

A SURVEY OF TRAIL USERS RIDGE TO RIVERS TRAIL SYSTEM

Report No. 6-2000

National Trails Day
June 3, 2000
Boise, Idaho



RIDGE
to **RIVERS**
TRAIL SYSTEM

Executive Summary

Overview

On National Trails Day, June 3, 2000, over 70 volunteers turned out to help the Ridge to Rivers Partnership conduct a trail user survey. These dedicated supporters stationed themselves at 12 different trail locations across the Central and Eastern Foothills from 7am to 7pm, asking trail users to fill out a survey form. Over 1135 surveys were completed and the results tabulated with help from the Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho staff.

Highlights

- While most respondents were Ada County residents (92%), a surprising number of our out-of-town guests happened by. France, Scotland, Calgary and Seattle were a few of the places represented. It is apparent that the foothills are seen as an interesting place to take visitors to show them our community.
- The level of alternative transportation used in getting to the trails was impressive with 56% of all respondents walking or bicycling to the trailhead.
- Hikers and Runners (51%) and mountain bikers (45%) made up the majority of users.
- Recreationists with dogs (28%) illustrates the value the foothills are to pet owners.
- Trail maintenance (82% listed as important) is as valued as more trail development (79% listed as important) indicating folks want to make sure we are taking care of what we have.
- Overall enjoyment and satisfaction of trail experience was quite high (90% very or somewhat satisfied).
- Given the negative responses to user fees throughout public lands in the West, it was surprising to see the level of support for an annual user fee to help care for the trails. While 83% indicated a willingness to pay a fee, 43% would pay \$10 or less per year. No other questions were asked about fees such as support levels if administrative costs were taken from the annual revenue.
- Users identified the things they enjoy the most about the foothills, which included...
 - The beauty
 - Solitude
 - Trails
 - Proximity to their home
- Users identified ways to improve the experience in the foothills that included...
 - Don't improve the trails too much. It's not the Greenbelt.
 - Minimize residential development.
 - More trails, trail maintenance and education.

For more information about the Ridge to Rivers Trail System or this survey contact...
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Background

The Ridge to Rivers Partnership is a consortium of local, state and federal agencies that have stewardship responsibilities for the Boise, Idaho Foothills. By pooling limited resources the agencies can better manage, maintain, preserve and create trails and open space. The existing trail system currently entails over 75 miles of trails, connecting neighborhoods with public lands. (Check out www.ridgetorivers.org for more information)

Why a Survey?

Know your customer. This adage applies to both the public and private sectors. By better understanding the trail user: where they live; how they get to the trails; how they use the trails; what they enjoy; and their general level of satisfaction; we can better allocate scarce resources. Since our customers include taxpayers, it is important that we exercise good land stewardship and fiscal responsibility by directing dollars to where they are the most needed and wanted. A survey is also an opportunity to identify emerging management challenges.

Who Conducted the Survey?

The survey was sponsored by the Ridge to Rivers Partnership and conducted with the help of over 70 volunteers as part of National Trails Day 2000. REI was a key sponsor and organizer, handling the challenging task of volunteer recruitment and scheduling. Other sponsors included Southwest Idaho Mountain Biking Association, Southwest Idaho Friends of Trails and CityDog.

Methodology

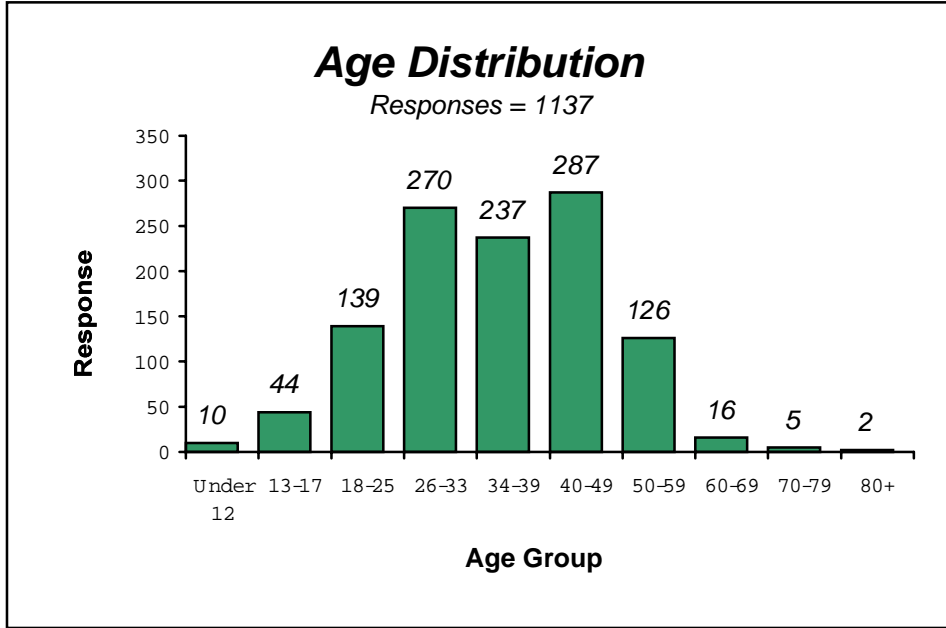
Twelve primary access points to the Foothills were chosen with someone stationed at each location from 7am to 7pm on June 3, 2000. The points of survey were:

- Bottom of Bob's Trail #30
- Old Pen
- Hulls Gulch #29 and Trail #4 Intersection
- 8th Street Parking Area
- Squaw Creek
- Corrals / Miller Gulch
- End of 9th Street
- Military Reserve
- Camels Back Front Side
- Rocky Canyon
- Lower Hulls Gulch Parking Area
- East Highland Valley Road

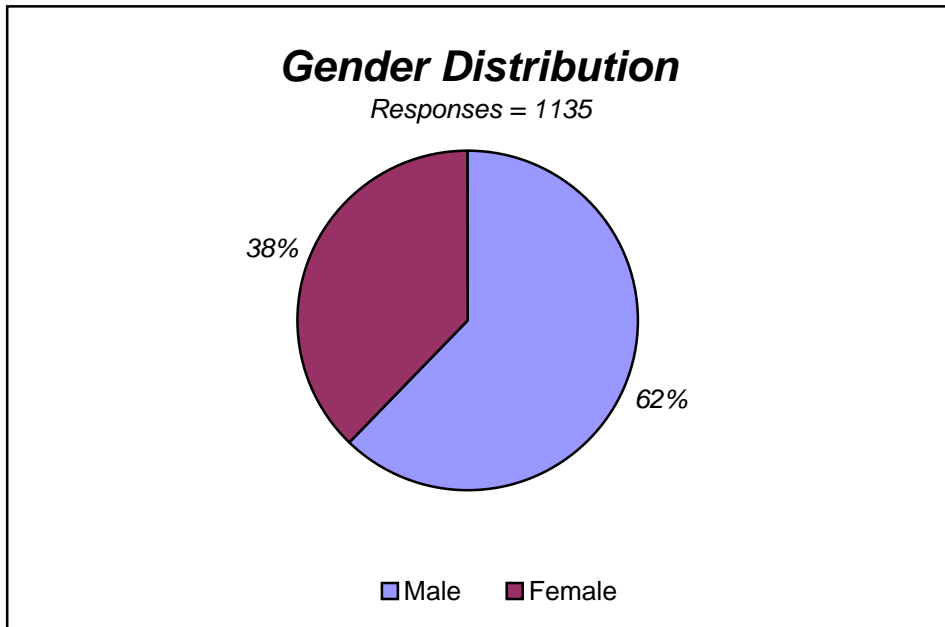
Anyone traveling through a survey station was asked to fill out a survey form. There were approximately 1135 survey forms filled out during the 12 hour time period. While this is a good way to assess attitudes and desires, it is important to recognize that this is only a generalized snapshot on a particularly hot Saturday in June.

1. **What is your age?**

Dominated by the 26 to 49 age group followed by the 18 to 25 and 50 to 59 age groups.



