

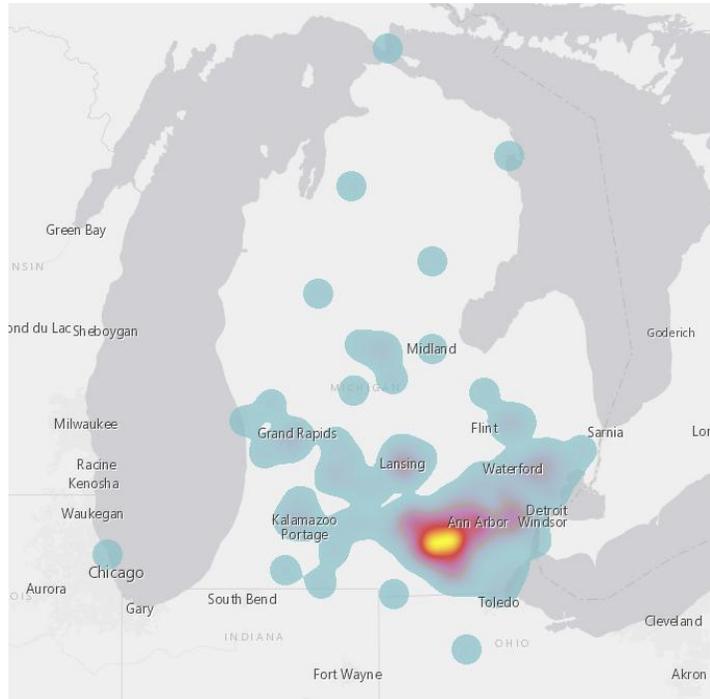
Watkins Lake State Park and County Preserve General Management Plan



Summary of Public Input Survey

The DNR recognizes that public input is a critical component of park planning, thus input is sought through multiple venues in hopes of gathering the opinions of a variety of users. One of the methods the planning team used to gather input from current and potential users of Watkins Lake State Park and County Preserve (WLP) was an online survey. This survey was advertised through an official DNR press release/email bulletin to over 17,400 individuals that have expressed an interest in DNR news in the region and via promotion by Washtenaw County on their website and social media. In addition, a letter was mailed to those who live adjacent to the park.

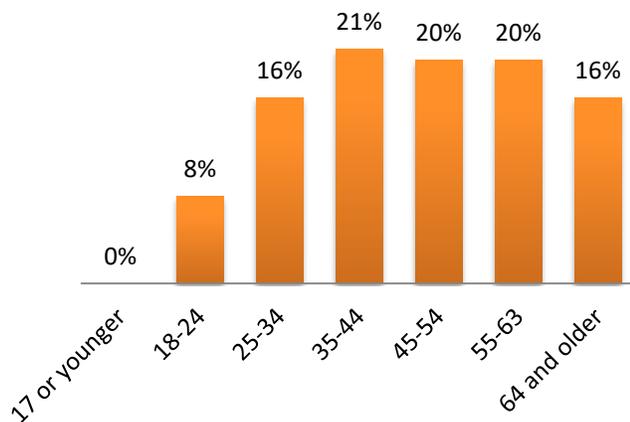
Two-hundred and forty eight (248) individuals completed the online survey. Of those who reported their zip code, 125 live within 50 miles of the park, with the most respondents living in Manchester and Brooklyn. The map to the right shows the zip codes of survey respondents, with the brighter colors indicating higher concentrations of survey respondents.



The map above shows respondents' reported zip codes. Brighter colors denote a higher concentration of respondents. Three respondents from out of the area (near Washington DC, Dayton OH, and Bridgeport CT) are not shown.

Those that took the survey were nearly evenly split in gender and were somewhat evenly distributed between the age ranges given, except for a lower response from the 18-24 age range and no responses from those under 18. The planning team also asked if respondents have a recreation passport; an overwhelming majority (93%) reported that they do.

What is your age?



The survey was broken into the following sections to gather targeted input:

