

Avimor Recreation Plan

Executive Summary

The following plan describes the existing and future planning guidelines for use and maintenance of the Avimor Planned Community Trail System. The goal of this document is to provide an outline of designations to provide a quality recreational experience within a conservation driven community. In the event there is a conflict between the recreation plan and the Avimor Wildlife Mitigation Plan (WMP), the WMP shall govern in all regards.

The Avimor Recreation Plan (ARP) outlines use designations associated with user safety and wildlife habitat management; and trail maintenance/ sustainability guidelines. The intent of the ARP is to create a sustainable trail system and limit user conflicts and impacts to wildlife and associated habitat.

The ARP also outlines the decision process for reviewing races, developing annual work plans, recommendations regarding, new trails or designs, and seasonal closures. These ideas will be submitted to or by the Avimor Trail Board (ATB). The ATB will make recommendations to the Avimor Conservation Advisory Committee (ACAC) (See Avimor WMP). Some of trails in the Avimor Trail System are within an easement held by Ada County. Any recommendations for races, annual work plans, the development of new trails, and seasonal trail closures within an easement held by Ada County must be approved by the Director of Ada County Parks and Waterways. Amendments, modifications and/or repeal of the recreation plan shall be made pursuant to Idaho Code § 67-6509 and Ada County Code.

This plan is intended to create a process that provides for changing needs and conditions of the community and the trail system. As recreational patterns, regional trail systems, and adjacent landownership changes, the ARP process will adapt to the needs and opportunities to provide the best user experience and recreational opportunities while maintaining conservation goals.

User Designations and Guidelines

The Avimor trail system is open for use to the general public. A wide range of recreational opportunities exist throughout the trail system for all types of trail users. In an effort create the most enjoyable recreational experience while balancing conservation requirements, user safety, and trail limitations or impacts, Avimor has developed use designations for specific areas and trails. Understanding that this may restrict some users from desirable areas and trails, it is the best way to try to manage user conflicts and provide the best overall user experience for all user types.

In addition to designating areas and trails to reduce user conflicts, portions of the trail system will be restricted during the winter months approximately (November 1 through March 1) for critical wintering areas for elk, mule deer, and migratory bird populations. The upper elevations

of the trail system are one of the largest areas in the Treasure Valley for wintering population of elk and mule deer. Restricting access will reduce user/wildlife interaction which often results in wintering animals using essential energy reserves needed to survive the winter. Some designated lower elevation trails will be available for use on a limited basis throughout the year. Trail use and big game movement will continue to be monitored and any adjustments needed to protect the big game populations will be addressed.

User Types

Although open to public use, the Avimor trail system is on or granted access through its private lands. To maximize the user experience and preserve the natural resources on the land, Avimor has designated some areas by user type, season of use, and limited motorized uses. Trail users may include hikers and wildlife viewers, mountain bikers, equestrians, on and off-leash dogs, and controlled hunting and use of motorized vehicles.

Use Designations

Seasonal Closures-

The majority of the Avimor trail system will be shut down from approximately November 1st to March 1st every winter to help protect wintering big game (elk and mule deer) and migratory bird populations within the Avimor property. Special use permits can be obtained for use of these trails during this time, and some lower elevation trails will remain open, conditions permitting, for year round use. During unusually harsh winters (heavy snowfall and cold temperatures) these trails may also be restricted based on movement of big game to lower elevations.

Based on big game movement patterns and prior years monitoring of wintering areas, the trails that will be available for year-round use are:

- All internal walking paths within the Avimor Village development (gravel paths within the development);
- All Heritage Park Trails;
- Trail 2 – Ricochet- entire trail;
- Trail 3 – Whistling Pig- entire trail;
- Trail 5-Shooting Range- portion of trail south of posted closure;
- Trail 7 – Knecht Loop: entire trail;
- Trail 9- Spring Valley Creek Trail- open from the trailhead to the canyon gate (posted annually);
- Trail 16 and 16a- Harlow Hallow/ Harlow Hallow Connector- entire trail;
- Trail 10- Burnt Car Draw Trail- open from trailhead to junction with trails 12 and 13 (posted annually);
- Trail 15- Baun's-Eye Trail- entire trail;

- Trail 12- Fischer Lane/Broken Horn Trail- open from junction with Trail 11 to junction with Trail 13 (posted annually); and
- Trail 13- Fiddleneck Ridge Trail- open from trailhead to junction with trails 10 and 12 (posted annually).

