

SAN LUIS VALLEY TRAILS AND RECREATION PLAN

JULY 2014

SLVGO

SAN LUIS VALLEY TRAILS AND RECREATION PLAN

Produced by the San Luis Valley Great Outdoor Coalition

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PLANNING FOR THE SAN LUIS VALLEY'S GREAT OUTDOORS

The purpose of this master plan is to lay the foundation for improving the San Luis Valley's outdoor recreation opportunities and for enhancing promotions of the region's varied recreational resources over the course of the next ten years. With this master plan, the San Luis Valley Great Outdoors Coalition (SLVGO Coalition) offers the Valley's counties and communities a set of tools and strategies for enhancing the quality of life for residents through outdoor recreation while also enticing more tourism.

This master plan is designed to serve as a road map that the SLVGO Coalition, its partners and SLV residents can use to build increased awareness of the region's recreation resources and facilitate greater exploration and enjoyment of the SLV's outdoors.

Throughout the planning effort, "outdoor recreation" has been defined broadly in order to explore a wide variety of ways that San Luis Valley (SLV) communities and organizations can facilitate play, exercise, community wellness, and the exploration and enjoyment of the SLV's great outdoors. For the purposes of this master planning effort, outdoor recreation includes in-town recreation (e.g., skate parks, ball fields, fairgrounds, playgrounds, multi-use recreation complexes), backcountry travel and recreation (e.g., trails, camping, mountain climbing, boating), stewardship projects (e.g., trail building, invasive weed removal, protecting and conserving critical sites), outdoor events and community gatherings (e.g., Monte Vista Crane Festival), heritage travel (e.g. visits to historic sites, agritourism), as well as recreation programming and activities (e.g., camps, guided tours, clinics).

Elements of the Master Plan

The master plan is broken into 4 main sections. In addition to this introduction that introduces the SLVGO Coalition and outlines the purpose of the plan, the master plan includes the following elements:

I. SLV Recreation Needs. This section describes the master planning process and, in particular, summarizes what SLVGO Coalition heard

from SLV residents during its extensive community outreach. Recreation needs are identified and provide the basis for the SLVGO Coalition's priority initiatives and tool kits.

II. The Challenges and Benefits of Connecting More People to the Outdoors.

This section acknowledges the mounting challenges we face as a society in inspiring healthy lifestyles and connecting youth with the outdoors. Additionally, this section summarizes health and economic benefits of outdoor recreation, increased physical activity and connecting residents with the outdoors are summarized.

III. SLVGO Coalition's Priority Initiatives.

The SLVGO Coalition's set of 6 priority initiatives are outlined in this section of the master plan. Collectively, the initiatives represent an ambitious effort to improve recreation facilities, expand recreation experiences across the SLV, and increase the promotion of the region's recreation opportunities. Each initiative is defined by a measurable objective, which will aid the SLVGO Coalition in evaluating its progress. The initiatives address year-round recreation and include an effort to encourage more outdoor recreation in the winter. Each initiative includes a listing of potential projects.

IV. Outdoor Recreation Tool Kits.

Addressing 9 different topics, the recreation tool kits provide strategies for implementing the priority initiatives and recreation projects. Each tool kit includes a set of best practices as well as case studies. The tool kits are designed to be stand alone tools that can aid the SLVGO Coalition, SLV communities, and organizations in expanding recreation opportunities, creating convenient access to the outdoors and increasing awareness and promotion of the SLV’s recreation resources.

Additionally, the master plan includes a list of resources (e.g., reports, websites, and organizations) that provide information regarding outdoor recreation and tools for encouraging more physical activity, access to the outdoors, and recreation.

Communication Media

Although not contained within the master plan document, the planning process also involved the development of communication media intended to spread the word about the SLVGO initiative, raise awareness of the SLV’s recreation opportunities, and begin the process of building a robust culture of recreation in the SLV. The communication media include:

- A website dedicated to the SLV’s recreation resources: www.slvgo.com
- A growing social presence on Facebook (www.facebook.com/SLVGO) and Instagram (<http://instagram.com/slvgo>)
- A digital newsletter and database of SLV recreation enthusiasts
- An SLVGO logo
- A series of SLVGO promotional graphics

It is also important to note, that this master plan is intended to act as a living document – one that SLV communities will hopefully contribute to and refine over the next ten years. For example, the SLVGO Coalition expects to see the plan’s list of potential projects grow as new partners and more communities get involved in the development and promotion of outdoor recreation.



A group hike (courtesy of Silver Thread Outdoor Recreation Club)

The Master Plan’s Target Audience(s)

As mentioned above, this master plan is intended as a tool to serve SLV communities and their partners in boosting recreation opportunities and increasing access to the outdoors. Therefore, the primary audience for this master plan is SLV residents and the overarching goal of the recreation planning effort is to improve the quality of life for SLV residents through enhanced recreation opportunities and experiences.

The secondary audience for the promotional strategies outlined in this master plan are non-residents and recreation-oriented tourists. In addition to targeting SLV residents, recreation promotions, marketing and outreach should be designed and distributed to also pique the interest of non-residents. Future promotional media should target travelers passing through the SLV on their way to another destination and potential visitors living outside the region (e.g., Colorado’s Front Range communities, Albuquerque). East of the SLV, Colorado’s Front Range is teeming with outdoor enthusiasts, many of

whom migrated to Colorado because of its recreation resources and crave more recreation options and, in particular, less crowded trails and more solitary outdoor experiences. According to visitor tracking conducted at Great Sand Dunes National Park and the Alamosa Convention and Visitors Bureau, the states of origin for travel to the San Luis Valley are typically Colorado, New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas and California.

As the Sangre de Cristo NHA, Colorado Welcome Center, Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve and other attractions and tourism groups refine their visitation monitoring and tracking, SLVGO Coalition and its tourism partners can use this customer research to implement more targeted promotions to proven receptive markets.

For more specifics on ideas and strategies for engaging both resident and non-resident audiences please refer to the Promotion Tool Kit.

Introducing the SLVGO Coalition

The San Luis Valley Great Outdoors (SLVGO) is a regional, cooperative initiative to create a long-term plan for increasing physical activity and access to trails and recreation in the San Luis Valley. This initiative, spearheaded by the SLVGO Coalition, is a partnership between counties, municipalities, interested organizations and federal, state and local land management agencies. Efforts to holistically approach trail and recreation development in the SLV began in 1996 with the development of the Great San Luis Valley Trails and Recreation Master Plan. Building on the 1996 Master Plan and inspired by the America's Great Outdoors (AGO) initiative launched by President Obama in 2010, SLVGO brings partners from all reaches of the SLV together in order to develop a framework for improving, sustaining and promoting outdoor recreation opportunities.

In April 2010, President Obama launched the AGO initiative to address the threat of a diminished



Adventure programs training expedition (courtesy of Adams State Adventure Programs)

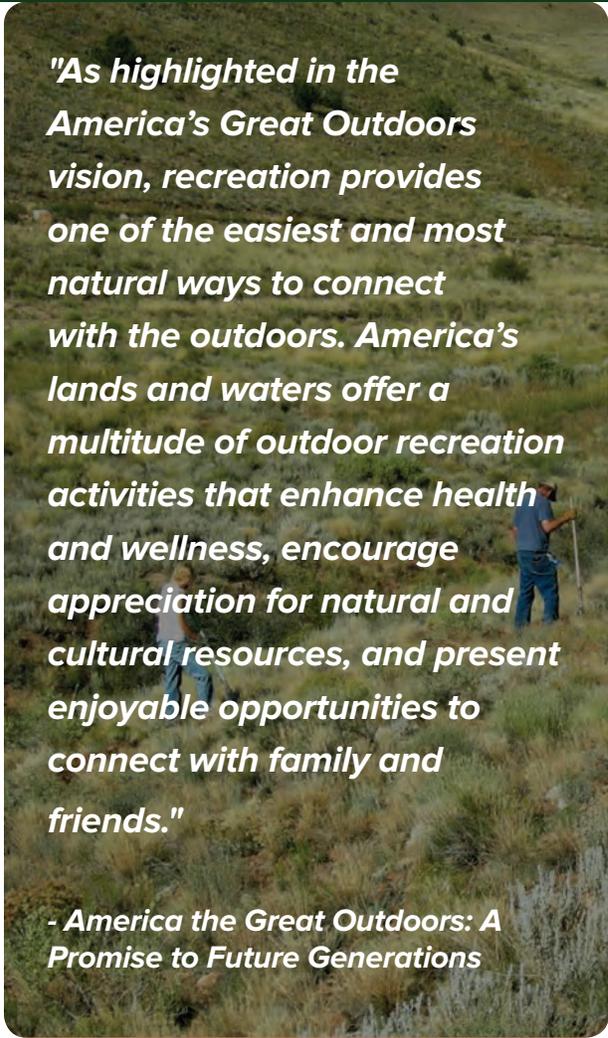
connection between people and the outdoors that our increasingly urbanized and plugged-in society has spawned. In February 2011, the Administration released an action plan for this initiative, *America's Great Outdoors: A Promise to Future Generations*. Implementation of the plan is now connecting American to the outdoors with jobs, education, recreation and service and is protecting and restoring the country's treasured lands and waters. Secretary of the Interior at the time, Ken Salazar, and others recognized the San Luis Valley as a priority area for AGO projects.

The SLVGO Coalition intends to fulfill the provisions of the AGO action plan as it relates to outdoor recreation and trail development by expanding access to the SLV's outdoors.

Goals and Objectives of the SLVGO Coalition

The SLVGO Coalition provides a forum where those interested in or working in recreation, conservation, and public health convene to share information and ideas about outdoor recreation throughout the SLV. Together members of the coalition endeavor to accomplish the following:

- Promote and improve recreation and trail development in the San Luis Valley and in Colorado. It shall look for ways to maintain a sustainable infrastructure system, and means to manage and operate such a system.
- Enhance the voluntary exchange of information in order to identify and address stakeholder concerns in a proactive manner.
- Participate in the use and on-going refinement of Valley recreation and trail needs to fulfill the America's Great Outdoors Initiative as it relates to these purposes.
- Provide education and public outreach concerning recreation and trail topics.
- Promote the protection, conservation, and wise use recreation and trail development for socio-economic sustainability, viability, and the benefit of the associated natural environment.
- Ensure that safe, adequate access to trails and recreational areas exist within the SLV for the benefit of residents and visitors alike.



"As highlighted in the America's Great Outdoors vision, recreation provides one of the easiest and most natural ways to connect with the outdoors. America's lands and waters offer a multitude of outdoor recreation activities that enhance health and wellness, encourage appreciation for natural and cultural resources, and present enjoyable opportunities to connect with family and friends."

- America the Great Outdoors: A Promise to Future Generations

- Promote existing recreational opportunities through mapping and marketing tools.
- Encourage and develop local youth programs for enhanced physical health for education regarding recreation related career opportunities and to help make the better life-long stewards of the land.
- Coordinate the revision of the 1996 SLV Master Plan that recognizes new recreational trends, land ownership and management, and the accomplishments of the 1996 plan. The coalition will allow the SLV to optimize existing recreational opportunities and to identify and help implement new recreational priorities.
- Provide recommendations to a variety of entities involved in trails and recreation projects.

With leadership from Rio Grande County Commissioner, Karla Shriver, the SLVGO Coalition is made up of representatives from all six San Luis Valley counties, National Park Service (NPS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), USDA Forest Service (FS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area (SdCNHA), Adams State University, community governments, as well as, tourism, conservation and recreation organizations. The SLVGO Coalition operates as a group of volunteers under the umbrella of the San Luis Valley Council of Governments. (See the title page for the list of SLVGO

Coalition members involved in the master planning effort).

SLVGO Coalition is an inclusive group that recognizes its impact will only be increased with more members. The Coalition welcomes the involvement of more partners and hopes to continue to build its geographic and industry sector reach.



Stone quarry trail building (courtesy of Marty Asplin)



OUTDOOR RECREATION PATTERNS AND NEEDS IN THE SLV

During the summer and Fall 2013, the SLVGO Coalition conducted valley-wide public outreach in order to explain its San Luis Valley Trails and Recreation Master Plan project (Master Plan) and to solicit community input. Through outreach, the SLVGO Coalition identified un-met recreation needs, uncovered potential recreation projects, and inquired about barriers to recreation within the SLV. Through the extensive and inclusive public engagement process, the SLVGO Coalition collected ideas for improving access to the outdoors, expanding recreation opportunities, and increasing awareness and promotion of all there is to do and see in the SLV.

The SLVGO Coalition hosted five public open houses in Alamosa, Del Norte, Creede, Saguache, and Crestone. Additionally, the SLVGO Coalition collected input at the La Jara Farmers Market, toured Costilla County, and attended a number of meetings with town boards, tourism groups, and stakeholders. At the onset of the project outreach effort, the SLVGO Coalition updated its website with Master Plan information and set up social media tools including a Facebook page, Instagram account, and an e-newsletter in order to spread the word about the project and offer other avenues for collecting input. Local press coverage was also helpful in spreading the word about the Master Plan and its outreach tools.

Finally, the SLVGO Coalition utilized a digital survey to collect additional input. Between August 5th and October 15th, 2013, Root House Studio administered a 25-question survey via Survey Monkey on behalf of the SLVGO Coalition. Like the other outreach efforts, the survey was designed to gain understanding about where and how recreation opportunities and experiences can be improved in the SLV. The 10-15 minute survey was marketed to stakeholder groups, residents and visitors through SLVGO's newsletter, Facebook page, website and other graphics. The survey was started by 425 respondents and fully completed by 347.

Findings generated from the survey and collected from other public and stakeholder engagement efforts have been used by the SLVGO Coalition to inform development of this master plan. Specifically, the 6 priority initiatives and associated priority projects outlined in Chapter 4 were identified through the various outreach methods.

This section summarizes these findings. For a more detailed and full summary of the survey findings and specific list of ideas collected through the outreach process please refer to the Public Engagement Summary in the Appendix.



Shriver Wright State Wildlife Area (courtesy of Rio de la Vista)

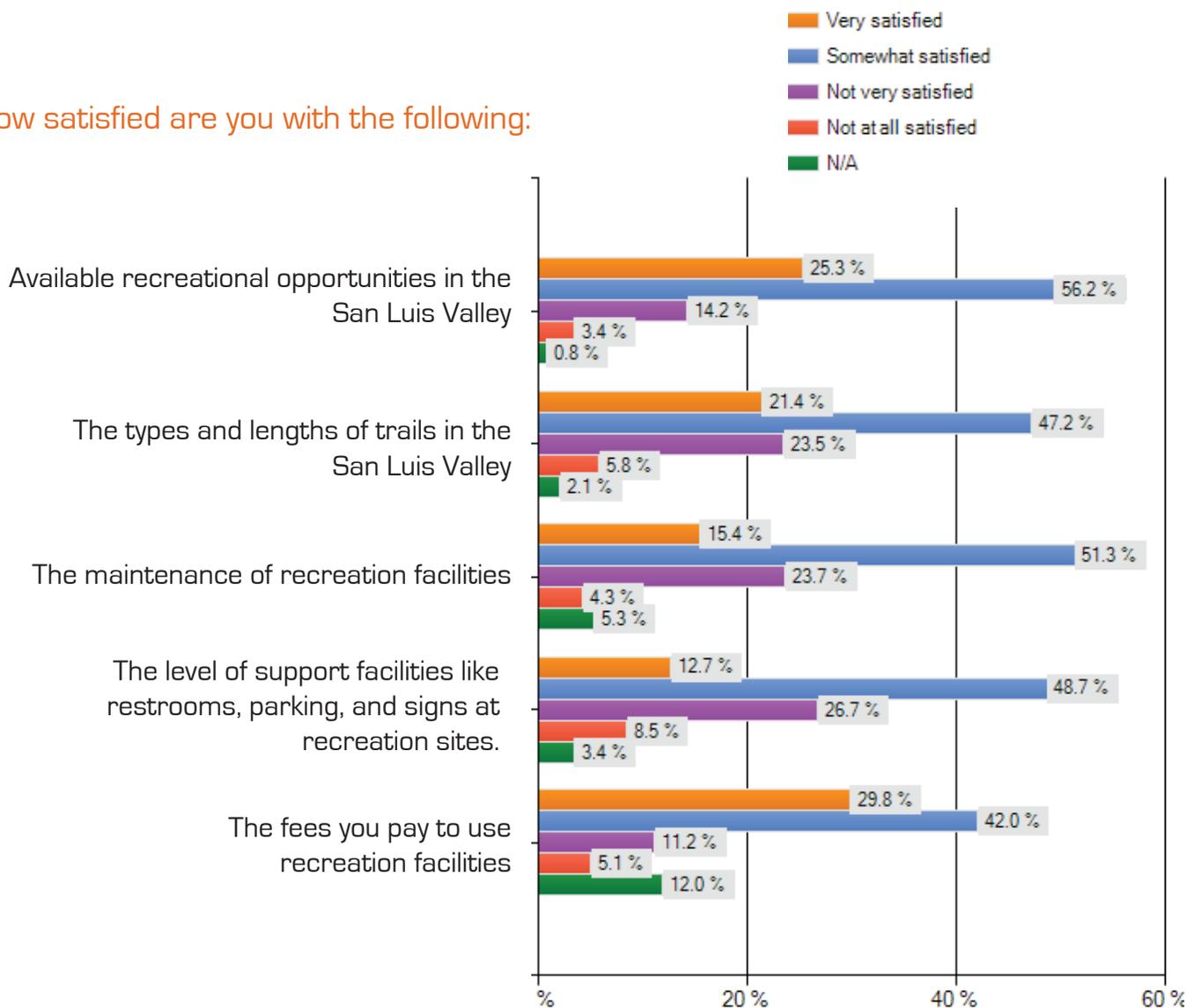
Commonly Expressed Un-met Outdoor Recreation Needs

A number of common themes emerged from the analysis of the community input collected through meetings, open houses and the survey. These were ideas, needs, or concerns that were expressed by multiple groups or individuals and that surfaced repeatedly during the outreach effort. The reader will see that these common themes formed the foundation of the SLVGO Coalition’s priority initiatives and inspired the development of several of the tools in the plan’s Outdoor Recreation Tool Kits.

Through community outreach, the SLVGO Coalition heard that there is a need for:

- Better information (e.g. maps, guides, signs) and more promotional media/tools to raise awareness of existing recreational opportunities.
- More connectivity among communities and linkages between existing trail systems, towns and recreation areas.
- More trails and a variety of trail experiences.
- More recreational activities and programs geared towards SLV youth.
- A wide range of recreational experiences across the SLV that cater to a broad base of residents and visitors.

How satisfied are you with the following:



Frequency and Type of Recreation Participation

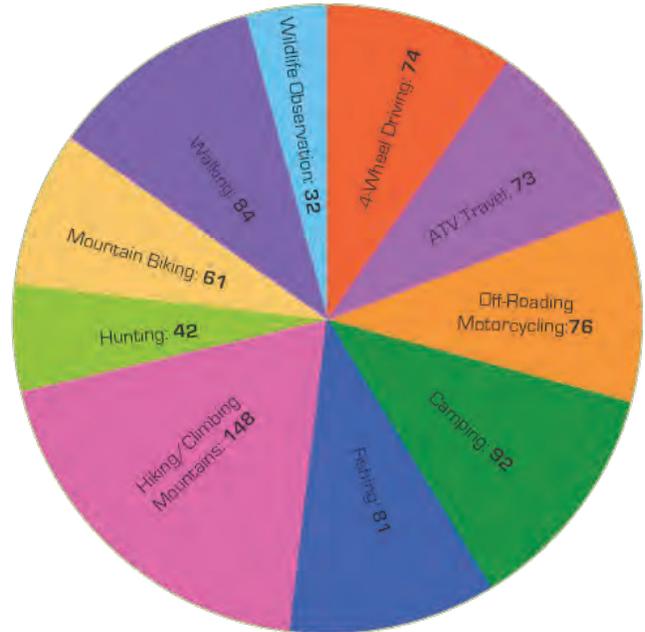
The first set of survey questions were designed to help the SLVGO Coalition understand recreation usage composition and patterns. 95% of survey participants indicated that they had recreated in the SLV in the past 12 months. Participants were also asked how often they participated in recreation and where their preferred recreation locations are in the SLV.

