

NORTH DAKOTA

State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

RECREATIONAL TRAIL NEEDS | 2018-2022





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The mission of the North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department is to provide and enhance outdoor recreation opportunities through diverse parks and programs that conserve the state’s natural diversity.

Acknowledgements: This publication was prepared by the North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department with Clearwater Communications. Winkelman Consulting surveyed North Dakota households and outdoor recreation providers and analyzed the resulting data included in this publication.

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Overview

Trails in North Dakota

Recreational Trail Needs is a companion publication to the *2018-2022 North Dakota State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)* prepared by the North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department. It was financed in part by a planning grant from the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, under the provisions of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Act of 1965 (PL 88-578, as amended), with additional funding provided by the Recreational Trails Program and the state of North Dakota.

Trails, both motorized and non-motorized, are important components of the outdoor recreation infrastructure in North Dakota. Paved multi-use trails for walking, running and bicycling are most often found in communities and provide close-to-home recreation. Unpaved trails for hiking, mountain biking and horseback riding are more

common in state and federal parks and recreation areas. Paddling trails for canoes and kayaks on rivers and lakes across the state are much more limited. Winter trails are available in North Dakota for cross-country skiing/snowshoeing and fat-tire biking. Off-highway vehicle (ATV, dirt bike or side by side) and snowmobile trails offer opportunities for those interested in motorized recreation.

North Dakota trail enthusiasts have formed a variety of trail user and advocacy groups at the national, state, regional and local levels to support the development and maintenance of trail systems. Active trail groups include the Maah Daah Hey Trail Association, Save the Maah Dah Hey, North Country Trail Association, North Dakota Back Country Horsemen, North Dakota Dirt Riders, Red River Riders and Snowmobile North Dakota.



Demand and Supply

Trails in North Dakota

Trails continue to be among the most popular outdoor recreation infrastructure in North Dakota, utilized by both citizens and visitors to the state.

Definitions

Support facilities along trails can impact a user's interest level and are categorized as follows:

- Primitive trails have neither restrooms nor running water.
- Semi-modern trails have restrooms but no running water.
- Modern trails have permanent restrooms and running water.

PERSPECTIVES FROM NORTH DAKOTANS

A 2017 survey of North Dakota households was conducted to assess interest in outdoor recreation activities and to identify the perceived quantity and quality of facilities for these activities.

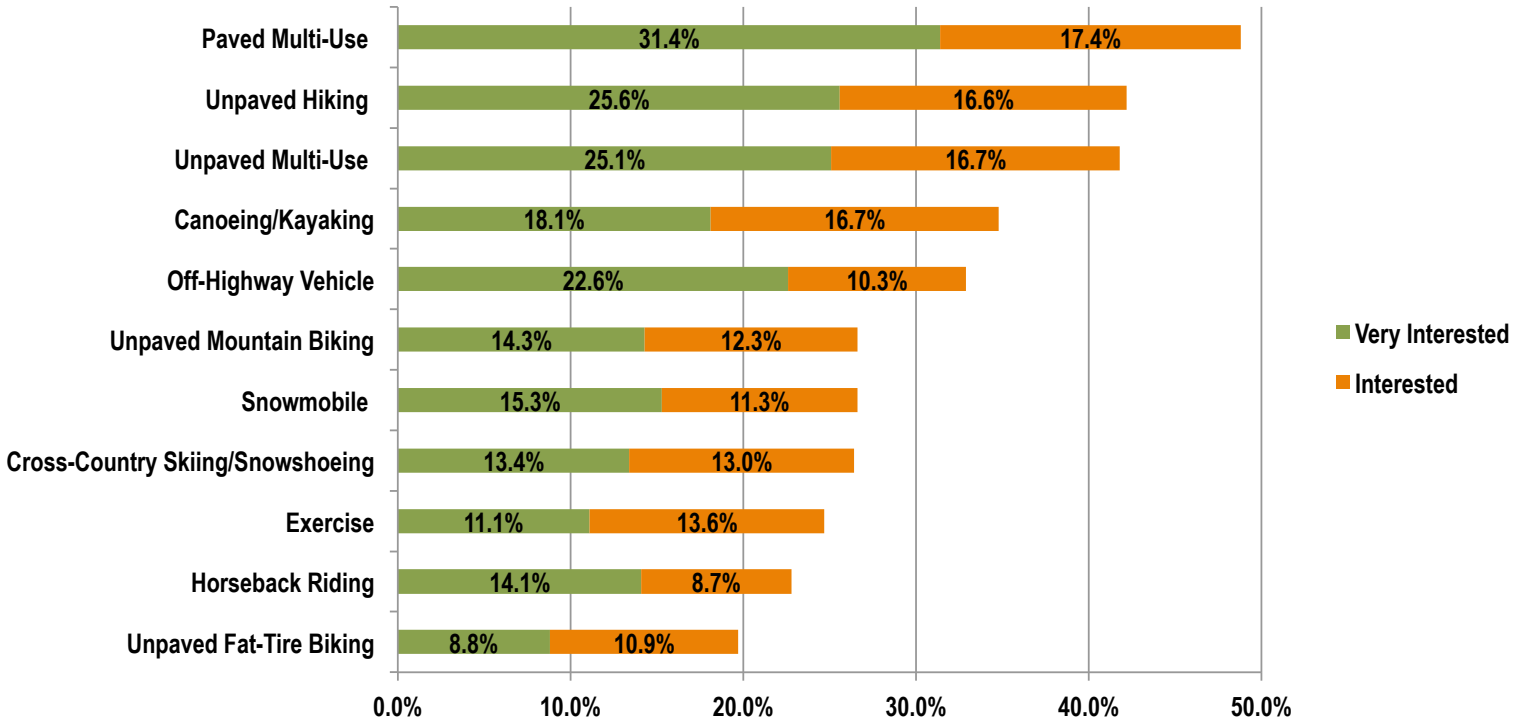
Non-motorized trail usage is one of the most popular outdoor recreation activities for North Dakota households, with 61% interested in using trails for walking, running, bicycling or horseback riding. Five years ago, 58% were interested in using non-motorized trails. When asked an open-ended question about what outdoor activities or facilities they would like to see offered or expanded in North Dakota, the largest number of North Dakota households expressed interest in trails for non-motorized use.

