

Chapter 3 – Public Opinion and Survey Results

Results



Introduction

A series of public outreach efforts and two primary surveys were conducted to gather public opinion and ensure that implementation of this park and open space plan is truly reflective of the wants and needs of Washington County residents. After utilizing numerous methods of collecting public comments from various demographic groups, results were analyzed and common themes emerged.

This chapter summarizes the public input efforts and twelve common themes that emerged. Full reports on each of the public engagement events and surveys can be found on the County’s website located at www.co.washington.wi.us/pln.

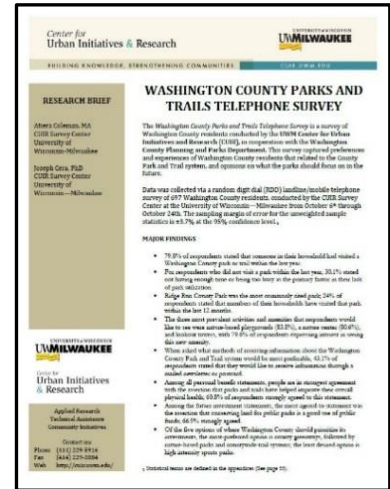


A two-page written survey was distributed at the general public visioning workshop, youth visioning workshop, Slinger and Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School mini-workshops, and to the Washington County Board Supervisors.

Description and Methodology of Public Comment Efforts

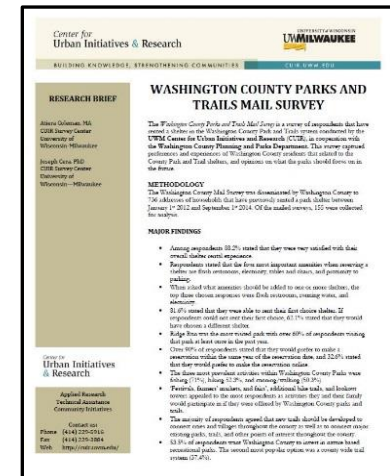
UWM Telephone Survey

The *Washington County Parks and Trails Telephone Survey* was a survey of Washington County residents conducted by the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM) Center for Urban Initiatives and Research (CUIR), in cooperation with the Washington County Planning and Parks Department. Data was collected via a random digit dial landline/mobile telephone survey conducted by the UWM CUIR Survey Center from October 6 through October 24 of 2014 and collected responses from 697 Washington County residents. The sampling margin of error for the unweighted sample statistics was ± 3.7 percent at the 95 percent confidence level and therefore revealed statistically significant results that are representative of the County's resident population.