- The majority of respondents indicated that they recreate at least 2-3 times a month, with 43.8% recreating once a week or more.
- The vast majority, 70% of respondents, prefer to recreate in remote areas on public lands and only 7.3% preferred “In Town” recreation locations.

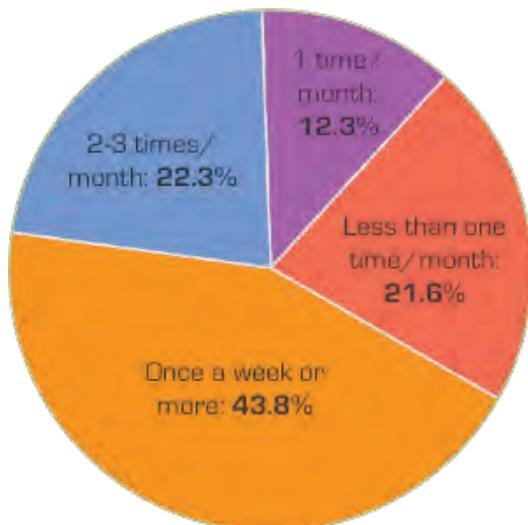
The survey presented a list of the following 44 recreational activities and asked respondents to check all of the activities that they engage in.

All of the 44 proposed activities were checked by at least 12 respondents, however, the top five recreational activities were camping (62% of respondents), hiking/climbing mountains (61%), walking (56%), picnicking (37%) and hunting (28%).

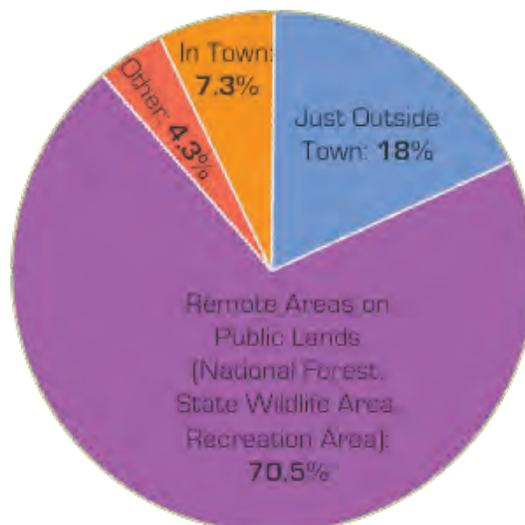
Which activities do you participate most frequently in in a given year?
(Top 10 responses shown below)



How often do you participate in recreation in the San Luis Valley?
(Choose one)



What is your preferred location to recreate in the SLV? (Choose one)



Most popular recreation activities

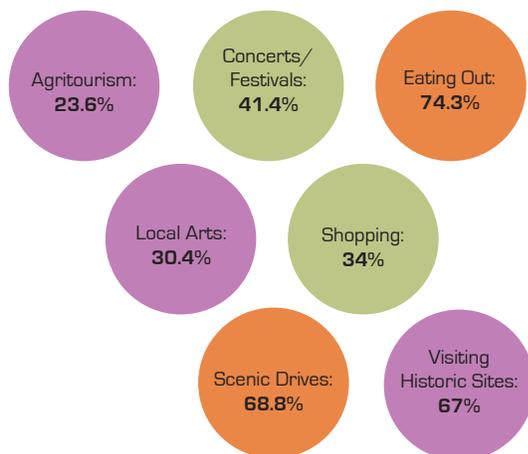
As indicated in the chart below, people engage in a fairly wide variety of recreation including winter and summer uses and motorized and non-motorized uses. The recreational activities that people participate in most frequently included hiking/ mountain climbing, camping, ATV travel and off-road motorcycling.

Other recreation activities

The survey provided the opportunity for respondents to write in any additional activities they engage in within the San Luis Valley. At the open houses, participants were also encouraged to explain what types of recreation they enjoy in the SLV. Some of these uses that were reported in the “other” response category and/or from discussions with the public and stakeholders included:

- Rodeo & Equestrian skills
- Float fishing
- Tubing
- Star gazing/astronomy
- Outdoor photograph
- Team sports
- Collecting/harvesting (e.g. sheds, piñon, fruit)
- Gardening
- Dance
- Archeology
- Spiritual retreats

Also, survey findings revealed that recreational use is combined with the following types of other activities:



Quotes from the Survey

“Even as a near-by resident and frequent visitor to the SLV, I have trouble finding access point to the incredible public lands resources that I know are available”

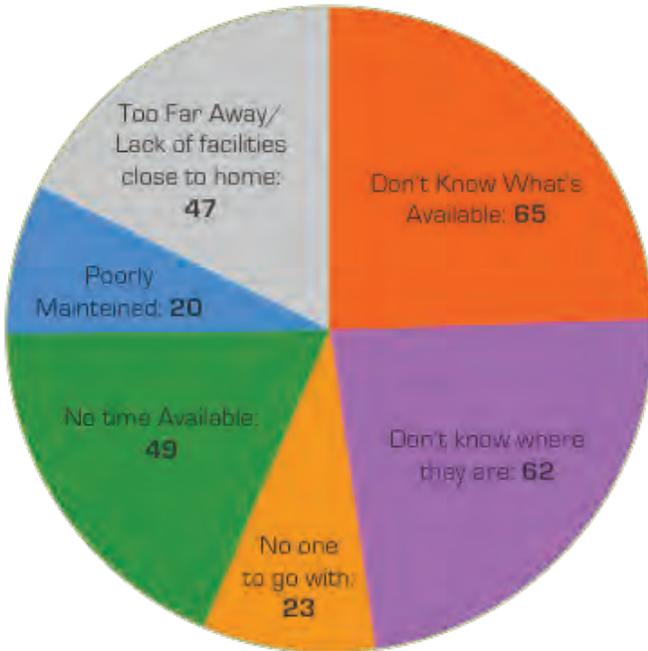
“Would like more educational opportunities to teach people new sports and more group activities to encourage new participants.”

“I’ve been looking for a new mountain biking destination. It’d need 3-4 days worth of good riding, camping, and amenities like restaurants, coffee shops, and brew pubs.”

“More trails. There are quite a few short sections of single-track hiking and biking trails, it would be great to connect some for more cohesion and longer trail sections.”

“Mountains and recreation are great, but it’s the people who make or break recreational enterprises. We need to give visitors a reason to come back and a sense of belonging when they’re here. This is an educational process of which all San Luis Valley residents should be apprised, if tourism is to grow and thrive here.”

If you do not use or infrequently use parks, public lands, trails, and/or other recreational amenities in the SLV, what are your reasons?
(Top 6 responses shown below)



Demand for more recreation opportunities

Among the 44 proposed activities, respondents were then asked to select what activities they'd like to have more opportunities for in the SLV. Survey respondents expressed a significant desire for more motorized recreation opportunities including snowmobiling, 4 wheel driving, ATV travel and Off-road motorcycling. Substantial demand was also expressed for non-motorized uses such as mountain biking, hiking, fishing and camping. Both swimming (indoor facilities) and cross-country skiing (groomed Nordic trails) were brought up in the context of residents expressing a need for winter recreational opportunities.

Through the survey and at the open houses, people were again given the opportunity to suggest any "other" recreational opportunities beyond those listed that they would like to see more of in the SLV. Additional proposed activities included:

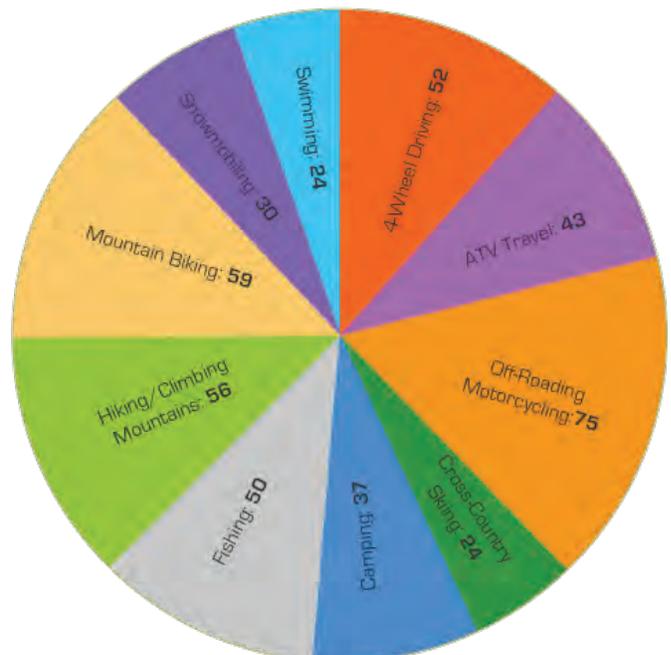
- Rodeo arena/facilities
- Team sports (e.g. soccer, football)

- Wheel chair accessible bike/walking paths
- Outdoor music event venue
- Live music and dancing programming
- Dog specific areas
- Cycling (Paved, Designated, Road Routes, Trails)
- Par golf course
- Educational outings and instructional programs (e.g., archaeology, flora and fauna, gardening, kayaking)
- More Rio Grande flow and recreation (e.g. fishing, boating, riverside trails)
- Ice skating facilities
- Youth programming (camps and outings)
- Outdoor volleyball

Barriers to Recreation

The digital survey contained a set of questions designed to identify the obstacles that may be preventing both SLV residents and visitors from taking advantage of the area's recreational resources. The answers to this set of questions revealed that there is a shortage of information about what is available and that there is a need to raise the visibility and awareness of SLV recreational resources. For example, over half of the respondents

What activities would you like to have more opportunities for?
(Top 10 responses shown below)



indicated that they do not use or infrequently use parks, public lands, trails and/or other recreational amenities in the SLV because they either “Don’t know what’s available” (34%) or they “Don’t know where they are” (32%).

As a follow up to the barrier survey questions, respondents were asked the open-ended question, “What would provide you with incentives to recreate outside more often in the SLV.” This line of questioning was also used to engage participants at the public open houses. Ideas generated from this question are summarized below.

Raising the visibility of what’s available in terms of recreation facilities, areas and programs would prompt more recreation. Ideas for creating more awareness of SLV’s recreational resources included:

- More information on trails including level of expertise required, mileage, trail head locations.
- Maps showing where recreation opportunities are available.
- A website or another online portal explaining where and what is available in terms of recreation facilities, programs and events.
- Information on winter recreation opportunities across the SLV.
- Better guides to SLV areas, lands, parks, destinations.
- Tours.
- More outreach/publicity/advertising of recreation opportunities.
- Tourism materials featuring recreation opportunities.
- Sport-specific maps (hiking and camping destinations, ATV routes, mountain biking, equestrian).

Improved signage so that people can find recreation destinations and feel more comfortable while they are out on the trail. Ideas related to sign improvements included:

- Give trails names, not just numbers. Names are more memorable.
- More information at trailheads and along

trails such as mileage, trail markers (e.g. cairns, direction signs), and difficulty.

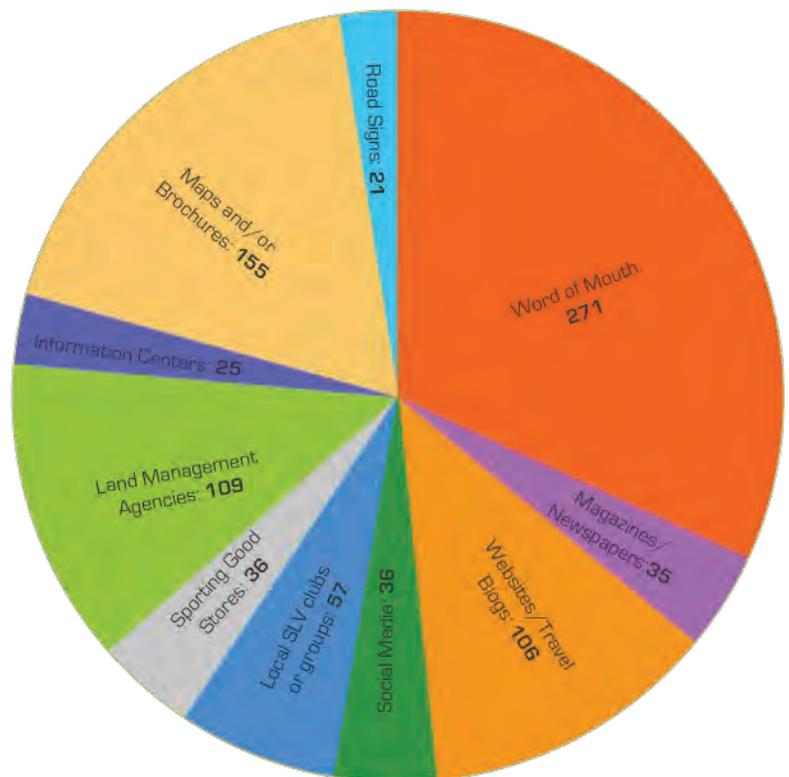
- “You are Here” stickers on maps.
- Wayfinding signs in town and along roads that direct travelers to recreation destinations and clear road signs at access points.

Make access more convenient and enhance recreation opportunities by increasing connectivity.

Ideas related to enhanced connectivity included:

- Connect trails from town.
- Ensure there are recreation facilities such as parks and paths within walking distance from towns.
- Connect towns and recreation areas using the Rio Grande.
- Paved/shaded/off-road/safe routes for kids.
- Link existing trail networks with one another.
- Ability to ride ATVs into towns (Saguache, Del Norte, South Fork).
- Link recreation areas (e.g. Bonanza to Saguache; La Garita to Carnero Pass).
- Consider using railroad corridors, canals/ditches and Utility right of ways as links between recreation areas and to improve connections between communities.

When planning a trip or recreation outing in the SLV, which of the following sources of information do you rely on the most?



- Utilizing the Rio Grande corridor as a link through voluntary, incentive-based agreements with private landowners.

Offering more recreation programming would attract more people and help spread the word about what’s available throughout the SLV. Potential programming ideas offered included:

- Group activities. Weekend outing clubs.
- Guided hikes and/or tours.
- Instructional recreation activities.
- Recreation-oriented events.
- Equestrian skill building.

More camping areas and more information on existing camping opportunities. Ideas related to camping included:

- Offer a range of camping experiences from in-town, full-service camping to primitive, backcountry camping.
- Organized camping outings.
- Offer more camping closer to town and/or in town.

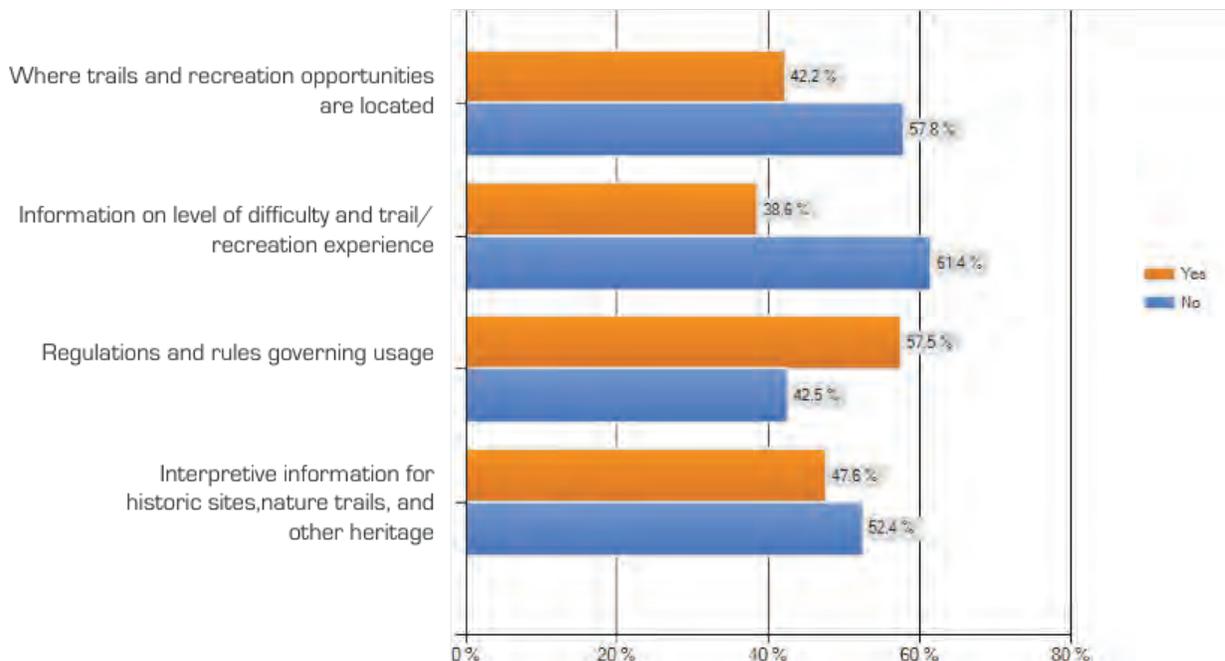
Build and/or connect more miles of single-track trails. Various user groups including motorized and non-motorized users asked for more trails and specifically more, single-track trails.

- Link existing trails and created looped trail systems to offer more miles of single-track and more varied trail experiences.
- More single-track trail open to motorcycle use.
- More single-track trail for trail running, hiking, and mountain biking.
- Create long, destination worthy trails that allow for a full day of travel.

More amenities in towns to accommodate recreational users and tourism as well as a culture of hospitality.

- Coffee shops
- Breweries
- Equipment rentals
- A variety of types of camping
- Offer classes to local businesses on hospitality and ensure business owners and locals are informed about Valley recreational resources so that they can share them with visitors.
- Share ideas for entrepreneurial ventures for better catering to tourists.

Is there adequate information addressing the following?



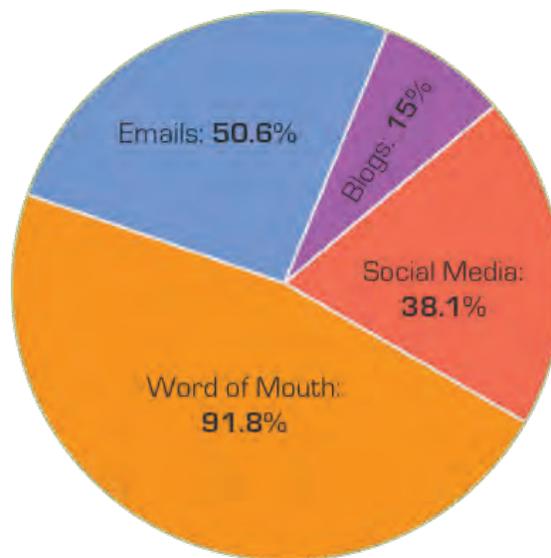
Satisfaction with Recreation Services and Information Sources

In the survey, respondents were asked to rank their satisfaction with recreation, trail services and facilities, as well as with information services and sources of information. As evidenced by the blue lines in the bar chart below, respondents were overwhelmingly “somewhat satisfied” with available recreation opportunities, the types and lengths of trails, maintenance of recreation facilities, level of support facilities, and fees. However, respondents expressed less satisfaction with information sources on recreation opportunities in the SLV.

