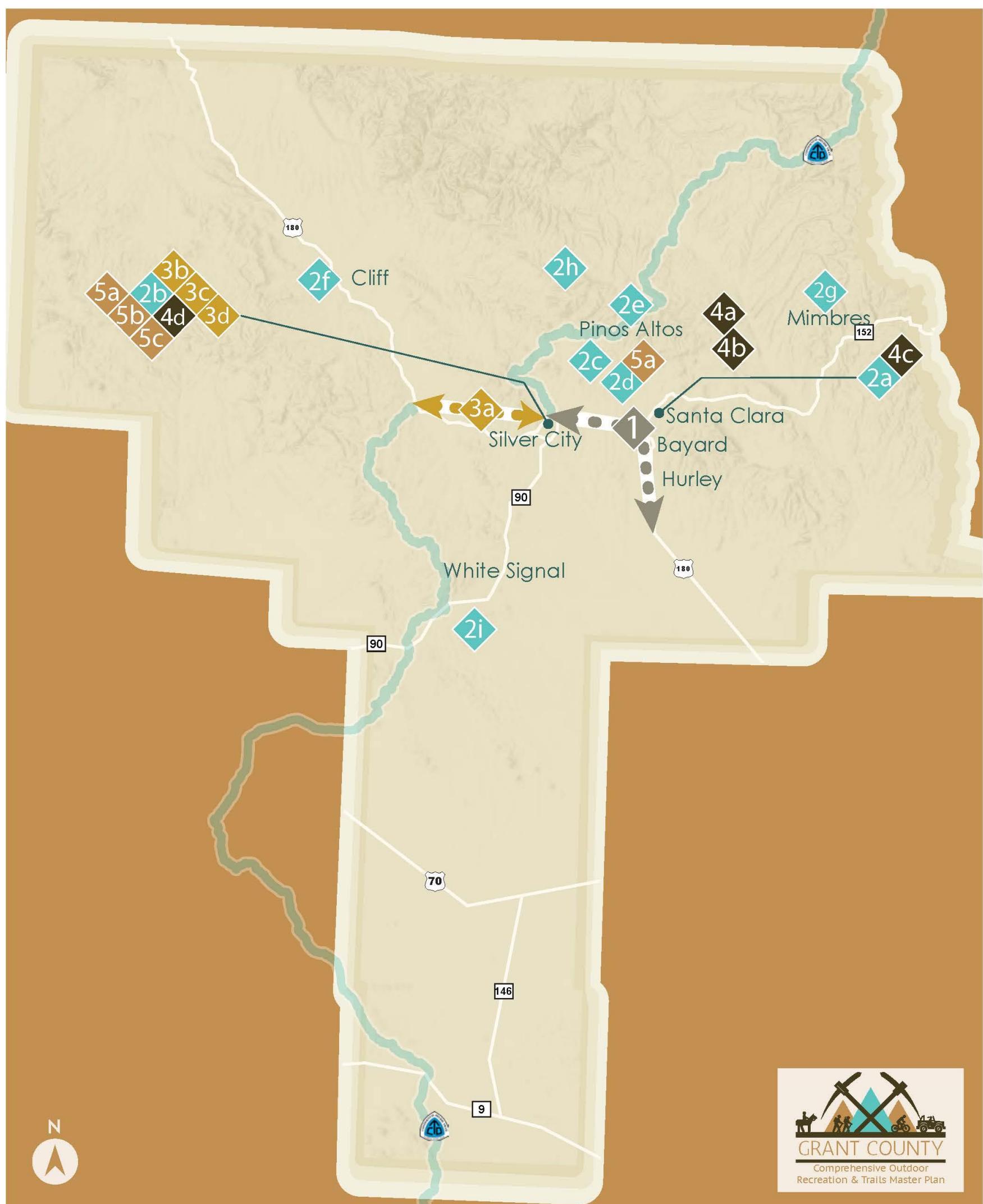
Towns as Trailheads—Enhance connectivity between recreational assets and adjacent communities and residents. Encourage and promote towns as destinations and seek to empower both residents and visitors to start and end their trail trips and recreational activities right in town or from home where possible.

What is it?

As shown in the map on page 15, this plan recommends several new trail connections within Grant County. The Copper Trails Greenway System Expansion trail connections (#1 on the Recommendations Map) extend the multi-use path connecting Santa Clara and Bayard to connect to Silver City and Hurley. This concept predates this plan and has been previously named the "Copper Trails" initiative. With spur trails leading to key recreational assets, such as Bataan Park and Fort



Bayard, this path system could enhance close-to-home recreational opportunities for Grant County's most populous communities. The Towns as Trailheads trail connections (#2 on the Recommendations Map) enhance trail connectivity between municipalities and recreation areas. The Continental Divide Trail Connectivity: Gaps and Assets recommended trail connections (#3 on the Recommendations Map) are intended to serve multiple objectives, such as closing the gap in the CDT that currently forces hikers to do an 11-mile walk along a busy roadway. The recommended CDT trail connections are also intended to support increased connectivity between the CDT and key locations in the Silver City area, such as downtown Silver City, Western New Mexico University, and the Waterworks/CDT Gateway site currently in-development. Additional recommended upgrades include Priority Soft-Surface Trails (#4 on the Recommendations Map) and Upgrades for Recreational Uses in the Urban Zone (#5 on the Recommendations Map).



Recommendations Map

1 Copper Trails Greenway System Expansion

2 Towns as Trailheads

- a. Santa Clara to Fort Bayard
- b. Silver City to CDT & National Forest
- c. Little Walnut Neighborhood to Gomez Peak & National Forest
- d. Arenas Valley to the Dragonfly Trails & National Forest
- e. Pinos Altos to CDT & National Forest
- f. Cliff to the Gila River
- g. Mimbres to the National Forest
- h. Saparillo Creek Neighborhood to Lake Roberts
- i. White Signal to Burro Mountain & National Forest

3 Continental Divide Connectivity: Gaps & Assets

- a. Close the CDT Gap
- b. Waterworks/CDT Gateway Site
- c. New Mexico University Connectivity
- d. Little Walnut Loop

4 Priority Soft-Surface Trail Connections: Thoughtful Expansions to Grant County's Trail Network

- a. Service Corral to Big Tree
- b. Admin Site Road Parallel Trail
- c. Connector to Silver-Santa Clara Trail
- d. Quarry Trails

5 Upgrades for Recreational Uses in Urban Zones

- a. Bike lanes and road markings to key biking areas
- b. Pump track and jump zone for BMX and MTB
- c. Explore quarry acquisition for motorized & non-motorized uses



How will it work?

These initiatives will take time and significant funding to complete. Preliminary planning is already underway for an off-road multi-use path connecting Silver City to Bayard. Both initiatives received substantial support from the public in the engagement conducted over the course of this planning process.

3. Prioritize Maintenance of Existing Trails and Recreation Areas

What is the recommendation?

Place greater emphasis on maintaining and improving existing trails than on creating new trail systems, particularly outside of the urban/residential areas of the County; new trail building should focus on connectivity and diversity rather than milage.

Why do this?

Throughout this planning process, members of the public indicated that trail maintenance was needed throughout the County. Maintenance activities could include remediation of damaged landscapes, trash pickup and the installation of bins and bathrooms at trailheads.

How will it work?

The County, perhaps led by the Trails Partnership, will develop and issue a guide to Complete Trailheads and work with land managers to score the maintenance needs of the county's trailheads and trails according to their level of use and level of need. To do this, the County must first maintain current data on existing trails and recreation assets (using the data collected in this plan as a starting point), improve collaboration with relevant agencies (through a trails partnership or similar agreement), and allocate funding towards the improvement of key trailheads.

4. Increase Access to Trail Information and Promote Responsible Recreation.

What is the recommendation?

Develop a set of standards for trail signage and trailheads to be applied county-wide. Ensure that signage and recreation information cater to all relevant user groups and conveys safe procedures for sharing multi-use trails and areas.



Why do this?

Grant County is a vast area, and there are many different types of recreational activities to enjoy. In the engagement efforts conducted over the course of this plan, county residents and visitors both indicated a strong interest in better trail information. Trail information can mean maps and directions, but it can also mean other critical information, such as allowed uses, regulations, safety information, and signage to help users navigate trails.

How will it work?

As with the Complete Trailheads guide described above, the County will develop standards for consistent and clear wayfinding signage for a variety of contexts, from urban environments to backcountry trails. The County will also provide a centralized source of recreation information that is up-to-date and encourages safe and responsible behavior in the outdoors.

5. Support a Diversity of Recreation Opportunities and Experiences

What is the recommendation?

Increase the range of motorized and non-motorized trail experiences offered in the County by focusing on closing the few identified experience/opportunity gaps.

Why do this?

Grant County residents enjoy a variety of recreational activities, including both motorized and non-motorized recreation. In public engagement efforts conducted over the course of this plan, participants shared how much they valued different types of recreation experiences, ranging from a hike through the wilderness to a bike ride through their neighborhood.

How will it work?

This plan recommends the development of several recreational opportunities that address gaps or weaknesses in the County's current recreation offering. These opportunities include a pump track, flow trail and cross-country biking opportunities, separate spaces designated for motorized recreation, and maintained and managed access points to the Gila River for anglers.

6. Ensure the Protection of Grant County's Unique Landscape and Remote Character

What is the recommendation?

Prioritize sustainable trails and recreation experiences that preserve the unique character of Grant County and minimize human impact on surrounding ecological systems; pursue recreational tourism



at a slow and deliberate pace that balances economic development with the character and scale of the County.

Why do this?

Grant County residents are well-aware of both the benefits and the burdens of a successful tourism economy. Residents were largely enthusiastic about the economic benefits of growing recreational tourism in Grant County, but they were hesitant about expanding as a destination too quickly. A slow and deliberate approach, while easier said than done, can help address these concerns.

How will it work?

Rather than focusing on promotion of Grant County as a destination, this plan recommends sensible improvements to the County's recreation system that residents support. These improvements include increased trail maintenance, enhanced connectivity between communities and nearby trail systems, and clear, accessible trail and stewardship information.



Introduction

With its striking mix of canyons, creeks, and mountains, Grant County offers a unique and eclectic offering of recreational experiences, including hiking, mountain biking, fishing, and off-roading. In 2021, the County initiated a comprehensive outdoor recreation and trails plan to develop a vision and road map for the region's recreational opportunities. The planning process, which took place over a year and a half, brought together the perspectives and knowledge of the public and land management agencies.





“Grant County’s landscape is quintessential to the American Southwest, complete with rugged mountains and star-filled skies above the high desert.”





ABOUT RECREATION IN GRANT COUNTY

Grant County's landscape is quintessential to the American Southwest, complete with rugged mountains and star-filled skies above the high desert. The region's crown jewel is the Gila – the Gila National Forest is approximately 2.7 million acres and includes the Gila Wilderness, the nation's first designated wilderness area. The Gila River and the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail both intersect the National Forest. Popular recreation destinations in Grant County also include City of Rocks State Park, Faywood Hot Springs, and the Gila Cliff Dwellings. Many kinds of recreational activities both passive and active, are popular in Grant County, including hiking, bird watching, mountain biking, road biking, fishing, and four-wheeling.

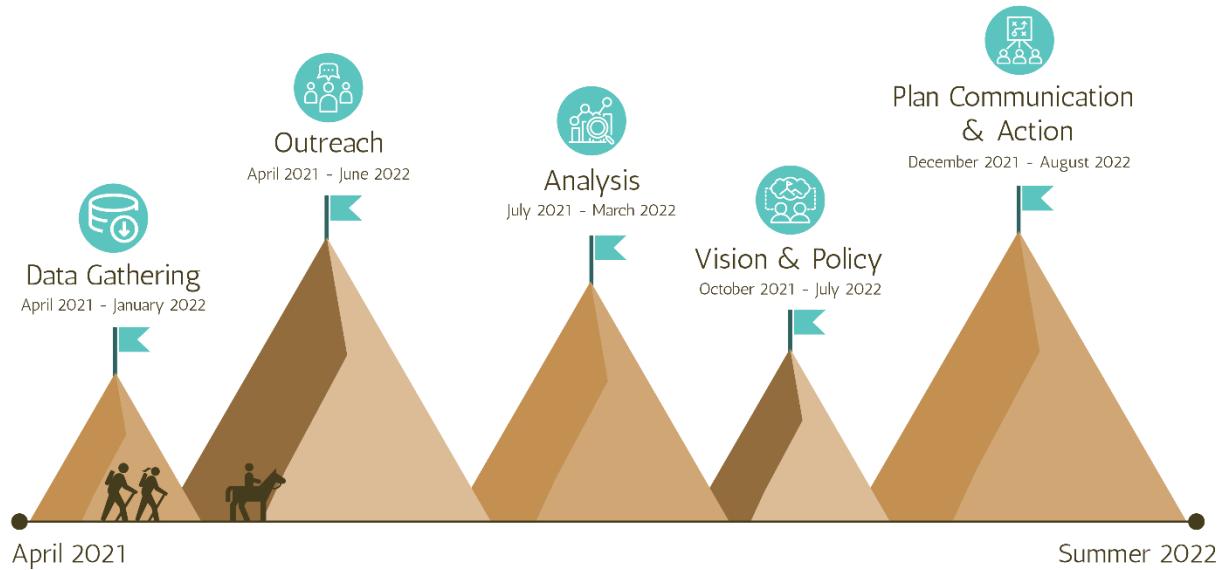
ABOUT THE PLANNING EFFORT

Why Grant County?

Several land management agencies oversee recreational lands within Grant County, including the U.S. Forest Service, the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), New Mexico Game & Fish, municipalities, and the County itself. Since these lands fall within County lines, it is the role of the County government to act as a convener of different land managers and stakeholders. This allows for a more comprehensive approach to recreation and tourism planning beyond planning for a specific recreation destination or for a single activity. Although the project area focuses on lands within Grant County, the project also accounted for recreation destinations in counties commonly accessed through Grant County, such as the Catwalk National Recreation Trail and the Gila National Monument.

Project Timeline

As shown in the timeline below, the planning process took place from April 2021 to August 2022. The Outreach phase, which refers to the public engagement conducted over the course of this plan, was the longest phase of the project.



Planning Process Guiding Principles

The planning process was guided by four primary principles:

1. Collect data on trails, recreation assets, natural resources, and current use patterns



During the planning process, the team conducted a thorough spatial inventory of recreation assets in Grant County. The analysis also gathered information on transportation infrastructure, habitat areas, and tourism amenities. The team also deployed several trail counters at key locations in the County to assess levels and patterns of use.

2. Develop plan for an integrated system of trails and outdoor recreation assets that serves Grant County's diverse residents and user base

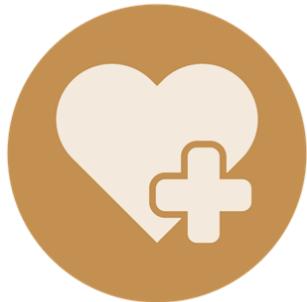


Using the trail data that was collected during this process and findings from public engagement efforts, the team developed a set of Stakeholder Perspectives on Recreation (page 55), Challenges & Opportunities (page 68), Plan Recommendations (page 90), and a Recommended Trail Connections Map (page 15). See **Appendix G** to view Trail Counting Results.



3. Conduct meaningful public engagement to develop a plan that reflects the values of the communities throughout Grant County

Public engagement was a central element of this planning effort. The team conducted three surveys and held 13 distinct in-person or online engagement events during the planning process. To attempt to reach rural areas of the County, the planning team held multiple in-person events outside of Silver City, the community's main population center. A significant effort was made to ensure that the many perspectives and viewpoints found in the County are reflected in the findings and recommendations of this plan.



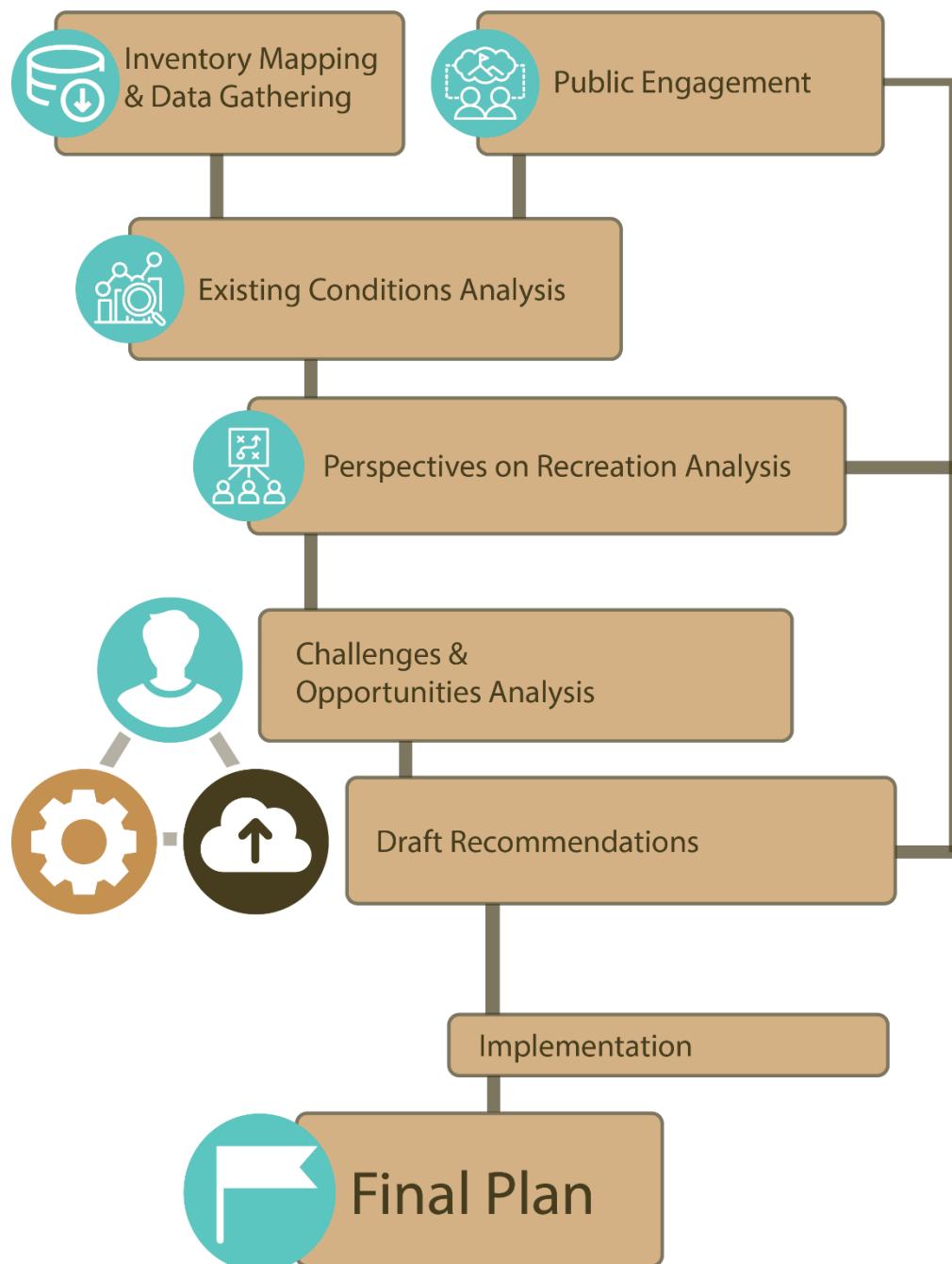
4. Enhance the benefits of outdoor recreation throughout Grant County including gains in community health and wellbeing, quality of life, economic development, and others.

Grant County is more than a destination for recreation – residents of the county treasure the recreational opportunities in their home region. In addition to recreation on public lands, this plan focused on close-to-home recreational opportunities and walkability within Grant County communities.



ABOUT THE ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

As shown in the following graphic, public engagement informed several aspects of this plan, including the analysis of existing conditions for recreation in Grant County. As described below, the planning process included several opportunities for the public to give feedback on draft plan recommendations.





Project Website

At the beginning of the planning process, the team launched the project website, GetOutsideGrantCounty.org. This website offered background information on the project, information regarding engagement opportunities, and summaries of engagement events and project findings. In the long-term, the project website can serve as an executive summary and encapsulation of the overall project process. The website was available in English and Spanish.

Steering Committee

The project Steering Committee included representatives from the Gila National Forest, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the National Park Service and Gila Cliff Dwelling National Monument, the City of Rocks State Park and New Mexico Game & Fish, the Southwest New Mexico Collaborative, and the County. This group met monthly during the course of this planning process. The group provided high-level direction on the project and helping to steer the overall project, analysis, and recommendations. They provided feedback on draft materials at critical milestones and shared data, agency information, and contextual background to support the project. They also shared information and project progress back with their respective teams and returned comments to the broader team.

Southwest New Mexico Collaborative

The project also leveraged the existing Southwest New Mexico Collaborative (SWNMC), which is a regional effort to ensure greater and more efficient coordination and alignment among local government, land management agencies, and community-based organizations to elevate the work on issues relevant to local communities in the region. SWNMC partners are working collaboratively on four main shared priorities: 1) Restoration; 2) Economic Development; 3) Youth Engagement, Education and Stewardship; and 4) Outdoor Recreation. Presenting and coordinating with the SWNMC provided the project with an opportunity to reach a broad range of local government officials, land managers and other community-based and regional leaders.

Visioning Survey & Open House

Near the beginning of the planning process, the project team launched a Visioning Survey designed to capture broad-level public priorities for recreation in Grant County. The survey was open to both residents and visitors and collected 608 responses. The project team also conducted a Visioning Open House in November 2021 that attracted over 100 attendees and asked participants to indicate their priorities for recreation, quality of life, and tourism in Grant County. A summary of the visioning engagement is provided in **Appendix B**.



Stakeholder Meetings

The project team conducted many stakeholder meetings over the course of this process that involved members of the business community, conservation advocates, community development advocates, and municipal representatives. These were conducted in several rounds, and many follow-up calls, emails and conversations were completed. The project team also coordinated with local recreation groups, such as the Silver City Trails & Open Space Committee and the Gila Chapter of the Backcountry Horsemen of New Mexico.

Site Visits and Business/Organization Drop-Ins

The project team conducted three site visits over the course of this project. As a component of these site visits, the team conducted “drop-in” engagements and conversations with many businesses and offices around Grant County, including Twin Sisters Cycling & Fitness, Silver City Powersports, the Murray Ryan Visitors Center, the Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument visitors center, as well as several lodging establishments, restaurants, and artistic businesses.

User Group Discussions

Many different user groups enjoy recreation in Grant County. To hear from the perspectives of different user groups, the project team facilitated two rounds of discussions with user groups. The groups were divided into four types of recreation: Non-Motorized Trail Recreation, Motorized Trail Recreation, Traditional Recreation, and Alternative/Water-Based Recreation. The project team facilitated ten discussions, three of which were offered in-person.

Draft Recommendations Survey & Open Houses

After completing the Draft Recommendations section of this plan, the project team distributed the Draft Recommendations on the project website and launched a survey soliciting public feedback on the Recommendations. The project team also conducted three Open Houses and one tabling event in early June 2022 to present the Draft Recommendations and provide opportunities for feedback and discussion. In addition to attendance at the Wild, Wild West Rodeo, public meetings were held in Mimbres, Cliff, and Silver City.

Additional Motorized Recreation Survey

Following the Draft Recommendations Survey and Open House events, the County and planning team were able to identify a few motorized users who could help connect the project with this user group. Recognizing that motorized users were underrepresented in previous meetings and surveys and that motorized use is a contentious issue for the region, the project team launched an additional survey



specifically focused on motorized recreation. Motorized use was identified by the County, the land managers, and other stakeholders as an important recreational use to consider in the development of this plan, and perspectives of both users and non-users were captured in this survey. The goal of this survey was to understand both the needs and desires of users as well as the concerns and management considerations of non-users. This understanding will promote more effective management of motorized uses, providing users with the recreational experiences they are looking for while minimizing the potential impacts through proper policies, design, and location of trails and routes.

ABOUT THE ANALYSIS PROCESS

Policy Analysis

The project team conducted a thorough review of local, state, and regional plans and policies affecting public lands, recreation, tourism, and transportation in Grant County. For a complete overview of the plans and policies reviewed over the course of this planning effort, see the **Existing Conditions** section (page 31).

Spatial Analysis

The project team reviewed spatial data for trails, recreation, transportation, and natural resources from several agencies and entities in Grant County. After performing quality control measures on the data, the team consolidated the spatial data into a database. The database stores the data and retains the original source designations (i.e. the database identifies which agency sourced each type of data). This supports the future use of the database by different land management agencies within Grant County. The geodatabase will also help the County maintain a comprehensive understanding of recreation and connectivity within the county.

Challenges & Opportunities Analysis

Following the conclusion of the Visioning and Data Gathering portions of the process, the project team identified a set of **Challenges & Opportunities** for recreation in Grant County (page 68). This analysis laid the groundwork for the **Recommendations** (page 90).



HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

Document Format

Following this introduction, this plan document contains an **Existing Conditions** section (page 31), a **Stakeholder Perspectives on Recreation** section (page 55), a **Challenges & Opportunities** section (page 68), a **Recommendations** section (page 90), and a **Trail Recommendations** map and implementation information (page 15). The plan's **Appendices** include the mapping conducted for this plan, an analysis of the Visioning Survey and Open House, and an analysis of trail counting data.

Plan Themes

The recommendations in this plan are grouped into eight plan themes. These themes were developed following the initial data gathering, analysis of existing conditions, and public visioning that occurred in the first phase of this project.

These themes are a critical piece of the organization of this document: the **Challenges & Opportunities** and **Recommendations** sections are organized around these eight themes. The **Stakeholder Perspectives on Recreation** section also references relevant Plan Themes to show the ways that engagement information informed the recommendations of this plan.





Intended Audiences

1. General Public

This plan is intended to be accessible to the general public. Members of the public may have several questions regarding recreation in Grant County: What recreational opportunities currently exist in Grant County? What were the results of public engagement? What will happen next? To learn about existing recreational uses and opportunities, see the **Existing Conditions** section (page 31). To read a summary of the perspectives captured in public engagement opportunities, see the **Stakeholder Perspectives on Recreation** section (page 55). For a summary of existing issues and program ideas in Grant County, see the **Challenges & Opportunities** section (page 68). For the final list of recommendations, see the **Recommendations** section (page 90). For a high-level overview of future trail connections suggested by the public, see the **Trail Recommendations** map (page 15). For full summaries of survey and visioning results, see the plan's **Appendices**.

2. County, Agency, & Governmental Partners

This Master Plan is intended to inform Grant County's activities related to recreation and trails. Managing these recreational resources is a collaborative enterprise shared between agency staff and municipal representatives from around the County. For a current snapshot of existing conditions and issues related to recreation and trails in Grant County, see the **Existing Conditions** section (page 31) and the **Challenges & Opportunities** section (page 68). The **Recommendations** section (page 90) and **Implementation** section (page 122) contain clear, actionable recommendations for recreation and trails in Grant County. For a high-level overview of future trail connections suggested by the public, see the **Trail Recommendations** map (page 15).

County and agency representatives may also be interested in the public engagement efforts conducted over the course of this plan. See the **Stakeholder Perspectives on Recreation** section (page 55) for this information. For full summaries of survey and visioning results, see the plan's **Appendices**.

