



Bighorn Trail Bridge Replacement

Project Scoping

December 21, 2015

The National Park Service (NPS) is seeking public feedback on a variety of options concerning replacing a former bridge across the Gallatin River along the Bighorn Pass Trail in Yellowstone National Park (YNP). In September of 2014 YNP trail crews removed a footbridge crossing the Gallatin River near the Bighorn Pass trailhead. Timber stringers that spanned the river had deteriorated to a dangerous condition. Initial attempts to barricade the bridge were ignored by some users, causing a genuine safety concern from park staff. Also, it was recognized that there was somewhat of a redundancy in access availability as there is another bridge crossing the river relatively close. Currently, the crossing is a manageable ford in all but high water conditions.

A decision whether to rebuild the bridge or not has not been made by park managers. YNP backcountry managers are seeking public comments to help inform the decision making process.

Factors to Consider

Following is a summation of the factors that will inform this decision:

- Since its construction in 1996 the bridge has become popular, particularly with regional users.
- As the Bighorn Pass Trail travels east toward the Gallatin Range it is more or less, paralleled by the Fawn Pass Trail to the north. Eventually, the trails are connected via the Bighorn-Fawn Cutoff Trail, forming an 11 mile loop.
- Bridge access to terrain on the east side of the Gallatin River is currently in place on the Fawn Pass Trail. This is located downstream of the former Bighorn bridge site, distances are noted below and on the accompanying map.
- A significant social trail now exists between the two trails, near the trailheads. By crossing the Gallatin River on the Fawn Pass Trail and following the social trail, users can access the Bighorn Pass trail without having to ford. The social trail is located on the east side of the river parallel with the river and Highway 191. Although the highway is between 0.25 and 0.5 mile distant from this route, views and sounds of traffic are apparent.
- Distances: (All additional distances refer to a route beginning at Fawn Pass Trailhead, following the Fawn Pass Trail across the river, then following the social trail to the former Bighorn bridge site.)
 - It is 2.16 miles from the Fawn Pass Trailhead to the Bighorn Pass Trail (east of former bridge site).
 - It is 0.39 mile from the Bighorn Trail summer parking area to the former bridge site. (1.77 additional 1-way mileage, 3.54 additional round trip mileage)
 - It is 0.64 mile from Bighorn Trail winter parking area to the former bridge site. (1.52 additional 1-way mileage, 3.04 additional round trip mileage)

- For winter travel, it is debatable whether or not quality snow conditions regularly exist along the social trail route. Surveys of this area are planned for this winter.
- For summer travel, the social trail is on gentle, easily negotiated terrain.
- It is estimated that a new bridge would cost about \$41,000. This would include labor (\$23,000), materials (\$13,000) and incidentals (\$5,000). Materials would likely include permanent, steel I-beam stringers.

Possible Actions

Following is the preliminary range of options the park is considering:

- 1.No Action:** The bridge would not be replaced. Hikers and skiers will have bridge access to the terrain east of the river only via the Fawn Pass Trailhead. Bighorn Pass Trail access will remain a ford. Those wishing bridge access to the Bighorn Pass Trail will have the additional cross country mileage to cover.
- 2.New Trail:** The bridge would not be replaced. However, a new trail would be constructed along the route of the social trail. The addition of the new trail would create a loop (utilizing the Fawn-Bighorn Cutoff Trail) from the Fawn Pass Trailhead.
- 3.Reconstruct Bridge:** A new bridge would be constructed in the location of the old bridge. Both the Fawn Pass and Bighorn Trailheads will have equally easy access to trails and terrain east of the river. The previous alignment of a semi-loop (Fawn Pass TH to Bighorn Pass TH) would remain.
- 4.Reconstruct Bridge and New Trail:** Reconstruct the bridge and formalize the social trail. Two bridges and a new trail section provides maximum access for all users with loop options from both the Fawn Pass and Bighorn Trailheads.

What's Next

Once we have received the scoping comments, park managers will analyze them and determine if there are issues or concerns that were overlooked. Park managers will use the feedback in making a decision whether or not to replace the bridge. A decision is expected by May 1.

Ideas to Consider

Following are a few ideas to keep in mind as you develop your comments on this proposal:

1. Do you have any ideas to share about issues/concerns, or are there any issues/concerns about the project that you think we should consider?
2. Are there any other alternatives that you think should be considered?
3. Do you have other comments and suggestions for us to consider?

You Are Invited To Comment

Please submit your comments online at the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment website:

<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/footbridge>

Comments may also be hand-delivered during normal business hours to the Mailroom in the park's Administration Building in Mammoth Hot Springs, Wyoming, or mailed to:

Yellowstone National Park
Attn: Bighorn Trail Bridge
P.O. Box 168
Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190

*Comments must be received by
February 3, 2016.*

Please note that names and addresses of people who comment become part of the public record. We will make all submissions from organizations, businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses available for public inspection in their entirety. Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment – including your personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. Although you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.



Bighorn Bridge, October 2012. NPS Photo.