



# REGIONAL PARKS, TRAILS & WATER ACCESS STRATEGY

FOR THE REGIONAL DISTRICT OF CENTRAL KOOTENAY (RDCK)

# What We Heard Report

AUGUST 2025



# Summary of Key Findings & Highlights from the Stage 1 Engagement



Input and contributions received from each engagement tactic were reviewed and analyzed. The major themes that emerged consistently across all engagement tactics are summarized below.



### **Equitable Access to Nature-Based Recreation.**

Across all engagement tactics, one of the strongest messages was the need to ensure equitable access to high-quality parks, trails, and water-based recreation opportunities throughout the RDCK. Residents in Creston, Area B, Area C, and Area K emphasized long-standing geographic and service gaps in the regional system. These were described not only in terms of a lack of physical infrastructure—such as parks, trails, or boat launches—but also as a gap in the overall quality and consistency of amenities. Water access was repeatedly identified as a critical regional issue, with strong calls for both new access points and better visibility of existing sites. The under-promotion of RDCK-managed access points, especially for paddling and swimming, was seen as a missed opportunity to meet growing community demand.



### **Protecting Nature While Supporting Recreation**

Participants voiced widespread support for increasing access to outdoor recreation but strongly emphasized that these improvements must be pursued with ecological integrity in mind. The strategy must balance visitor use with the need to protect sensitive ecosystems, maintain biodiversity, and preserve the natural character of landscapes. Respondents were particularly concerned about the risk of overdevelopment or urbanization of natural areas, expressing a desire for trails and parks that maintain their wildness while still being accessible. Calls to integrate Indigenous knowledge, cultural values, and traditional land stewardship practices were also prevalent, highlighting an opportunity to advance reconciliation and shared land care in future management.



### **Trail Networks and Diverse Outdoor Opportunities**

Trail use was central to many participants' outdoor experiences. Respondents expressed a desire to see a more connected and diverse trail network across the region. Many emphasized the importance of trails that link communities—not just isolated loops within parks—and supported both recreation and active transportation. Respondents identified the need for a wider variety of trail types, including hiking, mountain biking, adaptive trails, and motorized routes. Trail tourism, economic development, and equitable access for different recreation styles were all discussed as important benefits of a more robust and inclusive trail system.



### **Amenities, Maintenance, and Visitor Readiness**

The quality and consistency of amenities such as washrooms, signage, benches, parking, and waste management were described as essential, not optional, components of a functional parks and trails system. Respondents pointed to several locations where infrastructure had deteriorated or was missing entirely, particularly at trailheads and water access points. These gaps impact user safety, accessibility, and enjoyment—especially for families, seniors, and visitors unfamiliar with the area. Seasonal surges in visitation have intensified the pressure on infrastructure, reinforcing the need for routine maintenance and targeted upgrades that keep pace with use.



## Managing Conflicts and Visitor Use

As park and trail use has increased, so too have tensions between different user groups. Conflicts were most commonly reported between motorized and non-motorized recreationists, and between dog owners and other park users. Respondents requested clear rules, designated use areas, and stronger enforcement to ensure shared spaces are respectful, safe, and welcoming. There was particular interest in dog-friendly amenities, such as off-leash beaches or trails. This was suggested as a tool to help mitigate conflicts in areas where pet-related friction is high.



## Partnerships, Volunteerism, and Community Capacity

Many of the region's most popular trails and recreation assets are maintained by local trail societies, stewardship organizations, and volunteers. Engagement participants strongly advocated for deeper collaboration between RDCK and these groups. There is a need for more consistent funding, capacity-building support, and formal partnerships that acknowledge and reinforce the role of community-led stewardship. Respondents emphasized that these groups are not only maintaining infrastructure but also contributing to safety, education, and long-term sustainability—making them key partners in the delivery of the strategy.



## Awareness, Branding, and Investment Strategy

A widespread lack of awareness around existing parks, trails, and water access points was identified as a barrier to participation. Many residents, including long-time locals, expressed uncertainty about what outdoor assets exist and where they are located. This highlights the need for improved signage, branding, trip-planning resources, and public communication. Alongside these improvements, respondents called for a clear investment strategy that prioritizes the maintenance and improvement of existing parks before expanding into new areas. Investment was welcomed—particularly in underserved areas—but participants emphasized that it must be strategic, sustainable, and driven by local needs and values.



Image Source: RDCK

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1

# Introduction



The RDCK Regional Parks and Trails are part of an extensive regional network of parks and natural spaces. This mosaic of parks, trails, and conservation lands protects environmentally sensitive areas and significant landscapes, conserves ecological biodiversity, and provides high-quality outdoor recreational opportunities for residents and visitors alike. Today, the Regional Parks and Trails system includes 24 regional parks and 3 Regional Trails, covering more than 648.1ha (337.2 ha of regional parks and an additional 274.9 ha of regional trails) and 62 km, respectively, with an additional 27km of trails located within regional parks. Additionally, the RDCK has ongoing land acquisitions and strategic partnerships that continue to grow the diverse regional park system. In 2025 two additional acquisitions were announced (along the Goat River and Robson Park), as well as the significant expansion of Rosebud Lake (in collaboration with the BC Parks Foundation).

Recognizing the high value placed on regional parks, trails, and water access in the region, The Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK) is working collaboratively with residents, partners, and other governments to develop a Regional Parks, Trails, and Water Access Strategy. The strategy will set out a framework to guide future decisions regarding the classification, acquisition, development, enhancement and management of regional parks, trails, and water access for the next 10 years. Understanding the current state (strengths, gaps, and opportunities) of the Regional Parks, Trails, and Water Access system in the RDCK is a critical step in developing the overall strategy.

## 1.1 Purpose of This Report

The purpose of this report is to present the analysis and key findings from the engagement process and to provide an official documentation of the significant volume of input received during the engagement process. This report helps to ensure transparency in sharing the input that was received and used to inform the PTWAS.



Image Source: RDCK

# 1.2 Engagement Process & Tactics

To inform the PTWAS, a robust engagement process was launched in June of 2024 and concluded at the end of October 2024. This process focused on residents and visitors to the RDCK, First Nations, multiple levels of governments, and many diverse community partners (e.g. accessibility / adaptive recreation, conservation, tourism, and more), the engagement process was designed to introduce the planning process and generate insights to help inform the PTWAS. More specifically, the engagement process was designed to:

- Introduce the project and generate interest in helping inform the strategy.
- Understand the use of and satisfaction with current regional parks, trails and water access.
- Identify what is working and well with the existing network of regional parks, trails and water access areas.
- Assess and define community demands, needs, and priorities of the regional parks, trails, and water access system,
- Clarify the fundamental role, purpose and goals of the RDCK Parks and Trails Service.
- Identify the most important issues and concerns that the strategy should address.
- Identify priorities / opportunities to improve the quantity, diversity, connectivity, quality, accessibility, and management of regional parks, trails and water access.

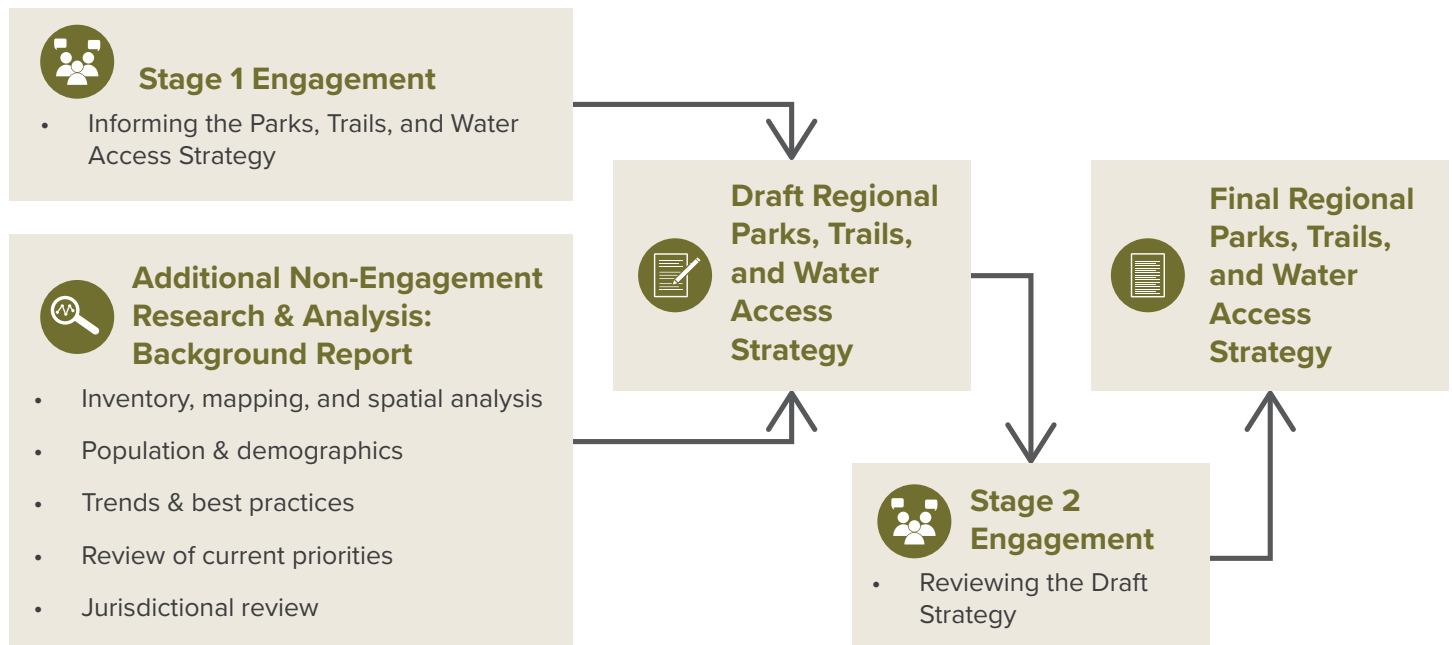


Figure 1: Regional Parks, Trails, and Water Access Strategy Process

The engagement process was designed and implemented in accordance with the International Association of Public Participation's (IAP2) best practices and core values (Figure 2)



## CORE VALUES

IAP2 Federation's Core Values for Public Participation professionals define the expectations and aspirations of the public participation process. Processes based on the Core Values have been shown to be the most successful and respected.

**1** Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.

**2** Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.

**3** Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision-makers.

**4** Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.

**5** Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.

**6** Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.

**7** Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.

Figure 2: IAP2 Core Values

Engagement was developed with the following principles for building relationships with community members, partners, and all interested parties. These principles have guided all engagement efforts for efficient and meaningful engagement.

- Be Respectful
- Be Open and Transparent
- Collaborate, Listen and Share
- Act with Integrity
- Be Willing to Adapt

We have also approached this work with a Gender-Based Analysis Plus lens. The GBA+ lens was used in the engagement design, data collection, and for in-depth data analysis. The GBA+ lens helps to ensure that the engagement process is as accessible and inclusive as possible, and that the engagement input can be tested for variation based on GBA+ factors. To do so, demographic questions are included to allow the analysis to test differences in results by equity, diversity, and inclusion factors including gender, racialized population, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, income, age. In addition, multiple engagement tactics were used to elevate the accessibility of the engagement process and opportunity for interested members of the public and stakeholders to share their input.

Furthermore, we were and continue to be mindful of and committed to alignment with Government to Government engagement with leading industry best practices for engaging with First Nations, such as Outdoor Recreation Council of British Columbia's Working in a Good Way document.

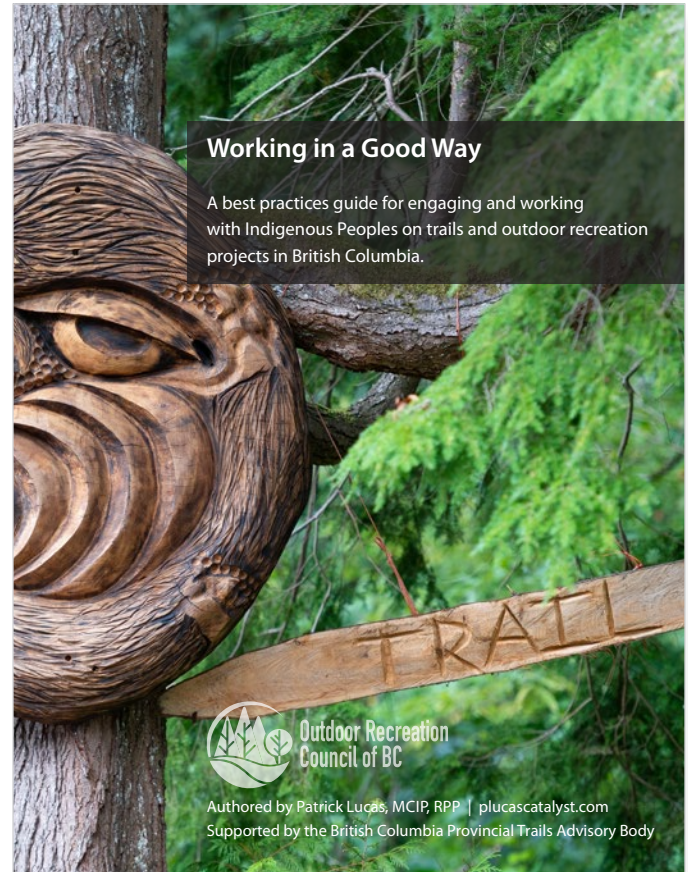


Figure 3: Outdoor Recreation Council of British Columbia's Working in a Good Way Report

The primary engagement tactics implemented as part of the engagement process included:

- Online public survey
- Onsite & in community sounding boards
- Onsite Roving Kiosks
- Online interactive crowdsource webmap
- Stakeholder Interviews (virtual & in-person)
- First Nations Engagement
  - » Interviews

The engagement tactics, particularly the online survey, was designed to enable collected data to be desegregated, analysed and reported on according to diverse users, community members, non-users, interested individuals, and all others whose voices and experiences have not or may not have been captured in the past.

## Engagement by the Numbers



**1,623** Online Public Surveys (**665 complete**)



**71** Community Partner Surveys (**27 complete**)



**1,655** webmap contributions (**361 points, lines, and comments; and 1294 likes / dislike**)



**87** sounding board comments



**200+** In-person engagement with roving kiosks (**258 comments**)



**14** Partner Interviews

# 1.3 Engagement Process Communications & Promotions

To generate awareness, interest, and reach, the engagement process was promoted through the following channels:

- Flyers and posters that were distributed via email to groups and posted throughout the community
- Paid advertising in social media
- Email “blasts” using contact lists from the RDCK communication department
- Engage RDCK webpage
- Media releases
- Variety of “organic”(unpaid) social media efforts

It is important that the input provided by community members be considered across the individual planning projects to leverage the contributions of the community. The following list identifies some of these studies:

- Reimagining Recreation Services Castlegar & District Area (2024)
- Town of Creston Parks Plan (2024)



Figure 4: Postcard



Figure 5: Digital Ad



Figure 6: Poster

# 1.4 First Nations Engagement Status

This report documents the findings of the engagement process to date. The RDCK is located within the traditional homelands of sn'ŕay'ckstx (Sinixt), Ktunaxa, and syilx<sup>w/</sup> Okanagan people. These communities have stewarded the land since time immemorial, contributing to the region's ecological diversity and cultural heritage. The RDCK acknowledges and honours the enduring connection these Indigenous nations have with the land and is committed to fostering respectful partnerships and

meaningful engagement, recognizing the importance of Indigenous knowledge, traditions, and governance in shaping a sustainable and inclusive future for all residents. At this time the RDCK has formally engaged with the Ktunaxa Nation, Yaquan Nukiy (Lower Kootenay Band), and the syilx<sup>w/</sup>Okanagan people. We are in ongoing dialogue with the sn'ŕay'ckstx (Sinixt) nation.



Image Source: RDCK

# 2

## Engagement Input by Engagement Tactic



The following sections document the input received through each engagement tactic.

## 2.1 First Nations Engagement

Based on the Consultative Areas Database of British Columbia the RDCK and the consulting team sent formal letters to the follow Frist Nations:

- Lower Similkameen Indian Band
- Upper Nicola Band
- Penticton Indian Band
- Okanagan Nation Alliance
- Adams Lake Indian Band
- Westbank First Nation
- Shuswap Band
- Splatsin First Nation
- Osoyoos Indian Band
- Sinixt Confederacy, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation
- Neskonlith Indian Band
- Skw!ʔx te Secwepemcuʔ!ʔecw
- Shuswap Band
- Ktunaxa Nation Council
- yaqan nuʔkiy, Lower Kootenay Band
- Tobacco Plains Indian Band
- ʔakisqʰuk
- ʔaqʰam



Image Source: RDCK

We heard back from the Ktunaxa Nation, the Yaqan Nukiy (Lower Kootenay Band), and the syilx<sup>w</sup>/Okanagan people, as well as that sn'Çay'ckstx (Sinixt) nation. While conversations are on going and relationships do not start and end with this engagement we did host two formal engagement sessions with representatives from the Ktunaxa Nation, the Yaqan Nukiy (Lower Kootenay Band), and the syilx<sup>w</sup>/Okanagan people. Based on those meetings the following recommendations were gleaned:

### **Develop, build, and foster on-going relationships**

The RDCK regional parks team has worked closely with syilx<sup>w</sup>/Okanagan people on numerous conservation projects within and close to regional parks. This relationship was built through open dialogue and communication between staff and representatives of the Nation. During the meeting with the syilx<sup>w</sup>/Okanagan people it was noted how important this work is and continues to be. In comparison, there are opportunities to build stronger relationships with the Yaqan Nukiy (Lower Kootenay Band), and seek collaborations and shared values of conservations and connection to the land to work together on. This relationship is seen as very positive at the staff level but there are opportunities for RDCK elected officials to seek out more government-to-government relationships.

The RDCK should consider the use of Memorandum of Understanding with both the Yaqan Nukiy (Lower Kootenay Band) and other First Nations communities whose traditional territories are within the RDCK boundaries. MOUs can solidify positive relationships and outline shared values.

### **Balancing Recreation with Ecological and Cultural Values**

Recreation has many benefits but can also impact the natural environment and has the potential to create conflict among visitors to the area and First Nations community members. It is essential for the RDCK to increase education and awareness of the significance of the area to the Ktunaxa Nation, the Yaqan Nukiy (Lower Kootenay Band), and the syilx<sup>w</sup>/Okanagan people, as well as that sn'Çay'ckstx (Sinixt) nation. Regional parks and trails must also ensure open access to the area for traditional and ceremonial practices. Furthermore, ongoing environmental impact assessments and archeological assessments (currently ongoing) will support better understanding and planning of trails to not disrupt traditional resources and culturally significant areas.

## 2.2 Online Public Survey

In total 1,623 participants attempted/began the survey. Of those, 655 participants fully completed the survey (response rate = 40%). The survey was open from May 21, 2024 – June 30, 2023. The survey was promoted to the public through the following channels:

- Posters with a QR code were displayed throughout RDCK.
- The RDCK website (engage RDCK), social media, other local recreation organizations, and the wider community.
- Organized user groups and community partners were asked to promote the survey to their members and networks.

Responses to the questions are presented below in the order they were asked in the survey. It is important to note that not all questions were answered by all respondents. Thus, the percentages in the findings represent the number 4% of respondents to the individual questions.

**Table 1: Key Respondent Characteristics**

Age	
18-24 years	0.5%
25-34 years	7%
35-44 years	19%
45-54 years	20%
55-64 years	23%
65- 74 years	20%
75 years and older	8%
Prefer not to answer	2.5%
Gender	
Female	49%
Male	44%
Prefer not to answer	7%

Residency	
Electoral Area A	4%
Electoral Area B	4%
Electoral Area C	2%
Electoral Area D	3%
Electoral Area E	11.4%
Electoral Area F	10%
Electoral Area G	3%
Electoral Area H	10%
Electoral Area I	3.5%
Electoral Area J	6%
Electoral Area K	1%
Castlegar	7%
Creston	8%
Kaslo	1%
Nakusp	1%
Nelson	19%
New Denver	2%
Salmo	1.5%
Silverton	.5%
Slocan	.5%
Outside the RDCK	1.5%

## 2.2.1 Approach to Analysis

Respondents were provided with an open ended “other” options throughout the survey. The comments were analyzed using the qualitative analysis software, Nvivo, and coded into themes. The major themes and examples of respondent comments are summarized for each question where relevant. In addition, multiple engagement tactics were used to elevate the accessibility of the engagement process and opportunities for interested members of the public and stakeholders to share their input. Additionally, some subsegment analysis was completed to compare the responses from respondents who live in areas with no access to RDCK Regional Parks and Trails (compared to those who have access within a 10-minute drive). Where there are sizeable and material differences between the segments, those differences are presented alongside the overall findings.

