

Photo Source: alain cloutier, alltrails.com

CONKLE MOUNTAIN TRAIL PLAN

WHAT WE HEARD REPORT

DATE: FEBRUARY 2025









EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Conkle Mountain trail system is one of the most desired year-round recreation assets in the District of Summerland (District). In keeping with direction from the [District's Trails Master Plan \(2019\)](#), the District is working collaboratively with trail users, First Nations, landowners / managers, and interested organizations to prepare a trail plan for the Conkle Mountain trail network.

To inform the plan, the District undertook a robust engagement process which began September 4 and closed on October 17, 2024. The community had the opportunity to share their ideas, concerns and input through an online survey, onsite sounding boards, an interactive online web map, stakeholder interviews, and written submissions.

SNAPSHOT OF KEY LEARNINGS

While the learnings are significant, the following represent a brief snapshot of what was heard:

- The trail system is highly valued and supports a variety of activities year round
- Participants were very satisfied with their recreational experience on the trail system

Top Amenity Improvements

- Signage (wayfinding, educational, regulatory, interpretive)
- On-trail amenities (benches, repair stations)
- Parking and trailhead enhancements (parking capacity, wildlife-proof garbage cans, picnic tables, vault toilet, bike parking)
- Participants want to ensure amenities are basic and compliment the natural setting

Top Trail Improvements

- Reroute trails off private property
- Manage the trail system for non-motorized activities
- Add a downhill, black diamond rated mountain bike optimized tech/flow trail
- Consider developing a mountain bike skills area
- Consider adding additional technical trail features
- Elevate trail maintenance

Future Opportunities to Improve Governance, Trail & Visitor Management

- Collaborate with the Province to explore options to formalize the trails on Crown lands
- Address gaps in ecological and archaeological inventories
- Establish a volunteer stewardship group for trail maintenance
- Elevate environmental awareness and responsible recreation
- Address trail conflicts with motorized users, dog walkers, and equestrian/mountain bikers

For further details on the key learnings, please see section 2. For details on the input received by each engagement tactic, please see section 3.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT	3
1.2 ENGAGEMENT PROCESS & TACTICS	4
1.3 ENGAGEMENT PROCESS COMMUNICATIONS & PROMOTIONS	6
1.4 FIRST NATIONS ENGAGEMENT STATUS	7
2. KEY LEARNINGS FROM THE ENGAGEMENT & PRIORITIES THE PLAN SHOULD ADDRESS	8
3. ENGAGEMENT INPUT BY ENGAGEMENT TACTIC	13
3.1 ONLINE PUBLIC SURVEY	14
3.2 ONLINE INTERACTIVE CROWDSOURCE MAP	44
3.3 SOUNDING BOARDS	48
3.4 STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS & WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS	50



1.

INTRODUCTION

Photo Source: GabbyKolean Ilagen, alltrails.com

The Conkle Mountain trail system is one of the most desired year-round trail systems in the District of Summerland. The trail system supports a diversity of trail-based activities such as walking, hiking, trail running, horseback riding, mountain biking, fat biking, and dog walking. Offering stunning vistas of Giants Head Mountain, Okanagan Lake, and the rolling hills, open forest lands, and grasslands of the Okanagan Valley, the Conkle Mountain trail system is also a popular tourism destination that attracts trails-based visitors to the community and is the stage for numerous trail-based special events and races. Residents and visitor's awareness of the trail system has grown over the past decade and visitation has and continues to increase.

Hosting thousands of visits each year, the Conkle Mountain trail system enables residents to lead healthy, active, outdoor lifestyles which are a cornerstone of living in Summerland. However, the Conkle Mountain trail system has evolved organically over the past few decades and without the benefit of a clear and community supported plan. As a result, many of the trails in the system are unsanctioned by landowners / managers and trail related management issues are on the rise.

The recently completed [District of Summerland Trails Master Plan](#) indicated that conflicts between users (e.g. bikes, equestrian, motorized vehicles), lacking visitor infrastructure, lacking signage and wayfinding, and unauthorized trail building and trespass on private lands and Crowns lands are growing management issues and that a plan was needed to address them. In addition, Conkle Mountain is ecologically important and provides habitat for many different species, including species at risk. Trails and trail use have the potential to negatively impact these ecological values.

Recognizing the growing popularity of the trail system, the evolving interests and new uses (e-bikes) that are occurring on the trail systems, and the increasing management issues and challenges, the District identified the need to work collaboratively with trail users, First Nations, residents, landowners and interested organizations to prepare a trail plan for the network.





Photo Source: Michelle Bromberg, alltrails.com

1.1 PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

The purpose of this report is to present the analysis and key findings from the engagement process and to provide an official documentation of the breadth and volume of input received during the engagement process. This report helps to ensure transparency in sharing the input that was received and used to inform the trail plan.

1.2 ENGAGEMENT PROCESS & TACTICS

To inform the Conkle Mountain trails plan, stage 1 of a robust engagement process was launched on September 4 and concluded October 17, 2024. Targeting recreational users of the area, general public, adjacent landowners, District staff, Government of BC staff and many diverse interested parties (e.g. recreation / trail groups, regional district, etc.). The Stage 1 engagement process was designed to introduce the planning process and generate insights to help inform the trails plan. More specifically, the engagement process was designed to:

- Introduce and generate interest in helping to inform the plan.
- Understand current and future recreational use of the mountain, visitor motivations, and visitor satisfaction.
- Confirm the trail inventory.
- Identify the type and location of management concerns and opinions about potential solutions.
- Inform the development of desired resource conditions for the mountain.
- Gather opinions on future trail and visitor amenity needs, trail maintenance, trail diversity, trail difficulty, technical trail features supply, programming & trail maintenance and operations, and
- Gather ideas and opinions to inform a future volunteer and partnership framework.

The engagement process was designed and implemented in accordance with the International Association of Public Participation's (IAP2) best practices and core values (Figure 1).

The primary engagement tactics implemented as part of the engagement process included:

- Online public survey
- Onsite & in community sounding boards
- Stakeholder Interviews (virtual)
- Written submissions
- Online interactive crowdsourcing webmap

Multiple engagement tactics were used to elevate the accessibility of the engagement process and opportunity for interested members of the public and stakeholders to share their input. The engagement tactics, particularly the online survey, was designed to enable collected data to be desegregated, analyzed and reported on according to diverse users, community members, non-users, interested individuals, and all others whose voices and experiences have not or may not have been captured in the past.

The graphic is a rectangular box with a blue border. In the top right corner is the IAP2 logo, which consists of the letters 'iap2' in a stylized font with a small '2' as a superscript, and the text 'international association for public participation' below it. The title 'CORE VALUES' is written in bold, orange, uppercase letters. Below the title, there are seven numbered items, each with a large orange number followed by a short paragraph. A vertical dotted line separates items 1-3 on the left from items 4-7 on the right. The background of the graphic features a light blue abstract pattern of dots and lines.

CORE VALUES

IAP2 Federation's Core Values for Public Participation professionals define the expectations and aspirations of the public participation process. Processes based on the Core Values have been shown to be the most successful and respected.

- 1** Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.
- 2** Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.
- 3** Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision-makers.
- 4** Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.
- 5** Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.
- 6** Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.
- 7** Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.

www.iap2.org

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Figure 1 IAP2 Core Values

ENGAGEMENT BY THE NUMBERS



264

Online Public Surveys (160 completes and 104 partials)



14

Interviews (17 individuals for both Conkle and Cartwright Mountains)



39

sounding board comments



1

written submission



297

webmap contributions (points, line, comments, likes / dislikes) from 34 unique users



1.3 ENGAGEMENT PROCESS COMMUNICATIONS & PROMOTIONS

To generate awareness, interest, and reach, the engagement process was promoted through the following channels:

- Direct email and project notice letter to the Pentiction Indian Band (August 9, 2024).
- Direct email and project notice letter to Syilx Okanagan Nation Alliance (August 9, 2024).
- District of Summerland Newsletter and Facebook social media site.
- Summerland Trail Users Facebook Group.
- Direct email notice to key stakeholders/groups to interview.
- Promotional posters installed at trailheads and high traffic locations throughout town.
- Promotional sounding boards displayed at key parking/access points to the trail system, and at key businesses and locations throughout the District.
- Print / web media articles (e.g. Summerland Review).



Figure 2 District Facebook Promotion



Figure 3 District Facebook Promotion

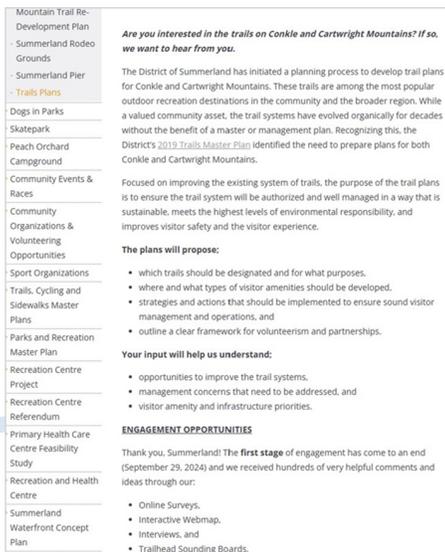


Figure 4 District Website Promotion



Figure 5 Pentiction Now Print/ Web Promotion



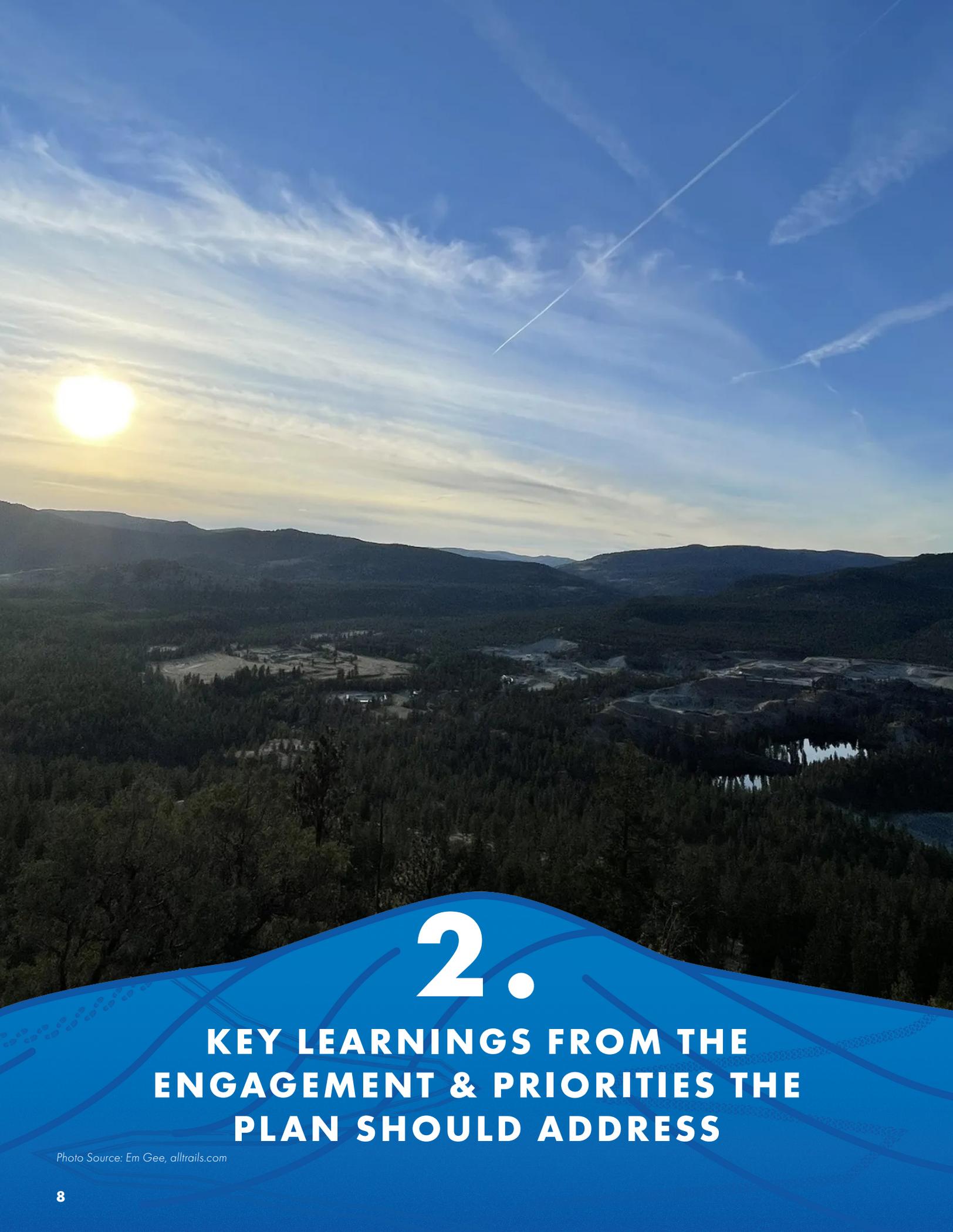
Figure 6 Summerland Review Print/Web Promotion

1.4 FIRST NATIONS ENGAGEMENT STATUS

Engagement with the Penticton Indian Band is ongoing and is not reflected within this report. Further time is required to ensure meaningful and respectful engagement. The insights from these future engagements will be fundamental to shaping the final trails plan.



Photo Source: Cindy Goodman, alltrails.com



2.

KEY LEARNINGS FROM THE ENGAGEMENT & PRIORITIES THE PLAN SHOULD ADDRESS

Photo Source: Em Gee, alltrails.com

Engagement input received through the online survey, sounding boards, interactive web map and interviews was carefully reviewed and analysed. While the input was wide ranging, a number of common findings emerged from the analysis. This section summarizes those key learnings. To the extent possible, the lists are presented in order of priority. For further details and the results presented by engagement tactic, please see Section 3.0.

THE TRAIL SYSTEM IS A HIGHLY VALUED RECREATION ASSET THAT DELIVERS DIVERSE BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY & INDIVIDUALS

The Conkle Mountain trail system is a highly valued recreational asset because of its:

- Natural and undeveloped state of the trails
- Diversity of trails styles / type
- Close proximity to downtown & easy access
- Scenery & viewpoints

The most common reasons respondents are motivated to enjoy the trail system include:

- Physical activity
- Enjoying nature
- Improve mental wellness
- Having fun & relaxing
- Because it is close to home
- For adventure / personal challenge

Benefits from the trail system include:

- Improves physical & mental health of individuals
- Helps to attract new / retain existing residents
- Increase community pride
- Helps to grow the local / regional economy
- Reduces crime

THE TRAIL SYSTEM HOSTS A DIVERSITY OF ACTIVITIES IN ALL SEASONS

The most common activities reported to be occurring on the trails include (in order):

- Walking / Hiking
- Mountain Biking – All Mountain & Cross Country
- Trail Running
- Off Leash & On Leash Dog Walking
- Snowshoeing



VISITORS ARE SATISFIED WITH THEIR RECREATION EXPERIENCE ON THE TRAIL SYSTEM, BUT THERE ARE OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE

Participants indicated that they are satisfied with the quality of the recreation experience provided by the trail system in both the warm and colder months. While participants reported that they are generally satisfied, and acknowledging that some participants indicated that the trail system should remain much the same as possible, the majority of participants identified opportunity and need to improve both the amenities and the trail experiences available. In both cases, it was clear that participants are seeking a basic level of service and a light touch that ensures any amenity and trail improvements or additions compliment the natural environment.

Top Amenity Improvements

- Signage (wayfinding, educational, regulatory, interpretive)
- Basic on-trail amenities (benches, bike repair stations)
- Trailhead amenities (wildlife proof waste receptacles, picnic tables, vault toilet, bike parking)
- Size and location of parking area, gateway experience & formalizing community trailheads

Trail Experience & Future Development Improvements

- There was strong support to manage the area as a non-motorized trail system.
- There was general support for the trail system continuing to target visitors who are seeking a beginner and intermediate level of difficulty experience with some opportunities for progression on more challenging black rated trails.
- Demand for developing new trails was minimal and was largely identified by mountain bikers. Ideas expressed included:
 - » Downhill, black rated mountain bike optimized trail from the upper switch back of Conkle Bonk to the Conkle Downhill.
- Trail re-routes to avoid trespass on private property.
- Multi-feature mountain bike technical skills training area.
- Integrate additional / more diverse technical trail features into existing trails.
- Elevate trail maintenance & improve some aspects of the trail design (e.g. corners, switchbacks, berms).



Photo Source: [conifersilence](https://www.conifersilence.com), [trailforks.com](https://www.trailforks.com)

WHILE NOT YET INTENSE, MANAGEMENT CONCERNS ARE GROWING & SHOULD BE ADDRESSED

While participants indicated that management concerns are not yet intense, they are growing, and participants recognized the need to get ahead and stay ahead of them now.