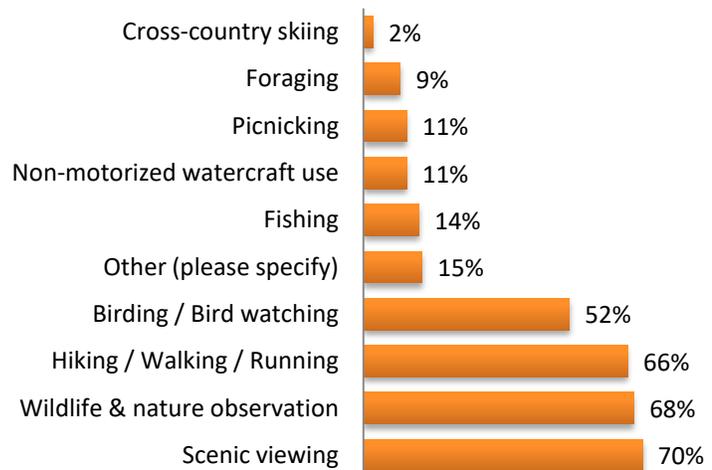
Category	Input received
Your Visit	Participants could select multiple answers from a predetermined list in order to provide general information about whether respondents have visited the park and how frequently, activities they participated in, what is most important to their visit, and reasons respondents have not visited the park.
Park Future	Respondents indicated the activities, enhancements, and facilities they would like to see at the park, whether they prefer recreation or preservation, and general comments about the park.
Tell Us About Yourself	Demographic data and contact information

Your Visit

Although nearly half (46%) of survey respondents have never visited the park, 24% visited WLP at least 5 times per year, 17% have been to the park two to five times, and 13% have visited once. Respondents tend to visit the park most often in the spring (74%), fall (68%) and summer (65%), while only 40% have visited the park in the winter.

Visitors participate in a range of activities at WLP (multiple answers could be selected by participants), with scenic viewing (70%) being most common. Wildlife and nature observation (68%), hiking, walking, and/or running (66%), and bird watching (51%) were other popular activities. Other notable activities that visitors participate in when they visit the park include fishing (14%), non-motorized watercraft use (11%), picnicking (11%), and foraging (9%).

Activities Participated in at WLP



Of these activities, respondents were asked to choose which one activity at WLP was most important to them. Overall, wildlife and nature observation was the most important (35%), with hiking, walking, or running also an important activity to visitors (20%). Bird watching was a somewhat important activity with 17% of responses. Respondents were also given the option to specify an activity that was not listed, and 7% of respondents noted that hunting would be the most important activity if it were allowed. There were also a few respondents that said they participated in biking or horseback riding at WLP, which are not currently allowed on the property.

Of the 46% of respondents that have never visited the park; the most frequently cited reason for not visiting was a lack of information or not knowing about the park (69%). Distance from the park and a lack of time were the next most common reasons (14% and 15%, respectively). Lack of park amenities and the park entry fee was only a small portion of respondents' reasoning for not visiting the park (5% and less than 1%, respectively).