In order to understand how locals and visitors plan their recreation trips and share their experiences, the survey included a number of questions about information sources. Given satisfaction with land management agencies, visitor/information centers and sporting good shops as sources of information on recreation facilities, it will be important for SLVGO to keep these information outlets updated with the most current offerings and opportunities. While “word of mouth” is a trusted and reliable trip planning resource, the survey findings indicate that other information sources such as regional websites, social media and guidebooks can be developed and/or enhanced.

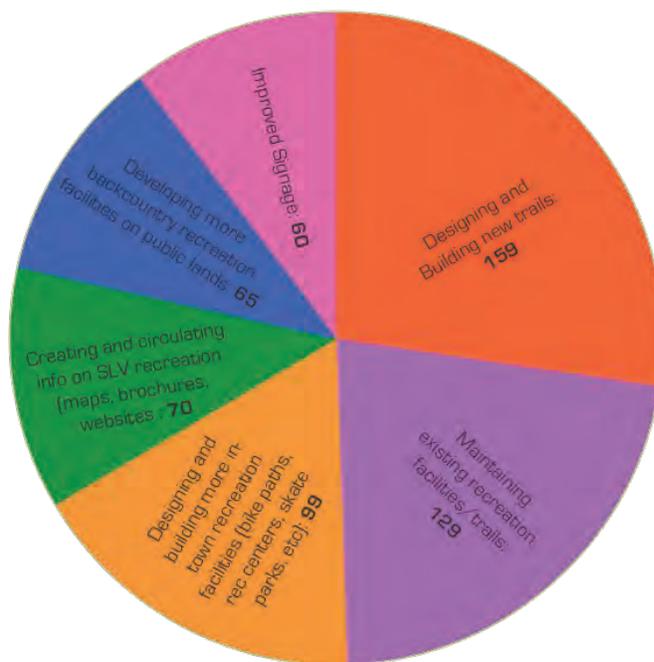


What media do you use to share information about your recreation experiences in the SLV? (choose all that apply)



Note: Facebook is the primary social media outlet

Which should be top funding priorities for SLV Great Outdoors? (Top 6 responses shown below)



Funding

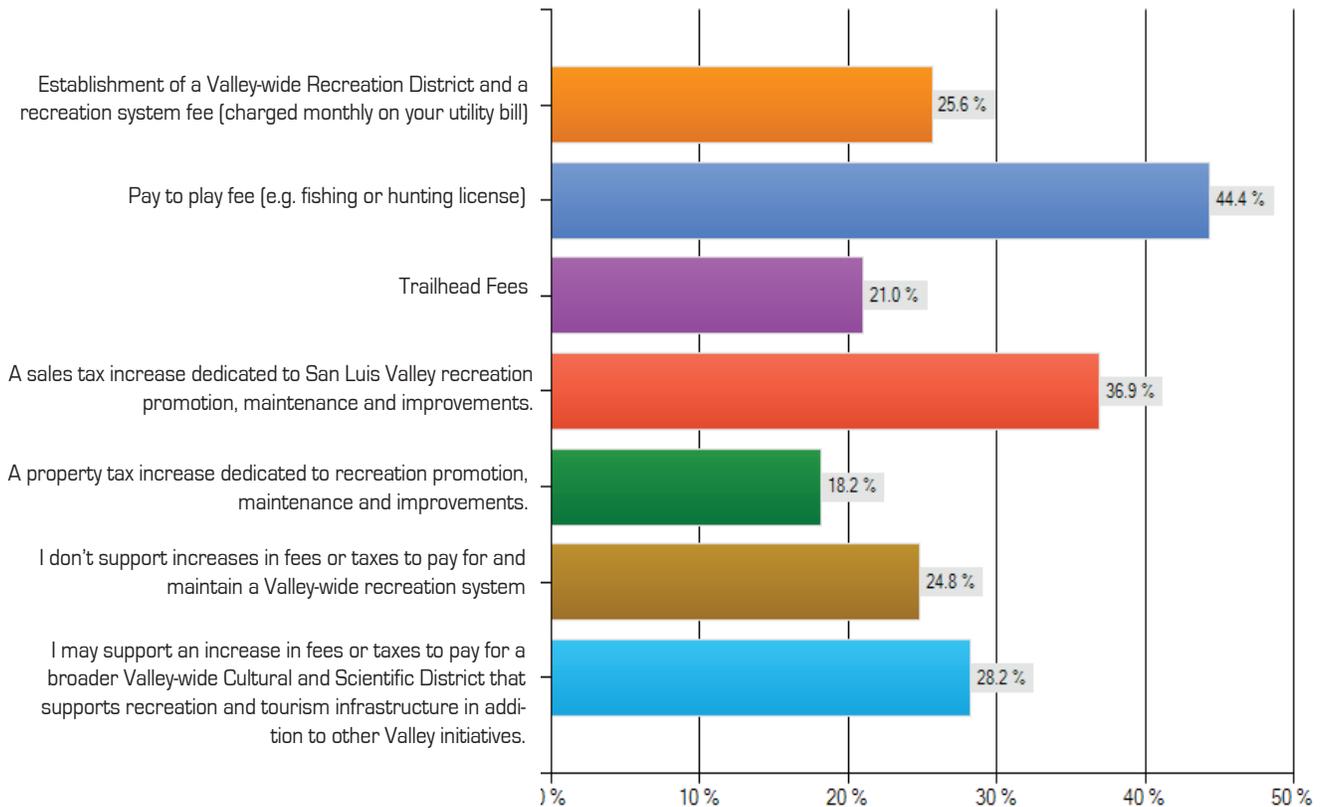
Since the SLVGO endeavors to build a financially sustainable and scalable system of Valley-wide recreation opportunities, the survey included questions designed to gauge respondent's views on potential funding mechanisms. Of the potential funding options presented, "Pay to Play Fees (e.g. fishing and hunting licenses, entrance fees)" received the most support (44%). The least favorable option was "A property tax increase dedicated to recreation maintenance and promotion" (18%) and a quarter of the respondents said they "Do not support increases in taxes to pay for and maintain a Valley-wide recreation system" (25%).

The following were identified as the top three priorities for SLVGO to fund:

- Designing and building new trails
- Maintaining existing recreation facilities and trails
- Designing and building more in-town recreation facilities (e.g., skate parks, rec centers, bike paths).

Support for this type of spending by the SLVGO was also echoed at the public open houses and in discussions with stakeholders

Which of the following funding options would you support to expand and maintain recreational opportunities in the San Luis Valley? *(Check all that apply)*





CHALLENGES AND BENEFITS OF OUTDOOR RECREATION

The SLVGO Coalition has joined a nationwide effort to reinvigorate outdoor recreation and instill a love of the great outdoors.

The outdoor experience is no longer an integral part of many American's existence. Increasingly busy schedules, seductive technology, and changing cultural norms are keeping more and more Americans inside and leading to an unhealthier society. Thirty years ago, most Americans led lives that kept them active and at a healthy weight, but times have changed.... Today we tend to drive rather than walk or bike; eat fast food and snack regularly; and spend free time with TVs, digital gadgets, video games, computers, and the Internet rather than the outdoors. We are busier than ever and our diets reflect that with frequent fast food visits and fewer home-cooked meals. The statistics related to the inactivity of Americans and the obesity epidemic are staggering with about one-third of adults and 17% of children weighing in as obese¹.

Outdoor Recreation among Youth is on the Decline

This societal problem is compounded by the fact that outdoor recreation among youth is on the decline across the country. For the past three years, The Outdoor Foundation has conducted a nationwide survey to examine youth participation in outdoor recreation. In 2009, The Outdoor Foundation conducted a nationwide survey of over 41,000 individuals between the ages of 6 and 25².

In their *Special Report on Youth, The Next Generation of Outdoor Champions*, The Outdoor Foundation outlines a number of key findings, including the following:

- 59% of 6- to 24 year-olds participated in outdoor recreation (defined as having taken part in one or more of 40 outdoor activities at least once during 2008).

- Youth participants made up 34% of all outdoor recreation participants. Participation in outdoor recreation was highest among 6- to 12-year-olds at 64%, declined to 61% for 13- to 17-year-olds, and declined further to 54% for 18- to 24-year-olds.
- Youth participation in outdoor recreation declined since 2006 in all age groups and among both boys and girls. The rate of decline was greatest among 6- to 12-year-old girls (77% in 2006 versus 58% in 2008).
- More males participated in outdoor recreation than females (56% versus 44%).
- More Caucasians participated in outdoor recreation than other ethnic populations (79% versus 7.4% for African Americans).
- Running, bicycling, and freshwater fishing were the most popular outdoor activities among youth.
- Parents, friends, and family were the strongest influences in getting younger children to participate in outdoor recreation.
- 46% of youth reported that lack of time and interest kept them from participating in outdoor activities more often.
- Youth with nearby walking and biking routes participated in more outdoor recreation (21% more for walking routes and 25% more for biking routes).

These national trends in combination with findings from SLVGO Coalition's public outreach efforts have informed development of the Tool Kit section (Chapter 5) of this master plan which offers strategies for improving access to the outdoors and enhancing recreation opportunities and experiences.

In the United States today, physical inactivity and unhealthy diet are second only to tobacco use as the main causes of premature death³. While this societal problem is grave, it is surmountable. A growing body of research indicates that easy-to-reach parks, recreation programming, activated outdoor spaces, and access to healthy foods can have an extraordinary positive impact on community health. The SLVGO Coalition is dedicated to inspiring and re-invigorating a love of the outdoors and advocates that recreation in the SLV should be fun, safe, healthy, and accessible to all.

1 Center for Disease Control and Prevention, <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpao/aboutus/index.html>

2 <http://www.outdoorfoundation.org/pdf/ResearchYouth.pdf>

3 Active Design Guidelines – Promoting Physical Activity and Health in Design. http://www.nyc.gov/html/ddc/html/design/active_design.shtml.

The Benefits of Outdoor Recreation

The SLVGO Coalition intends to help communities across the SLV grow and leverage their outdoor recreation opportunities in order to boost the wellness of SLV residents while also attracting recreation-oriented tourism. This master plan lays the groundwork for realizing the multiple benefits of outdoor recreation by giving residents information about existing recreation opportunities and identifying potential projects that could increase access to the outdoors and grow the number of recreation facilities and programs, thereby helping SLV residents of all ages become more physically active and healthier.

In this section, the benefits of outdoor recreation, encouraging more physical activity, and connecting youth with nature are summarized.

More Outdoor Recreation and Physical Activity Make for Healthier SLV Communities

Given declines in physical activity and time spent outdoors, it is imperative that groups like SLVGO Coalition and local communities play an active role in inspiring and facilitating the adoption of lifestyles that make room for physical activity and outdoor recreation. The health benefits of physical activity and outdoor recreation are numerous. For example, people who are physically active tend to live longer and have lower risk for heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, depression, and some cancers. Physical activity can also help with weight control, and may improve academic achievement in students.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity (DNPAO) is working to implement policy and environmental strategies to make healthy eating and active living accessible and affordable for everyone. One of the DNPAO's priorities is to "increase activity levels by promoting safe and convenient options for physical activity." This priority is directly in line with the SLVGO Coalition's objective to "ensure that safe, adequate access to trails and recreational areas exist within the SLV for the benefit of residents and visitors alike".

According to the CDC, regular physical activity is one of the most important things you can do for your health and the benefits of outdoor recreation and increased physical activity include:

- **Weight Control:** Getting to and staying at a healthy weight requires both regular physical activity and a healthy eating plan. Strong scientific evidence shows that physical activity can help individuals maintain their weight over time.
- **Reduced Risk of Cardiovascular Disease:** Heart disease and stroke are two of the leading causes of death in the United States. However, getting at least 150 minutes a week (2 hours and 30 minutes) of moderate-intensity aerobic activity reduces the risk for these diseases. Regular physical activity can also lower blood pressure and improve cholesterol levels.
- **Reduced Risk for Type 2 Diabetes:** Research shows that lower rates of type 2 diabetes are seen with 120 to 150 minutes (2 hours to 2 hours and 30 minutes) a week of at least moderate-intensity aerobic activity. And the risk lowers with more physical activity. For those with type 2 diabetes, regular physical activity helps control blood glucose levels.
- **Reduced Risk of Some Cancers:** Research shows that risk for both colon and breast cancer is reduced by physical activity. Additionally, ongoing research suggests that the risk of endometrial and lung cancer may also be lower among those who get regular physical activity.
- **Strengthens Bones and Muscles:** Research shows that doing aerobic, muscle-strengthening and bone-strengthening physical activity of at least a moderately-intense level can slow the loss of bone density that comes with age. Regular physical activity helps with arthritis and other conditions affecting the joints. Physical activity also helps build strong, healthy muscles. Aerobic and muscle-strengthening activities can help improve your ability to do everyday activities from climbing stairs, to grocery shopping to toting the kids around.
- **Improved Mental Health and Mood:** Regular physical activity (3-5 times per week) has been proven to reduce risks of depression and help with sleep problems. Additionally this degree of activity can help keep thinking, learning and judgement skills sharp as one ages.

A NATIONWIDE CHALLENGE TO RE-INSTILL HEALTHY LIFESTYLES

Recommended Dose of Physical Activity

"The Center for Disease Control recommends that adults need 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity a week; children need even more—at least one hour of physical activity each day. Less than half of adults and children, however, meet those baseline requirements."

- Urban Land Institute's *Ten Principles for Building Healthy Places*

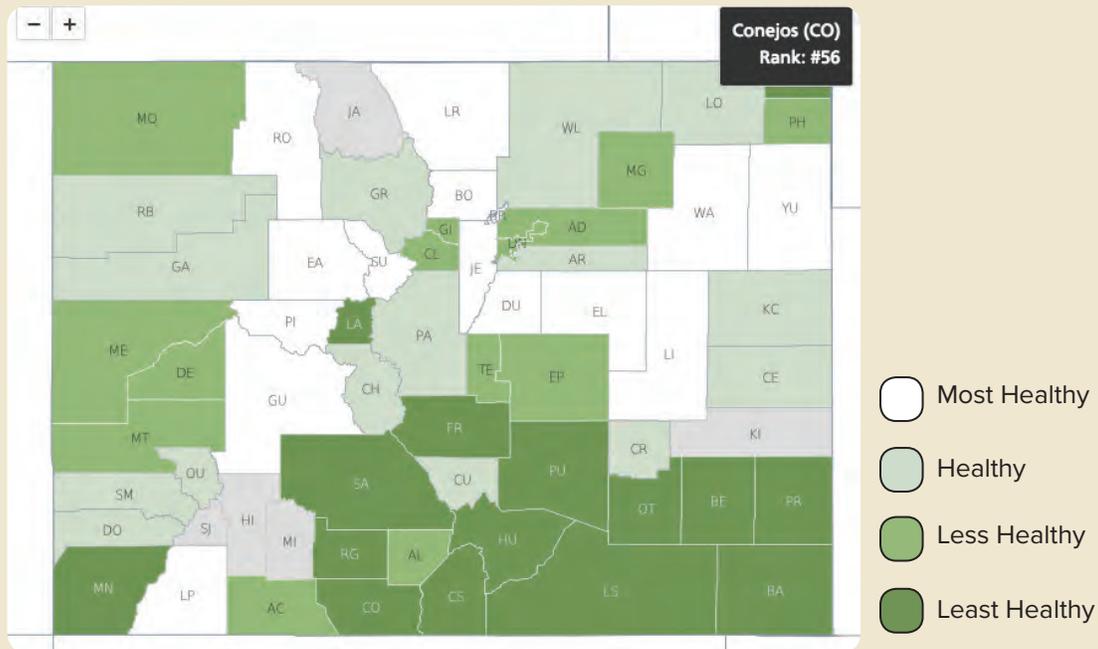
Obesity by the numbers

"Over the past three decades, childhood obesity rates in America have tripled, and today, nearly one in three children in America are overweight or obese. The numbers are even higher in African American and Hispanic communities, where nearly 40% of the children are overweight or obese. If we don't solve this problem, one third of all children born in 2000 or later will suffer from diabetes at some point in their lives. Many others will face chronic obesity-related health problems like heart disease, high blood pressure, cancer, and asthma."

- Let's Move

Plugged In & Sedentary

"Eight to 18-year old adolescents spend an average of 7.5 hours a day using entertainment media, including, TV, computers, video games, cell phones and movies, and only one-third of high school students get the recommended levels of physical activity." - Let's Move



Colorado County's Ranked By Health

The following map ranks how healthy counties are within the state of Colorado. The healthiest county in the state is ranked #1 and the least healthy counties are delineated by the darkest shade of green. The ranks are based on two types of measures: how long people live and how healthy people feel while alive. Of the 59 ranked counties, the San Luis Valley counties ranked as follows: Alamosa-43, Conejos-52, Costilla-56, Rio Grande-50, Saguache-51. Mineral County and 4 other CO counties were not ranked). The map and additional information on county health can be found at: <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/colorado/2013/rankings/outcomes/overall/by-rank>

What keeps youth who don't participate in outdoor activities indoors?

Ages 6-12

	All	Males	Females
1. I'm not interested.	39%	35%	43%
2. My parents don't take me on outdoor activities.	17%	16%	18%
3. I have too much schoolwork.	16%	10%	21%
4. I don't have the time.	15%	11%	18%
5. I would rather spend free time watching TV or movies, surfing the internet or playing video games.	15%	16%	14%
6. I'd rather spend time with my friends.	11%	5%	15%
7. I don't want to spend money on gear or equipment.	11%	16%	6%
8. I don't know how to get started, what to do or where to go.	10%	14%	7%

Ages 13-17

	All	Males	Females
1. I'm not interested.	54%	59%	50%
2. I have too much schoolwork.	29%	24%	33%
3. I would rather spend free time watching TV or movies, surfing the internet or playing video games.	27%	36%	20%
4. I'd rather spend time with my friends.	26%	21%	30%
5. I don't have the time.	25%	21%	29%

Ages 18-24

	All	Males	Females
1. I don't have the time.	47%	41%	51%
2. I'm not interested.	46%	51%	42%
3. I don't want to spend money on gear or equipment.	23%	18%	26%
4. I would rather spend free time watching TV or movies, surfing the internet or playing video games.	20%	23%	17%
5. I have too much schoolwork.	19%	18%	21%
6. I don't like bugs or dirt.	13%	7%	18%

Graphic reproduced from the The Outdoor Foundation's *Special Report on Youth, The Next Generation of Outdoor Champions* (2010). <http://www.outdoorfoundation.org/pdf/ResearchYouth.pdf>

- **Increase your chances of living longer:** Only a few lifestyle choices have as large an impact on your health as physical activity. People who are physically active for about 7 hours a week have a 40 percent lower risk of dying early than those who are active for less than 30 minutes a week. You don't have to do high amounts of activity or vigorous-intensity activity to reduce your risk of premature death. You can put yourself at lower risk of dying early by doing at least 150 minutes a week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity.
- **Improved Children and Adolescent Health:** According to the 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, strong evidence exists that children and adolescents benefit from physical activity through improved cardiorespiratory and muscular fitness, bone health, cardiovascular and metabolic health biomarkers, and favorable body composition. In addition, moderate evidence exists that physical activity reduces symptoms of depression.

The Benefits of Getting Outdoors

Nationally, there is an increased focus on getting our kids “unplugged” and getting families outside and more active. Public health advocates, legislators and non-profits concerned about rising obesity rates among our school age children are advancing this “get outdoors” movement through the development of programs and opportunities for kids and their families to get outside and explore the natural world.

