

**Town of Star Valley Ranch, Wyoming
and the Star Valley Ranch Association
in partnership with the USDA Forest Service
Bridger-Teton National Forest, Greys River Ranger District**

**Non-motorized Trail Plan & Proposal
September 18, 2014**

Recreation trails are for people. They allow us to go back to our roots. Trails help humans make sense of a world increasingly dominated by mechanical transportation and pavement. They allow us to come more closely in touch with our natural surroundings, to soothe our psyches, to challenge our bodies, and to practice ancient skills. -Forest Service Trail Construction and Maintenance Handbook

It is at the local, community level where successful trail networks begin. –BRANDYWINE CONSERVANCY, Community Trails Handbook, 1997

Introduction: The Town of Star Valley Ranch and the Star Valley Ranch Association are proposing non-motorized trail projects within the Bridger-Teton National Forest, adjacent to the town.

What is proposed: The Town of Star Valley Ranch and the Star Valley Ranch Association are proposing a partnership with the Bridger-Teton National Forest to increase recreational opportunities to the public and provide improved management and care of National Forest lands. To do this the Town and Association propose to improve and maintain approximately 7.5 miles of existing trail and to construct 3.0 miles of new non-motorized hiking trails utilizing volunteers and a proposed RTP grant from the State of Wyoming. These projects are detailed as follows:

1. The Town/Association would adopt the existing 4.5 mile Cedar Creek Trail and use volunteers to improve, repair and maintain the trail to Forest Service Trail Standards. We would request the Forest Service add the trail to the National Forest Trail System.
2. Add the 1.3 mile Green Canyon Trail to the National Forest Trail System. The Town/Association would volunteer to improve, repair and maintain the trail to Forest Service Trail Standards.
3. The Town/Association volunteers would provide routine trail maintenance to the Prater Canyon Trail (077) within the Prater Canyon Watershed. This trail is already on the National Forest Trail System. The town also proposes to limit motorized access at the National Forest/Town boundary.
4. The Town/Association volunteers will construct and maintain a new 1.1 mile trail from Vista Drive to Prater Canyon which would follow the toe of the slope. (Vista Prater Trail)

5. The Town/Association volunteers will construct a new 0.9 mile trail from the Vista Prater Trail, just south of Prater Canyon, to a viewpoint 500 feet in elevation above the mouth of Green Canyon then extending into and connecting with the Green Canyon Trail around 0.6 miles from the Green Canyon Trailhead. (Valley View Trail).
6. The Town/Association volunteers will work with the Forest Service to establish an improved and managed trailhead at the mouth of Green Canyon and a second trailhead for Cedar Creek Trail at the existing parking lot on National Forest Land north of the Association's barn.

Trail Locations: All of these trails begin along the boundary of the Town of Star Valley Ranch and the Bridger-Teton National Forest. **See attached map**

Why is this proposed?:

1. Improve the opportunity for people to connect with nature and public land by providing loop options for non-motorized use.
2. Improve the watershed conditions by reducing illegal activity and repairing unsustainable trails.
3. Increase the opportunities for citizen engagement in public education and stewardship of the National Forest.
4. Provide additional recreational opportunities and diversity for residents of the Star Valley and those visiting from other locations.

Design Elements: The basic design elements in the proposal are as follows:

1. Adopt all three canyon trails to the National Forest System.
2. Re-construct and provide heavy maintenance to the Cedar Creek Trail.
3. Add two trails, managed for foot traffic only, providing for a number of hiking opportunities including a loop route.
4. Provide two centralized Trailheads that allow for easy access to National Forest lands.
5. Construct a trail (Vista Prater) that is an easy hike with minimal grades as well as constructing a more challenging trail (Valley View). These two trails would offer a range of opportunities for town residents.

Public Access/Trailheads: All of these trails will have full public access provided for the residents of the Town of Star Valley Ranch and any visitor to the area. The primary access point to this trail system would be the Green Canyon Trailhead. From here a hiker would be able to access either Green or Prater canyons and associated trails.