This group may be particularly interested in the mapping developed for this project. These maps, which inventory a variety of recreation and recreation-adjacent assets in Grant County, can be found in the Map Booklet included in this plan (**Appendix A**).

3. Business Owners

Businesses in Grant County are a critical facet of the region's recreation economy. Business owners reading this plan may be most interested in the tourism-related discussions and recommendations. Tourism and economic development are discussed in each section of this plan document. In particular, tourism is addressed in the "Managed Growth" section of the **Stakeholder Perspectives on**



Recreation section (page 55) and in the “Balancing Grant County’s Economy, Identity & Character” sections of the **Challenges & Opportunities** (page 68) and **Recommendations** (page 90) sections.

4. Non-Profits & Advocates

This planning process engaged a variety of non-profit organizations and advocates who were interested in a variety of topics, including land conservation, pedestrian/bicycle connections, disability advocacy, historic preservation, and motorized recreation. This group may be most interested in the **Stakeholder Perspectives on Recreation** section (page 55), **Challenges & Opportunities** (page 68), and **Recommendations** (page 90) sections of this plan.



Existing Conditions

THIS CHAPTER DESCRIBES EXISTING CONDITIONS FOR RECREATION AND PUBLIC LANDS IN GRANT COUNTY. THIS ANALYSIS OF EXISTING CONDITIONS AND POLICIES PROVIDED A FOUNDATION FOR THE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THIS PLAN.



“Grant County is a vibrant and diverse collection of rural communities. As a region, Grant County is known for its stunning landscape, cultural heritage, and rustic character.”





GRANT COUNTY AND THE CHARACTER OF THE AREA

Grant County is located in the Southwest portion of New Mexico, within a three-hour driving distance from both Tucson and El Paso and less than an hour from the United States-Mexico border. The County is comprised of wilderness and urban areas, with a uniquely wild feeling amplified by the diverse landscape, rugged terrain, and cultural history. Much of the county is not accessible to the vehicular travel and is classified as remote backcountry, with rural homesteads and ranches scattered across the landscape. Settled as a hub for mining activity in the 19th century, the area retains much of its identity as a mining community and remains the state leader in the production of copper, lead, zinc, silver, gold, iron, manganese, and molybdenum. Generations of families have called the area home and have found prosperity and opportunity within the industry. Grant County is also home to a rich artistic and cultural history that reflects the many voices of the people who call the area home. Frequent arts and cultural events showcase the talent of residents of the area, many of whom have been drawn to Grant County because of the respite and escape offered by the natural atmosphere and quietude of the area. Grant County has a growing population of older, retired residents who have moved to Grant County specifically for the solitude and artistic character of the communities. These residents are active in the many community organizations thriving in the area, and many are active participants in outdoor recreation.

The County contains two primary transportation corridors: Interstate 10 which passes east-west through the southern part of the county, and Highway 180 connects I-10 from Deming northward into Catron County.

Grant County is home to four municipalities, the City of Bayard, the Town of Hurley, the Town of Silver City, and the Village of Santa Clara, in addition to several census-designated places (CDPs) and unincorporated communities.

Grant County has a history of mining and extraction dating back to the late 19th century which provided the blueprint for the settlement pattern seen today. In the late 20th century, Grant County began to experience the growth of its recreational economy and is now a quickly growing hub for recreation and tourism, complementing its existing identity as a mining and ranching region. As a popular southern stop along the Continental Divide Trail, more than 150 through-hikers pass through the County per year, with many more using sections for shorter trips and day hikes. Grant County hosts several large recreational events annually, including the Tour

How to Use the Map Booklet

Appendix A of this plan contains a map booklet with several maps of Grant County. These maps were created to inform the analysis of this plan, and they are intended to be used by local agencies in future recreation planning efforts. This chapter will reference maps in the map booklet; please examine the maps in the booklet as you read this chapter.



of the Gila bike race. The region experiences high visitation to the Gila National Forest and Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument, with traffic primarily congregating along Highway 15 and Highway 35.

Key recreation destinations in and around Grant County:

- Continental Divide National Scenic Trail
- Gila National Forest
- Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument
- City of Rocks State Park
- Catwalk Recreation Area
- Bill Evans Reservoir
- Lake Roberts
- Boston Hill Trails & Open Space

The City of Rocks State Park, Lake Roberts and Gila National Forest are enjoyed by regional and national visitors and the residents of Grant County alike. Visitors are attracted to the outdoor opportunities in the area with an expansive existing trail system and both primitive and established camping available. While outside Grant County, the Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument is only accessible through Grant County and provides yet another draw to the County.

Demographics

Grant County is home to over 27,800 residents, with the largest cohort being above 50 years of age. This indicates a high number of residents approaching or at retirement with the largest group comprised of women aged 65-69. While Grant County has opportunities for all ages, it provides ample opportunities for activities and gatherings for those in this age range. Nearly 93 percent identify as Caucasian, with over half identifying as Hispanic or Latino/a/x. Those identifying as American Indian or Black account for approximately 3 and 1.5 percent respectfully. 2.8 percent of residences identify as some other race. Grant County residents embrace their diversity and celebrate it through arts and cultural events and through the different programs and businesses in the community.

The median household income for Grant County is \$42,850. This is notably less than the median income for the State at \$56,735. Of the 11,496 households in the County, approximately 43 percent of households meet or surpass the area median income (AMI). Nearly 20 percent of Grant County residents identify as having a disability, slightly higher than that State estimate of 16 percent.

The infographic on the following page provides an overview of demographics in Grant County.



COMMUNITY PROFILE

KEY FACTS

27,884

48.6

Population

Median Age



2.2

Average Household Size

\$42,850

Median Household Income

ANNUAL LIFESTYLE SPENDING



\$1,800

Travel



\$60

Movies/Museums/ Parks



\$50

Theatre/Operas/ Concerts



\$40

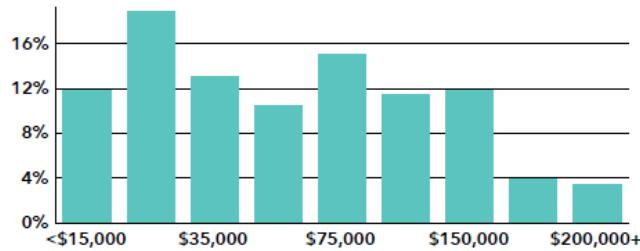
Sports Events



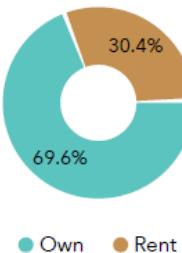
\$4

Online Games

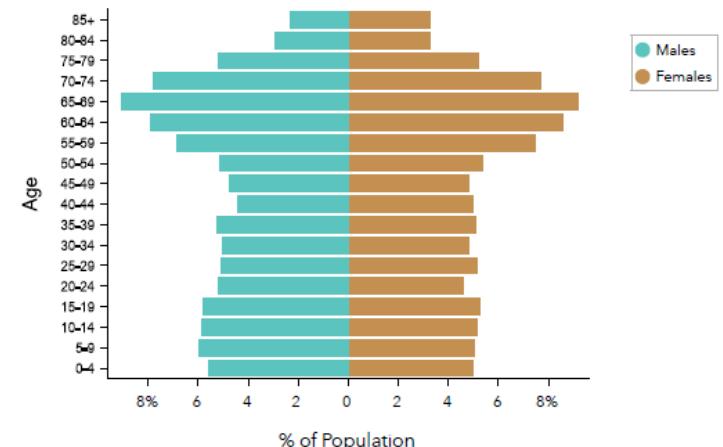
HOUSEHOLD INCOME



HOME OWNERSHIP



AGE DISTRIBUTION



EDUCATION



Race and Ethnicity

The largest group: White Alone (63.77)

The smallest group: Pacific Islander Alone (0.08)

Indicator ▲	Value	Diff
White Alone	63.77	+13.62
Black Alone	1.12	-1.07
American Indian/Alaska Native Alone	2.14	-7.95
Asian Alone	0.74	-1.06
Pacific Islander Alone	0.08	-0.02
Other Race	11.80	-3.23
Two or More Races	20.36	-0.28
Hispanic Origin (Any Race)	48.10	+0.15

Bars show deviation from New Mexico



THE FIVE ZONES OF GRANT COUNTY

Grant County includes different landscapes with unique recreational opportunities as one moves across the county. For the purposes of this plan, Grant County was divided into five distinct geographic zones. These zones are broken into the following areas: the West Zone, the Central Zone, the East Zone, the South Zone, and the Urban Zone. These zones are a landscape of different communities from rural to urban, each with unique geographic features and climate with most of Grant County's population captured within the Urban Zone. While this strategy allows for a more in-depth analysis of areas within the county, it recognizes that recreational opportunities weave across the expanse of the county and often are not contained within one single zone.

1. West

The West Zone of Grant County includes the area just east of the Arizona border. The West Zone includes the far western expanse of the Burro Mountains, the towns of Gila, Cliff, Buckhorn and Mule Creek. The Gila River runs through the West Zone and is a popular destination for paddling, angling, hunting, rock climbing and camping. In 2021, New Mexico Sens. Martin Heinrich and Ben Ray Lujan introduced legislation to designate the Gila River as a wild and scenic waterway to preserve the riparian ecosystem and prevent damming and diversion.

2. Central

The Central Zone encompasses much of the Gila National Forest stretching north up Highway 15 from Pinos Altos and is the gateway to the Gila Cliff Dwellings. The Central Zone also includes Lake Roberts and the far western spur of Highway 35 and stretches south to White Signal.

3. Urban

The Urban Zone captures the central urban and semi-urban populations of Silver City, Pinos Altos, Bayard, Hurley, Tyrone, Santa Clara, Rosedale, and the Arenas Valley. This is the most populous area in the county and has several trail systems and recreation hubs within the urban areas and in-between municipalities.

4. East

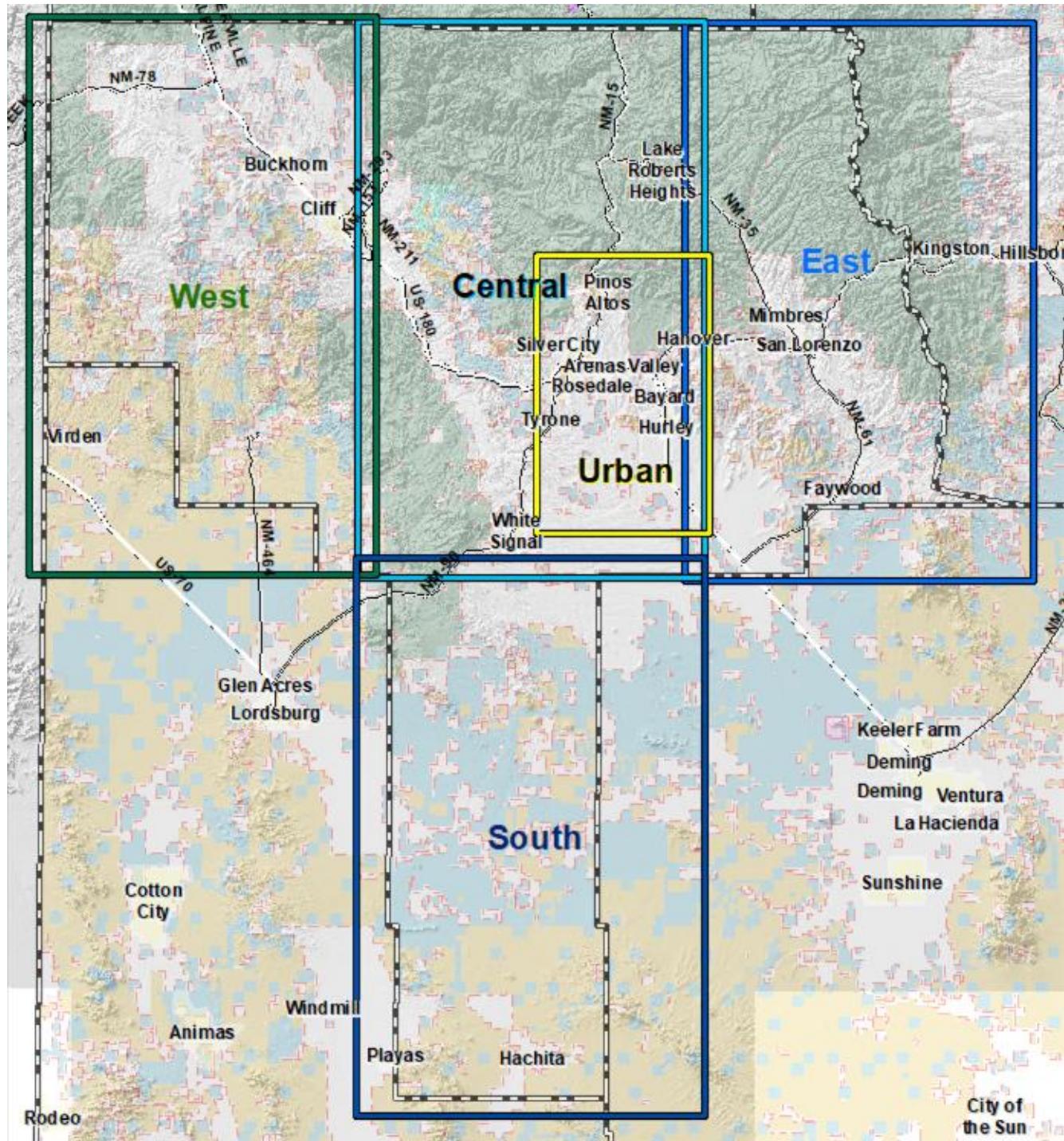
The East Zone stretches from Hanover eastward to the far eastern portion of the Gila National Forest. The East Zone contains Mimbres, San Lorenzo, Faywood and the City of Rocks State Park.

5. South

The South Zone captures the southernmost spur of Grant County from White Signal to Hachita.



See the **Map Booklet** in Appendix A to view additional maps using zones of Grant County.



Map 1: The Zones of Grant County



Land Ownership and Agencies

See Map Booklet: Land Ownership maps

Grant County's diverse landscape and existing recreational facilities are owned and managed by private, Federal, and State agencies. Of the 3,965 square miles within county, just over 38 percent of land is held privately, 34 percent is designated as the Gila National Forest and is managed by the U.S. Forest Service, approximately 14 percent is managed by the State of New Mexico, approximately 13 percent is managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), 0.33 percent is managed by the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, and 0.07 percent is managed by the U.S. Department of Defense. See **Table 1**.

Table 1: Land Ownership by Agency in Grant County

Land Manager	Square Miles	Total Percentage of County Land
Private	1,509	38.05%
U.S. Forest Service	1,352	34.10%
State of New Mexico	558	14.07%
Bureau of Land Management	531	13.39%
New Mexico Department of Game and Fish	13	0.33%
U.S. Department of Defense	3	0.07%
Total	3,965	100.00%

State and Federal Agencies

The U.S. Forest Service

The Gila National Forest is managed by six Ranger Districts:

- **The Silver City Ranger District** is the southern-most district of the Gila National Forest and is comprised of the Burro Mountain Range, the area surrounding Silver City and a portion just west from Emory Pass of the Black Range. This area is 406,768 acres in total.
- **The Black Range Ranger District** which is in the eastern most portion of the Gila within Southwest New Mexico and comprises 557,573 acres. A large portion of the Aldo Leopold Wilderness is contained within this district, as is a small portion of the Gila Wilderness.
- **The Wilderness Ranger District** is central to the Gila National Forest which covers 686,171 acres. This district is designated as wilderness and comprises the Gila and Aldo Leopold Wilderness areas.



- **The Glenwood Ranger District** which sits to the north of Grant County in Catron County. While this is outside of the scope area for this plan, this district is home to the Catwalk National recreation Trail which receives visitors from across the country, many of which use Grant County as a base for recreation during their stay.
- **The Quemado Ranger District** which is in the northernmost district of the Gila National Forest and sits outside of the project area.
- **The Reserve Ranger District** which is a large district in the northern portion of the Gila National Forest and sits outside of the project area.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

The BLM Las Cruces District Office manages 5.4 million acres of public land and over 10 million acres of Federal mineral estate in Southwestern New Mexico. The BLM manages public land for multiple uses including energy and natural resource extraction, ranching, in addition to recreation and cultural resource management.

The New Mexico Department of Game and Fish

The New Mexico Department of Game and Fish manages the state's wildlife resources throughout the state through regulating hunting and angling, OHV recreation, non-motorized recreation, and providing education and conservation resources.

The New Mexico Department of Transportation (DOT)

The New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) owns and manages transit, rail, aviation and highways in the State of New Mexico. NMDOT manages several state highways, railways, multimodal pathways and airways running through Grant County and owns the land in which the County's right-of ways run. The Department also provides long range planning support for future transportation projects and the communities that surround them. In 2020, NMDOT, in partnership with Grant County, sponsored a two-mile multimodal pathway from Santa Clara to Bayard after concern for the safety for non-automobile right-of-way users was voiced following several incidents occurred along Highway 180.

Supporting Organizations and Nonprofits

Grant County is home to over 375 non-profit 501(c)(3) organizations and several volunteer-based groups who serve the area. Much of the county's existing trail system is maintained by a handful of these groups with support from local businesses and community leaders. In addition to the funding and resources raised within each organization, several grant and funding opportunities from federal, state, and local programs support grassroots work in the area. Several key organizations in Grant County's Trail and Recreation landscape are highlighted below.



Continental Divide Trail Coalition

“The mission of the Continental Divide Trail Coalition (CDTC) is to complete, promote, and protect the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail. The CDTC will do this by building a strong and diverse trail community, providing up-to-date information to the public, and encouraging conservation and stewardship of the trail, its corridor, and surrounding landscapes.”

The CDTC works to enhance and restore sections of the Continental Divide Trail (CDT) running through Grant County. The organization is working towards eliminating on-trail gaps, many of which route hikers and trail users along long sections of paved road. However, this is only a piece of the work under the CDTC’s belt of ongoing trail enhancement work. The CDTC received grant funding from the New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Division (ORD) of the Economic Development Department in 2021 to enhance and restore 13 miles of Grant County CDT trail section.

The Gila Chapter Backcountry Horseman of New Mexico

“The Gila Chapter Back Country Horseman of New Mexico (Gila BCH)’s mission is to assure continued reasonable use of pack and saddle stock on public lands. We assist with trail maintenance and improvement projects, keeping trails clear for ALL user groups. Everyone who loves the Gila National Forest benefits from this work. We also develop equine facilities and participate in other activities that support equine use.”

The Gila BCH provides ongoing support in the restoration of trails, the reopening of connections to existing trail networks, information and wayfinding installation, and community information distribution. In 2021, the organization achieved over 7,500 volunteer hours with 262 volunteers. The group completed 25 trail projects and improved 130 miles of trail.

Southwest New Mexico ACT

“Southwest New Mexico ACT (swnmACT) exists to preserve, enhance, and sustain rural economic development initiatives and the creative economy in Southwestern New Mexico. We spearhead community collaboration through cultural and historic preservation; sponsor and engage the region in arts and cultural events; inspire and promote outdoor recreation, education, and tourism initiatives.”

swnmACT collaborates with local, regional and national organizations to support community building and equitable access to Grant County’s rich cultural heritage and recreational opportunities through several programs managed under the organization. The Five Points Initiative, launched in 2019, works to restore and revitalize historic buildings in Grant County to enhance recreation and cultural life in communities in the area. Once completed, these projects will link Grant County Communities via road, bike trails and waterways to support the county’s outdoor recreation identity.



Phase One of the Five Points Initiative is the Historic Waterworks site which will act as a CDT Hiker and Community camping space, outdoor education center, and event space. In late 2021 swnmACT in partnership with AIA Communities by Design, published a *Grant County, NM: A Vision for Five Points* to gather information and develop concepts for each of perspective site. In 2022, swnmACT received a Trails+ grant from the New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Division (ORD) for the remainder of the exterior site enhancements at the Waterworks site.

New Mexico Land Conservancy

The New Mexico Land Conservancy's goal is to "preserve New Mexico's unique and diverse land heritage for conservation purposes and benefit of local communities, the public, and future generations". The New Mexico Land Conservancy has partnered with several landowners in the County to preserve private open space and productive agricultural space. These spaces are either donated, purchased, or protected through a conservation easement in partnership with landowners.

Southwest New Mexico Collaborative

The Southwest New Mexico Collaborative (SWNMC) is a regional effort to provide a forum for community leaders to coordinate efforts, leverage resources and collaborate to accomplish shared goals. SWNMC coordinates local government, land management agencies and community organizations to elevate and provide regional support for communities and organizations. This organization works with economic development, recreation, restoration, and youth education and stewardship initiatives by facilitating opportunities through the provision of coordination support and partnering with local organizations which support networks and the share of resources and opportunities.

Western New Mexico University

Western New Mexico University (WNMU), located in Silver City, is an ongoing player in the outdoor recreation space within Grant County. The University offers educational and recreational programs for students inside and out of the classroom. The university offers Forest-Wildlife and Forest-Wildlife Law degrees for students wishing to pursue careers in state and federal agencies. The institution also offers an outdoor recreation program which teaches valuable outdoor education courses including wilderness medicine, an Outdoor Leadership minor and gear rental.

WNMU provides a welcoming and inclusive opportunity to expand outdoor recreation knowledge tracks students for a successful career with federal and state outdoor agencies. WNMU also represents an opportunity for a collaboration between the University and local outdoor recreation organizations through the share of resources, volunteers, and information.



Outdoor Recreation Businesses

The outdoor recreation businesses of Grant County provide equipment and information for recreationalists of all types. Due to the lack of a comprehensive trail information system in the county, many of these businesses play a critical role in providing trail information and updates to the community. Most of these business use printed handouts with hand drawn maps, or maps covering a specific geographic area, while others have a single map that shows recreation opportunities but are unable to distribute more information due to a lack of resources and available information.

Outdoor businesses also provide important resources and are involved with the stewardship of local recreation facilities. These groups are often active in trail maintenance efforts and within the community promoting Grant County's outdoor recreation community.

Silver City Trails & Open Space Committee

The Silver City Trails & Open Space Committee fulfills and advisory role to the Mayor and Town Council on everything trail and open space management. This includes the evaluation and enhancement of trails and open space, the development and implementation of educational programs, and the provision of experiential knowledge in the subject field. Current committee members act in a voluntary capacity and are comprised of residents and local business owners.

Ft. Bayard Historic Preservation Society

The Ft. Bayard Historic Preservation Society (FBHPS) promotes the preservation and interpretation of the Fort Bayard National Historic Landmark in Santa Clara. The FBHPS provides programming to the community to educate the public on the history of the area.

TRANSPORTATION, TRAILS, AND CONNECTIVITY

Grant County contains over 1,330 miles of multimodal transportation network comprised of non-motorized trails, motorized trails, unpaved roads, non-highway paved roads, state highways, railway lines, U.S. highways, a federal interstate, and a commercial airport operated by the Grant County Commission. Table X shows the breakdown of transportation type by agency and mileage within the county and the populous areas within the county.

I-10 passes through the southern end of Grant County, with Highway 180 running north-south and acting as the major connector between Silver City and Deming. New Mexico State Road 15 connects Silver City to the Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument to the north, passing through several CDPs and the Gila National Forest.

The Grant County Airport, south of Hurley, is owned and operated by the Grant County Commission. The airport offers a commercial airline service with daily flights to Albuquerque and Phoenix. A



second airport, Whiskey Creek Airport, is located between Silver City and Santa Clara but does not currently support commercial flights. The nearest large airport is in El Paso, 165 miles away.

Table 2: Miles of Transportation by Facility Type in Grant County, NM

Transportation Type	Miles Managed by Agency						
	Grant County Total	USFS	NM State Parks*	Silver City	Santa Clara	Bayard	Hurley
Non-motorized Trails	551.1	513.4	8.8	28.5	0	0	0
Motorized Trails	119.9	119.9	0	0	0	0	0
Unpaved Roads	475.8	226.0	0	2.8	1.2	1.6	0
Paved Roads (Non-Highway)	79.1	3.4	0.9	23.5	3.3	8.8	3.5
State Highway	69.4	18.8	0	1.7	0.3	0.3	0
US Highway	24.7	0.7	0	1.2	0.6	0.3	0.4
Interstate	12.3	0	0	0	0	0	0
* Managed by BLM							

The Trails of Grant County

Grant County's trails are managed by the U.S. Forest Services, the Bureau of Land Management through the New Mexico State Park System, and Silver City. The approximate 671 miles of non-motorized and motorized trails within the county fall mostly within the Central and East Zones, with few designated trails in the South and West Zones due to the large concentration of Forest Service land in this area of the county. These trails do not include non-paved roads which are often used as routes for motorized groups. **Table 3** provides information on the trail management, trail characteristics and existing use patterns within each zone. See **Map 1** earlier in this chapter to view the distinct zones of Grant County identified for this project.



Table 3: Trails by Zone Area in Grant County, NM

Zone	Primary Management Agencies	Trail/Trailhead Amenities	Character of Trails	Existing Use	Points of Interest
West	U.S. Forest Service, State of New Mexico, Private Ownership, BLM	Few trailhead amenities, limited information at trailheads, occasional trail markers, designated wildlife viewing areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Personal vehicles are required to reach most trail heads in this zone.Personal vehicles are required to reach most trail heads in this zoneRemote backcountry trailsRocky uneven soft-surface trailsPossibility of down timber, erosion, and unmarked obstacles	Hiking, Road Biking, Equestrian, Motorized use, primitive and established camping, wildlife viewing	Burro Mountain Homestead, Bill Evans Reservoir, the Gila River
Central	U.S. Forest Service, State of New Mexico, Private Ownership, BLM	Established amenities near high use trails, Pit toilets, some trailhead information, occasional trail markers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Personal vehicles are required to reach most trail heads in this zoneRemote backcountry trailsRocky uneven soft-surface trailsPossibility of down timber, erosion, and unmarked obstaclesSome maintained semi-urban trails	Hiking, biking, motorized use, primitive and established camping	Gila Cliff Dwelling National Monument, Lake Roberts, Deadman Canyon, Turkey Creek, Burro Mountain homestead, the Gila River
East	U.S. Forest Service	Few trailhead amenities, limited information at trailheads,	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Personal vehicles are required to reach most trail heads in this zone	Hiking, Equestrian, Motorized use, primitive and	City of Rocks State Park, Bear Canyon Reservoir,



		occasional trail markers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remote backcountry trails • Rocky uneven soft-surface trails • Possibility of down timber, erosion and unmarked obstacles 	established camping	Continental Divide
South	State of New Mexico, Private Ownership, BLM	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal vehicles are required to reach most trail heads from this zone • Limited existing established trails 	Limited established recreation opportunities	
Urban	State of New Mexico, Private Ownership, BLM, Tyrone Mining LLC, Chino Mines Company	Trail signage and wayfinding at high-use areas, some trailhead restroom facilities, trash receptacles,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintained soft-surface trails • Paved pathways • Picnic areas • Multi-use recreation facilities 	Accessible hiking and biking areas, multipurpose recreation space, event space, motorized use	Baatan Park, Ft. Bayard, San Vincente Trail, Boston Hill, Gomez Peak, the Dragonfly Trail

The East Zone

The East Zone has both motorized and non-motorized trails, most of which fall within the Gila National Forest. A handful of motorized trails sit near Sapillo, just east of Lake Roberts. The City of Rocks State Park managed several trails on BLM land. These offer an abundance of trail options in the southeast corner of the county. Most trails within the East Zone are classified as backcountry wilderness trails and characterized by largely unmaintained and not readily accessible for all ability levels. Personal vehicles are required to reach most trailheads in this zone. Few trails within this zone have an established trailhead and few, if any, information and wayfinding opportunities for users.

