

Quick Look Recreation Survey Summary

Acting on its mission to provide quality recreation and learning opportunities, OSU Research Forests hired a research team to survey recreation users of the McDonald and Dunn Forests in 2017¹. The goal was to determine characteristics and opinions of visitors, and to measure their reactions to possible Forest policies. While the survey was conducted both onsite and mailed to some neighbors, only onsite results are listed (unless otherwise noted).

Forest User Characteristics

Compared to the Benton County general population, Forest visitors are older, more educated, more likely to be female, more predominantly white, and have higher incomes. Demographics have not changed much since 2009² (when the last recreation survey was completed), except for an increase in income, average visitor age, and a higher number of female users.

The Typical Visitor:

- is a white, adult, college graduate;
- has an income between \$75-\$100K; and
- lives within five miles of the Forest.

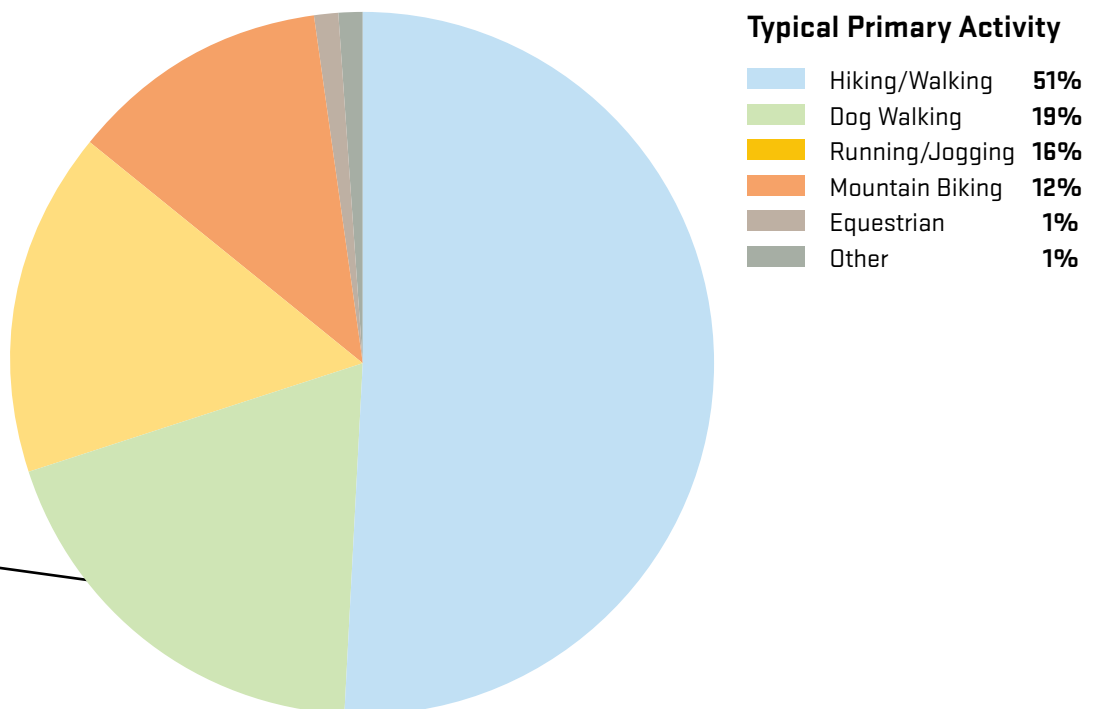
Most Visitors:

- drive to the forest;
- stay about 2 hours per visit;
- visit frequently – once a week or more;
- have been visiting for over a decade;
- come alone or in pairs; and
- do not bring children under 16

Annual Usage:

- *Estimated individual visitors in 2017: 17,271*
- *Estimated total visits in 2017: 155,446*
- *Approximate change since 2009: 48% increase (in both individual visitors and total visits)*
- *Busiest season of use: Spring*
- *First time visitors: 8% of total*

Typical Primary Activity



Dogs are an important part of the recreation experience for many visitors.

- While 19% of visitors identify their primary activity as dog walking, dogs accompany 44% of Forest visitors on a typical visit.
- the number of dogs is up roughly 22% from 2009.

¹Kooistra, C. & Munanura, I. (2018). *OSU Forest Recreation Survey Report*. Oregon State University, Corvallis, OR.

²Needham, M. D., & Rosenberger, R. S. (2011). *Public support, demand, and potential revenue for recreation at the McDonald-Dunn Forest. Final project report for Oregon State University College Forests and College of Forestry*. Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University, Department of Forest Ecosystems and Society.

User Satisfaction and Opinions

More than 90% of users are satisfied with their recreation experience.

Blue text boxes indicate ideas for management that could help improve the recreation experience.

The following characteristics rated as highly important, but visitors indicated lower satisfaction, suggesting management should address them:

- the number of directional signs
- the amount of dog waste seen
- the availability of single-track trails

Conflicts between visitors

Overall, perceived conflict is low, but some problems did emerge.

- These were observed by at least 50% or more of respondents and considered a problem by more than 25% of onsite visitors:
 - Mountain bikers riding too fast
 - Dogs not under vocal control
 - Mountain bikers and visitors with dogs failing to give verbal warning upon approach
- Neighbors surveyed appear more sensitive to mountain bikers and visitors with dogs than onsite respondents.
- Between 30 and 60% of onsite respondents in each activity group reported observing every other activity group (except for horseback riders) failing to give verbal warning upon approach.

Crowding

Crowding is not generally an issue, except for large numbers of vehicles observed at trailheads on weekends, especially at Oak Creek and Lewisburg Saddle.

Reactions to Forest Management and Communication

Possible management actions:

Support for most management actions was much higher than opposition.

Top 3 supported

- Provide additional dog-bag dispensers for dog waste/excrement (68% support, 6% oppose)
- Develop more trails designated only for people on foot (61% support, 7% oppose)
- Provide more way-finding signage along trails and roads (60% support, 6% oppose)

Top 3 opposed

- Require that dogs be kept on leash everywhere in the Forests (17% support, 62% oppose)
- Require that dogs be kept on leash in specific high-volume areas (47% support, 28% oppose)
- Increase enforcement of trail use rules and regulations (22% support, 26% oppose)

Information acquisition and use

- Forest communication efforts were rated effective by up to 35% of all surveyed
- At least half of all respondents preferred to receive Forest information from trail signs, kiosks, the OSU Research Forest website and email.
- Most onsite respondents found kiosk information useful, but few looked at it on the day surveyed.
- Over half of neighbors surveyed reported receiving Forest updates, while fewer than 20% of onsite respondents did.
- Receipt of updates seems to positively impact evaluations of the Forest's communication effectiveness.

Forest volunteers

- 14% of visitors have volunteered at the Forest in the past.
 - of these, about one-third have volunteered once in the past 12 months.

Consultant Recommendations

Based on the survey's formal analysis and findings, the research team makes these recommendations:

1. Develop a comprehensive visitor use management plan for the McDonald and Dunn Forests.
2. Increase communication effectiveness by developing and implementing a formal communications plan.
3. Establish a mechanism for monitoring the effectiveness of both plans.