UWM Mail Survey

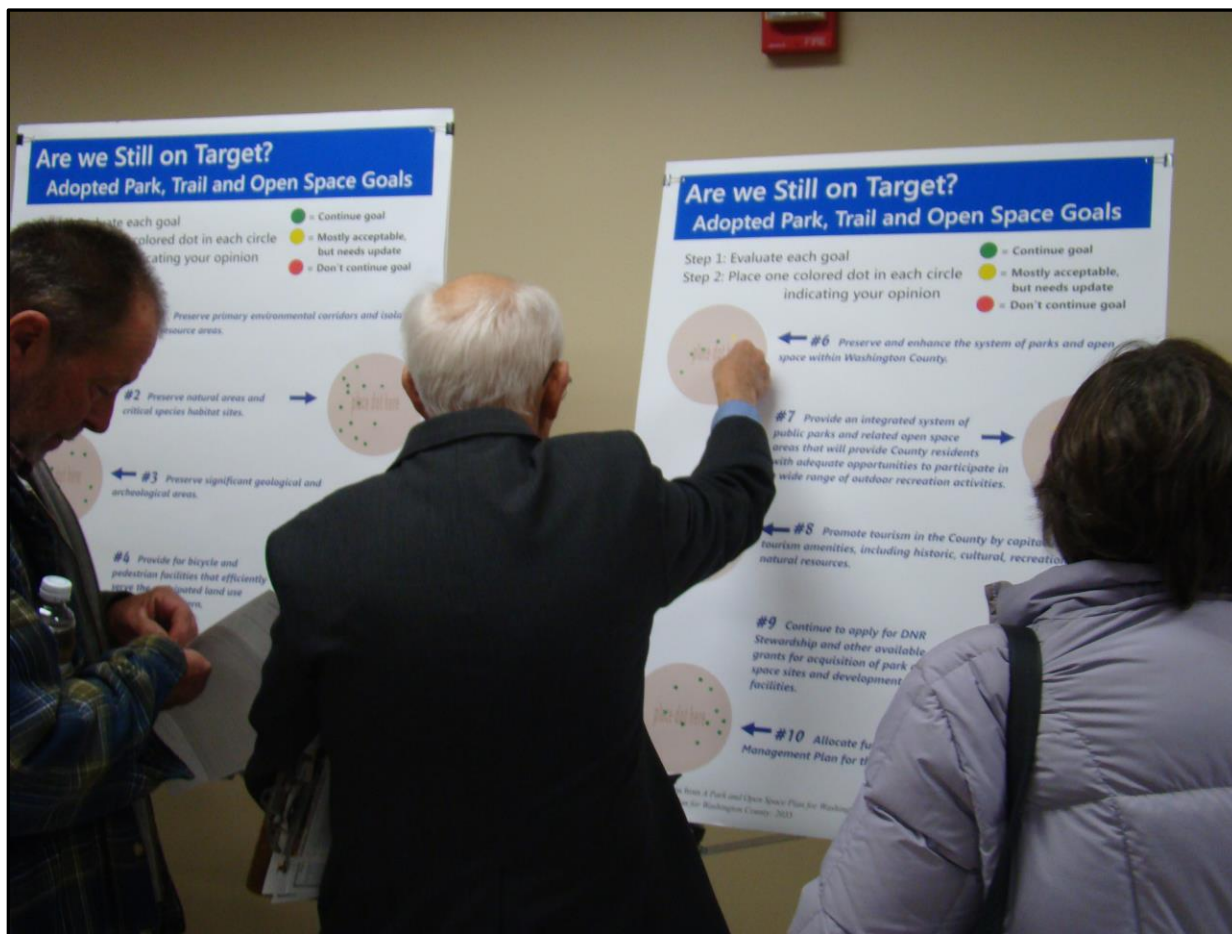
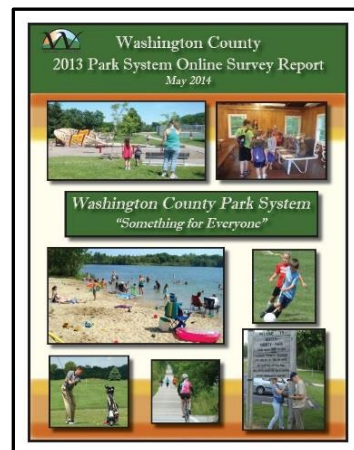
The *Washington County Parks and Trails Mail Survey* was a survey of respondents that have rented a shelter in the Washington County Park and Trails system conducted by the UWM CUIR, in cooperation with the Washington County Planning and Parks Department. The survey captured preferences and experiences of Washington County residents that related to the County park and trail shelters and opinions on what park and trail projects the Department should focus on in the future. The survey was disseminated by Washington County to 736 addresses of households that had previously rented a park shelter between January 1, 2012 and September 1, 2014. Of the mailed surveys, 155 were collected for analysis.



2013 Park System Online Survey

The Park System Online Survey was conducted by the Washington County Planning and Parks Department to help determine future funding priorities for improvements to the County Park and Trail System.

- Responses from 650 Washington County residents were collected
- Surveys indicated that the Eisenbahn State Trail and Glacier Hills County Park are the two most popular County Park System Facilities visited most often.



2014 County Visioning Workshops

The Planning Division conducted a series of public outreach events throughout October and November 2014 to gather public opinion about the future direction of the Washington County Park and Trail System.

