

**FISHERS PEAK STATE PARK MASTER PLAN**  
**PUBLIC SURVEY REPORT & ANALYSIS**  
**August 2021**

## Introduction

The Fishers Peak State Park Master Plan Project Team is committed to robust engagement to inform decision-making and ensure that stakeholder voices are incorporated into the Master Plan. As one component of this engagement process, the Project Team conducted a public survey between May and July 2021. This report provides an overview of survey participation and results, an analysis of the findings in the context of other engagement efforts, and acts as a resource for future engagement considerations (e.g., gaps analysis). Importantly, the survey and its results are intended to be just one tool in the toolbox connecting stakeholder interests to Park planning. A variety of other inputs from the stakeholder engagement process (e.g., Interest Group Discussions, Public Meetings, etc.) as well as other inputs from on-site data collection, tribal consultation, and elsewhere all coalesce to inform sound project decisions. Decisions will not be made based on any single input.

## Purpose and Structure of Report

The survey (attached as an appendix) was divided into sections ranging from demographic and general park-related questions to specific questions about potential activities and initiatives, with the latter topic-specific sections being optional. As such, the Report is divided by the sections of the survey:

1. Participation Demographics\*
2. General Park\*
3. Fishers Peak-Specific\*
4. Trails\*
5. Camping
6. Mountain Biking
7. Hunting
8. Dogs
9. Equestrian
10. Rock Climbing
11. Education/Interpretation
12. Future Engagement\*
13. Anything Else

\* indicates required section

*Differences between local and statewide participants:* The Fishers Peak Project Team and Partners have stated since the Project's onset that engagement efforts will work to understand the interests of both local and statewide stakeholders. Consequently, some sections of this report include a subheading for notable differences between the local community (defined here as anyone who listed their place of residence as Trinidad, Raton, or Las Animas / Huerfano County) and the statewide community (defined as anyone who listed their place of residence as Pueblo/Colorado Springs, Denver Metro Area, Northern Colorado, Other Colorado, Other New Mexico, Other (please specify), or Prefer not to share). It should be

noted that while there were some slight differences between local and statewide stakeholder groups, the two are generally aligned in their responses.

### **Survey Tool and Methodology**

Survey Monkey was used to develop and administer the survey. This tool allowed for easy quantification and analysis of results and ease of use by participants. Questions were primarily multiple choice or ranking, which allowed for more quantifiable answers. The final question was open-ended and intended as a “catch-all” so that participants could share input related to topics that previous questions failed to address.

### **Outreach and Participant Recruitment**

Due to the robust engagement with public stakeholders and organizations that had already occurred leading up to the survey launch, the Project Team was able to rely on existing relationships to help promote the survey across a variety of stakeholder networks. The survey was promoted or disseminated in the following ways:

- 3 E-Blasts were sent to the **576 stakeholders** signed up for Fishers Peak email updates
- Emailed to over **117 Fishers Peak Interest Group members** who represent a variety of governmental and non-governmental organizations. They were asked to distribute the survey across their networks.
- Emails were sent to **68 Fishers Peak Work Group Members** who were also asked to distribute throughout their networks.
- Emails were sent to **22 members of the Project’s Equity and Inclusivity Panel** who represent organizations focused on diversity and inclusion. They were asked to distribute the survey across their networks.
- **Project Partners** (Colorado Parks and Wildlife, The City of Trinidad, Las Animas County, The Nature Conservancy, Trust for Public Land, and Great Outdoors Colorado) all were engaged to help distribute the survey across their networks. Additionally, Trust for Public Land sent the survey to the **Next 100 Coalition** for distribution across their network of diversity-focused outdoor organizations.
- A **digital/print flyer** was created and distributed in each of the above emails. Print flyers were mailed to Project Team members on the ground in Trinidad to be physically distributed around the community.
- A **communication packet** that included social media posts, newsletter/email language, and photos was also created and distributed to the Work Groups, Interest Groups, and Equity and Inclusivity panel.
- The survey was promoted at the **Public Meeting** on June 24, 2021.
- Multiple **community leaders** were asked to distribute the information via their networks. The information was posted on facebook as well as through other local community outreach mechanisms.
- The information was also sent to the **local radio station** for promotion.

## Key Findings

- **Importance of natural resource conservation balanced with recreation:** When asked to rank the importance of general opportunities presented by the Park, participants ranked Wildlife and Natural Resource Conservation (45%) slightly ahead of Outdoor Recreation (43%). This is important because achieving a healthy, sustainable balance between conservation and recreation has been the pivotal theme for the Project Team throughout the Master Planning process. While the majority of comments received through the website comment form thus far have advocated for various types of recreation (e.g. equestrian, mountain biking, etc.), this survey finding demonstrates that, when asked, stakeholders value conservation and preservation of natural resources just as much as recreation access and development.
- **Backcountry experiences:** Backcountry trails were participants' top choice for potential Park infrastructure. This finding paired with those from both the Mountain Biking and Equestrian sections, which point to an interest from both user groups for exploring the backcountry via their respective activities, suggest that Fishers Peak becoming a backcountry destination is not only palatable but desirable for stakeholders.
  - **Trail to the Peak:** While backcountry experiences appeared to be of high interest to participants, when asked to rate their interest in hiking to the Peak, participants averaged a 3/10 (0=no interest, 10=highest level of interest).
- **A typical Park user:** Outreach efforts previously conducted as well as the survey data itself supports the claim that stakeholders for the Park vary in their demographics and interests. This has been established by the Project Team and engenders the need for continued intentional engagement with a diverse array of stakeholder groups through a wide variety of means. However, using this survey data it is possible to create a composite of a typical Park user.

*The traits of a typical Park user based on survey responses include:*

- Trinidad or Denver Metro resident
- Most often visits Trinidad Lake or Lake Pueblo State Park
- Usually visits parks with a partner or spouse, and has done so within the last six months
- Prefers to camp in the park if staying overnight and likes to bring their own supplies
- Prefers trail-based or nature based events
- Plans to visit Fishers Peak in the Fall or Spring
- Is most interested in backcountry trails and a visitor center for potential Fishers Peak facilities
- Values Wildlife and Natural Resource Conservation and Outdoor Recreation almost equally, with a slight edge to Natural Resource Conservation
- Is only marginally interested in a trail to the Peak
- Primarily prefers slightly challenging trails for walking/hiking/jogging and usually spends between 2-6 hours on a trail

- Has slightly more interest in hiking-only trails compared to multi-use trails and prefers directional trails
- Is close to equally interested in connectivity to Fishers Peak from adjacent wildlife areas, Sugarite Canyon State Park, and Trinidad Lake State Park
- Prefers to receive Park updates digitally, either from the website, social media, or e-blasts and prefers to provide input to the Project Team via the website comment form.

*Note: The above traits are derived only from the required survey questions and does not include information from the optional sections (camping, hunting, mountain biking, etc.).*

## Survey Sections

### 1) Participation and Demographics

*Overview:*

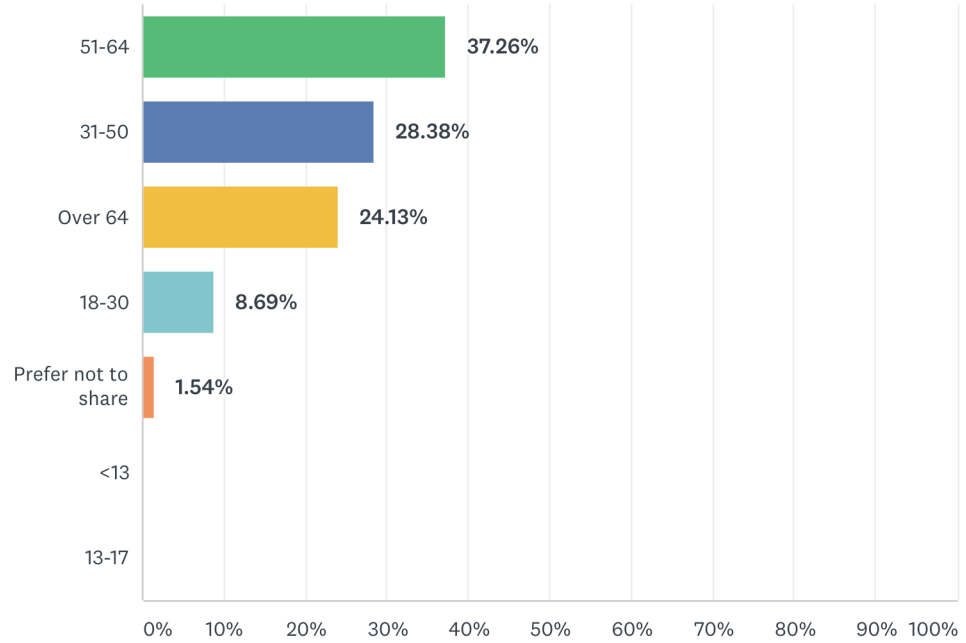
- With **518 total responses submitted**, the survey's promotion efforts were successful.
- The vast majority of participants were over the age of 30.
- Responses were relatively evenly distributed between participants identifying as male (51%) and female (46%).
- Participants identified primarily as white/caucasian (84%) or preferred not to share; the next highest identified race or ethnicity was Hispanic/Latino (5%).
- Most participants listed the Denver Metro Area (30%) as their place of residence, followed by Trinidad (21%).