The specific trail activities that interest the most North Dakota households include:

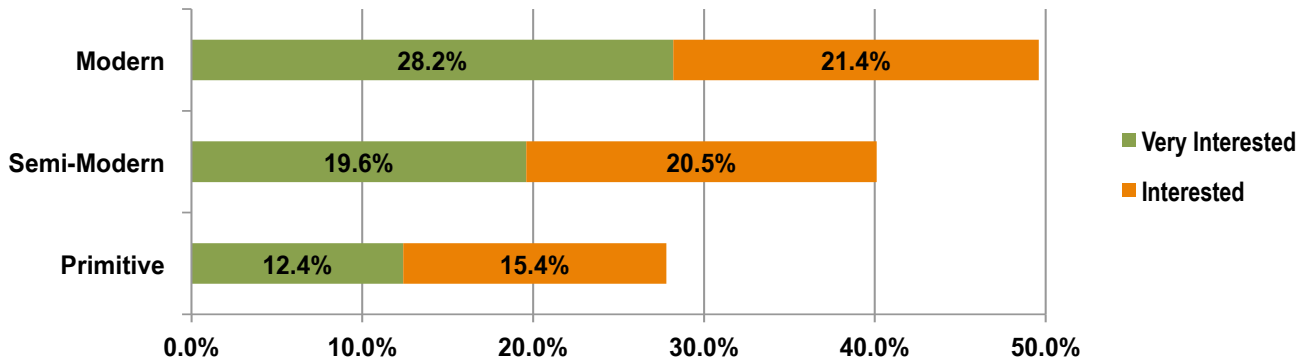
- Using modern trails (50%).
- Using paved multi-use (walking, jogging or bicycling) trails (49%).