2. **What is your gender?**



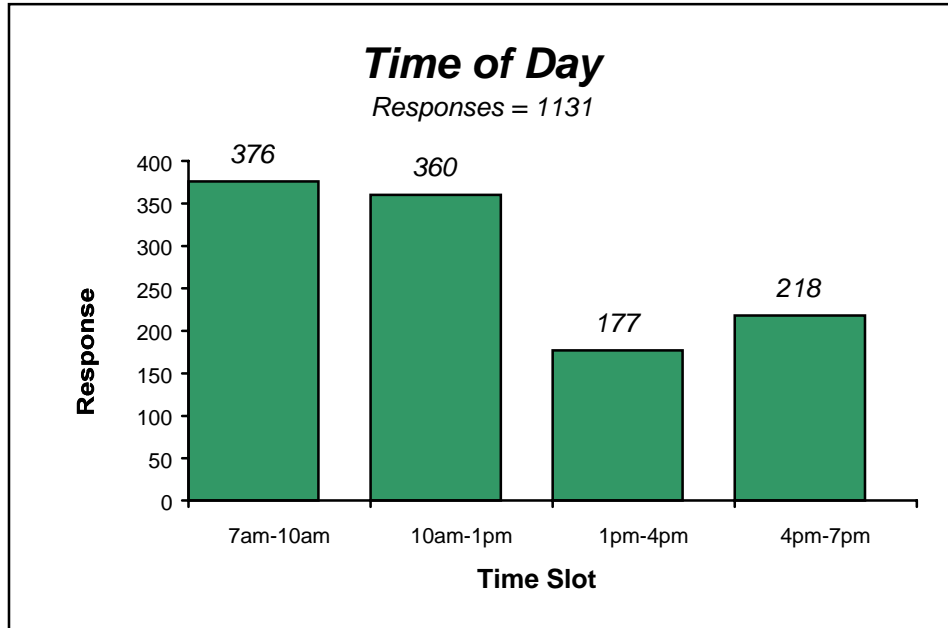
3. In which zip code do you live?

The wide range of zip codes represented was a surprise. Several out-of-country visitors were noted and are probably included in the “No response” category. Non-Idahoans represented 4% of respondents, presumably here on a visit. Ada County residents represented 92% of visitors. Another interesting observation was the representation of non-North End/East End residents, which totaled 55% of respondents. Southeast residents outnumbered East End residents 149 to 123. Residents of Eagle and Meridian represented 7% of visitors. It is difficult to estimate the allocation of Boise City residents since some zip codes cover both Boise City limits and Ada County, but it is high given the known zip codes that are entirely within Boise City limits.

ZIP Codes	Respondents	ZIP Codes	Respondents
0	14	83701	1
20815	1	83702	383
21014	1	83703	90
21220	1	83704	66
45122	1	83705	47
55125	1	83706	149
57706	1	83707	4
59427	1	83708	1
59716	1	83709	31
75206	1	83712	123
80203	1	83713	40
80303	1	83714	5
80304	1	83715	1
82490	1	83716	43
82717	1	84014	1
83401	1	84020	1
83605	2	84098	1
83606	1	84120	1
83616	25	85299	1
83617	1	87527	1
83634	1	89509	1
83637	1	92663	1
83638	1	93716	1
83641	1	97001	1
83642	48	97035	1
83644	3	97219	1
83645	1	97402	1
83647	2	97701	1
83648	4	97914	1
83669	1	98112	2
83686	7	98203	1
83687	2	98225	1

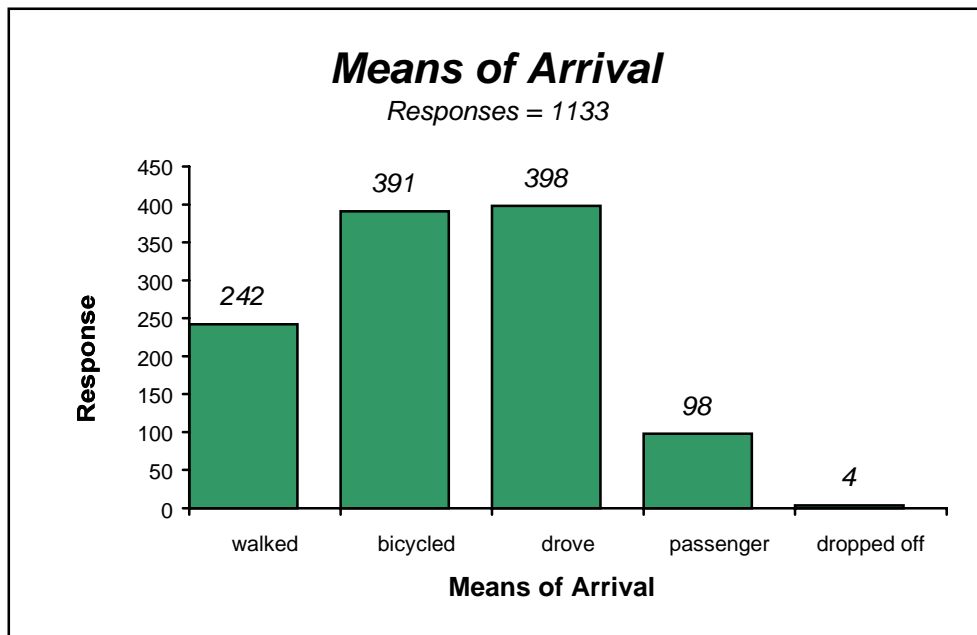
4. What is the time of day?

The highest number of visits occurred early in the day. Most likely the heat was a factor.



5. How did you arrive at the trailhead?

Nearly 65% of all visitors used alternative transportation to get to the trails. Of all hikers and runners, 42% walked or ran to the trail head. Of all mountain bikers, 77% bicycled to the trail head.

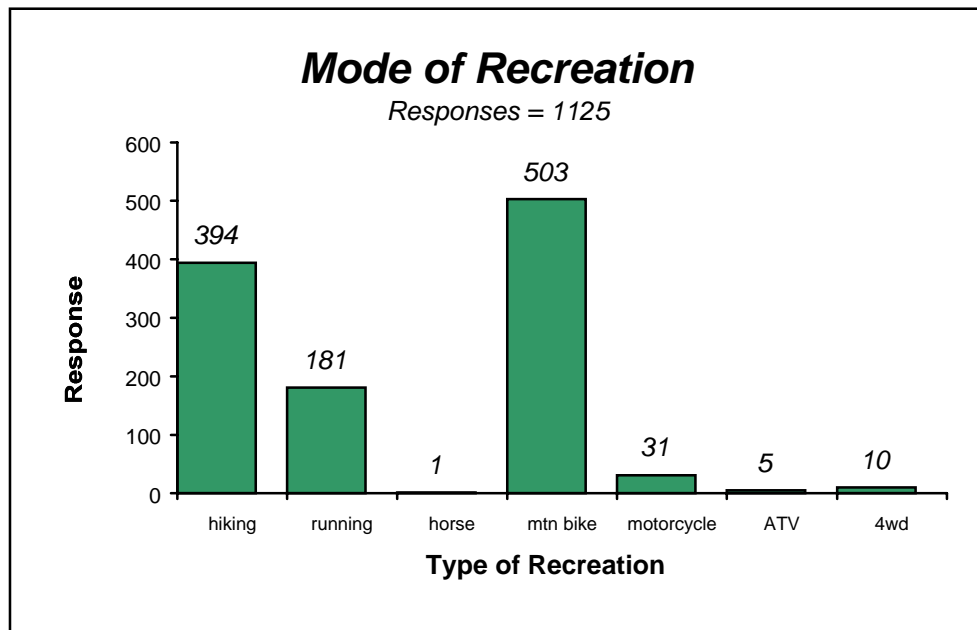


6. What is your mode of recreation today?

Pedestrians (i.e. runners and hikers) represented 51% and mountain bikers 45% of total responses. The absence of horse use was surprising but also reflected casual observations that there is not a large amount of horse activity on the Boise Foothills trails. This may reflect a desire of horse riders to recreate in a less congested environment. Another possibility could be linked to the limited number of parking areas for horse trailers. Where parking for trailers is provided, such as Miller Gulch, very little horse use was observed.

