

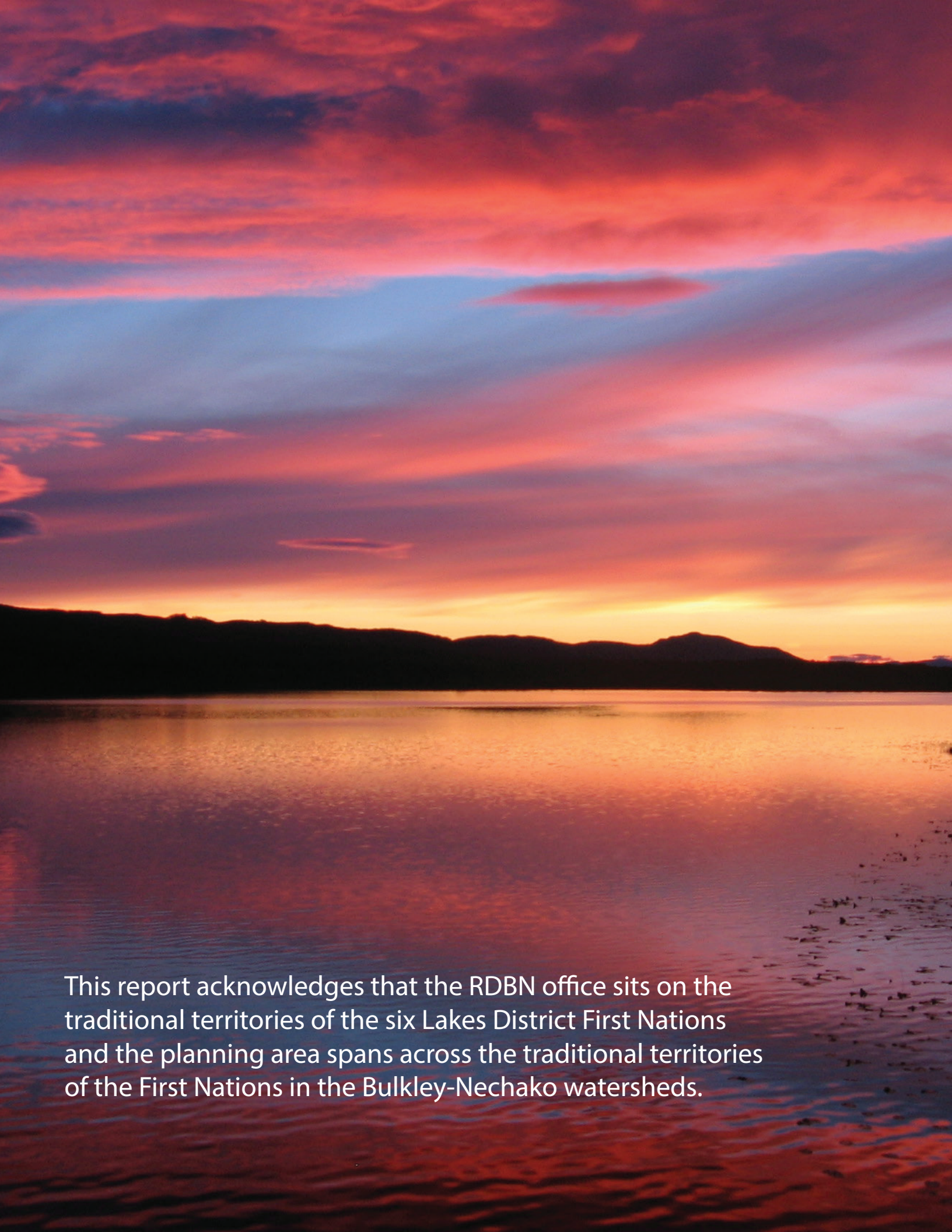
REGIONAL DISTRICT OF BULKLEY-NECHAKO

PARKS AND TRAILS MASTER PLAN

FOR ELECTORAL AREAS B (BURNS LAKE RURAL) AND
E (FRANÇOIS /OOTSA LAKE RURAL)



2023



This report acknowledges that the RDBN office sits on the traditional territories of the six Lakes District First Nations and the planning area spans across the traditional territories of the First Nations in the Bulkley-Nechako watersheds.

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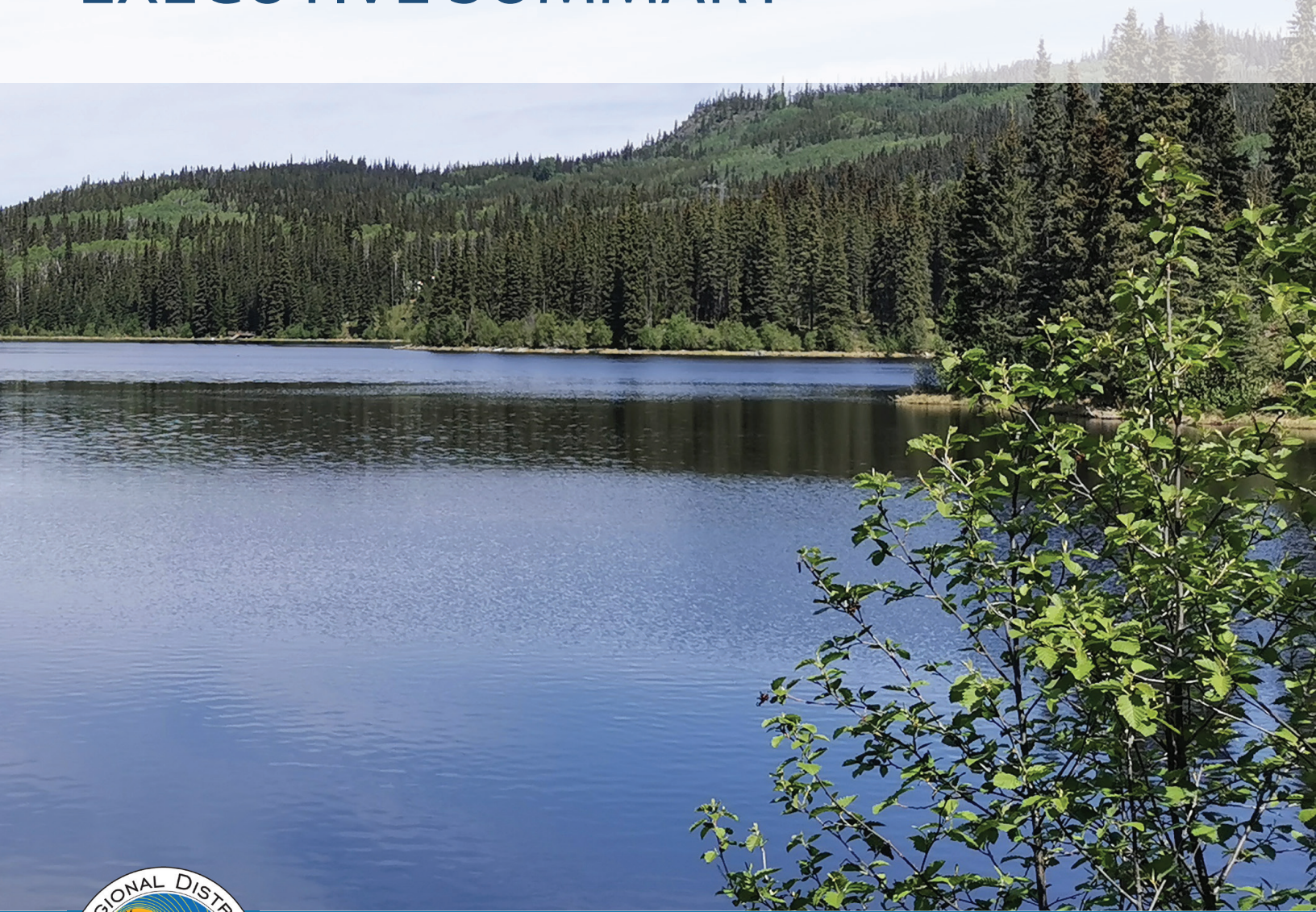
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Ride Burns Lake
Recreation Sites and Trails BC
Ministry of Transportation Staff
Village of Burns Lake Staff
Members of Nee Tahi Bunh

Thank you to those residents and members of the public who shared their thoughts and ideas through the online surveys.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The purpose of the Parks and Trails Master Plan for Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako (RDBN)'s Electoral Area B (Burns Lake Rural) and Area E (François Lake/Ootsa Lake) is to provide a comprehensive framework that will steer the development of parks and recreation facilities over the next 10 years. The RDBN has recently established a dedicated parks and trails service, in addition to introducing two regional parks in Electoral Areas B and E. The intention is to foster the growth of the parks and trails system within the planning area. This expansion builds on the achievements of existing service providers while addressing gaps in the system and defining the RDBN's role.

Through two rounds of public and stakeholder engagement, the local community has voiced several key priorities. These include the desire for enhanced trail connectivity; increased access to lakes and shorelines; diverse recreational opportunities for individuals of all ages and abilities; the importance of maintain existing parks and trails; supporting community organizations in delivering recreation services; and fostering collaboration with First Nations.

The planning process identified several key challenges and opportunities. These include the potential risk associated with overreliance on volunteers to sustain the region's recreation system; limited funding available for the maintenance of parks and trails; the critical role of partnerships; ensuring accessibility for all; recognizing Indigenous territories and cultures; and the desire to increase access to lakes and shorelines through the development of boat launches.

This Master Plan includes a set of specific recommendations to address the challenges and leverage the opportunities within the region's parks and trails system. These recommendations are accompanied by a structured framework for implementing the proposed actions over the course of the next decade.



Figure 1- Canoeing on Burns Lake

VISION STATEMENT

The RDBN's Parks and Trails Service for Electoral Area B (Burns Lake Rural) and Area E (François Lake/Ootsa Lake), which is located on the traditional territories of six Lakes District First Nations, will:

- **Build on Community Strengths.** The RDBN seeks to build upon the strengths of the recreation services provided by other levels of government, including First Nations, and recreation organizations. These partnerships will create a cohesive and synergistic system that enhances the overall recreational experience for all.
- **Connect People to Nature.** The parks and trails system in Electoral Areas B and E will support connections between new and existing parks and facilitate the creation of accessible and multiuse trails.
- **Provide Diverse and Accessible Recreation Opportunities.** Whether seeking a thrilling hiking adventure, a tranquil camping experience, or a leisurely stroll along a picturesque shoreline, the parks and trails system will offer diverse and accessible recreation options for all ages and abilities. This will be achieved through the creation of new park and trail facilities and the continuous upkeep of existing infrastructure.
- **Celebrate the Region's Natural Beauty.** The parks and trails system will facilitate access to lakes, shorelines, unique natural areas, and important community destinations. The parks and trails system will protect and enhance the rich ecosystems of the Lakes District, preserving opportunities for wildlife viewing and appreciation of native flora and fauna for future generations.

GOALS

Five goals emerged to support the RDBN in achieving the vision for parks and trails. Each goal is supported by specific recommendations to be accomplished over the next 10 years.

- **Goal 1:** Define the RDBN approach to the delivery of the Parks and Trails Service in Electoral Areas B and E
- **Goal 2:** Strengthen partnerships and build community capacity
- **Goal 3:** Increase access to lakes and shorelines
- **Goal 4:** Enhance the user experience at regional parks and trails
- **Goal 5:** Support active transportation and a connected community

The following table is a summary of the goals and recommendations included in this Master Plan.

	Recommendation	Priority
GOAL 1: DEFINE THE APPROACH TO PARKS AND TRAILS SERVICE DELIVERY IN ELECTORAL AREAS B AND E		
1.1	Develop park management plans for existing and future regional parks and update the plans every five years.	High
1.2	Establish a level of service for regional parks and continue to conduct parks and trails inspections as described in the Parks and Trails Inspection and Maintenance Policy.	High
GOAL 2: STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS AND BUILD COMMUNITY CAPACITY		
2.1	Continue with the implementation of the Recreation Contribution Grant Program that supports the RDBN in allocating multi-year funding to recreation organizations providing recreation services. Continue to monitor the success of the program and adjust criteria for funding and reporting requirements as needed.	High
2.2	Consider adding additional staff to support the implementation of new regional parks and trails projects across the RDBN’s four parks and trails service areas and ensure equitable distribution of staff time between the service areas.	Medium
2.3	Continue to work with First Nations communities, other levels of government, and community groups to maintain and expand land use agreements and acquire additional parkland for recreation and conservation use.	High
2.4	Work with Recreation Sites and Trails British Columbia (RSTBC) to identify priority sites for increased maintenance, management, or financial support from the RDBN.	High
GOAL 3: INCREASE ACCESS TO LAKES AND SHORELINES		
3.1	Identify opportunities to increase access to lakeshores through the inclusion of boat launches at waterfront parks owned by the RDBN or on Crown Land. Potential partners include First Nations communities, RSTBC, MoTI, and Southside Economic Development Association (SEDA).	Medium
GOAL 4: ENHANCE THE USER EXPERIENCE AT PARKS AND TRAILS		
4.1	Follow accessibility standards, such as the Universal Design Guide by BC Parks, when establishing or upgrading regional park and trails.	Medium

4.2	Update the RDBN’s website to provide more information about regional parks and trails including information about accessible features at parks and trails.	Medium
4.3	Work with First Nations communities to develop a naming policy for parks and trails and to incorporate Indigenous stories and histories into interpretive signage in parks or trails where appropriate.	Medium
4.4	Ensure all regional parks and trails are identified with wayfinding and informational signage indicating the name of the park/ trail as well as safety/ wildlife/ accessibility information.	Medium
4.5	Explore opportunities to include amenities at existing and future regional parks such as picnic shelters and tables, washrooms and firepits.	Medium
GOAL 5: SUPPORT ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION AND A CONNECTED COMMUNITY		
5.1	Explore opportunities to connect communities and key recreation assets in the Regional District through the development of multiuse trails and pathways.	Medium
5.2	Define the RDBN’s approach to the use of motorized vehicles on trails in Electoral Areas B and E.	High

AREA B RECOMMENDATIONS		
6.1	Explore opportunities and partnerships for future development of Burns Lake South. Engage Indigenous communities with traditional territories within the Burns Lake South Area early in the process.	Medium
6.2	Continue to work with CN Rail to develop a level pedestrian crossing for Imeson’s Beach to facilitate its future use as a regional park.	High
6.3	Partner with the Village to explore the feasibility of connecting Boer Mountain to the Village core.	Medium
AREA E RECOMMENDATIONS		
7.1	Complete a park development plan for Hospital Point which includes community and rightsholder engagement to determine priorities for developing the site as a regional park.	High
7.2	Explore partnering with the Southside Economic Development Association (SEDA) to maintain the nature trail and beach adjacent to the SEDA office.	Medium
7.3	Explore partnering with Cheslatta Carrier Nation to maintain the boat launch near the Southside ferry adjacent to SEDA beach on François Lake. Explore opportunities to add parking and a washroom.	Medium

1 INTRODUCTION



1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

The RDBN's *Parks and Outdoor Recreation Study (2020)* identified the need for a regional parks and trails service to meet the growing demand for outdoor recreation in the region's rural areas and address gaps in the recreation services provided by volunteer clubs, Recreation Sites & Trails BC, and BC Parks. In response to the 2020 study, the Regional District of Bulkley- Nechako (RDBN) initiated the creation of four distinct Parks and Trails Service Areas: Smithers and Electoral Area A; Houston, Granisle, and Electoral Area G; Burns Lake, Electoral Area B, and Electoral Area E; and District of Fort St. James and Electoral Area C. The RDBN has also recently established four Recreation Contribution Service Areas, which will provide financial assistance to organizations offering recreational activities for residents and visitors. To facilitate the implementation of these recently introduced services, the Regional District will be developing Parks and Trails Master Plans for each service area, commencing with the development of this Master Plan for Electoral Area B (Burns Lake Rural) and Electoral Area E (François/Ootsa Lake Rural).

1.1.1 PLANNING AREA

Spanning the Bulkley Valley, the Nechako Plateau, and couched in the Omineca and Hazelton Mountain ranges, the RDBN is located within the traditional territory of nearly 30 First Nations. These communities represent Dakelh, Nedut'en, Tse'khene and Wet'suwet'en people.

This Plan focuses on Electoral Area B (Burns Lake Rural) as well as Electoral Area E (François/Ootsa Lake Rural). These regions are collectively referred to as the planning area. Residents in the RDBN's Electoral Areas B and E value the rural character, natural beauty, and opportunities for outdoor recreation available within the planning area. First Nations heritage, thriving agricultural traditions, and natural resource economies have shaped the community in the RDBN's Areas B and E. Within the planning area, there are six First Nations including Ts'il Kaz Koh, Cheslatta Carrier, Lake Babine, Skin Tyee, Nee Tah Buhn, and Wet'suwet'en.

Electoral Area B (Burns Lake Rural) encompasses the rural area surrounding Burns Lake and several unincorporated communities, such as Decker Lake, Palling, Rose Lake, Sheraton, and Tintagel. Within this area, residents and visitors alike can enjoy a wide array of recreational opportunities. These include world-class mountain biking trails, Olympic-quality cross-country ski trails, and vast picturesque lakes.

Electoral Area E (François /Ootsa Lake Rural) encompasses the rural region situated to the south of the Village of Burns Lake. This area includes several unincorporated communities, namely François Lake, Noralee, Grassy Plains, Ootsa Lake, Southbank, Danskin, Wisteria, and Takysie Lake. The primary economic drivers in this area are the forestry, agriculture, and tourism sectors. Of importance in Electoral Area E is the François Lake Forester. This free ferry is a critical infrastructure element within Electoral Area E and serves as a vital link for the southern side of François Lake.

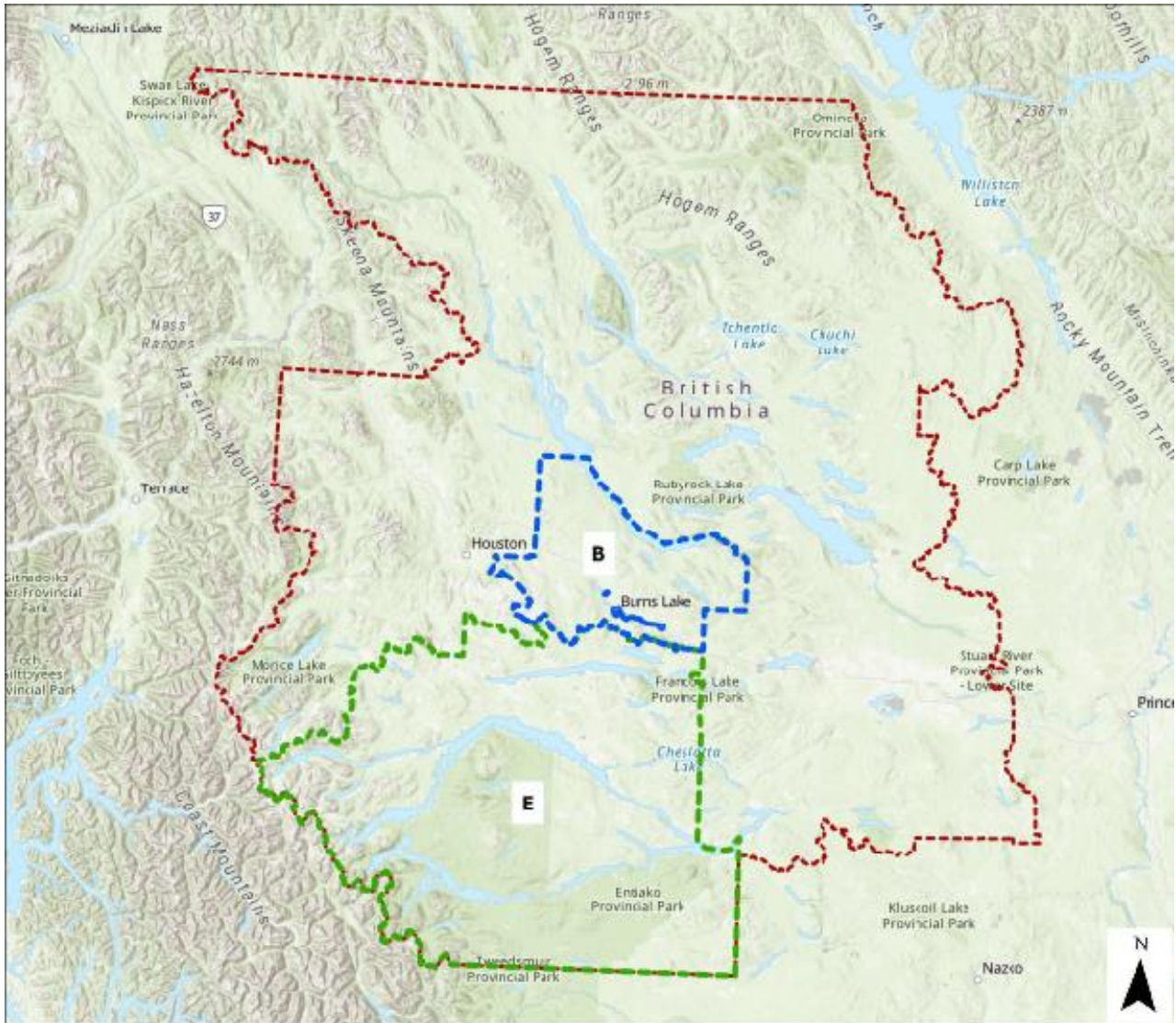


Figure 2- Map of Electoral Areas B and E

1.1.2 PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The Electoral Areas B and E Parks and Trails Master Plan is a strategic action plan that builds on the accomplishments of current outdoor recreation service providers, clarifies the RDBN's role in providing and improving outdoor recreation services, and outlines key projects and tasks for addressing community recreation needs over the next decade. It serves as a roadmap for a new parks and trails service, detailing projects and tasks to fulfill community recreation needs in the coming 10 years. This Master Plan aims to facilitate the development of parks and trails services in a coordinated, cooperative, and financially sustainable manner for taxpayers.

1.2 THE PLANNING PROCESS

The Regional Parks and Trails Master Plan process involved five phases, which encompassed two rounds of community involvement. The planning process unfolded as follows:

- **Phase 1 - Start-up, Inventory, and Analysis:** The first phase included background research, reviewing relevant regional strategies and bylaws, and mapping the existing inventory of regional parks and trails.
- **Phase 2 - Community Engagement Round 1:** In the second phase, site visits, discussions with RDBN staff, and community engagement occurred. This involved holding two in-person open houses, a rights holder meeting, and several stakeholder interviews and meetings. These sessions aimed to introduce the community to the project, understand their values and priorities, and identify challenges and opportunities regarding parks and trails in the region. Public input was also collected through an online survey.
- **Phase 3 - Draft Recreation and Parks Master Plan:** This phase involved the development of the draft Parks and Trails Master Plan, including information gathered in the first two phases of the project and a draft vision, goals, and recommendations.
- **Phase 4 - Community Engagement Round 2:** The fourth phase featured a second round of community engagement, ensuring alignment with community values by reporting findings back to the community. Round two of engagement included another online survey, stakeholder meetings, and a virtual open house.
- **Phase 5 - Final Recreation and Parks Master Plan:** The fifth phase of the planning process included the development of the final Parks and Trails Master Plan and a presentation to the Regional Board.



Figure 3 - Project Timeline

In recognition of the important partnership between the RDBN and the Village of Burns Lake, and to increase efficiencies, this plan was developed concurrently with the Village of Burns Lake’s Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

1.2.1 RELATED PLANS AND POLICIES

Various studies, plans, and policies have provided valuable background information and have informed the recommendations in this Plan. A summary of background documents and their relationship and relevance is presented in the table below.

DOCUMENT TITLE	CONTENT	RELEVANCE
RDBN Parks and Outdoor Recreation Study (2020)	Provides valuable information about demand for outdoor recreation what and Parks and Trails Service could look like and cost. This Study considers what role the RDBN could play as an owner and administrator of outdoor recreation facilities.	The findings in this Study provides insight into the recreation needs and preferences for residents in Electoral Areas B and E and has informed the recommendations in this Plan.
Burns Lake Rural and François Lake (North Shore) Official Community Plan (2017)	Outlines a vision and goals for parks and recreation in Electoral Areas B and E. Many of the goals identified in the OCP focus on protecting and enhancing the natural character of the area. The OCP also includes direction on specific areas of high recreational value, increasing access to lakes and rivers, and rezoning to expand recreational uses of lands such as golf courses and community halls.	The OCP includes objectives and policies for the designation of parks and recreation areas, such as guidance on protecting lands with significant recreational and/ or environmental value, that have informed the vision, goals, and recommendations in this Plan.
Burns Lake and Surrounding Area Profile (2014)	Provides important context on the Village of Burns Lake including demographic information, community recreation assets, and community organizations.	The Burns Lake and Surrounding Area Profile informed the community profile in this Plan and helped guide recommendations on recreation opportunities in the RDBN.
Electoral Area B and E Recreation Contribution Service Establishment Bylaw No. 1977, 2022	Establishes a service for financial contributions to organizations providing recreation services in Electoral Areas B and E.	The funds raised through this bylaw supports organizations in providing recreation services.
Parks and Trails Service Establishment Bylaw No.1927, 2020	A bylaw to establish a parks and trails service for Burns Lake, Electoral Area B and Electoral Area E.	This bylaw authorizes the RDBN to create, operate, and market regional parks and trails and therefore supports the implementation of recommendations in this Plan related to the creation of new parks and trails.