*Differences between local and statewide participants:* The local subset leaned slightly older and included more participants identifying as female (55%).

*Analysis:* The high number of total participants underscores the excitement of stakeholders and their desire to engage with the Fishers Peak Master Planning process. However, while efforts were made to reach a demographically diverse range of stakeholders (see Outreach and Participant Recruitment section above), including those of different races, genders, and ages, the results also point to a need to continue augmenting outreach initiatives to reach those underrepresented in this survey. This knowledge will inform engagement strategy development throughout the remainder of the Project.

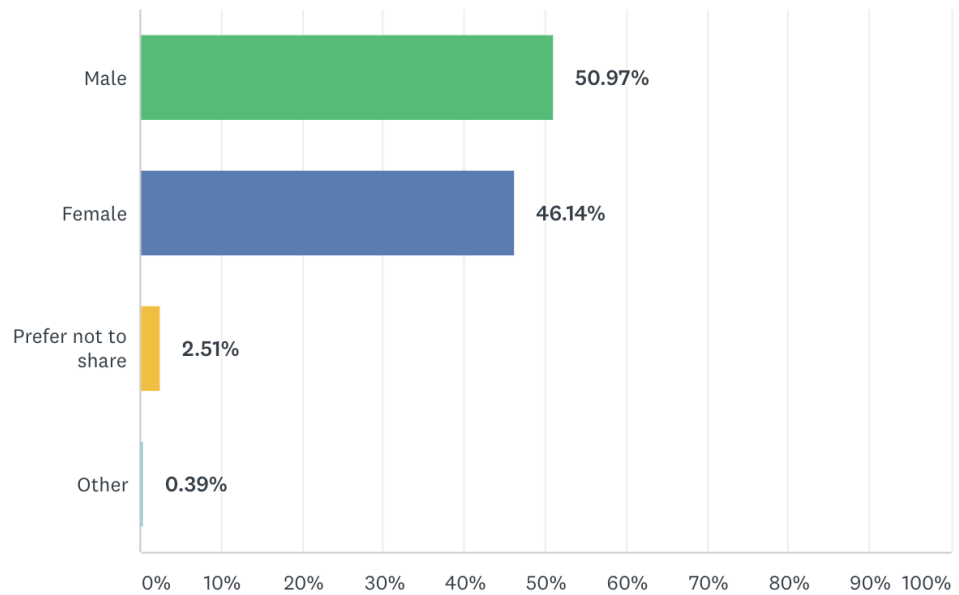
## Please select your age range. (Select One)

Answered: 518 Skipped: 0



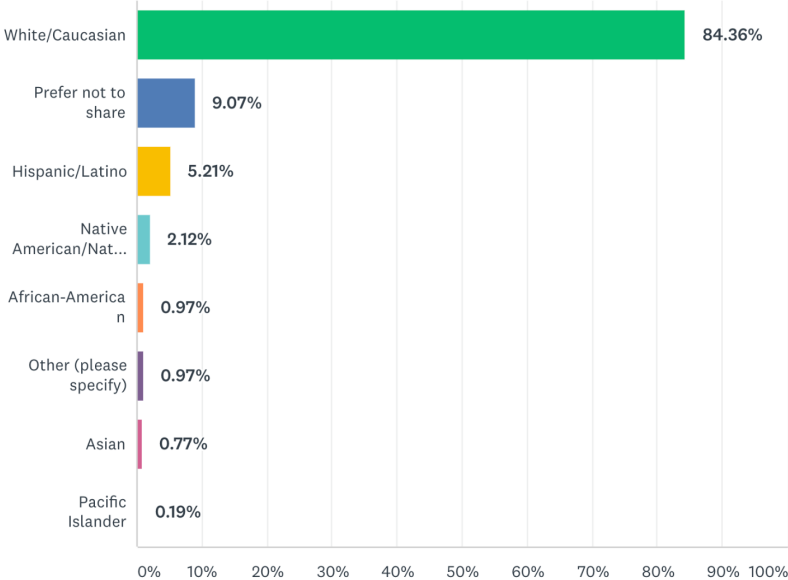
## Please select your gender. (Select One)

Answered: 518 Skipped: 0



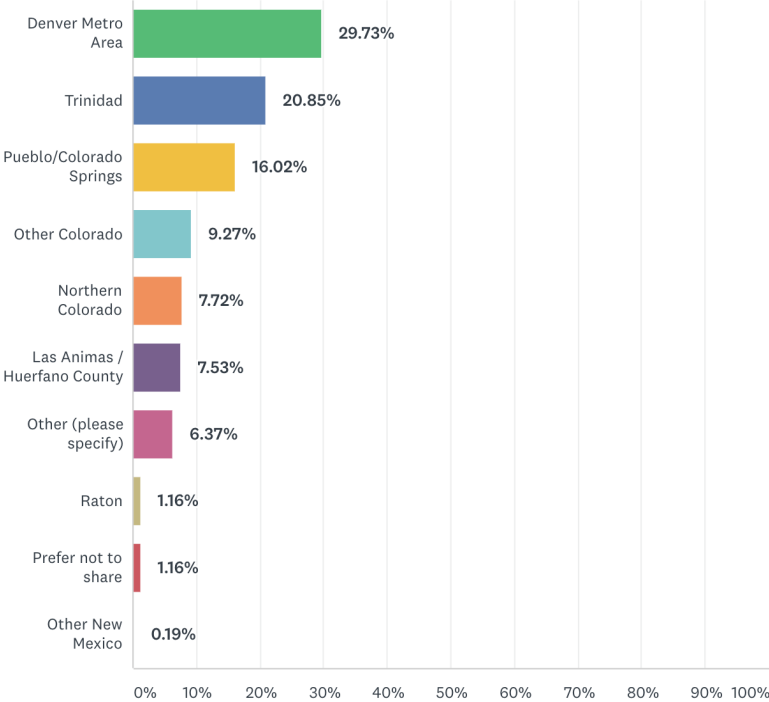
# Please select the race or ethnicity with which you identify. (Select All That Apply)

Answered: 518 Skipped: 0



# Do you reside in: (Select One)

Answered: 518 Skipped: 0



## 2) General Park\*

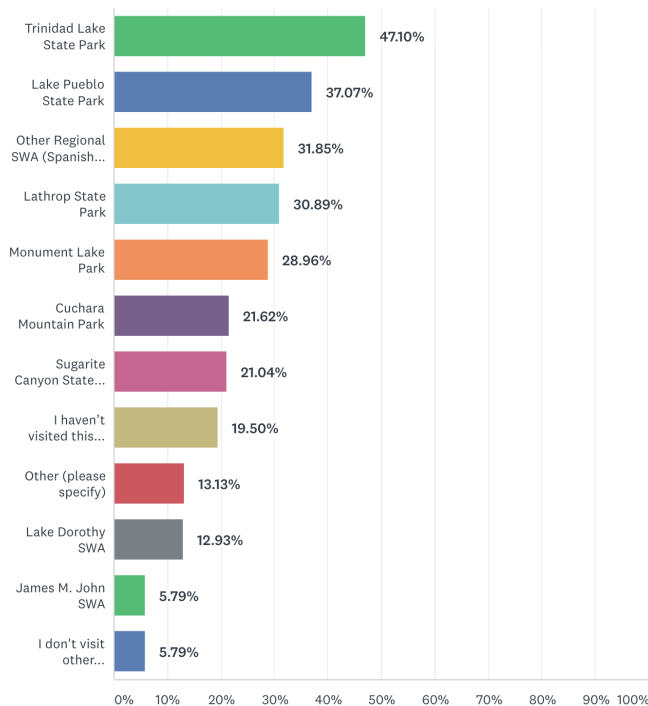
### Overview:

- The top three regional recreational locations visited by participants were Trinidad Lake State Park (47%) and Lake Pueblo (37%), followed by Other Regional SWA (Spanish Peaks, Bosque Del Oso, North Lake, Wahatoya, Apishapa) (32%).
- Most participants either visited state parks with a partner/spouse (49%) or with friends (21%).
- Most participants were frequent state park visitors, having visited a park in the last month (68%) or last 6 months (20%).
- If staying overnight, most participants prefer to camp in the parks they visit (58%).
- Most participants generally choose to bring their own supplies to the parks they visit (75%), as opposed to buying supplies in a nearby store (25%).
- When participants were asked to list the events they have attended while visiting public lands and parks the top selection was trail-based events (57%), followed by environmental events (52%), and historical or cultural events (34%).