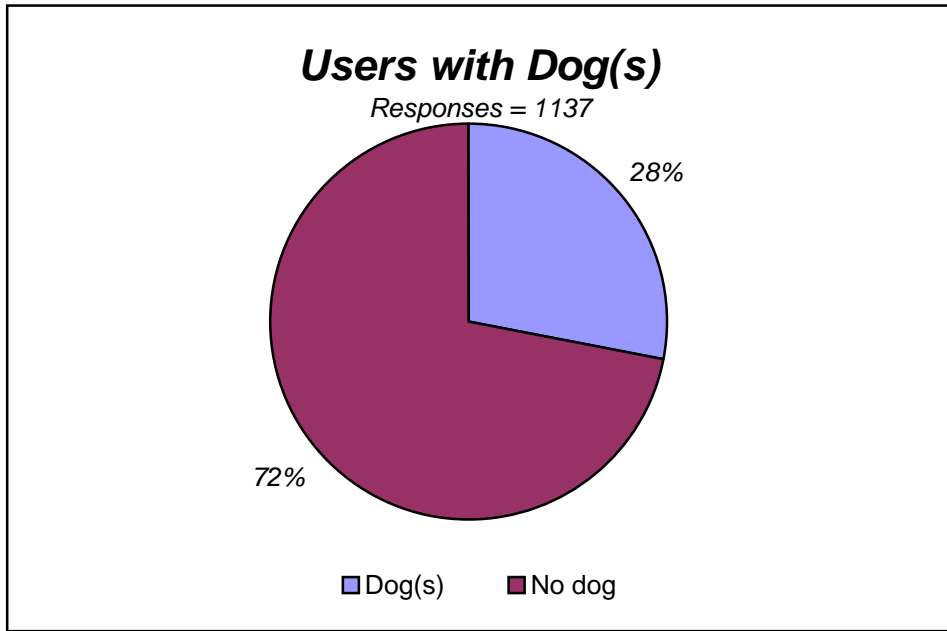
The high number of pedestrians and mountain bikers would lead one to believe that conflicts between users would be high. Question 11, "Courtesy of Other Users" indicates 77% of users are somewhat or very satisfied. Further analysis of bikers (78%) or pedestrians (76%) indicated that satisfaction levels about courtesy were not linked to mode of travel.

While motorized use is low overall as compared to non-motorized use, it is important to recognize the value in providing this type of recreation. If the opportunities did not exist, the potential for user-created routes would increase leading to possible damage and erosion of hillsides.

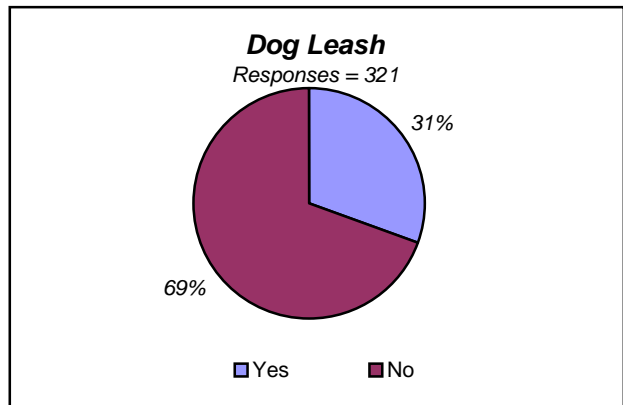
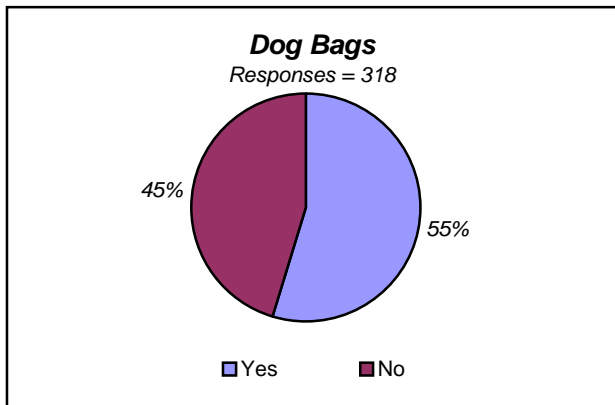


7. Did you bring a dog?

People with dogs represented 28% of all users (320 people brought 469 dogs). This is an indication that the Foothills are used extensively by dogs and their owners. While a trend has not been formally established, the increased enforcement of leash laws in Camels Back Park may have resulted in increased dog presence in the Foothills. With so many dogs using the trails one might assume a high level of conflict exists. Question #11. "Interaction with other's pets" indicates that over 61% of users are very or somewhat satisfied. With nearly 25% of users either somewhat or very dissatisfied, this is certainly an area to focus attention on.

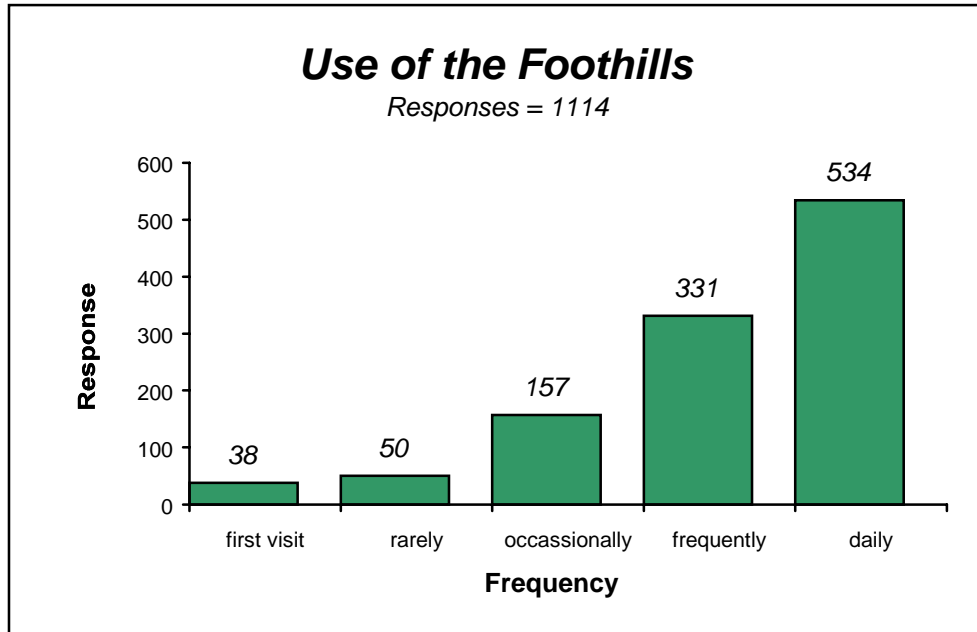


**Do you have bags to clean up after your dog?
Will your dog be leashed while using the trail?**



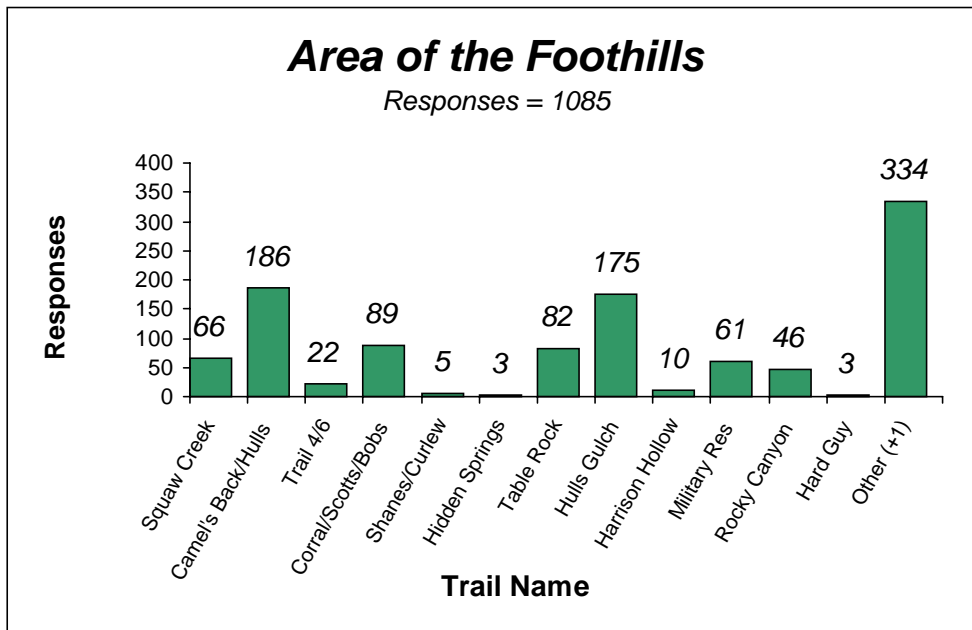
8. How often do you recreate in the foothills?

While most users were frequent visitors, there are a fair number of first visits, which could correlate with the many non-Idaho visitors.