[See Map Booklet: Trail Assets, East Zone](#)



The Central Zone

The Central Zone connects Grant County's north-central portion of the Gila National Forest to the Burro Mountain section of the Gila National Forest. Most of the trails in this zone are managed by the U.S. Forest Service and include motorized and non-motorized uses. The Burro Mountains have several established motorized trails and have become a hub for motorized recreation in the area.

Most trails within the Central Zone are classified as backcountry wilderness trails and are characterized by rocky and minimally maintained except for several areas managed by the National Park Service and sections maintained by local volunteers. Some trails, like the CDT, have trail markers indicating trail name or number, but have limited directional information.

[See Map Booklet: Trail Assets, Central Zone](#)

The West Zone

Existing trails in the West Zone are limited with four motorized trails in the Gila National Forest. The West Zone has a higher ratio of privately owned land than the Central and East Zones, with dispersed BLM land scattered between privately owned areas. Several non-motorized trails line the northern border of the county in this zone. These trails also fall within Forest Service land and stretch further into the Gila.

Most trails within the West Zone are classified as backcountry trails. Personal vehicles are required to reach most trail heads in this zone. Trails within this zone do have an established trail head and few, if any, information and wayfinding opportunities for users. Some trails, like the CDT, have trail markers indicating trail name or number, but have limited directional information.

[See Map Booklet: Trail Assets, West Zone](#)

The South Zone

The South Zone, which is a desert ecosystem, has few existing trails with the exception of the CDT bisection of the southern Burro Mountains.

[See Map Booklet: Trail Assets, South zone](#)

The Urban Zone

The Urban Zone contains Grant County's most populous communities as well as some of the most frequently used trails in the County. Trail systems including the Gomez Peak area, Boston Hill, and



the Dragonfly Trail offer easily accessible recreation options for residents within the urban center of the county. While the use of each of each trail high, there is limited connectivity between trail systems and connecting trail systems to the surrounding municipalities.

Boston Hill and the San Vincente Trail have perhaps the best access for Silver City residents with several trailhead locations and detailed information kiosks and wayfinding options. Dragonfly also has a relatively well-marked trail system with an information kiosk, outhouse, and confidence markers throughout the system.

While not designated as an official trail, Fort Bayard remains an important recreational destination for walkers, joggers and bicyclists in Santa Clara and the surrounding communities. Bataan Park is located adjacent to Fort Bayard and provides active and passive recreation opportunities, which include mountain biking, picnicking, and walking.

See Map Booklet: Trail Assets, Urban Zone

Major Destinations within Grant County

Several popular destinations provide opportunities for recreation including hiking, biking, off-highway vehicle (OHV), watersports, and birdwatching. While the County provides ample opportunity for outdoor recreation, this section identifies high-use and generally accessible areas within the county. Maintained areas are classified as areas which receive annual maintenance support for trails and amenities. Remote areas do not receive annual maintenance, although may be a part of occasional maintenance work through volunteer efforts.



Name	Location	Manager	Facility Type	Amenities	Condition
Boston Hill	Urban Zone; Silver City	The Town of Silver City	Maintained soft-surface trail with occasional rocks, gravel, and unmarked obstacles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trailhead information• Trash receptacles• Parking	Maintained soft-surface trail with occasional rocks, gravel, and unmarked obstacles
The Dragonfly System	The Urban Zone; Hwy 180 between Silver City and Santa Clara	U.S. Forest Service	Soft-surface trails	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trailhead information• Restroom• Trash receptacles• Parking• Trail markers	Maintained soft-surface trail with occasional rocks, gravel, and unmarked obstacles
The Burro Mountain System	The Central Zone, West of Silver City	U.S. Forest Service, Private Ownership	Remote soft-surface trails	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Occasional trail markers	Remote soft-surface trail with rocks, gravel, and unmarked obstacles
The Gila Cliff Dwelling National Monument	The Central Zone, North of Silver City	U.S. National Park Service	Remote soft-surface trails, established campsites	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trailhead information• Restroom• Trash receptacles• Parking• Visitors center• Occasional Trail markers	Semi-maintained soft-surface trail with occasional rocks, gravel, and unmarked obstacles
The City of Rocks State Park	The East Zone, the southwest portion of Hwy 180	The State of New Mexico, BLM	Soft-surface trails, establish campsites, picnic area	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trailhead information• Restroom• Trash receptacles• Parking• Visitors center	Semi-maintained soft-surface trail with occasional rocks, gravel,



				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established camping Shower facilities 	and unmarked obstacles
The Gomez Peak Area	The Urban Zone	U.S. Forest Service	Soft-surface trails, Picnic areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trailhead information • Trash receptacles • Parking • Picnic area • Restroom • Trail markers 	Semi-maintained soft-surface trail with occasional rocks, gravel, and unmarked obstacles
San Vincente Trail	The Urban Zone	Town of Silver City	Soft-surface trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visitor center • Trailhead information and wayfinding 	Maintained soft-surface trail with occasional rocks, gravel, and unmarked obstacles
Bataan Memorial Recreational Park	The Urban Zone	Grant County	Soft-surface trail, multi-use recreation area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Picnic area, sports complex • Event facilities • Restrooms • Trailhead information • Pavilion 	Maintained soft-surface trail with occasional rocks, gravel, and unmarked obstacles
Lake Roberts	The Central Zone	U.S. Forest Service, Private	Multi-use recreation area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Site information • Trash receptacles • Parking • Picnic area • Restroom • Boat launch 	Regularly maintained facility
Bill Evans Reservoir	The West Zone	New Mexico Department of Fish and Game	Multi-use recreation area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Site information • Trash receptacles • Parking • Picnic area • Restroom • Boat Launch 	Regularly maintained facility



Tourism and Programming

Events in Grant County

Tourism in Grant County has remained steady over the past decade with a slight increase since 2017. While the onset of COVID-19 impacted tourism around much of the country, Grant County's outdoor recreation industry experienced an increase of new participants to outdoor recreation from a local and regional geography.

Grant County has several recreational opportunities which attract visitors to the area. The Urban Zone of the county provides a gateway to an abundance of historic and cultural areas, such as the Gila Cliff Dwellings, and unique outdoor experiences encourage a consistent flow of visitors. The County also hosts organized events including Tour the Gila and the Tommy Knocker bike races. Recent investment into Bataan Park and interest in future investment in Ft. Bayard will provide much-needed formal event space and make it easier for businesses and organizations in the County to organize and manage events.

Grant County is also home to a spectrum of annual events including arts and cultural festivals, live music, pop-up festivals, rodeos and agricultural events.

[See Map Booklet: Outdoor Recreation Programs and Events, Overview](#)

Tourism Amenities

Most of the Grant County's amenities to support tourism are located within the Central and East Zones of the county. Tourism amenities include the services and attractions visitors depend on and seek out during their stay and provide an important opportunity for information distribution and include lodging, food, galleries, visitor centers, museums, and historical markers. Many of these amenities also act as an important economic driver for the area and cater to those seeking outdoor recreational experiences during their stay.

As shown in the Tourism Amenities section of the map booklet, Hurley, Bayard and Santa Clara contain significantly fewer visitor-oriented opportunities compared to Silver City.

[See Map Booklet: Tourism Amenities](#)

ECOLOGICAL CONDITIONS

Grant County has diverse and thriving wildlife, bird, and ecological communities. Apart from world-class bird watching, the area's expanse of high desert wilderness, riparian corridors, and desert plains



accommodate the many recreational pursuits of visitors to these spaces. Recognition of these spaces as sensitive areas is critical for future planning and development to reduce the impact of recreation on habitat. Residents and visitors alike are drawn to Grant County for its natural beauty and serenity.

Protected Areas

Grant County has several tiers of protected natural spaces: Designated wilderness, conservation easements, and natural study areas. The Aldo Leopold and Gila Wilderness areas, which total 2,912,675 acres, each partially fall within Grant County. These areas are federally protected and preserve watersheds, habitat and soil. Human activities within these areas are limited to hiking, camping, horseback riding and non-motorized use. Several non-motorized backcountry trails managed by the Forest Service fall within these designated wilderness areas. Users of this space are required to abide by Leave No Trace principles to reduce individual impact on the land.

The Forest Service also manages Grant County's Research Natural Areas (RNAs), areas that the USFS has designated to be permanently protected due to unique ecological features, rare or sensitive species, or high-quality examples of widespread ecosystems. Grant County's two RNAs border the Gila River in the West and Central Zones.

Grant County has four conservation easement areas, shown in the **Land Ownership** map in the **Map Booklet** associated with this plan. Conservation easements protect privately-owned land such as farms and ranches, wildlife habitat, historic and cultural sites, and scenic vistas from development. They are established voluntarily by the landowner and financial compensation is provided as an incentive.

Invasive Species

As interest in outdoor recreation throughout Grant County grows, the transmission of invasive species will likely parallel growth. These species are transmitted via wind and water, and through carriers including recreation users navigating vegetated areas. Species such as the five-stamen tamarisk spread along riparian areas, wiping out native species and causing erosion. Without proper management, growth in recreation poses the risk of increased spread of invasive species through transmission and the degradation of recreational spaces and natural areas. The BLM, Forest Service, and New Mexico Forestry Division participate in invasive weed management in cooperation with private, state and federal landowners. See **Appendix F** for a table includes a list of identified invasive species in Grant County.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE FUTURE OF GRANT COUNTY

Among the highest environmental risks for Grant County are the impacts of climate change. The county will likely see a hotter, dryer future with a longer wildfire season and decreasing annual



precipitation. As of the 2020 Grant County Community Wildfire Protection Plan, over 25 percent of Grant County communities are at a medium risk for wildfire, and approximately 75 percent of communities have a high-risk factor rating. The 2022 Black Fire, although human-caused, was likely perpetuated by extremely dry conditions resulting from increasingly short winter and monsoon seasons. Wildfires pose an immediate and life-threatening risk for trail users and causes significant trail damage and hillside stability, leading to unsafe trail conditions long after the fire has ended.

The County depends on monsoon weather patterns for nearly 50-60 percent of annual precipitation¹, which has been decreasing as the permanent impacts of climate change are realized. Changes in weather also produce sporadic climatic events, oftentimes with increasing intensity. For example, 100-year and 500-year flood events can occur with greater frequency. The intensity of these events can pose dangers to life and property.

The Nation Forest Service's Climate by Forest map, a tool developed in partnership with the USDA and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), identifies the projected impact of climate change on each National Forest within the United States. The allows as user to view historical and projected future climate trends. The tool predicts that the average daily max temperature in the Mogollon Mountain Coniferous in the Gila National Forest will jump from an estimated 64.9-69.6 degrees in 1950 to a predicted 72.5 degrees in 2060 with medium to low greenhouse gas emissions and will jump to 74.5 with high greenhouse gas emissions.

EXISTING PLANS AND DOCUMENTS

Grant County and the Southwest New Mexico region have been the subject of many planning efforts in the past decades. Plans that directly relate to recreation in the region, or indirectly through community development, were reviewed in the development of this plan. These plans are part of the existing context for recreation and community development in Grant County and provided critical information that informed the recommendations of this plan. A full list of the plans reviewed is provided on the following page. See **Appendix D** for full summaries of the plans reviewed.

¹ National Weather Service.



Federal Agency Plans

U.S. Forest Service

Draft Revised Gila National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (2019) and Amendments*

Assessment Report of Ecological/ Social / Economic Sustainability Conditions and Trends – Gila Forest, New Mexico

Gila National Forest – Draft Needs for Change Statements for Management Direction under the Existing 1986 Forest Plan

BLM

Mimbres Resource Management Plan (1993)

State Plans and Policy

New Mexico 2045 Statewide Transportation Plan (2021)

Southwest Regional Transportation Plan (2015)

Outdoor Equity Fund (2019)

Regional Plans

Interstate Stream Commission Southwest Regional Water Plan (2017)

County Plans

Grant County Comprehensive Plan (2017)

Grant County Economic Development Master Plan (2012)

Grant County Airport Action Plan (In Development)

New Mexico All-Hazard Emergency Operations Plan (2014 + update)

Grant County Hazard Mitigation Plan

Grant County Economic Base Study (NMSU) (2019)

Southwest New Mexico Council of Governments (SWNMCOG) – Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (2021-2026)



Municipal Plans

Town of Silver City

- Town of Silver City Comprehensive Plan (2017)
- Silver City Trails and Open Spaces Plan (2002)
- Town of Silver City Bicycle Master Plan (2016)
- Town of Silver City Community Forestry Plan (2013)
- Town of Silver City Greenways and Big Ditch Master Plan (2012)
- Town of Silver City Sustainability Plan 2030 (2013)
- Silver City Wetlands Action Plan (2008)
- Silver City Metropolitan Redevelopment Area Plan/Downtown Action Plan (2013)
- Silver City Housing Analysis and Strategic Plan (2010)
- Silver City Public Library Strategic Plan (2016)
- Silver City and ETZ Community Wildfire Protection Plan
- Town Pavement Management Plan
- Silver City Waterworks Redevelopment Plan & Five Points Initiative
- Boston Hill Mine Safeguard Project - Safeguarding Abandoned Mines on Boston Hill and the Legal Tender Mine Geologic Hazards Characterization

City of Bayard

- City of Bayard Comprehensive Plan (2021)
- Fort Bayard Historic Park – Business Plan (2016)

Town of Hurley

- Town of Hurley Comprehensive Plan (2005)

Village of Santa Clara

- Village of Santa Clara Comprehensive Plan (2013)



Stakeholder Perspectives on Recreation

Recreation matters to Grant County residents. This section draws on public engagement efforts and analysis of existing conditions to identify 8 distinct "Stakeholder Perspectives on Recreation" present in Grant County. The purpose of identifying and describing these perspectives is to ensure that the recommendations in this plan account for the many overlapping (and sometimes conflicting) priorities for recreation in Grant County.



“Throughout this planning process, members of the public highlighted the things they love most about living in Grant County, including its access to recreation, scenic qualities, and authentic feel.”



ABOUT THE STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES

Following an analysis of Existing Conditions in Grant County, the planning team developed a set of seven “Stakeholder Perspectives on Recreation” that encapsulate the many ways that residents and stakeholders in Grant County interact with and depend on outdoor recreation. The Stakeholder Perspectives highlight themes and attitudes that were captured through multiple means of engagement, including a Visioning Survey, an Open House, and a focus group series with User Groups, as well as one-on-one conversations with municipal representatives, non-profits, and local business owners. This set of Stakeholder Perspectives aims to capture the common themes that surfaced during public engagement efforts and to parse out the specific priorities of different stakeholder groups. The Stakeholder Perspectives (and groups) are not mutually exclusive – a given resident of Grant County might belong to multiple stakeholder groups. Taken together, these eight Stakeholder Perspectives offer a comprehensive understanding of what recreation and the outdoors mean to Grant County.

The eight Stakeholder Perspectives on Recreation are as follows:





PERSPECTIVE 1: LAND MANAGEMENT & STEWARDSHIP

As discussed in the Existing Conditions section of this plan, Grant County's land ownership is a patchwork. Just under 40% of lands within the County are privately held. Over 60% of lands are held by a variety of public agencies and administrations, including the U.S. Forest Service, the BLM, New Mexico Game & Fish, and the County. Grant County's primary recreation assets are on public land, and it is critical that planning for recreation in the County accounts for the existing capacity and priorities of land managers.



Who makes up this stakeholder group?

This stakeholder group is composed of staff of major land management agencies in Grant County, including the Forest Service, BLM, and the State of New Mexico (Department of Game and Fish).

Key Priorities

Stewardship of Grant County's Lands and Waters

Agencies in Grant County are charged to protect and steward Grant County's lands, waters, and wildlife. Agencies also help promote responsible human use and enjoyment of public lands. For example, as stated in the Draft Forest Plan for the Gila National Forest, the vision of the forest is to "connect individuals and communities to a healthy functioning landscape by recognizing and providing the opportunities for traditional uses and recreational experiences that stakeholders desire, and that the Gila National Forest is uniquely positioned to provide."

Accommodating a Diverse User Base and Balancing Land Management Needs

Several recreation areas in Grant County serve multiple user groups. For example, portions of the CDT are accessible to hikers, bikers, and equestrian users. Land managers must work to minimize conflict between different user groups and ensure that visitors are recreating responsibly. The Gila National Forest is especially challenged in this respect – the area contains some of the most ecologically sensitive areas of the County and some of its most popular recreational opportunities. The Forest Service is pressured to provide quality experiences for a wide variety of users while maintaining wild character and quietness that make the Gila so special.



PERSPECTIVE 2: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Many businesses in Grant County depend on recreation. Some businesses, such as outfitters and lodging, directly depend on recreation to sustain their business. Retail and food service businesses indirectly depend on recreation. Excellent access to recreation also makes a community an attractive place to live and work.

Who makes up this stakeholder group?



This stakeholder group is composed of Grant County's business community, as well as local institutions that support workforce development in Grant County (e.g. Western New Mexico University).

Key Priorities

Increase the Viability of Tourism in Grant County

The 2017 Grant County Comprehensive Plan identified tourism as one of five target economic sectors for the county. In the Visioning Survey and Open House, most participants expressed support for growing Grant County's tourism economy. Most participants were not supportive of a "tourism-based" or "recreation-based" economy, in which recreational tourism would be the county's primary industry.

Diversify the Local Economy and Attract a Talented Workforce

The mining industry is subject to boom-and-bust cycles, which can be economically and socially disruptive to the community. Open comments on the Visioning Survey and Recommendations survey expressed support for diversifying Grant County's economy to offset this instability. Members of the business community in Grant County also expressed the importance of attracting – and retaining – a talented workforce in the county.

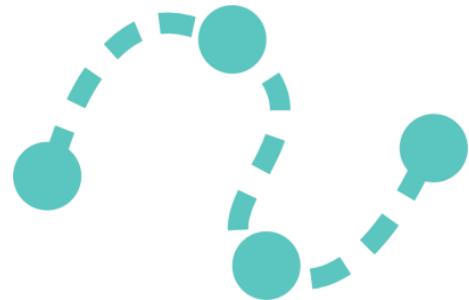
Supporting All Facets of a Recreation Economy

As discussed above, several types of businesses benefit from and depend on recreational tourism. A "recreation economy" can also include manufacturing businesses that make recreation gear or apparel. These types of businesses typically demand a large amount of floor area. In some cases, a recreation manufacturing business can give new life to a large vacant building that would have been expensive to demolish and challenging to rehabilitate for another use. Fort Bayard, which contains several large vacant buildings, could serve as an excellent location for a recreation manufacturing business. A craft-oriented business could align well with the broader vision for the area as a community hub for recreation and the arts.



PERSPECTIVE 3: QUALITY OF LIFE

Throughout this planning process, members of the public highlighted the things they love most about living in Grant County, including its access to recreation, scenic qualities, and authentic feel. As discussed in the Introduction to this plan, Quality of Life was one of the four guiding elements of this planning effort.



Who makes up this stakeholder group?

This stakeholder group is composed of members of the general public and representatives of community institutions. This group expressed high levels of interest in changes to Grant County's recreation system that would improve public health, wellbeing, and outdoor experiences.

Key Priorities

Enhance Recreation Access & Opportunities

At the Visioning Open House and in several User Groups calls, participants expressed interest in creating Universal Access trail opportunities in Grant County. These types of trails have a very gentle grade and would be accessible to individuals with different mobility needs. Participants also expressed support for community connector trails along major highway corridors, such as Hwy 180. These trails, which would be paved, multi-use paths, could also connect to existing trailheads and recreation areas, such as Bataan Park.

Improve Transportation Access for All Residents Through Multi-Use Community Connector Trails

As described above, community connector trails can help residents access recreational opportunities adjacent to their community. These trails can also help residents meet their daily needs. For instance, an individual who does not own a car but uses a wheelchair could use a connector path to access medical offices or a grocery store. This is especially important in rural areas like Grant County, where some communities do not have essential businesses and services. Santa Clara, for instance, lacks a grocery store. Residents without a car were forced to walk or roll along a busy highway to access the nearest grocery store in Bayard. A paved path that was recently constructed between the two communities has helped Santa Clara residents safely access the grocery store. Prior to this planning effort, there was an ongoing initiative to extend this trail and connect it to other communities – this project is known as the “Copper Trails” initiative.



Completing the Continental Divide Trail and Creating Established Connections to Silver City

As described in the Existing Conditions section of this plan, critical gaps in the CDT force through-hikers to walk along Little Walnut Road. Several participants in the User Groups sessions noted that creating established connections between the CDT and Silver City was a high priority. In particular, participants expressed interest in linking the Western New Mexico University campus to the Gila area and CDT through a pedestrian bridge over Hwy 180.

PERSPECTIVE 4: "ALL RECREATION"

As indicated by the Visioning Survey results ([Appendix B](#)), residents of and visitors to Grant County participate in a wide variety of recreational activities. This fourth perspective, "All Recreation," describes the idea that some users in Grant County enjoy multiple recreation activities. As discussed in the Introduction to this plan, the motto of this planning effort was, "if you're out, you're in!" This comprehensive plan attempts to capture all kinds of outdoor recreation and recreation users within Grant County, including hunting and other traditional recreation activities.



Who makes up this stakeholder group?

This stakeholder group is composed of recreation users in Grant County who participate in or support many kinds of recreation, including both motorized and non-motorized opportunities. This perspective also reflects the mandate of land managers in Grant County to provide opportunities for a wide range of recreational uses that are compatible with resource management goals for their lands.

Key Priorities

Providing a Variety of Opportunities that Serve and Support Grant County's Broad User Base

Grant County residents and visitors expressed enthusiasm for the variety of recreational opportunities available in their region. Residents who engaged with this plan represented a wide variety of user groups, including hikers, bikes, anglers, birders, disc golf players, and water recreation enthusiasts. In particular, motorized recreation users expressed a desire to support multiple types of recreation in Grant County. At User Groups calls, motorized recreation enthusiasts shared their



perspective that motorized opportunities can help elderly and disabled residents access the outdoors. Through the Motorized Recreation Survey, motorized users expressed that they enjoy off-roading in Grant County to experience the scenic qualities of landscape. Nearly 70% of motorized users rated their motorized recreation experience in Grant County as “Good” or “Excellent.”

PERSPECTIVE 5: WILD CHARACTER & CONSERVATION

Grant County is home to some of the most majestic and wild portions of the Gila region, including portions of two federal wilderness areas. Throughout the planning process, many residents expressed a strong desire to protect the wild character and remarkable ecology of the Gila. Many of these individuals were wary of potential expansions to recreation, which they view as a threat to the landscape’s ecological integrity and remote qualities.



Who makes up this stakeholder group?

This stakeholder group is composed of advocates for the remote character of Grant County, a group which includes members of the general public and representatives from local environmental organizations. This group generally supports passive recreation opportunities but is wary of expansions to recreation and tourism that could potentially impact wildlife habitat and/or wilderness values.

Key Priorities

Scaling Up Maintenance and Trailhead Amenities to Align with Patterns of High Use

As indicated by the Visioning Survey and Open House results (**Appendix B**), maintenance was a top concern for participants in this recreation planning process. In write-in comments to the Visioning Survey, participants provided further detail about their concerns with trash and crowding at highly visited locations, such as Bill Evans Lake and the Gila Box area. In discussions with non-motorized trail users in multiple User Groups calls, some participants cited a lack of basic trailhead amenities (e.g. trash cans, porta-potties, trail information, and stewardship guidelines) as a critical maintenance need.



Preserving the Gila's Wild Character and Honoring Aldo Leopold's Legacy

During this planning process, several participants noted the importance of Aldo Leopold's legacy in the Gila region. Leopold wrote in *A Sand County Almanac*, "A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise." Many residents of Grant County are deeply passionate about preserving their region's unique natural communities. In the User Groups calls, several non-motorized users highlighted their desire to preserve key characteristics of wilderness within Grant County, including solitude, remoteness, and an undeveloped character. Some residents of Grant County would like the region to be known for its wild qualities, and they consider motorized recreation and mining to conflict directly with these qualities. In response to the "Copper Trails" initiative highlighted in this plan, some respondents to the Plan Recommendations survey expressed the opinion that there are already too many monuments to mining. Some recent local planning has reflected this desire to highlight the wild and remote landscape of the region: a 2022 report produced by the American Institute of Architects recommended the creation of a Gila National Heritage Area within the region.

Supporting Climate & Water Resilience

Several comments on the Visioning Survey noted the urgent importance of mitigating climate change in Grant County. Given the county's location in a high desert environment, water resources are particularly at-risk. Rising temperatures and more volatile weather patterns also intensify the risks of fire in the region.

PERSPECTIVE 6: CULTURE & HERITAGE

The lands known as Grant County are the Nde Benah, Traditional Territory of the Chiricahua and Warm Springs Apaches. One of the most popular and iconic destinations in Grant County, the Gila Cliff Dwellings, is a cultural landmark. The cliff dwellings were home to the Mogollon people in the 13th century. Today, Grant County residents take pride in the diversity of their community and its legacy as a mining and ranching community. The vast and beautiful landscape of the Gila is a point of pride for the community.



Who makes up this stakeholder group?

This stakeholder group is composed of advocates for Grant County's cultural and historical landmarks, including local champions for the Fort Bayard historic area.



Key Priorities

Supporting Adaptive Reuse Projects that Combine Heritage Tourism and Recreational Access

Several initiatives in Grant County, including the Five Points Initiative and the Fort Bayard revitalization plan, aim to transform abandoned buildings into recreation assets and social hubs. In the open comments of the Visioning Survey, some respondents expressed support for these initiatives and urged the planning team to include them in the final report. See the Existing Conditions section for additional information regarding the Five Points Initiative and plans for Fort Bayard.

PERSPECTIVE 7: MANAGED GROWTH

Of all the Stakeholder Perspectives on Recreation, Managed Growth was certainly one of the most prevalent during this planning process. Several participants in this planning process expressed concern that promoting Grant County as a recreation destination too quickly would exacerbate existing stewardship and resource management issues. This Perspective favors a slow and methodical approach to recreational tourism in Grant County in which adaptive land management and stewardship practices take precedence over rapid increases in visitation.



Who makes up this stakeholder group?

This stakeholder group is composed of members of the public who have expressed some level of enthusiasm for outdoor recreation and its benefits to the community. The individuals who make up this group have also expressed skepticism towards the idea of growing recreational tourism in Grant County.

Key Priorities

Thoughtful & Limited Promotion of the Region

Some respondents to the Visioning Survey and participants in the Visioning Open House opposed additional promotion of Grant County as a recreation destination. These participants cited concerns that the community would “turn into Moab” and lose its authentic charm and remote character. Participants also expressed concern that additional tourism in Grant County would lead to increased traffic and affordability issues.



