



FALL 2021

Silver Star/Yacolt Burn Trail User Survey Results

YACOLT BURN/SILVER STAR TRAIL USER SURVEY SUMMARY

OVERVIEW

The online survey was intended to allow as many people as possible to provide general input to the Silver Star Planning Team to assist in the generation and resolution of issues in the Yacolt Burn/Silver Star planning area. Although it is not a scientific survey, it does provide an overview of how people recreate in the area and what their experience is like. Key highlights indicate that people enjoy different types of activities on different trails in the planning area.

Equestrian use tends to be clustered near Rock Creek Horse Camp and mountain biking is more common around the Yacolt Burn and Larch Mountain Trailheads. Hiking is more common at the Grouse Vista and Silver Star trailheads.

Regardless of their favorite activity, respondents share common concerns about litter, vandalism and unmanaged recreational shooting. Notably hikers' main concern is poor road conditions and cite the degraded condition of Forest Road 4109 to the Silver Star trailhead in particular. However, hikers are evenly split when asked if they would support decommissioning all or part of the road and converting it to a trail.



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YACOLT BURN/SILVER STAR TRAIL USER SURVEY SUMMARY

LIMITATIONS OF SURVEY

The results are not scientific because anyone who wanted to take the survey was allowed to.

User groups were encouraged to spread the Survey Announcement which resulted in an uneven number of respondents for certain user types (equestrians in particular) and where people are from (heavy responses from Clark County). To offset this, some results have been filtered by user type which allows for a better understanding of respondents and ways people are using the trails in the planning area.

Total responses = 1,232

Respondents were primarily from Clark County (69%)

Respondents' primary user type was hiker (39%), equestrian (34%), mountain biker (20%) and trail runner (3%).

As noted above, this is not reflective off the true use of Silver Star and Yacolt Burn trails. It is likely that equestrians responded in larger numbers than typically expected. In order to determine this, a user intercept study would need to be conducted.



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SURVEY RESULTS FOR YACOLT BURN

MTN BIKING

57% of mtn bikers use the trails on the Yacolt Burn State Forest a few times a month or more. Roughly one in three mtn bikers use the trails once a week or more. 6th Sense (38%) and Cold Creek- southern portion of Tarbell Loop (35%) were the most used trails by bikers. Yacolt Burn and Larch Mtn trailhead were the most commonly used parking areas. But, over 51% used Yacolt Burn trailhead the most.

HIKING

57% of hikers use the trails one or two times a year. 13% use them a few times a month or more. Grouse Vista Trail is the most frequently used (37%). Bells Mountain and Tarbell Trails were the most used by 19% of respondents. Not surprisingly, Grouse Vista Trailhead was the most frequented parking area for hikers (37%).

HORSEBACK RIDING

Equestrian respondents said they use the Yacolt Burn area once a month or less (77%). Tarbell Trail is the most popular equestrian trail on DNR lands in the project area (57%). 70% of equestrians use the Rock Creek Trailhead & Horse camp as their parking area.

TRAIL RUNNING

46% of trail runners use the DNR lands a few times a month or more and 54% use them once a month or less. Tarbell Trail is most commonly used by runners (51%). Most popular parking areas were split between Grouse Vista (28%), Bells Mountain (24%) and Yacolt Burn (20%).