*Differences between local and statewide participants:* The local subset selected Monument Lake Park (63%) and Sugarite Canyon State Park (47%) as its second and third choices for recreational locations visited. Trinidad Lake State Park remained their top choice.

Which other regional recreation locations do you visit? (Select all that apply)

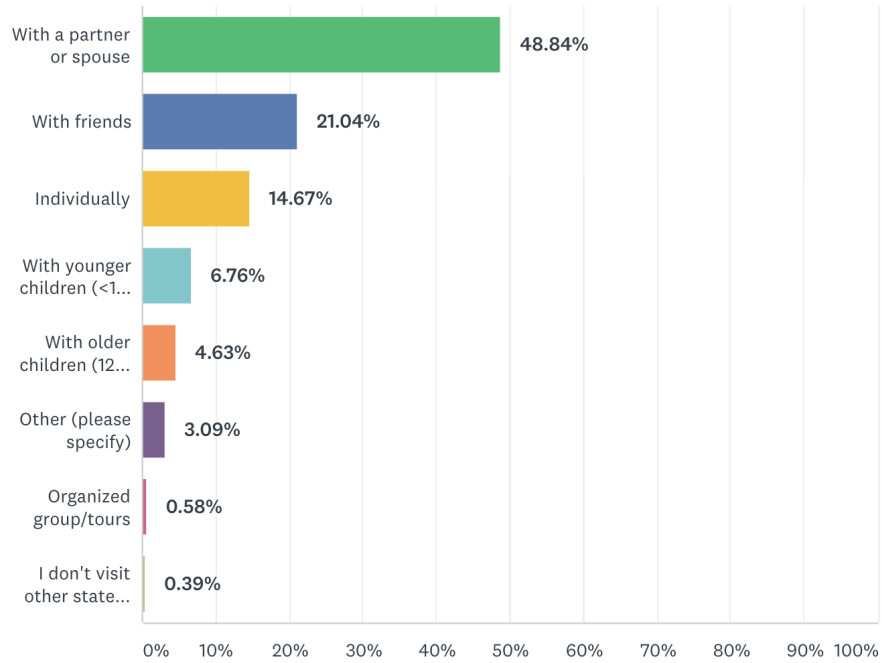
Answered: 518 Skipped: 0





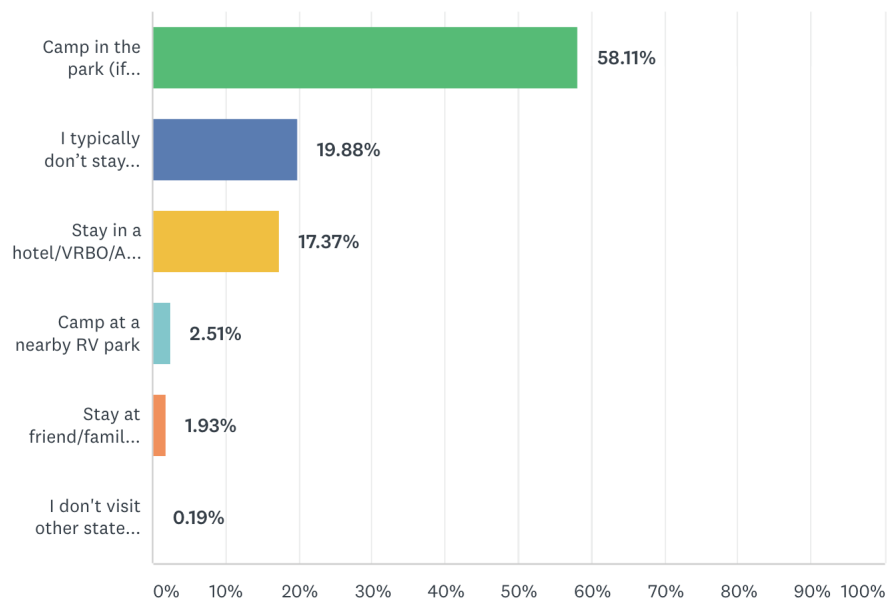
## When you visit state parks it is usually: (Select One)

Answered: 518 Skipped: 0



## When visiting a state park away from home, and you plan on staying overnight are you most likely to: (Select One)

Answered: 518 Skipped: 0



### 3) Fishers Peak-Specific\*

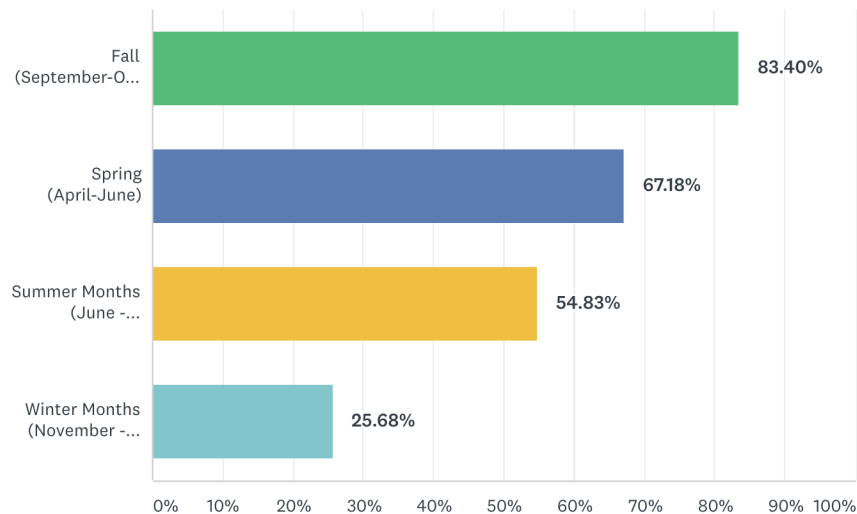
#### Overview:

- Most participants anticipate visiting Fishers Peak in the fall (83%), although spring (67%) and summer (54%) were also both highly selected. (Participants were asked to select all answers that apply, hence the sum surpassing 100%.)
- Backcountry trails were participants' top choice for potential Fishers Peak infrastructure (49%), followed by a visitor center (17%) and short interpretive trails (9%).
- When asked to rank the importance of opportunities, participants ranked Wildlife and Natural Resource Conservation (45%) slightly ahead of Outdoor Recreation (43%).
- Overall, participants averaged a 3/10 when asked how likely they were to attempt a hike to the Peak. This was true whether camping near the base was permitted or not.
- Adjacent wildlife areas (47%) and Sugarite Canyon State Park (46%) topped the list for which areas participants hoped to see connectivity to Fishers Peak.

*Differences between local and statewide participants:* Connectivity to downtown Trinidad was slightly more important to local participants when compared to statewide participants.