Trail Usage Interest by North Dakotans



Non-Motorized Trail Usage Interest by North Dakotans Based on Amenities

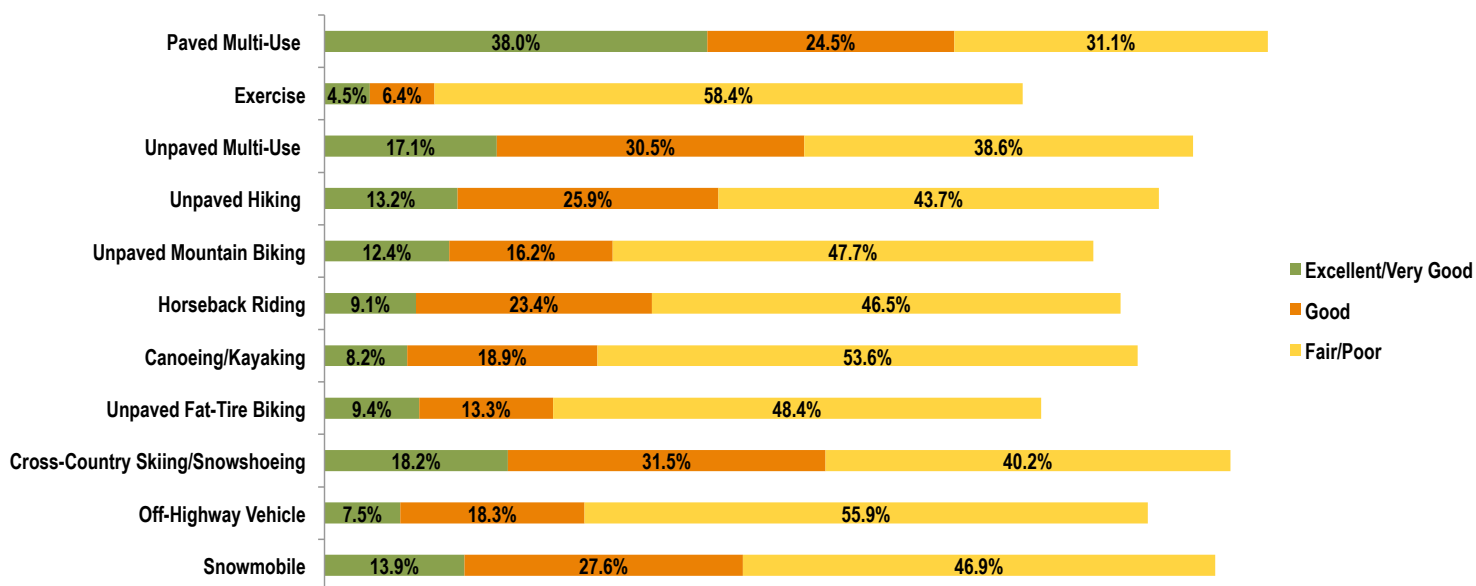


The quality and quantity of trails are critical to the recreation user's experience. North Dakota households that expressed interest in using trails were asked to rate the number of trails and the overall condition of those trails in their area on a five-point scale: excellent, very good, good, fair or poor.

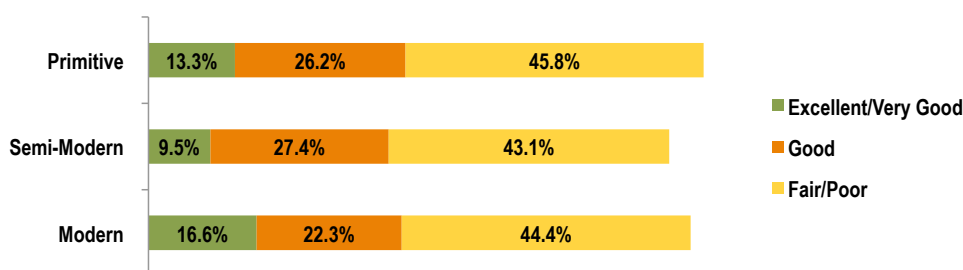
Thirty-eight percent of North Dakota households rate the number and condition of paved multi-use trails as excellent or very good. In contrast, fair or poor ratings are given to:

- Exercise trails with exercise machines or equipment at stations (58%).
- Off-highway vehicle (ATV, dirt bike or side by side) trails (56%).
- Designated paddling trails for canoeing or kayaking (54%).
- Unpaved fat-tire biking trails (48%).