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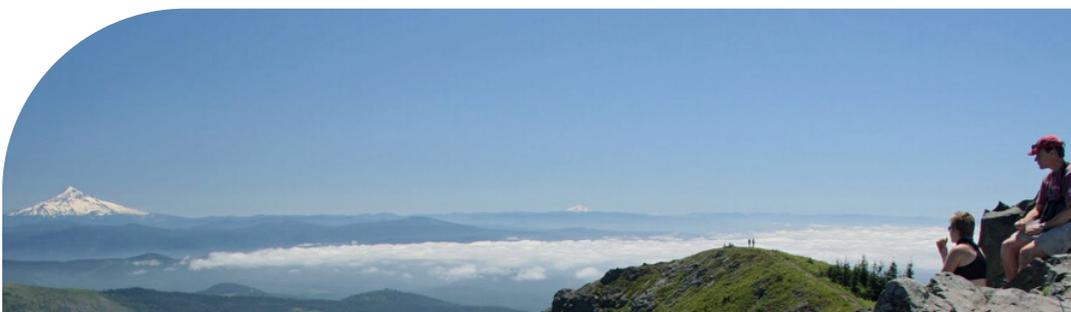
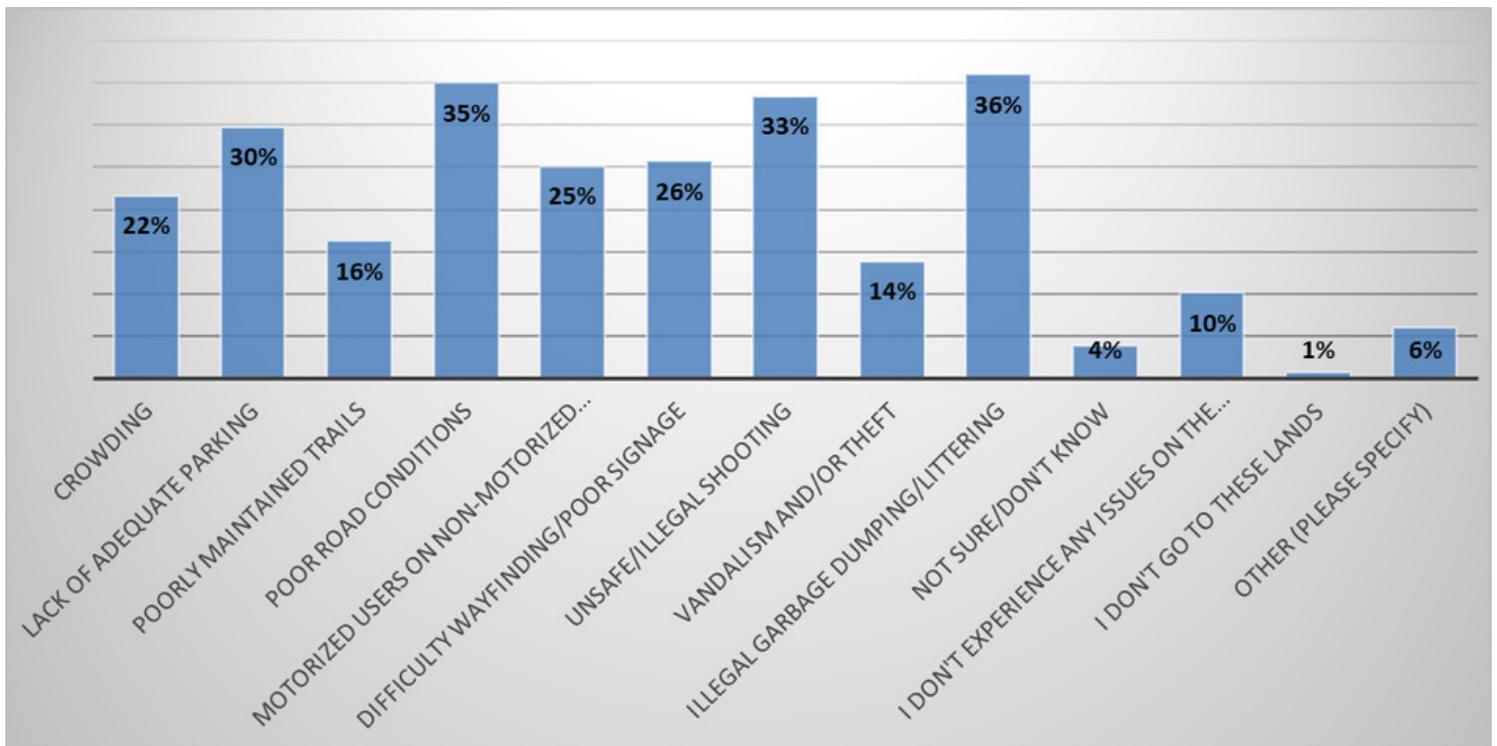
SURVEY RESULTS FOR YACOLT BURN

ISSUES EXPERIENCED - DNR

When asked what issues people are experiencing on the DNR lands, respondents said illegal dumping/littering (36%), poor road conditions (35%), illegal or unsafe shooting (33%), lack of adequate parking (30%), difficulty wayfinding/ lack of signage (26%), motorized users on trails (25%), crowding (22%), poorly maintained trails (16%) and vandalism and theft (14%).

Survey Takers were also asked what is the single biggest issue they experience. responses were mixed. Answers with the highest percentage of responses were poor road conditions (18%) and unsafe and illegal shooting (14%).

Percent of respondents who stated these issues effected them in their visits to Yacolt Burn - DNR lands.



