

2023
**ANNUAL
REPORT**



THE JOURNEY OF

... begins with a single step. The well-known Chinese proverb used so often to encourage those with big goals gets a lot of mileage this time of year. New Year's resolutions from exercising more to learning a foreign language to earning a college degree resound in living rooms across the country when the clock strikes midnight. Many people follow through, taking that first step of their 1,000-mile journey, then another, and another. Many don't; the parking lot at the local gym in late February compared to January 2nd is a testament to that.

At Idaho Trails Association, we pride ourselves on being part of the first group. We take a "first step" every spring followed shortly thereafter by the first pull of a crosscut and swing of a Pulaski. We know our journey is, quite literally, ten times longer than the proverb's millennial reference. There are 10,000 miles of hiking trails in Idaho, give or take, and they all need care and maintenance.

Last year –our best since we took the first step on a project in 2010– we cleared 293 miles of trail over 13,000 hours of volunteer work, on top of the thousands of volunteer hours spent preparing gear, food and traveling to and from projects all over the state. The year



Idaho Trails Association's mission is to keep Idaho's hiking trails open for all. We work with volunteers to preserve Idaho's trail system through education, maintenance projects, and public lands advocacy.

Become a member or volunteer at:
www.idahotrailsassociation.org

**Idaho Trails Association
PO Box 165
Boise, ID 83701**

10,000 MILES...

before that, we cleared 280. Someday, we'll take the first step on our first project of the year and by October look back at 1,000 miles. Someday.

For now, we reflect with gratitude on the work of our dedicated volunteers, crew leaders, and Board members and a 2023 full of trail miles, welcoming new volunteers, and launching first programs like Wilderness Immersion and Veterans projects. As we look back at success and forward at challenge, the first step of the 2024 season is inviting— who knows how many miles the journey will take us? We can only find out by putting boots to trail.



Melanie Vining
Executive Director



Board of Directors

Tim Martin- **President**- Boise
Pam Bond- **Vice President**- Boise
John Wheaton- **Treasurer**- Boise
Lilly Ragan- **Secretary**- Boise
Tom Dabrowski- *Sagle*
Bryan DuFosse- *Boise*
Tobey Jinkins- *Boise*
Herbert Klein- *Sandpoint*
Mark Sugden- *Jerome*

Advisory Board

Liz Bridges- *Boise*
Glenn Florence- *Pocatello*
Jeff Halligan- *McCall*
Leo Hennessy- *Boise*
Phil Hough- *Sagle*
Julie Kallemeyn- *Sandpoint*
John McCarthy- *Boise*
Bill Skerjanc- *Pocatello*
Steve Weston- *Middleton*

ITA Staff

Melanie Vining
Executive Director
Alex Cravener
Trail Projects Director
Kelly Hewes
Communications Director

2023

AT A GLANCE

721
volunteers



13,780
feet of tread fixed

5
Wilderness
Areas



7,186
logs removed

74
projects

666
water bars
built/maintained



293
miles of trail
cleared

9
National
Forests

13,262
volunteer hours
worked



89
miles brushed



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Idaho's trails got a lot of love in 2023 thanks to the unwavering dedication of Idaho Trails Association's committed volunteers and supporters. ITA successfully coordinated 74 trail projects across the state! From the Little Jacks Creek Wilderness in southern Idaho, to the middle of the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness, all the way to the border of the Salmo-Priest Wilderness in north Idaho, enthusiastic crews cleared 293 miles of trail.

With projects varying in duration from a few hours to three weeks long on ITA's first-ever Wilderness Immersion project, volunteers spent over 13,000 hours improving Idaho trails. Volunteers worked hard to cut out and remove trees and logs blocking trails, cut back brush, build bridges and puncheons, fix eroding tread, clean water bars, build drains, install signs, and rehab campsites. Whether in the front country, backcountry, Wilderness, or roadside, dedicated volunteers approached each project with optimism and determination to enhance Idaho's trail system!