Addressing Existing Maintenance Issues

Some respondents to the Visioning Survey and participants in the User Groups discussions expressed that they wanted to see existing trail and trailhead maintenance issues addressed before any additional marketing of recreation in the County occurred. During the planning team's site visits to Grant County, residents also pointed out the need for better wayfinding signage on key trail systems, such as the Gomez Peak and Dragonfly areas. See the Challenges & Opportunities section for additional information and priorities regarding wayfinding signage.

PERSPECTIVE 8: CASUAL USERS

Many participants in this planning process are highly passionate about recreation; many are frequent users of public lands and were interested in sharing their vision for their favorite trails and recreation areas. Many other residents of Grant County can be considered "casual users" of the county's recreation assets. This group is important and it is numerous, although was challenging to reach this group in public engagement efforts centered on recreation. The priorities listed in this section reflect conversations with casual recreation users in Grant County. This section also highlights priorities raised by members of the public that would naturally serve casual users and the general community.



Who makes up this stakeholder group?

This stakeholder group is composed of residents of Grant County who occasionally use public lands in Grant County for recreation purposes but would likely not consider themselves "recreation users." These individuals might take the occasional hike, bike ride, fishing or camping trip within Grant County, but they are not particularly interested in recreation or with changes to the county's recreation system.

Key Priorities

Providing Safe Bike/Ped Connections

Some residents might not consider taking a walk around the neighborhood or using a motorized wheelchair on a paved path to be "recreation." This plan, which covers walking and biking connections, considers these trips critical facets of a healthy community. Most casual users might not attempt an ambitious through-hike in the Gila Wilderness, but they might make use of a paved multi-use path connecting their neighborhood with nearby shopping opportunities and parks.



Clear & Accessible Recreation Information

In responses to the Visioning Survey, several respondents cited that they would recreate more in Grant County if they knew where to go. Recreation information can consist of trail information (location, mileage, difficulty, allowed uses etc.) as well as signage. Clear, well-signed routes can build confidence for casual users on the trail and reduce the likelihood of those users losing the trail and needing emergency assistance. See the Challenges & Opportunities section for additional information and priorities regarding wayfinding signage.

Addressing Maintenance Issues & Promoting Safety

Trail maintenance came up as an issue in nearly every public engagement forum within this plan, including the Visioning Survey, User Groups discussions, Motorize Survey, and open houses. Lack of maintenance and the presence of trash and debris can make an area seem particularly unsafe and can deter some users from recreating in that area.

HOW STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES INFORM THE PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

The project team developed the eight stakeholder recommendations to summarize the engagement process for this plan. Engagement for the plan included multiple surveys, open house events, focus group opportunities, and one tabling event. The project team processed the feedback from these events and identified the main stakeholder perspectives that had been reached.

The eight Stakeholder Perspectives in this chapter tell us *who is at the table*. Land managers, environmental activists, historic preservation advocates, economic development professionals and the general public all have a critical role to play in the future of recreation in Grant County. After listening to these stakeholder groups, the project team synthesized the main priorities of each group – the ideas and initiatives that have been brought to the table. We then compared these main priorities (e.g., better maintenance, clear recreation information, limitations on promotion and advertising) to the results of the quantitative and qualitative analysis of Grant County's recreation system. Finally, we drew out eight themes that are intended to reflect broad priorities of the County.



The remainder of this plan – the Challenges & Opportunities, Recommendations, and Implementation sections – are all structure around these eight Plan Themes:



As an example, we developed the “Balancing a Diverse Set of Uses” theme by reviewing the perspectives of both users and land managers on motorized and non-motorized recreational uses. As described above in the sections on the perspectives of land managers (“Land Management & Stewardship”) and motorized users (part of “All Recreation”), there are several priorities related to motorized and multi-use recreational opportunities in Grant County. Land managers are tasked with providing a full range of recreation opportunities, sometimes including motorized use, while preserving the ecological integrity of their lands. Motorized users, meanwhile, feel that there is inadequate information regarding where they are allowed to recreate; many motorized users also oppose recent efforts to close certain trails to motorized use. The project team reviewed these perspectives against the analysis of existing motorized trail opportunities in Grant County (see **Appendix A**) and identified a theme: **Balancing a Diverse Set of Uses**. The recommendations section of this plan offers a set of actions that support this theme.

The ultimate goal of compiling and analyzing the Stakeholder Perspectives on Recreation was to ensure that this Plan’s analysis and recommendations were thoroughly informed by findings from public engagement that encompasses all perspectives drawn out from the County.



Challenges & Opportunities

THE FOLLOWING CHAPTER DESCRIBES EACH RECOMMENDATION THEME AND ITS IMPORTANCE TO THIS PLANNING EFFORT. FOR EACH THEME, THIS SECTION DESCRIBES THE ASSOCIATED GEOGRAPHIC AREAS, CHALLENGES, AND OPPORTUNITIES.



“Residents of Grant County take great pride in the unique character and history of the region and its communities. The future of recreation and tourism in Grant County must complement and support the county’s people, history, landscape, and economy.”





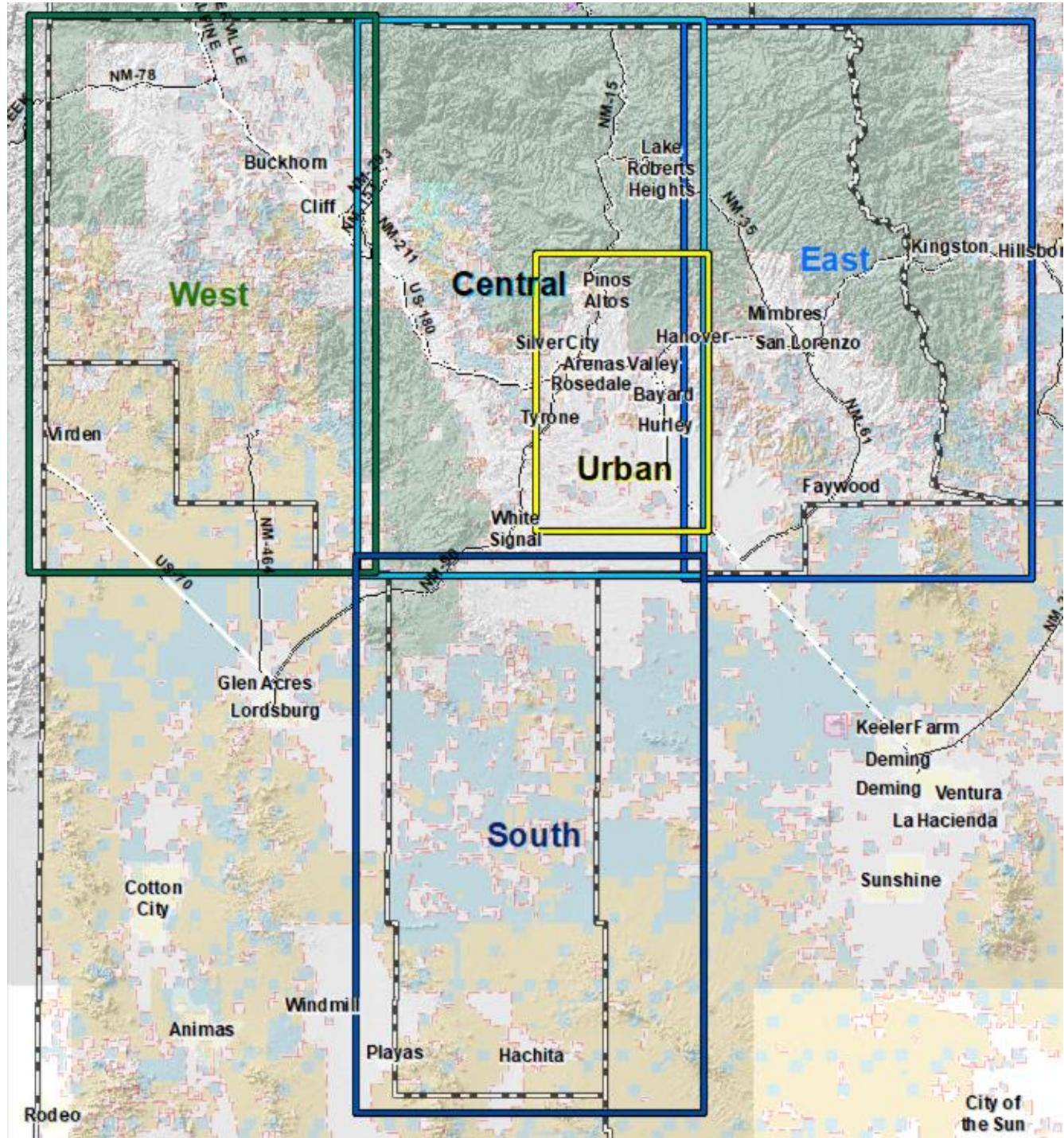
Plan Themes & Chapter Organization

As described in the **Introduction** to this plan, the project team identified eight plan themes based on the initial data gathering, analysis of existing conditions, and public visioning that occurred in the first phase of this project. The recommendations of this plan are grouped into these eight themes.



This chapter, **Challenges & Opportunities**, is structured around these eight themes. For each theme, the chapter describes a set of identified challenges and opportunities. This chapter is intended to provide helpful context and grounding information for the **Recommendations** in the following chapter, which is also structured around these eight themes.

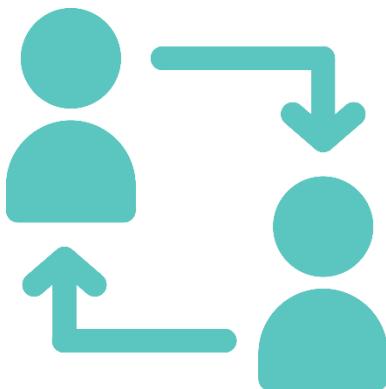
This chapter uses the Zones of Grant County to frame the d. A map of the zones of Grant County is included on the following page. This map can also be found in the Existing Conditions section and in the Map Booklet in **Appendix A** of this plan. Readers may find it helpful to reference the maps in the Map Booklet in **Appendix A** alongside this chapter.



Map 1: The Zones of Grant County, as described in the Existing Conditions section of this map. This section, Challenges and Opportunities, uses this concept of zones to frame the analysis.



FOSTERING RESOURCE COLLABORATION



Many different agencies and organizations provide trails and outdoor recreation opportunities in Grant County. These include the US Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service, New Mexico State Parks, the county, the municipalities, local groups and committees, and other non-profit and educational partners. While there are many agencies and organizations involved, essentially all experience some degree of imbalance between the need and demand for their services and the capacity of their staff and organization to deliver these to the public. Management, maintenance, and staff resources are almost ubiquitously spread too thin. In an environment where there are many organizations

conducting similar work, each with limited resources, there is often significant opportunities for collaboration and resource sharing.

This problem becomes acute when agencies are dealing with crises, such as fires. Fire management and emergency response is a top priority for land management agencies in Grant County. In the fire season, agency employees from every level can often be called away on fire assignment. These types of critical events can delay the progress of less pressing, long-term projects. In addition, Grant County has been experiencing a high degree of turnover among personnel, particularly at federal agencies. This turnover contributes to a loss of institutional knowledge and can also delay ongoing projects.

Land management agencies in Grant County typically conduct their work independent of one another. As a result, recreation information in the County has become unnecessarily segmented. For example, a visitor to the Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument Visitors' Center would not be able to access information about the adjacent Gila National Forest at that location, since the National Monument is managed by the National Park Service and the National Forest is managed by the Forest Service.

Challenges identified for recreation agency resources and capacity in the county include:

- Limited staff capacity throughout the county
- Limited funding for federal agencies and competing management priorities
- Federal agencies are managing the recreation program for their entire forest unit, region, or field office which is much broader than Grant County
- Federal employee turnover rate is relatively high, so keeping new people on board and up to speed is a challenge
- Local volunteers have capacity and interest, but don't have enough meaningful opportunities to be involved



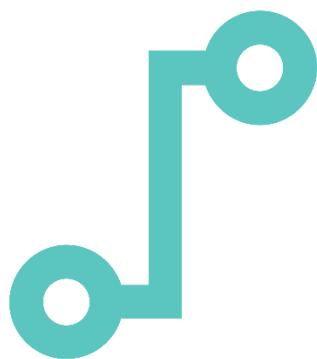
- Overlap in services and operations across agencies (maps, volunteer coordination, etc.) can be redundant and divert resources away from other potential activities
- Difficult to coordinate across jurisdictions (e.g., National Park Service staff are siloed from Forest Service staff although the Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument is surrounded by the Gila National Forest)
- Lack of capacity for additional community outreach & education

Opportunities identified for recreation agency resources and capacity in the county include:

- Centralize recreation activities by consolidating outdoor recreation funds and staff across Grant County, the municipalities, NM State Parks, and the federal land managers
- Form a new Outdoor Recreation Partnership through a multi-agency Memorandum of Understanding with financial contributions from each partner
- The Partnership could oversee trail planning, development, management, signage, stewardship, maintenance, education, enforcement, and a wide of trail and outdoor recreation activities
- Reduce operational inefficiencies and support the wise use of local and federal resources
- Centralize communications, mapping and information and volunteer and community coordination
- Provide more local control and focus resources on Grant County in specific

These Challenges and Opportunities affect all zones of Grant County.

IMPROVING CONNECTIVITY



Connectivity measures the ability for residents and visitors to access recreational facilities by looking at both the number of opportunities and ease of access to reach a destination. Areas with good connectivity often provide several efficient and safe ways to reach a destination. Connectivity covers a broad spectrum of opportunities including transit access, pathway options, and sidewalk networks. Barriers such as rail lines and major transportation corridors negatively impact connectivity by forcing travelers to navigate around the barrier, often adding distance and time to a trip.

Zones

West

Recreation opportunities in the West Zone are dispersed. There are few municipalities in this area. There are no formal trails or trailheads associated with the Cliff and Buckhorn areas. There is



potential to create a formal access point to the Gila River on Iron Bridge Road just south of Cliff. The CDT passes through the southern portion of the West zone – there is a loss of connectivity of the CDT when the trail reaches Highway 180. Bill Evans Lake is another popular recreation asset in the West Zone. The area is accessible by car; there are no formal connections between Bill Evans Lake and other trails in the area. There are a few motorized trails in the western portion of the West zone close to the Arizona border. These opportunities are not connected to other designated trail systems.

Central

Recreation opportunities in the Central Zone are dispersed. There are several trail opportunities accessible along Highway 15, but trailheads are often several miles apart. Trails are also distant from the central population of Grant County, which acts as a barrier to connectivity. During the engagement phase of this plan, participants identified improved pedestrian connectivity between the CDT and Silver City as a priority for the future.

Urban

Silver City, Hurley, Santa Clara, and Bayard have an established street grid system with relatively good connectivity within each municipality. Connectivity between Hurley, Santa Clara Bayard and surrounding recreational opportunities is limited. Several municipalities, in partnership with the New Mexico Department of Transportation, are exploring opportunities to connect semi-urban areas through multiuse pathways due to the high frequency of pedestrian and bicycle movement between municipalities. A pedestrian and bicycle connection were recently enhanced between Santa Clara and Bayard in light of connectivity and safety concerns. Expanding safe pathways between the municipalities of Grant County, and to targeted trailheads presents an opportunity to enhance connectivity. In addition to the expanse of the connective trail network, there are several opportunities for collaboration with private landowners and to increase the number of access points to reach trails and recreation opportunities and reduce barriers.

East

The East Zone contains a vast network of trails and trailheads that serve both motorized and non-motorized uses. The network of non-motorized backcountry trails in this area of the Gila National Forest is highly interconnected for a backcountry area. This zone encompasses NM-35 and provides an alternate connection to Lake Roberts. This zone also contains City of Rocks State Park, which is spatially isolated from other trail and recreational opportunities in Grant County. City of Rocks is currently planning to expand its existing trail system to expand opportunities for hiking, mountain biking, and other passive uses. The East Zone also includes Fort Bayard; at present, this area is not well-connected to Santa Clara, Bataan Park, and the Dragonfly Trail System though these locations



are in close proximity. Fort Bayard has potential to serve as a lodging and events center; with the growth of these uses, Fort Bayard should become better connected to Silver City.

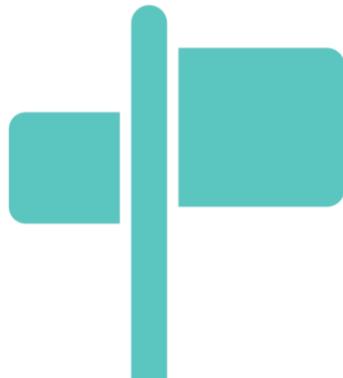
South

The South Zone has few established trails and existing recreation opportunities. As new opportunities are explored, connectivity between destinations should be explored.

Other opportunities for enhancing connectivity throughout the county may include:

- Establishing additional bus stops or routes to recreational destinations to eliminate the need for an automobile
- Exploring partnerships with local organizations to sponsor ongoing ride-sharing/shuttle services to distant trailheads
- Enhancing pedestrian and bike pathways leading to targeted destinations
- Partnering with private landowners to identify easement opportunities for cut throughs to create direct routes for trail users

PROVIDING WAYFINDING AND INFORMATION



Grant County's nearly 671 miles of motorized and non-motorized trail is managed by several entities, as outlined in the Existing Conditions section, all of which utilize a different system for providing information and wayfinding to users. Some areas, like the Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument, are well mapped with information available at the visitor's center, the National Park Service's website, and at established trailheads with information kiosks. Other trail systems, including many of the CDT connection points, have limited or no trailhead signage or a single, indistinguishable trail marker. Throughout the outreach process,

participants prioritized a consistent and cohesive wayfinding and information system for trails in Grant County. This should occur both within the urbanized areas of the county and in more remote locations. However, different areas may be served by different levels of information based on trailhead popularity and proximity to urban areas and areas within the Urban Zone.

Challenges identified for wayfinding and information to trail and recreation facilities in the county include:

- Incomplete trail inventory
- Limited trail map availability for recreational and agency use
- Inconsistent or absent wayfinding



- Limited access to trail information and condition
- Poor distribution of information to residents and visitors

Opportunities identified for wayfinding and information to trail and recreation facilities in the county include:

- Identify an on-trail wayfinding strategy
- Create a comprehensive and consolidated trail inventory
- Create a county-wide trail map available on paper and online
- Connect “first bases” including hotels, outdoor retailers and visitor centers with appropriate trail maps and information
- Identify “key trails” for trailhead conditions and trail info kiosks
- Leverage local resources to assist in wayfinding implementation and maintenance

Zones

Urban

Much of the Urban Zone has some sort of wayfinding and information. However, much of this information is not provided consistently and does not currently tie into the surrounding urban fabric and urban connections. Areas like Boston Hill, Gomez Peak and the Dragonfly trail system have an existing wayfinding strategy with some level of information available at the trailheads. These high use areas also have confidence markers at most intersections which act as an important wayfinding tool. While basic trail maps are also available for most high-use trails in the area, there is no consistent and comprehensive map documenting trails within the balance of the county. Additionally, no widely distributed map details trail mileage and other important information useful to outdoor recreational users. While many of the urban trails have some sort of signage system, the area does not use a consist approach to mapping and labeling trails causing a user to re-learn each system.

Residents and visitors support the creation of a detailed trail map for the central urban area which incorporates existing information, with occasional updates as trails are added and enhanced. The distribution of this resource should happen through both physical and digital maps, available on a dedicated website in which federal, state, county, municipal, and organizational entities contribute collaboratively. Information distribution may also be supported through outdoor recreation-specific businesses, hotels and hospitality hubs, the visitor center, library, and within community and recreation centers.

Opportunities for a single, cohesive wayfinding system for the county may enhance the existing recreation system while creating a familiar navigation strategy for reoccurring users. This wayfinding strategy may also be woven into high-use areas like Main Street signaling the direction of close-by



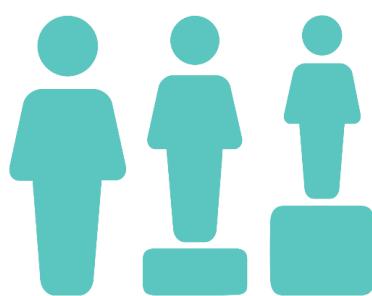
trail assets. A consistent wayfinding strategy guiding pedestrians to access points along the San Vincente trail to communicate gateways to natural areas and foster a sense of place.

Non-Urban

Grant County's remarkable number of non-urban trails are challenged by little to no wayfinding and signage except for the Gila National Monument and occasional roadside trail markers signifying access points and undeveloped trailheads. This creates a "DIY" perception with users in which they are responsible for discovering trails and navigation which can be uncomfortable for those without prior experience or knowledge of the area. Much of this area is also characterized by limited available trail maps information, with the risk of identified trails being non-existent or moving in a different direction.

The limited existing information about and along the non-urban trails of Grant County provides a clean slate for developing a consistent and complete wayfinding and trail mapping system. The development of a complete trail map of non-urban trails in the county would communicate the County's existing facilities and allow for the development of a consistent wayfinding strategy. A complete trail map would also aid in future maintenance and organization around trail efforts. Prioritizing wayfinding along assets like the CDT and med-high use non-urban trails may be as simple as colored tags as confidence markers, with signs at street crossings indication directional travel and navigation with associated distance to nearby urban areas. CDT users emphasized the value of street-crossing directional signs, especially along road which be confusing for hikers entering the region and looking for access to refill supplies or simply the next leg of their hike.

ENCOURAGING EQUITABLE ACCESS



Equitable access is attained by providing the opportunity for residents of Grant County, regardless of location, ability, and demographic, to have fair and just access to high-quality recreation programs, services, and facilities. Equitable access prioritizes the development of recreational opportunities for those with different abilities and needs while ensuring distribution of recreational opportunities across a demographic and physical landscape.

During the outreach portion of this plan, participants voiced interest in providing more opportunities for entry-level recreationalists, and for those with different mobility needs including ADA accessible opportunities. These opportunities would complement the extensive advanced recreation opportunities that currently exist in the



County. Grant County's high percentage of senior residents or residents with special mobility needs indicate a strong demand for a diversity of trail types with detailed information regarding trail condition and length. In addition to varying ability level, potential new users said that they'd be more willing to use trails if there was an enhanced wayfinding system.

The following key challenges and opportunities were identified through public engagement, stakeholder meetings, site visits, and information gathered from other plans:

Challenges identified for Equitable Access to trail and recreation facilities in the county include:

- There are a limited number of existing ADA compliant trail opportunities in the county
- New users are hesitant towards inconsistent or limited trail information including surface types and slope and distance
- Many of Grant County's trails are distant from urban areas, requiring a vehicle to access the trail
- Some residents of Grant County strongly oppose motorized recreation and believe that it should be disallowed within Grant County, which could limit recreation access for some users with disabilities and/or older users
- It can be challenging to reach and plan for "casual users," since these individuals may not be particularly interested or invested in recreation in Grant County. It may also be challenging to identify further actions that would support this entire group

Opportunities identified for Equitable Access to trail and recreation facilities in the county include:

- Follow USDA Accessibility Guidebook for Outdoor Recreation and Trails Standards
- Identify and develop priority recreation and trails facilities to accommodate all user types and abilities
- Establish an enhanced trail information system for prioritized trails
- Ensure consistent and frequent transit access to popular trailheads and recreation hubs
- Prioritize off-street connections between municipalities and key trail-systems

Urban

Grant County's urban areas have several barriers to equitable access to county trails and recreation facilities. Geographically, areas like Boston Hill, Fort Bayard, and the San Vincente Trail are well-located to host urban residents and visitors and are generally well maintained. However, these trails provide limited information regarding wayfinding and signage, trail condition, and surface material. Some areas, like Boston Hill, have succeeded in providing consistent and easy to follow signage while other nearby trail systems lack wayfinding altogether. Potentially new users of Grant County's trails feel hesitant towards using the county's trail systems because of limited or inconsistent trail information. They fear that the condition of the trail would be difficult to navigate for varying ability levels, or that they would get lost without signage, creating a barrier to access for users that are not familiar with the area's trail systems. This was a major consideration for potential users who have different mobility needs or levels.



During outreach, participants highlighted the idea that many of the recreation opportunities in Grant County are found on a “DIY” basis, with navigation of a trail dependent on each individual user. Equitable access in urban areas may be improved by establishing a cohesive and broad mechanism for information distribution in high-use areas. These priority areas should be identified by their location close to urban centers and their extensive existing user base. Surface type and periodical condition updates should be provided at these popular areas, and a simplified can go a long way towards creating inviting spaces for potentially new users.

Recognizing the diversity of user type is critical to enhancing the overall trail and recreation system within the county. Access to trail facilities and Grant County’s natural areas for those with mobility devices or special mobility needs are among the largest barriers to equitable access in the county. Nearly 21% of Grant County residents identify as having a disability indicating a need for accessible opportunities for recreation.

Areas like the initial portions of the Dragonfly Trail system offer stretches of compact, wide trail that recognizes the need of different user types and should be used as an example for future trail enhancements and development. Boardwalks, passive outdoor recreation areas, and future development and enhancements should be considerate of barriers like trailhead-fences with access gates which may be difficult to navigate for some users.

Connectivity between urban areas and nearby trail systems is currently limited for those without access to a vehicle. Encouraging equitable access is directly tied to off-road connective pathways and served by connective transit route. Opportunities which enhance connectivity between urban centers and trails and recreation facilitates, such as off-street connective pathways, will directly improve equitable access.

Non-Urban

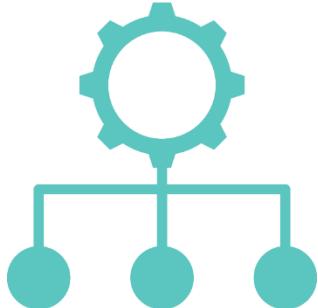
Non-urban areas in Grant County face several barriers to equitable access. Many of the existing trails on Grant County are accessible only to vehicles or by extensive on-road bicycle commutes. This disproportionately effects users without access to a vehicle. Much of the county also hosts unmarked and unmapped trails and facilities.

This area is relatively remote making travel to the area arduous for residents and visitors traveling from the Urban Zone, while limited information makes it difficult to locate and navigate trail systems for new users. Residents in the southern zone of Grant County lack established trails almost entirely. Improving countywide recreation and trail access should also support these residents, likely through the restoration of existing facilities or enhanced mobility option, such as weekly shuttles or public transit to key recreation hubs.



Ongoing maintenance and provision of amenities should support growing visitation to non-urban recreation areas. This should create a welcoming and comfortable environment for most users with varied outdoor recreation comfort and ability. Areas like Upper Box Canyon and Bill Evans provide an example of areas with existing amenities such as restrooms and trash receptacles, both of which promote a comfortable recreation experience for all comfort levels.

SUPPORTING TRAIL AND RECREATION MANAGEMENT



Trails and open space in the county are managed by several agencies. This includes the county, individual municipalities, the National Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the National Park Service in addition to privately held land. There is currently no county-wide trail and recreation management planning structure that connects agencies, private land owners, municipalities, and the county. With each agency managing its resources independently, the county has historically suffered from fragmented maintenance and management of its recreational resources. In addition, funding for trails and recreation

has been dispersed across agencies and not necessarily allocated towards priority projects for the County. Land management agencies also struggle to have the capacity to maintain their own resources; as a result, much of the management and upkeep of Grant County's trails and recreation assets has been coordinated by non-profit organizations and community groups, such as the Gila Chapter of the Backcountry Horsemen of New Mexico and the Continental Divide Trail Coalition.

