

Fort Phil Kearny Historic Site

Wyoming State Historic Site, National Landmark and Interpretive Center



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A Proposal to Designate the Bozeman Trail as a National Historic Trail

Project Goal: Pursuant to the National Trails Act of 1968, as amended, interested parties will ask the U.S. Congress for legislation directing the Secretary of Interior to undertake a feasibility and suitability study of the Bozeman Trail for designation as a National Historic Trail. If the Trail is found to be suitable, interested parties will request final legislation from Congress formally designating the Trail as a National Historic Trail.

Who: Fort Phil Kearny/Bozeman Trail Association and Our Montana, two 501 (c)(3) non-profit organizations.

The Bozeman Trail: The Trail was established by in 1863 as a 535-mile "shortcut" from the Oregon Trail on the North Platte River near Casper, Wyoming to the gold fields around Virginia City, Montana. The trail passed through the heart of Tribal territories. Increased civilian use and establishment of U.S. military Forts Reno, Phil Kearny, and C. F. Smith prompted a campaign by the tribes against the incursion known as Red Cloud's War which included numerous skirmishes and three major battles including the Fetterman Battle in 1866, and the Wagon Box, and Hay Field fights in 1867.

Feasibility Study: The study will include identification of a continuous route located as closely and practically as possible to the original routes, affirmation of national historic significance, education and recreation opportunities, and economic benefits to communities. The study will include full public participation with meetings and a formal comment period from which the study team will measure public desirability for National Trail designation.

National Trail Designation: Designation will not impact private landowners. There will be no restrictions or encumbrances placed on private land where the trail route is located or nearby. For public lands managed by the BLM in Wyoming, Resource Management Plans (RMP's) currently contain protective measures for intact segments of the Bozeman Trail. National Historic designation of the Bozeman Trail would not require revisions to the RMP's.

Benefits: (1) Increased interest, visitation, and revenue at associated publicly available historic sites and museums, (2) Enhanced grant applications for preservation and education along the Bozeman Trail corridor and associated sites such as Fort Phil Kearny, (3) Economic benefits to local communities through increased visitation.

Public Outreach: To garner understanding and seek support we are reaching out to elected officials at the local, county, state, and national levels, as well as landowners, Tribes, museums, organizations, and a wide spectrum of interested parties. Articles about our effort have appeared in Montana and Wyoming newspapers.

Desired Outcome: Letters of support to our congressional delegation with a copy to the NHT Committee for a feasibility study. We would make a formal request to the congressional delegation in 2021 for legislation for the feasibility study.

Current Support:

Beartooth Conservation and Development Area, Inc.
Becky Kallevig -Archaeologist
Big Horn City Historical Society
Converse County Historical Society
Dale Anderson - Our Montana
Don (Doc) Woerner Veterinary
Douglas Historic Preservation Commission
Fort Caspar Museum Association
Frank Bodden, Bozeman Trail/Powder River Wars social media admin.
Friends of the Story Mansion
Gene Wade -Bozeman Trail Land Owner
Gerold Groenewold- Bozeman Trail landowner
Hoofprints of the Past Museum
Howard Boggess- Crow Indian - Museum Manager retired
Jerome A. Greene - Retired historian, curator, and NPS manager. Author of 23 books.
Jim Court, Billings, MT
John Monnett, PhD - historian, author
Mary Ellen McWilliams Fort Phil Kearny/Bozeman Trail Association, Advisory Board Member
Montana Historical Society
Museum at the Bighorns
Natrona County Historic Preservation Commission
Oregon-California Trails Association (not official yet, but heard from SBD)
Patty Molinaro Hooker- Rancher - Museum Curator
Ralph Saunders- Trail Researcher
Ron (RL) Garritson-- Bozeman Trail Reenactors
Sheridan Community Land Trust
Sheridan County Historic Preservation Commission,
Sheridan County Travel & Tourism
Susan Badger Doyle, PhD - Bozeman Trail scholar.
Ted Karam, Bozeman Trail/Powder River Wars social media admin.
The Jim Gatchell Memorial Museum
Wyoming State Historical Society

Contact Us: To provide comments or submit questions please contact the NHT Committee at bozemannah@gmail.com



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