



Strategic Plan

2022-2024

Building on a Legacy

Lightning Creek is on the ancestral lands of the Apsáalooke Nation (Crow Nation), the Bitterroot Salish, Upper Pend d'Oreille, and Kootenai tribes (Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes), the Tsis tsis'tas (Northern Cheyenne Tribe), the Amskapi Piikani (Blackfeet Nation of Montana), and the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes.

About Crosscut

Crosscut operates two spectacular locations — Crosscut Mountain Sports Center and Lightning Creek. Crosscut Mountain Sports Center is a year-round mountain hub providing outstanding Nordic skiing, biathlon, mountain biking, hiking, and outdoor education. It offers world-class sports training and access to the rejuvenating power of nature for all ages, abilities, identities, and backgrounds. It is located in Bridger Canyon just 16 miles north of the thriving mountain town of Bozeman, Montana. Lightning Creek is Crosscut's newest location, acquired in April 2021. It's centered in the Madison Range in the Taylor Fork drainage. Big Sky is 18 miles away as the crow flies, and our nation's first national park, Yellowstone, is just 13 miles to the east.

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Executive Summary

Since purchasing Lightning Creek on April 30, 2021 (formerly known as Trapper's Cabin Ranch), the Crosscut team has:

- Created a new mission statement for the program
- Hosted a community listening tour
- Met with individual community members to assess the strengths and weaknesses of potential programs
- Completed an analysis of similar statewide programs and facilities
- Assessed risk management plans
- Started to build an understanding of the ecosystem processes
- Sketched a possible program calendar to understand our capacity
- Compiled a list of facility upgrades, associated costs, and recommended priorities

Overview

Lightning Creek, on the doorstep of Yellowstone National Park, is a beautiful 640-acre section of land with five comfortable cabins that can sleep up to 30. The property has been stewarded by generations of people who have had a deep respect for and abiding love of wild places. The purchase of this property, made possible by the generosity of our community, will preserve this area for generations to come.

History of Lightning Creek

The Gallatin Canyon area has abundant evidence of native peoples in the landscape well before European settlement, including numerous hunting campsites where tributary streams enter the West Gallatin. The types of projectiles show a history of occupation from the end of the last major ice age until wickiups likely dating from the late 1800's and early 1900's. Trappers, traders, and explorers encountered the Tukudika, or Sheep Eater, Indians hunting in the high valleys during summers. Just south of Taylor Fork, the Bannock Trail was a route for tribes of the Intermountain West (eastern Idaho) to reach buffalo hunting areas just east of the Rocky Mountains. People primarily of European descent have come to this landscape in several waves. Early trappers, traders and explorers harvested animal furs and traded with Indian tribes but tended to come and then depart. Longer term settlement occurred as ranchers brought cattle, and sometimes sheep, for summer grazing in the Upper Gallatin basins.

In 1938, Dr. Caroline McGill purchased this land from the Burlington Northern Railroad. Ginny & Robert W. Martin, Jr. bought this 640-acre section of land, known only by its section number (29) at the time in 1965 from Dr. McGill's estate. By 1969, the Martin's named the property "Trapper's Cabin Ranch" after the small cabin built by Thomas Lincoln. The Martin family added all the infrastructure to the property, including the five residential cabins. In 2021, Crosscut purchased this property with a goal of expanding how we fulfill our mission and serve our community.

Land Stewardship

This 640-acre section of land provides critical habitat for species like the westslope cutthroat trout and grizzly bears. With 610-acres protected through a conservation easement with the Gallatin Valley Land Trust (GVLT), Crosscut is proud to be the current stewards of this important area of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. A road easement with the U.S. Forest Service provides vehicle access through public land, while a trail easement allows the public access through this property to reach high alpine areas including Alp Lake.

Our Vision and Mission

Crosscut Vision

To empower healthy community by connecting people and nature.

Lightning Creek Mission

Lightning Creek offers connections for communities, undistracted experiences, and personal growth through immersive programs and thoughtful stewardship of wild places.



Our Values

Community + Solitude

We offer community connection, from familiar faces to new friends and provide opportunities to enjoy the outdoors in peaceful solitude. In both, we can enjoy a healthy break from hurried modern life. Crosscut's pristine surroundings offer visitors the opportunity to disconnect from everyday distractions and reconnect with the simple pleasures of nature.

Inclusivity + Education

We provide an accessible, affordable means for enjoyment in the outdoors. We also support relevant and diverse programming through our team and partner organizations to encourage confident recreation and healthy lifestyles. From sports education to science and creative pursuits, we seek to help people of all ages, abilities, identities, and backgrounds to grow their knowledge and skills, while learning about the natural world and deepening their sense of place and community.