Top Trail Management Problems

- Loss of trails or access to trails from private land development
- Limited wayfinding signage & trip planning information
- Current District & volunteer capacity to manage the trails
- No governance / management responsibility for the trails
- Unsanctioned trail building & lack of landowner / manager approvals
- Trails are being built without proper environmental & archaeological assessments or considerations
- Impacts to sensitive ecosystem & habitats
- Introduction & transport of invasive species
- Lack of trailhead / on-trail visitor comfort and convenience amenities
- Wildlife displacement & disturbance
- Lack of staging / parking areas
- Trespass on private lands

Top Visitor Management Problems

- Limited visitor education & information on responsible recreation.
- Unauthorized use of trails & trail damage from motorized / off road vehicles & Class 2 & 3 e-bikes
- Designating permitted & prohibited activities on trails
- Wildfire risk
- Trail damage from horses
- Trampling of vegetation from off trail travel
- Dog feces
- Horse manure
- Dogs off-leash
- Insufficient parking availability / access & congestion on nearby roads from overflow parking
- Litter & wildlife attractants
- Human wildlife conflicts
- Use of Class 1 e-bikes
- Visitors not following signage & rules
- Too many dogs on & off leash
- Trespass on private lands

Top Trail User Conflicts to be Addressed

- Motorized use & all other activity types
- Off-leash dog walking & all other activity types
- Equestrian & mountain biking

While not immediately relevant to the development of the plan, the following emerged during the engagement process:

- Concern about the recent trail development on Giants Head Mountain and a request to avoid repeating those types of developments on Conkle Mountain.

ENHANCE VOLUNTEER SUPPORT & CAPACITY

It was noted that the trail system is being operated by a very small number of dedicated volunteers with little support. Enhancing volunteer support and capacity and creation of a multi-interest trail stewardship group was a clear emerging priority. Key concerns included:

- Number of volunteers
- Volunteer training
- Limited capacity support provided to volunteers from the District for trail maintenance / operations
- More deliberate governance for the trail system, trail planning and decisions





3.

ENGAGEMENT INPUT BY ENGAGEMENT TACTIC

Photo Source: Heather Ellis, alltrails.com

The following sections document the input received through each engagement tactic.

3.1 ONLINE PUBLIC SURVEY

In total, 264 participants attempted the survey with 160 fully completed responses received, equalling a response rate of 60.6%. The survey was open from September 4 – 29, 2024. The survey was promoted to the public through the following channels:

- Posters with a QR code were displayed throughout the District.
- The District website, social media, and direct email invitation to community stakeholders.
- Community stakeholder groups were invited to promote the survey to their members and networks.

Responses to the questions are presented below in the order they were asked in the survey. It is important to note that not all questions were answered by all respondents. Thus, the percentages in the findings represent the number of respondents to the individual questions.

Table 1: Key Respondent Characteristics

Age	
18-24years	0.6%
25-34 years	6.2%
35-44 years	18.5%
45-54 years	23.5%
55-64 years	22.8%
65-74 years	21.0%
75 years and older	4.3%
Prefer not to answer	1.2%
Gender	
Female	46.9%
Male	46.9%
Trans Female	0.6%
Prefer to self-describe as	0.6%
Prefer not to answer	5%
Residency *	
District of Summerland Resident	136
Outside of District (or unknown)	17

**Not all respondents completed all questions on the survey and residency was not mandatory*

3.1.1 Approach to Analysis

Respondents were provided with an open ended “other” options throughout the survey. The comments were analyzed and coded into themes. The major themes and examples of respondent comments are summarized for each question where relevant.

3.1.2 Survey Results

The following section presents the survey results for each question asked.

1. **Have you participated in a trails-based recreation activity on Conkle Mountain in the past?**

The majority of respondents (80%) have used Conkle Mountain for recreation in the past.

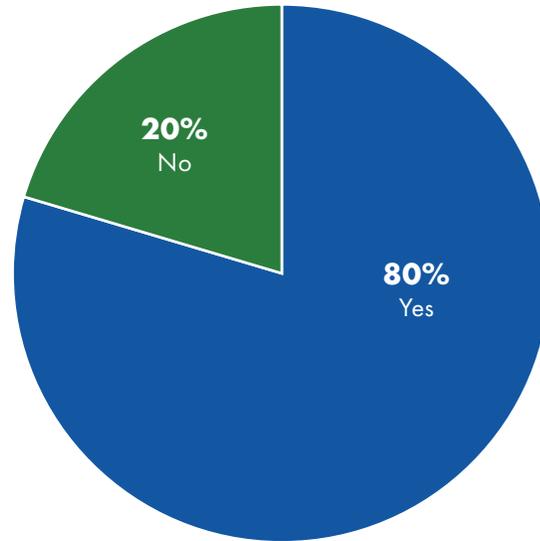


Figure 7 Participation in a Trails-based Recreation Activity



2. Thinking about why you choose to recreate on the trails on Conkle Mountain, please rate how important each of the following are to you.

Figure 8 shows the distribution of the various motivations. The majority of respondents are visiting the Conkle Mountain trail system for physical activity and exercise (93%) and to enjoy nature (90%), followed by 79% to improve their mental wellness, and 76% to have fun and relax.

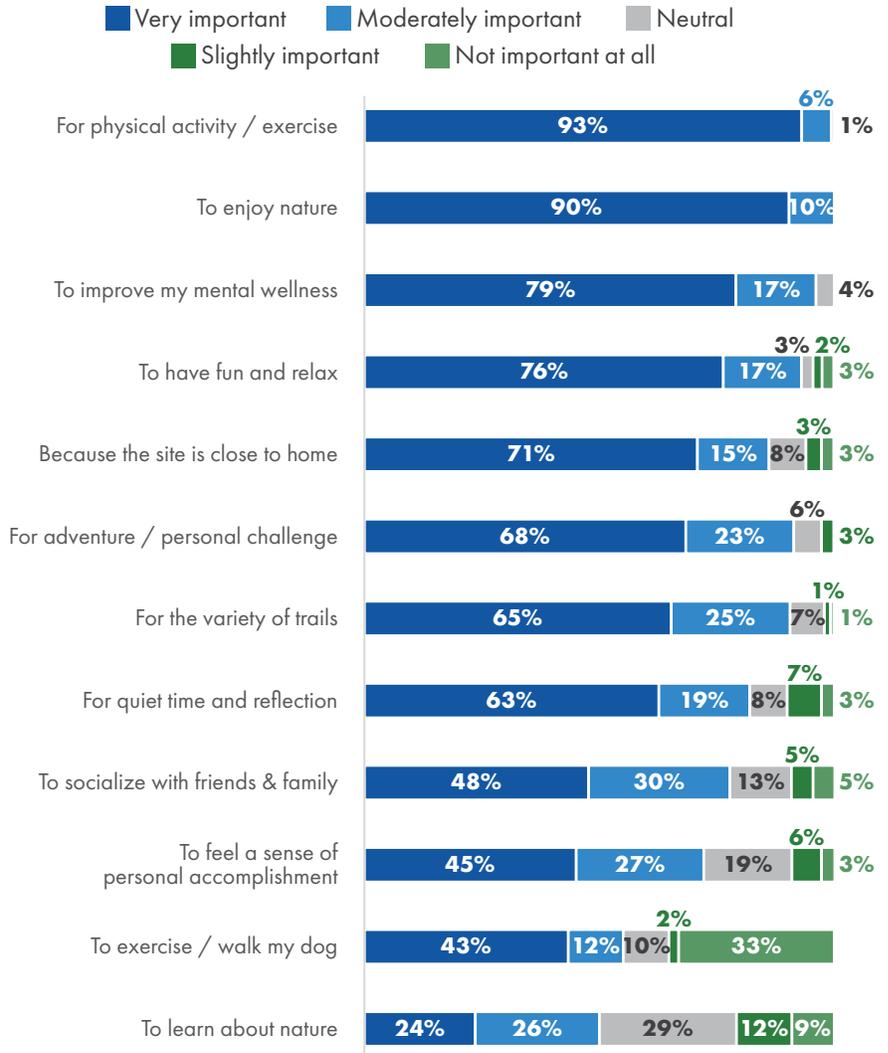


Figure 8 Reason for Recreating on Conkle Mountain

3. Which of the following activities do you undertake on Conkle Mountain during a) the warmer months (April – September) and b) the colder months (October – March)? Please select the activity(ies) that represent your primary reason for visiting the Conkle Mountain trail system.

Participants were asked to select the primary activity undertaken when recreating on the Conkle Mountain trail system¹. As it relates to seasonality, the recreational activities differ in the winter (colder months) and the summer (warmer months). In the warmer months (Figure 9) the majority of visitors (77%) are using the site for walking/hiking, followed by mountain biking – all mountain visitors (50%), and mountain biking – cross country (46%). Visitors are almost equally using the site for off (31%) and on (32%) leash dog walking. There is also some equestrian recreational activity (13%) in the area, and a smaller number of visitors are engaging in motorized use though not permitted in the District’s Mount Conkle Park.

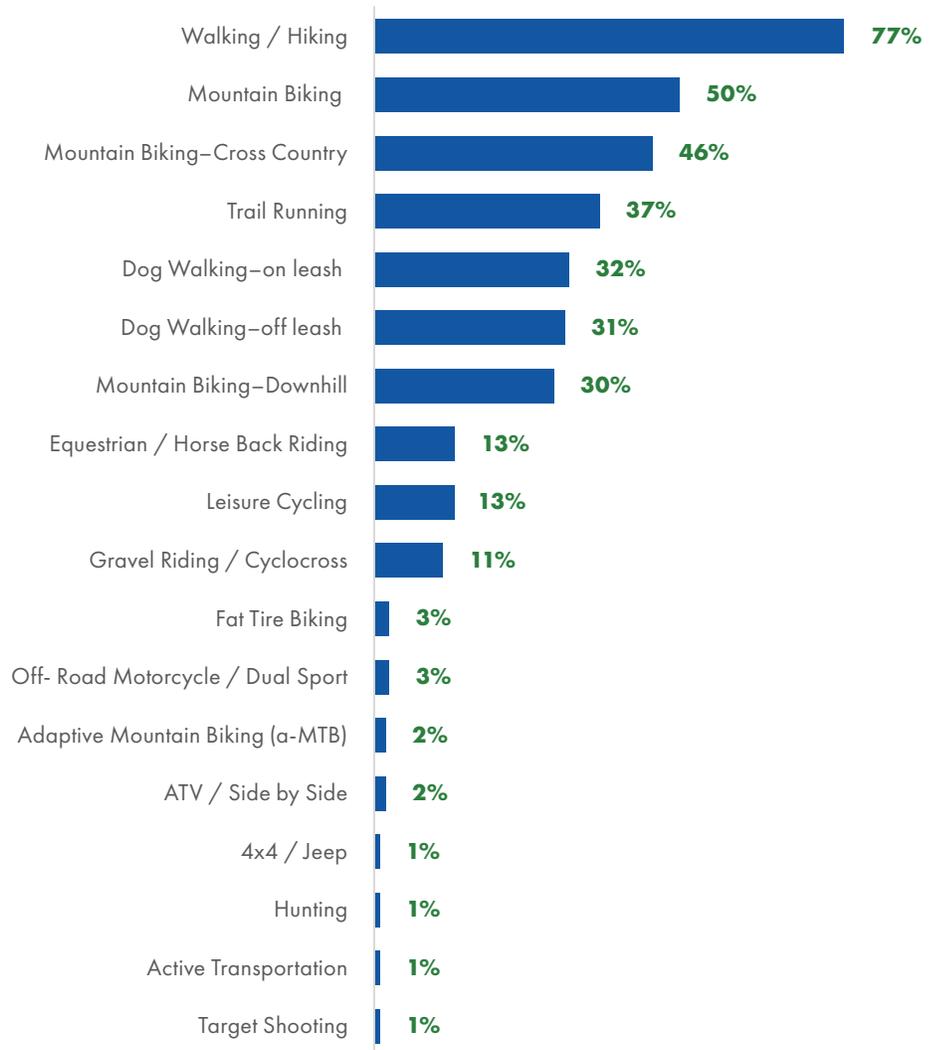


Figure 9 Recreation Activities during the Warmer Months (April – September)

¹ Participants were asked to select their primary reason/activity; however many people use the area for more than one activity and as such listed more than one primary activity.

In the winter (colder months) the area is primarily used for walking/hiking (77%) and snowshoeing (36%). In keeping with the District's bylaw, dog walking – off leash is occurring at higher rates than on leash walking. Mountain biking and trail running also occur (Figure 10).

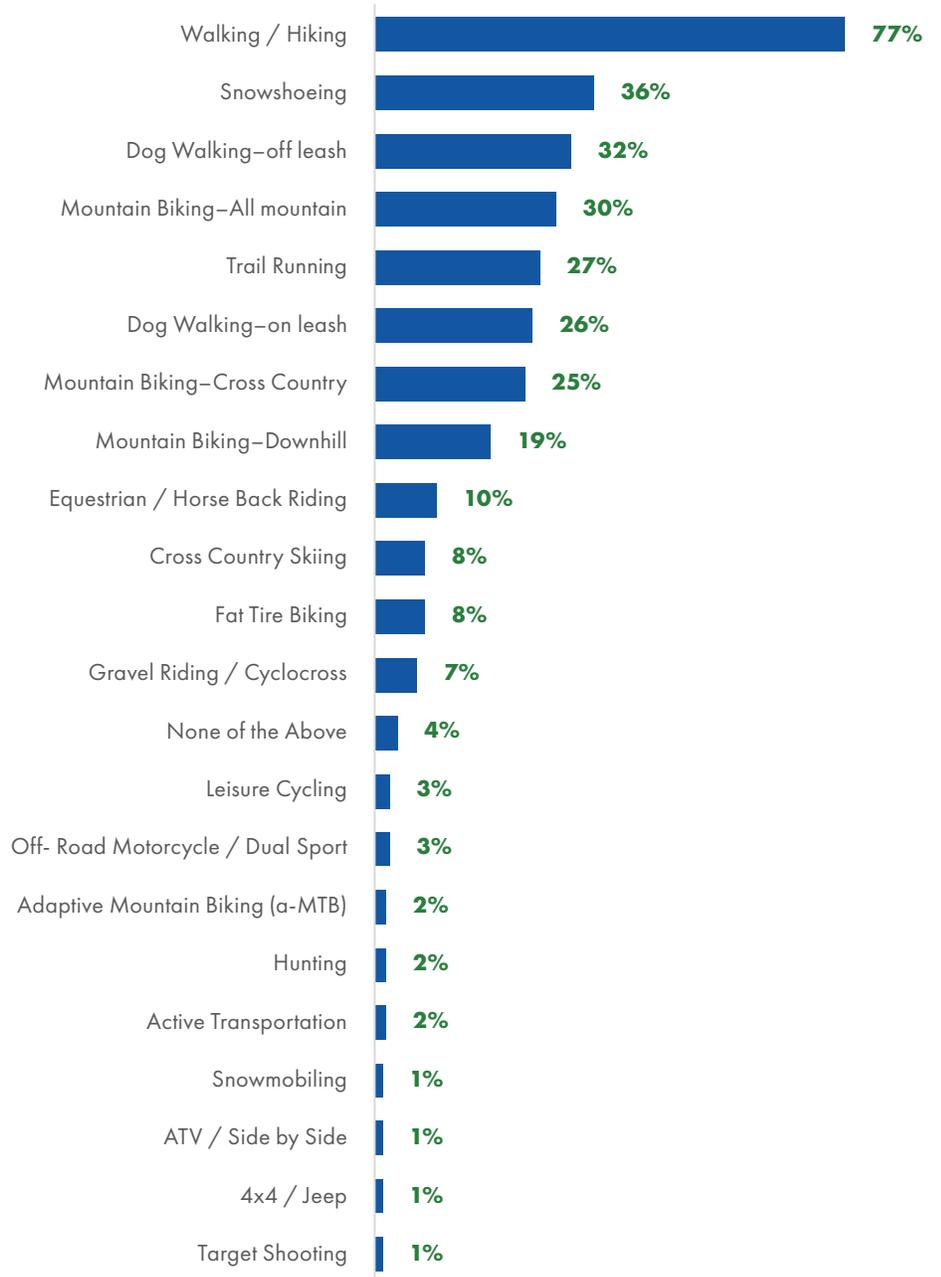


Figure 10 Recreation Activities during the Colder Months (October – March)

4. Are there other recreational activities, not listed in the previous question, that are the primary motivator for your recreational visit to Conkle Mountain?

Two respondents mentioned photography as their motivational activity while there was one mention each for race events, wildlife viewing, tobogganing, and bird watching as recreational activities they participate in not included on the list.



Photo Source: Mary Gibson, alltrails.com

5. Thinking about the past year, which of the following best describes how often you recreated on Conkle Mountain during a) the warmer months (April – September) and b) the colder months (October – March)?

Many respondents (40%) visit the recreation area more than once a week in the warmer months (Figure 11). During the colder months the frequency of visits is distributed more broadly with about 27% of visitors using the area more than once a week, 14.5% once a week, and 12.5% less often.

