

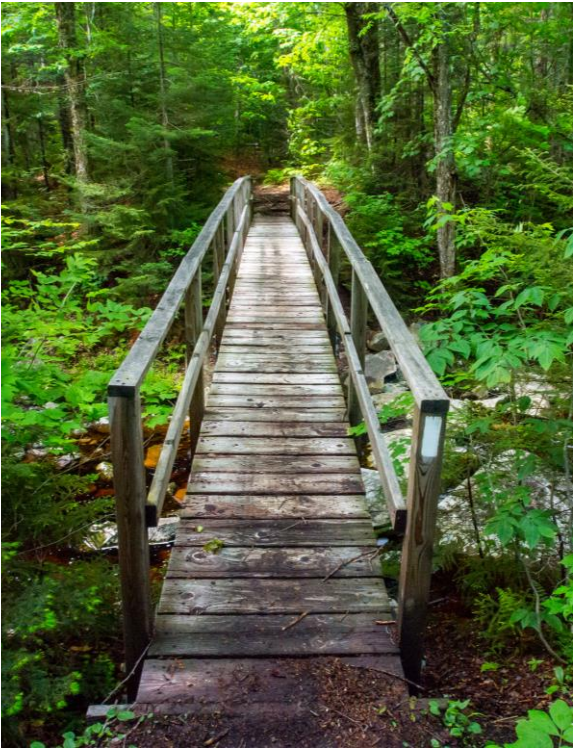


## ***‘WHAT WE’RE HEARING’*** **REPORT**

Engagement Round 1 of 2

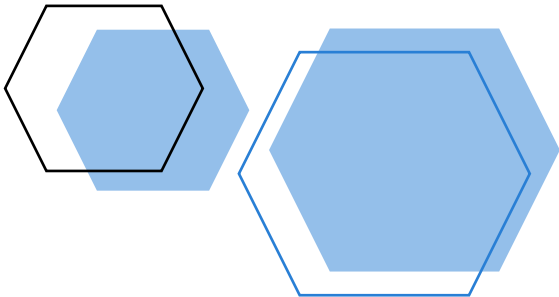
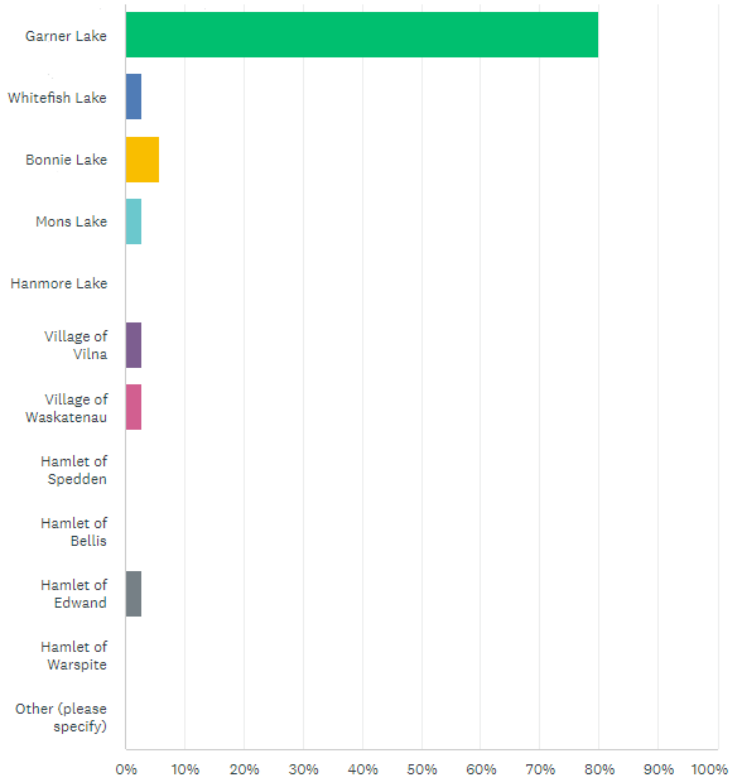
As an initial round of engagement during this project, Smoky Lake County is seeking to better understand resident’s relationship with their community trails, especially at lake subdivisions. This report represents a summary of those findings.

The two virtual open houses and online survey were advertised online on social media, in newsprint, on posters, and in gas bill inserts. This yielded 35 answers.



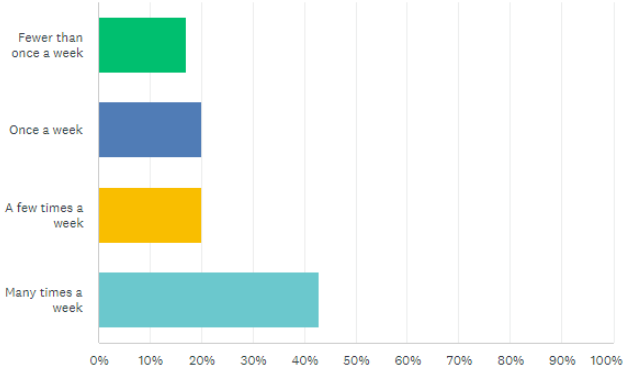
At which lake or other community do you reside?

