

Regional District of Bulkley Nechako

Parks and Trails Master Plan

Electoral Area G (Houston/Granisle Rural)

Engagement Summary

Prepared for:



Prepared by:

LEES
+
ASSOCIATES

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako (RDBN) is developing a Parks and Trails Master Plan for Electoral Area G (Houston/Granisle Rural). The Plan will set strategic actions for parks and trails that reflect the region's unique character, culture, and geography.

Community input is key to the success of the Master Plan. Interest holders, rights holders, potential partners, and the public were invited to provide feedback on parks, trails, and recreation areas. Engagement aimed to understand community needs, identify challenges and opportunities, and develop strategies to improve coordination of park and trail operations.

To ensure the Plan reflects a community vision and a wide range of perspectives, engagement included outreach to the public and key rights and interest-holders, including outdoor clubs, community groups, and local First Nations communities. The Engagement Summary presents feedback received during two rounds of public engagement.

1.2 OVERALL PLANNING PROCESS

Five phases guided the Plan, including a background review, round 1 community engagement, preparation of the draft Plan, round 2 engagement, and development of the final Parks and Trails Master Plan (Figure 1). Two rounds of engagement included:

- **Round 1:** Stakeholder meetings and interviews, a public online survey, and a public pop-up event. Participants helped shape the vision and priorities for parks and trails.
- **Round 2:** A public online survey and virtual public open house. Participants provided feedback on the Draft Master Plan.

Engagement activities are described below including key findings and how the input was used to inform the final Master Plan.



Figure 1 – Project timeline

1.3 FIRST NATIONS ENGAGEMENT

The RDBN is committed to fostering robust relationships with local First Nations and acknowledges the significance of considering their interests and values. This includes protecting culturally significant areas within the parks system. The RDBN invited sixteen First Nations within the RDBN’s Electoral Area G to participate in individual rights holder meetings, as well as extending the invitation to participate in the public pop-ups and online surveys. There have been no meeting requests to date. However, as further input is offered in the future, it will be integrated into the decision-making process.

1.4 WHAT WE DID

OUTREACH AND PARTICIPATION

Public consultation activities included virtual interest-holder workshops, two public online surveys, a community pop-up event, and a virtual open house. Further details about each activity and a summary of results are provided below.

To encourage participation, a combination of phone calls, email invitations, newspaper advertisements, and social media posts were used. The RDBN website provided a landing page for all updates, information on how to participate, and links to the online surveys and virtual open house.

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Round 1

Interest-holder Workshops and interviews

Four virtual workshops were held with a diverse set of interest-holders, including local and provincial government representatives, community organizations, land managers, youth, and education groups.

Engagement by the Numbers

125 participants in two online surveys

5 participants in the community workshops

6 participants in the virtual open house

1 pop-up event at the Houston Farmer's Market

Interviews with individual knowledge holders were also conducted. Participants included representatives from the following:

- Elected officials from the RDBN Electoral Area 'G', Village of Granisle, and District of Houston
- District of Houston Leisure Services Staff
- Houston Hikers
- Houston Mountain Bike Association
- Recreation Sites and Trails BC (RSTBC) Staff
- BC Parks Staff

Representatives were introduced to the project through workshops and interviews and were asked about their organization's role in parks and trails. They were also asked to provide feedback on challenges and opportunities within parks and trails.

Round 1 Online Public Survey

Public input was gathered through an online survey posted on the Regional District's website. Results were collected through the online platform Survey Monkey and summarized in Section 2.1 of this report.

The first survey received 54 responses collected between August 15th to September 30th, 2025. Survey questions asked the community to reflect on their needs and aspirations for parks, trails, and recreation.

Round 1 Public Pop-Up Event

One in-person pop-up event was held at the Houston Farmer's Market on August 22nd, 2025 from 12:00-4:00 pm. Facilitators from the Regional District and LEES were present to gather feedback, guide conversation, and answer project questions.

The pop-up event introduced the project to the community and shared information about parks and trails in the planning area. Display boards prompted participants to share their vision for parks and trails, identify key locations they would like prioritized, and share important features and amenities. The pop-up event also encouraged participation in the first online survey.

Round 2

Virtual Open House

A virtual open house was held in March of 2026. Interest-holders from the first round of engagement were invited in addition to an open invite to members of the community via the RDBN's website. The open house included a presentation on the draft Parks and Trails Master Plan followed by a brief discussion providing space for questions and feedback on the Plan.

Round 2 Online Public Survey

Public input was gathered through a second online survey posted on the Regional District's website. The results were collected through the online platform Survey Monkey and are summarized in Section 2.2.

Survey responses for round 2 of engagement were collected from February 26th to April 6th, 2026, with a total of 71 responses. Survey questions asked for community feedback on the Draft Parks and Trails Master Plan, including the level of support for the vision and recommendations and the highest priorities.

2 ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES

2.1 ROUND 1 ENGAGEMENT RESULTS

2.1.1 COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS AND INTERVIEWS

The following section outlines key points raised during the community workshops and interviews of elected officials, Houston Leisure Services, and the Houston Hikers.

Elected Officials

- A meeting held with the Ministry of Forests at Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) discussed their commitment to a ten kilometre trail between the Granisle and Topley Landing previously explored in a 2021 feasibility study by the Village of Granisle. This is a top priority for the municipality.
- Future forestry campsites and access roads will be important to trail and recreational access planning, as forestry companies may not continue to maintain all roads.
- Changes to permitting requirements mean a larger number of permits will likely be required to establish new projects, particularly along lakeshores and rivers. Focusing on maintaining existing assets over establishing new infrastructure may reduce required permits.
- Fishing along the Morice River and lake access were identified as priorities, alongside closing gaps in hiking trails along lake and river frontages.
- Unmaintained and unsanctioned boat launches along waterfronts present a hazard. Barrett and Klinger Lakes were identified as sites in need of improved amenities and parking.
- Stronger partnerships with local First Nations are needed to support access to public recreation sites and improve communication with the public, especially as Provincial reconciliation processes may change future access to Crown land. Several long-term, well-used recreation sites are now exclusively used by First Nations. Elected officials expressed the importance of collaborative approaches, including culturally respectful signage that acknowledges First Nations sites and encourages responsible use.

Houston Leisure Services

- A challenge identified was limited volunteer capacity within a small population.
- Priorities identified included accessibility, safety, trail connectivity, and improved signage.

Houston Hikers

- Challenges include trail maintenance and limited funding streams for operational work .
- There is interest in establishing a link between the Morice Mountain cabin and the Owen Lookout Cabin.

- Interest was expressed in establishing trails and access along Old Man, Swans and Elwin Lakes in partnership with RSTBC.
- Members noted several long-standing recreation sites are now exclusively used by local First Nations, and the community feels the loss of these areas. They suggested exploring opportunities to develop new sites or expand existing ones to maintain recreation capacity.

Key Locations Shared:

- Morice River
- Barrett Lake
- Klinger Lake
- Owen Lake
- Helen Lake
- Silverthorne Lake
- Old Man Lake
- Swans Lake
- Elwin Lake
- Irrigation Lake (District of Houston)
- By-mac Campground (District of Houston)
- Northwood Park (District of Houston)

2.1.2 ROUND 1 PUBLIC POP-UP EVENT

During the pop-up event, the following themes emerged:

- **Nadina Mountain:** Participants identified the Nadina Mountain area as a place of interest valued for its wilderness lodge, Nadina Mountain Provincial Park, and the Owen Lake Recreation Site.
- **Road access:** Concerns over maintaining road access after industry decommissioning was discussed, with specific reference to Palisades, Morice Lake Park, and Nadina Mountain access along the Owen Connector.
- **BC Recreation Sites:** Sites located close to town were described as popular and favored by locals due to their ease of access including Silverthorne Lake, Helen Lake, and Sunset Lake.
- **Bike trails:** Participants expressed interest in improved bike safety, increased community connections, and development of more trails in the area. Mountain biking emerged as the main topic, however an opportunity for introducing gravel bike trails was identified.

2.1.3 ROUND 1 ONLINE SURVEY

The following key findings shared in the round 1 online survey include:

- **Trail use habits:** Three quarters of respondents use trails at least on a weekly basis (76%).
- **Popular activities:** The most popular activities among adults include hiking, walking, and snowshoeing. Among children, hiking, ATV/snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, dog walking, and mountain biking were the most popular activities. Though not as popular as summer activities, a significant portion of respondents participate in winter trail activities.
- **Outdoor recreation habits:** Camping is a popular outdoor recreation activity enjoyed by many adults (83%) and children (95%) and respondents enjoy water-based activities including canoeing and kayaking, swimming, going to the lake, and fishing.
- **Barriers to access:** Primary barriers to accessing parks and trails include wildlife concerns (28%), poor maintenance (26%), lack of information (20%), and being too busy (20%). Roughly a quarter of respondents don't face any barriers (28%).
- **Key destinations:** Morice Mountain Nordic Ski Club is the most mentioned destination from participants followed by China Nose Mountain (not in Electoral Area G) and the Babine Lake hiking trails.
- **Trail networks and connections:** Respondents indicated the creation and management of new trail networks should be prioritized over the next 10 years, with 78% ranking it in their top two, followed by connections between communities (56%), preservation of natural areas (38%), and acquiring land (29%).
- **Park priorities:** Respondents indicated campgrounds, environmental protection, opportunities to be active, connect with nature, and more park amenities are the main priorities for parks.
- **Trail priorities:** Respondents indicated hiking and walking (82%), trail signage (49%), and improved trail connections to community amenities (56%) are their main priorities for trails and active transportation.
- **Tax increase:** More respondents were supportive of tax increases to fund parks and trails improvements than those opposed (47% supportive compared to 29% opposed).
- **Additional comments:** Many respondents commented on the need for improved connectivity, maintenance, and more information, wayfinding, and signage.