1.2.2 ROLE OF THE REGIONAL DISTRICT

The role of the Regional Parks and Trails Service is to establish, manage, and promote regional parks and regional trails, and by extension, support healthy and active living, foster community bonds through recreation, and enable individuals to enjoy the natural environment. It is the intention of the RDBN to complement and coordinate with the overall network of parks and trails in the region, but not duplicate the services of other agencies in fulfilling its mandate. The general role of the regional park and trails system is to provide opportunities for the public to access and enjoy scenic and historically significant destinations for a range of year-round outdoor recreational activities such as hiking, biking, walking, boating, paddling, fishing, wildlife viewing, picnicking, and swimming.

The RDBN intends to take a phased approach to the development of regional parks and trails, focusing first on providing access to day-use recreation areas, improving access to lakes and shorelines, and supporting the efforts of other government and non-governmental organizations in providing recreation services.

1.2.3 REGIONAL DISTRICT SERVICES

In addition to the Parks and Trails Service and Recreation Contribution Service, the RDBN also does the following:

- **Grants in Aid:** The RDBN provides grants to community organizations through an application process which is reviewed by the RDBN's Board. Grants may be used for cultural, charitable, sporting, recreational, service activities and special events for the purpose of benefiting the community.
- **Gas Tax Funding:** The RDBN administers Federal Gas Tax Funding, and local non-profit organizations can apply for support on a variety of community projects, including outdoor recreation capital projects.
- **Transfers to Partner Municipalities for Recreation Services:** The RDBN collects property taxes from rural residents to contribute to the costs that municipalities incur for providing recreation services. The RDBN contributes to the recreation centre, arena, and curling rink in the Village of Burns Lake.
- **Grant Writing Support:** The RDBN has an economic development team with proposal writers on staff that can assist non-profit organizations with the grant writing process.¹

¹ Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Parks & Outdoor Recreation Study – June 2020

2

PARKS & TRAILS SYSTEM



2.1 THE PARKS AND TRAILS SYSTEM

Parks and trails play a crucial role in the region and are greatly appreciated by the community for providing recreational opportunities that enhance health and wellness. They serve as avenues for accessing nature, engaging in outdoor activities, and safeguarding open spaces for the benefit of future generations.

The RDBN has opened a regional park at Hospital Point in Electoral Area E and has proposed a future regional park, Imeson’s Beach, in Electoral Area B, accounting for 8.5 hectares of regional parkland in the planning area. Other parks and recreation services in Electoral Areas B and E are provided primarily by Recreation Sites and Trails BC, BC Parks, and local volunteer organizations, including 35 recreation sites on crown land and 9 trail areas.

2.1.1 REGIONAL PLANNING

The RDBN Regional Parks and Trails Service is administered by the Regional District’s Planning Department. In each of the four service areas, planning staff are responsible for overseeing the development of the Parks and Trails Service, coordinating with government and community recreation organizations, offering recreation services in the regional district, and administering planning processes and capital projects.

Each Parks and Trails Service Area has unique challenges and opportunities, as well as distinct outdoor recreation needs. A key challenge for the RDBN has been the question of how to balance resources and staff time between each service area. In 2022, 61% of staff time was dedicated to Smithers/Electoral Area A and a similar level of service is anticipated in 2024. As the parks and trails service in each area grows, additional staff resources may be needed to address inequities.

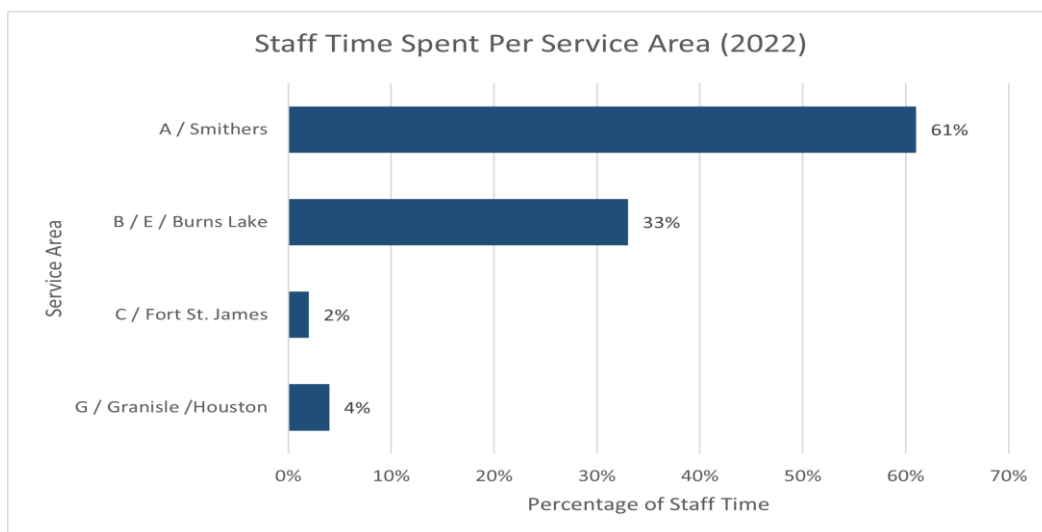


Figure 4 - Staff Time Spent Per Parks and Trails Service Area

2.1.2 PARKLAND ACQUISITION

The RDBN has the authority to establish and operate parks and recreation services as set out in *Part 10 of the Local Government Act*. The *Act* allows the RDBN to acquire land for parks and trails and pass regulatory bylaws with respect to managing those parks. With the RDBN's establishment of a parks function by bylaw, it can use the following tools to generate revenues for parks and recreation services:

- **Property Taxes:** Property taxes are the most common revenue stream for supporting a parks and recreation function.
- **Parkland or Cash-in-Lieu of Parkland at Time of Subdivision:** The *Act* gives the RDBN authority to require parkland dedication or cash in lieu of parkland dedication equivalent to the market value of 5% of the land at the time of subdivision.
- **Development Cost Charges (DCCs):** Through a Development Cost Charges (DCC) Bylaw the RDBN may charge developers a fee at the time of development. DCCs for parks can be used for land acquisition and for specific improvements, such as trails and picnic areas.
- **Ecological gifts, bequests, life-estates, land donations:** The RDBN has the authority to accept ecological gifts of land. It can be a considerable tax benefit to a donor to have a land donation recognized as having “ecological significance” by Revenue Canada.
- **Gas Tax Grants and other Senior Government Grants:** The RDBN has access to various government grant programs to fund parks and recreation infrastructure. Typically, these programs do not provide funding for maintenance or operational costs.²

In each Service Area, there will be a separate Parkland Reserve Fund. The revenues collected within each Service Area will be used to cover the expenses for the capital, operational, and administrative aspects of the parks and trails service specifically in that area.

² Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Parks & Outdoor Recreation Study – June 2020

2.1.3 OTHER OUTDOOR RECREATION SERVICE PROVIDERS

Various levels of government, contractors, and recreation organizations also play a significant role in parks and recreation in the planning area including:

- Recreation Sites and Trails BC (and their contractors) – responsible for recreation sites on backcountry Crown Land;
- BC Parks – responsible for provincial parks;
- Village of Burns Lake – responsible for municipal parks and trails;
- First Nations – responsible for on-reserve parks and trails, and
- Recreation organizations, such as the Omineca Ski Club and Ride Burns Lake, which are responsible for the operation and maintenance of trails on Crown and community forest lands.



Figure 5 - Boer Mountain Trails. Credit: Village of Burns Lake

2.2 PARKS AND TRAILS INVENTORY

This section provides an inventory of parks and trails within the planning area. This encompasses parks and trails managed by the RDBN as well as others. As the RDBN's Parks and Trails Service was recently established, presenting a comprehensive inventory of parks and trails in Electoral Areas B and E enables the RDBN to bridge existing gaps in the parks and trails system and discover possibilities for expanding service offerings.

2.2.1 RDBN PARKS AND TRAILS IN AREAS B AND E

The RDBN's current inventory of parks in Electoral Areas B and E consists of two regional parks, accounting for 8.5 hectares of regional parkland in the planning area. Hospital Point, located in Electoral Area E, features an accessible washroom and day use areas on François Lake. Imeson's Beach, located in Electoral Area B, is a proposed future park that would provide access to Burns Lake.

RDBN Electoral Area	Total Amount of Parkland	Amount of Regional Parkland per 1,000 people
Electoral Area B	4.5 ha	2.6 ha
Electoral Area E	4 ha	3.3 ha

Table 1 - Summary of Parks in the Planning Area



Figure 6 - View from Hospital Point

2.2.2 OTHER PARKS AND TRAILS SYSTEMS

In addition to regional parks, there are other types of parks and trails such as recreation sites, municipal parks, provincial parks, and other protected areas that make up the overall RDBN Electoral Area B and E parks system.

(1) Recreation Sites and Trails

There is a total of 35 recreation sites and 9 trail areas within the planning area on backcountry Crown Land managed by Recreation Sites and Trails BC. These sites feature various amenities including rustic campgrounds, day use/ picnic areas, boat launches, trails, lake access and washrooms.

RDBN Electoral Area	Total Number of Recreation Sites	Total Number of Trail Areas	Total Number Boat Launches
Electoral Area B	8	6	8
Electoral Area E	27	3	22

Table 2- Summary of Recreation Amenities

(2) Village of Burns Lake Parkland

The Village of Burns Lake manages 15 hectares of parkland, from playgrounds and picnic areas to sports fields and a dog park. In addition to parks owned and managed by the Village, School District No. 91 has four sites with fields and play spaces and Lake Babine Nation has both playing fields and play spaces. The Village also manages two trails, Rod Reid and Eveneshen Trail, which both run through natural areas. The current level of service for parkland in the Village of Burns Lake is 9 hectares per 1000 residents. Based on data collection for the 2021 Parks People Report, the average provision of parkland per 1,000 people for communities in British Columbia participating in the study was 4.4 hectares.

Year	Population	Total Hectares of Village Parkland	Hectares of Parkland per 1000 Residents	Provincial Average Parkland Provision per 1000 Residents
2021	1,659	15	9	4.4

Table 3 - Village of Burns Lake Parkland Supply

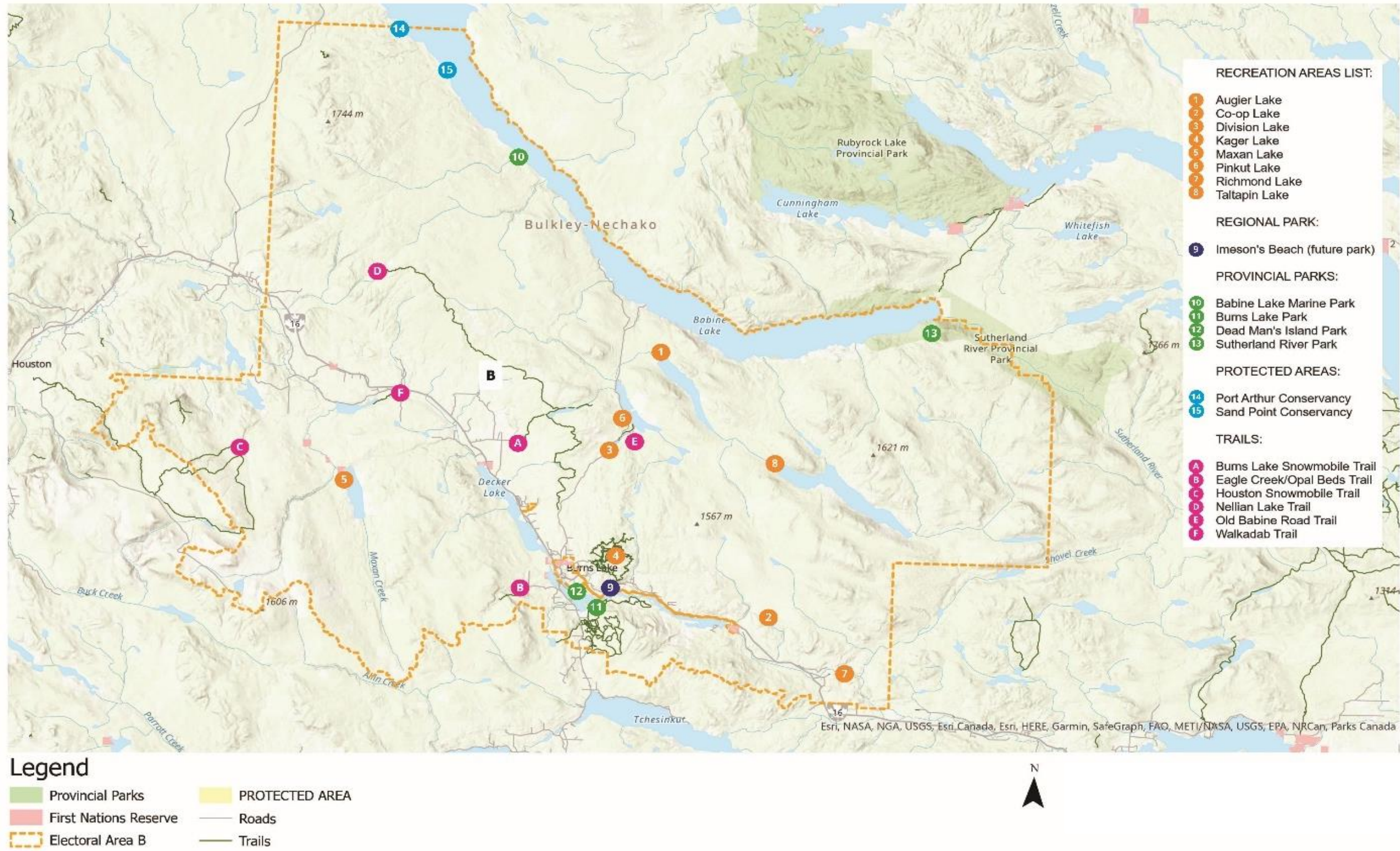


Figure 7 - Map of Parks, Trails, and Recreation Areas in Electoral Area B

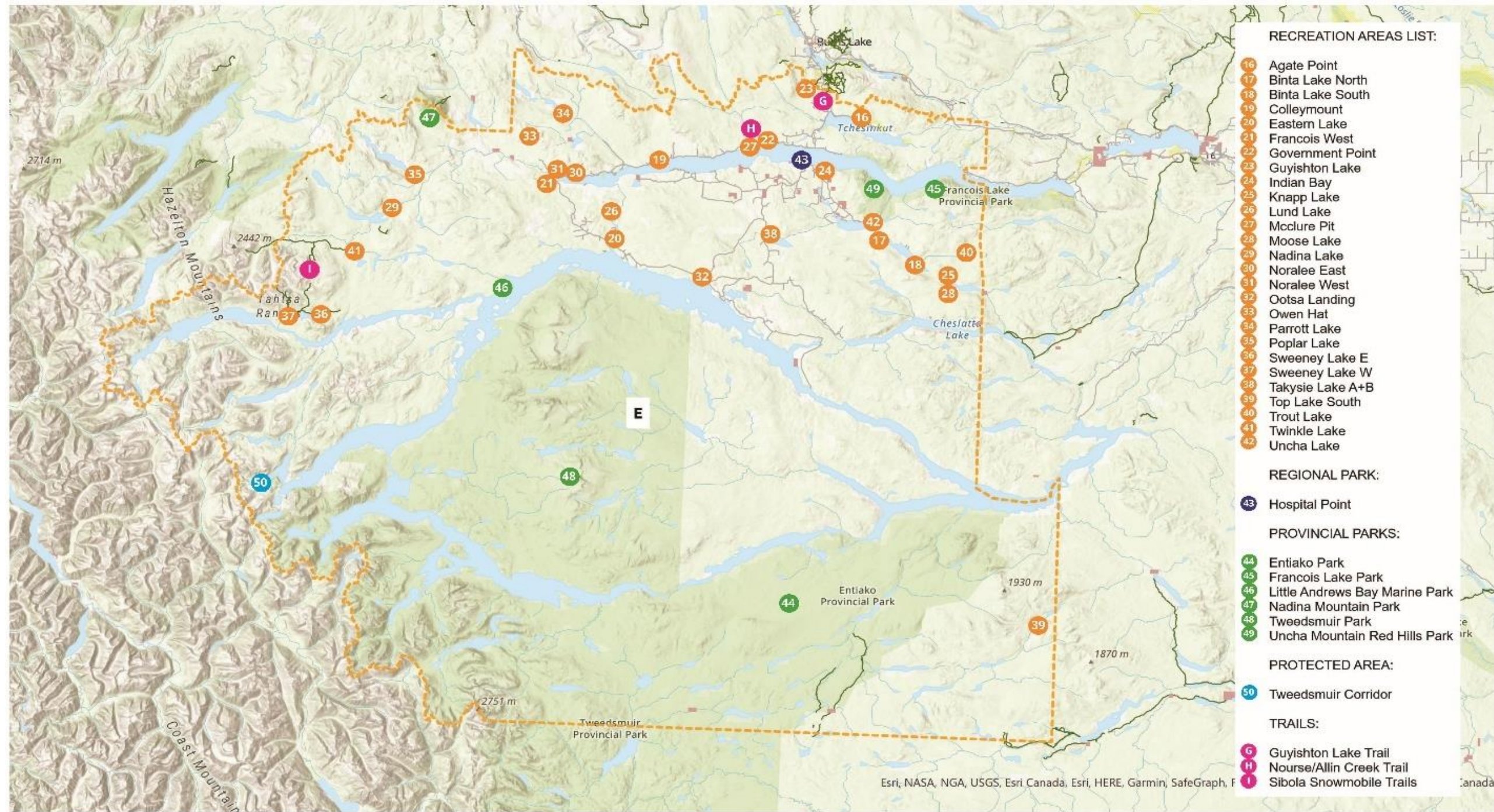


Figure 8 - Map of Parks, Trails, and Recreation Areas in Electoral Area E

(3) Provincial Protected Areas and Parkland

Within the planning area, there are 368 hectares of provincial protected areas and over 1 million hectares of provincial parkland within the planning area. Tweedsmuir Park, one of British Columbia’s largest provincial parks, is partially located in Electoral Area E. Tweedsmuir Park is a magnet for outdoor recreation enthusiasts, attracting visitors engaging in a diverse array of activities such as fishing, hiking, horseback riding, camping, and canoeing.

Park/Protected Area Type	Owner/ Manager	Amount of Parkland
Provincial Parkland	Province of British Columbia	1,149,282 ha
Protected Areas	Province of British Columbia	368 ha
Village Parkland	Village of Burns Lake	15 ha

Table 4 - Summary of other Parks and Trails in the Planning Area

2.3 OUTDOOR RECREATION SERVICES

The following is a summary of the outdoor recreation services and a comparison of the parks and outdoor recreation amenities in each of the four parks and trails service areas in the RDBN. The intention of this section is to provide a snapshot of the outdoor recreation services available in Electoral Areas B and E and identify gaps and potential opportunities for the RDBN to address unmet needs in the planning area.

During the initial round of community engagement, participants emphasized the significance of having a wide range of outdoor recreational options, including activities like camping, walking, swimming, paddling, and hunting. Numerous outdoor recreation organizations, such as Lakes Outdoor Recreation Society (LORS), Ride Burns, Omineca Ski Club, Burns Lake Snowmobile Club, and more, actively contribute to outdoor recreation in the planning area. Additionally, land managers such as Recreation, Sites, and Trails BC, the Village of Burns Lake, and BC Parks, are vital contributors to ensuring access to outdoor recreation opportunities within the planning area.

Table 6 provides an overview of amenities provided by various government entities, land managers, and outdoor recreation organizations. This table is designed to highlight disparities between the community's preferences and the existing amenities.

Outdoor Recreation Service Providers	Campgrounds	Walking/ Hiking / Biking Trails	Skiing / Snowshoeing Trails	ATV / Snowmobiling Trails	Beach Access/ Beaches	Boat Launches	Outdoor event space/ Fair Grounds
RDBN		✓			✓		
Village of Burns Lake	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
BC Parks	✓	✓			✓		
Recreation, Sites, and Trails BC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Community Recreation Organizations		✓	✓	✓			✓
School District 91		✓					✓

Table 5 - Community Recreation Facilities and Services Provided by Outdoor Recreation Service Providers

The information in the table above suggests that the planning area is well-equipped with walking, hiking, and biking trails. However, there are noticeable gaps in terms of access to boat launches and trails suitable for winter activities like skiing and snowshoeing. While several service providers offer camping and beach access there are no full-service campgrounds and most of the boat launches in the planning area do not accommodate larger motorized boats. Additionally, campgrounds and boat launches were both highlighted in community engagement as key priorities for outdoor recreation (see Appendix A for full engagement findings).

2.3.1 COMPARISON WITH OTHER PARKS AND TRAILS SERVICE AREAS

Gaining insights into the provision of parkland and outdoor recreation amenities in each of the RDBN's parks and trails service areas will empower the RDBN to make informed decisions regarding the specific types of services and amenities required in each respective area. Table 7 is an inventory of the number of regional, provincial, and municipal parks by service area. Additionally, the table includes the number of recreational sites in each service area, recognizing their significance as integral components of the recreational landscape in RDBN.

Service Areas in RDBN	Regional Parks	Provincial Parks	Municipal Parks	Recreation Sites
Burns Lake, Electoral Area B, and Electoral Area E	2	10	13	35
Smithers and Electoral Area A	1	3	21	21
District of Fort St. James and Electoral Area C		9	7	26
Houston, Granisle, and Electoral Area G		11	19	21

Table 6 - Comparison of Parks and Outdoor Recreation Amenities in Each of the Parks and Trails Service Areas

Compared to the other three Parks and Trails Service Areas in the RDBN, Electoral Areas B and Electoral Area E have the highest number of recreation sites and the second highest number of provincial parks; however, it is important to note that the provincial parks and recreation sites in the planning area are predominately rustic sites with limited amenities and in some cases are difficult to access, such as Tweedsmuir Provincial Park. This exercise indicates that while Electoral Areas B and E enjoy adequate coverage with recreation sites, there is an opportunity to add more fully serviced campsites.

2.4 PARKLAND NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The Parkland Needs Assessment involves an exploration of the gaps and opportunities within the parks and trails system that have been identified during the planning process. A benchmarking exercise was also conducted comparing the provision of parkland to comparable communities in BC.

There is no definitive way to determine whether a region has an adequate supply of parkland; it depends on the values, desires, and needs of the communities. However, several common metrics can be employed to gauge the adequacy of parkland, such as comparing with other regions, assessing the amount of parkland available per capita, and evaluating the proximity of parks to residents. The following section analyzes parkland averages to understand the inventory and distribution needs of the RDBN.

2.4.1 PARKLAND PER CAPITA ANALYSIS

Parkland area and population estimates were used to determine the amount of regional parkland in Electoral Areas B and E per 1,000 residents. Since the establishment of the Parks and Trails Service in 2020, the RDBN has acquired approximately 43.5 hectares of regional parkland, resulting in an overall average of 1.2 hectares of parkland per 1,000 residents in the RDBN. The RDBN has a below average supply of regional parkland compared to similar regional districts, however, as the RDBN’s Parks and Trails Service is newly established, this is anticipated to change over the next 10 years.

Regional District	Population (2021)	Total Area of Regional Parks (ha)	Parkland (Ha) Per 1,000
Bulkley-Nechako	37,737	43.5	1.2
Thompson-Nicola	143,680	67	0.5
Peace River	61,532	72	1.2
Central Kootenay	62,509	86	1.4
East Kootenay	65,896	254	3.9
Fraser Fort-George	96,979	330	3.4
Central Okanagan	222,162	2,020	9.1
Average			2.8

Table 7 - Parkland Supply Compared to Similar Regional Districts

To meet the average of 2.8 hectares/ 1,000 residents, an additional 62.16 hectares are required throughout the RDBN. Specifically, Electoral Areas B and E needs an additional 9 hectares to meet this target. According to BC Stats, the population of the RDBN is projected to increase to 42,269 by 2034, this translates to a total need of 74.88 additional hectares, with 11.8 additional hectares needed in Electoral Areas B and E.³

³ "Population Estimates & Projections for British Columbia," BC Population Estimates & Projections, <https://bcstats.shinyapps.io/popApp/>.

2.4.2 GAPS IDENTIFIED IN PREVIOUS STUDIES

Further insights into challenges and opportunities for a parks and trails service in the RDBN in Electoral Areas B and E are informed by the Outdoor Recreation Council of BC's (ORCBC) study on the impacts of outdoor recreation in rural BC communities (2023)⁴ and RDBN's Parks and Outdoor Recreation Study (2020).⁵

Accessibility

- The Outdoor Recreation Council of BC's (ORCBC) study highlights the importance of providing options for outdoor recreation in the region for people of all ages and abilities. Commonly referenced accessibility initiatives included trails and camp sites designed to universal design standards.

Front Country Recreation

- A key gap that is identified in the Parks and Outdoor Recreation Study is a lack of recreation assets in the "front-country," or rural areas that are close to towns. The report listed two key recreation asset gaps in the front country:
 - **Boat launches and lake/ river access** outside of municipal boundaries.
 - **Active transportation corridors** that cross multiple jurisdictions.