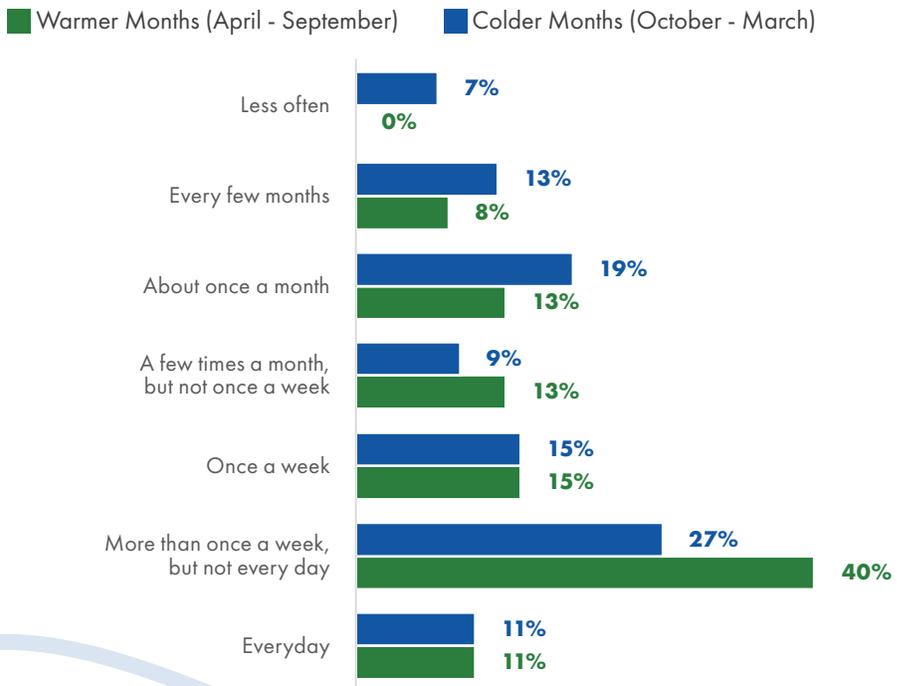


Figure 11 Frequency of Recreation Visits by Season

6. Typically, how long do your recreational outings last on Conkle Mountain last?

The majority of visitors (more than 70%) are spending 1-2 hours recreating on Conkle Mountain during both warmer and colder months (Figure 12).

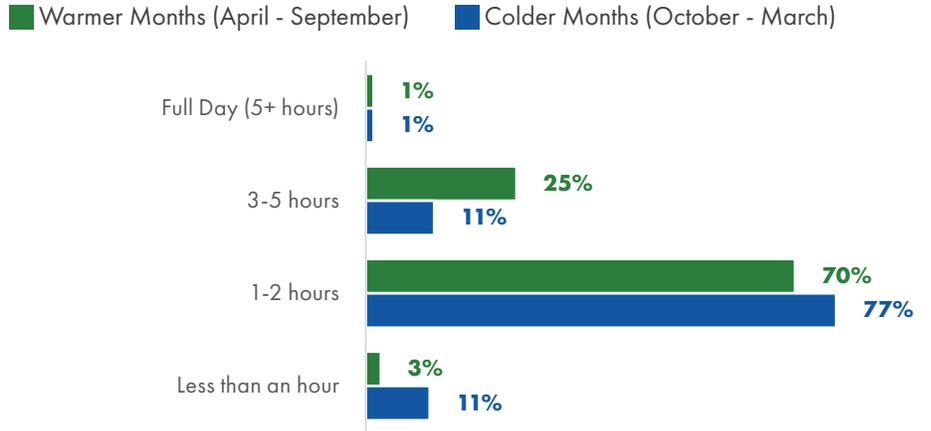


Figure 12 Length of Recreational Visit

7. When you recreate on Conkle Mountain, how many people are typically in your group during a) the warmer months (April – September) and b) the colder months (October – March)?

Respondents indicated the typical group size in the warmer months is slightly larger than that in the colder months. In the warmer months, the average group size of people recreating on Conkle Mountain is 2.8 with the highest reported group size of 10 and lowest being 1. In the colder months, the average group size of people recreating on Conkle Mountain is 2.4 with the highest reported group size of 10 and lowest being 1.



8. Who do you typically recreate with when visiting Conkle Mountain? (select all that apply)

The majority of respondents are recreating with family (64%) and friends (74%) as shown in Figure 13. However, more than 50% of respondents visit alone (note there is also overlap as some people may visit some days by themselves and other days with family and friends). A small proportion of respondents participate in organized activities such as hiking, walking, and running/race club events or organized mountain biking sessions.

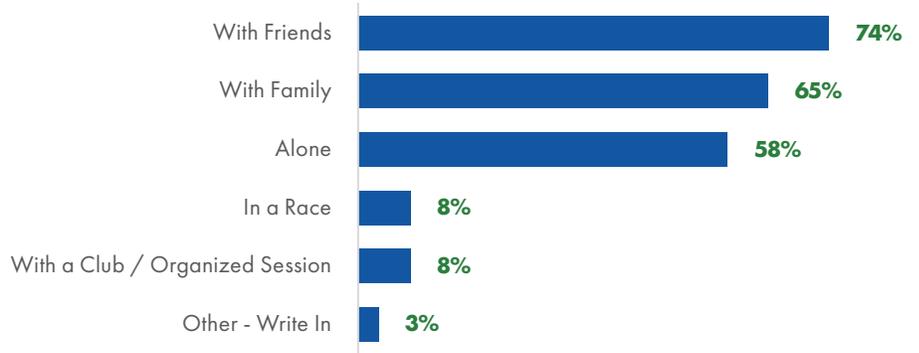


Figure 13 People who Respondents Typically Recreate With

9. Typically, what mode of transportation do you use to travel to the trails on Conkle Mountain?

Most respondents (71%) travel to the Conkle Mountain trail system by automobile / motorcycle, while less than 43% indicate that they cycle, 24% walk, and only about 30% carpool to the trail system.

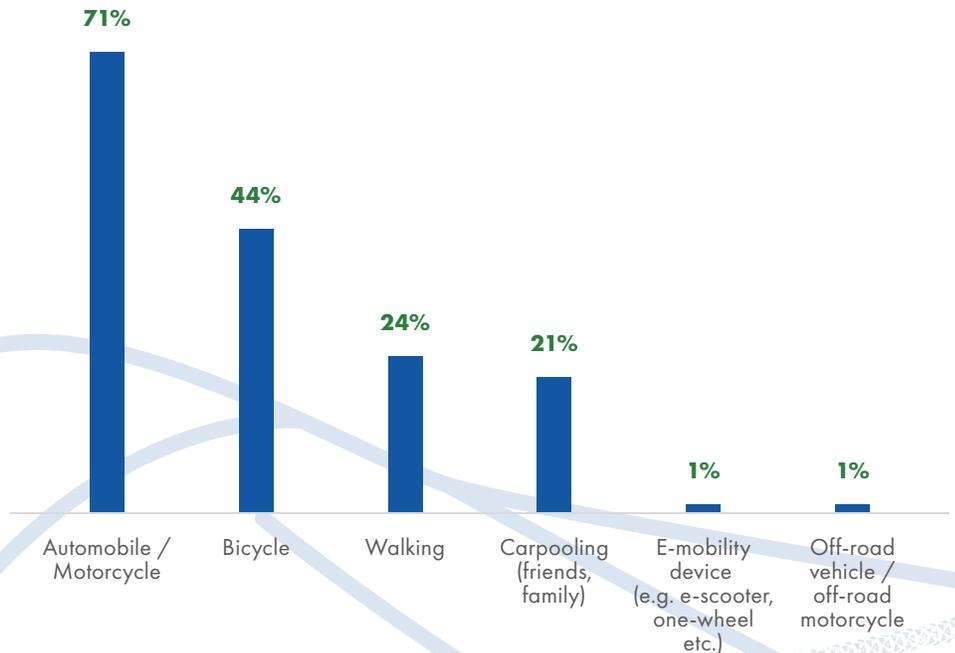


Figure 14 Transportation Modes Most Used by Visitors

10. Typically, where do you park when you visit Conkle Mountain?

Most respondents report using the Summerland Rodeo Grounds parking lot (65%) and the Fenwick / Fyffe Road entrance on Fenwick Road (58%), while 24% indicated they do not use any public parking as they live in the area (Figure 15).

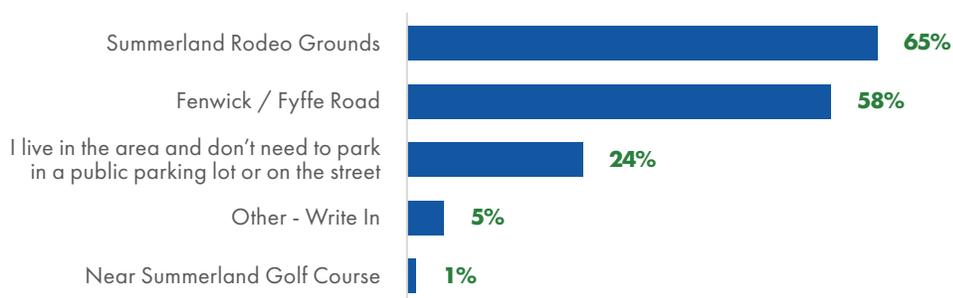


Figure 15 Parking Locations

11. Which of the following sources of information do you typically or have you used in the past, when planning your visit to Conkle Mountain? (select all that apply)

A majority of the respondents (61%) indicated they don't use any sources of information to help plan their trips as they live in the area and visit all the time. Of those that do utilize information sources to help plan their trip, Trailforks (34%) was the most frequently referenced. Other respondents rely on family / friends / relatives (22%) who are familiar with the area. Other web-based sources of information include AllTrails (15%), Social Media (13%), and Strava (12%). Figure 16 demonstrates the range of information sources used.

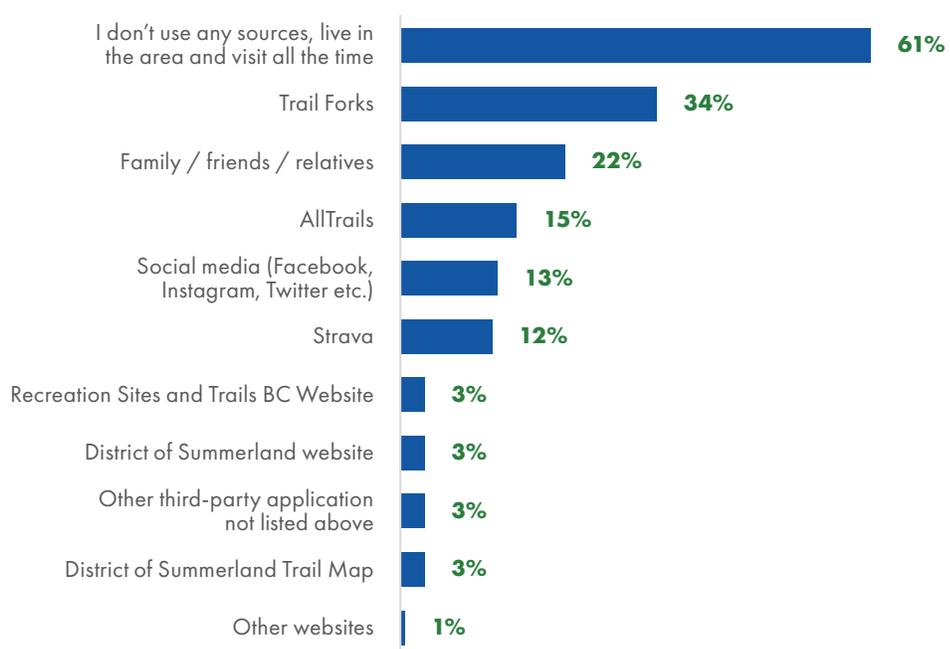


Figure 16 Information Sources Used to Plan Visit

12. What characteristics attract you to recreate on the trails on Conkle Mountain?

Open ended responses indicate that visitors choose to recreate on Conkle Mountain because of a variety of characteristics. From the 130 open ended responses provided, the most important characteristic that attracted respondents to recreate on Conkle Mountain appears to be the natural and undeveloped state of the trails (26%), followed closely by the diversity of trail types (24.5%) available. The third most important characteristic appears to be the ease of access to the trails (15%), as Conkle Mountain is very close to most residents of Summerland making it an easy site to access. And the fourth most important characteristic is the scenery of the area, with 14% of respondents suggesting this a factor in attracting them to the Conkle Mountain trail system.



Photo Source: DW66, trailforks.com

13. Overall, how satisfied are you with quality of your WARM season recreation experience on the Conkle Mountain trail system?

Most respondents (70%) are very satisfied with the quality of their warm season recreation experience on Conkle Mountain (Figure 17) with 24% of respondents indicating they are satisfied with their visit.

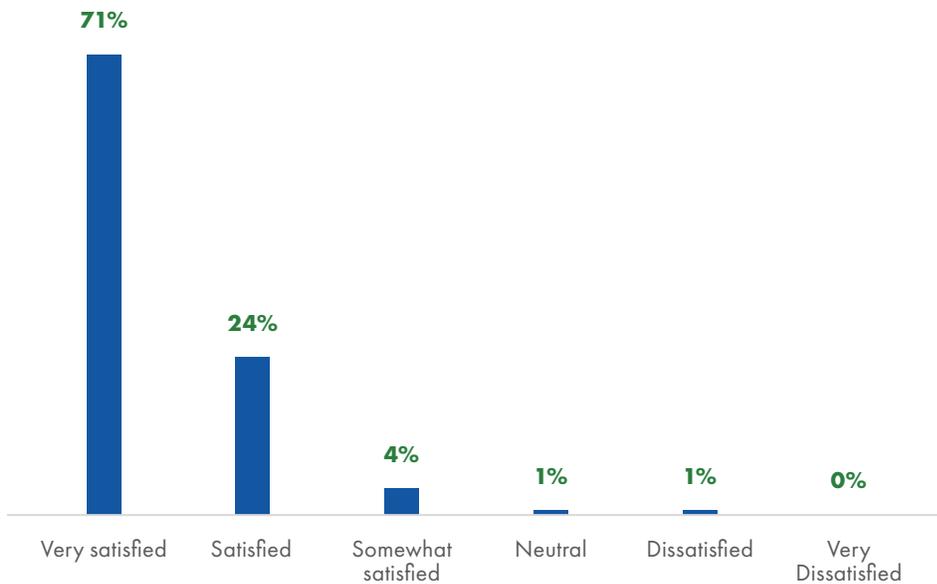


Figure 17 Satisfaction during the Warmer Season

14. Overall, how satisfied are you with quality of your COLD season recreation experience on the Conkle Mountain trail system?

Respondents are not as satisfied with their winter recreation experience on Conkle Mountain, with 52% indicating they are very satisfied with their experiences and 26% being satisfied (Figure 18).

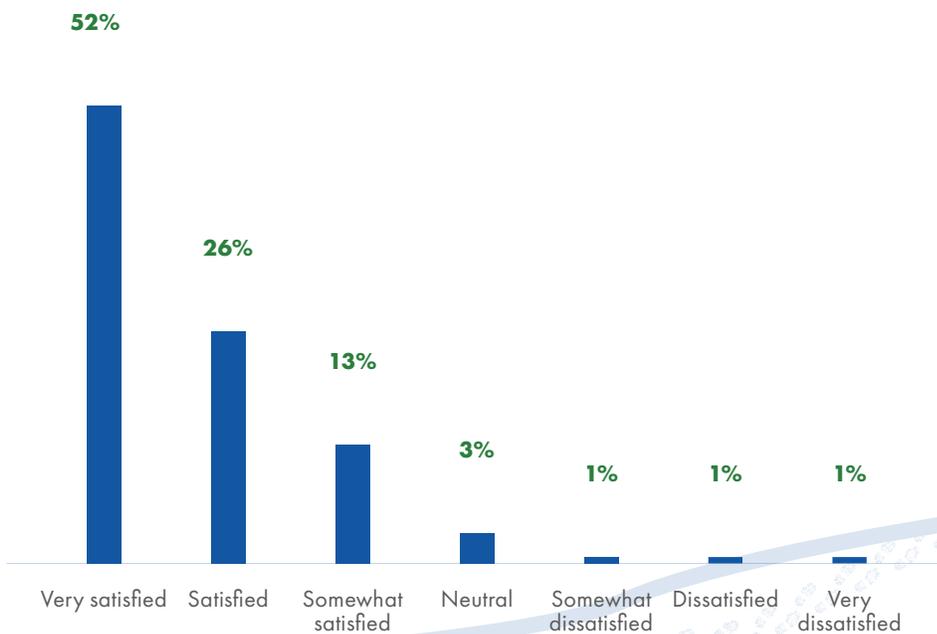


Figure 18 Satisfaction during the Colder Season

15. How likely is it that you would recommend visiting the Conkle Mountain trail system to a friend, family member, or colleague?

From a total of 147 participants who completed the survey, 91 respondents (62%) reported they would be extremely likely (10 out of 10) to recommend visiting the Conkle Mountain trail system to a friend, family member, or colleague while fifty respondents (34%) indicated that they would be highly likely to make the recommendation to visit.