Achievement + Play

Whether someone seeks grit or grace, effort or leisure, adventure or comfort, we meet them wherever they are. With Nordic ski heritage as our foundation, we have expanded to support a wide range of recreators and athletes, supporting body and spirit, so they can wholeheartedly and joyfully pursue that which fulfills them. The thrill of high-performance efforts, the personal growth of learning, and the freedom of spontaneous play are each important, and equally boundless in possibility.

Stewardship + Vision

With respect for the Indigenous peoples who have called and continue to call these lands home, we strive to proactively conserve and protect the landscapes around us, carrying forward the stories of these places, the legacies of interconnection, and a light human touch. We work to create and maintain comfortable yet exceptional facilities with high levels of sustainability, in harmony with our responsibilities to current and future generations.

Wildness + Accessibility

Our locations are accessible from Big Sky and Bozeman and adjacent to undeveloped lands. Surrounded by an abundance of beauty and the rhythms of the natural world, Crosscut offers immersive and meaningful experiences — from a quick afternoon ski to a weeklong retreat. We work to preserve the enduring vitality of the landscape while creating welcoming environments for all.

Collaboration + Leadership

Crosscut embraces our interdependence — with the land, the community, our visitors, and the greater world. We welcome all voices to the conversation, knowing our best opportunities for learning and growth can come from fresh perspectives. We also stand on what we know to be right, and when needed, provide guidance both inside and outside of our organization.

Gratitude + Pride

We teach and practice respect for self, others, and the natural world, recognizing the inherent worth of each. The Crosscut community functions as an extended family — cheering for each other's wins and sharing the burden in times of struggle. This philosophy is rooted in love, integrity, and authenticity — we lead by example, cultivating opportunities for our team and patrons to become the best possible versions of themselves.

Five Strategic Goals



Strategic Goal

#1

Inspire deep connection, respect, love, and enjoyment for wild places through immersive programs shaped by the natural landscape of Lightning Creek.

With hundreds of acres, many miles of trails, and cabins and facilities that serve dozens, Lightning Creek can provide year-round opportunities to make adventures in nature accessible to people of diverse backgrounds and needs.

Objective 1.1: Foster community by providing undistracted experiences for established groups and new friends to gather and connect to each other and nature

Initiative 1.1.A: Working with the Community Council, identify and implement partnership programs at Lightning Creek with like-minded organizations and other partners.

Initiative 1.1.B: Cultivate relationships in our community by supporting other organizations' programs at other locations.

Initiative 1.1.C: Build positive program experiences with partners by collecting feedback, assessing our operations, and modifying partnership activities as needed.

Objective 1.2: Build new programs to support people of diverse ages, abilities, identities, and backgrounds to grow their firsthand knowledge and skills, while developing a deeper sense of place.

Initiative 1.2.A: Working with Crosscut's newly forming Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) working group, identify mission-driven programs for Lightning Creek focused on inclusivity and accessibility.

Initiative 1.2.B: Connect people of diverse ages, abilities, identities, and backgrounds to the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem through immersive programs and undistracted experiences at Lightning Creek.

Initiative 1.2.C: Using feedback from participants, continually assess and improve our programs to ensure positive experiences.

Initiative 1.2.D: Assemble materials and equipment to support various program activities for all users.





Strategic Goal

#2

Steward this wild, beautiful landscape to protect its unique character for generations to come.

This pristine natural setting is located adjacent to the Lee Metcalf Wilderness, between Big Sky and Yellowstone National Park. As current stewards of this landscape, we have a responsibility to thoughtfully preserve the enduring vitality of the land.

Objective 2.1: With Indigenous partners that continue to call this region home, use Lightning Creek as a place for inspiration, learning, and sharing while developing strategies for facing today's personal, community, and global challenges

Initiative 2.1.A: Invite Indigenous organizations and groups to visit, listen, learn, and build relationships.

Initiative 2.1.B: Learn from the landscape with Indigenous partners by spending time together, engaging in conversation, and thoughtfully considering actions for the future.

Initiative 2.1.C: Incorporate Indigenous knowledge and practices in stewardship decisions and actions, working together at a local level to face personal, community and global challenges.

Objective 2.2: Working with key stakeholders, thoughtfully maintain and protect the scenic qualities and historical background of Lightning Creek

Initiative 2.2.A: Protect critical habitat of Lightning Creek and the westslope cutthroat trout population.

Initiative 2.2.B: Develop a land stewardship plan for the property that manages fire fuel conditions, invasive species, and protects habitat conditions for threatened species such as grizzly bears and whitebark pine.