Answered: 35 Skipped: 0



On Average, how often do you utilize community trails during summer?

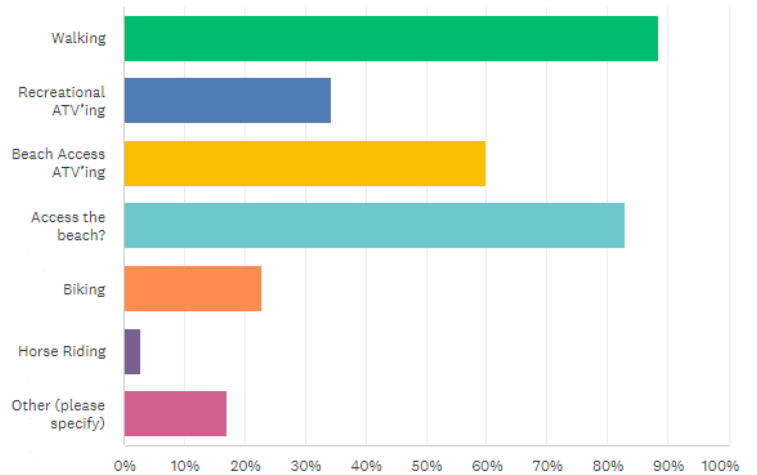
Answered: 35 Skipped: 0





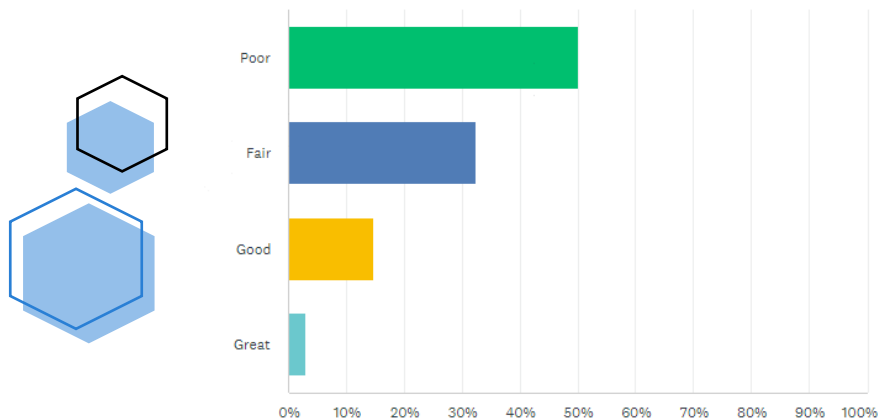
## What mode of use? (check all that apply)

Answered: 35 Skipped: 0



## How do you rate trail conditions in your area?

Answered: 34 Skipped: 1



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## If you have trail condition concerns, state the nature and location

Answered: 27 Skipped: 8

- *They were damaged last year by the county and there are open areas and rough areas with roots and stumps sticking up. Many of the damaged trees were not removed or protected with arbor tape. There is so much cleaning up of the branches and bark to be done.*
- *The trails are very bumpy and there is not one good trail to go down to the lake that isn't super steep. On days when it is raining we get stuck and can't get up the hill.*
- *We need to extend the existing trail to go along the entire length of the ER adjacent to the Lakeshore. Front lot owners have taken over the er in front of their lots with and one person has placed large*