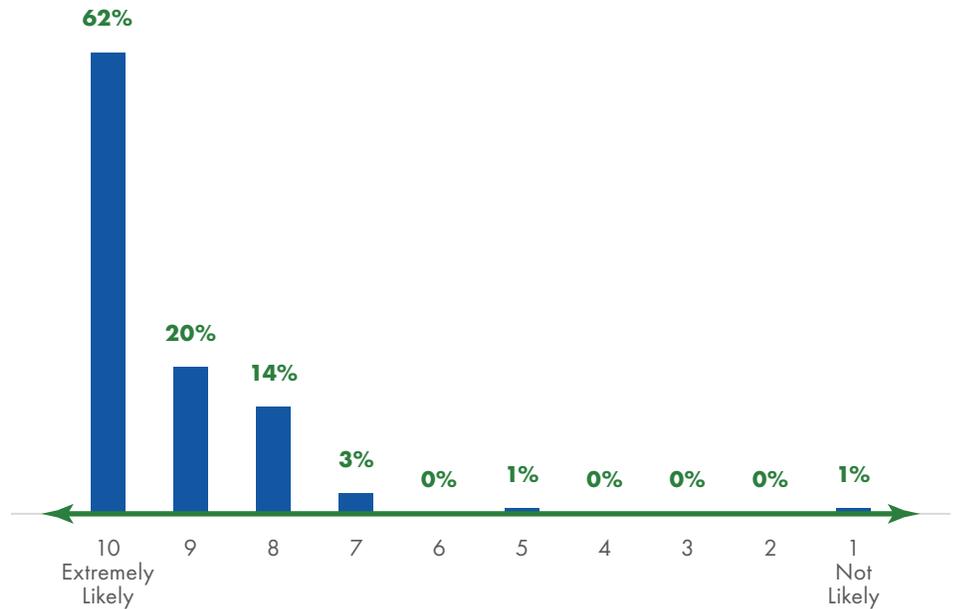


Figure 19 Likelihood of Recommending Visiting the Conkle Mountain Trail System



16. How satisfied are you with the following at Conkle Mountain?

Visitors are most satisfied with the quality of the trails for hiking, walking, and trail running (71%) followed by total length of trails (single-track multi-use trails) at 67%.

The next two features visitors are most satisfied with include the ease and supply of climb trails (59%) followed closely by the current distribution of trail difficulty (58%), and the total length of mountain bike optimized trails at 57%.

While there was general overall satisfaction, most respondent dissatisfaction appeared with the supply and quality of visitor comfort amenities and signage compared to other features of the trail system. Over 29% of respondents are dissatisfied with the current wayfinding signage while 27% feel that visitor comfort amenities such as toilets, benches, and waste receptacles are lacking.

Additionally, 19% of respondents are dissatisfied with the amount of regulatory signage on the trail system while 18% feel more responsible use educational signage is needed.

Not to be missed however, 20% of respondents are dissatisfied with size of the parking areas, likely due to the fact that only two areas are providing current access.

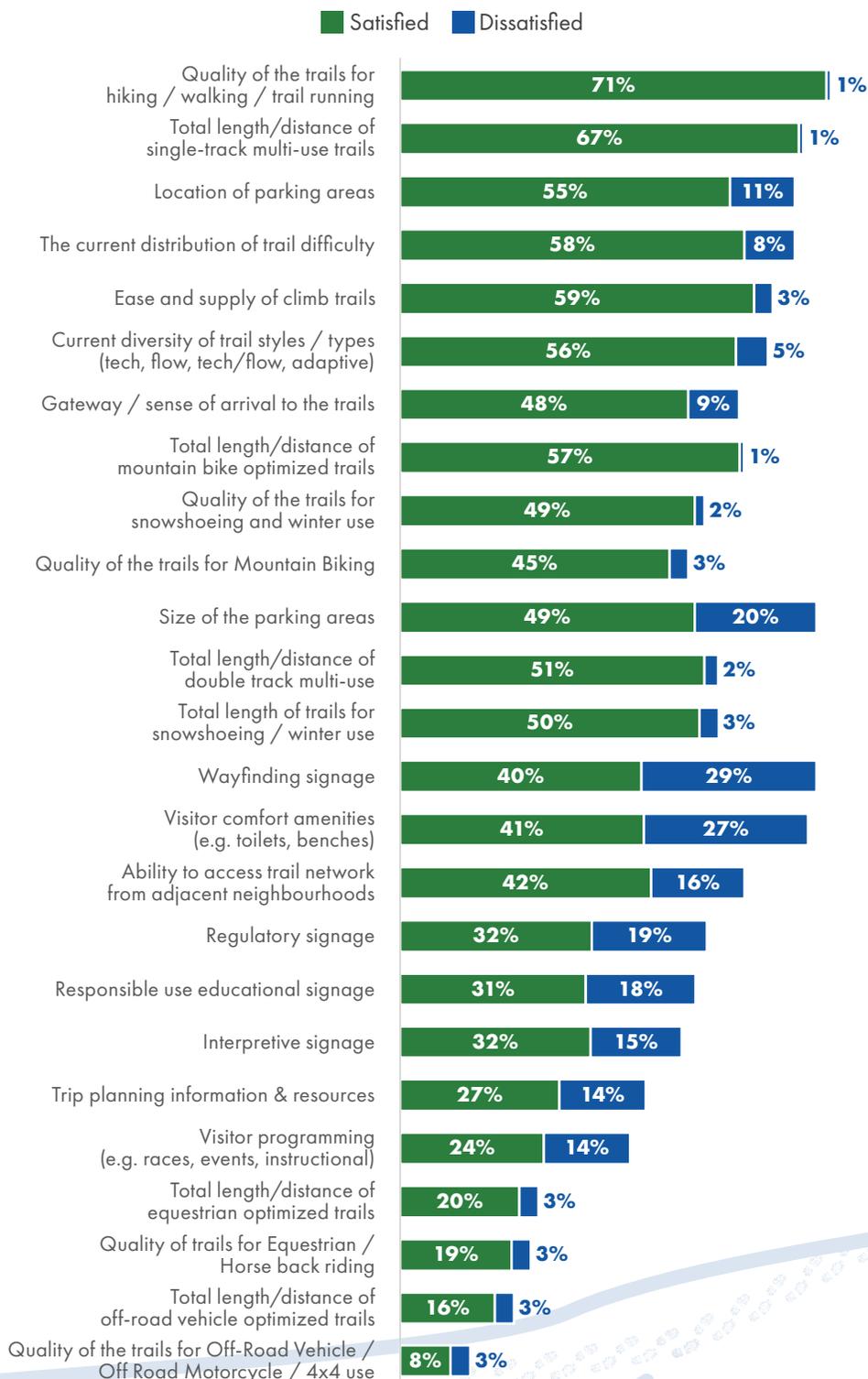


Figure 20 Visitor Satisfaction with Trail System Features

17. Do you believe that more trails are needed at Conkle mountain to meet current and future demands?

Approximately 54% of respondents indicated that no more trails are needed at Conkle Mountain to meet current and future demands, while 27% desired the development of more trails with 19% of respondents uncertain.

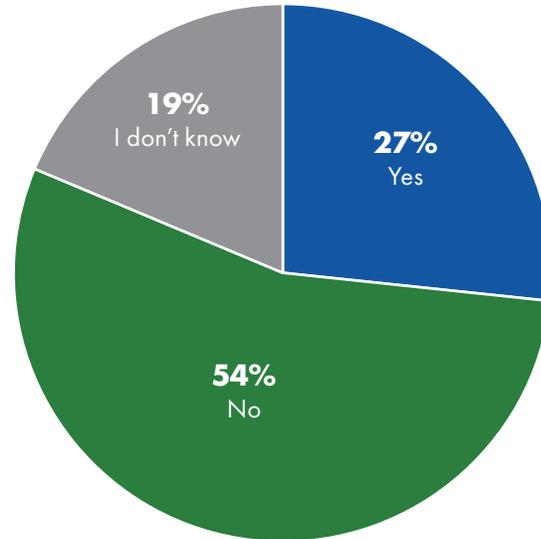


Figure 21 Desire for More Trails to Meet Current/Future Demand

18. Thinking about the current mix of trails and what, if any, additional trails are needed to meet future demands, what types of trails do you believe should be prioritized for further development / expansion? (select all that apply)

The variety and mix of trails are very important to users on Conkle Mountain. Based on the respondents who indicated that more trails are needed, the following trail types were identified as most needed: 1) all-mountain mountain bike optimized trails, 2) cross-country mountain bike optimized trails, 3) non-motorized single track – multi use trail and 4) downhill mountain bike optimized trails. Figure 22 represents the ranking for the types of new trails that respondents believe should be prioritized.

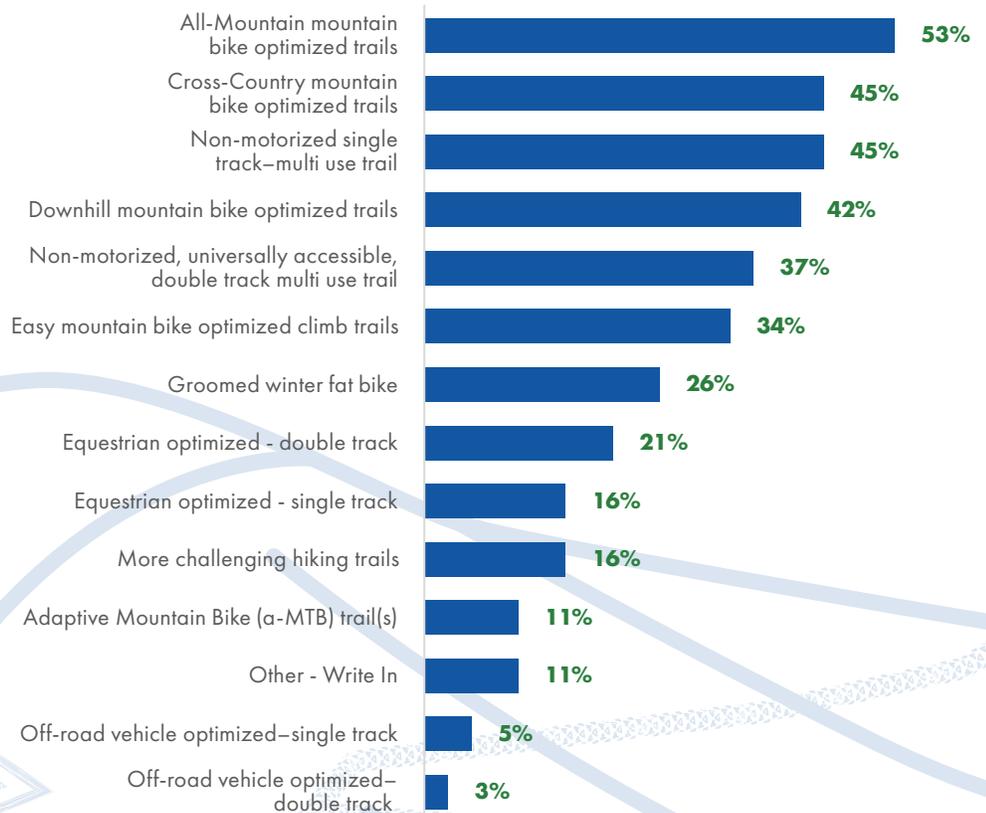


Figure 22 Trails to be Prioritized for Future Development

19. Regardless of your preferred trail-based activity, please check the box(es) that describe your preferred trail difficulty level (select multiple if applicable)

While respondents are seeking the full range of trail difficulty, there is a clear desire for the system to provide bluer rated and black rated trails than other levels of difficulty. The majority of respondents (84%) prefer more difficult / blue square rated trails, followed by advanced / black diamond (60%), and easier / green circle (52%). Much smaller proportions of respondents prefer trails rated as easy / white circle or expert / double black diamond. Very few respondents preferred adaptive mountain bike trail. Figure 23 presents the difficulty preferences of respondents.

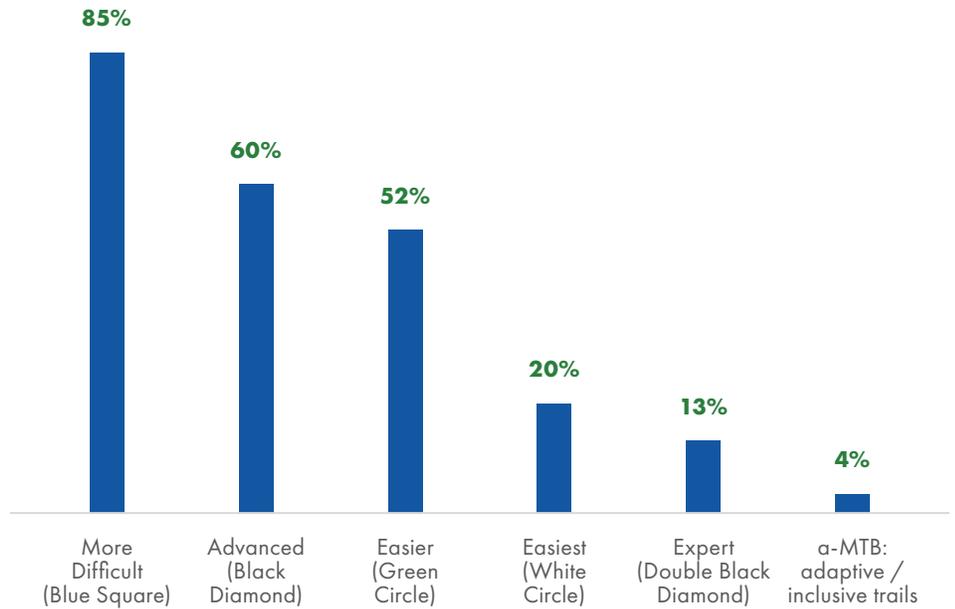


Figure 23 Preferred Trail Difficulty Level

20. Technical Trail Features are built or natural features that are purposefully integrated into mountain bike optimized trails to elevate the fun, excitement and / or challenge of the trail. Do you feel that more technical trail features are needed in the trail system?

Nearly 41% of respondents felt that no additional technical trail features (TTF) are needed in the trail system while 23% indicated support for the inclusion of new TTFs and 23% reporting that they did not mountain bike on Conkle Mountain. A much smaller proportion of respondents (13%) did not know.

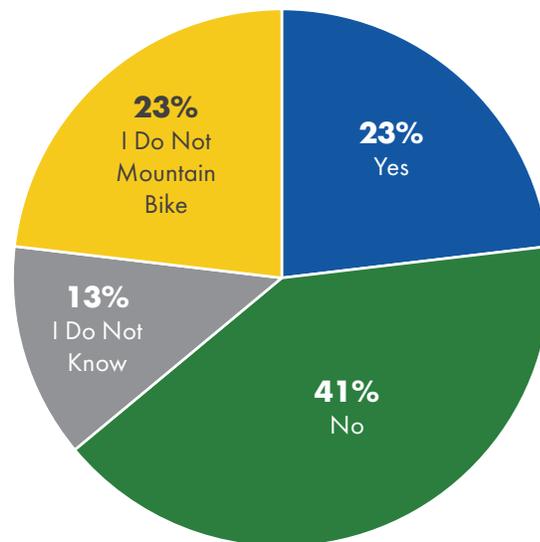


Figure 24 Demand for More Technical Trail Features

21. What types of Technical Trail Features do you feel the trail system requires more of? (select all that apply)

Based on those that indicated new TTFs are needed, the most preferred technical trail features include natural rolls (82%), natural drops (79%), and wooden rolls/roll overs (62%). The least preferred are double rollers, elevated bridges/skinnies, and teeter totters. Figure 25 provides further detail for all listed technical trail features.