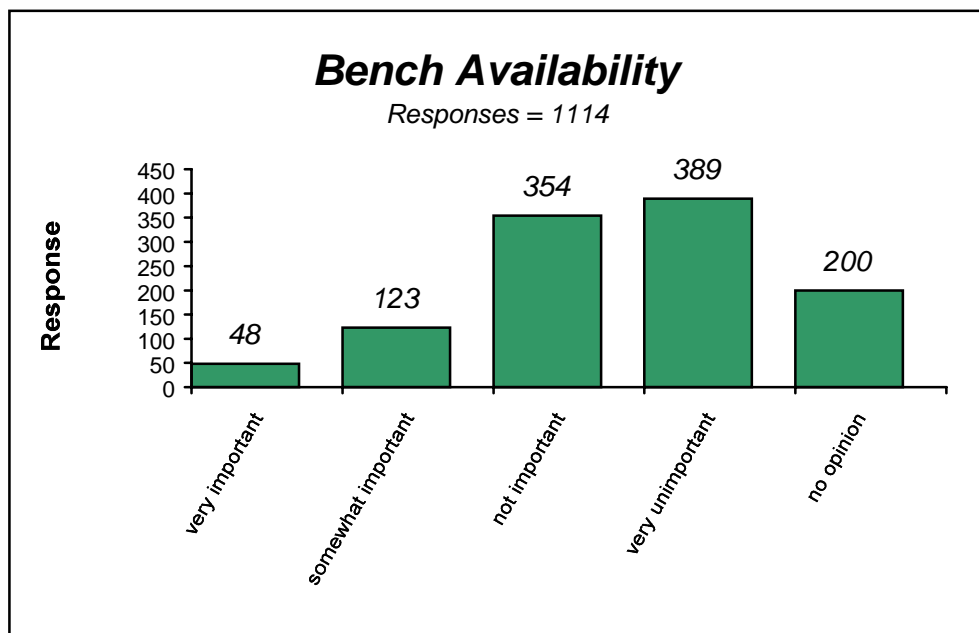
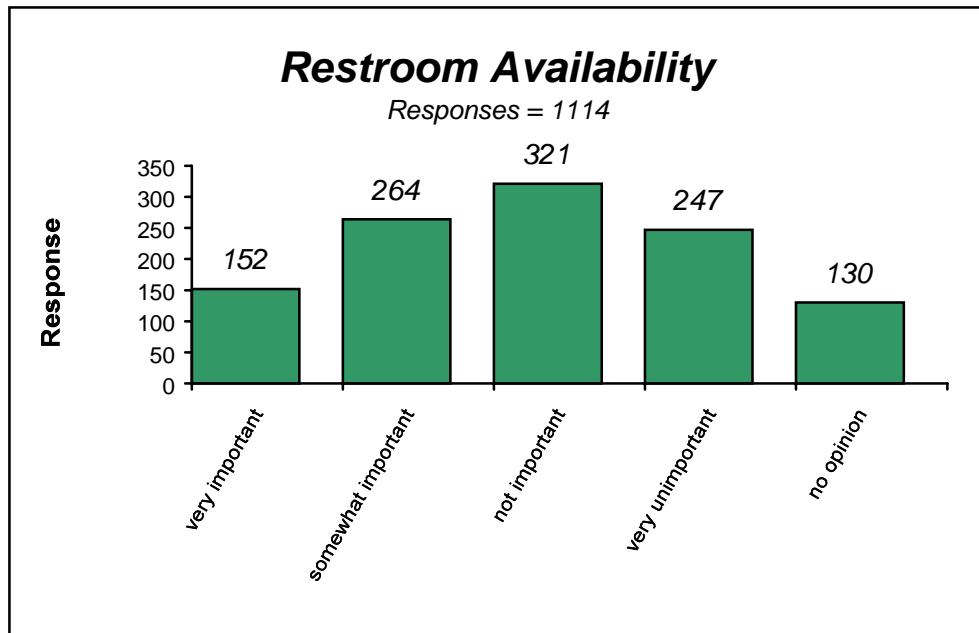
9. Which one area of the Foothills do you visit the most?

Many users selected more than one location indicating people frequent more than one area of the Foothills and find it difficult to narrow down their choice.



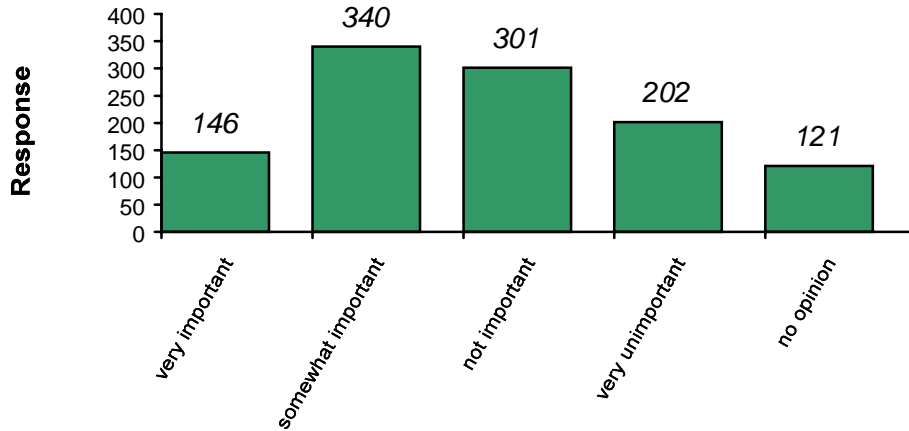
10. How important are the following items to you?

Both restrooms and drinking water seemed to be evenly balanced between those wanting the facilities and those who do not. The availability of benches did not solicit significant support. It was reassuring to see a high degree of support for both closing inappropriate trails and weed control/habitat improvement. This reaffirms the idea that folks using the trails also enjoy traveling within a healthy landscape. Users place as much value on taking care of what we have as they do the desire for more trails.