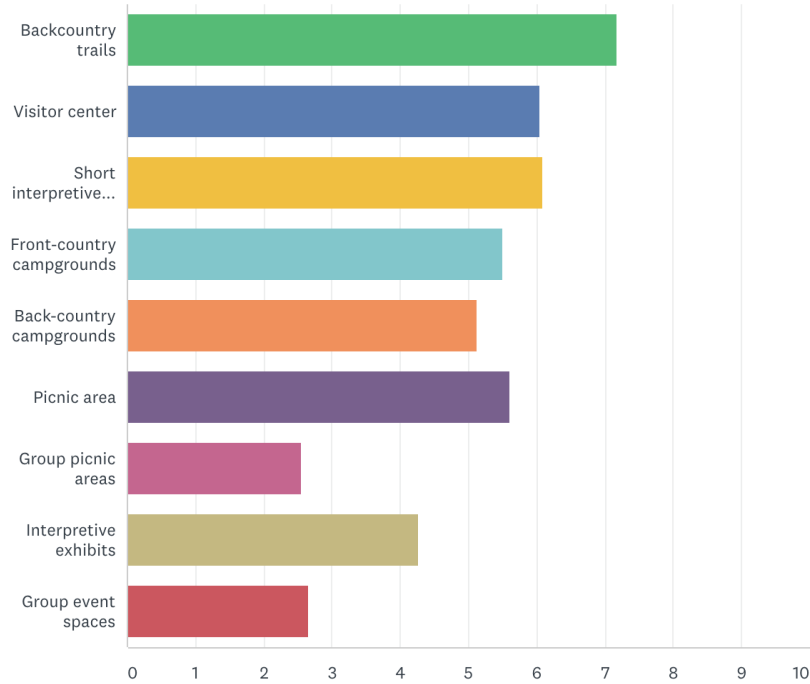
What time of year do you anticipate visiting Fishers Peak State Park most often? (Select all that apply)

Answered: 518 Skipped: 0



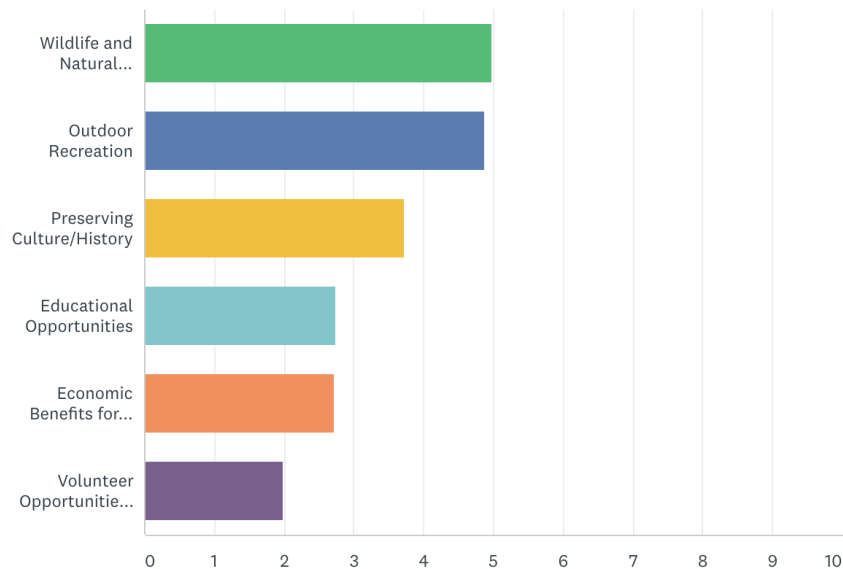
## What recreation programs and facilities would you value the most? (Please rank based on highest importance)

Answered: 518 Skipped: 0



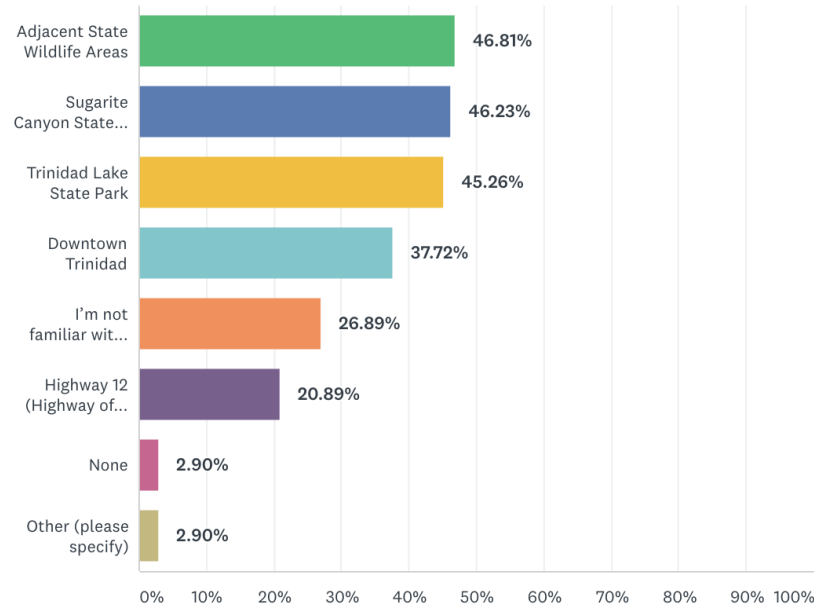
## Please tell us the importance of the following Opportunities at Fishers Peak State Park: (Please rank based on highest importance)

Answered: 518 Skipped: 0



## What type of trail connectivity would you like to see from the Park? (Select all that apply)

Answered: 517 Skipped: 1



### 4) Trails\*

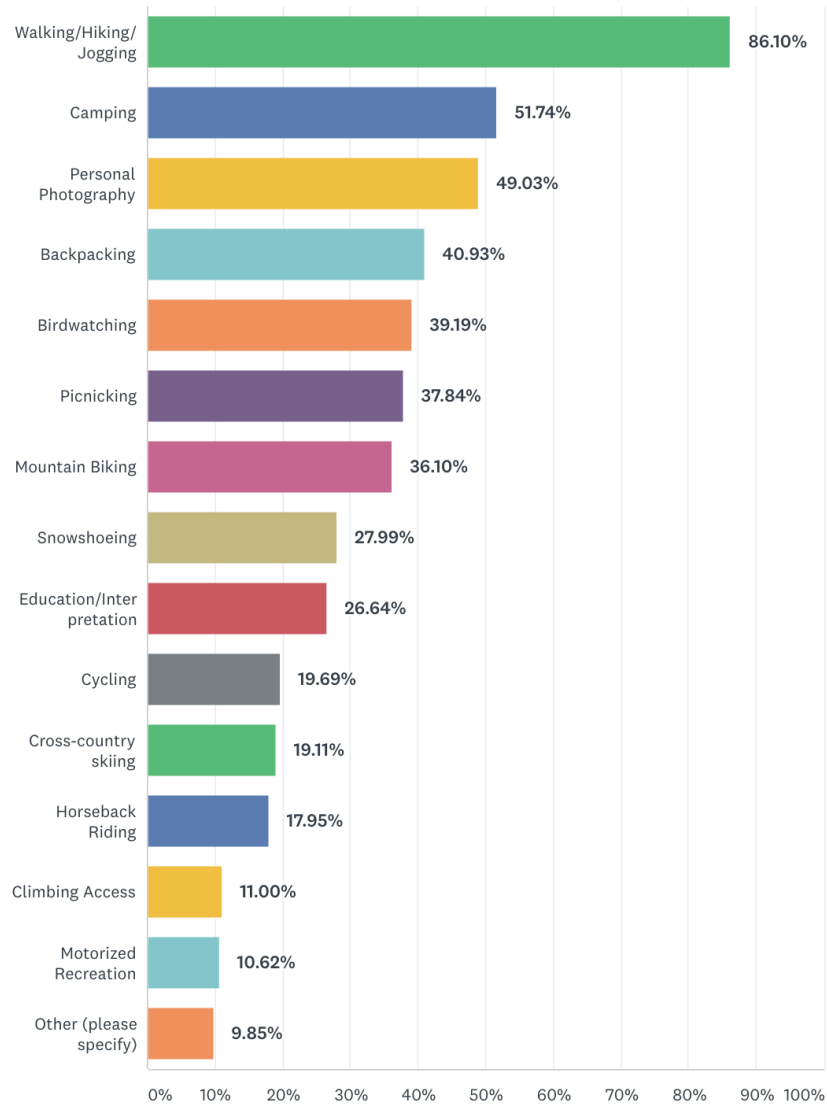
#### Overview:

- Walking/hiking/jogging was the top selection (86%) for how participants anticipate using trails, followed by camping (52%). Motorized recreation was the least selected response (10%). Mountain biking was selected by 36% of participants.
- Most participants anticipate spending 2-6 hours on a given trail (66%) and prefer trails to be hiking-only (42%) and directional (60%). A preference for multi-use trails was selected by 31% of participants and mountain bike-only trails garnered 12%.

*Differences between local and statewide participants:* No notable differences.