Events included:

- two focus group sessions
- a general public visioning workshop
- a youth visioning workshop
- mini workshops during eight class periods at two local high schools
- a mini survey of the Washington County Board of Supervisors



Table 3.1

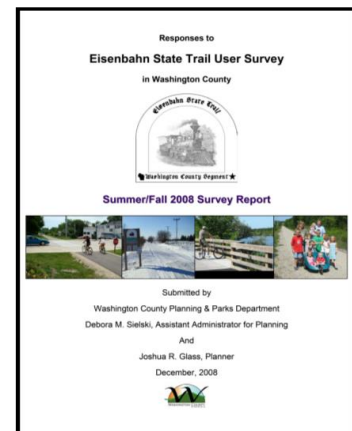
PARK AND OPEN SPACE PLANNING PUBLIC OUTREACH EVENTS: 2014

Public Outreach Event	Event Date	Number of Participants	Planning Division Outreach
Recreational Business Focus Group	October 14, 2014	3	Invites sent to 17 businesses with a reminder phone call provided
Non-profit Conservation Organization / Local Government Park and Recreation Focus Group	October 14, 2014	13	Invites sent to 26 agencies with a reminder phone call provided
General Public Visioning Workshop	October 22, 2014	131	Invites sent to 4,470 people, flyers posted around the County, press release
Youth Visioning Workshop	October 28, 2014	22	Flyers provided to all high schools and colleges in County, e-mails sent to schools and student club advisors
Slinger High School Mini Workshop	October 27, 2014	48	Three classes at Slinger High School
Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School Mini Workshop	November 14 and 20, 2014	102	Five classes at Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School
County Board Mini Survey	October 2014	20	Surveys sent to 30 County Board Supervisors

Eisenbahn State Trail User Survey

The Eisenbahn State Trail User Survey was conducted in two phases between July 2008 and March 2009.

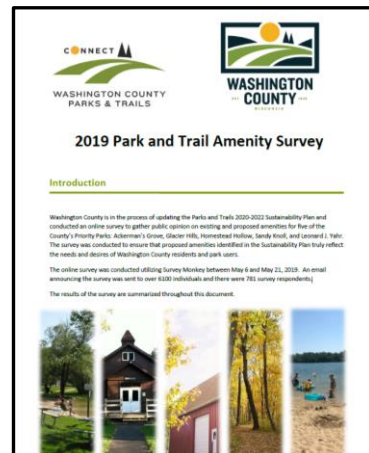
- Survey responses from 582 summer and fall trail users were collected and 2,312 users were counted using the trail during Phase 1.
- Survey responses from 150 winter and early spring trail users were completed during Phase 2.



2019 Park and Trail Amenity Survey

As part of updating the 2020-2022 Parks and Trails Sustainability Plan, an online survey was conducted to gather public opinion on existing and proposed amenities for five of the County's priority parks: Ackerman's Grove, Glacier Hills, Homestead Hollow, Sandy Knoll, and Leonard J. Yahr. The survey was conducted to ensure that proposed amenities identified in the Sustainability Plan truly reflect the needs and desires of Washington County residents and park users.

The online survey was conducted utilizing Survey Monkey between May 6 and May 21, 2019. An email announcing the survey was sent to over 6,100 individuals and there were 781 survey respondents.



- The majority of survey respondents supported or strongly supported a self-serve kayak/canoe rental, a kayak launching dock and a lookout tower for Ackerman's Grove.
- The majority of survey respondents supported or strongly supported a fishing pier, improved swimming access, an ADA path to the lake and a kayak launching dock at Glacier Hills.
- About 45% of survey respondents either supported or strongly supported a group rustic cabin rental at Homestead Hollow Park.
- The majority of survey respondents supported or strongly supported a dog park, fishing pier/platform and a nature playground at Sandy Knoll.
- The majority of survey respondents supported or strongly supported a beach expansion and a kayak launching dock at Yahr Park.