Trail Quality and Quantity in North Dakota

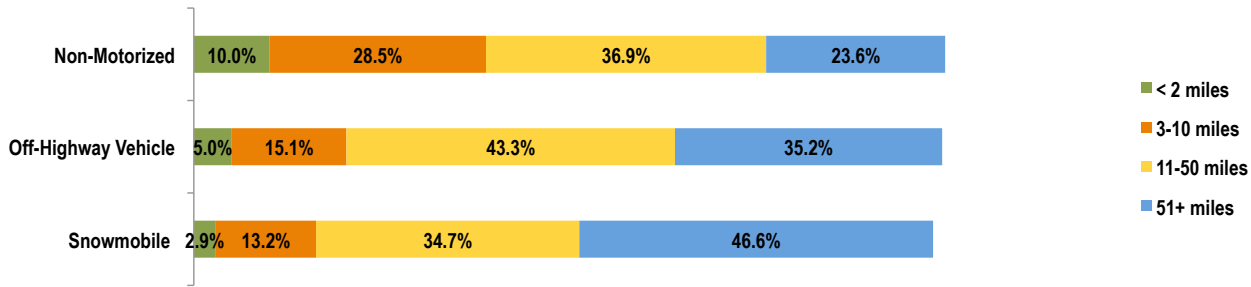


Quality and Quantity of Non-Motorized Trails Based on Amenities in North Dakota



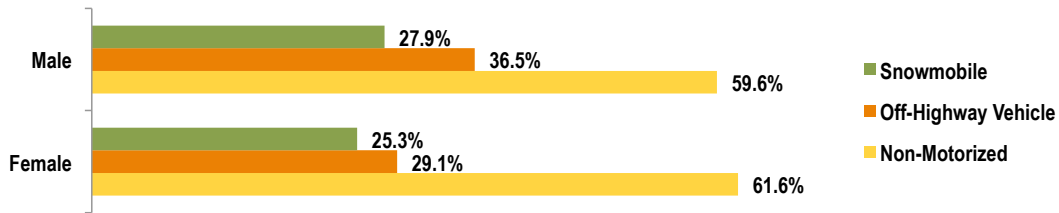
North Dakota households are willing to travel farther to use motorized trails than non-motorized trails, with 47% of North Dakota households interested in snowmobiling willing to drive more than 50 miles to use trails.

Farthest Distance North Dakota Trail Users Are Willing to Travel

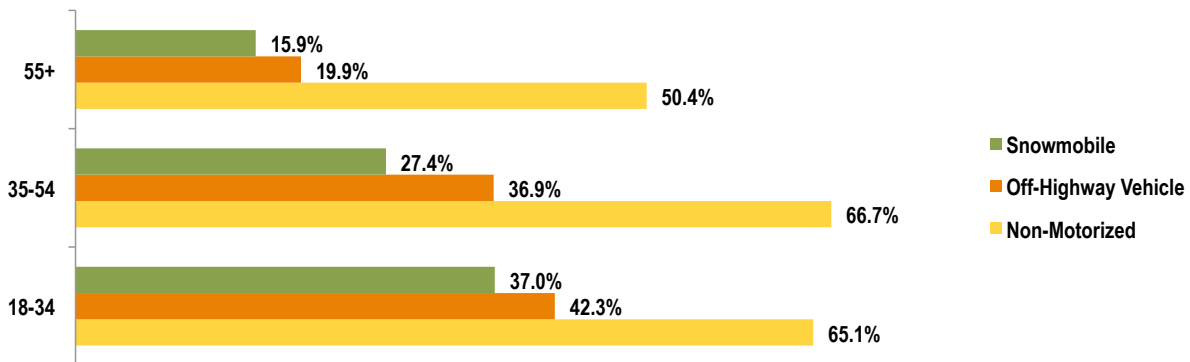


Interest in trails varies somewhat when considering the demographics of North Dakotans or North Dakota households. Men are more interested in using off-highway vehicle (ATV, dirt bike or side by side) and snowmobile trails than women. Motorized trail interest increases as community population decreases.