DNR

SURVEY RESULTS FOR SILVER STAR

HIKING

74% of hikers said they go to the Silver Star area a few times a year or less. 48% said they go here once or twice a year. The most popular trails on the USFS lands in the project area were listed as Silver Star Trail (34%), Grouse Vista (30%) and Ed's Trail (23%). The most commonly used trailheads were Silver Star (42%) and Grouse Vista - hiking into USFS lands (34%).

HORSEBACK RIDING

36% of equestrians go to Silver Star lands once or twice a year. 11% of riders go a few times a month or more. The Silver Star Trail was far and away the most used trail by equestrians (48%). Most common parking and access to USFS lands was divided amongst Rock Creek Trailhead (39%), Silver Star (20%) and Tarbell (18%).

MTN BIKING

56% of mountain bikers said they go to the Silver Star portion of the project area a few times a year or less. Only 9% said they go to the USFS lands a few times a month or more. The most popular trail was listed as Silver Star (37%) and Grouse Vista (20%). Most commonly used trailheads for mtn bikers in these lands were Silver Star trailhead (28%) and Grouse Vista Trailhead (25%).

TRAIL RUNNING

54% of trail runners said they go to the USFS lands a few times a year or less. 45% of runners said they use it once a month or a few times a month. Nobody stated they come here on a weekly basis. Most popular trails were Silver Star (46%), Grouse Vista (25%) and Eds Trail (17%). Grouse Vista was the most commonly used trailhead (48%) and Silver Star was the second most popular trailhead (20%).



USFS

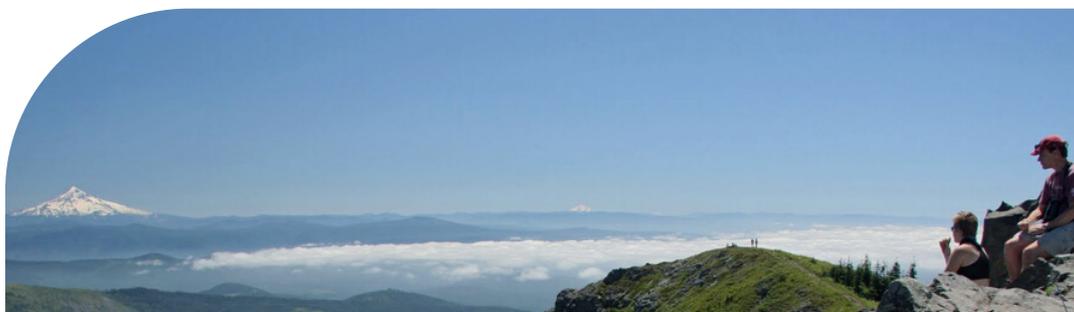
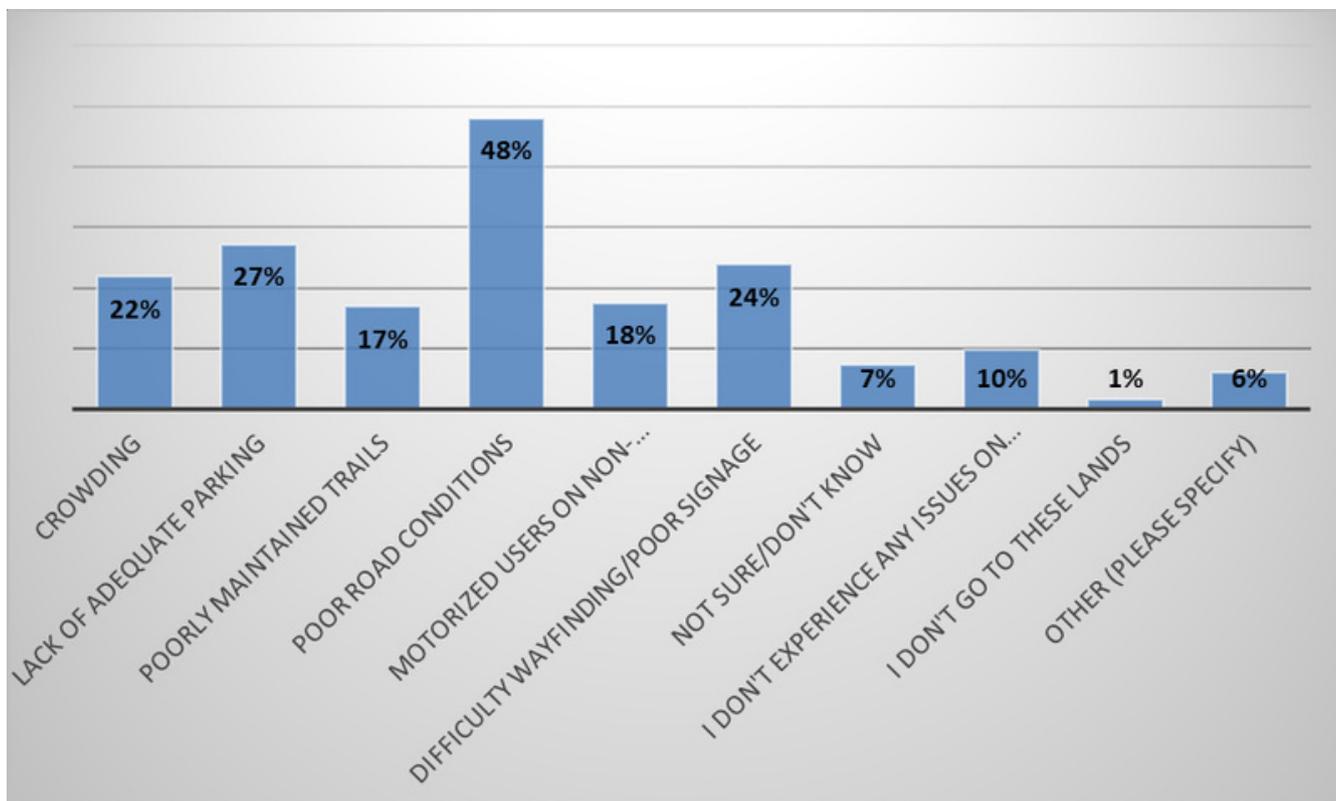
SURVEY RESULTS FOR SILVER STAR