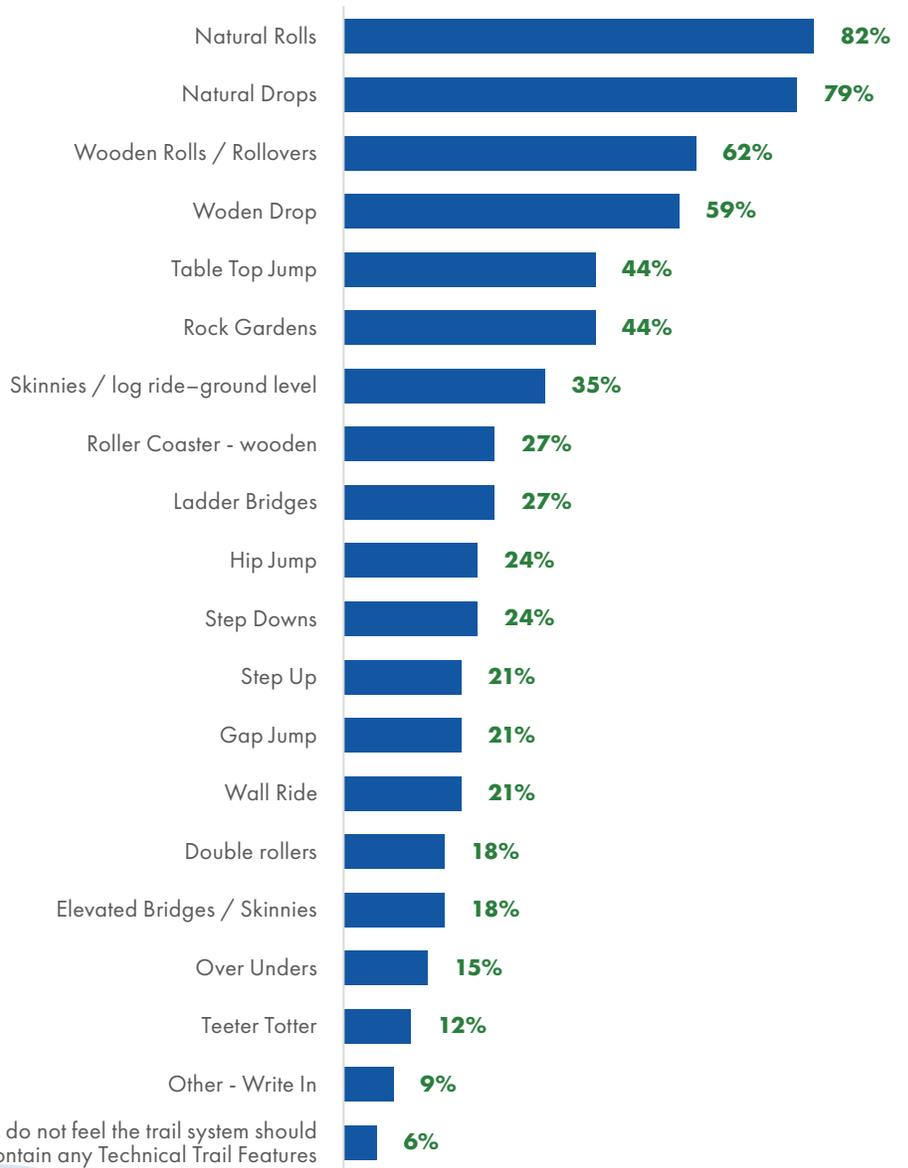


Figure 25 Demand for Technical Trail Features by Type

22. Overall, what do you think could be done to improve the quality of your recreational experience on the Conkle Mountain trail system?

Respondents were given the opportunity to describe in their own words what could be done to improve the experience on Conkle Mountain. In total 113 respondents provided open ended responses to this question. The main themes included:

• Keep it the way it is (32 comments)

- » The majority of the comments were appreciative of its support for multi-use and multi-disciplines, the areas natural beauty, quality of the existing trails, variety of terrain and difficulty, and rough and ready natural character the trail system supports.
- » Respondents want to ensure that the existing natural trails continue to support the variety of users, and all experiences are valued equally as the beauty of Conkle is the natural state.
- » Additional trails would be nice, but not imperative suggesting more trails would damage the environment and ruin the natural setting and atmosphere.
- » Respondents supported the District meet with the various volunteers and stakeholders that use the trails to support the maintenance of the trails as is and direct those who want a different experience to Giants Head.

• Add/Improve/Update Signage (21 comments)

- » New signage is needed to improve wayfinding and the overall visitor experience at parking/staging areas, trailheads, and along the trails.
- » Improved signage and mapping of the entire planning area that incorporates type of usage of trail (single use or mixed-use) and identified trail activities was desired.
- » It was noted that regulatory and enforcement signage is needed in certain areas including where motorized vehicles can access non-motorized trails, where environmental impact has damaged trails, and where trails enter private property.
- » Respondents indicated this is needed for both tourists and local visitors and especially for new or beginning trail users.

• Grow and Support the Conkle Mountain Trail system as a Major Asset in the Community (16 comments)

- » It was noted that the KVR / TCTI between rodeo grounds and Fyffe Rd along with the Full Frontal/Frontside/Bonk trails is a fabulous mix, for walker/hikers/joggers/equestrian and mountain bike users.
- » Respondents suggested that more trails could be built, but not take away the enjoyment of the natural flowy nature of the trails on Conkle.
- » Building more quality trails and further enhancing the diversity of trails was suggested including dedicated mtn bike trails, increasing downhill sections and using the rocky landscape to add natural features and bigger jumps to the sections.
- » There was a suggestion to rebuild the Conkle DH to double its length and make it more resilient with flows, big berms, safe jumps, and more built features as well as the development of an exit trail to Dale Meadows with small features on the descent trails.
- » There is a desire to ensure that all trails continue to be non-motorized multi-use between hikers, bikers and equestrians as well as having designated trails for some different activities (e.g. mountain bikes, e-bikes, and equestrian).
- » Smith Creek was provided as an example of what could be achieved which includes providing trails for all levels and it was also suggested to look at Hope, Fernie, Powell River, and Nakusp as best practice youth/family skills bike park/trail centres.
- » Although outside the planning area, it was suggested that adding and formalizing a trail above the reservoir and across the KVR linking Conkle to Cartwright would allow for access from the residential areas at the end of Prairie Valley and provide potential for alternate access/parking for both trail networks on municipal land.
- » It was also suggested that municipal land located further west of the reservoir could become a destination for motorized, providing further economic benefit and connectivity to the existing motorized trails west of the Cartwright Mountain planning area.

- **Visitor Comfort and Convenience Amenities (6 comments)**

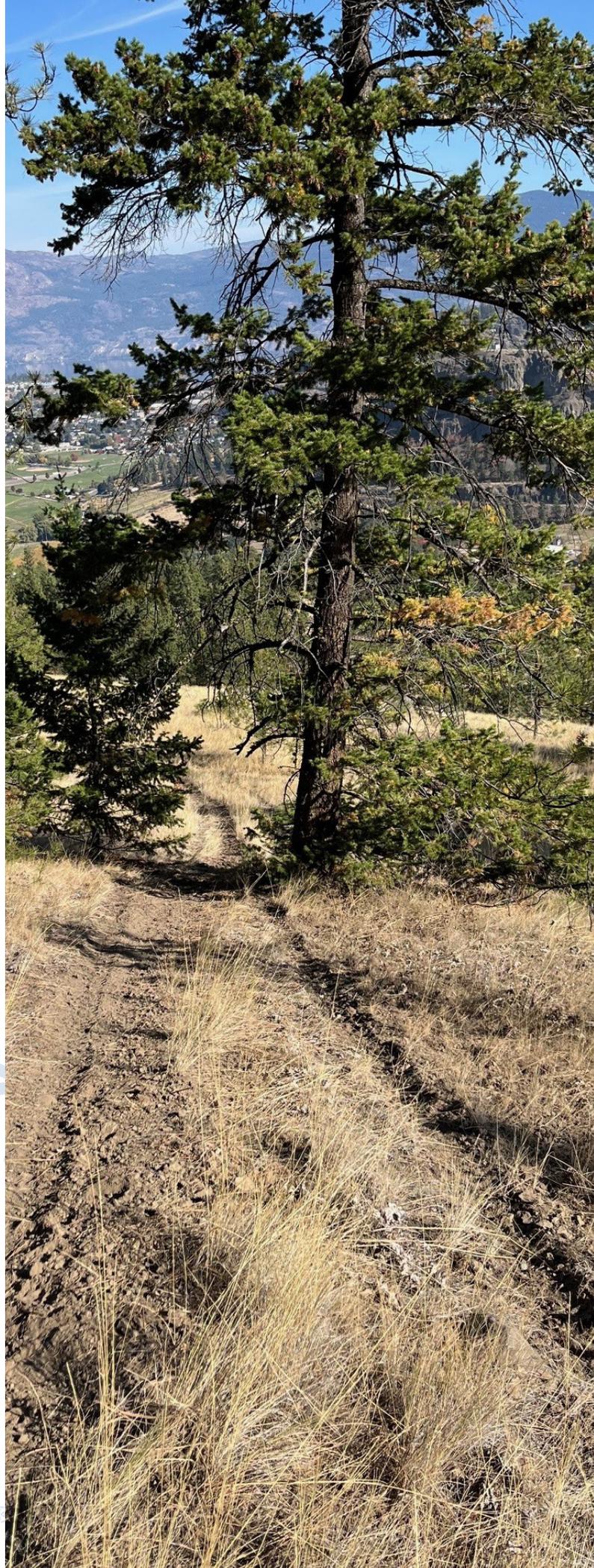
- » The visitor experience could be enhanced with some key amenities and infrastructure that address garbage, dog feces, horse manure and OHV access.
- » Although the District recently added a new bear-proof garbage bin to the Conkle Mountain trailhead at the Rodeo Grounds, there was general support for more amenities at this location, including enhanced parking spots and area facilities such as washrooms, hitching posts, picnic tables and benches, water stations, and recycling/waste receptacles.

- **Improve Parking and Access (6 comments)**

- » Respondents would like to see better parking at the Fyffe Road/Fenwick Road access in the east as it has generated congestion challenges and private landowner concerns.
- » There was support for enhancing the existing gateway to the Rodeo Grounds for a more welcoming and sense of arrival to the trailheads, staging, and parking area.

- **Improve Trail Maintenance and Management (6 comments)**

- » A few respondents felt more maintenance is required in sensitive sites where damage exists, dry/dusty descents, and in sections where erosion is occurring.
- » There was praise given to the snow clearing and maintenance of the KVR in the winter providing opportunities for walkers and trail runners





23. In your opinion, what benefits does visitation to the Conkle Mountain trail system generate for the District and the Region? Check all that apply.

Respondents identified that visitation to the Conkle Mountain trail system generates a wide range of benefits for the District and the region. The most frequently cited benefits include improving the physical and mental health of visitors (85%), followed by the ability to attract and retain new residents (72%), and increasing community pride (61%). There is also a recognition that trails-based recreation helps to grow (44%) and diversify (34%) the local and regional economy, followed by reducing crime (44%). Figure 26 presents the types of benefits respondents believe trails-based recreation visitation to the Conkle Mountain trail system generate for the District and the region.

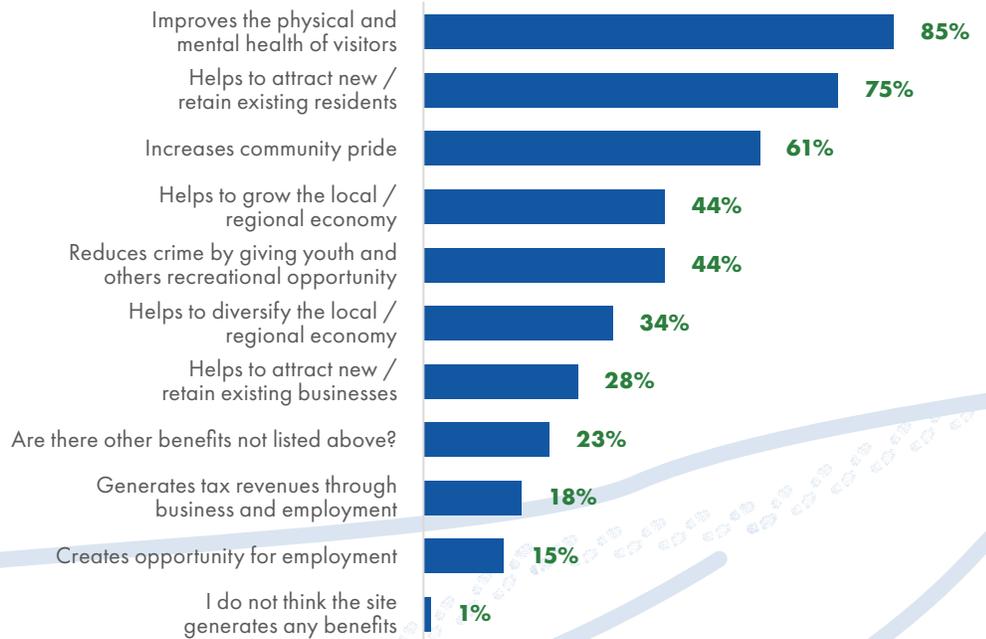


Figure 26 Benefits of Trails-based Recreation

24. To what extent do you believe the following trail management concerns are a problem and should be addressed by the trail plan?

A list of 19 possible trail management concerns were provided to respondents to review and provide feedback on the level of concern they had for each given issue. The top five concerns of respondents indicating they believed the factor to be a problem are summarized below.

The most significant concern is the potential loss of trails or access to trails due to private land development with 56% of respondents indicating this issue is a problem.

The second most significant concern is the lack of way finding signage with 48% of respondents identifying this as a problem.

The next two concerns respondents indicated as problems include having the financial resource dedicated to site management / maintenance (46%) followed closely by the lack of trailhead / visitor comfort and convenience amenities (44%).

Finally, respondents are equally concerned with the capacity of the District and volunteers to manage the site and that no clear governance / management responsibility for the trails exist, with 43% identifying these two as problems that need to be addressed.

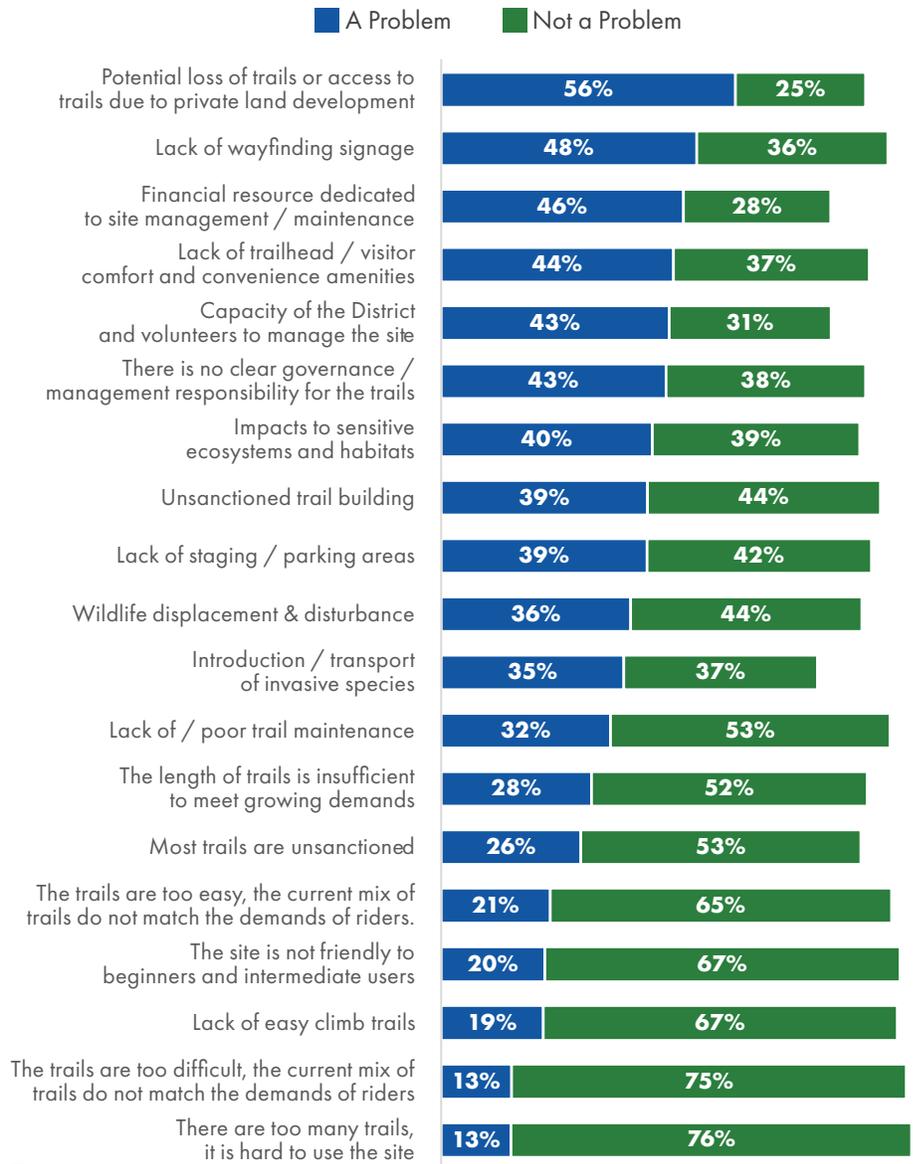


Figure 27 Trail Management Concerns

25. To what extent do you believe the following visitor management concerns are a problem and should be addressed by the trail plan?

A list of 28 possible visitor management concerns were provided to respondents to review and provide feedback on the level of concern they had for a given issue. The top five concerns of respondents indicating they believed the factor to be a problem are summarized below.

The two most significant concerns identified by respondents as being problems include the unauthorized use of trails (e.g., motorized on a non-motorized trail) at 70% followed closely by trail damage due to motorized / off-road vehicles at 68%.

The next two concerns respondents indicated as problems to address include the use of class 2 & 3 e-bikes (throttle & unrestricted) at 61% followed by wildfire risk from recreational use at 51%.

Finally, respondents were equally concerned with insufficient parking availability / access, trail damage due to horses, and trampling of vegetation from off trail travel, with 49% identifying these 3 concerns as problems that need to be addressed.