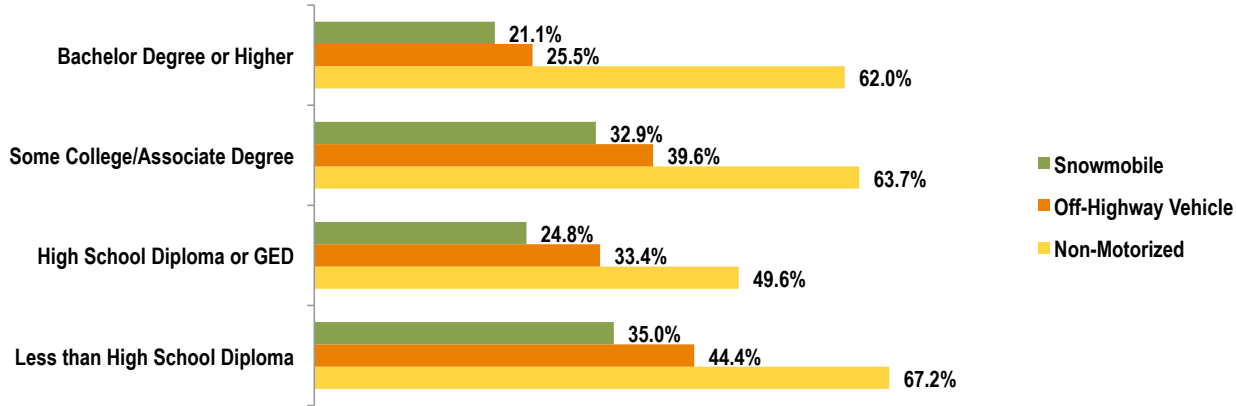
Trail Usage Interest by Gender



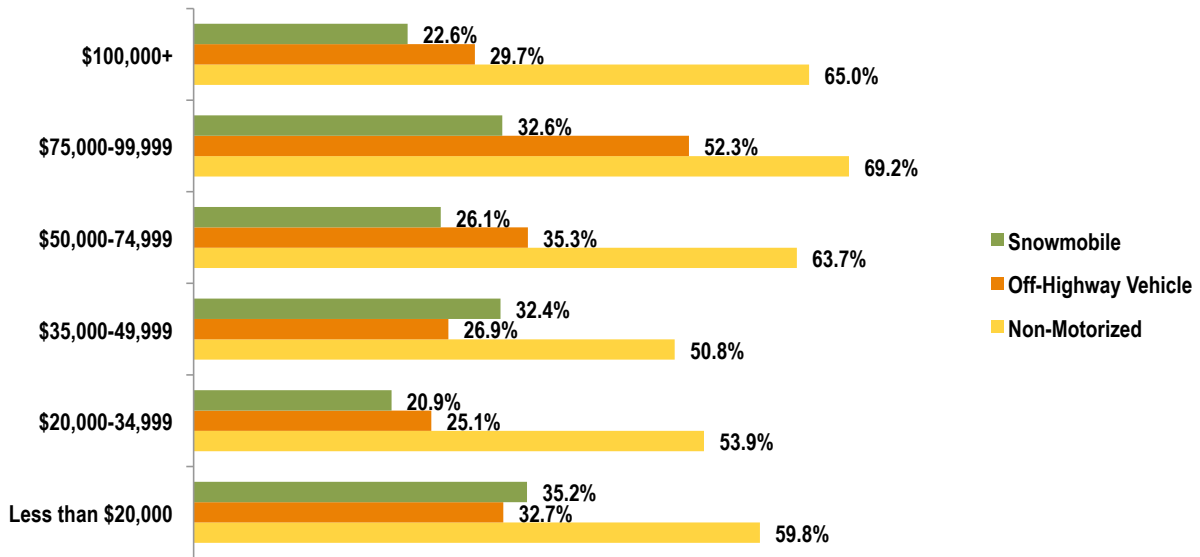
Trail Usage Interest by Age



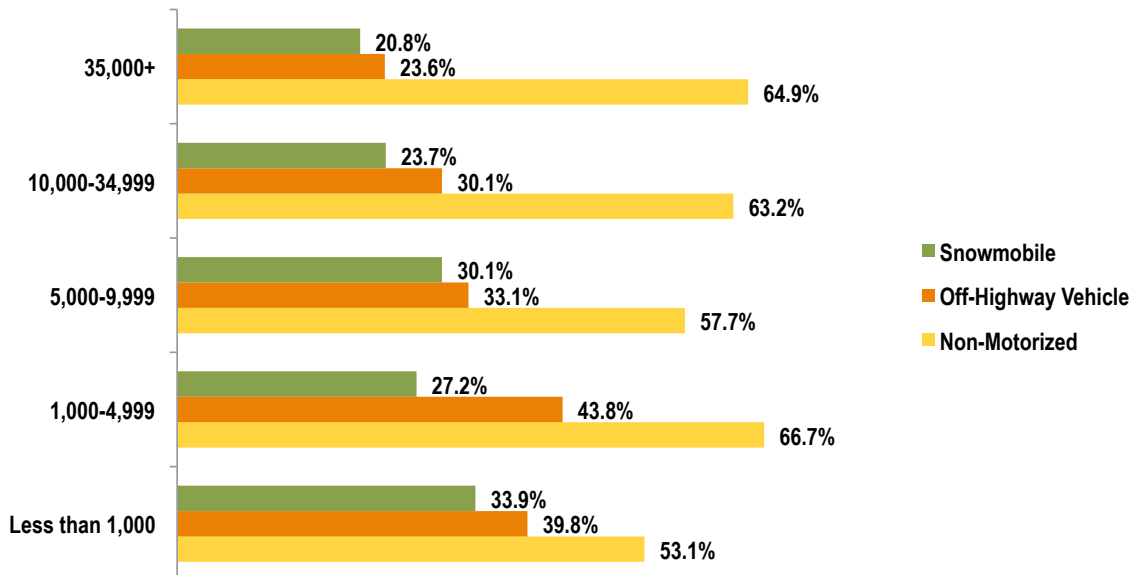
Trail Usage Interest by Education Level



Trail Usage Interest by Household Income Level



Trail Usage Interest by Community Population



Comparing North Dakota households' interest in using different types of trails with their rating of the number and condition of such trails (excellent/very good versus fair/poor) provides a strength-weakness grid. The quality/quantity percentage in the chart shows the difference between the percentage of households that rated a type of trail excellent or very good versus fair or poor.

Modern and semi-modern trails, as well as unpaved multi-use trails, hiking trails and paddling trails for canoeing/kayaking, are primary weaknesses throughout the state. This means there is a high level of interest in these types of trails, but the overall number and condition is rated fair or poor. In contrast, paved multi-use trails are primary strengths, according to North Dakota households.

Strength-Weakness Trail Grid

Trail Type	Interest Level	Quality/Quantity Rating	Strength/Weakness Category
NON-MOTORIZED			
Paved Multi-Use	48.8%	6.9%	Primary Strength
Exercise with Stations	24.7%	-53.9%	Secondary Weakness
Unpaved Multi-Use	41.8%	-21.5%	Primary Weakness
Unpaved Hiking	42.2%	-30.5%	Primary Weakness
Unpaved Mountain Biking	26.7%	-11.3%	Secondary Weakness
Horseback Riding	22.8%	-37.4%	Secondary Weakness
Paddling for Canoeing/Kayaking	34.8%	-45.4%	Primary Weakness
Cross-Country Skiing/Snowshoeing	26.5%	-22.0%	Secondary Weakness
Fat-Tire Biking	19.7%	-39.0%	Secondary Weakness
NON-MOTORIZED AMENITIES			
