

TRAIL USE IN THE COWICHAN VALLEY

Social & Economic Impacts



World Leisure
Centre of Excellence
VANCOUVER ISLAND UNIVERSITY

CTSS
COWICHAN TRAIL STEWARDS

TOURISM
COWICHAN

The World Leisure Centre of Excellence at VIU acknowledges that this research was conducted on the unceded and traditional territory of the Q̓uw'utsun, Malahat, Ts'uubaa-asatx, Halalt, Penelakut, Stz'uminus, Lyackson, Pauquachin, Ditidaht and Pacheedaht Peoples. The WLCE@VIU is located on the unceded ancestral territory of the Snuneymuxw First Nation.

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Introduction

Located on southern Vancouver Island and crossing multiple jurisdictions and landscapes, the Cowichan Region spans from Yellow Point and Ladysmith to Shawnigan Lake and the Malahat. Research conducted on visitors to the region in 2022 revealed that parks and open spaces, outdoor adventure activities, and ease of access were three of the most important reasons for visiting (Weighill et al., 2023¹). The study also revealed that very few of the sampled participants mountain biked while visiting, which explains why the availability of mountain bike trails was not considered important to visitors.

BC Outdoor Recreation Council (2022) research revealed an over 150% increase in park and trail use during the pandemic. The rapid increase in park and trail use by British Columbians and visitors has resulted in the need for communities to understand (a) who trail users are, (b) what activities are done on trails, (c) the social and health benefits of trails, and d) the economic impacts induced by trails. This increase has prompted the Province of BC and many communities to (re)develop integrated trail strategies to meet residents' needs while driving economic growth through increased visitation.

The Cowichan Trail Stewardship Society (CTSS) is a dedicated group of volunteers focused on building, maintaining, and expanding trail systems in the Cowichan Valley (CTSS, 2023). The CTSS approached the World Leisure Centre of Excellence at Vancouver Island University to research trails in the Cowichan Valley. The initial aim of this research was to understand better the users of trails on several mountain networks in the Cowichan Region and the economic and social benefits accrued from the trail systems. This evolved into a more extensive study that looked beyond the impact of mountain biking and included trails throughout the Cowichan Region.²

Methods

The social and economic impact analysis of the Cowichan Valley Trails was conducted from November 2023 to January 2024. The study population included residents and visitors who used trails within the Cowichan Valley during the past year. Residents were defined as those living within the Cowichan Region, and visitors included anyone who did not reside in one of those communities.

Multiple approaches were used to recruit participants, including (a) email recruitment through several hiking, mountain biking, and outdoor recreation groups (e.g., CTSS email list, BC Mountain Biking Assoc, & BC Outdoor Recreation

¹ Contact Kenzie Knight of Tourism Cowichan or Dr. Aggie Weighill of the WLCE at VIU (wlce@viu.ca) for more information about the report.

² Users were not provided an exhaustive list of trails, marine trails were not included, and an exhaustive list of trail users (i.e., activities) was not included. This likely impacted sampling and some of the results.



Council), (b) face-to-face intercepts at trailheads throughout the region (using business cards with links), (c) social media ads, and (d) snowball sampling.³

Data were collected using a self-administered online questionnaire hosted on SurveyMonkey. After consenting to the study, participants were asked about their trail use and experiences in the Cowichan Valley. They were asked:

- How likely were they to participate in different outdoor trail-related activities?
- What activities participants were most likely to do in different locations?
- Focused on the activity that they did the most:
 - What were the social benefits of their trail use?
 - How much money did they spend in the Cowichan Valley?
 - What challenges and concerns were experienced while on the trails?
- Demographic questions.

One thousand one hundred (1100) people started the survey; however, once data were cleaned (e.g., responses from participants who completed less than 50% of the questions or responded in a repeating predictable pattern), the sample included 1010 participants. Approximately 82% of participants were residents, and 97% were from Vancouver Island.

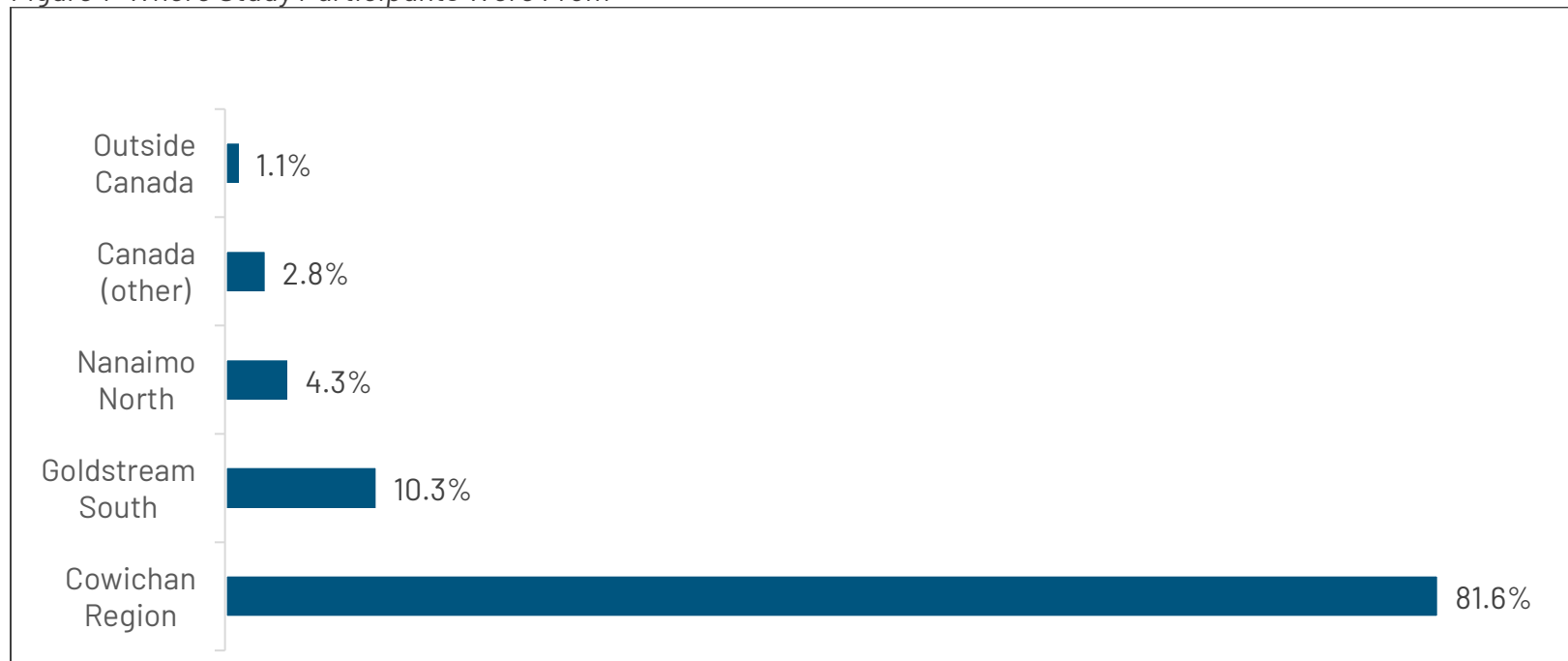
Data Analysis

Before analysis, data were prepared by creating new variables and recoding answers to the *other* questions. Variables for age and age groups, trails used, and activity groups were created for analysis. Analysis was conducted on the total sample, followed by exploring visitor characteristics. This was followed by a repeat of the analysis, comparing responses of the two primary user groups (hikers & mountain bikers). Note: For the purposes of this study, hikers and walkers were divided into two different activity-based groups, as hiking is associated with longer and more technically difficult terrain. More importantly, walkers and hikers could self-select based on their definition of each activity. Comments were reviewed to identify common managerial themes.

Sample Description

Analysis revealed that 81.6% of participants were residents of the Cowichan Region, 10.3% lived south of the Malahat, and 4.3% lived north of the Region (Figure 1).

³ Participants were encouraged to share with friends and family. Sharing with the CTSS email list was the most successful sampling technique.

*Figure 1: Where Study Participants Were From*

Slightly more women (56.2%) than men (43.1%) participated in the study, with the remaining being non-binary or wanting to self-define their gender. Participants' ages ranged from 16 to 86 years, with the average age 55.9 years. Table 1 shows the distribution of trail users across 10-year increments. Seventy-nine percent of participants had completed post-secondary education, and 42% reported an annual income of \$100,000.00 or more (Table 2).

"I am a mental health counsellor, and time/exercise in nature is shown to be significantly helpful for mental health, especially depression and anxiety...Easy access [to trails] and lots of options close to home (in many areas) is vital."

~ Study Participant ~



Table 1: Participants' Ages (Grouped)

Age (Years)	Percent
<20	0.8
20s	4.5
30s	10.2
40s	17.4
50s	19.8
60s	29.0
70s	16.1
80s	2.1



Table 2: Participants' Income

Income	Percent
< \$25,000.00	4.9
\$25,000.00 - \$49,999.00	14.3
\$50,000.00 - \$74,999.00	18.9
\$75,000.00 - \$99,999.00	19.7
\$100,000.00 - \$124,999.00	14.0
\$125,000.00 - \$149,999.00	7.8
\$150,000.00 - \$174,999.00	4.0
\$175,000.00 - \$199,999.00	1.2
\$200,000.00+	5.3
Prefer Not to Say	9.9





Results

The results of this study are split into two primary sections. Section one summarizes the whole sample and includes an overview of visitors. Section two compares the results of the top two trail user groups, exploring similarities and differences between hikers and mountain bikers.

Activity Participation

Study participants were asked what activity they did most in the 30 days before responding to the survey. The three largest groups were hikers (34.4%), mountain bikers (30.5%), and walkers (24.5%). Table 3 includes all the activities listed, excluding those listed by respondents.⁴

Table 3: Most Common Activity Participated In

Activity	Percentage
Hikers	34.4
Mountain Biking	30.5
Walking	24.5
Trail Running	4.2
Horseback Riding	2.3
Nature Appreciation	2.0

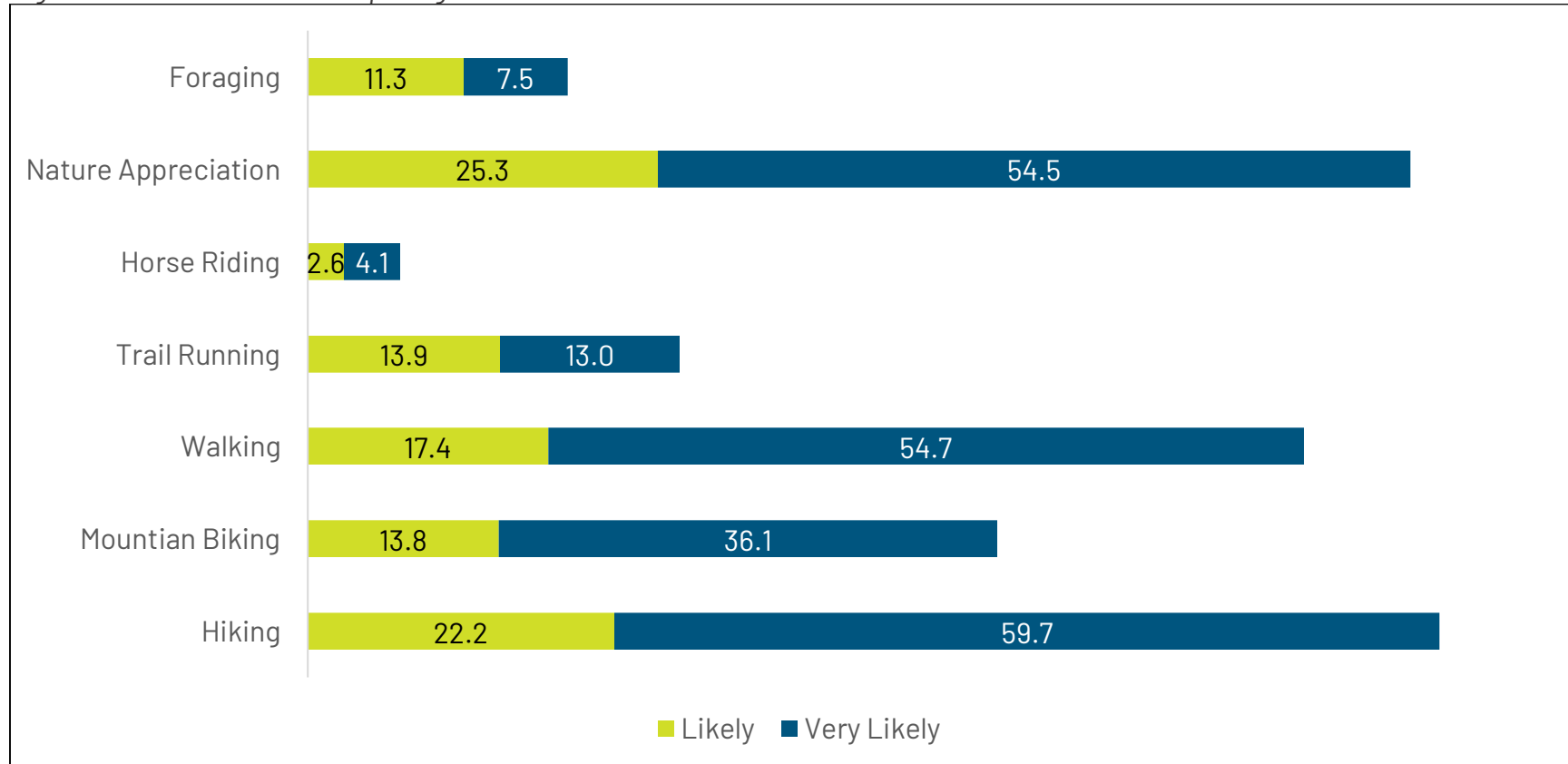
Likelihood of Participating in Different Trail-Based Activities

Participants were asked how likely they were to participate in each trail-based activity listed. Hiking (81.9%), nature appreciation (79.8%), and walking (72.1%) were the top three activities, with mountain biking (49.9%) being the next most popular activity (Figure 2).

⁴ Cycling, foraging, hunting, horse driving, maintenance, dirt biking, stair climbing, and commuting were all listed by <1%.