West

The West Zone is comprised of both public and private ownership. Public land in this area is managed primarily by the Bureau of Land Management, the State of New Mexico, and the Forest Service. Enhancement of existing opportunities in and around the Burro Mountains and along the Gila River should be considered. This includes the ongoing maintenance of established trails and recreation sites used for camping, fishing, climbing, and existing popular uses in the area.

Central

Land within the Central Zone is primarily managed by the Forest Service, with some BLM and municipal management south of the Gila and within the Urban Zone. In this zone, most Forest Service-managed trails are remote backcountry access with limited maintenance and trail information.



The Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument, managed by the National Park Service, is accessed through this zone. Limited Forest Service resources has prompted extensive community organization around the stewardship of trails and recreation areas in the Central zone.

Challenges identified for the management of trail and recreation facilities in the county include:

- The lack of a recreation planning system that conforms to County boundaries; recreation planning to date has been conducted for specific resources or for the lands managed by a particular agency (e.g. NM Department of Game & Fish).
- Lack of process facilitating information-sharing between agencies
- Difficulties managing several types of land management issues, some more time-sensitive than others (e.g. fire management vs. routine trail maintenance)
- Lack of dedicated funding for recreation in Grant County

Opportunities identified for the management of trail and recreation facilities in the county include:

- The formation of a partnership to collectively manage Grant County's recreational resources on a county-wide scale, involving both land managers and communities
- The use of a shared geodatabase to manage trails and recreation assets across agencies (see Appendix A: Map Booklet).
- Align recreational tourism/ecotourism planning with recreation planning efforts; facilitate management of recreation destinations throughout Grant County
- Identify dedicated funding sources for recreation in Grant County; opportunity to put economic gains generated from tourism back into maintaining the trails (e.g. lodging tax that funds trail maintenance)

BALANCING A DIVERSE SET OF USES



Residents and visitors to Grant County enjoy a wide variety of outdoor recreation and trail activities, including hiking, biking, horseback riding, off-roading, and nature appreciation. This variety of activities and opportunities is one of the qualities that makes Grant County such a distinctive and special place to recreate. Each recreational activity has a role to play in the broader recreation offering in Grant County. However, not all uses are compatible with every landscape; for example, certain activities are not suited for sensitive habitat areas. In addition, with many different user groups visiting multi-use trails and recreation spaces, conflicts between user groups can arise. Balancing a diverse set of uses means supporting resource management objectives while providing quality recreation experiences for all users.



The Visioning Survey conducted in the first portion of the planning process indicated that residents of and visitors to Grant County participate in many different recreational activities. Respondents to the survey reported high levels of participation in walking, hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, nature appreciation, and ATVing. At the Visioning Open House, some participants indicated a strong opposition towards motorized uses in Grant County, citing the desire to preserve the wild character of lands in Grant County. At the same time, motorized recreation is a popular activity in Grant County, with many families and older users participating.

The Motorized Recreation survey conducted during this planning process reflected both disagreements and shared priorities regarding the future direction of motorized recreation in Grant County. The survey, which was open to motorized users and non-users, captured the opinions of residents who support motorized recreation in Grant County, as well as those who believe it should be limited and/or banned in the county. Non-motorized users expressed particular concern regarding the noise impacts and carbon emissions associated with motorized recreation. Several non-motorized participants also expressed their view that Grant County should not focus on expanding motorized recreation and that they currently appreciate the relatively low motorized use compared to many other regions in New Mexico and the American Southwest. Some respondents expressed that they wished the County would invest more funding and attention towards expansions to pedestrian and bicycle connections and improvements. There was broad support for the idea that motorized and non-motorized recreation uses should be adequately separated from one another to avoid conflicts and improve recreation experiences.

The following key challenges and opportunities were identified through public engagement, stakeholder meetings, site visits, and information gathered from other plans:

What are user conflicts?

User conflicts are negative interactions that arise between different individuals visiting a trail system or recreation area. User conflicts occur when one or more users feel that their safety and quality of their experience are diminished by another user(s).

How do they occur?

User conflicts typically arise when users have different expectations and priorities for their recreation experience. For example, one user might feel threatened by another user's off-leash dog use. User conflicts can occur when two people are visiting a trail at the same time, though this is not always the case.



Challenges identified for Balancing Uses within trail and recreation facilities in the county include:

- Lack of consensus regarding the role of motorized recreation and e-bikes in Grant County
- Lack of a designated motorized recreation area or area(s), leading to unsanctioned, dispersed use
- Conflicts between homeless community living in or near Big Ditch and visitors to the area
- Lack of signage and guidance regarding multi-use trails
- Safety issues along roadways for bicyclists and CDT through-hikers
- Presence of trash and debris at recreation sites and trailheads
- Crowding issues at key recreation sites
- Large-scale projects, such as closing the gaps in the CDT, require buy-in from many stakeholders
- Different community priorities for recreational tourism

Opportunities identified for Balancing Uses within trail and recreation facilities in the county include:

- Use the USFS' [Recreation Opportunity Spectrum](#) to create a county-wide framework for balancing uses
- Capitalize on the ability of adaptive reuse projects (e.g. revitalization of Fort Bayard, Waterworks site) to support and serve multiple types of recreational uses
- Adopt a compassionate, “person-first” approach to addressing homelessness in public parks
- Provide signage and information that communicates clear expectations for allowed uses, trail etiquette, and encourages safety and awareness on multi-use trails and key roadways
- Participate in existing stewardship initiatives to promote stewardship and reduce user conflicts
- Monitor patterns of use at destinations across Grant County; deploy visitor management strategies to maintain sustainable levels of use

Urban

Grant County's urban areas support a remarkable variety of recreational experiences. In Silver City, for example, users can hike or mountain bike at Boston Hill and walk along the wooded San Vicente Creek Trail. From Fort Bayard, users can access several trail systems leading to the Gila National Forest and walk or bike along the fort's roads. In the Visioning Survey, when asked if there were areas that users intentionally avoided, some respondents noted that they avoided crowded areas and areas they perceived as lacking in maintenance, such as the Big Ditch area. During the outreach phase of this plan, some participants also described feeling unsafe in this area due to the presence of homeless individuals living in the area. This challenge – a form of user conflict – presents several opportunities for the community. First, the County and its municipalities have an opportunity to affirm that Grant County's parks and open spaces are open to all. The County has an opportunity to guide a firm, yet compassionate approach to this conflict by promoting safe, respectful uses of public areas.



Urban areas of Grant County also include stretches of major roadways, including Highway 180. At several points during the outreach portion of the plan, Grant County residents highlighted forms of conflict along these roadways. First, CDT through-hikers must hike 11 miles along roadways in Grant County (including a portion along Highway 180) because of the lack of complete trail connections. In addition, the County lacks a spur connector trail to Silver City, prompting hikers to walk along the road. Second, road biking enthusiasts mentioned feeling highly unsafe and threatened by vehicles traveling at high speeds on roadways throughout the county. As shown in the Transportation Existing Conditions map for urban areas (PAGE), there are no designated bike lanes in Grant County. Third, residents and community leaders raised concerns about residents (particularly older residents using motorized scooters or wheelchairs) in the mining districts walking or rolling along the roadway. The recent paved connection between Santa Clara and Hurley has improved this issue in that area. However, there is still a need for protected, paved off-road paths connecting additional neighborhoods and communities. These paths are critical transportation and public health infrastructure as well as recreational amenities – as residents pointed out, community connector paths make it possible for residents to meet their needs, helping them access grocery stores, medical services, and other resources that may not exist in their immediate neighborhood. These pathways would particularly serve Grant County's aging population and the substantial portion of community members who do not own a vehicle.

Non-Urban

In non-urban areas of Grant County, particularly in the Gila National Forest, residents and visitors enjoy additional activities, such as off-roading, camping, and boating at Lake Roberts. During outreach and engagement efforts, participants expressed opinions on the uses that should be allowed within Grant County. As noted earlier in this chapter, some participants felt strongly that motorized recreation should be discouraged and not expanded in Grant County. In focus group sessions designed for particular user groups, some non-motorized recreation users expressed that certain motorized recreational activities, such as mudding, should not occur in the Gila. These participants, as well as representatives from environmental groups in Grant County, were concerned about potential impacts of motorized recreation on key habitat areas, vegetation, soils and water resources. Some participants raised concerns about unsanctioned motorized recreation on state land, specifically in an area adjoining Fort Bayard. In the Motorized Survey, motorized recreation users and non-users both expressed support for the idea that motorized and non-motorized recreation areas should be clearly separated.

During focus group sessions for motorized users, participants expressed that they supported conservation and resource management efforts and requested improved signage and online information regarding rules, regulations, and closures for motorized areas. The Forest Service (FS) is charged with substantial planning and monitoring efforts of the Gila and makes judgements



regarding the suitability of recreational activities and uses for each area of the lands it manages. Grant County has an opportunity to inform resource considerations for recreational uses using the FS' systems and information, such as the current Motor Vehicle Use Map. Motorized users expressed interest in an up-to-date digitized version of this map; this resource would help reduce unsanctioned use and assist the County's efforts to inventory all recreation opportunities. At present, there is a lack of consensus within Grant County regarding whether ATVs and UTVs should be permitted to travel along major roadways. ATVs and UTVs are currently not permitted to travel on state highways, which has created a gap between Silver City Powersports and nearby recreational access points along Little Walnut Road.

Non-urban areas of the county include some of the most remote regions of the Gila Wilderness. Throughout the engagement process, Grant County residents and visitors expressed appreciation for the wild character of the Gila. They also raised concerns about several uses that may conflict with resource management and the health of natural communities. For instance, participants raised concerns about crowding and the presence of trash and debris at key destinations, such as the Gila Box area. This presents an opportunity for Grant County to collaborate with land managers on capacity management and stewardship initiatives. In the Visioning Survey and in focus group sessions, recreationalists also raised concerns about the presence of cattle near stream areas. Conflicts between recreational uses and grazing/ranching uses are common throughout the American West, and Grant County is no exception. The County has an opportunity to look to other communities experiencing similar issues and pursue similar strategies to educate recreational users and ranching interests alike. For example, the County could partner with other agencies and the ranching community on an education campaign to promote the safe, sustainable sharing of open spaces within the County.

PROTECTING ECOSYSTEMS THROUGH SUSTAINABLE TRAILS & RECREATION



Grant County's vast network of ecosystems, natural landscape, and natural resources are valued by many residents and visitors alike. Participants in this process identified the need for consistent, sustainable trail building and management practices and expressed concern for the impact of climate change in the future. Recognizing the role and impact of recreational facilities in the County is vital for the sustainability of facilities over time and the health of the ecosystems and cultural resources that host them. The creation of a sustainable trail recognizes the need for creating trails that withstand time while mitigating impacts, such as erosion,



which jeopardizes the trail and the surrounding environment. Sustainable trails require little ongoing maintenance while having a minimal impact on the surrounding land. At present, land managers are tasked with maintaining their current trails, many of which have not been constructed sustainably. As described above, agencies also struggle to balance long-term, regular trail maintenance with other critical responsibilities, such as long-range resource planning, day-to-day monitoring, and fire mitigation. With their current capacity, the Forest Service has been challenged in its ability to address several trails in poor condition within Grant County.

The reality of climate change-related impacts also presents a factor for future trail development and management. Wildfires and flooding, which are historically characteristic for the area, will likely become a more common threat and require consideration with trail placement and management tactics. Resulting hazards like landslides may become more of a risk as variable climate conditions become all too common.

Challenges identified to support the protection of ecosystems, and sustainable trails and recreation in the county include:

- Existing trail development in sensitive areas
- The threat of transport of invasive species
- Stormwater and erosion impacts
- Natural hazards, including flooding and wildfire
- The impacts of climate change
- Lack of maintenance attention for some highly trafficked recreation areas

Opportunities identified to support the protection of ecosystems and sustainable trails and recreation in the county include:

- Provide sustainable trail education to trail builders and volunteers
- Use of native materials to maintain the character of the surroundings
- Eradication of invasive species within recreation facilities or within sensitive areas
- Well-marked signage to avoid user-created alignments
- Provision of adequate trailhead amenities including restrooms and trash receptacles
- Established trail closure protocols for areas experiencing variable conditions or wildfires
- Wildfire prevention education for trail users

Urban

Trail and recreation facilities surrounding urban areas are often high-use with large community demand. Implementing sustainable trails within urban areas will work to minimize required maintenance to keep a relatively well-maintained trail system. Preventing erosion, extensive gravel and “baby heads” is essential to keeping key urban trail systems accessible for most users. These areas are likely to experience degradation during wet periods and may require extra signage or trail



closures during periods of extended precipitation. The prevention of user-created alignments is also an issue for these areas and can create a confusing web of foot-created pathways to cut switchbacks and deviate from the trail. Prevention measures including signage, informal path “closures” and physical pathway deterrents should be considered as a management tactic for this. Maintaining a healthy ecosystem and clean trail system in urban areas should also prioritize trash receptacle and bathroom facilities at all major trailheads.

Non-Urban

Non-urban areas in Grant County receive little to no trail maintenance, with the exception of target volunteer efforts. Managing and maintaining Grant County’s vast trail network through sustainable development and enhancement should be prioritized in all future efforts to minimize the need to additional maintenance in the near future.

Non-urban areas face issues related to invasive species dispersal in sensitive and seldomly-visited areas, many of which are untouched by invasive species who are easily distributed near roadways and waterways. Trail manager education on invasive species mitigation and reclamation should be standard to education received through sustainable trail development standards.

While typically distant from most human settlement, recreation facilities in non-urban areas face a great risk from climate-related events than urban areas. Events like a flood can knockout large sections of trail if not planned sustainably, and areas impacted by wildfire can pose human safety risk through the wildfire itself or through landslides for years after. Monitoring changing conditions and post-event impact are critical safety practices trail managers must take into consideration.

PRESERVING & COMPLEMENTING GRANT COUNTY'S ECONOMY, IDENTITY, AND CHARACTER



Residents of Grant County take great pride in the unique character and history of the region and its communities. Grant County is a diverse region in several senses – first, the county is demographically diverse, with 52% of the County identifying as Latino/a/x. Second, the county’s landscape is highly diverse and varied. Grant County encompasses several habitat areas, including desert, arid grasslands, and conifer forests. Third, the county has a rich and diverse history as a mining community and CDT cultural center. Fourth, Grant County hosts a diversity of recreational uses and possibilities.



During the outreach phase of this plan, residents and visitors highlighted key aspects of Grant County's identity and character that they wanted to inform this plan. When asked about the character of Grant County, participants in focus groups mentioned the wild character of the area, the tight-knit feel of the communities, and the remoteness of the area. Throughout the outreach process, some residents expressed that they liked how "quiet" the county is – they liked being able to find solitude on trails, and they liked that tourism had not fundamentally changed the character of the county's recreation opportunities and communities.

During the outreach process, respondents also expressed support for the growth Grant County's recreational tourism economy. As noted in the Visioning Survey results summary, this opinion was more common among residents of Grant County who responded to the survey. The majority of respondents (a little more than half) indicated that recreation and tourism should be "somewhat central" to Grant County's economy. About 40% indicated that recreation and tourism should be "very central" to Grant County's economy. Some participants at the Plan Open House and in focus groups indicated that they were supportive of Grant County's growth as a recreation destination but felt concerned about the possible pace of growth. Some participants also noted that they wanted to avoid the example of other outdoor communities that experience high volumes of tourists, citing crowding issues and gentrification.

A "managed growth" approach, which encourages recreational tourism at a slow and deliberate pace, could thread the needle between conflicting community desires for additional economic opportunities and the preservation of the County's quiet feel. This approach is complicated and depends on a host of factors outside the County's control – unforeseen events can trigger uncharacteristic visitation patterns. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted normal travel patterns and made it challenging to predict visitation levels. Though the County likely cannot execute Managed Growth perfectly, the effort to balance economic development and ecological values is still valuable. The future of recreation and tourism in Grant County must complement and support the county's people, history, landscape, and economy.

Challenges identified for Grant County's Economy, Identity, and Character as they relate to trail and recreation facilities in the county include:

- Need to support efforts to diversify and strengthen Grant County's economy
- Lack of consensus on the type of tourism Grant County should cater to and prioritize (e.g. heritage tourism, mountain biking-focused, general recreation, eco-tourism, a mix of several types)
- Concern about the potential pace of growth of recreation in Grant County and its effects on natural communities and trail character
- Need to support Grant County's recreation and tourism businesses, particularly visitor-facing businesses



- Need to ensure that Grant County experiences benefit – not strain – from the growth of recreational tourism
- Need to align recreational tourism projects with ongoing cultural and historic preservation efforts, such as the Fort Bayard Historic Park and the Five Points Initiative
- A “managed growth” approach is easier said than done

Opportunities identified for Grant County’s Economy, Identity, and Character as they relate to trail and recreation facilities in the county include:

- Promote events, collaboration, and information-sharing among Grant County’s community of entrepreneurs and stakeholders, including business owners, educators, and advocates
- Capitalize on the ability of adaptive reuse projects (e.g. revitalization of Fort Bayard, Waterworks site) to support recreational tourism
- Participate in existing stewardship initiatives to promote stewardship in anticipation of new users and visitors
- Monitor patterns of use at destinations across Grant County; deploy visitor management strategies to maintain sustainable levels of use
- Support arts, cultural, and historic programming in Grant County along with recreational tourism programming



RECOMMENDATIONS

THIS CHAPTER CONTAINS POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF RECREATION AND TRAILS IN GRANT COUNTY. THESE RECOMMENDATIONS ARE INTENDED TO BE CARRIED OUT BY THE COUNTY IN COLLABORATION WITH RELEVANT LAND MANAGEMENT AGENCIES, MUNICIPALITIES, COMMUNITY INSTITUTIONS, AND NON-PROFITS.



“While Grant County does not directly manage most recreational lands, the county has an important role to play in supporting the land managers who oversee Grant County’s trails and recreation resources.”





INTRODUCTION & SUMMARY

The eight recommendation themes, as identified in the previous chapter, represent the primary topics, ideas and areas of concern identified throughout this process. These themes provided a mechanism to develop focused recommendations that reflect both community feedback and analysis of the area.

The recommendations for this plan are intended to provide high-level guidance; they reflect current priorities for the county, citizens, and land management agencies. Further planning and organization will be required to construct and implement specific recommendations. For example, this plan identifies several opportunities for trail connections, but the actual alignments of these trails must be negotiated in finer detail on a case-by-case basis. The **Implementation** chapter follows this chapter and provides additional detail for each recommendation objective, including a timeframe for implementation and prioritization, responsibility, and additional notes to guide implementation.

Key Recommendations include:

Create a One-Stop-Shop for Outdoor Recreation

Form an inter-agency Trails Partnership that shares funding, resources, and staff to build, maintain, and manage trails on all public lands in the County.

Establish Critical Trail Connections Between Communities (Copper Trails Greenway)

Build an inter-community connectivity route that links together communities, parks, trail systems, and other recreational assets in Grant County; ensure the trail system serves a variety of non-motorized users and provides both transportation and recreational values.

Promote CDT Connectivity

Close the gap in the Continental Divide Trail while maintaining connectivity and trail activity through Silver City; strengthen trail connections between the CDT and Silver City and seek to develop new connections between the CDT and other Grant County communities and trail systems such as Pinos Atos, Fort Bayard, and Santa Clara.

Embrace a “Towns as Trailheads” Concept

Enhance connectivity between recreational assets and adjacent communities and residents. Encourage and promote towns as destinations and seek to empower both residents and visitors to start and end their trail trips and recreational activities right in town or from home where possible.

**Support a Diversity of Recreational Opportunities and Experiences**

Increase the range of motorized and non-motorized trail experiences offered in the County by focusing on closing the few identified experience/opportunity gaps.

Prioritize Maintenance of Existing Trails and Recreation Areas

Place greater emphasis on maintaining and improving existing trails than on creating new trail systems, particularly outside of the urban/residential areas of the County; new trail building should focus on connectivity and diversity rather than milage.

Increase Access to Trail Information and Promote Responsible Recreation

Develop a set of standards for trail signage and trailheads to be applied county-wide. Ensure that signage and recreation information cater to all relevant user groups and conveys safe procedures for sharing multi-use trails and areas.

Ensure the Protection of Grant County's Unique Landscape and Remote Character

Develop sustainable trails and recreation experiences that preserve the unique character of Grant County and minimize their impact on surrounding ecological systems; pursue recreational tourism at a slow and deliberate pace that balances economic development with the character and scale of the County.



THEME 1



Fostering Resource Collaboration

Outdoor recreation and trails are managed by a wide range of agencies and organizations in Grant County, including the US Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service, New Mexico State Parks, the county, the municipalities, local groups and committees, and other non-profit and educational partners. Recreation specialists within the federal agencies are tasked with managing the trail program for their entire forest unit, region, or field office which is much broader than Grant County. Outdoor recreation resources at the federal agencies are stretched too thin as it is, so focusing efforts on Grant County can often be a challenge. At the local level, there are many passionate volunteers, local businesses, and organizational and government partners working to improve outdoor recreation, but they don't always have the all the expertise, capacity, and control that is needed to implement their vision.

To deliver on all the recommendations of this plan, it is recommended that Grant County and its other recreation partners pool their outdoor recreation funds and specialized knowledge to form a new Outdoor Recreation Partnership between Grant County, the municipalities, the US Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service, New Mexico State Parks, WMNU, and other interested partners. Modeled after other local community/federal agency trail initiatives throughout the country, this partnership could oversee trail planning, development, management, signage, stewardship, maintenance, education, enforcement, and a wide of trail and outdoor recreation activities that are funded with financial contributions from each partner. Such an initiative would requirement a multi-agency Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Grant County serving as the lead agency. Centralizing recreation activities would empower Grant County to have greater control over outdoor recreation activities in the area while reducing redundancies and using local and federal tax dollars efficiently. This organization could also facilitate community involvement in recreation planning for Grant County. The Recreation and Trails Partnership could leverage community knowledge in a variety of ways, including a Trails Advisory Group made up of passionate trail volunteers, business owners, advocates, and other leaders in the local recreation space.



COLLABORATION OBJECTIVES

Collaboration Objective 1: Form a Recreation and Trails Partnership to enable continued collaboration between Grant County and major land managers on recreation and trail initiatives.

Actions

- Build upon the framework of inter-agency collaboration and momentum established through the master plan to spur the development of the new organization.
- Look to other, similar trail initiatives as examples such as the Ridge to Rivers Partnership in Idaho or the Sierra Buttes Trail Stewardship in California. See **Appendix E** for summaries of similar trail initiatives.
- Develop a multi-agency Memorandum of Understanding to guide the initiative, with Grant County serving as the lead agency.
- Establish an arrangement for governance, representation, and financial contributions from each partner.
- Hire outdoor recreation staff dedicated to Grant County for planning, management, operations, maintenance, and volunteer coordination.
- Hold quarterly meetings between land managers and county representatives to discuss issues, trends, events, and progress on shared goals.
- Ensure equitable and inclusive access to participate in established partnership.

Collaboration Objective 2: Empower recreation stakeholders and community members to be involved in trail and outdoor recreation management in Grant County.

Actions

- Ensure transparency of the Partnership; share information broadly and provide opportunities for public input on Partnership proceedings.
- Establish a Trails Advisory Group that helps inform the Partnership activities and provides a means for interested residents, volunteers, and individuals to reach land managers.
- Continue gathering public input and holding open houses on trails and outdoor recreation at both the county-wide and project specific scale.
- Involve a diversity of user types within stakeholder and advisory positions.

Collaboration Objective 3: Marshall volunteer capacity and efforts through centralized trails and recreation management.



Actions

- Combine and leverage volunteer trail and stewardship efforts across agencies and organizations.
- Increase efficiency and involvement of volunteers with enhanced and consistent support for all trails and land managers in the County.
- Leverage corporate relationships and other opportunities for volunteer capacity through enhanced and consistent coordination with Grant County businesses.

Collaboration Objective 4: Integrate Partnership activities with the internal processes and support opportunities of the partnering land management agencies.

Actions

- Coordinate with each partnering land management agency to ensure Partnership employees are integrated into the organizational structure and management processes for each forest unit, region, or field office.
- Leverage technical support and expertise within the partnering land management agencies to complement the recreation specialty of the Partnership (biologists, natural resource specialists, lands and real estate, etc.).
- Consolidate and coordinate NEPA and other environmental review processes for Partnership projects with an inter-agency team.
- Pursue funding and other agency support programs through the Partnership.
- Integrate Partnership activities and planning with travel management planning within each partnering land management agency.
- Ensure two-way communication between partnering land management agencies and the Grant County community.



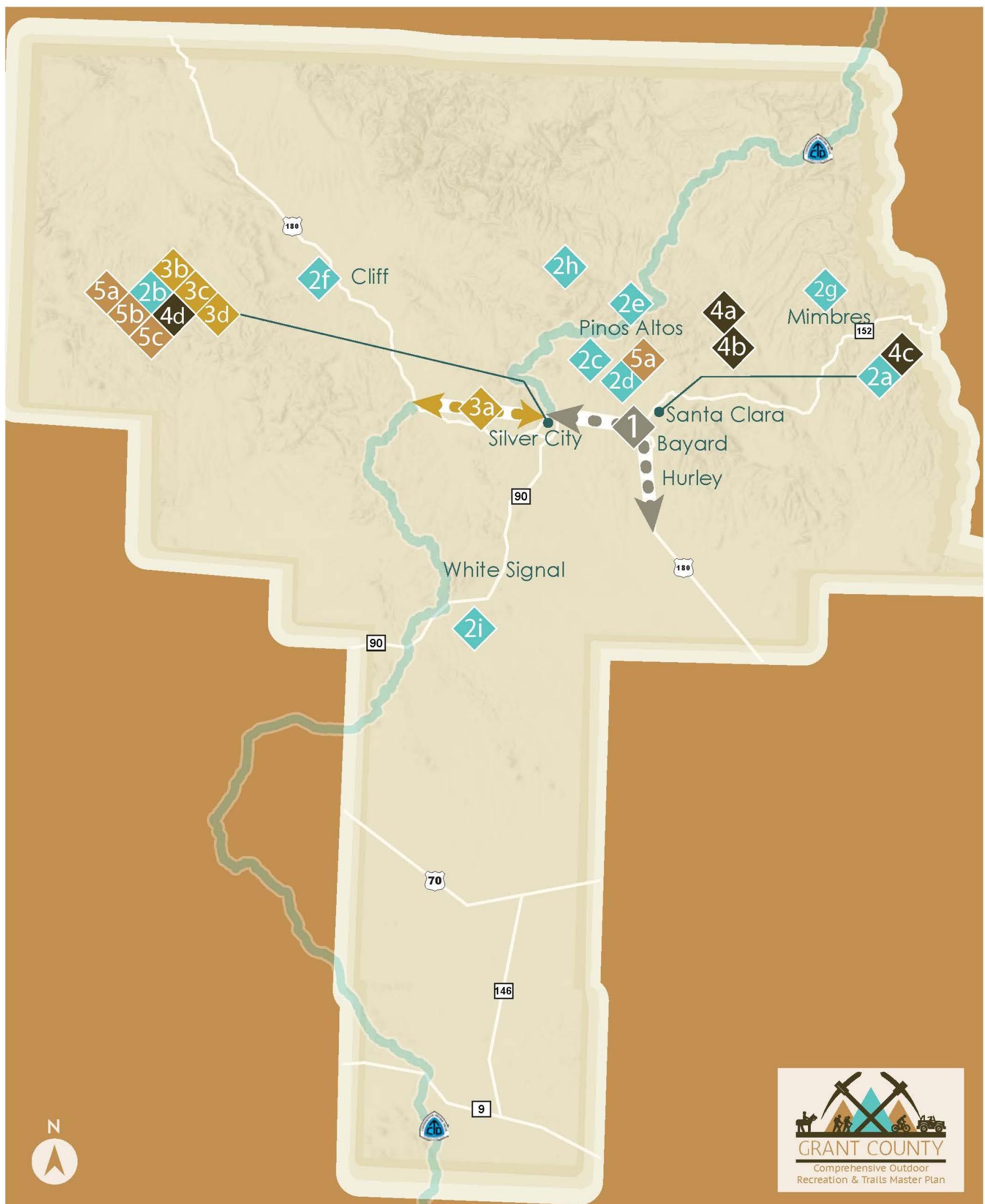
THEME 2



Improving Connectivity

Connectivity considers the interconnectedness of the County's trail system as well as the ability for residents and visitors to access recreational facilities. Areas with good connectivity often provide several efficient and safe ways to reach a destination. Opportunities to improve connectivity includes a broad spectrum of strategies including enhanced transit access, new soft-surface trails and footpaths, new greenway and multi-use pathway options, and building out a complete "Active Transportation" network of sidewalks, bike lanes, and other facilities. While there are some needs for connectivity enhancements within the more remote trail systems on the National Forest and other public lands, connectivity efforts within Grant County should focus primarily on improving access and connectivity within and between the communities in the County. There are opportunities to enhance connections from the Continental Divide Trail to various areas of the county, to create new connections between the communities of the county, and to create an overall interconnected system of parks, trails, and recreational assets in Grant County.

