

Boise Parks and Recreation Commission

June 19, 2014, 4 p.m.

2014 Ridge to Rivers Trail User Survey - Results

May 17th, 2014 was a perfect day for the 2014 annual survey: We had blue sky and 79 degrees. 13 trailheads were staffed for 12 hours by 3 shifts of 84 volunteers in total.

3 Significant Changes in 2014

1. 1680 filled questionnaires, 35% more than last year and 10% more than the previous record in 2010
2. Hillside to Hollows area was added to the survey, with the trailhead at Healthwise
3. Parks & Recreation bought its own scanning software: Surveys are now cheaper, faster, and the software is available for any surveys by Parks & Recreation and beyond

Presentation Focus

- Hillside to Hollow results, including some comparison with R2R trailheads
- A few key results of the full survey in their context
- 3 interesting trends

Hillside to Hollow Results

Hillside to Hollow is special in many ways. Let me give you some examples.

1. There is a much higher % of female trail users than at the 12 R2R trail heads (65% vs. 48%)
2. Almost ½ of respondents (46%) come daily vs. just 18% at other trail heads, and visits are shorter than in other areas
3. Nearly double as many come alone (65% vs. 35%)
4. More locals from Boise and Garden City than at other trailheads (98% vs. 77%)
5. Just 4% are bicycling vs. 30%
6. 89% are willing to pay an annual user fee vs. 73%
7. 76% brought a dog vs. 26% (same % for female and male)
8. Double as many trail users know the R2R off-leash guideline of 30 ft. (52% vs. 27%; dog owners: 35%)
9. More pleasant interaction between trail users than in other trail areas; see "Case 1" below
10. #1 for trail users seeking solitude, proximity and freedom

Of course it needs to be considered that many (76%) H2H trail users also use other R2R trail areas and their experience there is as well reflected in the survey.

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Key Results in Context

Case 1

Hillside to Hollow and Homestead are leading regarding pleasant interaction between different groups of trail users (e.g. hikers, bikers, dog owners, etc.), and show the highest overall enjoyment of the trails. Are people at these 2 locations more friendly? Could be. But here are some facts:

At Hillside to Hollow we only have 4% bikers and 84% hikers/walkers. 76% trail users bring a dog. So it's more or less just one user group and there is not much opportunity for conflicts.

At Homestead the trail is double track, which means no stress with right-of-way rules and dogs are supposed to be on-leash anyway.

Case 2

What is so special about Old Pen? It's the busiest trailhead; I met one Saturday morning in 50 minutes 215 people! It is where more than at any other trailhead people give exercise as a reason for coming. And 92% are hikers/walkers, with 77% coming not alone; both numbers are the highest % of all trailheads. 89% support trail designations. Trail users come less frequently than anywhere else and they are much younger than in other trail areas (44% under 30).

Where does all this come together? Old Pen went up from 10% of all survey responses to now 17%.

That's why changes we see in overall survey #s are more and more a bit the result of changes at Old Pen. Btw, when asked in the survey which area of the Foothills people use most, the response "Table Rock" grew by 6.4% from last year (now 37.6%).

3 Interesting Trends

1. Age

The number of 60+ year old trail users further increased to now 11%, from 2% in 2000, while the number of 31-50 year old trail users went down year after year to now 44%, from 58% in 2000.

2. Trail Use

The number of hikers/walkers increased from 35% in 2000 to now 53%. Runners went down from 21% in 2000 to now 17%. Bikers went down from 45% in 2000 to now 29%.

3. Management Strategies

Support for trail designations (pedestrians only, mountain bikers only) increased this year further to now 77% from 26% in 2009.

Closing with 2 Survey Comments

- Thank you to the trail maintenance crew - excellent job this year
- Keep up the good work! We're very lucky to have this trail system in our backyard. This makes Boise a special place