Key Findings of Public Surveys, Workshops and Events —

There were 12 key findings that emerged when analyzing the results of the numerous public outreach surveys, workshops and events:

1. ***Park and Trail Utilization*** - Residents of Washington County **utilize** the County Parks and Trail System.
2. ***Most Popular Destinations*** - The Eisenbahn State Trail, Sandy Knoll County Park, and Glacier Hills County Park are the three **most frequently visited** sites within the Washington County Park and Trail System.
3. ***Quality of the County Parks and Trails*** - The public **is satisfied** with the Washington County Park and Trail System.
4. ***Most Popular Activities Currently Offered*** - Activities such as fishing, hiking, walking, and running, are the **most popular activities** enjoyed within the Washington County Park and Trail system.
5. ***County-wide Trail System*** - The public wants **more trails** similar to the Eisenbahn State Trail that connect population centers, major parks, points of interest and existing trails in adjacent counties.
6. ***Additional Amenities and Activities*** - The public wants **additional activities/amenities** including nature-based playgrounds, a nature center, additional bike trails, lookout towers, camping, kayak/canoe launching docks, informational nature trail signage, fishing docks, dog parks, mountain bike trails, and groomed cross-country ski trails.



7. *Future Investments* - Open space should **be preserved for future generations** and doing so is a **good use of public funds**.
8. *Future Land Acquisition* - The County **should focus on nature-based parks**, acquiring land that **preserves important natural resources** and acquiring property adjacent to existing county parks and in areas where there are currently no county parks nearby.
9. *Benefits of Parks* - Parks and trails **improve quality of life** and results in **better physical and mental health**.
10. *Lake and Waterway Access* – The County should focus on **providing lake access** and opportunities for fishing.
11. *Shelter Reservations and Amenities* - The County should **provide flush restrooms**, running water and electricity to more shelters.
12. *Communication* – Park users prefer to **obtain information** about the County Park and Trail System through a mailed newsletter or postcard but their preferred method of reserving a park shelter was to reserve it online.



Key Finding #1 - Park and Trail Utilization

Residents of Washington County **utilize** the County Parks and Trail System.

- 79.8% of UWM Telephone Survey respondents stated that someone in their household had visited a Washington County park or trail within the last year.
- Of the 61.8% of UWM Telephone Survey respondents without children, 74.9% visited a County park/trail over the past year.
- Of the 37.9% of UWM Telephone Survey respondents with children, 88.2% visited a County park/trail over the past year.
- Park and trail utilization is highest by those ages 35 to 49 (84.8 percent) and 18 to 34 (84.0 percent) for respondents of the UWM Telephone Survey.
- For UWM Telephone Survey respondents who did not visit a park within the last year, 30.1% stated not having enough time or being too busy as the primary factor in their lack of park utilization.



“The Washington County Park System is my home away from home. I always tell my family ‘If you can’t find me, check the park trails’.”

Key Finding #2 - Most Popular Destination¹

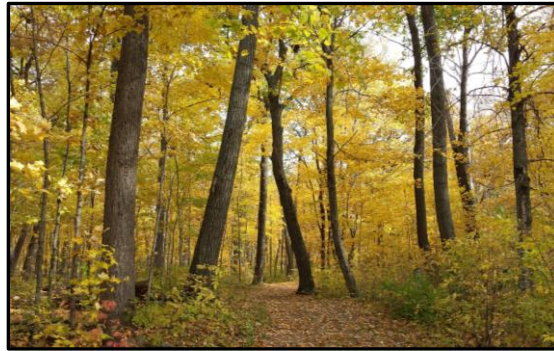
The Eisenbahn State Trail, Sandy Knoll County Park, and Glacier Hills County Park are the three **most frequently visited** sites within the Washington County Park and Trail System.

- Sandy Knoll County Park and Glacier Hills County Park are the most popular destinations within the Washington County Park and Trail System for people of all age groups of the UWM Telephone Survey.



¹ At the time of the UWM Telephone and Mail Survey and the 2013 Online Survey, Ridge Run County Park was the most popular park visited. Ridge Run is now a City of West Bend Park.

- The Eisenbahn State Trail was the most commonly cited County park/trail; 14.4% of UWM Telephone Survey respondents stated that members of their households have visited within the last 12 months. The Eisenbahn State Trail is utilized most frequently by repeat users than any other asset within the system.
- For 2013 Online Survey respondents, the four most frequently visited facilities in the County Park system were the Eisenbahn State Trail, Glacier Hills, Sandy Knoll and Ackerman’s Grove.



