

# **Bike Trail Usage Focus Groups Report**

Prepared for:

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

June 2012

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# Background

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The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources has evidence to suggest that there is lower involvement in nature-based activities by Minnesotans. This includes a decrease in usage of off-road, non-motorized, paved trails, particularly by people from 20 to 45 years of age.

Lower recreation use is a concern to the DNR for many reasons, especially because it affects the DNR's customer base and the revenues generated from that market. In addition, there is a larger public health concern of decreasing outdoor activity.

# Research Objectives

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The objective of the research was to understand the decline in outdoor, nature-based activity, particularly related to trail usage.

The specific objectives of the research included understanding:

- ▶ Preferred way to spend leisure time in general
- ▶ Preferred way to spend leisure and free time outdoors
- ▶ Motivations behind outdoor recreation
- ▶ Barriers to spending time in nature and outdoors
- ▶ Solutions to spending more time outside
- ▶ Reactions to photographs of non-motorized, off-road, paved trails
- ▶ Reasons for trail usage
- ▶ Barriers to trail usage
- ▶ Reactions to itineraries, package-deals and guides
- ▶ Feedback on the 'kid-friendliest' messaging
- ▶ Response to state trail map

# Methodology

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Qualitative research in the form of focus groups was determined to be the best methodology for accomplishing the research goals. A total of five focus groups were conducted in May 2012. The focus groups were held at Leede Research in Plymouth, Minnesota, and lasted approximately one hour and forty minutes.

The recruiting criteria were different for each group. Initially, the aim was to recruit two groups of respondents who had not used an off-road, non-motorized paved trail in the last two years. It proved very challenging to recruit groups of people under 45 who had not used an off-road, non-motorized paved trail. Over 2,000 phone calls were initially made to residents in the Twin Cities without finding qualifying individuals. Therefore, the recruiting criteria were modified to include individuals who had not traveled at least a mile or more to access a trail within the last two years.

The focus groups were defined and recruited as follows:

Groups 1 and 2: Males or females who have moderate involvement in outdoor recreation and had not traveled greater than one mile to use an off-road, non-motorized paved trail in the last two years.

Group 3: Males or females who bike with their children on a moderate basis.

Group 4: Females who bike with their children on a moderate basis.

Group 5: Males or females who are moderate to high users of off-road, non-motorized paved trails.

A total of 41 people participated in the focus groups. All participants received a \$50 incentive as a thank you. Wendy Lutter, an independent, trained facilitator, moderated all the focus groups.

## Caveat

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Focus groups develop insight, direction, and general trends. They do not provide quantitatively precise or absolute measures due to the relatively small number of participants in the study. Focus groups are a forum for ideas and in-depth discussions. All findings presented in this report are exploratory in nature and cannot be projected to the population as a whole or any sub-groups.

## Key Findings

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### **OVERALL IMPRESSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

- There is a high usage of off-road, non-motorized paved trails in the Twin Cities metropolitan area based on the difficulty of recruitment and the large number of residents called who said they used trails frequently.
- Overall, most people in each group do not get out of doors as much as they would like.
- Motivations and reasons for outdoor use include overall wellness, emotional well-being, stress relief, time for reflection, and solitude as well as time to connect with others and socialize.
- There is a universal sentiment that being outdoors and participating in nature-based activities promotes overall better health and well-being and helps individuals focus on what is important in life.
- Participants view partaking in outdoor activities with others as important. Spending solitary time in nature is also meaningful. Both serve different, yet valuable, purposes depending on the person's needs.

- Outdoor recreation and the activities that participants engaged in as children impact their current activities. Participants want to create the same memories for their children by introducing them to the wonders of outdoor recreation.
- Participants don't try new things out of doors, with the exception of heavy users. It is difficult for them to think outside their comfort zone. Many could not recall the last time they experienced something new.
- The most frequent barriers to recreation outdoors are time constraints and lack of knowledge of opportunities. Participants use scheduling, prioritization, and planning to overcome these barriers.
- Participants ages 20-45 are used to having information at their fingers tips. The younger participants in the groups expect to be spoon-fed the information, as did those who participated less frequently in nature-based activities.
- Across all groups, participants want their nature-based outing to provide a sense of purpose or a destination. The DNR is in a good position to communicate the "adventure" of state trail use and the unique features that can be experienced by off-road trail usage.
- All groups had strong, positive responses to the sample itinerary. Itineraries provide the solution that participants are seeking in multiple ways:
  - The information is all laid out, removing the need for planning
  - Points of interest, including top sites to see are explained, giving a sense of purpose or destination
  - Geographical information provides the educational component important to many parents
  - The adventure and sense of freedom is still present by picking and choosing which parts of the itinerary to use
- Participants value the freedom they feel when being outdoors. It is an escape from chores, workload, and other stresses. Words people in the groups use to describe how they feel in nature include: calm, happy, stress-free, natural-high, exhilarated, grounded, connected.
- Almost all participants reacted negatively to the idea of a guided bike tour. The idea of a guide is counter to the freedom they seek by using the trails. A guide would feel contrived, limiting, and even uncomfortable because of having to follow the guide's pace. Parents especially commented on the pace of their kids and the stress that having to keep up with a guide might produce.
- A few of the less-active participants like the idea of a guide because a guide would motivate them to try a new trail, commit them to do it, as well as provide an expert and sense of security to the experience.
- Participants do not distinguish DNR state trails from regional or local trails. When respondents looked at the map of where the trails are located in Minnesota, most were surprised that there are not more, that they are far away from the Twin Cities, and that they are all out-and-back as opposed to a loop.

- Participants who use trails less frequently think the DNR state trails are a big outing and require a large time commitment. The perception is that the entire trail has to be used instead of using just a portion of the trail. Once again, there is misinformation and an opportunity for the DNR to provide information on how and why to use state trails.
- Bathrooms are highly important to successful trail use for women and for parents. However, participants do not expect standalone buildings. Bathrooms can be primitive and portable. They just need to be clean and have toilet paper.
- Moms want to know where the restrooms are on a trail so that the planning can include bathroom breaks. Any maps the DNR can provide with details on bathrooms will be valued by parents.
- Respondents did not like or relate to “satellite” as a description for portable toilets. Some were unclear what the terminology meant. Suggestions for better names are “biff” or “port-a-potty” as wording that is more universally understood and used.
- Universally, men in every group do not need or care about bathroom facilities for themselves. A common theme that ran through all the groups from men is that “nature is one big bathroom” to them.
- Parents have some unique motivations and expectations as compared to other participants. Being in the outdoors together as a family is a time to bond unlike any other. It is an active experience versus watching their children participate in sports, theater, or other school events. Outdoor recreation is something parents and children do together. Parents talked about being outside together as a time when children open up and talk more freely.
- Parents also like that outdoor recreation is the antithesis to technology. Many talked about the importance of “un-plugging.” They value a time when their children are doing healthy activities and breathing fresh air.
- In all aspects of the outdoor experience, incidence of use will be higher if the DNR can make it easier for the target market to use the trails by including mile markers, toilets, maps, signage, and well-kept trails.
- Word of mouth is the most common, most frequent, and most trusted way that participants find out about outdoor recreation opportunities.
- The Internet is also a resource used often to discover new activities and research nature-based possibilities. Respondents expect to find out detailed information from Internet searches, including specific maps.
- Online coupons, such as Groupon or Living Social, are a way to attract people to try a new outdoor activity.
- People use online forums and recommendations as a way to get information. They look at trail ratings and difficulty levels, as well as parking information.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Creating outdoor memories to introduce children to the wonders of outdoor recreation is key for the DNR, and the DNR should capitalize on messaging, marketing and outreach for long-term customers, beginning with children whose parents take them on DNR trails.
- It is recommended that the DNR use the powerful messages from these parents about creating life-long memories and having quality time that naturally happens in the outdoors. Connecting with the children, as well as the parents, will ensure the next generation of DNR state trail users.
- The DNR can help with solutions by providing easy-to-use, accessible information about trails.
- Because participants are bombarded with information and choices, it is recommended that the DNR provide clear, easy-to-use resources on its website, in its brochures, and on trails with signage and maps.
- It is suggested that the DNR use the key words and phrases calm, happy, stress-free, natural-high, exhilarated, grounded, connected in marketing and communications materials.
- Access to a toilet on a trail would be another distinguishing factor for the DNR versus regional trails.
- Instead of offering guides, consider posted signs along the trail as a way for trail users to gain information and education. Ways that the DNR can make it easy to rate the state trails at online forums will likely increase visibility.
- The DNR could consider targeting guided rides at the low user group as a way to increase that market's involvement in trail use.
- If the DNR wants to distinguish its trails from others', signage and mile markers that say "DNR State Trail" are recommended as a start to branding and recognition.
- The DNR can provide much information on its website to meet the needs of trail users.
- The DNR can further investigate using a social network coupon to entice the target market to use the trails.
- Some key messages possible for the DNR are:
  - Research shows that being outdoors gets your children to open up and talk about their lives. Get outside and open up
  - Feel the freedom of being outside
  - Get lost on purpose, lose yourself from stress, work, responsibilities
  - Re-connect with what is important
  - Get out and make some memories
  - Create those lifetime memories from your childhood
  - Give your child the gift of memories of outdoor adventure