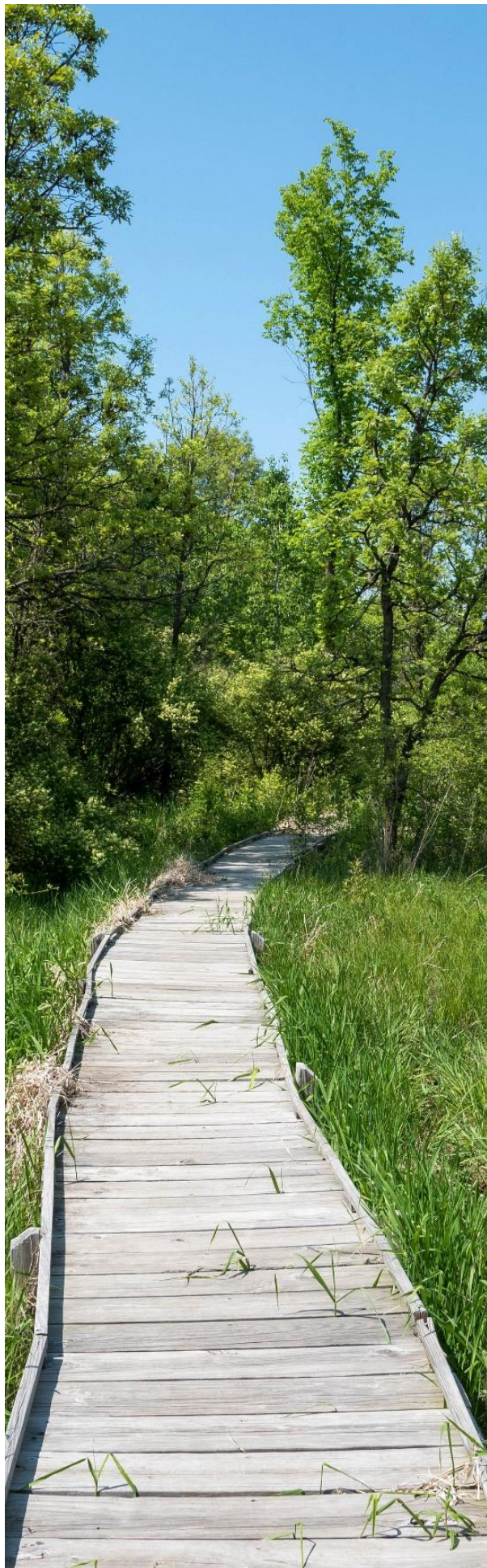


*boulders on the county Er high water mark and built their own boat launch*

- *there are some really nice trails in the Provincial park*
- *All trails need upgrading and need to be developed for access in Birchland.*
- *Not always kept up with mowing or snow removal*
- *Can't find any trails around Vilna. Iron Horse seems taken over by machines.*
- *Most of the trails are too steep for safe travel with Atv's. Many trails have been hidden by home owners therefore are not utilized. Eg. on 7th st. & on 5th st. As well as others.*
- *5th street beach trail has barricades*
- *What's with the pile of crap metal blocking the path along the tree line*
- *it is constantly wet due to an underground spring.*
- *Birchland trails -non-designated/trees being ruined by Quadders along beach areas/erosion of soil with mud bogs in some areas occurring*
- *Many trails have not been developed to allow the community to have access to the beach.*
- *When it rains it becomes one BIG mud trail.*
- *The trail between 8th & 9th has been open to the road!. This is dangerous and the access to the road should be closed. Due to heavy use of the trail when it rains we cannot use it due to the deep mud.*
- *Open to the road, dangerous we want the road entrance closed like all the other trails, traffic is high and easy for robbery*
- *Trail between 8 street and 9 street is unsafe and it is only a matter of time before a disaster happens. The county is put on notice!!! 9 street*
- *The shore walking trail is awful. The ATV's have created a muddy mess. You can not walk along the shore without worry you will break a leg*
- *Trail widths are too narrow- access off 7th to beach access*