A secondary trailhead will be needed near the mouth of Cedar Creek Canyon. At the present time hikers and horse users are able to access the trail by crossing private land owned by Leisure Valley Inc. Space exists on National Forest and Association lands, near the barn; to construct a trailhead and connecting trail but it would require a short easement from LVI.

Season of Use: The primary season of use for these trails would be summer and fall. There may be some winter use of the Vista Prater Trail, mostly by snowshoers and/or cross country skiers.

Construction and Maintenance: The Town and Association will lead, in conjunction with the Forest Service, the design, construction and reconstruction of these trails. The Town and Association will apply for a RTP Grant through the State of Wyoming for funding to include leadership, supplies and tools. The Town and Association will develop a volunteer trail crew to be led by a paid employee during the construction phase. All trail construction/maintenance and reconstruction will be accomplished through the use of volunteers.

Construction/Reconstruction Schedule: Below is listed a proposed phasing of the construction/reconstruction and maintenance work. An RTP grant request will be submitted in 2014 for the first two phases.

Phase 1 (2015): Reconstruct/Maintain the first 3 miles of the Cedar Creek Trail. Construct the 1.1 mile Vista Green Trail from Vista Drive to Prater Canyon. Establish signing on these trails and an information kiosk at the Green Canyon Trailhead as well as traffic control barriers and gates.

Phase 2 (2016): Maintain/reconstruct the upper 1.5 miles of the Cedar Creek Trail. Construct the first 0.5 miles of the Valley View Trail from the junction with the Vista Prater Trail to the viewpoint above Green Canyon. Establish a Trailhead on National Forest Land and Association property north of the Association Barn. Build a connecting trail to Cedar Creek and install information and trail signing. Close off public vehicular access to the mouth of Cedar Creek.

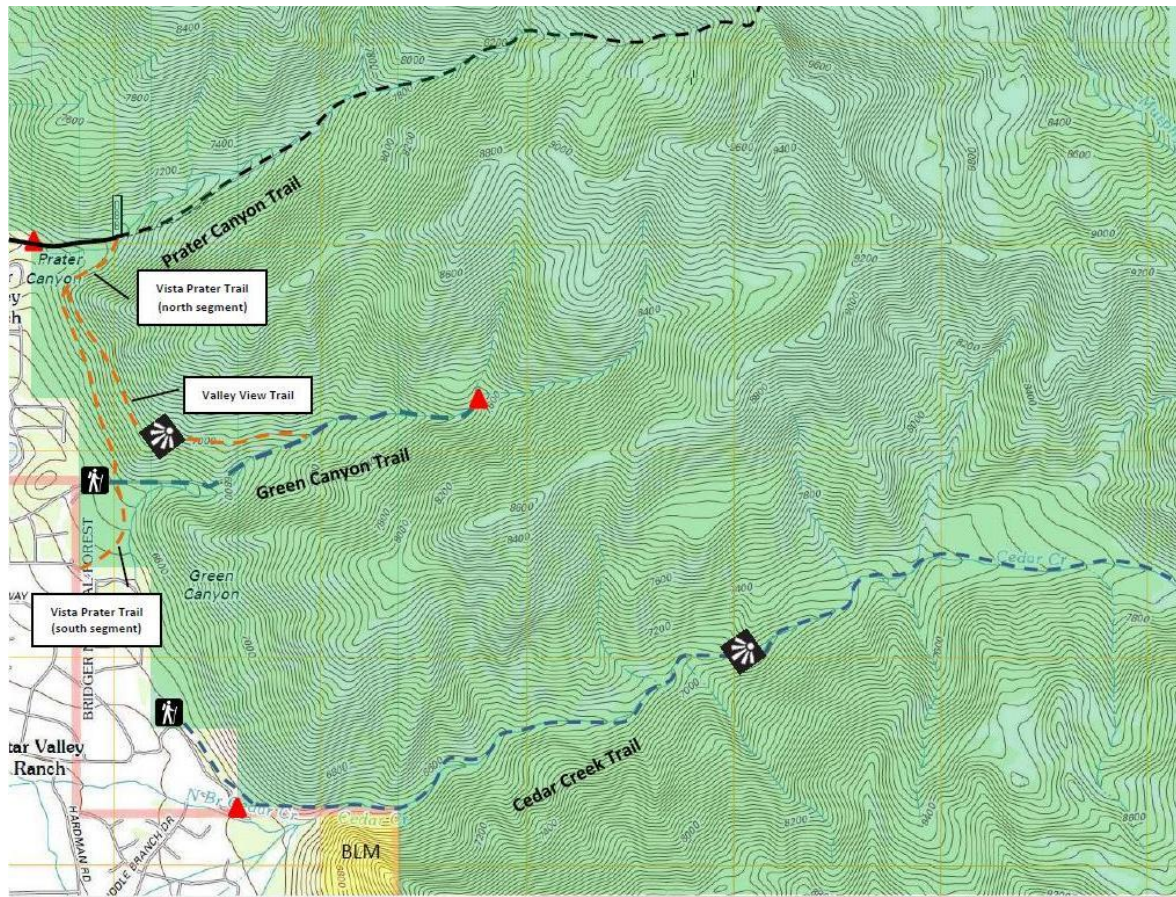
Phase 3 (2017): Construct the final 0.4 miles of the Valley View Trail from the viewpoint above the mouth of Green Canyon to the Green Canyon Trail. Maintain/Reconstruct Green Canyon Trail and Prater Canyon Trails.