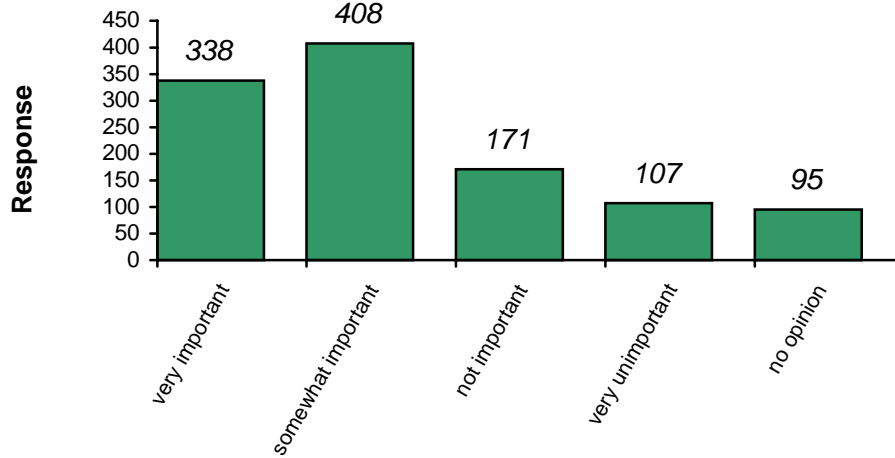
Interpretive Trails/Signs Availability

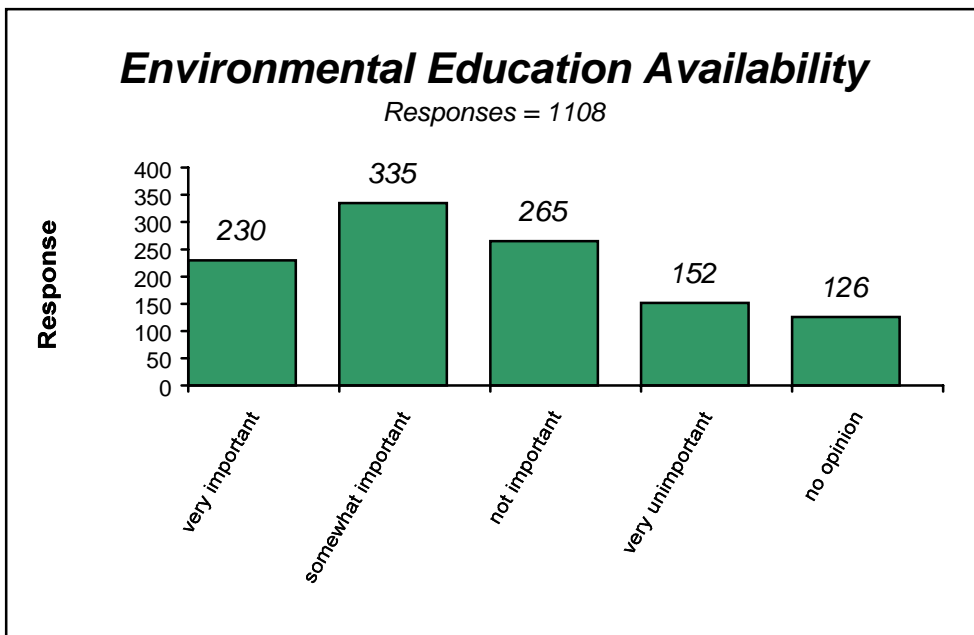
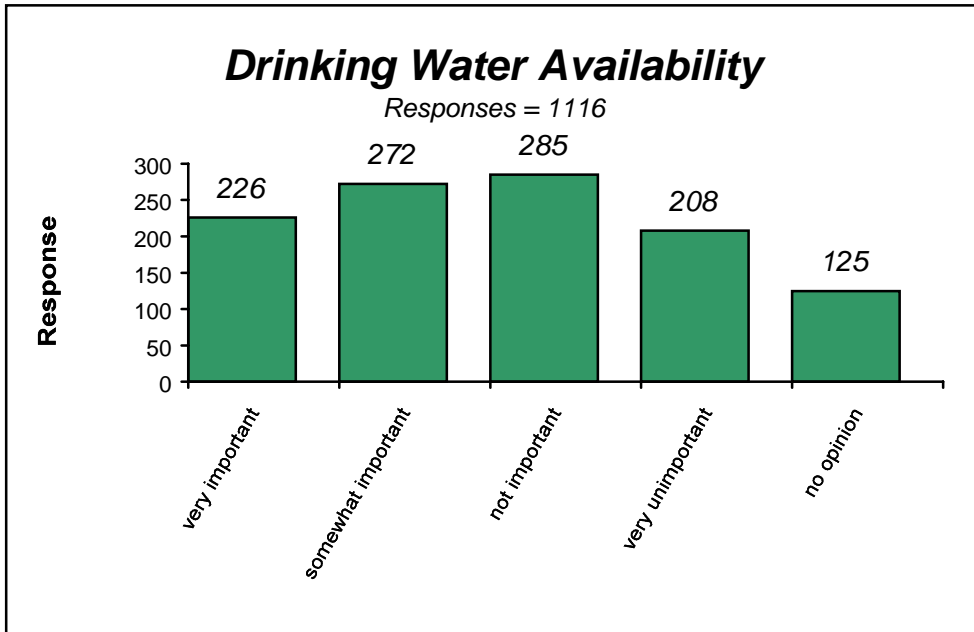
Responses = 1110



Trail Markers / Signs

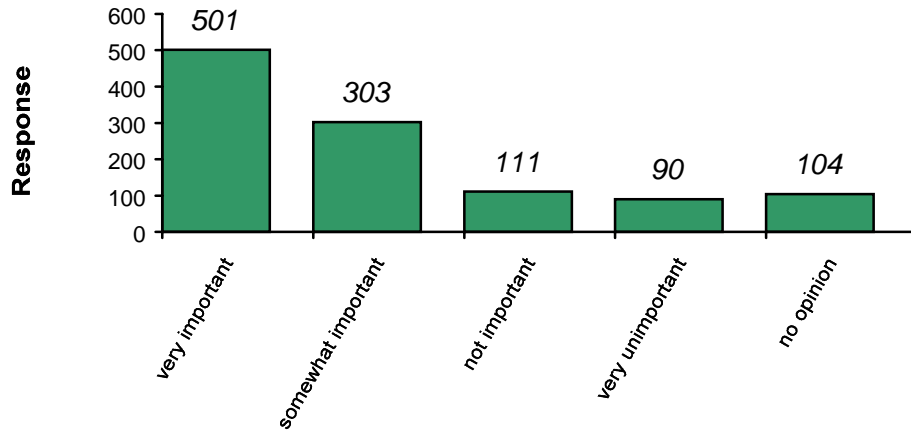
Responses = 1119





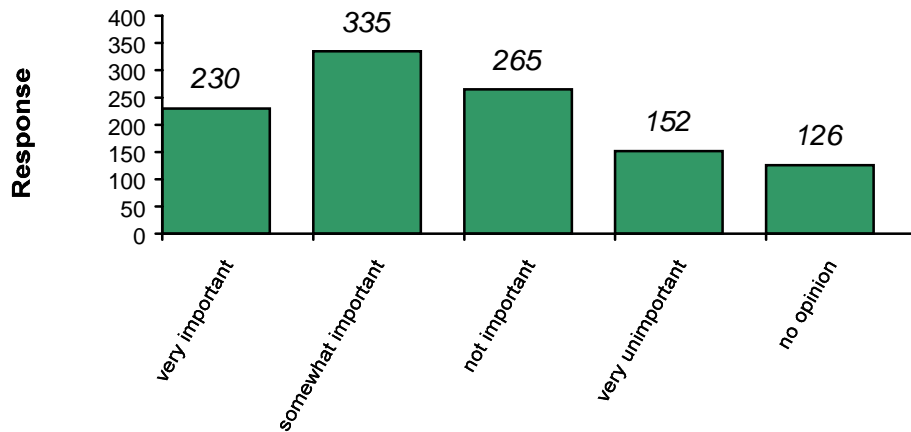
Closing or Rehabilitating Trails

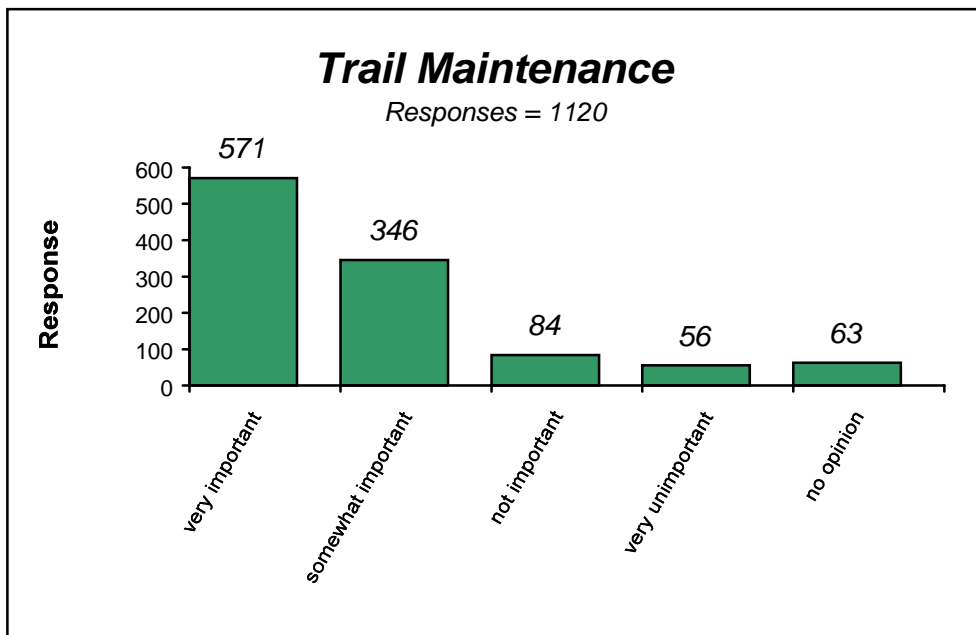
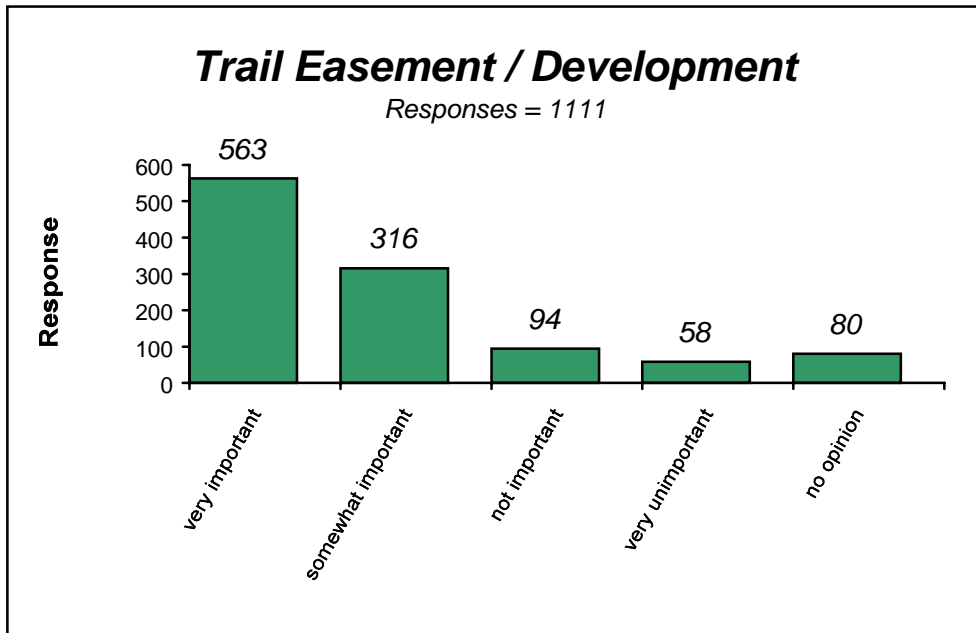
Responses = 1109