A map summarizing these recommendations is included on the next page. This map is also included in the Executive Summary of this plan.



Recommendations Map

1 Copper Trails Greenway System Expansion

- Wyns as Trailheads**
 - a. Santa Clara to Fort Bayard
 - b. Silver City to CDT & National Forest
 - c. Little Walnut Neighborhood to Gomez Peak & National Forest
 - d. Arenas Valley to the Dragonfly Trails & National Forest
 - e. Pinos Altos to CDT & National Forest
 - f. Cliff to the Gila River
 - g. Mimbres to the National Forest
 - h. Saparillo Creek Neighborhood to Lake Roberts
 - i. White Signal to Burro Mountain & National Forest

2 Towns as Trailheads

- a. Santa Clara to Fort Bayard
- b. Silver City to CDT & National Forest
- c. Little Walnut Neighborhood to Gomez Peak & National Forest
- d. Arenas Valley to the Dragonfly Trails & National Forest
- e. Pinos Altos to CDT & National Forest
- f. Cliff to the Gila River
- g. Mimbres to the National Forest
- h. Saparillo Creek Neighborhood to Lake Roberts
- i. White Signal to Burro Mountain & National Forest

3 Continental Divide Connectivity: Gaps & Assets

- a. Close the CDT Gap
- b. Waterworks/CDT Gateway Site
- c. New Mexico University Connectivity
- d. Little Walnut Loop

4 Priority Soft-Surface Trail Connections: Thoughtful Expansions to Grant County's Trail Network

- a. Service Corral to Big Tree
- b. Admin Site Road Parallel Trail
- c. Connector to Silver-Santa Clara Trail
- d. Quarry Trails

5 Upgrades for Recreational Uses in Urban Zones

- a. Bike lanes and road markings to key biking areas
- b. Pump track and jump zone for BMX and MTB
- c. Explore quarry acquisition for motorized & non-motorized uses



CONNECTIVITY OBJECTIVES

Connectivity Objective 1: Build out a “Copper Trails” Greenway system to connect Grant County communities.

See #1 on the included map.

Actions

- Complete a master plan for an inter-community connectivity route that builds upon the new path recently constructed near Santa Clara and has a similar greenway/multi-use character.
- Seek opportunities to connect communities, parks, trail systems, and other recreational assets with the envisioned complete Copper Trails system
- Ensure the Copper Trails system serves a variety of non-motorized users and provides both transportation and recreational values.
- Establish a Copper Trails Coalition that includes representatives from the County, the municipalities, NMDOT, WNMU, and other community partners.
- Integrate Copper Trails system development with other connectivity efforts around the CDT and other soft-surface trail connections.

Connectivity Objective 2: Promote a “Town as Trailhead” concept for recreational assets throughout the County.

See #2 on the included map.

Actions

- Encourage and promote towns as destinations and seek to empower both residents and visitors to start and end their trail trips and recreational activities right in town or from home where possible.
- Communicate the intent for Grant County to be a recreation-friendly community through branding, wayfinding, and signage that highlights recreation opportunities for everyone in the County and provides visitors with key information about where to shop, dine, stay, and play.
- Enhance connectivity between recreational assets and adjacent communities and residents. For example: connect Fort Bayard with Santa Clara, connect Lake Roberts with the Saparillo Creek area, connect Gomez Peak with Pinos Altos, etc.
- Support the development of more “close to home” trails and recreational experiences that support communities and residential areas throughout the County with opportunities for



fitness or hiking, nature trails, dog walking, and shorter or more convenience-oriented mountain biking and off-roading.

- Develop a thoughtful downtown parking strategy in Silver City and other communities that preserves walkability while providing convenient access to trailheads, businesses, and other destinations.
- Support the development of the Waterworks site as a primary gateway to the Continental Divide Trail that can serve both day and long-distance hikers and expand their economic impact on the County.
- Encourage efforts to increase connectivity between new and existing motorized recreational trails and related businesses, such as Silver City Powersports.

Connectivity Objective 3: Maximize connectivity opportunities with the Continental Divide Trail; utilize the trail as a primary spine of non-motorized recreational connectivity throughout the County.

See #3 on the included map.

Actions

- Continue efforts to close the CDT trail gap in Grant County (i.e., move the trail off-road) while maintaining connectivity and trail activity through Silver City.
- Strengthen trail connections between the CDT and Silver City. Connection priorities include:
 - Improved connections between the Waterworks CDT Gateway site with both the CDT north and the CDT south, possibly through WNMU.
 - Improved connections between the Waterworks CDT Gateway site with both the CDT north and the CDT south, possibly through WNMU.
 - Enhanced connectivity with Western New Mexico University via a multi-use pathway/bridge connection over Highway 180 and trail improvements heading toward the CDT north.
 - A hiking and mountain biking loop from the new CDT parking area on Little Walnut that provides a new route between the green gate on the CDT North and the CDT south gate near the “Doug/Bob Trail.” This would provide an excelling CDT loop opportunity and relieve mountain bike pressure from the Gomez Peak trails.
 - Improving interim on-road segments with enhanced pedestrian facilities and signage should also be pursued in the interim.
- Develop new connections between the CDT and other Grant County communities and trail systems such as Pinos Atos, Fort Bayard, and Santa Clara.
- Explore opportunities to use old railroad corridors as connectivity corridors.



Connectivity Objective 4: Develop a formal network of soft-surface trails that provide connectivity between communities and recreational assets for a variety of motorized and non-motorized uses which recognize the intrinsic value of the land which hosts them.

See #4 on the included map.

Actions

- Work with willing landowners to expand inter-community connectivity for hiking, trail running, mountain biking, and off-roading.
- Explore opportunities for using existing natural or human-made corridors for sustainable trail development; these could include roads, powerlines, drainages, and other features on the landscape.
- Develop new inter-community connections in concert with new “close to home” recreational trail loops near communities.
- Utilize existing trail systems in each community to build out an interconnected county-wide system over time.
- Integrate these connections with other connectivity efforts around the Grant County Greenway and CDT connections.
- Use the formalization of pathways with signage as an opportunity to reduce “user created pathways” and preserve the land on which they run.
- Connection priorities include:
 - Service Corral to Big Tree: This trail would leave from the service corral, head towards Twin Sisters Creek and finish on Sawmill Wagon Rd at the Big Tree trail.
 - Admin Site Road Parallel Trail: Formalize the rough trail from the parking/camping/trailhead before the creek crossing on the way to the Tommyknocker trailhead. Route this trail to the Big Tree trailhead and establish that area as a covered parking/camping area.
 - Connector to Silver-Santa Clara Trail: Investigate creating a trail parallel to the road leading to Dragonfly Trail to enhance connectivity to neighboring communities. Consider adding a parking area closer to Hwy 180 that would service the Copper Trails route between Santa Clara and Silver City and the Dragonfly Trail Network.
 - Quarry Trail: The Town of Silver City should consider purchasing the old quarry on Hwy 90 and creating a trail from Boston Hill over to the quarry. The quarry represents an opportunity for a mountain bike-specific trail there and possibly a pump track. Another trail connection opportunity for this area would connect Boston Hill and the San Vicente Creek Trail: this trail would run along the fence that leads to Ridge Road and Fairway Drive to get down to the ball fields, which connect to the San Vicente Creek



trail. This route would make use of some existing roads; wayfinding signage could help clarify the trail, particularly for on-road sections.

Connectivity Objective 5: Support “Active Transportation” connectivity throughout Grant County and ensure transportation projects consider access to trailheads and other recreational assets.

See #5 on the included map.

Actions

- Consider trail, sidewalk, bike lane, and active transportation facilities as an integrated system for walking, biking, and recreational use and incorporate this concept into all planning and design efforts for such facilities.
- Encourage adoption of “Complete Streets” ordinances and policies at both the county and municipal level.
- Address need for safe routes to key urban trailheads including Gomez Peak and Boston Hill.
- Improve bike, pedestrian, and recreational connectivity across Highway 180 and other major transportation corridors; seek intersection safety improvements and explore opportunities for safe recreational crossings for both motorized and non-motorized trails.
- Focus active transportation connections connecting communities to public schools in the County.



THEME 3



Providing
Wayfinding
& Information

The ability for trail users to navigate a recreation system encourages a welcoming and comfortable experience for both new and well-versed trail users. A well-developed wayfinding and information system uses consistent and familiar branding that meets people where they are- from trailheads the comfort of their living room through their cellular devices. This system should recognize the different geographic realities of the county and the navigational needs of both urban and remote assets.

WAYFINDING & INFORMATION OBJECTIVES

WAYFINDING & INFORMATION OBJECTIVE 1: Provide clear and consistent trail information at trailheads and outdoor recreation areas.

Actions

- Identify priority trailheads to receive amenity upgrades and information distribution kiosks.
- Create an urban wayfinding strategy to direct users to trail assets within urban areas.
- Ensure wayfinding systems are robust and maintainable to allow for durability and to minimize the impacts of vandalism
- Develop a detailed, consistent and predictable wayfinding system for priority areas using existing wayfinding strategies found at Boston Hill, the Dragonfly trail network, etc.
- Provide user courtesy information for trails bisecting private property and ranchland.
- Clearly define established trails as alternatives to deer pathways and desire lines.

WAYFINDING & INFORMATION OBJECTIVE 2: Provide a centralized source of trail information that indicates trail location, length, and type at high-use trailheads.

Actions

- Provide trail-condition updates and relative level of difficulty for all trails within the Urban Zone.



- Provide a mechanism for reporting and learning about what to expect on backcountry trails
- Leverage and Update Geographic Database System Created during this project.
- Create comprehensive package marketing and trail map materials available for public use.
- Collaborate regularly with the local recreation management partnership on updating existing information.
- Provide access to public trail information resources on an open-source basis to allow for citizen and volunteer access and trail updates.
- Clearly post trail closures for all motorized and non-motorized facilities.

WAYFINDING & INFORMATION OBJECTIVE 3: Enhance community familiarity with trails and outdoor recreation facilities and opportunities.

Actions

- Develop a distribution strategy for trail and recreation facility information through online resources, outdoor-oriented businesses, libraries hotels, community recreation facilities, and visitor centers.
- Create a shareable and detailed county-wide map with all inventoried trails and outdoor recreation facilities.
- Provide both paper and digital maps with guiding QR codes in high-use areas.
- Advise users of the reality of being in remote areas and the limited availability of drinkable water, potential safety hazards, and rapidly changing weather conditions.

WAYFINDING & INFORMATION OBJECTIVE 4: Develop a consistent system for on-trail wayfinding for remote and backcountry trails.

Actions

- Support interagency coordination for trail maintenance, enhancements, and the development of a consistent signage and confidence marker program with associated distances and direction symbols at forks in the trail.
- When applicable, use existing trail signage to direct users to trail navigation and condition information.
- Ensure digital maps interface with live wayfinding navigation platforms for on-trail users.
- Ensure that all trailheads are clearly marked and distinguishable, especially those located on Forest Service and BLM land.
- Provide CDT-road crossings with wayfinding information guiding users to the next trail section and to the nearest urban area.
- Prioritize maintenance on popular backcountry trails.



THEME 4



Encouraging Equitable Access

Equitable access is attained by providing the opportunity for residents of Grant County, regardless of location, ability, and demographic, to have fair and just access to high-quality recreation programs, services, and facilities. Equitable access prioritizes the development of recreational opportunities for those with different abilities and needs while ensuring distribution of recreational opportunities across a demographic and physical landscape. Equitable access is supported by broadening the stereotype of what recreation is within the community by providing opportunities for all levels of activity.

EQUITABLE ACCESS OBJECTIVES

EQUITABLE ACCESS OBJECTIVE 1: Provide equitable access and diverse options to outdoor trail and recreation assets regardless of ability, income, and location.

Actions

- Follow USDA Accessibility Guidebook for Outdoor Recreation and Trails Standards.
- Enhance high-use trailhead and outdoor recreation facilities to improve ADA accessibility.
- Identify areas appropriate for enhanced ADA access.

Ensure equitable recreation opportunities regardless of location in the county or provide connective transportation options to reach existing high-use trailheads.

Actions

- Identify central areas with various recreation opportunities to become recreation destination hubs
 - The areas of Ft. Bayard/Santa Clara, Downtown Silver City, and Gila should be considered for this action.



- Ensure consistent and frequent transit access to popular existing trailheads and recreation hubs
- Mechanize the “Town as Trailhead” approach to ensure equitable access to recreation assets across urban areas.
- Prioritize off-street connections between municipalities and key trail-systems.
- Evaluate the opportunity for trailhead bike racks and bike maintenance stations at trailheads with high bicycle visitation.

EQUITABLE ACCESS OBJECTIVE 2: Prioritize the development of new recreation and trails facilities that accommodate all user types and abilities within the Urban Zone.

Actions

- Expand the existing system of low-grade paved and smooth soft-surface trails and access points.
- Prioritize the development and enhanced access of paved and adaptive soft-surface trails for motorized wheelchairs for use as both a recreation facility and a day-to-day route to access needed goods and services.
- Develop future outdoor trail and recreation systems with consideration for both active and passive recreation uses including seating and rest areas, bathroom facilities, shade structures, and play equipment.

EQUITABLE ACCESS OBJECTIVE 3: Eliminate the information barrier between the county’s recreation facilities and potential new users.

Actions

Provide printed maps for trail users at trail heads, community recreation centers, library, outfitters and public facilities.

Explore programming opportunities for residents of all ages and abilities to meet and explore new recreation opportunities.

Explore partnership opportunities for outdoor education venues to promote place-based learning and outdoor stewardship.



THEME 5



Supporting Trail
& Recreation
Management

While Grant County does not directly manage most recreational lands, the county has an important role to play in supporting the land managers who oversee Grant County's trails and recreation resources. The County has a unique opportunity to serve as a conduit between members of the public, municipalities, and large land management agencies such as the BLM, FS, and State Parks. Importantly, many of the objectives for supporting trail and recreation management can be administered and carried out by a Grant County Recreation & Trails Partnership.

RECREATION AND MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

RECREATION AND MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVE 1: Use a Grant County Recreation & Trails Partnership to facilitate dialogue and information-sharing between the County and land managers regarding shared recreation and stewardship goals.

Actions

- Encourage land managers to participate in a recreation management partnership (MOU agreement) in partnership with the county.
- Conduct outreach to Western New Mexico University to apply university research on land management best practices to issues in Grant County.
- Ensure that Search and Rescue (SAR) professionals are included in future recreation planning and broad-level management conversations.

RECREATION AND MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVE 2: Support efforts of the Forest Service and other entities to manage and steward fire-prone areas.

Actions

- Encourage municipalities to reduce fire damage by limiting development in the wildland-urban interface (WUI).



- Provide up-to-date information to the public regarding fire-related trail and park closures.
- Develop a rehabilitation plan for public trails and recreation destinations damaged by fire; in the event of prolonged or permanent closures, evaluate trail re-routes to maintain connectivity.

RECREATION AND MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVE 3: Develop an interagency prioritization strategy for trail and facility maintenance.

Actions

- Prioritize maintenance and upkeep at recreation locations with high visitation and high ecological impact.
- Address visitor capacity and maintenance issues at priority locations, including Bill Evans and Gila Box Canyon.
- Establish a county-wide guide for “Complete Trailheads,” which may include visitor information, stewardship guidelines, parking, trash receptacles, and restrooms. Trail education should include information regarding Leave No Trace practices, right-of-way rules and guidelines for sharing the trail with other users, and language prohibiting littering.
- Prioritize maintenance and upkeep of existing facilities over the development of new facilities.
- Allocate more funding to MOU or trail management entity.

RECREATION AND MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVE 4: Strive to expand recreational access and improve recreational experiences in line with resource management goals.

Actions

- Expand recreational opportunities that align with the appropriate zone (e.g. majority of paved opportunities belong in Urban Zone).
- Explore private property acquisition along the San Vicente Creek Trail to facilitate ecological connectivity and a broader range of recreation amenities.
- Collaborate with the Forest Service on bike-optimized and motorized trails that contain features that cater to a range of abilities.
- Ensure that Search and Rescue (SAR) professionals are informed of changes to the recreation offering in Grant County, particularly in backcountry areas.

RECREATION AND MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVE 5: Encourage input from the public on new recreation opportunities and incentivize volunteer participation in stewardship initiatives.



Actions

- Establish a Trails Advisory Group made up of local business owners, nonprofit representatives, and representatives from different user groups to act as a connection between the community and agencies within the county.
- Support participation in and promotion of Continental Divide Trail Days events and similar volunteer trail maintenance activities.
- Incentivize long-term volunteer participation and retention by providing discounts at local businesses for repeat volunteers; engage in succession planning to encourage stable levels of volunteer participation.

RECREATION AND MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVE 6: Support the long-term sustainability of trails of all types in Grant County.

Actions

- Implement a lodging tax or other funding mechanism to provide continued support for trail maintenance.
- Create a paid position to apply for and administer grants for trail maintenance crews and projects within the County; apply for NMDOT Recreational Trail Program and Transportation Alternatives Program funds to maintain backcountry trails and enhance bike/ped infrastructure, respectively.
- Provide opportunities for County officials and other recreation stakeholders to attend conferences and trainings led by leading trail stewardship organizations (e.g. American Trails, the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics, Professional Trail Builders Association) to learn about best practices for trail and recreation management.



THEME 6



Balancing a Diverse Set of Uses

A balance of recreational uses exists in a given area when that area contains a variety of recreational uses and resource management goals are being met or exceeded. This delicate balance is achieved through a variety of management interventions, such as addressing and minimizing user conflicts and identifying suitable and unsuitable landscapes for different recreational activities, such as motorized uses.

BALANCING USE OBJECTIVES

BALANCING USE OBJECTIVE 1: Ensure compatibility of Grant County's current and future recreational offerings with Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) designations and other land management prescriptions.

Actions

- Create and sustain a county-wide framework for balancing recreational uses based on their degree of impact; using the [ROS](#) as a guide.
- Identify target zones for motorized use away from key riparian areas and other high-sensitivity zones; monitor unsanctioned use.

BALANCING USE OBJECTIVE 2: Ensure that all user groups have equal access to resources and information that allow them to recreate safely and responsibly.

Actions

- Maintain a centralized source of trail information that provides up-to-date notices of road and trail closures; ensure that this source provides trail and recreation information specific to primary user groups in Grant County, including but not limited to hikers, mountain bikers, hunters, and motorized users.
- Facilitate efforts to digitize and publicize an updated Motor Vehicle Use Map of the Gila NF.



BALANCING USE OBJECTIVE 3: Encourage the viability and growth of recreational uses suitable for the Urban Zone within that environment.

See #5 on the Recommendations Map included in the Theme 2: Improving Connectivity recommendations.

Actions

- Support the Copper Trails implementation and efforts to create universally accessible paved trails connecting Grant County communities and destinations; prioritize connections to existing and future paved paths
- Partner with DOT to install Share-the-Road signs or similar signage to encourage drivers to be mindful of road bikers and through hikers using major roadways, particularly Highway 180
- Install bike lanes or provide shareway road markings that connect to key biking areas, such as Boston Hill and Fort Bayard
- Promote the use of existing paved surfaces for active recreational opportunities, such as skateboarding and road biking
- Explore opportunities to develop a pump track and jump zone for BMX and mountain biking near the skatepark in Silver City; consider a paved or chip seal facility that will reduce on-going maintenance costs and extend opportunities to skateboarders, scooters and other users.
- Explore the acquisition of the old quarry site on Hwy 90 in Silver City for recreational uses. The site could provide additional opportunities for trail connectivity between Boston Hill and San Vicente, mountain biking, a pump track, and/or a motorized skills/challenge area.

BALANCING USE OBJECTIVE 4: Designate motorized recreation opportunities areas in Grant County that promote safe, quality experiences and avoid high-quality habitat areas.

Actions

- Provide specific and sanctioned trail opportunities for motorized recreation; restrict motorized users from non-motorized trails using gates and other enforcement measures.
- Diversify motorized trail experiences in Grant County with purpose-built recreational routes including:
- Explore one or more locations for a motorized skills building or play area; this could include a track, skills features and small trails, a challenge park and progressive features, a jump line/area.
- Rock crawling routes
- Touring routes



- Soft roading/light wheeling routes
- Singletrack OHM trails
- Gravel OHM trails

BALANCING USE OBJECTIVE 5: Reduce user conflicts through education and stewardship messaging.

Actions

- Provide signage along multi-use trails and at trailheads that educates users on etiquette for sharing the trail.
- Provide trash receptacles and other amenities that encourage responsible use of trails and rec facilities.
- Provide motorized-specific stewardship guidelines and requirements, such as using a catch-pan when crossing streams.
- Cultivate a culture of accountability and mutual respect on Grant County trails and recreation spaces; for example, install “Watch for Bikes,” “Share the Road,” or similar signage that encourages a safe, respectful environment for road cyclists.

BALANCING USE OBJECTIVE 6: Affirm that all Grant County residents belong in outdoor spaces; cultivate an inclusive culture on trails and open spaces in Grant County.

Actions

- Support the growth of recreational opportunities that cater to community members of all ages and abilities.
- Encourage motorized recreation users to form an organized group or league to facilitate communication between county leaders and motorized users.
- Ensure that promotional materials and imagery depicting outdoor recreation in Grant County reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of recreation users.
- Adopt a compassionate, “person-first” approach to addressing homelessness in public parks, such as Big Ditch.

BALANCING USE OBJECTIVE 7: Seek to provide new recreational experiences that “fill the gaps” in the current recreational offerings in the County.

Actions

- Provide “close to home opportunities” for residents to partake in recreational activities within their neighborhoods or immediate area eliminating the need to travel for experiences.
- Provide additional opportunities and spaces for designated motorized recreation.



- When possible, separate motorized and non-motorized users with the exception of shared infrastructure such as bridges and crossings.
- Explore opportunities for self-contained recreational assets including a pump track as spaces for skill development and community-building.
- Create a diversity of trail types for bicyclists including both flow trail and cross country opportunities.
- Provided maintained and managed access points to the Gila River in the Gila and Cliff areas.



THEME 7



Protecting Ecosystems
Through Sustainable
Trails & Recreation

Responsible management and stewardship of Grant County's outdoor recreational assets is pivotal to sustained trail quality and the surrounding ecological health. Respect for the land in which trails inhabit is the responsibility of both those who develop and maintain trails, and those who use them. Grant County and its many recreationalists have an existing appreciation for the unique places and spaces of the county which sets a strong foundation for future awareness and opportunity to preserve and restore areas adjacent to recreational uses.

SUSTAINABLE RECREATION OBJECTIVES

SUSTAINABLE RECREATION OBJECTIVE 1: Develop sustainable and resilient recreation facilities which recognize and preserve the natural setting, protect cultural resources, and have minimized impact on surrounding ecological systems.

Actions

- Utilize local materials and building techniques to preserve the character of the surrounding area.
- Establish an evaluation system for trail additions or improvements within culturally sensitive areas.
- Require a comprehensive understanding of cultural site protection, invasive species management, ecological impact mitigation and sustainable trail design for future trail and outdoor recreation development.



SUSTAINABLE RECREATION OBJECTIVE 2: Provide ongoing trail and facility maintenance to ensure the sustainability and resiliency of recreation facilities.

Actions

- Designate the responsibility of maintenance and upkeep of trail assets to the established MOU
- Provide and maintain trash receptacles at all trailheads within the Urban Zone, and at popular trailheads outside of this area.
- Provide adequate trail maintenance to mitigate erosion and promote soil health.
- Ensure adequate stormwater management systems on trails using construction techniques such as out-sloping and grade reversals.
- Identify and eliminate invasive plant species adjacent to trails and recreation facilities to avoid transmission.
- Encourage volunteer stewardship through coordinated programs and stewardship events.

SUSTAINABLE RECREATION OBJECTIVE 3: Mitigate the impacts of recreation on sensitive ecological areas and critical habitats.

Actions

- Establish use patterns which are consistent and considerate of sensitive areas and ecological needs surrounding a trail or outdoor recreation facility.
- Establish a close relationship with local biologists and environmental specialists in partnership with the established MOU to provide ongoing environmental assessment.
- Monitor and evaluate trails for impacts on ecosystems.
- Reroute trails as necessary to bypass particularly sensitive areas.
- Study capacity use patterns and control access to provide responsible management.
- Require thorough environmental review for new trail development and large enhancements on a multilevel agency scale, including a county review.
- Provide dog waste bag centers at all established trailheads.

SUSTAINABLE RECREATION OBJECTIVE 4: Promote responsible recreation, especially in sensitive areas, designated wilderness and protected areas.

Actions

- Enhance public knowledge of low-impact recreation through county-wide campaigns and initiatives.
- Promote programs to reduce individual impact including Leave No Trace and Tread Lightly!



- Integrate responsible recreation messaging at trail heads and at local outdoor retailer locations.
- Provide constant and widespread education on safe campfire and fire mitigation strategies.
- Provide education on user hygiene when in remote or backcountry areas.
- Avoid routing multimodal transportation and connectivity routes through sensitive ecological areas.

SUSTAINABLE RECREATION OBJECTIVE 5: Plan future trail and recreation facilities to accommodate the growing impacts of climate change.