Figure 2: Likelihood of Participating in Different Activities

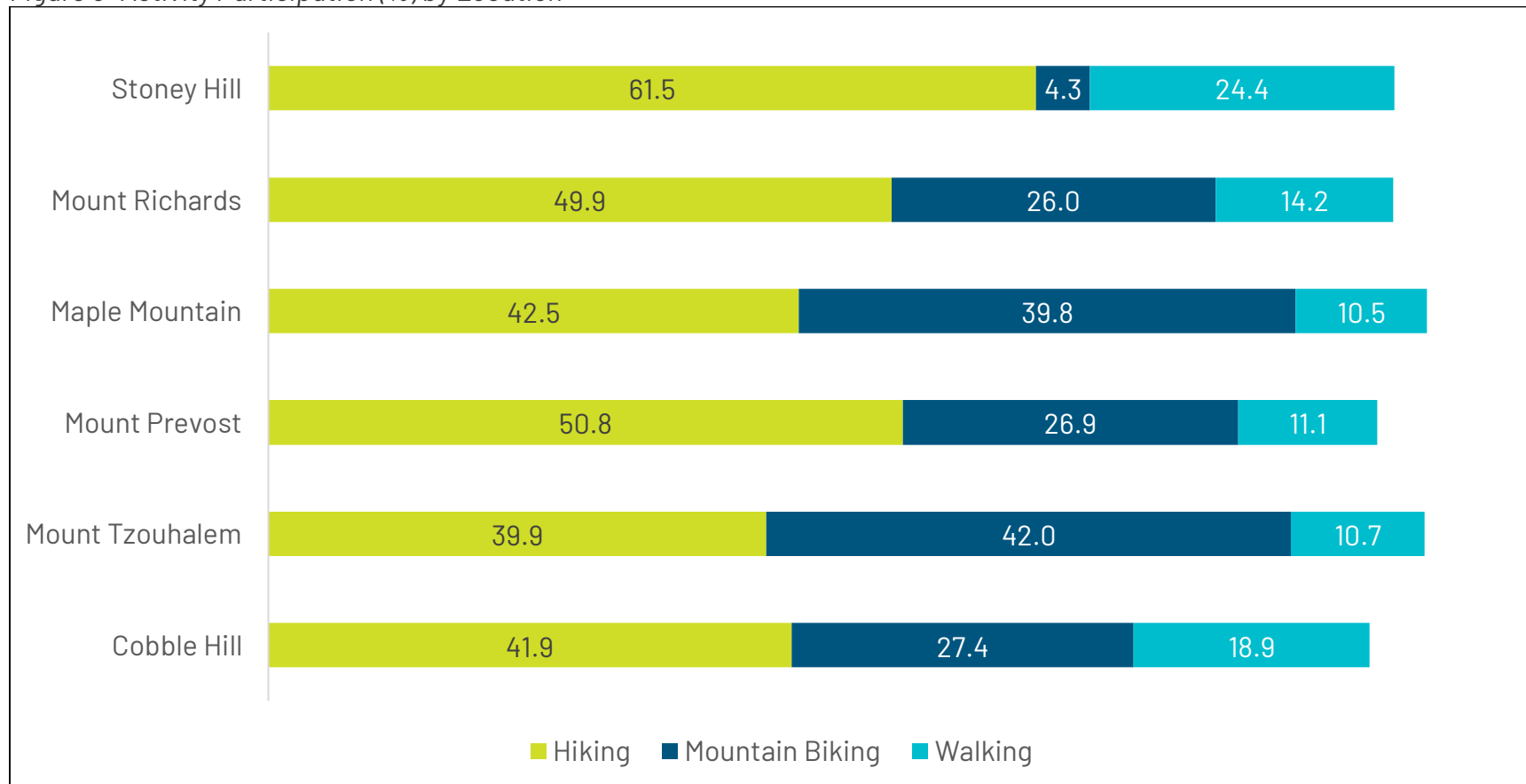


Activity Participation by Location

Using the same list of activities, participants were asked what they were most likely to do at each mountain trail system in the Cowichan Valley. Most participants, 88% to 93%, identified hiking, mountain biking, or walking as the activities they would most likely do at each location. Mount Prevost (5.6%) and Stoney Hill (6.5%) were the most likely places for nature appreciation, and Cobble Hill (4.4%) had the highest percentage of trail runners.



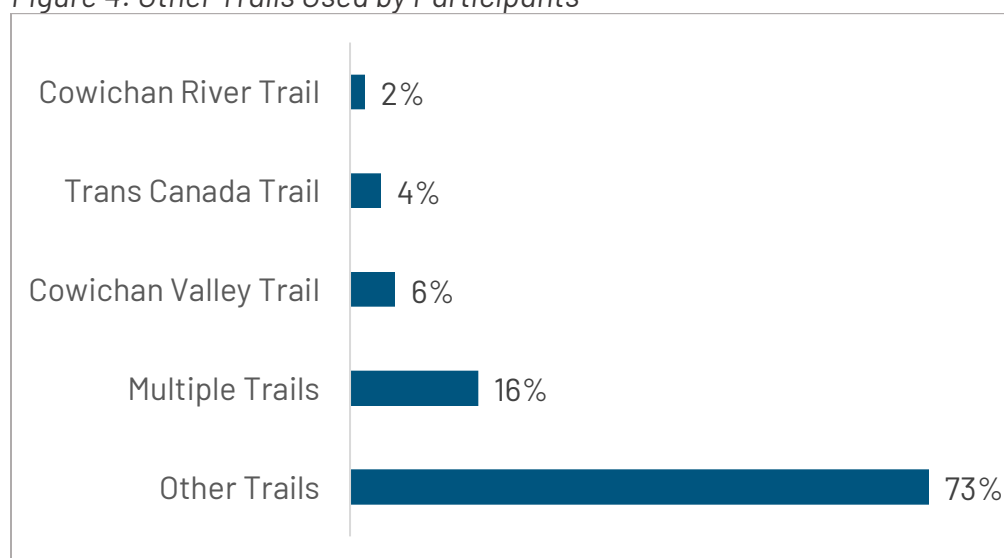
Figure 3: Activity Participation (%) by Location





Participants were also asked to identify the other trails they used in the Cowichan Valley.⁵ All respondents (n=1010) indicated that they had used other trails. The most identified individual trails were the Cowichan Valley Trail (5.6%) and the Trans Canada Trail/Great Trail (3.9%). However, 16.0% indicated using multiple trails (including the Cowichan Valley Trail and Trans Canada Trail). Nearly 74% of all other users identified 28 different trails in several Cowichan Region communities. Further, it was evident that many locals used specific location-based segments as trail names, which may not always correspond to the official trail name, or participants did not know the trail name. This may have been influenced by what they used for trail information, as many apps use segment or user-generated names.

Figure 4: Other Trails Used by Participants



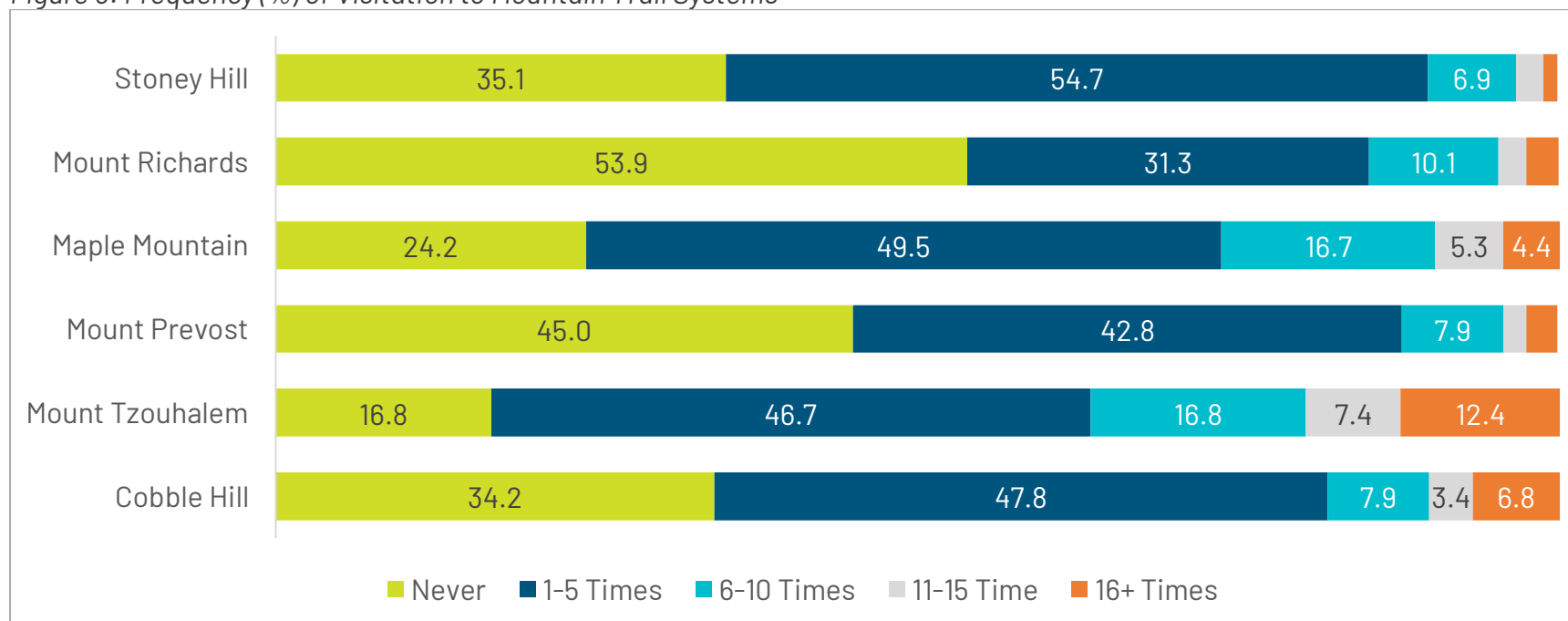
⁵ Several participants noted that they were surprised or disappointed that a more comprehensive list of trail systems was not provided. Individuals representing different systems (e.g., marine trails and trails in particular communities) also reached out to ask about inclusion in the survey, but this occurred too late in the process.



Frequency of Visitation

Mount Richards (46.1%) and Mount Prevost (54.9%) were identified as the least visited trail systems two months before participants completed the survey, and Mount Tzouhalem (83.3%) and Maple Mountain (75.9%) were the most visited sites. Figure 4 shows that participants who got to Mount Tzouhalem (16.8%) and Maple Mountain (16.7%) are more likely to visit more frequently.

Figure 5: Frequency (%) of Visitation to Mountain Trail Systems





Economic Impacts

Study participants were asked to estimate how much money they had spent on equipment, restaurant food, incidentals, and visitor accommodations⁶. Spending needed to be in the Cowichan Valley two months before completing the survey, which for the majority would have included late September to early December. The average spend on equipment was \$556.39 ($SD = \$1,761.57$) and ranged from \$0.00 to \$20,000, with participants estimating their total spending at \$456,239.00. The average spending in cafés or restaurants was \$108.56 ($SD = \148.19) and ranged from \$0.00 to \$1,000.00 for a total estimated spend of \$92,489.00. Participants reported that they spent \$69.25 ($SD = \115.74) on average for incidentals like snacks, fuel, and groceries; however, as one resident noted, it was hard to estimate as they generally packed snacks and lunches from groceries in their home and they did not always gas-up their vehicle on days they used the trails. Reported spending on incidentals ranged from \$0.00 to \$1,000.00 for an estimated \$58,655.00. Table 4 includes the average and median spending, reflecting that 50% of participants spent less and 50% more.

The most common response for equipment and restaurant/café food was \$0.00 and \$20.00 for incidentals. The total direct spending in the Cowichan Valley (excluding visitor accommodations) was an estimated \$607,843.00. As this period included the lead-in to both the fall mountain bike season and holiday spending, it is possible that the range in equipment spending could be accounted for when purchasing higher-end bikes. Further, most participants engaged in multiple activities, which may have required them to purchase equipment for more than one activity.

Table 4: Estimated Spending by All Participants

	Average Spend	Median Value*	Range	Total Spend
Equipment	\$556.39	\$100.00	\$20,000.00	\$456,239.00
Restaurant/Café Food	\$108.56	\$50.00	\$1000.00	\$92,489.00
Incidentals	\$69.25	\$25.00	\$1000.00	\$58,655.00

*Fifty percent of all responses were above and below this value.

Given the spending range, additional analysis was conducted using a cut-off of approximately 85%–90% of participants in each category. For incidental spending, 85.1% of participants spent \$100 or less, 86.3% spent \$200.00 or less on food and beverages, and 89.5% spent \$600.00 or less on equipment. Selecting only participants who fit into all three of

⁶ Measuring expenditures can be challenging as some people are reluctant to share the information, and/or respondents may under or overestimate their true spending based on social pressures/bias.



these groups resulted in a total sample of 576 participants, accounting for varying percentages of those who reported spending on equipment (70.2%), restaurants (67.6%), and incidentals (68.0%). Table 5 includes these participants' average spending, median value, range, and total spending.

Table 5: Estimated Spending by Participants – Corrected

	Average Spend	Median Value*	Range	Total Spend
Equipment	\$118.59	\$50.00	\$600.00	\$68,309.00
Restaurant/Café Food	\$50.97	\$40.00	\$200	\$29,357.00
Incidentals	\$28.97	\$20.00	\$100	\$16,687.00

*Fifty percent of all responses were above and below this value.

Visitor Only Spending

Visitors represented less than 20% of the sample but still accounted for substantial spending. Their spending patterns reflected the whole sample, with equipment and restaurant spending higher than incidentals or accommodations. However, incidental spending by visitors ($M=\$92.89$, $SD=\$133.02$) was higher on average than the whole ($M=\$69.25$, $SD=\$115.74$). The range for spending on equipment was much lower (\$12,000.00), reflecting that many visitors likely made larger equipment purchases elsewhere (Table 6).

Table 6: Visitor Spending in the Cowichan Valley

	Average Spend	Median Value*	Range	Total Spend
Equipment	\$435.74	\$67.50	\$12,000.00	\$63,618.00
Restaurant/Café Food	\$140.87	\$77.50	\$1000.00	\$21,694.00
Incidentals	\$92.89	\$50.00	\$1000.00	\$14,119.00
Accommodations	\$72.05	\$0.00**	\$3000.00	\$8,502.00

*Fifty percent of all responses were above and below this value. **Most visits were day trips only.

Social Impacts of Trail Use

Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with several benefit statements, while reflecting on participating in their main trail activity. The scale ranged from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5), and participants agreed that they experienced all benefits listed except for the one financial-related statement (Table 7).

*Table 7: Benefits of Participating in Trail-Based Activities*

Benefits of Participating in Activity	Average	SD
I have benefited socially from doing my activity.	4.13	0.93
My activity is an expression of my identity.	4.12	0.91
Participating in my activity enhanced my self-image.	4.10	0.86
I share many of the same beliefs as others who do my activity.	4.06	0.87
My activity allows me to display my skills and abilities.	3.75	0.98
The development and cohesiveness of my activity group is important to me.	3.74	1.04
I have benefited financially from doing my activity.	2.01	1.05

Trail Use and Management Issues

Participants were asked to indicate to what extent a series of common trail issues were a problem in the Cowichan Valley. The scale ranged from *not at all* (1) to *very high* (5), and as can be seen in Table 8, the issues listed were identified as small to moderate problems. *Motorized vehicles on the trail* (2.9) and *litter* (2.7) were ranked as moderate issues, while *inexperienced users on expert trails* (1.9) and *lack of adequate safe parking* (2.0) were ranked as small issues. Participants were also asked to identify “other” issues – those comments (unsorted) are available in Appendix A.

Table 8: Extent of Trail Use and Management Issues

Trail Use and Management Issue	Average
Motorized vehicles on trails.	2.9
Litter on trails.	2.7
Graffiti or vandalism.	2.5
Lack of washroom facilities	2.4
Trail users ignoring rules and regulations.	2.3
Encountering dogs off-leash.	2.3
Poorly marked trails.	2.2
Unsafe mountain bike structures.	2.1
Conflicts with other users	2.0
Lack of adequate safe parking.	2.0
Inexperienced users on expert trails.	1.9



Comparing Hikers and Mountain Bikers

The two primary trail user groups were hikers and mountain bikers; this section directly compares these groups to highlight the similarities and differences in the social and economic impacts experienced and associated with each group. It is worth noting that many of the participants do both activities; however, they are sorted based on the answer given to the question asking which activity they did the most in the 30 days before doing the survey. The total sample was 642 trail users; 53.0% were hikers, and 47.0% were mountain bikers.

Sample Description

There were significantly more female (67.8%) than male (31.9%) hikers and conversely more male (71.4%) than female (27.9%) mountain bikers. On average, hikers were older (61.5 years) than mountain bikers (47.4 years), with 65.1% of hikers aged 60 or older and 66.1% of mountain bikers being 30 to 59 years of age. More hikers (62.2%) than mountain bikers (49.8%) reported household incomes of less than \$100,000.00, whereas 15.0% of hikers and 31.5% of mountain bikers reported household incomes of \$100,000.00 to \$149,999.00. Most hikers (92.2%) were from the Cowichan Valley, compared to 61.4% of mountain bikers. In contrast, 26.5% of mountain bikers were from the South Island.