Technical Expertise

- Interviews included in the Parks and Outdoor Recreation Study (2020) highlighted the need for contractors for technical trail design and the development of trails that meet standards required by RSTBC (such as the International Mountain Bike Association standards) to support outdoor recreation groups in their work.

⁴ *The impacts of outdoor recreation in rural B.C. communities*, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/6169b9b7f9862761042c7c05/t/6455c39ce4379239281e6587/1683342238489/The+Impacts+of+Outdoor+Recreation+in+Rural+BC+Communities.pdf>.

⁵ *RDBN's Parks and Outdoor Recreation Study, 2020*.

2.5 OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARKS AND TRAILS

Key takeaways from the review of RDBN’s Electoral Areas B and E Parks and Trails Service, as informed by background research, park and trail inventories, and parkland needs assessment, include:

Resource Allocation

- Maximizing the allocation of resources and staff time across service areas presents an opportunity. As services expand in each area, there is potential for improved resource distribution, ensuring equitable attention to each region.

Service Enhancement Possibilities

- Opportunities exist to address service gaps, particularly with a focus on improving access to lake and shorelines, as highlighted in Table 6 on Page 22.

Strategic Parkland Expansion

- The need for additional parkland to meet the average of 2.8 hectares per 1,000 residents presents an opportunity for strategic expansion. Specifically, there is potential to acquire 62.16 hectares throughout the RDBN, with Electoral Areas B and E requiring 9 hectares. Anticipating population growth, this offers a chance to proactively plan for a total of 74.88 additional hectares of parkland by 2034, with 11.8 hectares earmarked for Electoral Areas B and E.

Front Country Recreation Development

- The emphasis on front country recreation, particularly in the development of boat launches and active transportation corridors (such as the multiuse trail along Highway 35), provides an opportunity to enhance recreational offerings and accessibility in these areas.

Bolstering Recreation Organizations’ Efforts

- Opportunities exist to further support recreation organizations by providing expertise in technical trail design. Ensuring trail development aligns with standards set by RSTBC creates a platform for collaboration and improvement in outdoor recreational services.

Improving Accessibility

- Prioritizing accessibility in the planning of new parks and trails, along with upgrades to existing trails, offers an opportunity to create inclusive outdoor spaces that cater to a diverse range of users.

3 COMMUNITY PROFILE



3.1 COMMUNITY PROFILE

Developing a community profile for RDBN’s Electoral Areas B and E is an important step towards understanding the community’s present and future needs for parks and recreation. As of 2021, the planning area had a total population of 3,218 accounting for approximately 8.5% of the population of the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako. Based on 2021 Statistics Canada Census data, Electoral Area B experienced a 9.5% population decrease and Electoral Area E experienced a 5.1% population decrease between 2016 and 2021. However, the Regional District believes that the census may have undercounted the population, suggesting that the actual decline might not be as significant, and the population has remained relatively stable throughout the planning area since 2011.

The primary population center within the planning area is the Village of Burns Lake. As of 2021, the Village of Burns Lake had a total population of 1,659, accounting for approximately 4.4% of the population of the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako. Since 2016, the population has experienced a decline of 6.7%. However, like in the rural areas, it is acknowledged by the Village that this estimate may be inaccurate, and it is believed that the population of Burns Lake has likely remained relatively unchanged since the 2011 census.

Over the next 10 years, BC Stats projects the population of Electoral Area B to increase by 4.5% per year. This increase is significant compared to a 2.6% projected annual increase in Electoral Area E, and 1.14% in the RDBN as a whole. However, it should be noted that historic population trends in Electoral Area B indicate that this projection may be overly optimistic.

	2021 Census Population	BC Stats Projected Population 2034	Population Density (per km ²)	Percent of Total Population
RDBN Regional District	37,737	42,269*	0.5	100%
Electoral Area B	1,706	2,637**	0.5	4.5%
Electoral Area E	1,512	1,593**	0.1	4.0%
Village of Burns Lake	1,659	1,962***	253.7	4.4%

Figure 9 - Current and Projects Population

Note: * Projection based on BC Stats projection for the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako (51000).

**Projections based on BC Stats projection for Burns Lake South (5222) and Burns Lake North (5223) Community Health Service Areas.

***Projection based on BC Stats projection for the Burns Lake Municipality (51022).⁶

Population growth, age distribution, and household incomes are pivotal demographic factors shaping the recommendations in this Master Plan. The Statistics Canada Census Reports (2021) unveil key characteristics about the planning areas:

Average Age

- Electoral Area B has an average age of 44.5, while Electoral Area E averages 45.8. Both are slightly higher than the RDBN (41.1) and British Columbia (43.1).

Household Incomes

- In 2020, the median annual household income in Electoral Area B was \$93,000, slightly surpassing British Columbia and RDBN (both at \$85,000). Conversely, Electoral Area E had a median income of \$79,000, slightly lower than British Columbia and RDBN.

Youth Percentage

- Electoral Area B aligns with the British Columbia average percentage of youth aged 0-14 (15%), while Electoral Area E (17.5%) and RDBN (18.9%) have slightly higher percentages.

These demographic trends underscore the necessity for the parks and trails system to adapt to accommodate a growing population, especially in Electoral Area B, ensuring diverse recreational options. A robust parks and trails system is important for attracting and retaining families, particularly in Electoral Area E with a slower rate of growth and slightly older population than Electoral Area B. Census data also highlights the importance of planning for an aging population, ensuring parks and trails are accessible for all ages and abilities in both Electoral Areas.

The Burns Lake and Surrounding Area Profile emphasizes that forestry is the main industry driving the region's economy, with pellet plants and lumber mills as primary employers. Additionally, agriculture, tourism, and mining sectors significantly contribute to providing employment opportunities for residents. Considering the diverse range of household incomes in Electoral Areas B and E, it is crucial to plan for the inclusion of low-cost recreation opportunities in the parks and trails system.

⁶ "Population Estimates & Projections for British Columbia," BC Population Estimates & Projections, <https://bcstats.shinyapps.io/popApp/>.

3.2 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

PURPOSE

The volunteer community in the planning area, including an extensive network of community organizations and sport/interest groups, is actively engaged in the provision of recreation opportunities in the RDBN’s Electoral Areas B and E. Therefore, understanding the community’s vision and goals for the newly established Parks and Trails Service is critical to the success of the Parks and Trails Master Plan for Electoral Areas B and E. Through community engagement, significant challenges and opportunities were identified, providing key input that guided the recommendations included in this Master Plan.

The first round of community engagement, held in spring 2023, asked stakeholders and potential partners and the public to provide information about how they use parks and recreation facilities and programs within Electoral Areas B and E. The feedback from the first round of engagement informed the vision and goals for the Draft Parks and Trails Master Plan and helped to identify potential opportunities for the future parks and trails system.

The second round of engagement, held in fall 2023, asked the community for feedback on draft recommendations to confirm the developed vision and goals.

As there is significant overlap in the amenities and resources between the RDBN’s Electoral Areas B and E, and the Village of Burns Lake, the community was engaged on both the RDBN’s Parks and Trails Master Plan for Electoral Areas B and E and the Village of Burns Lake’s Recreation and Parks Master Plan concurrently.

WHAT WE DID

The following is a summary of the engagement activities by phase. A detailed description of the engagement activities and findings is included in **Appendix A**.



PARTICIPATION

Participation included:

- 346 participants in two online surveys
- 35 participants in the community open houses and workshop
- 8 stakeholder groups participated in meetings and interviews



Figure 10 - Open House in Burns Lake

FIRST NATIONS ENGAGEMENT

The RDBN and the Village invited the six first nations within the RDBN’s Electoral Areas B and E and Village of Burns Lake, to participate in individual rights holder meetings, as well as extending the invitation to participate in the public open houses and online surveys. In addition, letters were sent to seven Indigenous communities with traditional territories within the RDBN’s Electoral Areas B and E describing the projects and inviting participation in the engagement process. To date, one meeting with Nee-Tahi-Buhn has taken place.

The RDBN is committed to fostering robust relationships with local First Nations and acknowledges the significance of considering their interests and values. This includes the protection of culturally significant areas within the parks system. As further input is offered in the future, it will be integrated into the decision-making process.

WHAT WE HEARD

Several key themes emerged during engagement including:

Trail Connectivity

- Emphasis was placed on the importance of increased trail connectivity to create a larger accessible system that includes more multi-use trails and hiking trails for various abilities.

Access to Nature and Water

- Access to nature, water, hiking or walking trails, and campgrounds were the key features valued in parks and trails. These elements align with the community's desire for natural and accessible recreational spaces.

Recognition of Indigenous Lands

- Participants emphasized the importance of recognizing First Nations and traditional Indigenous lands in the vision statement, indicating a commitment to acknowledging and respecting local Indigenous cultures.

Maintenance and Accessibility

- Engagement results highlighted the importance of maintaining existing parks and trails, supporting trail maintenance, and developing accessible parks and trails, demonstrating the community's commitment to ongoing involvement and care for their recreational assets.

Signage and Way-Finding

- Participants expressed a desire for increased signage at parks and trails including way-finding signage and interpretive signage with educational information about the cultural and ecological significance of parks and trails.

Boat Launches

- The desire for more boat launches was a top priority for engagement participants. François Lake, Tchesinkut Lake, and Burns Lake were identified as priority sites to develop boat launches.

Active Transportation

- A key theme from the survey and open houses was the importance of multiuse trails to encourage more biking and walking as well as increased accessibility.

The following key challenges were also identified throughout engagement.

Volunteer Support

- Stakeholders shared that volunteer capacity, burnout, and lack of sustainable sources of funding for the maintenance of recreation sites and trails is a key issue. Supporting recreation organizations through grant funding and promoting collaboration through coordination meetings were top priorities for the community, underscoring the importance of working together for a vibrant recreation community.

Partnerships

- Partnerships are essential to the current parks and trails service delivery model in the RDBN, however, stakeholders highlighted key challenges related to this approach.
 - **Recreation Sites and Trails BC (RSTBC)** oversees the maintenance and care of 35 recreation sites in the planning area and must navigate the challenges posed by staffing constraints and increasing costs associated with site upkeep. RSTBC has hired contractors, such as the Lakes Outdoor Recreation Society, to help address these issues.
 - The **Lakes Outdoor Recreation Society (LORS)** has a contract to maintain 28 sites in Electoral Areas B and E. However, the funding from RSTBC falls short of covering the costs needed to maintain these sites at the desired level of care by LORS. Consequently, LORS depends on fundraising initiatives and grant acquisitions, leading to inconsistent and variable funding. Volunteers also face substantial efforts in navigating various government processes.
 - There are no full-service campgrounds in Electoral Areas B or E and there may be an opportunity to partner with **BC Parks** to increase the service at Provincial parks within the planning area.

A person wearing a black helmet, a green sleeveless shirt, and brown pants is performing a wheelie on a black mountain bike. The bike has red and yellow accents on the wheels. The person is in a forest setting with green trees and a white vehicle in the background. A semi-transparent white banner is overlaid on the image, containing the text '4 BENEFITS & TRENDS'.

4 BENEFITS & TRENDS



4.1 BENEFITS OF PARKS AND TRAILS

Research shows the numerous benefits of parks and trails including positive effects on individual well-being, physical health, ecological health, and economic benefits.

Community Social and Mental Health Benefits



Spending time in nature and participation in outdoor recreation reduces stress and promotes social connections.

The ORCBC study (2023) highlighted the significance of outdoor recreation for creating positive social connections and preserving mental well-being during the winter in the RDBN. Ride Burns, which oversees the bike park at Boer Mountain’s development and maintenance, is an example of the impact of social connection through outdoor recreation. With a considerable membership actively engaging in weekly trail building and upkeep, a sense of strong camaraderie and dedication is evident. The Omineca Ski Club provides a dual benefit of connecting people through sport and facilitating outdoor recreation throughout the winter. These organizations foster a sense of community and togetherness through their shared interests and commitment to outdoor recreational pursuits.

Volunteerism

The ORCBC study (2023) emphasized that volunteer retention can be challenging, with factors such as burnout and aging demographics contributing to this issue. Outdoor recreation clubs expressed that the burden of work falls on the same few volunteers consistently. The combination of an ageing volunteer base and a relatively small population presents further difficulties in addressing these maintenance needs effectively.



The study also highlighted the significant challenges faced by volunteer groups, such as the Lakes Outdoor Recreation Society (LORS), in keeping up with increasing costs and demand for maintenance of recreation sites. Moreover, the impacts of climate change, including issues like beetle kill and forest fires, are introducing new obstacles to the upkeep of trails and recreation areas. These clubs are grappling with uncertainty concerning funding, especially due to the temporary cancellation of the Government of B.C.’s Rural Dividend Fund, which had been a primary funding source for outdoor recreation clubs. Furthermore, traditionally reliable funding sources, from groups such as Community Forests, have become less assured due to reductions in Annual Allowable Cut and a general decline in the forest sector.

These hurdles present a significant challenge not only to outdoor recreation groups but also to land managers and the outdoor recreation sector, as volunteers play a crucial role in maintaining the region’s outdoor recreation assets.

Reconciliation



There is an increasing imperative to understand the pre-colonial settlement history of British Columbia and to gain greater awareness of Indigenous cultures. Initiatives such as naming parks and trails in partnership with Indigenous communities and incorporating Indigenous stories and histories has become a leading practice. Engaging with First Nations communities and incorporating their values and needs in parks and trails is a very important steps that land managers can take towards reconciliation.

Wayfinding



Interpretive signage and guided tours within parks can help educate park visitors about the area they are exploring, providing a more profound and meaningful experience beyond just being present in the space. In discussions with stakeholders, the suggestion emerged that parks could benefit from an increased presence of interpretive panels, which offer valuable information to visitors. Additionally, there is a desire for interpretive talks to be hosted in parks, allowing for a more engaging and informative experience for those exploring these natural spaces.

Tourism



The Lakes District has over 300 lakes, exceptional fishing, and worldclass mountain biking trails. This region's natural attractions are becoming increasingly popular with tourists seeking outdoor activities in rural areas. As interest grows, regional parks in the area may emerge as significant tourist destinations. Additionally, visitors are likely to stop in local communities to stock up on supplies before embarking on outdoor adventures, potentially boosting economic activity. The ORCBC study (2023) identified the local outdoor recreation store, Woods N' Water, which went from having one employee in the summer to nine, as an example of the positive economic impacts of outdoor tourism in the region.

Accessibility



With an aging population in the planning area, a growing number of individuals will face mobility challenges precisely at a time when the significance of staying active and getting outdoors increases. In regional parks, the presence of options that are safe and enjoyable for seniors and those with limited mobility holds great appeal, as these amenities can be used by people of all age groups, including parents with strollers and children. Trails that are safe and easily accessible play a crucial role in encouraging and empowering children and youth to engage in physical activity.

The issue of accessibility extends beyond the younger and older demographics. According to the Canadian Survey on Disability Reports, in 2017, 22% of the Canadian population aged 15 and older had one or more disabilities, ranging from mild to severe (Canada, 2020). These disabilities pose challenges for the most vulnerable members of the community in accessing public facilities, including parks.

Climate Change



Northern BC is experiencing effects of climate change that contribute to wildfire risk, extreme weather events, and other changes that impact residents' health and community infrastructure. Climate change will be top of mind for future park endeavors including operational practices, maintenance considerations and park acquisition.

In an interview conducted as a part of the ORCBC study (2023), a participant from Burns Lake explained the role of trail construction in combatting forest fires. According to the interviewee, volunteer trail clearing plays a role in mitigating forest fires as trails facilitate convenient access for firefighters, eliminating the need to create new paths or rely on helicopter drops when a nearby trail network is already in place. Trail clearing also removes ground fuel and creates a firebreak.

Recreation Trends

Activities such as fishing, mountain biking, cycling for recreation, canoeing, horseback riding, motorized trail use, walking and hiking continue to increase in popularity – highlighting the importance of planning and managing for diverse use and potential conflicts associated with shared use of parks.

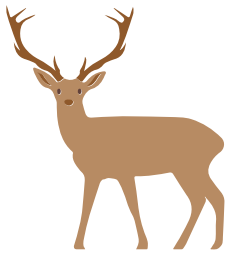
In Northern BC, both residents and visitors are increasingly drawn to wildlife viewing, with the Bulkey-Nechako area being recognized as one of the finest places to observe undisturbed wildlife in remote locations. Wildlife viewing offers a flexible, equipment-light activity suitable for all ages. However, educating park visitors is crucial to ensuring public safety during wildlife viewing and to minimize human-wildlife conflicts effectively.

Year-Round Park Use



The Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako experiences winter weather conditions for nearly six months each year. Encouraging and embracing outdoor recreation during this period is essential to keep people active and engaged with parks throughout the entire year. By providing opportunities for these winter activities, parks can cater to a broader range of visitors and ensure that the enjoyment of outdoor spaces extends beyond the warmer months.

Environmental Benefits



According to the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA), parks and trails serve a vital role in conserving natural resources, providing wildlife habitat, safeguarding air and water quality, offsetting carbon emissions, and preserving open spaces for future generations. Engaging in stewardship and participating in volunteer activities within parks allow the public to actively contribute to preserving these spaces for the future while also increasing awareness of environmental issues at both local and global levels.

In the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako (RDBN), regional parks can play a significant role in safeguarding essential ecosystems and natural features, such as rivers, lakes, spawning areas, and marshes. Moreover, they can serve as habitats for a diverse range of wildlife.

Economic Benefits

Parks and trails encourage people to get outside and move, contributing to long term reductions in healthcare costs associated with the health burden of physical inactivity and associated chronic diseases. Research suggests that even a 10% increase in physical activity rates among Canadians could lead to a substantial \$280 billion reduction in direct healthcare costs.⁷

Regional parks and trails serve as attractive destinations for both visitors and residents. The infrastructure of these parks and trails provides opportunities for generating revenue through various means, including venue rentals, events, educational programs, and interpretive activities. A 2020 study reveals that outdoor recreation in British Columbia contributes over 15 billion dollars in economic value to the residents of the province each year.⁸

⁷ BC Provincial Health Services Authority, 2019

⁸ Patrick Lloyd-Smith, The Economic Benefits of Recreation in Canada, accessed November 17, 2023, https://plloydsmith.github.io/files/LloydSmith_RecCJE.pdf.

5 VISION & GOALS



5.1 VISION

The RDBN's Parks and Trails Service for Electoral Area B (Burns Lake Rural) and Area E (François Lake/Ootsa Lake), which is located on the traditional territories of six Lakes District First Nations, will:

- **Build on Community Strengths.** The RDBN seeks to build upon the strengths of the recreation services provided by other levels of government, including First Nations, and recreation organizations. These partnerships will create a cohesive and synergistic system that enhances the overall recreational experience for all.
- **Connect People to Nature.** The parks and trails system in Electoral Areas B and E will support connections between new and existing parks and facilitate the creation of accessible and multiuse trails.
- **Provide Diverse and Accessible Recreation Opportunities.** Whether seeking a thrilling hiking adventure, a tranquil camping experience, or a leisurely stroll along a picturesque shoreline, the parks and trails system will offer diverse and accessible recreation options for all ages and abilities. This will be achieved through the creation of new park and trail facilities and the continuous upkeep of existing infrastructure.
- **Celebrate the Region's Natural Beauty.** The parks and trails system will facilitate access to lakes, shorelines, unique natural areas, and important community destinations. The parks and trails system will protect and enhance the rich ecosystems of the Lakes District, preserving opportunities for wildlife viewing and appreciation of native flora and fauna for future generations.

5.2 GOALS

Five goals emerged to support the RDBN in achieving the vision for parks and trail. Each goal is supported by specific recommendations to be accomplished over the next 10 years.

- **Goal 1:** Define the RDBN approach to the delivery of the Parks and Trails Service in Electoral Areas B and E
- **Goal 2:** Strengthen partnerships and build community capacity
- **Goal 3:** Increase access to lakes and shorelines
- **Goal 4:** Enhance the user experience at regional parks and trails
- **Goal 5:** Support active transportation and a connected community

6 RECOMMENDATIONS



The following section organizes the recommendations by goals and specific recommendations for Electoral Areas B and E.

GOAL 1: DEFINE THE APPROACH TO THE DELIVERY OF THE PARKS AND TRAILS SERVICE IN ELECTORAL AREAS B AND E

This goal focuses on establishing a comprehensive approach to the delivery of parks and trails services in Electoral Areas B and E. By providing clear frameworks and consistent evaluations, this goal ensures the safety, proper maintenance, and strategic allocation of resources for the parks and trails within these electoral areas.

Recommendation 1.1

Develop park management plans for existing and future regional parks and update the plans every five years. Include considerations for level of maintenance, developing/ upgrading infrastructure, universal accessibility and protection for environmentally sensitive areas, and invasive species management.

Recommendation 1.2

Establish a level of service for regional parks and trails and continue to conduct parks and trails inspections, as described in the Parks and Trails Inspection and Maintenance Policy. This will ensure parks and trails are safe, well-maintained, and that appropriate resources and budget are allocated to maintenance.

GOAL 2: STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS AND BUILD COMMUNITY CAPACITY

This goal emphasizes the importance of building robust partnerships and enhancing community capacity in the realm of parks and trails services. By fostering collaboration, providing financial support, and expanding land use agreements, this goal aims to build a stronger community foundation and ensure effective management and development of parks and trails services.

Recommendation 2.1

Continue with the implementation of the Recreation Contribution Grant Program that supports the RDBN in allocating multi-year funding to recreation organizations providing recreation services. Continue to monitor the success of the program and adjust criteria for funding and reporting requirements as needed.

Recommendation 2.2

Consider adding additional staff to support the implementation of new regional parks and trails projects across the RDBN's four parks and trails service areas and ensure equitable distribution of staff time between the service areas.

Recommendation 2.3

Continue to work with First Nations communities, other levels of government, and community groups to maintain and expand land use agreements and acquire additional parkland for recreation and conservation use.

Recommendation 2.4

Work with Recreation Sites and Trails British Columbia (RSTBC) to identify priority sites for increased maintenance, management, or financial support from the RDBN. Priority sites will include locations that improve public access to lakes and shorelines, are connected to other parks and trails, and sites with viewpoints or opportunities to appreciate nature.

GOAL 3: INCREASE ACCESS TO LAKES AND SHORELINES

This goal focuses on expanding access to lakeshores, particularly through the inclusion of boat launches at lakes. By enhancing access to lakeshores, this goal aims to improve recreational opportunities while recognizing the significance of these natural assets.

Recommendation 3.1

Identify opportunities to increase access to lakeshores through the inclusion of boat launches at waterfront parks owned by the RDBN or on Crown Land. Potential partners include First Nations communities, RSTBC, MoTI, and Southside Economic Development Association (SEDA). François, Tchesinkut, and Burns Lake were identified as priority areas for boat launches in the round 2 public online survey.

GOAL 4: ENHANCE THE USER EXPERIENCE AT PARKS AND TRAILS

This goal aims to improve overall user experience within regional parks and trails. By prioritizing accessibility, information availability, cultural inclusion, and amenity expansion, this goal aims to create an enriched and user-friendly environment within parks and trails, enhancing community enjoyment and engagement.

Recommendation 4.1

Follow accessibility standards, such as the [Universal Design Guide](#) by BC Parks, when establishing or upgrading regional park and trails.

Recommendation 4.2

Update the RDBN's website to provide more information about Regional Parks and Trails including information about accessible features at parks and trails.

Recommendation 4.3

Work with First Nations communities to develop a naming policy for parks and trails and to incorporate Indigenous stories and histories into interpretive signage in parks or trails where appropriate.

Recommendation 4.4

Ensure all regional parks and trails are identified with wayfinding and informational signage indicating the name of the park/ trail as well as safety/ wildlife/ accessibility information.

Recommendation 4.5

Explore opportunities to include amenities at existing and future regional parks such as picnic shelters and tables, washrooms, and firepits.

GOAL 5: SUPPORT ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION AND A CONNECTED COMMUNITY

This goal focuses on fostering active transportation and community connectivity within the RDBN. By addressing transportation needs and connectivity, this goal contributes to a more cohesive and engaged community.

Recommendation 5.1

Explore opportunities to connect communities and key recreation assets in the RDBN through the development of multiuse trails and pathways. For example, partnering with the Village of Burns Lake to develop a multiuse trail along Highway 35 connecting the Village with the ferry landing at François Lake.

Recommendation 5.2

Define the RDBN's approach to the use of motorized vehicles on trails in Electoral Areas B and E.

AREA B RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 6.1

Explore opportunities and partnerships for future development of Burns Lake South. Engage Indigenous communities with traditional territories within the Burns Lake South Area early in the process.

Recommendation 6.2

Continue to work with CN Rail to develop a level pedestrian crossing for Imeson's Beach to facilitate its future use as a regional park.

Recommendation 6.3

Partner with the Village to explore the feasibility of connecting Boer Mountain to the Village core.

AREA E RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 7.1

Complete a park development plan for Hospital Point which includes community and rightsholder engagement to determine priorities for developing the site as a regional park. The park has good potential for day use picnic areas and covered gathering area/picnic shelter.

Recommendation 7.2

Explore partnering with the Southside Economic Development Association (SEDA) to maintain the nature trail and beach adjacent to the SEDA office.