2.2 ROUND 2 ENGAGEMENT RESULTS

2.2.1 VIRTUAL OPEN HOUSE

The following input was shared during the virtual open house including:

- The Houston Mountain Bike Association (HMBA) and the Morice Mountain Nordic Ski Club (MMNSC) are jointly developing summer biking maps and signage;
- The Owen-Nadina connection should be restored to provide 4x4 access; and
- A shortened version of the final plan would be helpful for the public and for grants.

2.2.2 ROUND 2 ONLINE SURVEY

The key findings shared in the round 2 online survey include:

- **Vision and goals:** The majority of respondents support the draft vision statement (80%) and the five goals (90%). When asked to describe overall goals missed, a few respondents mentioned a desire for providing garbage maintenance.
- **Parks and Trails working group:** The majority of respondents support the creation of a parks and trails working group (77%). However, 21% feel neutral or unsure.
- **Granisle and Topley Landing multi-use trail:** The majority of respondents (59%) support creating a new multi-use trail between Granisle and Topley Landing and 33% feel neutral. With further engagement, the project has a strong potential to build even broader community support.
- **Expansion of trail networks:** Support was strong for both initiatives, with a slight preference for Nadina Mountain trail connection to the Owen Lake recreation site (52% ranked as their top priority) followed by developing a three-lake canoe route integrated with Old Man Lake Park (48% ranked as their top priority).
- **Outdoor recreation organization and land manager initiatives** – Respondents would like the RDBN to prioritize establishing a campground near the Mt. Harry Davis mountain biking trails with the Houston Mountain Bike Association (61% ranked as their top two priorities). Both enhancing the Houston Palisades Trail and improving Silverthorne Lake and the Morice Wilderness Area were equally prioritized (48% ranked as their top two priorities).
- **Provincial Recreation Site improvements:** Respondents prioritized upgrades at Owen Lake (26 votes), followed by Silverthorne Lake (24), Mt. Harry Davis (20), and the Aspen sites (19). They highlighted needs such as better signage and maps, improved accessibility, better access to the Morice River and Lamprey Creek, more trails and benches, and additional camping options, particularly at Mt. Harry Davis.
- **Dominion Telegraph Line trail:** The majority of respondents (60%) support creating a new trail following the historic Dominion Telegraph Line and 33% feel neutral or unsure, suggesting further distribution of information to build community support.

- **Further comments:** Additional comments included not finding information on the planning process, the importance of highlighting that the western portion of Area E is often considered a “Houston area” for recreation and a desire of advertising to get input from neighbouring areas.

2.2.3 ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK RECEIVED

The RDBN received additional feedback through email messages from organizations including:

- **Houston Hikers:** Provided feedback on content related to Houston Hikers trails and a recreation site.
- **BC Parks:** Shared feedback on recommendations related to BC Parks, including insight into trail upgrade projects, specifically Old Man Park, and engagement with Houston Hikers and First Nations.
- **Recreation Sites and Trails BC (RSTBC):** Provided information on sites under jurisdiction, including missing trails and recreation site closures.
- **Village of Granisle:** Clarified municipal jurisdiction of parks and trails.
- **Mayor of Granisle:** Shared input on making a user-friendly version of the plan.

3 SUMMARY OF KEY THEMES

Section three summarizes key themes from both rounds of engagement, including challenges, opportunities, and priorities found from the community workshops and interviews, online surveys, the in-person pop-up event, and the virtual open house.

3.1 CHALLENGES

Key challenges include:

- **Volunteer capacity and funding:** Volunteer capacity is limited by a small population and ongoing operational work is limited by a lack of stable funding.
- **Loss of road access:** The decommissioning of roads by forestry companies is a significant concern, particularly for the Palisades, Morice Lake Park, and Nadina Mountain.
- **Current level of maintenance:** Declining quality of trails and amenities has raised concern about the current level of park and trail maintenance.
- **Access to water recreation:** Unmaintained and unsanctioned boat launches have limited access to recreational use of lakes.
- **Lack of information and signage:** Missing information and signage on parks and trails was identified as a challenge.
- **Wildlife concerns:** Presence of wildlife was identified as the biggest barrier to access.

3.2 OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunities include:

- **Grow the trail network:** Open up the trail network to provide additional opportunities for hiking. Trails could provide additional access to Nadina Mountain, including a new trail connecting Granisle to Topley Landing and a new trail along the Owen Connector.
- **Improve cabin access:** Establish a link between the Morice Mountain cabin and the Owen Lookout Cabin.
- **Improve water access:** Provide improvements to access the Morice River and Morice Lake, as well as Barrett and Klinger Lake, by formalizing boat launches to increase recreation opportunities for water sports.
- **Build partnerships:** Strengthen collaboration between organizations and the RDBN, including partnering with the RSTBC to develop trails and provide access to Old Man, Swan, and Elwin Lakes, helping to increase volunteer capacity, and building ongoing relationship with local First Nations.

- **Improve trail maintenance:** Establish funding pathways through tax increases, grants, or creating a parks and trails working group to enhance maintenance and management of the trail system, as well as build capacity.
- **Improve information, wayfinding, and education:** Develop clear trail wayfinding, information on the trail system, and education. Providing information on wildlife-human interactions could help address wildlife related concerns.

3.3 SUPPORT FOR THE PLAN

Overall, there was strong support for the Parks and Trails Master Plan, including:

- **80%** of online survey respondents were supportive or very supportive of the vision.
- **90%** of online survey respondents were supportive or very supportive of the goals.
- Participants of the virtual open house expressed support for the Draft Master Plan.
- Organizations providing feedback expressed support for the Draft Master Plan.

3.4 PRIORITIES

Community priorities place emphasis on expanding trail networks, improving trail connectivity, and improving amenities. Key priorities identified include:

- **Expand and connect trail networks:** Expand trail networks to increase recreation opportunities and improve connectivity between communities and key recreation destinations. This could include developing a 10-kilometre trail linking the Village of Granisle with Topley Landing and establishing a connection between Nadina Mountain Park and the Owen Lake Recreation Site.
- **Establish a historic trail:** Plan and construct a trail along the historic Dominion Telegraph Line to support tourism, enhance local recreation, and highlight the area's historical past.
- **Enhance water recreation opportunities:** Develop a three-lake canoe route incorporating Old Man Lake Park.
- **Improve Provincial Recreation Sites:** Support improvements to provincial recreation sites including enhanced amenities, signage, and improved access, with a focus on Owen Lake, Silverthorne Lake, and Mount Harry Davis.
- **Strengthen Relationships with Local First Nations:** Work with local First Nations to ensure ongoing communication and engagement is developed to support shared stewardship of public recreation sites, support cultural and ecological practices, and ensure clear communication in planning and management conversations.
- **Establish a new campground:** Establish a new campground near the Mt. Harry Davis mountain biking trails in collaboration with the Houston Mountain Bike Association.

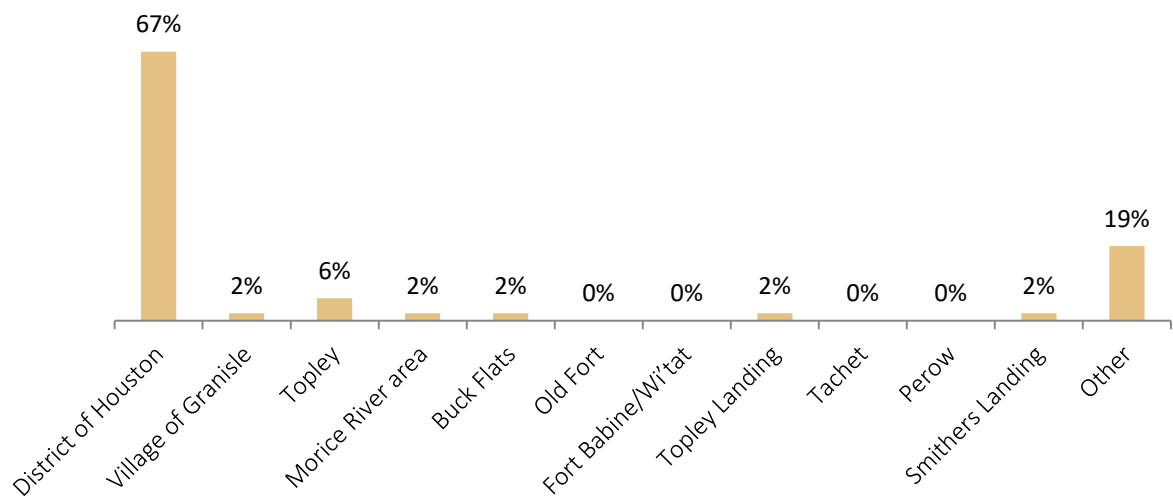
- **Create a Parks and Trails Working Group:** Establish a parks and trails working group to build partnerships, collaborate, and improve community capacity, bringing together local organizations, land managers, other levels of government, and First Nations to collaborate and share resources and knowledge to support and improve parks and trails opportunities.