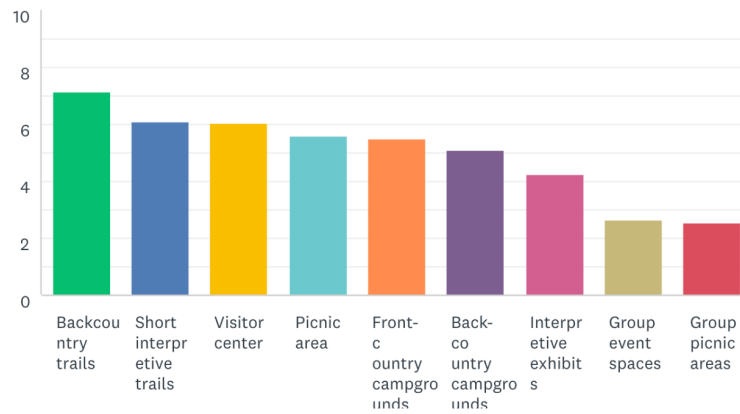
# How do you use trails in public open spaces and parks? (Select all that apply)

Answered: 518 Skipped: 0



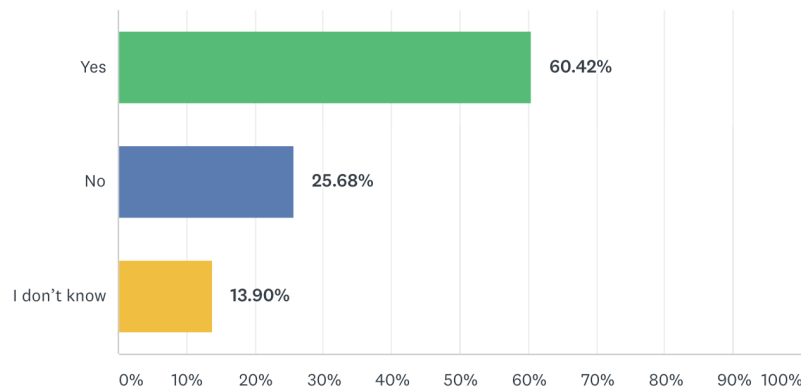
What recreation programs and facilities would you value the most? (Please rank based on highest importance)

Answered: 518 Skipped: 0



Do you prefer directional trails (directional trails are loop trails that allow for one direction of use to reduce conflict)? (Select One)

Answered: 518 Skipped: 0



## Optional Sections

Participants were prompted to select whether they wanted to answer questions specific to the following activities.

### 5) Camping

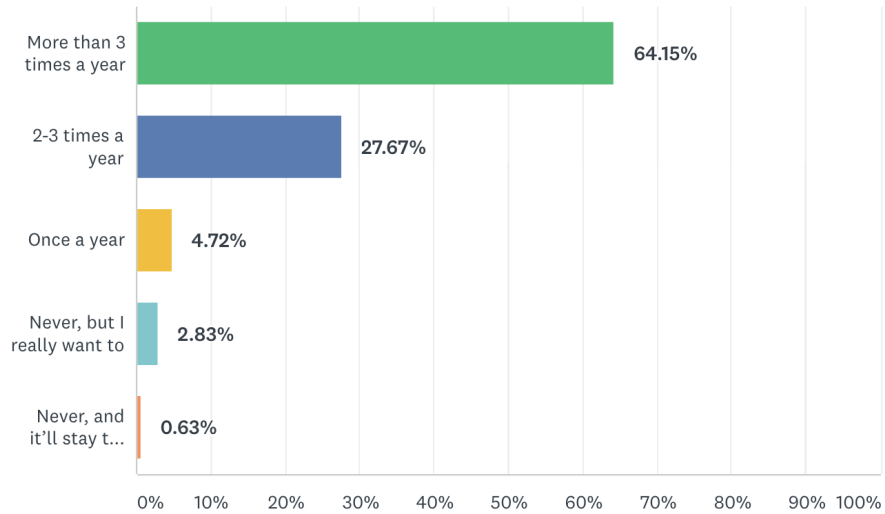
Overview:

- Participants typically camp more than 3 times per year (65%) and generally stay 2 nights (46%).
- Most prefer car/tent camping (42%) or RV/Van camping (26%).

*Differences between local and statewide participants:* No notable differences.

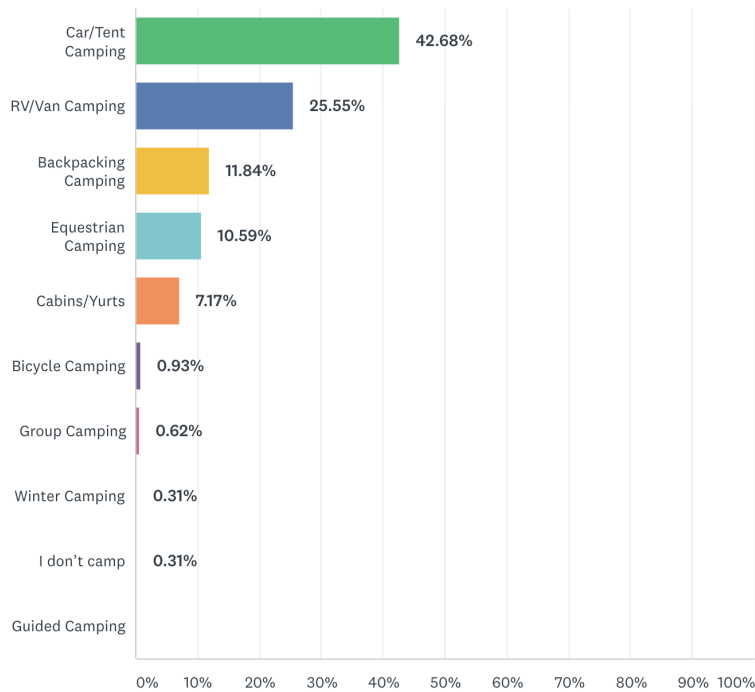
## How often do you camp? (Select One)

Answered: 318 Skipped: 200



## When you camp, you prefer (Select One):

Answered: 321 Skipped: 197



## 6) Mountain Biking

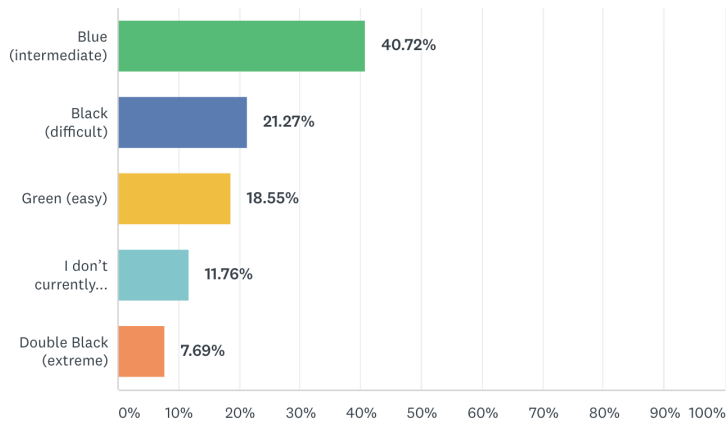
### Overview:

- Participants prefer blue (41%) or black (21%) difficulty level mountain bike trails and would prefer rides that offer opportunities to explore the backcountry and find solitude (56%), enjoy nature and experience the scenery (54%), or have fun with friends (47%).
- 77% of participants said they did not anticipate using an e-bike at Fishers Peak.

*Differences between local and statewide participants:* A smaller percentage (28%) of local participants opted to answer mountain bike-related questions compared to statewide participants (50%).