Actions

- Plan future trails with recognition for the increasing severity of flood events.
- Establish a county-wide protocol for wildfire trail closures and to mitigate landslide hazards.
- Develop a county-wide wildfire prevention campaign for recreationalists with frequent high fire danger postings.
- Coordinate trail closings with agencies to better communicate closures and openings with the public.



THEME 8



Preserving &
Complementing Grant
County's Economy,
Identity and Character

Expansions to recreational tourism can help diversify and strengthen a region's economy. However, fast-paced tourism growth can have unintended negative effects on a given community. Growth pressures may come into conflict with other community priorities, such as affordability and the ability to find solitude on local trails. A balance and harmony between economy, identity, and character can be achieved when expansions to recreational tourism complement, rather than compete with, community values.

ECONOMY, IDENTITY AND CHARACTER OBJECTIVES

ECONOMY, IDENTITY AND CHARACTER OBJECTIVE 1: Support thoughtful and sustainable county-wide growth of outdoor recreation and tourism; promote the diversification of Grant County's economy.

Actions

- Encourage strategic investments in connectivity, infrastructure, and amenities to promote visitation to and economic activity in communities across Grant County.
- Monitor visitation on a seasonal and annual basis using trail/vehicle counting, occupancy rates, and additional metrics; adaptively manage increases in visitation rates.
- Provide a business guide to recreation-focused businesses and new business owners that summarizes existing resources, stewardship principles, and other best practices.
- Promote events, collaboration, and information-sharing among Grant County's community of entrepreneurs and stakeholders, including business owners, educators, and advocates.
- Provide technical assistance to community leaders and entrepreneurs seeking to expand recreation and/or tourism viability in their communities.

ECONOMY, IDENTITY AND CHARACTER OBJECTIVE 2: Attract and retain a talented workforce in Grant County through investments in recreation and quality of life; ensure



that expansions to recreation and tourism complement mining, ranching, and other traditional industries in Grant County.

Actions

- Complement efforts of Freeport McMoRan and other major employers to finance recreation amenities and improvements through community investment grants.
- Conduct routine outreach to the ranching community to facilitate collaboration on future expansions to recreation and trails as they relate to ranching.
- Spearhead and support efforts to educate students and young residents on the variety of professional opportunities available to them in Grant County.

ECONOMY, IDENTITY AND CHARACTER OBJECTIVE 3: Support the innovative and productive future reclamation of abandoned mine lands (AML) for recreation.

- Follow Environmental Protection Agency guidance on the revitalization and reuse of AML for recreation or related purposes.
- Support the remediation and rewilding of these areas to promote biological connectivity for birds, insects, and other wildlife.
- Conduct thorough and proactive stakeholder engagement with mining interests and recreation advocates.
- Encourage the location of motorized recreational uses in AML areas and other previously disturbed areas.

ECONOMY, IDENTITY AND CHARACTER OBJECTIVE 4: Promote Grant County as a multi-faceted recreation destination; strive to capture and retain Grant County's distinctive community and way of life in promotional materials.

Actions

- Co-sponsor a tourism-focused website that offers trail and tourism information specific to key user groups; offer "destination packages" that cater to specific visitor types.
- Ensure that promotional materials highlight Grant County's diverse community, varied landscape, and unique way of life.
- Communicate Grant County's commitments to stewardship ethics and inclusivity on County-sponsored recreation and tourism materials.
- Encourage and facilitate the review of marketing materials by land managers; ensure that trail guides and maps highlight locations that are prepared to receive increased volumes of use (e.g. trails with restrooms, ample parking).



- Support the growth of eco-tourism businesses and “voluntourism” projects that emphasize sustainability and service.
- Explore a National Heritage Area designation for the Gila region as proposed by the American Institute of Architects' 2022 report, A Vision for Five Points.

ECONOMY, IDENTITY AND CHARACTER OBJECTIVE 5: Encourage adaptive reuse projects as they relate to recreation; complement existing efforts to grow Grant County’s heritage tourism and craft economy.

Actions

- Support efforts to enhance Fort Bayard as a recreation hub for residents and visitors alike; facilitate efforts to locate recreation-focused offices and groups on or near the Fort Bayard campus.
- Provide support for regional initiatives to enhance community vibrancy and connectivity, such as the enhancement of the Waterworks site as part of the Five Points Initiative.
- Sponsor and uplift arts, cultural, and history programming in Grant County along with recreational tourism programming; support the development of arts facilities and programs on the Fort Bayard campus.
- Incentivize adaptive reuse efforts that enable recreation manufacturing and/or tech businesses to locate in Grant County.

ECONOMY, IDENTITY AND CHARACTER OBJECTIVE 6: Prioritize conservation, sustainability, and stewardship within recreational tourism growth strategies; protect Grant County’s significant natural features and ecosystems.

Actions

- Ensure continued compatibility with New Mexico’s 30x30 commitments.
- Monitor patterns of use at destinations across Grant County; deploy visitor use management strategies to maintain sustainable levels of use at popular destinations.
- Participate in existing stewardship initiatives, such as Leave No Trace and Tread Lightly!, to promote stewardship in anticipation of new users and visitors.
- Ensure continued compatibility of county-wide tourism goals with resource management goals for the Gila National Forest and other key land managers.
- Seize the opportunity to educate visitors and residents about the remarkable ecologies present in Grant County through signage, interpretation, and digital/physical guides and maps.



ECONOMY, IDENTITY AND CHARACTER OBJECTIVE 7: Reduce barriers to participation in outdoor recreation; promote meaningful engagement with the outdoors for community members of all ages.

Actions

- Establish a county-wide, donation-based “gear library” intended to increase access to outdoor gear for underserved individuals.
- Encourage “place-based” education initiatives and curricula in local schools, such as a “Gila semester” for high school students.
- Partner with HMS Senior Service to provide opportunities for senior members of the Grant County community to socialize and access the outdoors.

ECONOMY, IDENTITY AND CHARACTER OBJECTIVE 8: Proactively manage potential undesirable side effects of economic growth associated with tourism.

Actions

- Establish county-wide guidelines for sensible short-term rental (STR) limitations; provide communities with resources to retain affordable housing options (e.g. land banking, deed restrictions, cooperative housing).
- Monitor potential negative effects of visitation; for example, monitor typical traffic volumes along Highway 180 in collaboration with NM DOT.
- Encourage future municipal planning efforts to establish designated “growth areas” for tourism in the form of tourism overlay districts or recreation overlay districts.
- Provide municipalities with information on lighting ordinances that protect dark skies and wildlife.
- Consider policy interventions such as lodging taxes to fund initiatives desired by the community.
- Promote the safety and viability of walking and biking in communities throughout Grant County to reduce nuisance levels of vehicle traffic and spur economic activity.

ECONOMY, IDENTITY AND CHARACTER OBJECTIVE 9: Hold large and small events that promote the unique character of Grant County and highlight the area’s high-quality recreation offering and compelling landscape.

Actions

- Support recreation and natural history programming that emphasizes Grant County’s unique features, such as dark skies and avian biodiversity.



- Continue to sponsor landmark recreation events and key tournaments, such as the Tour of the Gila bike race.
- Encourage recreation events that involve communities throughout Grant County to spur visitor spending in less-visited areas of the County.



Implementation

THIS CHAPTER IDENTIFIES NEXT STEPS TOWARDS IMPLEMENTATION. RECOGNIZING THE CHALLENGES THAT ARE OFTEN FACED LEADING TO IMPLEMENTATION. IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS IDENTIFIED WITHIN THIS PLAN WILL REQUIRE THE COLLABORATE SUPPORT OF VARIOUS ACTORS OVER AN EXTENDED PERIOD. ACHIEVING THE FINAL VISION MAY FEEL LIKE A DAUNTING TASK. BUT EACH ACTION ON THE WAY IS AN IMPORTANT STEP TOWARDS A COMPLETE OUTDOOR RECREATION SYSTEM THAT WILL BENEFIT GENERATIONS TO COME.



“The ideal pathway towards implementation begins with the formation of this Trails Partnership to manage and monitor trails work moving forward.”





A PATHWAY TOWARDS IMPLEMENTATION

While many of the recommendations in this plan can be accomplished without a Trails Partnership, the formation of this group will facilitate seamless and efficient implementation of the plan (See **Recommendations Theme 1: Fostering Resource Collaboration**). The ideal pathway towards implementation begins with the formation of this Trails Partnership to manage and monitor trail work in the County moving forward. The County and the project steering committee would be responsible for establishing an MOU for the initiative and would take on the initial coordination of the partnership until partnership staff are hired. Critical next steps in the formation of a partnership include:

1

Convene and coordinate with representatives from the U.S. Forest Service, BLM, National Park Service, NM State Parks, and local municipalities to confirm their potential role in such a partnership and develop an MOU for the initiative. See a sample MOU from the Ridge to Rivers Partnership, here: <https://www.ridgetorivers.org/media/1052/signed-2020-r2r-mou.pdf>

2

Identify multi-agency funding strategies to fund the partnership, which will require a handful of paid staff and resources needed to uphold partnership objectives

3

Hire appropriate staff to manage and coordinate projects between the different agencies and apply for future grant funding to expand capabilities

4

Assign partnership staff with the responsibility of coordinating and executing actions listed within this chapter

5

Conduct regular partnership updates with county staff, associated agencies and partnership staff

The development of a partnership is recommended to ease the burden of implementation for any one agency, but collaboration between different groups can be effective without the development of



a partnership. Without a partnership, specific staff would need to be identified to ensure ongoing planning capabilities and coordination between different agencies and projects.



Ridge to Rivers Trails Partnership Case Study

Ridge to Rivers (R2R) is a cooperative partnership in Boise, Idaho between various local land managers and government agencies. The goal of the Ridge to Rivers partnership is to provide a high-quality system of trails for the enjoyment of Treasure Valley residents and visitors to the Boise Foothills.

In 1992, a variety of local, state, and federal agencies combined their efforts to steward and maintain local trails by forming Ridge to Rivers Partnership. The Ridge to Rivers partnership today consists of the City of Boise, Ada County, The Bureau of Land Management Four Rivers Field Office, the Boise National Forest and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game.

The Partnership exists under a multi-agency Memorandum of Understanding, with the City of Boise serving as the lead agency that states: "The primary intent of this MOU is to maximize cooperation and coordination amongst the several Agencies to efficiently manage public land resources in the Foothills." The partnership also endeavors to work closely with other stakeholders – particularly private, nonprofit and for-profit landowners – on issues affecting their lands. Examples include Bogus Basin, Land Trust of the Treasure Valley and the Idaho State Historical Society.

R2R has a full-time trail crew that provides trail services from trail design to construction, maintenance, and management. The success of the R2R partnership is based on the concept of sharing funding and expertise. By pooling limited funds and specialized knowledge, this partnership effort can accomplish community goals while using tax dollars efficiently.

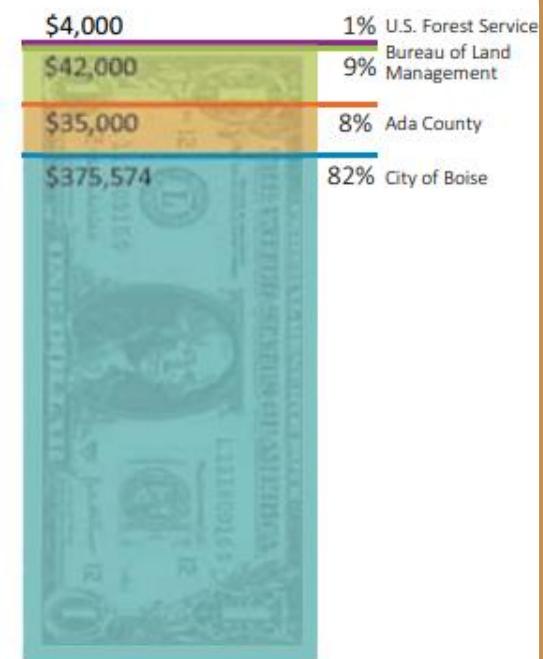
Trail maintenance and management represents about 70% of the R2R's annual budget. Partner agencies contributed nearly

a half million dollars of in-kind and direct funding for the operations and maintenance of the Ridge to Rivers trail system in 2015. All partner agencies, with the exception of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG), contribute funding to the Ridge to Rivers program but as the coordinating partner of Ridge to Rivers, the City of Boise funds over 80 percent of program costs.

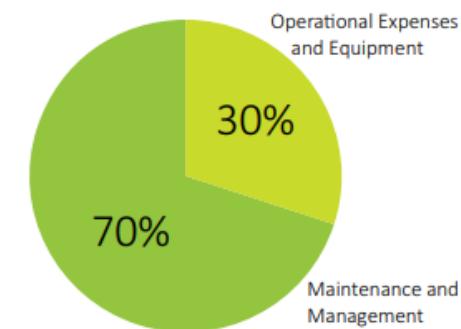
Source: <https://www.ridgetorivers.org>

► *How is Ridge to Rivers Funded?*

2015



► *What Does Ridge to Rivers Spend Money On?*





FUNDING & ASSISTANCE OPPORTUNITIES

Federal Opportunities

Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) Grant Program

This program, sponsored by the U.S Department of Transportation, appropriates grant funding to local, regional, and tribal entities for the prevention of injury or death along roadways. Grant funding can be applied to planning, research, or the implementation of projects identified in an Action Plan. This includes the development of bike/pedestrian infrastructure along hazardous roadways.

Economic Development Administration (EDA) Grants

The U.S. EDA's Travel, Tourism & Outdoor Recreation grant program provides funding from the American Rescue Plan to county, city, and organizations for investment in marketing, infrastructure, workforce, and other projects to revive travel and economic development in tourism-based economies.

USDA Rural Development Loan and Grant Assistance (RD)

USDA Rural Development (RD) forges partnerships with rural communities (defined as towns and villages with less than 20,000 inhabitants), funding projects that bring housing, community facilities (including trails and active transportation facilities), business guarantees, utilities and other services to rural America. This program provides funding to develop essential community facilities in rural areas. An essential community facility is defined as a facility that provides an essential service to the local community for the orderly development of the community. Relevant to this plan, possible projects include transportation facilities, parks, museums, street improvements, and small businesses.

National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program (RTC)

The National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTC) program supports community-led natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation projects across the nation. Their national network of conservation and recreation planning professionals can partner 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. Current projects include trail rehabilitation, interpretive trails, connector trails, trail master plans, trails collaboratives, and rail trail connectors. No monetary grants are made.



New Mexico Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)

The New Mexico Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), also known as the Recreational Trails Program (RTP), is a Federal reimbursement program as a part of the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBG) to communities for development and maintaining recreational trail projects. Grants are awarded to well-planned projects that help to develop, protect, and maintain trails and trail systems that improve connections in the community, livability, user-ability, and are maintained for public recreational use. TAP funds support a wide range of trail activities including hiking, mountain biking, walking, running, cross-country and backcountry skiing, nature-based interpretive trail use, equestrian, snowmobiling, and off-road motorized recreation. Funds can be used for the following types of projects: construction of new trails or trail connections; construction of new trailhead areas/parking facilities; construction of trailside facilities; maintenance, renovation, or restoration of trails; improvements to signage or trail structures along the trail; assessments of existing trail conditions for accessibility and improvements; equipment; and trail-related educational projects (i.e., information about trail safety, appropriate trail use, environmental protection, etc.). The program is administered by NMDOT, in cooperation with the state's seven RTPOs.

The Land & Water Conservation Fund

The Land & Water Conservation Fund is a Federal funding program under the Department of the Interior and administered by New Mexico branch of the Land & Water Conservation Fund. This program supports a variety of high-quality recreation and conservation areas dedicated for public outdoor recreation use and enjoyment. These grants can be used for a range of projects from establishing baseball fields and community green spaces; to providing public access to rivers, lakes and other water resources; to protecting historic and cultural sites; and conserving natural landscapes.

Certified Local Government Program

For municipalities that are enrolled as certified local government, federal grants are available to help local governments integrate historic preservation concerns with the planning and decision making process. Uses of the grant money can include resource identification and planning, National Register nominations, downtown planning and development of architectural drawings, streetscape assessments, public education, and building feasibility studies. Grants range from \$5,000 to \$59,000 and do not require a match.

Public Land Agency Opportunities

National Forest System Trails Stewardship Act



This act focuses on increasing the role of partners and volunteers in trail maintenance. This identifies maintenance priority areas and uses an Outfitter & Guide Stewardship credit system to perform agreed-upon work in lieu of paying annual land use fee. It also identifies a strategy to significantly increase the role of volunteers and partners in trail management and maintenance.

The Great American Outdoors Act

This act uses revenues from energy development to provide \$1.9 billion per year for five years to needed maintenance for critical facilities and infrastructure in national parks, forests, wildlife refuges, recreation areas, and American Indian schools

National Conservation Lands Program

The National Conservation Lands Program, managed by the BLM, conserves public land for the use of recreation, solitude, wildlife viewing and a wide range of other uses.

Bipartisan Infrastructure Law

This legislation increases funding for the National Park Service under the Federal Lands Transportation Program by 22 percent over five years. These funds will be invested in repairing and upgrading multiuse trails, transit systems, roads, bridges, and other transportation infrastructure. The Law invests in critical transportation infrastructure relating to: Climate and severe weather resiliency, connections to underserved gateway communities, electric vehicles & charging stations, wildlife crossings and rehabilitation & repair projects.

USDOT RAISE Grants

Nearly \$2.2 billion from the Rebuilding American Infrastructure and Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) program was allocated to help urban and rural modernization of transportation infrastructure. The Grant is for planning and capital investment supporting transportation with nearly two-thirds of projects in areas with persistent poverty or who are historically disadvantaged.

State Opportunities

The Outdoor Equity Fund

The Outdoor Equity Fund supports equitable access for underrepresented youth to outdoor experiences in New Mexico. This fund is oriented towards communities where at least 40 percent of youth are low-income. This grant requires an educational component and awards range from \$1,500-\$20,000.

Outdoor Recreation Trails+ Grant

The & Outdoor Recreation Trails+ program is supported by a combination of public and private investment with the objective to enhance equity in outdoor spaces through the development of



opportunities to support community and economic development, access to outdoor spaces, and wellness. This program provides two grant tiers, one for projects up to \$99,999 and the second to \$500,000. The program also provides a 2:1 match for rural applicants.

The Outdoor Recreation Incubator & Accelerator

This funding program provide grant funding to assist early state outdoor businesses. This program will assist in funding programs including service, retail, manufacturing, and other sectors leading New Mexico's reputation as an outdoor recreation powerhouse. 2021 recipients received \$20,000 from this program.

New Mexico Recreational Centers/Quality of Life Grant

The New Mexico Department of Finance & Administration sponsors an annual grant for communities to plan, design, furnish/equip and construct recreational projects. This can be applied to new and existing projects which are expected to contribute to the quality of life for regional residents.

Non-Grant Funding Opportunities

Capital Improvement Planning (CIP)

CIPs are common community planning tools to coordinate location, timing and financing of large capital improvement projects. They fund infrastructure development, machinery purchases. This can be used as a tool for recreation development and can assist in the acquisition of future grants.

Bonding

Local governments often use bonding as a mechanism to fund large recreation initiatives, especially those with strong community support. This requires some pre-planning and preparation prior to going to vote but can help attain public facilities.

Development Impact Fees

Areas experiencing development may benefit from recreation-specific development impact fees.

Tax Credits

Tax Credit programs, such as those under the New Mexico Land Conservancy, provide tax incentive for the dedication of land to public recreation and educational opportunities. This may be especially valuable in areas where private land may provide additional recreation space.



Other Opportunities

Freeport-McMoRan Foundation Investment Grants

The Freeport-McMoRan Foundation provides grant opportunities for Education and Workforce development, Economic Development, and Capacity and Leadership within the communities they work with. Funding opportunities occur on an annual basis and are awarded to 501c# designation, schools, and government institutions.

National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA)

NRPA offers Grant and Funding opportunities to support the development of recreation facilities through 501c(3) funding and the funding of recreation agencies. NRPA funding covers AmeriCorp Volunteer efforts, youth development, community facilities direct loans and grants for rural communities and several other opportunities to access resources for community recreation development.

PeopleforBikes Community Fund (PBCG)

The PeopleforBikes Community Grant Program (PBCG) provides funding for important and influential projects that build momentum for bicycling in communities across the U.S. These projects include bike paths and rail trails, as well as mountain bike trails, bike parks, and large-scale bicycle advocacy initiatives. PeopleforBikes will fund engineering and design work, construction costs, and reasonable volunteer support costs. The maximum grant award is \$10,000 and the grant cannot make up more than 50% of the total project budget.

Santa Cruz PayDirt Fund

Santa Cruz Bicycles funds groups, projects, programs and events that aim to increase riders' access to off-road cycling through their PayDirt Fund. This program funds new trail construction, maintenance, education, studies, signage and mapping, tools and land purchase

The Outride Fund

This grant program is organized through a non-profit organization dedicated to proving youth riding opportunities. They provide research, school-based programs, and matching community grants up to \$15,000 to support the emotional and physical well-being of youth while helping to cultivate inclusive cycling communities.



International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) Dig In Program

IMBA's Dig In Program, founded by Shimano, provides an avenue for raising funds for mountain bike projects nationwide. IMBA and Shimano run a national marketing campaign and provide grant opportunities up to \$5,000. The goal is to bridge the gap between local and national fundraising efforts, and show new audiences how inspirational and vital trails are to local riders and communities.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF)

RWJF provides funding for programs related to community health and its tie to where we live, learn, work and play. This foundation provides several grant opportunities to build a strong culture of health through equitable access to recreational opportunities.

The National Forest System Trail Stewardship Partner Funding Program

The National Forest System Trail Stewardship Partner Funding Program is intended to encourage and support volunteer and stewardship group trail maintenance accomplishments and trail deferred maintenance backlog on the National Forest trail system. Grants range from \$2,000 - \$20,000 and require a non-federal cash or in-kind match of at least 1:1.

The American Trails Trail Fund

The Trail Fund is administered by the trails Move People Coalition and supports grants for trail maintenance, research, and stewardship training. Grants range between \$2,000 - \$15,000 and require a cash or in-kind match of at least 20%.

NEXT STEPS

The following implementation chart identifies the priority level, general cost, and implementation responsibility for actions identified with each objective. The priority for each action was evaluated based upon community interest and need, its interaction and dependency on other actions, and ease of implementation.



IMPLEMENTATION

Theme 1: Fostering Resource Collaboration

NO.	ACTION	IMMEDIATE	2-5 YEARS	5-10 YEARS	ONGOING	Cost	Responsibility
Form a Recreation and Trails Partnership to enable continued collaboration between Grant County and major land managers on recreation and trail initiatives.							
1	Build upon the framework of inter-agency collaboration and momentum established through the master plan to spur the development of the new organization.	x				\$	County
2	Look to other, similar trail initiatives as examples such as the Ridge to Rivers Partnership in Idaho or the Sierra Buttes Trail Stewardship in California.	x				\$	County
3	Develop a multi-agency Memorandum of Understanding to guide the initiative, with Grant County serving as the lead agency.	x				\$	County
4	Establish an arrangement for governance, representation, and financial contributions from each partner.	x				\$	County
5	Hire outdoor recreation staff dedicated to Grant County for planning, management, operations, maintenance, and volunteer coordination.	x				\$\$	County
6	Hold quarterly meetings between land managers and county representatives to discuss issues, trends, events, and progress on shared goals.				x	\$	County, Land Managers
7	Ensure equitable and inclusive access to participate in established partnership.				x	\$	County
Empower recreation stakeholders and community members to be involved in trail and outdoor recreation management in Grant County.							
1	Ensure transparency of the Partnership; share information broadly and provide opportunities for public input on Partnership proceedings.				x	\$	MOU



2	Establish a Trails Advisory Group that helps inform the Partnership activities and provides a means for interested residents, volunteer, and individuals to reach land managers.	x			x	\$	MOU
3	Continue gathering public input and holding open houses on trails and outdoor recreation at both the county-wide and project specific scale.				x	\$	MOU
4	Involve a diversity of user types within stakeholder and advisory positions.				x	\$	MOU
Marshall volunteer capacity and efforts through centralized trails and recreation management.							
1	Combine and leverage volunteer trail and stewardship efforts across agencies and organizations.				x	\$	MOU
2	Increase efficiency and involvement of volunteers with enhanced and consistent support for all trails and land managers in the County.				x	\$	MOU
3	Leverage corporate relationships and other opportunities for volunteer capacity through enhanced and consistent coordination with Grant County businesses.				x	\$	MOU
Integrate Partnership activities with the internal processes and support opportunities of the partnering land management agencies.							
1	Coordinate with each partnering land management agency to ensure Partnership employees are integrated into the organizational structure and management processes for each forest unit, region, or field office.	x				\$	MOU
2	Leverage technical support and expertise within the partnering land management agencies to complement the recreation specialty of the Partnership (biologists, natural resource specialists, lands and real estate, etc.).				x	\$	MOU
3	Consolidate and coordinate NEPA and other environmental review processes for Partnership projects with an inter-agency team.				x	\$	MOU
4	Pursue funding and other agency support programs through the Partnership.				x	\$	MOU



5	Integrate Partnership activities and planning with travel management planning within each partnering land management agency.				x	\$	MOU
6	Ensure two-way communication between partnering land management agencies and the Grant County community.				x	\$	MOU



Theme 2: Improving Connectivity

NO.	ACTION	IMMEDIATE	2-5 YEARS	5-10 YEARS	ONGOING	Cost	Responsibility
Build out a “Copper Trails” Greenway system to connect Grant County communities.							
1	Complete a master plan for an inter-community connectivity route that builds upon the new path recently constructed near Santa Clara and has a similar greenway/multi-use character.		X			\$\$	MOU
2	Seek opportunities to connect communities, parks, trail systems, and other recreational assets with the envisioned complete Copper Trails system		X			\$	County, Municipalities
3	Ensure the Copper Trails system serves a variety of non-motorized users and provides both transportation and recreational values.				X	\$\$	County, MOU
4	Establish a Copper Trails Coalition that includes representatives from the County, the municipalities, NMDOT, WNMU, and other community partners.		X			\$	County
5	Integrate Copper Trails system development with other connectivity efforts around the CDT and other soft-surface trail connections.				X	\$\$\$	County, MOU
Promote a “Town as Trailhead” concept for recreational assets throughout the County.							
1	Encourage and promote towns as destinations and seek to empower both residents and visitors to start and end their trail trips and recreational activities right in town or from home where possible.				X	\$\$	Municipalities
2	Communicate the intent for Grant County to be a recreation-friendly community through branding, wayfinding, and signage that highlights recreation opportunities for everyone in the County and provides visitors with key information about where to shop, dine, stay, and play.				X	\$\$	County



3	Enhance connectivity between recreational assets and adjacent communities and residents. For example: connect Fort Bayard with Santa Clara, connect Lake Roberts with the Sapillo Creek area, connect Gomez Peak with Pinos Altos, etc.			X	\$\$\$\$	County
4	Support the development of more “close to home” trails and recreational experiences that support communities and residential areas throughout the County with opportunities for fitness or hiking, nature trails, dog walking, and shorter or more convenience-oriented mountain biking and off-roading.			X	\$\$\$	County, MOU
5	Develop a thoughtful downtown parking strategy in Silver City and other communities that preserves walkability while providing convenient access to trailheads, businesses, and other destinations.		X		\$\$	Municipalities
6	Support the development of the Waterworks site as a primary gateway to the Continental Divide Trail that can serve both day and long-distance hikers and expand their economic impact on the County.	X			\$	Silver City, County
7	Encourage efforts to increase connectivity between new and existing motorized recreational trails and related businesses, such as Silver City Powersports.		X		\$\$\$	County, Municipality
Maximize connectivity opportunities with the Continental Divide Trail; utilize the trail as a primary spine of non-motorized recreational connectivity throughout the County.						