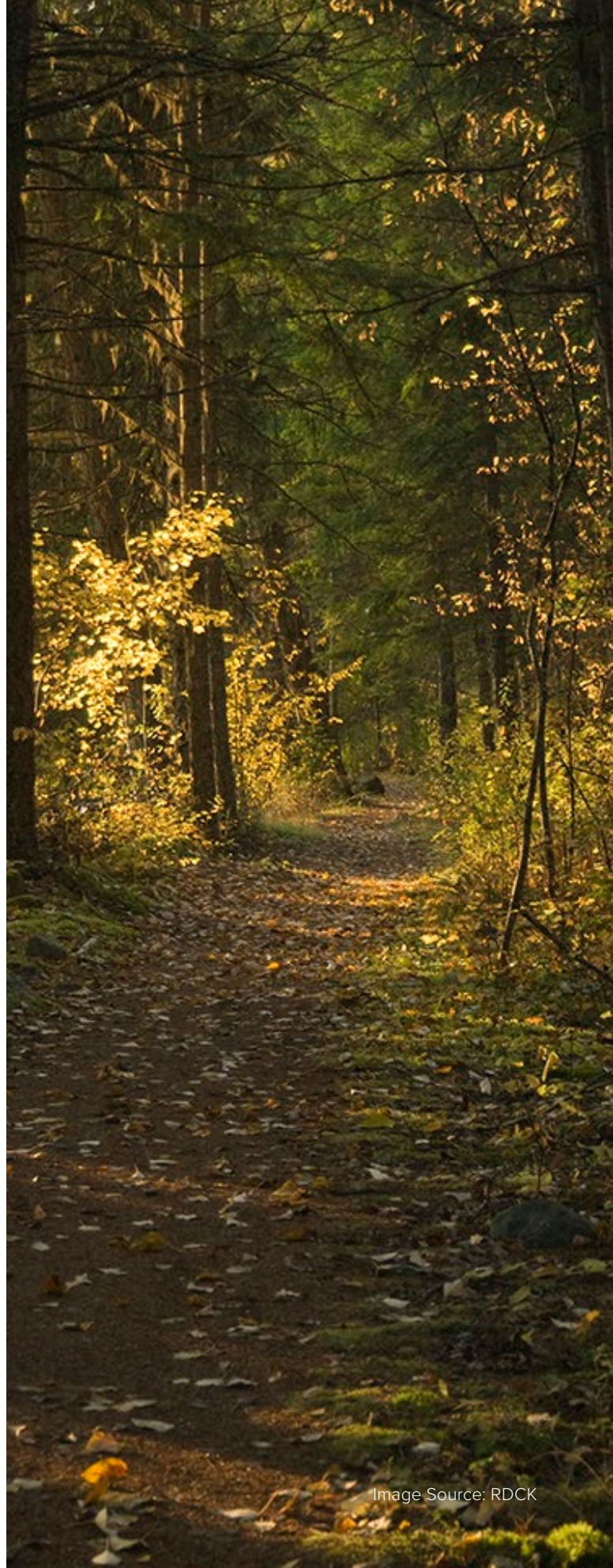


Image Source: RDCK

## 2.2.2 Survey Results

The following section presents the survey results for each question asked.

### 1. Have you ever visited an RDCK regional park or regional trail?

The majority of respondents (more than 94%) have previously visited RDCK managed regional parks and trails.

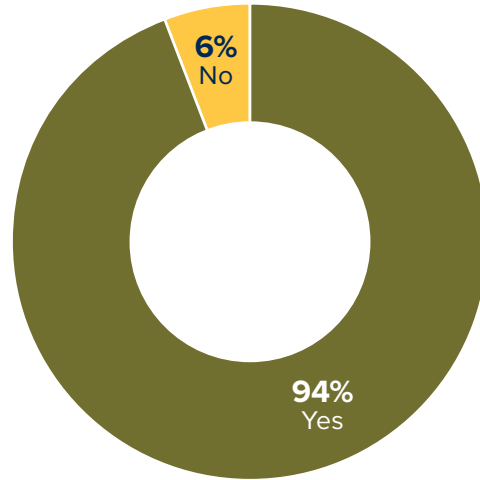


Figure 7: RDCK regional park or trail visitation

Respondents from Area A and C reported visiting RDCK regional park or trail less frequently, with only 80% of residents from these electoral area reporting they had visited before.



Image Source: RDCK

## 2. In the previous 12 months did you use/ visit any of the following Regional Parks and Regional Trails?

All 27 regional parks and trails were visited by respondents in the previous 12 months (Figure 8). The top 3 most frequently visited parks include Taghum Beach Regional Park, Cottonwood Lake Regional Park, and Pulpit Rock Access Regional Trail. These parks and trail offer regionally Signiant features such as beaches, water access, fishing, and long-distance hiking.

When compared by electoral area, municipal areas, and sub regions the most visited region parks change dramatically. The respondents who reside within Creston Valley Shared Services Committee area who do not have a RDCK regional park or trail within their areas(including electoral areas B, and C) visit Crawford Creek Regional Park, Riondel Regional Park, and Balfour Beach Regional Park between 37%-20%. Similarly, the residents of area K, visit Rosebery Parkland Regional Park more frequently as it is the closest park. Thinking about why you choose to visit parks and trails in the RDCK, please rate how important each of the following are to you.

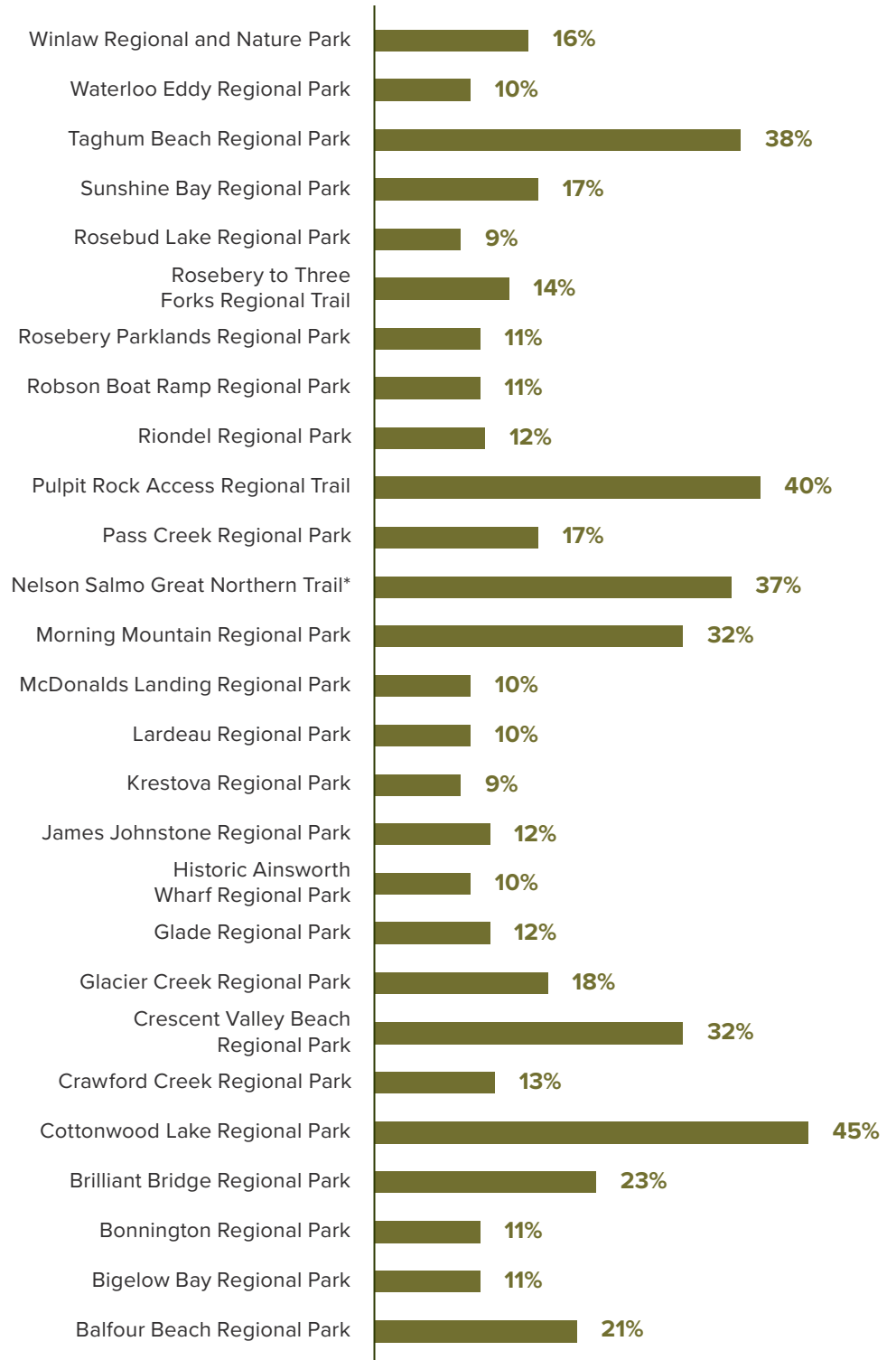



Figure 8: RDCK regional parks and trails visited in the previous 12 months



Cottonwood Lake Regional Park was visited by at least 1 resident of all RDCK electoral areas and municipalities. Taghum Beach Regional Park was visited by at least 1 resident of all RDCK electoral areas and municipalities, with the exception of the village of Silverton. Finally, the Pulpit Rock Access Regional Trail was also visited by almost all electoral areas and municipalities within the RDCK, with the exception of residents from the villages of Slocan and Nakusp.



Image Source: RDCK



Image Source: RDCK

## Activities

### 3. When you visit RDCK Regional Parks and Regional Trails which of the following activities have participated in during the previous 12 months?

The most common activities are walking/hiking as well as using trails for active transportation, with over 90% of all respondents engaging in these activities. Nature appreciation was the second most common activity, and swimming and beach access were also noted by more than 50% of participants. Many other activities are noted (Figure 9) and important to respondents as core activities that RDCK regional parks and trails support.

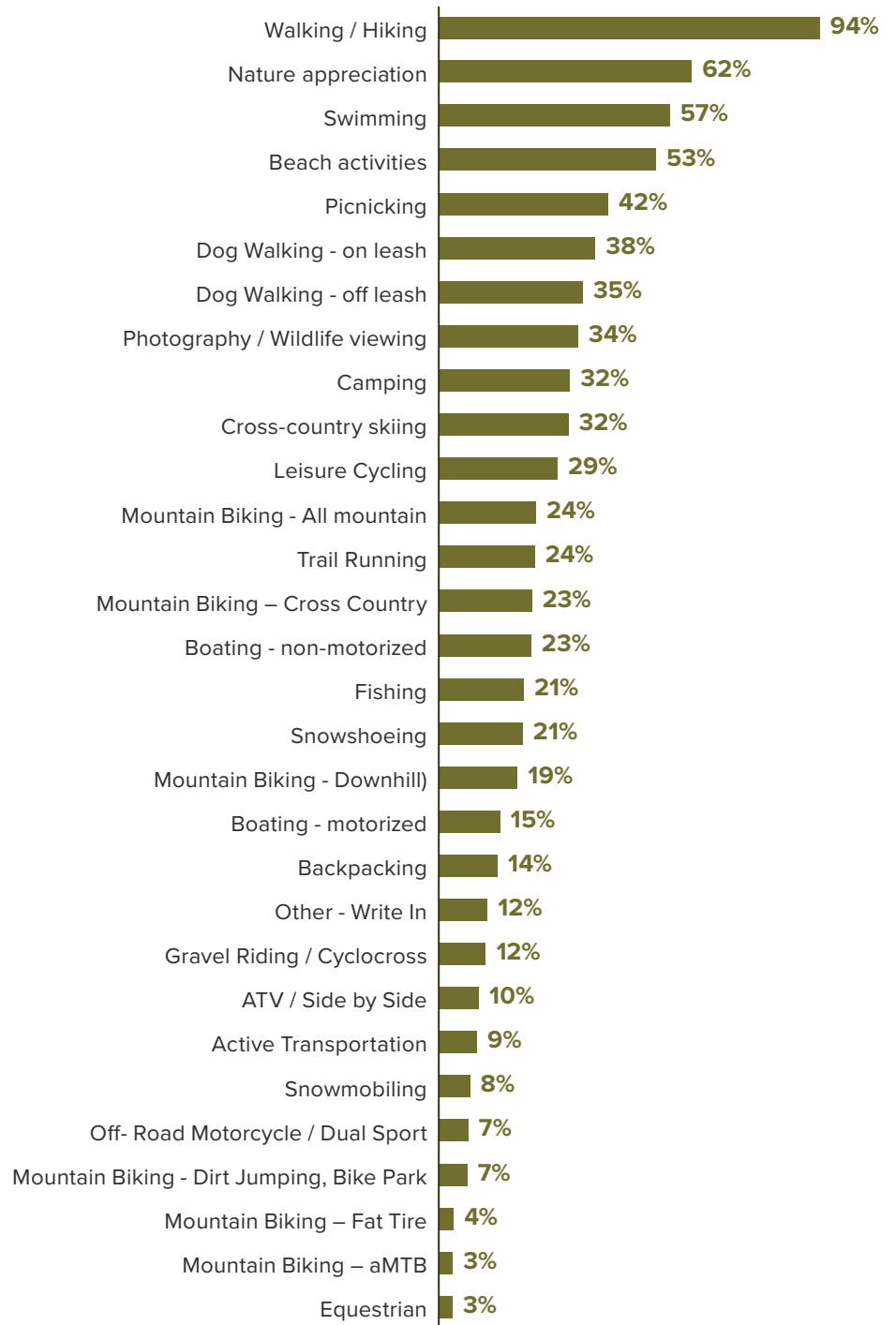


Figure 9: Which of the following activities have participated in during the previous 12 months?

**4. Are there other recreational activities, not listed in the previous question, that are the primary motivator for visiting RDCK Regional Parks and Regional Trails?**

When asked about other activities (not listed above), the most frequently noted outdoor activities were:

- Rock Climbing
- Paddle Boarding
- Bird watching
- Mediation
- Ski touring
- Ice Skating
- Nature photography

**5. Of the activities listed above, what 3 activities do you participate in the MOST when you visit RDCK Regional Parks and Regional Trails?**

Regional parks and trails are primarily used by residents for outdoor activities such as walking, hiking, dog walker, swimming, and mountain biking (Table 2). However, they are also valued as places for nature appreciation and the opportunity to relax and be in intact natural environments.

**Table 2: Top 3 activities within RDCK regional park and trails**

Item	Overall Rank	Rank Distribution	Score	No. of Rankings
Walking / Hiking	1		1,731	649
Dog Walking - Off Leash	2		375	175
Nature Appreciation	3		316	209
Swimming	4		271	165
Mountain Biking - All Mountain	5		248	119
Dog Walking - On Leash	6		245	123
Beach Activities	7		223	145
Trail Running	8		150	70
Camping	9		136	78
Mountain Biking - Downhill	10		135	63

**6. Are there any nature-based recreation activities that currently take place in RDCK Regional Parks or Regional Trails that you feel should be stopped?**

When asked what activities should potentially be stopped or not allowed with parks the majority of respondents suggested that there is no need to change current allowable activities (i.e., phrases like “No, the parks are there for everyone’s use” and “Nothing needs to be stopped” were common). However, a few key activities were noted by respondents.

- **Motorized Recreation** (159 responses)  
This was the most frequently mentioned activity that respondents felt should be stopped or significantly restricted. This includes references to: Off-road vehicles (ORVs), ATVs, dirtbikes, snowmobiles. Many respondents linked motorized use to trail degradation, noise, and wildlife disturbance.
- **Dogs/Off-Leash Issues** (34 responses)  
Concerns about off-leash dogs were noted, especially where these activities conflict with other users or wildlife. Some respondents called for more regulation or enforcement of leash laws.
- **Camping** (5 responses)  
A small number flagged unauthorized or unmanaged camping as problematic, particularly in sensitive or high-use areas.



Image Source: RDCK

## 7. Thinking about the future, are there nature-based recreation activities that you feel should be developed or better enabled and supported in RDCK Regional Parks?

There were many ideas shared in regards to new opportunities or activities that can be enhanced and developed in regional parks. The following themes were the most frequently cited:

- **Trails and Hiking** (132 responses)  
The most frequently mentioned priority. Respondents expressed strong support for expanding and maintaining hiking and walking trail networks. Many suggested increased trail connectivity between communities and destinations.
- **Cycling / Mountain Biking** (69 responses)  
There was clear interest in developing more mountain biking infrastructure, including purpose-built trails, skill zones, and bike-accessible amenities.
- **Swimming / Beach Access** (38 responses)  
Participants highlighted a need for clean, accessible swimming areas and improved beach amenities. Some referenced specific parks with overcrowding or degraded facilities (e.g., Syringa Park).
- **Motorized Recreation** (35 responses)  
While some people felt strongly that motorized recreation should be stopped other respondents disagree, and support the idea of expanding and supporting motorized recreation in the region. Motorized use (including ATVs and snowmobiles) was named as an activity that should be designated and better supported—especially from rural and backcountry stakeholders.
- **Rock Climbing** (28 responses)  
A relatively new and emerging theme, particularly in the Kootenays. Respondents called for designated climbing areas, improved access to crags, and safety infrastructure like signage and parking.
- **Nature Education** (25 responses)  
Several respondents asked for more interpretive signage, guided programs, and opportunities to engage with the natural environment through learning. This was seen as especially valuable for youth and schools.
- **Camping** (25 responses)  
More camping opportunities—especially low-impact and backcountry—were requested. Some respondents cited high demand and limited availability in existing locations.
- **Dog Access / Off-Leash Areas** (22 responses)  
Interest in more clearly designated areas for dog use, including off-leash zones. Some framed this as a solution to current user conflicts.
- **Paddling / Non-Motorized Boating** (12 responses)  
Respondents mentioned a desire for access points and amenities for paddling, including canoe and kayak launches, especially at quieter lakes and rivers.

**8. Of the water-based activities listed above, are you using any water access areas outside of the RDCK Regional Parks, to participate in your selected activities?**

Water access is a high priority for residents across the RDCK, and while the regional parks system provides meaningful and important access to various bodies of water across the region, it is by far not the only land manager providing this important access. As illustrated in Figure 10, more than 75% of residents are using water access areas not managed by the RDCK regional parks and trails system.

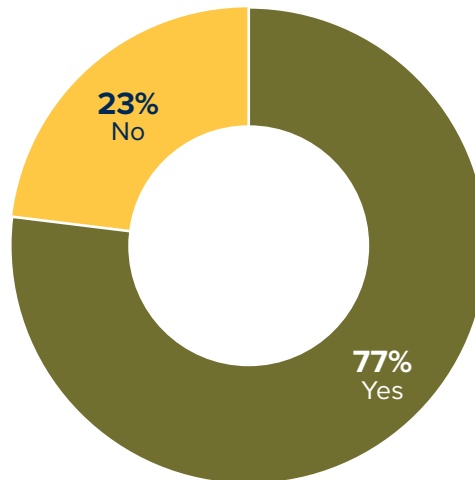


Figure 10: Percentage of visitors using water access outside of RDCK regional parks and trails

**9. Is this water access area managed by a business, community group, or other?**

Of the water access areas that residents are frequently using that are NOT managed by the RDCK, some are managed by other government or non-profit organizations such, however many (almost 50%) are unmanaged water access areas (e.g. MOTI right of ways). Figure 11 highlights respondents awareness of water access area management.

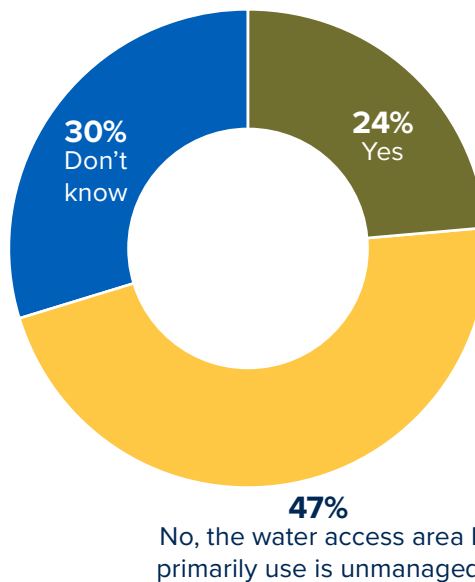
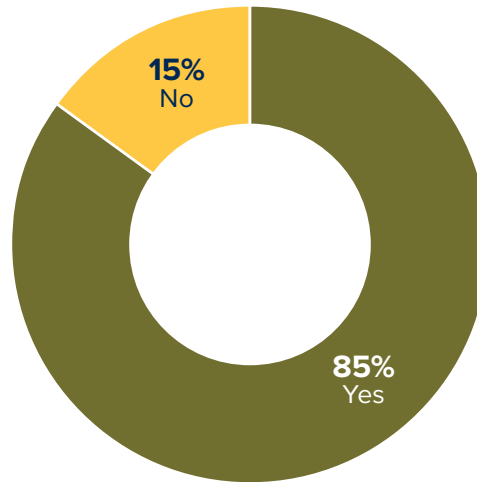


Figure 11: Is this water access area managed by a business, community group, or other?

**10. Are there other NON-RDCK parks and trails that you visit to participate in nature-based recreation?**

Outdoor recreation is incredibly important to residents across the RDCK; therefore it is not surprising that many (85%) are visiting other areas throughout the region to engage in nature-based recreation (Figure 12).



*Figure 12: Are there other NON-RDCK parks and trails that you visit to participate in nature-based recreation?*

**a. What NON-RDCK owned or managed parks and trails do you visit and what activities do you engage in when visiting these areas?**

- **Slocan Valley Rail Trail** (mentioned in 284 responses)  
This was by far the most frequently cited location. It's a multi-use, well-loved regional corridor used for walking, cycling, and cross-country skiing.
- **BC Provincial Parks** (236 mentions)  
Many respondents referenced using the broader provincial park system extensively, without naming specific parks.
- **Kokanee Creek Provincial Park** (108 mentions)  
This specific provincial park, located near Nelson was praised for camping, hiking, and family access to water.
- **Goat Mountain Trail System** (31 mentions)  
Popular for hiking, snowshoeing, and trail walking—especially among residents near Creston and the East Shore.
- **Salmo Ski Hill / Hooch Creek** (16 mentions)  
Referenced both for alpine recreation and nearby trail use. Identified by respondents as underdeveloped but highly valued.
- **Crown Land Areas** (23 mentions)  
Used for a variety of informal recreational activities including ATV riding, hiking, and nature appreciation.
- **Wildlife Management Area** (West Creston) (23 mentions)  
Visited for bird watching, walking, and environmental education activities.

**11. Thinking about why you visit the RDCK regional parks and regional trails, how important are the following characteristics to making your decision to visit?**

People visit parks for a variety of reasons, however, in the RDCK respondents are primarily visiting regional parks and trails for access to nature and scenic values. Location and the opportunities within specific parks and on regional trails are also highly influential in visitors’ decisions. Solitude and outdoor recreation were also noted highly (Table 3).