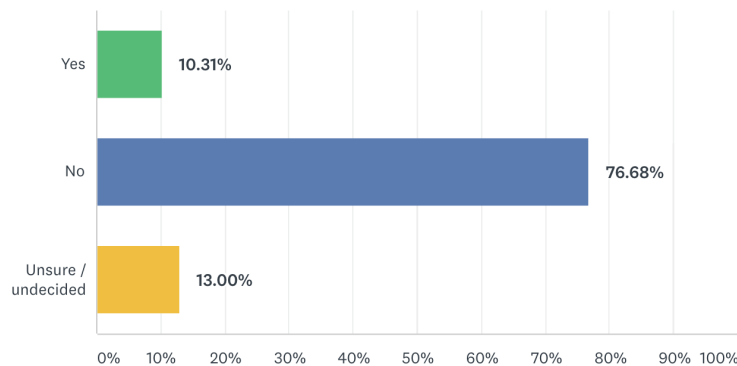
What difficulty level of mountain bike trail do you prefer? (Select One)

Answered: 221 Skipped: 297



As you envision visiting Fishers Peak, do you anticipate using an e-bike? (Select One)

Answered: 223 Skipped: 295





## 7) Hunting

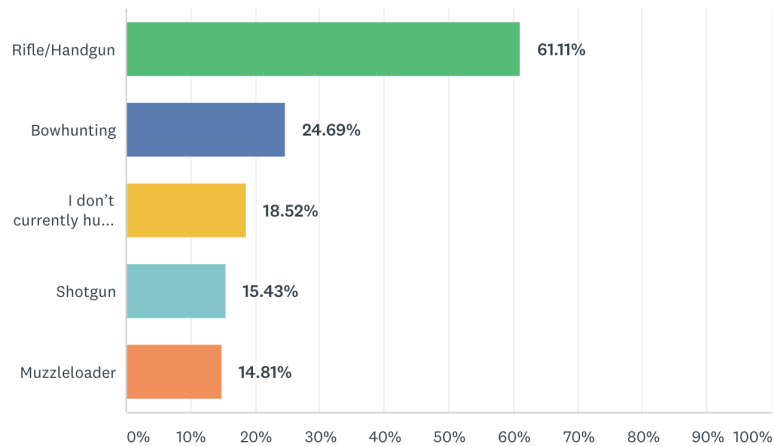
### Overview:

- 60% of participants have had a hunting license in Colorado within the past five years.
- Most respondents prefer big game hunting with a rifle/handgun (61%), followed by bowhunting (25%), and expect method of game retrieval at Fishers Peak to be on foot (50%).

*Differences between local and statewide participants:* No notable differences.

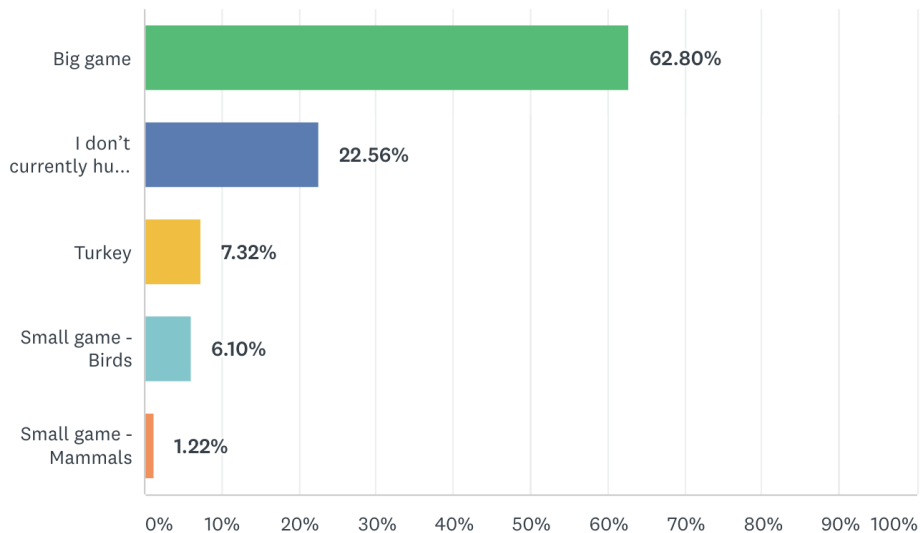
What is your preferred method of big game hunting ? (Select all that apply)

Answered: 162 Skipped: 356



When hunting you prefer hunting: (Select One)

Answered: 164 Skipped: 354



## 8) Dogs

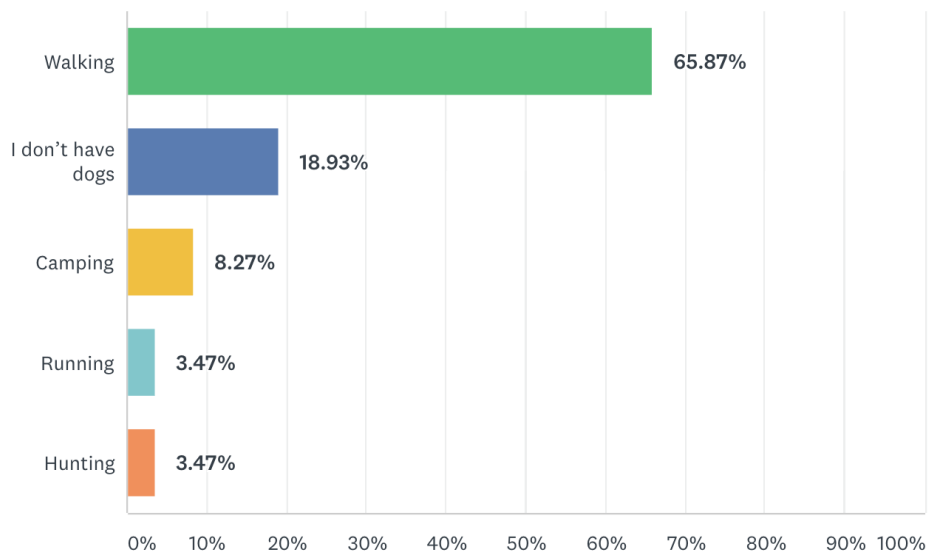
### Overview:

- Most respondents take their dogs on trails outside of their immediate residence (67%) and walk with their dogs (66%) as a primary activity.

*Differences between local and statewide participants:* No notable differences.

## For what purposes do you utilize trails with your dog? (Select One)

Answered: 375 Skipped: 143



## Equestrian

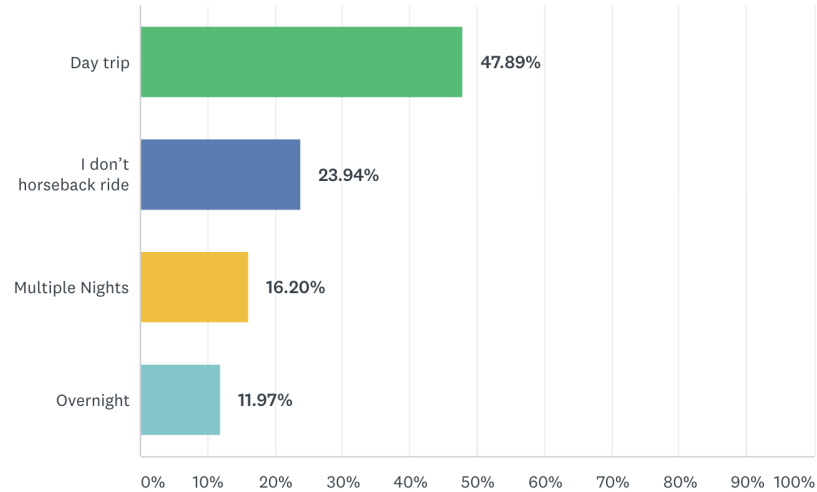
### Overview:

- Most equestrians prefer day trips in state parks (48%) with one or two other riders (53%) and typically travel 5-10 miles (37%).
- The top three preferences for equestrian experiences at Fishers Peak are Opportunity to enjoy nature and experience the scenery (74%), Opportunities to explore the backcountry and find solitude (70%), and Opportunities for fun and engaging rides to share with friends (44%).

*Differences between local and statewide participants:* No notable differences.