# Specific Findings

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## ***ALLOCATION OF LEISURE AND OUTDOOR RECREATION TIME***

Participants in each of the five focus groups listed many different outdoor activities as their favorite way to allocate their leisure and free time.

The two focus groups made up of participants who did not use or had lower use of non-motorized paved trails listed some their top activities as shopping, playing on the Wii, hanging out in the backyard, playing guitar, travel, and golf. Those participants who had heavy trail use and were outdoors more than four times a week tended to list their favorite way to spend free time as something that was outside. Top activities included:

- Biking
- Camping
- Fishing
- Ice skating
- Running
- Boating
- Hiking
- Spending time with friends
- Frisbee Golf
- Gardening
- Walking the dog
- Hunting
- Traveling

Only a few participants from groups who were often active outside listed non-nature related activities, such as shopping and travel.

Participants were asked to close their eyes and imagine what it felt like to be outside in nature. Many pictures, words, and feelings came up for people including images of:

- Trails
- Woods
- Greenery
- Lakes
- Birds singing
- Peacefulness
- Wildlife
- Walking paths
- Playgrounds

Some specific places came to mind for a few participants including the Superior Hiking Trail, Boundary Waters, and Lake Superior.

## **MOTIVATIONS FOR OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES**

There were many reasons that participants go outside. Across all groups, being out in nature was described as restorative, relaxing, and healthy. There were deep sentiments and personal stories shared about why people go outdoors.

*It puts me in touch with my essence, just resets me from humanity, from civilization. Group 3*

*I feel like I need green time. I feel like I think better and I just, I clear my head and peaceful and I get calm a moment. Group 4*

*It just feels so good. Just feels good. It feels like I'm getting a lot more oxygen, just a healthier, happier being. I feel like I'm closer to the heavens, if you will. I don't worry about the other stuff. I don't think about it. I'm just happy. Group 3*

Feeling free and happy were emotions that people in every group valued and associated with outside experiences. Getting outside was the answer to the long winter months of “being cooped-up” and having “cabin fever.” The simple pleasures seemed more accessible to participants when they were outdoors.

*I just feel free. Group 2*

*It (being outside) makes me so much happier. Group 1*

Being in nature provided the benefit of emotional well-being for some respondents. They described their overall stress level decreasing and actually physically feeling better after time outside. Disconnecting from work was another benefit of being outdoors.

*Inside the house you're stressing about bills, and school, and jobs, and all that stuff. I can just go in my backyard and get lost. Group 3*

*The ability to clear my head or let the free flow of consciousness go through me. Like when I'm running, if I can't clear my head, I'm at least getting it all out. So stress relief. Group 5*

*It's flipping the switch on the stress button and not thinking about work and then I'm elsewhere. I'm not at work and that's pretty awesome. Group 2*

Escaping technology was a common reason people liked getting outdoors. They talked about how constantly being connected to the Internet, smart phones, and email was exhausting and all-consuming.

*If you've ever sat on a couch for six hours at a time and then go outside, you feel a heck of a lot better after you do that. Group 1*

*It gets you a little bit more into a primitive mindset. If you're disconnecting from modern appliances, modern life, modern cubicle job or whatever you're doing, it allows you to kind of back up and recharge. Group 2*

*Getting (my kids) unplugged. My son is twelve and a half, and he's plugged in as any adult. He's got his cell phone, his iPod, his laptop. I hardly ever see him. He goes in his room and does his homework and then he's on the phone talking to his girlfriend. When we're camping, that stuff stays home. Group 3*

Socialization was also a reason for some people to get outside. It was a chance to connect with others in a fun, healthy way. A few participants talked about being more accountable to getting outdoors if they had a friend also partaking in the activity.

*If I call a friend, I know that they're going to keep me accountable to go. Sometimes if I can get other people besides myself to go, then I am more likely to follow through with it. Group 5*

*It's to get together with friends and take advantage of the good weather. Group 1*

Doing an activity outdoors was an event or type of entertainment for a few participants. It was a low cost way to do something with friends or family.

*You don't have to go spend money to drive somewhere or see a movie or something. With the Frisbee golf or any kind of outdoor activity, it's something to do...Like it's an event all in itself, because you can go use whatever your city has outside. Group 2*

*It provides entertainment, something other than you know, logging into your computer and wasting two hours doing that. Group 2*

Some people liked challenging themselves with a goal related to being outside, such as biking or running a certain distance.

*Sometimes it gives you the opportunity to conquer something so whether it's, if you're hiking, like it's getting to those high places or just, expanding yourself that much more. Group 1*

When asked if walking the dog or exercising felt like a chore or a time to be outside, the majority of people said it was not a chore. A few people thought walking the dog forced them to get outside, which always made them feel better long term.

## **BARRIERS/CONSTRAINTS TO OUTDOOR ACTIVITY**

Participation levels in outdoor recreation varied depending on the group. As you might expect, the low level trail users were not outside as much as the parent groups or the high level trail users. However, the vast majority of people in each group managed to get outside for something, even if it was walking the dog, a least three times a week.

Among the high level trail users, most get outside daily but not in a way they want or find meaningful. Although they get outside, it might only be for a few minutes in their backyards as opposed to having time to take a hike. They wanted more quality time in nature.

The list of barriers was long and included:

- Time
- Work
- Access
- Scheduling
- Distance
- Location of where to go
- Home improvements
- Family commitments
- Weather
- Bugs and ticks
- Lack of skill
- Cost
- Finding others to do activity together
- Parenting responsibility
- Crowds
- Laziness

The biggest and most common barrier mentioned was time. Time constraints from work and household responsibilities, as well as the needs of their children and spouses all were constraints to spending time in nature.

*Just time management, I mean by the time you get home from work, got to do dinner, whatever after school activities, it's dark. Group 4*

*It's barriers with a few jobs and school. Group 5*

*It's low on the priority list as far as the work and parenting and housework. Even though I love it. Group 3*

Access was mentioned in all groups as a barrier. Although many options existed close to home, some did not provide the rustic or nature-based experience people wanted. In addition, some people were not sure how or where to access certain nature-based activities.