Over the last decade, the development of nature-human health research has become increasingly diverse and rigorous. The research demonstrates that “green environments” – the outdoors, natural spaces – are essential to human health. Mounting research establishes how human’s health and well-being are improved through contact with nature and immersion in the outdoors.

In a 2010, the National Recreation and Parks Association funded a research synthesis and overview of what scientists have discovered about the relationship between nature and human health. The report's author, Dr. Frances Ming Kuo, summarized the reports finding below:

“greater access to green views and green environments yields better cognitive functioning; more proactive, more effective patterns of

life functioning; more self-discipline and more impulse control; greater mental health overall; and greater resilience in response to stressful life events . Less access to nature is linked to exacerbated attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder symptoms, more sadness and higher rates of clinical depression. People with less access to nature are more prone to stress and anxiety, as reflected not only individuals’ self-report but also measures of pulse rate, blood pressure, and stress-related patterns of nervous system and endocrine system anxiety, as well as physician-diagnosed anxiety disorders.”⁴

⁴ Kuo, F. E., 2010. Parks and Other Green Environments: Essential Components of a Healthy Human Habitat. This report is available online at: <http://www.nrpa.org/>

"Rarely do the scientific findings on any question align so clearly. While for scientists the search for greater understanding of how and why and when contact with nature impacts health continues, for society as a whole the findings are clear . Parks and other green environments are an essential component of a healthy human habitat . While street trees, parks, and public green spaces are often regarded as mere amenities—ways to beautify our communities and make life a little more pleasant, the science tells us that they play a central role in human health and healthy human functioning. Much like eating greens provides essential nutrients, so does seeing and being around green . To promote a healthier, kinder, smarter, more effective, more resilient, more vital populace, communities should be designed to provide every individual with regular, diverse sources of 'Vitamin G .' "

- Dr. Kuo, Parks and Other Green Environments

It is important to note that all the studies compiled in Kuo's report factor in the role that income might play in an apparent link between access to nature and physical health outcomes. While it is true that wealthier individuals and families tend to have both greater access to nature and better physical health outcomes, the comparisons in Kuo's report reveal that people of the same socio-economic status who have greater access to nature have better physical health outcomes (Kuo, 2010).

Additional health and wellness benefits tied to human's getting outdoors and connecting with nature include the following:

- When we compare people with more versus less ready access to parks and other green environments, we find that they exhibit differences in well-being and functioning in each of the three trade-mark domains: social, psychological, and physical health (Kuo, 2010).
- Proximity to natural places has a direct, positive effect on physical and mental health, as well as stress reduction. Studies have shown that children, in particular, have higher rates of physical activity the closer they live to parks and green space and report lower levels of stress and adversity (ULI 2013, Ten Principles, 24).
- The positive impacts of connecting with nature on human health extend beyond social and psychological health outcomes to include physical health outcomes. Spending time in parks and greener environments has been demonstrated to enhance recovery from surgery, enable and support higher levels of physical activity, improve immune system functioning, help diabetics achieve healthier blood glucose levels, and improve functional health status and independent living skills among older adults (Kuo, 2010).
- By contrast, environments that don't offer connections with nature, that are "less green" are associated with greater rates of childhood obesity; higher rates of 15 out of 24 categories of physician-diagnosed diseases, including cardiovascular diseases; and higher rates of mortality in younger and older adults (Kuo, 2010).

Inspiring Future Conservation Leaders and Support of our Natural Landscapes and Public Lands

According to a 2004 study by The Outdoor Foundation, *Exploring the Active Lifestyle*, 90 percent of adult participants in outdoor recreation were introduced to outdoor activities between ages 5 and 18. Therefore if SLVGO Coalition is to foster a culture of outdoor recreation and ensure future generations realize the benefits of connecting with the outdoors, it is imperative to start by inspiring today's youth to get outdoors and enjoy the San Luis Valley's public lands.

Reconnecting youth with the outdoors has gained national attention as a movement that is critical to the health of future generations and the health of our natural landscapes. In the San Luis Valley and across the country, children are desperate for the physical, mental and social benefits of a healthy, active outdoor lifestyle, and our natural landscapes need the support and protection of individuals with a strong connection to the outdoors.⁵

Exposing children to nature is a crucial step to getting youth to care about environmental issues, to support public lands, and to promote outdoor recreation. In 2011, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) commissioned a nationwide poll of American children to understand children's connection with nature. Survey questions explored children's current connection with nature, environmental attitudes, and obstacles and opportunities to connect with nature. The survey report highlights many interesting findings, a few of which include:

- Children spend a lot of time engaged in electronic media. For example, 88% of children reported using a computer almost every day, while only 11% of children reported visiting a local park or natural area almost every day.
- Children reported that feelings of discomfort (bugs, heat, etc.), lack of transportation to natural areas, and lack of natural areas near home were the top 3 reasons why they did not spend more time in nature.

⁵ The Nature Conservancy. (2011). Connecting America's youth to nature. This report is available online at: <http://www.nature.org/newsfeatures/kids-in-nature/kids-in-nature-poll.xml>.

- Obese children prefer indoor activities more than children who are not obese and are less likely to have had a meaningful experience in nature.
- Children most often experience nature with friends (79%), followed by parents (46%) and brothers and sisters (44%).
- Children living in the West are most likely to prefer spending time outdoors, while children living in the Northeast are most likely to prefer spending time indoors.
- Children with personal, positive experiences with nature were twice as likely to view themselves as strong environmentalists and were significantly more likely to express concern about water issues, air pollution, climate change and the overall condition of the environment.
- 86% of children said that it is “cool” to do things that protect the environment.

Based on the survey results, researchers highlight a number of strategies to enhance children’s connection to nature, including providing opportunities at school that engage children with

nature, getting friends and parents to encourage children to spend more time outside, and ensuring that activities are fun and easy. The Connecting Youth With the Outdoors tool kit in Chapter 5 offers additional suggestions for engaging youth in outdoor recreation.

Economic Benefits

With this master planning effort, SLVGO Coalition hopes to inspire communities to open the SLV’s collective door to the economic power of becoming an outdoor recreation destination. By supporting the development of desirable multiuse trail systems throughout the SLV and promoting existing recreation opportunities, the SLVGO Coalition intends to attract more recreation-based tourists, spark the creation of new businesses, cultivate new jobs, grow wages, boost property values, and increase tax revenues.

Put simply, outdoor recreation strengthens local economies. Cities and towns across the United



The beauty of the San Luis Valley draws tourists and recreationalists to the region (courtesy of Root House Studio)

States and especially the western states are tapping into the business of outdoor recreation as they recognize that outdoor recreation and open spaces are key ingredients to healthy communities, contribute to a high quality of life, and attract and sustain businesses, tourism and families. Outdoor recreation and associated recreation-based tourism have the potential to bolster local economies in the SLV. With this plan, the SLVGO Coalition provides strategies for promoting the SLV as a recreation destination and enticing tourists to spend dollars in the region in pursuit of outdoor recreation opportunities.

Local economies can benefit from spending associated with outdoor recreation in multiple forms including the purchase of gear and vehicles as well as dollars spent on trips, travel and recreation fees. Gear purchases include anything for outdoor recreation, such as outdoor apparel and footwear, skis, tents, rifles, fishing poles, binoculars or climbing ropes.

Vehicle purchases include vehicles and accessories used only for outdoor recreation, such as boats, trailers, RVs, snowmobiles and off-highway vehicles. Trip and travel-related expenses include lodging, restaurants, groceries, gasoline, rental cars, campgrounds as well as souvenir shopping. When SLV residents and tourists recreate outside during day outings and overnight trips within the 6-county region, their spending supports local enterprises, land management agencies, and recreation providers by paying for outfitters and guides, lift tickets and ski lessons, entrance fees, licenses and much more.

These multiple types of recreation spending support small business owners, help create jobs and generate tax revenue for communities.

Motorized Recreation

It is also important to recognize that the SLV's vast terrain lends itself to motorized recreation (e.g., snowmobiling and off-road travel on motorcycles, ATVs, jeeps) that can further contribute to local economies. The sport and industry of motorized recreation is increasing in popularity in Colorado

among both residents and non-residents and this form of outdoor recreation brings substantial economic contributions. A 2013 report from the Trails Preservation Alliance, entitled the *Economic Contributions of Off-Highway Vehicle Use in Colorado* summarized both the growth of the industry and its economic contributions. Findings from the report that demonstrate the potential economic benefits of supporting motorized recreation in the SLV include:

- OHV registrations increased by 131 percent between 2000 and 2012. The bulk of growth occurred between 2000 and 2007 and was fairly constant between 2007 and 2012.
- Snowmobile registrations were fairly constant between 2000 and 2009 and decreased slightly between 2008 and 2012.
- Between 2008-2012, non-resident OHV permits grew by more than 34%
- During the 2012-13 season, it was estimated that motorized recreational enthusiasts spent more than \$602 million while taking trips using their motorized vehicle for recreational purposes. On a household basis, residents spent on average \$109 to \$137 per day trip and \$441 to \$679 per overnight trip. Non-residential households spent on average \$131 to \$197 per day trip and \$926 to \$1,660 per overnight trip.
- More than 90 percent of these expenditures occurred during the summer OHV recreational season.

ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF OUTDOOR RECREATION

Outdoor Recreation: A Steadily Growing National Economic Sector

The American outdoor recreation economy provides 6.1 million jobs, spurs \$646 billion in spending, and brings \$39.9 billion in Federal tax revenue and \$39.7 billion in state and local tax revenue.

"In short, outdoor recreation is a growing and diverse economic super sector that is a vital cornerstone of successful communities that cannot be ignored. Most importantly, outdoor recreation is no longer a "nice to have," it is now a "must have" as leaders across the country recognize the undeniable economic, social and health benefits of outdoor recreation."

– Outdoor Industry Association, Outdoor Recreation Economy Report (2012)



Graphic reproduced from the Outdoor Industry Association's *Outdoor Recreation Economy Report (2012)*
http://outdoorindustry.org/images/researchfiles/OIA_OutdoorRecEconomyReport2012.pdf?167

In Colorado OUTDOOR RECREATION GENERATES...

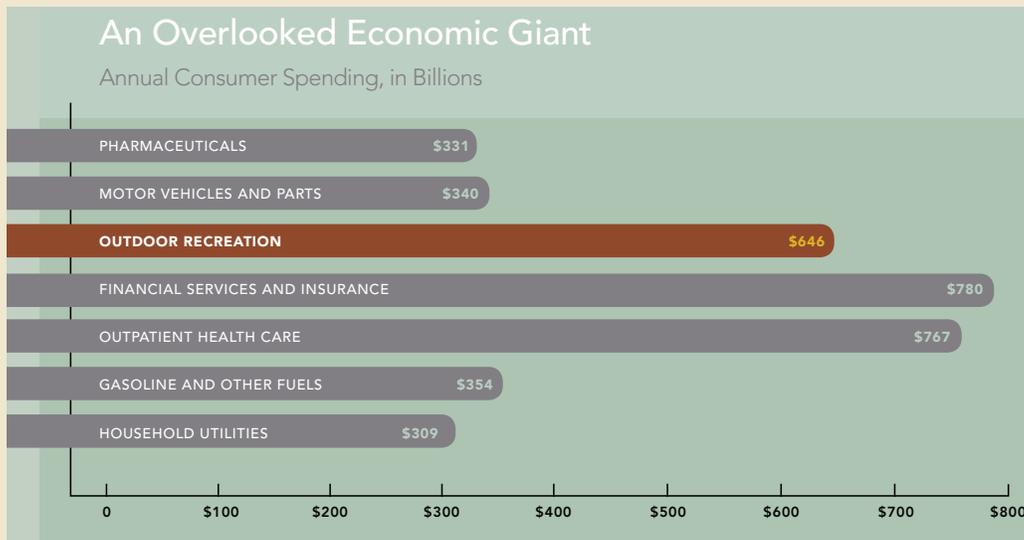
- \$13.2 BILLION in consumer spending
- 125K direct Colorado jobs
- \$4.2 BILLION in wages and salaries
- \$994 MILLION in state and local tax revenue

- Outdoor Industry Association,
Take it Outside for Colorado Jobs and a Strong Economy (2012)

Big Business in the Western States.

Outdoor recreation spending in Western states equaled \$255.6 billion – nearly 40% of the national total. This includes purchases of outdoor gear and vehicles as well as travel expenditures when enjoying the great Western outdoors. Outdoor recreation spending equals jobs in the West – 2.3 million jobs in the region in 2011.

- Western Governors’ Association,
A Snapshot of The Economic Impact of Outdoor Recreation (2012)



Graphic reproduced from the Outdoor Industry Association's *Outdoor Recreation Economy Report (2012)* http://outdoorindustry.org/images/researchfiles/OIA_OutdoorRecEconomyReport2012.pdf?167 Date source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, Personal Consumption Expenditures by Type of Product, based on available 2010 data.



Outdoor recreation opportunities vary widely in the San Luis Valley from enjoying wildlife along the riparian corridor, to touring historic sites, to hitting Monte Vista's skate park (courtesy of Root House Studio).



SLVGO COALITION'S PRIORITY INITIATIVES

SLVGO Priority Initiatives

The SLVGO Coalition has developed a set of priority initiatives in direct response to the un-met recreation needs and residents' desires to improve recreation experiences and opportunities in the SLV that were identified through the project's outreach efforts. Collectively, the initiatives represent an ambitious effort to improve recreation facilities, expand outdoor experiences across the SLV, and to increase the promotion of the region's recreation opportunities. These initiatives will be the focus of the SLVGO Coalition and its partners over the next ten years.

Each initiative includes a number of potential projects. This list of potential projects was compiled from ideas suggested by Coalition members and raised during community outreach. The list of potential projects will continue to grow as more communities learn about the SLVGO's initiatives and identify their projects.

Over the next ten years, the SLVGO Coalition strives to achieve the following 6 initiatives:

1. Improve community wellness through enhanced in-town recreation facilities.

Convenient access to outdoor recreation within SLV communities, downtowns, neighborhoods, parks, and adjacent public lands will encourage more physical activity and contribute to the health of SLV residents. SLVGO Coalition will work with partners to create more recreation opportunities and facilities within and in close proximity to towns. In some cases achieving this initiative will require the construction of new facilities, however, in many communities this initiative may simply entail raising awareness of and the enhancing the appeal of existing recreation facilities. Excellent examples of existing or planned in-town recreation facilities that enrich a community by providing convenient and fun access to outdoor fun include the trail system on Lookout Mountain that tie into Del Norte and the outdoor fitness and exercise park located in the courtyard of the Costilla County's Health and Services building on Main Street in San Luis.

Objective: By 2025, the SLVGO Coalition and its partners will support each of the 18 San Luis Valley communities in developing or upgrading their in-town recreation facilities to ensure they are welcoming, promoted and conveniently accessible to nearby residents.

Potential Projects

- Vista Grande Recreation Area (Saguache)
- Ski Hi Recreation Complex (Monte Vista)
- Connecting the SLV's three National Wildlife Refuges with nearby towns (Alamosa, Monte Vista, Crestone)
- In-town path connections (Creede)
- Devil's Playground Site Rehabilitation and Park Development (Alamosa)
- La Jara BMX Track Park
- Rito Seco Park facility upgrades and trail system expansion (e.g., informational and interpretive signs, restrooms, picnic tables, campsites, fishing access)
- Center Town Park (Center)
- Boyd & Mollie Brown Memorial Park (South Fork)

Valley Wide In-Town Recreation Improvements

- Bike lanes, sidewalks and multi-use paths to provide safe routes throughout towns and facilitate biking and walking.
- Fitness parks/exercise stations incorporated into existing trail systems, parks, and/or school yards (e.g. Polston Elementary, Alamosa).
- Nordic skiing on golf courses.
- Outdoor performance venues (e.g., covered stage at Cole Park)
- Recreation equipment rentals (e.g., bikes, climbing gear, fishing pole)
- Flexible open spaces and/or ball fields
- Increase awareness of what's out there
- Local outdoor recreation / exercise campaigns

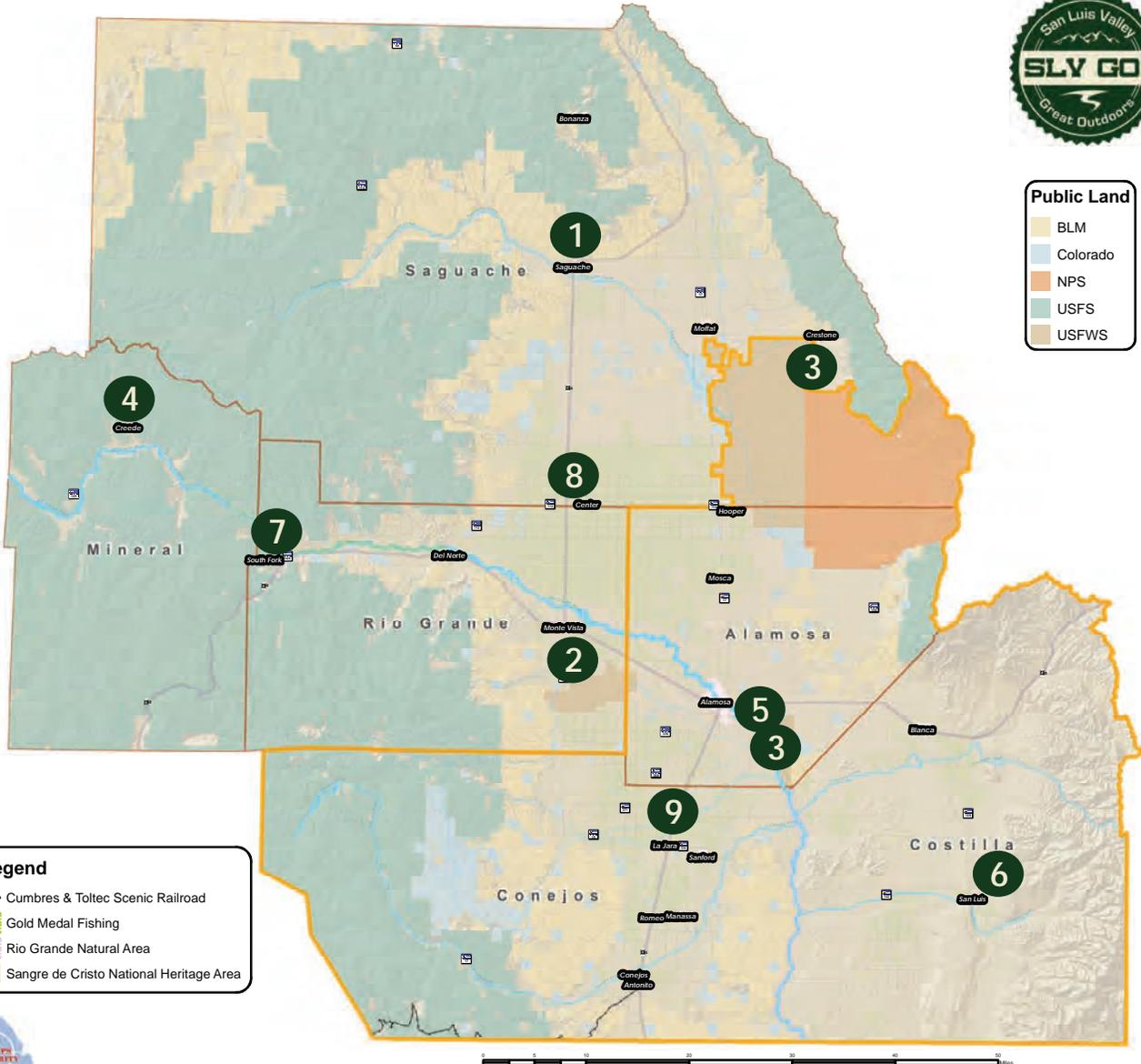
San Luis Valley

Improve Community Wellness with In-Town Recreation Enhancements



Public Land	
	BLM
	Colorado
	NPS
	USFS
	USFWS

Legend	
	Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad
	Gold Medal Fishing
	Rio Grande Natural Area
	Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area



PRIORITY INITIATIVES

The following potential projects would encourage more outdoor recreation and activity in communities across the San Luis Valley:

- 1 Vista Grande Recreation Area (Saguache)
- 2 Ski Hi Complex Recreation Facility Improvements
- 3 Connecting National Wildlife Refuges with Towns (Alamosa, Monte Vista, Crestone)
- 4 Creede trail connections
- 5 Devil's Playground Site Rehabilitation / Park Development
- 6 Rito Seco Park Upgrades / Trail System Expansion
- 7 Boyd & Millie Brown Memorial Park (South Fork)
- 8 Center Town Park (Center)
- 9 La Jara BMX Track

- Work with partners like the SdCNHA, Old Spanish Trail and local historical groups to build and promote walking tours designed around exploring and learning about community’s history.
- Other potential in-town recreation facilities: indoor golf range, par course, disc golf course, tennis courts, pickleball courts, dog park, community garden, sand volleyball courts, zipline, community pools, Off-road motorcycle complex (for all ages, motocross track, cross country track).