Associated Benefits: Additional benefits will be derived from the establishment of these trails and facilities.

1. Increased public access to National Forest Lands
2. Improved understanding of Forest Service mission
3. Increased access for fuels management reduction projects, especially along the Vista Prater Trail.
4. Better access for noxious weed control
5. Better signing and understanding of the National Forest boundary.
6. A safer experience for the forest visitor
7. Increased opportunities for business transactions with increased stops along Highway 89.
8. Allow for future planning between the town and the National Forest

Appendix:

Map of Project Area:

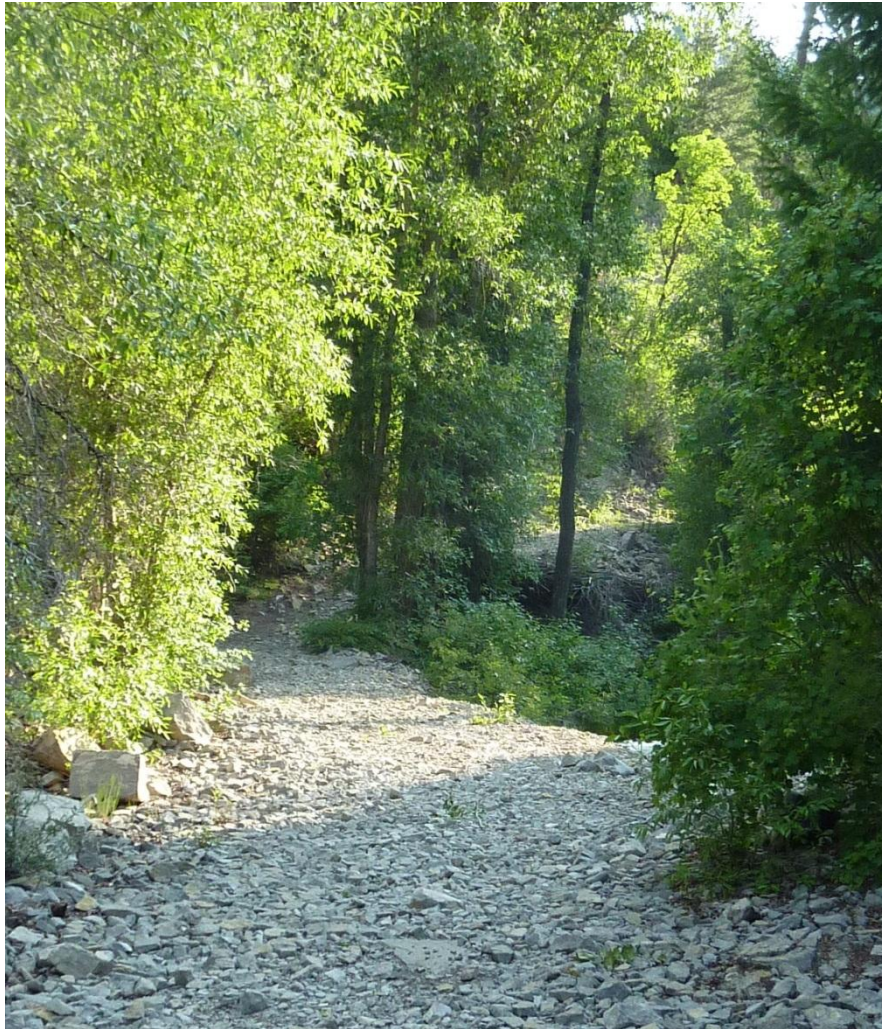


Scale: 1" = 2,600' Gate or barrier - ▲ Trailhead - ▲ Existing user trail - Existing user trail Proposed trail - Viewpoint -

Trail Logs/Photos:

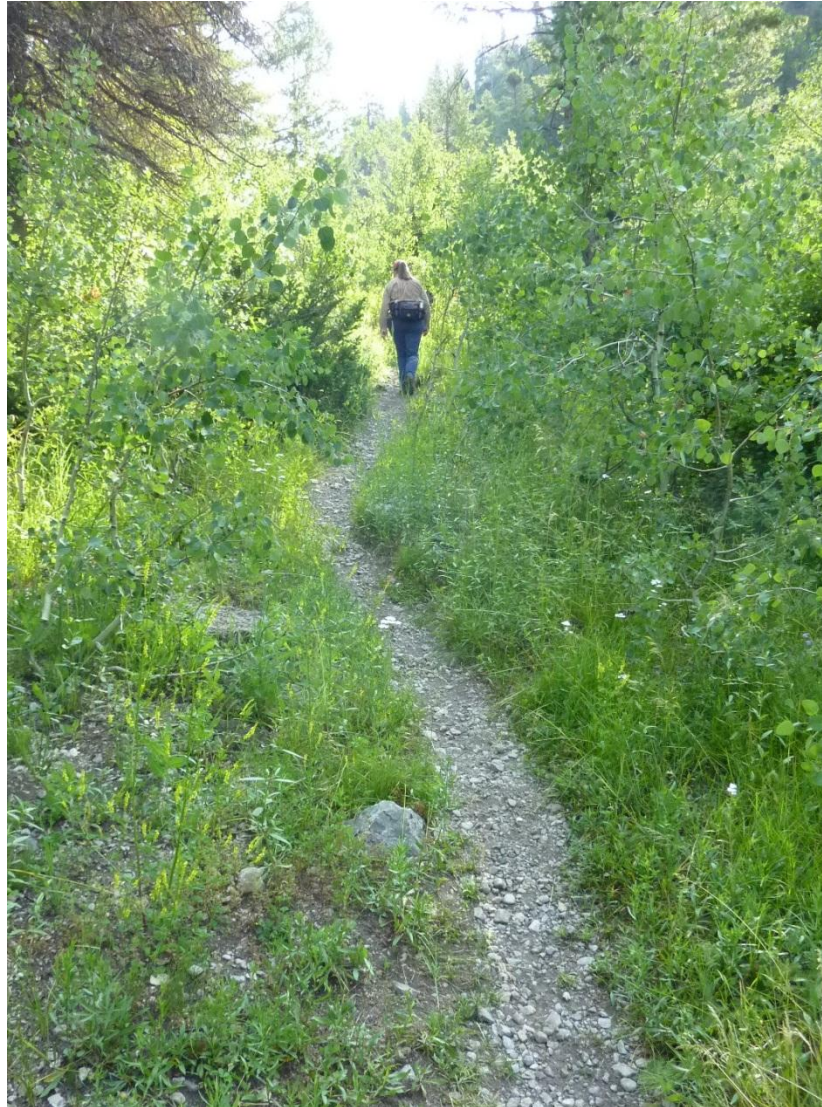
A. Cedar Creek Trail

Cedar Creek Trail is an existing “user trail” that is not on the Forest Service trail system. It begins at the mouth of Cedar Creek Canyon and extends for approximately 4.5 miles where it terminates near a small unnamed lake. It rises in elevation from 6,334 feet at the entrance to the canyon to 8,845 feet at the lake with an average grade of 10.5%.



MP 0.27: Cedar Creek Trail at National Forest Boundary looking up canyon.

In general the trail has a very good tread although there are a number of locations that require tread work or trail relocation. By far the primary maintenance need for this trail is brushing and cutting downfall. In many locations the years of downfall have required users to find a new route where there is now a trail that wanders about around fallen trees.



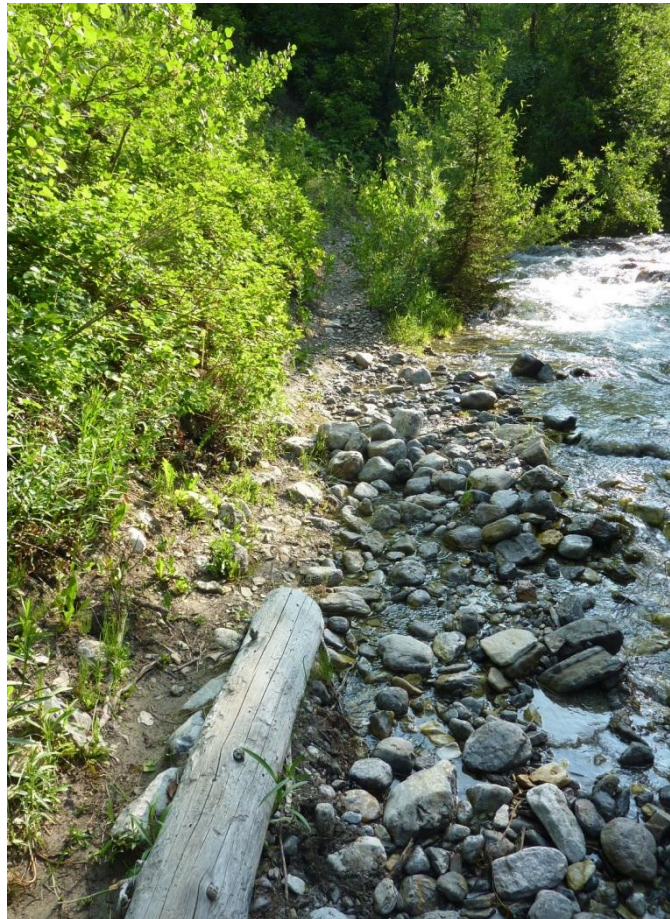
MP 0.50: Good tread condition as trail climbs up Cedar Creek Canyon

In several locations drainage from side seeps and springs either accumulates on the trail or runs down the trail for 20 or 30 feet. Some maintenance will be required in five or six locations to move this water off the trail or construct rock culverts to carry the water under the trail.

In one location, at MP 0.61 the trail actually follows the creek bed for 50 feet or so and requires hikers to wade along the stream during the high water season. The best solution here is to relocate the trail a few feet to the north out of the creek bed and use a small crib wall to protect the tread.



MP 0.55: The first 0.7 miles of the trail closely follows Cedar Creek



MP 0.61: Trail dips into the creek bed for around 50 feet



MP 0.63: Second area along the creek requiring some tread work.

