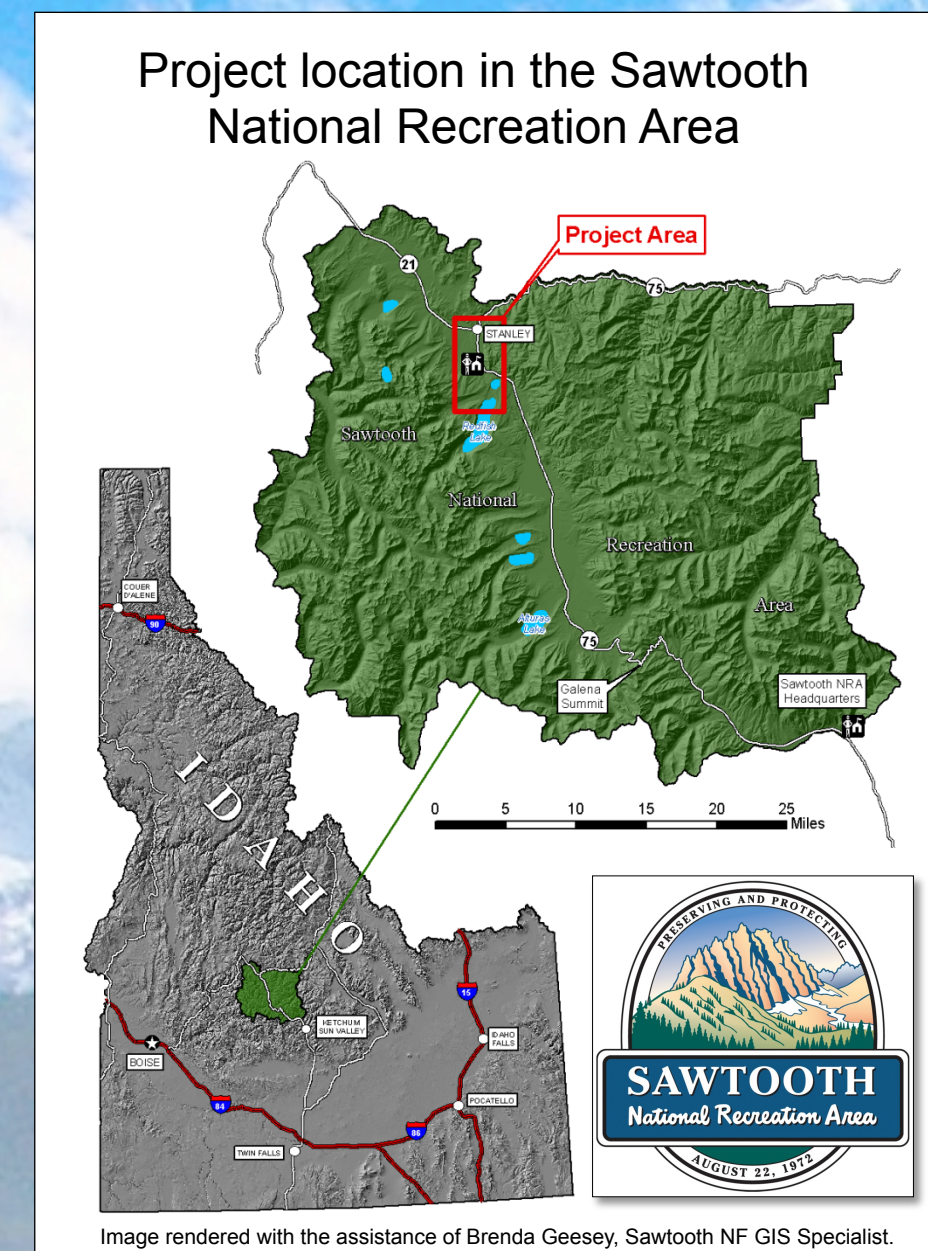


# The City of Stanley to Redfish Lake Complex Trails: Designing Transportation Choice in the “Jewel of Idaho”

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Sawtooth National Recreation Area

## What is the Transportation Scholars Program?

The Public Lands and National Park Foundations' Transportation Scholars programs provide parks and public lands with transportation professionals for six to 12 months who assist in transportation planning and implementation to help parks and public lands reduce traffic, congestion and pollution while improving visitor experiences. These programs are designed to place individuals with substantial knowledge and expertise in transportation planning and related areas. *See footer for a list of sponsors.*



## The Redfish Lake Recreation Complex

Just six miles south of Stanley Idaho, the Redfish Lake Complex is the most popular summer destination in the SNRA. Approximately 379,200 people visited the SNRA in 2009 (National Visitors Use Monitoring ,2009). Redfish Lake is 4.5 miles long and 0.75 miles wide and has seven campgrounds, a boat ramp, rustic lodge (with cabins), and three day-use facilities, all with enough capacity to serve up to 2,200 people at one time. In the summer, the Redfish Lake Complex becomes the largest community in Custer County, Idaho.