*I would say sometimes access is an issue. I live in a suburban neighborhood. We have lots of parks and some walking trails and sidewalks and everything. But I personally like to go to more of like the state parks where it is more wooded and definitely more, seems farther out and sometimes that's more difficult. Group 4*

There were complaints about weather in every group. Weather was a barrier that was impossible to control, yet greatly impacted people's ability to do activities they had planned. Heat, rain, wind, and cold were all factors that got in the way of participants getting outdoors as much as possible.

*It's hard to schedule for those swings or extremes or be prepared. Like if you had a weekend and you had some plans and all you brought was shorts and then it's 45 degrees out and you're like, "What the heck?" Group 1*

Some participants had difficulty finding others to recreate with outdoors. There were group activities like Frisbee golf or boating that required more than one person. It could be challenging to find friends or companions.

*The question is, can I find other people to also have that same time free to go do what I want to do. Because there are a lot of things outdoors that are just not as much fun by yourself. Group 1*

*Finding someone to come with me if I don't want to go by myself. Group 2*

Finding motivation to get outside was a problem for some participants. With all the other responsibilities in life, it was easier sometimes to stay home than to find the energy to get outside.

*I think it's tempting to relax on your couch instead of taking a walk. Group 4*

*Just plain laziness. Group 1*

## **SOLUTIONS**

Planning was the universal solution to overcoming barriers for outdoor activity. Participants who were successful at getting outdoors were great at planning. Changing habits and mindsets to include time to be outside took a lot of work, but those who planned and scheduled were able to find time to get outside. Participants who intentionally made an effort to put time on their calendars were more likely to get out.

*The only way we get out there is to plan to get out there and not just have it be, "Oh, let's go outside now," because you'll never make it out, but to actually schedule it into our day. Group 1*

*I think it's important to build it as part of your schedule. You have to make an effort to do it or it's not going to fall into your lap. At least that's how my life is. Group 5*

Prioritization was also important to getting outside as often as participants desired. People discussed the importance of putting aside chores and housework and prioritizing outside time.

*Just making it a priority and then deciding what is important and eliminating things that aren't. You know, is Idol at 7:00 important or more important than going for a walk or can you Tivo it and see it later. Group 4*

*Put off the chores and go play. Group 1*

## **OUTDOOR ACTIVITY WITH CHILDREN**

Getting outside with their children was very important to parents. The most important and significant benefit for parents was to create lifelong memories for their children.

The desire to create memories and spend quality time with their children outdoors stemmed from participants' own childhood experiences. Many people in the focus groups talked fondly of

time they had spent in nature in their youth. Creating the same memories was a strong motivator for parents to get their own kids outside.

*Something that was instilled when I was growing up is that those memories have helped me through the tough times of life. I am loved. I am cared for and I belong. And as you go through the teenage years, or the years you try to figure out where you are, those are what stay with you and kind of remind you that things will be okay. Group 3*

*I've got a seven year-old, and I like to be outside with him because I like to see him experience some of those things. It's something I did with my father and my parents, and it's something I think is bonding, too. Group 5*

*I think it connects me more to him. I hope he has the same memories when he gets to be my age that I have at this time. Group 4*

*It's just making memories...they learn from you. You learn from them. That bond grows stronger. I don't know, those memories. Growing up here in Minnesota, that's what I have with my family. And I want to have that with my kids. It's a priority we put in my family. Group 3*

Parents see nature-based activities as a time to bond with their kids, teach them new things, show them the joy of nature, and get them to exercise. Getting children outdoors also begins to form healthy habits early on and was an important alternative to technology.

*For me, being outside grounds me or gives me that peaceful aspect to my life. I want my kids to experience that and for them to also fall in love with the outdoors, to know that recreation-wise it's not being stuck in front of a TV, that no matter what you can go outside and do something. Group 1*

*It's all about being together, and being outside together. Because there's no laundry, no homework, no work, no TV, no email, none of that, so it's about each other and nature. Group 3*

*I want them to learn a lot of good times have to do with exercise, too. I don't want them going out and talking about their favorite TV show as their main topic of conversation. So just teaching them healthy habits, too, and that they can have a lot of fun doing stuff outside. Group 3*

Another benefit to being outside with their kids was the chance for parents to understand what was really going on in their lives. Kids open up more when they are doing something side by side with their parents and tend to talk more openly and freely.

*It gives me time to talk to my son and it's just, you know, alone time for us to talk about things, school, family things. Group 4*

*It's to understand what's going on in their life. I'm always amazed at what four, two and eight months--they're growing and learning. And sometimes I don't give them credit for all that they know and learn and grow. By having those moments where you can really connect with them, you understand better where they're at. Group 3*

Doing activities outside was perceived as a learning experience for children. It was a way for kids to try things and experiment without realizing they are actually learning.

*Today, I stopped at every tree along the path and let me son reach out and touch the different leaves and trees and bark and stuff and so with kids, it becomes a learning experience. Group 2*

*There are a lot of lessons that you can teach as a parent on doing lots of things outside. The importance of the family unit. If you're biking, the importance of having a spare tube for your tire. All these things and the planning that's involved. Group 3*

*Usually it's a walk where we're exploring whatever area's around, whether it's the neighborhood or at the park or wherever it is, checking things out. Really taking the time to look and see what's there instead of just walking by it. Group 4*

### **FAVORITE OUTDOOR ACTIVITY TO DO WITH CHILDREN**

Parents listed many different outdoor activities as their top choices including:

- Fishing
- Biking
- Camping
- Walking
- Swimming
- Digging in the dirt
- Kayaking
- Canoeing
- Going to playgrounds

### **MOTIVATION TO BIKE WITH CHILDREN**

There were many reasons that parents like to bike with their children. It is a way to get exercise and a way to spend time doing a healthy activity together. Biking was also a means for transportation.

Parents identified two different kinds of biking with their children: One was as a way to get somewhere, and the other was to go biking as an activity.

*You know there are adventure rides which we're going to go somewhere. We're going to get on the bike trail system and just go. We don't know where we're going. We're just going to start riding. And we'll turn around whenever we get tired. And then there's some times where it's got a sense of purpose. Group 3*

*We bike when we go get our haircuts and then we stop at Dairy Queen on the way home. Group 4*

*Recently (we bike) to save gas, too, because we live close enough to the bank and Target and library, and we can do it all at once and still head to the park for a little bit. So we can kill many birds with one stone. Group 4*

Parents of younger children liked biking with them because they could put them in a tag-along or a trailer behind their bike. Biking allowed the parents to get exercise and provided entertainment for their children.

*Biking is super easy. And I don't feel guilty. Like if I go to the health club, I've got to put him in the daycare thing or leave him at home. Where if I go on a bike ride, he's right in the back. And he's yelling out things that he's seen. And we can stop at parks on the way. Group 3*

*The kid trailer thing...it's the greatest invention for kids that don't bike yet. You're like, "Let's go to the park." You feel like a horse. But it's fun. It's great. I love it. It's magic. Plus they see things. They love pointing them out. They call it their adventure. It entertains them, and it allows me to get my endorphin fix, just getting outside. Group 3*

Exercise for older children was a benefit of biking. It was a fun way for kids to get out and get moving without realizing they are exercising.

*(My son) doesn't get as much exercise. So we kind of use it that way to go to the park, ride our bikes because we can go to a park farther. It doesn't hurt me either for exercise. Group 4*

*Exercise. Sometimes I walk while they bike, depending on whatever situation. Or they may even Rollerblade. But otherwise (biking), it's mainly for exercise. Group 3*

Some parents talked about using biking as a way to teach their children about health, exercise, and safety.