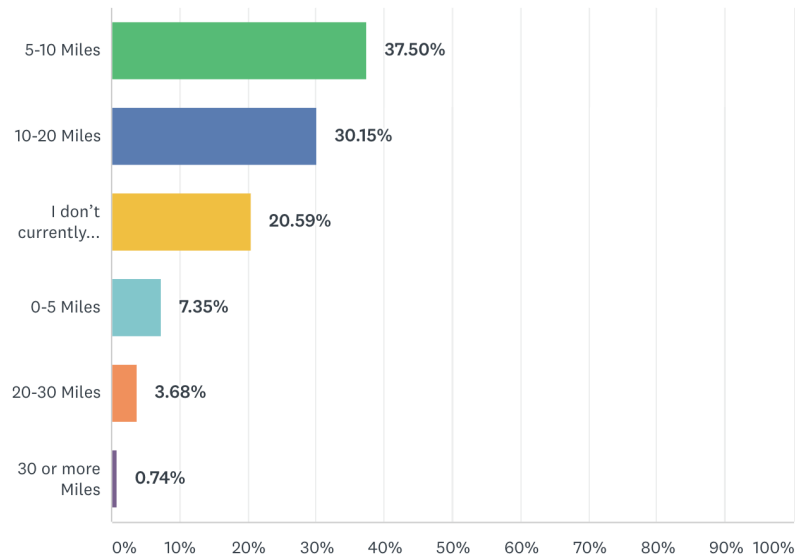
## When horseback riding in a state park, how long is your typical stay? (Select One)

Answered: 142 Skipped: 376



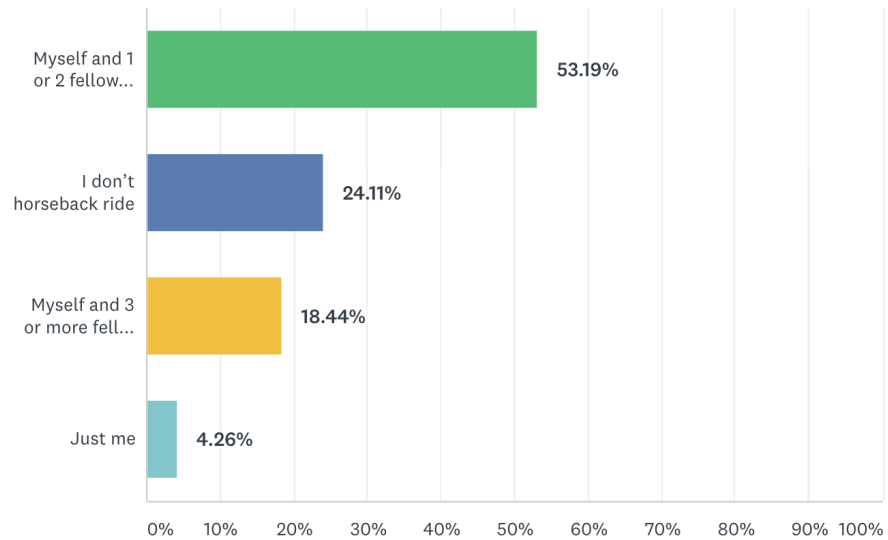
## How many total daily miles do you prefer to ride when horseback riding? (Select One)

Answered: 136 Skipped: 382



## When horseback riding in a state park, what is your typical group size? (Select One)

Answered: 141 Skipped: 377



### 9) Rock Climbing

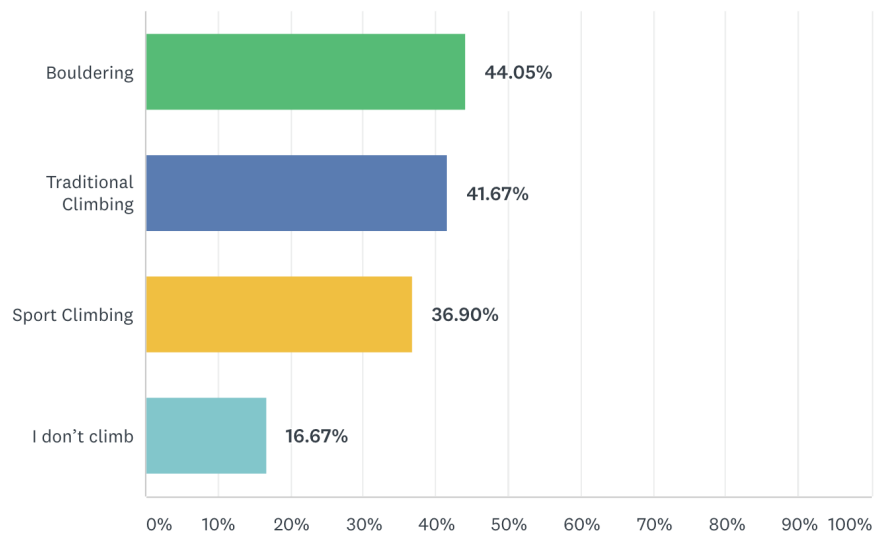
#### Overview:

- Most participants described themselves as intermediate climbers (40%) who typically engage in bouldering (44%) or traditional climbing (41%).

*Differences between local and statewide participants:* Local participants were more likely to describe themselves as beginner climbers (40%) and were tilted toward bouldering as the type of climbing they typically do (52%).

## What type(s) of rock climbing do you typically do? (Select all that apply)

Answered: 84 Skipped: 434



### 10) Education/Interpretation

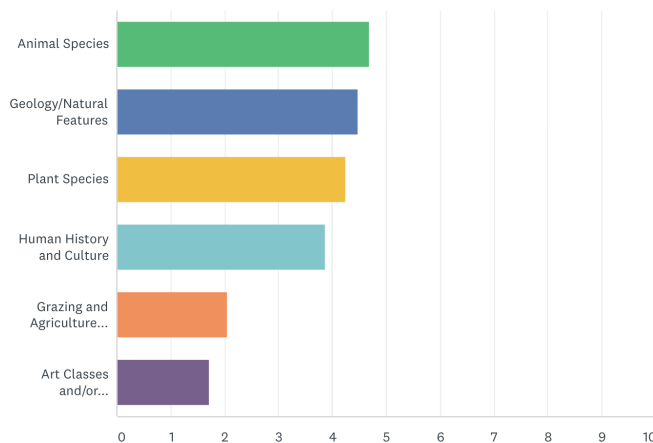
#### Overview:

- Most participants listed animal species (33%) or geological and natural features (26%) as their top choice for educational topics offered by the Park.
- Interpretive signage was the top choice for educational initiatives and programming options, followed by interpretive tours.

*Differences between local and statewide participants:* No notable differences.

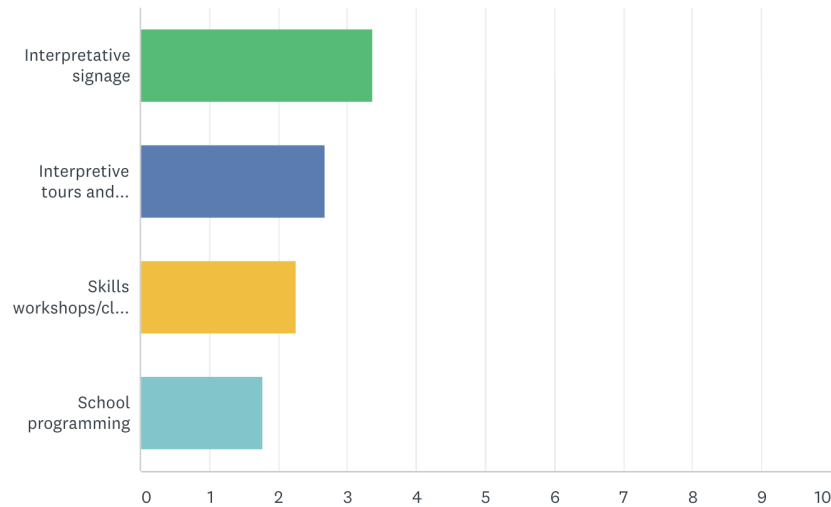
Please rank the following educational topics based on your level of interest.  
(Ranking)

Answered: 279 Skipped: 239



Please rank the following educational initiatives and programming options based on your level of interest. (Ranking)

Answered: 266 Skipped: 252



## 11) Future Engagement\*

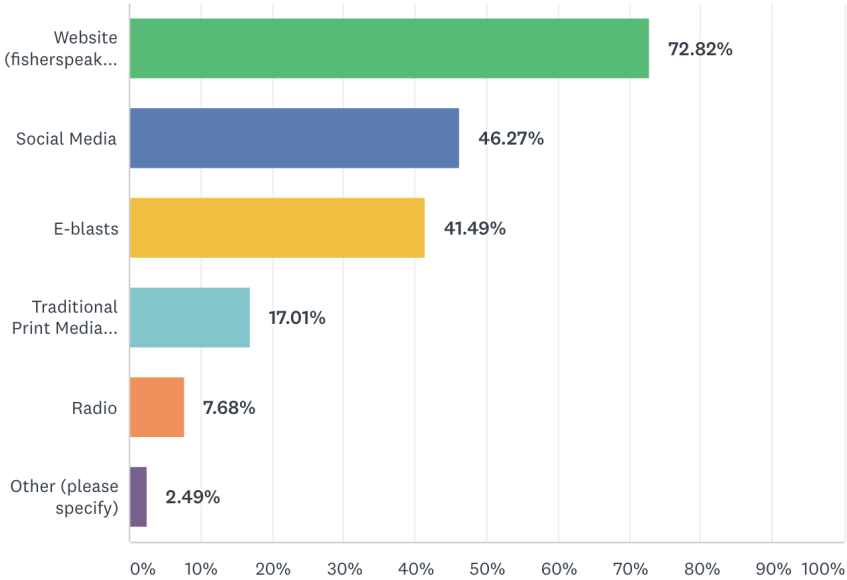
### Overview:

- 72% of participants listed the Fishers Peak website as a preferred method of receiving updates. This was followed by Social Media (46%) and e-blasts (41%).
- Participants prefer providing input to the Project Team through the website comment form (83%), virtual public meetings (36%), and in-person public meetings (20%).