These trails will provide recreational users the opportunity for some scenic loops used for hiking, biking, and equestrian opportunities, while protecting wintering big game and migratory bird populations. The availability of trails may vary dependent on weather conditions and future monitoring of big game. If the winter snow line is low or persistent, or big game are found to use these areas frequently for winter bedding and foraging, access may be restricted based on an index developed by the ATB/ACAC in conjunction with the IDFG. Regardless of conditions, all trail users must comply with seasonal closures.

Hikers/Foot-traffic-

Trails in the Avimor trail system are open for all hikers and other foot traffic. However, hikers must comply with the season closures listed in the prior section.

Mountain Bikers-

Currently, all trails in the Avimor trail system are available for use by mountain bikers. Future plans could include directional trail use, such as downhill only, which would reduce potentially dangerous encounters, but at this time there are no directional trails. If problems with encounters are present, the ATB may recommend directional flow to increase safety for all trail users. In the case of direction designations, signage will be posted to inform and direct users to proper use and alternative routes.

Equestrian-

The majority of trails in the Avimor trail system are available for equestrian trail users with a few exceptions. Some trails have been designated for foot traffic and mountain biking only to reduce user conflicts or maintain trail integrity. The following trails are currently restricted from all equestrian use:

- Trail 1- Willow Creek Trail;
- Trail 9- Spring Valley Creek Trail (Canyon Portion Only); and
- Trail 16a- Harlow Hallow Connector.

Future trails could be restricted from equestrian use in order to maintain public safety and trail integrity.

Motorized Vehicles-

All motorized vehicles use in the Avimor trail system is by special permit only. In order to monitor and promote sustainable use by motorized vehicles, Avimor has decided to permit a fixed number of motorized vehicle users per day. All motorized vehicle use on Avimor trails is restricted to designated routes, i.e. no off road or cross country travel is permitted. A day permit can be acquired at the Avimor administrative office. Once a special use permit is acquired, motorized vehicle users are allowed to access the following Avimor trails:

- All existing two-tracks;
- Trail 10- Burnt Car Draw Trail;
- Trail 13- Fiddleneck Ridge Trail; and
- Trail 14-Stack Rock Ridge Trail.

Motorized vehicle use associated with emergency medical services (EMS), trail maintenance activities, or permitted livestock operations are exempt from the restrictions.

Dogs

Dogs are permitted on all trails in the Avimor trail system. However, to prevent user conflicts, protect wildlife, and ensure the safety for dogs and other trail users, off-leash restrictions exist on some trails. **All dogs will be on leash on all trails from November 1 to May 1, with the exception of any designated off-leash dog area.** The on-leash restrictive time period is extended beyond winter trail closures to ensure wildlife safety and to protect nesting birds in Avimor. Some wildlife may be present near open trails during this time of year and off-leash dogs threaten winter survival by chasing or disturbing wintering wildlife. Currently, from May 1 to October 31, controlled off-leash dogs are allowed on all Avimor trails with exception of the following trails which are on-leash year round only for user safety and to reduce user conflicts.

- Trail 1- Willow Creek Trail;
- Trail 9- Spring Valley Creek Trail (Canyon Portion Only); and
- Trail 10a- Harlow Hallow Connector.

Additional trails may be designated as on-leash year round in order to maintain user safety and to reduce user conflicts.

Hunting

In the past, Avimor had a depredation hunt with a number of tags for big game within their property. While Avimor is not currently part of the Fish and Game's depredation hunt, it could be in the future, and Avimor does have access to a number of privately held tags for their property. Like motorized vehicles (see above), hunting is only allowed via specialized permission, inquire at the Avimor administrative office.

Use of motorized vehicles during hunting season will be restricted, with the exception of permitted use for disabled hunters and game removal on an as needed basis. All motorized vehicles will stay on designated trails, and hunting directly from any motorized vehicle is strictly prohibited. Signs will be posted to alert all trail users that hunting season is open and educated users and hunters about safety measures to take while hunting in the Avimor foothills.

Trail Design Guidelines and Maintenance

For any new trail construction or re-routing of trails at Avimor, general trail building guidelines will be followed during each step in the planning and construction process. Following the general guidelines will help create a more sustainable and user friendly trail system, while reducing maintenance or reconstruction requirements of faulty trail design and construction.