	Continue efforts to close the CDT trail gap in Grant County (i.e., move the trail off-road) while maintaining connectivity and trail activity through Silver City. Prioritize improved connections between the Waterworks CDT Gateway site with both the CDT north and the CDT south, possibly through WNMU; enhanced connectivity with Western New Mexico University via a multi-use pathway/bridge connection over Highway 180 and trail improvements heading toward the CDT north; a hiking and mountain biking loop from the new CDT parking area on Little Walnut that provides a new route between the green gate on the CDT North and the CDT south gate near the "Doug/Bob Trail"; improving interim on-road segments with enhanced pedestrian facilities and signage.						
1					X	\$\$\$\$	County
2	Develop new connections between the CDT and other Grant County communities and trail systems such as Pinos Atos, Fort Bayard, and Santa Clara.			X		\$\$\$\$\$	County
3	Explore opportunities to use old railroad corridors as connectivity corridors.		X			\$\$	MOU
Develop a formal network of soft-surface trails that provide connectivity between communities and recreational assets for a variety of motorized and non-motorized uses which recognize the intrinsic value of the land which hosts them.							
1	Work with willing landowners to expand inter-community connectivity for hiking, trail running, mountain biking, and off-roading.				X	\$\$	MOU
2	Explore opportunities for using existing natural or human-made corridors for sustainable trail development; these could include roads, powerlines, drainages, and other features on the landscape.		X			\$\$	MOU
3	Develop new inter-community connections in concert with new "close to home" recreational trail loops near communities.			X		\$\$	MOU, Municipalities
4	Utilize existing trail systems in each community to build out an interconnected county-wide system over time.			X		\$\$	MOU, County



5	Integrate these connections with other connectivity efforts around the Grant County Greenway and CDT connections.				x	\$\$\$	MOU
6	Use the formalization of pathways with signage as an opportunity to reduce “user created pathways” and preserve the land on which they run.		x			\$	MOU
7	Prioritize connections between Service Corral to Big Tree, Admin Site Road Parallel Trail, Connector to Silver-Santa Clara Trail and Quarry Trail.		x			\$\$\$\$	County, MOU
Support “Active Transportation” connectivity throughout Grant County and ensure transportation projects consider access to trailheads and other recreational assets.							
1	Consider trail, sidewalk, bike lane, and active transportation facilities as an integrated system for walking, biking, and recreational use and incorporate this concept into all planning and design efforts for such facilities.				x	\$\$\$	County, Municipalities
2	Encourage adoption of “Complete Streets” ordinances and policies at both the county and municipal level.	x				\$	County, Municipalities
3	Address need for safe routes to key urban trailheads including Gomez Peak and Boston Hill.	x				\$\$\$	County, Municipalities
4	Improve bike, pedestrian, and recreational connectivity across Highway 180 and other major transportation corridors; seek intersection safety improvements and explore opportunities for safe recreational crossings for both motorized and non-motorized trails.		x			\$\$	County
5	Focus active transportation connections connecting communities to public schools in the County.				x	\$\$\$\$	County

Theme 3: Fostering Resource Collaboration

NO.	ACTION	IMMEDIATE	2-5 YEARS	5-10 YEARS	ONGOING	Cost	Responsibility
	Provide clear and consistent trail information at trailheads and outdoor recreation areas.						



1	Identify priority trailheads to receive amenity upgrades and information distribution kiosks.	x				\$	MOU
2	Create an urban wayfinding strategy to direct users to trail assets within urban areas.		x			\$	MOU
3	Ensure wayfinding systems are robust and maintainable to allow for durability and to minimize the impacts of vandalism				x	\$\$	MOU
4	Develop a detailed, consistent and predictable wayfinding system for priority areas using existing wayfinding strategies found at Boston Hill, the Dragonfly trail network, etc.		x			\$\$	MOU
5	Provide user courtesy information for trails bisecting private property and ranchland.		x			\$	MOU
6	Clearly define established trails as alternatives to deer pathways and desire lines.				x	\$	MOU
Provide a centralized source of trail information that indicates trail location, length, and type at high-use trailheads.							
1	Provide trail-condition updates and relative level of difficulty for all trails within the Urban Zone.		x			\$	MOU
2	Provide a mechanism for reporting and learning about what to expect on backcountry trails		x			\$\$	MOU
3	Leverage and Update Geographic Database System Created during this project.	x				\$	MOU
4	Create comprehensive package marketing and trail map materials available for public use.	x				\$\$	MOU
5	Collaborate regularly with the local recreation management partnership on updating existing information.				x	\$	MOU
6	Provide access to public trail information resources on an open-source basis to allow for citizen and volunteer access and trail updates.		x			\$	MOU
7	Clearly post trail closures for all motorized and non-motorized facilities.				\$	\$	MOU, Agencies



Enhance community familiarity with trails and outdoor recreation facilities and opportunities.							
1	Develop a distribution strategy for trail and recreation facility information through online resources, outdoor-oriented businesses, libraries hotels, community recreation facilities, and visitor centers.	x					\$ MOU
2	Create a shareable and detailed county-wide map with all inventoried trails and outdoor recreation facilities.	x					\$ MOU, County
3	Provide both paper and digital maps with guiding QR codes in high-use areas.	x					\$ MOU
4	Advise users of the reality of being in remote areas and the limited availability of drinkable water, potential safety hazards, and rapidly changing weather conditions.				x		MOU, County Agencies
Develop a consistent system for on-trail wayfinding for remote and backcountry trails.							
1	Support interagency coordination for trail maintenance, enhancements, and the development of a consistent signage and confidence marker program with associated distances and direction symbols at forks in the trail.				x	\$	MOU
2	When applicable, use existing trail signage to direct users to trail navigation and condition information.	x				\$	MOU
3	Ensure digital maps interface with live wayfinding navigation platforms for on-trail users.		x			\$	MOU
4	Ensure that all trailheads are clearly marked and distinguishable, especially those located on Forest Service and BLM land.		x			\$\$	MOU
5	Provide CDT-road crossings with wayfinding information guiding users to the next trail section and to the nearest urban area.		x			\$\$	MOU
6	Prioritize maintenance on popular backcountry trails.			x		\$\$\$	MOU





Theme 4: Encouraging Equitable Access

NO.	ACTION	IMMEDIATE	2-5 YEARS	5-10 YEARS	ONGOING	Cost	Responsibility
Provide equitable access and diverse options to outdoor trail and recreation assets regardless of ability, income, and location.							
1	Follow USDA Accessibility Guidebook for Outdoor Recreation and Trails Standards.				x	\$	County, Municipalities, MOU
2	Enhance high-use trailhead and outdoor recreation facilities to improve ADA accessibility.			x		\$\$\$	County, Municipalities, MOU
3	Identify areas appropriate for enhanced ADA access.	x				\$	County, Municipalities, MOU
Ensure equitable recreation opportunities regardless of location in the county or provide connective transportation options to reach existing high-use trailheads.							
1	Identify central areas with various recreation opportunities to become recreation destination hubs including Ft. Bayard/Santa Clara, Downtown Silver City, and Gila	x				\$	County, MOU
2	Ensure consistent and frequent transit access to popular existing trailheads and recreation hubs			x		\$\$\$	County
3	Mechanize the “Town as Trailhead” approach to ensure equitable access to recreation assets across urban areas.			x		\$\$	MOU, Municipalities
4	Prioritize off-street connections between municipalities and key trail-systems.			x		\$\$\$\$	MOU, Municipalities
5	Evaluate the opportunity for trailhead bike racks and bike maintenance stations at trailheads with high bicycle visitation.		x			\$\$	MOU
Eliminate the information barrier between the county's recreation facilities and potential new users.							
1	Provide printed maps for trail users at trail heads, community recreation centers, library, outfitters and public facilities.	x				\$	County, MOU



2	Explore programming opportunities for residents of all ages and abilities to meet and explore new recreation opportunities.	x					\$	MOU
3	Explore partnership opportunities for outdoor education venues to promote place-based learning and outdoor stewardship.		x				\$	MOU

Theme 5: Supporting Trail Recreation and Management

NO.	ACTION	IMMEDIATE	2-5 YEARS	5-10 YEARS	ONGOING	Cost	Responsibility
Use a Grant County Recreation & Trails Partnership to facilitate dialogue and information-sharing between the County and land managers regarding shared recreation and stewardship goals.							
1	Encourage land managers to participate in a recreation management partnership (MOU agreement) in partnership with the county.	x				\$	County
Support efforts of the Forest Service and other entities to manage and steward fire-prone areas.							
1	Encourage municipalities to reduce fire damage by limiting development in the wildland-urban interface (WUI).				x	\$	County
2	Provide up-to-date information to the public regarding fire-related trail and park closures.				x	\$	County, MOU
3	Develop a rehabilitation plan for public trails and recreation destinations damaged by fire; in the event of prolonged or permanent closures, evaluate trail re-routes to maintain connectivity.			x		\$\$	County, MOU
Develop an interagency prioritization strategy for trail and facility maintenance.							



1	Prioritize maintenance and upkeep at recreation locations with high visitation and high ecological impact.		x			\$\$	MOU
2	Address visitor capacity and maintenance issues at priority locations, including Bill Evans and Gila Box Canyon.		x			\$\$	MOU, County
3	Establish a county-wide guide for "Complete Trailheads," which may include visitor information, stewardship guidelines, parking, trash receptacles, and restrooms. Trail education should include information regarding Leave No Trace practices, right-of-way rules and guidelines for sharing the trail with other users, and language prohibiting littering.		x			\$\$	MOU
4	Prioritize maintenance and upkeep of existing facilities over the development of new facilities.					\$\$	MOU
5	Allocate more funding to MOU or trail management entity.			x	x	\$\$\$	County
Strive to expand recreational access and improve recreational experiences in line with resource management goals.							
1	Expand recreational opportunities that align with the appropriate zone (e.g. majority of paved opportunities belong in Urban Zone).			x		\$\$\$\$	MOU
2	Explore private property acquisition along the San Vicente Creek Trail to facilitate ecological connectivity and a broader range of recreation amenities.		x			\$\$\$	Silver City, MOU
3	Collaborate with the Forest Service on bike-optimized and motorized trails that contain features that cater to a range of abilities.			x		\$\$	MOU
4	Ensure that Search and Rescue (SAR) professionals are informed of changes to the recreation offering in Grant County, particularly in backcountry areas.				x	\$	MOU, County
Encourage input from the public on new recreation opportunities and incentivize volunteer participation in stewardship initiatives.							



1	Establish a Trails Advisory Group made up of local business owners, nonprofit representatives, and representatives from different user groups to act as a connection between the community and agencies within the county.	x					\$	MOU
2	Support participation in and promotion of Continental Divide Trail Days events and similar volunteer trail maintenance activities.	x					\$	MOU, County, Agencies
3	Incentivize long-term volunteer participation and retention by providing discounts at local businesses for repeat volunteers; engage in succession planning to encourage stable levels of volunteer participation.		x				\$	MOU, County
Support the long-term sustainability of trails of all types in Grant County.								
1	Implement a lodging tax or other funding mechanism to provide continued support for trail maintenance.		x				\$	County
2	Create a paid position to apply for and administer grants for trail maintenance crews and projects within the County; apply for NMDOT Recreational Trail Program and Transportation Alternatives Program funds to maintain backcountry trails and enhance bike/ped infrastructure, respectively.	x					\$\$	County
3	Provide opportunities for County officials and other recreation stakeholders to attend conferences and trainings led by leading trail stewardship organizations (e.g. American Trails, the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics, Professional Trail Builders Association) to learn about best practices for trail and recreation management.					x	\$\$	MOU, County



Theme 6: Balancing a Diverse Set of Uses

NO.	ACTION	IMMEDIATE	2-5 YEARS	5-10 YEARS	ONGOING	Cost	Responsibility
Ensure compatibility of Grant County's current and future recreational offerings with Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) designations and other land management prescriptions.							
1	Create and sustain a county-wide framework for balancing recreational uses based on their degree of impact; using the ROS as a guide.		x			\$\$	County
2	Identify target zones for motorized use away from key riparian areas and other high-sensitivity zones; monitor unsanctioned use.		x			\$	County
Ensure that all user groups have equal access to resources and information that allow them to recreate safely and responsibly.							
1	Maintain a centralized source of trail information that provides up-to-date notices of road and trail closures; ensure that this source provides trail and recreation information specific to primary user groups in Grant County, including but not limited to hikers, mountain bikers, hunters, and motorized users.				x	\$	MOU
2	Facilitate efforts to digitize and publicize an updated Motor Vehicle Use Map of the Gila NF.		x			\$	MOU
Encourage the viability and growth of recreational uses suitable for the Urban Zone within that environment.							
1	Support the Copper Trails implementation and efforts to create universally accessible paved trails connecting Grant County communities and destinations; prioritize connections to existing and future paved paths.			x		\$\$\$\$	County
2	Partner with DOT to install Share-the-Road signs or similar signage to encourage drivers to be mindful of road bikers and through hikers using major roadways, particularly Highway 180.		x			\$\$	County
3	Install bike lanes or provide shareway road markings that connect to key biking areas, such as Boston Hill and Fort Bayard.		x			\$\$-\$	County, Municipalities



4	Promote the use of existing paved surfaces for active recreational opportunities, such as skateboarding and road biking.	x				\$	County, Municipalities
5	Explore opportunities to develop a pump track and jump zone for BMX and mountain biking near the skatepark in Silver City; consider a paved or chip seal facility that will reduce on-going maintenance costs and extend opportunities to skateboarders, scooters and other users.		x			\$\$\$	MOU
6	Explore the acquisition of the old quarry site on Hwy 90 in Silver City for recreational uses. The site could provide additional opportunities for trail connectivity between Boston Hill and San Vicente, mountain biking, a pump track, and/or a motorized skills/challenge area.			x		\$\$	MOU, Silver City
Designate motorized recreation opportunities areas in Grant County that promote safe, quality experiences and avoid high-quality habitat areas.							
1	Provide specific and sanctioned trail opportunities for motorized recreation; restrict motorized users from non-motorized trails using gates and other enforcement measures.		x			\$\$	MOU, Agencies
2	Diversify motorized trail experiences in Grant County with purpose-built recreational routes including locations for a motorized skills building or play area, rock crawling routes, touring routes, soft roading/ singletrack OHM trails and gravel OHM trails.			x		\$\$\$	MOU
Reduce user conflicts through education and stewardship messaging.							
1	Provide signage along multi-use trails and at trailheads that educates users on etiquette for sharing the trail.		x			\$\$	MOU
2	Provide trash receptacles and other amenities that encourage responsible use of trails and rec facilities		x			\$\$	MOU



3	Provide motorized-specific stewardship guidelines and requirements, such as using a catch-pan when crossing streams	x				\$	MOU
4	Cultivate a culture of accountability and mutual respect on Grant County trails and recreation spaces; for example, install “Watch for Bikes,” “Share the Road,” or similar signage that encourages a safe, respectful environment for road cyclists				x	\$	County, Municipalities, Agencies
Affirm that all Grant County residents belong in outdoor spaces; cultivate an inclusive culture on trails and open spaces in Grant County.							
1	Support the growth of recreational opportunities that cater to community members of all ages and abilities				x	\$	County, Municipalities, Agencies
2	Encourage motorized recreation users to form an organized group or league to facilitate communication between county leaders and motorized users	x				\$	County
3	Ensure that promotional materials and imagery depicting outdoor recreation in Grant County reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of recreation users	x				\$	MOU, County, Municipalities, Agencies
4	Adopt a compassionate, “person-first” approach to addressing homelessness in public parks, such as Big Ditch.		x			\$\$	County, Municipalities
Seek to provide new recreational experiences that “fill the gaps” in the current recreational offerings in the County.							
1	Provide “close to home opportunities” for residents to partake in recreational activities within their neighborhoods or immediate area eliminating the need to travel for experiences.			x		\$\$\$\$	County, Municipalities
2	Provide additional opportunities and spaces for designated motorized recreation.			x		\$\$\$\$	MOU, County
3	When possible, separate motorized and non-motorized users with the exception of shared infrastructure such as bridges and crossings.			x		\$\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$\$	MOU
4	Explore opportunities for self-contained recreational assets including a pump track as spaces for skill development and community-building.		x			\$\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$\$	MOU



5	Create a diversity of trail types for bicyclists including both flow trail and cross-country opportunities.			x		\$\$\$	MOU
6	Provided maintained and managed access points to the Gila River in the Gila and Cliff areas.		x			\$\$\$	County

Theme 7: Protecting Ecosystems Through Sustainable Trails & Recreation

NO.	ACTION	IMMEDIATE	2-5 YEARS	5-10 YEARS	ONGOING	Cost	Responsibility
Develop sustainable and resilient recreation facilities which recognize and preserve the natural setting, protect cultural resources, and have minimized impact on surrounding ecological systems.							
1	Utilize local materials and building techniques to preserve the character of the surrounding area.				x	\$\$	MOU
2	Establish an evaluation system for trail additions or improvements within culturally sensitive areas.		x			\$	MOU
3	Require a comprehensive understanding of cultural site protection, invasive species management, ecological impact mitigation and sustainable trail design for future trail and outdoor recreation development.				x	\$	MOU, County, Municipalities, Agencies
Provide ongoing trail and facility maintenance to ensure the sustainability and resiliency of recreation facilities.							
1	Designate the responsibility of maintenance and upkeep of trail assets to the established MOU	x				\$	County
2	Provide and maintain trash receptacles at all trailheads within the Urban Zone, and at popular trailheads outside of this area.		x			\$\$	MOU
3	Provide adequate trail maintenance to mitigate erosion and promote soil health.				x	\$\$	MOU
4	Ensure adequate stormwater management systems on trails using construction techniques such as out-sloping and grade reversals.				x	\$\$\$	MOU
5	Identify and eliminate invasive plant species adjacent to trails and recreation facilities to avoid transmission.			x		\$\$	MOU



6	Encourage volunteer stewardship through coordinated programs and stewardship events.				x	\$	MOU, County
Mitigate the impacts of recreation on sensitive ecological areas and critical habitats.							
1	Establish use patterns which are consistent and considerate of sensitive areas and ecological needs surrounding a trail or outdoor recreation facility.		x			\$	MOU
2	Establish a close relationship with local biologists and environmental specialists in partnership with the established MOU to provide ongoing environmental assessment.				x	\$\$	MOU, County, Agencies
3	Monitor and evaluate trails for impacts on ecosystems.			x		\$	MOU
4	Reroute trails as necessary to bypass particularly sensitive areas.			x		\$\$	MOU
5	Study capacity use patterns and control access to provide responsible management.			x		\$\$	MOU
6	Require thorough environmental review for new trail development and large enhancements on a multilevel agency scale, including a county review.				x	\$\$\$	MOU
7	Provide dog waste bag centers at all established trailheads.	x				\$	MOU
Promote responsible recreation, especially in sensitive areas, designated wilderness and protected areas.							
1	Enhance public knowledge of low-impact recreation through county-wide campaigns and initiatives.		x			\$\$	MOU
2	Promote programs to reduce individual impact including Leave No Trace and Tread Lightly!	x				\$	MOU
3	Integrate responsible recreation messaging at trail heads and at local outdoor retailer locations.		x			\$	MOU
4	Provide constant and widespread education on safe campfire and fire mitigation strategies.				x	\$	MOU
5	Provide education on user hygiene when in remote or backcountry areas.				x	\$	MOU
6	Avoid routing multimodal transportation and connectivity routes through sensitive ecological areas.				x	\$	County, Municipalities
Plan future trail and recreation facilities to accommodate the growing impacts of climate change.							



1	Plan future trails with recognition for the increasing severity of flood events.				x	\$	MOU
2	Establish a county-wide protocol for wildfire trail closures and to mitigate landslide hazards.	x				\$	MOU, County, Agencies
3	Develop a county-wide wildfire prevention campaign for recreationalists with frequent high fire danger postings.	x				\$	MOU
4	Coordinate trail closings with agencies to better communicate closures and openings with the public.		x			\$	MOU



Theme 8: Preserving & Complementing Grant County's Economy, Identity and Character

NO.	ACTION	IMMEDIATE	2-5 YEARS	5-10 YEARS	ONGOING	Cost	Responsibility
Support thoughtful and sustainable county-wide growth of outdoor recreation and tourism; promote the diversification of Grant County's economy.							
1	Encourage strategic investments in connectivity, infrastructure, and amenities to promote visitation to and economic activity in communities across Grant County.				x	\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$	County
2	Monitor visitation on a seasonal and annual basis using trail/vehicle counting, occupancy rates, and additional metrics; adaptively manage increases in visitation rates.				x	\$\$	County, MOU
3	Provide a business guide to recreation-focused businesses and new business owners that summarizes existing resources, stewardship principles, and other best practices.	x				\$\$	County
4	Promote events, collaboration, and information-sharing among Grant County's community of entrepreneurs and stakeholders, including business owners, educators, and advocates.				x	\$	County
5	Provide technical assistance to community leaders and entrepreneurs seeking to expand recreation and/or tourism viability in their communities.		x			\$\$	County
Attract and retain a talented workforce in Grant County through investments in recreation and quality of life; ensure that expansions to recreation and tourism complement mining, ranching, and other traditional industries in Grant County.							
1	Complement efforts of Freeport McMoRan and other major employers to finance recreation amenities and improvements through community investment grants.		x			\$\$	County
2	Conduct routine outreach to the ranching community to facilitate collaboration on future expansions to recreation and trails as they relate to ranching.				x	\$	County, MOU



3	Spearhead and support efforts to educate students and young residents on the variety of professional opportunities available to them in Grant County.	x				\$	County
Support the innovative and productive future reclamation of abandoned mine lands (AML) for recreation.							
1	Follow Environmental Protection Agency guidance on the revitalization and reuse of AML for recreation or related purposes.				x	\$	County, MOU
2	Support the remediation and rewilding of these areas to promote biological connectivity for birds, insects, and other wildlife.			x		\$\$\$	County
3	Conduct thorough and proactive stakeholder engagement with mining interests and recreation advocates.		x			\$	County, MOU
4	Encourage the location of motorized recreational uses in AML areas and other previously disturbed areas.				x	\$	County, MOU
Promote Grant County as a multi-faceted recreation destination; strive to capture and retain Grant County's distinctive community and way of life in promotional materials.							
1	Co-sponsor a tourism-focused website that offers trail and tourism information specific to key user groups; offer "destination packages" that cater to specific visitor types.		x			\$\$	County
2	Ensure that promotional materials highlight Grant County's diverse community, varied landscape, and unique way of life.				x	\$	County
3	Communicate Grant County's commitments to stewardship ethics and inclusivity on County-sponsored recreation and tourism materials.	x				\$	County
4	Encourage and facilitate the review of marketing materials by land managers; ensure that trail guides and maps highlight locations that are prepared to receive increased volumes of use (e.g. trails with restrooms, ample parking).		x			\$	County, MOU



5	Support the growth of eco-tourism businesses and “voluntourism” projects that emphasize sustainability and service.		x			\$	County
6	Explore a National Heritage Area designation for the Gila region as proposed by the American Institute of Architects' 2022 report, A Vision for Five Points.	x				\$	County
Encourage adaptive reuse projects as they relate to recreation; complement existing efforts to grow Grant County's heritage tourism and craft economy.							
1	Support efforts to enhance Fort Bayard as a recreation hub for residents and visitors alike; facilitate efforts to locate recreation-focused offices and groups on or near the Fort Bayard campus.				x	\$\$-\$\$\$\$	County
2	Provide support for regional initiatives to enhance community vibrancy and connectivity, such as the enhancement of the Waterworks site as part of the Five Points Initiative.				x	\$\$-\$\$\$\$	County
3	Sponsor and uplift arts, cultural, and history programming in Grant County along with recreational tourism programming; support the development of arts facilities and programs on the Fort Bayard campus.				x	\$\$-\$\$\$\$	County
4	Incentivize adaptive reuse efforts that enable recreation manufacturing and/or tech businesses to locate in Grant County.			x		\$\$-\$\$\$\$	County
Prioritize conservation, sustainability, and stewardship within recreational tourism growth strategies; protect Grant County's significant natural features and ecosystems.							
1	Ensure continued compatibility with New Mexico's 30x30 commitments.				x	\$	County
2	Monitor patterns of use at destinations across Grant County; deploy visitor use management strategies to maintain sustainable levels of use at popular destinations.			x		\$	County
3	Participate in existing stewardship initiatives, such as Leave No Trace and Tread Lightly!, to promote stewardship in anticipation of new users and visitors.	x				\$	County, MOU



4	Ensure continued compatibility of county-wide tourism goals with resource management goals for the Gila National Forest and other key land managers.				x	\$	MOU
5	Seize the opportunity to educate visitors and residents about the remarkable ecologies present in Grant County through signage, interpretation, and digital/physical guides and maps.		x			\$\$	County, MOU



Reduce barriers to participation in outdoor recreation; promote meaningful engagement with the outdoors for community members of all ages.						
1	Establish a county-wide, donation-based “gear library” intended to increase access to outdoor gear for underserved individuals.			x	\$\$	County, MOU
2	Encourage “place-based” education initiatives and curricula in local schools, such as a “Gila semester” for high school students.			x	\$\$	County
3	Partner with HMS Senior Service to provide opportunities for senior members of the Grant County community to socialize and access the outdoors.			x	\$\$	County
Proactively manage potential undesirable side effects of economic growth associated with tourism.						
1	Establish county-wide guidelines for sensible short-term rental (STR) limitations; provide communities with resources to retain affordable housing options (e.g. land banking, deed restrictions, cooperative housing).			x	\$	County
2	Monitor potential negative effects of visitation; for example, monitor typical traffic volumes along Highway 180 in collaboration with NM DOT.			x	\$	County
3	Encourage future municipal planning efforts to establish designated “growth areas” for tourism in the form of tourism overlay districts or recreation overlay districts.			x	\$\$	County
4	Provide municipalities with information on lighting ordinances that protect dark skies and wildlife.		x		\$	County
5	Consider policy interventions such as lodging taxes to fund initiatives desired by the community.	x			\$	County
6	Promote the safety and viability of walking and biking in communities throughout Grant County to reduce nuisance levels of vehicle traffic and spur economic activity.	x			\$\$\$	County
Hold large and small events that promote the unique character of Grant County and highlight the area’s high-quality recreation offering and compelling landscape.						



1	Support recreation and natural history programming that emphasizes Grant County's unique features, such as dark skies and avian biodiversity.				x	\$\$	County
2	Continue to sponsor landmark recreation events and key tournaments, such as the Tour of the Gila bike race.				x	\$\$	County
3	Encourage recreation events that involve communities throughout Grant County to spur visitor spending in less-visited areas of the County.				x	\$\$	County