Mountain Bikers and Hikers Trail Activities and Locations Visited in the Cowichan Valley

Table 9 includes the percentage of hikers and mountain bikers who were likely or very likely to participate in other trail activities. Mountain Bikers were more likely to hike on Cowichan Valley trails than hikers were to mountain bike. Hikers were more likely to use trails for walking, nature appreciation, and foraging, while mountain bikers were more likely to trail run.

Table 9: Hiker and Mountain Biker Likelihood of Using Trails for Different Activities

Activity (n=)	Hikers		Mountain Bikers	
	Likely (%)	Very Likely (%)	Likely (%)	Very Likely (%)
Hiking (n=559)	11.8	85.6	31.2	30.1
Mountain Biking (n=548)	12.0	12.0	19.4	75.9
Walking/Walking Dog (n=506)	19.3	57.2	19.4	25.9
Trail Running (n=492)	13.9	10.7	16.9	8.3
Nature Appreciation (n=557)	19.5	72.7	32.4	26.0
Foraging (n=504)	14.1	6.7	7.2	3.2



Participants were also asked to indicate whether they hiked or mountain biked at several locations throughout the valley. Table 10 shows that, except for Stoney Hill, hikers and mountain bikers were most likely to do their primary activity at each location.

Table 10: Percentage of Hikers and Mountain Bikers Who Do Each Activity at Different Locations

Location (n=)	Hikers		Mountain Bikers	
	Hiking (%)	Mountain Biking (%)	Hiking (%)	Mountain Biking (%)
Cobble Hill (n=501)	81.2	5.4	14.1	75.5
Mount Tzouhalem (n=586)	81.0	12.2	1.7	97.6
Mount Prevost (n=466)	85.7	2.5	23.1	70.3
Maple Mountain (n=570)	81.9	9.7	4.3	94.7
Mount Richards (n=428)	85.3	3.1	22.1	71.1
Stoney Hill (n=501)	80.8	0.0	59.8	15.8

Spending Within the Cowichan Valley by Hikers and Mountain Bikers

Mountain bikers spent more money in all categories measured than hikers; however, the increased spending was partially explained by the number of visitors (48.6%) who were mountain bikers and the expense of the associated equipment. In the two months before completing the survey, hikers estimated that they spent \$98,008, and mountain bikers spent \$397,476.00. Table 11 illustrates the average spend, the median spend, and the range for hikers and mountain bikers in three different categories: (a) equipment, (b) food and beverage, and (c) incidentals (gas, snacks, etc.). Visitors were not asked where they spent the money (i.e., community) or what pieces of equipment were purchased.

Table 11: Spending of Hikers and Mountain Bikers in the Cowichan Valley

	Average (\$)	Median Value (\$)*	Range (\$)	Total Spend (\$)
	Hikers Mountain Bikers	Hikers Mountain Bikers	Hikers Mountain Bikers	Hikers Mountain Bikers
Equipment	192.24 1252.23	50.00 300.00	9,500.00 20,000.00	52,097.00 330,590.00
Restaurant/Café Food	103.11 153.93	50.00 100.00	1,000.00 1,000.00	29,387.00 41,715.00
Incidentals	58.80 94.27	20.00 50.00	650.00 1,000.00	16,524.00 25,171.00

*Median value = 50% of values above and 50% below the amount listed.



Social Impacts of Trail Use for Hikers and Mountain Bikers

Hikers and mountain bikers indicated that participation in their primary trail activity resulted in positive social benefits. Figures 6 and 7 illustrate the average level of agreement of hikers and mountain bikers with each statement (1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree). The only statement that the participants disagreed with concerned financial gain from their activity and the only statistically significant differences found between user types related to the following three statements (Figures 6 & 7).

- a) I have improved my skills in my activity since I began doing it.
- b) I work at being more competent in my activity.
- c) I overcome difficulties in my activity by being persistent.

Figure 6: Average Agreement with Social Benefit Statements I

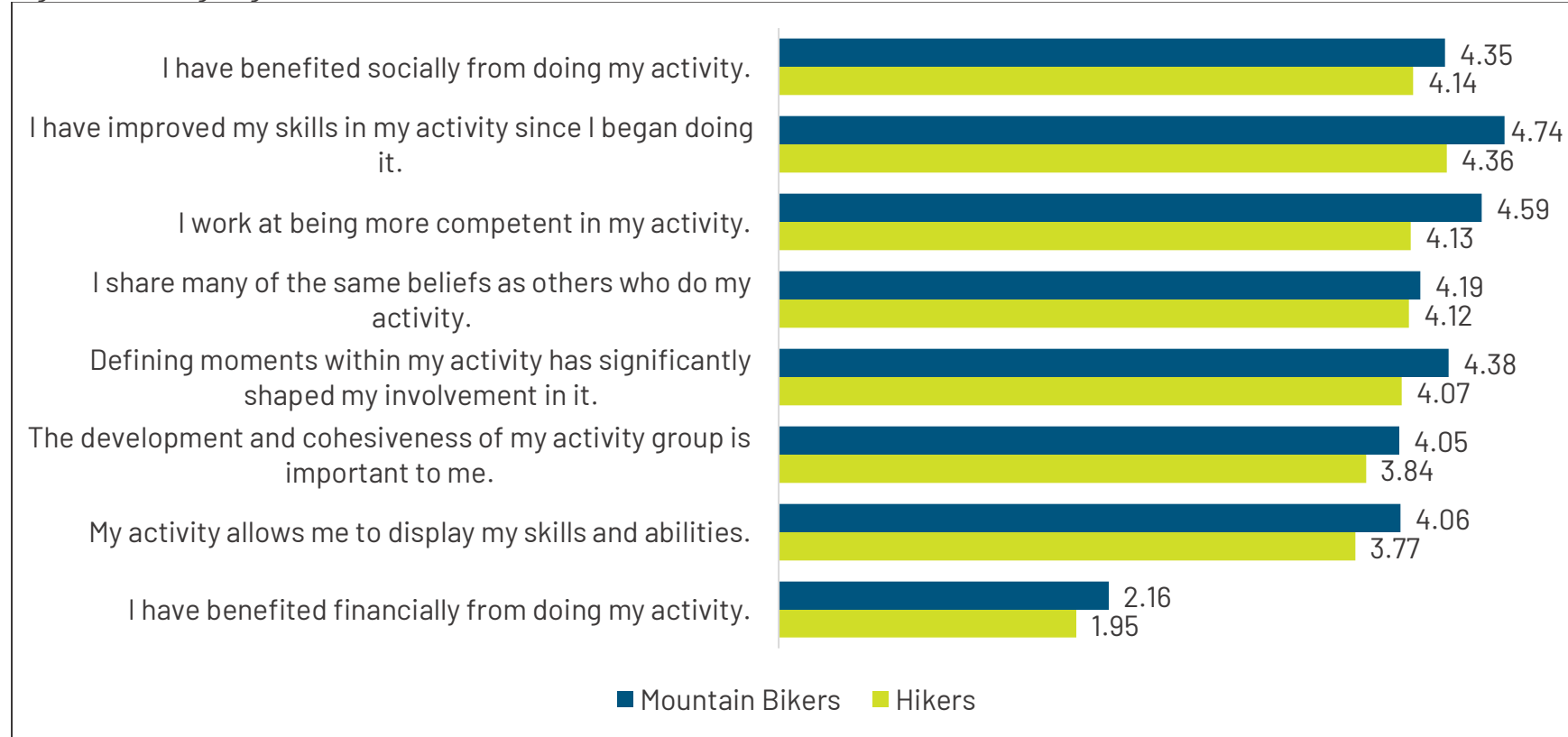
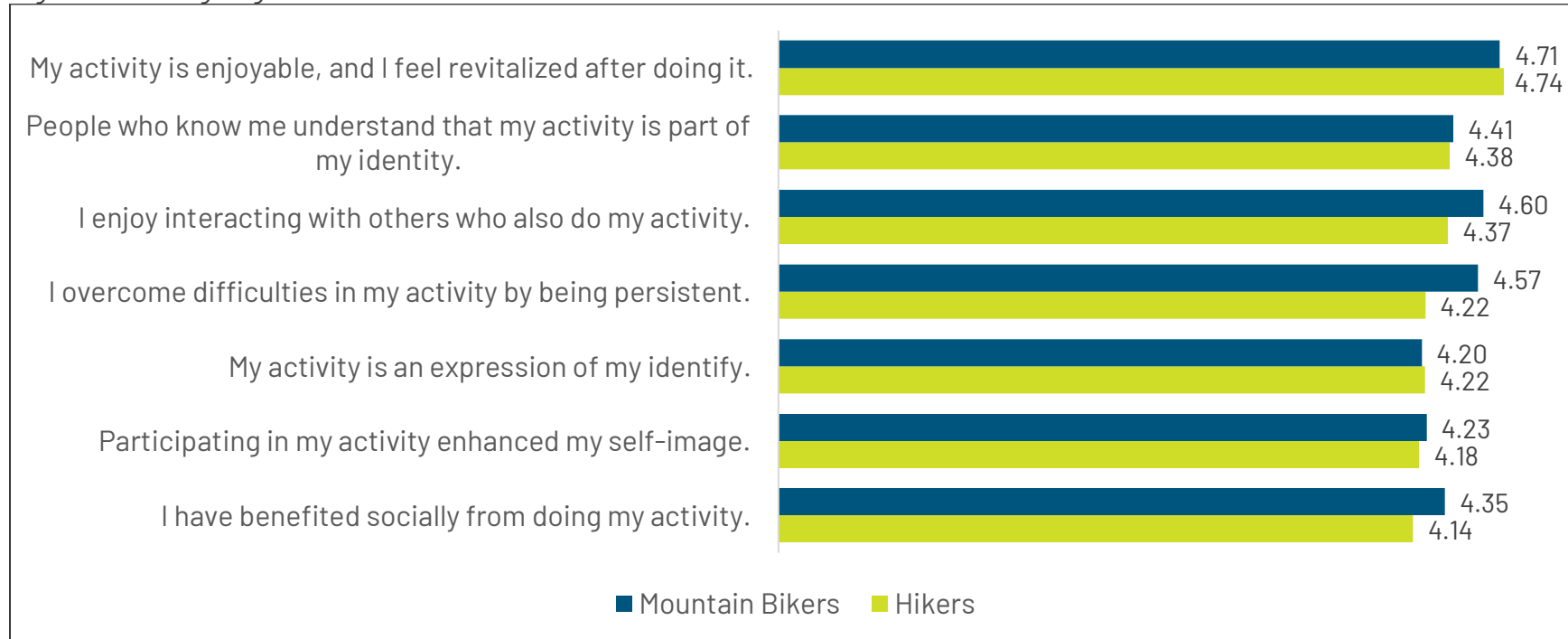




Figure 7: Average Agreement with Social Benefit Statements II

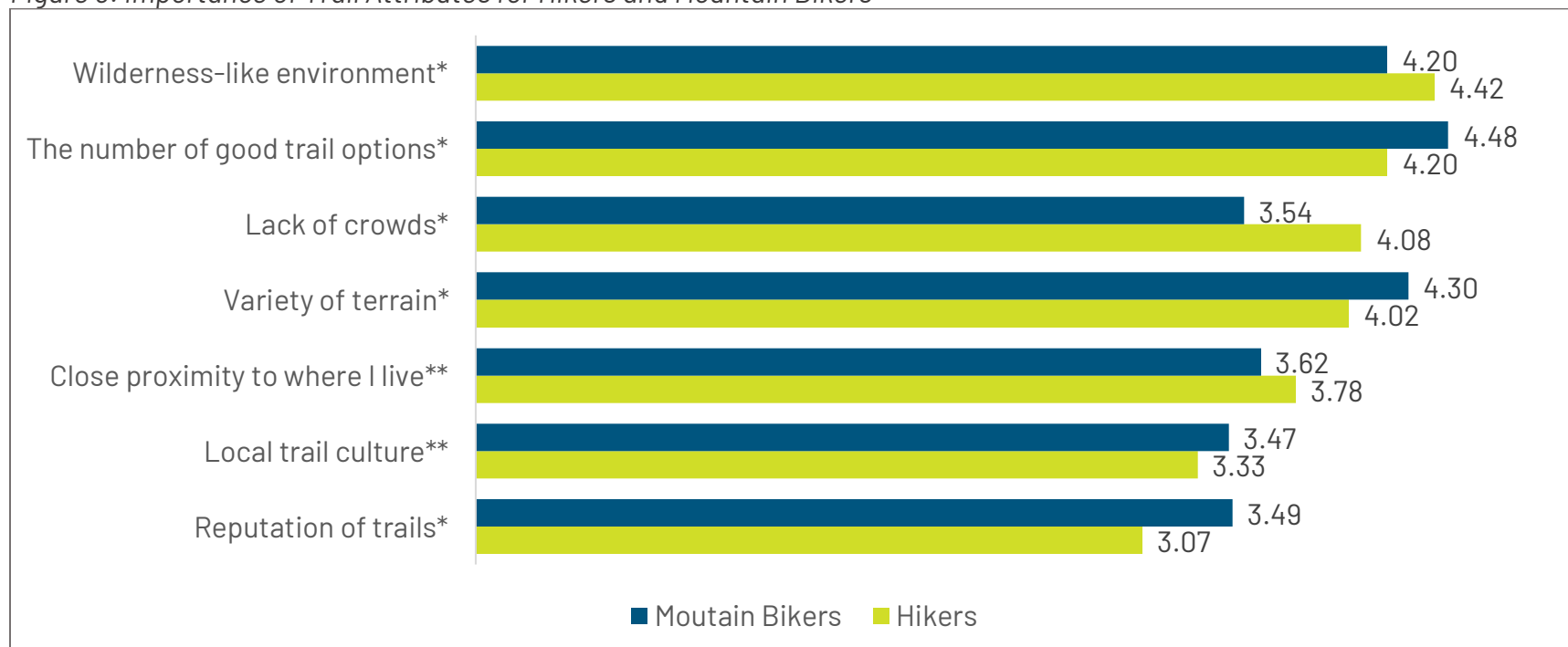


Importance of Different Trail Attributes to Hikers and Mountain Bikers

Hikers and mountain bikers were asked to indicate the importance of different attributes in choosing a particular trail using a scale from not at all important (1) to very important (5). Significant differences between the user groups were found related to eight of the attributes (Figure 8). Hikers indicated that a *wilderness-like environment* (4.42) and *lack of crowds* (4.08) were of higher importance to their trail selection than mountain bikers (4.20 & 3.45). All attributes were ranked moderately important or higher; however, the results show that trail options, reputation, and local culture were more important to mountain bikers than hikers.



Figure 8: Importance of Trail Attributes for Hikers and Mountain Bikers



*This signifies that differences would be found at 99/100 ($p < .01$). **This means that differences would be found at 95/100 ($p < .05$).

Level of Agreement with Managerial Issues Facing Trails in the Cowichan Valley

Hikers and mountain bikers revealed different perspectives on all managerial issues⁷ except *inexperienced users on expert trails* and *lack of washroom facilities*, which both groups identified as minor issues. For all other statements, hikers felt that the issues were more impactful than mountain bikers⁸, which was also reflected in the comments offered by participants.

⁷ Italics indicate scale items from the questionnaire.

⁸ All differences were statistically significant $< .05$.