**Table 3: Reasons for visiting RDCK regional parks and trails**

	<b>Not Important</b>	<b>Somewhat important</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Important</b>	<b>Very important</b>
Scenic beauty of the site	0.9%	4.7%	5.1%	<b>44.8%</b>	<b>44.5%</b>
Desire to experience a specific park	5.2%	9.5%	31.7%	38.4%	15.3%
Desire to experience a specific trail	4.4%	7.9%	24.1%	<b>42.2%</b>	21.4%
Ease of access and convenience (close to home, work, easy to get to)	3.3%	9.1%	12.4%	<b>43.7%</b>	31.5%
Lack of crowds	2.1%	6.5%	13.0%	<b>42.3%</b>	36.1%
Safety of the experience	9.7%	11.4%	29.2%	33.2%	16.5%
Availability of universally accessible visitor amenities	22.2%	16.4%	32.2%	21.4%	7.8%
Supply of visitor amenities (e.g. toilets, benches, viewpoints etc.)	14.3%	19.0%	23.5%	31.5%	11.7%
Recreation opportunity provided (e.g. ice skating, mountain biking, hike, ORV, swimming etc.)	9.5%	10.5%	17.5%	32.1%	30.3%

## Satisfaction

Overall respondents were somewhat or very satisfied with most elements of regional parks and trails. However, of note the main amenities that respondents were dissatisfied with were garbage and recycling receptacles. Additional, respondents indicated less satisfaction with non-motorized water access points and the amount of hiking trails (both for motorized and non-motorized recreation). The following Tables (Table 4-Table 7) highlight the various satisfaction measured provided.

### 12. How satisfied are you with the following visitor amenities in RDCK Regional Parks and Trails?

Table 4: Visitors satisfaction with amenities in RDCK regional parks and trails

	Very dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Neutral	Somewhat satisfied	Very satisfied	I do not use this amenity
Parking / staging areas	2.2%	6.6%	19.6%	<b>33.8%</b>	<b>34.7%</b>	3.0%
BBQ / firepits	2.1%	5.9%	<b>36.7%</b>	13.6%	12.5%	29.2%
Bike racks	3.5%	9.6%	<b>39.0%</b>	12.4%	6.7%	28.9%
Washrooms / change rooms	3.6%	11.5%	27.0%	<b>30.2%</b>	20.2%	7.5%
Benches / picnic tables	1.8%	6.4%	26.1%	<b>33.4%</b>	25.5%	6.9%
Shade structures / day use shelter	1.8%	7.1%	<b>32.0%</b>	23.5%	18.3%	17.3%
Wayfinding and interpretive signage	2.6%	10.0%	<b>31.7%</b>	27.5%	19.9%	8.2%
Garbage receptacles	5.6%	17.3%	24.3%	26.2%	20.6%	6.0%
Recycling receptacles	9.3%	20.5%	<b>30.7%</b>	18.0%	13.5%	7.9%

### 13. How satisfied are you with the following features in RDCK Regional Parks and Trails?

Table 5: Visitor satisfaction with RDCK regional park and trail features

	Very dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Neutral	Somewhat satisfied	Very satisfied	I do not know
Playgrounds	2.2%	5.7%	<b>39.6%</b>	15.3%	9.5%	27.6%
Sports fields / diamonds / courts	2.8%	4.9%	<b>40.0%</b>	16.4%	10.2%	25.8%
Non-motorized water access points	7.3%	14.8%	28.1%	20.2%	16.3%	13.2%
Motorized boat launches	6.1%	8.4%	36.4%	11.6%	10.2%	27.3%
Beaches / swimming areas	4.6%	10.2%	21.7%	32.9%	26.3%	4.3%
Drive in campgrounds	3.5%	9.7%	33.7%	18.9%	13.8%	20.4%
Festival / event hosting infrastructure	3.1%	6.5%	<b>41.8%</b>	10.0%	9.0%	29.7%
Visitor programming (e.g. rentals, events, instructional)	2.1%	6.1%	<b>46.8%</b>	8.2%	6.5%	30.3%
Trip planning information & resources	2.1%	9.1%	<b>44.7%</b>	12.8%	8.7%	22.6%

## 14. How satisfied are you with the following trail types in RDCK Regional Parks and Regional Trails?

Table 6: Visitor satisfaction with RDCK regional trails

	Very dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Neutral	Somewhat satisfied	Very satisfied	I do not know
Total amount of multi-use (non-motorized) trails	4.7%	15.3%	17.0%	31.9%	24.4%	6.6%
Total amount of mixed-use (motorized allowed) trails	10.2%	12.2%	29.7%	13.3%	13.0%	21.6%
Total amount of hiking optimized trails	4.0%	14.1%	20.7%	33.9%	19.5%	7.8%
Total amount of equestrian optimized trails	1.8%	3.7%	39.0%	3.8%	6.8%	<b>45.0%</b>
Total amount of mountain bike optimized trails	1.8%	7.6%	29.8%	16.9%	20.2%	23.7%
Total amount of motorized optimized trails	9.2%	6.7%	33.2%	5.8%	9.4%	35.6%
Total amount of accessible trails	3.5%	12.6%	31.1%	18.8%	10.2%	23.8%
Quality of the trails for mountain biking	1.5%	4.9%	26.0%	15.3%	24.1%	28.1%
Quality of the trails for hiking / walking / trail running	2.7%	7.6%	13.6%	33.2%	38.4%	4.6%
Quality of the trails for motorized recreation	6.9%	4.9%	33.4%	5.4%	7.5%	<b>41.9%</b>
Quality of the trails for equestrian	2.0%	3.3%	36.1%	3.2%	5.6%	<b>49.9%</b>
Quality of accessible trails	2.7%	8.3%	30.7%	16.3%	12.7%	29.2%

## 15. Overall, how satisfied are you with the following items and experiences

Table 7: Overall visitor satisfaction with RDCK regional parks and trails

	Very dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Neutral	Somewhat satisfied	Very satisfied	I do not know
Recreation experiences in RDCK Regional Parks	2.5%	7.1%	11.9%	<b>42.5%</b>	34.4%	1.6%
Recreation experiences in NON-RDCK Parks (e.g., municipal parks, community parks etc.)	1.8%	5.2%	14.0%	<b>40.1%</b>	35.8%	3.2%
Recreation experiences on RDCK Regional Trails	2.7%	5.8%	14.7%	<b>42.3%</b>	30.9%	3.7%
Recreation experiences on NON-RDCK Trails (e.g. trails managed by others)	1.9%	3.9%	14.5%	<b>39.9%</b>	34.7%	5.2%



Image Source: RDCK

## Water Access Area characteristics

### 16. Thinking about water access areas how important are the following characteristics to making your decision to visit?

Access to water is important to many respondents and residents of the RDCK, when asked what the most important characteristics of those areas are, the scenic beauty, ease of access, and lack of crowds were the top 3 most important factors. However, recreation opportunities such as swimming and boating were also ranked very high. The full range of categories is captured in Table 8.

Table 8: Water access area characteristics

	Not at all important	Somewhat important	Neutral	Important	Very important
Scenic beauty of the site	2.7%	8.4%	9.1%	<b>41.1%</b>	38.7%
Ease of access and convenience (close to home, work, easy to get to)	5.0%	10.9%	12.8%	<b>44.6%</b>	26.8%
Lack of crowds	3.2%	8.4%	14.0%	<b>40.4%</b>	33.9%
Safety of the experience	7.8%	13.4%	22.0%	39.0%	17.8%
Availability of universally accessible visitor amenities	17.5%	15.5%	35.1%	25.1%	6.8%
Supply of visitor amenities (e.g. toilets, benches, viewpoints etc.)	11.8%	17.2%	22.5%	36.7%	11.8%
Recreation opportunity provided (e.g. boating, swimming etc.)	6.8%	11.9%	16.2%	<b>41.2%</b>	23.9%

**17. Water access areas are typically unmanaged with little to no amenities. How important would development or improvements be to you?**

The majority of respondents (58%) felt that development and improvements are NOT important, and additional 16% felt neutral about these, and less than 25% felt that managed facilities were important (Figure 13). Unmanaged but accessible water access appears to be the most important factor.

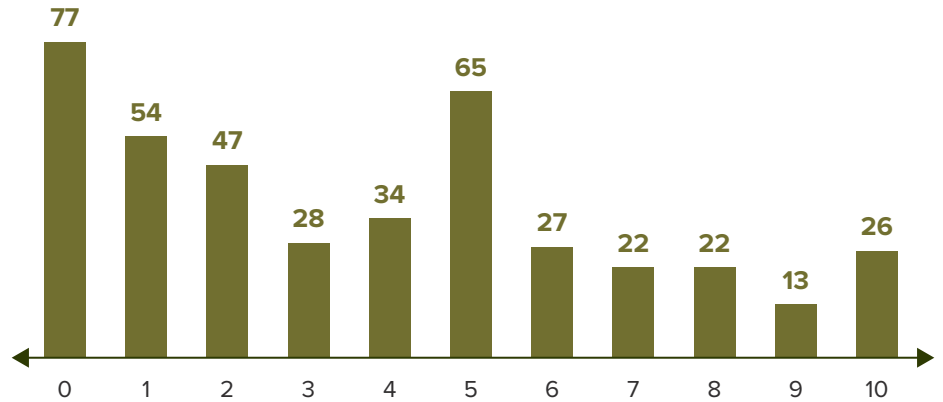


Figure 13: How important would development or improvements to water access areas be to you?

**18. Overall, how satisfied are you knowing that there is no active management role over undeveloped water access areas in the RDCK?**

Almost 50% of respondents are perfectly happy with no active management of water access areas, however, some participants (28%) would like to see this improved (Figure 14).

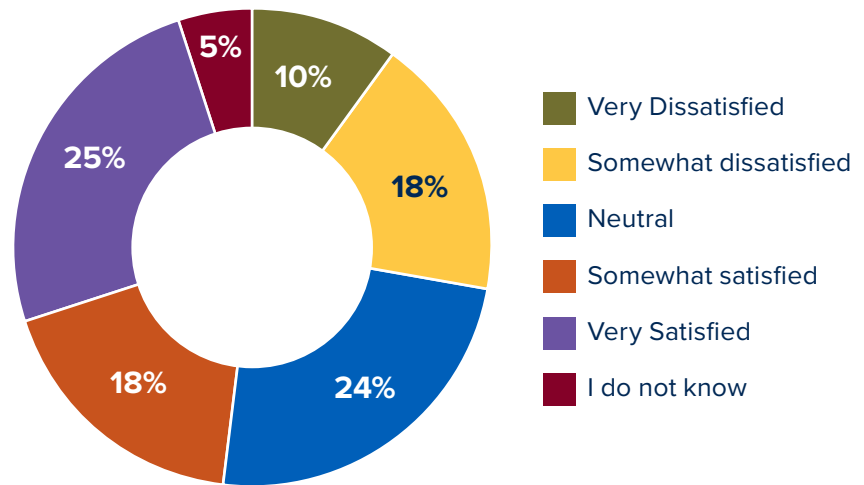


Figure 14: Visitor satisfaction with lack of active management in undeveloped water access areas

## 19. Overall, what do you think could be done to improve your experience using the RDCK Regional Parks, Trails, and Water Access Areas?

Respondents had many ideas for improvement, while also being very positive about their overall experiences.

The main themes that emerged are as follows:

### **Improve Access (183 mentions)**

The most common suggestion by far. Respondents called for better and more frequent access to existing parks and water bodies. Some emphasized physical access (trails, roads), while others called for more equitable geographic access across the RDCK. Respondents from Creston and Areas A,B, and C repeatedly noted the complete lack of RDCK-supported regional parks or trails in their area. This was viewed as a long-standing gap.

### **Expand Trails and Connectivity (115 mentions)**

Many suggested the creation of new trails or extensions to existing ones. Improved connectivity between communities, parks, and amenities was seen as vital to increasing use and benefit.

### **Beach and Water Recreation (68 mentions)**

There were many calls for improving or creating beaches and waterfront areas, especially at underused lakes like Rosebud and Box Lake. Desire for family-friendly lake access, clean beaches, and places to swim was strong.

### **Maintenance and Upkeep (50 mentions)**

Trails, parks, and water access areas were often described as needing more frequent cleaning, repair, or ongoing stewardship—especially during peak season use. Overcrowded or insufficient parking was also noted as a recurring concern, especially near popular trailheads and beach areas.

### **Signage and Navigation (41 mentions)**

Respondents noted that clear signage, directional wayfinding, and interpretive information were lacking or inconsistent. This was often framed as a safety and experience issue. A few respondents pointed out the lack of general awareness about RDCK regional parks, suggesting the need for a public engagement and promotion strategy.

### **Community Programming (25 mentions)**

Suggestions included offering more events, guided walks, or seasonal activities to engage locals and visitors alike. Some respondents also emphasized the importance of environmental education, signage about ecosystems, and opportunities for youth learning in parks.

### **Accessibility and Equity (6 mentions)**

A smaller group asked for improvements to better serve people with disabilities, seniors, and those with limited transport access.

## Functions and Support of Regional Parks, Trails, and Water Access Areas

### 20. How important are the following functions for RDCK Regional Parks and Trails?

Environmental protection and wildlife habitat are seen as the most critical functions of the RDCK regional parks and trails systems; however, this is equally as important to residents as nature-based recreation opportunities (Table 9). Sports are still important to respondents but less so than the other priorities.

Table 9: Importance of RDCK regional parks and trails functions

	Not at all important	Somewhat important	Neutral	Important	Very important
Regionally significant environmental protection	4.9%	9.0%	9.1%	27.8%	<b>49.1%</b>
Conservation focused areas	5.5%	8.5%	10.2%	28.3%	<b>47.5%</b>
Wildlife protection areas	4.7%	8.6%	8.5%	26.7%	<b>51.6%</b>
Nature-based recreation areas	4.1%	6.3%	9.2%	31.3%	<b>49.1%</b>
Community or neighbourhood green spaces	5.1%	8.0%	9.5%	33.8%	<b>43.6%</b>
Community or neighbourhood outdoor sports facilities (e.g. soccer fields, skateboarding park)	8.6%	13.5%	19.5%	34.1%	24.4%
Regional significant outdoor sports facilities	12.6%	12.6%	27.0%	29.3%	18.5%

## 21. In your opinion, what should the primary function of RDCK Regional Parks and Trails be?

When asked to rank based on importance and determine the most important function, respondents notes that the regional parks and trails system should have a primary focus on nature-based outdoor recreation, with environmental protection being the next most important function (Table 10).

Table 10: Primary function of RDCK regional parks and trails

Item	Overall Rank	Rank Distribution	Score	No. of Rankings
Nature-based recreation areas	1		295	295
Regionally significant environmental protection	2		170	170
Community or neighbourhood green spaces	3		68	68
Wildlife protection areas	4		49	49
Community or neighbourhood outdoor sports facilities	5		35	35
Regional significant outdoor sports facilities	6		33	33
Conservation focused areas	7		33	33



Image Source: RDCK

**22. Consider each of the following statements that refer to the development and delivery of RDCK Regional Parks, Trails, and water access areas.**

Regional parks, trails, and water access areas are increasingly seen as essential to community well-being, sense of belonging, and civic pride. Respondents made it very clear that regional parks and trails are important. It is also clear from these responses (Table 11) that there is a strong desire for the network to expand and work together with community partners to serve even more RDCK residents with access to nature-based recreation opportunities near their homes.

**Table 11: Core values of RDCK regional parks and trails**

	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Somewhat agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
Residents can benefit even if they do not use regional parks and trails.	5.0%	4.8%	11.3%	29.1%	<b>47.9%</b>
The RDCK should expand its network of regional parks.	9.1%	6.1%	12.6%	27.1%	<b>42.9%</b>
The RDCK should expand its network of regional trails.	8.3%	5.8%	10.9%	27.9%	<b>45.5%</b>
It is important to maintain existing regional parks and trails, before we consider developing new ones.	3.6%	6.8%	11.1%	34.2%	<b>42.8%</b>
The RDCK should partner with community groups and non-profit organizations to manage and deliver regional parks and trails.	3.3%	2.8%	9.5%	27.1%	<b>55.1%</b>
Regional parks and trails help strengthen and bring the community together.	3.6%	2.1%	7.3%	22.6%	<b>62.1%</b>
Residents can benefit even if they do not use water access areas.	5.2%	5.2%	16.8%	25.8%	<b>44.4%</b>
The RDCK should take an active management role over undeveloped water access areas.	12.7%	10.9%	20.9%	22.3%	28.0%

### 23. Overall, how satisfied are you with the quantity of parks and trails in the RDCK (both Regional and Non-Regional)?

Overall, respondents appear to be somewhat-very satisfied with the number of and the types of regional parks and trails across the region (Table 12).

However, when comparing residents in areas without RDCK regional parks and trails the feedback is quite different. Residents in Electoral B and C reported 75% being very-somewhat dissatisfied with both the number of and the types of regional parks and trails (as there are none).



Respondents from Areas B and C (and to a lesser extent Area K and the town of Creston) are highly dissatisfied with the lack of RDCK regional parks and trails. An additional 50% of these residents confirmed they are also dissatisfied with non-RDCK parks and trails, citing an overall lack of nature-based recreation amenities.

Table 12: Satisfaction with the number of parks and trails across the entire RDCK

	Very dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Neutral	Somewhat satisfied	Very satisfied	I do not know
The number of RDCK Regional Parks in your area	8.2%	12.2%	17.1%	<b>35.8%</b>	24.4%	2.4%
The type of RDCK Regional Parks in your area	8.5%	11.7%	17.6%	<b>35.3%</b>	23.9%	3.0%
The number of RDCK Regional Trails in your area	9.3%	16.5%	13.7%	<b>35.8%</b>	20.9%	3.8%
The number of NON-RDCK Parks in your area (e.g., municipal parks, community parks etc.)	3.4%	13.2%	18.7%	<b>33.7%</b>	25.7%	5.2%
The number of NON-RDCK Trails (e.g. trails managed by others)	2.4%	10.9%	19.0%	<b>32.8%</b>	28.4%	6.4%

**24. Currently, residents support RDCK Regional Parks and Trails through the community parks budget, how supportive would you be of paying an additional regional parks, regional trails, and water access tax levy?**

More than 50% of respondents were supportive of paying an addition tax levy to support regional parks, trails, and water access areas (Table 13). However, there were also approximately 1/3 or 33% of respondents who were not supportive.

Table 13: Support for additional tax levies

	Very unresponsive	Somewhat unresponsive	Neutral	Somewhat supportive	Very supportive
RDCK Regional Parks	23.0%	11.5%	16.3%	<b>31.0%</b>	18.2%
RDCK Regional Trails	22.3%	10.2%	14.2%	<b>32.2%</b>	21.1%
Water Access Areas	25.1%	13.0%	18.4%	24.6%	18.9%

Residents of Areas B, C and the Town of Creston were strongly opposed to the idea of paying additional tax levies of any kind (more than 60% of respondents from these areas indicated they were very unresponsive or somewhat unresponsive).

**a. If a special tax levy to support RDCK Regional Parks, Trails, and Water access areas was implemented how much would you be supportive of paying annually?**

While the majority of respondents are supportive of between \$25-\$50 increased in special tax levies, and additional 20% indicated they would be in favour of even higher fees. Again, it is important to point out that residents in areas without RDCK regional parks and trails were largely not supportive of any increases (Figure 15).

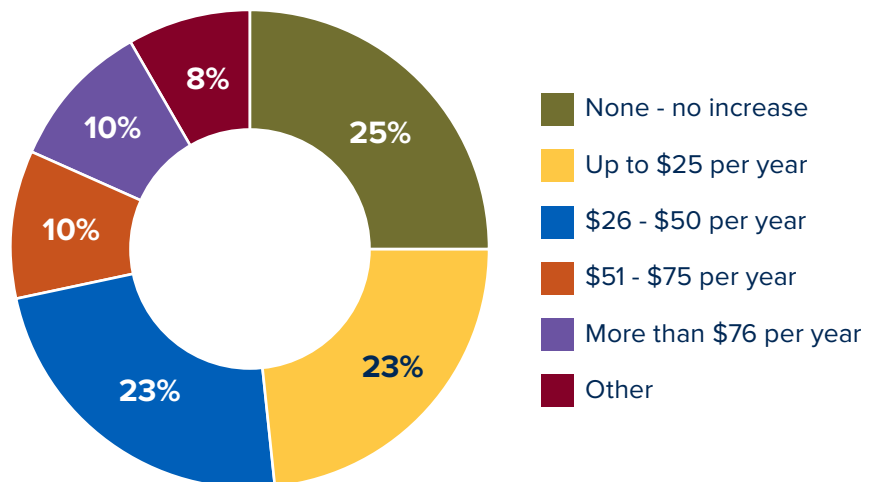


Figure 15: Support for special tax levy amounts

## 25. Should the RDCK pursue the establishment of more regional parks, trails, and water access areas?

Overall, respondents do feel that the RDCK should pursue the establishment and development of new parks and trails (56% and 64.5% respectively). However, there was slightly less support for developing new water access areas. Approximately, 25% of respondents do not believe any new areas are needed (Table 14).

Table 14: Support for establishing additional RDCK regional parks, trails, and water access areas

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
The RDCK should pursue the establishment of more regional parks	12.7%	10.6%	20.5%	<b>30.6%</b>	25.5%
The RDCK should develop more regional trails	12.1%	7.2%	16.3%	<b>30.5%</b>	<b>33.9%</b>
The RDCK should develop more water access areas	13.2%	11.7%	23.6%	25.9%	25.6%

Residents in areas without RDCK regional parks felt more strongly the establishment of new parks are needed (more than 75% of respondents from Area, B, C, K and the Town of Creston). Even more (80%), felt that new trails and water access areas should be developed.



Image Source: RDCK

## 26. Thinking about the acquisition and development of NEW Regional Parks, in your opinion, how important is it that the RDCK acquire and develop more of the following park type?