Indoor Recreation Improvements

While the focus of this planning effort was on *outdoor* recreation, a desire was expressed for enhancing and expanding *indoor* recreation in certain communities. These suggested improvements included the following:

- Recreation/Community Centers (in Saguache, South Fork, Antonito or La Jara, and/or Del Norte)
- Public pools, non-hot spring swimming facilities, year-round pool (in Del Norte or Monte Vista)

2. Connect, expand, and enhance trail systems throughout the Valley.

During outreach, many voices expressed interest in seeing more trails developed in the San Luis Valley. Various user groups including motorized and non-motorized users asked for more trails and specifically more, singletrack trails. In response to these desires, the SLVGO Coalition is committed to supporting trail projects annually and to working with partners to create varied trail experiences ranging from singletrack to paved multi-use paths. Additionally, SLVGO Coalition will work with its partners to increase trail connectivity between trail systems, recreation destinations, heritage sites, and communities.

Objective: Over the 10-year life of the plan, SLVGO will support the building and/or improvement of 100 or more miles of trails.

Potential Projects

- Continue to improve and expand BLM trail systems: Lime Kiln, Zapata Falls, Penitente Canyon, Bishop Rock, Greenie Mountain, Vista Grande, Pronghorn.
- Expand trail system at Shriver-Wright SWA
- A designated road cycling loop route connecting S. Colorado and N. New Mexico (Antonito-Tres Piedras-Taos-San Luis- Antonito).
- Trail link connecting Creede and South Fork. (The Railroad corridor is now private, but maybe there’s an opportunity for a private/public partnership.)
- Work with the Baca POA to formalize the subdivision’s trail system and potentially convert the Baca’s social trail web into designated, sustainable trails. Provide trails connections that link USFS, BLM, downtown Crestone, Baca subdivision and Baca NWR.
- Safe, well-marked bike lanes between towns and in towns (e.g., Acequia Drive in Monte Vista).
- Extend the Rito Seco Park Trail System and

connect the Greenbelt Trail to Rito Seco Park and build a trail from Rito Seco Park to Batenburg Meadows.

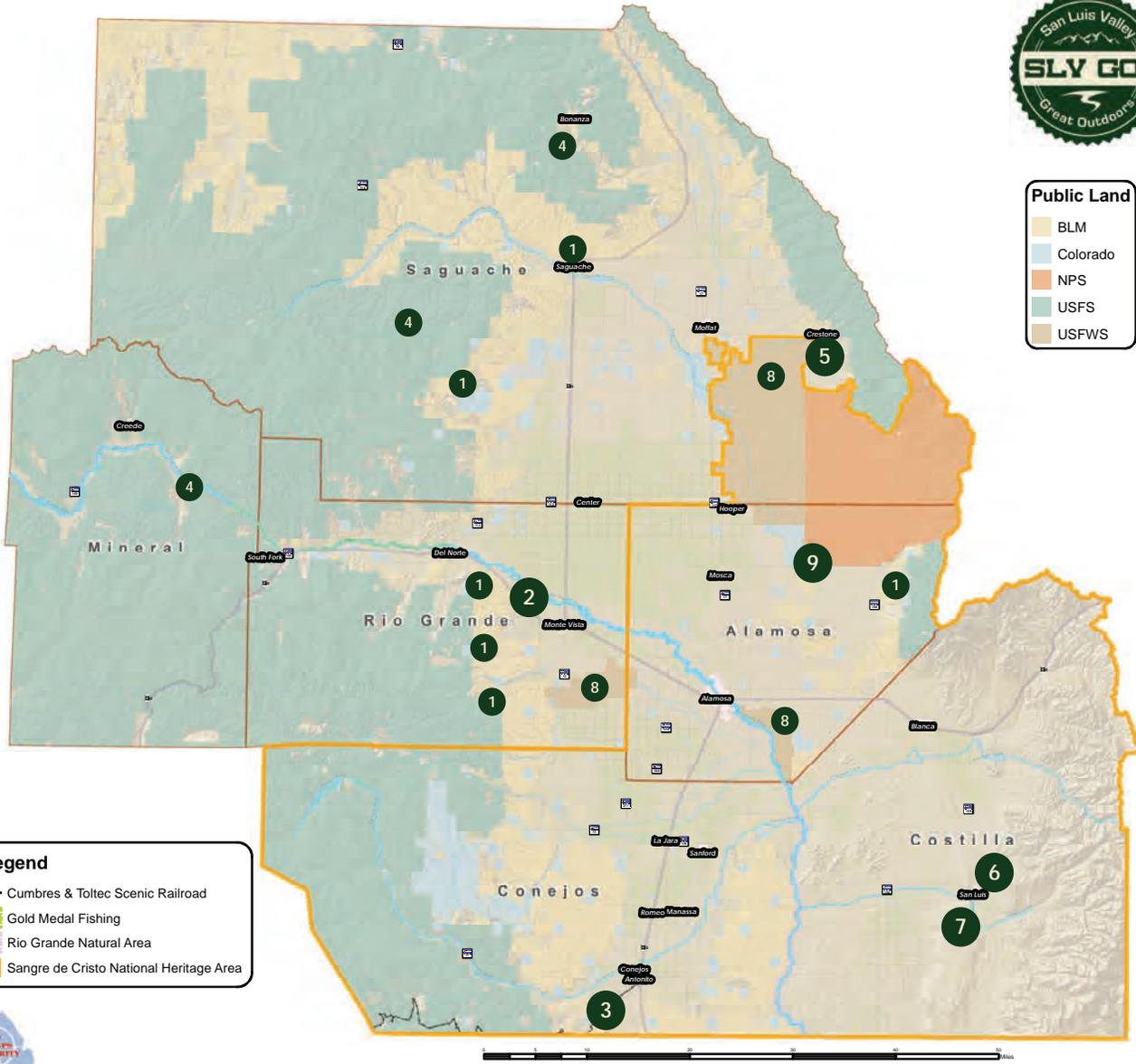
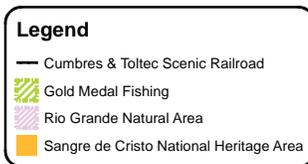
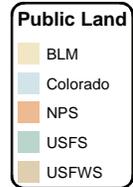
- Build and/or expand trail systems in Costilla County’s greenbelts including Sangre de Cristo, Rio Grande, Buffalo Hill, and Trinchera Creek Greenbelts.
- Build a bike connection (e.g., designated bike lane, separated multi-use path) from Highway 17 to the Great Sand Dunes National Park along Lane 6 North.

Other Potential Trail Improvements

- Identify recreation destination and/or trail hubs where users can link into a robust trail system and/or find a variety of trail and recreation experiences.
- A designated obstacle course trail for runners.
- Purpose-built mountain bike trails.

San Luis Valley

Improve Trail Connections



PRIORITY INITIATIVES

The following potential trails projects help grow the SLV's trail systems, improve access to the outdoors, and connect trail systems with one another and with communities and heritage sites.

- 1 Improve and expand BLM trail systems (e.g., Lime Kiln, Zapata Falls, Penitente Canyon, Bishop Rock, Greenie Mountain, Vista Grande, Pronghorn)
- 2 Expand trail system at Shriver-Wright SWA
- 3 Designate a road cycling loop route connecting S. CO and N. NM (Antonito-Tres Piedras-Taos-San Luis-Antonito)
- 4 Marked OHV trails and designated routes for motorcycle, ATVs, and other vehicles that link existing recreation areas (e.g., Bonanza to Saguache; Carnero Pass; links from South Fork, north and south of 160).
- 5 Provide trails connections that link Forest Service, BLM, Crestone, Baca NWR and Baca subdivision trails.
- 6 Connect the Greenbelt Trail to Rito Seco Park and build a trail from Rito Seco Park to Batenburg Meadows.
- 7 Build new trails in Costilla County's greenbelts
- 8 Expand trail systems in the 3 SLV National Wildlife Refuges
- 9 Build a bike trail along Lane 6 North from Highway 17 to Great Sands National Park

- Build and/or mark trails that connect to historic and cultural sites (e.g., Summitville mining site, Bachelor loop mining sites, Ute Ulay mining site, La Garita church, Stations of the Cross).

Potential Trail Improvements for Motorized Travel

- Marked Off-highway vehicle (OHV) trails and designated routes for motorcycle, ATVs, and other vehicles that link existing recreation areas (e.g., Bonanza to Saguache; La Garita to Carnero Pass; links from South Fork, north and south of 160).

- Create additional off-road routes, open to OHV vehicles that connect towns with one another and with outlying public lands (e.g., connect Creede-Del Norte-South Fork).
- Utilize state and county roads to connect communities and to provide access for OHV travel to historic destinations such as mining sites.
- More singletrack motorized trails including long (+/- 100 mile) singletrack routes open to motorcycles.

3. Grow more recreation programs and activities specifically tailored to SLV youth.

In response to SLV residents' desire for more recreational opportunities and facilities tailored to youth, the SLVGO Coalition endeavors to support more youth-oriented programming and recreational activities across the 6-county region. SLVGO will also help encourage the development of recreation facilities that are appealing to the SLV's younger residents and where families can enjoy the outdoors and connect with nature.

Objective: Support the development of 5-10 youth-oriented programs, facilities and/or activities over the next 10 years.

Potential Projects

- BMX Track (La Jara)
- Equestrian instruction and skill development (Ski Hi Recreation Complex)
- Elements Camp (Crestone)
- Rio Grande Greenbelt Park (future park development with potential for camping facilities, a day use picnic area, fishing and boating access, and trails).
- Vista Grande Park (Saguache)

Valley-Wide Improvements

- Instructional programming/ recreation lessons
- Recreation mentor program
- More sports leagues
- More organized outdoor programming for youth and activities for children and families (e.g., camps, field trips).
- Create new and extend existing Safe Routes to School Walking Paths (e.g., extend path from Fort Garland to Blanca).
- Environmental education programming within the San Luis Valley NWR Complex.
- Outdoor education programming at parks within convenient distances from local school districts and non-profit organizations.

4. Expand water-based recreation.

SLVGO is committed to increasing awareness of opportunities for water-based recreation in the SLV. As part of this effort, SLVGO will work with partners to increase access to public lands along the Rio Grande corridor and to promote recreation throughout the larger Rio Grande watershed.

Objective: Over the next ten years, work with partners to add 2-3 additional public access points along the Rio Grande and develop communications media that boost visibility of existing water-based recreation opportunities throughout the Rio Grande watershed including its other rivers, creeks, and reservoirs.

Potential Projects

- Community Specific Improvements
- Rio Grande Greenbelt (e.g., park potential, camping, picnic) (Costilla County)
- Del Norte boat put-in (Del Norte)
- Boat livery at Alamosa's City Park (e.g., canoes, SUP, kayaks).
- Recreational facility upgrades and information and sign improvements at Costilla County reservoirs including Smith, Stabilization, Sanchez and Mountain Home Reservoirs.

Valley-Wide Improvements

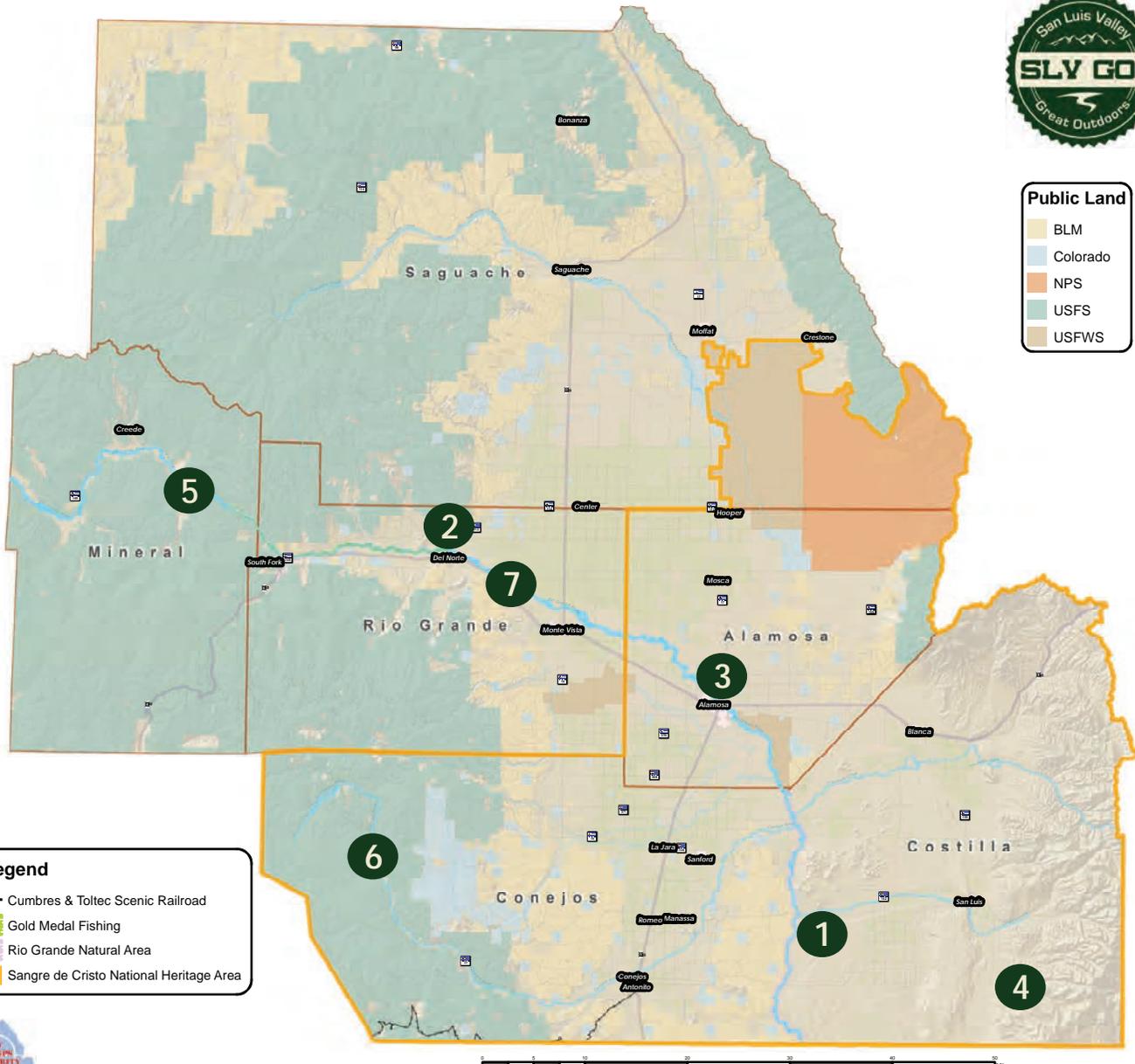
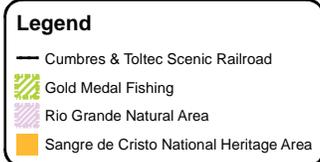
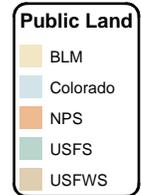
- Water Recreation Map (featuring rivers, hot springs, reservoirs, waterfalls).
- Kayak course or white water “play” features for kayakers and other boaters.
- Great promotion of fishing opportunities in the SLV
- Rio Grande Map (interp/history plus access points and recreation opportunities).
- Utilizing the Rio Grande corridor as a link to connect recreation sites through voluntary, incentive-based agreements with private landowners and partnerships with public land management agencies.



Cottonwood bosque along the Rio Grande (courtesy of Rio de la Vista)

San Luis Valley

Expand Water Recreation



The following potential projects will raise awareness of opportunities for water-based recreation in the SLV and encourage more outdoor recreation throughout the Rio Grande watershed.

- 1 Rio Grande Greenbelt Improvements (camping, picnic, put-in, trails)
- 2 Del Norte Boat Put-In
- 3 Boat Livery in Alamosa's City Park
- 4 Recreational facility upgrades and information and sign improvements at Costilla County reservoirs including Smith, Stabilization, Sanchez and Mountain Home Reservoirs
- 5 Rio Grande Interpretive and Recreation Map (featuring the Rio's history, access points, and recreation opportunities)
- 6 SLV Water Recreation Map (showcasing rivers/creeks for fishing, hot springs, reservoirs, waterfalls, and boating put-ins/take-outs)
- 7 Utilizing the Rio Grande corridor as a link to connect recreation sites through voluntary, incentive-based agreements with private landowners and partnerships with public land management agencies.

5. Expand opportunities for winter recreation.

SLVGO Coalition recognizes the importance of facilitating year-round outdoor recreation. As a result, the coalition will support development of more outdoor, winter recreation opportunities and facilities across the SLV.

Objective: Expand opportunities for outdoor winter recreation by supporting development of new and/or improved facilities or winter recreation programming in at least four communities or recreation sites over the next ten years.

Potential Projects

- Additional groomed snowmobile trails (Creede, Mineral County).
- Ski bus to Wolf Creek (with stops in Alamosa, Monte Vista and South Fork).
- More marked/maintained Nordic ski trails (e.g., near Del Norte, Monte Vista and along the river at Cole Park in Alamosa, and on golf courses).
- Facilitate and promote winter recreational use on the Rio Grande in town (e.g. cross country, ice skating, snow biking).
- Ice climbing (Creede area)

Valley-Wide Improvements

- Outdoor ice skating opportunities.
- Backcountry hut system (in the San Juans).
- Maps, lists, and other information about winter recreation opportunities across the SLV.