Hikers identified *soil erosion, motorized vehicles on trails, encountering dogs off-leash, and trail users ignoring rules and regulations* as issues experienced at a moderate level. In contrast, mountain bikers only identified *soil erosion and motorized vehicles on trails* as moderately impactful (Figure 9). Increased trail use/development related to mountain biking (Table 12) and dogs (Table 13) were strong themes within the hikers' comments. Mountain bikers (Table 14) commented more on adding trails, inadequate parking, and signage about safe trail use (i.e., crossing and downhill single tracks).

Table 12: Comments Made by Hikers Regarding Challenges with Mountain Bikers

Hikers' Perspectives on Mountain Bikers

Mt Tzouhalem, I've had to change my timing and mountain with the "take over" by mtn bikers. 25 years of hiking. I'm not against the shift, but it's a noted change and grateful we have other areas to hike/walk.

Too few trails that are hiking only are now leading to close encounters between bikers and hikers. It is difficult to enjoy a nature trail hike while needing to be hypervigilant for the sound of bikes.

Bikers on hiking trails, with blind corners and people not respecting the usage rules

The most frequent challenge and issue that pushes me away from trails is overuse/busyness, especially in relation to mountain biking. Especially on Mt Tzouhalem, there are days and times that are extremely unpleasant to hike because of the amount of mountain bikers that descend on the mountain.

Mountain bikers make trails dangerous for hikers due to soil erosion and fast-moving traffic.

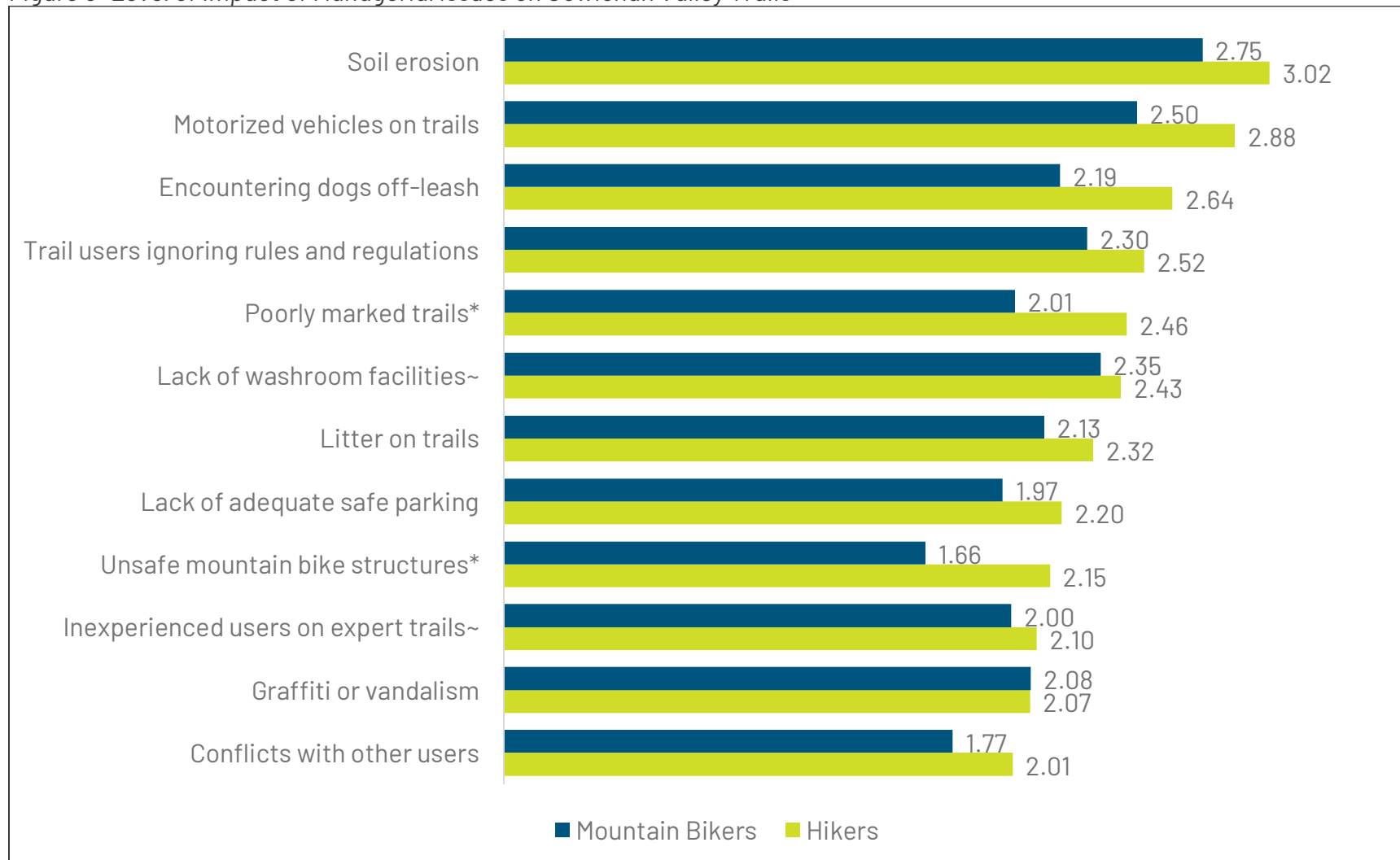
More education needed for bikers on blind corner of shared trail on Tzouhalem. Despite hikers' use of whistle and shouting both bikers and hikers almost collided or went over the edge. Frightening.

"I love the trails, but I feel unsafe when bikes are on the trails with me. Some bikers think they have right away...Maple Mountain is unsafe for hiking because bikers. This is upsetting. I am afraid to walk there.

~Study Participant~



Figure 9: Level of Impact of Managerial Issues on Cowichan Valley Trails



*p < .01. ~No statistical difference. All other items p < .05.



Table 13: Comments Made by Hikers Regarding Challenges with Dogs

Hikers' Perspectives on Dogs
<p>I feel very unsafe at times when there are aggressive unleashed dogs on the trails, and I encounter them almost every time I use them. To me that is the greatest risk factor I have encountered.</p> <p><i>Off leash dogs are an ongoing and growing problem. Aggressive dogs off leash running up to hikers, barking, and baring teeth...</i></p> <p>The off-leash dogs are a huge problem as well as their waste bags</p> <p>Aggressive off leash dogs</p> <p>Dogs are a problem on many of the trails we have used throughout the Cowichan valley. We have tried talking to some of the people, but many are belligerent, and the challenges, of course, with enforcement. There are trails by my house in my neighborhood and people go around with their dogs off leash, despite walking right by a sign requiring leashes, and the other issue is people not picking up their dog poop!</p> <p>Off leash dogs are an ongoing & growing problem. Aggressive dogs off leash running up to hikers, barking and bearing teeth. They often sniff and bite hikers including myself while their owners dismiss it as not a problem.</p> <p>Full/used dog litter bags left on trails</p> <p>Some dogs are a bit aggressive but, other than that, I thoroughly enjoy my trail experiences.</p>

*Table 14: Comments Made by Mountain Bikers*

Mountain Bikers' Comments
Aggressive residents near Mt. Tzouhalem parking lot
Parking is only an issue for zoo
Need more parking Mt Richards side. Thank you. Dangerous for my dog. 🐕
Ban dogs off leash. Insane amount of mtb riders that run their dog using downhill trails. Set the standard and stop this please
Cobble hill off leash dogs are brutal!
Other mountain bikers poor trail etiquette, poor trail maintenance on flow trails
Unleashed dogs on bike trails are a significant safety issue, usually with irresponsible riders.
Walkers on downhill only trails, dog feces baggies left on trails
We have lots of land, keeping biking trails for bikers and hiking trails for hikers, makes the most sense and leaves nothing to an issue

Hiker and Mountain Biker Party Sizes and Information Seeking Sources

Hikers (33.9%) were most likely to hike with one other person and mountain bikers (27.0%) with two other people (Table 15). Seventy-three percent of hikers used the trails with four or fewer additional people, whereas 83.1% of mountain bikers rode with four or fewer riders. A higher percentage of hikers (14.0%) were in larger groups of seven or more people (mountain bikers = 2.8%).

Table 15: Group Size for Mountain Bikers and Hikers using Cowichan Valley Trails



Number of People	Hikers % (n=271)	Mountain Bikers % (n=244)
1 Person	33.9	19.3
2 People	19.6	27.0
3 People	10.3	20.1
4 People	9.2	19.7
5 People	8.1	5.7
6 People	4.8	5.3
7-13 People	8.5	2.0
14+ People	5.5	0.8

Mountain bikers and hikers tended to use different sources for trail information; however, both groups were most likely to use a third-party app versus information shared through traditional channels. AllTrails (38.8%), friends and family (13.3%), and Trailforks (11.0%) were the most popular sources for hikers. In contrast, mountain bikers used Trailforks (36.4%) and Strava (11.8%) the most. It is worth noting that few hikers and mountain bikers used municipal websites (6.5% & 3.0%) or the Tourism Cowichan website (0.3% & 0.4%) for trail information. There were also mixed comments regarding signage and trail information, with some feeling that there was a need for more maps and others indicating appreciation for the quality of the trail signs.

Conclusions

The results of this study provide a snapshot of trail use in the Cowichan Valley, with a particular focus on the mountain trail networks (i.e., Mount Tzouhalem, Stoney Hill, Mount Prevost, Maple Mountain, Mount Richards, and Cobble Hill). The additional analysis shows the similarities and differences between hikers and mountain bikers as the two primary user groups. The information in this section is offered as conclusions drawn from study results and things that the Cowichan Trail Stewardship Society, municipalities in the Cowichan Valley, and Tourism Cowichan may want to consider.

The results of this study clearly show the importance of trails for the residents of the Cowichan Valley and Vancouver Island. Trails were identified as important to participants for achieving social and mental health benefits, particularly for adults and older adults. The World Health Organization have noted that social isolation impacts approximately 25% of older adults and 5% -15% of adolescents and that it has similar negative health outcomes as smoking, obesity, and physical



inactivity.⁹ Trails are community recreation spaces facilitating opportunities for social connections and physical activity, elevating their vital role in public health and wellbeing strategies.

Measuring the economic impact of trails is challenging as it relies on participants remembering and reflecting on their spending accurately. Economic impacts are only linked to visitors (i.e., new money) to the community, whereas economic activity accounts for all user spending¹⁰. The results of this study revealed that visitors and locals invested in their activities (e.g., equipment) and spent on the social components of the experience. These contributions to the local community are not insignificant but must be considered in combination with social and ecological/climate change mitigation benefits.

Hikers identified more inter-user conflicts than mountain bikers, and the comments revealed increasing concerns about expanding mountain bike trails into traditionally hiking/walking-only areas. While this was not ranked as a high-impact issue, it requires monitoring and ongoing consultation for future development and trail strategies. Additionally, off-leash dogs were universally identified as a management issue that impacted trail users and their perceptions of safety.

Considerations

The following points are offered for consideration based on the results presented and general comments shared by participants (Appendix B), and they should not be considered prescriptive or the only factors that should be considered in future trail development and management.

Trail and Infrastructure Development

As trail popularity and its use for economic development increase, a few things should be considered.

- ⇒ Trails' social and health benefits are significant and often not fully considered in rationales for trail development.
- ⇒ Inter-user group conflicts and less compatible activities should be considered for future planning.
 - Hikers/walkers perceived that their access was being reduced by expanding mountain bike trails.
 - Off-leash dogs were a problem for most user groups, and it was suggested that designating off-leash trails would help reduce this issue.
 - Clearer signage about the sanctioned uses for each trail, combined with education about trail uses (e.g., don't hike up a downhill mountain bike trail), may help to reduce inter-group conflict.

⁹ <https://www.who.int/teams/social-determinants-of-health/demographic-change-and-healthy-ageing/social-isolation-and-loneliness>

¹⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/live/3A56EKYx0x8?si=CJGoxwLWtGvjgc5d>



- ⇒ Providing adequate parking, garbage collection, washrooms, bike washing stations, etc., at trailheads can facilitate improved user experiences.
- ⇒ Advocate for trail development and use that promotes residents' engagement in physically active and socially engaged leisure.

Future Research

The research presented here provides a snapshot that was heavily influenced by the membership of the CTSS and hiking groups within the Cowichan Valley. It had a relatively narrow focus and was conducted to meet the needs of the CTSS, and was designed to align with a study done in Nanaimo¹¹ to allow for comparison. Most points below speak to expanding the focus, design, or methods.

- ⇒ Future trail research and consultations must explicitly include other user groups who did not perceive that they were represented in the current questionnaire (e.g., non-mountain bike cyclists and different equestrian/horse groups).
- ⇒ Municipalities within the Cowichan Valley should consider partnering to explore the social, ecological, and economic benefits of the various trails within the region.
 - Concerns were raised about bias due to the involvement of the Cowichan Trails Stewardship Society and the perception of its focus on mountain biking.
 - While the CTSS was focused on exploring the economic and social benefits of specific mountain trail systems, residents and other trail groups indicated that a broader, more inclusive study was needed.
- ⇒ Ongoing monitoring of inter-user conflicts is required to ensure that issues are handled quickly and effectively.
- ⇒ Future economic evaluation of parks and trails could include various sources, such as surveying local businesses (e.g., biking stores) about equipment expenditures or partnering with Tourism Cowichan to capture visitor data.
- ⇒ Trail use monitoring over a longer period and during a different season may reveal different users and spending patterns. It can also assist with assessing carrying capacity (social and ecological), user dispersion, and additional management issues.

¹¹ <https://www.mbta.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Nanaimo-Trails-Survey-2021-Economic-Impact-of-Mountain-Biking-Management-Considerations-and-User-Characteristics-Report-Matthew-Bowes.pdf>



Appendix A: All Trail Management Comments

Comments – Unsorted and Unedited

- Accessibility
- Aggressive dogs off leash
- Aggressive residents near Mt. Tzouhalem parking lot
- Bags of dog excrement in bushes after leaves fall. Yuck
- Bathrooms locked for off season
- bike wash water hose is always missing?
- Bikers going after dogs owners, shouting at us. Motorbikes even where they should not be. Bikers trying to beat up our dogs. Seriously we don't know where to go... Most dogs are afraid of bikes, we spend a fortune in training but bikers don't give us a chance. They are everywhere also where they are not allowed to be...
- Bikers not heeding hikers on trails. Tzouhalem summit trail dangerous on weekends!
- Bikers on hiking trails and their speed and rudeness
- Bikers on hiking trails, with blind corners and people not respecting the usage rules
- Bikes on walking trails, unsafe for hikers.
- bow hunters actively hunting on Tzouhalem
- Bridges washed out in lots of trails
- Closure of trail due to washouts has been an issue
- Cobble hill off leash dogs are brutal!
- Cowichan trail blocked off on Sherman Road
- creeps
- Cyclists on Crofton Lake using lake trail where families/dog walkers are. Almost rode into people around a corner, riding quickly.
- Cyclists on traditional hiking trails, shortcutting switch backs by cyclists, runners, and inexperienced hikers
- Debris from the FireSmart project, last spring, still has not been removed from Mt Tzouhalem
- dirt bike riders in some areas
- Dirt bikes & ATV damage to trails and NOISE.
- Dirt bikes specifically
- Dog feces
- Dog poo bags
- Dog poop on trail edges on some dog-dense trails



- Dog shit classified as litter?
- Dogs off leash
- Dogs off leash with their owners on their mountain bike
- downed trees seem to take a long time to get removed
- Dumbing down of natural trail sections, lack of signage at trail crossing advising mtbers to SLOW DOWN
- Erosion specifically on Downhill Only Trails
- Full/used dog litter bags left on trails
- Hikers and Mountain Bikers need designation/signage
- Horse crap High
- Horse waste on cobble hill is a huge issue and the commercial users are amplifying the issue
- Horses and their leftovers!!
- Horses are a problem. They ruin the trails and horse owners are righteous and rarely move to the side of the trail.
- Horses on Cobble Hill Mountain- they take up the whole trail, leave a lot of poop to step in and move very slowly and we have to move right off the trail and wait for them to go by.
- Hunters
- I find that people often don't leash their dogs and if I have the grandchildren with me this causes them to have fear and upset. I myself have become confused of my location while hiking on Mount Tzouhalem.
- I need places for dogs to be dogs off leash
- I RIDE AND CARRIAGE DRIVE DAILY AND ENCOUNTER VERY FEW PROBLEMS
- I try to avoid dirt bikes or quads just so my horse doesn't spook
- I worry about access to trails. Private individuals block access and housing developments eliminate trail systems.
- I would say parking an issue, and cell reception in case of emergency
- illegal motorized vehicles
- increasing numbers of people using trails
- Insufficient number of and location of waste receptacles means lots of folks don't pick up dog waste in particular
- Karens
- Lack of bike wash stations
- Lack of real time reporting of bear sightings
- lack of responsibility from dog owners: dog excrement, bags thrown in the bush
- Lack of trail maintenance
- lack on maintenance of structures like stairs and foot bridges particularly at Glenora on the foot path...it is dangerous.