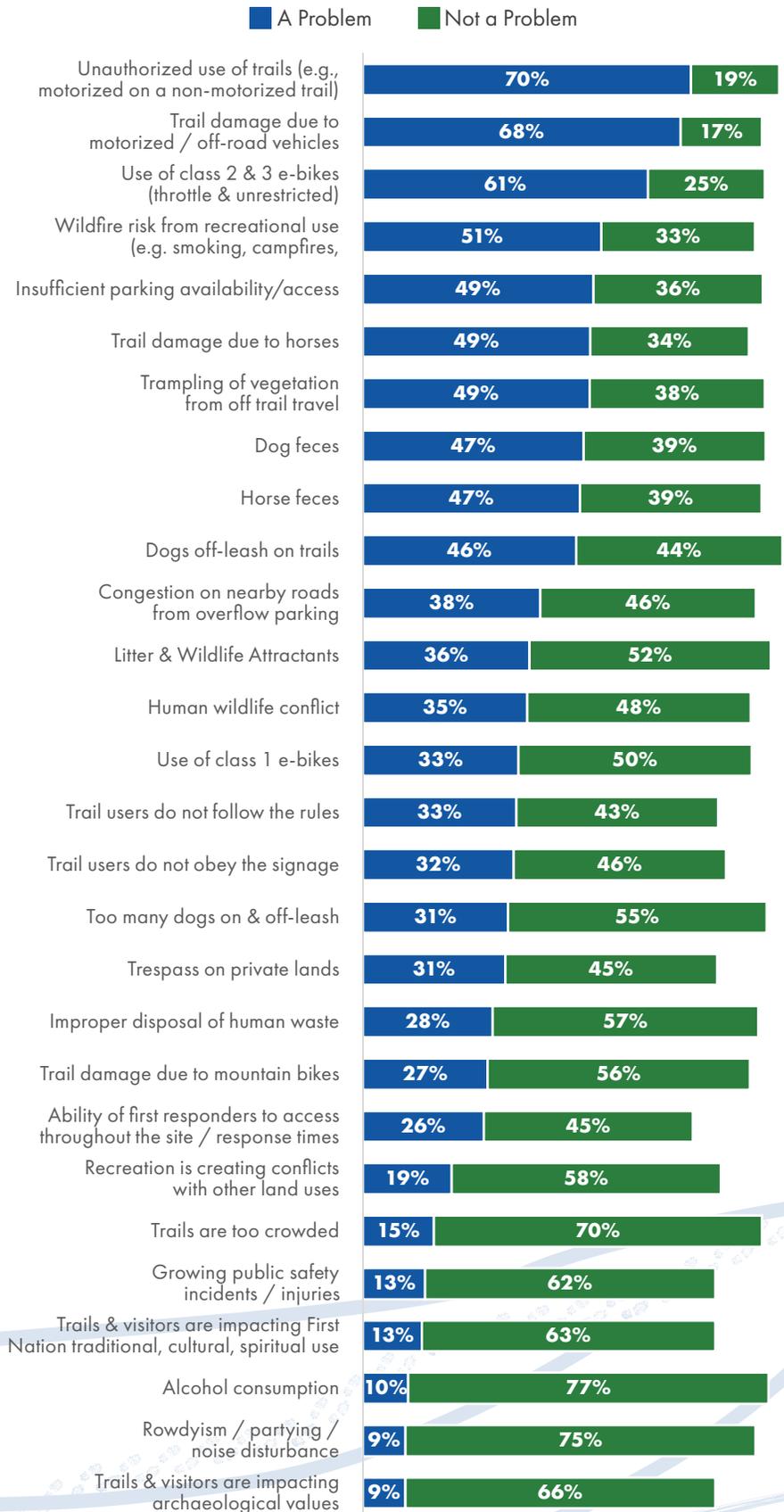


Figure 28 Visitor Management Concerns

26. To what extent do you agree that the following visitor conflicts are a problem that needs to be managed on the trail system?

A list of 8 possible visitor conflicts were provided to respondents to review and provide feedback on the level of concern they had on Conkle Mountain. The top three conflicts of respondents indicating they believed the factor to be a problem are summarized below.

The two most significant conflicts on the trail system are between equestrian and motorized vehicles and between off-lease dog walkers and other activities, both identified by respondents (48%) as being problems that need to be managed.

The next most significant conflict is between equestrian and mountain bike activities with 47% of respondents indicating this is a problem.

Finally, respondents were equally concerned with the conflicts between mountain biking and motorized vehicles and hiking / pedestrian use and motorized vehicles, with 45% identifying these 2 concerns as problems that need to be managed.

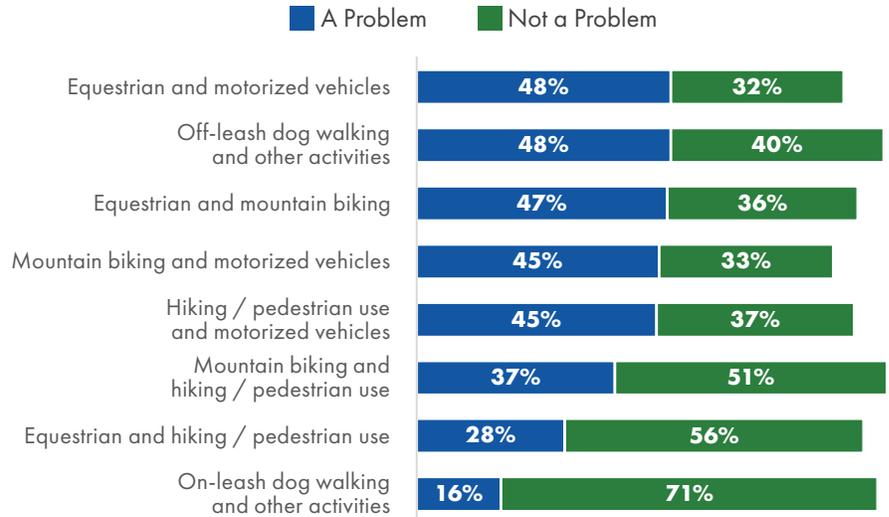


Figure 29 Visitor Conflict Concerns

27. Are there any other management issues or concerns, not already identified in the last two questions, that are creating undesirable conditions on or near the Conkle Mountain trails system? (open ended)

This open-ended question received 50 unique responses, some comments stressed the importance of the already identified issues and concerns, others were to elaborate on the identified issues, and some comments provided new issues or concerns. Three key themes emerged from this question and are summarized below.

- **Access & Parking** - There were 11 unique comments made regarding access and parking. These were primarily focused on the two main parking areas, at Fyffe/Fenwick Road and at the Rodeo Grounds. Parking on Fyffe Road and Fenwick Road is limited to the shoulder. Access to the trails is not considered ideal due to safety and impacts on private landowners. As both roads cannot support additional traffic, moving parking on road to a new parking area within the planning area should be investigated to address these issues. Parking at the Rodeo Grounds was considered descent but could be made better with the addition of basic year-round amenities (garbage cans, washrooms, benches, etc.). It was also suggested that more modifications and barriers be added at the Rodeo Grounds to prevent motorized traffic accessing the park and going beyond the parking lot into the trail system. Unauthorized motorized use is a concern as respondents suggesting prohibiting motorized vehicles entirely and doing more to address the insufficient access for non-motorized users as there is the perception that the District is prioritizing vehicle convenience over pedestrian/bicycle convenience.

- **Multi-Use & Trail Etiquette** - The second main theme was focused on the need to ensure Conkle Mountain supports multi-use, with a recognition that all users share the trails and employ respectful trail etiquette to avoid conflict (10 comments). These were primarily focused on awareness of the trail system as a multi-use shared resource and the concern that users are not being respectful to other user groups. Respondents suggested that the lack of direction and signage on sharing the trails and that the current inventory of trails have been created without any planning as the potential reason.
- **Manage Dog Walking & Equestrian Use** - A third theme revealed the need to provide better management of dog walkers and equestrian use. These were primarily focused on off leash dogs chasing wildlife or conflicting with trail use as well as the improper disposal of dog feces (3 comments). Respondents also reported experiencing damage to soft single-track trails, trail banking and fall away sides, and climbing trails caused by horses particularly during the winter, as well as horse manure on the trails (4 comments).

There were additional comments made regarding the following topics:

- Sustainability and trail maintenance (5 comments)
- Better signage (3 comments)
- Lack of amenities such as washrooms and garbage bins (2 comments)

28. In your opinion, what should be done to address the most pressing management issues on Conkle Mountain?

This open-ended question received 73 unique responses and ideas on potential solutions to address the most pressing management issues on Conkle Mountain. The following themes emerged from this feedback:

• Improve Signage & Amenities (16 Comments)

- » The majority of respondents reported that current signage (e.g. regulatory, educational / informational, interpretive) is incomplete, inconsistent, and/or absent in many locations and feel opportunities to educate visitors and deepen understanding and appreciation have not been realized.
- » Visitor comfort and convenience amenities (e.g. benches, waste receptacles, bike repair, bike wash station, picnic tables, washrooms, etc.) are absent from parking areas, or provided inconsistently at trailheads and on trail and/or are approaching their end of life.
- » Information boards / kiosks as well as trail mapping information was considered lacking across the trail system.

• Leave Trail System As Is (15 comments)

- » A number of respondents felt there are no pressing management issues or any extensive work needed on Conkle Mountain indicating the smaller front side trails were thoughtfully created and well maintained.
- » As stated earlier, respondents were appreciative of its support for multi-use and multi-disciplines, the areas natural beauty, quality of the existing trails, variety of terrain and difficulty.
- » Respondents would like to see more effort on improving the TransCanada Trail with the rest of the trail system remaining intact in its natural state.

• Improve Trail Maintenance and Management (21 comments)

- » Addressing the impacts of dogs and horses (9 comments) was considered the top pressing visitor management issues on the trail system by respondents. This included improper disposal of dog feces, control of off-leash dogs, horses causing damage, and horse manure left on trails.
- » The designation of trails for different user groups to address conflict as well as resolving the unauthorized use of trails (e.g. motorized, including e-bikers) that is causing damage (6 comments) were also considered a visitor management priority. Visitor conflicts highlighted by respondents included equestrian and mountain biking / hiking, off-leash dog walking and other activities, motorized use and other activities.
- » Addressing environmental impacts and fostering / supporting a volunteer management / monitor group or community trail group (6 comments) responsible for the building of new multi-use trails and maintaining existing trails has been identified as a pressing management issue.

• Increase & Improve Access and Parking Capacity (6 comments)

- » Respondents agreed that more could be done create and maintain more parking areas as the parking capacity at the Rodeo Grounds & Fenwick Road are inadequate to meet current, anticipated future demands, and peak period demands (e.g. events).
- » Specific concern was raised with trailhead access, illegal parking, and blocking access to private driveways and property along Fenwick Road as well as limited access to the trail system in general for non-motorized modes of travel.
- » Unauthorized motorized use is a concern as respondents suggested restricting or eliminating motorized vehicles use and access from the park entirely and look at fire mitigation efforts.

29. To what extent do you agree that the Conkle Mountain trail system could and should become a more significant trails tourism destination and attraction for visitors to the region?

Trails tourism is important to many respondents. Almost 56% agree that the trail system should become a more significant trails tourism destination and work to attract visitors to the region. However, not all agree as 31% of respondents do not believe that trails tourism should become more significant (Figure 30).

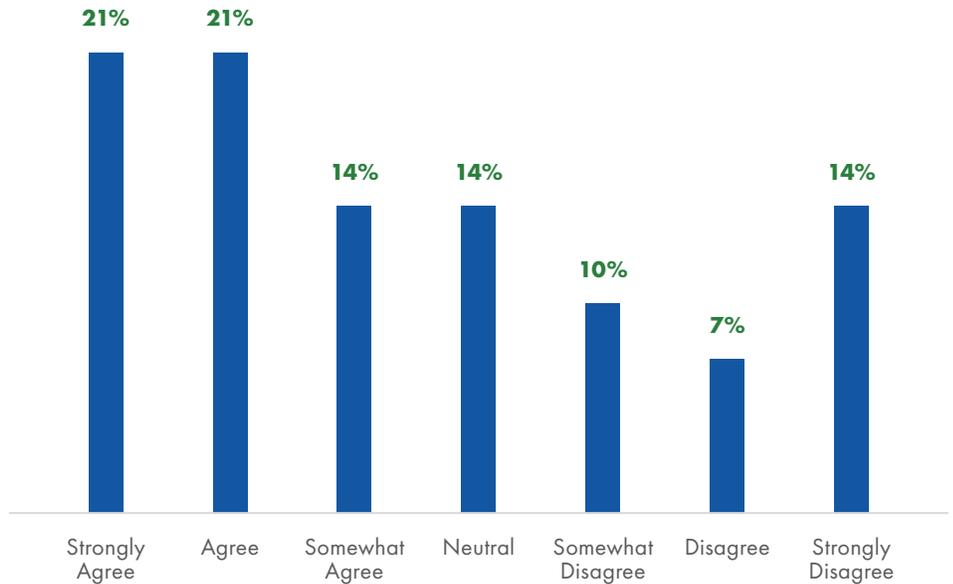


Figure 30 Extent you Agree the Conkle Mountain Trail System could be a Trails Tourism Destination/Attraction

30. Please feel free to share any other input or ideas you have about how the quality of the trail system and /or the management of recreational use can be improved on Conkle Mountain.

This was the final open-ended question, and most respondents had shared detailed ideas, suggestions, and experience in the previous question. However, 66 comments were provided with the majority of these comments equally focused on two previously stated concerns and improvement ideas.

Interestingly, an equal number of respondents appealed to leave the Conkle Mountain trail system in its current natural state versus those who stated a desire for trail developments, maintenance, and management to enhance the visitor experience and attract visitation.

They agreed that some small improvements could be made but also expressed concern that more development would detract from the uniqueness of the natural state and current system of multi-use trails enjoyed by a diversity of user groups. Along with this, respondents were concerned about who would be tasked to manage the trail system and whether better management will actually improve it. Trail regulations, designations and overdevelopment were raised as major concerns

Alternatively, respondents reported the existing trails to be fantastic but could certainly benefit from some new trails and routes with varying styles and degrees of difficulty. With the appropriate development, some see an opportunity to orient the trail system to a beginner-to-intermediate riding level, attracting visitation to a nature-based product with a growing market. This location provides that entry level experience, which is in demand, and currently unavailable in the South Okanagan. To complement this, advocacy was also shown for building a beginner/intermediate skills park and trail center at the Rodeo Grounds to be more accessible to new/young riders. Maintaining the existing trails would be a good start followed by the development of new trails, both for community use and enjoyment and some catered to visitors across the region and province are seen an important for a growing a sustainable visitor economy.

Additionally, respondent comments regarding the need for more and improved signage and visitor comfort and convenience amenities were well represented. Input also reiterated the importance of trail planning and maintenance, controlling access, and the provision of ample and safe parking areas.

31. Which statement best reflects your level of expertise and experience as a trail user?

From a total of 76 respondents, 47% indicated their level of expertise and experience as a trail user on Conkle Mountain to be advanced while 30% reported their level to be intermediate, followed by 23% at the expert level. Figure 31 demonstrates the respondents interests in the area.

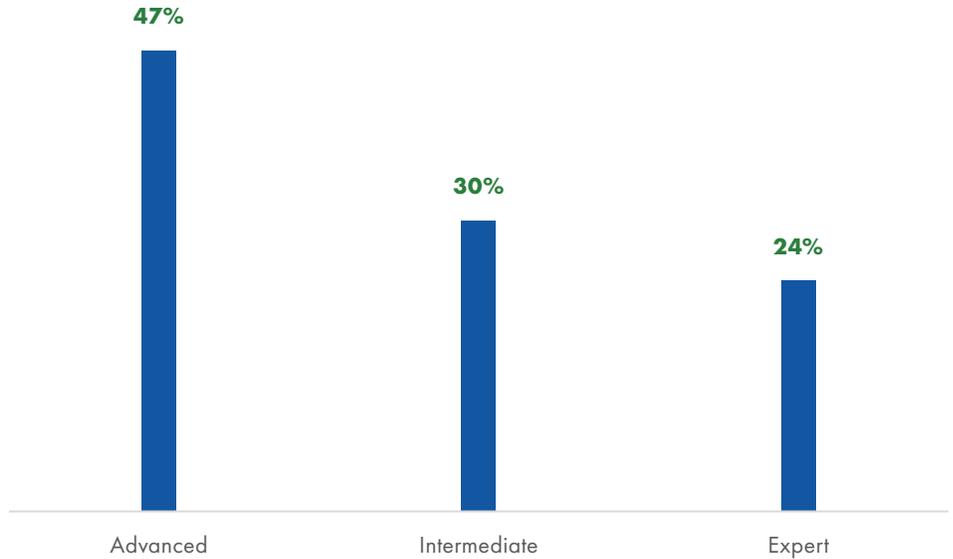


Figure 31 Level of Expertise

32. Which statement below best represents your interest in the trails on Conkle Mountain? Check all that apply.

The majority of respondents (94%) recreate on Conkle Mountain unguided, while 8% reported they are a private landowner adjacent to the trail system. A small percentage (4%) indicated they were representing a formal recreation organization/club. Figure 32 demonstrates the respondents interests in the area.