Modern	49.6%	-27.8%	Primary Weakness
Semi-Modern	40.1%	-33.6%	Primary Weakness
Primitive	27.8%	-32.5%	Secondary Weakness
MOTORIZED			
Off-Highway Vehicle	32.9%	-48.4%	Secondary Weakness
Snowmobile	26.6%	-33.0%	Secondary Weakness



PERSPECTIVES FROM PROVIDERS

A 2017 survey of North Dakota outdoor recreation providers was completed to assess perceived demand for various outdoor recreation facilities, inventory the quantity and condition of such facilities, and solicit input on future demand and needs.

Public providers reported on the demand for and condition of trails under their management. The types of trails for which the highest proportion of providers say demand exceeds supply include:

- Paved multi-use trails (31.2%).
- Unpaved multi-use trails (26.7%).
- Unpaved mountain biking trails (22.7%).
- Off-highway vehicle (ATV, dirt bike or side by side) trails (22.3%).

Trail Demand Assessed by North Dakota Providers

Trails	Demand Greatly Exceeds Supply	Demand Slightly Exceeds Supply	Overall Demand Exceeds Supply
NON-MOTORIZED			
Paved Multi-Use	10.4%	20.8%	31.2%
Exercise with Stations	5.9%	7.4%	13.3%
Unpaved Multi-Use	7.9%	18.8%	26.7%
Unpaved Hiking	6.4%	14.9%	21.3%
Unpaved Mountain Biking	5.9%	16.8%	22.7%
Horseback Riding	4.5%	5.4%	9.9%
Paddling for Canoes/Kayaks	4.5%	5.0%	9.5%
Cross-Country Skiing/Snowshoeing	6.4%	9.9%	16.3%
Fat-Tire Biking	4.0%	6.9%	10.9%
NON-MOTORIZED AMENITIES			
Primitive	4.0%	13.4%	17.4%
Semi-Modern	5.4%	11.4%	16.8%
Modern	5.4%	10.4%	15.8%
MOTORIZED			
Off-Highway Vehicle	12.4%	9.9%	22.3%
Snowmobile	5.0%	8.9%	13.9%

Providers with the following types of trails report they are in poor condition:

- Unpaved multi-use trails (16%).
- Exercise trails with exercise machines or equipment at stations (11%).

