DIRT, SAWDUST, AND RED TAPE: THE CHALLENGES OF TRAIL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
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Trails provide opportunities for people to view scenic areas not accessible by other modes of transportation and are key for bettering mental health, exercise, and social interactions. Outdoor recreation is a growing activity in the United States, with increasing participation and economic growth. There are a variety of challenges facing the planning, development, and maintenance of trails. The purpose of this project was to identify common challenges of outdoor recreation organizations (OROs) face when planning and developing trails. In order to identify potential challenges that are faced by OROs involved with trail planning and development, I conducted a literature review and extensively interviewed representatives involved in trail planning and development from TREAD, Washington Trails Association, Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance, Mountains to Sound Greenway, and Methow Trails. Interviews were recorded and analyzed for major challenges that the interviewee perceived their organization faced. Then a full list of challenges was created from both the literature review and interviews. Additionally, I interned with Methow Trails to gain firsthand experience working on all stages of trail planning, development, routing, construction, and maintenance. The three most common challenges between the literature review and interviews were funding, ownership of lands/landowner support, and time limitations. All outdoor recreation organizations face a wide variety of challenges when planning and developing trails. Some potential solutions to these as stated by the interviewees includes advocacy towards governments on all levels for prioritizing outdoor recreation, volunteering with local OROs, and continued use of trail systems.