## City of Stanley (pop 63), Custer County, Idaho

Stanley is contained within SNRA lands and has a tourism based economy most active during the two month long peak summer season. Known as the coldest town in the Lower 48 (record low of -54°F), the year-round population has dropped by over third since 2000 (100 to 63). Remaining residents continue to struggle to make ends meet. The City believes a trail between Stanley and the Redfish Lake Complex (6 miles) has the potential to boost its economy.



## Introduction

### The Sawtooth National Recreation Area (SNRA)

The SNRA was established in 1972 and consists of 756,000 acres of iconic western landscapes and majestic mountain pinnacles in south central Idaho.

- Once considered for a National Park, the SNRA is administered by the U.S. Forest Service, with enabling legislation (Public Law 92-400) that strives for a better balance between preservation and “multiple uses”.
- Uses include working landscapes of timber harvests, grazing, limited mining, as well as recreation like hunting, off-road motor vehicle use, and mountain biking.
- SNRA is rural and remote. It is approximately a 160 mile drive from Boise and a 300 mile drive from Salt Lake City.
- “The Jewel of Idaho.”

## The Problem

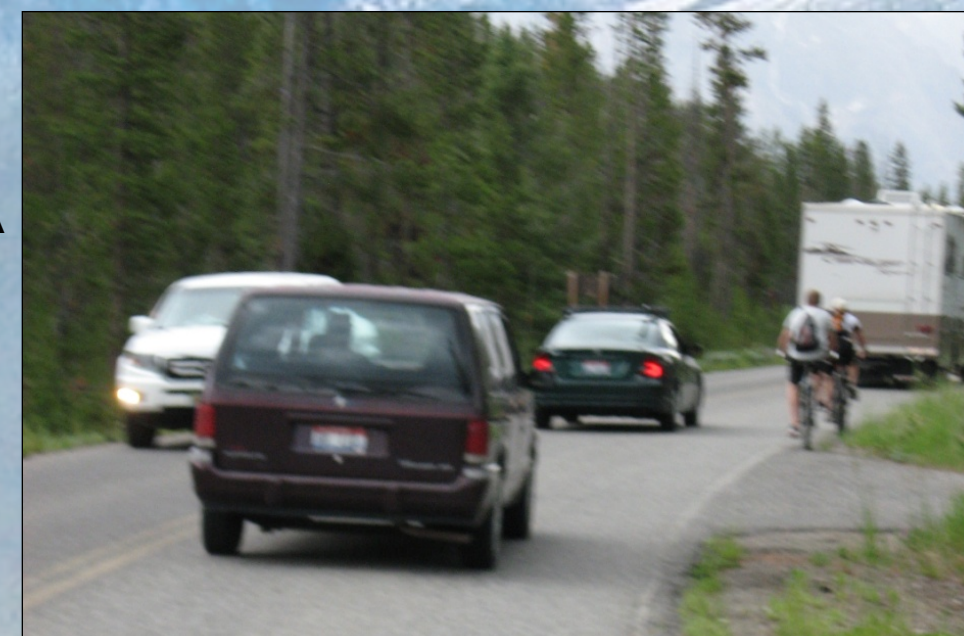
Redfish Lake area day use parking lots overflow on the weekends. The old and narrow road network is heavily used by large pickup trucks, RV's and camp/boat trailers. Heavy bicycle and pedestrian traffic must share roads with large recreation vehicles throughout the summer. Visitor safety and user experience is a primary concern and travel is made more difficult due to rough surfaces (in places), desire paths, redundant trails and a lack of directional signs.

Idaho Highway 75, the only route between Redfish Lake and Stanley, is 26 feet wide with no shoulders and has a 65mph speed limit. There are no alternative routes for non-motorized travelers to reach Stanley from the Redfish Lake area. To address the above issues, a transportation scholar is working with the U.S. Forest Service on three main tasks.

