

UTAH RECREATION & TOURISM MATTERS

Institute for Outdoor Recreation and Tourism

Reviewed December 2011

No. NR/RF/14

Utahns and Recreational Trails: Statewide Telephone Survey Summary Results of Utah Residents' Attitudes

Steven W. Burr and Douglas K. Reiter

Introduction

As part of his Quality of Life endeavor, former Utah Governor Michael Leavitt initiated an effort to create a statewide trails initiative, with the aim of developing a framework for future funding processes, planning, development, and maintenance for both motorized and non-motorized trails in Utah. The State Division of Parks and Recreation facilitated the formation of the Governor's Trails Initiative Steering Committee, comprised of stakeholder groups represented by community leaders and planners, recreation professionals, and representatives from cities, towns, counties, and state and federal agencies, in order to guide development of the initiative.

At a July 2001 meeting, the Steering Committee authorized Utah State University's Institute for Outdoor Recreation and Tourism (IORT) to conduct a statewide telephone survey of Utah residents in order to determine their opinions on the values and benefits of recreational trails, their awareness and use of trails, and their perception of needs and preferences related to trails in the state, with the intent that resulting information generated from this survey would provide supporting elements for the Governor's Trails Initiative.

From September 6-17, 2001, research scientists affiliated with IORT conducted the telephone survey. Of 4,346 personal telephone contacts made to households in Utah's seven Planning Districts, 2,590 adults agreed to participate and completed the telephone survey, for a response rate of almost 60%. The purpose of this publication is to report summary results of this statewide telephone survey.



Backpackers traverse a ridge on a high mountain trail

Types of Trails in Utah

Generally, there are three broad types of trails in Utah: 1) recreation trails, where the primary purpose of use is for recreational activity such as hiking, biking, off highway vehicle (OHV) driving, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, horseback riding, and other activities; 2) transportation trails, located primarily in urban/suburban areas, where the primary purpose of use is travel to get from one point to another, although oftentimes such trails are also used for recreation (walking for pleasure, running/jogging, skating, etc.); and 3) historic or heritage trails, where the primary purpose is to preserve important travel routes of historic significance, such as the National Historic Mormon Pioneer Trail, Spanish Trail, and Pony Express Trail, although again, such trails are also used for recreation, especially automobile touring and driving for pleasure. Within these three broad types of trails, *motorized trails* are specifically designated or allow for motorized recreational activities such as OHV driving, Jeep

touring, all terrain vehicle (ATV) driving, motorcycling, dirt biking, snowmobiling, and automobile touring; *non-motorized trails* are specifically designated or allow for non-motorized recreational activities such as walking, hiking, jogging/running, in-line skating, skateboarding, backpacking, cycling, mountain biking, horseback riding/horse packing, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing.

Use of Trails in Utah

Based on the telephone survey results, it is clear the use of trails in Utah by residents is both significant and popular, as statewide, almost half of the respondents (49.7%) indicated they had used trails in Utah in the previous 12 months, and are considered to be recent trail users. Slightly over half of the respondents in the Mountainland (51.4%), Six County (52.2%), and Five County (50.8%) Planning Districts are recent trail users, while somewhat less than half of the respondents are recent trail users in the Wasatch Front (49.7%), Bear River (46.8%) and Southeastern (45.9%) Planning Districts. Interestingly, only 37.8% of respondents in the Uintah Basin Planning District reported using trails in Utah in the previous 12 months.

Among these recent trail users, the proportion of males and females is close to even and the average age is almost 40 years old. Recent trail users indicated a wide range of trail use with an average of slightly over 20 times and a median of six times in the past 12 months. Statewide, three of five recent trail users indicated their use was from 2-4 times to 5-10 times in the past 12 months, almost one-quarter used trails from once a month to 2-4 times a month, and another 10% of recent trail users indicated their use as being from once a week to more than once a day. Thus, the use of trails appears to be a significant part of these recent trail users' recreational activity and lifestyle. In addition, the use of trails in Utah appears to be a family affair, as over three-quarters of recent trail users statewide indicated there are other members of their household who have used trails in Utah in the past 12 months, with an average of three other members in each household using trails.