Similarly to the primary focus of RDCK regional parks, any new parks should focus primarily on nature-based recreation and protected regionally significant environmental areas – with a specific focus on conservation. Additionally, water and mountains were noted as important features when considering new parks (Table 15). While some respondents would like the RDCK to consider opportunities for motorized recreation, the majority of respondents did not agree with this focus.

Table 15: Focus/park type for new/potential RDCK regional parks

	Not important	Somewhat important	Neutral	Important	Very important
Regionally significant environmental protection areas	13.3%	8.8%	15.4%	27.6%	34.9%
Conservation focused parks	13.3%	8.4%	16.5%	29.6%	32.2%
Nature-based recreation focused parks	11.3%	7.0%	11.9%	32.8%	37.1%
Community or neighbourhood green spaces/parks	12.3%	11.2%	18.6%	37.8%	20.2%
Mountain parks	11.7%	9.1%	24.6%	32.0%	22.6%
Lakefront parks	12.0%	6.5%	18.2%	34.6%	28.7%
Riverfront parks	11.8%	6.6%	19.0%	35.4%	27.2%
Cultural / Heritage parks	17.8%	14.3%	34.3%	22.5%	11.1%
Outdoor sport focused parks (e.g. soccer fields, skateboarding park)	22.4%	16.6%	33.7%	19.0%	8.3%
Motorized focused recreational parks	<b>58.9%</b>	8.6%	18.7%	6.3%	7.5%
Overnight / camping focused parks	19.7%	18.6%	18.6%	30.9%	12.1%
Barrier free parks/accessible parks	13.9%	16.1%	27.6%	27.3%	15.1%

**27. Trails are a key priority in recreation master plans across the RDCK. Thinking about the acquisition, development, or funding of NEW or enhanced trails, in your opinion, how important is it that the RDCK or other groups (e.g. community-based organizations, municipalities, etc.) acquire more of the following trail types?**

The majority of respondents favour the development of non-motorized trails designed specifically for hiking (72.4%). However, accessible and mountain bike trails are also important to more than 30% of respondents. Motorized recreation has less support but is still very important to about 12-18% of respondents (Table 16).

**Table 16: Focus/trail type for new/potential or enhanced RDCK regional trails**

	<b>Not important</b>	<b>Somewhat important</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Important</b>	<b>Very important</b>
Double track, paved / compacted universally accessible multi-use non-motorized trails	36.0%	15.2%	15.7%	20.3%	12.8%
Mixed use trail (motorized allowed)	<b>58.1%</b>	10.7%	12.6%	9.3%	9.3%
Single track, natural surfaced hiking / walking trails	12.3%	7.7%	7.7%	34.9%	37.4%
All-mountain mountain bike optimized trails	27.5%	12.1%	22.9%	22.2%	15.3%
Downhill mountain biking optimized trails	37.2%	12.7%	28.0%	13.0%	9.0%
Motorized optimized	<b>65.3%</b>	7.5%	14.6%	6.0%	6.6%
Hiking optimized trails	12.1%	8.7%	10.8%	34.0%	34.5%
Equestrian optimized trails	38.6%	10.3%	39.0%	9.3%	2.8%

**28. In your opinion, what benefits does nature-based recreation provide to the RDCK (please check all that apply)?**

Nature-based recreation provides a number of benefits to the entire population of the region. Respondents noted that overall physical and mental health are the most significant benefits derived from having access to nature. However, recreation is also seen as economic driving, increases civic pride and engagement and reduces crime (Figure 16).

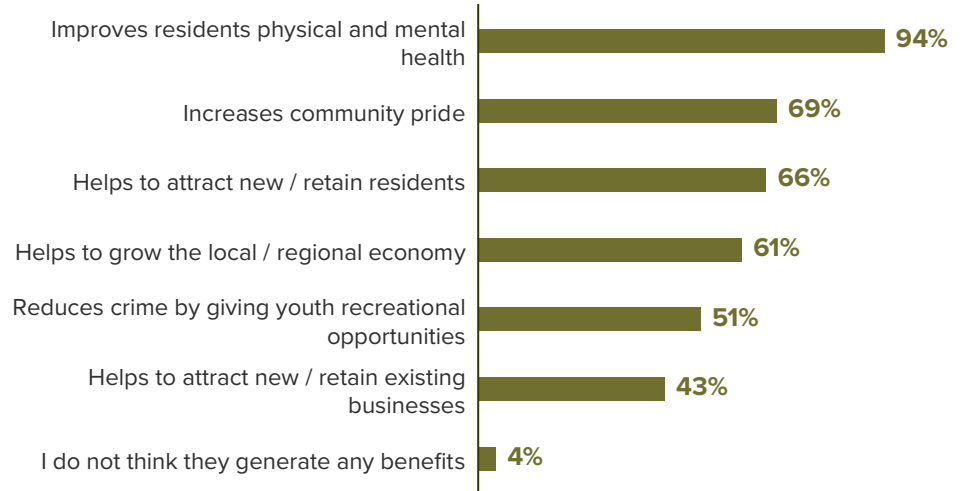


Figure 16: What benefits does nature-based recreation provide to the RDCK



Image Source: RDCK, Dave Heath

## Other parks and recreation infrastructure

**29. The RDCK also funds parks, trails, and nature-based recreation spaces outside of regional parks. This includes community parks, area parks, and other recreation infrastructure. In the previous 12 months did you use or visit any of the following areas (please select all that apply)?**

Respondents visit many parks and trails, not only those that are directly managed or owned by the RDCK, but also those that the RDCK funds and provides support to municipal and community partners to manage. This community assets are frequently visited and highly valued by many across the region. According to Figure 17, Lakeside Park is the most frequently visited, however, the Kokanee Nature Centre is a unique regional asset as it provides important environmental education and stewardship programming (that is currently not offered through direct RDCK programming.

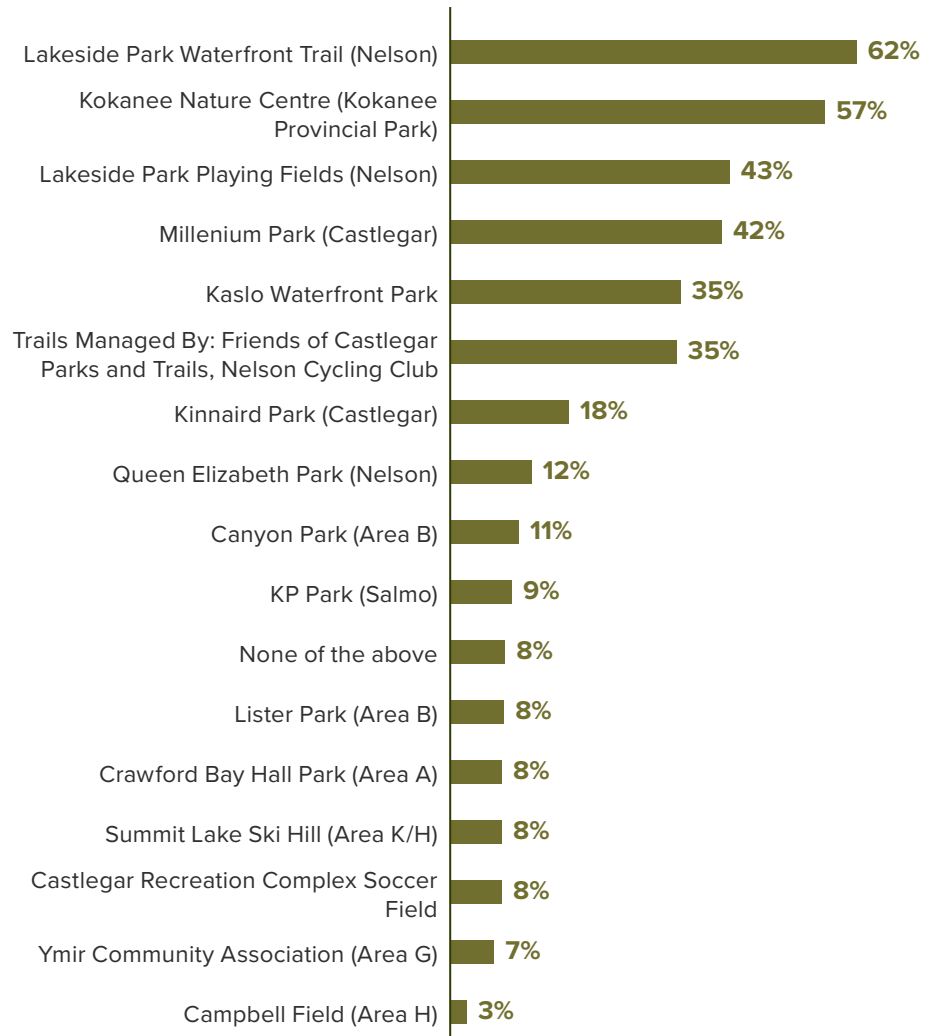


Figure 17: In the previous 12 months did you use or visit any of the following areas (please select all that apply)?

**30. From the list above, how satisfied are you with your past visit(s)?**

Similar to overall park visitation, respondents are highly satisfied with these areas (73.5%), as highlighted in Figure 18.

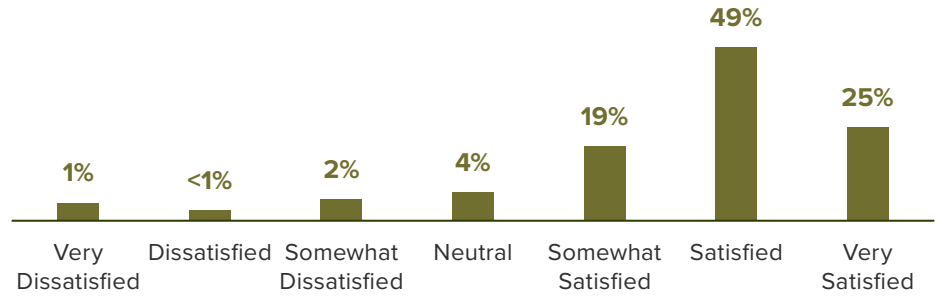


Figure 18: Satisfaction with NON-RDCK owned but support parks and trails



Image Source: RDCK

## Barriers to visiting Regional Parks, Trails, and Water Access Areas

There are many reasons why visitors cannot or do visit parks, trails, and water access areas. Some of these barriers are personal and others are structural. This survey was interested in the range of potential reasons for why individuals may not visit or may not visit as often as they would like (barriers are not binary but rather exist on a continuum of not visiting at all to visiting as often and for as long as I would like). The following Figures (Figure 19-Figure 21) represent the range of barriers respondents experience to visiting RDCK regional parks, trails, and water access areas.

### 31. Reason(s) for not visiting RDCK Regional Parks:

The majority of respondents indicated that they do not experience substantive barriers to visiting regional parks. However, many respondents also experience some level of barrier to fully experiencing regional parks – this includes lack of information, access and location, crowding, and time crunch of daily life (Figure 19).

When asked if there were additional reasons not listed, respondents provide deeper insights such as location (no parks in communities), dogs and dogs-off-leash, feeling unsafe, lack of accessibility, and other personal reasons.

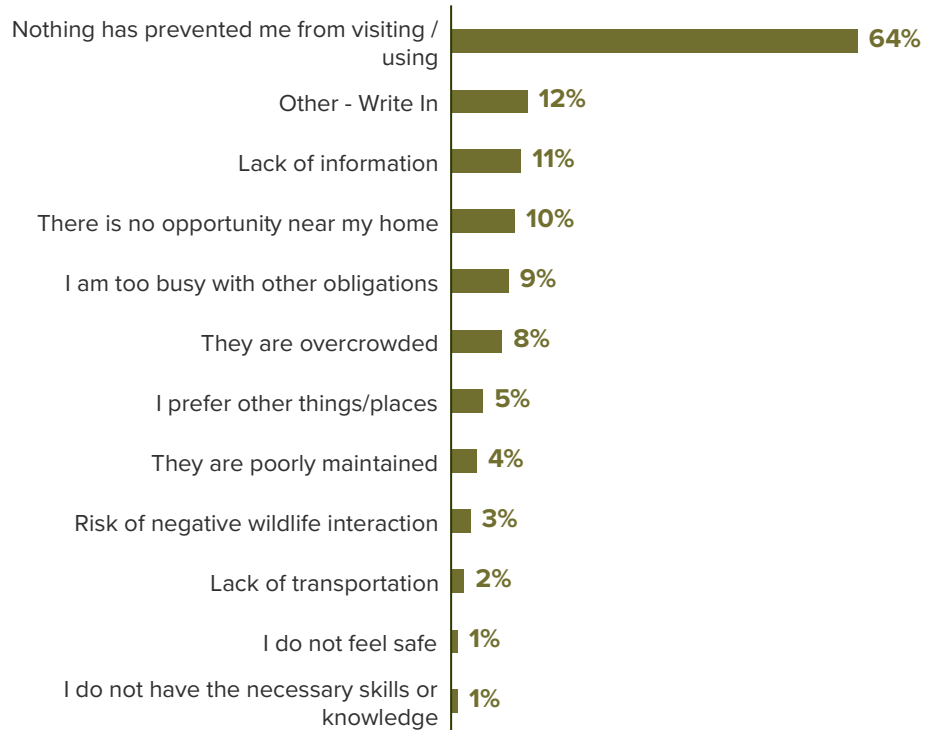


Figure 19: Reason(s) for not visiting RDCK Regional Parks

### 32. Reason(s) for not visiting RDCK Regional Trails:

The majority of respondents indicated that they do not experience substantive barriers to visiting regional trails. However, many respondents also experience some level of barrier to fully experiencing regional trails – this includes lack of information, access and location, and time crunch of daily life (Figure 20). When asked if there were additional reasons not listed respondents provide deeper insights such as lack of equestrian specific trails, lack of motorized recreation, large issues of dogs and off-leash dogs, mobility and accessibility challenges, and parking in busy locations.

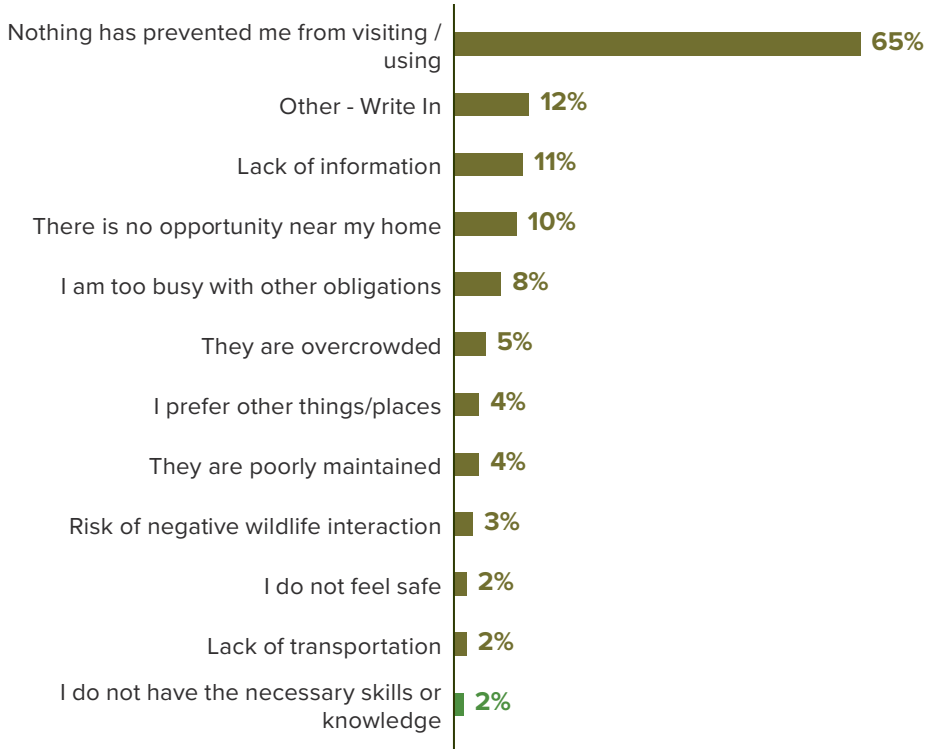


Figure 20: Reason(s) for not visiting RDCK Regional Trails

### 33. Reason(s) for not using Water access areas:

Similar to regional parks and trails most respondents do not experience significant barriers to accessing water areas. However, the lack of information and lack of opportunities (close to home) does keep people from accessing water (Figure 21). When asked to provide additional reasons for not accessing water respondents noted that having access to boats or watercrafts was a limiting factor, safety concerns, and overall, a sense that water access feels restricted (private land, awareness, etc.).

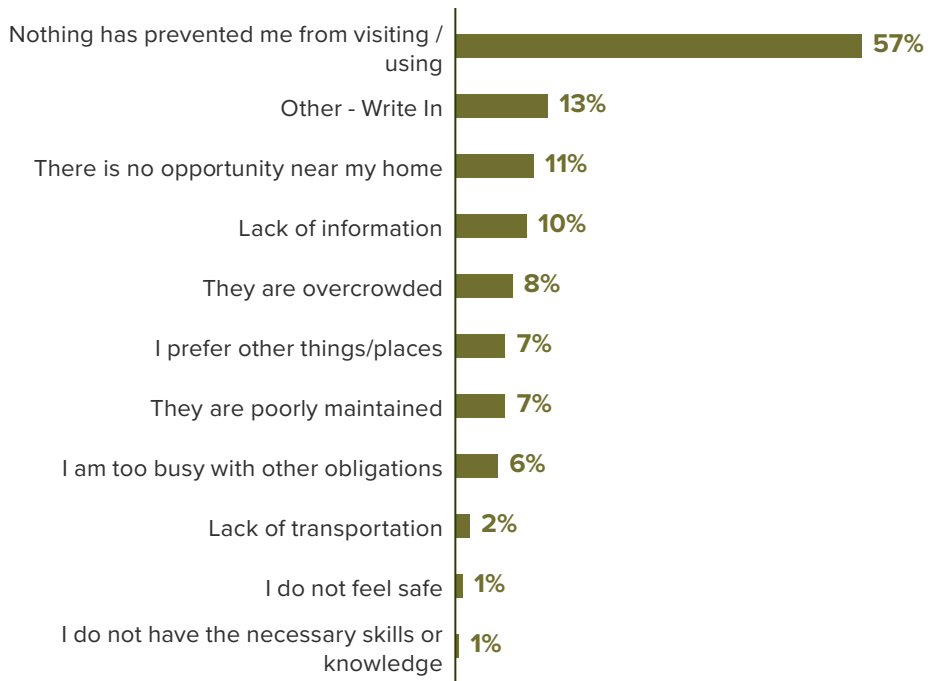


Figure 21: Reason(s) for not using RDCK Regional Parks

## Challenges and Issues in Regional Parks, Trails, and Water Access Areas

All park agencies have issues and management areas of focus. The public survey provided an opportunity for respondents to indicate key issues of concern that they have noticed or experiences within RDCK regional parks, trails, and water access areas. The following tables (Table 17-Table 19) provide insight into the top management concerns as described by park and trail users/survey respondents.

### How significant of a problem are the following management concerns/issues

#### 34. Management concerns/issues in regional parks

The top management concern within regional parks are issues with dogs. 41% of respondents indicated that dog waste was a high or very high problem, and off leash dogs was a high or very high problem for 38% of respondents. The next most important issue for respondents is litter and wildlife attractants, 40% of respondents indicated that this was a major concern. Finally, the risk of wildfire is top of mind for park visitors, as 39% of respondents indicated wildfire risk from recreation such as campfires, was a high or very high problem. Table 17 highlights the full spectrum of management concerns across regional parks.

Table 17: Management concerns/issues in RDCK regional parks

	Not a problem	Small problem	Neutral	High problem	Very high problem	I do not know
Crowding	28.9%	25.9%	23.0%	11.4%	5.0%	5.8%
Conflicts between users	22.9%	26.7%	21.4%	14.3%	5.8%	8.9%
Human wildlife conflicts	27.5%	29.3%	20.1%	12.8%	3.9%	6.5%
Environmental damage/trampling/erosion	13.2%	27.3%	18.7%	22.6%	12.8%	5.4%
Dogs off-leash	23.6%	20.7%	14.2%	19.9%	18.0%	3.7%
Too many dogs (on & off-leash)	28.5%	18.8%	19.3%	15.0%	13.5%	4.8%
Dog feces	16.2%	23.1%	14.1%	22.3%	18.9%	5.4%
Users do not obey the signage / follow the rules	13.5%	24.4%	19.9%	23.2%	13.0%	6.1%
Use of class 1 e-bikes	<b>39.8%</b>	12.1%	20.4%	5.5%	5.0%	17.2%
Use of class 2 & 3 e-bikes	<b>31.2%</b>	15.0%	21.2%	8.7%	5.8%	18.1%
Drone flying	27.2%	16.2%	20.7%	11.3%	7.8%	16.8%
Rowdyism / partying / noise disturbance	21.6%	24.8%	21.1%	14.3%	7.7%	10.5%
Impacts to First Nation traditional, cultural, spiritual use	29.4%	8.6%	23.7%	6.8%	6.8%	24.7%

	Not a problem	Small problem	Neutral	High problem	Very high problem	I do not know
Litter & Wildlife Attractants	10.5%	28.3%	15.7%	26.2%	13.0%	6.2%
Improper disposal of human waste	18.4%	21.0%	17.0%	20.4%	9.0%	14.3%
Wildlife displacement & disturbance	16.5%	18.7%	18.1%	19.7%	13.9%	13.1%
Wildfire risk from recreational use (e.g. smoking, campfires,	14.2%	22.5%	16.2%	23.1%	15.8%	8.2%
Introduction / transport of invasive species	12.1%	17.6%	18.4%	22.5%	13.7%	15.8%
Trespassing on adjacent private lands	20.6%	21.9%	19.3%	8.8%	6.7%	22.7%
Growing public safety incidents / injuries	<b>30.9%</b>	17.9%	23.3%	2.4%	2.9%	22.5%
Unsafe discharge of firearms / target shooting	<b>35.7%</b>	12.3%	15.4%	4.7%	2.9%	28.9%



Image Source: RDCK

### 35. Management concerns/issues in regional trails

Top management concerns along regional trails are also dog related, with dog-off leash and dog waste again being the most significant issues and concerns for respondents. Again, litter and wildlife attractants are seen as a somewhat significant issue, and finally, the threat of invasive species appears to be a small problem (Table 18).