Task 1- Coordinate with partners and analyze results of a trail user survey

Task 2- Conduct trail planning, design and NEPA analysis for a Stanley to Redfish Lake trail

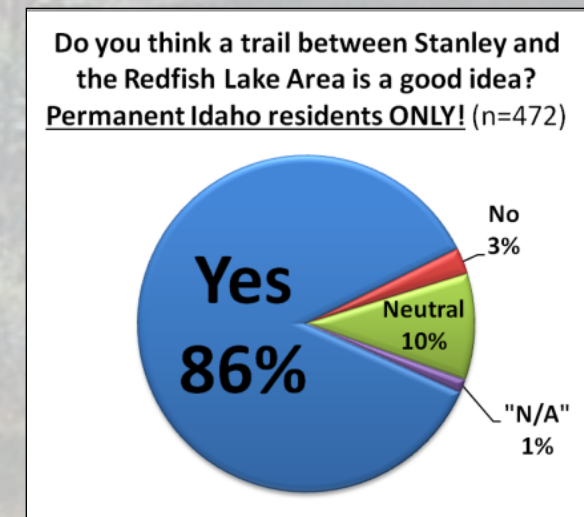
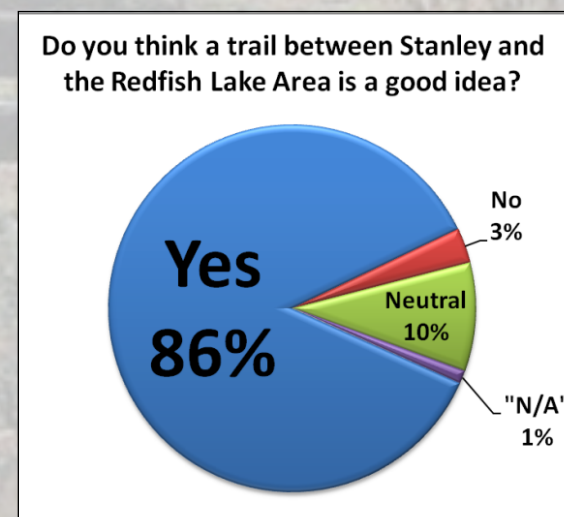
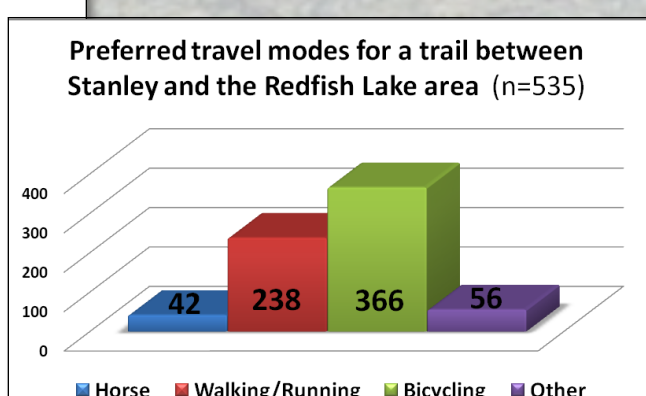
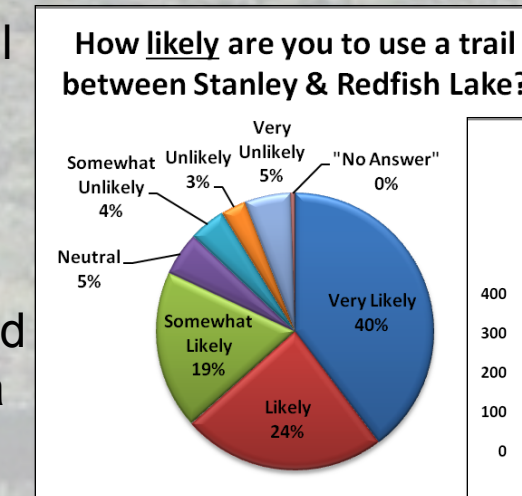
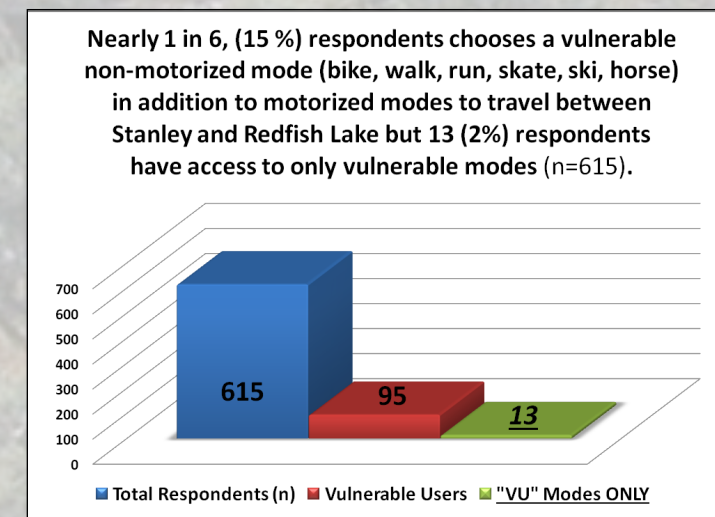
Task 3- Conduct alternative transportation planning within the Redfish Lake Complex