APPENDIX A – ONLINE SURVEY 1 SUMMARY

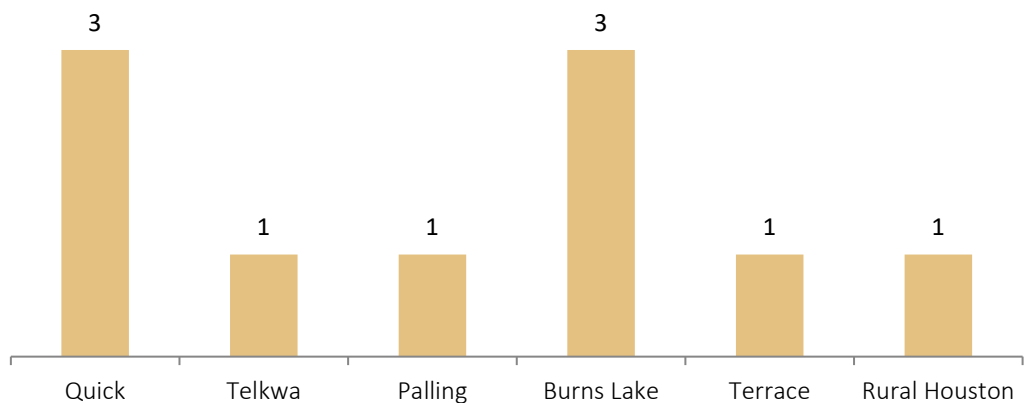
Who Responded

- The survey was completed by a total of 54 respondents.
- The majority of respondents identified as women (80%).
- The largest age group of respondents were between 35 and 49 years of age (43%).
- Less than half of respondents noted having children under the age of 18 living at home (38%).
- The majority of respondents were from the District of Houston (67%).

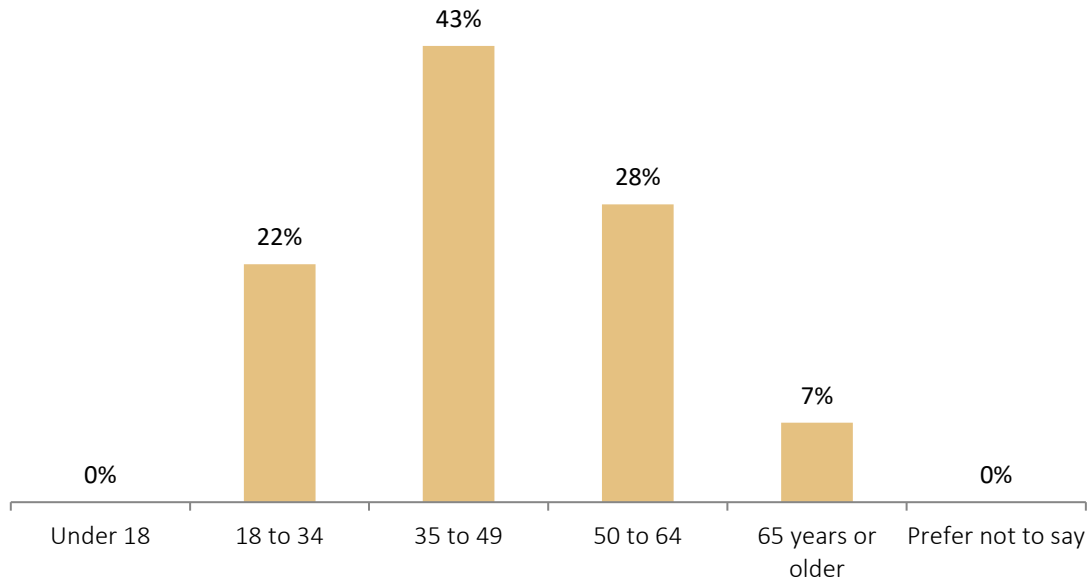
Where do you live?



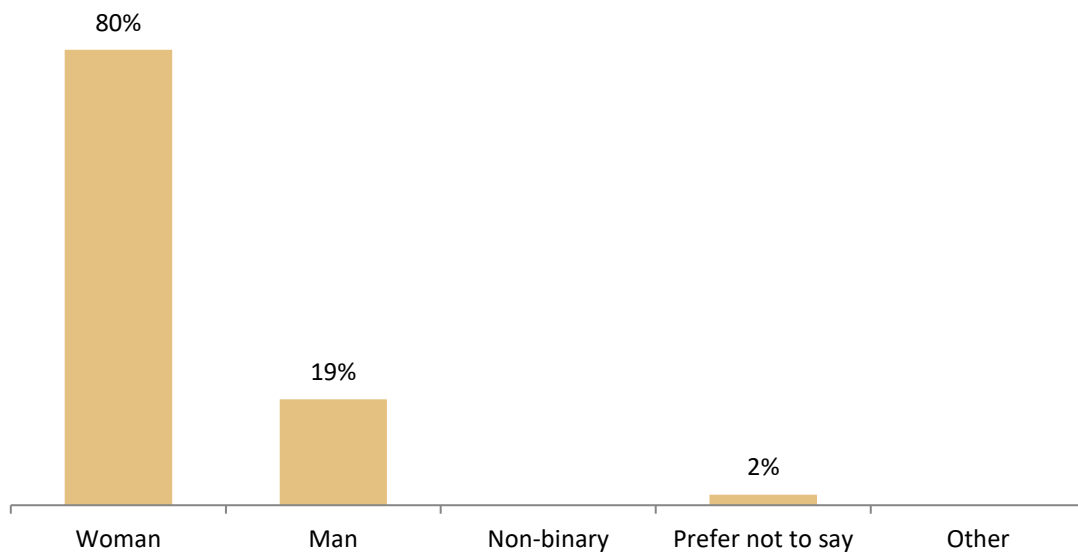
Other Areas of Residence



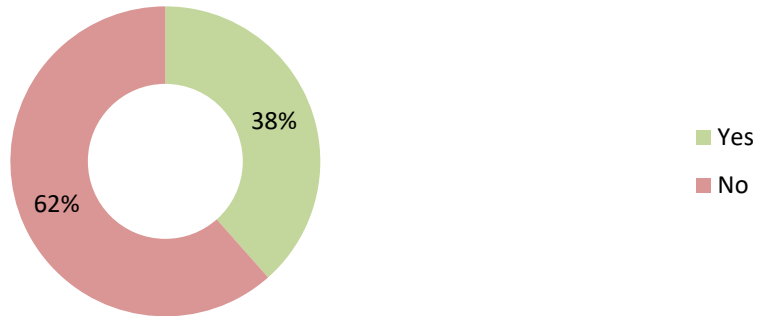
What age category are you?



What gender do you identify with?



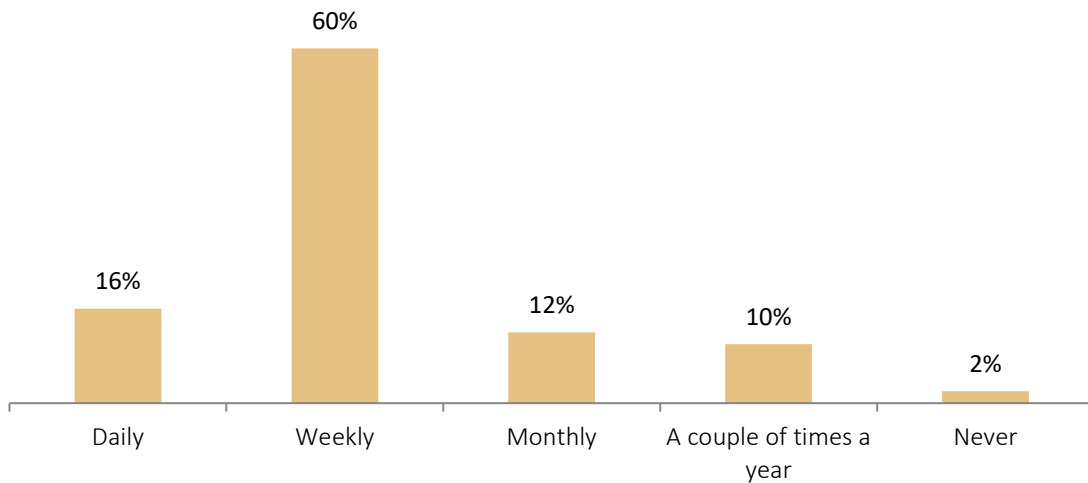
Do you have children under the age of 18 living at home?