Tackling rugged dirt roads or the thrill of a backcountry airplane, volunteers traveled far and wide, with some coming from all over the country to work on a project. Some volunteers embraced the convenience of car camping while others the adventure of backpacking. There were projects supported by horses, mules, and llamas to help carry food and gear into remote places.



This important work is almost exclusively on public lands, including those administered by the United States Forest Service (USFS). Partnerships with land management agencies and other like-minded organizations are crucial to this work, and the support of individuals within these agencies helps make the projects positive and productive.



The magnitude of the achievements would not have been possible without the collaborative efforts of the volunteer community. Acknowledging not only the 721 volunteers who participated in trail projects but also those involved in planning, organizing, moving trailers, packing and preparing food, training crew leaders, attending events, and undertaking countless unseen tasks, it is this collective effort that makes ITA a formidable advocate for trail improvement throughout Idaho.

YOUTH TRAIL CREW

"I hadn't expected to bond with the crew as much as I did, but it made the whole experience just that much better. I made many memories along the way, saw some incredible wildlife, and discovered a love for working in the outdoors that I didn't know about before.


Thank you ITA!"
**-Youth Trail Crew
Volunteer**

2023 was ITA's fourth season for the Youth Trail Crew Program. Five projects across the state got youth ages 14-18 to hit the trails removing brush, fixing trail tread, and using crosscuts and axes to clear logs. Overall, 54 volunteers worked on 15 miles of trail, removed 255 trees, and cleared 9.3 miles of brush under the guidance of awesome Youth Trail Crew leaders. They not only learned trail maintenance skills but also Leave No Trace principles and working together as a crew.

The first project of the season was at Wilderness Gateway along scenic Highway 12, where the crew of seven made impressive progress clearing heavy brush on the popular Boulder Creek Trail that accesses the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness area from the Lochsa River side. Later in June, nine youth joined their volunteer leaders for a long weekend clearing the first three miles of the Queens River Trail near Atlanta, Idaho. The 32 trees and hundreds of feet of brush removed cleared the way for future ITA crews working on that trail. On a buggy mid-July weekend, nine youth volunteers (all but one new to ITA and trail work!) met at the North Fork Meadows Trailhead north of McCall to camp and work on the Center Ridge Trail. The crew focused on brushing and drainage work during the day and playing cards in the safety of a screen tent in the evenings. The Loon Lake crew met up for year two of a backpacking project working up to and past Loon Lake. Eleven youth and three leaders hiked from Chinook Campground to the Secesh River Campground, carrying all their food and gear for the week! The crew cleared 113 trees from the trail and tackled thick regrowth and brush along the way. The Black Lake Creek crew camped for the week at Black Lake and worked down towards Rapid River, clearing the full three miles of trail. In the evenings the youth swam in the lake and watched mountain goats.

Thank you to the crew leaders who are the heart of the Youth Program: Alex Cravener, Amber Kostoff, Barry Miller, Brendan Blowers De León, Eric Messenger, Kasey Rose, Mark Sugden, Melanie Vining, Patti Stieger, Ray Arguello, and Terry Patterson. Thank you to the volunteer cooks/camp hosts who keep the crews happy and fed: Azha Anderson, Cindy Walker, Emely Blowers DeLeon, and Fred Herbert.





WOMEN IN THE WILD

2023 marked the 6th year of ITA's Women in the Wild Program. Over six projects, 48 women from all walks of life came together to learn and practice their trail maintenance skills and build community. Crews cleared 29 miles of trails, removed 315 trees, cleared 8.8 miles of brush, and repaired 667 feet of tread.