ISSUES EXPERIENCED- USFS

When asked what issues they were experiencing in the Silver Star area (USFS), respondents said poor road conditions (48%), lack of adequate parking (27%), difficulty wayfinding/poor signage (24%), crowding (22%), motorized users on trails (18%) and poorly maintained trails (17%).

Respondents were then asked what was the single biggest issue they experience on USFS lands in the project area, poor road conditions was by far the largest response (36%). All other issues had 10% of responses or less.

Percent of respondents who stated these issues effected them in their visits to Silver Star - USFS lands.

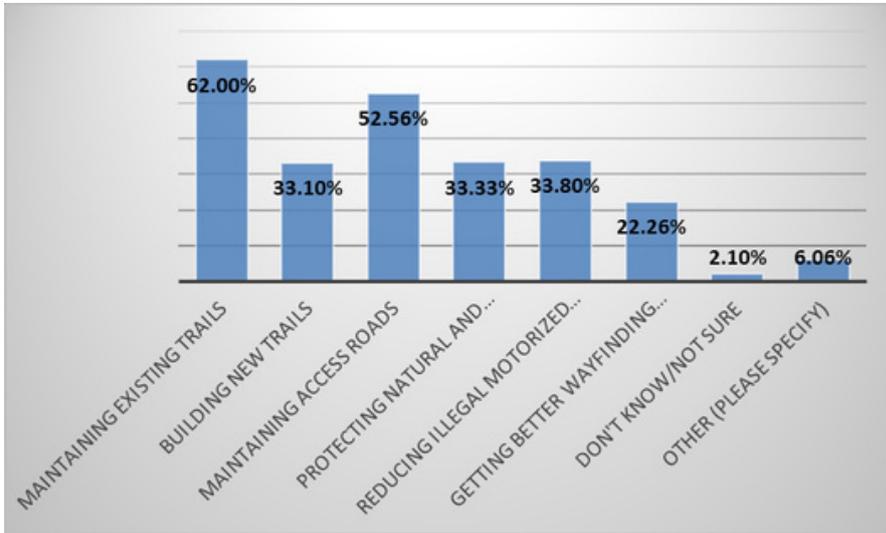


USFS

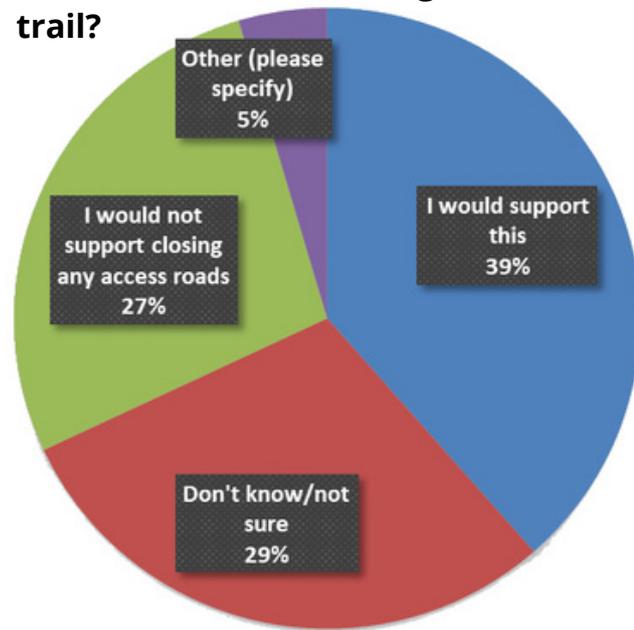
MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