Trail Condition Assessed by North Dakota Providers

Trails	Good Condition	Adequate Condition	Poor Condition
NON-MOTORIZED			
Paved Multi-Use	44.6%	51.3%	4.1%
Exercise with Stations	77.8%	11.1%	11.1%
Unpaved Multi-Use	38.7%	45.6%	15.7%
Unpaved Hiking Only	54.0%	43.0%	3.0%
Unpaved Mountain Biking Only	65.1%	31.2%	3.7%
Horseback Riding	55.0%	45.0%	0.0%
Paddling for Canoes/Kayaks	58.3%	40.8%	0.9%
Cross-Country Skiing/ Snowshoeing	22.0%	78.0%	0.0%
Fat-Tire Biking	55.7%	44.3%	0.0%
NON-MOTORIZED AMENITIES			
Primitive	17.8%	81.4%	0.8%
Semi-Modern	29.2%	69.7%	1.1%
Modern	55.9%	43.3%	0.8%
MOTORIZED			
Off-Highway Vehicle	50%	50%	0.0%
Snowmobile	0.3%	99.7%	0.0%



Priorities

Trails in North Dakota

Based on analysis of the demand for and supply of outdoor recreation facilities in North Dakota, facility needs are prioritized into three levels: primary, secondary and tertiary. Non-motorized trails are a primary need statewide and in each of the eight planning regions. Motorized trails are a tertiary need statewide and in Regions 4, 6, 7 and 8, as well as a secondary need in Region 3.

STATEWIDE TRAIL PRIORITIES

Primary Need: Non-Motorized Trails

Sixty-one percent of North Dakota households are interested in using trails for walking, running, bicycling or horseback riding. Household also expressed interest in using modern trails (50%), paved multi-use trails (49%), unpaved hiking trails (42%), unpaved multi-use trails (42%) and semi-modern trails (40%). Semi-modern trails, hiking trails, modern and unpaved multi-use trails are primary weaknesses statewide. The following percentage of providers report demand exceeds supply: 31% for paved multi-use trails, 27% for unpaved multi-use trails, 23% for mountain biking trails and 21% for hiking trails.

Tertiary Need: Motorized Trails

Twenty-two percent of providers statewide report demand exceeds supply for off-highway vehicle (ATV, dirt bike or side by side) trails.

REGION 1 TRAIL PRIORITIES

Primary Need: Non-Motorized Trails

Using trails for walking, running, bicycling or horseback riding is of interest to 55% of North Dakota households in Region 1, with 47% interested in modern trails. Modern trails, semi-modern trails and unpaved multi-use trails are primary weaknesses for the region. Twenty-nine percent of providers report demand exceeds supply for paved multi-use trails and exercise trails, while 22% say the same for hiking trails.

REGION 2 TRAIL PRIORITIES

Primary Need: Non-Motorized Trails

Fifty-eight percent of North Dakota households in Region 2 are interested in using trails for walking, running, bicycling or horseback riding, with 48% interested in modern trails and 42% in semi-modern. Forty-seven percent are interested in paved multi-use trails compared to 42% in hiking. Primary weaknesses include semi-modern trails, unpaved multi-use trails, modern trails and hiking trails. Twenty-four percent of providers report demand exceeds supply for hiking trails.





REGION 3 TRAIL PRIORITIES

Primary Need: Non-Motorized Trails

Sixty-one percent of Region 3 households are interested in using designated trails for walking, running, bicycling or horse riding. Fifty-one percent are interested in using modern trails, while 44% are interested in using semi-modern trails. Forty-seven percent of households are interested in using paved multi-use trails and 39% in unpaved multi-use trails. Hiking trails are of interest to 41 percent of households. Semi-modern, modern trails, hiking trails, paved multi-use trails and unpaved multi-use trails are primary weaknesses. Providers report demand exceeds supply in the following areas: paved multi-use trails (38%), hiking trails (38%), unpaved multi-use trails (29%) and semi-modern trails (24%). Providers report 40% of paved multi-use trails in the region are in poor condition.

Secondary Need: Motorized Trails

Using designated trails for riding off-highway vehicles (ATVs, dirt bikes or side by sides) is of interest to 43% of households in the region. OHV trails are primary weaknesses. Thirty-eight percent of providers report demand exceeds supply for OHV trails.

REGION 4 TRAIL PRIORITIES

Primary Need: Non-Motorized Trails

Trails for walking, running, bicycling or horseback riding are of interest to 62% of Region 4 households, with 50% interested in modern trails and 41% in semi-modern trails. Forty-eight percent are interested in hiking trails and paved multi-use trails, while 46% are interested in unpaved multi-use trails. Primary weaknesses are hiking trails and semi-modern trails. According to providers, demand exceeds supply for unpaved multi-use trails (36%), paved multi-use trails (32%), mountain biking trails (28%), hiking trails (24%), semi-modern trails (20%) and modern trails (20%).