## Task 1: Trail User Survey

The City of Stanley administered a survey over seven days in early July 2013 at 19 locations including trailheads, campgrounds and local businesses in Stanley, Ketchum and Challis, Idaho. The purpose of the survey was to learn what visitors and residents of the Stanley/ Redfish lake area think about a proposed Stanley to Redfish Lake trail. A total of 619 surveys were collected. Some key results are shown below.

- 86 percent favorable to the idea of a trail
- 58 percent prefer an unpaved trail
- Non-motorized trail uses most popular
- One in six survey participants already chooses a “vulnerable non-motorized mode” to travel between the Stanley and Redfish Lake Recreation Complex Area
- 13 survey respondents (2%) only have access to vulnerable modes.



## Task 2: Stanley to Redfish Lake Trail Planning

The scholar's work includes analysis of existing site conditions, trail alternatives, amenities, and trailheads. The north end of the trail will begin in Stanley and follow a legally binding trail easement through private range land for 1.6 miles (see Figure 1). The trail route then enters SNRA lands, where two routes (A and B) are being evaluated as shown in Figure 1.

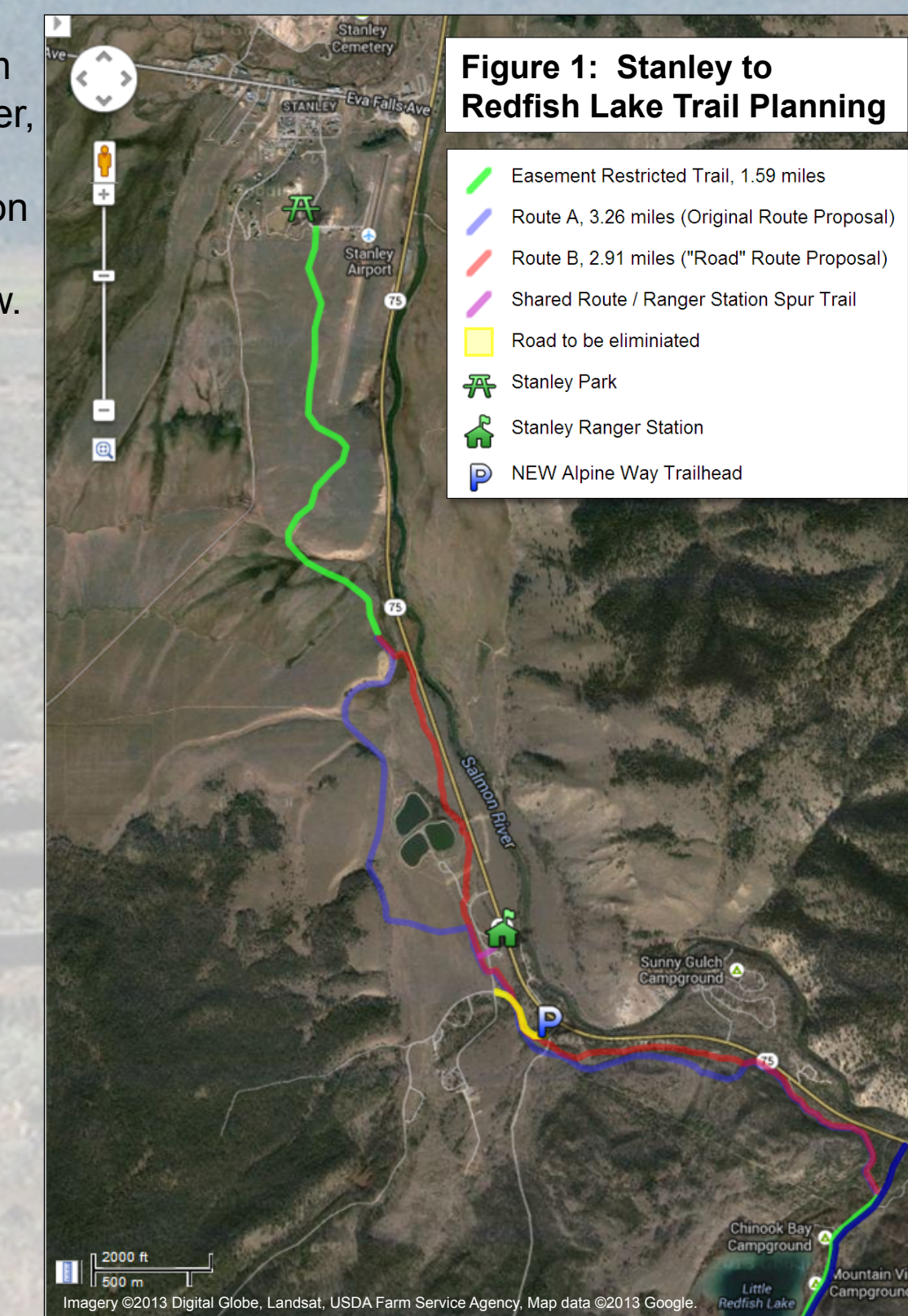
**Proposed route A** is located west of the sewage ponds and connects to the Stanley Ranger Station. South of the ranger station, route A gradually traverses and climbs a hillside covered with trees to get to the top of a hill 75 feet above Highway 75. It then descends to and follows a dirt road to an existing bridge over Redfish Lake Creek and enters the Redfish Lake complex.