Recommendation 7.3

Explore partnering with Cheslatta Carrier Nation to maintain the boat launch near the Southside ferry adjacent to SEDA beach on François Lake. Explore opportunities to add parking and a washroom.

7 IMPLEMENTATION



This Master Plan offers recommendations for the enhancement of parks and trails in the region during a 10-year period from 2024 to 2034. The Board's endorsement of this Master Plan indicates a preliminary agreement, without implying a financial commitment. Decisions regarding specific financial allocations will be made by the Board as part of the financial planning process.

The table on pages 48-50 outlines recommended actions, along with their priority levels, timelines, and resource requirements. Operational tasks are identified as those that should be included in staff work plans and departmental resources, while capital projects will be evaluated and integrated into budget planning, subject to Board approval based on available resources and priorities.

In certain cases, where the RDBN is not the primary service provider, the responsibility for implementing these actions rests with the RDBN's partners. These responsibilities are highlighted for the RDBN's reference in discussions, monitoring, and assessing the value generated from the RDBN's investments. By ensuring that community partners understand the regional district's objectives and priorities, they can better align their efforts with the community's needs.

Time Frame:

The time frame is defined as:

- Short term (0-5 years)
- Medium term (5-10 years)
- Long term (10 years+)

It is important to note that longer-term actions may, in some instances, be completed ahead of short-term actions, driven by funding opportunities, partnerships, or other influencing factors. The sequence in which actions are carried out will be determined through the RDBN's annual work plans, maintaining the flexibility to accommodate changing community needs and funding availability.

Required Resources:

Most of the actions described in the implementation plan come with associated costs, which include staff time, operational expenses, or capital investments. These resource requirements are categorized as follows:

- Low: Less than \$50,000
- Medium: \$50,000 to \$100,000
- High: More than \$100,000

	Recommendation	Priority	Timeline	Resources	Other/Partners
GOAL 1: DEFINE THE APPROACH TO THE DELIVERY OF THE PARKS AND TRAILS SERVICE IN ELECTORAL AREAS B AND E					
1.1	Develop park management plans for existing and future regional parks and update the plans every five years. Include considerations for level of maintenance, developing/ upgrading infrastructure, universal accessibility and protection for environmentally sensitive areas, and invasive species management.	High	Medium-term	Staff time \$ Low annual budget for implementing projects	
1.2	Establish a level of service for regional parks and continue to conduct parks and trails inspections as described in the Parks and Trails Inspection and Maintenance Policy.	High	Medium-term	Staff time \$ Low annual budget for performing inspections	
GOAL 2: STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS AND BUILD COMMUNITY CAPACITY					
2.1	Continue with the implementation of the Recreation Contribution Grant Program that supports the RDBN in allocating multi-year funding to recreation organizations providing recreation services. Continue to monitor the success of the program and adjust criteria for funding and reporting requirements as needed.	High	Short-term	Staff time \$ High 3-year budget for grant program	Community Organizations
2.2	Consider adding additional staff to support the implementation of new regional parks and trails projects across the RDBN’s four parks and trails service areas and ensure equitable distribution of staff time between the service areas.	Medium	Medium-term	Staff time \$ High	
2.3	Continue to work with First Nations communities, other levels of government, and community groups to maintain and expand land use agreements and acquire additional parkland for recreation and conservation use.	High	Short-term	Staff time \$ High – parkland acquisition	First Nations/ governments/ community groups
2.4	Work with Recreation Sites and Trails British Columbia (RSTBC) to identify priority locations for increased maintenance, management, or financial support from the RDBN.	High	Short-term	Staff time \$ Low annual budget for implementing projects	RSTBC
GOAL 3: INCREASE ACCESS TO LAKES AND SHORELINES					
3.1	Identify opportunities to increase access to lakeshores through the inclusion of boat launches at waterfront parks owned by the RDBN or on Crown Land. Potential partners include First Nations communities, RSTBC, MoTI, and Southside Economic Development Association (SEDA).	Medium	Medium-term	Staff time \$ Medium annual budget for implementing projects	First Nations/ RSTBC/ MoTI/ SEDA

GOAL 4: ENHANCE THE USER EXPERIENCE AT PARKS AND TRAILS					
4.1	Follow accessibility standards, such as the Universal Design Guide by BC Parks, when establishing or upgrading regional park and trails.	Medium	Medium-term	Cost is project dependent	
4.2	Update the RDBN’s website to provide more information about Regional Parks and Trails including information about accessible features at parks and trails.	Medium	Medium-term	Staff time or \$ Low annual budget for external website updates	
4.3	Work with First Nations communities to develop a naming policy for parks and trails and to incorporate Indigenous stories and histories into interpretive signage in parks or trails where appropriate.	Medium	Medium-term	Staff time \$ Low annual budget for implementing projects	First Nations
4.4	Ensure all regional parks and trails are identified with wayfinding and informational signage indicating the name of the park/ trail as well as safety/ wildlife/ accessibility information.	Medium	Short-term	Staff time \$ Medium annual budget for implementing projects	
4.5	Explore opportunities to include amenities at existing and future regional parks such as picnic shelters and tables, washrooms and firepits.	Medium	Medium-term	Staff time Cost is project dependent	
GOAL 5: SUPPORT ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION AND A CONNECTED COMMUNITY					
5.1	Explore opportunities to connect communities and key recreation assets in the RDBN through the development of multiuse trails and pathways. For example, partnering with the Village of Burns Lake to develop a multiuse trail along Highway 35 connecting the Village with the ferry landing at François Lake.	Medium	Long-term	Staff time Specific project costs dependent on design	Village of Burns Lake, Other land managers
5.2	Define the RDBN’s approach to the use of motorized vehicles on trails in Electoral Areas B and E.	High	Medium-term	Staff time	
AREA B RECOMMENDATIONS					
6.1	Explore opportunities and partnerships for future development of Burns Lake South. Engage Indigenous communities with traditional territories within the Burns Lake South Area early in the process.	Medium	Short-term	Staff time Specific project costs dependent on design	Indigenous Communities/ First Nations

6.2	Continue to work with CN Rail to develop a level pedestrian crossing for Imeson’s Beach to facilitate its future use as a regional park.	High	Short-term	\$ Medium – High depending on design	CN Rail
6.3	Partner with the Village to explore the feasibility of connecting Boer Mountain to the Village core.	Medium	Medium-term	\$ High	Village of Burns Lake
AREA E RECOMMENDATIONS					
7.1	Complete a park development plan for Hospital Point which includes community and rights holder engagement to determine priorities for developing the site as a regional park.	High	Short-term	Master Plan - Staff time; Park development = \$ High	CN Rail
7.2	Explore partnering with the Southside Economic Development Association (SEDA) to maintain the nature trail and beach adjacent to the SEDA office.	Medium	Medium-term	Staff time \$ Low - Annual maintenance budget	
7.3	Explore partnering with Cheslatta Carrier Nation to maintain the boat launch near the Southside ferry adjacent to SEDA beach on François Lake. Explore opportunities to add parking and a washroom.	Medium	Medium-term	Staff time \$ High - Annual maintenance	

APPENDIX A

WHAT WE HEARD REPORT

Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako

Parks and Trails Master Plan

For Electoral Areas B (Burns Lake Rural) and
E (François /Ootsa Lake Rural)

What We Heard Report

Prepared for:



Prepared by:

LEES
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Status: Final

December 2023

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako is developed a Parks and Trails Master Plan for Electoral Areas B (Burns Lake Rural) and E (Francois/Ootsa Lake Rural). The Master Plan builds on the successes of existing outdoor recreation service providers, establishes the role of the Regional District in providing new and improved outdoor recreation services, and identifies projects and tasks to be undertaken to meet community recreation needs over the next 10 years. The goal is to ensure that the Regional District provides parks and trails services in a coordinated, cooperative, and cost-effective manner at a level that is sustainable for taxpayers.

The Master Plan builds on the successes of previous documents, including:

- RDBN Parks and Outdoor Recreation Strategy (2020),
- Burns Lake Rural and Francois Lake (North Shore) Official Community Plan (2017),
- Burns Lake and Surrounding Area Profile (2014),
- Electoral Area B and E Recreation Contribution Service Establishment Bylaw No. 1977, 2022 and,
- Parks and Trails Service Establishment Bylaw No.1928, 2022

1.2 FIRST NATIONS ENGAGEMENT

The RDBN and the Village invited the six first nations within the RDBN's Electoral Areas B and E and Village of Burns Lake, to participate in individual rights holder meetings, as well as extending the invitation to participate in the public open houses and online surveys. In addition, letters were sent to seven Indigenous communities with traditional territories within the RDBN's Electoral Areas B and E describing the projects and inviting participation in the engagement process. To date, one meeting with Nee-Tahi-Buhn has taken place.

The RDBN is committed to fostering robust relationships with local First Nations and acknowledges the significance of considering their interests and values. This includes the protection of culturally significant areas within the parks system. As further input is offered in the future, it will be integrated into the decision-making process.

1.3 OVERALL PLANNING PROCESS

The Parks and Trails Master Plan process includes the following five phases. This What We Heard Report summarizes feedback received during Phase 2 and 4 of the planning processes, and two rounds of community engagement.



2 ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

2.1 PURPOSE OF ENGAGEMENT

The first round of engagement, which was held in May of 2023, asked stakeholders, rightsholders, potential partners and the public to provide information about how they use and/or interact with parks and recreation facilities and programs within Electoral Areas B and E. The feedback from the first round of engagement helped gather information on any potential gaps or identified needs relating to parks and recreation. It also informed the vision and goals in the Draft Parks and Trails Master Plan.

The second round of engagement, which was held in September of 2023, asked the community for feedback on key recommendations included in the Draft Parks and Trails Master Plan to confirm the developed vision and goals.

To increase efficiencies, the RDBN's Parks and Trails Master Plan for Electoral Areas B and E and the Village of Burns Lake's Parks and Recreation Master Plan were developed concurrently, and the community was engaged on both projects.

2.2 HOW WE REACHED OUT

The Regional District's website was used as a primary information sharing tool. It was updated with information about the project objectives, planning process, and how to get involved with engagement.

LEES+Associates sent out emails inviting community members to take the online surveys and attend the in-person open houses. Posters with information about the surveys and open houses were also distributed around the community.

The open houses, surveys, and workshop were also advertised through:

- Lake District News
- The Regional District’s Facebook page
- The Village’s Facebook Page

2.3 ENGAGEMENT TOOLS

Round 1 engagement included stakeholder meetings, stakeholder interviews, a public online survey, and two public open houses. Round 2 engagement included stakeholder interviews, a public online survey, and a public workshop. The details of these activities are described below, and the results are summarized in this report.

2.3.1 ONLINE PUBLIC SURVEY

Input from the public was gathered through two online surveys posted on the Regional District’s website. Survey responses for round 1 engagement were collected from May 17th to 31st, 2023 with a total of 213 responses. Survey responses for round 2 engagement were collected from September 15th to 30th, 2023 with a total of 133 responses. The results were collected through the online platform Survey Monkey and are summarized in Section 4.0 of this report.

2.3.2 COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSES

For round 1 engagement, two in-person open houses were held: Electoral Area B on May 24, 2023, at the Lakeside Multiplex from 4:00 – 7:00 p.m., and Electoral Area E on May 25, 2023, at Grassy Plains School from 4:00 – 7:00 p.m.

During the open houses, the project was introduced, and community members were asked for their comments and experiences related to how they use parks and trails within the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Electoral Areas B and E.

The following questions were asked on the open house boards:

- What features and amenities would you like to see in Regional District parks?
- What do you love and value most about the parks and trails in Area B (Burns Lake Rural)?

Engagement by the Numbers

- 346 participants in two online surveys
- 35 participants in the community open houses and workshop

- What do you love and value most about the parks and trails in Area E (Francois/Ootsa Lake Rural)?
- How can existing parks and trails be improved? Is anything missing?
- What areas should be prioritized for future parks and trails?
- What words best reflect your vision for the future of parks and trails in the Regional District?
- What else do we need to know?

The open house results are summarized in Section 5.0 of this report.

2.3.3 STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS AND INTERVIEWS

Stakeholder meetings and interviews were held online during round 1 and 2 engagement with the following stakeholders:

- Foundry Burns Lake
- Lakes District Arts Council
- Lakes Outdoor Recreation Society
- Organized Sports
- Ministry of Transportation Infrastructure
- Recreation Sites and Trails BC
- Rotary Club of Burns Lake

During these meetings and interviews, the project was introduced, and stakeholder representatives were asked about their organization's role in parks and trails. They were also asked for their feedback on any challenges or potential opportunities within parks and trails.

Key themes from the stakeholder meetings and interviews are summarized in Section 6.0 of this report.

2.3.4 ONLINE WORKSHOP

The online workshop for round 2 engagement was held over Zoom on September 28, 2023, from 6:00 – 7:00 p.m.

During the workshop, the vision, goals, and recommendations were presented, and community members were asked for their input. The online workshop results are summarized in Section 7.0 of this report.

3 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES

COMMUNITY VALUES

The following were the top community values from both rounds of engagement.

Trail Connectivity

- There is emphasis placed on the importance of increased trail connectivity to create a larger accessible system that includes more multiuse trails.

Access to Nature

- There is strong support for connecting to nature through parks, trails, and recreation sites.

Access to Water

- Access to the waterfront through public beach access is of significant value to the community.

Recreation

- Community input highlights the importance of access to a diversity of recreation opportunities.

Maintenance

- There is strong support for prioritizing maintenance of existing trails and recreation sites to increase safety.

Partnerships

- Community input highlights the importance of working with recreation organization and First Nations.

KEY ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The following are the key issues and opportunities that emerged.

Active Transportation

- A key theme from the survey and open houses is the integration of multiuse trails to encourage active transportation and increase accessibility.

Indigenous Acknowledgement

- Survey respondents and open house attendees indicate the importance of Indigenous consultation and acknowledgement and suggested the integration of Indigenous names and stories associated with recreational sites and trails.

Promotion of Recreational Sites and Trails

- Survey respondents and open house attendees indicate the importance of promoting recreational sites and trails such as through increased signage.

4 ONLINE SURVEY – SUMMARY OF RESULTS

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE ROUND 1 ONLINE SURVEY:

- The most popular indoor recreational activities/programs for survey respondents included community events and walking for exercise.
- The most popular outdoor activities for survey respondents included camping, walking for exercise, swimming/going to the beach/lake, hiking, and kayaking/canoeing.
- The most cited reason for not visiting parks and recreation facilities was being too busy with work, school, or family.
- Survey respondents indicated that access to nature, access to water, soft surface hiking or walking trails, and campgrounds are the top features that they value in parks and trails.
- Survey respondents indicated that opportunities to connect with nature, and opportunities to exercise and be active are their top values in regional parks, trails, and recreation areas in Electoral Area B and E.
- Survey respondents indicated that access to water and shorelines, campgrounds, and hiking or walking trails are the top features they would like to see in regional district parks.
- Survey respondents indicated that improving existing parks and improving existing trails should be top priorities in the regional district over the next 10 years.
- 40.1% of survey respondents were supportive of a tax increase to fund the acquisition of new parks and trails or the development of new infrastructure in parks, and 30.8% of survey respondents were neutral.
- Many respondents indicated that they participate in and enjoy camping. Some respondents indicated a need for increased maintenance of campsites and/or an increased number of campsites.
- Some respondents indicated their concern about drug use in recreational sites, including the littering of drug paraphernalia.
- Some respondents indicated a need for more docks and paved boat launches at recreational sites.
- Many respondents have visited Kager Lake within the past 12 months.
 - Some respondents indicated a need for more campsites near Kager Lake and Radley beach.
 - Some respondents indicated a need to maintain the bridge and trails at Kager Lake to ensure increased accessibility.

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE ROUND 2 ONLINE SURVEY:

- Close to 90% of survey respondents are supportive of the draft Vision Statement and over 93% are supportive of the Draft Goals in the Parks and Trails Master Plan.
- Some survey participants indicate the importance of incorporating recognition of First Nations and traditional Indigenous lands into the vision statement.
- When asked about priorities how the RDBN should prioritize acquiring new parkland the top responses include:
 - Sites that improve public access to lakes;
 - Sites that are connected to other parks, trails, schools, or public amenities, and
 - Sites with viewpoints or opportunities to appreciate nature.
- Top priorities for features at parks and trails include accessible features (such as ramps, trails with smooth surfaces, universal design features), wayfinding signage and interpretive or educational signage.
- Close to 60% of respondents are very supportive of a multi-use trail along Highway 35 and close to 6% are either somewhat or very opposed.
- Support for the collaborative engagement process between the Village of Burns Lake and Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako (3 mentions).
- A few survey respondents identify the importance of maintaining existing trails and the need to financially support recreation organizations doing trail maintenance and development.
- Others indicate support for the development of accessible playgrounds and trails.

5 COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSES AND WORKSHOP – KEY THEMES

ROUND 1 OPEN HOUSE SUMMARY

During the open houses, participants were asked to share their thoughts on parks and trails in Electoral Area B (Burns Lake Rural) and E (Francois/Ootsa Lake Rural) as well as their vision for future parks and trails.

Most attendees were from Electoral Area B and the Village of Burns Lake, with some representation from Electoral Area E.

5.1.1 WHAT DO YOU LOVE AND VALUE MOST ABOUT THE PARKS AND TRAILS IN AREA B?

Key themes that emerged from input received included:

- Quiet/not crowded or busy (5 mentions)
- Rugged/remote (4 mentions)
- Natural beauty (3 mentions)
- Campsites (2 mentions)
- Mountain biking (2 mentions)
- Bike pump track (2 mentions)
- Appreciation of Kager Lake/Boer Mountain area (2 mentions)

5.1.2 WHAT DO YOU LOVE AND VALUE MOST ABOUT THE PARKS AND TRAILS IN AREA E?

Key themes that emerged from input received included:

- Beautiful surroundings
- Wildlife sightings
- Lake scenery

5.1.3 HOW CAN EXISTING PARKS AND TRAILS BE IMPROVED? IS ANYTHING MISSING?

Key themes that emerged from input received included:

- Trail maintenance (7 mentions)
- Better trail signage (6 mentions)
- Increased network of park and trail connectivity (5 mentions)

- Increased funding for trail maintenance (3 mentions)
- More winter recreation options (3 mentions)
- Garbage collection (2 mentions)

5.1.4 WHAT AREAS SHOULD BE PRIORITIZED FOR FUTURE PARKS AND TRAILS?

Key themes that emerged from input received included:

- Trail connectivity/expansion
 - Trail connection between Decker Lake/Burns Lake/Francois Lake (4 mentions)
 - Re-open Red Hills Park trail (2 mentions)
 - Burns Lake South trails (2 mentions)
 - Develop historical grease trails
- Tchesinkut Lake for beach access and trail connectivity (5 mentions)
- Increase future lake/beach access (4 mentions)
- Maintenance for Eagle Creek/Opal Beds trail and recreational site (4 mentions)
- Kager Lake/Boer Mountain (3 mentions)
- Expansion of Omineca ski trails (3 mentions)
- Mountain biking trails (2 mentions)
- Wisteria campground (2 mentions)

5.1.5 WHAT WORDS BEST REFLECT YOUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF PARKS AND TRAILS IN THE REGIONAL DISTRICT?

Key words that emerged from input received included:

- Nature/Natural Areas/Wild (8 mentions)
- Connected (4 mentions)
- Accessible (4 mentions)
- Inclusive (4 mentions)
- Diverse (3 mentions)
- Fun (2 mentions)
- Maintained (2 mentions)
- Peaceful/Quiet (2 mentions)

5.1.6 WHAT FEATURES AND AMENITIES WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IN REGIONAL DISTRICT PARKS?

Key themes that emerged from input received included:

- Multiuse trail from town to ferry (4 mentions)
- Maintain existing campsites, add new campsites (3 mentions)
- Better trail signage (2 mentions)
- More options for mountain bike trails (2 mentions)
- Accessible connections to trails and parks (2 mentions)

5.1.7 WHAT ELSE DO WE NEED TO KNOW?

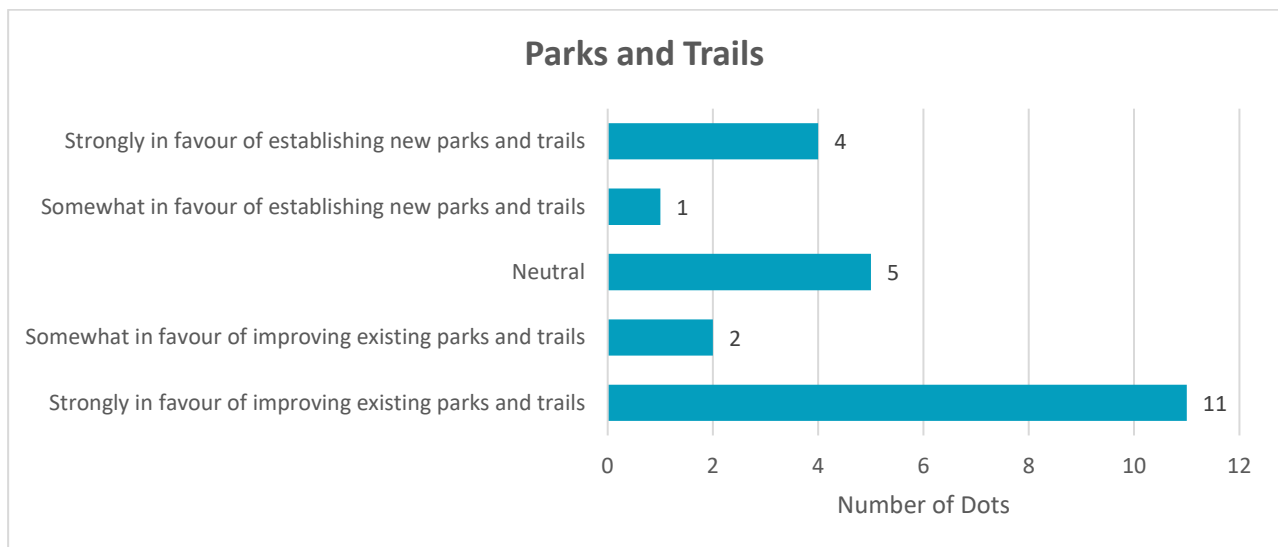
Key themes that emerged from input received included:

- Trail connection from Burns Lake to Decker Lake (3 mentions)
- Safe walking and cycling trails heading east of town (3 mentions)
- Improved lake access (2 mentions)

5.1.8 PLACE A DOT ON THE SCALES BELOW TO INDICATE WHAT YOU THINK IS MOST IMPORTANT.

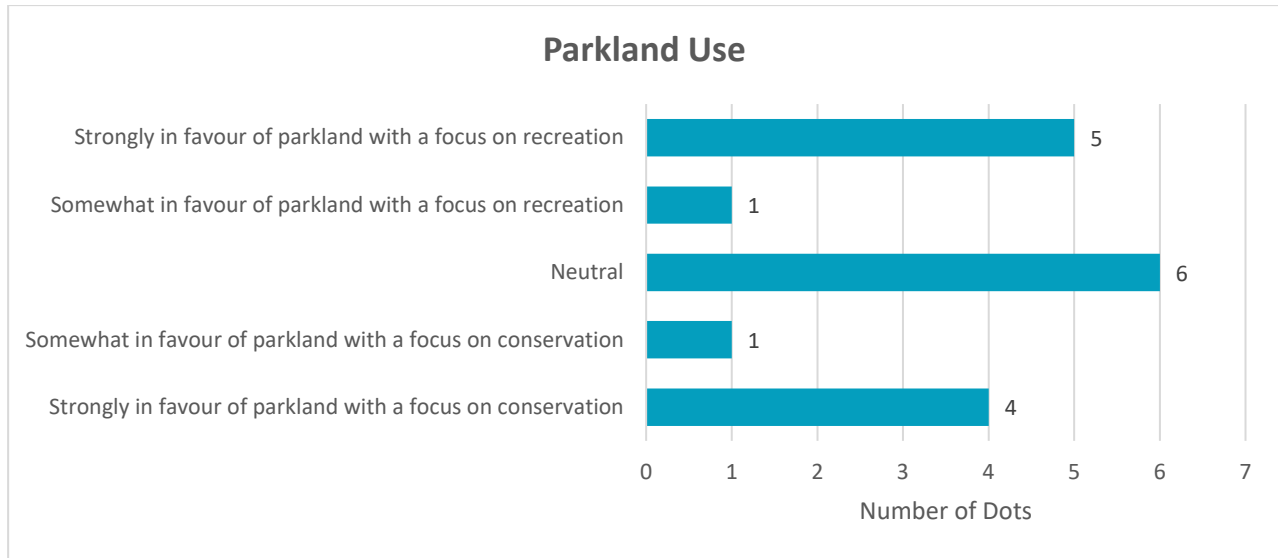
Improve existing parks and trails, or establish new parks and trails?

Of the 23 participants that responded by placing a dot on the board, 11 are strongly in favour of improving existing parks and trails.