Trail design should follow the five essential elements of sustainable trails as presented in the US Forest Services trail design parameters (http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/programs/trail-management/trail-fundamentals/National_Design_Parameters_10_16_2008.pdf). Although certain stretches of new trails may require deviations, the following five principals should be used during planning and construction of all new trails at Avimor.

1. The Half Rule. The grade of the trail should not exceed half the grade of the hillside or side slope that the trail traverses. Trails that exceed the half rule are considered fall-line trails and encourage waterflow down the trail rather than across it, increasing probability of erosion damage.
2. The Ten Percent Average Guideline. On average the overall trail grade ($[\text{elevation gain}/\text{trail length}] \times 100$) should not exceed 10 percent. Although some trail segments may exceed ten percent grade, the general rule for a sustainable trail is an average of ten percent over the length of the trail.
3. Maximum Sustainable Trail Grade. Although the ten percent rule is a general rule for an entire trail, determining a maximum grade (typically 15-20 percent) for trail segments should be determined in planning based on site specific factors:
 - Half rule;
 - Soil type;
 - Rock;
 - Annual rainfall;
 - Grade reversals;
 - Types of users;
 - Number of users;
 - And difficulty level.

4. Grade Reversals. Grade reversals are spots in the trail where a climbing trail levels out then changes direction, dropping subtly for up to 50 feet before rising again. The change in grade allows water to exit the trail at the low point, reducing erosive power of water running down the trail. Depending on soil stability, grade reversals should be placed every 20 to 50 feet.
5. Outslope. When a trail contours across a hillside, the downhill edge of the tread surface should tilt slightly down and away from the high side of the trail, promoting water flow across the trail rather than down the trail. A general rule is to build all trails with a 5-percent outslope. In looser soils, i.e. sandy soils, frequent grade reversals will aid in cross-trail drainage.

In addition to using these five design guidelines, all new trail construction will require approval from the ATB and the ACAC.

Annual Trail Maintenance

Trail maintenance is a critical component to a sustainable trail system. As such, an annual work plan will be developed by the ATB and submitted to the ACAC. The annual work plan will outline the dates, recommended actions, and associated justification for more intensive maintenance actions throughout the trail system. Intensive maintenance actions include, but are not limited to: trail diversions or reroutes; projects associated with wetlands/riparian areas; and new construction projects.

In contrast, routine maintenance actions will not be included in the annual work plan, and do not require approval from the ACAC. Routine maintenance actions include, but are not limited to: light mechanical vegetation control to include pruning, grubbing, lopping, and hand pulling; noxious weed control; and minor erosion control and emergency trail stabilization. However, these actions will still require approval from the ASO (land owner) prior to implementation.

Annual Race Events

The Avimor trail system has a long history with organized mountain biking race events and will continue to do so. However, as the population of the region continues to grow with the use of the Avimor trail system, it will be imperative that future races are well organized, have a minimal effect on the public use of the trail system (temporal or spatial), and result in a net gain for the trail system. As such, the number of annual race events will not exceed five (5) in any calendar year, with two of the five reserved for the Knobby Tire Series and Broken Spoke Cycling. Regardless of the applicant, all races will go through the ATB application process and be submitted to the ACAC for approval no later than September 1 of each year. Some

exceptions may apply; however, the ASO reserves the right to disapprove any applicant. If a race occurs on a trail within an Ada County easement, the Director of Ada County Parks and Waterways will need to approve of the race and proper liability insurance as determined by Ada County shall be obtained.

Avimor Trail Board

The ATB is made up of one representative from each of the following groups: the ASO, Avimor Home Owners Association (HOA), Avimor Trail Coordinator, the Avimor Conservation Director (CD), and a member for each of the following user groups: equestrian, running, biking, and one at large. The purpose of the review board is to monitor trail use, identify and address any concerns or conflict, develop the annual work plan, and to review and make recommendations on proposed trail developments and races.

The ATB will meet on a quarterly basis or more often if the need arises. The board will make professional recommendations on trail designations, new construction, maintenance issues, and conflicts, which will be presented to the ACAC (Figure 1). The ACAC will review the trail board's recommendation and make the final ruling on any issues or proposed changes to the trail system and its users. Modifications and/or amendments and/or repeal of the recreation plan must be made pursuant to Idaho Code § 67-6509 and Ada County Code.