“Sandy Knoll and Homestead Hollow are beautiful!”

Key Finding #3 - Quality of the County Parks and Trails

The public **is satisfied** with the Washington County Park and Trail System.

- UWM Telephone Survey respondents were asked to rate the overall quality of Washington County Parks and Trail where 1 represented “very poor” and 10 represented “excellent”. Over 50% of the respondents gave the parks and trail system a rating of 8 or above, with 26.5% giving a rating of 9 and 20.1% giving a rating of 10. A rating of 8.5 in overall quality of the County Park and Trail System was provided by participants of the 2014 Visioning Workshops.
- Respondents of the 2013 Online Survey most frequently expressed that they liked the safety, cleanliness, and general maintenance of the park system; accessibility, location, and variety of parks and amenities offered; preservation of nature, scenery, and trails for hiking and biking.
- For the Eisenbahn State Trail User Survey, 88% of respondents reported that safety and security along the trail was either excellent or good, and 90% of respondents rated the maintenance of the Eisenbahn State Trail as either excellent or good.

“Washington County has the best park system in the region”



“Nice playgrounds, beautiful trail, natural beauty”

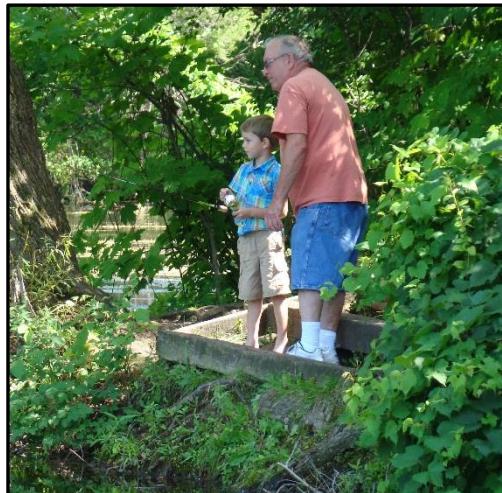


Key Finding #4 - Most Popular Activities Currently Offered

Activities such as fishing, hiking, walking, and running, are the **most popular activities** enjoyed within the Washington County Park and Trail system.

- The 10 most prevalent activities within Washington County Park and Trail System by the UWM Mail Survey respondents were:

- Fishing (71%)
- Hiking (52.3%)
- Running/walking (50.3%)
- Relaxation/stress relief (41.9%)
- Playing on playgrounds (38.7%)
- Picnicking (32.3%)
- Family gathering (30.3%)
- Nature viewing/study (29.7%)
- Dog walking (29.0%)
- Biking (25.8%)



- For 2013 Online Survey respondents, the five most popular activities when visiting the County Park System were walking/running/jogging, hiking, biking, relaxation/stress relief and nature viewing/study. More than half of the respondents use the park for walking, running, and/or jogging. These activities are enjoyed on both gravel/dirt and paved surfaces and are commonly done with a dog on a leash as a means of pet exercise.
- Through a visual preference survey offered at the 2014 County Visioning Workshops, respondents were asked to rate images of features currently offered in the Washington County Park and Trail System on a scale of one (strongly dislike) to five (strongly like). The five most-highly-rated features and their overall ratings were a gravel hiking trail (4.17), sledding or tubing hill (4.14), swimming beach (4.11), garbage/pet waste receptacles along a trail (4.03), and a paved multi-use trail (3.98).



“Like biking/walking trails, soccer, swimming and lake access”

Key Finding #5 – County-wide Trail System

The public wants **more trails** similar to the Eisenbahn State Trail that connect population centers, major parks, points of interest and existing trails in adjacent counties.