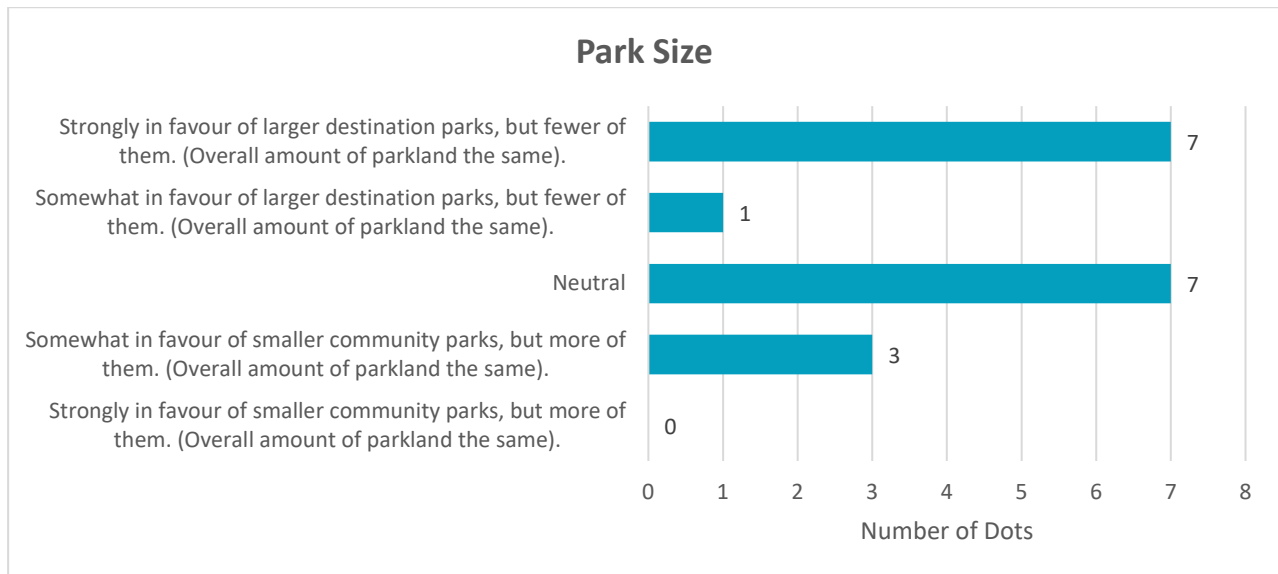
Parkland for conservation, or parkland for recreation?

Of the 17 participants that responded by placing a dot on the board, 5 are strongly in favour of parkland with a focus on recreation and 6 are neutral.



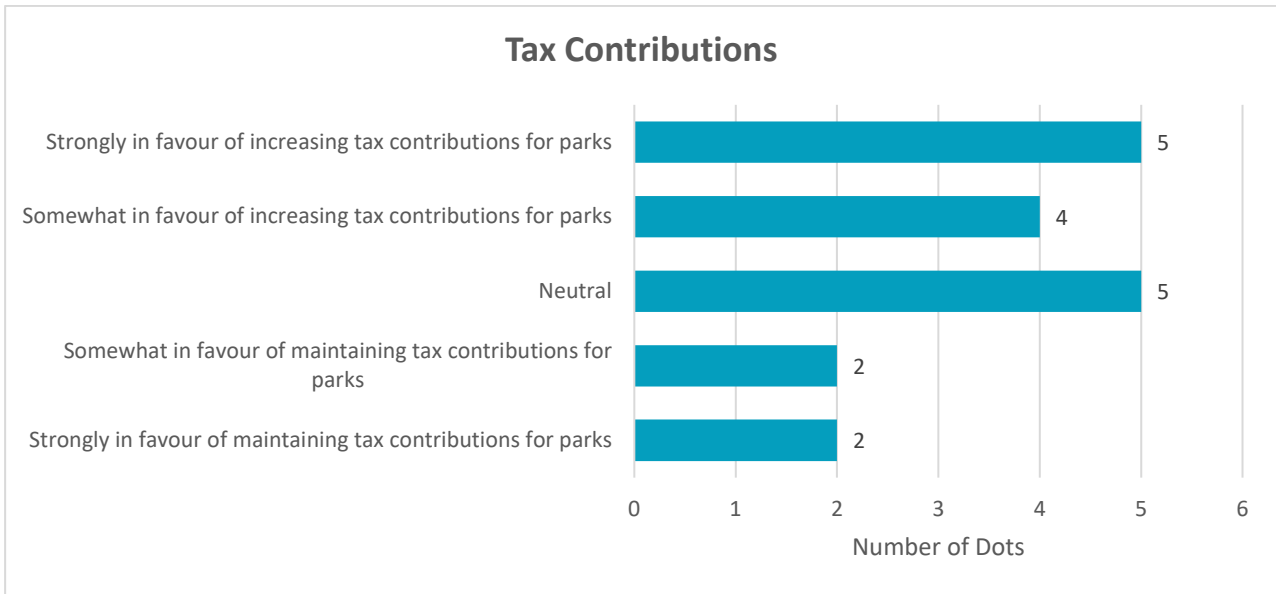
Small community parks or large destination parks?

Of the 18 participants that responded by placing a dot on the board, 7 are strongly in favour of larger destination parks and 7 are neutral.



Maintain tax contributions for parks or increase tax contributions for parks?

Of the 18 participants that responded by placing a dot on the board, 5 are strongly in favour of increasing tax contributions for parks and 5 are neutral.



ROUND 2 WORKSHOP SUMMARY

During the workshop, participants were asked to share their thoughts on the draft vision, goals, and recommendations from the Parks and Trails Master Plan.

One attendee was from Area B and one attendee was from Area E.

Q1: Which words from the Vision Statement resonate most with you?

The RDBN's Parks and Trails Service for Electoral Area B (Burns Lake Rural) and Area E (François Lake/Ootsa Lake) will:

Build on Community Strengths. The RDBN seeks to build upon the strengths of the recreation services provided by other levels of government and members of the community. These partnerships will create a cohesive and synergistic system that enhances the overall recreational experience for all.

Connect People to Water and Nature. The parks and trails system will facilitate access to lakes, and shorelines and connect users with nature.

Provide Diverse and Accessible Recreation Opportunities. Whether seeking a thrilling hiking adventure, a tranquil camping experience, or a leisurely stroll along a picturesque shoreline, the parks and trails system will offer diverse and accessible recreation options for all ages and abilities.

Celebrate the Region's Natural Beauty. The parks and trails system will provide opportunities for wildlife viewing, an appreciation of native flora and fauna, and the rich ecosystems of the Lakes District.

- Sustainable, water, ecosystems, and partnerships are words from the Vision Statement that resonate most with workshop participants.

Q2: Are there any words or ideas that are so important they should be added?

Suggestions include:

- Change protection to stewardship
- Emphasize the importance of partnerships

Q3: Which words from the Vision Statement resonate the most with you?

- Partnerships
- Access to shorelines

Q4: Are there any words or ideas that are so important they should be added?

- Change protection to stewardship

Q5: Which of the goals for the RDBN’s Parks and Trails Master Plan for Areas B and E are most important to you?

GOAL 1: Define the approach to parks service delivery in Electoral Areas B and E

GOAL 2: Strengthen partnerships and build community capacity

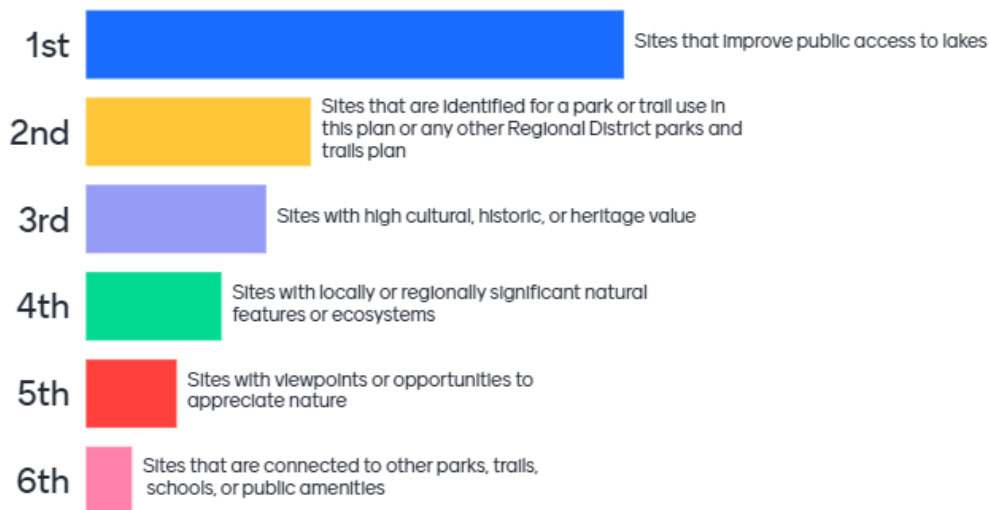
GOAL 3: Increase access to lakes and shorelines

GOAL 4: Enhance the user experience at parks and trails

GOAL 5: Support active transportation and a connected community

One participant indicated that Goal 1 is the most important and another participant shared that Goal 2 is important to them. There was also a comment that all the goals are important, so it is challenging to rank them.

Q6: What should be the focus of parkland and trails acquisition?



Other suggestions include:

- Access to lakes and campgrounds
- Better maintenance of existing parks before acquiring new parks and trails

Q11: Are there opportunities for partnerships that we should include in the RDBN Master Plan?

- Provincial government agencies
- MoTI
- Community Forests

Q11: What else should we know about parks, recreation, and trails in your community?

- Struggling to maintain existing parks, trails, and recreation sites
- Volunteers are aging
- Lack of funding for parks and recreation
- Need to attract youth to volunteering and get an understanding of their priorities for parks and recreation
- Current campsites in Areas B and E are seeing lots of use – especially on Francois Lake
- There is a lack of rec sites on major lakes/ need to be expanded in size (southside of Francois Lake)

6 STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS & INTERVIEWS – KEY THEMES

The following are the key themes that emerged from stakeholder meetings and interviews during the first and second rounds of engagement.

Accessibility

- Many stakeholders emphasized the importance of accessibility in parks and recreation sites. For example, Recreation Sites and Trails BC suggested one accessible campsite per community.

Maintenance Issues & Funding Opportunities

- Many stakeholders reported issues with maintenance upkeep in relation to insufficient funding and volunteer support.

Diversity of Recreation Options

- There was support among stakeholders for a greater diversity of recreation options. This included more low barrier and low cost programming, more recreation opportunities on evenings and weekends, and more summer recreation opportunities.

Community Involvement/Volunteers

- Many stakeholders reported that volunteer burnout, especially since Covid-19, has greatly impacted their organizations. Organized Sports reported that volunteers oversee a lot of upgrades and maintenance for their organizations. Lakes District Arts Council stated that volunteer participation has also become more complex for legal reasons including safety and liability.

Boat Launches

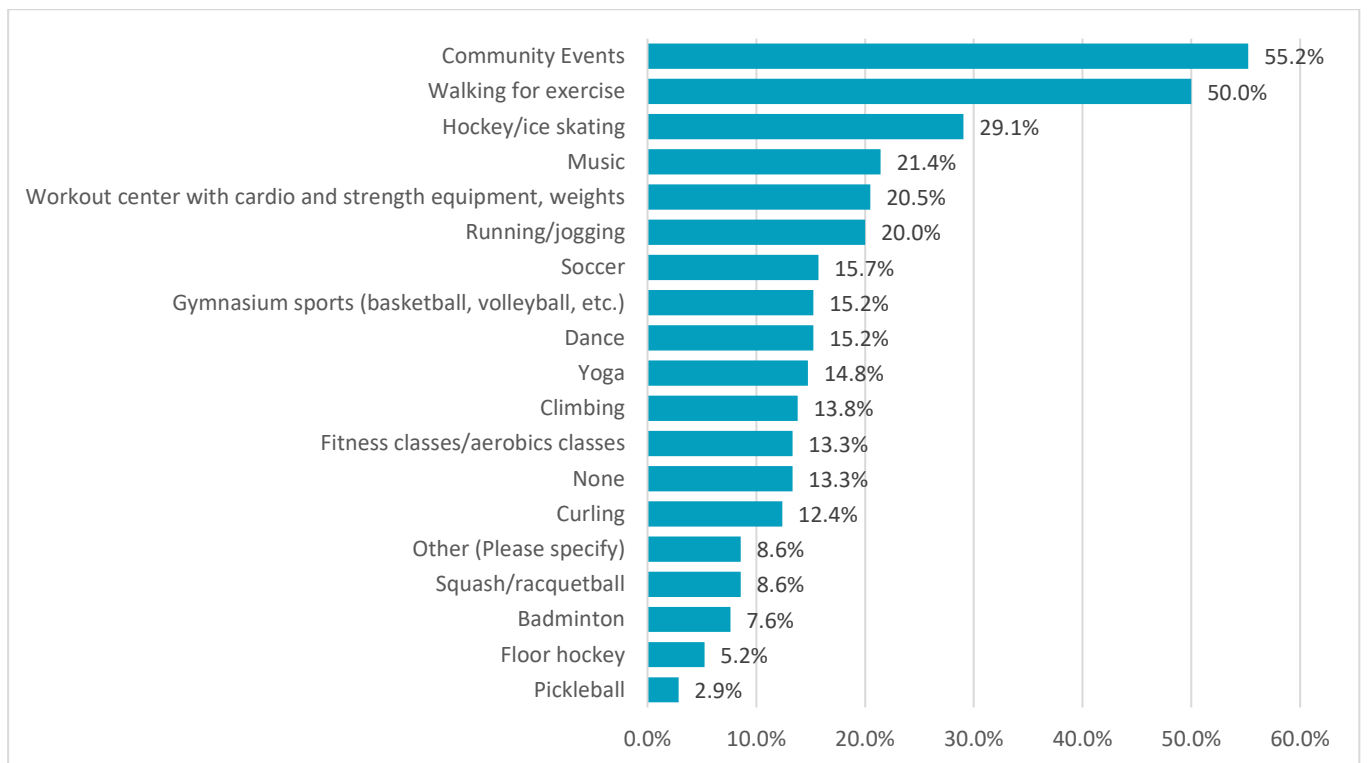
- There was support among stakeholders for more boat launches at recreation sites.

APPENDIX A – ONLINE SURVEY 1 SUMMARY

Q1: What indoor recreational, leisure activities or programs do you participate in on a regular basis outside the home?

The top responses are:

1. Community Events
2. Walking for exercise
3. Hockey/ice skating



210 respondents answered this question. Respondents were asked to select all options that applied to them.

Q2: What types of activities do you enjoy outdoors? Think of all seasons of the year.

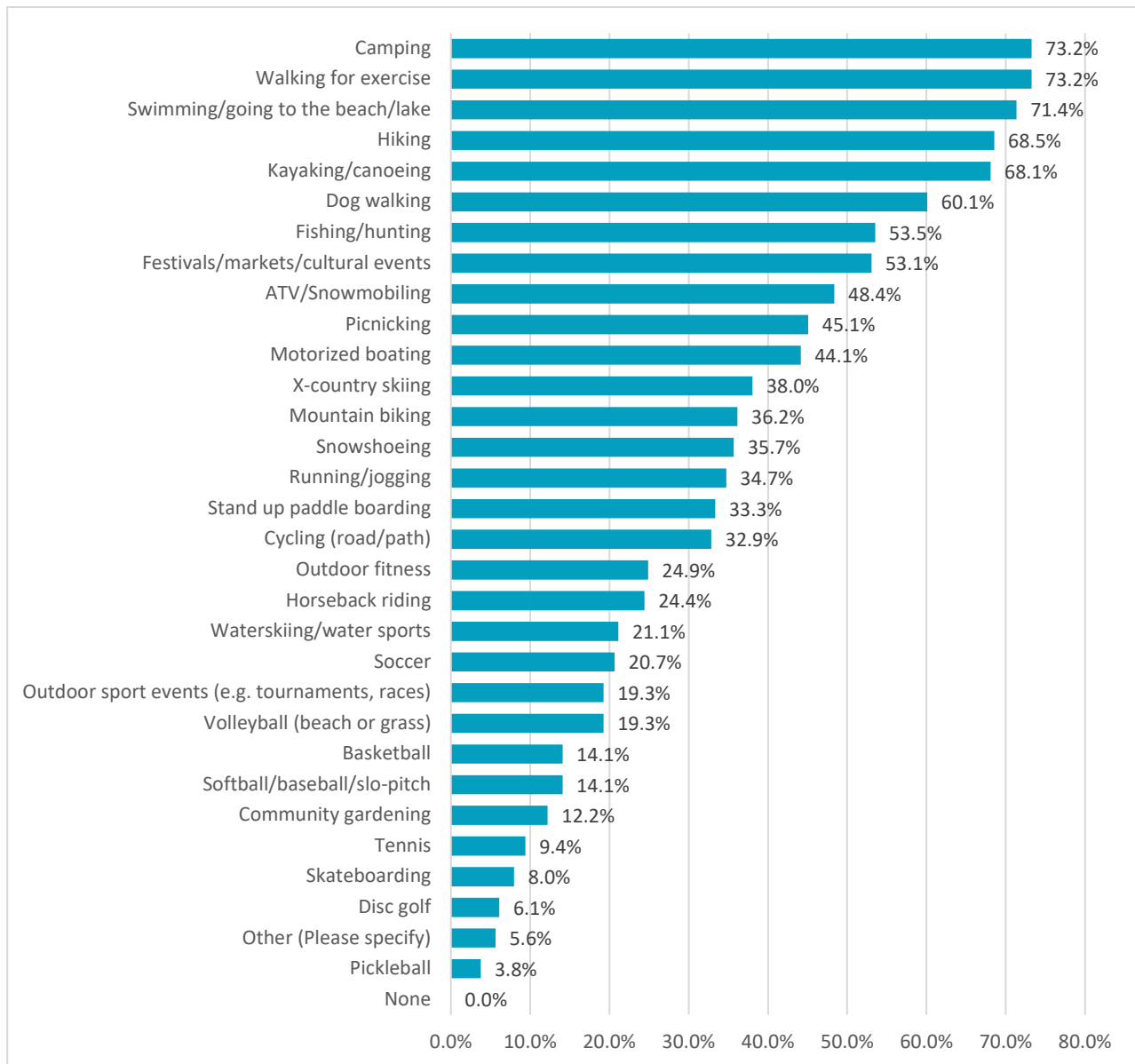
The top responses are:

1. Camping & Walking for Exercise (tied)
2. Swimming/going to the beach/lake
3. Hiking

4. Kayaking/canoeing

The top “other (please specify)” responses are:

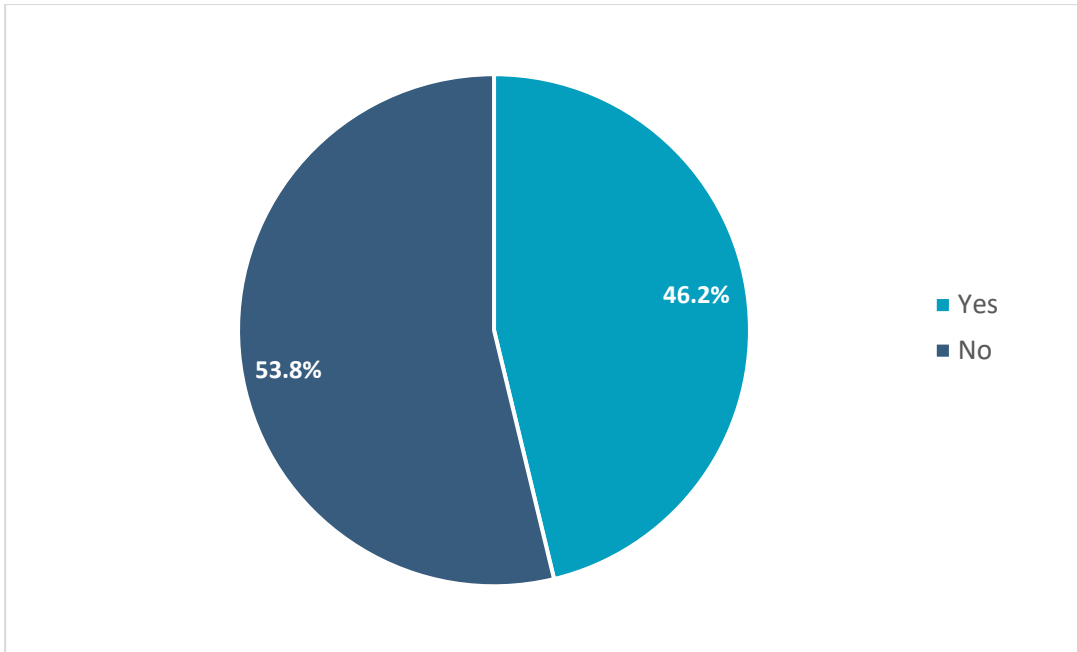
- Golf (3 mentions)
- Snowboarding (2 mentions)
- Dirt Biking (2 mentions)



213 respondents answered this question. Respondents were asked to select all options that applied to them.

Q3: Do you have children under the age of 18 living at home?

Of the 212 respondents who answered this question, 46% have children under the age of 18 at home.



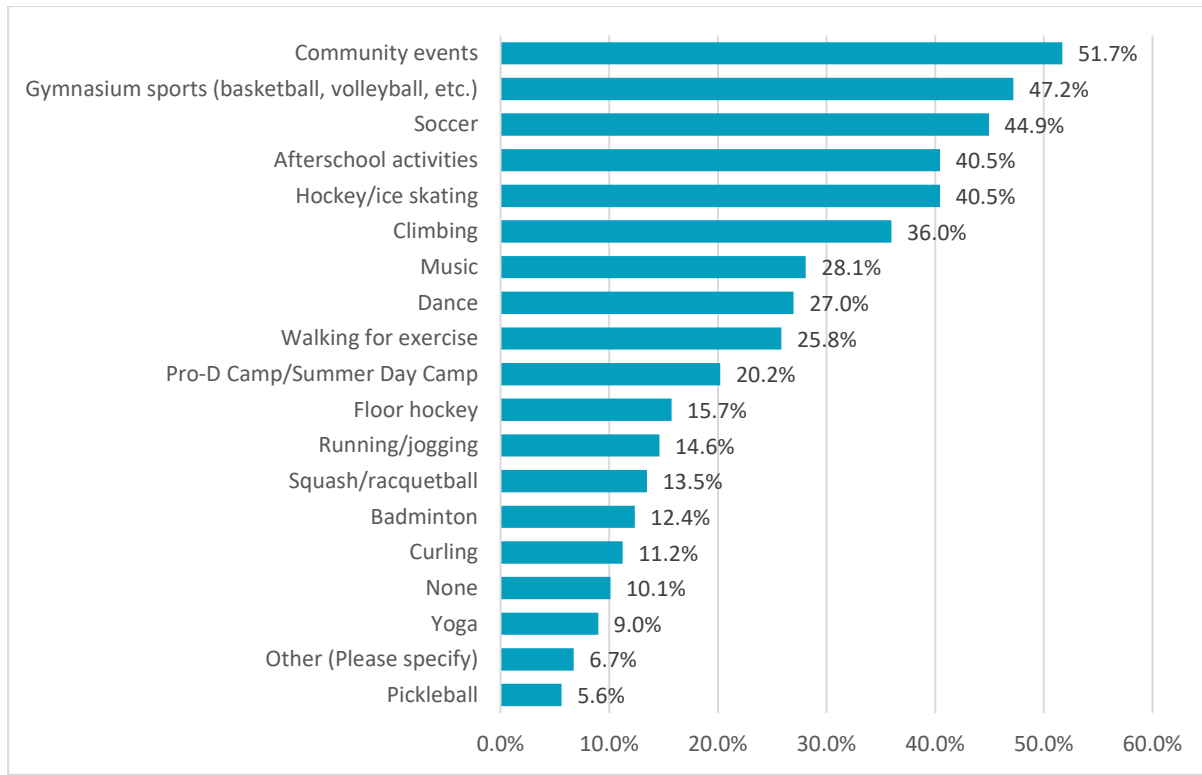
Q4: What types of indoor activities does your child (or children) enjoy outside of the home?