Tertiary Need: Motorized Trails

Twenty-eight percent of the region's providers report demand exceeds supply for off-highway vehicle (ATV, dirt bike or side by side) trails. OHV trails are primary weaknesses.

REGION 5 TRAIL PRIORITIES

Primary Need: Non-Motorized Trails

Trails for walking, running, bicycling or horseback riding are of interest to 61% of Region 5 households with 51% interested in modern trails. Fifty-one percent are interested in using paved multi-use trails while 44% are interested in unpaved multi-use trails. Hiking trails, semi-modern trails, modern trails and unpaved multi-use trails are primary weaknesses. Providers note demand exceeds supply for paved multi-use trails (25%), unpaved multi-use trails (25%) and exercise trails (22%).

REGION 6 TRAIL PRIORITIES

Primary Need: Non-Motorized Trails

Fifty-four percent of North Dakota households in Region 6 are interested in using designated trails for walking, running, bicycling or horseback riding, while 45% are interested in using modern trails and paved multi-use trails. Primary weaknesses are semi-modern trails, modern trails, hiking trails, unpaved multi-use trails and paved multi-use trails. Paved multi-use trails (33%) and mountain biking trails (26%) are facilities where providers say demand exceeds supply. Providers report 23% of paved multi-use trails in the region are in poor condition.



Tertiary Need: Motorized Trails

Off-highway vehicle (ATV, dirt bike or side by side) trails are primary weaknesses in the region.

REGION 7 TRAIL PRIORITIES

Primary Need: Non-Motorized Trails

Trails for walking, running, bicycling or horseback riding are of interest to 66% of Region 7 households. Fifty-four percent are interested in using paved multi-use trails, 53% in modern trails, 47% in hiking trails, 46% in unpaved multi-use trails and 46% in semi-modern trails. Hiking trails and semi-modern trails are primary weaknesses. Providers listed paved multi-use trails (33%), unpaved multi-use trails (31%) and mountain biking trails (24%) as facilities where demand exceeds supply. According to providers, all exercise trails in the region are in poor condition, as are 29% of mountain biking trails.

Tertiary Need: Motorized Trails

Demand exceeds supply for off-highway vehicle (ATV/dirt bike/side by side) trails and snowmobile trails, according to 21% of Region 7 providers.

REGION 8 TRAIL PRIORITIES

Primary Need: Non-Motorized Trails

Fifty-six percent of North Dakota households in the region are interested in using designated trails for walking, running, bicycling or horseback riding with 44% interested in modern trails. Hiking trails, modern trails, unpaved multi-use trails, semi-modern trails and paved multi-use trails are primary weaknesses. According to providers, demand exceeds supply for the following facilities: paved multi-use trails (42%), unpaved multi-use trails (36%), primitive trails (36%), modern trails (36%), hiking trails (33%), mountain biking trails (33%), exercise trails (26%) and semi-modern trails (31%). According to providers, 33% of hiking trails in the region are in poor condition.

Tertiary Need: Motorized Trails

Off-highway vehicle (ATV, dirt bike or side by side) trails are primary weaknesses. Thirty-eight percent of providers report demand exceeds supply for OHV trails and 27% say the same for snowmobile trails.

Survey Data

In January 2017, the North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department (NDPRD) contracted with Clearwater Communications, Bismarck, to perform survey and planning services to develop the *2018-2022 North Dakota State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)*, along with two companion publications, *Recreational Trail Needs* and *Wetlands Priorities*.

Clearwater Communications subcontracted with Winkelman Consulting to complete the research portion of the project, which included surveys of North Dakota households and outdoor recreation providers to determine demand for and supply of outdoor recreation facilities in the state. For the household survey, 800 North Dakotans

over the age of 18 were surveyed by telephone in March 2017, resulting in a 95% confidence level with a maximum margin of error of $\pm 3.5\%$.

For the provider survey, 68% of North Dakota's 314 outdoor recreation providers (214) completed the mail survey in February and March 2017, resulting in a 95% confidence level with a maximum margin of error of $\pm 4.0\%$.

Recreational Trail Needs summarizes the research on the demand for and supply of non-motorized and motorized trails in North Dakota.





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