- Limit of funds assigned to trail maintenance
- litter and dog poop
- Main parking areas shouldn't be near residences. Mt Tz. Need an accessible paved trail.
- Mnt bike trails not allowed on Mt Richards so their established trails are not well marked
- More bike wash stations at other trailheads
- More trails should be off leash but dogs under control
- More washrooms, outhouses! Maybe composting toilet at top of Tzouhalem!
- Most of the nice hiking trails are slowly becoming bike only
- Motorized vehicles on Mt. Richards
- Motorized vehicles on unauthorized trails
- Mountain Bike Trail building and use in ESA's and other restricted areas
- Mountain bikers not calling out when crossing a hiking trail.
- Mountain bikers scaring me
- Mountain bikers with attitudes
- Mountain bikes make trails dangerous for hikers due to soil erosion and fast-moving traffic.
- Mt Tzouhalem, I've had to change my timing and mountains with the "take over" by mtn bikers. 25 years of hiking. I'm not against the shift, but it's a noted change and grateful we have other areas to hike/walk.
- Multi users not following rules for who has right of way
- need a garbage can
- Need for area trail maps
- need trails which are designated off-leash. Otherwise all trails are on-leash. I've seen bikes/dogs collide and "friendly" dogs scaring people who are afraid of any dog
- No active program to keep people from trespassing on Cowichan Tribes lands.
- No bike wash at Maple Mtn
- Not respecting the land right holders use as a priority...and was there any First Nation on this working group? questions are leading and not Culturally Safe.
- Off leash dogs that are not under control
- Ongoing culture of consumption - take without giving back
- other mountain bikers poor trail etiquette, poor trail maintenance on flow trails
- Parking is only an issue for zoo
- People leaving trinkets in the forest...its littering.
- People not picking up their pet waste and or throwing the bag into trees.



- Sad to see downhill bikers taking precedence over other user groups. They are not the friendliest group of riders...
 - sharing trails with fast moving mountain bikers
 - Signage to keep hikers off high speed biking trails (but it's in the works for Prevost)
 - Specifically, Mt. Prevost needs washrooms
 - The bike wash hose getting stolen on a daily basis at tzouhalem is quite annoying. No bottle fill/ wash station at maple mountain is surprising with how much use that location is getting.
 - The survey appears to highlight mountain biking with a lower interest on gravel biking, hiking and trail running an
 - The TCT in the Glenora area is typically not cleared of downed trees very often or quickly.
 - the use of trails by hikers/walkers, and mountain bikers is unsafe and NOT sustainable.
 - There are toilets at each site I access. This is so great for out of towners. Can change after a ride and go to a restaurant to eat
 - There seems to be a bias that favours mountain biking over every other type of trail user. This makes safely walking or running challenging.
 - These questions seem to be specific to only one or 2 user groups
 - Too few trails that are hiking only are now leading to close encounters between bikers and hikers. It is difficult to enjoy a nature trail hike while needing to be hypervigilant for the sound of bikes
 - Too many downhill biking trails...
 - Too many trails have been annexed by the cycling members, walkers have no rights here.
 - Trails destroyed ! Referring to Mount Tzouhalem, by the White Church
 - Un maintained boardwalks and stairs
 - Unleashed dogs on bike trails are a significant safety issue, usually with irresponsible riders.
 - Use of Unauthorised Trails, Removal of Trail Marker Maps
 - Variety of trails: not many long distance or low elevation gain trails for new users
 - Walkers on downhill only trails, dog feces baggies left on trails
 - Wash rooms need cleaning more.
 - Water bowls for dogs at some main points other than trailhead
 - When riding a horse, being unsafely approached by cyclists, namely too fast and too close. When approached from behind, many cyclists do not announce that they are approaching.
 - Why was the washroom at the Mt Tzouhalem closed during a recent frosty spell of weather
 - Windfall not cleared
-



Appendix B: Additional Comments – All Participants

Comments – Unsorted and Unedited

- I prefer to walk/hike on established walking/hiking trails. Although I appreciate the presence of unsanctioned mnt bike trails to navigate Mt Richards, I don't walk the well used bike trails on Maple Mt (but I do scuttle between the hiking trails and biking trails). And I find Mt. Tzouhalem's biking trails overly curated (for fire management purposes), and too many intersecting bike trails along the route to the Cross.
- the trails are very important especially for carriage drivers as we have not other places to drive. Roads are unsafe. Trails have to be wide enough for carriages without stairs and very steep inclines.
- There is a need to incorporate indigenous values and reconciliation activities into trail management.
- 1) The survey does not give enough emphasis on the use of TransCanada Trail. There is a washout that is now three years old that has not been repaired. The trail provides safe walking and biking for school kids and commuters and this is limited both by the washout and the limited urban and peri-urban extent of the trail. 2. The noise from the Vancouver Island Motorsport Circuit is a significant impairment to the use of the Trans Canada trail in the Sahtlam area as well as the hiking trails on Mount Prevost.
- A wonderful resource for us from the much more crowded Capital Region. Worth a weekend pilgrimage. Hope to see more accommodations developed along the main rails to trails. Love the surfacing by the way – great gravel/fines mix that works for cyclists, horses, walkers.
- Access to information about flora and fauna as well as routes and direction signage is important especially for New Canadians and visitors to the area as well as encouraging locals to be involved in the preservation of our precious woodland and other nature sites. Many people refer to online info for description and directions – this is probably a better investment than hard signage or displays. Thinking of info like birds, distinctive plants. Trees. Indigenous peoples, settlers... natural and human history.
- All trail building in the Municipal Forest Reserves brings a bounty of benefits to local communities and overall health to people and environmental connectiveness. People don't know what can be lost to if they can't get out there to enjoy it. Motorbikes constantly, constantly use Mt Richards as their own dirt bike track. They are typically underage and ride non-street legal bikes on the roads through traffic to get there. This situation is very dangerous and obviously illegal.
- Allow dogs off leash more, on more trails. Cruel to keep them on leash, they need to run.
- Although I am mostly a sole user, I do love seeing others out on the trails. As a regular local user of the Cowichan Trail system, I like seeing others that are presumably in the same boat. We are SO lucky to have easy access to our trail network.



- Although I have marked dog walking as main activity, given the time parameters, I am an active carriage driver (equestrian) other times of year and more safe accessible trails are needed as no longer safe to drive on the roads in my neighbourhood
- always amazing at how many people use the trails in the Valley every day, yet you can complete a ride/run/hike and never see anyone. the abundance of trails definitely adds to societal value as well.
- Amazing trails. So grateful for these protected areas.
- An arborist should evaluate the trails and assess the amount of damage that's been done to the trees next to the trails (i.e: root damage)
- An important reason as to why I choose to live here
- acquire more land for conservation! And keep doing what you do! Your trails are why I moved here!
- As a long time local user of the area trails I'm more than concerned about the huge influx of trail bikers, since Covid, that have taken over many trails on mount Tzouhalem and Maple Mountain. These are the trails I frequency most. It seems this has been happening without consulting all multi users. Many times we have had to jump off trails, that are marked hiking, to get out of the way of mountain bikers. My husband and I were verbally assaulted as were my hiking pals and I. We are mature, courteous adults that have stated these mountain trails for years. It's a more recent issue in my mind. Thanks for listening, I've been wondering if we hikers would get a voice.
- As an avid trail runner and hiker, I am disappointed how many trails that used to be for hiking only now have mountain bike use. I'm seeing more trail erosion and do not feel as safe.
- As an Ontario resident spending the winters on Vancouver Island, I have enjoyed hiking on the Cowichan Valley trails and seeing the beautiful scenery in the area. There are many trails yet to explore and I look forward to seeing them all.
- As densification in the area of Duncan/North Cowichan continues to increase, the importance of access to nature through the trail system will also increase. Current studies are showing cognitive ability increases after being in nature compared to staying indoors. This needs to be more widely known as our nature spaces within town are decreasing in existence or safety.
- As I age I find it more difficult to walk any distance. I am not able to ride a horse or a bicycle, so it really limits my trail use in the area. I do have a quad and I use it responsibly in areas where it is permitted, and I would love to see the development of trails for motorized vehicles, quads, motorized bicycles and electric carts. Just because we are elderly doesn't mean we want to stay in and not enjoy nature.



- As noted above awfully dogs are a problem on many of the trails we have used throughout the Cowichan valley. We have tried talking to some of the people, but many are belligerent, and the challenges, of course, with enforcement. There are trails by my house in my neighborhood and people go around with their dogs off leash, despite walking right by a sign requiring leashes, and the other issue is people not picking up their dog poop!
- Availability of good trails was a key factor in choosing to live in the Cowichan Valley.
- awesome job can't wait to see what is next
- Ban dogs off leash . Insane amount of mtb riders that run their dog using downhill trails. Set the standard and stop this please
- Best fitness option I could want.
- better upkeep
- Build more trails and explore more areas of development
- Cobble Hill is a goldmine but needs much better trail markings!!! Particularly at forks in the trails.
- Complete the Cowichan Trail system.
- Concern about how this survey is partnered with CTSS which is clearly biased learning towards wanting more mountain biking trails and less hiking trails. It feels like the economic impacts part of the survey may be skewed to help promote mountain bike trails being sanctioned where they currently are not (e.g. Richards Mountain). I hope this survey is not being done mainly to push the CTSS agenda of making more of our precious wilderness mountains into "world class mountain biking destinations) for the sake of their sport and economic development.
- Connecting areas should be priority. Rail trails. Trail signage and management. i.e. Mt. Zhouhalem. Stop harvesting trees.
- Conservation must be top priority.
- Continue to make improvements. I'm a frequent user and so appreciate the work being done!
- Cowichan valley trails - include many other trails - not included here - I hike/walk/cycle these as well. Cowichan valley trail/Cowichan River trails/Cowichan estuary trails.



- Cowichan Valley trails are the reason that we moved to this area. Their value is immeasurable. My husband hikes daily. I find the economic impact on this survey disconcerting. It seems to imply that only those that come from out of the area and spend any amount are providing economic input. There is nothing to appreciate the premium costs that those of us who live close to these mountains (taxes etc.) pay. The survey seems to suggest that the only economic gain comes from those who travel here. Further, it would be interesting to be able to verify the accuracy of costs provided by the survey. If I was doing one particular sport that I wanted to see an increase in funding for, expanded trail use, etc., I think it would be easy for individuals to indicate a greater amount.
- Critical to my mental and physical wellbeing.
- CTSS is amazing and doing a wonderful job!
- CTSS is awesome; thanks to them for all their hard work!
- CV has some beautiful trails- and lots of variety. i believe accomodating multiple users types is important - i think users are doing this pretty well (from what i've seen), signage and trail side info really help.
- CVTSS needs to provide more balance of stewardship in favour of non-mountain bike trails and services. They are doing good work enhancing mountain bike trails although it can reduce the value of some areas for other users.
- Didn't like how the money questions were asked about what we spend during activities. I live here in the valley, so all my locally earned dollars are spent locally.
- Discussion needs to take place in regards the overuse of the trail system in terms of saturation of trails set against the amount of land available. Mt. Tzouhalem has high trail saturation and is in a continual build cycle by others (unsanctioned trails). Additionally protection of sensitive areas, protection of lands and planned trails needs to be considered for more activities than just mountain biking. A shift to embracing the enhancement of hiking trails, equestrian access and connectivity to our neighbours via trails systems should be embraced.
- Dogs are an important part of my hiking world..please don't leash them
- Don't forget about the Cowichan Valley rail trail. This is a huge resource to the bikepacking and bike touring communities as well as with trail users; if this trail is managed well, there could be a lot more economic opportunities arising from it, including people travelling from far away with that as a destination. The history, trestles, scenery, and connection to other points in the valley give it really world-class potential.
- Don't forget to look at the TCT. It is a major route for many people



- Don't underestimate the positive impact of bike tourism. Encourage it if you want to build a community and bring tourism dollars to the community. But keep the rules and red tape to a minimum, part of the appeal to most users is the freedom it provides. Don't forget that all these trails exist on the backs of volunteers who first dug them. Going forward it's still mostly those volunteers and rogue builders who create what becomes famous later
- Easily one of the best reasons to live here. Need more well built trails!
- Enjoy all the trails in the Cowichan Valley
- Ensure that trails are not illegally built, are safe and respect fish streams and environmentally sensitive areas.
- Equally as important as the physical/social benefits are the mental health benefits. The CV Trails are my go to for all and the perfect way to de-stress.
- Ever increasing focus on mountain biking is leaving ever fewer options for hikers
- Every time a trail gets destroyed, there's people like me, who aren't from here, who feel refrained from hiking. I find the situation on Mount Tzouhalem quite upsetting. I know alternate trails exist, but the one by the white church was closer to both my workplace and where I live, and I hiked it hundreds of times since I moved to the island. It was one of those trails that everyone liked and respected. Whoever is responsible to have damaged / removed the cross from the top is an idiot, but I feel that we all got punished for a somewhat isolated incident - if it's at all linked to the destruction of the trail.
- Extremely valuable but concerned about losing trails to logging and housing development
- Failure to repair the start of the Cowichan Trail in Duncan is an unbelievable failure. Paid officials should be replaced!
- Fix the trail at Sherman Road! Your questions do not allow me to use the trails for hiking AND nature? There are many trails other than those on the six mountains to consider. MNC is about to legitimize 13 new Mountain Bike trails on Prevost, and there is yet to be a single legitimate trail for hiking AND nature! What about a hiking trail from a logging road out to the bluffs on SE Sicker? What about finishing the Trans Canada Trail from Johnston Road to Chemainus?
- Fortunate to have local government & regional district that invests so well into parks & recreation
- gd need to fix the part that washed out by sherman rd
- Get the horse people clean up their animals waste or at least move it off trails
- Good for local economy. I run into people who have come from the Pacific NW stateside, and from the Interior who come here specifically to ride our trails. The BC Bike Race really helped show off Vancouver Island to the world of mountain bikers; would be good to encourage them to come back to Cowichan Valley each year!