The top responses are:

1. Community events
2. Gymnasium sports (basketball, volleyball, etc.)
3. Soccer
4. Afterschool activities & Hockey/ice skating (tied)

The top “other (please specify)” responses are:

- Gym/weightlifting (2 mentions)
- Archery (2 mentions)

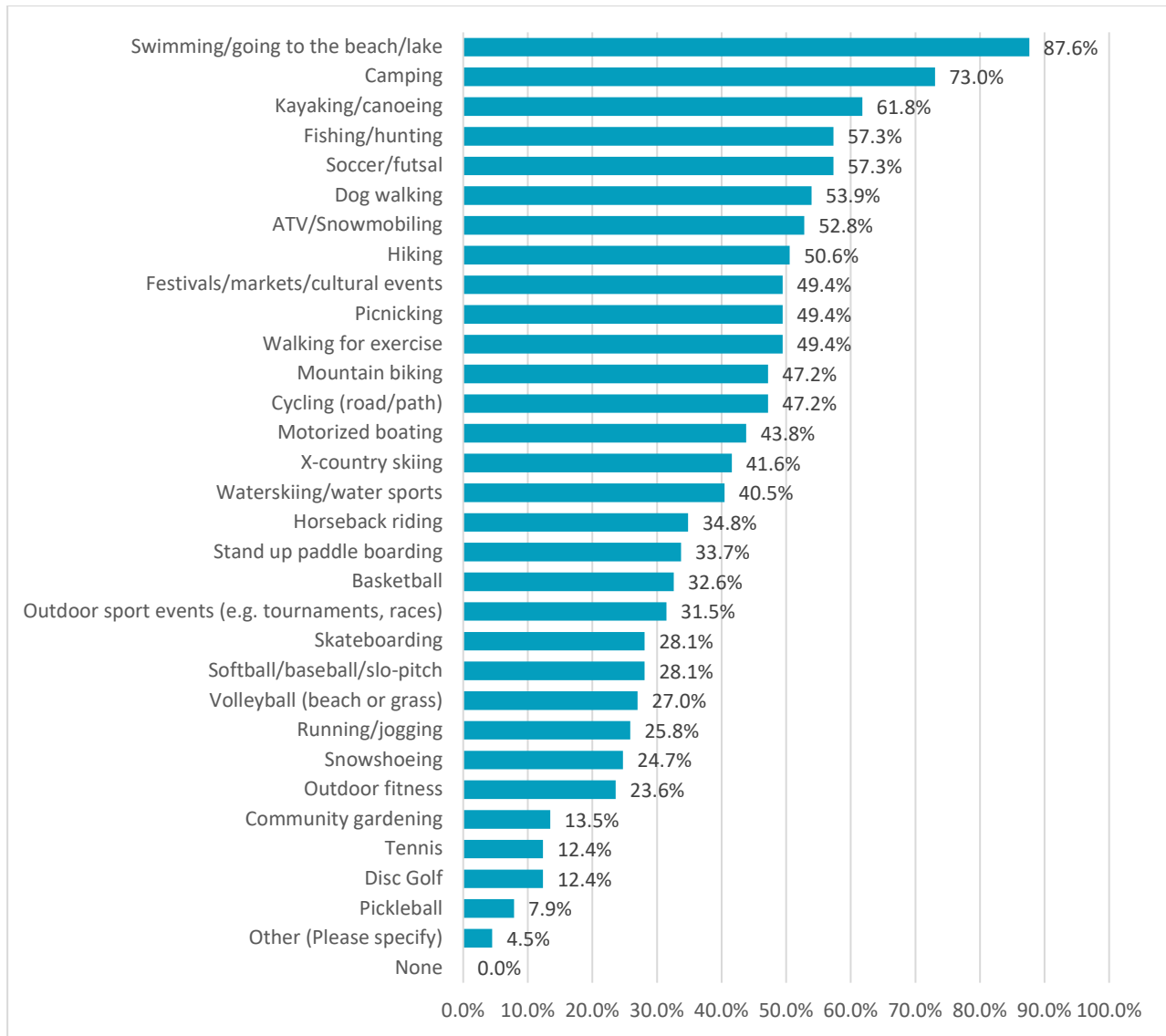


89 respondents answered this question. This question was only posed to respondents who selected “yes” to question 3 and they were asked to select all options that applied.

Q5: What types of outdoor activities does your child (or children) enjoy? Think of all seasons of the year.

The top responses are:

1. Swimming/going to the beach/lake
2. Camping
3. Kayaking/canoeing



89 respondents answered this question. This question was only posed to respondents who selected “yes” to question 3 and they were asked to select all options that applied.

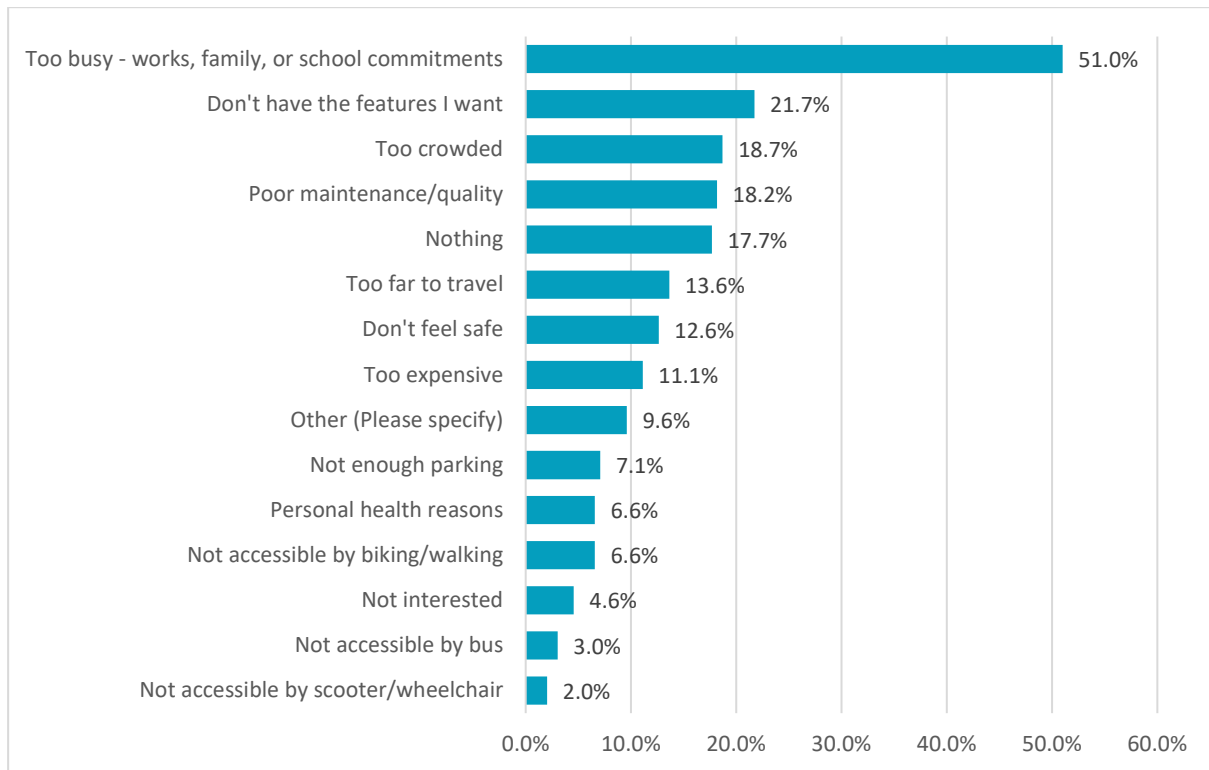
Q6: What, if anything, keeps you from visiting parks and recreation facilities more often?

The top responses are:

1. Too busy – work, family, or school commitments
2. Don't have the features I want
3. Too crowded
4. Poor maintenance/quality
5. Nothing

The top "other (please specify)" responses are:

- Drug use in public areas (3 mentions)
- Wildlife concerns (2 mentions)
- No proper boat launch or dock space (2 mentions)

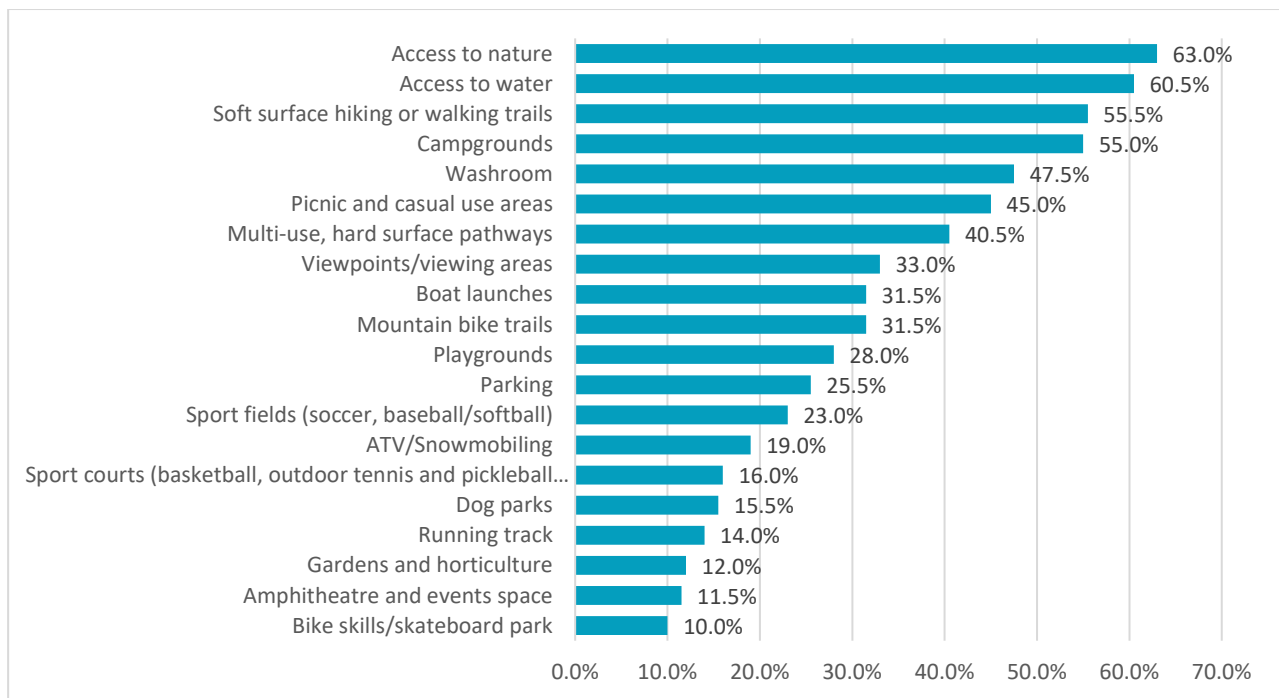


198 respondents answered this question. Respondents were asked to select their top five reasons.

Q7: What features do you value most in parks and trails?

The top responses are:

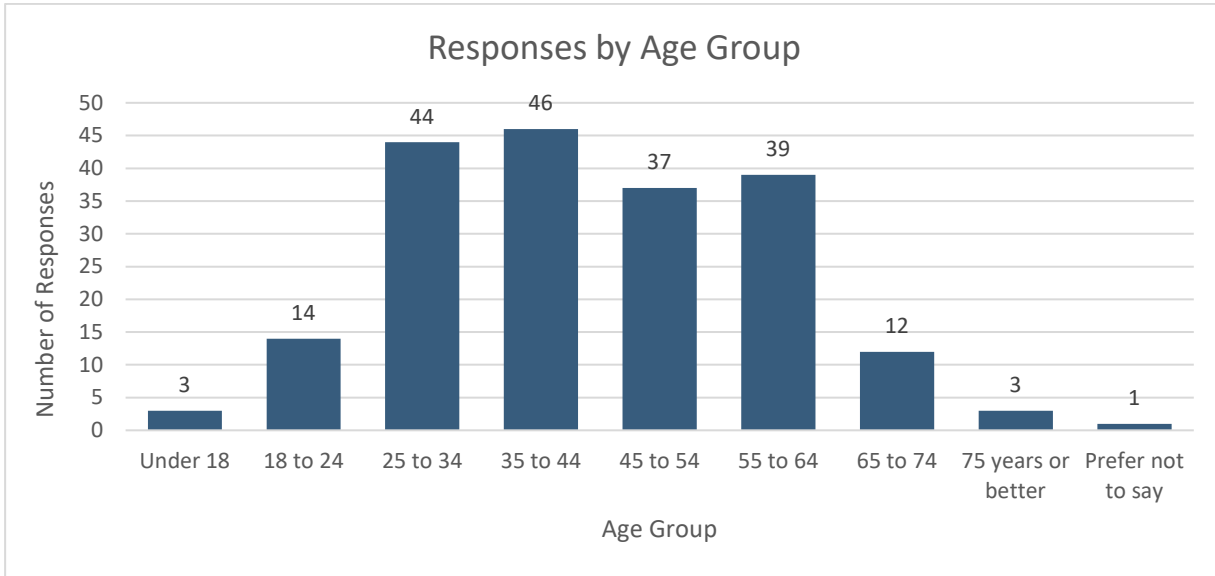
1. Access to nature
2. Access to water
3. Soft surface hiking or walking trails
4. Campgrounds
5. Washrooms



200 respondents answered this question. Respondents were asked to select their top five values.

Q8: What age category are you?

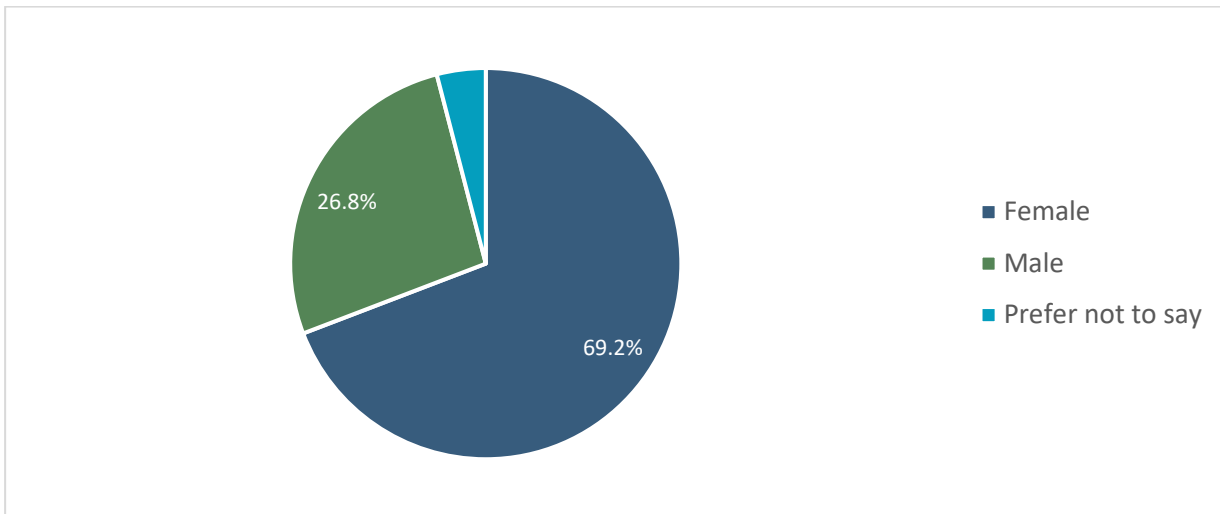
Most respondents are between the ages of 25-64 with 35-44 being the most common response.



199 respondents answered this question.

Q9: What is your gender?

Almost 70% of survey respondents identify as female.

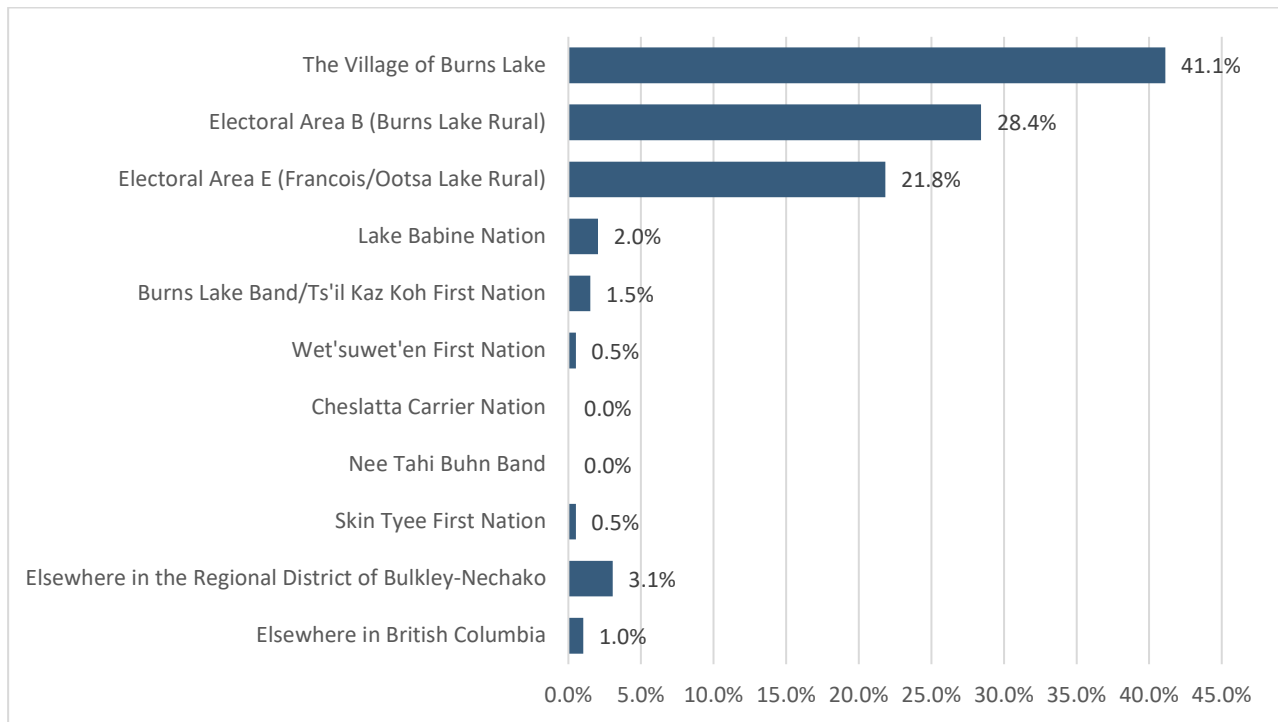


198 respondents answered this question.

Q10: Where do you live?

The top responses are:

1. The Village of Burns Lake
2. Electoral Area B (Burns Lake Rural)
3. Electoral Area E (Francois/Ootsa Lake Rural)



197 respondents answered this question. This question was optional.

Q11: Do you want to answer questions related to the Village of Burns Lake, the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Electoral Areas B and E, or both?

70% of respondents indicated that they wanted to answer questions related to both the Village of Burns Lake and the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Electoral Areas B and E.

190 respondents answered this question. This question was optional.

Q12 – Q16 were questions specific to the Village of Burns Lake.

Q17: Which of the following parks, trails, or recreation areas have you visited in the last 12 months?

The top responses are:

1. Kager Lake (Recreation Area)
2. Boer Mountain (Recreation Area)
3. Agate Point (Recreation Area)

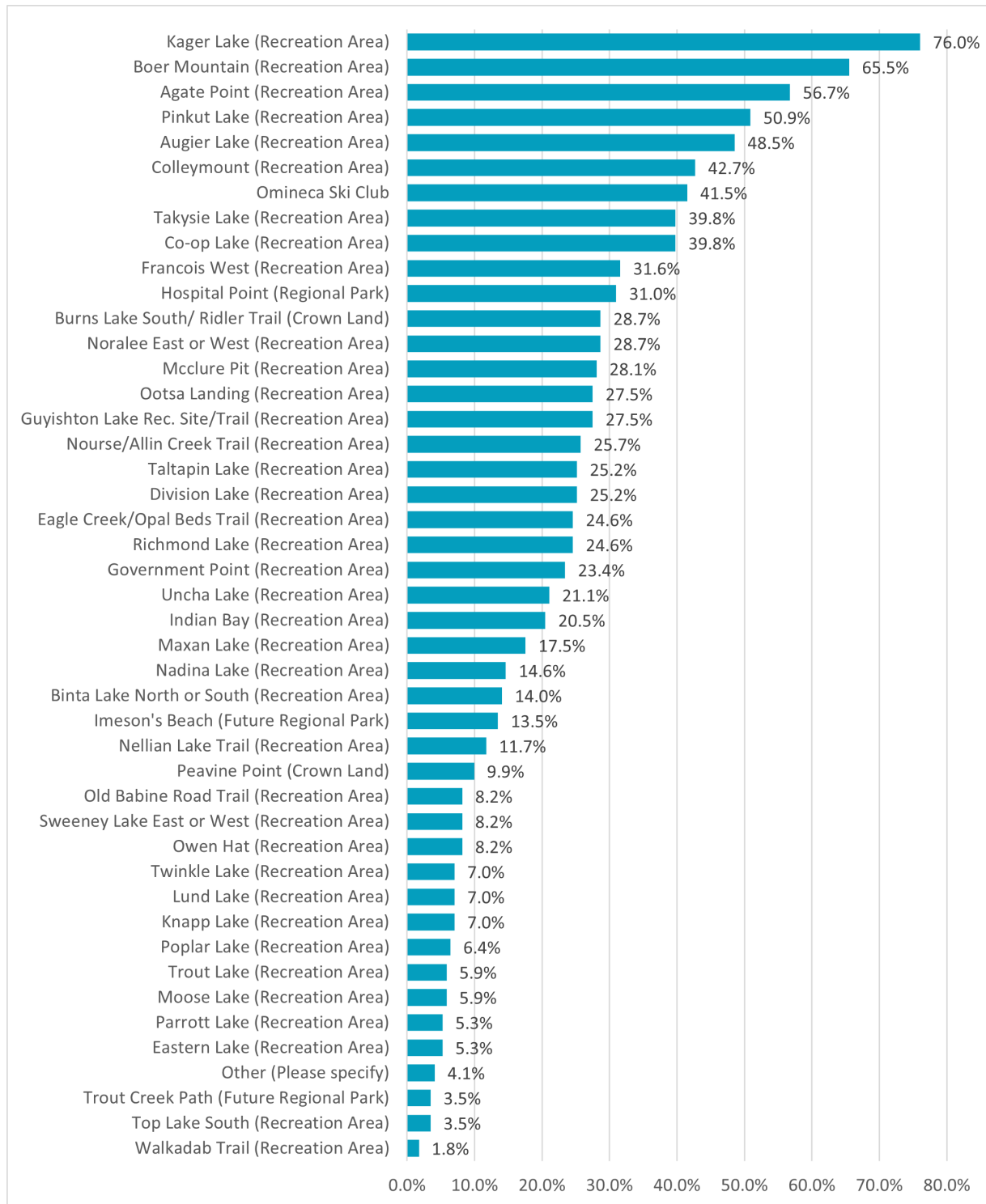


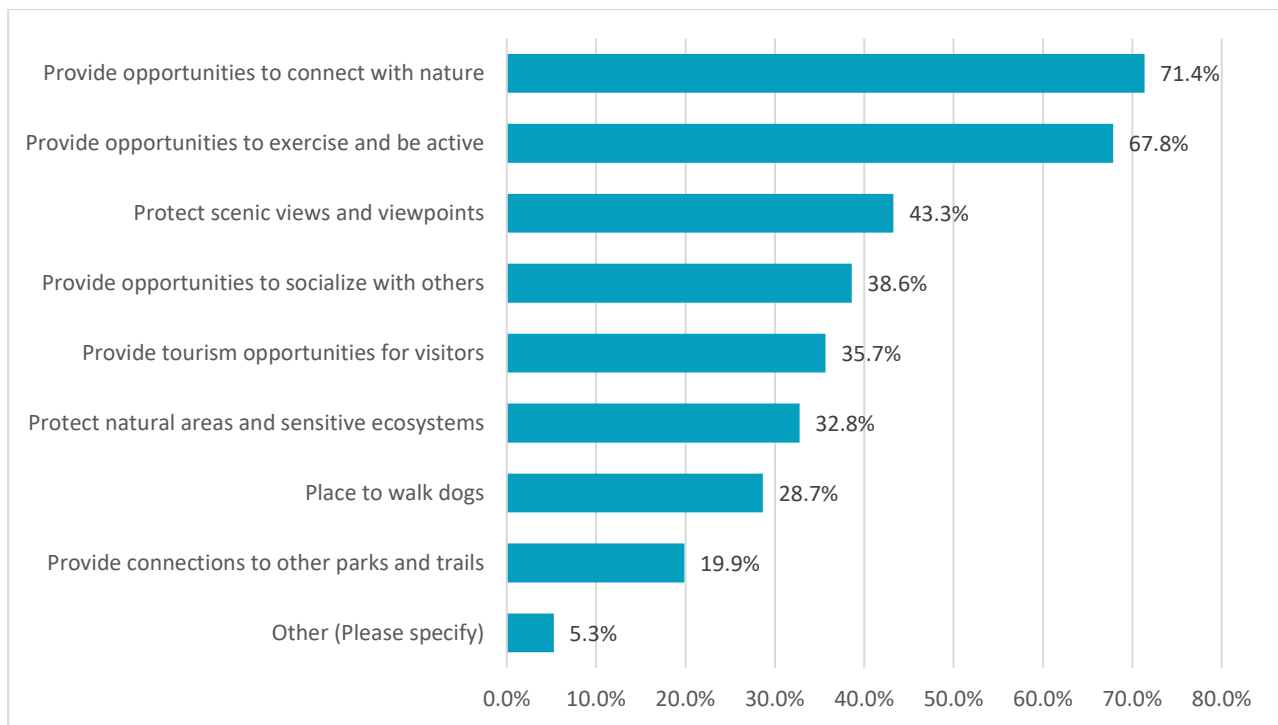
Figure 1 – Top parks, trails, or recreation areas. Note there were 45 locations options in total.

171 respondents answered this question. Respondents were asked to select all options that applied.

Q18: What do you value most about regional parks, trails, and recreation areas in Electoral Area B and E?