At MP 0.70 the trail begins to climb away from the creek on the south facing slope. Grades average 10 to 12% with some short steeper pitches, but the tread is good and shows no erosion.

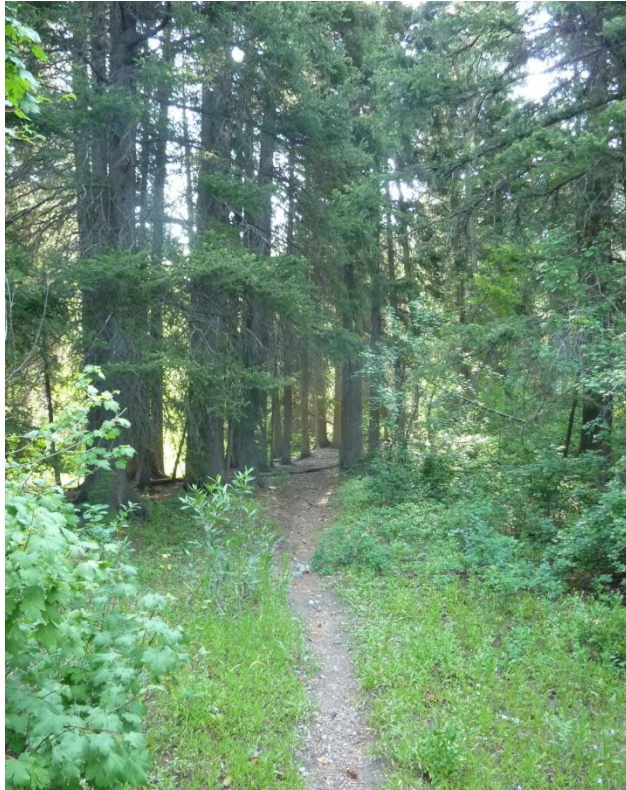
At MP 0.85 the trail comes to a very nice overlook. From here you get a good view looking back down the canyon and at the creek below. A very nice cataract is formed as the creek flows over a large rock outcrop. A short spur trail leads to a nice rock to stand on and gather in the view.



MP 0.85: From viewpoint looking down into Cedar Creek



MP 0.85: Lookout Rock



At MP 0.96 the trail comes into a grove of White Spruce.



MP 1.24: Brushing is the primary maintenance issue

At MP 1.45 the trail begins a steep climb, 18 to 20% grade up the south facing slope of the canyon. At MP 1.64 the trail levels out at 7,351 ft., 1,000 feet above the mouth of the canyon. There are excellent views of the Star Valley to the west and a large basin to the east that the trail now enters. The main maintenance issue here is downed logs.



MP 1.64: Looking west into the Star Valley and the Caribou Mountains of Idaho



MP 1.85: Lots of downfall from here on.

At MP 2.10 the trail crosses a side creek and enters a long, relatively flat basin. Meadows with wildflowers are surrounded by stands of spruce and fir that shows very little mortality. For the next mile the trail rises at a 4 to 5% grade.



MP 2.45: Looking north from trail in a large basin at 7,600 feet, almost 1,300 feet above the mouth of the canyon.

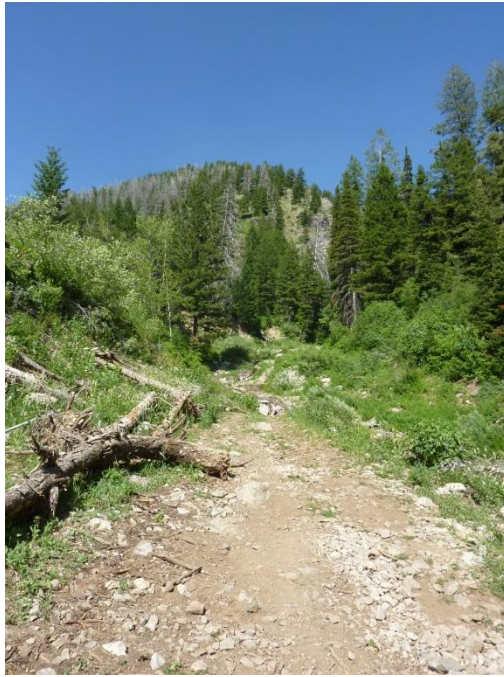
At MP 3.12 the trail starts a steep climb to the unnamed lake.