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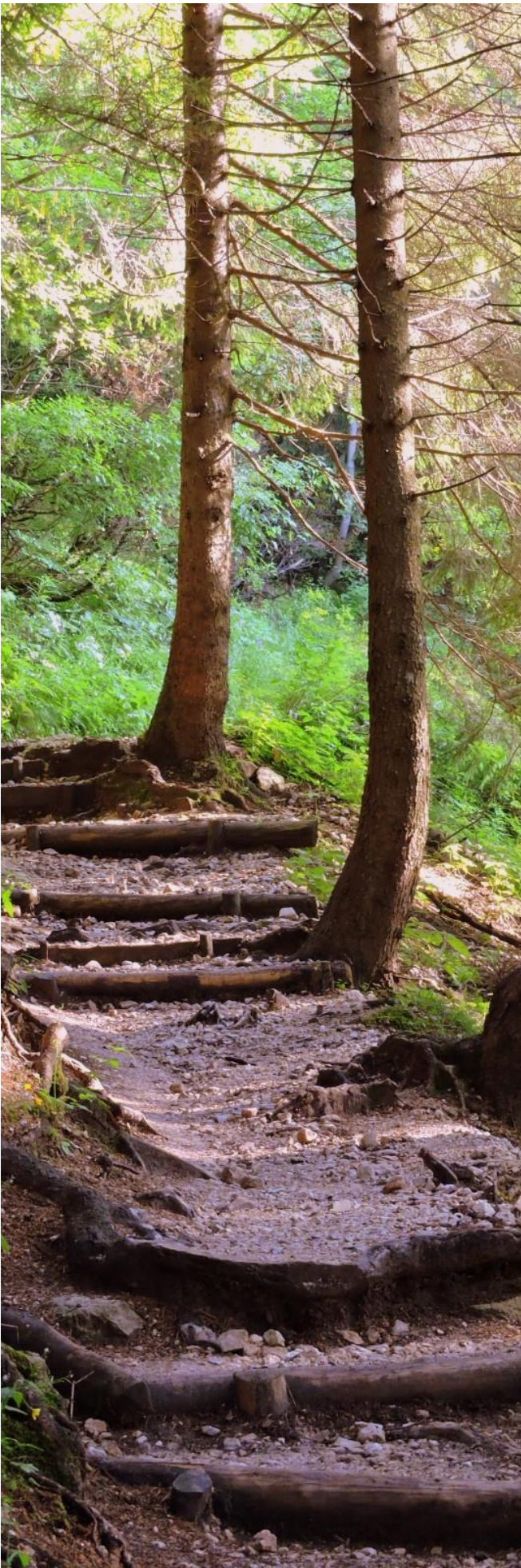
- *Where the trails pass through wet areas the trails are deeply rutted making it difficult to walk the trails and it forces ATV users to break new trails.*
- *Very muddy at times....zero trail care*
- *none at this time*
- *Safety concern. There should be no vehicle traffic from trails to Birchland Drive Every street in the Birchland Resort has or should have a trail to the beach area and access to Birchland Drive is not required. I have personally witnessed several near misses and I am sure a serious injury will take place*
- *Steep slippery hill*
- *Trail between 2nd and 3rd st. Also there is supposed to be access from 3rd st and there isn't.*
- *Ruts, beavers on various*
- *As mentioned in several occasions walking paths along the treeline, high water mark, neighbours have blocked off with old wood, docks, boat lifts, and junk. Making this dangerous and oaths not accessible. 2+ years ago this was supposed be addressed and taken care of by the county. Before passing a bylaw, maybe address the co verbs that were never acknowledged or action taken back then. Someone is going to get hurt.*

## Are there any specific barriers or reasons why you don't use trails more?

Answered: 26 Skipped: 9

- *No*
- *There isn't a good trail that isn't too steep to use.*
- *The county has barricaded the trail on the top and bottom of the road allowance which has made the existing trail that was pushed by a county cat grow in*
- *usually walk on the road*
- *Most trails are not accessible therefore the 7th street trail is overused.*
- *I have a bike trailer for the kids and I am not away of any paved pathway as pulling it on gravel or grass is difficult*
- *They don't exist.*





- Yes. One lake front home owner has put up dangerous barricades.
- Steel structures around 5th street beach trail are very hazardous
- Other in front of the places on Fifth street beach area there should be no need for that
- Fear of my children and grandchildren being hit by an ATV or a motorcycle
- As many trails have not been developed, there are trees, rocks and steep hills preventing people from using these trails.
- A lot of cabins have no trail so they use ours.
- Yes, the county never did any work on any trails so some trails have steep hills, rocks, trees that make it difficult to use and access the beach.
- No
- too much atv speeding around every turn.
- N/A
- There are physical barriers placed across the trails by cottage owners to prevent ATV's from using the trails. This also presents a hindrance to pedestrian usage of the trails.
- Mud
- we are summer residents, so use trails on weekends and when on vacation at Birchland
- Trail between 9th and 10th street can not be used during wet conditions due to a steep slope and a clay base
- No
- 2nd st access is very steep.
- Some downed trees etc.
- Sometimes the conditions preclude it
- Yes, see above residents blocking public land with junk



**Do you have any specific safety concerns to make us aware of? (Note, for urgent matters, call 780-656-3730 or 911 in the case of emergency).** Answered: 23 Skipped: 12



- *Will they respond? I sent emails to the COO, Gene S. and nothing was done*
- *if there are groomed trails weaving in and out the quads and snowmobiles will be traveling at high speeds and wipe out a person out for a stroll. Then who do you call?*
- *7th street and trails off 7th street is heavily used by ATV's and dirt bikes.*
- *No*
- *Walkers and drivers on same trail dangerous.*
- *Many young children riding ATVs*
- *The barricades cabin owners put up*
- *N/A*
- *We must cross the walking trail to get to our beach and have had many close encounters with ATV riders*
- *Yes. The trail between 8th & 9th has been opened to the road. There have been many occasions where a collision nearly occurred between an ATV/dirt bike exiting the trail and nearly hitting a vehicle driving down Birchland road.*
- *Yes the trail between 8 th and 9 th should NOT have access to Birchland Drive. This is an MAJOR ACCIDENT waiting to happen.*
- *Yes, When people are on ATV's are coming from the beach jump up onto the road and vehicles driving on Birchland road cannot see them, so we have had many close calls. This could result in a major accident.*
- *Dangerous*