The top responses are:

1. Provide opportunities to connect with nature
2. Provide opportunities to exercise and be active
3. Protect scenic views and viewpoints



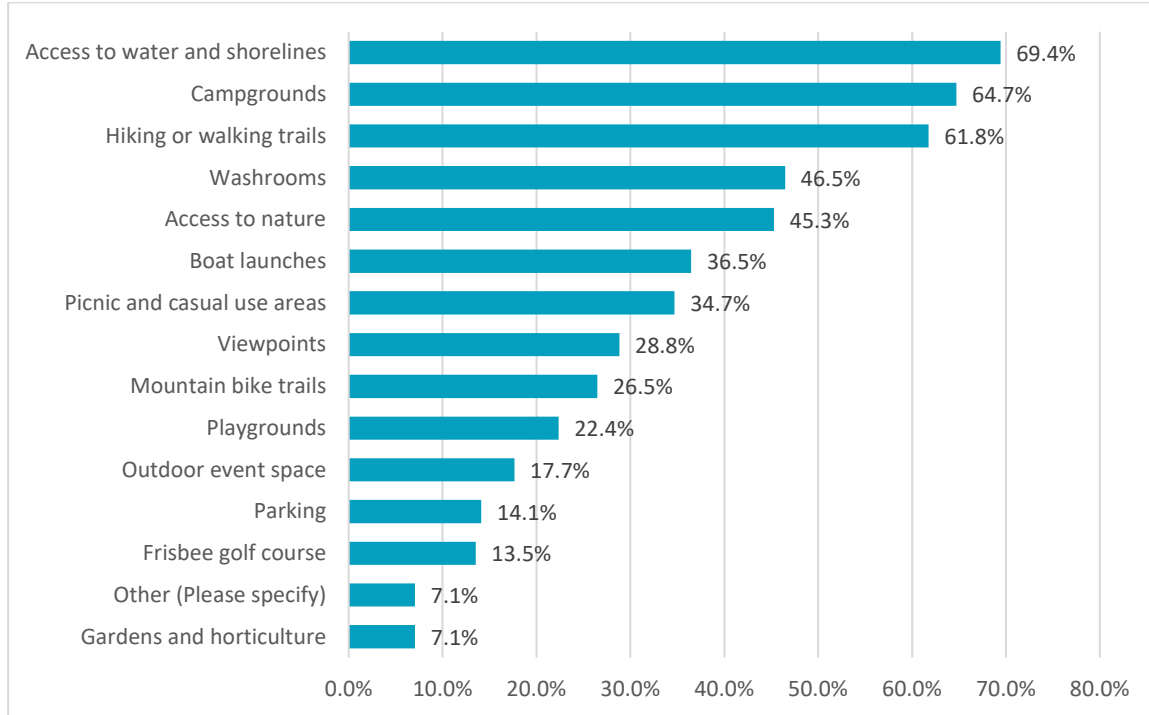
171 respondents answered this question. Respondents were asked to select their top three options.

Q19: What features would you like to see in regional district parks?

The top responses are:

1. Access to water and shorelines
2. Campgrounds
3. Hiking or walking trails
4. Washrooms

5. Access to nature

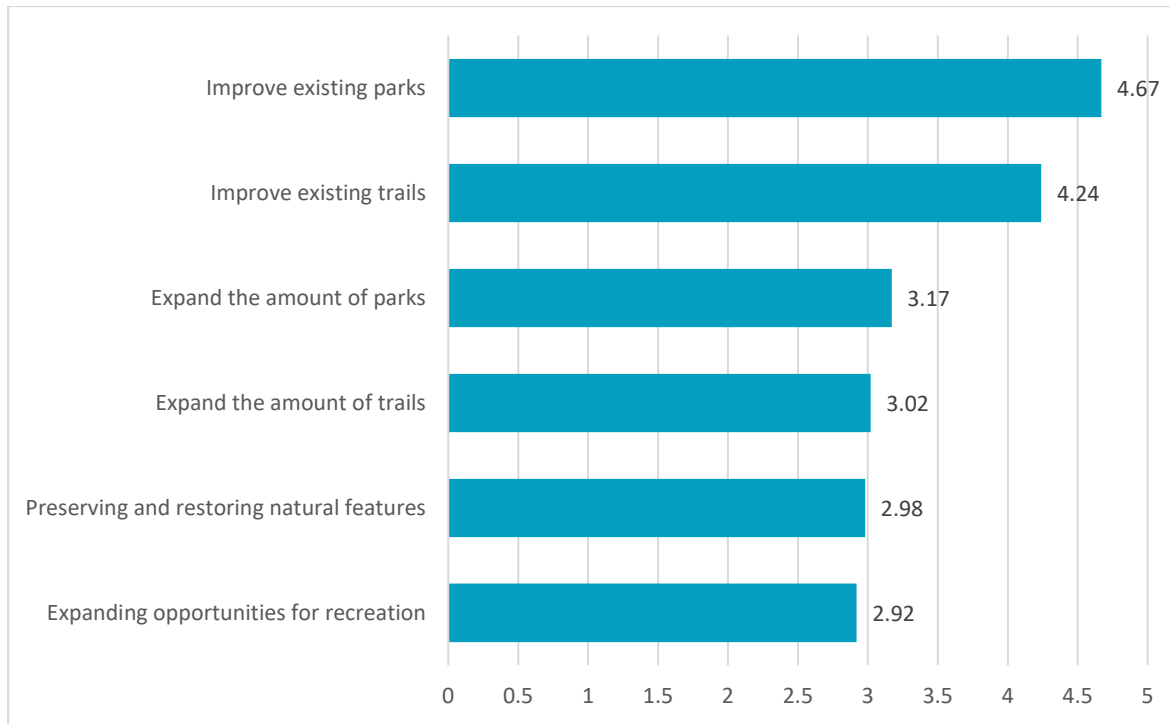


170 respondents answered this question. Respondents were asked to select their top five options.

Q20: Over the next 10 years, what should the Regional District prioritize?

The top responses of priorities are:

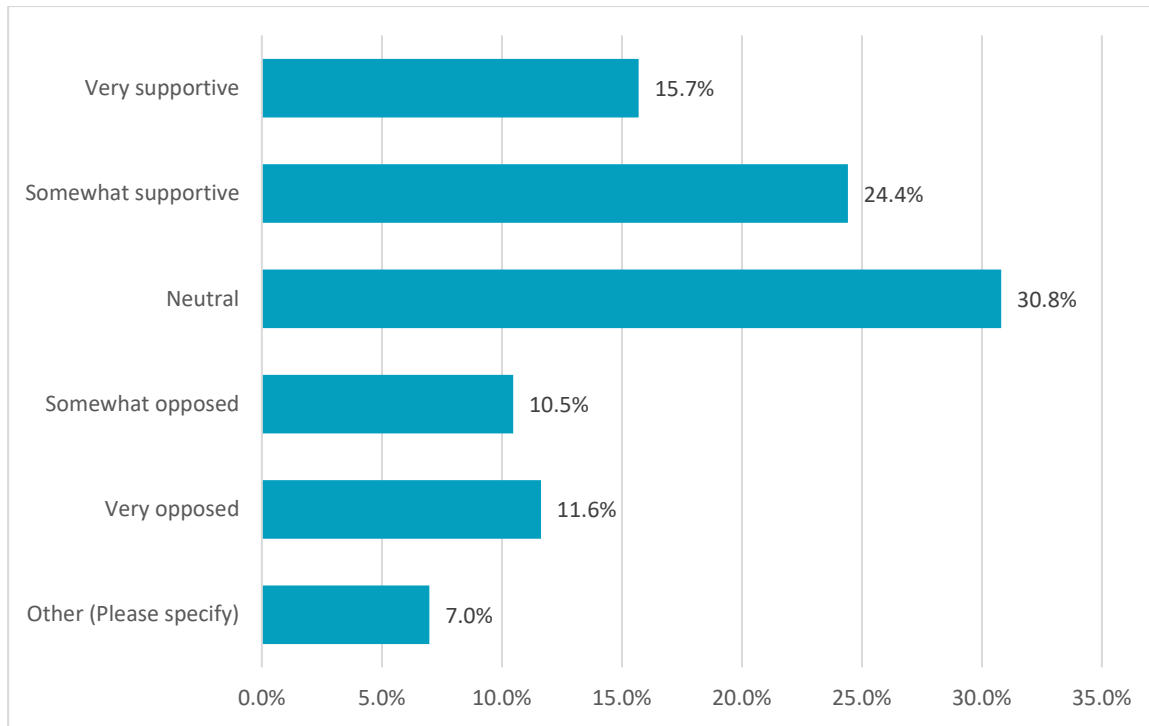
1. Improve existing parks
2. Improve existing trails
3. Expand the amount of parks



172 respondents answered this question. Respondents were asked to rank the six options from highest to lowest priority.

Q21: How supportive are you of a tax increase to fund the acquisition of new parks and trails or the development of new infrastructure in parks?

Of the 172 responses to this question, 40.1% are supportive of a tax increase to fund the acquisition of new parks and trails or the development of new infrastructure in parks, and 30.8% of respondents are neutral.



172 respondents answered this question.

Q22: What else do we need to know about recreation, parks, and trails in the Village of Burns Lake and Electoral Area B and E of the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako?

The top responses are:

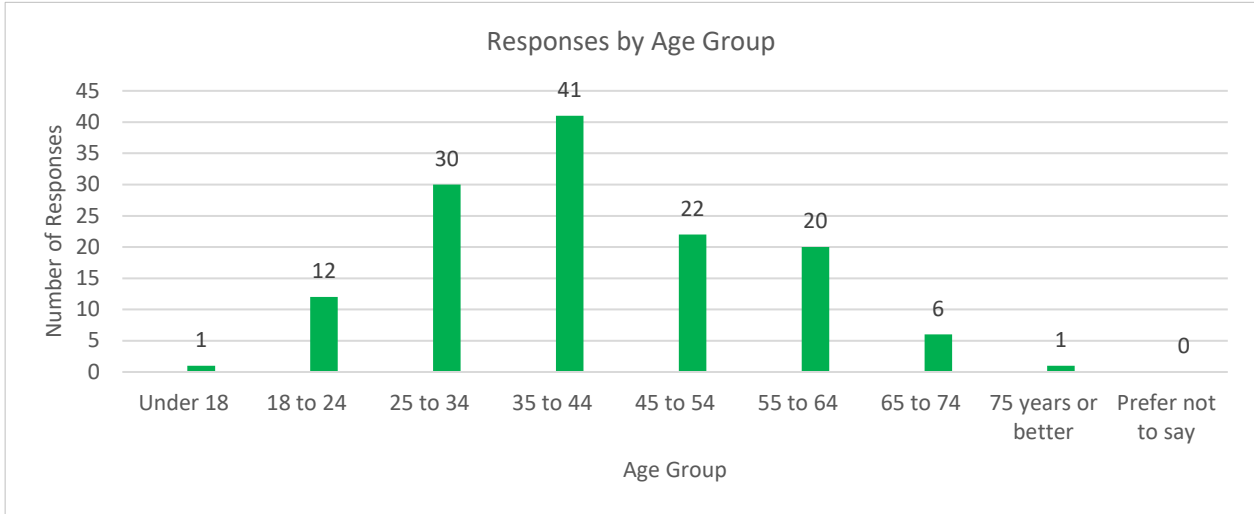
1. Maintenance of existing recreational sites and trails (12 mentions)
2. Increase trail connectivity (7 mentions)
3. Indigenous connection to recreational sites and trails (5 mentions)
4. Promotion and signage for recreational sites and trails (5 mentions)
5. More docks and boat launches at recreational sites (4 mentions)
6. Multiuse trails (3 mentions)

62 respondents answered this question. This question was open ended and survey responses were grouped into themes.

APPENDIX B – ONLINE SURVEY 2 SUMMARY

Q1: What age category are you?

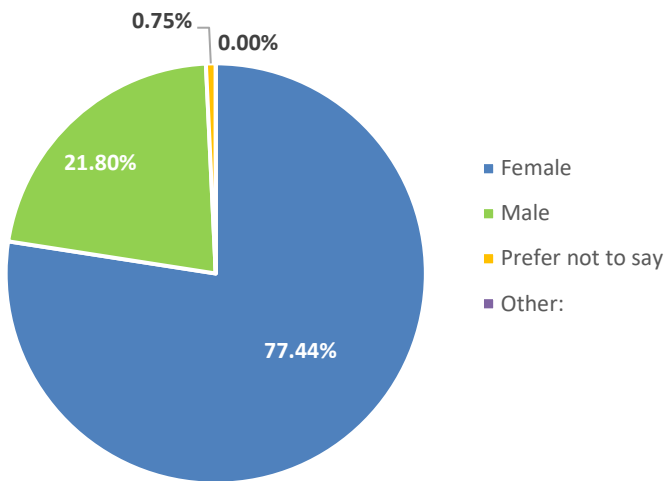
Most respondents are between the ages of 35-44 with 25-34 being the most common response.



133 respondents answered this question.

Q2: What is your gender?

Of respondents, 77% identify as female.

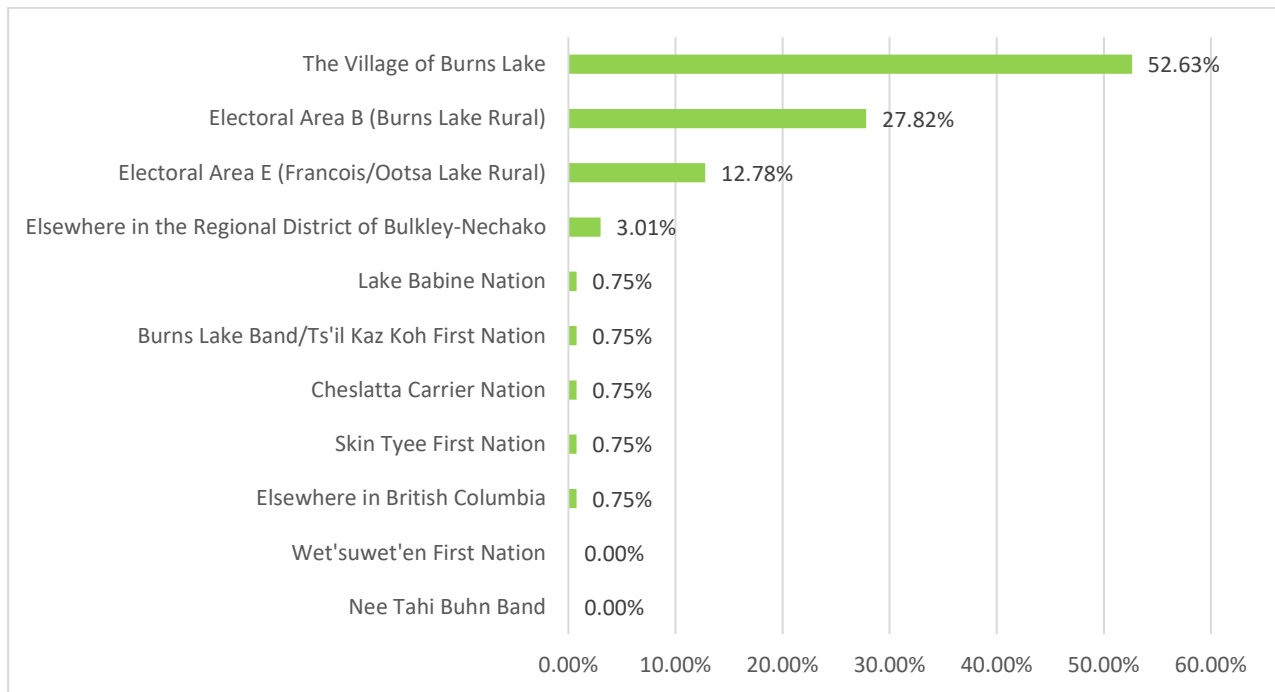


133 respondents answered this question.

Q3: Where do you live?

The top responses are:

1. The Village of Burns Lake
2. Electoral Area B (Burns Lake Rural)
3. Electoral Area E (Francois/Ootsa Lake Rural)



133 respondents answered this question.

Q4: Do you want to answer questions related to the Village of Burns Lake, the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Electoral Areas B and E, or both?

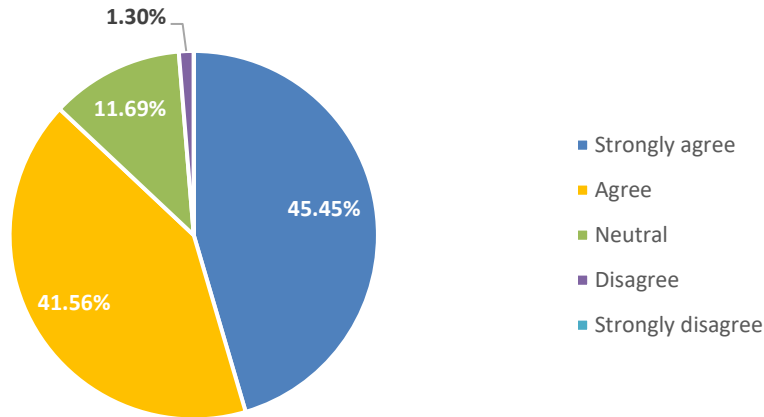
Over 80% of respondents indicated that they wanted to answer questions related to both the Village of Burns Lake and the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Electoral Areas B and E.

133 respondents answered this question. This question was optional.

Q14 – Q22 were questions specific to the Village of Burns Lake.

Q14: To what extent do you agree with the Vision Statement?

Of respondents, 87% either agree or strongly agree with the vision statement.



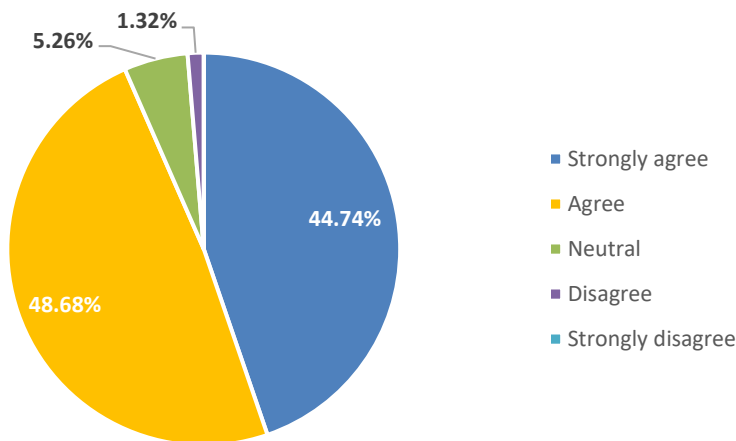
77 respondents answered this question. This question was optional.

Q15: Is there anything missing from the Vision Statement?

Of the 10 responses, 2 are supportive of the vision statement and 2 suggest including an acknowledgement of the traditional Indigenous territories on which the Plan takes place and a statement about working with Indigenous community members. The other responses indicated support for the vision and suggestions to inclusion of wording on health promotion, environmental protection, the provision of greenspaces, new and improved infrastructure and trails for ATVS.

Q16: To what extent do you agree with the Goals?

Of respondents, over 93% either agree or strongly agree with the goals.



76 respondents answered this question. This question was optional.

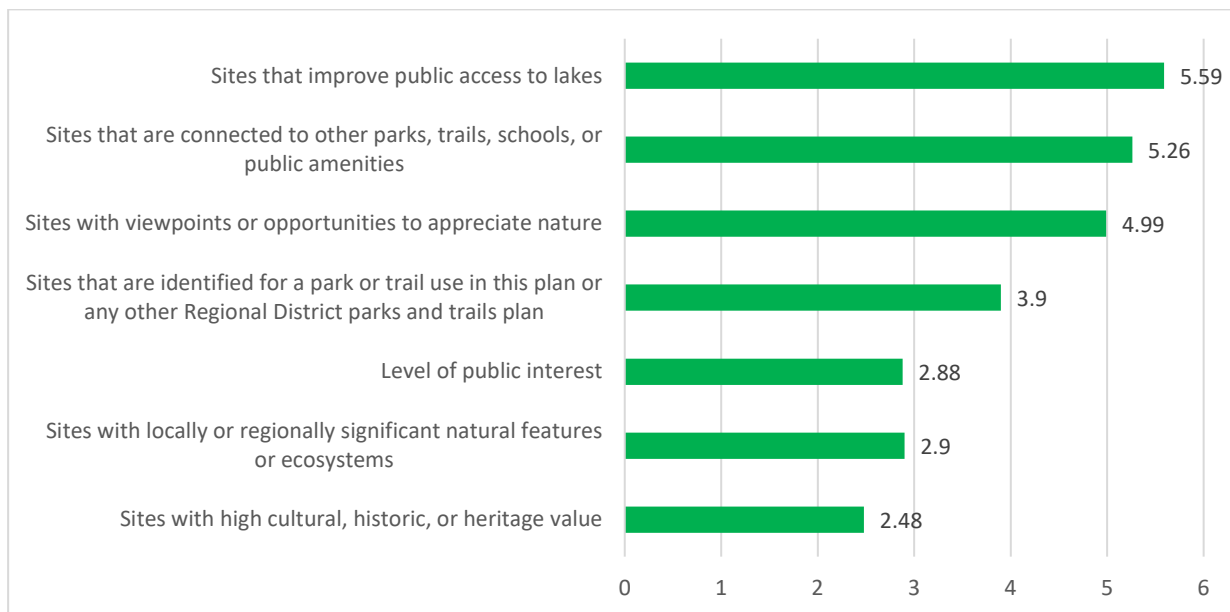
Q17: Is there anything missing from the Goals?

Of the 10 responses, there are suggestions to include goals to protect and maintain natural shorelines, lakes, and habitat, expand boat launches and camping facilities, and create new trails and infrastructure matching goals.

Q18: Which of the following parkland acquisition criteria should the RDBN prioritize? Please rank the following criteria from highest importance (1) to lowest (7):

The top responses are:

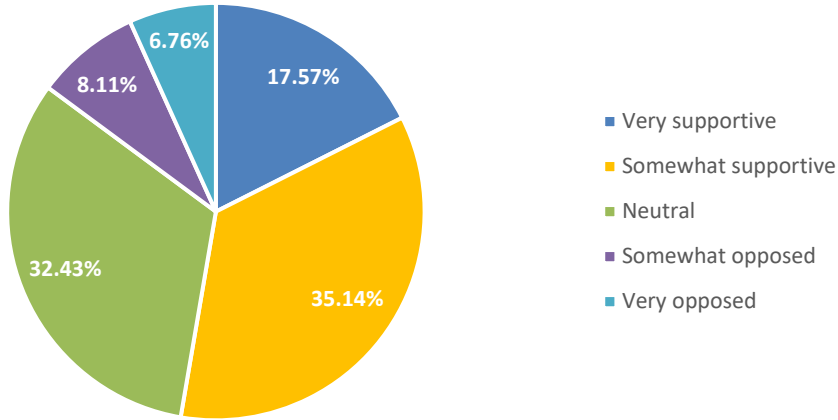
1. Sites that improve public access to lakes
2. Sites that are connected to other parks, trails, schools, or public amenities
3. Sites with viewpoints or opportunities to appreciate nature



73 respondents answered this question. This question was optional.

Q19: What is your level of support for the RDBN increasing taxation or spending to support coordination between recreation organizations and the RDBN?

Of respondents, close to 53% are either very or somewhat supportive of increasing taxation to support coordination between recreation organizations and the RDBN and 32% are neutral.



74 respondents answered this question. This question was optional.

Q20: A key recommendation in the Parks and Trails Master Plan is to increase access to lakeshores through the inclusion of boat launches. Which lakes in Electoral Areas B and E should the RDBN prioritize for developing boat launches?

Of the locations identified on the map (figure 1), 8 points were identified on Francois Lake, 7 points on Tchesinkut lake, and 4 on Burns Lake.

27 respondents answered this question. This question was optional.