- The UWM Telephone Survey revealed that 94.5% of respondents indicated that a Countywide trail system, with networks of trails for use by people on foot, bicycles, horseback, kayaks or canoes was either somewhat or very important with 59.1% of respondents indicating this was very important.
- The UWM Telephone Survey revealed that 84.0% of respondents either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that the County should invest in additional countywide trails similar to the Eisenbahn State Trail with 45.5% of respondents strongly agreeing. Nearly three quarters of 2013 Online Survey respondents were in favor of the County investing in additional countywide trails similar to the Eisenbahn State Trail.
- The UWM Telephone Survey revealed that 83.5% of respondents either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that new trails should be developed to connect cities and village throughout the County with 47.5% of respondents strongly agreeing. Of UWM Mail Survey respondents, 58.5% agreed with this statement. Of the 2013 Online Survey respondents, 94% indicated that new trails should connect cities and villages throughout the County.
- The UWM Telephone Survey revealed that 85.7% of respondents either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that new trails should be developed to connect existing major parks, trails, and other points of interest throughout the County with 47.7% of respondents strongly agreeing. Of UWM Mail Survey respondents, 70.7% agreed with this statement as well as 95% of 2013 Online Survey respondents.



“Love what a bike system can do for making a livable, attractive, desirable and healthy community”

- The UWM Telephone Survey revealed that 80.4% of respondents either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that new trails should be developed to connect to existing trails in adjacent counties with 39.3% of respondents strongly agreeing. Of 2013 Online Survey respondents, 89% indicated that new trails should connect to existing trails in adjacent counties.
- During the 2014 County Visioning Workshops - Youth Outreach Events, the majority of high school student participants agreed that new trails should be developed to connect cities and villages throughout the County, connect existing major parks, trails and other points of interest throughout the County, and connect to existing trails in adjacent counties.
- Additions or improvements related to trails were commonly requested and included trails open for specific uses such as ATV riding, snowshoeing, groomed cross-country skiing, kayak and canoe travel (water trails), and horseback riding. More paved bike trails, hiking and walking trails, and snowmobile trails; and additional benches, signage, and pet waste stations along trails, especially the Eisenbahn State Trail, were also commonly requested during the 2014 County Visioning Workshops.
- For the Eisenbahn State Trail User Survey, the vast majority of Phase 1 respondents (85%) described biking as their primary activity and walking as the second most prevalent activity, though biking was three times as popular. Of Phase 2 (winter) respondents, 69% described snowmobiling as their primary activity on the trail.
- Respondents of the Eisenbahn State Trail Survey were asked to rate six images depicting different trail designs on a scale of 0 (very poor) to 10 (very good) according to what they would like to see in a trail system. Phase 1 respondents typically preferred a paved trail outside of road right-of-ways. Phase 1 respondents also indicated a preference for trails that were buffered from other rights-of-way. However, Phase 2 respondents indicated a preference for an unpaved trail, most likely because a primary activity of Phase 2 respondents was snowmobiling which is not allowed on paved portions of the trail.



“As a homeowner, one of my top priorities is to live in a walkable, bikeable community. A system of trails connecting my home with schools, parks, shopping, work, entertainment and natural area is VERY important to me for the long-term health and happiness of my family and myself.”

Key Finding #6 – Additional Amenities and Activities

The public wants **additional activities/amenities** including nature-based playgrounds, a nature center, additional bike trails, lookout towers, camping, informational nature trail signage, dog parks, mountain bike trails, and groomed cross-country ski trails.

- The most prevalent activities and amenities that UWM Telephone Survey respondents would like to see were nature-based playgrounds (83.8%), a nature center (80.6%), lookout towers (79.6%), mountain bike trails (74.5%), camping (70.7%), groomed cross-country ski trails (69.4%) and dog parks, with 65.1% of respondents expressing interest in seeing this new amenity.
- Festivals, farmer’s markets, and fairs, additional bike trails, lookout towers, additional benches along trails, camping and informational nature trail signage appealed to the most respondents of the UWM Mail Survey as activities they and their family would participate in if they were offered by Washington County parks and trails.
- The five most requested additional recreational activities/amenities for the 2013 Online Survey respondents were additional bike trails, lookout towers, trail signage displaying slopes, distances and trail surfacing, additional benches along trails, and dog parks.
- During the 2014 County Visioning Workshops, participants selected activities or amenities that should be offered through the County Park and Trail System. The most frequent responses included additional bike trails, water trails for canoe/kayaking, mountain bike trails, informational nature trail signage, groomed cross-country ski trails and disc golf.
- During the 2014 County Visioning Workshops - Youth Outreach Events, the majority of high school student participants were interested in having the County invest in an ATV or Dirt Bike Course, ATV trails, outdoor aquatic center, archery range, and rock climbing.
- Respondents to the 2019 Park and Trail Amenity Survey would like to see kayak/canoe launching docks and rentals, lookout towers, group rustic cabins, fishing platforms, and improved beach swimming access.