*Differences between local and statewide participants:* Local participants were more likely to list in-person public meetings as a preferred method of providing input (39%) compared to statewide participants (12.8%).

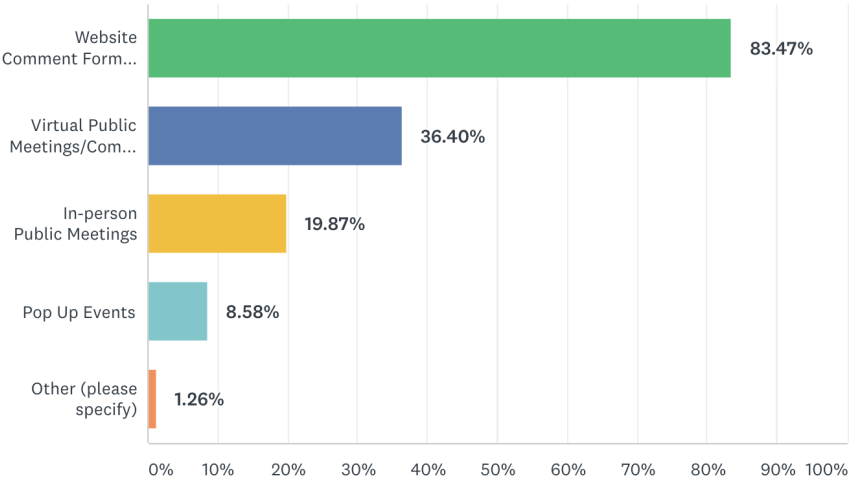
# What are your preferred channels of communication for receiving Fishers Peak State Park updates? (Select all that apply)

Answered: 482 Skipped: 36



# Keeping in mind that public health restrictions may apply, what are your preferred methods of providing input to the Fishers Peak Master Plan? (Select all that apply)

Answered: 478 Skipped: 40



## 12) Anything Else

The final question asked participants to **“Please provide [the Project Team] with any other information related to Fishers Peak State Park”** and elicited 164 responses covering a vast range of topics. Below is a selection of the most prominent response themes and associated quotes in order of prevalence. All responses (both listed and unlisted) are being reviewed by the Project Team to inform future decision-making.

- *Accessibility and management of uses and activities* - Many participants requested that Fishers Peak State Park allow access to their activity of choice and/or limit access to activities that they view as harmful. Activities or uses frequently mentioned include: hiking, camping, mountain biking, dogs, off-highway vehicles, RVs, hunting, fishing, and equestrianism. Of these comments, a number requested that management practices be implemented to mitigate conflict between different types of user groups. Many requested that trails be single-use or that they limit access to a subset of uses (e.g., hiking-only trails, mountain bike-only trails, equestrian-only trails, dog-friendly trails, etc.). As of August 2021, no long term decisions have been made about Park usage. Survey comments will help inform future decisions about these issues, but will not be the sole determining factor.
  - “Please conduct an aggressive time and space management plan for hikers, hikers with dogs, hikers with pack animals, equestrians, mountain bikers and trail runners. These uses are incompatible at the same time. Make even/odd days for hiking and biking. Make some trails usable for equestrians and people with animals.”
  - “Please make some trails prohibit dogs, not all are comfortable. Dedicated trails for different purposes (biking vs walking/running can be helpful), but all activities should be supported!”
  - “Love directional trails. Downhill trails should have bikers separate from hikers. I do both hiking and biking but prefer single use trails if possible.”
- *Prioritize natural resource preservation, limit development* - Participants frequently emphasized the importance of preserving a large portion of Fishers Peak State Park from excessive development. Commenters under this theme requested that the Park “stays wild” and that a “remote experience” is preferable to a “shopping mall” (i.e., highly developed) experience.
  - “Please keep the Park as wild as possible. Wildlife have been accustomed to a peaceful, natural existence. A large influx of humans, and horses, and bikes, and camping will be disruptive at best and damaging at worst.”
  - “Please keep it as untouched and wild as possible. Just because you “can” doesn’t mean you “should” and Colorado’s wild spaces are crowded and becoming spoiled. Leave areas where humans aren’t allowed to go!”



- “The ecosystems of this area are under-studied. It is important that the activities developed with Fisher Peak State Park preserve the natural habitats.”
- *Preserve and showcase area history* - Multiple comments voiced support for preserving and showcasing the unique history of the land on which Fishers Peak State Park exists. In particular, participants emphasized the importance of the Santa Fe Trail and its significance to travelers in centuries past. There was also mention of the importance of Tribal history and Spanish influence in the region.
  - “Please keep the historical perspective of the people, many families have lived in the area long before Colorado was ever a state. And that parcel of land is very special and important.”
  - “I rarely hear the Santa Fe Trail and its history mentioned in FPSP discussions. Great opportunity to center the parks development/connection to town historically!”
- *Accessibility for all* - A number of comments requested that accommodations be made for people with accessibility limitations, including elders and people with disabilities.
  - “Please include some recreation for physically disabled folk, e.g. wheelchair accessible, sensory trail for vision impaired.”
  - “Make sure there are options for mobility-impaired individuals.”
- *Other* - Other themes mentioned multiple times in the responses include:
  - Dark skies
  - Volunteer programs
  - Connectivity to other parks and SWAs
  - Detailed mapping
  - Water access
  - Adequate signage
  - Adequate restroom facilities and locations

## Next Steps

**Applying Survey Findings to Decision-Making:** The survey findings described in this report are of substantial utility to the Project Team as the Master Plan progresses. While all survey data will be referred to over the coming months to inform decision-making related to concepts for facilities and Park policies, the key findings are worth reiterating here:

- **Importance of natural resource conservation balanced with recreation:** This overarching theme will continue to be paramount through the completion of the Master Plan. These survey results

reinforce the assumption that stakeholders share CPW's interest in having Fishers Peak become a Park that both preserves natural resources and offers meaningful recreation access.

- **Backcountry experiences:** Through this survey and other engagement avenues, stakeholders have expressed interest in Fishers Peak offering a range of recreation opportunities, including notable interest in backcountry experiences. This bolsters the Project Team's charge to explore these types of opportunities in detail.
- **A typical Park user:** Fishers Peak public stakeholders are in no way monolith in their interests or demographics. However, understanding typical preferences—such as preferred trail design, average time spent in a park, common recreation behaviors, and other findings—are useful when considering trade offs for the Master Plan.

**A Look Ahead at the Master Planning Process:** The Fishers Peak Master Planning process is iterative and anticipated to run through the first quarter of 2022. The results of this report will inform not just the substantive issues but also the process itself over the coming months. Some process considerations based on the findings of this report include:

- **Engagement Preferences:** In comparison to statewide stakeholders, local stakeholders showed a higher preference for in-person meetings. Although public health protocols and other factors will play a major role in determining whether engagement activities are virtual or in-person, this is a useful data point, as it appears the local community has interest in meeting “face-to-face.” The project team plans to undergo a “gaps analysis” process to further understand the interested stakeholders who have not yet engaged with the project. The team will look at engaging faith communities, youth, and other demographic groups in the next engagement rounds to ensure all voices have an opportunity to participate.
- **Communication Preferences:** Participants demonstrated interest in Master Plan updates via the Fishers Peak website ([fisherspeakstatepark.com](https://fisherspeakstatepark.com)), e-blasts/newsletter, and social media. These won't be the only methods of communication, but the findings here support continued use and development of these methods as primary communication tools.

**Anticipated Project Schedule:** Below is the anticipated timeline for the completion of the Master Plan. As of August 2021, the Project is in the Opportunities & Challenges phase.

### Fishers Peak Master Plan Process