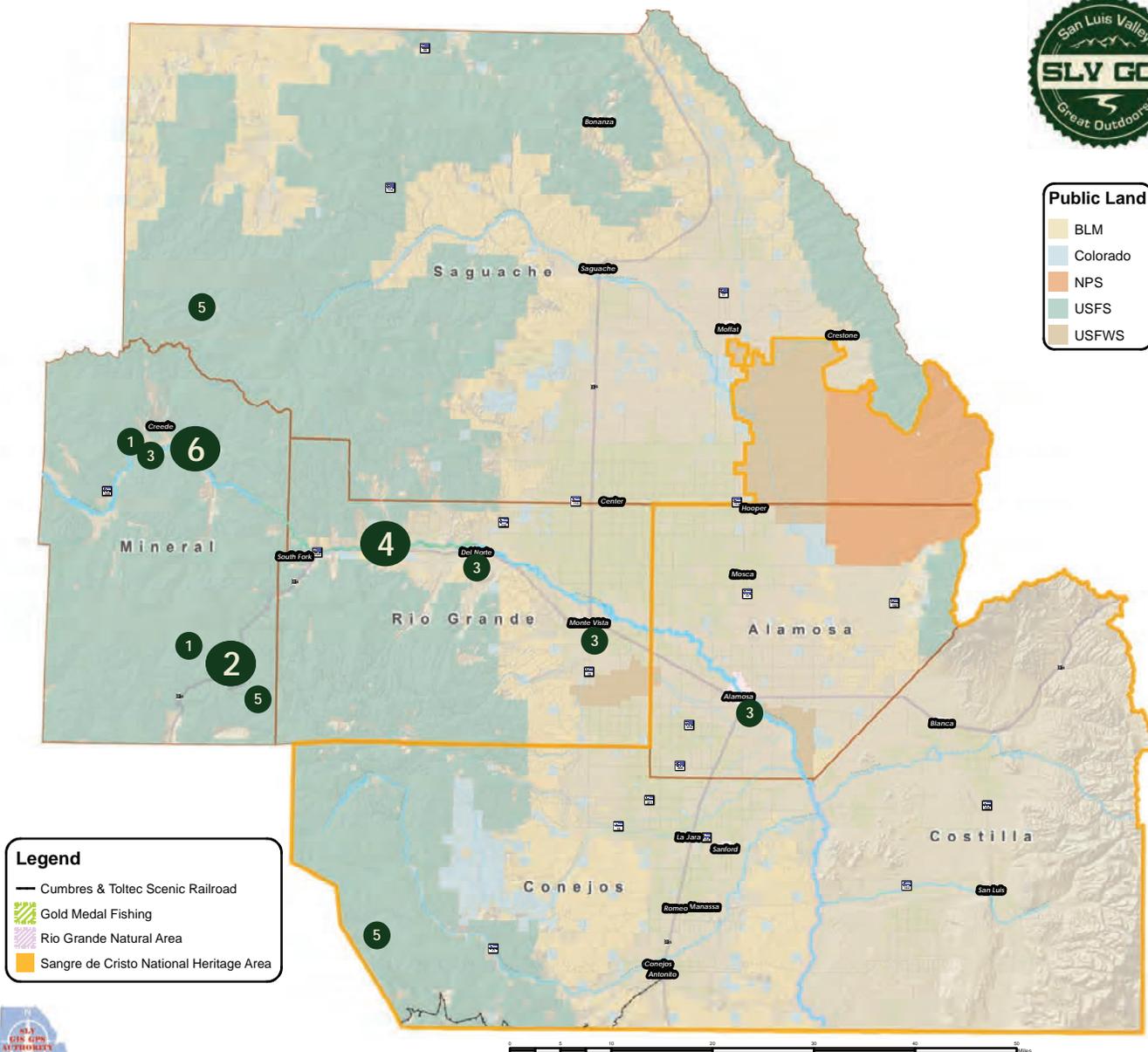
Snowmobiling Elwood Pass (courtesy of Heather Salaz)

San Luis Valley

Winter Recreation



Public Land	
	BLM
	Colorado
	NPS
	USFS
	USFWS



The following potential projects will encourage more winter outdoor recreation in the San Luis Valley.

- 1 Additional groomed snowmobile trails (Mineral County)
- 2 Ski bus to Wolf Creek (with stops in Alamosa, Monte Vista and South Fork)
- 3 More marked/maintained Nordic ski trails (e.g., Creede, Del Norte, Monte Vista and along the river at Cole Park in Alamosa). Existing golf courses also lend themselves to winter uses including nordic skiing, snowshoeing and hiking.
- 4 Facilitate and promote winter recreational use on the Rio Grande in and inbetween town (e.g. cross country, ice skating, snow biking)
- 5 Backcountry hut systems in the San Juans and La Garita Mountains
- 6 Ice climbing in the Creede area

6. Promote the SLV's recreation opportunities and increase information sharing about what there is to see and do in the SLV.

The SLVGO Coalition endeavors to raise broader awareness among resident of outdoor recreation opportunities in the SLV. Through ramped up marketing and outreach efforts in collaboration with its tourism partners, the SLVGO Coalition also intends to recruit more recreationalists to travel to the SLV and take advantage of its public lands, trails and recreation experiences.

Objective: Within the next 3 years develop media that promotes outdoor recreation in SLV and work with partners to develop a campaign promoting the varied recreation experiences that the SLV offers.

Potential Projects

- Support Rio Grande Watershed Emergency Action Coordination Team's (RWEACT) post-fire promotions and rebuilding tourism (Mineral and Rio Grande Counties).
- Maps and more designated/signed routes to accommodate large number of winter and summer motorized, off-road users (Mineral County).

Valley-Wide Improvements

- Media explaining where and what is available in terms of recreation facilities, programs and events (e.g., recreation map, website, brochures, guides).
- Tourism materials and the collaborative promotion of the San Luis Valley as a regional recreation destination in order to increase the tourism pie.
- Work to get the SLV on the Front Range resident's radar as a weekend, long-weekend destination.
- Better promotion of the three National Wildlife Refuges and Colorado Parks and Wildlife's (CPW) state wildlife areas and the opportunities for wildlife-dependent recreation that these destinations provide.
- Improved promotion of winter use (e.g., Creede and Wolf Creek pass for snowmobiling).
- More interpretation and orientation information to explain the Valley's heritage and to orient residents and visitors to its assets..

Partnerships Will Be Essential to Implementation of the Initiatives

It is important to qualify that the SLVGO Coalition alone does not have the organizational bandwidth to implement these six priority initiatives alone. With this master planning effort, the SLVGO Coalition has taken the first step in identify what needs to be done. The above-mentioned priority initiatives will require the support, collaboration and commitment of a wide variety of partners. The involvement of partners from all levels of government, schools, health care professionals, faith-based and community-based organizations, outdoor clubs, tourism providers, as well as private sector companies will be needed to build more recreation facilities, inspire a valley-wide culture of recreation, and encourage many more people to enjoy the SLV's great outdoors.

While the priority initiatives spell out **what** the SLVGO Coalition and its partners, the tool kits in the next chapter offer suggestions and strategies for **how** to achieve the initiatives. The tool kits presented in the next section of the master plan, offer more direct guidance and inspiration for implementing the priority initiatives and enhancing outdoor recreation in the SLV.

These tool kits are intended for the SLVGO Coalition's existing partners and all others interested in taking a role in improving access to the outdoors and opportunities for recreation.

WHAT

INITIATIVES

IMPROVE
COMMUNITY
WELLNESS

ENHANCE
TRAIL
SYSTEMS

BUILD
RECREATION
FOR YOUTH

EXPAND
WATER
RECREATION

EXPAND
WINTER
RECREATION

INCREASED
RECREATION
PROMOTION

HOW

TOOL KITS

SHAPING
RECREATION
DESTINATIONS

BUILDING
HEALTHIER
COMMUNITIES

DEVELOPING
TRAIL
SYSTEMS

REALIZING
TRAIL
CONNECTIONS

CONNECTING
YOUTH
& THE
OUTDOORS

BALANCING
RECREATION &
CONSERVATION

PROMOTING
RECREATION

HOSTING
RECREATION
EVENTS

FUNDING &
SUSTAINING
RECREATION



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APPENDIX

Public Engagement Summary

SLV Trails and Recreation Master Plan

Public Engagement Summary Nov 2013



Public Engagement Overview

During the summer and Fall 2013, San Luis Valley Great Outdoors Coalition (SLVGO) conducted valley-wide public outreach in order to explain its **San Luis Valley Trails and Recreation Master Plan** project (Master Plan) and to solicit community input. Through the extensive and inclusive public engagement process, SLVGO collected ideas for improving access to the outdoors, expanding recreation opportunities, and increasing awareness and promotion of all there is to do and see in the San Luis Valley. For the purpose of the Master Plan, "RECREATION" has been defined very broadly and encompasses everything from in-town recreation (e.g., sports fields, skate parks, bike paths, golf courses) to more remote, backcountry recreation facilities (e.g., trails, campgrounds) as well as community events and recreation programs, classes and activities.

SLVGO hosted five public open houses in Alamosa, Del Norte, Creede, Saguache, and Crestone. Additionally, SLVGO collected input at the La Jara Farmers Market, toured Costilla County and attended a number of meetings with town boards, tourism groups and stakeholders. At the onset of the project outreach effort, SLVGO updated its website with Master Plan information and set up social media tools including a Facebook page, Instagram account and an e-newsletter in order to spread the word about the project and offer other avenues for collecting input. Local press coverage was also helpful in spreading the word about the Master Plan and its outreach tools.

Finally, SLVGO utilized a digital survey to collect additional input. Between August 5th and October 15th, 2013, Root House Studio administered a 25-question survey via Survey Monkey on behalf of the SLVGO. Like the other outreach efforts, the survey was designed to gain understanding about where and how recreation opportunities and experiences can be improved in the San Luis Valley (SLV). The 10-15 minute survey was marketed to stakeholder groups, residents and visitors through SLVGO's newsletter, Facebook page, website and other graphics. The survey was started by 425 respondents and fully completed by 347.

Findings generated from the survey and collected from other public and stakeholder engagement efforts will help inform development of the San Luis Valley Trails and Recreation Master Plan. Specifically, the Master Plan will offer up implementation strategies for achieving ideas and potential projects identified through the various outreach methods.

This report summarizes the survey findings *as well as* ideas and input gleaned from the open houses and other discussions with the public, stakeholders and SLVGO partners.

Common Themes from the Survey and Outreach

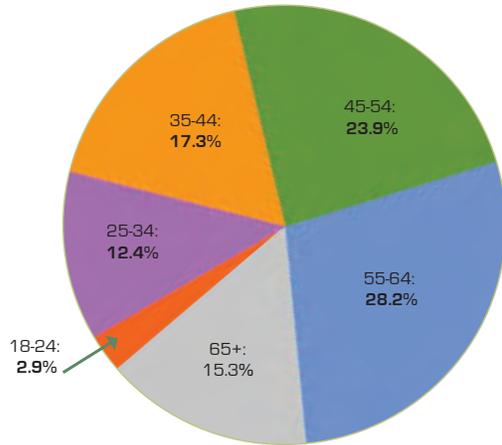
A number of common themes emerged from the analysis of the survey results and the input collected through meetings and open houses. These were ideas, needs, or concerns that were expressed by multiple groups or individuals and that surfaced repeatedly during the outreach effort. The SLV Recreation and Trails Master Plan will include implementation strategies to address each of these common themes.

- There's a need for **better information** (e.g. maps, guides, signs) and **more promotional media/tools** to raise awareness of existing recreational opportunities.
- There's a desire for **more connectivity** among communities and linkages between existing trail systems, towns and recreation areas.
- **More trails and a variety of trail experiences** was a commonly expressed desire.
- Concern was voiced for the lack of recreational **activities and programs geared towards SLV youth**.
- **Provide a wide range of recreational experiences** across the Valley that caters to a broad base of residents and visitors.

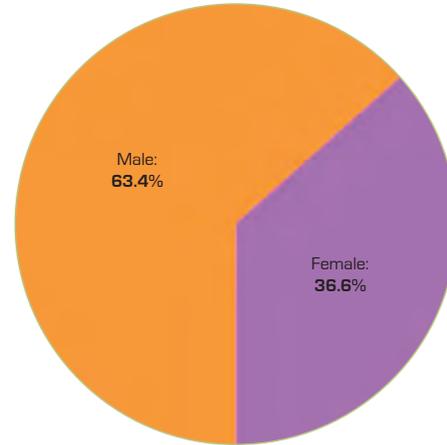
Survey Demographics

As mentioned above, 425 respondents took the SLVGO digital survey. The majority of the respondents (77%) were SLV residents with 24% of respondents residing elsewhere in Colorado. Additionally, 4% of respondents were from out of state. The age and gender breakdown of survey respondents is represented in the following charts.

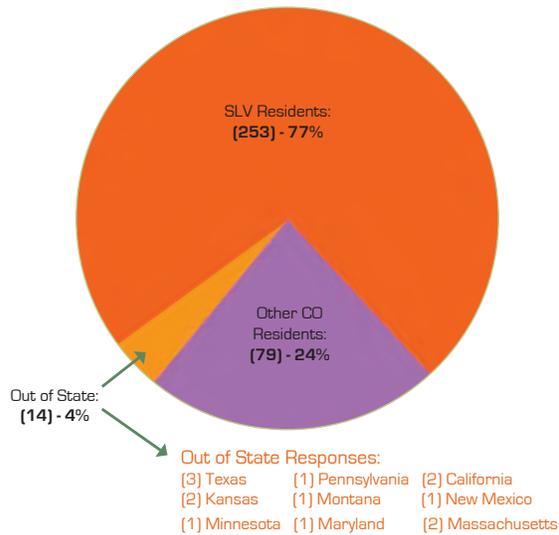
Summary of Age Range



Gender of Respondents



SLV Residents vs. Other
(Only 328 responses to this question)

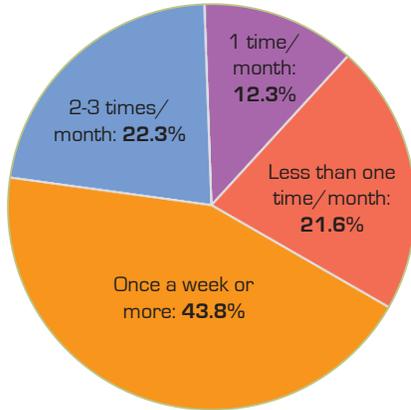


Frequency and Type of Recreation Participation

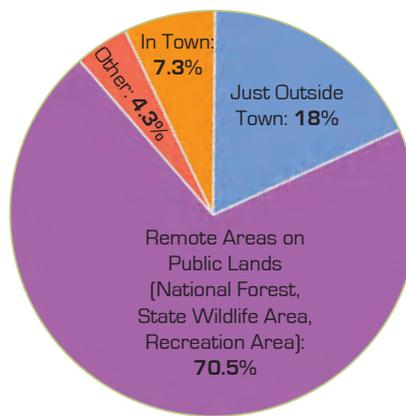
The first set of survey questions were designed to help SLVGO understand recreation usage composition and patterns. 95% of survey participants indicated that they had recreated in the SLV in the past 12 months. Participants were also asked how often they participated in recreation and where their preferred recreation locations are in the SLV.

- The majority of respondents indicated that they recreate at least 2-3 times a month, with 43.8% recreating once a week or more.
- The vast majority, 70% of respondents, prefer to recreation in remote areas on public lands and only 7.3% preferred "In Town" recreation locations.

How often do you participate in recreation in the San Luis Valley?
(Choose one)



What is your preferred location to recreate in the SLV? (Choose one)



The survey presented a list of the following 44 recreational activities and asked respondents to check all of the activities that they engage in.

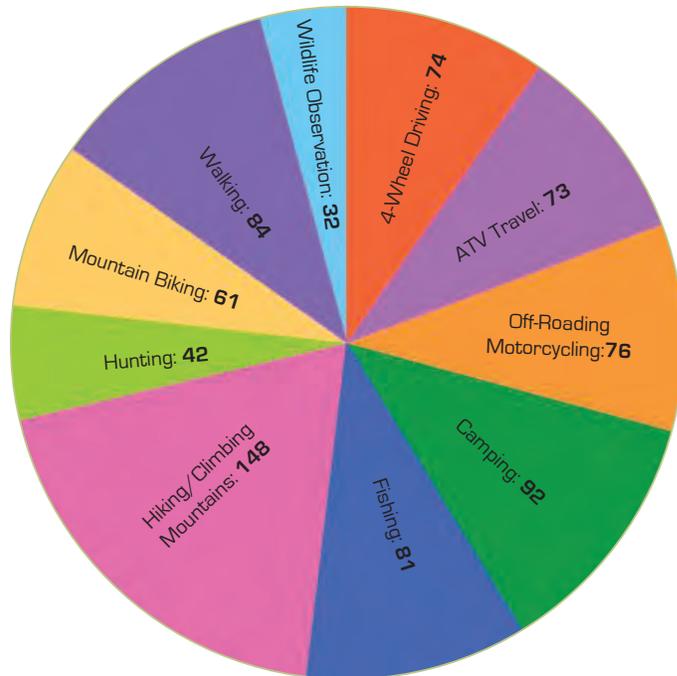
Recreation Activities	
4-Wheel Driving/Jeeps	All-Terrain Vehicle Travel
Off Road Motorcycling	Backcountry Skiing
Backpacking	Bike Park/BMX Riding
Camping	Competitive Trail Events
Cross-Country Skiing	Disc Golf
Environmental Education/Naturalist Programming	Exercise Classes
Fishing	Geocaching
Golf	Gym Workouts
Hiking/Climbing Mountains	Hiking/Packing with horses, mules, llamas or stock
Hockey/Ice Skating	Horseback Riding
Hot Springs	Hunting
Ice Climbing	Motorized Boating
Mountain Biking	Picnicking
Rafting	Rafting/Kayaking/SUP
Resort Skiing	Road Biking
Road Running	Rock Climbing/Mountaineering
Roller blading, in-line skating	Shooting/Target Practice
Skate Park	Snowmobiling
Snowshoeing	Swimming
Tennis	Trail Building Projects
Trail Running	Walking
Wildlife Observation/Birding	Yoga

All of the 44 proposed activities were checked by at least 12 respondents, however, the top five recreational activities were camping (62% of respondents), hiking/climbing mountains (61%), walking (56%), picnicking (37%) and hunting (28%).

Most popular recreation activities

As indicated in the chart below, people engage in a fairly wide variety of recreation including winter and summer uses and motorized and non-motorized uses. The recreational activities that people participate in most frequently included hiking/mountain climbing, camping, ATV travel and off-road motorcycling.

Which activities do you participate most frequently in in a given year?
(Top 10 responses shown below)



Other recreation activities

The survey provided the opportunity for respondents to write in any additional activities they engage in within the San Luis Valley. At the open houses, participants were also encouraged to explain what types of recreation they enjoy in the SLV. Some of these uses that were reported in the “other” response category and/or from discussions with the public and stakeholders included:

- Rodeo & Equestrian skills
- Float fishing
- Tubing
- Star gazing/astronomy
- Outdoor photograph
- Team sports
- Collecting/harvesting (e.g. sheds, pinion, fruit)
- Gardening
- Dance
- Archeology
- Spiritual retreats

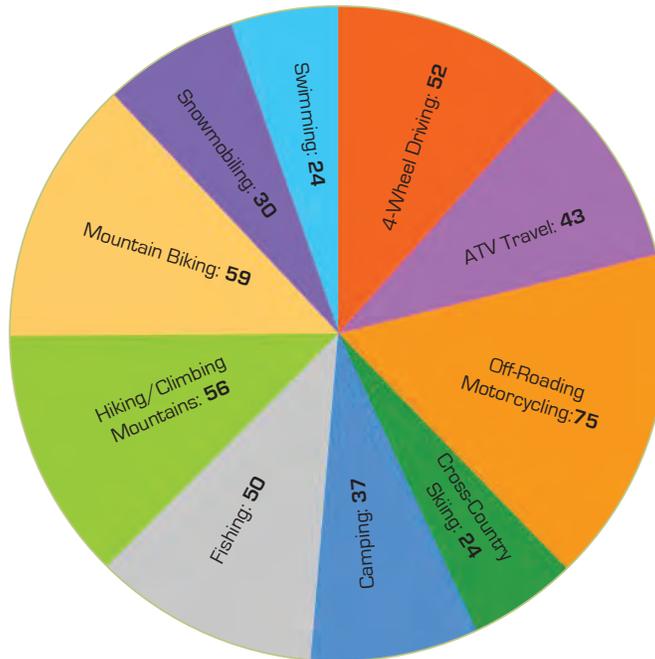
Also, survey findings revealed that recreational use is combined with the following types of other activities:



Demand for more recreation opportunities

Among the 44 proposed activities, respondents were then asked to select what activities they'd like to have more opportunities for in the SLV. Survey respondents expressed a significant desire for more motorized recreation opportunities including snowmobiling, 4 wheel driving, ATV travel and Off-road motorcycling. Substantial demand was also expressed for non-motorized uses such as mountain biking, hiking, fishing and camping. Both swimming (indoor facilities) and cross-country skiing (groomed Nordic trails) were brought up in the context of residents expressing a need for winter recreational opportunities.