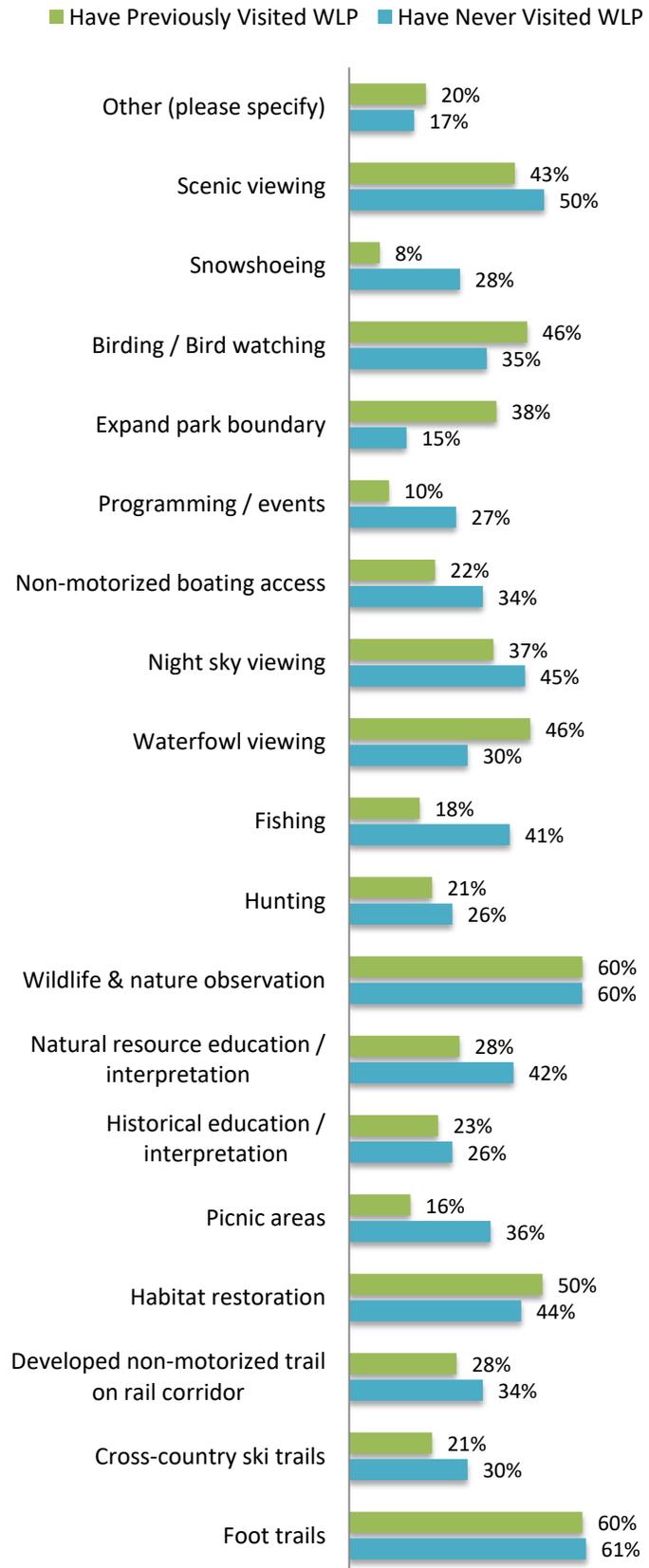
Park Future

The planning team devised a series of questions to determine what the public desired for WLP’s future. First, participants were asked which activities, enhancements, or facilities they would like to see at WLP (they could select multiple responses from a pre-determined list). Foot trails and wildlife & nature observation were at the top of the list, each with 60% of respondents indicating they would like to see those amenities and activities. Other top amenities and enhancements were: habitat restoration (46%), scenic viewing (45%), bird watching (41%), night sky viewing (41%), and waterfowl viewing (40%). Ranging from 25% to 35% of responses were natural resource education/interpretation, a developed non-motorized trail on the rail corridor, fishing, non-motorized boating access, expanded park boundary, cross-country ski trails, and picnic areas. Other items with at least 17% but less than 25% of responses included historical education/interpretation, hunting, programming/events, and snowshoeing.

The adjacent graph compares the desired amenities and activities between those who have visited WLP in the past and those who have never visited. Both groups were relatively equally interested in the most popular improvements: foot trails, wildlife & nature observation, scenic viewing, and habitat restoration. There was greater difference between the two groups (more than 10%) in the following categories:

Picnic areas, natural resource education / interpretation, fishing, non-motorized boating access, programming / events, and snowshoeing were more desired by those who haven’t visited the park.

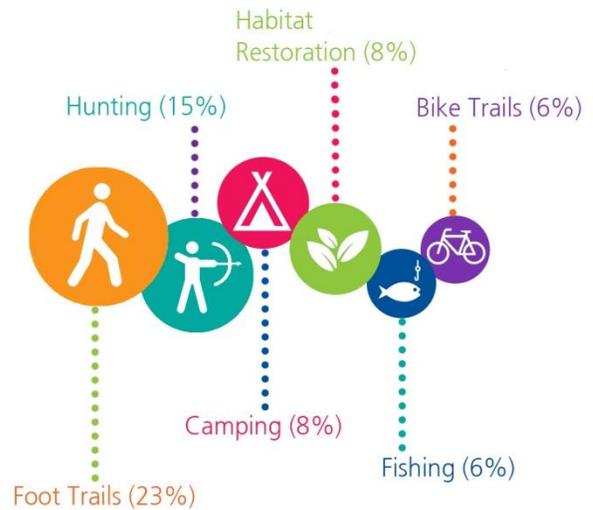
Desired activities, enhancements, or facilities at WLP



Waterfowl viewing, expanding the park boundary and bird watching were more desired by those who have visited the park.

When the respondents were sorted by age group, a trend could be seen that younger age groups are more likely to engage in active recreation pursuits such as hunting, fishing, and non-motorized boating, while older age groups prefer passive activities such as wildlife & nature viewing, birding, and waterfowl viewing. However, foot trails were popular among all age groups.

After being asked to select items from a pre-determined list, respondents were given the opportunity to share, through an open-ended question, one activity, enhancement, or facility they would most like to see at WLP. The top item listed by participants was foot trails (23%), and hunting followed as second most mentioned with 15% of responses. Other somewhat popular items include camping and habitat restoration/preservation (8% each), fishing (6%), and paved trails for biking (6%). Less popular activities, enhancements, or facilities, with less than 5% of responses for each, were: educational programs, night sky viewing, horse trails, parking, non-motorized boat access, expanding park boundaries, and scenic viewing.



Throughout the survey, there was a wide range of activities, enhancements, and facilities listed that respondents wanted for WLP. When asked whether recreation development or preservation was more important, 50% of the respondents felt that the future of WLP should strike a balance between the two, while 42% percent of respondents preferred that WLP focus only on preserving and protecting natural and cultural resources. In general, respondents appreciate the natural beauty and ecological importance of WLP and would prefer that development protect the park for future generations.

What is your preference for the future of WLP?