**Table 18: Management concerns/issues in regional trails**

	<b>Not a problem</b>	<b>Small problem</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>High problem</b>	<b>Very high problem</b>	<b>I do not know</b>
Crowding	<b>40.1%</b>	21.4%	20.9%	6.6%	3.0%	8.0%
Conflicts between users	34.2%	24.0%	17.9%	7.2%	5.8%	10.9%
Human wildlife conflicts	28.2%	31.0%	16.1%	11.7%	3.9%	9.1%
Environmental damage/trampling/erosion	18.2%	29.2%	16.7%	18.4%	9.1%	8.3%
Dogs off-leash	27.8%	22.3%	12.8%	17.7%	14.3%	5.0%
Too many dogs (on & off-leash)	32.1%	20.5%	16.5%	13.0%	11.0%	7.0%
Dog feces	19.0%	29.0%	10.6%	20.1%	15.1%	6.2%
Users do not obey the signage / follow the rules	18.6%	24.5%	19.8%	18.2%	9.1%	9.8%
Use of class 1 e-bikes	37.5%	10.2%	18.8%	7.9%	5.4%	20.3%
Use of class 2 & 3 e-bikes	31.0%	13.1%	18.5%	10.1%	5.9%	21.5%
Drone flying	29.9%	14.4%	19.0%	8.1%	4.9%	23.7%
Rowdyism / partying / noise disturbance	31.4%	21.3%	19.2%	7.6%	4.2%	16.3%
Impacts to First Nation traditional, cultural, spiritual use	33.0%	8.1%	19.9%	5.6%	5.1%	28.5%
Litter & Wildlife Attractants	16.4%	29.9%	14.3%	20.1%	10.7%	8.6%
Introduction / transport of invasive species	17.3%	19.5%	16.9%	17.1%	9.7%	19.5%
Trespassing on adjacent private lands	24.6%	20.9%	16.5%	7.9%	4.5%	25.6%
Growing public safety incidents / injuries	34.7%	15.7%	19.8%	3.2%	2.5%	24.0%
Unsafe discharge of firearms / target shooting	38.9%	10.6%	13.3%	4.7%	2.2%	30.3%

### 36. Management concerns/issues of water access areas

The major issues and concerns for water access areas are similar to those of regional parks and trails (although they appear to be less of concern). 31% of respondents noted dog waste at the most significant concern, followed by litter, wildlife attractants, and the introduction of invasive species (31% each). Table 19 highlights that most potential issues appear to be noted as not a problem or a small problem.

**Table 19: Management concerns/issues of water access areas**

	<b>Not a problem</b>	<b>Small problem</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>High problem</b>	<b>Very high problem</b>	<b>do not know</b>
Crowding	29.2%	19.1%	17.2%	11.5%	7.9%	15.1%
Conflicts between users	29.8%	17.2%	20.5%	7.9%	4.5%	20.1%
Human wildlife conflicts	<b>37.1%</b>	19.2%	17.9%	4.3%	3.3%	18.2%
Environmental damage/trampling/erosion	22.1%	22.9%	16.4%	13.0%	9.1%	16.4%
Dogs off-leash	26.3%	21.3%	12.8%	13.8%	11.4%	14.4%
Too many dogs (on & off-leash)	<b>30.0%</b>	19.7%	14.8%	11.7%	9.1%	14.7%
Dog feces	19.5%	22.7%	11.9%	19.0%	12.2%	14.7%
Users do not obey the signage / follow the rules	18.8%	20.5%	17.5%	16.8%	7.8%	18.6%
Impacts to First Nation traditional, cultural, spiritual use	<b>30.8%</b>	5.9%	18.5%	5.2%	5.2%	<b>34.3%</b>
Litter & Wildlife Attractants	15.7%	23.1%	13.2%	20.2%	10.4%	17.4%
Introduction / transport of invasive species	15.1%	16.1%	14.0%	16.6%	14.0%	24.2%
Trespassing on adjacent private lands	24.8%	17.1%	15.9%	6.6%	5.2%	<b>30.2%</b>
Growing public safety incidents / injuries	<b>32.5%</b>	10.8%	20.0%	3.4%	2.1%	<b>31.3%</b>

### 37. Other management concerns (open ended)

Many respondents noted the management concerns listed above to provide deeper insights into how the experience RDCK regional parks, trails, and water access. A detailed analysis of the 343 comments provided, demonstrated that a few more key management issues and concerns are experienced by visitors. The following themes were representative of the feedback provided:

#### Access Issues, Equity, and Regional Representation (70 comments)

The most frequently cited concern was the challenge of accessing regional parks, trails, and especially water access areas. Respondents noted that many sites are blocked by unclear signage, private land, or a lack of formal entry points. Several described situations where longstanding informal access has been lost due to development or lack of public investment, creating a sense of exclusion from local landscapes. This theme is closely tied to equity and highlights the importance of clear, visible, and legal access infrastructure. One respondent noted that “A huge concern is the lack of water access for public use—too many areas are inaccessible or poorly marked.”

#### Amenities Parking and Vehicle Access (59 comments)

A significant number of respondents expressed concern over the lack of fundamental amenities and basic maintenance at RDCK regional parks, trails, and water access areas. Chief among these were inadequate parking and insufficient waste management services—two issues that directly affect user safety, environmental health, and overall visitor experience.

People noted that many high-use sites, particularly trailheads and waterfronts either lack formal parking areas or have undersized lots that can’t meet demand. This results in roadside congestion, unsafe conditions, and increased conflict with adjacent residents. Some suggested that improved signage and dedicated parking lots would significantly improve access and reduce friction between users. In terms of maintenance, overflowing garbage bins, aging or absent washroom facilities, and litter were frequently raised. These issues were especially prominent at lakeside parks and during summer peak-use periods. Several respondents emphasized that the lack of sanitation infrastructure diminishes the overall quality and safety of these spaces, particularly for families, children, and seniors.

Together, these responses speak to a broader need for investment in the core infrastructure that supports day-to-day park operations. Respondents are not calling for luxury or overdevelopment—they are asking for the basics to be done well: safe access, functioning amenities, and consistent stewardship. These foundational services are central to an inclusive, sustainable, and welcoming regional parks system.

### User Conflicts (40 comments)

Conflicts between user groups, especially between motorized versus non-motorized recreationists were a strong concern throughout responses. Respondents described tension between trail runners, hikers, and mountain bikers, as well as disputes between paddlers and powerboaters. The lack of signage, rules, or designated zones often exacerbates these conflicts and leads to feelings of unsafe or degraded experiences. One example that was provided was “Glade Park is inundated with boater and trail users. There is too much conflict and no clear guidance on who should use what.” These issues suggest the need for clear user guidelines, trail zoning where appropriate, and increased communication about shared use etiquette.

### Site Capacity (16 comments)

While this theme is smaller and had less responses some residents described a pattern of overuse at high-traffic parks, beaches, and trailheads. These concerns often overlapped with themes of access and parking, but also included frustrations about overcrowding, noise, and degradation of the natural environment due to excessive visitation. There is a sense that the current system lacks the capacity or planning to handle growing demand particularly during summer months. This theme suggests the importance of visitor management strategies, capacity planning, and sustainable design.

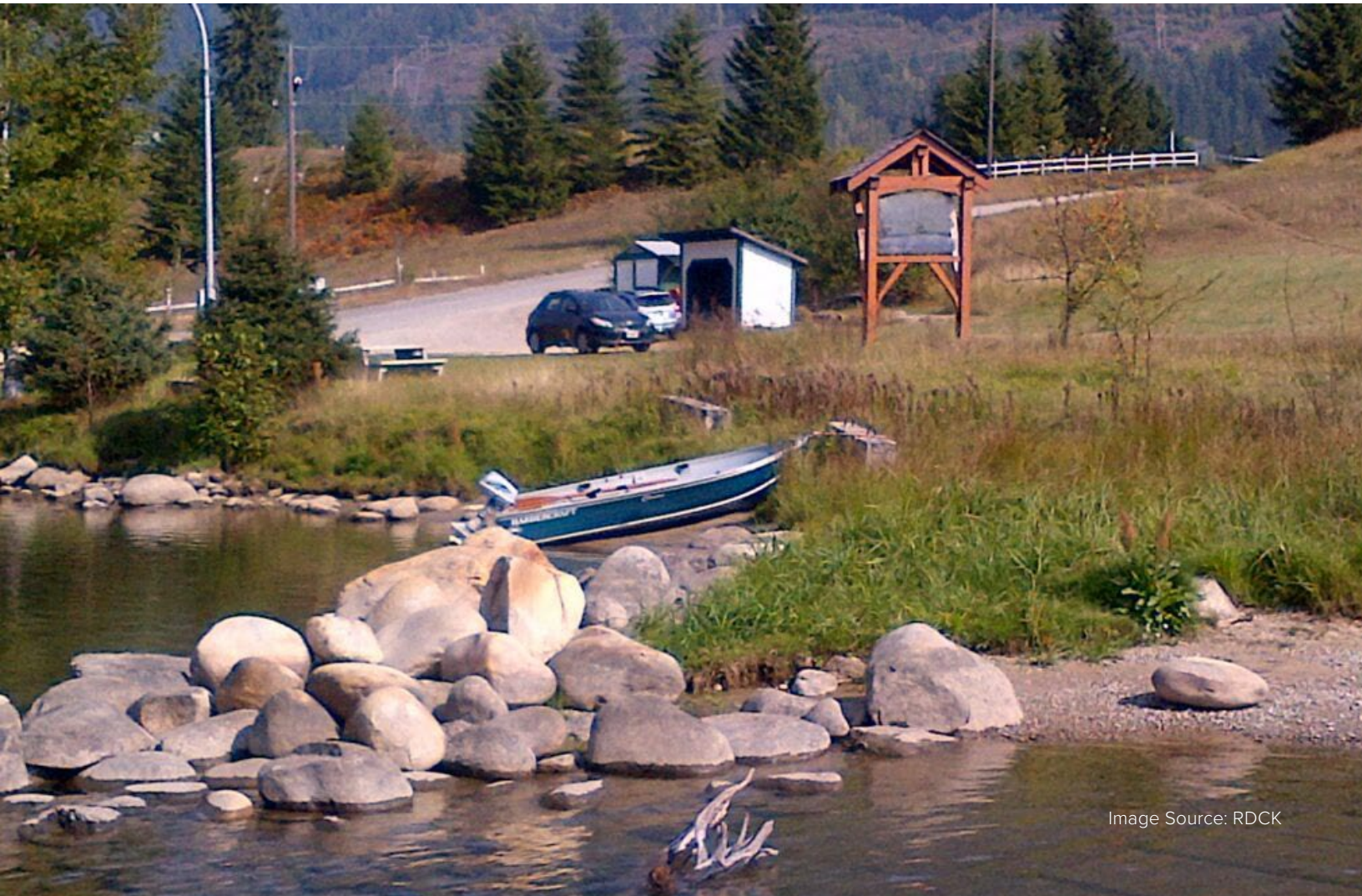


Image Source: RDCK

## Other Important Feedback

### **38. Please feel free to share any other input or ideas you have about how the quality of Regional Parks, Regional Trails, and Water access can be improved across the RDCK. (open ended)**

The opportunity to provide overall feedback allowed respondents to share any ideas, concerns, or other comments that were missed in other areas of the public survey. In total 257 people provided additional feedback. The general themes from these comments are provided below:

#### **Water Access Areas (39 comments)**

Water access emerged as one of the most popular and passionately discussed priorities. Participants requested more public swimming areas, non-motorized boat launches, beaches, and access areas that are environmentally sensitive and family friendly. Several pointed to specific lakes—such as Rosebud and Box Lake—as missed opportunities for low-impact recreation that could serve both locals and tourists. Others suggested that many of the existing waterfront sites are either degraded, overcrowded, or too difficult to access (private land concerns). There was also support for enhanced stewardship of shorelines to ensure safety, cleanliness, and ecological protection. This theme reflects the desire to make water-based experiences more welcoming, sustainable, and accessible across the region.

#### **Sustainable Management (29 comments)**

Rather than continuously expanding the network of parks and trails, many respondents emphasized the importance of sustaining what already exists. They expressed concern that some existing regional parks are being “overloved,” poorly maintained, or unsupported by adequate staffing and operational resources. Respondents recommended focusing on sustainable operations, thoughtful use, and better coordination with local volunteers and stewardship groups. This theme signals a desire to move from expansionism to consolidation and care. Of note, a common statement was “Focus on what areas you already have to manage. Stop trying to be all things to all people.” This pragmatic view promotes resilience and sustainability over unchecked growth. In addition, sustainable management also requires a recognition of park infrastructure and amenities needs. Respondents shared their perception that regional parks and trails lack the lack of basic amenities—especially bathrooms. Comments focused on unsanitary or outdated washrooms, limited parking, and the absence of waste disposal options. This was especially concerning at high-use waterfront sites or along popular trail corridors. Several respondents connected poor infrastructure to both reduced user experience and environmental degradation.

### **Equity for Underserved Areas (28 comments)**

This is a common and recurring theme through the public survey, especially from areas that do not currently have RDCK regional parks and trails. Respondents highlighted the absence of equitable investment in parks infrastructure across the RDCK. Dozens of respondents described feeling a sense of exclusion, noting that while other sub-regions benefit from trails, parks, signage, and planning attention, their communities have “nothing” or are “not on the map.” This feedback was often emotionally charged and combined with recommendations for the RDCK to rectify regional imbalances by investing in trails, parks, and waterfronts in underrepresented areas. This theme not only reflects geographical gaps but also broader perceptions of systemic neglect.

### **Conservation and Regional Significant Environments (20 comments)**

There was strong sentiment for protecting the natural integrity of park spaces and resisting overdevelopment. In particular, respondents from more rural or ecologically sensitive areas voiced concern about the “urbanization” of parks—citing fears that paving trails, adding large structures, or expanding parking could undermine the very qualities that make these spaces valuable. The value of “leaving the forest as forest” resonated throughout responses. Many people expressed a preference for quiet, lightly managed spaces that support biodiversity and minimize human intrusion. This reflects a philosophy of low-impact nature-based recreation rooted in ecological ethics and landscape identity.

### **Camping and Overnight Use (13 comments)**

Respondents identified a need for small-scale, environmentally conscious overnight opportunities, particularly in conjunction with paddling or hiking routes. While not a dominant theme, this feedback aligns with broader trends in nature-based tourism and interest in micro-adventures close to home. Respondents requested modest infrastructure—such as designated tent sites or overnight zones—rather than large campgrounds or RV sites. These experiences were often imagined as tranquil, minimal-impact, and integrated into the surrounding natural environment.

### **Positive Feedback and General Support (12 comments)**

Amid critique and suggestions, many respondents offered words of thanks, encouragement, and hope for the future of the parks system. Several noted their appreciation for the planning process, commended existing efforts, or expressed eagerness to see the results of community engagement. Some offered to collaborate more directly through stewardship or advocacy roles.

## Participant Overview (demographics)

### 39. When you visit RDCK Regional Parks, Regional Trails, and visit Water access areas for recreation, who do you typically visit with?

The majority of respondents visit regional parks, trails, and water access areas with family and friends as well as with children (Figure 22). A smaller proportion of respondents visit alone (12%).

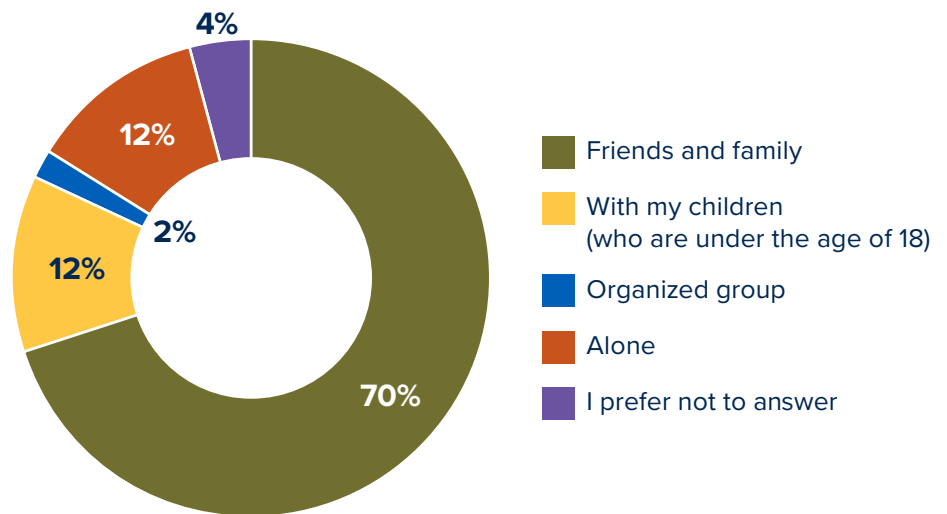


Figure 22: When you visit RDCK Regional Parks, Regional Trails, and visit Water access areas for recreation, who do you typically visit with?

### 40. When you visit RDCK Regional Parks, Regional Trails, and visit Water access areas for recreation, how many people are typically in your group?

Given that the majority of visitors to regional parks, trails, and water access areas are visiting with family and friends it is not surprising that the majority of respondents indicated they typically visit in relatively small groups (82% indicated the visit in groups of 5 or less, Figure 23).

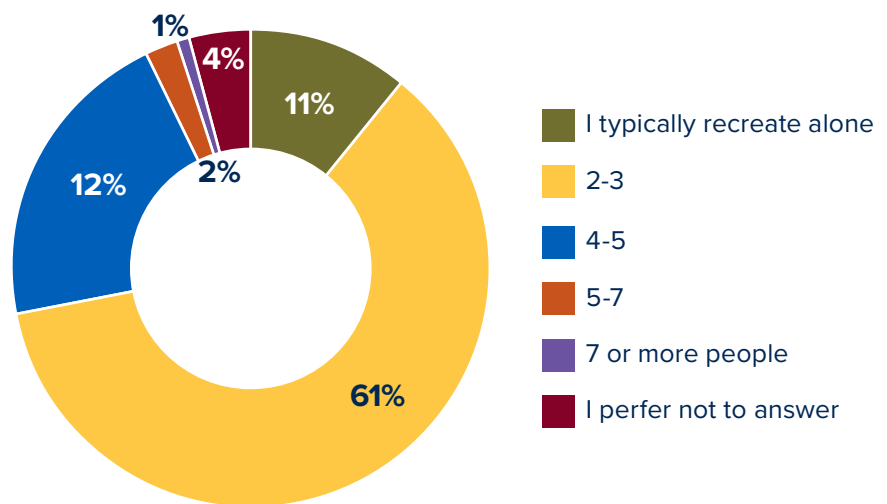


Figure 23: When you visit RDCK Regional Parks, Regional Trails, and visit Water access areas for recreation, how many people are typically in your group?

**41. When you visit RDCK Regional Parks, Trails, and Water access areas how long do your recreational outings last? Please select all that apply.**

Typically, people spend a few hours at a time visiting RDCK regional parks, trails, and water access areas. Figure 24 highlights the average length of stay for visitors.

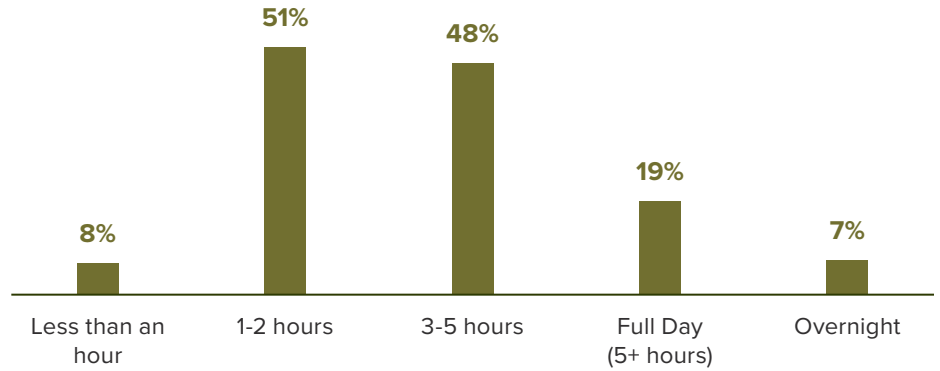


Figure 24: How long do your recreational outings last

**42. Which statement below best represents your interest in RDCK Regional Parks, Trails, and Water access areas?**

The majority of respondents are primarily recreational visitors of parks, trails, and water access areas (92%). Figure 25 demonstrates the range of interests represented in the public survey.

