

Deschutes River Access and Habitat Restoration Plan February 2020 Community Survey Results

Introduction

As part of the public engagement scope for the Deschutes River and Habitat Restoration Plan, the Bend Parks and Recreation District (BPRD) solicited input from the community regarding their current use of the rivers, as well as their desires related to access and habitat restoration. This input was gathered via a community survey that was available from February 10 through February 28, 2020. The survey was advertised on the BPRD website, BPRD social media pages, BPRD newsletters, stakeholder email list (reaching over 100 individuals and their associated organizations, as applicable) and focus group member outreach. After one week of the survey being open, a number of groups were identified as having more limited responses, including surfers and anglers. In addition, the Spanish language survey had a low number of responses. To address this, BPRD completed more targeted outreach to these groups including attending meetings frequented by these groups and requesting input, targeted outreach to individuals affiliated with these groups, targeted outreach on social media pages associated with these groups, and additional personal email outreach. This additional outreach did result in an increase in responses from these groups. It should also be noted that a number of Latino community members we spoke with indicated that they preferred to complete the survey in English.

Overall, BPRD received 712 responses to the survey. BPRD was pleased with the response – both the overall quantity of responses, as well as the breadth of user groups whom provided their feedback. BPRD believes the feedback received from this survey will be informative in the development of projects and related priorities for ultimate inclusion in the Deschutes River Access and Habitat Restoration Plan.

What follows is a summary of the survey results focused on key take-aways from the survey results.

Key Take-aways

The survey included high level questions to ascertain most prevalent river use activities and to better understand perceptions, desire and concerns related to the Deschutes River parks. In addition, the survey also included more targeted questions associated with specific user groups. This section is focused on high level questions associated with river access and habitat restoration.

Top Three Activities

There are many uses along and within the river, and the survey inquired about the top three activities that people enjoy at the river. What follows is a summary of the top three uses, based upon the survey results.

Use Type	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Total Respondents
Trail walking, running or biking	592	83%
Paddling the river	307	43%
Floating the river	281	40%

As evidenced by the data, individuals enjoy activities at the bank edge, as well as activities within the water. Other popular activities included taking your dog swimming or wading along the river and visiting a park along the river. For the Spanish survey, sitting or standing on the river falls within the top three activities (instead of paddling, as seen with the overall results).

Most used parks for the top three activities

As a follow-up question to the top three activities individuals enjoy at the river, the survey asked at which parks individuals enjoy these activities. What follows is a summary of the top three parks for the identified most prevalent activities, based upon the survey results.

Park	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Total Respondents
Farewell Bend	525	74%
Riverbend	466	69%
Drake	452	64%

The identified parks are consistent with the preferred activities noted in response to question 1 as they are popular locations for trail use, and paddling and floating the river. Other popular parks included McKay, Miller's Landing, Sawyer and First Street Rapids.

River Access Satisfaction

The 2017 Community Needs survey completed for the BPRD comprehensive plan identified riverfront parks and areas to access the river as two of the seven highest priority needs. Given that the district has 16 parks along eight miles of the Deschutes River, as well as approximately 119 access points along this eight-mile stretch, BPRD is trying to better understand what is driving the requests for more riverfront parks and access points. Given that satisfaction with the existing river access may factor into the desires for additional river access, a survey question inquired about satisfaction with river access for desired activities. Below is a summary of the responses based upon the 694 people that answered this question:

Satisfaction level	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Total Respondents*
Very Satisfied	152	22%
Satisfied	300	43%
Neutral	135	19%
Dissatisfied	74	11%
Very Dissatisfied	33	5%

As illustrated in the table, the majority of respondents were either satisfied or neutral regarding existing river access, with approximately 16% of respondents dissatisfied. Lack of satisfaction by this minority of the population may have contributed to the Community Survey results that indicated that more river access is necessary.

Top Three Concerns

Concerns or opportunities for improvements at the BPRD river parks may be another reason Community Survey results have previously indicated that riverfront parks and access to the river are an unmet need. To better understand current community concerns related to riverfront parks, the survey inquired about what concerns respondents had related to these parks. Below are the top six responses, which were concerns expressed by at least one-third of the respondents. Respondents could choose as many concerns as they desired.

Concerns	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Total Respondents
Bank Erosion	321	48%
Number of People	307	46%
Litter	289	43%
Vegetation being Trampled	286	43%
Parking Availability	272	41%
Behavior of People	254	40%

The top concerns include a focus on both access and habitat degradation, indicative of the communities' concerns related to both of these facets of the river. For the Spanish survey, the lack of trash can availability scored as the 2nd top concern and the number of people in the park was one of the lowest concerns.

Transportation Mode Choice

Given that BPRD has heard over time that parking is a challenge at some river parks, the survey included a question to understand how people get to the parks. Respondents were invited to identify all modes that apply to them. Below is a summary of the responses.

Mode Choice	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Total Respondents
Personal Vehicle	603	89%
Walk or Bike	346	51%
Carpool	121	18%
Ride the River Shuttle	63	9%
Other	8	1.2%
Other Public Transit	5	0.7%
I Don't go to the Deschutes	3	0.4%

As evidenced by the data, the large majority of respondents access the river parks via a single occupancy vehicle, which could be contributing to the parking challenges at river parks.

Importance of Improving Wildlife Habitat

In order to better understand the importance, the respondents placed upon the need for improving wildlife habitat along the Deschutes River, the survey included a question specific to this. As illustrated below, the vast majority of respondents (86%) felt that improving habitat was either very or somewhat important. This illustrates the need to focus on both habitat restoration, as well as access improvements.

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Total Respondents
Very Important	429	63%
Somewhat Important	155	23%
Neutral	57	8%
Not Important	35	5%
Don't know	4	0.6%

* Due to rounding, the total is off by 0.4 percent