The first project of the season had crews fly into the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness to camp along Big Creek and work up Coxey Creek. This section, part of the Idaho Centennial Trail (ICT), was heavily brushed in and the crew cleared the first three miles over the week. In June, a crew of six women camped at Paradise Campground on the upper Selway River and worked the beautiful Selway River Trail. Also heavily brushed in, the crew cleared the way for pack stock and a future ITA crew to pack in and continue working. In the Idaho Panhandle National Forest, a group spent the weekend car camping and maintaining trails in Boulder Meadows. Here the crew decommissioned a trail that traveled through the meadow, installed new signs, and removed overhead and trailside obstacles for stock on a newly-built trail. The Wood River Trails Coalition partnered with us on the Prairie-Miner Lakes Trails where volunteers spent a weekend car camping and clearing avalanche debris. In August a crew, with the help of some llamas, returned to the Caton Lake Trail for five days of backpacking and clearing the seemingly endless supply of fallen logs. Finally, in September a small crew backpacked a section of the ICT in the Sawtooths that goes from Grandjean campground to Stanley Lake, brushing, clearing drains, and improving tread.

"The women on this trip had so much knowledge and wisdom to share, beyond just trail work.

They each had such a positive and fresh outlook on life. I came away with not just trail experience, but stronger and mentally refreshed with a new perspective on life and respect for myself.

Thank you all!"

**-Women in the Wild
Volunteer**

Crew Leaders Alisa Rettschlag, Cindy Walker, Dagmar Rapp, Elizabeth Bridges, Leslie Hvozda, Lilly Ragan, Pam Bond, and Patti Stieger supported and mentored volunteers while getting some serious work done! Thank you to Carith Kamermans and the Wood River Trails Coalition for being a great partner. Thank you to Margaret Cheney for cooking and supporting the Selway River crew!

NOTABLE PROJECTS

Hansen Ridge

ITA undertook several projects along the Idaho Centennial Trail (ICT) this year. The ICT stretches 996 miles across the entirety of the state and navigates through some exceptionally isolated Wilderness areas. ITA partnered with the Great Burn Conservation Alliance to work up Hansen Ridge, a long-neglected segment of the ICT. Six volunteers and a Great Burn field staff member were packed into a basecamp at Hansen Meadows for the week and their camp kitchen, food, tools, and volunteer gear were packed in by Cayuse Outfitters. The work consisted primarily of brushing the trail corridor and cutting back dense overgrowth of serviceberry, vine maple, and ceanothus. Overall, the crew volunteered 308 volunteer trail work hours, clearing nine trees, and brushing out 6,864 feet over 1.8 miles of trail.

Wilderness Immersion

The Wilderness Immersion Program was designed to provide volunteers with an opportunity to live, work, and explore some of the most remote country in the lower 48 states. The crew spent three weeks immersed in the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness with no bathrooms, hot showers, cell phones, or easy access to friends and family. While both mentally and physically challenging, this project brought a group of eight people together for a truly life-changing experience.

After months of planning, the crew flew into Chamberlain Airstrip and worked north on the Idaho Centennial Trail to Tumbledown Bridge. From there, the crew worked on the trail that leads to Arctic Point via Meadow of Doubt. Both of these sections of trail are regularly maintained, but from Meadow of Doubt, the crew worked in a seldom-visited area that has not been maintained for many years. The White Bird Meadow Trail has largely been burned over in recent wildfires and the crew spent most of their time cutting and moving trees from the trail. Most days, the crew cleared about half a mile of trail. Midway through the project, the crew was forced to move south of Chamberlain Airstrip to the McCalla

Creek Trail because of the Elkhorn Fire. Although the crew was sad to leave the original project area, it was rewarding to completely open the northern section of the McCall Creek Trail to the McCoy Cutoff Trail. On the last evening the crew returned to Chamberlain Basin, where the caretakers at Stonebreaker Ranch cooked a celebratory feast! Over this three-week project, the crew of eight cut 2,506 trees, brushed 3.5 miles of trail, improved 750 feet of tread, and restored 125 water bars over 18 miles and 878 trail work hours. Wow!