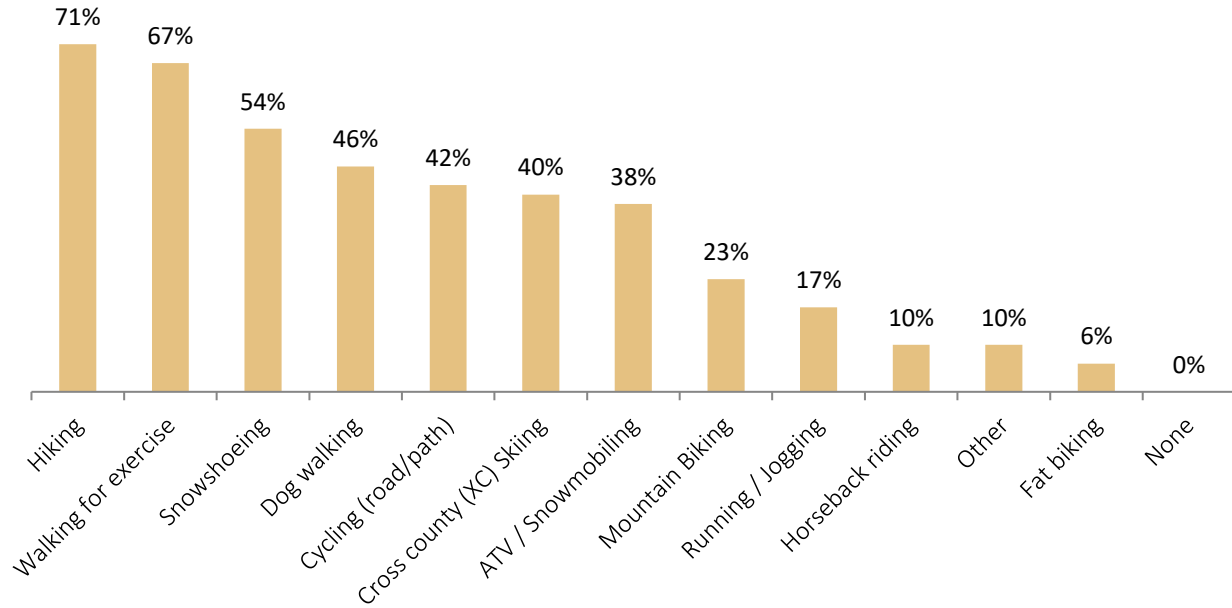
Trail Use Habits

- Roughly three-quarters of respondents noted using trails at least on a weekly basis (76%).
- The most popular trail activities among respondents were hiking (71%), walking for exercise (67%), and snowshoeing (54%).
- Though not as popular as summer activities, a significant portion of respondents reported participating in winter trail activities.
- The most popular trail activity among the children of respondents was hiking (65%), though ATV/snowmobiling (45%), cross-country skiing (45%), dog walking (40%), and mountain biking (40%) were also common responses.

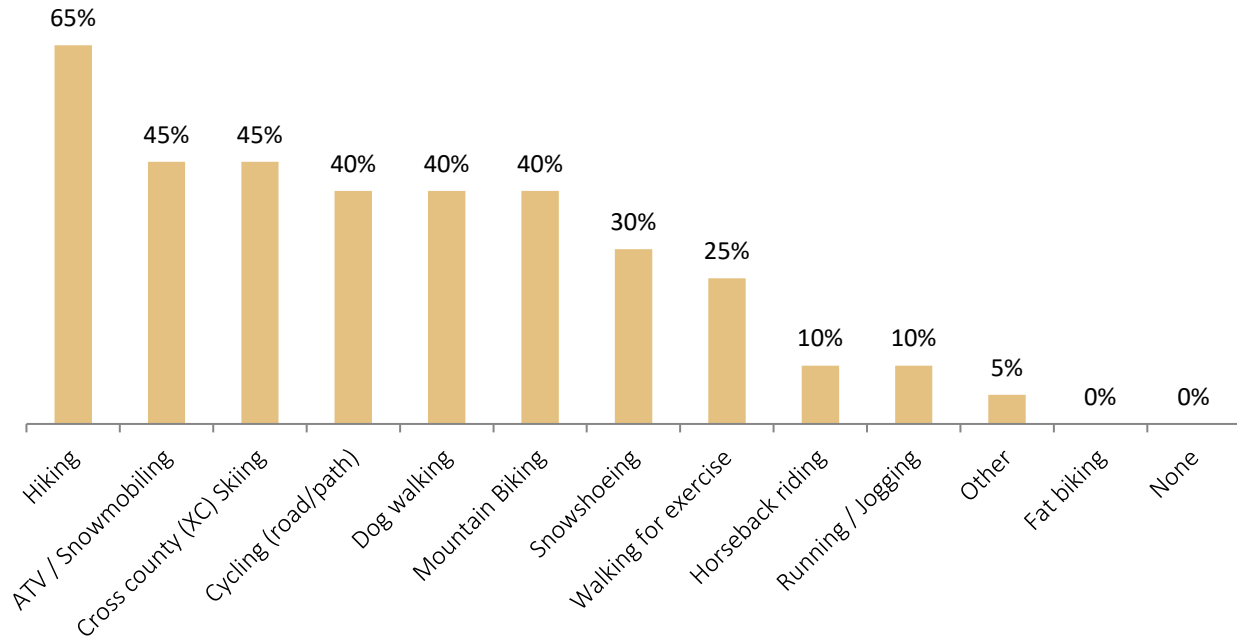
How often do you use trails?



What types of trail activities do you do most often?



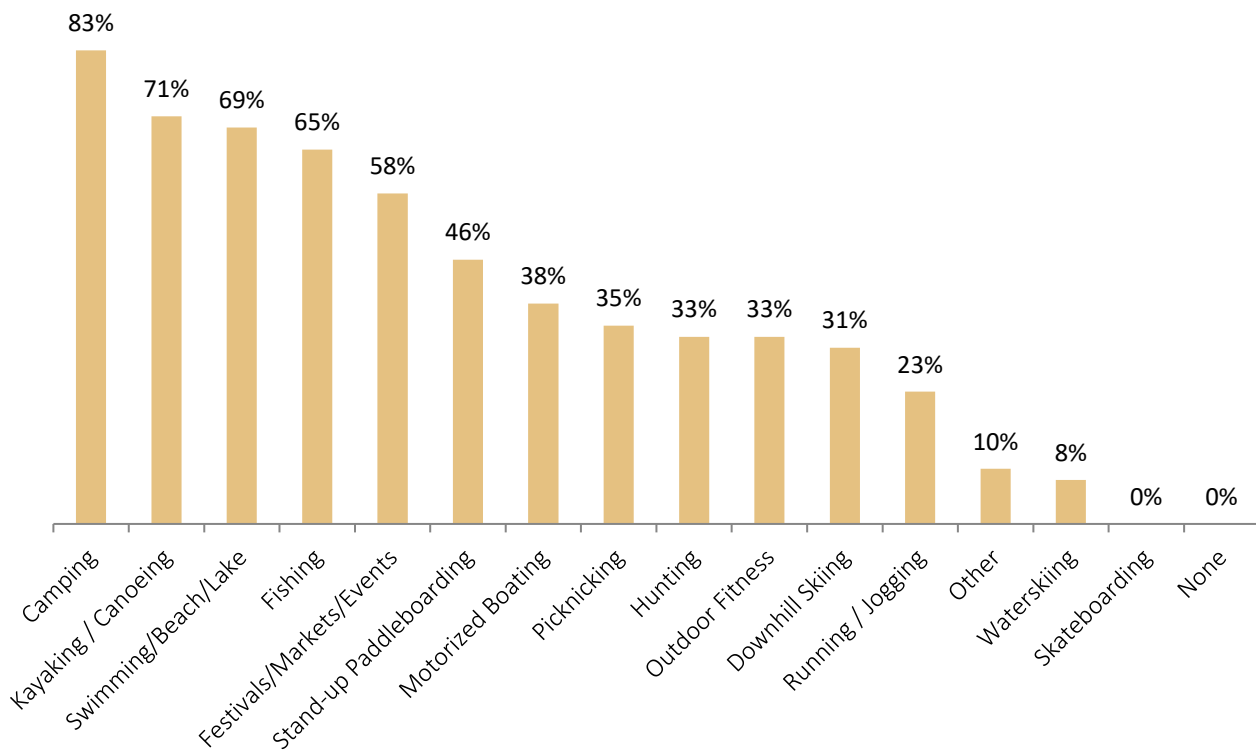
What types of trail activities do your children do most often? (Select all that apply).