Kinds of Activities on Trails in Utah

Recent trail users were able to identify any number and variety of activities in which they participated on trails in Utah (Table 1). Statewide, hiking was the most frequently mentioned trail activity with slightly over 71% of recent trail users indicating this as an activity they participated in on trails in Utah. Hiking was followed by biking/mountain biking at 23%, walking at slightly over 18%, all terrain vehicle (ATV) driving at slightly over 13%, horseback riding and backpacking at almost 7%, and jogging/running at 5%. A number of other pedestrian,

motorized and non-motorized conveyance, and educational/cultural trail activities were identified by less than 4% of recent trail users.

Table 1: Trails Activities Mentioned by Recent Trail Users¹

Hiking	71.1%
Biking/Mountain Biking	23.0%
Walking	18.1%
ATV Driving.	13.1%
Horseback Riding.	6.9%
Backpacking	6.6%
Jogging/Running.	5.0%
Birdwatching/Wildlife Viewing.	3.4%
OHV Driving	3.4%
Motorcycle/Dirt Biking	2.7%
Cross Country Skiing	2.6%
Auto Touring	2.3%
Historic/Heritage Activities	2.2%

¹Percentages do not add up to 100% as recent trail users could mention more than one trails activity.

Awareness of Trails in Utah

There is a high level of awareness of trails among residents in Utah. Statewide, slightly over 86% of recent trail users and almost 60% of non-users of trails (those who had not used a trail in Utah in the previous 12 months) said they knew of a trail within 15 minutes of their home or workplace. Over one-quarter of recent trail users used this particular trail from 2-4 times a year, and over one-quarter used this trail from once a week to more than once a day. Well over one-third (37.7%) of recent trail users statewide indicated their favorite trail is within 15 minutes of home, almost two-thirds (65%) said within 30 minutes of home, and over four-fifths (82.7%) said within one hour of home. Over 60% of recent trail users use their favorite trail between one and 10 times a year, almost 16% of recent trail users use their favorite trail from one to four times a month, and another 16% use their favorite trail from once a week to once a day.

Intent to Use Trails More

Both recent trail users and non-users of trails indicated they would like to use trails in Utah more than they did in the past 12 months. Statewide, almost four of five recent trail users indicated they would like to use trails more. The main reason slightly over two-thirds of recent trail users did not use trails as much as they would have liked



Rider on the Paiute ATV trail in northern Utah

is not enough time and/or too busy with other activities. Even a substantial majority of non-users of trails (almost 60%) indicated their desire to use trails more. More than half of these non-users of trails said they did not use trails more was because they did not have enough time and/or were too busy with other activities. However, a substantial proportion of non-users of trails (13%) said they did not use trails more because of personal constraints associated with health concerns, age, and/or disability.

Support for the Use of Additional Public Funds for Trails

Statewide, although recent trail users are fairly evenly split on their support for the use of additional public funds for motorized trails in Utah, support for the use of additional public funds for non-motorized trails is significantly greater (almost 86%). Although almost half of non-users of trails would not support the use of additional public funds for motorized trails, still slightly over 43% would support this. An even greater percentage of non-users of trails, slightly over 66%, would support the use of additional public funds for non-motorized trails. Almost 51% of recent trail users would support a tax increase if the additional money would be used to enhance their use and enjoyment of trails in Utah. However, a clear majority of non-users of trails, slightly over 60%, would not support such a tax increase for trails.

Values of Trails: Benefits, Importance, Healthy Lifestyles, and Quality of Life

Statewide, almost 95% of recent trail users and 66% of non-users of trails strongly agreed or agreed having quality trails in Utah was personally important to them. Almost 90% of recent trail users and over half of non-users of trails report they personally receive benefits from trails. Among recent trail users, 65% strongly agreed or agreed having trails in their area results in economic benefits for local communities, and 48% of non-users of trails also strongly agreed or agreed. Preservation of historic trails in Utah is important to both recent trail users (slightly over 90%) and non-users of trails (slightly over

77%). Also, 92% of recent trail users and almost 67% of non-users of trails strongly agree or agree having trails in or near their community allows them to be physically active and lead a healthy lifestyle. Finally, almost 95% of recent trail users and 70% of non-users of trails report having trails in or near their community contributes much to their quality of life.