*We're out on the road. We don't have a path or anything like that. We're out in the country. But it's teaching them safety lessons and etiquette and all that kind of stuff. Group 3*

Parents listed many places they biked with their children or places their children biked alone:

- On trails
- To school
- To parks
- On errands
- On vacation
- Around the neighborhood

Planning bike outings with kids tended to fall on the parents. Once kids got a little older, like teenagers, they play a bigger role in the planning. Sometimes the teenagers were more difficult to convince to bike, therefore interesting destinations or seeing something special was important.

## **CONSIDERATIONS WHEN BIKING WITH CHILDREN**

Considerations and obstacles to biking with children were similar to overall barriers to outdoor exercise, but also included the need for more planning and more access to services. Things that parents take into account when planning to bike with their kids included:

- Distance
- Time
- Provisions
- Weather
- Bathrooms
- Water
- Where there is a place to stop for a treat
- Safety
- Traffic
- Cost

Distance was a big consideration for parents in their decisions to take their children biking. It mattered to them how long the route was and what type of traffic they would encounter.

*Traffic, vehicles, and then number of routes we could take. Group 3*

*Knowing how long about it will take you. Because we've gotten on ones, too, where you thought, "Oh, that's not that far." Then they're struggling. I'm like keep going, keep going, shouldn't be too much further. Group 4*

Access to bathrooms was also important for parents. Especially for younger children, knowing where bathrooms were located made the trip more enjoyable.

*It's important to know where they are because you're going, "Did you go to the bathroom?" before we leave. Then in 10 minutes and then it's like, "Oh my god, I've got to go so bad." It's a disaster. Group 4*

*I don't want to get stuck somewhere and got to use the bathroom and there's no bathroom, or the bathroom's not clean. Group 4*

Knowing where to get water was also an important consideration for parents. It aided them in planning how much water they needed to bring with them from home.

*The trails in Minneapolis are really good. There are a lot of drinking fountains, but sometimes there's not. So every time you come to one of those stops that's got a map, you got to look to see if there's going to be water. So you just plan how much water. Do I have enough water to get to the next stop? Group 3*

## **REACTION TO DEFINITION: OFF-ROAD, PAVED, NON-MOTORIZED TRAILS**

The description "off-road, paved, non-motorized trail" made sense to everyone. They envisioned exactly what the trails are.

*It's paved; it's going to be off-road. It's going to be more in the woods, so I would probably think that I'm not going to see as much like bathroom facilities or other things.*  
Group 3

## **REACTIONS TO PHOTOGRAPHS**

Participants in each group were shown a series of photographs of Minnesota state trails to get their opinions and reactions.

### **PHOTO ONE**



Overall, this photograph was a favorite among many in each group because of the background. They loved the canopy and path covered by trees. It felt like someplace they wanted to experience.

*I like the canopy. Any place where you can go ride, walk, bike, hike – if there's a canopy like that. I remember growing up, canopies in all kinds of streets. They cut them down for power lines. When you go through a canopy like that, it's just storybook like. You're on an adventure, away from other things.* Group 3

*It just looks serene. It really does.* Group 2

*Those are my favorite kind of paths. I love when the trees, like, overgrow the path. So you're like in a tunnel of trees. It's my favorite.* Group 4

*I like how the trees come together. It kind of makes a natural treetop. Looks cool.* Group 5

The trail looked familiar to people. It seemed accessible to their homes and not a far distance to travel, which was positive. It was a trail they wanted to explore with their friends and families.

*This seems like somewhere close. Like we were talking about maybe it's after dinner, going out or just an afternoon. It's a family activity. It's just nice to think that there would be something that beautiful that you could have accessible.* Group 5

*You can enjoy it and do family activities without having to go very far. Group 4*

Some of the negative responses to the photograph included that it would be difficult to skate on because of the debris. They also noticed the mother wasn't wearing a helmet.

*Probably a lot of crap to Rollerblade over from all those trees. Group 2*

*I've always found difficult on the trails just because, you have natural debris and it's not the best surface to be riding on some of the trails. Group 4*

A couple people had allergies or asthma, so the trees and pollen associated with them brought up negative thoughts of difficulty breathing.

*I think this is pretty. I really like it. But for me, health wise, I couldn't do it. Because I have asthma. Group 3*

*I'm asthmatic and just looking at that picture makes me wheeze... And I know it's weird [because] trees give off oxygen. It's really hard as an asthmatic to breathe in enclosed areas where there's not a lot of breeze or wind blowing through. I take my kids to places like this but it's always a chore. Group 1*

One woman did not like the closed-in nature of the trees from a safety standpoint.

*I would be paranoid in this setting because there are so many trees. I kind of have this fear of people jumping out of the bushes at me, so I'm much more likely to go for the trail in the open...it's just me and my kids on a trail with a bunch of trees, I kind of avoid those. Group 4*

## PHOTO TWO



Reactions to the above photograph were mixed. To some, they saw discovery and exploration. For others, it was boring. Many participants were concerned about there being a sidewalk and the traffic.

Those who liked this photograph thought the trail would be an adventure to see what was in the small town and part of a destination bike ride.

*I think there's a charm going through these. It looks like Redwing. Just going through those little towns and finding those old Dairy Queens, you know. Those are the adventures that make it and the fact that there's a trail that goes through it. Group 3*

*I thought it was very interesting. An old small town, you'd just ride your bike down the street, check it out and you'd be back in nature in no time. Group 5*

Some participants liked to take bike rides on trails that were in nature and not through any towns or traffic, so this photograph did not appeal to them.

*Boring. No scenery. Nothing good to look at. I mean it feels like you're in a desolate town. Group 4*

*You're not out in nature. You can see where nature is, but you're not there. That (the picture) is what I do to get to work. Group 5*

Another negative was the traffic in the town and stop signs on the bike trail.

*It brings my anxiety up a little bit. That's one thing I hate getting to some of the trails is I have to drive through town with my son in the carrier. Group 3*

*Sometimes people forget the road rules of watching out for pedestrians or cyclists. So just the danger...for the cyclists or the pedestrians to be mindful of traffic around. The safety piece. Group 4*

### PHOTO THREE



Participants' main reaction to this photograph was their impression of the sheer beauty of the scene. Everyone thought it looked serene.

*The area lends itself to vistas and greater views that you don't get here in the cities. So I think any time you're at Superior, it's a good time. Group 3*

*This is the ideal day off. It makes me feel like I'm in a completely different place. Group 5*

There were participants in every group who thought this trail looked like a commitment and that they would have to bike the entire thing. It looked difficult based on what the bikers were wearing as well as the angle of the photograph, which made it look long and steep. This did not seem like a kid-friendly trail.

*It looks intimidating. Like, do I need to train for a marathon before I go for a walk on that trail kind of thing? Group 2*

*It looked like this was a long trail. Just the way it is like off the water and it just, to me, it just looks like a long. They look like they're out in the middle of nowhere. Group 4*

*It's not a kid path. This seems to me like this is a serious biking. The way people are dressed. I mean it's not casual bikers. Group 4*

#### PHOTO FOUR



This photograph was a favorite because of the setting and background. It received a positive reaction from parent groups and participants who were not as active. People liked the concept of the multi-use trail with fishing and biking.