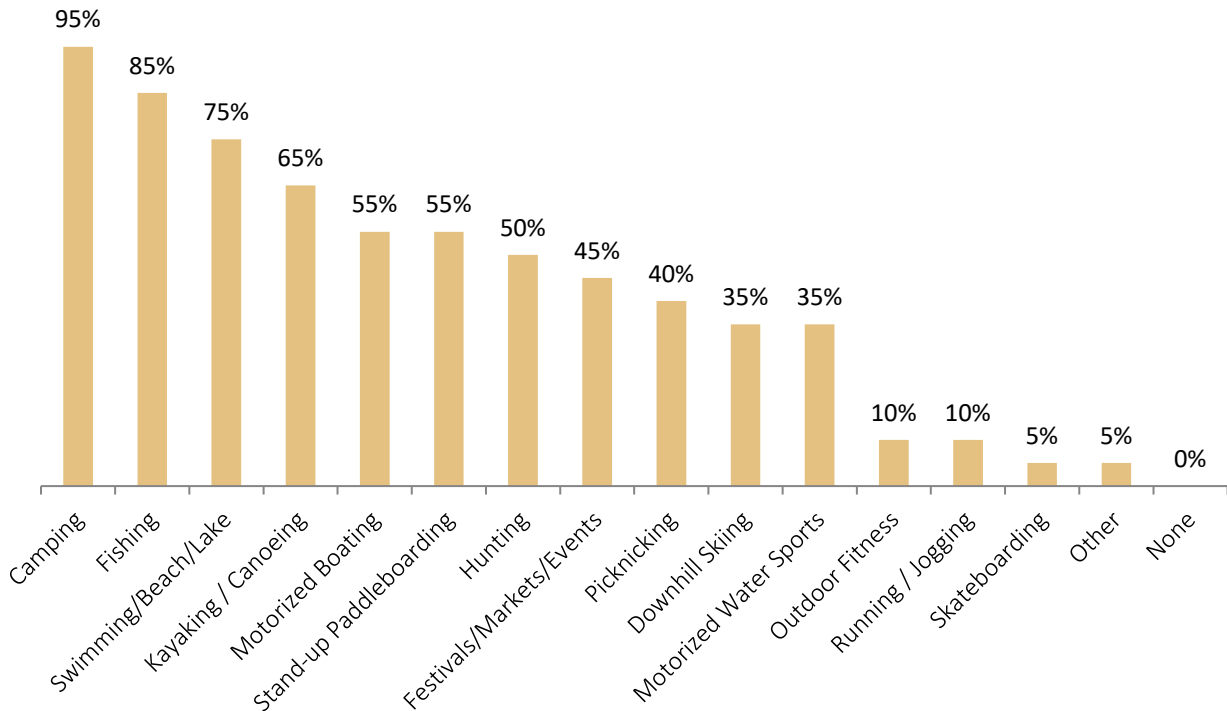
Outdoor Recreation Habits

- Camping was the most popular outdoor recreation activity among respondents (83%).
- Many respondents participated in water-based activities such as canoeing/kayaking (71%), swimming/going to the lake (69%), fishing (65%), stand-up paddleboarding (46%), and motorized boating (38%).
- The most popular outdoor recreation activities among the children of respondents were camping (95%), fishing (85%), and swimming/going to the lake (75%).

What types outdoor activities do you enjoy? Think of all seasons and times of the year.
(Select all that apply).



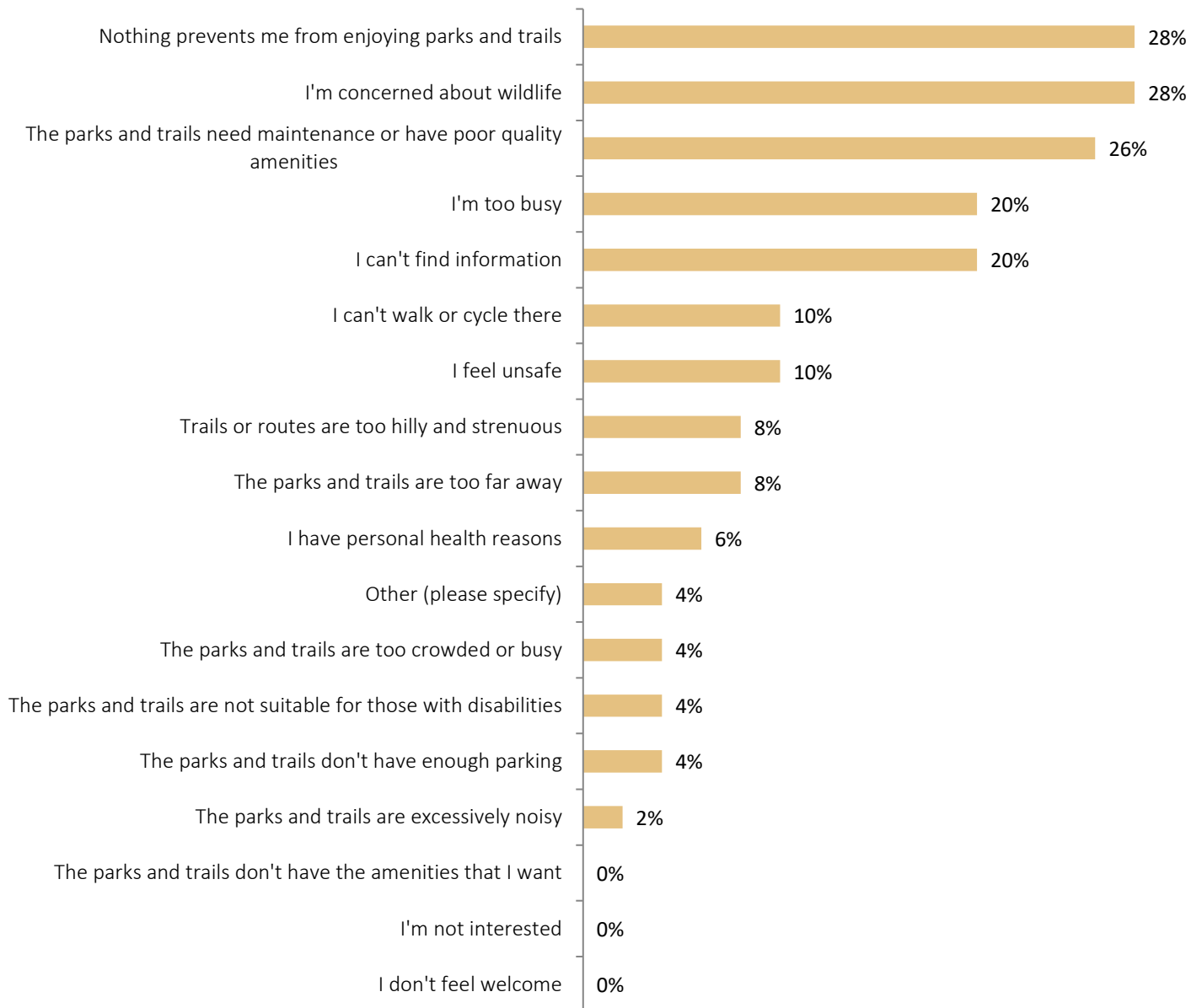
What types outdoor activities do your children enjoy? Think of all seasons and times of the year. *(Select all that apply).*



Barriers to Accessing Outdoor Recreation

- The primary barriers to using parks and trails more often were wildlife concerns (28%), poor park and trail maintenance (26%), a lack of information (20%), and being too busy (20%).
- Roughly one-quarter of respondents said they don't face any barriers in accessing parks and trails (28%).

What, if anything, keeps you from visiting parks or getting out on trails more often? (Select your top 3 reasons).



Key Destinations

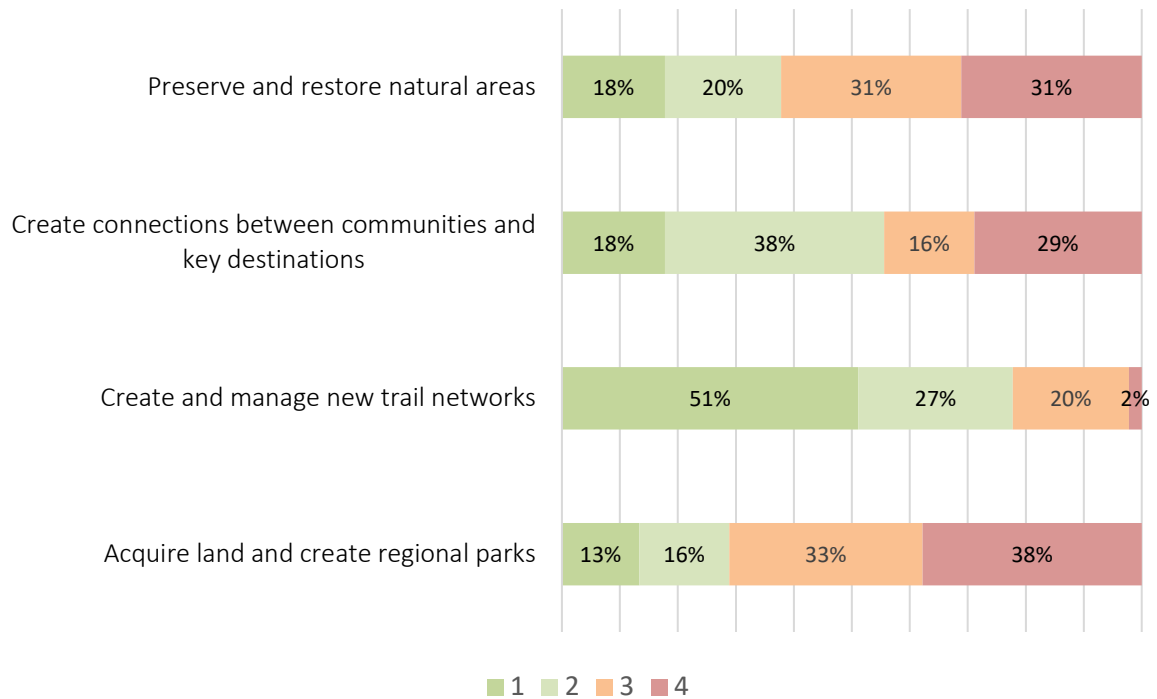
Destinations raised by engagement participants included:

- Morice Mountain Nordic Ski Club (n=10)
- China Nose Mountain (n=7) (Note: This is not in Electoral Area G)
- Babine Lake Hiking Trails (n=6)
- Equity Ice Falls (n=4)
- Barret Hat Hiking Area (n=3)
- Owen Lake (n=3)
- Duck Pond (n=2) (District of Houston)
- Telkwa Range (n=2)
- Sunset Lake (n=1)
- Buck Creek Falls (n=1)
- Perow Falls (n=1)