Petit Creek Trail Puncheons

ITA assisted the Sawtooth National Forest in their larger effort to replace puncheons along the popular Alice-Toxaway Loop in the Sawtooth National Recreation Area. A puncheon is a wooden walkway built over wet areas and building one in the Wilderness is no easy task! No power tools means all work must be done with hand tools. The crew of 10 spent a week replacing a 12-foot puncheon, including dismantling the old structure, placing the boards, securing them in with rocks and gravel, and carefully leveling and squaring them. The crew secured the decking, painstakingly nailing each board in place, then finally built up the trail leading up to each end. The crew camped at the trailhead at Petit Lake, where the volunteer chef prepared meals for the tired crew. ITA is planning to return in 2024 to help replace more puncheons!



Jackson Creek

In the Idaho Panhandle, four volunteers spent a combined 87 hours clearing Jackson Creek Trail. This trail was very brushy with many alder and evergreen branches to clear before the log cutting could even begin. The crew worked up to the Shedroof Divide Trail, meeting a Washington Trails Association Crew on the other side. Over the long weekend, the crew worked on the 5.5 miles of trail, starting from the trailhead, cutting out 142 trees and brushing 200 feet. Once cleared, this trail will be part of a backpacking loop that takes folks up and over the Shedroof Divide and through the Salmo-Priest Wilderness in Washington. In 2024, ITA will keep plugging away at this loop, working on the Hughes Fork Trail.



Veterans Trip

In partnership with the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, ITA spent two weekends working on trails in the Idaho City Yurt system. As an added perk, crews were able to camp in the yurts for the project. The crew worked on cutting logs and brushing the Gold Fork, Lodgepole, Double Dip, and Moose Trails. They also installed trail blaze signs and signposts. Mission 43, an Idaho nonprofit dedicated to providing opportunities to Veterans in Idaho, partnered with ITA on the second weekend project. In all, 2.3 miles were cleared and brushed in the Yurt trail system!

Campbell Creek Reroute

Over three weekends, including National Trails Day and National Public Lands Day, ITA volunteers and Caribou-Targhee National Forest employees spent four total days rerouting a steep section of trail on Campbell Creek Trail #7020. This trail is used to connect to a large trail system near the Gibson Jack Trailhead. This half-mile re-route significantly improves the grade and tread width of the existing trail. Led by dedicated volunteers from the Pocatello area, ITA is planning to continue to expand trail work opportunities in east Idaho in the years to come!



Caton Lake

Seven dedicated volunteers spent five days backpacking and clearing the Caton Lake Trail for a Women in the Wild project. With support from Forest Service employees and llamas to carry food and gear into camp, the crew cut out 214 trees over 2.6 miles along with brushing and tread work. ITA Crew Leader Patti Steiger, determined to get this trail cleared, went back a few weekends later to clear an additional 92 trees with five other volunteers.

EDUCATION

Presentations, classes, and projects

In an ongoing effort to educate the public on topics related to trail preservation, Leave No Trace Principles, and traditional trail skills, ITA hosted 14 presentations and classes both in person and virtually in 2023. Classes included Backpacking 101, Hiking with Kids, Backcountry Nutrition, Safety and First Aid, and Hiking with Dogs. ITA also hosted two hands-on education opportunities as part of trail projects: Backpacking 101 and Meyers Cove Packer Experience. ITA, in partnership with the Payette National Forest and through a grant from the Idaho Humanities Council, offered history and archeology presentations in the field to adult and youth volunteers on two trail projects.

CLEM

The Crew Leader Education and Mentoring (CLEM) sessions continued this year with trainings in Sandpoint in the north and outside McCall in the southern part of the state. Over 40 crew leaders met for long weekends to learn new skills, brush up on old ones, and share ideas for leading safe, fun, and productive ITA trips. Oh, and they cleared over five total miles of trail, too!