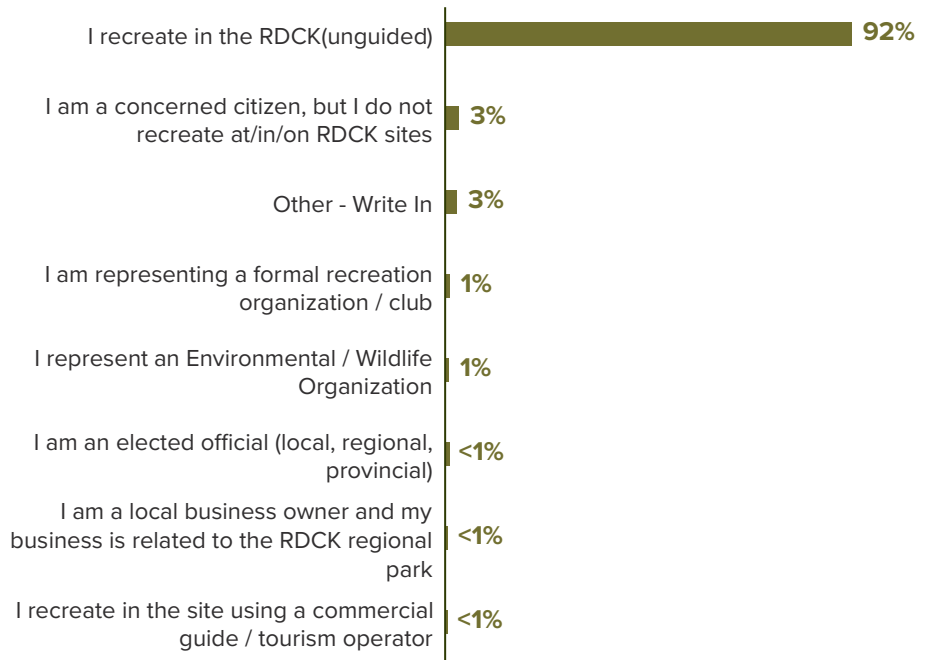


Figure 25: Which statement best represents you

### 43. Are you an active member of a Recreation Organization / Club?

Approximately one third (1/3) of respondents are members of formal recreation clubs (Figure 24)

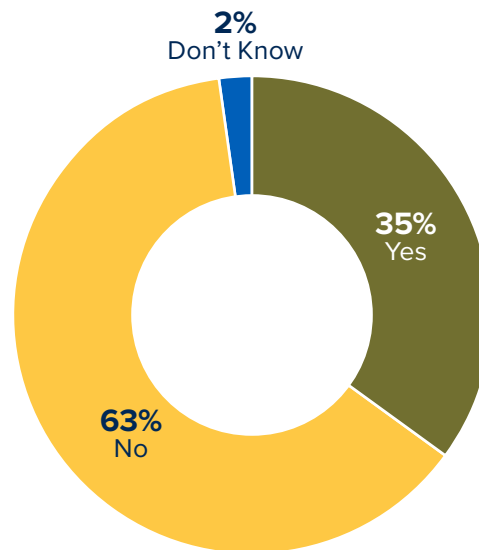


Figure 26: Are you an active member of a Recreation Organization / Club?

The most common recreation organizations and clubs are:

Table 20: Recreation Organizations / Clubs

Organization Name	Respondent Count
Nelson Cycling Club	29
Kootenay Mountaineering Club / KMC	15
TAWKROC	8
Creston Trails Society / CVTS	9
Castlegar Parks and Trails Society	5
Creston Valley Cycling Association	4
Castlegar Nordic Ski Club	3
ESTBA / East Shore Trail & Bike Association	3
KORTS	3
Nelson Nordic Ski Club	3
Nelson Running Club / Run Club	3
Scouts Canada	2
Creston ATV Club	2
Creston Rod and Gun Club	2
West Kootenay Dirt Biking / ATV Society	2
Salmo Valley ATV Club	2
Salmo Valley Trail Society	2

**44. Which of the following sources of information do you typically use, or have you used in the past, when planning your visit to RDCK Parks, Trails, and Water access areas?**

According to Figure 27, most visitors to RDCK regional parks, trails, and water access areas are getting information from family and friends. However, they are also accessing information from the RDCK website and social media (32%). However, third party apps such as Strava, Trail Forks, Alltrails etc. are also used very frequently.

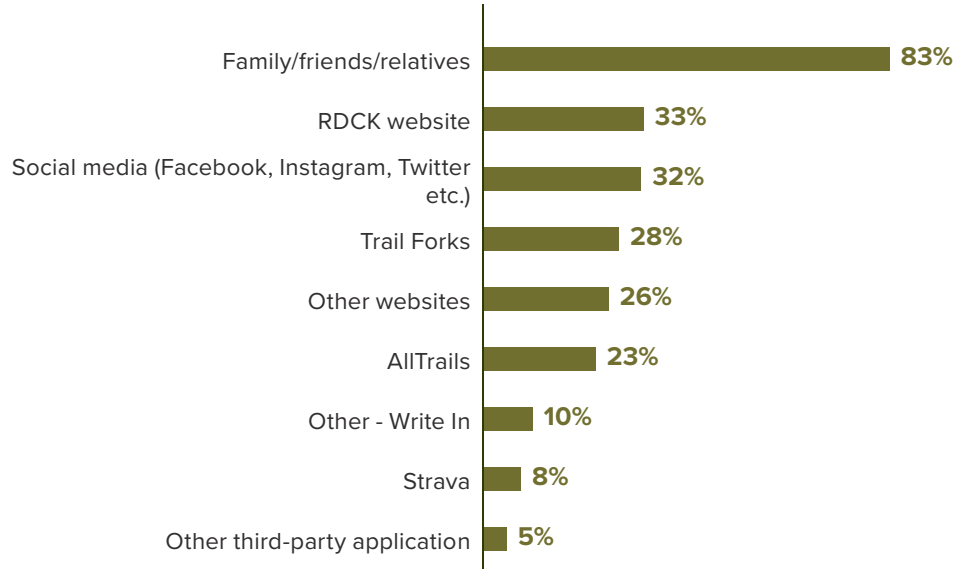


Figure 27: Which of the following sources of information do you typically use

**45. In which age category do you fall?**

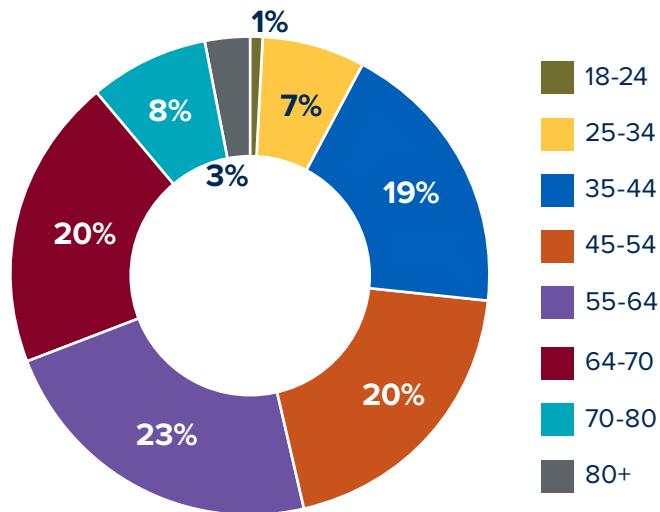


Figure 28: In which age category do you fall?

#### 46. What gender do you most identify with?

Respondents were relatively evenly split between men and women, with women making up a slight majority at 49% compared to 43.5% of male respondents (Figure 29).

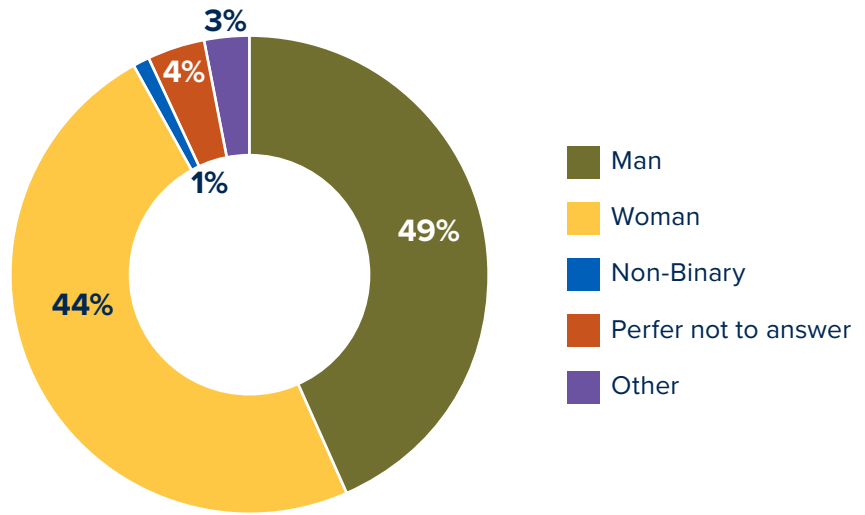


Figure 29: What gender do you most identify with?



Image Source: RDCK

**47. Do you identify as a person experiencing disability or person with impairment?**

While not in line with provincial data, approximately 7% of respondents indicated that they experience a disability or impairment (Figure 30).

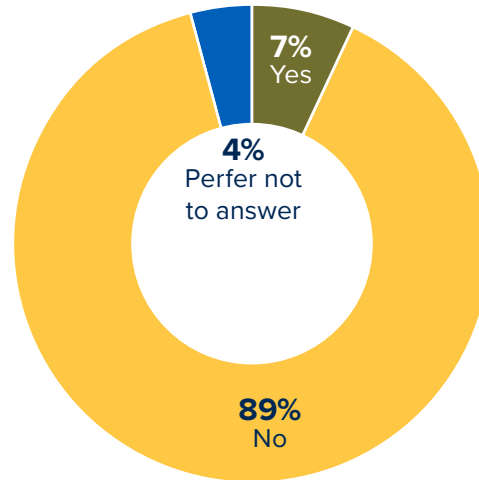


Figure 30: Do you identify as a person experiencing disability or person with impairment?

**a. As follows are several difficulties a person may have doing certain activities. Only difficulties or long-term conditions that have lasted or are expected to last for six months or more should be considered. Do you have or experience any of the following?**

Of those who reported experiencing a disability or impairment, the most common experience was difficulty walking (61%), Figure 31 highlights the other experiences of respondents.

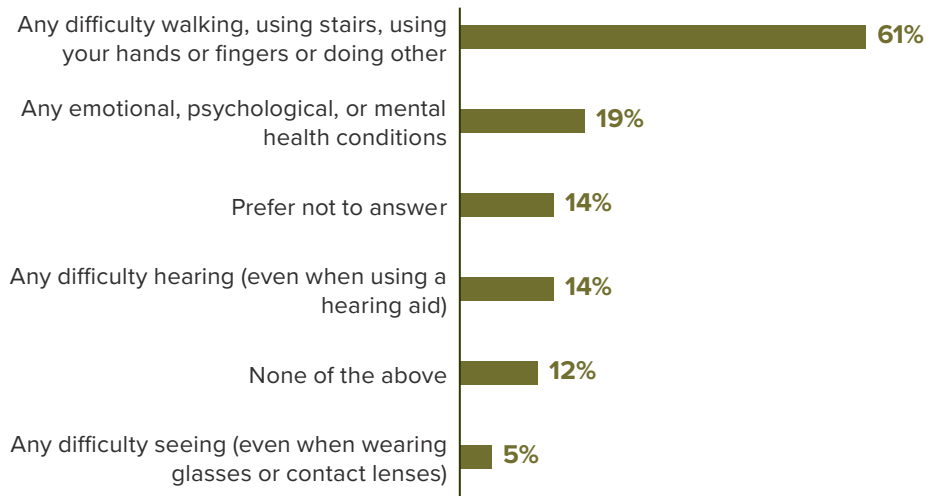


Figure 31: Do you have or experience any of the following disabilities or impairments?

#### 48. Do you identify as an Indigenous Person (First Nation, Métis, Inuk)?

Only 3% of respondents identify as Indigenous (Figure 32), which is significantly less than the reported 6% of the population in the RDCK who identify as Indigenous.

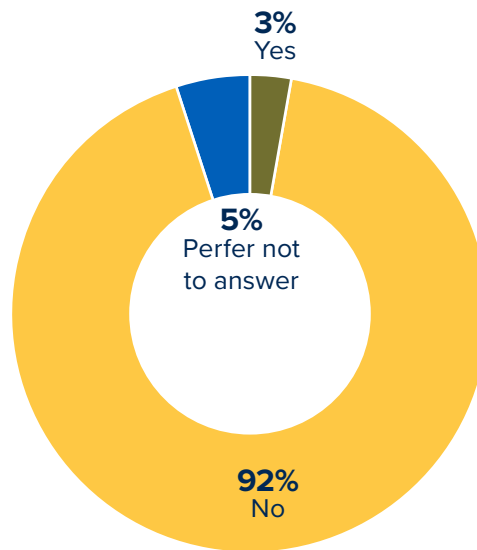


Figure 32: Do you identify as an Indigenous Person (First Nation, Métis, Inuk)?



Image Source: RDCK

#### 49. Were you born in Canada?

Almost 15% of respondents indicated they were not born in Canada (Figure 33), while the totally foreign born population of the RDCK is unknown this is reflective of the changing and diverse population of British Columbia and Canada.

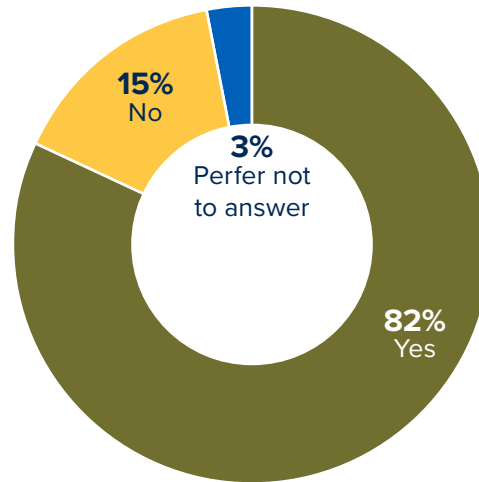


Figure 33: Were you born in Canada?

#### a. How long have you been in Canada?

The majority of foreign-born respondents have been in Canada for 11 years or more, and only 2% (Figure 34) are considered new immigrants (according to Statistics Canada).

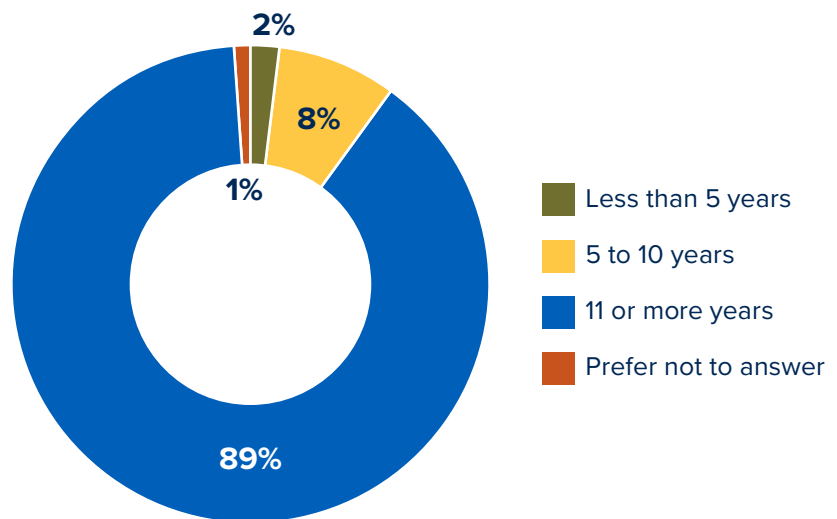


Figure 34: How long have you been in Canada?

**50. What is the highest level of education you have completed?**

More than 50% of respondents have post-secondary degrees and an additional 30% have completed a college diploma or partial university degrees (Figure 35).

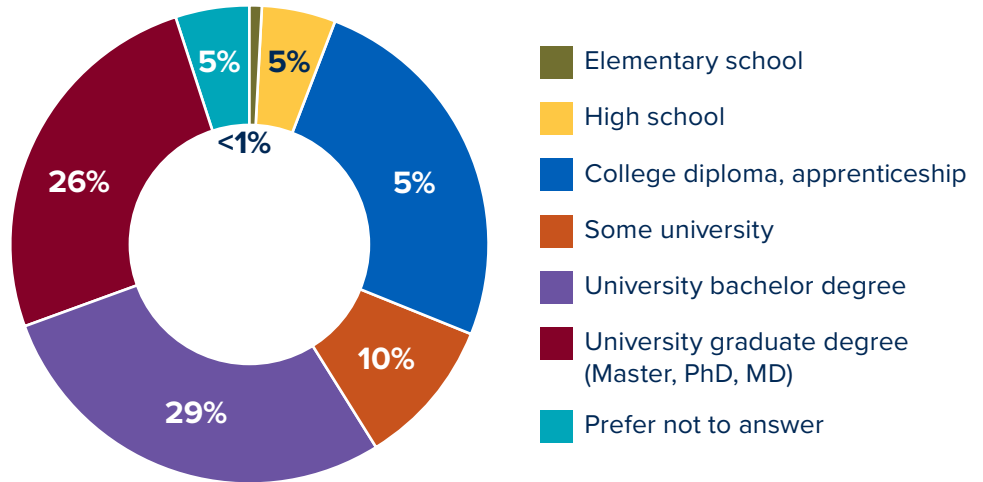


Figure 35: What is the highest level of education you have completed?

**51. Which of the following best represents your household income before tax?**

Household incomes are relatively evenly distributed across respondents (Figure 36).

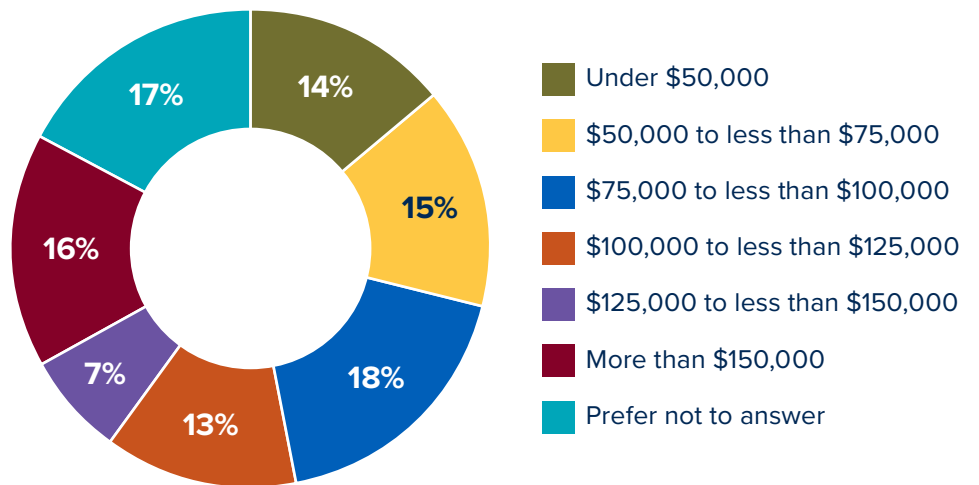


Figure 36: Which of the following best represents your household income before tax?

## 2.3 Community Partner Surveys

The invitation to participate in the Community Partner Survey (survey) was sent to approximately 50 groups representing a wide range of core interests, including outdoor recreation, conservation and stewardship, and service and support based organizations. An email with the online survey link and information on the project was distributed to main contacts with each group. One response was requested per organization. The online survey was available for approximately 4 weeks from early August to September, 2024. In total, 27 completed responses were received for the survey (with an additional 40 partial responses)– see Appendix X for the list of participating groups.

The key themes and findings from the Community Partner Survey are provided below:

### Strengths of the Regional Parks, Trails, and Water Access System

#### Regional Parks System

Participants commonly described existing regional parks as accessible, well-serviced, and ecologically valuable. Key strengths included variety of park experiences, presence of basic infrastructure such as signage and maintenance, and opportunities for nature-based recreation. Several responses emphasized how these parks offer inclusive access across age and ability levels. However, groups from under-served areas like Creston and the surrounding areas (such as the East Shore) noted the complete absence of regional parks, framing this as a critical inequity in the system.

#### Regional Trails System

Many organizations praised the variety, quality, and wayfinding available on RDCK trail networks. However, a significant number of responses came from motorized recreation users (e.g., ATV and ORV groups) who highlighted the lack of designated regional trails for their use. These respondents emphasized the importance of backcountry access and expressed concern about increasing restrictions on motorized trail networks. Non-motorized users noted opportunities for increasing connectivity through the region, and a focus on accessible recreation, and health.

#### Water Access Areas

Access to water emerged as one of the most widely discussed priorities. Respondents emphasized the importance of maintaining and expanding public access to rivers and lakes, with repeated references to ‘boat launches,’ ‘shoreline access,’ and ‘undeveloped access points.’ Some community partners valued minimal infrastructure, preferring natural spaces for self-propelled recreation. Others, particularly those involved with powerboating or nature-based tourism, emphasized the lack of suitable launch infrastructure as a barrier. Environmental protection and education were also mentioned in the context of managing these areas responsibly.

## What Makes Sites Unique

When asked which regional parks and trails were the most valued, respondents indicated the Cottonwood Lake, Glacier Creek, and Pulpit Rock Access trail were the most valued (Figure 37).

Respondents described the unique value of RDCK sites through personal, community, and ecological lenses. Outdoor recreation is core to community identity and the opportunity to have accessible parks and trails in communities across the RDCK was paramount. River and lake access were frequently noted as distinguishing features, especially in areas where few such access points exist. Respondents noted the importance of ‘close-to-home’ parks and trails—spaces they can access daily, not just seasonally or during special outings. Aesthetic value, trail diversity, accessibility for a range of users, and intergenerational use were also cited. The emotional and cultural attachment to sites was particularly strong in places where few other amenities exist.