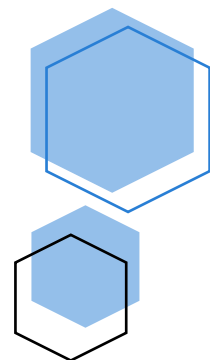
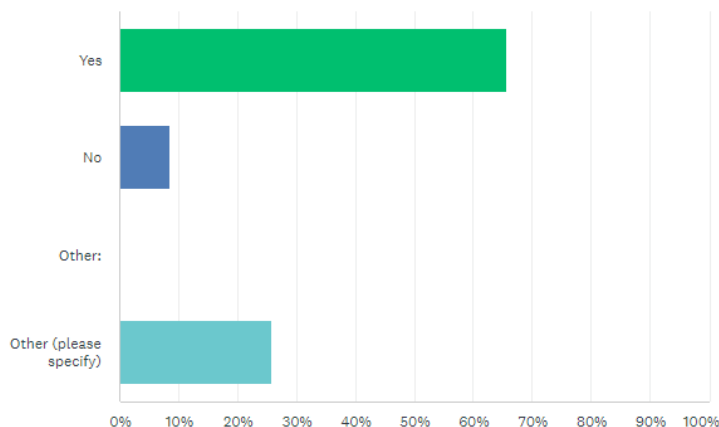


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- Refer to #5 above.
- The drunk drivers, Children under age driving along the shore unsupervised. e. Unsupervised children riding machines they are not licenend
- N/A
- There is a safety issue stemming from the anger and threats of cottagers against ATV users on the trails.
- No
- none
- The issue regarding the trail on 8 street has been brought to year attention numerous times and no action has ever been taken Beach trail has been blocked in several places .... Especially near 5th street
- No
- 2nd street access is very steep for my parents and young children.
- See above definite safety measures. As mentioned 2 + years ago

The County receives many trail maintenance service requests on an annual basis. A Trails Strategy Policy Statement could help guide future management of trails. Should Smoky Lake County seek to manage existing trails including enforcement, classification, scheduled maintenance, and established service levels?

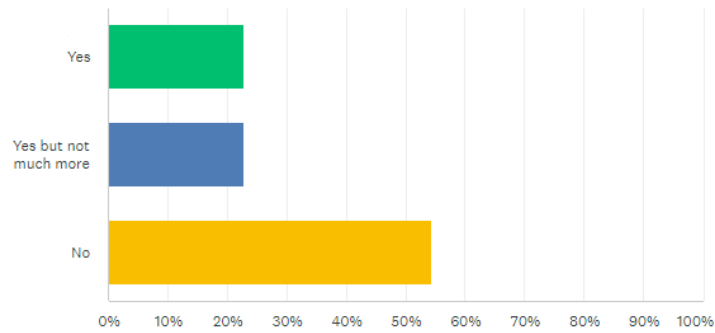
Answered: 35 Skipped: 0





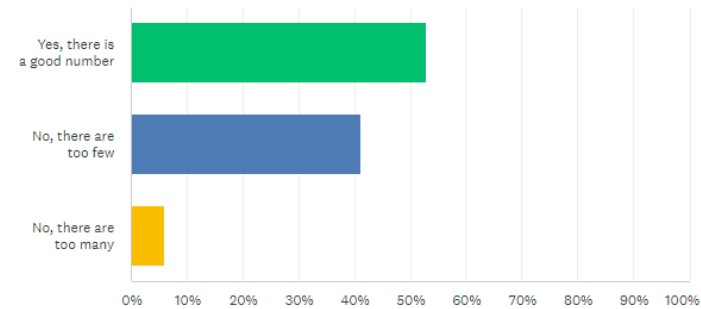
Are you be willing to pay more tax for increased service levels and maintenance?

Answered: 35   Skipped: 0



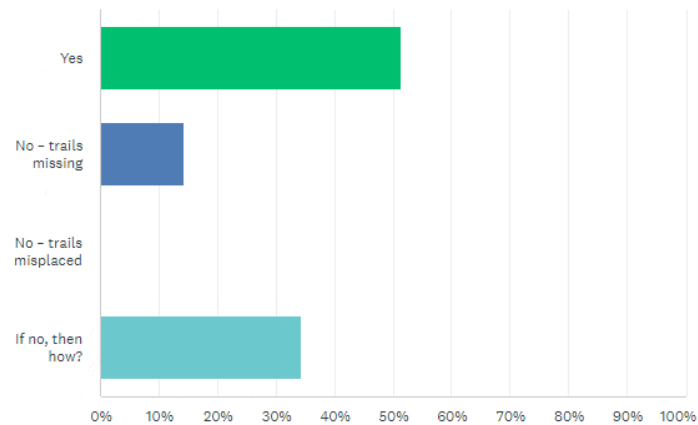
Are you satisfied with the number of trails? Should there be more or fewer?