Weed Control / Habitat Restoration

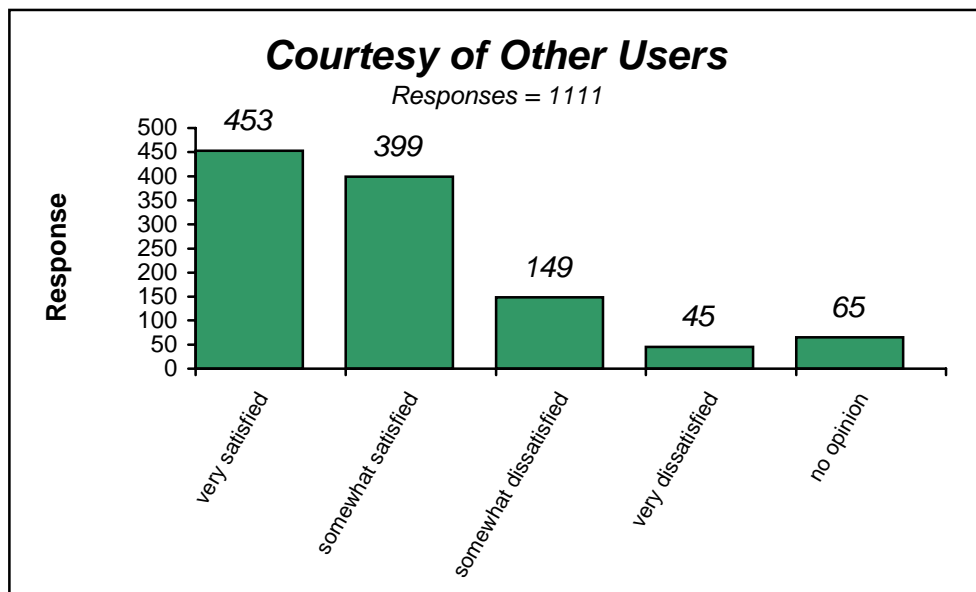
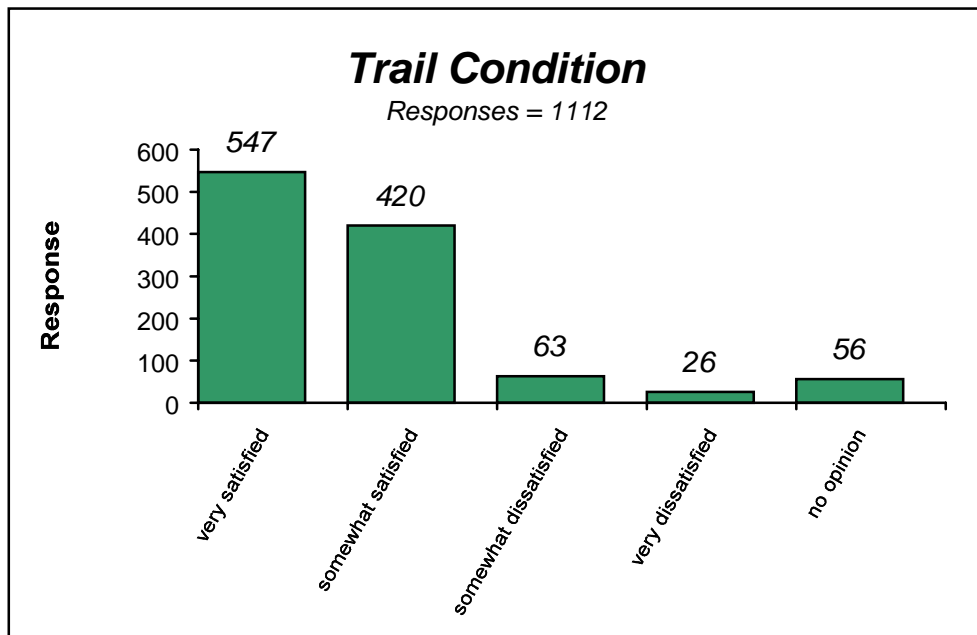
Responses = 1115

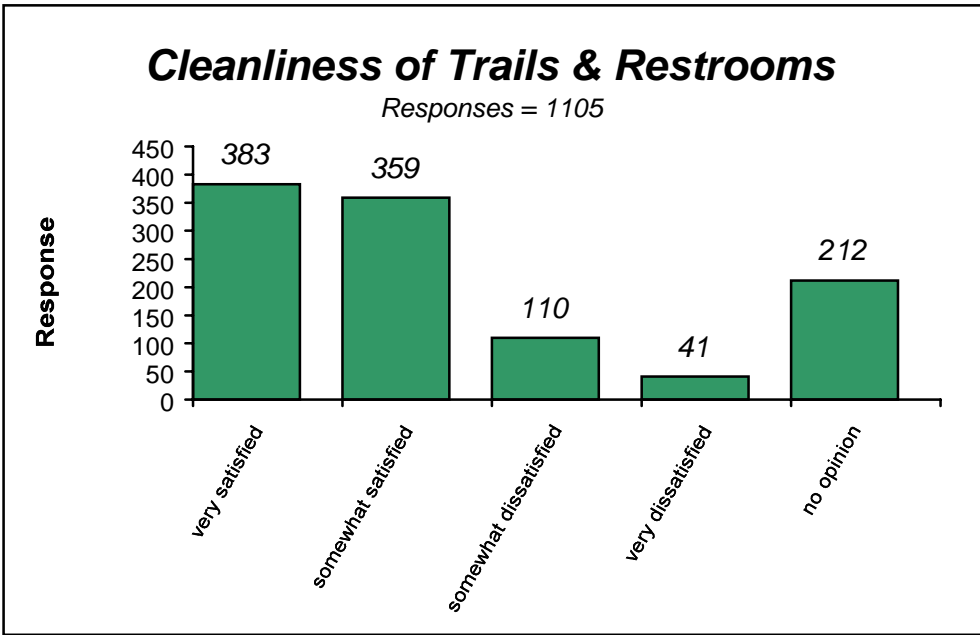
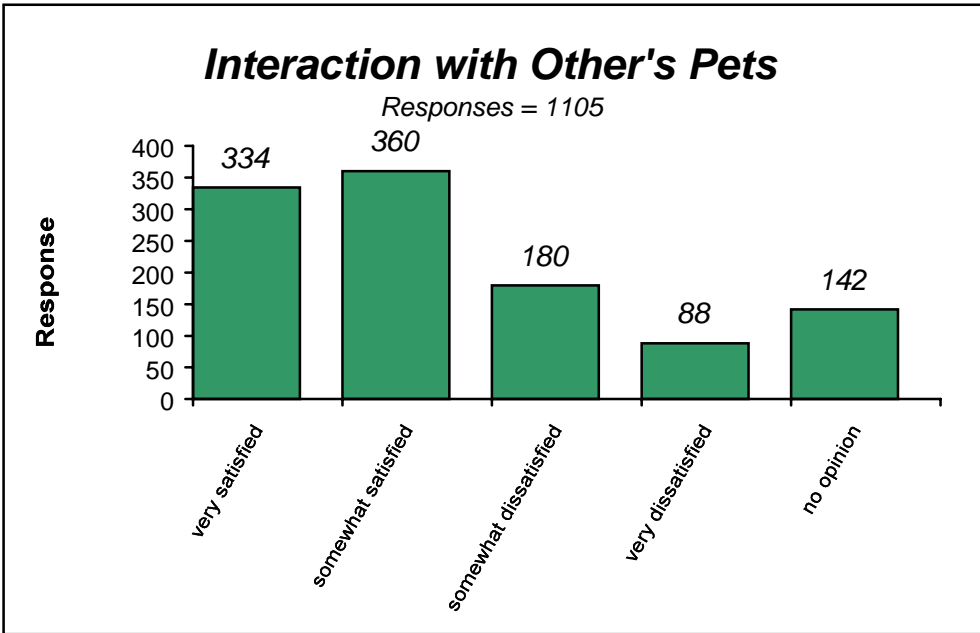