*I'd be at that place in a heartbeat if I knew where it was. It's the perfect place. You could be biking. You could be exploring. You could be screwing around in the creek. Whatever. And all of that is safe for kids. Group 4*

*I think it's like a multi-use area. People are biking. The family is going to be fishing. There's going to be somebody sitting there reading a book. You could be doing multiple things. Group 5*

*You're seeing more than one activity going on here and I think that's what the biggest thing is because on almost all these other ones, it's all biking, Rollerblading, active stuff, and some people just want to fish or do nothing or walk around. Group 2*

This image looked closer to the Cities than some of the other pictures. As with photo one, it felt accessible to their homes and a way to use trails during the week. It also looked safe.

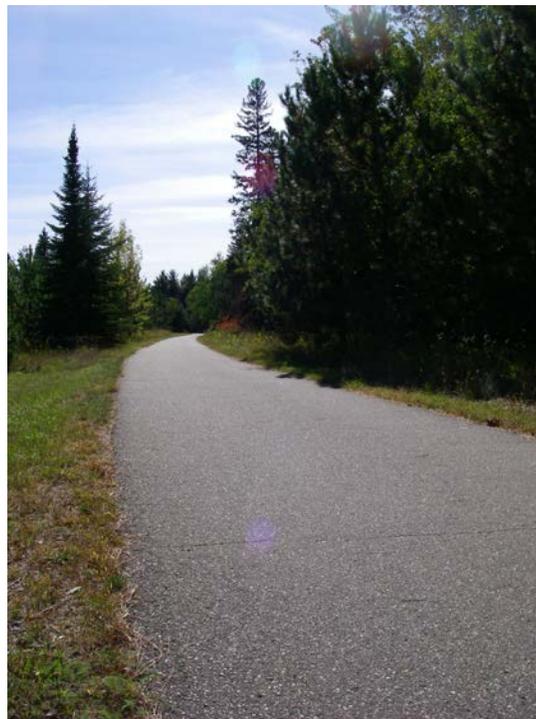
*It looks like a safe place to be, like for this woman to be out biking by herself. She's not just on some long, long trail that gets more and more secluded, but there's a river, there's people fishing, there's people around enough that it feels safe even though she is biking by herself. Group 2*

*I like that it feels more remote. Even though it's with a paved trail, it makes you think it's still close to a city but it makes you feel really private park. Group 3*

*It seems like a suburban park, on Wednesday evening. You take your kid out to do fishing. Some place you can go any day of the week. Group 5*

One negative comment about this photograph was that it felt staged and not natural.

#### PHOTO FIVE



There were mixed responses to this photograph. Overall, most participants preferred having people featured in the photographs versus just the trail. Some liked the bareness of the photo and thought it denoted adventure.

*I like the fact that it's not completely open. Because if it's the first time there, it's actually part of the adventure. Group 5*

*This just looks relaxing. It looks peaceful. It would be great just to walk through. Group 2*

There were two younger women who thought they would like to run on this trail or who already run places like this.

*I'd run it. Group 5*

Others thought it looked too remote and had safety concerns. The participants who did not like this photo were all women.

*It's kind of creepy. There's nothing. I mean it seems dark. And it seems like nothing's around. No place I'd want to walk by myself. I don't think I'd even want to drive down there. Group 5*

*The fact that there's no people in it makes it feel more stark to me. Group 3*

#### PHOTO SIX



Some participants liked the fact that they could see the city in the background, which let them know that the trail was close by and easy to access.

*I like it because it looks like they're kind of close to the city, but they found a little bit of a cool trail, wooded on either side of them. Group 4*

*I like the contrast with the outdoors and with the city in the background...they potentially could have biked to the city. And I like that – that the outdoors would be so accessible from the city. Group 3*

Participants who biked with their kids found this photograph to be inviting. It appealed to them because there were families pictured in it. It felt like a child-friendly trail.

*A lot of time you get the feeling on certain trails that when I'm out there on the trails I'm an inconvenience to the die-hard, super bikers who are trying to pound out thirty miles an hour. Group 2*

*I've been on a couple of trails in and out of the city, and it's been fun. The accessibility is awesome. And it's really cool to have it approachable, like you can do it, especially with little kids. Group 3*

A few negative comments were that the trail felt too crowded and too close to the city.

*I prefer not to see the people, honestly. I'd rather feel like I'm out there alone. Group 4*

*It just doesn't look appealing to me. Too close to the city. It does not look relaxing. Group 2*

## **MOTIVATIONS FOR TRAIL USE**

Participants generated many questions in the focus groups about the trails that they wanted answered before they would be motivated to use them, including:

- How long is the trail?
- Is it marked?
- Can you shorten it if it's too long and still get back to your vehicle?
- Where are you going to end up?
- Is a park pass needed?
- What is the reason to go there?
- Do I need equipment and what kind?
- What type of trail is it? How difficult is it?

Participants said they would be motivated to use a trail like the ones in the photographs because it would connect them to nature as well as be free of cost.

If maps were provided, it would increase their motivation and the likelihood they would use the trail. Participants ideally would like paper maps as well as an app for their smart phones. They also wanted all the logistical details possible.

*Knowing it's there. Knowing where it goes, what it does, when it's open, how, what the options are with whatever trail you're looking for. Group 1*

The idea of the trails as a destination was very appealing to many participants.

*It's motivating too if there's something there that's kind of your reason to go. You know, I'm not just going to go walk. Group 2*

*I definitely am with having to have a destination, though. If you are going to take a trail to the end, have something at the end that you can stop and take a break and do. Versus like, oh, you're at the end and it's just a parking lot, couple picnic tables. Then you turn around and go all the way back. Group 4*

Access to bathrooms was important to women and parents in every group. They wanted to know where bathrooms would be located before going on an off-road, non-motorized paved trail.

*With children, knowing where those places are that we could stop for bathrooms breaks and we need a snack or something. Group 1*

*You would expect a lot of the parks around here to supply (portable toilets). Otherwise, with kids, I'd be like, absolutely not. I'm not going if there's not a bathroom. They can't make it. Group 5*

## **BARRIERS TO TRAIL USE**

Participants in every group had similar lists of barriers and constraints to using an off-road, paved trail. Barriers to trail use would be:

- Access
- Hours of operation
- Time
- Distance from home
- Lack of equipment
- Personal safety
- No cell service
- Cost
- Bugs
- Ticks
- Sunscreen
- Access to Bathrooms
- Parking fee
- Park pass

# ITINERARY

## Itinerary for Biking the Root River State Trail

**10:00 am** – (Mile 0; “A” on map) Park the car and unload the bikes at the Fountain trailhead, the western end of the trail. Bathroom facilities are available, if needed. Strap on your helmet and let the adventure begin!



**RICHARD J. DORER MEMORIAL HARDWOOD STATE FOREST**  
**TRAIL MAP**  
**BLINDERS MANAGEMENT UNIT**

**10:30 am** – (Mile 5.4; “B” on map) Take a break, learn about Minnesota tree species, and hike ¼ mile to a scenic overlook in the Dorer State Forest (Isinours Forest Management Unit). The overlook affords views of the Watson Creek watershed, the Root River valley, and Preston 3 miles to the south. Toilets and a shelter are available at the trailhead/parking area.



**11:30 am** – Get back on your bike and ride! Note the intersection with the Harmony-Preston State Trail (Mile 6.2) and the bluffs rising up on either side of the trail just north of Heron Rd (Mile 6.6). Also note that the Old Barn Resort is just east of the Heron Rd/Root River State Trail intersection.



**12:00 pm** – (Mile 11.0; “C” on map) Arrive in Lanesboro. Right after you cross the old railroad trestle bridge, hang a right on Parkway Avenue and park your bike in front of Riverside on the Root. It’s time for lunch! Grab a table on the patio overlooking the river, sit back, and relax. Save room for dessert a little further down the trail, though!