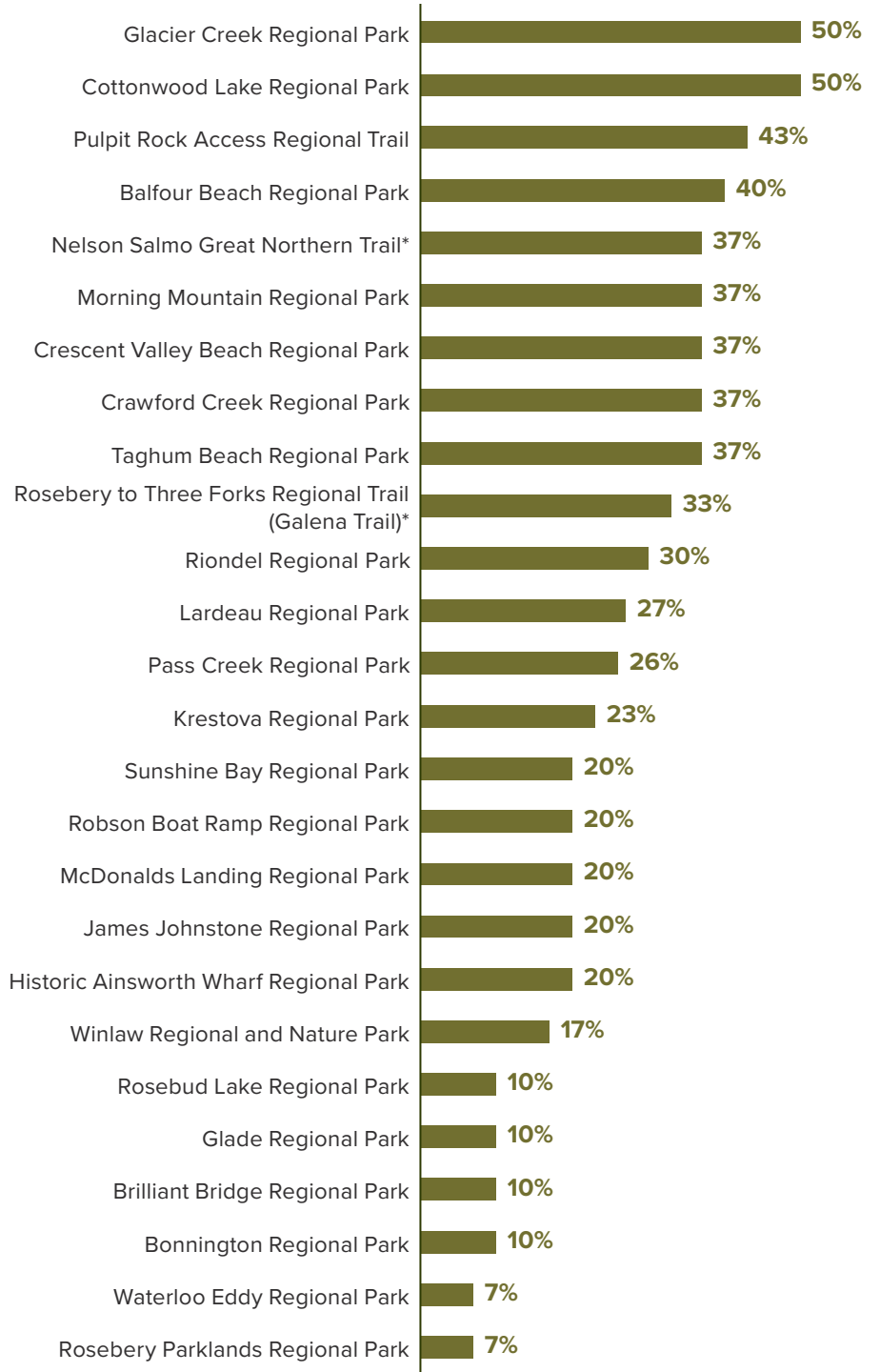


Figure 37: What Makes Sites Unique

## Goals and Purposes of the Regional System

### Regional Parks System

Public access, nature conservation, and community recreation emerged as the top three goals community groups want to see reflected in future park planning. Conservation goals were often framed around the protection of ‘sensitive ecosystems,’ climate adaptation, and the need for spaces where people can experience nature with minimal impact. There is also a strong desire to ensure that all regions of the RDCK—especially those currently underserved—have access to regional parks.

### Regional Trails System

Trail system goals span a broad range of uses: active transportation, recreational tourism, mountain biking, hiking, and motorized use. Many groups emphasized the need for ‘multi-use’ trails that accommodate different types of users in a respectful and managed way. Respondents called for better connectivity across communities, infrastructure for maintenance, and designated spaces for specific activities (e.g., ORVs or cycling). The importance of trail tourism and local economic development was also raised, especially in communities investing in destination marketing of outdoor recreation.

### Water Access Areas

Water access goals focused heavily on the expansion and improvement of public access to lakes and rivers. Whether for motorized boating, kayaking, swimming, or simply enjoying the shoreline, community partners across the region emphasized the critical value of these spaces. Safety, signage, and environmental education were also raised as ways to better manage increasing use. It is worth noting that not all respondents agree on the desired level of development, with some advocating for more formalized infrastructure (e.g., boat launches), while others favored maintaining a more natural aesthetic.

## Guidance for Setting Priorities and Investments

When asked how the RDCK should determine investments in acquisitions, facilities, and programs, respondents encouraged a balanced, needs-based approach grounded in both environmental responsibility and equity of access. Many called for prioritizing areas that currently lack formal parks or trails, with the Creston region frequently identified as an area of high need. There was strong support for continued and enhanced public engagement, with community-based organizations asking to be involved in co-development of future plans. Environmental considerations—such as ecological sensitivity, the presence of invasive species, and climate adaptation—were also seen as vital investments for the region. Respondents encouraged the RDCK to consider operational sustainability alongside acquisition priorities to ensure new spaces can be maintained effectively over the long term.

## Vision and Mission Statement Keywords

Participants were invited to contribute words and concepts they felt should guide the strategy’s vision and mission statements. Recurring keywords for the vision included: access, nature, inclusive, sustainable, connected, healthy, and regional. These terms reflect a strong desire for the system to serve the public equitably while preserving environmental integrity. For the mission statement, respondents emphasized: recreation, stewardship, partnership, safe, accessible, and long-term. Together, these suggestions indicate a shared aspiration for a system that is both community-driven and resilient.

## Additional Reflections and Final Thoughts

Final comments reinforced many earlier themes while also surfacing areas of concern. Several respondents noted regional disparities in access to RDCK-supported outdoor infrastructure. Other respondents called attention to the growing pressure from user groups with differing needs, particularly between motorized and non-motorized users, and stressed the need for fair, clear, and consistent policies. Groups also advocated for transparent, collaborative planning processes that center local voices and commit to reconciliation, equity, and long-term stewardship.

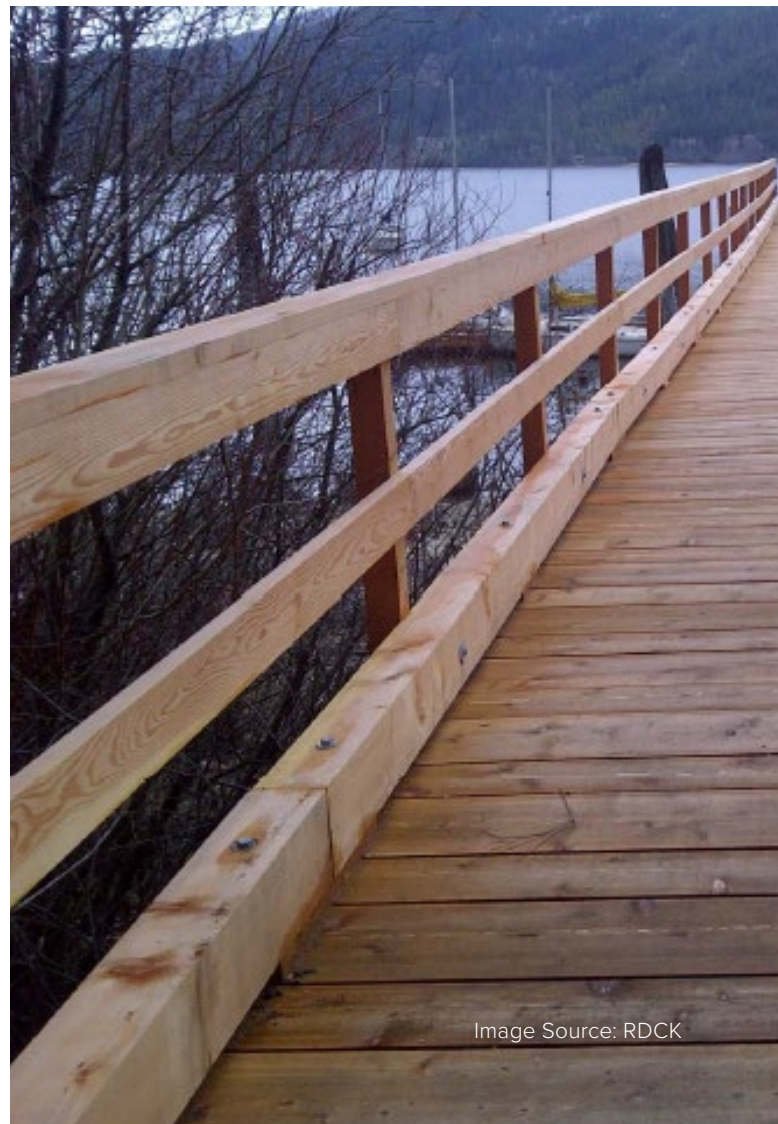


Image Source: RDCK

## 2.4 Online Interactive Crowdsource Map

An online interactive webmap was available for people to add comments spatially (Figure 38). The map was available from May 21, 2024 – June 30, 2023. In total, 1655 webmap contributions occurred. This resulted in 361 points, lines, and comments; and an additional 1294 “agrees” and “disagrees”. The crowdsourcing map revealed both strong support for new development (parks and trails) and clear concerns about existing conditions—especially around trail maintenance, access, and recreational conflicts.

The map allowed people to add five different types of points or lines:







-  **STORY** - There is a story here worth sharing.
  - Personal reflections or narratives connected to specific locations.
-  **IMPROVE**
  - Suggestions for enhancing existing infrastructure or conditions
-  **ISSUE/CONCERN**
  - Recreation or management-related challenges or problems.
-  **WATER ACCESS**
  - Water access site used by the public and what type of access it provides (motorized or non-motorized)
-  **NEW PARK**
  - Ideas for establishing new parks or amenities.
-  **NEW TRAIL**
  - Suggestions for developing new trail corridors.



Image Source: RDCK

**LEGEND**

- Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK) Boundary
- First Nation Boundaries
- Municipal Boundaries
- Waterbody
- Highway

**Community Feedback:**

- Improve
- Issue / Concern
- Water Access
- New Park
- Story
- New Trail

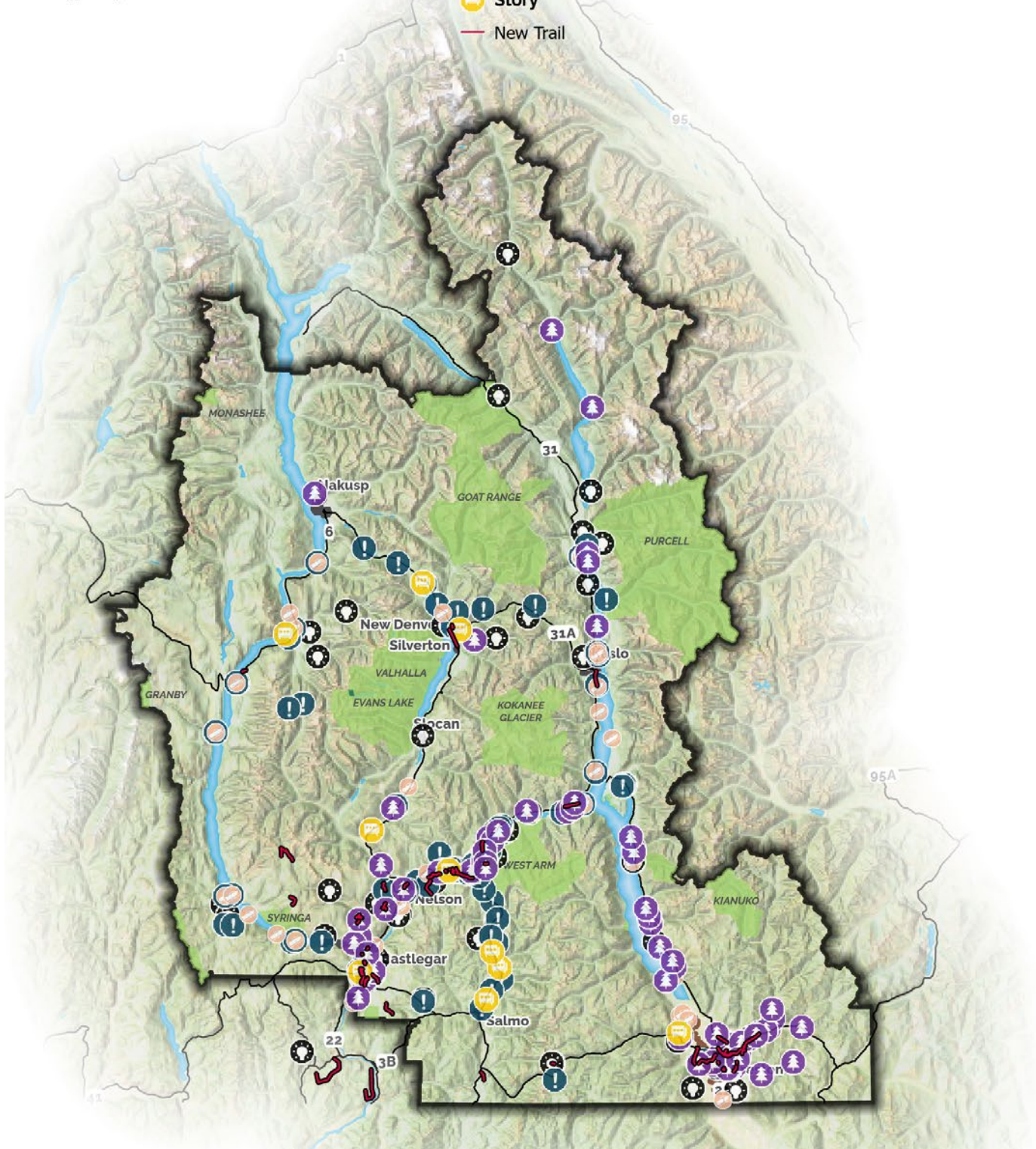


Figure 38: Online Interactive Webmap Feedback

In addition to dropping points and drawing lines, participants were able to react to points / lines already on the map indicating whether they agreed or disagreed with the point and to provide further comment. It is important to note that some points were “dropped” in an area with no feedback or description.

The following presents, by topic area, the themes that emerged from the analysis.

## **Improve**

A total of 90 comments were logged under the “Improve” category, receiving 246 agrees and 94 disagrees.

The majority of comments in this category focuses on sites outside of RDCK managed parks and trails (e.g. provincial, municipal, or privately managed lands). However, given the system level connections across the region these comments are still presented and included as valuable insights for region wide planning and considerations. The most common themes revolved around existing trail conditions, lake and shoreline use, and access infrastructure. Trail maintenance—including surfacing, brushing, and erosion repair—was frequently cited, particularly around marsh paths, steep sections, and areas lacking safe footing. Within RDCK specific sites, concerns about amenity gaps were also raised, with calls for improvement included dog waste bags, washroom access, and improved signage and wayfinding throughout existing park spaces.

Another key area of feedback focused on motorized vs. non-motorized use, especially regarding lake access and trail conflict. Some comments highlighted tension between recreation modes, including a request to make “the lake jetski-free” (4 agrees, 6 disagrees), underscoring community divisions around water use policies.

## **Issue/Concern**

This category had the highest volume of input, with 101 comments, 408 agrees, and 147 disagrees.

The most frequently noted concerns included:

- Trail safety and maintenance
- Environmental protection
- User conflict and unauthorized use
- Parking and crowding

These concerns point to growing pressure on RDCK recreation areas and the need for clear use guidelines, signage, and monitoring.

## **Story**

Twelve unique stories were submitted, often combining personal reflection with spatial insight. These received 55 agrees and 27 disagrees, showing varied resonance with others.

Stories ranged from family memories on specific trails to observations of change over time—such as land use pressures, declining maintenance, or increasing crowding. Ideas and locations also provide insight into potential “new” regional parks, trails, and water access areas. These comments add a valuable emotional and historical layer to the feedback, offering clues about how places are valued beyond infrastructure alone.

## **New Park**

With 85 comments and a significant 412 agrees (and only 68 disagrees), the desire for new park development emerged as a major community interest. In many cases, these are areas known to the RDCK and are already considered areas of interest. The most frequently sited areas of interests are presented in Figure 39. These represent ten (10) potential new regional parks sites that have been identified by the public.

These sites included areas in Creston and Electoral Areas A, B, and C as well as near Castlegar and Electoral Areas J, and surrounding Nelson and Electoral Area E. The ten locations that received high-support based on suggestions, comments, and “likes” or indications of support from other users, included the creation of community gathering areas, picnic spots, and natural play spaces, often focused near existing high-use areas that currently lack amenities. Some respondents highlighted underused public lands that could be formalized into recreation sites with the potential for minimal investment. There was also strong support for water access improvements, such as designated swimming areas, non-motorized launch points, and shoreline seating. A complete list of comments, support, and suggestions has been provided (raw data).





## **New Trail**

The 59 entries under “New Trail” received 83 agrees and 11 disagrees.

Key trail suggestions focused on regional connectors and accessible multi-use routes as well as underserved communities in the RDCK (e.g., Creston). Participants identified desired connections between communities (e.g., New Denver and Silverton, Catlegar and Nelson), and the development of trails that serve a broader range of users, including walkers, cyclists, and adaptive recreation participants. One comment with 15 agrees proposed a “lower trail connecting Nelson to Mountain Station,” which was viewed as a high-value connection for both commuters and recreational users. Additionally, there were opportunities noted to connect to other existing networks such as Morning Mountain. Figure 40 highlights the most frequently noted and supported suggestions for new trail proposed by users, these represents key areas of concern for respondents that received multiple comments and support.



Image Source: RDCK

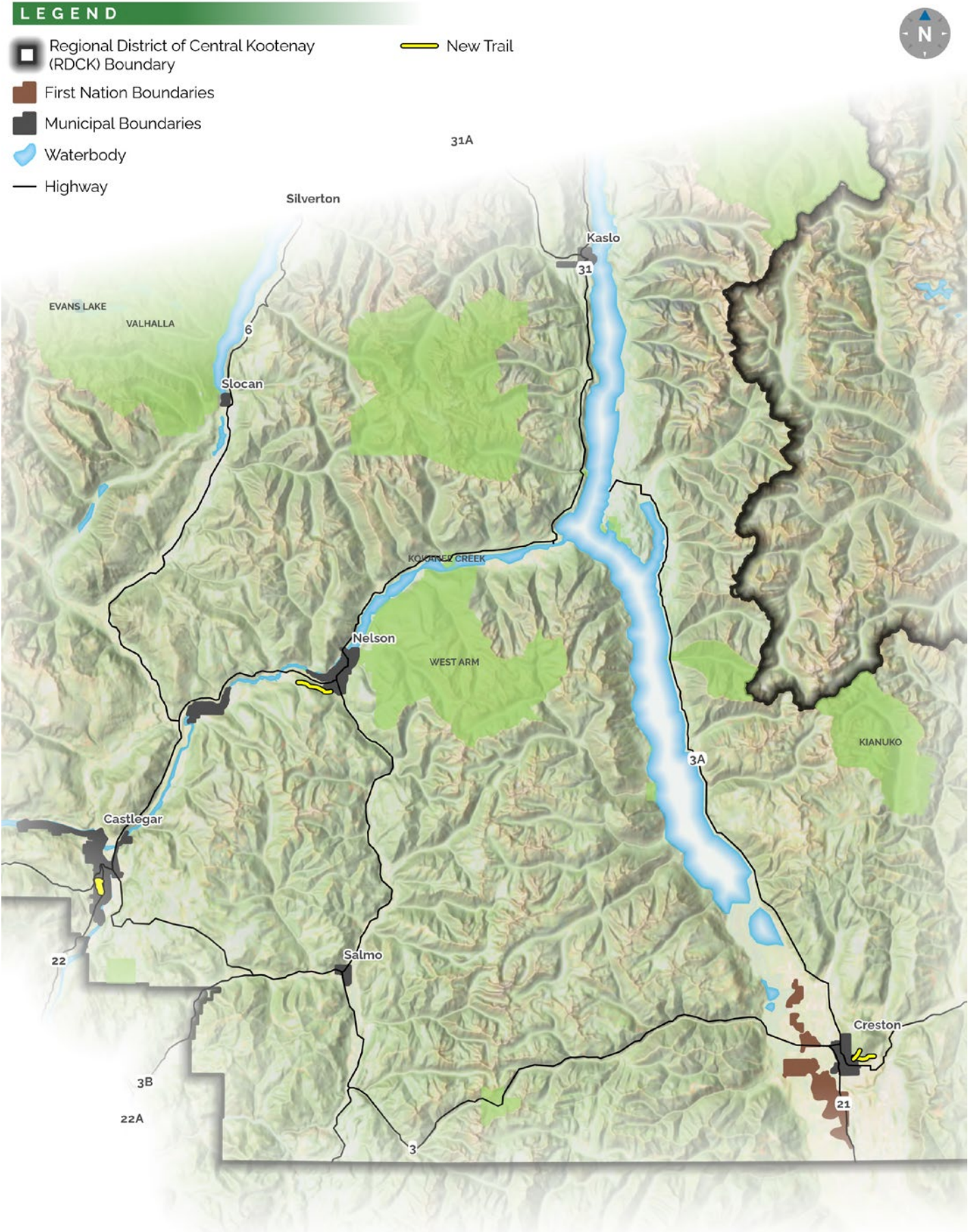


Figure 40: Webmap New Trail Suggestions

# 2.5 Sounding Boards

Four “sounding boards” (large weatherproof panels) were set-up at higher traffic locations throughout the RDCK. Sounding boards were used to provide information on the project, encourage participation in the online Survey and web map (via a QR code), and to enable participants to provide immediate input directly on panel in response to the question