- Good trail building being done..
- Gravel biking on trails , I do this a great deal in addition to hiking
- Great connection to learn about nature and great exercise.
- Great job maintaining the mountain trails and making them multi use.
- Great marked trails well maintained for walking and mountain biking lots of different types of trails for any type of activity I want to do
- Great to have wilderness so close to home.
- great trails in any given area is the reason I will travel there.
- Having bonified trails reduces meandering through nature and helping to not destroy our environment. Also safer for the participants.
- Health and well being. Athletic and social benefits. The trails are fantastic and I also enjoy the Cowichan Valley trail and TCT for cycling.
- Health for us - heart rate, balance, fresh air, cardio, place for the dogs to run
- Healthy forest has a healing impact on people
- Hikers, walkers, equestrian users do not need Mount Richards opened to multi-use. Please leave it as it is
- Hiking in the valley is exceptional. The value in terms of health and wellness cannot be discounted.
- Hiking is as important as biking, but the present group in Trail Stewards is only made up of cyclists , where is the other representation?
- Hiking/walking on the local trails has become an enjoyable routine and enriched our lives both physically and mentally
- Horse Trailer only parking is a big problem. This needs to be enforced or ticketed. Even if the sign said that violators will be towed, that might be a deterrent.
- I absolutely love the trails. It's one of the reasons I live here. I'm grateful for the trail maintenance and generally wonderful community of users. Some dogs are a bit aggressive but, other than that, I thoroughly enjoy my trail experiences.
- I actually moved to Cowichan for the mountain biking trails.
- I am a mental health counsellor, and time/exercise in nature is shown to be significantly helpful for mental health, especially depression and anxiety. These and other mental health challenges are at record levels, in my professional opinion. Easy access and lots of options close to home (in many areas) is vital. Please don't discount access to nature



as simply a “social” benefit (although it is). It is a mental health resource that is free, in a depleted mental health system with very few affordable resources.

- I am concerned that this survey has an economic bias particularly that it is done in "partnership" with the Cowichan Trail Stewardship Society whose president is a well known advocate of mountain biking. Many people enjoy being outside in nature peacefully, thus enhancing one's mental, spiritual as well as physical wellbeing. Finally, how can the organizers of this survey know the accuracy of amount of money spent in the community? I could have said that I spend \$100 each time I use a trail and who could disagree?
- I am proud to be from the Cowichan valley and have the amount of outlets for activities that we do. I travel out of country frequently and constantly brag about how much we can do in such a short proximity and that the quality of these activities are often at a world class level. Whether that would be mountain biking, surfing, skiing, back packing. So many of these are at a world class quality.
- I appreciate everyone for putting in the time and effort into the trails.
- I appreciate seeing the working forest... people working in forestry and seeing the changes in landscape - areas logged, replanted, and seeing the new trees grow over time - it makes me happy
- I appreciate your continued support for the mountain biking community. Thank you!
- I believe that Cowichan valley trails are features and attraction of living in this area
- I believe the rail should be turned into trail. Just exploring I find you can go quite a distance between communities using IE an ebike. Eventually we could develop a corridor using innovative electric transport options.
- I choose to live on Maple Mountain because of the easy access to trails near my home.
- I could really see the value in putting extra resources into our trail networks. All of these number on amount of money spent goes up drastically when we mountain bike outside of the Cowichan Valley. We do this at least once a month and end up spending more on fuel, coffee, restaurants, snacks, alcohol. I think there is plenty of trail tourism here, but look at Cumberland for example.
- I encounter lots of visitors from the US and Europe who start their BC adventure in Cowichan.
- I enjoy the Cowichan Valley Trail but can't walk it as much as I did because there are too many dogs off-leash and my dog has to stay on-leash so she doesn't interact with them. I think bylaw officers should patrol the trail and ticket people with dogs off leash - also owners who don't pick up after their dogs should get a fine.



- I enjoy trails that lead to a view. Long trails.
- I feel that the trail network in Cowichan is great! The maintenance on Tzou is better than anywhere else on the island. An expansion of beginner/progressive zone would be a benefit for the community, at Tzou or Maple/Richards.
- I feel very unsafe at times when there are aggressive unleashed dogs on the trails and I encounter them almost every time I use the them. To me that is the greatest risk factor I have encountered. Trail maintenance does not appear to be a big concern for the CVRD, especially when it comes to weak and dead trees dropping right on trails. I see that as death or injury just waiting to happen.
- I have a gravel bike and frequently use the trails on it. You should have included gravel bikes in the survey. The rail trails in the valley are superb. The disused rail lines (EandN) need to be converted to trails as I feel it would add immensely to the economic and pleasure use in the valley.
- I have been using them since 1985.
- I have been very impressed with the upkeep of Cobble Hill Trails. We are relatively new to this area and have only discovered the trails recently, but now use them frequently.
- I have cerebral palsy
- I have concerns that this is a skewed survey, especially considering it is being done in conjunction with CTSS who are very focused on growing mountain biking in the area and don't take the time to properly consult with other user groups or community members who frequently use the trails. Not every mountain needs to be turned into bike trails.
- I have ridden mountain bikes all over world and what I see here is Mountain biking is a huge asset to the region
- I have yet to explore all the trails but as I discover a new one I am always grateful for the foresight to make these trails available. They add great value to my life in the Cowichan Valley!
- I highly value all the trails in the valley. My observation is the numbers of users have increased dramatically and lacking monitoring of the users over the last 10 years has lead to erosion loss of natural flora which in terms creates other devastating results - increase in surface water, destruction / peeling away of soil and plant life from the rocks and cliffs, random new trails created by people not adhering to the trails creating more destruction. My fear is, as this continues we will loose our natural plants and flora forever. In my view, implementing strategies to manage the results created by the items mentioned above to our beautiful trails is eminently required to conserve the areas
- I hike with my dog, so when I answered "dog walking", it actually represents hiking, not just dog walking. I consider hiking to be any mountain area, where dog walking is using more flat trails.



- I hope to see multi use for all types of trail use. Cobble Hill is a great example of different trail users making it work well. I think moto should be allowed also
- I just arrived in the area and I am exploring. So far I only visited Maple twice. Indications and climbing is fantastic there, but to me, descending was very disappointing, especially Maple Syrup and Tony's. Having to hike a bike multiple times on sections impossible to climb when you are supposed to go down the mountain is just ruining the experience!
- I just know the trails of the Cowichan Valley, because of the walking seniors group I walk with, if not I wouldn't know the existence of these trails.
- I live here because of the trails available! They are extremely important to my lifestyle and are a huge asset to our community and future generations!
- I live here and we have people visit who come to stay for the mountain biking. I have lived here for the majority of my life and have been thrilled by the expansion of my opportunities to hike and bike in our valley. Historically I also often used Cobble Hill but have not been there in the last year. These trails are a wonderful resource for all of us and each weekend I run into visitors to our valley who have come here specifically to use the trails.
- I live in Crofton and use Maple Mountain for mountain biking around 2-3 times per week for 5 years. I love the trails and they are maintained fairly well, structures are improved, erosion is filled in. I really dislike hearing dirt bikes in the forest, but it does not happen too much (mount richards is bad for it). There is some logging/development which gets in the way. I wish it were a completely protected area, ie no logging. Maple Mountain is absolutely 100% mental health sustaining. I credit my rides with my ability to keep happily working in a physically/mentally stressful nursing career into my 60s.
- I lived in Squamish for 5 years before moving (home) to the island. I miss the mixture of trail terrain that mountain biking in Squamish offered. I also miss being able to bike to the trail head. I also lived in the Okanagan for 9 years and the same things apply, much more varied trails and ability to ride to the trail head. Vancouver Island should focus on a regional perspective, I see more potential in that than in just focusing on Cowichan trails. I would love to see Richards with some black trails, I know the horse riders want an area, perhaps designating the ocean side of Maple Mtn as mountain bike free, and some of the flat areas of Richards can be mountain bike free as well. Thanks for your efforts.
- I love all the trail options. Makes it a great place to live.
- I love our trails!! I wish there were more opportunities for trail building and maintenance- I would do more if I knew how to get involved.



- I LOVE the trails and feel so grateful to live here in the Cowichan Valley with its' abundance of out door activities. Hiking keeps my mental well being healthy and joyful!
- I love the trails and hike then 2-3 times per week. Would not want any changes to them.
- I love the trails around my area in Maple Bay however the use of Mountain bikes in some of the shared areas make me avoid closer options like Maple Mountain and Mt Tzouhalem. I frequent Crofton Lake reservoir as there are no such encounters and it is a great hike with the canine. Please keep that one wheel free. Thank you
- I love the trails in the valley! It's a fantastic place to mountain bike and when I have friends from other places who ride visit me I am eager to show them the trails around the valley.
- I love the trails, but I feel unsafe when bikes are on trails with me. Some bikers think they have right away. And yell at hikers to get out of way. On maple mtn is unsafe for hiking because bikes. This is upsetting. I am afraid to walk there. I pay taxes and live in Crofton.
- I love the trails, mostly those I can ride on and I love hiking. This survey assumes, incorrectly, that cyclers are mountain bike users. We have trail bikes and e-bikes. This might have been considered in the survey as it is an important aspect of trail use.
- I love them. I love the quietness, safety, beauty, natural state
- I love these trails. Please continue to protect them for recreational use.
- I moved to the cowichan valley 10 years ago for the amazing mountain biking. Since then I have a had a career as a professional mountain biker due to the high quality of these trails and I have also had other family members and friends move to the cowichan valley because of the these trails.
- I moved to this area because of the trails and it is a huge part of my life. We are very fortunate to have such beautiful trails to use for a variety of activities that help make a great life for many of us! I have a group of friends varying in age from 50-75 that I ride with regularly (3+ times a week, year round) and it is fundamental to our heath and fitness that we have this wonderful resource. Very grateful!
- I really appreciate living in the valley and over the years have ran hiked and cycle on the trails to lake cowichan
- I really value our trails. I live closer to Langford but do most of my shopping in Duncan around mountain biking trips on the weekends.
- I said yes to mountain biking but I have a gravel bike. I run on the CVT, bike one the CVT and walk my dog on the CVT. I wish the portion from Ladysmith easily continued onwards to the rest of the trail system. I have explored a bit of the southern portions but would go al the way to Victoria if I could avoid roads. Love the trail.



- I spend 4 to 8 days a month volunteering doing trail mtce for the past 25 years on Mt Tzouhalem
- I strongly feel that the railroad should become a Regoinal Trail. Other the that I just feel that more resources should be put into park and trail management, as enjoying the trails is very important to me, and I feel like they are a fantastic use of local taxes.
- I think having off leash options are important for hiking not just enclosed dog parks. Also I do not enjoy encountering quads and dirt bikes
- I think it's time to step it up! There should be a bike/rider lift up Mt Prevost, this could be a Mecca for mountain bike riders, draw people to the area, maybe hotel developers!
- I think the trails are some of the best on the island
- I think the Valley has an amazing network of trails which should be cherished by all that use them. I would like to see better signage on Cobble Hill mountain.
- I think you all are doing a GREAT job with the trails. The majority of the trails are very well maintained and I am grateful to have such an abundance of options for getting outdoors safely
- I truly value them for physical recovery from injury and illness. We are being displaced by so many people from out of town who come here.
- I use a small trail in Sahtlam as well as the Tansor Trail head and our family loves them
- I use relatively easy trails. They are well maintained and convenient to my location - Ladysmith.
- I use them a lot in the summer with my horses and every day of the year with my dogs. The trans Canada trail is my back property line. All the Atv people I encounter are very polite. I have no problem sharing the trails with them. The only issue I have is people trying to make the trails like city parks. Go back to the city. We like our wild trails and multi use trails. We can all have our hobbies as long as we are respectful of each other.
- I value the Cowichan Valley trails but have big concerns regarding the development numerous mountain biking trails on all the mountains which has taken place and is taking place now on Mount Prevost and if the Trails Society gets its way on Mount Richards. It would be great to maintain Mount Richards as a place for hiking, horse back riding and to limit further trail development on all the mountains. over the past ten to twenty years the trail development has been fairly continuous as any trail map will confirm. I wonder whether this survey(one of whose supporters is the Trails Society) is being sent out to justify further trail development .



- I value our trail systems and am grateful to those who create and maintain them. The trail system is of high importance for locals and tourists and it also incites an appreciation of our natural environment a desire to conserve nature. I have noticed a huge increase in trail use since the pandemic and an increase of tourists both local and off island since the presence of social media. Most people are out enjoying the various eco-systems and seem to deeply appreciate the beauty of our valley. Some things that need to be addressed are the infrastucture on the trails along the river foot path near Glenora which though well used, are in a terrible state and are in fact dangerous. I would also like to see signs prohibiting graffiti on trees at Stoney Hill. It is so disappointing to see the arbutus trees carved and scarred. On all the trails most dog owners are courteous and respectful but some or not, leaving their dogs off leash and discarding plastic poo bags along the trail, which often detracts from my pleasure and sense of safety. One final comment would be on crafted decorations left in the forest such as carved owls and painted stones. I know that some enjoy these and place them along the trails for others to see, but for many of us, these decorations distract us from the beauty of the natural environment and are inappropriate along a nature trail, best kept for your yard or garden. I think signage at all trails reminding people to respect the natural environment and leave it as is for others to enjoy and listing things take selfies instead of carving up our trees, your dog is welcome but remember to carry out the plastic poo bags and enjoy the beauty of the forest but please share decorations like carvings and painted stones in your garden and yard, leaving the natural beauty of the ecosystems intact..... would perhaps make people think a little about conserving the beauty of our valley rather than leaving their mark on it.
- I value trails that are designated specifically as pedestrian or bike or horse use.
- I very much support the idea of removing the train tracks and the development of a biking, walking, etc trail from Shawnigan Lake to Nanaimo and beyond.
- I was born and raised in the valley but moved to Nanaimo. I frequently come back with my family and we always enjoy the hikes and beautiful nature. Cowichan valley trails are my favourite!
- I wish the Loam trail was multi use. Plenty of room on trail for bikes and foot travellers
- I wish there were more flat/gentle trails available.
- I wish walking and dog walking were separate categories. That would help determine how many dog walkers there are and how many people walk without dogs.
- I wish you had included a question on the appropriateness of multiple-use trails. I believe separation is the better way such as hiking and biking.
- I would just like to reiterate how disappointed the Cowichan Lake Trail Blazer Society is that our Cowichan Lake Area and network of has been totally ignored in this survey.



- I would use the trails a lot more with my carriage horse if there were places to go.
- I've also hiked at Glenora, Byngs Creek and Skutz Falls recently
- I've Watch trails system get developed over the years. Been great. Everyone done a great job.
- If I don't get on the trails at least 4 times a week I feel disconnected from nature. Love my cobble hill!
- Impact of bike trails to the longevity of the trails.
- Improve horse trailer parking so we can access Maple Mt, Prevost Richards and tzouhalem like we use to 15 years ago. Provide better parking at Cowichan Valley trail head like Paldi
- Improved signage on Cobble Hill trails would greatly improve enjoyment and use, in my opinion.
- In addition to contributing to our physical and mental health trails help us appreciate and learn more about the amazing natural environments in our region. I hope trail use encourages us to protect all of these diverse habitats to help buffer global warming and preserve all of the lifeforms (including humans!) that depend on them.
- In Crofton area I believe we are in need of walks/trails for everyone. Some trails for young families with small children in strollers, seniors with walkers. Maple Mountain and Mt Richard can accommodate everyone. Hiking, Biking, horse back riding. I would like to see viewing points so that we can watch the biking. Bike park for kids
- In my opinion it is critical to restrict (& enforce the restriction!) motorized vehicle access. The noise pollution of dirt bikes/ATV's is devastating to every other person trying to the experience the quietude of the forests.
- In my opinion they are the best part of the Valley
- Increases quality of life an why I live here. So appreciative of the work that goes into maintaining them.
- Incredibly valuable to my emotional/mental/physical state to have access to these wonderful areas. I prefer outdoor physical activity to being in a gym and these trails allow me to get outdoors for exercise, bit of social interaction in a relatively safe environment.
- Indigenous plants is very important and carrying items to keep you safe on the trail should be included
- Involve and acknowledge the local Indigenous peoples in all community events
- It is extremely important to me that Mt. Richards be designated as a hike/walk destination
- It is necessary to facilitate Indigenous Engagement, apply right holders approach, and apply TRC Action 92, DIPA, UNDRIP principles. Apply the Consultation and Accommodation principles. Firs Nations are not foragers, it is our way of living with one with nature...
- It rocks. I love hiking. We moved here from Ontario for it.