**1:00 pm** – Now that you’re refreshed and refueled, it’s time to get back on the saddle, at least for a little while. The trail follows the curves of the river and past the Eagle Cliff Campground until it reaches the small community of Whalan. Hop off your bike at the Aroma Pie Shop and have a slice a la mode at the “Home of World Famous Pies” (Mile 15.7; “D” on map).

**2:00 pm** – You’ve seen the sights, eaten well, and had fun every “step” of the way. It’s time to turn around and head back toward Lanesboro and Fountain. What do you say we ride without stopping for a while?

**2:45 pm** – Remember the Old Barn Resort (Mile 6.6) you went by late this morning, just after you passed the intersection with the Harmony Preston trail? Well, it might be a good time to take a break, stretch the legs, use the facilities, and grab a cold beverage. Or, if you’re feeling good, just keep on riding west!

**3:30 pm** – Arrive back at the Fountain trailhead. You made it! What a day on the Root River State Trail, in the Dorer State Forest, and in the communities along the trail?! You are going to sleep well tonight.



A	5.4 miles, +/- 27 mins	B	5.6 miles, +/- 31 mins	C	4.7 miles, +/- 23 mins	D
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**Location**  
 The Root River and Harmony - Preston Valley State Trails are part of the Blufflands State Trail System located in southeastern Minnesota. The Root River segment passes through Houston and Fillmore counties. The Harmony - Preston Valley segment is entirely within Fillmore County.

The Root River and Harmony - Preston Valley State Trails provide spectacular views of the area's distinctive limestone bluffs, access to historic towns, sixty miles of multi-purpose trails, connections to water trails, campgrounds, and state forests, and an immersive natural experience.



Participants in every group liked the idea of an itinerary. The sample itinerary above was passed out to participants. Almost everyone in every group said an itinerary would make a difference in their trail use. Participants described it as “awesome” and “great.” They saw the itinerary as a

way to get motivated. They thought it would help overcome the barriers of planning and scheduling.

*I'm a planner, so this is awesome. 'Cause then, mentally I know this is kind of what my day might be. Even if I want to pull off for two hours and do something, I just know I can enjoy everything because I know what, where the end is. Group 4*

*You trust a little bit more that your day is going to be awesome. I mean I like spontaneous stuff, but also it's fun to know that if we're going to drive all the way down to southeast Minnesota that there's a really good itinerary there. Group 5*

Parents thought an itinerary like this would help get the kids involved, engaged, and excited about the prospect of biking on a trail.

*Just the fact that you're making it an event, the kids are going to look at it and go, "Holy cow, Dad, you're awesome." I'm not going to lie. I like that. Group 3*

*Well heck, you pick this up and you go, "Okay guys, got a day." That was easy. Load the bikes and let's go. Group 4*

*I'm thinking if I did this with family, if I had a trip like this, that'd be helpful. So pretty much everybody could be on board and knows what to expect. I can be as adventurous as I want to be, but if I'm with two other people that don't want to be. Group 5*

A suggested improvement for the itinerary was to not have specific times listed, e.g. 10:30. It would still be beneficial to have the approximate time to would take to get from one point to the next, such as 30 minutes. The exact time of day felt limiting to some participants.

*I like the concept of it, I'm not a big fan of the time-based because to me, I know we never get out of the house on time. Group 2*

Another suggestion was to have different itineraries based on the ages of children with different distances and stopping points.

There were participants in every group who talked about wanting a loop itinerary instead of an out-and-back.

*I like circle routes because turning around and going back, you can only go a certain distance is no fun. You've already seen it. Group 4*

## **PACKAGE DEALS**

The idea of package deals was presented to the groups. With a package deal, all the equipment, gear, food, and routes would be provided. There were mixed reactions to the package concept. Package deals were appealing to one or two people in every group.

*It cuts down on the preparation and the big ordeal you have to make it into if everything's provided for you. All you really need to do is bring yourself and whatever that might entail. Group 2*

*Absolutely (I like this). Say if you had a vacation planned and it was forecasted to be bad weather. And it changed and you didn't plan around that. Guess what, now we have six free hours. Let's stop at the station and see what to do. Group 3*

*I think for people who live in the city and may not have bikes, this is like: we're going to go experience nature. And you've never done it before. It's all laid out. You can bike. You can kayak. You don't want to spend a lot of money. You do it once every year. I'm not going to go buy a kayak or a canoe. Group 4*

Most people thought shuttles would be nice to have but not needed. They worried that the cost would be too much and trying to plan around a shuttle time felt like it would impinge on their freedom.

*Usually have to commit if you're doing a shuttle. You can't just do your own thing. Group 1*

Even though the package deal did not appeal to everyone, many participants would like to have the option to rent bikes at some of the trails.

*This would also be a good place to have the rental bikes ready. Because unless you have a truck or something big that if you have a large family to take all those bikes in your vehicle or on your vehicle, it would be a serious chore. Group 1*

*I think if you had a Nice Ride or something by (the trail), that's not as annoying as the package deal. Then if I wanted to go camping and just pick up a Nice Ride for the afternoon and do this. Group 5*

## **GUIDED TOURS**

Almost all participants in every group reacted negatively to the concept of a guided bike tour. The idea of a guide took away the adventure, freedom, and escape they experienced in nature or using an off-road trail. Participants worried that a guide would change their pace. They thought it would seem awkward to ride with a guide.

*You lose the freedom. Group 2*

*I don't want somebody telling me when I can stop and start. Group 3*

*Sounds inhibiting. Because you want to go out and enjoy yourself and do what you feel like. If you want to stop and stare at the mushroom for 10 minutes, the guide's not going to want to do that. Group 4*

However, there were two people who liked the idea of guides. They had low trail use and tended to not to participate in outdoor activity as frequently.

*For me, I think that that would be an ideal thing because I'm not the outdoorsy camping person. So I may go so far and just say, okay, seen enough, forget it. Even though my son is wanting to keep going and he wants to see more. But if I have a guide, then that's kind of like stuck. Group 4*

Participants wanted to get the information a guide would provide, but wanted it delivered differently. They came up with the idea to have information stations at points of interest along the trail so they could learn about things at their own pace.

*Guides could be in stations. You could stop for instance here on the bridge. If you stop and there would be somebody to talk about. Group 4*

## **SEEKING OUT TRAILS ON VACATION**

At least two participants in every group said they looked for trails on their vacation. Some said including trails was part of their planning for a vacation. For those active people, using trails in new areas was a way to explore, discover, and get exercise.

*I like active vacations. Let's go be active somewhere else is a nice change of pace. Group 3*

*That's kind of what we do (on vacation.) We have the Garmin and we'll just find state trails. We went to Colorado and just typed in the Garmin, "state trails." Group 2*

*There are different things to see. Every place, it's going to have its own trees, its own animals. Group 4*

## **DNR MATERIALS AND COMMUNICATION**

Participants were asked what sources they used for gathering information about activities outdoors. Word of mouth was the most common way people discovered new things to do outdoors. They relied on word of mouth because they trusted their family and friends to like the same things they did.

*Word of mouth is a big one. Once somebody has done something and it's like, "Oh, that might be kind of cool to try." Group 4*

*I think (word of mouth) is huge. I have a buddy who's a big camper. I go to him. He's got four girls all under eight. So he knows where to go. So everything he's vetted I'm good with. Group 3*

*Whenever I see someone who is obviously a nature lover, I try to chat with them to see where they've gone, when they've gone, what's it like, what should I expect. That's why I started canoeing the Rum River every year because I heard about it from someone. Group 5*

Searching the Internet was also widely used as a way to get information about the outdoors.