Answered: 34   Skipped: 1



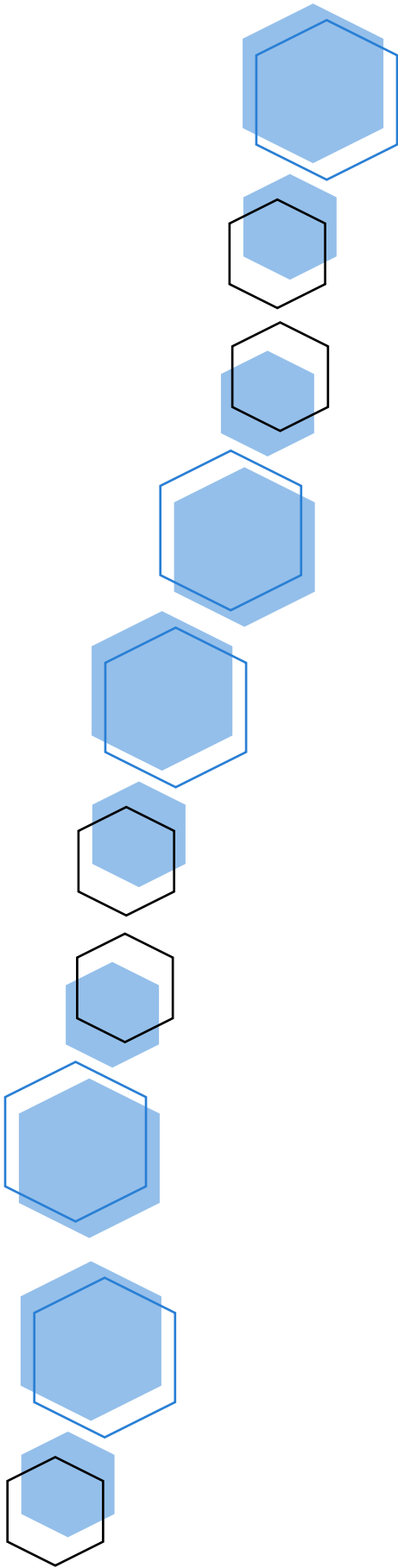
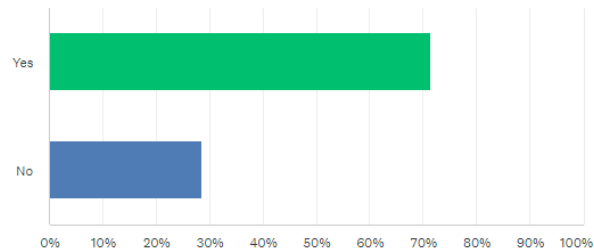
Do the draft trail maps accurately reflect reality?

Answered: 35   Skipped: 0



Are you aware that some trails are within Municipal Lands, and others are within the bed and shore, meaning under the jurisdiction of the Province of Alberta?

Answered: 35   Skipped: 0



# Are there any locations that you would like to see a trail established?

Answered: 26 Skipped: 9

- *Not by the county. They just drive through and destroy nests, dens, trees, and the path.*
- *Yes on the ER along the Lakeshore Ang along the edges of the subdivision in a ring*
- *no there are some real nice trails in the provincial park at Garner lake for walking and they are seldom used other than a few months of the year*
- *the existing trails need to be opened and accessible*
- *A bike path along the north Saskatchewan*
- *Vilna. Stry.*
- *Yes. All that are supposed to be available for back lots to access the beach. The trail between 5th & 7th st. is being used by many streets as it was widened by you and now it is as busy as a highway on weekends.*
- *All adjacent crown / municipal land*
- *No*
- *Nope*
- *No*
- *Along the main road for quaders so Iron Horse trail can be more easily accessed*
- *Yes. Excluding 8th & 9th, no other street has trails developed for access to the beach. This has caused a high traffic trail for 8th and 9th, which is not fair for the residence who back on to this trail. Also, 8th & 9th should not have open access to Birchland drive.*
- *Yes as shown on your map. Many cabins do not have access to the lake and a lot of them use the trail between 8 and 9 to access the lake. This makes that trail a HIGH TRAFFIC TRAIL. Not fair to the cabins that back onto that trail.*
- *Yes, R18 (1st to about to 5th street)R13 needs trail access to the beach. Between 7 & 8th needs more work (widen).Behind 10th street there is no trail and cabin owners backing onto it need access to the beach.*
- *No*
- *No*
- *No trails on the bed and shore for any motorized vehicle*
- *no*
- *At Birchland Resort there should be a built-up trail along the bottom of the escarpment that parallels the shore. The trail should be used as a walking path as well ATV access for dock installation and removal. I would also support ATV recreational use provided that speeds are limited to 10km/hr.*
- *No*
- *none*