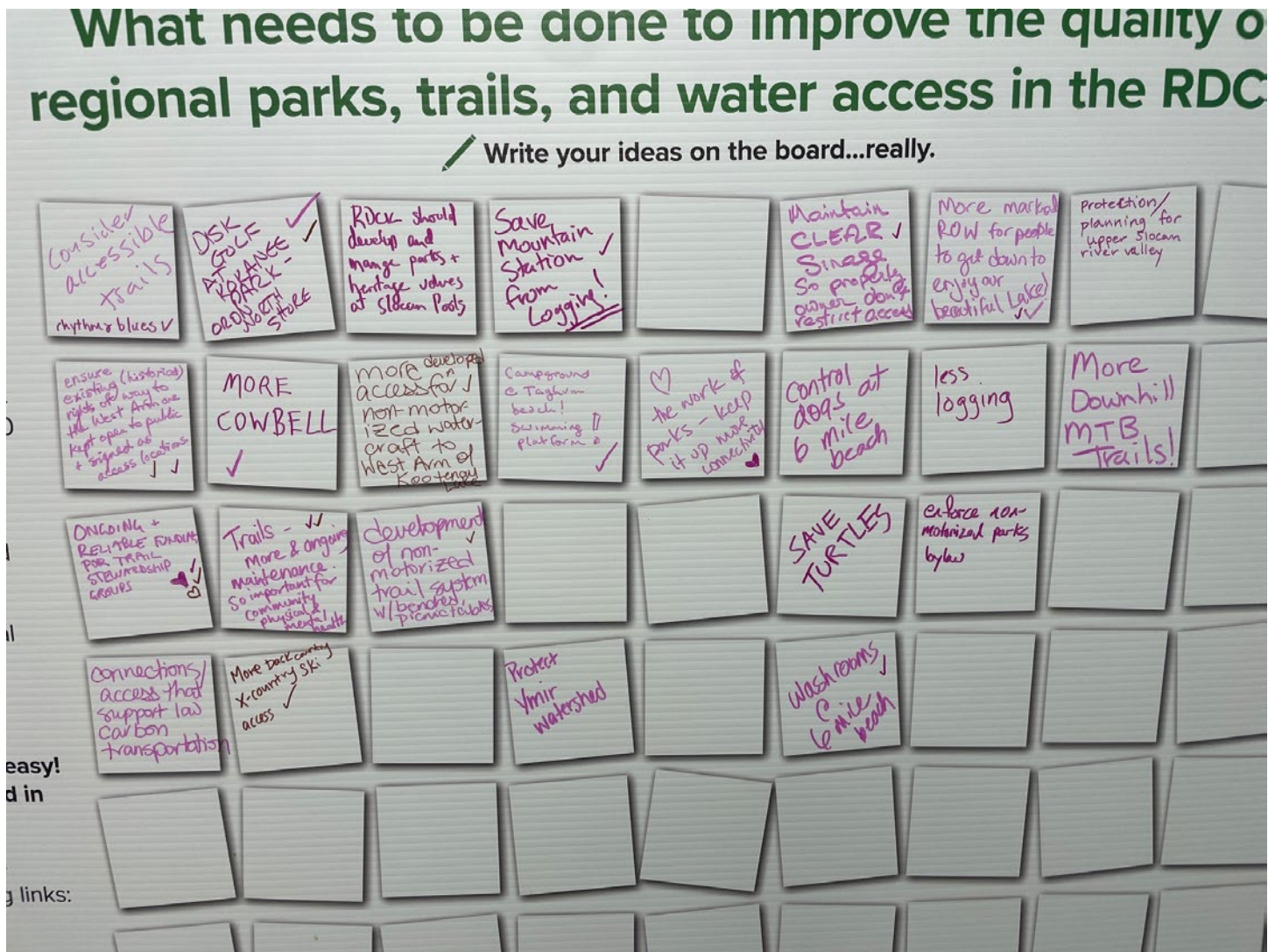


Figure 41: Example of community sounding board

In total, 87 comments (or threads of comments) were provided on the sounding boards. The themes that emerged from the analysis of received comments are as follows:

### **Outdoor recreation infrastructure**

- Rock climbing
- Bike park and other recreational biking infrastructure
- Disc golf opportunities
- Increased supply of trails
- Trail connectivity
- Active transportation corridors that connect communities across the RDCK

### **Water Access**

- Increase public water access
- Developed and undeveloped but accessible
- Non-motorized
- Swimming

### **Accessibility**

- Provide accessible and inclusive parks, trails, and water access areas for people with all levels of ability.
- Increase the supply of parks and trails to areas that are under served so that all residents of the RDCK can access regional assets.



Image Source: RDCK

## 2.6 On-site Roving Kiosks

Efforts were also made to intercept residents and active regional park and trail users in the field. More than 200 community members provided feedback, including responding to community needs, ideas on what was missing in the systems, strengths of the system, and opportunities for future management decisions and outdoor recreation enhancements across the RDCK.

Techniques varied with weather, location and staff availability, but included:

- Roving kiosks with information panels (staffed; 1-3 hours in length).
- Intercept interviews with park and trail users.

**Table 21: Summary of roving kiosk engagement**

Location	Timing	Activity	# Of Individuals Engaged
Creston and District Community Complex	May 23, 2024	Staff roving kiosk; information panels	24
Castlegar and District Community Complex	May 23 and 24, 2024	Staff roving kiosk; information panels	9
Nelson and District Community Complex	May 24, 2024	Staff roving kiosk; information panels	50+
Crescent Valley Beach Regional Park	May 25, 2024	Staff roving kiosk; information panels	11
Nelson Salmo Great Northern Trail	May 25, 2024	Staff roving kiosk; information panels	26
Nelson and District Community Complex	May 26, 2024	Staff roving kiosk; information panels	50+

The roving kiosks were designed to better understand the priorities of community members across the RDCK to help guide the regional parks and trails system into the future. Residents were asked to reflect and respond to the following:

1. Regional Parks Priorities
2. Regional Trail Priorities
3. Water Access
  - a. Types, preferences, and overall needs
4. Opportunities for Improvement across the RDCK regional parks and trails system.

With 258 comments and more than 300 unique pieces of feedback the following key themes surfaced.

## **Increase the Number of Parks and trails (focus on underserved areas)**

Residents in Area B,C, K, and A as well as the town of Creston were clear concerned with the lack of regional parks and trails in their communities. They noted that the current system feels unequal and are looking for new parks and trails in their communities. Some specific locations were notes such as public access to Goat River, the Kootenay River, Goat Mountain and the Lady Slipper trail network, Overwhelming sense that parks and trails are central to all RDCK communities and while the current system is considered a big strength of the region there are opportunities to increase the system and provide additional recreation opportunities to all residents.

## **Increase Water Access**

Water access was one of if not the most prominent and recurring theme across all locations and with residents from across the RDCK. Residents noted the need for more water access but also the desire to have better signage and awareness of current water access sites. Many people felt like the RDCK already offered a lot of water access areas, but they did not “advertise” them and therefore people felt like that simply didn’t know these areas existed. This provides an opportunity to both investigate opportunities to increase RDCK managed water access areas to support public access to water and increase communication and signage to ensure existing supply is better understood.

## **Outdoor Recreation Needs**

Residents noted that outdoor recreation is central to life in the region and therefore people are looking for parks, trails, and water access that provide them the chance to participate in many different types of outdoor activities. Specifically, the following were mentioned the most frequently as outdoor activities that should either be enhanced or new opportunities provided:

- Mountain biking
- Hiking and walking
- Summer motorized recreation
- Swimming and beaches
- Non motorized boating
- Fishing
- Overnight/camping
- Winter non-motorized recreation such as cross-country skiing

It is important to note that there was mixed feedback regarding motorized and non-motorized recreation. Some residents feel very strongly that RDCK regional parks and trails should be non-motorized only while others feel that developing and allowing motorized recreation on RDCK trails is essential. This came through in every location and with people from all across the RDCK.

## **Balancing Conservation and Outdoor Recreation**

While many residents mentioned how much the value outdoor recreation there was also a specific focus on balancing the needs of humans (desire to recreation in parks and on trails) and ecological needs. Many respondents noted that parks should be places that protect important biodiversity and ecologically sensitive habitats. Additionally, parks were seen as important for enhancing community resiliency to the pressures of climate change and extreme weather events.

## Other opportunities and new ideas

Residents were asked to share their ideas of innovation, improvements, priorities, strengths and weakness of the current regional parks, trails, and water access areas. Within these discussion a few innovative and important ideas were brought forward.

1. Trail connectivity and active transportation. Residents specifically noted (this was recurring and common across locations) the opportunity to create a connector trail between Nelson and Castlegar. This trail would provide active transportation options for residents while simultaneously increasing outdoor recreation access and physical activity opportunities for residents.
2. Outdoor education and interpretive programming. As many residents are active in the outdoors and choose to live in the region because of the surrounding natural environment it was noted that one thing missing from RDCK parks and trails was direct programming related to stewardship, environmental education, and cultural or historical interpretive programs and signage. There is an opportunity to partner with local First Nations, non-profit community based organizations, and community members to deliver this type of programming and develop engaging signage to help share the unique history and culture of the region.
3. Rock Climbing. The region offers high-quality climbing routes in beautiful natural settings, often just minutes from local communities. Areas like Kinnaird Bluffs, Waterline Wall, and Grohman Narrows are increasingly well-known. Residents noted that rock climbing offers a unique way to experience the natural environment and is increasingly popular across the region and beyond. As participation grows, there are new opportunities—and responsibilities—for the RDCK/managers to support safe access, minimize ecological impacts, and work collaboratively with climbing groups to steward these natural assets.
4. Dog friendly areas. Many residents indicated that they enjoy recreating and visiting parks and trails with their dog(s). There was an expressed need to increase dog friendly areas. This has the potential to minimize conflict as currently many sites are which are not designated dog off leash areas may be used in this way, which conflicts with the expectations of other visitors. By designated more dog beaches or off leash areas, this may reduce user conflict and encourage residents to only use the designated dog friendly areas or parks.



Figure 42: Roving Kiosk Set Up

## 2.7 Community Partner and Stakeholder Interviews

Based on a contact list supplied by RDCK staff, 15 individuals and organizations were invited to participate in in-depth semi-structured interviews. Interviews lasted between 30-45 minutes and were held virtually. Using a common interview guide, the interview questions were focused on 4 main topics:

1. Strengths of the Current System
2. Issues and Challenges of the Current System
3. Vision and Purpose of the System
4. Future Priorities for the System

### Interview Participants:

- 1 National Trails Organization
- 5 Municipal Partners
- 1 Post-Secondary Institution
- 1 Tourism and Destination Management Organization
- 2 Conservation Organizations
- 2 Provincial Partners
- 2 Regional Recreation Commissions



Image Source: RDCK

Based on these in-depth interviews the following main themes emerged:

### **Community-Driven Stewardship and Volunteerism**

RDCK parks and trails benefit immensely from strong community involvement, with many sites maintained and enhanced through volunteer efforts. Community pride and ownership over local parks and trails encourage ongoing support and care for these areas.

### **Focus on Nature-Based Recreation (while balancing the important role of conservation)**

Many participants articulated that RDCK parks should not only provide space for walking, cycling, and nature-based leisure, but also serve as protected areas for biodiversity, wildlife corridors, and sensitive ecosystems. As one conservation-focused interviewee noted, “The system should be ecosystem-based – the health of the ecosystem is considered holistically”. Others highlighted the significance of parks in supporting climate adaptation, citing that regional greenspaces can serve as buffers against extreme weather and changing environmental conditions. For example, one respondent suggested that “linkages [between parks] are opportunities to be made for climate change,” pointing to trail corridors as dual-purpose infrastructure that enhances both recreation and resiliency.

There was also a strong call to better integrate conservation planning into park design, including identifying and protecting old growth forests, wetlands, and important species habitats such as grizzly bear corridors and amphibian breeding grounds. These perspectives suggest a vision for RDCK parks and trails as multi-functional landscapes—where community wellbeing and ecological stewardship are mutually reinforcing priorities.

### **Increased Need for Accessible, Multi-Use Infrastructure**

Accessibility and inclusivity are high priorities, with respondents expressing a desire for more trails and parks that accommodate different abilities and uses. This includes the development of accessible paths, water access, and inclusive beach facilities. Accessibility improvements, such as Mobi Mats for wheelchair beach access and universally designed trails, would create a more welcoming environment for all community members. Multi-use facilities and trails are also emphasized to maximize enjoyment while minimizing environmental impact. Participants suggested that the RDCK should focus on creating multi-use infrastructure and accessible facilities as it would align with the values of inclusion held across the region.



Image Source: RDCK



Image Source: RDCK

### **Challenges with Water Access and Private Land Limitations**

A recurring issue is limited water access due to privately-owned lands bordering water bodies. Many interviewees emphasized the importance of expanding water access to meet community demand, especially for recreation and environmental education purposes. Participants noted that some waterways are bordered by private land, limiting public access and creating conflicts between landowners and community members seeking access. Respondents suggested that RDCK could play a strategic role in expanding public access to water by acquiring land or securing easements.

Popular water sites, such as the old ferry landing on the Kootenay River, appear to have become party spots, often resulting in littering and environmental degradation. There is also potential to convert certain areas into public walking or biking trails along rivers, though such efforts would require careful negotiation with dyking authorities and private landowners. Securing public water access is a high priority, particularly in areas with limited natural water access points, as it serves both recreational and conservation goals. One participant specifically stated that “strategically securing access to water is a high priority.”

### **Communication and Branding**

A consistent theme across all participants was the need for improved communication between RDCK, local residents, and partner organizations. Many people felt that RDCK parks and trails could benefit from more visible signage, promotional efforts, and educational outreach, as community members are often unaware of the resources available or the rules governing them. Improved collaboration with tourism and municipal partners could also support more coordinated management and planning. It was also noted that the RDCK has an opportunity to work more closely with tourism and destination marketing organizations (DMOs) to manage visitor impact. A coordinated approach could help educate tourists on responsible use and ensure that tourism aligns with local park capacities and conservation goals.

## Sustainable Growth and Visitor Use Management

Participants acknowledged that while tourism can boost the local economy, there is a concern that unregulated growth could lead to environmental degradation and detract from the local character of parks and trails. One participant noted “If you can’t steward it, don’t market it. That is really important”.

As RDCK parks and trails attract more visitors, there is a clear need for sustainable tourism strategies. Many interviewees underscored the importance of balancing growth with responsible management, to prevent overcrowding, protect local ecosystems, and ensure that tourism supports the community without overwhelming it.

Managed growth strategies could help RDCK balance attracting visitors with preserving local resources. One participant indicated an opportunity to work closely with post-secondary institutions and students who are training in the nature-based recreation and natural resources field to support in visitor use management capacity. Others suggested that now is the time to make effective management decisions to prevent negative outcomes linked to overtourism or increased pressures of nature-based outdoor recreation.

## Perceived Budget and Resource Constraints

Participants noted the difficulty of balancing capital investments with ongoing maintenance, especially as new facilities (e.g., washrooms and parking areas) add operational costs, “I understand that budgets are tight...adding washrooms and garbage bins just adds maintenance”. Many suggested exploring new funding models, such as increased contributions from tourism, grants, and potential partnerships, to help sustain RDCK’s infrastructure. Some respondents suggested that community and volunteer support may alleviate some pressure and resourcing needs but also indicated a risk in relying on volunteers and community-based organizations. It was also noted that there are gaps in the public’s understanding of resourcing and how expensive important amenities and services such as garbage ‘disposal.



Image Source: RDCK

# Appendices



Image Source: RDCK, Dave Heath

# Appendix A

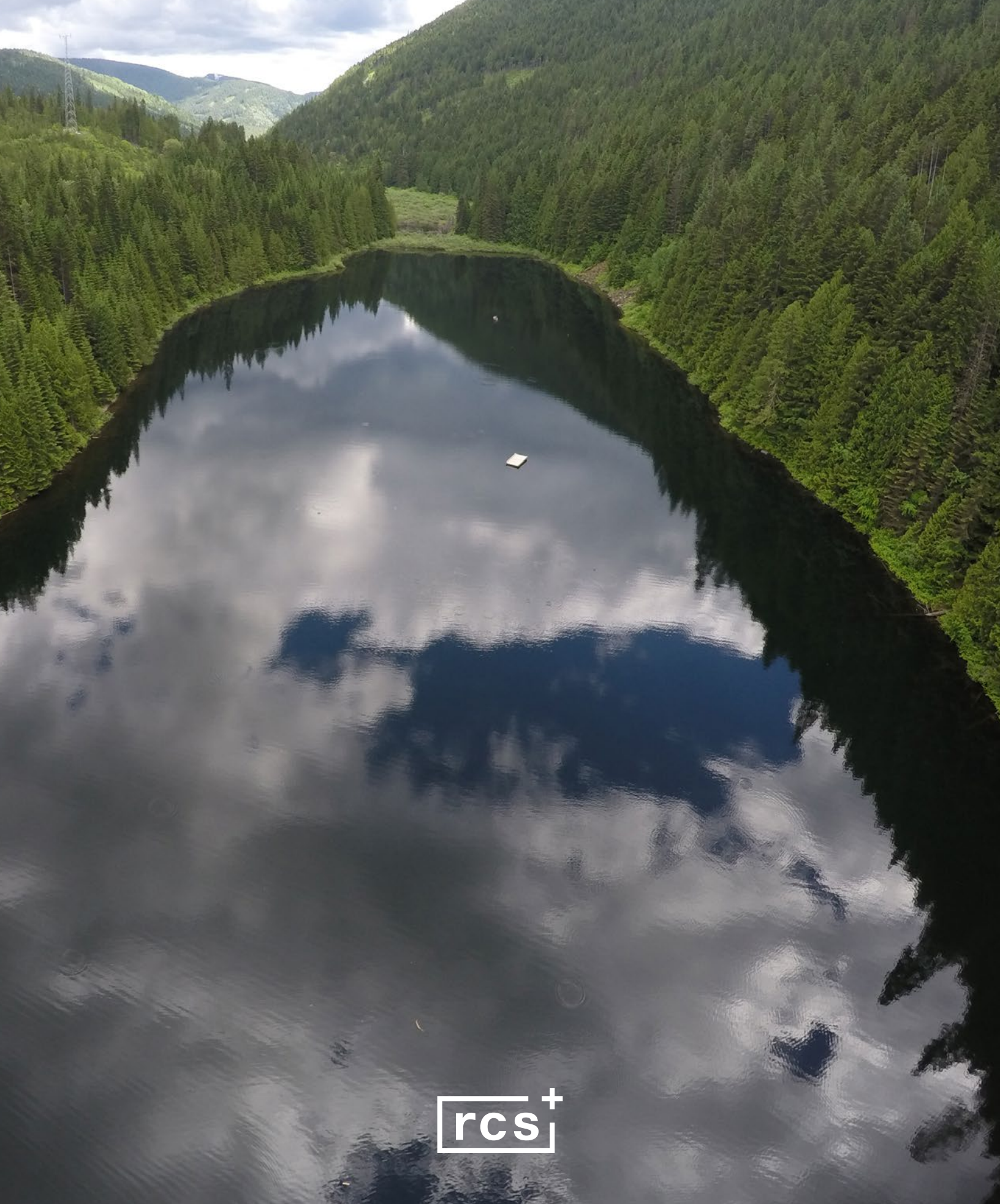
Table 22: Community Organizations

Grouping	Organization
Education/Research	School District 10 Arrow Lake
Education/Research	School District 20 Kootenay Columbia
Education/Research	School District 8 Kootenay Lake
Trails	Nelson Cycling Club
Trails	Trails for Creston Valley Society
Trails	Creston Valley Cycling Association
Trails	Castlegar Parks and Trails Society
Trails	East Shore Trail & Bike Association
Trails	Friends of Pulpit Rock Society
Trails	Nakusp and Area Bike/Community Trails Society
Trails	North Slocan Trails Society
Trails	Kaslo Outdoor Recreation & Trails Society
Trails	Kaslo Mountain Bike Club
Trails	Salmo Valley Trail Society
Trails	Slocan Valley Heritage Trail Society
Winter	Valhalla Hills Nordic Ski Club
Winter	Arrow Lakes Cross Country Ski Club
Winter	Nakusp Ski Club Association
Winter	Salmo Ski Club
Winter	Nelson Nordic Ski Club
Motorsports/Mixed Use	Columbia & Western Community Society
Motorsports	ATV BC
Motorsports	Salmo Seniors ATV Society
Motorsports	West Kootenay Recreational Dirt Bike and ATV Society
Community	Pass Creek Exhibition Society
Community	Balfour Recreation Commission
Community	Canyon Community Association
Community	Crawford Bay Hall & Parks Association
Community	Blewett Conservation Society
Community	Ymir Community Association
Community	Nelson Boy Scout & Girl Guides

<b>Grouping</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Wildlife, Nature & Water Stewardship	Fresh Water Fisheries Society of BC
Wildlife, Nature & Water Stewardship	Kootenay Lake Partnership
Wildlife, Nature & Water Stewardship	Kokanee Creek Nature Centre Society
Wildlife, Nature & Water Stewardship	Wildsight - Creston Valley Branch
Wildlife, Nature & Water Stewardship	Central Kootenay Invasive Species Society
Regional/Provincial Land Stewardship	Creston Community Forests
Sports Groups	Nelson Disc Golf Society
Sports Groups	Kootenay Mountaineering Club
Sports Groups	Backcountry Horsemanship of BC (West Kootenay)
Sports Groups	Kootenay Chaos Track and Field Club
Sports Groups	Castlegar Girls Softball Association
Sports Groups	Creston Soccer
Sports Groups	Creston Valley Little League
Sports Groups	Nelson Soccer Association
Sports Groups	Nelson Tennis Club
Sports Groups	TAWKROC (The Association of West Kootenay Rock Climbers)
RDCK	East Shore Economic Development Commission
RDCK	Sustainability Coordinator
RDCK	Emergency Services/ Wildfire
Water Sports	Rowing Club (Creston)
Water Sports	Kuskonook Harbour Society
Water Sports	Nelson Kayak & Canoe Club
Water Sports	Columbia Canoe & Kayak Club
Water Sports	West Kootenay Fly Fishing Club







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