What activities would you like to have more opportunities for?
(Top 10 responses shown below)



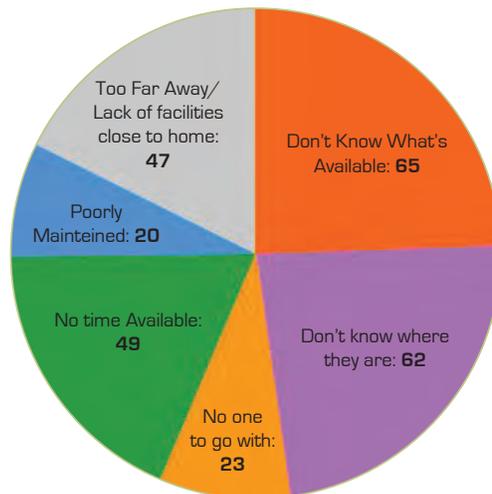
Through the survey and at the open houses, people were again given the opportunity to suggest any “other” recreational opportunities beyond those listed that they would like to see more of in the SLV. Additional proposed activities included:

- Rodeo arena/facilities
- Team sports (e.g. soccer, football)
- Wheel chair accessible bike/walking paths
- Outdoor music event venue
- Live music and dancing programming
- Dog specific areas
- Cycling (Paved, Designated, Road Routes, Trails)
- Par golf course
- Educational outings and instructional programs (e.g., archaeology, flora and fauna, gardening, kayaking)
- More Rio Grande flow and recreation (e.g. fishing, boating, riverside trails)
- Ice skating facilities
- Youth programming (camps and outings)
- Outdoor volleyball

Barriers to Recreation

The digital survey contained a set of questions designed to identify the obstacles that may be preventing both SLV residents and visitors from taking advantage of the area’s recreational resources. The answers to this set of questions revealed that there is a dearth of information about what is available and that there is a need to raise the visibility and awareness of SLV recreational resources. For example, over half of the respondents indicated that they do not use or infrequently use parks, public lands, trails and/or other recreational amenities in the SLV because they either “Don’t know what’s available” (34%) or they “Don’t know where they are” (32%).

*If you do not use or infrequently use parks, public lands, trails, and/or other recreational amenities in the SLV, what are your reasons?
 [Top 6 responses shown below]*



As a follow up to the barrier survey questions, respondents were asked the open-ended question, ***“What would provide you with incentives to recreate outside more often in the SLV.”*** This line of questioning was also used to engage participants at the public open houses. Ideas generated from this question are summarized below:

- **Raising the visibility of what’s available in terms of recreation facilities, areas and programs would prompt more recreation.** Ideas for creating more awareness of SLV’s recreational resources included:
 - More information on trails including level of expertise required, mileage, trail head locations.
 - Maps showing where recreation opportunities are available.
 - A website or another online portal explaining where and what is available in terms of recreation facilities, programs and events.
 - Better guides to SLV areas, lands, parks, destinations.
 - Tours.
 - More outreach/publicity/advertising of recreation opportunities.
 - Tourism materials featuring recreation opportunities.
 - Sport-specific maps (hiking and camping destinations, ATV routes, mountain biking, equestrian).

“I guess I sometimes just don’t know quite where to go. Maybe a map on your website would be a way to get more folks out and about” – quote from the survey

- **Improve signage so that people can find recreation destinations and feel more comfortable while they are out on the trail.** Ideas related to sign improvements included:
 - Give trails names, not just numbers. Names are more memorable.
 - More information at trailheads and along trails such as mileage, trail markers (e.g. cairns, direction signs), and difficulty.
 - “You are Here” stickers on maps.
 - Wayfinding signs in town and along roads that direct travelers to recreation destinations and clear road signs at access points.

“Even as a near-by resident and frequent visitor to the SLV, I have trouble finding access point to the incredible public lands resources that I know are available” – quote from the survey

- **Make access more convenient and enhance recreation opportunities by increasing connectivity.** Ideas related to enhanced connectivity included:
 - Connect trails from town.
 - Ensure there are recreation facilities such as parks and paths within walking distance from towns.
 - Connect towns and recreation areas using the Rio Grande.
 - Paved/shaded/off-road/safe routes for kids.
 - Link existing trail networks with one another.
 - Ability to ride ATVs into towns (Saguache, Del Norte, South Fork).
 - Link recreation areas (e.g. Bonanza to Saguache; La Garita to Carnero Pass).
 - Consider using railroad corridors, canals/ditches and Utility right of ways as links between recreation areas and to improve connections between communities.

“Would love to be able to ride from Monarch Pass to Del Norte.” – quote from the survey

- **Offering more recreation programming would attract more people and help spread the word about what's available throughout the SLV.** Potential programming ideas offered included:
 - Group activities. Weekend outing clubs.
 - Guided hikes and/or tours.
 - Instructional recreation activities.
 - Recreation-oriented events.
 - Equestrian skill building.

"Would like more educational opportunities to teach people new sports and more group activities to encourage new participants." – quote from the survey

- **More camping areas and more information on existing camping opportunities.** Ideas related to camping included:
 - Offer a range of camping experiences from in-town, full-service camping to primitive, backcountry camping.
 - Organized camping outings.
 - Offer more camping closer to town and/or in town.

"I've been looking for a new mountain biking destination. It'd need 3-4 days worth of good riding, camping, and amenities like restaurants, coffee shops, and brew pubs." – quote from the survey

- **Build and/or connect more miles of single-track trails.** Various user groups including motorized and non-motorized users asked for more trails and specifically more, single-track trails.
 - Link existing trails and created looped trail systems to offer more miles of single-track and more varied trail experiences.
 - More single-track trail open to motorcycle use.
 - More single-track trail for trail running, hiking, and mountain biking.
 - Create long, destination worthy trails that allow for a full day of travel.

"More trails. There are quite a few short sections of single-track hiking and biking trails, it would be great to connect some for more cohesion and longer trail sections." – quote from the survey

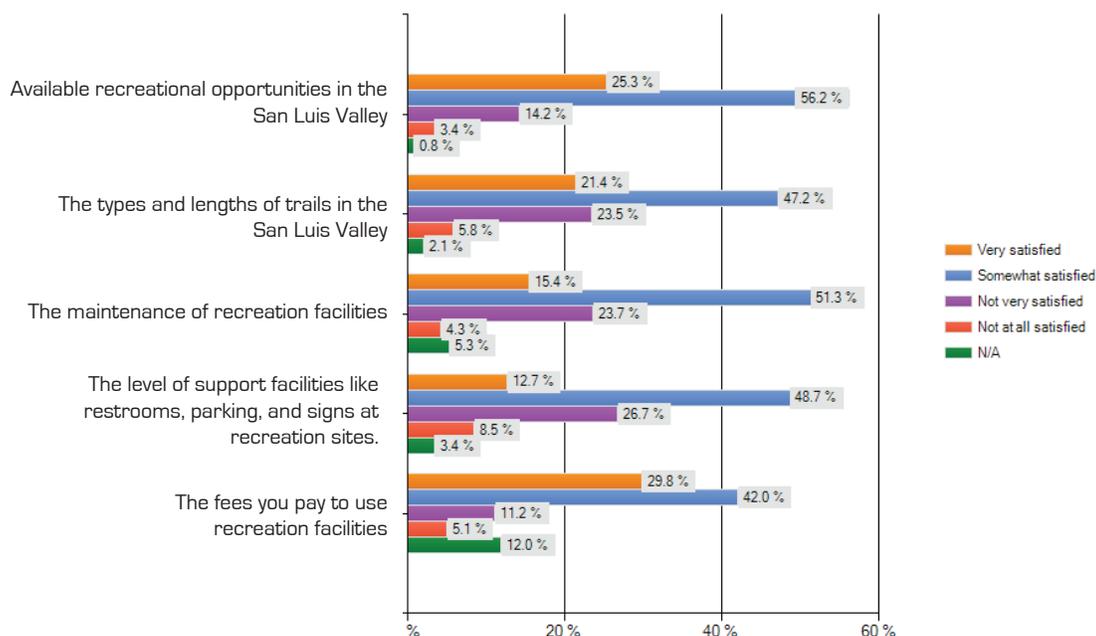
- **More amenities in towns to accommodate recreational users and tourism as well as a culture of hospitality.**
 - Coffee shops
 - Breweries
 - Equipment rentals
 - A variety of types of camping
 - Offer classes to local businesses on hospitality and ensure business owners and locals are informed about Valley recreational resources so that they can share them with visitors.
 - Share ideas for entrepreneurial ventures for better catering to tourists.

“Mountains and recreation are great, but it’s the people who make or break recreational enterprises. We need to give visitors a reason to come back and a sense of belonging when they’re here. This is an educational process of which all San Luis Valley residents should be apprised, if tourism is to grow and thrive here.” – quote from the survey

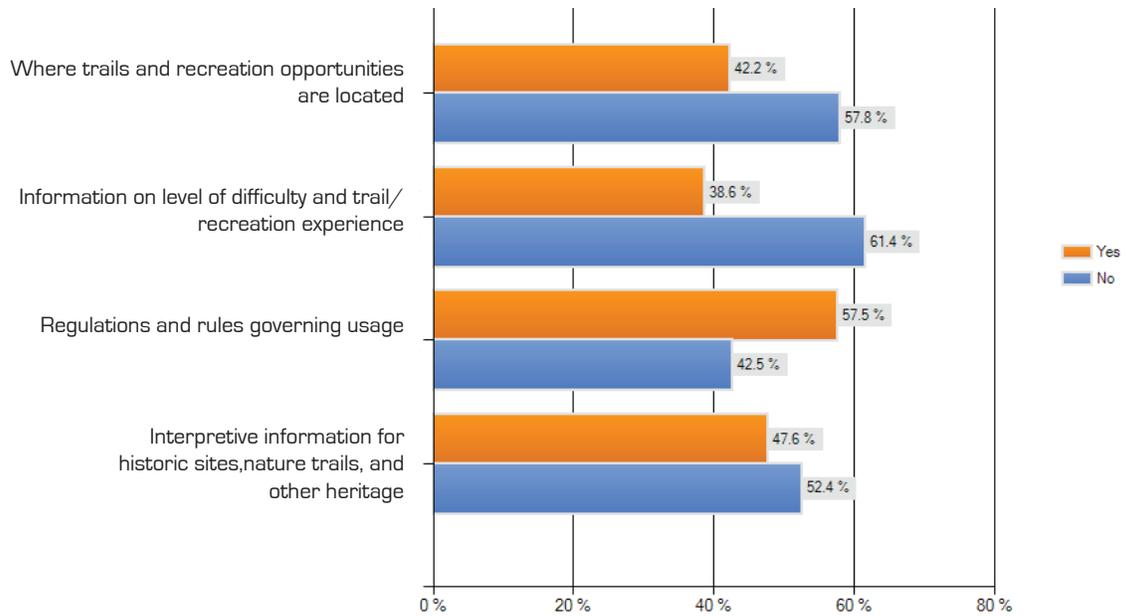
Satisfaction with Recreation Services and Information Sources

In the survey, respondents were asked to rank their satisfaction with recreation, trail services and facilities, as well as with information services and sources of information. As evidenced by the blue lines in the bar chart below, respondents were overwhelmingly “somewhat satisfied” with available recreation opportunities, the types and lengths of trails, maintenance of recreation facilities, level of support facilities, and fees. However, respondents expressed less satisfaction with information sources on recreation opportunities in the SLV.

How satisfied are you with the following:

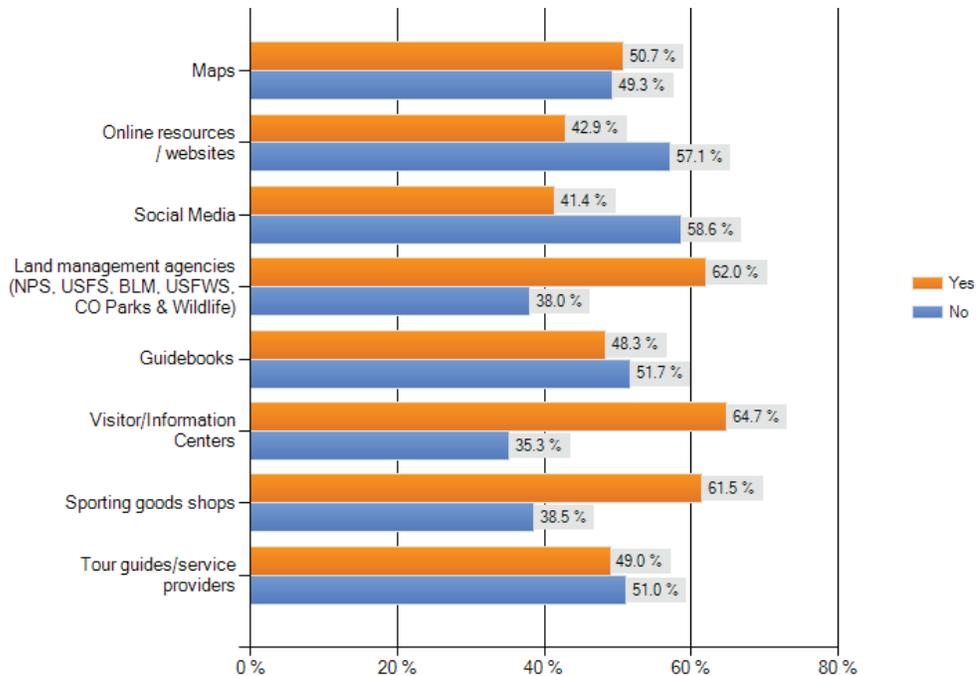


Is there adequate information addressing the following?

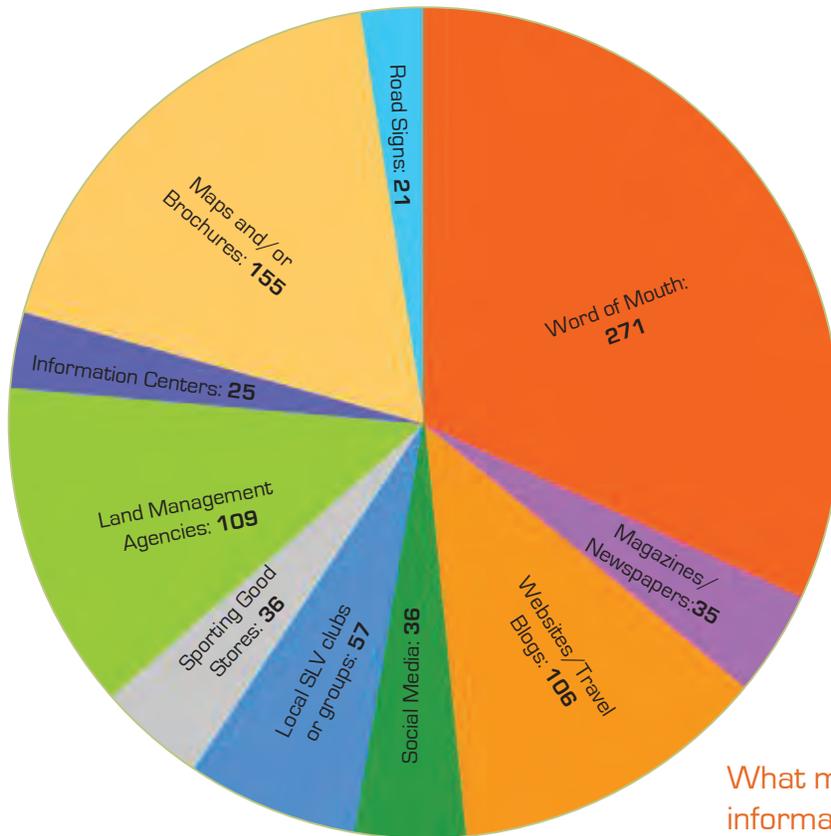


In order to understand how locals and visitors plan their recreation trips and share their experiences, the survey included a number of questions about information sources. Given satisfaction with land management agencies, visitor/information centers and sporting good shops as sources of information on recreation facilities, it will be important for SLVGO to keep these information outlets updated with the most current offerings and opportunities. While “word of mouth” is a trusted and reliable trip planning resource, the survey findings indicate that other information sources such as regional websites, social media and guidebooks can be developed and/or enhanced.

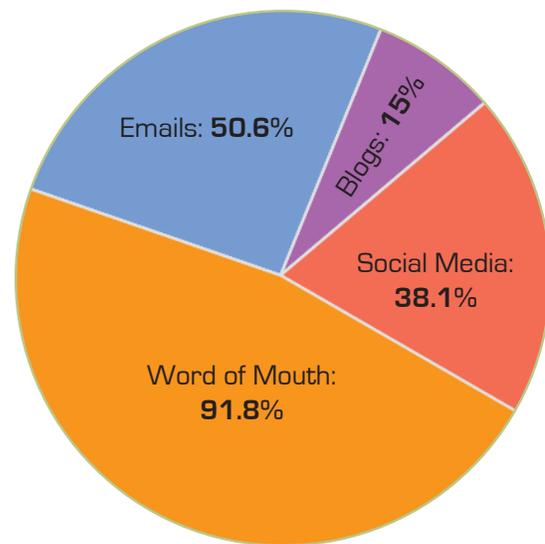
Are you satisfied with the following sources of information on recreation facilities and opportunities in the San Luis Valley?



When planning a trip or recreation outing in the SLV, which of the following sources of information do you rely on the most?



