

# RESEARCH BRIEF



## Why this study was needed

Pilot Hill is a unique recreation area. It was born out of community collaboration and action. It is one of the first State Trust land (STL) recreation leases in Wyoming and has created many benefits for the people of Laramie. It continues to inspire communities around Wyoming to utilize STL for recreation purposes. It is still a work in progress and will hopefully someday allow southeast Wyoming to become a hotspot for recreation.

Although the project is unique, we believe that recreation areas like Pilot Hill could be repeated in the future. There are several characteristics that made the parcel a prime candidate for a recreation lease: Its position above the Casper aquifer was a great incentive to protect the parcel. During preliminary studies of the parcel before its acquisition by the state no extractable materials(coal, oil, etc.) were found underground dissuading extraction-based companies from lobbying for the parcel. The Albany county community was on board with the project from the very start. Many people volunteered their time and money throughout the creation of Pilot Hill. State, university and private stakeholders made many compromises throughout the project. Without the level of collaboration that happened between the stakeholders Pilot Hill would not have been created with the ease that it was.

Overall, many things needed to go right. We researched what went well and what could have gone better to someday relay this information to any motivated individuals willing to recreate an area like this in their own community. Recreation on STL is very new to Wyoming and we would like to raise awareness that projects like Pilot Hill are possible.

### **Statistics**

The following statistics were taken from the Pilot Hill Project website and our interview with the Director of Pilot Hill Inc, Sarah Brown Matthews.

- \$1.2 million value added to the local economy
- Supports at least 150 local jobs
- 150,000 visits annually
- 45,000 non-local visits annually
- \$15 million land worth
- \$42,000 + 2.38% lease per year
- 3,076 Acres of wildlife habitat
- 4.010 Acres of recreation
- 82% community vote of approval in intial poll

### How it was done

In order to obtain the most up to date information available we interviewed a wide range of locals professionals as our main form of research. There is more information on interviewees below.

### Why it's important

Communities around the state have seen the benefits Pilot Hill has had on the Laramie community and are inspired to recreate a similar recreation site in their hometowns.

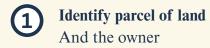
Some of these benefits include promoting a healthy lifestyle for the city by providing easy access to recreation, which was not possible without a car before.

As Pilot Hill becomes more popular as a destination, it has begun to boost the local economy. Its strategic trailhead location forces tourists to make their way through Laramie and its many businesses. The protection of the view shed east of town has benefited local land value in many neighborhoods.

The conservation of the ecosystem is also of utmost important. The Casper Aquifer has been protected from development, allowing the county to have clean drinking water. There is also now protected open space for wildlife many miles east of Laramie.

Pilot Hill has set a precedent throughout the state towards community based recreation. Recreation areas like these allow for a healthy, autonomous community that involves themselves as stewards of the land.

### **General process**



- Test parcel for resources

  Mineral extraction generates more
  revenue than recreation and conservation
- Establish non-profit organizations
  To maintain parcel and build trails
- Initiate STL land swap
  Identify stranded parcels of equal value
  that would be a good fit for a land swap
- Fundraise
  Hold community events and write grants to pay for annual lease and maintenance
- Rally your community around your cause
  Pilot Hill could not be what it is without
  the Laramie community
  - These steps can happen simultaneously
  - Steps may look different for your location
  - Likely will take years to accomplish

#### Interviewees

Richard Vercoe
University of Wyoming
Dewey Gallegos
Owner, Pedalhouse

Sarah Brown Matthews Director, Pilot Hill Inc Elise D'Alessandro UW Outdoor Program Ian Hall Local Mountainbiker

Birch Malotky
Ruckelshaus Institute
Evan O'Toole
Former BikeNet President

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