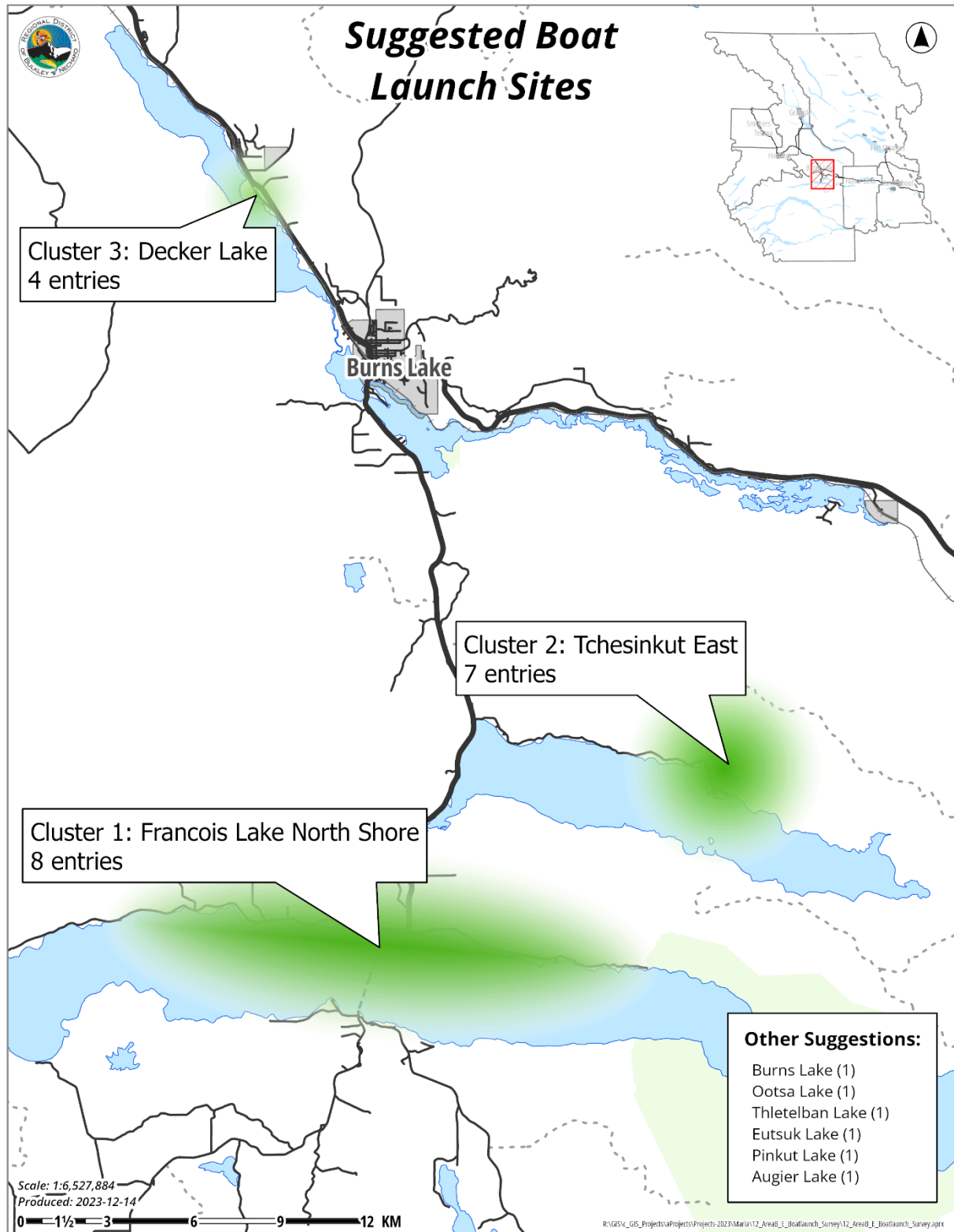
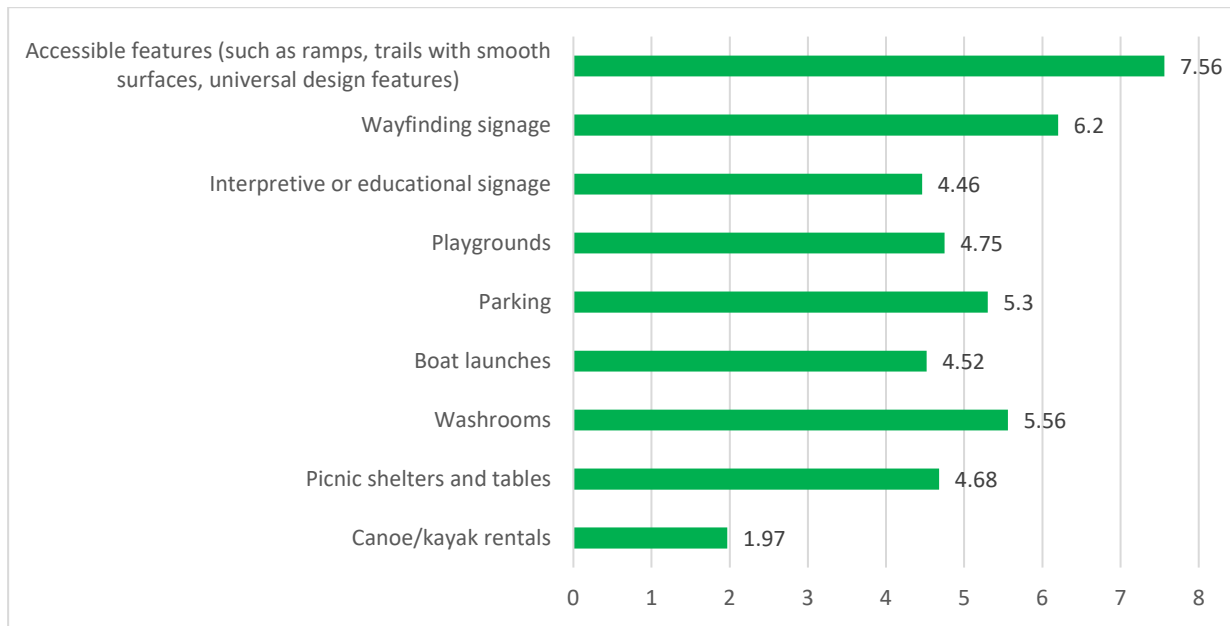


Figure 2- Map of locations identified for potential boat launches

Q21: How important are the following features at new or existing regional parks and trails? Please rank the following features from highest importance (1) to lowest (9).

The top responses are:

1. Accessible features (such as ramps, trails with smooth surfaces, universal design features)
2. Wayfinding signage
3. Interpretive or educational signage



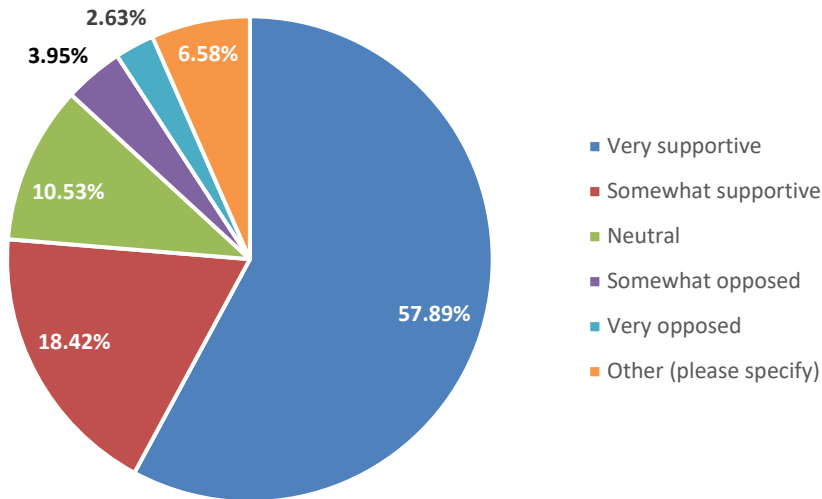
71 respondents answered this question. This question was optional.

Q22: What is your level of support for the development of a multi-use trail along Highway 35 connecting the Village with the Francois Lake Ferry?

Close to 60% of respondents are very supportive of a multi-use trail along Highway 35 and close to 6% are either somewhat or very opposed.

The top “other (please specify)” responses:

- Mention the importance of the trail being multi-use including considerations for motorized vehicles such as ATVs (3 mentions)
- Voice support for a multi-use trail (2 mentions)



76 respondents answered this question. This question was optional.

Q23: What else do we need to know about recreation, parks, and trails in the Village of Burns Lake and Electoral Areas B and E of the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako?

Top responses include:

- Support for the collaborative engagement process between the Village of Burns Lake and Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako (3 mentions)
- The importance of maintaining existing trails (3 mentions)
- Support for the development of accessible playgrounds and trails (3 mentions)
- The need to financially support recreation organizations doing trail maintenance and development (2 mentions)

APPENDIX C – STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW NOTES

ROUND 1 FOUNDRY STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

1. Can you tell me about Foundry Burns Lake and your role there?
 - The Foundry is a youth focused provincial initiative with sites across the province
 - Services provided include primary care, mental health services, maternal care, peer support and youth programming
 - The host organization for Foundry Burns is Carrier Sekani Family Services which provides health and wellness services for 6 First Nations in Area B and E
 - Foundry Burns Lake is a capital project opening in the fall of 2024
 - Foundry Burns Lake has a northern focus and is the only Indigenous led branch
 - Health Services Manager with Carrier Sekani Family Services
 - Role includes project lead for the Burns Foundry, fundraising, programming
2. What is the relationship between your organization and the Village of Burns Lake?
 - Carrier Sekani Youth Services has a good relationship with the Village
 - The Village is responsive to their communications and has been very supportive of the Foundry Burns Lake Project
3. Does the Foundry provide youth programming? Does the Foundry use the Village's parks or recreation facilities for programming?
 - The Foundry Burns Lake will provide youth programming
 - Nature therapy and land-based healing
 - BL Foundry may have a basketball court, outdoor ping-pong tables, a track around the building, a community garden and a campfire (for Indigenous ceremonies)
 - Building will include a multi-purpose room that can be booked
 - Foundry Burns Lake is not open yet but will be using the parks and recreation facilities in the Village
 - There is a possibility of connecting the trails from Boer Mountain to the Foundry
4. From your perspective, how important is access to parks and recreation facilities in your work?
 - Very important
 - VBL youth complain that there is nothing to do in town – particularly on evenings and weekends

5. What is missing in the Village in terms of Parks and Recreation that would be well used by youth?
What about the regional district?
 - Transportation to get to recreation facilities, parks
 - Basketball courts – particularly at Radley Beach
 - Wifi
 - More programming that is low barrier and low cost – sports and camps
 - Events or instructors from out of town
 - Things to do on evenings and weekends

6. What do you think are the biggest challenges for youth in Burns Lake when it comes to participating in organized sports, accessing recreation facilities or visiting parks?
 - Transportation – ferry schedule
 - Cost
 - Population – not enough numbers for some organized sports
 - Lack of places to buy equipment

7. Is there anything we should know about parks, trails, and recreation in your community?
 - During engagement for the Foundry building, including a pool was a frequent request
 - Skate park is well used

ROUND 1 LAND MANAGEMENT PARTNERS STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

1. Please tell me about your role with Recreation Sites and Trails BC (RSTBC)? What are your organization's key goals for the future?
 - District Recreation Officer for Nadina-Skeena District
 - Has been with RSTBC 7 years and has seen the focus shift from new opportunities for recreation sites to catching up with years of building
 - The district has two staff, managing 62 campgrounds and 20 partner groups
 - RSTBC has authority under FRPA to construct campgrounds, trails
 - Day to day involves ensuring that existing sites and trails meet standard
 - RSTBC would look at new sites if they meet community demand (example campground in Burns Lake)
2. How does your organization view its role in relation to the regional parks and trails? (i.e. What values and priorities do it share? What are the key differences?)
 - As RDBN has not had a parks function – the relationship has been limited
3. How would you describe the current land management partnership(s) between your organization and the RDBN? How is it working? What could be improved?
 - RSTBC has a good working relationship with the RDBN. RSTBC offers support and information to the RDBN and vice versa
 - Often multiple jurisdictions are involved with rec sites (crown land, regional district) so discussions are needed to decide who will manage what
 - RDBN has the tools to manage front country sites (dealing with crowds, parking etc.) and RSTBC is better at backcountry sites
4. How would you describe the current partnership between your organization and the Lakes Outdoor Recreation Society? How is it working? What could be improved?
 - RST awards \$20,000 directly to LORS annually
 - Contracts LORS to maintain 28 sites – LORS subcontracts some of the maintenance
 - LORS raises additional money through the community forest and other sources to pay for maintenance of rec sites
 - LORS is both a partnership agreement holder and contractor with RSTBC. Can be challenging as there is a perceived authority over what is done at rec sites
 - RSTBC helps LORS with maintenance supplies

- The sites managed by LORS are the best managed in the district
 - Procurement, limited budgets, and staff capacity has been a challenge for RSTBC and LORS may not understand the procurement process fully
 - No one wants to decommission campsites, but challenges arise when there are danger trees, vandalism or road maintenance needed and there is no budget/ capacity to repair
 - RDBN could help with these additional costs
 - Charging for use of some campsites could help with maintenance costs but this is a challenge in the north where the sites do not see consistent use
 - Could see a scenario where more funding is allocated to busier sites. Counters are deployed at all sites to determine use
 - 5 sites became user maintained this year – LORS could continue to maintain these sites as volunteers
5. Can you tell us about Rec Sites and Trails current approach to public access? Has this approach changed over the past few years or do you anticipate any changes in the future?
- The recreation sites model is built on the premise that camping is free and accessible to the public. RSTBC could consider fee sites soon
6. What opportunities do you see for improving the regional parks and trails system over the next 10 years? What about the Village?
- Boat launches
 - Rec sites are the access for these boat launches
 - Parking at boat launches so visitors are not parking in campgrounds
 - RSTBC Would be happy to see the RDBN take over popular campgrounds and trails
 - RSTBC could enter into a partnership with RDBN –license of occupation through lands branch
 - Kager Lake – partnership with RD? busy site with lots of infrastructure
 - Sites on Francois lake, Augier Lake, Government Point
 - Priority for RSTBC is to provide an overnight camping service, and would like RDBN to do the same if they took on sites
 - Finding funding for building [infrastructure] is easy but challenging to find maintenance funding
 - Larger sites for RVs would be well used
 - Expand camping opportunities in Burns Lake
7. Are there plans or initiatives that you think we should be aware of or consider through this process?

- Accessibility is a focus – one site per community
 - Upgrades have been made at Noralee East and Kager Lake
8. Of all the things we've talked about, what is the most important?
- Boat launches!
9. Is there anything else you'd like to share with us or anything you think is relevant that we haven't talked about yet?
- If RDBN wants to take over rec sites, it would be better for everyone. LORs doing well but limited budget is limited

ROUND 1 LAND MANAGEMENT PARTNERS STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

1. (Introductions)
2. Please tell me about your role with the Ministry of Transportation Infrastructure (MoTI)?
 - Regional Planning Manager with MoTI
 - Involved in any transportation projects within the RDBN
 - Involved with Cycle 16, trails, and other non- motorized vehicle access on MoTI property
 - Reviewed active transportation applications from Village
3. Either on a personal level or through your work, how familiar are you with the regional parks and recreation areas in Area B and E of the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako? What about the Parks and Trails in the Village of Burns Lake?
 - Aware that there is an RFP for a multi-use path along Highway 35
 - Also aware of the Cycle 16 project connecting Smithers and Telkwa
 - Beach access on MoTI Rows is limited
 - There is a great need for parks and recreation in the area
4. How does your organization view its role in relation to the regional parks and trails? (i.e. What values and priorities does it share? What are the key differences?)
 - MoTI offers access on transportation right of ways (ROW) which could impact potential parks and trails if they cross MoTI lands
5. How would you describe the current land management partnership(s) between your organization and the RDBN? How is it working? What could be improved?
 - MoTI has a good working relationship with RDBN
 - Challenging to retrofit – current MoTI ROW as multi-use path – example minimum set back from transportation with significantly limited area to be used as a trail
6. Can you tell us about MoTI’s current approach to public access? Has this approach changed over the past few years or do you anticipate any changes in the future?
 - MoTI’s policy is to provide grants to local governments to build infrastructure
 - There has been a push over the past few years to build more active transportation infrastructure
 - The demand for beach access has always been strong
7. What opportunities do you see for improving the regional parks and trails system over the next 10 years? What about the Village?

- Great that they are considering taking on recreation sites
 - The RDBN's parks service is too new to comment on opportunities for improvement
8. Are there plans or initiatives that you think we should be aware of or consider through this process?
- Active transportation grants
 - MoTI may be updating grant process/ requirements
9. Of all the things we've talked about, what is the most important?
- It is great that RDBN is identifying the areas of high use and the parks service will be a great benefit to the community

ROUND 1 ORGANIZED SPORTS STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP NOTES

1. Please introduce yourself and describe the relationship between your organization and the Municipality and RDBN?
 - Volunteer with slo-pitch and on the hockey board
 - Softball
 - Volunteers have applied for grants to upgrade the infields
 - No agreement with Eagle Creek Recreation Commission
 - Fastball played there
 - Interest from others in in fair grounds being used for fall classic tournament to attract tourism
 - Slo-pitch
 - Games are at Eagle Creek Fair Grounds – field 3 is a challenge
 - Volunteers are renovating the bleachers and rotary is helping with the paint
 - Eagle creek has holes in the pitch. T-ball fixed the fields
 - Hockey
 - Village ice rink ice goes in at a good time of the year
 - More hockey camps and increased drop-ins would be good
 - Affordability is an issue - equipment, gear, and tournament fees
 - \$300 per a weekend tournament. Tried to do a house league, but they don't have enough for a team
 - Lowered fees to attract youth
 - Director of Recreation Services for the Village
 - Involved in youth soccer
 - Short season – May and June on school fields (owned and maintained by school)
 - Partnership with Burns Lake soccer and Village – Village handles registration for soccer and basketball
 - Washrooms at field are managed by the Village
 - Village of Burns lake Councillor
 - Involved in the gun club (Area B- property owned by the club) 1000 round range and curling club.

- Curling club - Village runs the curling rink and rents the lounge to the Curling Club. Money from lounge to cover own expenses
- Would like to see broader use of arena
- Village is very responsive always trying to improve service it would be nice to see a broader range of use at the rink

2. What do you love about parks, trails, and recreation in your community?

- People out of the house from the screens
- Walking in the mornings in the up track to the bike park
- Favorite place: Francois lake
- There are so many options
- Kids love the spray park, not safe enough to swim in the lake
- So much within such a short driving distance. 5 min any direction you have opportunities to get outside

3. What are your organization's biggest challenges?

- A lot of volunteer issues and capacity. Volunteer burnout
- Arena has new heating and the snow took out the heaters
 - Only half the heaters working
 - Issues with air circulation and ice issues which all fit within a budget and timeline

4. How could the municipality assist you in reducing the challenges or roadblocks?

- Not many roadblocks – community is very supportive. Its all about finding the right avenue to start a new program

5. Is your membership growing, shrinking, or staying the same? Why?

- Hockey
 - Shrinking but seems like it may grow this year
- Softball
 - Relatively consistent year after year
- Curling
 - Highschool curling needs a dedicated volunteer

- Curling Club has stabilized growth and assists with Friday even drop-ins
- Soccer
 - Little bit of growth. 5%? Back to pre-covid numbers
 - U-18 team has enough to run. 188 kids, 20 more than last year
 - Summertime people disappears not a lot of summer programs

6. Is there anything we should know about parks, trails, and recreation in your community?

- RDBN - limited access for boaters
- Campground operations have failed
- Desire for more outdoor recreation
 - Beachball volleyball court
- Look at partnerships with groups that don't fall under a specific government

ROUND 1 LAKE DISTRICT ARTS COUNCIL STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

1. Can you tell me about the Lakes District Arts Council and your role there?
 - President of the Lakes District Arts Council for last 17 years
 - Arts council is taking a backseat in arts and cultural programming currently
 - Our emphasis is on live performances – impacted by COVID19 – artists and volunteers
 - Changing focus to local artists and visual arts
 - More focus on programming for youth – working with the school district
 - The organization is 100% volunteer run and lots of grants are needed to keep the organization operating
 - Fall 2023 – Green Thumb Theatre partnering with fall fair to bring entertainment
2. What is the relationship between your organization and the Village of Burns Lake?
 - The Arts council has a good relationship with the Village and RDBN and Communication is good
 - Village would like to see more live performances, however, there needs dedicated person to take over planning performances
3. Does the Art Council provide programming or classes? Does the Council use the Village’s parks or recreation facilities for programming?
 - Arts council organizes workshops – both adult and youth
 - Has organized performances at Burns Lake Centennial
 - Art programs for kids
 - Arts council has used spirit square for performances often, school stages, and Lakeside Multiplex in the past
4. From your perspective, how important is access to parks and recreation facilities in your work?
 - Spirit square is important for concerts
 - What’s missing for seniors? Washrooms
 - Better maps are needed – example Ridler Trail
 - Hiking on trails on mountain biking trails, Rod Reid trail are well used by seniors

5. What is missing in the Village in terms of Recreation and Culture? What about the regional district?
 - Professional touring artists
 - Growing exposure available for visual artists – coffee houses ongoing
 - Partnered with Beacon theatre to offer MET opera performances
 - Audience numbers averaging 200 people per performance and post COVID dramatically reduced and did not return
6. Is there anything we should know about parks, trails, and recreation in your community?
 - Burns Lake is a small town with a small taxation base – in favour of long-term planning but careful thought and planning needs to go into maintenance of infrastructure. For example, landscaping downtown
 - Capacity building for cultural and recreation organizations is important
 - Volunteering has become more complex for legal (safety, liability, technological reasons, accounting)
 - Liability insurance for events is becoming a barrier for organizations
 - Weather and wildfires making it more challenging to have outdoor events

ROUND 1 LAKES OUTDOOR RECREATION SOCIETY STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

1. What is the role of the Lakes Outdoor Recreation Society in providing access to parks and trails in the RDBN? What are your organization's key goals for the future?
 - LORS has a contract with RSTBC to maintain recreation sites- LORS repairs picnic tables, cuts grass, performs road maintenance, signage repair, etc.
 - If major maintenance issue RSTBC will send someone – example danger trees
 - LORS has partnership agreement with volunteers
 - Hired a maintenance contractor so volunteers do not do site maintenance
 - When the society first started, the primary aim was trail maintenance
 - Key goals: continue to fundraise for upgrades and maintenance, provide recreation opportunities for residents, attract people to more rural sites
 - RSTBC have reclassified sites to user maintained. LORS would like to change these back to recreation sites and would like not like anything else taken away
 - Challenging to know which government agency to contact regarding certain issues
2. How would you describe the current partnership between your organization and Recreation Sites and Trails BC? How is it working? What could be improved?
 - The relationship is spotty
 - RSTBC is buried under bureaucracy
 - LORS is not given much attention
 - How RSTBC operates can create challenges for LORS
 - Example danger tree assessment a week before may long weekend and people camping anyways
 - Centralization of RSTBC in Smithers has impacted Burns Lake – they are out of touch with what is going on in the Lakes District
 - Buying supplies for maintenance bought in Smithers and brought to Burns Lake
 - Limited funding provided to LORS challenging
 - RSTBC provides LORS \$25,000 annually and they are spending \$60,000
 - BC parks provides LORS \$3,500
 - The RDBN could help with providing additional funding to LORS
 - Road maintenance challenging – impacts access to sites

3. How could the Regional District assist you in reducing the challenges or roadblocks?
 - Communication with RDBN is limited
 - Expressed that the Regional District seems content with the service provided by LORS
 - RDBN to recognize the worth for LORS and provide year after year funding
 - LORS is supportive of RDBN providing boat launches and to take on liability for boat launches

4. What opportunities do you see for improving the regional parks and trails system over the next 10 years? What about Parks and Recreation in the Village?
 - Trail systems – having another contract for trail maintenance
 - LORS does not have time or money to do trails and fire crews have not had much time to assist in recent years
 - Eveneshen trail
 - Closed due to blow down – rotary club has set aside funding
 - Village needs more of the plan for Eveneshen
 - Old ministry highways – 20 years of remediation – this site has been offered to Burn’s Lake Band. Village is interested in partnering with First Nation to develop this property
 - Ridler Trail
 - Location close to town
 - Really great trails out there – on community forest land
 - Guyishton beautiful site but no access to fish

5. Is there anything we should know about parks, trails, and recreation in your community?
 - LORS is passionate about they do and fight for what they do
 - Fear that LORS is seen as a arms length organization
 - The parks component of RDBN is very important

ROUND 2 ROTARY CLUB STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW

1. Please introduce yourself and describe the relationship between your organization and the Municipality and RDBN?
 - Current president of the rotary club
 - Member with the rotary club for 30 years
2. What initiatives are the Rotary interested in for the Village and surrounding area?
 - Involved with maintaining Rod Reid and Eveneshen Nature Trail which is an on-going effort
 - Open to meeting with members of the community to discuss how they can be involved
 - Some past initiatives in the Village include the Gazebo at Sprit Square, trails, skatepark, sani-dump
 - Rotary confirms that the Village has the capacity to take over the maintenance of infrastructure before they begin building
 - Rotary is considering funding bike racks in the Village
 - Rotary has 17 members currently – down from 24 members
 - Rotary is focused on recovering from dip in membership due to COVID
3. Does Rotary have any specific areas of interest?
 - Community focused
 - Focused on meeting the needs of community
 - Rotary has local and international goals that are greater than what is seen in our community. They include literacy, peace, water, and health, to name a few
4. What is the current relationship between the Village and Rotary? How can it be improved?
 - Rotary sees the Village as a community partner
 - Communication could be improved
 - Village could meet quarterly with the Rotary Club
 - Report from the Village about what projects are ongoing would be helpful
 - Simpler for Rotarians when they are raising money for a certain project (i.e if the Village was building a playground)
5. What are the most outstanding achievements Rotary has provided for the Community? In what ways has Rotary accomplished those achievements?

- Sani-dump and tennis courts
 - The exchange program (1 student a year) is life changing for students
 - The work of the entire organization and the resulting synergy
 - Youth citizen of the year award
 - Committed volunteerism and community support
 - The annual auction is a major fundraising event
6. What are some of the challenges Rotary is facing in the future? How can the Village assist?
- Recruitment and volunteer retention
 - Volunteers are over committed
 - Lost membership during COVID – not being able to gather impacted membership
7. What grants are Rotary currently applied for, and which ones will be applying for in the future?
- No grant funding currently - Just fundraising
 - Rotary International has some matching grants, but they have stipulations. District Grants can be used for construction/renovation, but they cannot be used toward the purchase of land or buildings. Nor can they be applied for to fund costs that have already been incurred
 - Village could let Rotary know about grants that they qualify for
 - Rotary is a non-registered entity