When respondents were asked to list their three most important management actions for both DNR and USFS in the project area, 62% said maintaining existing trails. 53% wanted a focus on maintaining existing roads. About 33% said building new trails, protecting natural & cultural resources, and reducing illegal motorized use on trails.

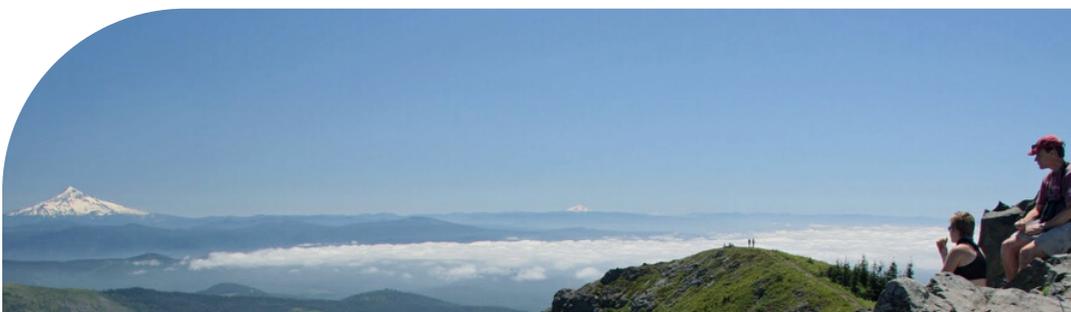
Which management actions do you think are the most important for the Yacolt Burn/Silver Star area? You may select up to three but no more than three.



In order to reduce maintenance costs, would you support closing a road and converting it to a trail even if it meant that you had to hike/ride/run farther to get to the trail?



When asked, in order to reduce maintenance costs, would you support closing a road and converting it to a trail even if it meant that you had to hike/ride/run farther to get to the trail? Respondents were mixed. 39% said they would support this. 29% said they didn't know or weren't sure. 27% stated they would not support this. Hikers displayed less support for closing roads (32%) than Bikers or Equestrians.



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NARRATIVE COMMENTS: ROAD CLOSURES

The narrative comments indicate that Forest Road 4109 leading to the Silver Star trailhead is in particularly poor condition and an issue that respondents are somewhat divided on how to resolve.

"The road to Silver Star Trailhead is terrible and hasn't been maintained in years. This really needs to be fixed."

"The 4109 road desperately needs repairing, not closing. That hike is a reasonable distance to bring children and have them experience the great views and such of that area. Don't ruin it, just make the road better."

"My concern about improved road conditions is that even MORE people will recreate in this area."

"However, barriers to access are what is preserving the beauty of Silver Star and that is a GOOD thing. With improved accessibility, the Indian pits are at greater risk of damage and destruction."

"It upsets me when I hear that access is being reduced in order to 'protect the resource'. Proper trailheads and well signed and maintained trails keep people where they should be."



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ADDITIONAL NARRATIVE COMMENTS

The last question of the survey invited people to share any other thoughts about the area or the project. Common themes include an appreciation for the area's unique beauty as well as concerns over perceived "abuses" of the area such as through unmanaged shooting (this was most common comment received), vandalism and unmanaged "overcrowding". Many answers included praise for the quality of recreation and trails.

Some patterns emerged within the different activity types. Some mountain bikers expressed a desire for more directional trails as well as more riding opportunities. Equestrians highlighted concerns over adequate parking for their trailers and some expressed concerns about the rise in mountain biking and feeling unsafe when encountering bicyclists.

Similar to equestrians and mountain bicyclists, hikers expressed love for the area in their additional comments as well as concern over shooting, vandalism and litter. Many took issue with motorized incursions on to non-motorized trails. But the largest focus of Hikers was on the road access to Silver Star trailhead (Forest Road 4109) with a majority of comments expressing a desire to restore the road to allow access to passenger vehicles.



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