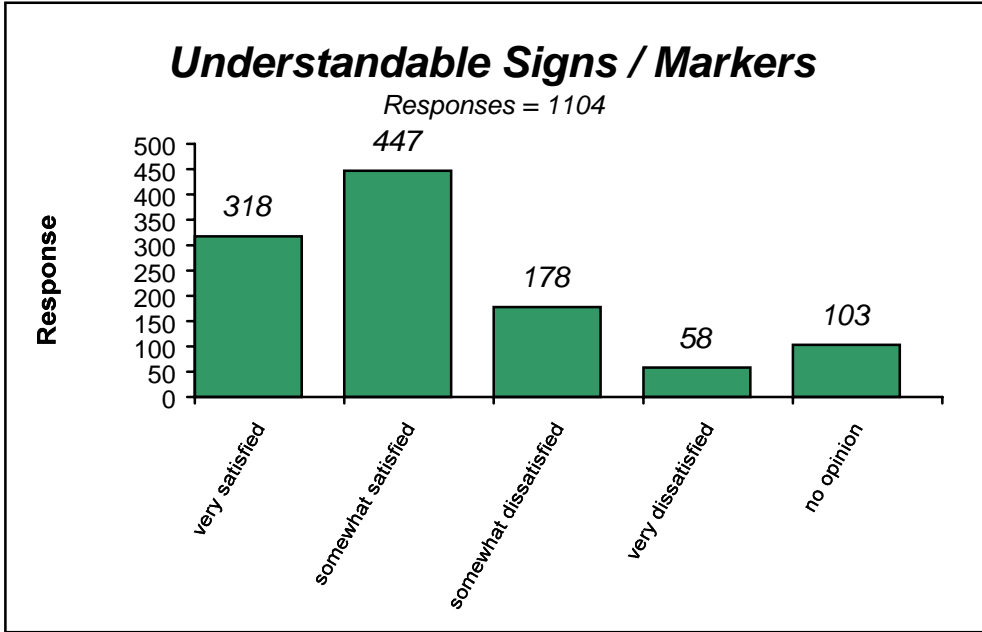
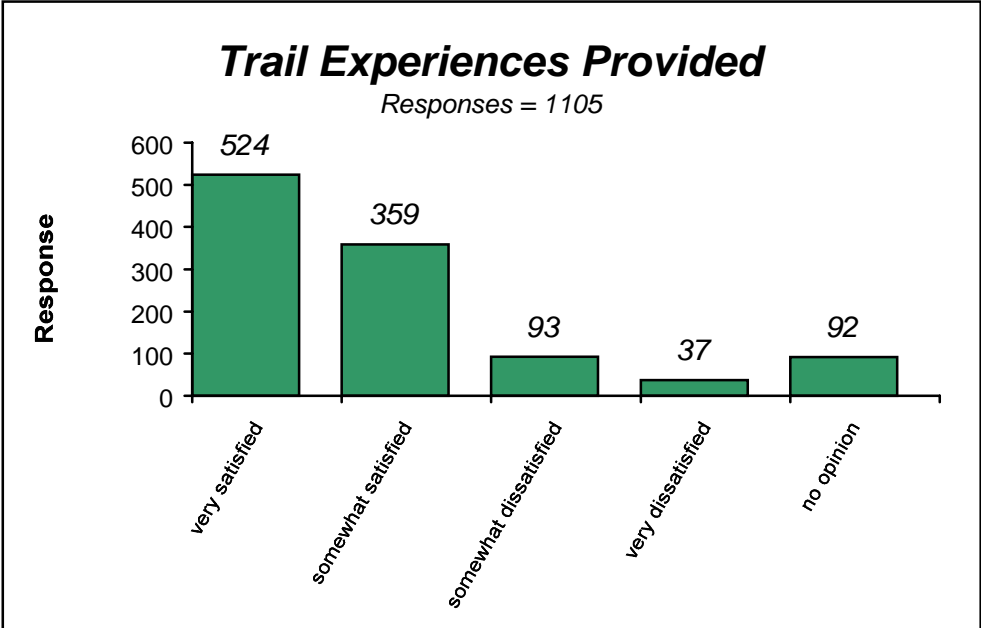


11. What is your level of satisfaction of your past Foothills experiences?

Generally a high level of satisfaction exists with 88% of the users stating they were very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with their overall enjoyment of the Foothills experience. Courtesy of other trail users, and interaction with other's pets both had high satisfaction levels but were two of the three areas receiving the most dissatisfied scores along with signs and directional markers. These are areas to focus some attention on to determine what could be done to increase satisfaction levels. One could argue, however, that conflicts on the trail between users and with other's pets are quite low given the high level of use.