- *No new trails.... Maintain current trails and open blocked trails for everyone not just a selected few people*
- *No*
- *3rd street to lake*
- *Perhaps*



## Are there any other comments you'd like to contribute to this engagement?

Answered: 24 Skipped: 11

- *If there is no enforcement, then nothing is needed.*
- *Trail between 2nd and 3rd street. There should be a path but the residents created their driveway in the way so we can't access it.*
- *The county should do more at Hillside Acres. The subdivision is now 20 years old and there isn't any playground but you budget for a playground at Hanmore Lake Eastside. That is lease from the government of Alberta and you don't have any rate payers there. How long are you going to ignore the ratepayers at Hillside Acres.*
- *This would be a waste of tax dollars and an unreal expectation that the county would be able to maintain the trails let alone enforce the use of motorized vehicles on any new trails that would be developed through this type of plan. I thought that the environmental concern was to return the lands to their natural state for the wildlife and water foul. This plan would be the total opposite in my opinion.*
- *Would like to see some law enforcement presence on weekends (especially the long weekends).*
- *No*
- *Have never heard of any walking trails anywhere in this county. If you have them, let us know. Having a prescription to walk for my health, I must walk year round. Many elderly people can extend good health by years or even decades when they can walk regularly year round on safe trails.*
- *Is something actually going to come of this survey or will it fall to the wayside like the last survey? I think lake lot owners taxes are very high for the services we receive which are basically "nothing".*
- *We mainly use trails in Garner Lake Prov. Park. Would be nice to have a more complete trail around the waterfront of Garner Lake.*
- *Someone will get Injured law suits will be made if the owners of the steel structures do not remove them off the trail*

- *Nope*
- *We would like to see ATV's banned from any trail on or near the established lake shore. Signs should be posted to this effect.*
- *The trail between 8th & 9th MUST have it's access CLOSED to Birchland road. The entire community uses this trail, creating high level traffic which has become a major safety concern for pedestrians and vehicles who pass by.*
- *YES CLOSE THE ACESS TO THE TRAIL BETWEEN 8 and 9 from BIRCHLAND DRIVE.*
- *We have a major safety concern for the trail between 8th and 9th, as well as the road access needs to be closed! This trail has had increased traffic (ATV's & Dirt bikes) from other subdivision's and the campground. Therefore, this has made it unsafe for walking and kids playing in yards that back on onto this trail.*
- *There is no follow through after surveys. Mostly a waste of time and money.*
- *It is about time the county puts our environment a priority before we have no lakes and streams left in LAKELAND*
- *Trail use is vital for accessing beach. The majority of trail users are respectful and understand the importance of minimal impact to environmentally sensitive areas (including shoreline). Signage and clear marker access will encourage people to stay on designated areas.*
- *This trail strategy is long overdue!!*
- *No*
- *Would just like existing bylaws enforced re no atv's on the beach.*
- *Not at this time*
- *I'm glad this is being looked at.*
- *See all above comments, please look at letters submitted previously, meeting minutes, dangers, etc.*





# CONCLUSION

## TOWARD A TRAILS STRATEGY FOR SMOKY LAKE COUNTY

The management and jurisdiction of community trails located on Environmental and Municipal Reserve (ER/MR) are complicated. In order for any strategy to be successful, the County will need to partner with local community associations, adjacent municipalities, and the Province of Alberta.

- The new Alberta *Trails Act* is not directly applicable to lake trails but may be relevant to other snowmobile and OHV trails on Crown Lands within Smoky Lake County. Engaging Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) at a Director-level (and the MLA) is a logical next-step.
- The draft trail maps are undoubtedly imperfect, but they **do** begin to convey a sense of scale and scope which previously had been data unavailable to Smoky Lake County Council.
- The more than 30 respondents of Round 1 Engagement have indicated some key concerns and focus areas which will be important for the County to address.

The next step of this project will be to bring a draft policy statement to committee for discussion before undertaking a second round of engagement and consideration of adopting the same as a plan for the future management of lake and other trails in Smoky Lake County. Administration aims to do this in Fall 2022.



## Appendix A (Emails)

### Kyle Schole

---

**From:** Deb Williams [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** May 20, 2022 4:01 PM  
**To:** Kyle Schole  
**Subject:** Re: Survey and upcoming zoom

**Follow Up Flag:** Flag for follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged

Thanks Kyle for your quick reply! Have a nice long weekend too!

Sent from my iPad

On May 20, 2022, at 3:41 PM, Kyle Schole <kschole@smokylakecounty.ab.ca> wrote:

Deb,

Thanks for sharing your disappointment, and I apologize that you weren't included on the initial email sent out. As you might expect, we're taking a multi pronged approach, and several waves of notifications are being sent out, so you would have certainly been receiving one of those very shortly.