Avimor Trail Board Process

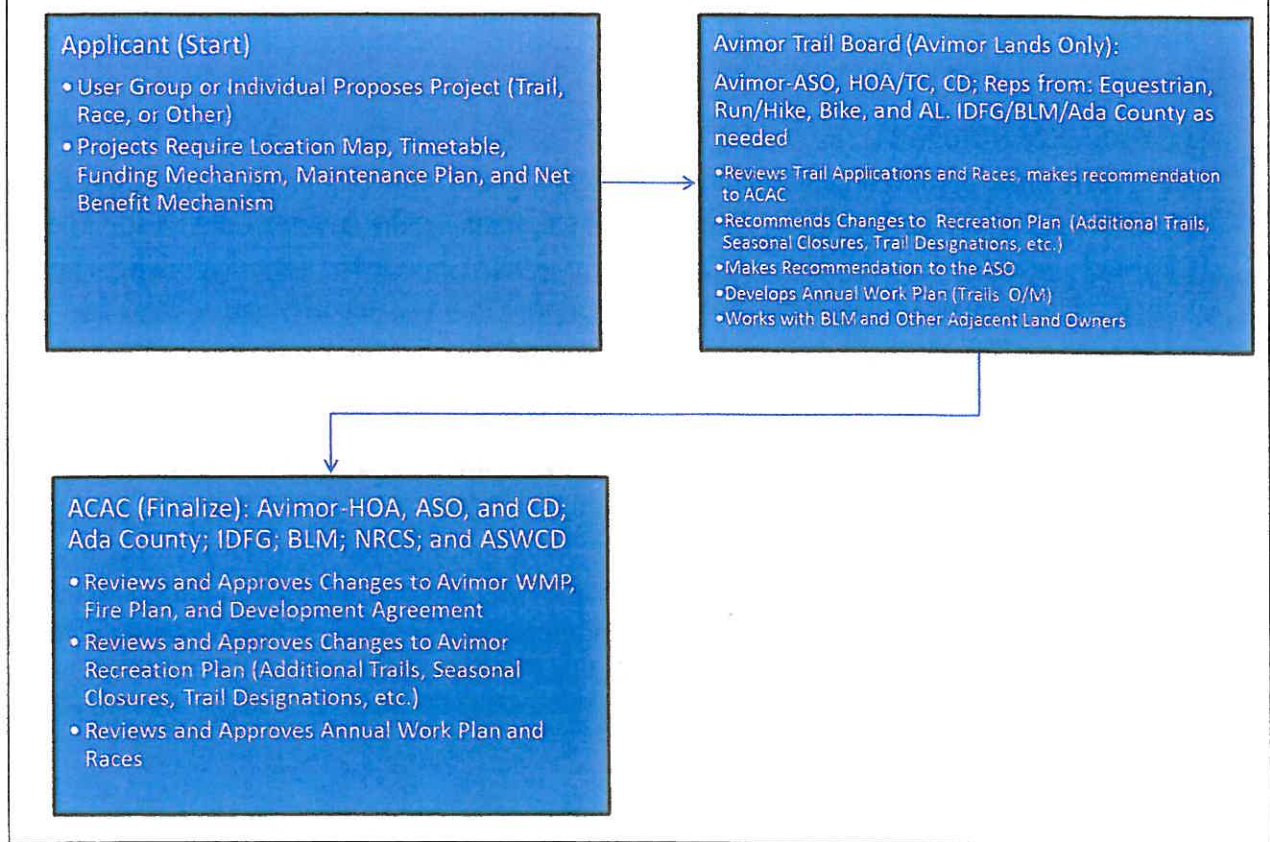


Figure 1: Avimor Trail Process Flow Chart.

Funding

Funding for all trail projects, including trail construction, maintenance, signage, and kiosk will be provided by a combination of funds from the Avimor Conservation Fund, external partners, and by actively pursuing grant money from local, state, and federal agencies. Ada County holds some easements within the Avimor Planned Community. Ada County explicitly retains authority as to whether the County will appropriate funding, including but not limited to trail construction, maintenance, signage, and kiosk for the easements that Ada County holds.

A large portion of work to be done on the trail system has and will continue to be completed through volunteer efforts and community support/building projects by Avimor residents and the surrounding communities.