B. Green Canyon Trail

Green Canyon Trail is a 1.27 mile, 4-wheel drive road that starts at the mouth of Green Canyon and terminates at the intersection of two canyon drainages. This road is used by the Star Valley Ranch Association and Leisure Valley Inc. to maintain access to water collection facilities in the canyon. The trail is currently used by hikers, bikers and ATV users. It is very steep, rising 913 feet in a little over a mile and a quarter; this works out to a 14% grade.



MP 0.1: Beginning of trail just above parking area.



MP 1.27: End of trail where two drainages come together and form Green Canyon Creek.

C. Prater Canyon Trail

Prater Canyon Trail begins at the end of a 0.86 mile road that is maintained by the Town of Star Valley Ranch to access their water collection facilities in the canyon. At the end of the road there is a small parking area at 7,342 ft. From here the Prater Canyon Trail follows the creek heading east to Murphy Canyon and Murphy Lakes. This is a National Forest System trail.



MP 0.2: Prater Canyon Trail looking west towards the Star Valley.



MP 0.45: The Prater Canyon Trail is extremely steep with an average grade of 30%

This proposal would provide some trail maintenance within the Prater Canyon watershed.

D. Vista Prater Trail

The Vista Prater Trail is a proposed trail that would run from Vista Drive in the Town of Star Valley Ranch on the south, to Prater Canyon Road on the north. It would be approximately 1.10 miles in length and rise 450 feet from south to north; a 7.6% grade. Construction would not be difficult as it is rolling terrain and it follows a shaded fuel break on National Forest land.

The trail has been located near the toe of the slope as far east as possible. This places the trail out of sight from the homes that have been built along the National Forest boundary. This trail should be quite popular with hikers on the ranch as it could be combined with other trails and roads to make some nice loop opportunities.



View from Vista Drive looking north. Typical terrain and vegetation.

E. Valley View Trail

The proposed Valley View Trail begins from the Vista Prater Trail approximately 0.2 miles south of Prater Canyon. From this junction the route of the trail heads southeast and begins to climb the face of the slope between Prater Canyon and Green Canyon. The trail will follow the forested area on the slope which screen the trail from the homes along the Forest Boundary.

The trail has been designed to follow a forested, natural bench along the face of the slope so that the trail is not visible from the valley below. Hikers will experience a secluded forest walk with a brief view of the valley as they move south. When they reach the ridge above the mouth of Green Canyon they will be treated to a panoramic view of the Lower Star Valley and the Caribou Mountain in Idaho.

The trail from Green Canyon to the Green Canyon Viewpoint is 0.5 miles in length. Total elevation gained over this run is 225 feet; an average of a 8.5% grade. At the viewpoint the elevation is 7,000 feet, approximately 520 feet above the entrance to Green Canyon.



Valley View Trail as viewed from Cedar Creek Road.



MP 0.5 Early morning view from the Valley View Trail

Summary: The proposed addition of two existing trails within the Bridger-Teton National Forest to the National Forest Trails System, the improvement of one trail which is already on the National Forest Trails System and the construction of two new trails within this forest area will greatly improve public access to the National Forest. This proposed partnership with the Bridger-Teton National Forest will allow the Town of Star Valley Ranch and the Star Valley Ranch Association to implement these changes using funds provided by a proposed Recreational Trails Program (RTP) grant from the State of Wyoming and volunteers provided by the Town of Star Valley Ranch and/or the Star Valley Ranch Association.