Wilderness First Aid

Thanks to a generous donor and in memory of an idea that started with our late Board member and crew leader, John Platt, ITA began offering Wilderness First Aid classes for crew leaders in 2022. Two longtime ITA volunteers and retired medical professionals volunteered to obtain certification through the American Red Cross and teach 2-4 classes each year. To date, over 40 crew leaders have had the chance to certify in Wilderness First Aid in a class covering the curriculum in a way that directly links to working on trails in the backcountry. Thank you to Brian Mahon and Anne Poinier for teaching these classes and the Wilderness Society and Tom Dabrowski for hosting.

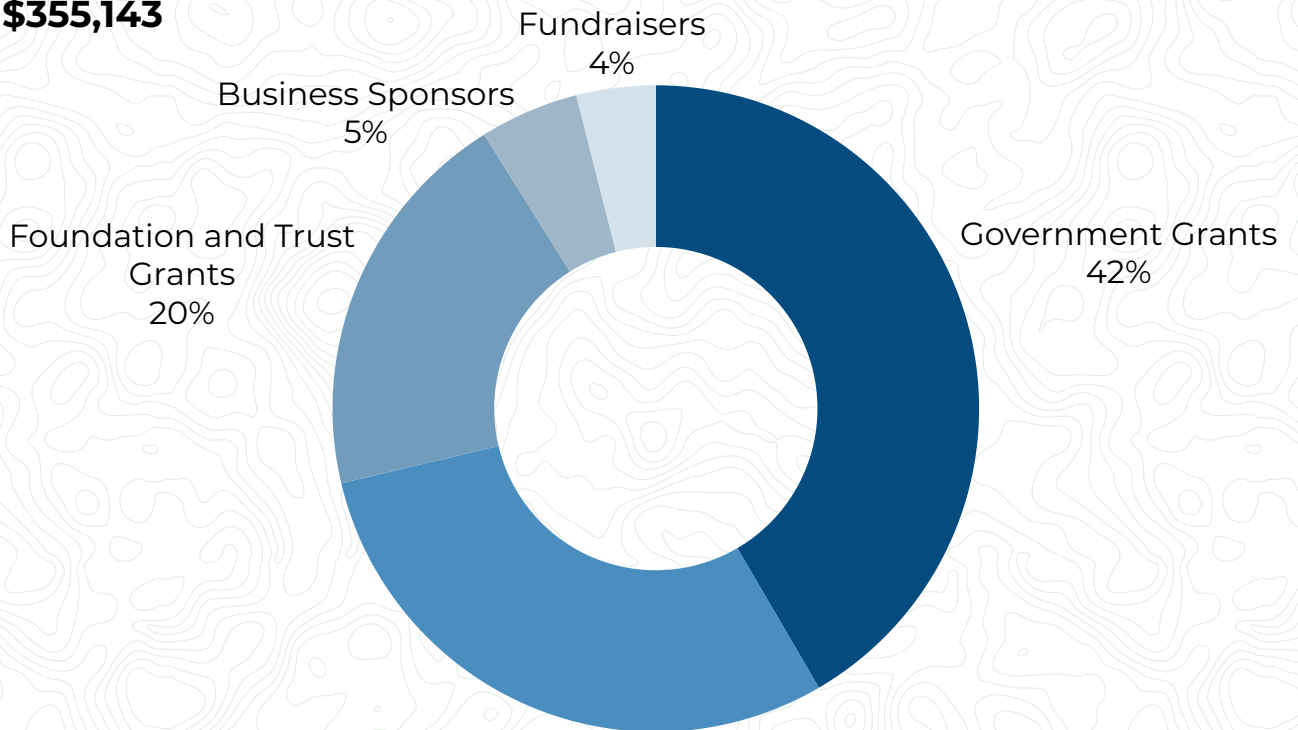
SPLATTSKI SCHOLARSHIP

The Splattski Scholarship Fund, established in 2022, helped outfit five ITA volunteers with the gear needed to pursue outdoor adventure and more trail projects! ITA was excited to award these scholarships to purchase items such as hiking boots and lightweight tents, and thrilled to hear back from each recipient about how the new gear was put to use. This fund continues to help more people access the outdoors.