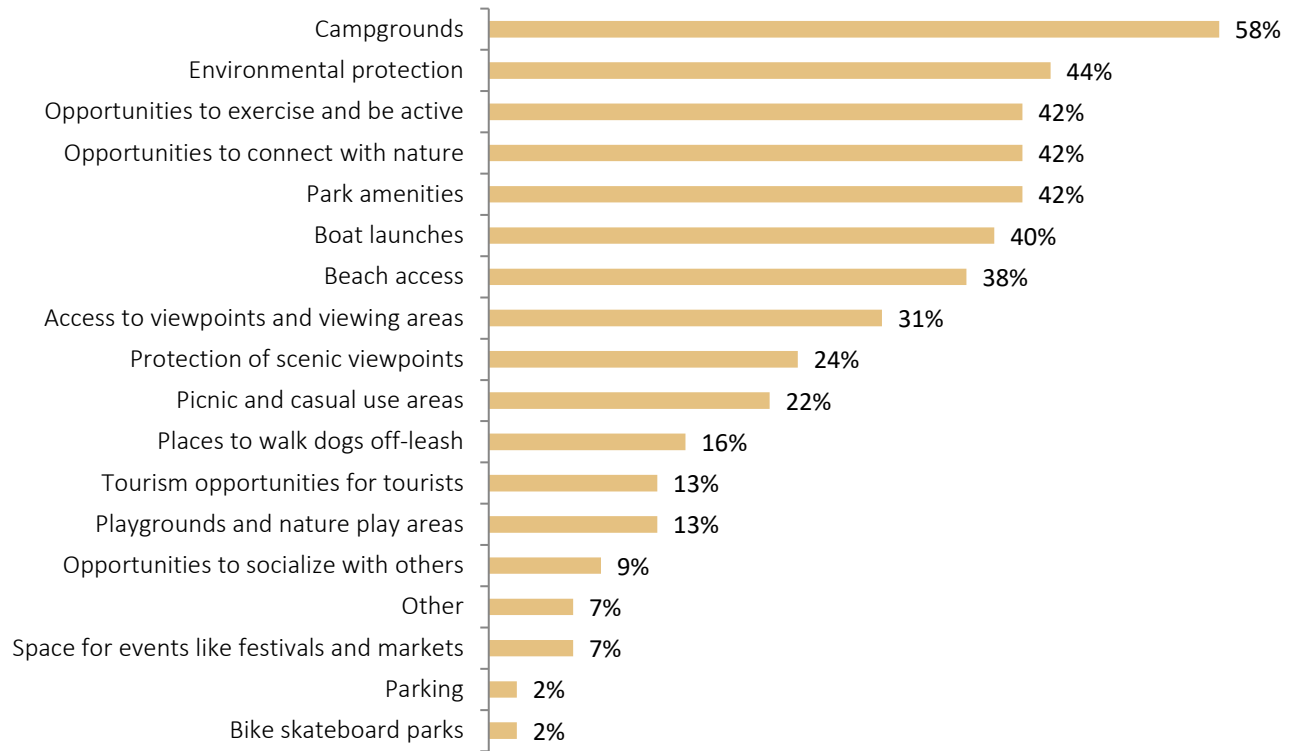
Park and Trails Priorities

- Respondents indicated that the **creation and management of new trails networks** should be prioritized over the next 10 years (78% of respondents selected as their top two priorities), followed by the **creation of connections between communities and key destinations** (56% of respondents selected as their top two priorities).
- Respondents indicated that **campgrounds** (58%), **environmental protection** (44%), **opportunities to be active** (42%) and **connect with nature** (42%), and park **amenities** (42%) are their main priority for parks in Electoral Area G.
- Respondents indicated that **hiking and walking** (82%), trail **signage** (49%), **improved trail connections to community amenities** (36%), **hard-surface multi-use pathways** (33%), and **ATV/snowmobile routes** (31%) are their main priorities for trails and active transportation in Electoral Area G.
- More respondents were supportive of tax increases to fund parks and trails improvements than those opposed (47% supportive compared to 29% opposed). A quarter of respondents (24%) were neutral regarding increased taxation.
- When asked what else we need to know, many respondents commented on the need for improved connectivity (n=9). Improved maintenance (n=6) and the need for more information, wayfinding, and signage (n=4) were also commonly mentioned.

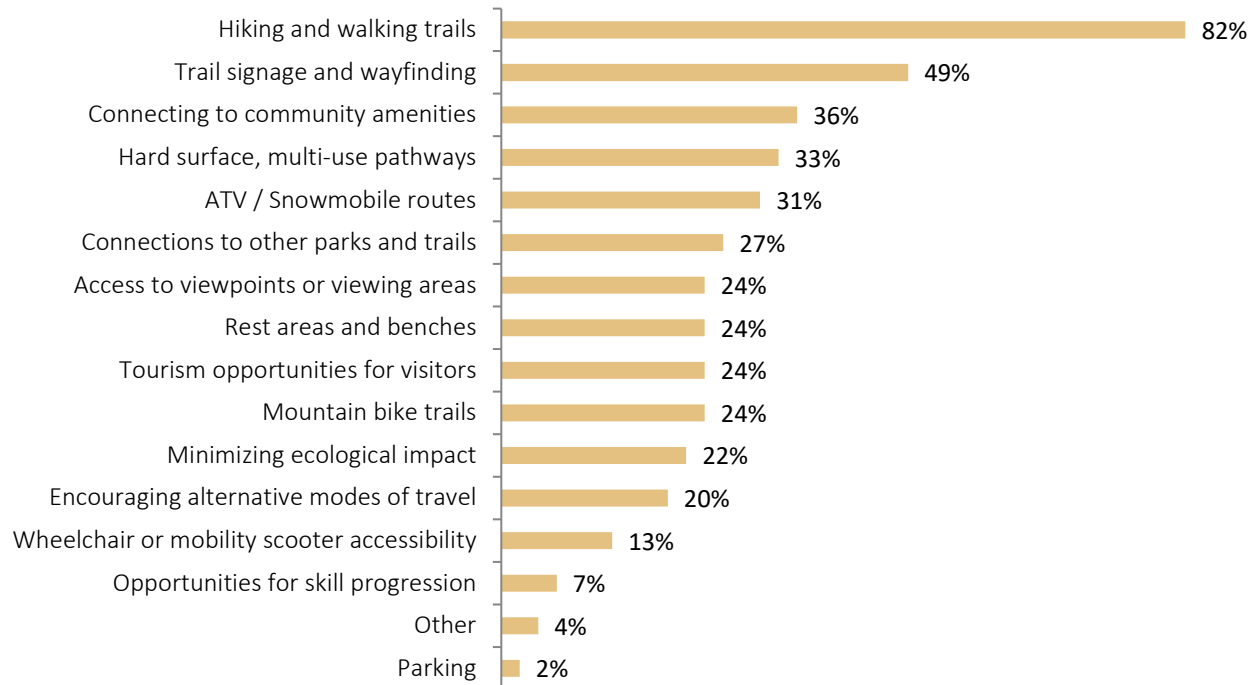
What should the RDBN prioritize in parks and trails over the next 10 years? (Rank options in order of priority)



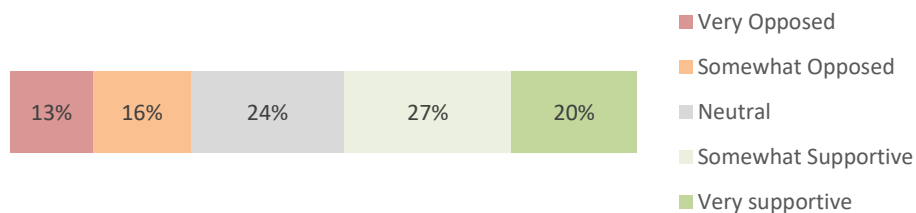
What are your main priorities for parks in Electoral Area G-Houston/Granisle Rural? (Select your top 5)



What are your main priorities for trails and active transportation in Electoral Area G (Houston/Granisle Rural)? (Select your top 5).



