

# Recreation Facility Analysis



## Five-year Program of Work

BRIDGER-TETON National Forest

The BTNF recreation facility analysis was completed in February 2006. It was intended as a road map for effective developed site management in the context of a complete forest-wide recreation program. This plan guides all recreation developed site investments, including the capital improvement program, minor construction, partnerships, and annual operations and maintenance.

Financial information available in 2004 showed that the Bridger-Teton Forest could afford to operate all existing developed sites to some level of quality. It is worth noting that numerous efficiency measures have already been taken in regard to developed recreation on the forest, prior to this action plan.

Premises on which the program of work is based:

- Our overall strategy is to maintain a balanced program and be as efficient as possible with developed recreation so we can also accomplish our targets in dispersed recreation and special uses. Developed recreation is only one part of the overall program, and on the BTNF a relatively small part of the program. This is consistent with the forest niche that offers primarily a dispersed recreation experience.
- Just because a developed site isn't "paying for itself" doesn't mean we won't continue to offer the service. We will be as efficient as possible but some sites that currently don't generate much revenue do meet the forest niche and public need; further, some low-ranking sites in our inventory may only require some modest investment to better meet the niche or generate revenue. Some of our small, isolated campgrounds are used in lieu of dispersed sites, allowing us to concentrate campsite clean-up and other operations, so there is some efficiency in having these sites open. In other parts of the forest, small recreation sites offer food storage structures to help people keep attractants away from bears. The presence of these structures encourages use of the sites, makes people feel safer, and reduces the effort we must make to patrol and clean up dispersed camps.

## **2. THE BTNF RECREATION NICHE**

### **Settings, Special Places, and Values**

The Bridger-Teton National Forest is a large part of the Greater Yellowstone region, and it contains some of the most pristine areas within it. A third of the forest is in classified wilderness or Wilderness Study Areas; another forty percent is backcountry that is every bit as wild. Other parts of the forest have major recreation corridors, roads that give access to the backcountry and dispersed roadside camping, and popular rivers for floating and fishing that attract great numbers of visitors. Finally, the BTNF offers some world-class recreation destinations, some of which are resorts and some of which are managed by the forest. These tend to be the most developed parts of the forest, but even these are rustic in appearance and architecture, blending into the natural surroundings. Wild lands include not only the three wildernesses on the forest but primitive backcountry, OHV routes, and low-standard forest roads that give access to dispersed activities.

Resorts and outfitter services serve local, regional, national, and international visitors, many of whom are interested in learning about and appreciating the natural setting of the forest. The forest has numerous opportunities for wildlife viewing, hunting, fishing, and sites of unique geologic interest. Natural amenities of the forest are vital to the economy of nearby communities.

## Primary Visitors

People who visit or recreate within the BTNF can be divided into three major categories:

- “Spontaneous” recreationists who rarely plan an outing, and are residents of communities adjacent to the Forest (Jackson, Pinedale, Big Piney, Kemmerer). Emphasis on day use, short duration, and use of trails and other facilities close to town.
- “Go tomorrow” recreationists who do minimal trip planning and live within a two to four-hour drive of the Forest (Wasatch Front, Idaho Falls).
- “Planner” recreationists who do significant trip planning and preparation, may utilize outfitters and guides, and live outside of region.

### 3. CHANGES FROM BASE LINE OF DEVELOPED RECREATION SITES

Some recreation sites have changed since the completion of the Recreation Facility Analysis in 2006. Site closures at Fourmile Picnic and the Forestry Interpretive sites implement tasks identified in the analysis; site conversions, some of which are facilitated by necessary removal of beetle-killed trees, are being considered.

**Swift Creek Campground** and **Bridge Campground**, both at Greys River RD, serve a day use need more than camping; plans being considered include improving and redesigning Swift Creek Campground (replacing water system and old toilets as shown below) and converting it to a reservable group picnic/reunion site and converting Bridge into a water-focus site with kayak launching, picnic sites and fishing access.

Our ability to manage the restroom at **Cache Creek Trailhead** year-round is restricted by lack of funds. This is not a fee site and we have no plans to convert it to one, but in order to reduce costs we are considering closure of the restroom during the winter. We may be able to leave it open if we can negotiate a cooperating agreement with the county or another entity. This is still being discussed.



**Fourmile Picnic** site is to be decommissioned in 2008 as part of a highway reconstruction project. New sites for scenic turn-outs, trailheads, and other developments associated with the scenic byway will increase the opportunities for roadside day use in this area.



**The forestry interpretive trail** on US 26 will be removed as part of the reconstruction of the highway.

We proposed to convert **Lynx Creek Campground** to a reservable group site that can be used for both camping and day use. Most existing single family units will remain and will be available as they currently exist; under-used sites like the one at left will become part of the redesigned group site.

Additions to the developed fee site inventory have occurred since 2004, or are planned for 2008. These include **Wolf Creek Campground, Sherman Guard Station** and **Green River Lakes Lodge** (the latter two are rental cabins).

#### **4. PROGRAM OF WORK**

The BTNF is in the process of implementing the 2006 analysis, as revised in 2007. Further revision is planned for 2008; these revisions reflect accomplishments each year (so the needs listed in the RFA no longer exist); they have also been altered to incorporate the forest's transition plan to meeting universal access standards.