EXPLORING LEPPY HILLS TRAILS

It is 2017 and the spring and summer seasons are getting underway and what a perfect time to visit the local Leppy Hills Trails.

The Leppy Hills Trails system includes 5 miles of hard pack trail consisting of three main loops (Loops A, B and C) located on the north side of Interstate 80 in the Leppy Hills which overlook West Wendover. The project was originally envisioned in 2002 as part of the city's first Bicycle System Plan which was subsequently incorporated into the city's Master Plan in relation to the city's complete streets designs and recreational uses. The trail systems final design was completed in 2007 when competitive grant funding was awarded to the city through an application to the Nevada State Lands Question 1 Program.

Project construction was completed in the spring of 2008 at a cost of nearly $650,000 with 60% of the cost (about $400,000) coming in the form of a state grant, with the remainder being provided by the city along with a substantial donation from the local Graymont Pilot Peak lime plant, which provided the lime aggregate used for the final surface of the trail.

"I remember looking forward to the completion of this project for a very long time", said Chris Melville City Manager in 2008, "it certainly has been a goal of mine growing up in the community to see new outdoor recreational venues that would raise the quality of life for our residents and provide a great experience for visitors to see this beautiful desert we call home." When Chris was asked today about how the trail has impacted the community, he says, "After nearly a decade I am pleased to be able to say that the trail system is used nearly every day of the week all year long by local residents of every age and ability, as well as visitors; all looking to get out, get some exercise, clear their minds, put a smile on their face and take in the great views of our desert surroundings. Is the trail system perfect, no, but despite its imperfections and the occasional whoopti-woos on the trail caused by heavy rains and the proverbial desert mountain gully washers, it's a great asset to our community and I really think our community has fallen in love with it".

The Leppy Trails are <u>NON MOTORIZED</u> trails. That means <u>NO</u> ATV's side by sides or motorcycles.

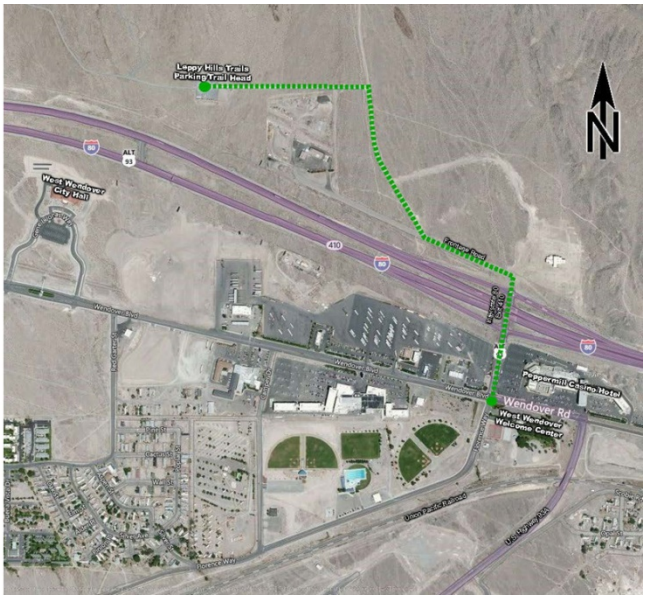
So, pass on the word get out and enjoy some beautiful vistas and wild flowers in the coming seasons. And, please be careful of the dangers of the desert; from flash flooding to yes, even snakes. Snakes prefer to keep their distance from you, so the best advice is to do the same, keep your distance from them.

From the intersection of Wendover Boulevard/Exit 410 near the Peppermill Casino, proceed to the north side of Interstate 80 (Exit 410) passing the west bound onramp, approximately 0.2 miles.

Make a left turn and head west on the Frontage Road approximately 0.2 miles.

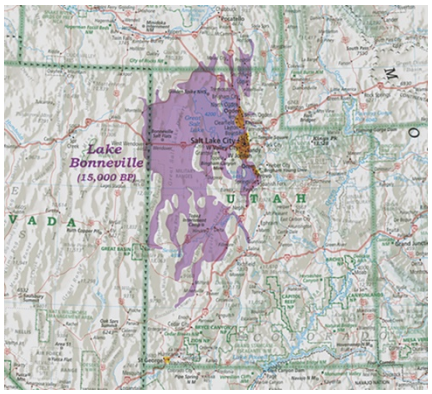
Make a slight turn to the right onto a gravel/dirt road and head north another 0.3 miles