What media do you use to share information about your recreation experiences in the SLV? (choose all that apply)

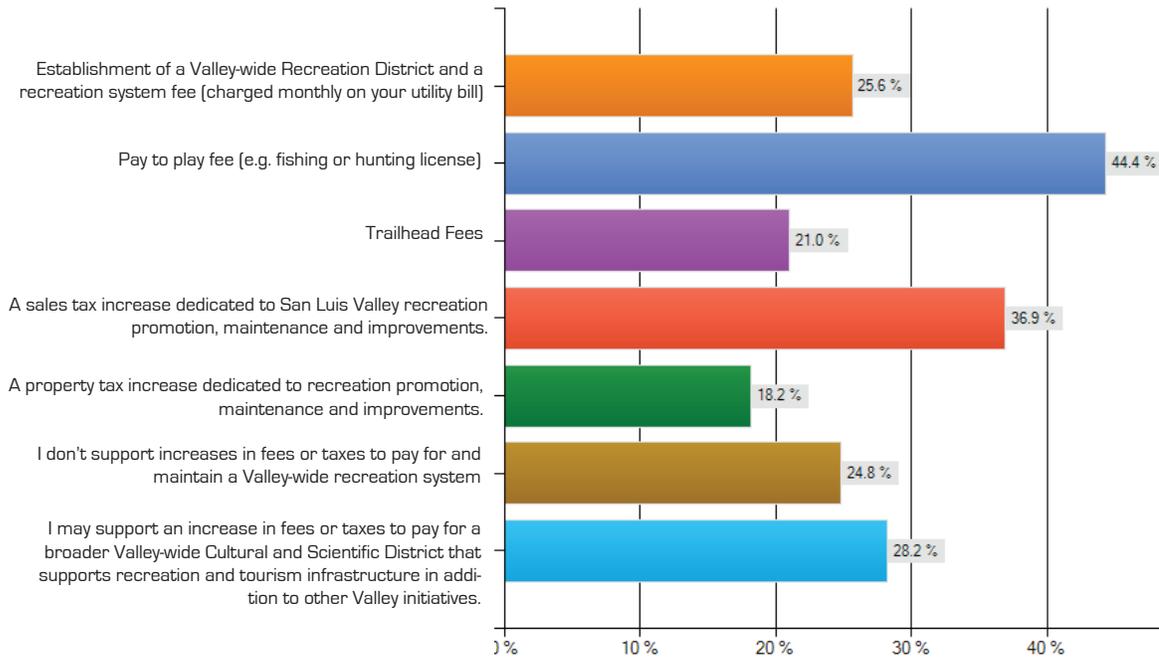


Note: Facebook is the primary social media outlet

Funding

Since the SLVGO endeavors to build a financially sustainable and scalable system of Valley-wide recreation opportunities, the survey included questions designed to gauge respondent's views on potential funding mechanisms. Of the potential funding options presented, "Pay to Play Fees (e.g. fishing and hunting licenses, entrance fees)" received the most support (44%). The least favorable option was "A property tax increase ded to recreation maintenance and promotion" (18%) and a quarter of the respondents said they "Do not support increases in taxes to pay for and maintain a Valley-wide recreation system" (25%).

Which of the following funding options would you support to expand and maintain recreational opportunities in the San Luis Valley? *(Check all that apply)*

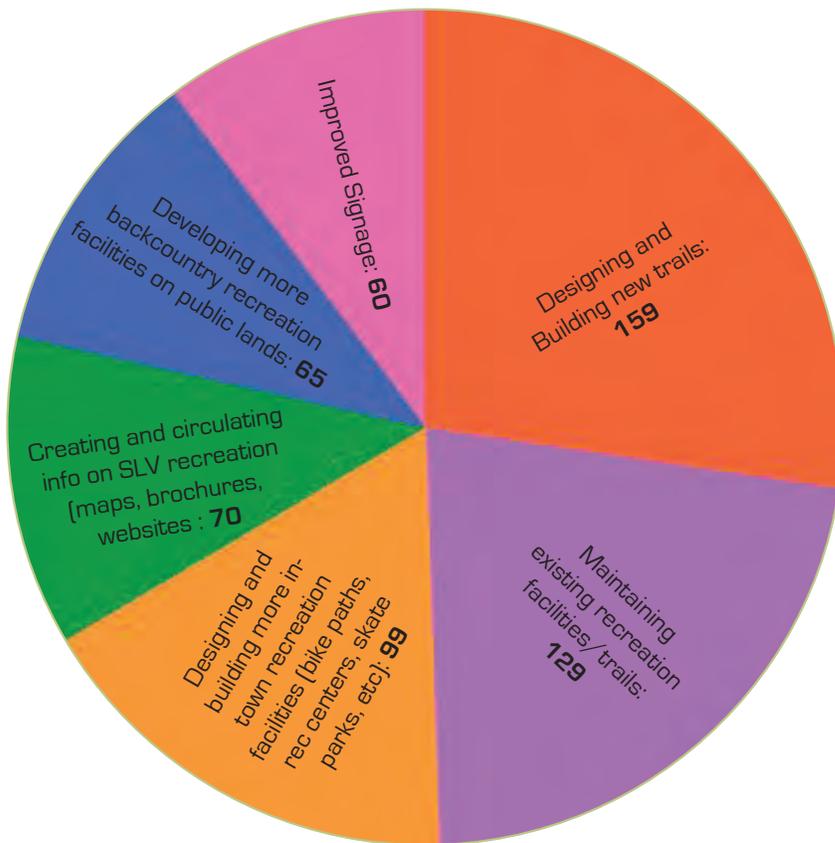


The following were identified as the top three priorities for SLVGO to fund:

- Designing and building new trails
- Maintaining existing recreation facilities and trails
- Designing and building more in-town recreation facilities (e.g., skate parks, rec centers, bike p

Support for this type of spending by the SLVGO was also echoed at the public open houses and in discussion stakeholders.

Which should be top funding priorities for
SLV Great Outdoors?
(Top 6 responses shown below)



Future Trail/Recreation Development

The survey, open houses and stakeholder engagement has resulted in a number of ideas for improving recreation opportunities in the San Luis Valley, increasing visitor satisfaction with recreation facilities and expanding the recreation experience of the SLV for both residents and locals. Ideas gleaned from the outreach effort are categorized and summarized below.

- **Information, Promotions & Communications Ideas and Tools.**
 - Recreation map for the SLV
 - Central web page with all activities listed
 - Trail guides

- Better promotion of the refuges
- Information on safe, family-friendly paved trails (e.g., for inline skating, kids, families)
- Equestrian trail information
- Bike trail maps.
- Mobile app for trail users with info on trail conditions, mileage, difficulty as well as community recreation-oriented events.
- A searchable trails database
- Trail maps/recreation orientation kiosks at entrance points to the SLV
- Map of the Rio Grande and recreation areas/opportunities along the river corridor
- “Tear-off” maps of recreational resources in the SLV that can be widely distributed at local outlets throughout the valley.
- Sangre de Cristo NHA is developing portal signs/kiosks and recreation info could potentially be included at the portals.
- Collectively promote the San Luis Valley
- Market the Valley as a region and a recreation destination in order to increase the tourism pie

“As a new resident, can’t find anything. Need better marked and rated trails with easier ways to find access” – quote from the survey

“I don’t think residents of the San Luis Valley know where the “cool” spots are around here. Maybe a recreation map of the SLV. It is also possible we don’t know what area is accessible versus private” – quote from the survey

- **Suggested Trail Improvements and SLV Trail System Expansion.**
 - More designated multi-use paths (e.g., paved, in/near-town, long distance route)
 - More accessible trails for users of all abilities including those in wheel chairs
 - Promote and interpret the interpretive and historic trails (e.g., nature trails, Old Spanish Trail, Pikes Route)
 - More looped/longer mountain bike trails
 - More trails along the Rio Grande
 - A designated obstacle course trail for runners
 - Downhill mountain bike trails (e.g., parallel Lake Como trail)
 - Connect towns via trails/paths (e.g., South Fork-Creede along RR, Alamosa to South Fork)
 - Work with the railroad and explore potential Rails-To-Trails projects.
 - Utilize ditch easements and utility right of ways as trail corridors
 - Improved/more trails signs (with distance markers)
 - Designated road ride loop between S. Colorado and N. New Mexico
 - Connections between towns (e.g., Creede to South Fork trail connection along the RR)
 - More access to challenging trails
 - Purpose-built mountain bike trails
 - Maintained trails closer to home (vs. in remote areas)
 - More trails to heritage sites

- **Suggested Enhancements for Motorized Recreational Use.**
 - More connected motorized routes and more direct access from towns (e.g., connect Creede-Del Norte-South Fork)
 - More single-track motorized trails
 - Consider allowing ATVs on unpaved county roads (in Rio Grande County and Saguache County)
 - Series of marked 4WD trails for ATV/motorcycle riding and driving
 - Improved marking
 - A motocross park/track
 - Opportunities to go town-to-town and/or looped trails
 - Long (~100 mile) single-track routes open to motorcycles

“We see a lot of ATVs coming in from out of state and out of county to enjoy this area and it would be helpful if they did not have to load their vehicles on a trailer to go anywhere” - quote from the survey

- **Ideas for Enhancing Existing Recreation Opportunities.**
 - Make sure there are easy, entry-level recreation areas for the various activities (e.g. mountain biking, rock climbing)
 - More trails (e.g., trail network at Alamosa Ranch)
 - Designated road cycling routes
 - More boat ramps (e.g., along Rio Grande in Del Norte)
 - More golf (indoor golf range, par course)
 - Another disc golf course
 - More free camping
 - More tennis
 - Designated horse camps
 - Continued development of Ski Hi Park Ski Hi Park Recreation Complex
 - Public shooting ranges and sporting clays facility
 - Ensure wheelchair access for more recreation opportunities
 - More places to ride bikes without having to be on the road with cars
 - Improved trail maintenance
 - Involve locals as volunteers to help with implementation when the plan is complete
 - More bike lane striping in towns to connect parks/recreation areas
 - Safe, well-marked bike lanes between towns and in towns (e.g., Acequia Drive in MV)

- **Ideas for Enhanced Winter Use.**
 - Outdoor ice skating opportunities, Ice Rink (e.g., Home Lake)
 - Indoor shooting range
 - More snowmobiling trails
 - Ski buses to Wolf Creek

- More marked/maintained Nordic ski trails (e.g., near Del Norte, Monte Vista and along the river at Cole Park)
- Hut system (in the San Juans)
- More winter recreational us on the river in town (e.g. cross country, ice skating, snow biking)
- **Ideas for Recreation Events.** The following types of events were recommended as a tool for building interest in recreation, raising awareness of the SLV's recreation resources and bringing the community together.
 - Mountain bike race
 - Road riding rides/events
 - Cross country running race
 - Family fun hikes (volksmarching)
 - Marathon/Half-marathon
 - Triathlon
 - Fishing tournaments
 - Motocross races
 - Geocache finding contests.
 - Festivals – Music, Art Festivals (although need a better outdoor stage)
 - Conservation/Nature, history and/or cultural-based conferences, workshops, presentations
 - Naturalist and/or history campfire talks
 - Competitive horse events (e.g., shows, competitions)
 - Stewardship events (e.g., volunteer cleanups, trail building)
 - Nature/Recreation photography contests

“Bring intellectual and outdoor enthusiasts into the Valley, and repeat, and repeat. They will come back on their own with more money and friends as well.” - quote from the survey

- **Ideas for New or Expanded Recreational Programming.**
 - More outdoor programming for youth and activities for children and families (e.g., camps, field trips)
 - Youth need somewhere to go, something to do.
 - Outdoor skills/recreation mentors for youth
 - Explore agritourism opportunities (potential partners include Farm Bureau and SLV Local Foods Coalition).
 - Provide a range of experiences.
 - Dance classes (e.g., partner with Ruth Marie Center)
 - Horse use education
 - Integrating art into trails and recreation sites
 - Interpretive info at recreation sites
 - Historical tours (e.g., Old Spanish Trail, Pike's and Fremont's Routes, Sangre de Cristo NHA)
 - More interpretation of the Spanish Trail (and other historic routes across the valley)
 - Valley excursions for school kids

- Group excursions (e.g., hikes, mountain bike rides, ATV rides)
- Rock climbing classes
- Designated “kid discovery areas” valley-wide
- Hunter safety classes
- Instructional programming for the types of recreation available in the SLV (e.g., Nordic skiing, climbing, biking, and/or horseback riding lessons)
- More clubs (e.g., photography clubs, gardening clubs, outdoor skill-building clubs)
- Expand and improve the river walk trail along the Rio Grande (in Alamosa and beyond)

“More things for children. There is a real issue that kids do not have things to do” - quote from the survey

- **Proposed New Recreation Facilities.**

- Pickleballing (a new form of mini-tennis)
- Kayak course, white water park (MV, Alamosa, South Fork)
- Zip lines
- Outdoor Concert Venue (e.g., covered stage at Cole Park)
- Recreation/Community Centers (in Saguache, South Fork, Antonito or La Jara, and/or Del Norte)
- Public pools, non-hot spring swimming facilities, year-round pool (in Del Norte or MV)
- Dog park
- Saguache’s Vista Grande project
- Hut systems (to promote both backcountry skiing and hiking)
- Water park (in Alamosa)
- Golf course
- Sand volleyball courts
- Del Norte boat ramp
- Community garden
- Healthy living park (Polston elementary)
- Off-road motorcycle complex (for all ages, motocross track, cross country track).
- Sand flat and sand racing
- Performing arts center
- Equipment rentals (e.g., bikes, climbing gear, fishing pole)

County-specific ideas

While most of the ideas for trail and recreation enhancements had valley-wide application and are incorporated into the lists above, there were a handful of ideas and projects suggested that were specific to the counties. These ideas are captured below.

ALAMOSA COUNTY:

- Water recreation from Carrols Woods to Cole Park
- Boat livery at City Park (e.g., canoes, SUP, kayaks)
- Establish trail connections from town to Alamosa NWR

- Explore potential use/connections to Devil's playground (potential Trust for Public Lands partnership)

COSTILLA COUNTY:

- Rito Seco Park and Trails (trail expansion and camping/picnic area improvements)
- Rio Grande Greenbelt (park potential, camping, picnic)
- Trinchera Ranch Greenbelt (trail/park potential)
- Trinchera Creek Greenbelt (trail/park potential)
- In-town fitness park in San Luis built in association with the public health department that could be replicated elsewhere in the Valley
- Carpenter Ranch (potential for agritourism in partnership w/ the Rio Culebra Ag)
- Coop and the County)
- Trinchera Ranch (private ranch with possibility of increased commercial recreation opportunities)

CONEJOS COUNTY:

- A loop route connecting S. Colorado and N. New Mexico (Antonito-Tres Piedras-Taos-San Luis-Antonito)
- La Jara BMX park is under construction. The group needs help with building and promoting the park.
- Need a map of local area trails (unsure of what's accessible in the San Juan Hills)
- Unaware of recreational resources in the county and southern portion of the Valley
- Desire for information on where a family could ride bikes together

MINERAL COUNTY:

- Need help with post-fire promotions and rebuilding tourism
- Need maps and more designated routes to accommodate large number of motorized, off-road users (for winter and summer use)
- Make sure popular Creede recreation areas like the Bachelor Loop and Phoenix Park are on the recreation maps
- Trail link connecting Creede and South Fork. The RR is now private, but maybe there's an opportunity for a private/public partnership.
- Winter recreation is really important and Creede would like to boost winter use. Creede and Wolf Creek pass are very popular snowmobile sites.
- Recognize and promote the differences between Creede and other communities. The Creede area recreation complements other Valley recreation opportunities.
- Desire for an ice rink
- Potential for in-town path along the ditch

SAGUACHE COUNTY:

- Lots of support vocalized for Saguache's Vista Grande project (Saguache).
- Promote downtown Saguache's improvements as well as La Garita as a destination in association with travel to Penitente Canyon or elsewhere
- Work with the Baca POA to formalize the subdivision's trail system. Consider converting the Baca's social trail web into designated, sustainable trails.
- Provide trails connections that link USFS, BLM, downtown Crestone, Baca subdivision and Baca NWR.

- Tap the growing interest in Volunteer Stewardship among visitors to Crestone
- The Camino de Crestone is a new recreation opportunity that was introduced in 2013 - a walk connecting the spiritual centers.
- Crestone’s Manitou Foundation is a potential partner for recreational programming and facility development

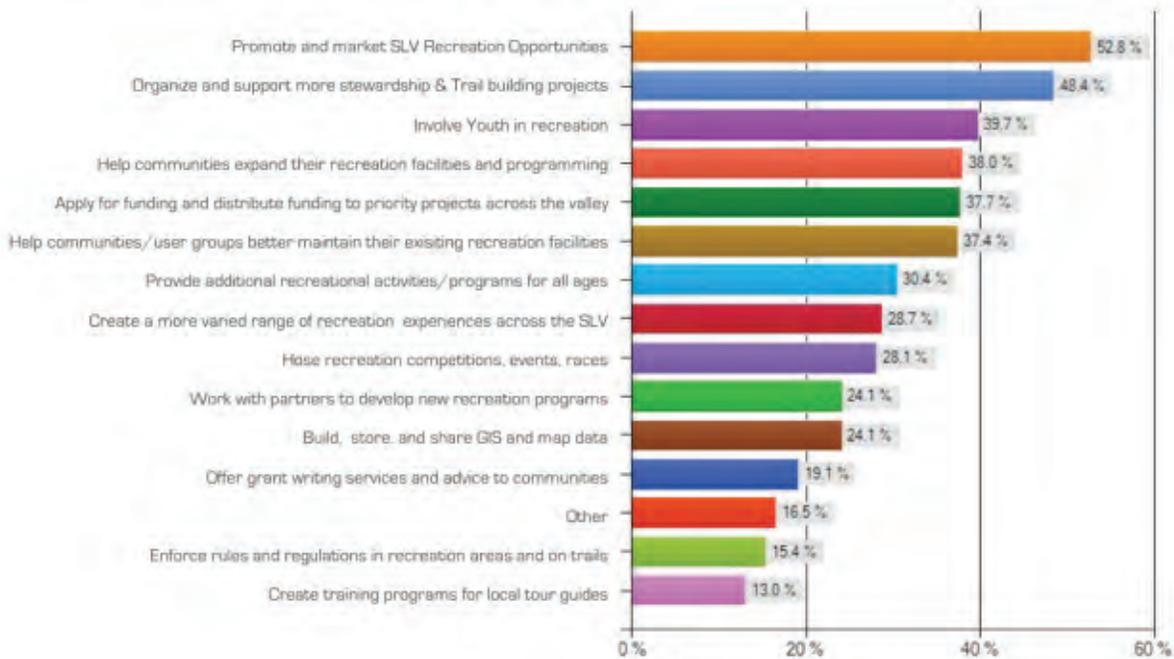
RIO GRANDE COUNTY:

- More groomed cross-country trails
- Link existing trail systems and trails including Lime Kiln, Continental Divide Trail, The Colorado Trail, Pronghorn, Elephant Rocks and Penitente Canyon.
- Provide to connect outlying trails to Del Norte
- Promote Del Norte as a trail/recreation destination
- Continued development and renovation of Ski Hi Park
- Develop more linked routes for motorized use including links from South Fork, north and south of 160.
- Need a boat ramp in Del Norte

Ideas for SLVGO

Finally, survey respondents and meeting participants were asked how they envisioned SLVGO assisting their communities in the future. As listed in the bar chart below, the survey respondents were most keen on SLVGO assisting with “promoting and marketing SLV recreation opportunities”. Other suggested top priorities for SLVGO that were expressed in the survey and echoed in community and stakeholder meetings included: organizing and supporting more stewardship and trail building projects, involving youth in recreation, and helping communities expand their recreation facilities and programming.

How can the San Luis Valley Great Outdoors Coalition (SLVGO) be most helpful in enhancing recreation in the San Luis Valley? (Choose up to five)



Ongoing Community Input and Next Steps

The SLVGO encourages Valley residents, visitors and organizations to continue to share their ideas with the coalition and to stay involved in the Master Plan project. They can do so by posting on SLVGO's Facebook page (www.facebook.com/SLVGO), contacting a member of the SLVGO, sending a note to slvgreatoutdoors@gmail.com and joining the project's mailing list at <http://www.slvgo.com>. During the late fall and winter of 2013, the SLVGO team will be using the input collected to date to develop the preliminary strategies for implementing recreation improvements and enhancements throughout the San Luis Valley. It is anticipated that SLVGO return to the public with their ideas and request more input on the draft master plan in early 2014.