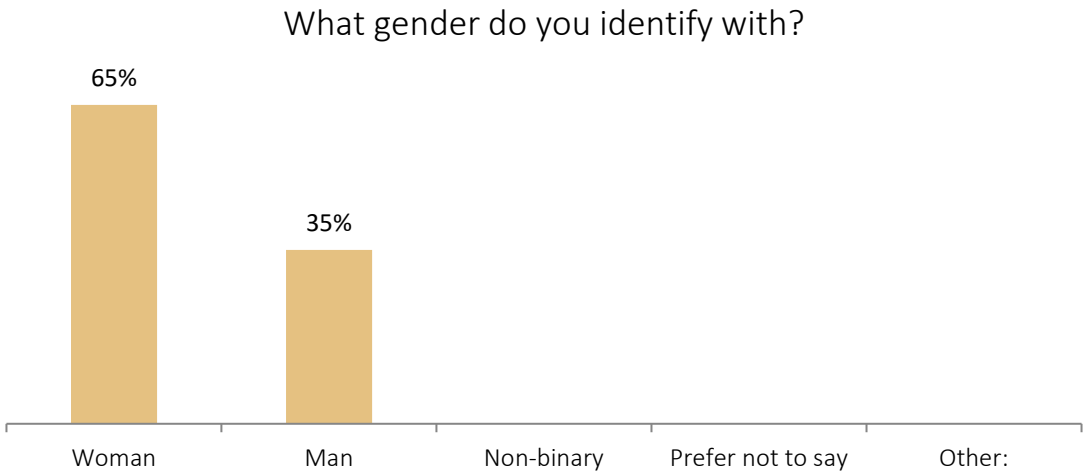
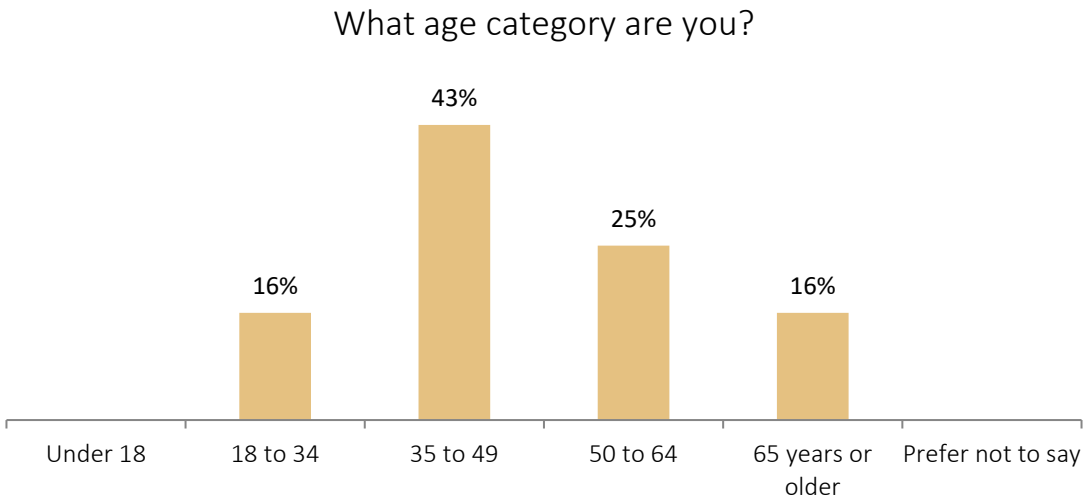
How supportive are you of a tax increase to fund the acquisition of new parks and trails, or the development of new infrastructure in parks and trails?



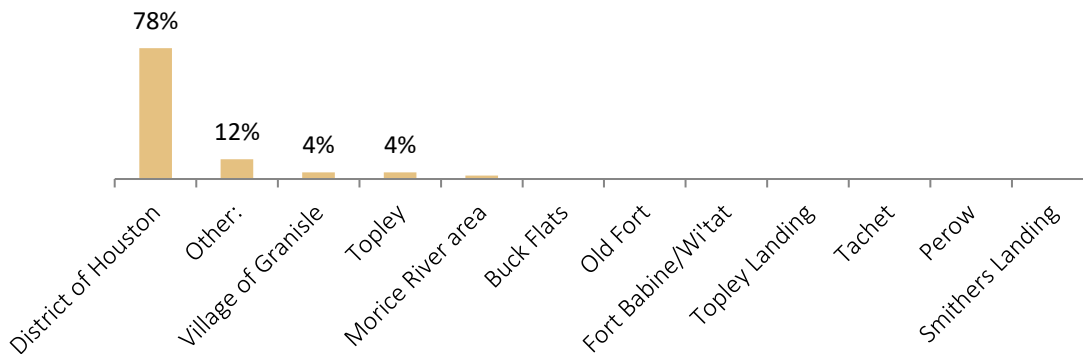
APPENDIX B – ONLINE SURVEY 2 SUMMARY

Who Responded

- The survey was completed by a total of 71 respondents.
- The majority of respondents are between the ages of 35-64 (69%)
- 65% of respondents identify as a woman.
- The majority of respondents live in the District of Houston (78%) with the remainder from the Village of Granisle, Topley Landing, or a location not listed (e.g. Smithers).



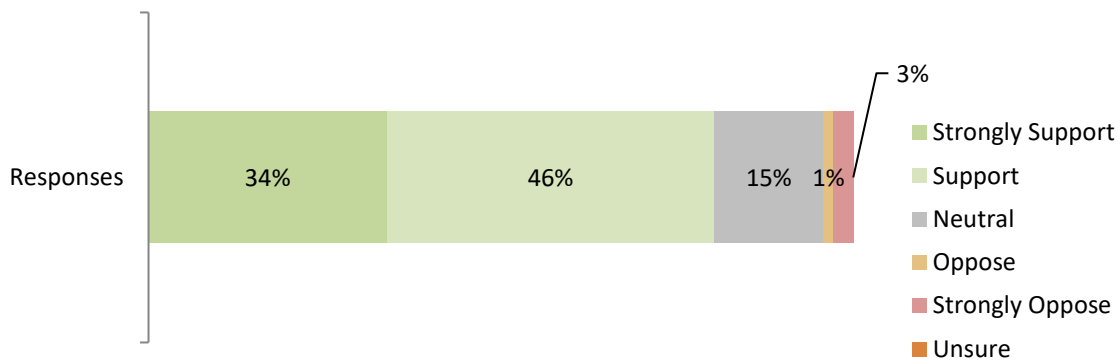
Where do you live?



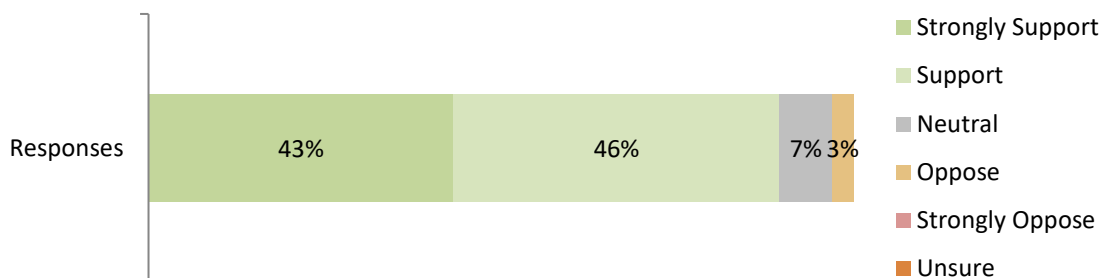
Vision and Goals

- The majority of survey respondents support the vision statement (80%).
- The majority support the five goals presented (94%)

To what extent do you support the Vision Statement?



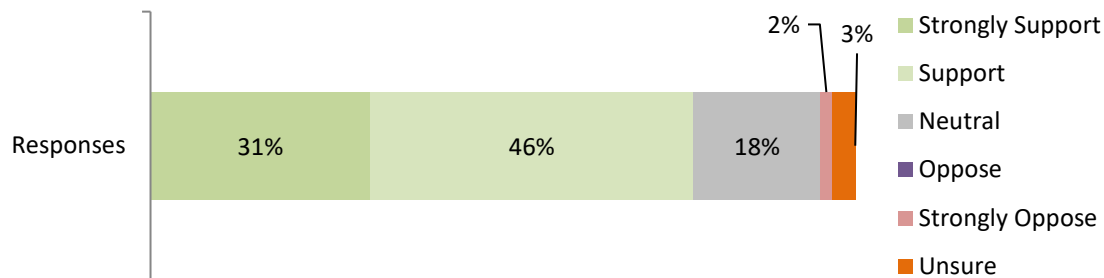
To what extent do you support the five goals?



Parks and trails working group

- The majority support the RDBN in creating a parks and trails working group (77%). However, it should be noted, 21% were neutral or unsure suggesting room for more feedback.

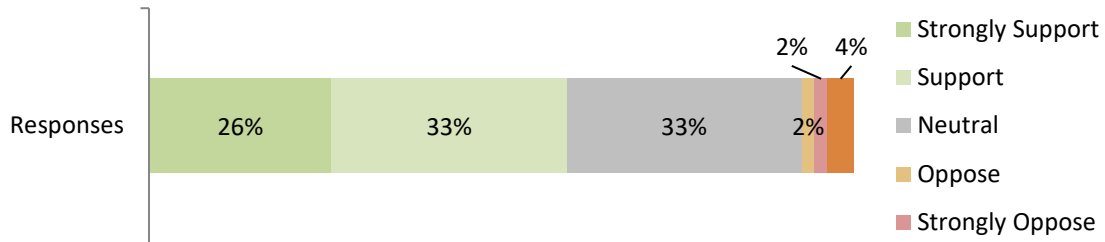
How supportive are you of the RDBN helping to form a parks and trails working group?