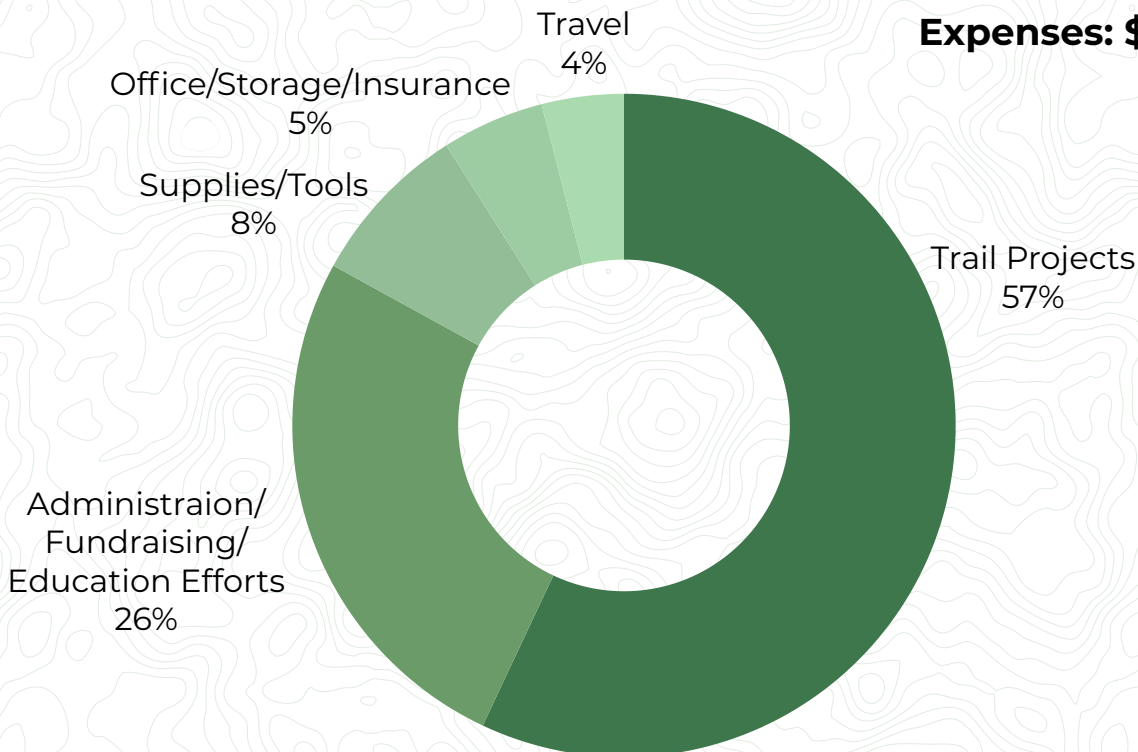


FINANCIALS

Revenue: \$355,143



Expenses: \$276,504 *



* excess revenue went toward ITA's cash reserves/savings

PARTNERS

Land Managers

In 2023 ITA partnered with the following Land Managers: US Forest Service Regions 1, 4 and 6. Bitterroot, Boise, Caribou-Targhee, Idaho Panhandle, Nez Perce-Clearwater, Payette, Salmon-Challis, Sawtooth, and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests, Boise BLM-Bruneau Field Office, City of Boise- Ridge to Rivers, Idaho Parks and Recreation, and Land Trust of the Treasure Valley.

Volunteer Groups

Thank you to the following volunteer groups that partnered with ITA in 2023: Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, Boise State University, ESI Construction, Friends of Scotchman's Peak Wilderness, Idaho Conservation League, Great Burn Conservation Alliance, Mission 43, Monday Hikers, Selway-Bitterroot Frank Church Foundation, the Squaw Butte, Heartland, Twin Rivers, and Priest River Chapters of the Backcountry Horsemen of Idaho, Washington Trails Association, Wild Hearts Idaho, and Woodrider Trails Coalition.