“More horse trails, more multiuse trails”

“We would appreciate groomed x-country ski trails”

“Develop more quiet sport activities like hiking, x-country skiing, bicycling”

“Heritage Trails Park replace pit toilet and playground”

“I would like to see more ATV-UTV trails here in Washington County”

“I would strongly recommend more camping. Tent camping, RV camping, and cabin renting should be more common and near lake areas or in the middle of a wooded area”

Key Finding #7 – Future Investments

Open space should be **preserved** for future generations, and doing so is a **good use** of public funds.

- The UWM Telephone Survey revealed that 97.8% of respondents either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that it is important to preserve open space for future generations with 83.0% of respondents strongly agreeing.
- During the 2014 County Visioning Workshops - Youth Outreach Events, the majority of high school student participants (75.7%) agreed that it was important to preserve open space for future generations.
- The UWM Telephone Survey revealed that 94.7% of respondents either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that conserving land for public parks is a good use of public funds with 66.9% of respondents strongly agreeing.
- The UWM Telephone Survey revealed that 90.1% of respondents either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that parks and trails are a public service that should be funded by County government.
- Respondents of the UWM Telephone Survey were asked about support for an increase in the per capita annual tax contribution to the Washington County Park and Trail system. A large majority (78.9%) of respondents indicated they would support an increase of \$1.
- 99.1% of the UWM Telephone Survey respondents indicated that the County should accept donations which include land suitable for park use.

“I do not want to see additional taxes raised, however, donations and user fees should be allowed”



“Low economical cost on a daily basis for fun, exercise, activity, and plain getting people outside and together! “

Key Finding #8 – Future Land Acquisition

The County **should focus** on nature-based parks, acquiring land that preserves important natural resources, and acquiring property adjacent to existing county parks and in areas where there are currently no county parks nearby.

- The UWM Telephone Survey revealed that 95.0% of respondents indicated that nature-based parks with hiking, camping, lake swimming, and nature appreciation was either somewhat or very important with 60.3% of respondents indicating this was very important. Of the five options regarding where Washington County should prioritize its investments, the most-preferred option is county greenways, followed by nature-based parks and countywide trail systems; the least desired option is high intensity sports parks. The majority (53.5%) of UWM Mail Survey respondents agreed that the County should invest in nature-based recreation parks.
- The UWM Telephone Survey revealed that 94.3% of respondents indicated that County greenways that protect natural resources was either somewhat or very important with 63.8% of respondents indicating this was very important.
- UWM Telephone Survey respondents indicated that the County should focus on acquiring:
 - Property adjacent to existing parks (78.1%)
 - Property in areas where there are currently no county parks nearby (84.4%)
 - Land that preserves important natural resources such as woodlands and wetlands (95.6%)
- The UWM Telephone Survey revealed that 79.2% of respondents either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that County government is doing enough to preserve natural resources and open space with 23.8% of respondents strongly agreeing.
- On the topic of providing enough parks and recreational opportunities the respondents of the UWM Telephone Survey were split:
 - When asked if we have enough parks and recreational opportunities in Washington County, 69% either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed.
 - When asked if Washington County should provide additional parks and recreation opportunities to the system, 78.7% either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed.
- As part of the 2014 County Visioning Workshops, local governments and land trusts representatives indicated that they would like to see the County invest in additional park and trail developments – particularly property adjacent to existing county parks, a countywide trail system, nature-based recreational parks, and preserve important natural resources such as woodland and wetlands.

“Preserve and actively manage natural areas”

“Preserve the environment while providing places to still enjoy nature...”