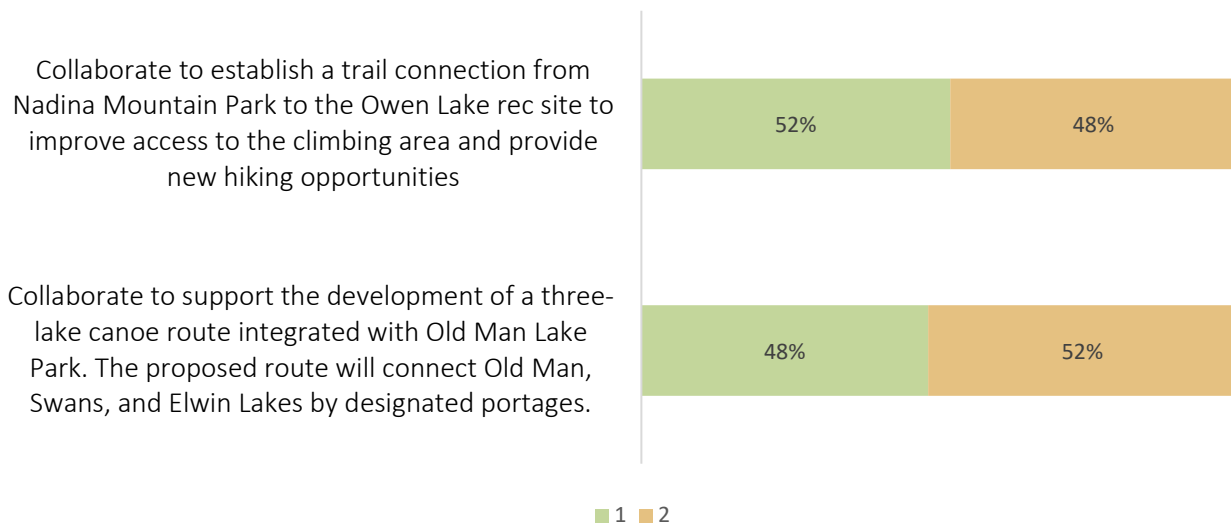
Park and Trails Priorities

- **Granisle and Topley Landing multi-use trail** – The majority of respondents (59%) support creating a new multi-use trail between Granisle and Topley Landing and 33% feel neutral. With further engagement, the project has a strong potential to build even broader community support.
- **Expansion of trail networks** – Support was strong for both initiatives, with a slight preference for Nadina Mountain trail connection to the Owen Lake recreation site (52% ranked as their top priority) followed by developing a three-lake canoe route integrated with Old Man Lake Park (48% ranked as their top priority).
- **Outdoor recreation organization and land manager initiatives** – Respondents would like the RDBN to prioritize establishing a campground near the Mt. Harry Davis mountain biking trails with the Houston Mountain Bike Association (61% ranked as their top two priorities). Both enhancing the Houston Palisades Trail and improving Silverthorne Lake and the Morice Wilderness Area were equally prioritized (48% ranked as their top two priorities).
- **Provincial Recreation Site improvements** – Respondents prioritized upgrades at Owen Lake (26 votes), followed by Silverthorne Lake (24), Mt. Harry Davis (20), and the Aspen sites (19). They highlighted needs such as better signage and maps, improved accessibility, better access to the Morice River and Lamprey Creek, more trails and benches, and additional camping options, particularly at Mt. Harry Davis.
- **Dominion Telegraph Line trail** – The majority of respondents (60%) support creating a new trail following the historic Dominion Telegraph Line and 33% feel neutral or unsure, suggesting further distribution of information to build community support.

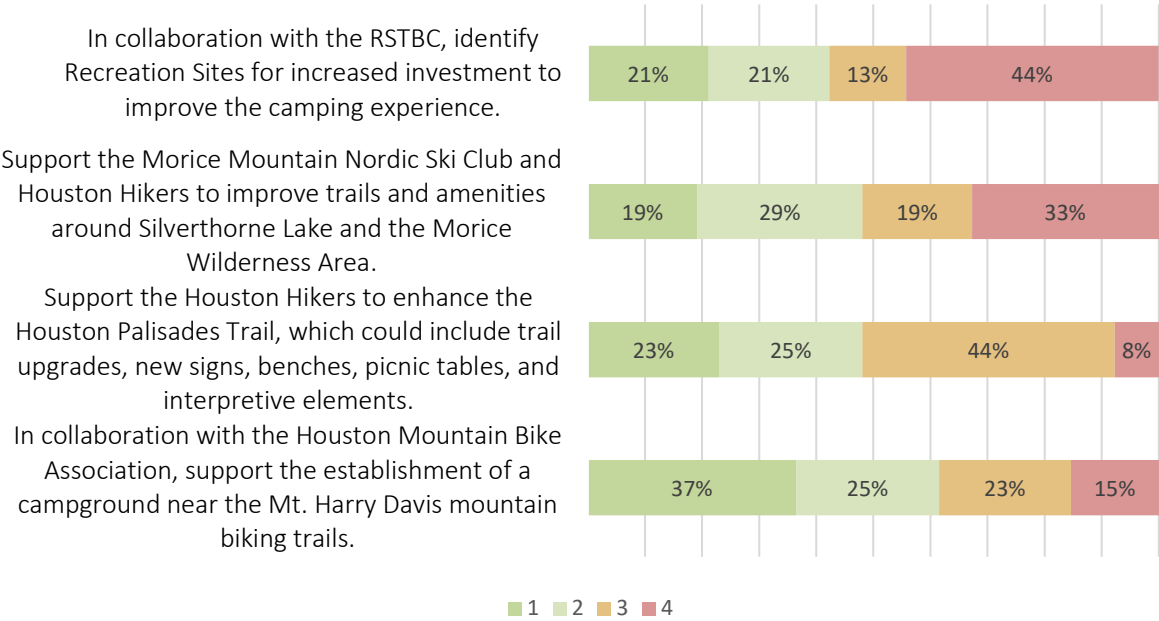
How supportive are you of the RDBN working with the Village of Granisle to explore the development of a multi-use trail between Granisle and Topley Landing?



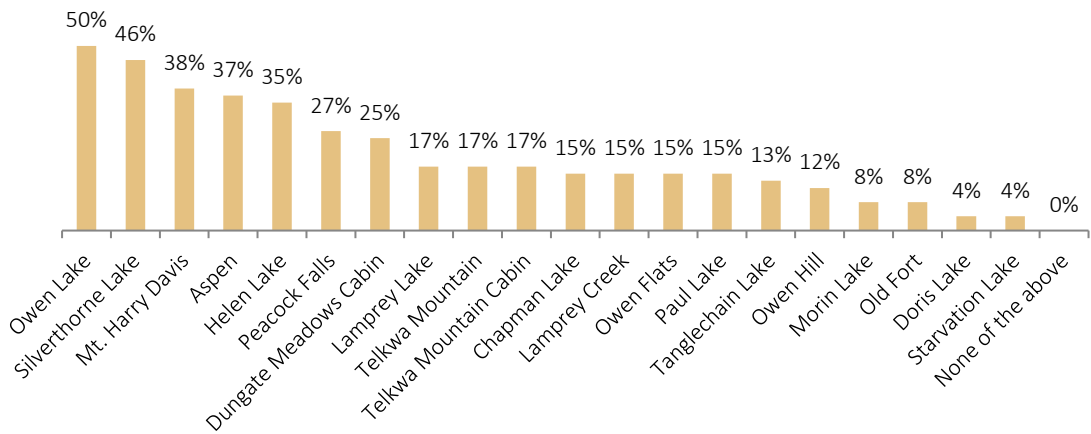
Expanding trail networks and recreation opportunities requires collaboration across recreation service providers. The RDBN can work with land managers and outdoor recreation organizations, such as RSTBC, BC Parks, and Houston Hikers, to secure access to e



The RDBN is aiming to support existing outdoor recreation organizations and land managers to enhance the user experience at existing park and trail locations. Which of the following initiatives are most important to you? Rank from highest priority to lowe



Which Provincial Recreation Sites in Area G would you like to see improved? Please select all the sites you'd like to prioritize and reference Figure 1 for locations.



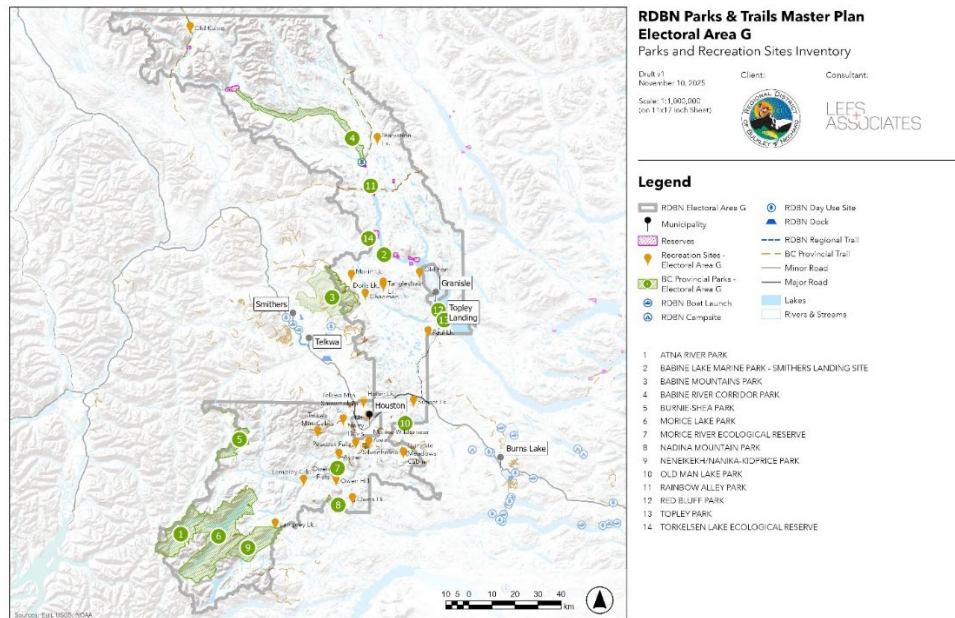


Figure 1

How supportive are you of the RDBN constructing a new trail based on the Dominion Telegraph Line ?