Donors

Thank you so much to ITA's members for helping surpass fundraising goals and do even more for trails. ITA couldn't have broken the previous record for number of projects and volunteers out on the trail if it wasn't for the support of so many generous donors. The number of members grew to 810 in 2023 – more than ever before! Each new and renewing member means more dollars towards keeping Idaho's hiking trails open for all.

Foundations and Nonprofits

Every year a significant portion of ITA's funding comes from the generosity of various foundations and nonprofit organizations in the form of grants or other support like partnering on trail projects. ITA is thankful for the continued support of longtime partner organizations and the new support of others who believe in the power of trails:

Clif Bar Family Foundation granted funds to help with day-to-day ITA operations.

Idaho Humanities Council granted funding to bring history talks to several trail projects.

Idaho Power supported trail work in Hell's Canyon through their grant program and shuttled volunteers with their jet boat.

Idaho Women's Charitable Foundation granted funding to support ITA's women's and youth programs.

Innovia and Equinox Foundations granted funds to support trail projects in north Idaho.

Lightfoot Foundation provided funding for ITA's youth program.

MJ Murdock Foundation provided funds for ITA's Communications Director position.

The Sawtooth Society provided grant support for trail projects in the Sawtooth Valley.

The Stibnite Foundation granted funds to support trail work in west-central Idaho.

Wal-Mart Community Foundation supported trail work in the Boise area.

Business Members

ITA launched a Business Membership Program in 2021 and it continues to grow. This year businesses across Idaho stepped up in the name of Idaho trails to donate funds, gear, services, and more to support trails. ITA recognizes the business partners on social media, the website, and in the monthly Old Saw newsletter. It's a small token of appreciation for the big impact these contributions have on the trails program.

Thank you to the following businesses that supported ITA with donations in 2023:

\$1000+

AllTrails
Café Mulé
Idaho Forest Group
Idaho Power
Mother Earth Brewing
McAlvain Construction
Scheels

\$500+

Avista Corporation
Bonner General Health
ESI Construction
Hyperspud Sports
Idaho Mountain Touring
Sage Environmental Services
Shu's Idaho Running Company
Sockeye Brewing

Thank you to the following businesses that donated items and services for fundraising efforts like ITA's Pack Your Summer Auction and Annual Membership Drive as well as gear to be used on trail projects:

888 Custom Milling and Woodwork
BD Recreation Consultants
Bogus Basin
Breakwater Expeditions
Cedar Grove Wildlife Guiding
Chisel Custom Design
Columbia Sportswear
Dovetail Workwear
Emerald Slope Vineyards
Felco
GSI Outdoors
Gaia GPS
Hide and Hive Dry Goods

Hotel McCall
Idaho River Sports
Litehouse
Mother Earth Brewing
Mountain Village Resort
Owyhee Slingshot
Salmon River Brewery
Sawtooth Flying Service
Schweitzer
Six Moon Designs
Sun Valley Mountain Huts
Taisie Design

Thank you to the following businesses, organizations, and individuals that supported ITA through events and fundraisers:

Boise Bicycle Project
Boise Farmer's Market
Broken Horn Brewing
Cyclebar
Ken and Virginia Greger
Lake Hazel Branch Library
Library! at Bown Crossing
Library! At Cole and Ustick

Lost Grove Brewing
Misison 48
Palouse-Clearwater Environmental Institute
Payette Brewing
REI
Sawtooth Brewing
Sockeye
The Flicks



ITA is a nonprofit that works with volunteers, organizations, and government partners to preserve Idaho's incredible trail system through education, maintenance projects, and public lands advocacy. Join us in our mission to keep Idaho's hiking trails open for all.

**To learn more about becoming a member or volunteer, please visit:
www.idahotrailsassociation.org**