- It would be good to measure the impact of all the trail work since the CTSS began managing the trails (very positive).
- It would be great to have some mountains left for hiking and walking only. I am not OKay with mt Richards being designated for more mountain bike trails when we already have Mt Prevost , Tzouhalem and Maple overrun with bikes.
- It would be nice to have a few trails delineated for hiking only - no mountain bikes. Signage (minimal - possibly at start of trail) explaining user etiquette could add to the enjoyment of the features
- It would be nice to have more trails available to us on our horses - which we can use without motorized vehicles - and if that includes ebikes then a speed limit...
- It's extremely important to me and my family to have access to trails. WE are out there almost every day and take friends with is. It is vital for our mental, emotional and physical health
- It's important to me to have trails specifically only available for walkers, hikers, no cyclists, no motorized vehicles.
- It's a main factor of why I choose to live in the Cowichan Valley. It's been essential to my mental health. The only way I benefit financially from the trails is that they keep me physically and emotionally/mentally healthier , which means more work days and fewer sick days or leaves of absence. This benefits me and my local employer. I like my trails accessible with some parking, but best when slightly less developed.
- It's made me a happier, healthier and at peace with our local beauty. Hiking and Mountain biking has changed my life.
- It's the life style to be outdoors
- It's the reason I moved to The Valley!
- Keep access for equestrians
- Keep allowing off leash dogs on all trails. This other wilderness, not New York city
- Keep doing a amazing job!!
- Keep expanding
- Keep it maintained and pristine
- Keep it wild
- Keep the cowichan rive estuary trail intact
- Keep the trails coming!
- Keep them as pristine as possible and as unregulated as possible with minimal signage.
- Keep up the amazing work!
- Keep up the fantastic work. This trail system is unlike any other in the South Island



- Keep up the good work
- Keep up the good work!
- Keep up the good work! Build more high quality mtb trails. Having some well signed DH only hills helps avoid conflicts!
- Keep up the great work and help teach the South Island a thing or two about trail networks!
- Keep up the great work. We are extremely lucky to live here.
- Keep up with the amazing work of growing these trails! I moved here for the trail systems on my mountain bike. Live for this sport.
- Keeping Mt. Richards the way it is would be a drawing card to attract visitors for a less developed area, the way Mt. Tzouhalem use to be.
- Lack of parking, signage and safety considerations especially on ravines, along with cougars and bears are on-going issues.
- leave natural as much as possible. Do not want overdevelopment
- Leave them the hell alone and stop all logging. No more trails. We have lots. Leave it for the critters
- Less off leash dogs. Actual trail signage. Keep it up thank you
- limit mountain bike trails, leaving some areas free for dog walking and safe hiking/walking without mountain bikes. Often trails have been damaged by bikers riding on sensitive areas such as moss covered outcrops where wild flowers grow. It is startling to have a biker appear at speed while hiking, especially with a dog off-leash.
- Limiting the survey to the main recreation areas in the Cowichan Valley is insufficient. We are developing a strong gravel culture that makes use of logging roads on NC Municipal lands and accessible lands in land management areas (i.e. Mosaic lands). Think about events like the Burnt Bridge Classic & Belgian Waffle Ride. There is also road cycling that local residents enjoy and tourists too. More needs to be done for road fondo's. The Cowichan Valley Trail system is also an important draw for tourism (i.e. Kinsol Trestle).
- live here, play here, love here.
- Local use should take precedence. Not look to make our forests an eco tourism business that comes at a cost of overuse and detrimental to the forests ecosystem
- Lots of choice
- Lots of us travel to the valley specifically to ride bikes!
- Love our trails, more off-leash dog friendly trails or longer trails for marathon training
- Love the opportunity to be on the trails. Would love to be more involved in the stewardship program



- Love the trails so much!
- Love the trails. Could use more of course Unless you ride at peak times it's never busy
- Love to ride my mountain bike on Cobble Hill Mountain in the spring and summer
- Love trail 2020
- Lucky to live here. Major props to North Cowichan for developing and continuing to develop mtb infrastructure in particular that has such a stellar reputation for those across the island. The CVRD could really step it up in the mtb area.
- Make better use of existing infrastructure like the Haul Road from the Cobble Hill Quarry down to Bamberton. Also the BC Hydro cut lines.
- manage trail conflict between hikers and mountain bikers.
- Many trails on private land ie mosaic and they need protection
- Maple and Richards needs more trails
- More challenging trails to be built on mt Tzhoulem
- More connector bicycle trails needed throughout the CVRD
- More education needed for bikers on blind corner of shared trail on Tzouhalem. Despite hikers use of whistle and shouting both bikers and hikers almost collided or went over the edge. Frightening.
- More hiker only trails
- More maps at trails
- More online maps
- More road signage and publication like printed trail maps needed
- More sanctioned mountain biking trails! New climb trail from the Kaspera parking lot for beginners.
- More separation between hikers and bikers.
- more trail development please
- Most of the trails I use are well maintained
- Mountain bike trails are one of the only reasons I come to the Cowichan valley
- Mountain bikes are too entitled and we need to have trails where they are not allowed. Tired of it being crammed down our throats!
- Mountain biking too extensive and controlling and cause a high degree of erosion.



- Mt Prevost is world-renowned for Downhill training — at any given weekend there are 1-20 UCI WorldCup Canadian racers practicing and training. This is a huge destination in BC, and brings race teams here to do training camps, weekend trips, etc.
- Multi-use trails need leadership to collaborate on solutions that work for all. The district can play that role. Contact City of Maple Ridge to learn how they led/facilitated solutions to conflicts between mountain bikers, horseback riders and hikers on Thornhill Mountain. They worked with leaders of the 2 user group clubs to a really good outcome, but it was the City that had to take the lead to make it work.
- My favourite hike is up Old Mt Baldy in Shawnigan! This spot really needs washroom facilities and safer parking at the base. I also keep supplies in my car trunk for litterpicking, and help run an annual Earth Day Clean Up and LitterWatch group.
- My home
- My husband and I live just across the street from the Cowichan Trail. We walk there daily in every season. Our whole neighbourhood walks on that trail and the social bonds built between neighbours are strong. During Covid it kept us all same to walk outside and socialize two meters apart. Before the wash outs occurred we were able to use the trail as a safe active transport corridor and enjoy riding up to Lake Cowichan for lunch or a swim.
- My main complaint is the very poor signage/markings on the trails. Europe has colour coded trails that are easy to mark, maintain and follow. The only one I've seen here is the back of Maple mountain.
- My prevost new parking lot up from the power lines needs more work.some done but people doing donuts in there already.cement barriers not in middle. Needs a solar st light and under survellience signs or it will soon get wrecked.we have seen people doing this
- Need a skills park similar to Jordie Lunn / Stevie Smith parks
- Need for more Accessible trails for adaptive mountain bikes is growing but emphasize this doesn't mean they have to be machine built. Please reach out to the community to help consult on future adaptive mountain biking adaptations
- Need more off leash trails
- Need more parking Mt Richards side. Thank you. Dangerous for my dog. 🐕
- Need more wheelchair accessibility to trails
- Need to integrate Cowichan trail networks into an expanded Island network. E&N rail corridor.
- No need for small trails in odd places. Enhance the larger trail systems you already have and enhance access and egress to them



- Not enough city trails
- Note, \$\$ answer skewed by purchase of a new bike. However, access to CV Trails definitely influenced this purchase.
- Numbers would be higher if not for snow
- Off leash and horse friendly trails are the most important to me
- Off leash dogs are an ongoing & growing problem. Aggressive dogs off leash running up to hikers, barking & bearing teeth. They often sniff & bite hikers including myself while their owners dismiss it as not a problem.
- One of the best features of our region.
- One of the only recreation options for young families!
- One of the reasons we chose to live here 20+ years ago was because of the access to outdoor activities. We live at the base of Cobble hill Mt
- Only that the value cannot be understated.....the trails benefit even those who don't use them!!!! Esthetically. Environmentally. Overall Wellness. We have something unique and incredibly valuable here. The overall health of our community is directly linked to these trails. The value of green space cannot be understated.
- Our access to trails in any direction within minutes is amazing. I have seen incredible improvements in the trails over the years and appreciate the efforts. Keep them as natural as possible. Signs about the flora and fauna at the start of the trail are always great to know what to look for for visitors. (Gary Oak Reserve in Timbercrest is a great example)
- Our forest trails are so important to my well-being.
- Our trails are an incredible resource. They should be prioritized in community planning, protected, and promoted outside of the region. To the politicians- please consider allowing value added services, like food trucks, at established parking lots and trailheads. Scotland has excellent examples of well planned trail networks - each with cheap parking, a bike repair shop, and a cafe. This would be an excellent addition for busier mountain biking spots like cobble hill, maple and tzoo.
- Our trails are one of the jewels of the Cowichan Valley. I am a hiker, mountain biker, runner,... If desired, the Cowichan region could become a major mountain biking, road biking, gravel biking and hiking mecca! Trail running as well.
- Outstanding value Please orient future trail maps IAW cartography standards- N is up!
- parking is almost always a problem at prime times, weekends
- Parking lots should be improved (especially the trail next to 1331 tzouhalem road and dagger deep) vehicles getting stuck, and people pushing vehicles out of parking lot.



- Part of my enjoyment comes from the quiet and the lack of people
- Personally I think we should maintain the trails we have before building new ones. I also believe that we should be very careful about building more trails that intrude on the local wildlife. The valley already has a significant amount of trails.
- Physical activity is important for improving physical and mental health. Please help the trees whose roots are being eroded! We need them to draw down carbon from the atmosphere. Thank you
- Please add more connection points to the trans Canada trail. I want to commute to Duncan on the trail.
- Please add the trails in the Cowichan Lake area
- Please ban off-road vehicles
- Please consider cycle tourism and recognize how occasional visitors value and use the trails.
- PLEASE do NOT allow mountain bikers and hikers/walkers on the same trails at the same time. It is NOT SAFE, particularly when some hikers/walkers have off-leash dogs. These areas are to be enjoyed by all including our pets
- Please keep in mind the people who cannot bike, but still like to use our mountains and trails.
- Please maintain existing trails, develop new ones and work to educate trail users on the ethics of trail use as well as how to stay safe out there.
- Please protect these places for the wild critters whose homes we have commandeered for our own use
- Please repair the area near Sherman Rd in Duncan.
- Please update the survey to include lake cowichan trails: fairservice fun, Christopher rock, bald mountain, cowichan valley trail, cowichan river footpath, at least! Otherwise, you have an incomplete picture of trail usage.
- PLEASE! Leave Richard's mountain to hiking only trails. Peaceful hiking.... No fear of meeting bikers - especially downhill sections. Enough development for bikers on other mountains. Mountain biking has a more narrow portion of population.
- Prefer hiking trails to be prohibited to mountain bikes. There is more erosion on bike trails.
- Prior questions - Hiking and Nature appreciation is the same in my mind - but could not click two. I hike with 2-6 people but could not enter this. I hike local in the valley - and therefore do not financially contribute - so this is misleading...because as a resident I always use local restaurants/coffee shops/gas stations - pay taxes and give time to trails.
- Properly name the trails on Cobble Hill Mountain. The current ones are very confusing. I reported this to the CVRD Parks Division three different times and was given nothing but lip service.



- Protecting our forests are the most important thing. Forest therapy has really helped me in difficult times
- Push the cow trail all the way to Comox. Get every First Nations and town involved to build a structure on the trail at each town that talks about the full history of the town and First Nation in that area
- Question #15 allows only one choice.... Flawed.
- Reading this survey...most of the questions relate to mountain biking. It's disappointing to see shared trails being changed to downhill only. I don't feel this asks the correct questions regarding other user groups.
- really appreciate CTSS!!!
- Really appreciate that we have trails available for everyone.
- Recreational trails have some of the most underreported economic benefits to this community. Our trail system has a incredibly high economic benefit for the Cowichan Valley.
- Restrict unleashed dogs on mtb specific trails. Bikers with dogs cannot possibly keep their pets safe when riding, leading to safety concerns for the dog and riders as well as trail conflicts.
- ROAD SIDE TRAILS FOR ACCESS TO NETWORKS BY WALKERS, CYCLISTS, EQUESTRIANS AND CARRIAGE DRIVERS FOR ACCESS TO THE TRAIL NETWORKS WOULD BE WONDERFUL
- Shoot a horse, save a trail.
- should have seperate sections for people who live locally vs those who are visiting. For some reason I could not put in a dollar value for the amount I spent or explain that I was not local in the appropriate boxes
- Should push to have the E and N rail grade turned into a trail ASAP
- signage on Mt Tzou and Maple Mtn is amazing and appreciated. Trail maps on mtn and on Muni website are excellent. especially geo-tagged maps.
- Since retirement, hiking on these trails is my main activity for physical fitness and a major activity of socialization.
- Since you guys are making a lot of bike trails , please make some ' dogs friendly trail with no bikes' something like that...
- Skills and jump park, pump track, look what Cumberland is doing. Don't be shy to create blue black jump trails
- So grateful for the care, number, and accessibility of trails in the Cowichan Valley.
- so proud to have so many great trails nearby for various abilities and activities.



- So valuable!!!! We wouldn't live here if we didn't have easy access to trails for walking, horseback riding and in the case of my husband, for dirt bike riding in permitted areas (mostly the logging companies property, unfortunately)
- So very important for physical and mental wellness and not appreciated for the benefit they give.
- Some Cowichan valley Trails are considerate of the roots of old forest trees.
- Some trails and parking, e.g. Tzouhalem, are overloaded at times. It ruins the experience. Also we have trouble with bikers not sharing trails well with foot traffic.
- Some trails, like Stony Hill get very crowded and there is little parking. Another trail near by would help with some of the crowds
- Some years I visit often, other years not so much. Many of the questions above were about the last 2 months which isn't especially representative for me at least.
- Stop cutting down the trees!
- Thank you. How can I help
- Thanks
- The amount of dog faeces on the trail is disgusting.
- The Cowichan Trail networks are great for 4 season mountain Biking but each of the main areas have drawbacks too. i.e. Tzouhalem is great but has no more room to grow, Prevost has huge potential but is currently DH only, Cobblehill is designed for hikers or beginner-bikers only. Maple Mountain is under-developed.
- The Cowichan trails have been a great way for me to enjoy nature and the beauty of the area with my family. Would like to see more of the local pubs allow minors for a good burger after the adventures. We've had to head up to Crofton rather than Duncan for a family meal. Nice but wrong direction at the end of the day.
- The cowichan valley trail is such a gem, it's interesting to me it wasn't included in this survey
- The Cowichan Valley trails are extremely valuable - providing social, physical, mental health, as well as economic benefits. I strongly support continuing to maintain and expand the network of trails - not only for current use - but as a legacy for future generations.
- The CV has outstanding potential to become the cycling capital of Canada. World Class trail, gravel and road networks can be found here. It didn't happen by accident, rather, it exists because of dedicated local government, business support and the incredible volunteers. Vancouver Island boasts likely the best variety and access for all outdoor users in the world. The CV is quickly becoming the "IT" place to live or vacation especially if one is into outdoor rec.