Conclusions

About half of Utah residents used trails in the state during the last year, but a majority of both recent trail users and non-users of trails would like to use trails more than they currently do. Large majorities of respondents feel trails provide important benefits and add to their quality of life. A majority also feels trails provide local economic benefits. Utahns are also willing to use additional public funds for trails, but only about one-third of non-users of trails to one-half of recent trail users said they would support a tax increase to provide additional funding for trails. Thus, while there is strong demand and support for trails and trail funding, citizen support for a tax increase for trails is more marginal. Increasing public support will require political and educational outreach to increase awareness of lesser-known values of trails, such as open space, watershed, and wildlife habitat benefits, while still allowing for public use and access. There is also less support for funding motorized trails, indicating that getting political and economic support for OHV-designated trails may be more difficult than for non-motorized or mixed-use trails. Strategies could include increasing collaborative relationships and providing matching funding with OHV groups, emphasizing the benefits of OHV trails for open space protection and providing public access, and additional hiking and biking opportunities. But related to this, the environmental costs and benefits of on-trail versus off-trail OHV driving need to be examined more. Finally, the many differences in the findings among the seven Planning Districts and in urban and rural areas indicate different approaches to planning and development will be necessary throughout the different regions of Utah.

References

Burr, S.W., Blahna, D.J., Reiter, D.K., & Butkus, M.F. (2001 November). A Statewide Telephone Survey of Utah Residents' Attitudes Toward Recreational Trails (Professional Report IORT-PR2001-6). Logan, Utah: Institute for Outdoor Recreation and Tourism, Utah State University.

State Division of Parks and Recreation. (2002). Executive Summary: Establishing an Olympic Legacy for Trails in Utah, 2002-2004. Salt Lake City, Utah: State Division of Parks and Recreation, Utah Department of Natural Resources.

Trail Priorities in Utah Identified At Seven Regional Trails Workshops

The following trail segments were identified at Trails Workshops conducted in each of the seven Planning Districts in the state in late 2001. These trails were identified as having highest priority for development or improvement. Workshop participants included trail advocates, state and federal resource management representatives, local

business and political leaders, and the interested public. The 21 trails listed below are approximately 715 miles long with 62% non-motorized and 38% motorized. These 21 trails and trail segments represent only 20% or less of many potential, desired, and lesser priority Olympic Legacy trail projects identified during the Trails Workshops.

Region	Trail System Name	Length in Miles	Use
Bear River Planning Region	Bonneville Shoreline Trail	50	Non-Motorized
	Logan River	10	Non-Motorized
	Cold Water Canyon	4	Non-Motorized
Wasatch Front Planning Region	Provo Jordan River Parkway	40	Non-Motorized
	Bonneville Shoreline Trail	113	Non-Motorized
	Great Western Trail (GWT)	83	Multiple Use
Mountainland Planning Region	Oakley Rail Trail	27	Non-Motorized
	GWT - Nun's Park to South Fork	5	Multiple Use
	Provo Jordan River Parkway	22	Non-Motorized
Uintah Basin Planning Region	Dry Fork Flume	19	Non-Motorized
	Outlaw Adventure ATV	46	Motorized ATV
	Vernal Canals	47	Non-Motorized
Six County Planning Region	Coffee Peak	10	Motorized ATV
	Marysvale Canyon Rail Trail	13	Multiple Use
	Monroe-Hunts Lake to Annabella	28	Multiple Use
Five County Planning Region	Three Rivers	86	Non-Motorized
	Red Canyon to Bryce	9	Non-Motorized
	Hog Canyon OHV	18	Multiple Use
Southeastern Planning Region	New Spanish Trail	25	Non-Motorized
	Arapeen Community Connector	44	Motorized ATV
	Price River Walkway	17	Non-Motorized



Hikers pause along a sandstone ridge in the red-rock country of southern Utah

For More Information:

This publication, the full report cited in the References above, and other publications and reports are available through Utah State University's Institute for Outdoor Recreation and Tourism (IORT), and can be accessed on IORT's website at www.extension.usu.edu/cooperative/iort.

Institute for Outdoor Recreation and Tourism

Utah State University
5220 Old Main Hill
Logan, UT 84322-5220

Utah State University is committed to providing an environment free from harassment and other forms of illegal discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age (40 and older), disability, and veteran's status. USU's policy also prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in employment and academic related practices and decisions.

Utah State University employees and students cannot, because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, or veteran's status, refuse to hire; discharge; promote; demote; terminate; discriminate in compensation; or discriminate regarding terms, privileges, or conditions of employment, against any person otherwise qualified. Employees and students also cannot discriminate in the classroom, residence halls, or in on/off campus, USU-sponsored events and activities.

This publication is issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Noelle E. Cockett, Vice President for Extension and Agriculture, Utah State University.