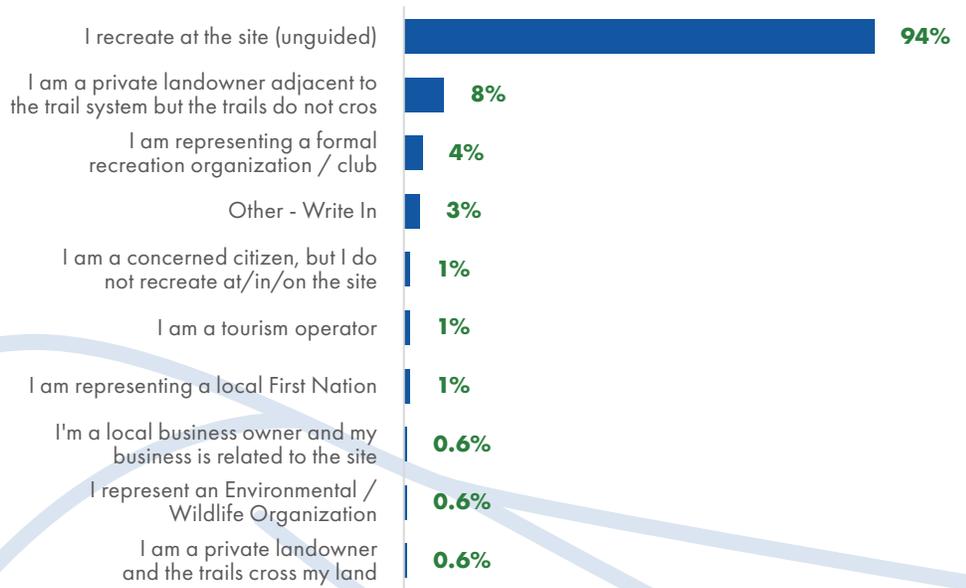


Figure 32 Primary Interest in the Trails on Conkle Mountain

33. In which age category do you fall?

The largest portion of respondents (25%) are between the ages of 45-54, closely followed by the ages of 55-64, 65-74, and 35-44. Figure 33 highlights the age distribution of respondents.

34. What is the postal code for your permanent residence?

Of the total completed surveys, 89% of respondents are from the District of Summerland while just over 6% of participants are from Penticton. Five respondents participated from other parts of the Okanagan, three from other parts of BC, and two from Alberta.

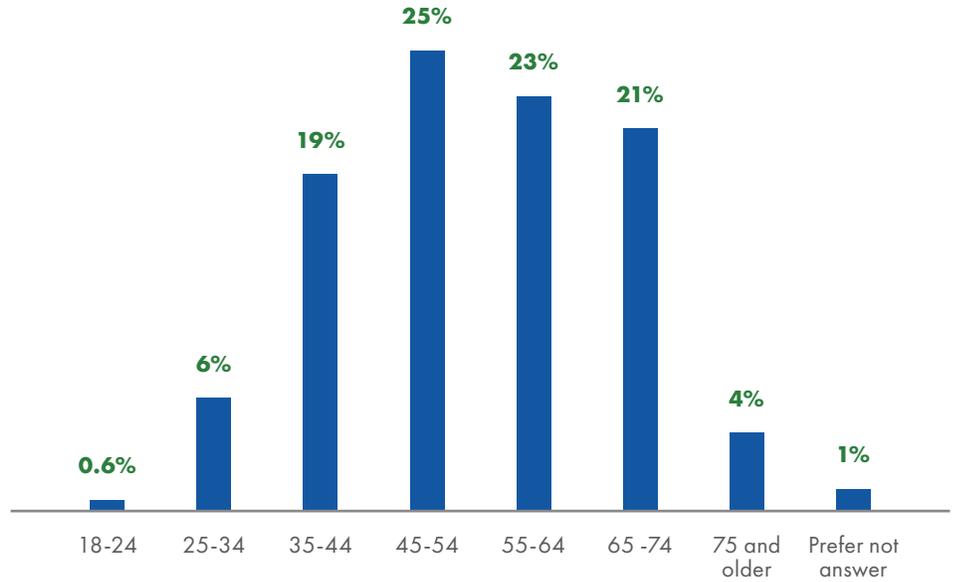


Figure 33 Age Distribution



35. What gender do you most identify with?

Male and female participation totalled 75 each equally representing 47% of total respondents. A total of 8 participants preferred not to answer the question. Figure 34 highlights the gender distribution.

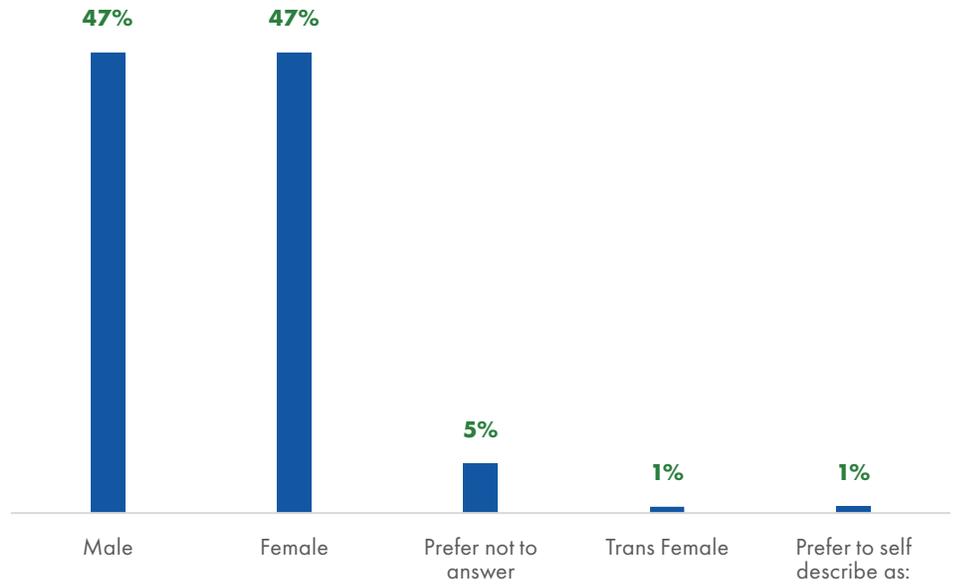


Figure 34 Gender Distribution

36. Do you identify as a person experiencing disability or person with impairment?

The majority of respondents (92%) do not identify as a person living with a disability with 4 respondents reporting as a person experiencing disability or person with impairment. A total of 9 participants preferred not to answer the question. Figure 35 summarizes the distribution of respondents.

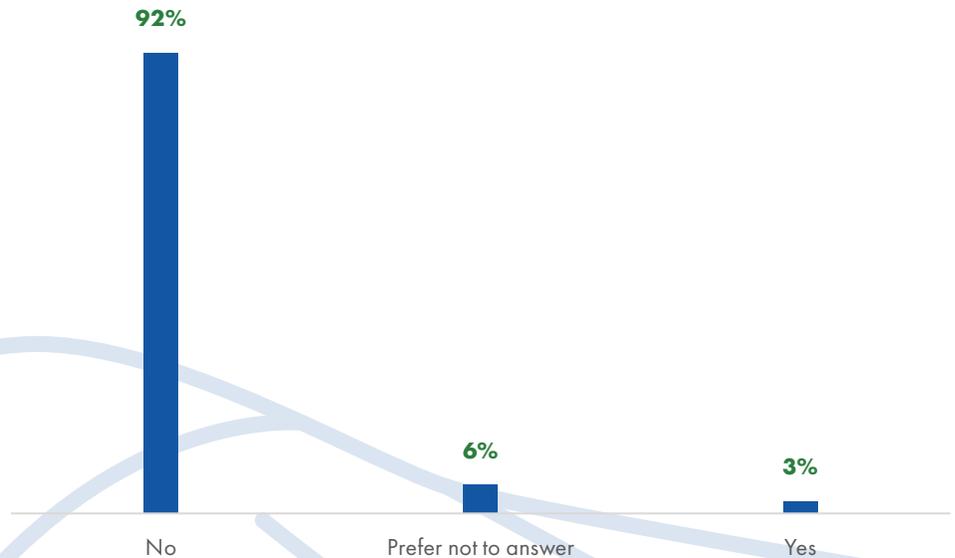


Figure 35 Persons with Disabilities

37. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

More than 85% of respondents have some level of post secondary education, with the majority (35%) having completed a university bachelor's degree. A total of 14 participants preferred not to answer the question. Figure 36 highlights the levels of education amongst respondents.

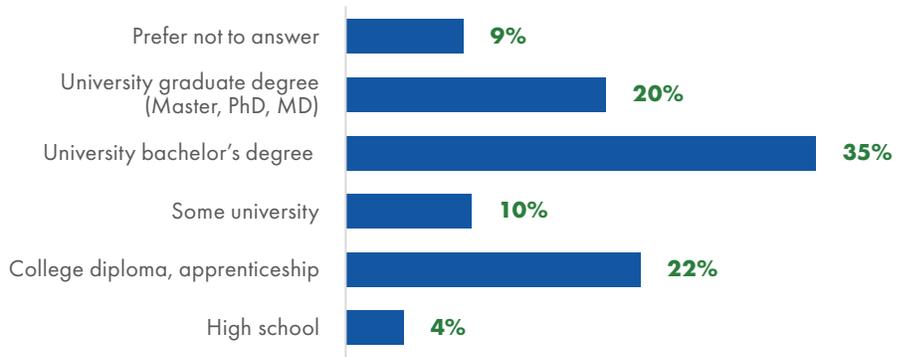


Figure 36 Highest Level of Education Completed

38. Which of the following best represents your household income before tax?

Household (combined) income levels of \$75,000 to less than \$100,000 per year were represented the most by respondents at 16%, followed closely by respondents who reported household (combined) income levels of \$100,000 to less than \$125,000 per year at 15%. Figure 37 provides a more detailed breakdown of respondents' household income.

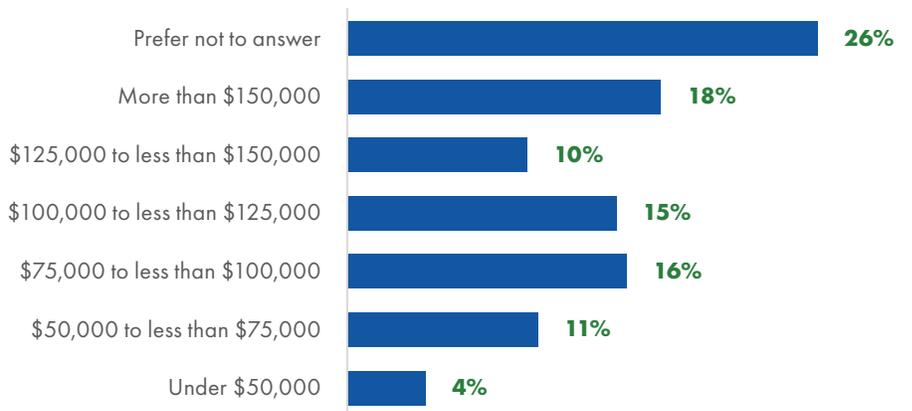


Figure 37 Household Income

39. Are you an active member of a local trail club / organization / trail maintenance volunteer?

The majority of respondents (64%) indicated they were not an active member of a local trail club, organization, or trail maintenance volunteer however, over 26% indicated they are, of which included 24 respondents who are active with the Penticton and Area Cycling Association.

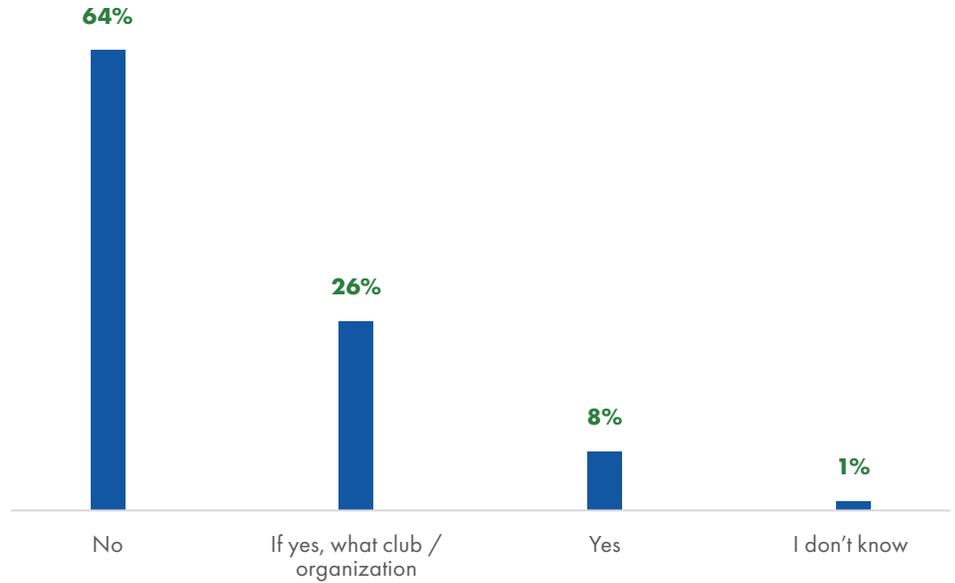


Figure 38 Trail Membership





3.2 ONLINE INTERACTIVE CROWDSOURCE MAP

An online interactive webmap was available for people to add comments spatially. The map was available from September 4 – 29, 2024. In total 297 interactions with the site occurred resulting in 117 unique points, 7 lines, and an additional 127 “agrees” and 37 “disagrees” were added to points / lines and comments made on the site.

The map allowed people to add five different types of points or lines:

- Build
 - » This pin was used to identify where new infrastructure should be developed.
- Improve
 - » This pin was used to identify where existing infrastructure needs to be improved.
- Issue/Concern
 - » This pin was used to identify and describe where a recreation related management concern or issue exists that should be dealt with.

In addition to dropping points and drawing lines, participants were able to react to points / lines already on the map indicating whether they agreed or disagreed with the point and to provide further comment. It is important to note that some points were “dropped” in an area with no feedback or description.



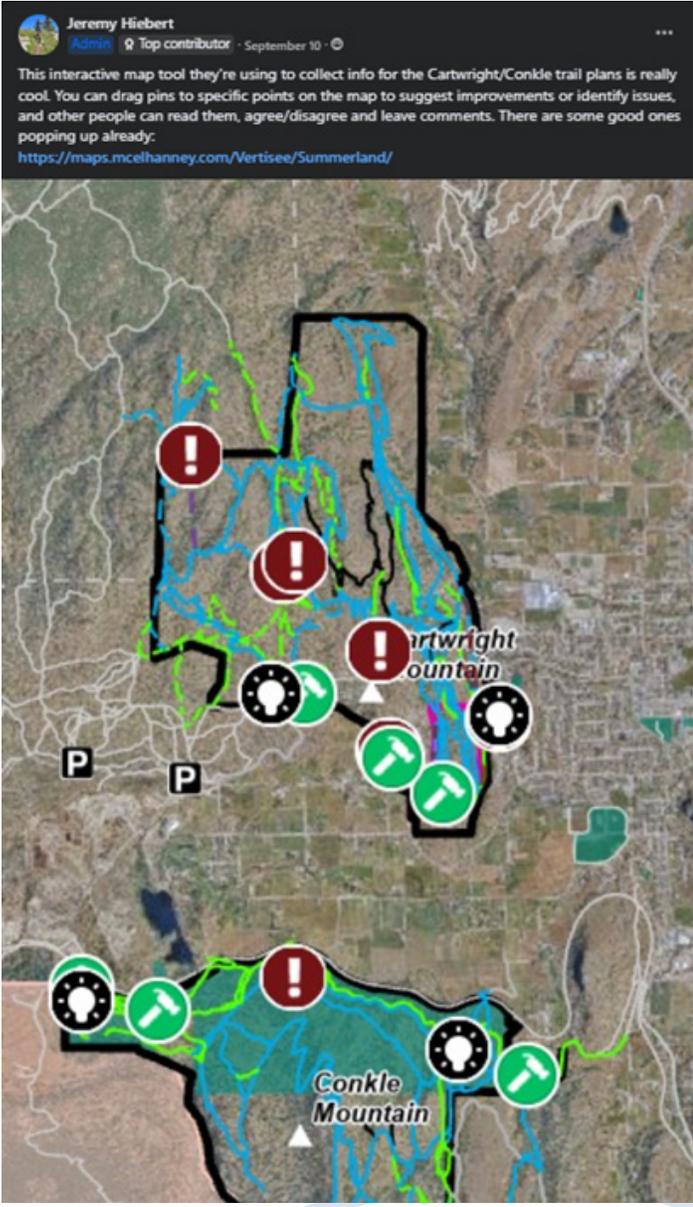


Figure 39 On-line Webmap Tool Feedback



The following presents, by topic area, the themes that emerged from the analysis of responses.