Make a left turn and head west 0.3 miles; arrive at the Leppy Hills Trails parking area and trail head



SOME INTERESTING FACTOIDS ABOUT LEPPY HILLS

- Where does the name Leppy Hills come from? City Manager Chris Melville has the answer. "Oh yes, I get asked this question a lot" says Chris, "From what I know leppy has really two meanings though there are probably a few more. One is a short way of saying a leprechaun and the other is a name for a small calf (cow) which has been orphaned. I haven't seen too many little guys in green clothes with top hats running around planting clover and hiding gold up in the hills, so the right answer is that the mountains were likely named long ago by someone who saw a lone motherless calf wandering the hills. Given the cowboy and ranching history of Nevada, it does seem the most plausible but then again maybe while on the trails you should keep an eye out for a little fella looking for his pot of gold at the end of the rainbow", he says with a smile.



- The Leppy Hills were an island during the waning years of the last ice age over 15,000 years ago when Ancient Lake Bonneville existed. Lake Bonneville was named after U.S. Army Brigadier General Benjamin Louis Eulalie de Bonneville (1796-1878) who was an early explorer of the American West.

- Lake Bonneville covered most of western Utah and a portion of eastern Nevada and southern Idaho. By surface area the lake was nearly as large as present day Lake Michigan covering more than 19,000 square miles, but was much deeper at over 1,000 feet deep.

- One of the many things you can distinctly see while on the upper portions of Loop C of the trail system is looking to the south (to what we call the 9 Mile Mountains) you will see the horizontal shoreline of the ancient lake carved along the upper portion of those mountains. TO put it in perspective, if you were standing at that highest elevation point on Loop C about 15,000 years ago, you would find yourself about 50 feet under water and if you were walking down Wendover Boulevard you would be over 700 feet under the water surface of Lake Bonneville.

- Geology

From a vantage point on western side of the Leppy Trails Loop "C" look eastward toward the Bonneville Salt Flats. This is what is left behind of the giant Pleistocene-aged Lake Bonneville, of which the present Great Salt Lake is but a small remnant. At least twice within the last one million years, higher rainfall and lower temperatures associated with ice ages caused this basin to fill with water. Because this closed basin had no drainage to the ocean (being part of the Great Basin of the Intermountain West), when the climate warmed and dried, evaporation left behind the salt that is now the Bonneville Salt Flats used today to set world land speed records.

The steep ridges on the eastern side of the Leppy Trails (1) are formed of 300-million year old limestone and sandstone. The lime and sand were deposited in a shallow, tropical ocean, and later pushed up and plastered onto the western edge of North America. The rocks in these ridges are gray to bluish-gray and tan in color. Some of the limestone beds are reported to have fossil shells *[inset photo]*. Look carefully and you may find marine brachiopods, bryozoans (sea "moss"), gastropods (snails), bivalves (clams), and cylindrical fragments of crinoids (sea "lilies").

At the southwestern end of “Loop C” of the trail (2) you will find and ancient beach of Lake Bonneville made up of silt, clay and sand deposits. The sand and gravel deposited by streams, which flowed into Lake Bonneville are intermixed with the finer grained lake deposits. The lake and stream deposits are light gray and tan in color and crumbly in texture.

12 million years ago volcanic flows and rocks from a nearby volcano formed an upside down ∩ shaped ring which the western part of trail “Loop C” follows. This ring of volcanic rock provided the needed barrier for the edges of the lake to settle out silts and sands, lending to the creation of what would have been one very beautiful beach. If you look closely at some of the lava rock you will see small crystals within its makeup; these crystals are a trade mark of such lava flows. Through the millennia that followed including the presence of Lake Bonneville, some of that lava rock was sculpted into the smooth orange and tan colored lava mounds (3) which you can see today.

- Plant & Animal Life in the Leppy Hills

Shown are some of the various desert plants common to the Great Basin that you see in the Leppy Hills, especially in the spring (April through June) when they are flowering as well as some of the common animals you may see:


Mexican Cliffrose with Western Tanager song bird


Spinny Hopsage


Prickly Pear Cactus


Small-leaf Globemallow


Easter Daisy


Horsebrush


Purple Larkspur


Long Nosed Leopard Lizard


Short Horned Lizard


Desert Horned Lizard


Chipmunk


Blacktail Jackrabbit


Desert Cottontail Rabbit


Pronghorn Antelope


Red-tail Hawk

A special thanks to the Elko District Office/Wells Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management for their assistance with the geological formation information as well as the plant and animal information for Leppy Hills.