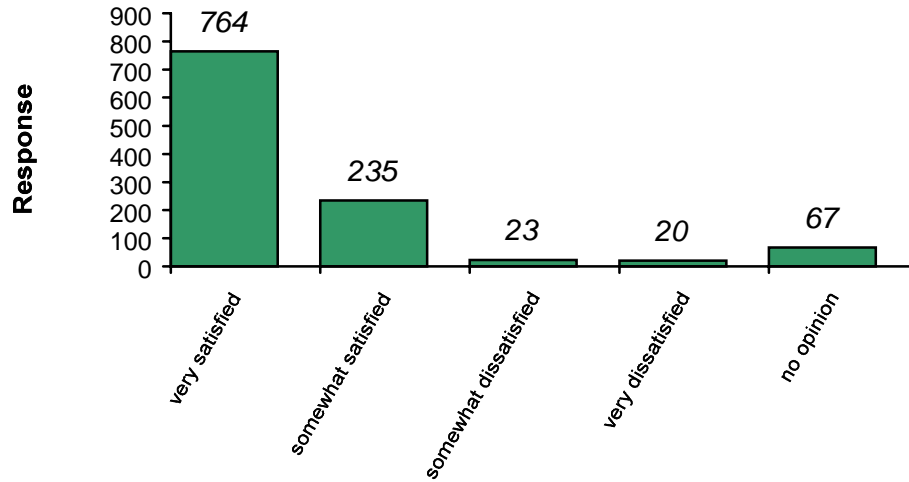






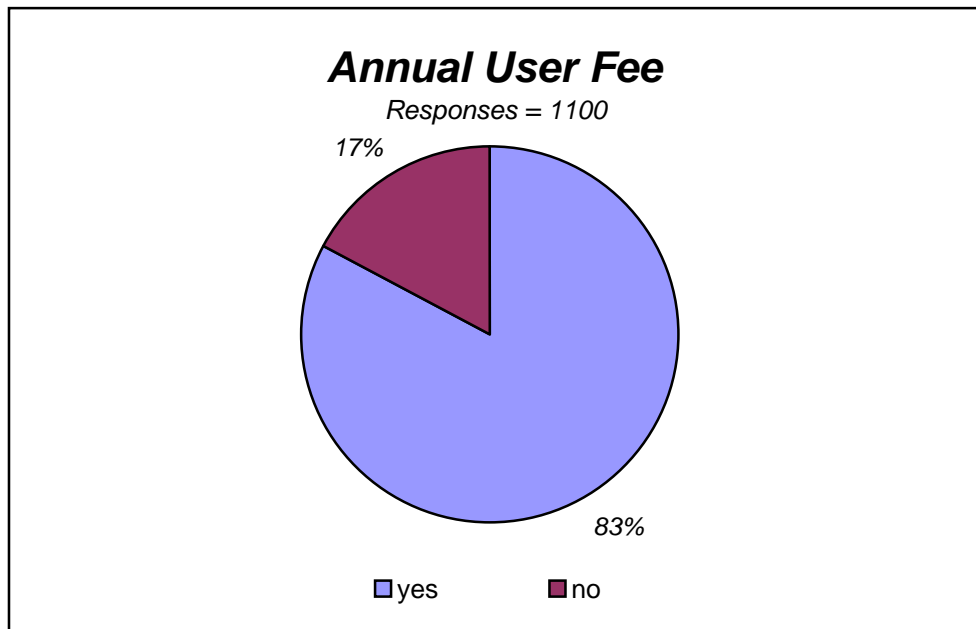
Overall Enjoyment / Satisfaction

Responses = 1109

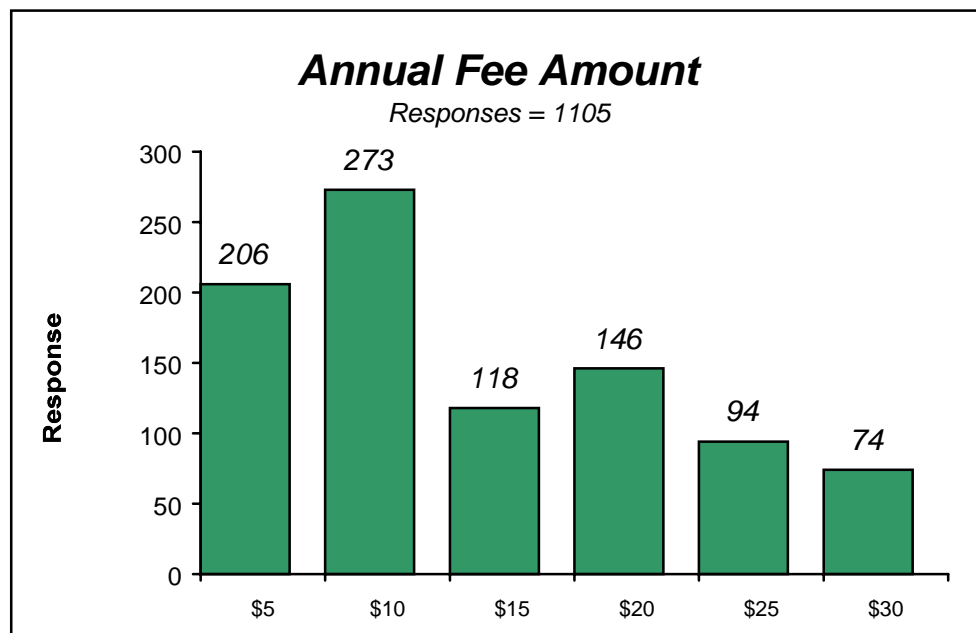


12. Would you be willing to pay an annual user fee to help care for the trails?

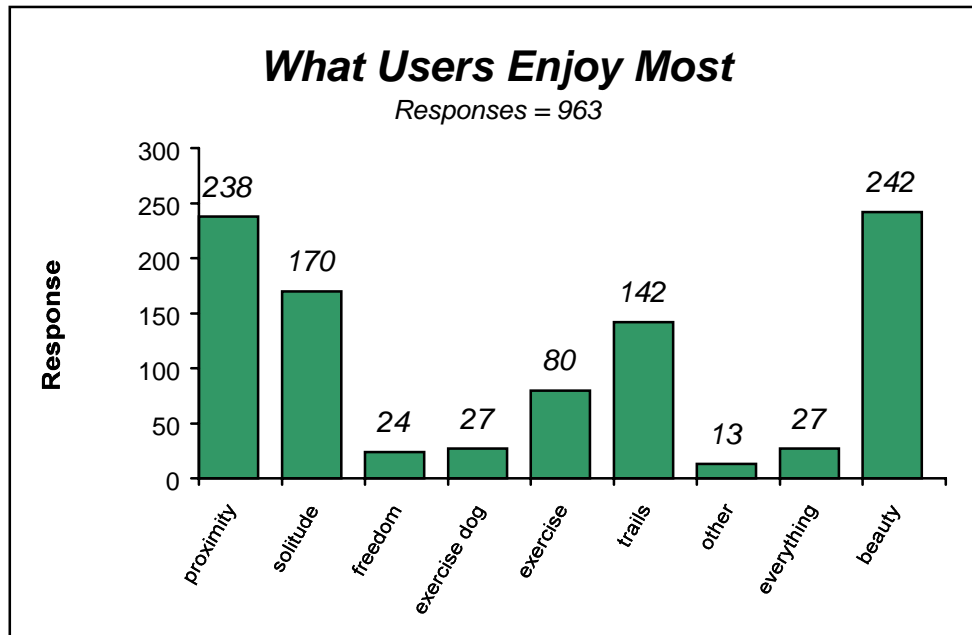
The support for paying a fee was surprisingly high with 83% in favor. Of those who supported a fee, over 47% were willing to pay \$15/year or more. It is difficult to assess the price break where support for user fees drops off. With 53% of supporters willing to pay \$10 or less, we can not assess the support if the fee were increased beyond \$10/year. This area will need more analysis to help determine a course of action.



If yes, what annual amount would seem appropriate or acceptable?

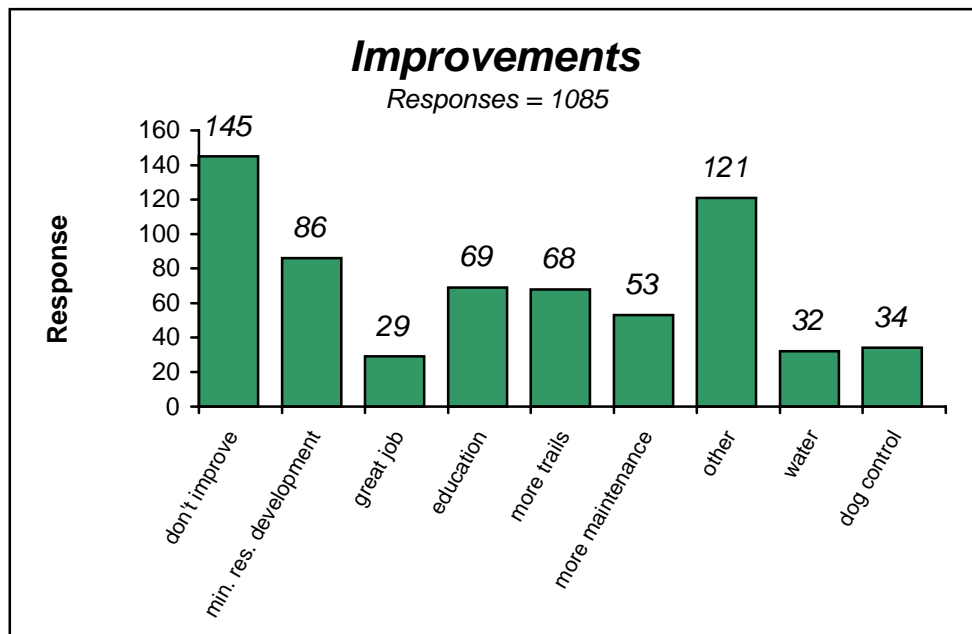


13. What do you enjoy most about the Foothills?



14. What suggestions do you have to improve your experience in the Foothills?

With such a high level of “No Response” (38%) one can not gauge if the high level of satisfaction left folks feeling there was no room for improvement or if they just wanted to get on with their trail experience. A desire to keep the trail experience wild without too much development may have stemmed from a couple of questions about the desire for drinking water, benches and restrooms.



TRENDS IN USE LEVELS

On June 4, 1994, the Ridge to Rivers Partnership, with help from Southwest Idaho Mountain Bike Association volunteers, conducted a user count at the Halls Gulch / Trail 4 intersection. Counts were taken between 9:30am and 7pm. With this information as a baseline, we compared results to the counts taken on June 3, 2000 to gauge trends over the past 6 years.

While tallies of total users occurred at all stations in 2000, we will look only at this site.

Special notes...

* Weather: In 1994, the weather was cooler. Temperatures reached into the 90's in 2000.

* Time periods: The tally in 2000 included the 7am to 9:30am time period so true comparisons are difficult.

Halls Gulch/Trail 4 Intersection