*The Internet. Just looking stuff up. "How to get to Canada." And then yeah, you've got your tourism site, talks about what to do, where to go. I have AAA membership, you can ask them to send you stuff. But the Internet is a huge way to find out stuff. Group 3*

*My first thought would be to go on the Internet. And if there's a particular geographical region that if I knew I was going to be by a small town or in a certain area of Minnesota, I probably would just use keywords and search. I don't know of any one-stop Internet site where I can find stuff like that. Group 5*

Participants really liked using websites to find detailed information. They wanted interactive maps that would give as much information as possible.

*It'd be awesome in my ideal world if there was a big giant map that I could click in. I'm going here and it'd draw a little circle. It would show me all the trails all hooked together. Group 3*

*I'm an online person so I'd love to see a map like this and then you could like click on a trail and it could give you more detail. Because there might, you know, there might be some sort of off-shoots or loops that they just can't show in enough detail in here. And then have an itinerary type thing attached or with more specific distances. Group 1*

Half of the participants used online reviews as part of their information gathering. But no one based their decision solely on the reviews of strangers. Online reviews were helpful to get tips and see photographs from real users.

*I go to the online forums, like when I'm training for an event. I look to see what trails are good. What are the pros, the cons? I look for feedback from other people. Group 3*

*I read online reviews but I take them with a grain of salt because I feel like sometimes they're skewed by the people who put them there. Group 1*

A number of people in each group used online coupon services, like Groupon and Living Social, to motivate them to try new activities. They felt like they were getting a deal as well as not having to invest a lot until they could decide if they enjoyed the activity.

*I get lots of ideas through Groupon and Living Socials and all those coupon email things they send you. I'm like, "Oh, that sounds like a cool place." My last date night we went and jumped on trampolines, because of a Groupon. Group 3*

Other places participants mentioned getting information were:

- Explore Minnesota
- Minnesota DNR website
- Star Tribune
- Kare 11
- Minnesota Bound
- REI
- Free area maps
- Facebook
- Emails

## **REACTION TO DESCRIPTION OF TRAILS**

Participants were given the following information and asked for their reactions to each description.

DNR off-road, non-motorized paved trails:

1. Are away from traffic, with the exception of a few marked road crossings -- you can pedal for miles without being close to any cars,
2. Are paved (or surfaced) and level, so they are easy for young kids to pedal,
3. Have \*some\* primitive restrooms along the way; think "Satellites,"
4. Are scenic, so you are pedaling in nature,
5. Are, for the most part, not within a city where you could stop at a store along the way, and
6. Require that you transport your bike to the trail and bring along the things you need (water, snacks).

No one was surprised in any of the groups about the definition of DNR trails. The description was how they pictured the trails. However, there was some confusion about the word choice "satellites" for portable restrooms. People preferred portable restrooms.

*I wouldn't call a toilet a satellite. Call them port-a-pots or biffies. No one in Minnesota says satellite. Group 5*

## **KID-FRIENDLIEST TRAILS**

The DNR has been using the term "kid-friendliest trails" in marketing materials and wanted to understand if the message was meaningful, reliable or credible. Participants were not sure about calling the trails the "kid-friendliest." They had many questions about why they would be called that.

*Why are they kid-friendly? Is there less traffic? Or is there Paul Bunyan and some other cool historical things? Ice cream stores? Group 3*

*What makes them more kid-friendly is what I'm wondering? Group 4*

Parents liked the safety aspect for children because there were no motorized vehicles allowed.

*They're supervised, and they're away from potentially other distractions and it's a good quality time and they're on a trail where they are away from traffic and they're away from other influences. Group 1*

*The fact that they're saying they're paved and they're level. Group 2*

*Just the very fact that the DNR designed them to be kid-able. Group 2*

## **TRYING SOMETHING NEW OUTDOORS**

With the exception of the high trail users, most participants had not tried anything new outdoors recently. There were long pauses while people tried to recount their last new outdoor adventure.

They don't try new things because they don't know where they are and they don't like to leave their comfort zones.

*I'm trying to think of the last time I got outside of my comfort zone in the outdoors. You know what's close to home, and your friends are close to home, so you do stuff close to home. Group 1*

High trail users were more adventurous and many people in that group tried something new such as kayaking, zip lining, or paddle boarding.

## **REACTION TO DNR STATE TRAIL MAPS**

Participants were shown a map of where the state paved trails were located. Overall, people did not know which trails were regional, state, or local. They were surprised by how few trails were designated DNR state trails.

*I didn't realize there was a distinction between DNR versus state. I didn't realize, oh, this is just a small part of the parks that are out there. I thought maybe DNR was all that. Group 2*

*I would have expected more. Group 1*

*None of them are looped. Group 4*

Participants were asked to write down the three things they needed to know before using a DNR state off-road, non-motorized paved trail. Their responses are below.

### **Top Three Things I Need to Know/Have Before Using a Minnesota State Trail**

- Distance/length of trail (13 responses)
- Bathrooms (8)
- Maps (7)
- Drinking Fountains/Water (6)
- Points of Interest (5)
- Facilities (4)
- Distance from home (4)
- Location (3)
- Terrain (3)
- Difficulty (3)
- Accessibility (2)
- Activities (2)
- An app for the phone (2)
- Destination (2)
- Directions (2)
- Mile markers (2)
- Parking (2)
- Safety (2)
- Scenery (2)
- Cheap Available bikes (1)
- Descriptions (1)

Easy to find itinerary (1)  
End Point (1)  
Experience level (1)  
Hours (1)  
Ideas of things in nature to look for (1)  
Information to go (1)  
Kid friendly (1)  
Lodging options (1)  
Loop or out and back (1)  
One website with all the information (1)  
Options for shorter or longer hikes (1)  
Patrolled at certain hours (1)  
Price (1)  
See photos (1)  
Signs, billboards (1)  
Some shade (1)  
Sprayed for bugs (1)  
Transportation (1)  
Well traveled (1)  
Type of area (1)

## **Appendix A**

### **Discussion Guide Groups 1 & 2**

**DISCUSSION GUIDE-*final***  
**DNR PAT Focus Groups 1 & 2**  
**Monday May 21, 2012**

**INTRODUCTION:**

**(10 minutes)**

Welcome everyone! My name is Wendy Lutter and I will be moderating your group today. We will be here about an hour and a half.

**PURPOSE:**

We are here today to talk about your perspectives, experiences and opinions as related to outdoors in Minnesota. Your input will help the DNR understand residents' interests and expectations so they can tailor their services and amenities accordingly.

Before we get started, have any of you been in a focus group before?

For those of you who haven't, I'll give you some information. First of all, I have nothing to sell. The focus groups are for research purposes only. I am an independent, trained moderator, so please feel free to make any positive or negative comments today- my job is not on the line based on your responses.

This is a free flowing discussion. We're here to learn as much as possible about everyone's ideas. There are no wrong answers.

**GROUND RULES:**

Here are some guidelines for you to know about:

Notice the tape recorder. I am taping this conversation so that I don't have to take notes. I will use the tapes for a report I have to write. No names will be used. Because of the taping, please speak in a loud voice and speak one at a time.

This is a one-way mirror. There will be representatives from the Minnesota DNR listening so they can hear what you have to say first hand.

Avoid side conversations with the person who is sitting next to you. This is usually the best information so tell it to all of us.

Everyone does not have to answer every single question, but make sure I hear from each one of you at some point this evening.

If I cut you off, I'm not being rude, we just have a lot to cover today in our short time together.

**ACKNOWLEDGE:**

Thank you for being here. Your time is very valuable and your opinions important.