In terms of the maps, the different colors are simply intended to help with visibility. This is the same reason whatever information was or was not included per your comments above.

Rest assured that your comments above will be captured in our report to Council.

Finally, yes, it is our aim to have a second round of engagement in August or September.

Thanks for your feedback and have a lovely long weekend.

-KMS

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**From:** Deb Williams [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, May 20, 2022 3:28:34 PM  
**To:** kschole@smokylakecounty.ab.ca <kschole@smokylakecounty.ab.ca>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Survey and upcoming zoom

Hi Kyle,

I noticed that the survey came out. I was disappointed that I did not get an email for it, being that I brought Birchland resort trails to your attention. We have had numerous communications with you and you mentioned that you would keep me informed. We discovered the survey from a Facebook post by Lori Brown.





**From:** Hans [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** July 11, 2021 11:04 PM  
**To:** Kyle Schole  
**Subject:** Re: Trail on 8th and 9th and the traffic problem.

Thank you for your email Kyle. I'm glad to see some action regarding the trails at Birchland Resort. It really hasn't affected us that much but the present conditions and policies have created some bitter feelings among residents in the resort. I can see why the trail on 8th and 9th has created some bad feelings since it is being used by residents ranging from street 2 to 10. The trails are there to be enjoyed by all residents yet some trails are not accessible to everyone and if they are you are made aware that you are not welcome. The trail between Street 7 and 8 is pleasant to walk on yet there is a sign on the lake side No Exit and is not cleared 20 feet from Birchland Drive. This in effect makes it a private trail.

Like I stated earlier this has not affected us to any great extent but we are rather sad to see conflict in our community.

Now I have a question for you not related to the above. What is the policy regarding cutting down dead trees on county property? We have four large dead black poplar trees just off our property line which are likely to fall in the near future. We have been lucky up to now since a few trees have fallen during thunderstorms but they have always fallen away from the cabin and garage

Hans

> On Jul 9, 2021, at 2:32 PM, Kyle Schole <kschole@smokylakecounty.ab.ca> wrote:  
>  
> Deb and Ron,  
>  
> Thanks for your extensive phone-call with myself this morning, your call to Doug, and thirdly this follow-up email.  
>  
> You and I talked extensively this morning regarding the multi-faceted realities of these trails, the steps the County has already taken, and those we will be taking. The County is not interested in playing whack-a-mole, and has determined to undertake a trails strategy including an inventory of existing trails in order to take a full look and fairly and cost effectively address trails issues such as safety and nuisance across the lake subdivisions. We have already begun looking at best practices in other municipalities such as Strathcona County, and the River Valley Alliance (RVA) in order to formulate an overarching trails strategy framework. This work will unfold as possible in the next month or two.  
>  
> To re-confirm the information for you, and for the first time for those you've cc'd, I'm enclosing Jordan's response to you from Wednesday this week as an outcome from your delegation appearance at the June 24 County Council Meeting. I have also saved/captured this correspondence to the trails strategy project folder, and have cc'd Council in this reply to you for their information.  
>  
> Best Regards,  
>  
> Kyle Schole  
> -----Original Message-----  
> From: Professional Dental Ceramics [REDACTED]  
> Sent: July 9, 2021 2:16 PM  
> To: Kyle Schole <kschole@smokylakecounty.ab.ca> [REDACTED]  
> [REDACTED]  
> Subject: Trail on 8th and 9th and the traffic problem.  
>  
> Hi Kyle,  
>  
> Thank you for taking my call today I really appreciate it! Thank you for the load of Gravel, and working on the 9th street trail to fix the problem we have with the rain collecting in spots. As you know we did want the trail to be fixed but please see below:  
>  
> Now unfortunately, we have a major problem we addressed with you regarding and high traffic volume. Please note that the developer planed for all the trails to be used by the owners that back onto them and some of them are only partially open, so they using 8/9th trail. This follows up with the phone call I just had with Doug.  
> In talking with Doug he said they are not going to be working on any more trails.  
> So now what we have to deal with is the high volume freeway of all the other streets that won't use there own trails and believe me, they don't care.  
> We all have grandchildren that we worry about, they are small and at risk.  
> I'm speaking for the others owners that back onto this trail (8-9th) and we all very upset so now we need your help to close this trail from the road. Check back into the archives and you will see that this trail was never meant to be open.  
> Please take this at face value that this problem will only get worse if not handled.  
> I know you mentioned there are upcoming meetings and all of us are looking forward to attending. We will also will be looking for the emails and please include Ron's at [REDACTED] and please CC all of the contacts in this email.  
>  
> Sincerely  
> Deb and Ron Williams



## Appendix B (Draft Trail Maps)