**Proposed route B** is located east of the sewage ponds and connects to the Stanley Ranger Station. South of the ranger station, route B would stay below the hillside using parts of an existing dirt road that parallels Highway 75. This route would then climb sharply (up to a 10% grade) to join route A 75 feet above Highway 75 and stays with route A to the terminus.

## Project Concerns / Issues

A field tour of route A in September 2013 was attended by an interdisciplinary team including the Scholar, Area District Ranger, Landscape Architect, Wildlife Biologist, Archeologist, Project Engineer, Recreation Planner and others. Some issues discussed during the tour are listed below.

- How to ensure livestock stay in designated areas (use of gates, cattle guards, signage)
- Impacts of the trail and its users on elk that frequent the area west of the sewage ponds.
- Impacts of trail users' dogs on waterfowl. The sewage ponds provide critical refuge for migratory waterfowl which are sensitive to disturbance.
- Ecological disturbance of cutting trail into the hillside and removal of trees.
- What kind of trail should this be? (recreation, transportation or both)
- What design standards should trail meet? (recreation, AASHTO, etc.)
- How may trail be designed to minimize environmental and other impacts required for National Environment Policy Act (NEPA) review.



The concerns expressed by the interdisciplinary team lead to the design of an alternate route B. This was reviewed in a second field tour in November 2013 with more favorable feedback from the team. Also, the SNRA has hundreds of miles of trails that provide a challenging recreation experience often requiring skill and high fitness levels. Few trails meet ADA requirements or cater to the needs of the beginner. Based on survey results, field tours and professional judgment, the project team decided the trail should generally follow AASHTO bikeway design guidelines (save for the unpaved surface) and US Access Board guidelines.

## Task 3: The Redfish Lake Complex Alternative Transportation Planning

The scholar will help the Forest Service develop goals, objectives and performance measures for alternative transportation within the Redfish Lake Complex. This work will identify non-motorized trail connections linking destinations within the Redfish Lake Complex. Figure 2 shows preliminary trail routes.

This trail system must be coordinated with a road and bridge removal and replacement project being constructed in two phases. The trails anticipated to be built in this project would adhere to U.S. Access Board and AASHTO bikeway standards with the possible exception of the Phase 2 trail loop.

## Other Tasks

Being a bicycle and pedestrian planning specialist, the scholar saw the opportunity to use his talents to several side projects.

- A report of suggested bicycle safety improvements on Idaho 75 from SNRA Headquarters, over Galena Summit (8,701 ft) to Smiley Creek. This is a challenging and very popular road ride.
- The scholar identified a low traffic route using existing trails and dirt roads from SNRA Headquarters to Redfish Lake. Will produce a feasibility study for making this an official unpaved bike route/trail.