- The Estuary trail seems important to older people who cannot hike a lot uphill. Maybe there can be alternative flat trails considered when the new Estuary project (of which I am a big fan) removes the trail?
- The estuary/ dike at Cowichan Bay is one of the only flat, in nature trails in the valley. It needs to be kept. More flat, easy access for parking trails are needed for people with mobility issues and recovery from surgery.
- The trails are one of the key reasons we moved to the area
- The location and climate offer year round world class trail use. Local government needs to promote the sustainable development of the trail network to attract investment in order to reduce taxation pressures on local residents.
- The main reason I live in the Cowichan Valley is because we have access to beautiful hiking trails. I hope that these HIKING trails can be preserved and not turned into mountain bike trails such as what has happened on Mt. Tzouhalem and the north side of Mt. Prevost which has been taken over by mountain bikes.
- The most frequent challenge and issue that pushes me away from trails is overuse/busyness, especially in relation to mountain biking. Especially on Mt Tzouhalem, there are days and times that are extremely unpleasant to hike because of the amount of mountain bikers that descend on the mountain.
- The mountain biking brings world class athletes from across North America to the region to train on the trails in the Cowichan Valley
- The off leash dogs are a huge problem as well as their waste bags
- The park ranger is very approachable.
- The rail trail networks were the number one reason I wanted to move here. I run about 3600kms a year on the Cowichan Valley trail.
- The reason I live and stay where I do is for the trails offered in the Cowichan valley !!
- The trail system is a huge asset for the Cowichan Valley. It should be nurtured and expanded.
- The trail system is one of the main reasons we live in Cowichan Valley, it is a very strong local asset
- The trail system is one of the reasons we moved from lower mainland to cowichan
- The trails and ease of trail access and variety of trails are one of the main reasons I live here
- The trails are a huge part of my enjoyment and pride in living in the CV. My wellbeing, health and joy are fueled by being able to have easy access to the trails.



- The trails are incredibly important for the health of the population. There are innumerable studies that show the health and mental health benefits of both exercise and being outside. When I think of the cost of something like the pool or an ice arena compared with the cost of maintaining trails, I can't believe we aren't putting trails on all public land. The health savings alone should persuade all levels of government to push for as much outdoor nature space as possible.
- The trails are my favourite thing about the valley!
- The trails are overrun by cyclists and members on council are encouraging and promoting more cyclists to come into the valley, leaving little space for local walkers.
- The trails are such a treasure, I am so appreciative of the hard work that goes into maintaining them and the quality of life that they bring. Thank you!
- The trails are very important to my mental health - hiking them are how I reset and energize myself after a busy week in health care -
- The trails are very important to my personal well-being, and I do believe they contribute highly to community appreciation of nature and thus to environmental health as people who value nature are more likely to adjust their habits and lifestyle to help address climate and environmental issues.
- The trails are wonderful, but lack of oversight and impolite folks with off-leash dogs and motorized vehicles, as well as dog poop everywhere, sometimes makes it difficult to fully enjoy them. As well, the continual rearranging of nature-scapes (e.g. stone "inukshuk" piles everywhere on Maple Mountain; dogs and people off trail in ecologically sensitive areas) can make it very difficult to enjoy the nature experience. With off-leash dogs, sometimes it's also dangerous.
- The trails contribute hugely to my mental health! I have discovered mountain biking, and it has been a lifeline for me in the past 4 years as a health care worker in the pandemic/post pandemic collapsing system. Also, my dog LOVES the trails!
- The trails in North Cowichan are world class for hiking and mountain biking and we get to use them year round.
- The trails in the area are amazing and I feel treated to live so close to all of them.
- The trails in the CV are wonderful in my experience!
- The value is actually so high that I often think I am the luckiest person to live in an area where the variety and quality of trail systems is staggering. We appreciate the work and commitment that it takes to have the numerous excellent trails!



- The value is extremely high, an awesome way to get out into nature. Most mountain bikers I meet are super protective over our forests and want them to remain as beautiful as they are and as natural as they are, having frequented trails helps protect and save these mountains and parks as they are a large part of the community.
- The wilderness and variety of trails are a primary reason why we live in the Cowichan.
- There are a passionate group of builders in the Cowichan Valley that should be recognized for their contribution. Without them, this discussion would not be happening.
- There are awesome trails in our valley but good luck keeping everyone happy
- there are lots of dog poop bags being left on the trails
- There are not enough trails in proximity to populated areas. Have to drive to forested trails, which is discriminatory for the many people struggling financially.
- There has been tremendous improvement in trails and signage. (The Tzou & Maple Mtn.) The trail surfaces from Shawnigan Lake to Lake Cowichan and back to Duncan also improved significantly. A few sections could still be improved. Nirvana will be when the E& N to Comox and Alberni & Victoria becomes a Rail Trail and tourism and associated businesses and employment will put Vancouver Island as a true destination for these activities.
- There is a real lack of accessible trails for users with mobility challenges and the bias towards mountain bikers on trails makes it really challenging for users that need to move more slowly. Bikers move fast and are often frustrated by slower users resulting in conflict. This makes those with mobility challenges or those that enjoy a slower pace uncomfortable and unwelcome on our public trails.
- There is so much potential to work on trails on Mt. Richards and Sicker. The potential to build a biking/ hiking community like Cumberland in Crofton is exponential, and I would love to see it happen.
- There's huge value in connection between the trail systems. Making challenges like 'the triple crown' possible is huge
- These trails and the maintenance done are greatly appreciated and create a real opportunity for all people to enhance their life style and health and well being.
- These trails are extremely important to local hikers and need to be maintained (Holt Creek Trail/pedestrian Bridge)
- They are a gem and have allowed our family members to quickly progress and improve our skills in learning to MTB
- They are for the most part we'll look after
- They are incredibly important to me. The trails are a significant reason for me living here. I'm so grateful for them.



- They are integral to my children's health (physical and mental) and identity as they too are on them 3-5 times a week. They have enabled my family to connect with each other and nature in ways that board games and other indoor activities cannot
- They are invaluable to me as a disabled person, keeping my fitness level up.
- They are jewels and we use them often !!! They are often a community hub! Love our trails!!
- They are one of the main reasons we live here! Great work!
- They are priceless to us.
- They are the single most wonderful thing about living in this location.
- They are very important to all the wildlife as well by preserving ecosystems.
- They are very valuable to me
- They are vital to my mental health and general wellbeing.
- They are vital to my personal mental and physical well-being, and I greatly appreciate the maintenance and upkeep of the trails. I feel very blessed to be able to consistently enjoy the natural beauty of our area.
- They are well-kept, diverse and a wonderful resource. My main concern is hunting season, and the fact that people are allowed to target practice shoot at any time. Another concern is protecting wildlife. Humans need access to wild areas, but in a given area, most needs to be off limits to humans. For the most part we stick to trails, I hope trails are designed with this in mind.
- They generally improve the health of area residents.
- They should be treasured by locals, visitors, and local government
- They were a big contributing factor to relocating to CVRD from Saanich 5 years ago.
- They're beautiful, we need to protect the Old Ones. It's such a pity that we didn't buy the land on Cliffs. I'm sad that we lost access on Khenipsen as well. Those were 2 of my favourite small hikes.
- They're doing an unreal job with what they have. If you invested the same amount of money as building a hockey rink into trail building you would have an internationally recognized tourist destination. **FUND THE TRAILS**
- Those responsible are to be commended on the high level of stewardship and maintenance in evidence on the Cowichan Valley trails.
- Those trails are my life



- Throughout the survey there seems to be an assumption that I am a mountain biker, there should have been options for does not apply to me. As we age, short walk options should be more available 2-3 km as in Sahtlam Green way plan
- Too much focus on my biking at the cost of other users.
- too much human impact on wildlife. it seems ironic that we need to build bigger parking lots so we can all go out and enjoy nature. we have great trails. please don't make more.
- Too much work on trails. Less natural than it could be.
- Trail crew at mt tzou does a fantastic job. Love all the work they do. Kudos!
- Trail crew is doing great but more money towards trail builders and mtb trail maintenance. expand trail crew to have more members that can cover more trails and do more maintenance
- Trail maintenance is essential. Separating hiking from biking should be key design goal.
- Trail Maintenance Volunteers are so important and need to be recognized. In Nanaimo there is a small fenced acreage for people (seniors like me and young parents) can safely walk in a forest which is so much more enjoyable, North Cowichan should consider this. Off leash parks in N.C. aren't policed and do create problems at times.
- Trail repairs from 2020 floods at Bings Creek need to be completed at west of Sherman and Lane Roads.
- Trail systems in the valley are maintained very well.
- Trail use categories are a bit limiting. Getting my dogs out is a primary motivator but in the course of doing so I walk, hike, run, mountain bike, and engage in nature appreciation like bird watching, nature photography, plant id, etc. Restricting myself to dog walking as it's the prime motivation feels like it's missing a huge part of my park useage
- Trails are a major source of exercise and mental relaxation for locals and visitors alike.
- Trails are disappearing in Cowichan valley. Access to Khenipsen road to Genoa bay has been blocked by a local landowner. Bings creek to Mount Prevost is always being threatened by private landowners. Compared to Britain, we have poor access to our local outdoor spaces.
- Trails are essential to the well being of anyone who wants to self-propel themselves whether it be for recreation or transportation. Most of the roads around here are not safe for use by pedestrians/cyclists/horseback riders.
- Trails are very important for many reasons prev stated. Good for economy, good for the soul



- Trails are very important to our health, we need wilderness, more trails and attention to maintaining them. Put value on that not on profits, we need to have protection from climate change, water protection, have resource industries sustainable.
- Trails managed by CTSS are some of the best on Vancouver Island and we visit from Salt Spring Island to ride and help do volunteer trail building in the area.
- Understand the need to share trails and the benefits of e bikes for improving access and participation, BUT the erosion of trails by increasing number of bikes is notable. Additionally your income question should offer a “prefer not to answer” option. Most do, my \$ answer is not accurate, just used it to move forward in survey.
- Unfortunately, more and more trails are becoming bike only and the trails left to hike only are on the perimeters. 20 years ago, hikers could share trails with bikers. Now, the biking has become fast downhill and dangerous.
- Up to date map at maples would be great. Also paper maps of tzo/maples etc
- Updated trail maps at trail heads and online so helpful, I always make a photo if I don't have a paper copy for areas not super familiar with.
- Use of the trails is weekly. Feel strongly that Mt Richard's must not be developed as a bike riding destination.
- Valuable. Not for exploitation or tourists. Most mtbr come to ride then leave. Not safe to leave your bike unattended to get lunch anywhere in the valley. This is not Whistler nor should the politicians and societies be pushing for that experience or trying to profit from our trails. Locals pay the taxes to support our trails for the community's use. Stop creating groomed runs that are unsustainable. There are bike parks in other island communities for the Disney land experience. Keep cowichan parks free and natural and commercial free
- very grateful for them
- Very grateful for where we live and my access to nature. Accessing trail walks supports my well-being and is necessary self-care as a Professional in the helping field.
- Very important
- Very important area for hikers coming here from other parts of the island.
- Very important for physical and mental health
- Very important to my family and appreciate the leadership from MNC
- Very impressed with windfall clearing after storms. There is high value simply because of proximity, access and terrain variety. I'd love to see a linkage trail for longer loop/end to end hikes. Eg. We've hiked Tzouhalem from Kaspa



Rd to Genoa Bay – parked cars at both ends. That’s just on Tzou, but could do the same joining mountains. Stoney Hill-Tzouhalem-Maple Mtn-Richards are close enough together.

- Very valuable, I meet numerous people from off the Island who have come here to use the trails.
- Very very important for physical and mental health. Affordable way of keeping well. Very grateful for protected forests / parks. Clean washrooms are much appreciated.
- Visit regularly from Ontario to visit daughter, housesit for friends. These trails are simply incredible, and it is a huge privilege to be able to use them during my stay.
- Walking on the trails daily helps with maintaining good physical and mental health.
- Want to keep some trails for just hikers, no mountain bikes.
- We are hemmed in everywhere by private land ownership. Emphasis and incentives are needed on inter-jurisdictional cooperation and land access projects. Also, not every trail needs to be open to mechanically assisted, wheel sports. They all degrade trails.
- We are privileged to live here.
- We are so very privileged, to have so many beautiful trails. The trails during covid were the saving grace of life. The smell of the trees is so refreshing. Every year it's fun to watch the trails change, trees change, path or side trails change, the streams always change routes. It's beautiful to watch all the life spring in the spring. Really remarkable trails to be on in the valley. Thankyou for taking good care of them. Truly there is nothing better than a forest bath.
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- We are very fortunate to have so many great trails to enjoy. It is so good for our physical and mental health
- We are very grateful for the work done on the local trails. It is a beautiful area with so many opportunities to hike and enjoy nature.
- We have enough trails, don't build any more.
- We have lots of land, keeping biking trails for bikers and hiking trails for hikers, makes the most sense and leaves nothing to an issue
- We have many fantastic trails, off leash dogs are a huge problem as is their waste



- We like very narrow, winding trails. We avoid the main trails like Branch A on Tzou, TransCanada Trail at Glenora, and the main trail up to the lookout on Cobble Hill. Also, it was very difficult to fill out the survey as it kept saying it was in the wrong format, with reference to the question above about how many people I use the trails with. I entered one and it took me a while to figure out it wanted it in numeric form. It would be helpful if you specify that.
- We love riding Tzouhalem and Prevost. Thank you for all the hard work you do to provide such awesome trails. Wish the CRD had the same vision as Cowichan does. Maybe they will notice how many of their residents have bike racks full of mt bikes heading to Duncan every morning on the weekends.
- We love the expansion of Hanks Road Trail. My group walks it 6 day/ week
- We love the mountain biking at mount tzou! Highlight of living in the cowichan valley!
- We loved to the Cowichan Valley specifically for the outdoors, good mountain biking and hiking opportunities. My 5 year old son is thriving w/ endless hiking and mountain biking and genuinely appreciating the outdoors/wilderness.
- We need more off-leash trails! I don't think there are any at the moment.
- we need more trails
- We need more wilderness trails, parks, instead of building on forest land, need to keep Greenspace old growth, etc
- We need more!
- We need to keep the trails open to equestrians
- We need to keep trail equally open to horseback riders and inform public like bikers n joggers how to approach not just run up behind and scare they need to give us riders notice ring a bell or talk in the distant so we can hear them coming we are considerate to all them
- We need trail signage and maps especially for trails in North Cowichan.
- While I chose "hiking" over "appreciation of nature", the latter is extremely important to me.
- Why is there a parking lot in the middle of subdivisions?
- Wildlife, rock collecting, photography
- With the constant logging of trees, I think it is very important to have some way for us to get out into nature with trees!
- Would like to see better road bike trails and corridors
- Would like to see trails link communities



- You are giving preference to mountain bikers on the trails. On Mt Tzouhalem when coming down the main road both trails on either side are Double D and resurrection. Both bike trails only. I can only go on the main line, and on weekends there are so many dogs and conflicts. Put resurrection back to hiking trail. Double D can be biking, just put Resurrection as hiking. One of my favorites parts to run on the mountain for 30 years, and it is gone.
 - You are sitting on a gold mine.....don't screw it up by allowing forestry to decimate the forests. I lived in Port Hardy for years and the area was systematically destroyed by logging
 - you need to build more hiking trails only, and not for mountain biking, you have way to many cycling trails ,, STOP making them
 - You only offer mountain biking. Many many people use gravel bikes for rail trails, back country and even on the mountain bike trails.
-