Build

- The notion of enhancing the existing gathering space on the ridge of Full Frontal was the most frequently mentioned and supported with 9 comments, 11 agrees, and 2 disagrees. This spot provides 360 degrees views and currently used as a restorative rest area containing prayer flags. Some minor infrastructure was suggested along with creating a space to get out of the way of the actual trail.
- Second, 6 comments, 4 agrees, and 1 disagree were captured and supportive of adding a washroom, bike repair station and water bottle filler at the Rodeo Grounds parking lot. Comments also noted that the staging area could use signage with maps, signage about the area and being adjacent to PIB lands, and acknowledgement of partners and land stewardship.
- Third, was the notion of creating a new mountain bike skills park suitable for beginners and intermediate riders (4 comments, 4 agrees, and 4 disagrees). It was noted that more green trails for MTB in this area would develop skills of newer and younger riders and that this concept was discussed during the Rodeo Ground Master Plan and approved. Other comments suggested Lower Trappers as another location should be explored instead due to the environmentally sensitive area that would be impacted.
- Finally, additional feedback identified the desire for adding additional downhill mountain bike optimized trails, adding a non-motorized off-road trail connection linking Conkle (Summerland Rodeo Ground) to Cartwright (McLarty Place parking lot), and moving parking off of Fenwick Road to a new parking area within the planning area were reported.

Improve

There was a mix of comments ranging from making improvements to three popular mountain bike trails in the system, and for adding signage for designated trails and to clarify parallel trails for wayfinding and to avoid confusion.

- The main theme focused on stabilization and other improvements to specific trails and technical trail features. These include 6 comments (10 agrees, and 3 disagrees) and mentioned the following trails: Conkle Bonk, Conkle Downhill, Midline Connector, and Frontside. Participants noted that the trails could receive attention as they get significant use, but also shrubs have encroached in spots, and proper connection to the TCT is needed.
- Three comments (9 agrees, and 2 disagrees) were made to add signage for designated equestrian trails and to look to other jurisdictions who have had success with using horseshoes as signage at trailheads.
- The third theme focused on providing more clarity in one particular area. When entering the system off of Fenwick Road, three comments (5 agrees, and 0 disagrees) were made to clarify the trail system as it is confusing to travel through. As hikers and horseback riders have different preferences than mountain bikes, it was suggested to provide fewer parallel trails here and/or add extra signage to avoid confusion and conflicts.
- Finally, additional feedback identified the opportunity for the trail connecting to the Conkle Bonk Loop to be equestrian-only as it's not frequently used by mountain bikers and gives good access to the higher level of Conkle Bonk, avoiding the easily eroded sections along the canyon.

Issue/Concern

There was a mix of comments ranging from unauthorized vehicle use and illegal access to private property to issues of trail damage and addressing certain hazards on specific trails.

- The most common issue/concern, with 5 comments, 15 agrees, and 1 disagree, reported the need to stabilize sections of Conkle Bonk in order to avoid erosion and redesign Quick Exit for safety reasons.
- The second most common issue, with 8 comments, 8 agrees and 0 disagrees, was that some trails are susceptible to damage from horses due to dry or muddy conditions, exposure, and width, particularly Midline, impacting the integrity of the overall trail. The feedback indicated sustainability, trail maintenance and collaboration amongst all groups will be important moving forward to find solutions.
- The third most common issue/concern was vehicles driving into the planning area and damaging the sensitive habitat (4 comments, 13 agrees, 0 disagrees). The feedback proposed that regulatory signage at all trailheads, Rodeo Grounds and other staging areas should clearly indicate that the trail system is intended for non motorized recreational use only.
- Finally, additional feedback (1 comment and 9 agrees), identified the need to remove the remnants of barbed wire fencing that is in between the TCT and upper flume maintenance roadway in sections as it has become a hazard.



3.3 SOUNDING BOARDS

3.3.1 Overview

Two “sounding boards” were set-up at higher traffic locations on Conkle Mountain and popular outdoor retail businesses including:

- Trans Canada Trail / Fenwick Road Trailhead
- Rodeo Grounds

Sounding boards were used to provide information on the project, encourage participation in the online Survey and web map (via a QR code), and to enable participants to provide immediate input directly on panel in response to the question “What should be done to improve the quality and sustainability of the trails on Conkle Mountain?”



Figure 40 Rodeo Grounds Trailhead



Figure 41 Fenwick Road Trailhead

3.3.2 Results

In total, 39 comments were provided on the sounding boards. The themes that emerged from the analysis of received comments are as follows:

1. **Leave it as is & Keep it Natural** - Leave it as is (9), keep it natural (4), do not follow Giants Head approach (4), and focus more on supporting road infrastructure to the trail system (3) (20 total comments/support)
2. **Improve the Trails & Diversity of Trail Experiences** - Garner more support for trail maintenance (2), share existing multi-use trails (3) and develop more green/blue/black Mtn bike trails (3) (8 total comments/support)
3. **Improve Amenities & Signage** - Increase amenities including parking (2), signage (2) and picnic shelter (1) (4 total comments/support)
4. **Access to Private Land** - Close access to private land (2 total comments / support)



3.4 STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS & WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

Ten virtual interviews were held with 13 individuals that have an interest in Conkle Mountain. One additional written response was also received from a member of the general public. Interview participants included local recreation organizations or activity representatives (including motorized recreation, hiking, trail running, equestrian, and trail building/maintenance), historian, qualified environmental professional, Government of BC, the Regional District, and local residents. Interviews lasted between 60 - 120 minutes and were held virtually. Using a common interview guide, the interview questions were focused on 3 main topics:

1. Strengths of the Conkle Mountain Trails System
2. Management Issues and Opportunities to Improve
3. Future Priorities (including trails, parking, facilities)

The main themes that emerged from the interviews and written submission feedback are as follows.



INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS:

- 5 Recreation-based Users/Groups including;
 - » 2 equestrian
 - » 1 mtn biking
 - » 2 trail running/ hiking
 - » 2 trail maintenance
 - » 1 motorized
- 1 Historian
- 1 Environmental Professional
- 1 Provincial Government Representative
- 1 Regional District of Okanagan Similkameen Representative
- 1 General Public (written submission)

1. STRENGTHS OF THE CONKLE MOUNTAIN TRAILS SYSTEM

All participants noted the uniqueness of the Conkle Mountain planning area, commenting on the geography, diversity of terrain, scenic views, the close proximity to downtown Summerland, and for tourists visiting. Participants noted that large portion of the trail system is on public lands managed by the District of Summerland and Province. The trail system is viewed by locals as a community asset that is integral to supporting quality of life for many residents. Specifically, having multi-use nature-based outdoor recreation that provides residents the opportunity to experience the restorative properties of the area through active recreation is highly valuable to residents, visitors, and municipal officials.

In addition to the convenient location and physical environment, participants noted the value of the mountain bike trails and, in most cases, the diversity of the non-motorized trail system. Conkle Mountain supports a diverse range of recreational activities including hiking, trail running, equestrian, and mountain biking (down hill, cross country). In the winter there are groomed trails for cross country skiing and fat biking. This range of activities and inclusive nature of the area was identified as a major strength, and respondents want to ensure the area is well managed, maintained and supportive of all permitted recreational activities on sanctioned / designated trails.

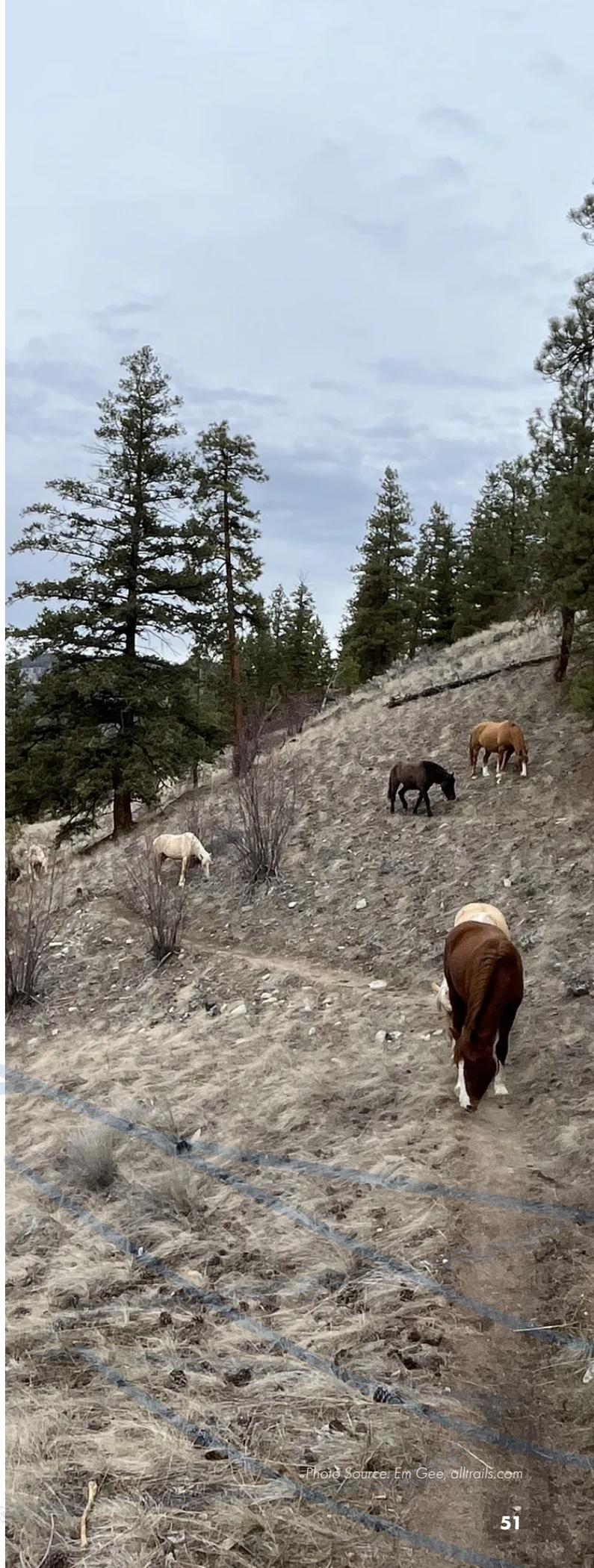


Photo Source: Em Gee, alltrails.com

2. MANAGEMENT ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE

Access and parking capacity, collaboration, governance model and operational responsibilities, visitor amenities, environmental impacts, unauthorized trails and private land trespass emerged as the primary management issues and opportunities to improve. A brief overview of each theme is provided below.

• Governance Model and Operational Responsibilities

- » Decisions about new trail development, trail redevelopment, maintenance and operations are currently being made by a very small number of dedicated and motivated volunteers.
- » Based on the uncoordinated approach to trail development, there is a need to address unauthorized trail development to ensure collaboration and liability and to avoid risks.
- » As there is no current authorized management body in place, people don't understand the governance of who has management responsibility for the various trails (e.g. RDOS manages the TCT). A multi-user trail governance body should be established to provide management guidance for the trails on Conkle, Cartwright and even Giants Head.
- » The issue of land ownership, landowner support, management, access, and operations need to be addressed.
- » Currently, the solutions would all require a thorough review and understanding of land designations, maintenance of roads, and access points as there is a mix of Crown land, private land, and District of Summerland options suggested by respondents.

• Access and Parking Capacity

- » Regardless of participants connection to the planning area (government, local recreation user groups, community members, etc.) most agreed that parking and access is a management issues that need to be addressed through the trails plan.
- » Most visitors drive to trail system and park either in the formal parking lot provided at the Rodeo Grounds or informally along Fenwick Road.
- » Parking off the Fenwick Road trailhead is a major issue as the road acts as a driveway and turn-around area, is unsafe, uninviting, lacks appeal and user friendliness, and impacts private landowners.
- » Expansion of parking capacity, addressing congestion and parking conflicts with landowners on Fenwick Road, and improvements to the gateway experience and trailhead amenities at the Rodeo Grounds emerged as priorities.

• Collaboration

- » Interviewees highlighted the diversity of uses on Conkle Mountain as a strength, but also a potential issue/weakness. Currently, the planning area and its trails are perceived to be built and maintained by one user group (mountain biking). Some participants noted that, while the volunteers are doing a descent job, they might be biased towards mountain biking with limited consideration of the needs of other permitted user groups.
- » Participants would like to see a more collaborative approach that directly involves broader communication and representation from more user groups, other interested parties, and private landowners.
- » No clear coordinated and collaborative approach to design, development, and management of trails leading to misconceptions about responsibilities for maintenance.
- » There is a lack of understanding or appreciation of trail maintenance that all user types undertake while some trail builders may feel they are the only ones doing maintenance.
- » The Penticton Area Cycling Association (PACA) was mentioned multiple times by respondents who are current members and enjoy the trail system. These members could be further engaged to advance collaboration and active support (e.g. management, funding) between the District of Summerland, Government of BC, private landowners and other active user groups.

• Visitor Amenities

- » Most interviewees noted the value of the natural environment and the diversity of the trail system. However, the need for improvements was clearly identified. The most common comfort and convenience amenity improvements on trails, at trailheads and staging areas included:
 - Addition of waste/recycling bins, benches, picnic tables, etc.
 - Addition of washrooms, outdoor pavilion, picnic tables at the Rodeo Grounds as anticipated use increases and the location acts as staging area for mountain biking (e.g. gravel racing) and equine events
 - Addition of new and improved signage throughout the trail system
 - Addition of technical bike skills training area at the Rodeo Grounds to support the progressive development of mountain bikers' technical skills
- » First Nations place naming and languages are not reflected in existing signage.
- » Interpretation is limited to the KVR trail

• Environmental Impacts & Lack of Data

- » Ecological inventories, including inventories of invasive species, are lacking and insufficient to support sound trail planning and decision making regarding trail development.
- » Most trails have been constructed without authorization and without appropriate environmental impact assessments. Trail development and trail use (e.g. off-leash dogs) may be posing risks to a variety of species, including species at risk.
- » Trails have the potential to introduce and spread invasive species. Best management practice should be applied during trail construction to limit introduction of invasive species, and invasive species monitoring and control is needed on trails and at trailheads after construction.
- » Use of trails in the spring or during overly wet conditions should be avoided / managed to limit trail and environmental impacts.

• Visitor Use Management

- » Greater attention to managing trail use and visitor behaviours is needed.
- » Visitor education should be increased to address environmental concerns and conflicts.
- » Enforcement / compliance assurance is needed to address environmental concerns, unauthorized trail building, off-road vehicle use.

• Unauthorized Trails & Private Land Trespass

- » Most trails in the network are unauthorized by the respective land manager.
- » The volume of trails may be reaching the point where the natural feel and desired recreation setting on the mountain could be lost if more are developed.
- » Trails on Crown Lands need to be authorized through a section 57 approval under the Forest & Range Practices Act or a License of Occupation. Trails on Crown Lands should not be promoted until they are authorized.
- » The boundaries of private lands are not delineated and trail users do not know where they are.
- » Trails on private lands are not formally authorized and landowners are quite concerned about risk and liability exposure.

3. FUTURE PRIORITIES

In general, interview participants felt that Conkle Mountain provides a good mix and diversity of trails that are appreciated by the local community and visited by a wide range of users which is healthy.

There were a few comments that if new trails were to be developed or new facilities included in the planning area, then the focus should be on beginner and intermediate (green and blue) level looped trails to reduce barriers to participation. Some participants also noted the desire to increase focus on the development of a bike skills area/park and adaptive run-bike pump track loop.

There was also a desire to investigate special event use / commercial use opportunities for the planning area. The current demand is not huge but ignoring it should not be the approach, as there is nearby demand and desire for riding, hiking and other use from locals and within the region. With more inventory participants noted that Summerland, along with Penticton, could be a hub for out of region / province destination cycling.

Interviewees noted that there would likely/possibly be interest in the community for a more formalized trail building, operations, and maintenance group with support from the District (training, funding, supplies). They felt the formation of a multi-interest stakeholder governance group would have merit in making the trails system more sustainable. One of the benefits would be having a collaborative and unifying voice to share information, equipment, and expertise but also foster the synergies that come with supporting each other. This would ensure the multi-interest trail ecosystem is connected to identify, support, and combine resources.

It was noted that the Trail Users of Summerland Facebook group has a pool of interested trail users and other resources that can offer great information. This group may be interested in reaching out to other trail users to collaborate with and negotiate a formalized group committed to long-term and sustainable usage of the area.

Finally, another future priority highlighted the opportunity to work with Summerland Museum, Okanagan Historical Society, PIB and others to prepare a Conkle Mountain interpretive plan that would support all future educational and interpretive signage for the trail system. Consideration should be given to app based interpretation. Interpretive signage should continue to be expanded along the KVR trail as well as a few select locations (e.g. viewpoints) on other trails in the system. Key interpretive themes that could be expanded include volcanoes / geology, First Nations, culturally important plants.



