

And the deer like them too

The City of Iowa Falls and surrounding Hardin County are more pleasant places to walk, jog and bike around now. Thanks to a system of trails that has been winding its way through the area woods and ravines, natural areas that were hard to reach are now accessible to anyone.

In 2006, a group of volunteers formed the Hardin County Recreational Trails Committee. Following a series of public meetings, the City of Iowa Falls committed to funding a trail system and agreed to shoulder maintenance costs for at least 20 years.

WHKS conducted a feasibility study to investigate trail and bridge options for several sections of the trail system and was then asked to design the approved project. The result is a system of trails and bridges that link the corners of the City, provide a safe and attractive route between important municipal facilities and serve as a year-round recreational amenity.



The bridges are the highlight of the system. Their meandering alignments and natural materials blend beautifully into the natural landscape and provide stunning vistas of deep ravines and gentle swales that were previously hard to reach.

Several bridges cross Rock Run Creek and provide views to limestone cliffs and geological formations that are rare to the state. The bridge in Jones Park spans a 40-foot deep ravine and trail users experience one of the most beautiful sections of Iowa Falls, with old growth timber and wildlife that takes refuge near the creek bed. As the ribbon was cut to open the Rock Run Creek bridge, deer were grazing below.



To minimize the impact on the natural environment, materials and construction methods were carefully chosen. Boardwalk footings were drilled, rather than dug, limiting the excavation area and shortening construction time. The shorter schedule also reduced disturbances to wildlife in the area. Timber boardwalks were used to preserve the natural landscapes and avoid large excavations and retaining walls.

The Iowa Falls Trail System is enjoyed year-round by hikers, cyclists, runners/walkers, and outdoor enthusiasts. Since the trails designed by WHKS are ADA compliant, it's cherished by people with physical disabilities too. The trails and bridges are a tremendous asset, making a welcome contribution to the quality of life in the region.