Initiative 2.2.C: In partnership with key stakeholders, proactively minimize our human impact on the ecosystem caused by program offerings. Adopt management practices that are consistent with the surrounding wild landscape as well as state and federal agencies.

Objective 2.3: Complete critical maintenance projects to protect Lightning Creek's facilities and infrastructure and upgrade infrastructure systems to align the property with Crosscut's conservation and sustainability values

Initiative 2.3.A: Maintain and protect existing facilities and infrastructure, balancing the character and history of the buildings with the need to support new programs for all users.

Initiative 2.3.B: Ensure staff and visitor safety as the facility transitions from being a family retreat to a community resource.

Initiative 2.3.C: Adapt structures for inclusivity and accessibility, making the property a better fit for groups having a range of interests and capabilities.

Initiative 2.3.D: Optimize natural resource consumption and use by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, creating a safer and healthier environment for us and the landscape.

Initiative 2.3.E: Prepare for year-round programs by making upgrades that allow for year-round use, including systems that can work in the harsh winter conditions.

Strategic Goal

#3

Become a leader in place-based education, sustainability and conservation, and research in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem

Based on research and best practices in place-based outdoor education, our program will be an exemplary community resource and a nationally recognized leader.

Objective 3.1: Contribute to the field of place-based education through publications, presentations, and a strong community presence

Initiative 3.1.A: Conduct research to measure intended program impacts.

Initiative 3.2.B: Publish and present portions from our team's place-based education programs and initiatives.

Initiative 3.2.C: Participate in community events, networking opportunities, conferences, and other community-based programs.

Initiative 3.2.D: Support staff with professional development opportunities in place-based outdoor education.

Objective 3.2: Using our infrastructure systems as a teaching tool, serve as an example to others for sustainable infrastructure that embraces environmental responsibility

Initiative 3.2.A: Introduce Lightning Creek’s infrastructure systems to all visitors to encourage others to consume fewer resources and find ways they can implement changes in their own homes and facilities.

Initiative 3.2.B: Utilizing a variety of outreach activities and channels, share Lightning Creek’s infrastructure systems with others within and outside of our community.

Objective 3.3: Grow in our role as thoughtful stewards of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE) by supporting research and building our understanding of our shared natural and cultural history

Initiative 3.3.A: Support Indigenous partners in deepening our collective understanding of the GYE with Traditional Ecological Knowledge.

Initiative 3.3.B: Support the conservation of the GYE, by maintaining an up-to-date ecological inventory of the property and leading and partnering with others to facilitate research projects focused on the area’s natural and human history.

Initiative 3.3.C: Gather, preserve, and share the cultural history of Lightning Creek, including stories, historical photos, and objects.





Strategic Goal

#4

Build strong operations to support a robust offering of programs

To support our future programs and operations, we will thoughtfully build scalable operations and consider the resources we need to be successful and provide a safe environment for our participants.

Objective 4.1: Build a team to support program activities and maintain the facilities

Initiative 4.1.A: Appropriately staff the Lightning Creek team with paid and volunteer positions by considering future program growth.

Initiative 4.1.B: Thoughtfully build a culture that matches our core values by being inclusive in our hiring practices and fostering a positive team environment.

Objective 4.2: Develop our risk philosophy and maximize the benefits of risk in outdoor programs.

Initiative 4.2.A: Identify and communicate Lightning Creek's risk philosophy.

Initiative 4.2.B: Develop inclusive risk management practices including the many beneficial risks of outdoor experiences.

Objective 4.3: Strengthen Crosscut's organizational resources to support new program activities at Lightning Creek

Initiative 4.3.A: Develop policies and protocols to support operations at both Crosscut Mountain Sports Center and Lightning Creek.

Initiative 4.3.B: Manage organizational data and knowledge to maximize efficiencies across all Crosscut programs and activities using shared software and systems.

Initiative 4.3.C: Create public facing communications for Lightning Creek that align with the overall Crosscut organization.



Strategic Goal

#5

Achieve financial sustainability for program activities to ensure long-term success

Objective 5.1: Develop a responsible, realistic, and balanced budget for annual program activities

Initiative 5.1.A: Conduct a cost analysis to determine program fees for all participants and programs, including overhead program costs (i.e., staff, program materials).

Initiative 5.1.B: Develop a strategy to provide scholarships ensuring programs are economically accessible.

Objective 5.2: Build a financial reserve for Lightning Creek to respond to emergent needs and ensure long-term success

Initiative 5.2.A: Compile a list of facility and infrastructure needs anticipated in the next ten years to better predict and understand expected project-based costs.

Initiative 5.2.B: Build a diverse funding stream including but not limited to committed donors, local foundations, and grants to support these projects.