“It is important to preserve primary environmental corridors and natural resource areas”

“Do not want the county to purchase properties at taxpayer expense”

Key Finding #9 – Benefits of Parks

Parks and trails **improve quality of life** and results in **better physical and mental health**.

- Among all personal benefit statements, 94.3% of respondents to the UWM Telephone Survey strongly agreed or agreed somewhat that parks and trails improved their overall physical health.
- Among all personal benefit statements, 96.2% of respondents to the UWM Telephone Survey strongly agreed or agreed somewhat that parks and trails improved their overall quality of life. The majority of 2013 Online Survey respondents, 92% expressed that parks and trails were either somewhat or very important to their quality of life in Washington County.
- Among all personal benefit statements, 91.9% of respondents to the UWM Telephone Survey strongly agreed or agreed somewhat that parks and trails helped decrease their stress level.

“I like that I can find quiet on a path”



*“Parks, trails and open spaces keep me and friends and family happy and healthy.
Good for mind, body and soul!”*

Key Finding #10 – Lake and Waterway Access

The County **should focus** on providing lake access and opportunities for fishing.

- 84.8% of the UWM Telephone Survey respondents indicated that the County should focus on providing lake access.
- The UWM Telephone Survey revealed that 77.2% of respondents either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that County government is doing enough to provide access to lakes and waterways in Washington County with 28.5% of respondents strongly agreeing.
- As part of the 2014 County Visioning Workshops, local governments and land trusts representatives indicated that they would like to see the County invest in lake access.
- During the 2014 County Visioning Workshops, the majority of participants indicated the County should focus on providing lake access.
- For the UWM Mail Survey respondents, fishing was most frequent activity (71%) when visiting the County Park and Trail System.



Key Finding #11 – Shelter Reservations and Amenities

The County **should provide** flush restrooms, running water and electricity to more shelters.

- Among UWM Mail respondents 88.2% stated that they were very satisfied with their overall shelter rental experience.
- UWM Mail Survey respondents stated that the four most important amenities when reserving a shelter are flush restrooms, electricity, tables and chairs, and proximity to parking with 85.2% of respondents indicating that flush restrooms are the most important amenity.
- When asked what amenities should be added to one or more shelters, the top three chosen responses to the UWM Mail Survey were flush restrooms, running water, and electricity. When asked if they would be willing to pay a slightly higher fee to reserve a shelter if the above amenities were added, 68.1% indicated that they would pay a higher fee.
- UWM Mail Survey respondents stated that the four most influential factors when reserving a shelter were the accommodation of the size of the group, location, liking the park and cost.
- Over 90% of UWM Mail Survey respondents stated that they would prefer to make a reservation within the same year of the reservation date, and 32.6% stated that they would prefer to make the reservation online.
- Among UWM Mail respondents 82.2% stated that they were very satisfied with their overall level of service by the Planning and Parks Department staff throughout their rental experience.
- More than half of 2013 Online Survey respondents (54%) expressed that it was either somewhat or very important to have access to a heated flush restroom with running water during their visit to a County Park.



“Parks with shelters are a bonus because family outings are much easier.”

Key Finding #12 – Communication

Park users prefer to **obtain information** about the County Park and Trail System through a mailed newsletter or postcard but their preferred method of reserving a park shelter was to reserve it online.

- When asked what methods of receiving information about the Washington County Park and Trail system would be most preferable, 43.1% of the UWM Telephone Survey respondents stated that they would like to receive information through a mailed newsletter or postcard and the second most preferable method by 23.2% of respondents was through email.
- The preferred method of receiving information varied by age group. While 45.7% of the UWM Telephone Survey respondents aged 18 to 34 said they preferred email, that proportion drops to 27.5% among those aged 35 to 49, to 13.3% among those aged 50 to 64, and to just 6.3% among those aged 65 and up. Inversely, the likelihood of respondents stating a preference for learning about the system through local newspapers significantly *increases* with age; while just 5.3% of those aged 18 to 34 would prefer newspapers as their medium of learning, 27.9% of those aged 65 and up stated a preference for newspapers.
- Of UWM Mail Survey respondents, 32.6% indicated that their most favorable method of reserving a park shelter was to reserve it online.