**INTRODUCTIONS:** Let's get started by having you introduce yourself to the group and tell us:

- Your first name
- Where you live
- What would you do if you had a day off?

## **I. Allocation of Leisure and Outdoor Recreation Time (20 minutes)**

- Let's start by talking about things you do for enjoyment and leisure. On the notepad in front of you, please write down all the ways you spend your free time, from big things to little. Think of this free or leisure time as time when you are not working or doing household or everyday duties. (GIVE A MOMENT TO LIST) Now, please go back and circle your top choice.
- Let's go around the table and tell us what which was your top choice. (FLIPCHART RESPONSES)
- Let's move now to talking about spending time outside as part of your free time. Close your eyes for a second and picture being outdoors in nature. What comes to mind? What words, images, phrases?
- What causes you to do an activity outside? (PROBE: health, wellness, social interaction, emotional, introspection, getting away from it all, learn, experience, others) What motivates you to do outdoor activities and get involved? (PROBE: do you consider walking the dog a chore or free time? How about exercising?)
- What do you like best about outdoor activities? What are the benefits? Reasons for benefit? (PROBE: reasons for motivator to get outdoors)
- What do you like least about outdoor activities? What are the reasons you dislike that aspect? (PROBE: barriers, constraints) How could that negative be removed or solved?

## **II. Barriers/Constraints to Outdoor Activity (15 minutes)**

- Describe your participation level in outdoor activities. How often are you outside for activities? Do you get out of doors as often as you'd like? RAISE HANDS. For those of you who said yes, what are your secrets to time management? How do you make decisions to allow you to make time? How do you prioritize?
- For those who said no, what are the barriers to more time to participate in outdoor activities? (PROBE: constraints vs. interest?)
- Let's list some things that make it hard to do outdoor activities as often as you'd like. (FLIPCHART) Now let's look at these and find a solution or way that you might be able to overcome it as an obstacle. How do you overcome these barriers? PROBE: How important is it to have someone to do the outdoor activity with? Social aspect? (PROBE: how successful are you at it? What makes you successful?)

- D. What would need to change in order for you to participate in outdoor activities more often? (PROBE: time management, planning ahead, more access to information, awareness of options) Would you envision anywhere you could get help in overcoming these things?

### **III. DNR off-road, non-motorized trails (25 minutes)**

- A. I am going to show you a couple photos and get your reactions. SHOW PHOTOS OF TRAILS. FOR EACH ONE ASK: What do you think of when you see this photo? What words or images come to mind? Where do you think this is? Positive reactions? Negatives? (PROBE)
- B. When you hear the term, off-road, non-motorized paved trail, what does that say to you? What does it describe? (PROBE: Appealing, negative, descriptive) Are there other words you would use?
- C. What activities could you do on this type of trail? (IF DON'T COME UP UNAIDED, PROBE: walking, dog walking, biking, running/jogging, in-line skating, biking, roller-skiing)
- D. What would motivate you to use a trail like this? Think about what the experience would look and feel like for you to consider it? What concerns do you have about using an off-road, non-motorized paved trail? What information would alleviate those concerns?
- E. What would the barriers be to using one of these trails? (PROBE: lack of awareness, access, where are the trails, near home, knowledge, lack of equipment, safety, cost, restrooms, drinking water, health concerns, bugs, other)
- F. Would it make a difference to have an itinerary like this one? (Share itinerary) How would this impact your possible use? What about if there were guided rides or hikes on the trails? What about package deals where you just showed up and everything was taken care of for you? (PROBE: willingness to pay and what)
- G. When you go on vacation, do you ever seek out trails like these? Reasons why or why not?

### **IV. DNR Materials and Communication (15 minutes)**

- A. How do you learn about new things to do in your leisure time outdoors? What sources do you use to gather information about things to do in your free time? (PROBE: email, Internet, Facebook, mail, advertisements) How would you see using technology to find out more about trails like these?
- B. When was the last time you tried something new outdoors? What was it and how did you find out about it? How much does word of mouth or talking to others play a role in your decisions?

- C. I am going to read you a list of facts about DNR state trails for you to read. PASS OUT LIST. What are your reactions, surprises? Do you think these trails would be kid-friendly? Why or why not? How about more kid-friendly than other trails in Minnesota?

## **V. Wrap Up**

**(5 minutes)**

*I have a quick thing for you to do. Please list the top three things that you would need to know before using an off-road, paved trail.*

*(CHECK WITH VIEWERS IN BACK ROOM TO SEE IF THERE ARE ANY ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS OR CLARIFICATIONS)*

One more thing. Do any of you know where the state off-road, non-motorized paved trails are? Here is a map of state trails like the ones we have been talking about. Reactions? Any surprises?

Thank you very much for your time and opinions! Please check out at the desk and they will have a check for you. Also, I'd like to ask you to do me a favor. We have another group coming in after you so please don't tell them what we discussed. Thank you!

## **Appendix B**

### **Discussion Guide Groups 3 & 4**

**DISCUSSION GUIDE-*final***  
**DNR PAT Focus Groups 3 & 4**  
**Wednesday May 23, 2012**

**INTRODUCTION:** Welcome everyone! My name is Wendy Lutter and I will be moderating your group today. We will be here about an hour and a half.

**PURPOSE:** We are here today to talk about your perspectives, experiences and opinions as related to outdoors in Minnesota. Your input will help the DNR understand residents' interests and expectations so they can tailor their services and amenities accordingly.

Before we get started, have any of you been in a focus group before?

For those of you who haven't, I'll give you some information. First of all, I have nothing to sell. The focus groups are for research purposes only. I am an independent, trained moderator, so please feel free to make any positive or negative comments today- my job is not on the line based on your responses.

This is a free flowing discussion. We're here to learn as much as possible about everyone's ideas. There are no wrong answers.

**GROUND RULES:** Here are some guidelines for you to know about:

Notice the tape recorder. I am taping this conversation so that I don't have to take notes. I will use the tapes for a report I have to write. No names will be used. Because of the taping, please speak in a loud voice and speak one at a time.

This is a one-way mirror. There will be representatives from the Minnesota DNR listening so they can hear what you have to say first hand.

Avoid side conversations with the person who is sitting next to you. This is usually the best information so tell it to all of us.

Everyone does not have to answer every single question, but make sure I hear from each one of you at some point this evening.

If I cut you off, I'm not being rude, we just have a lot to cover today in our short time together.

**ACKNOWLEDGE:** Thank you for being here. Your time is very valuable and your opinions important.

**INTRODUCTIONS:** Let's get started by having you introduce yourself to the group and tell us:

- Your first name
- Where you live
- How many children you have and what ages
- What would you do if you had a day off?

## **I. Allocation of Leisure and Outdoor Recreation Time (10 minutes)**

- Let's start by talking about things you do for enjoyment and leisure. On the notepad in front of you, please write down all the ways you spend your free time, from big things to little. Think of this free or leisure time as time when you are not working or doing household or everyday duties. (GIVE A MOMENT TO LIST) Now, please go back and circle your top choice.
- Let's go around the table and tell us what which was your top choice. (FLIPCHART RESPONSES)
- Let's move now to talking about spending time outside as part of your free time. Close your eyes for a second and picture being outdoors in nature. What comes to mind? What words, images, phrases?
- What causes you to do an activity outside? (PROBE: health, wellness, social interaction, emotional, introspection, getting away from it all, learn, experience, others) What motivates you to do outdoor activities and get involved? (PROBE: do you consider walking the dog a chore or free time? How about exercising?)

## **II. Barriers/Constraints to Outdoor Activity (10 minutes)**

- Describe your participation level in outdoor activities. How often are you outside for activities? Do you get out of doors as often as you'd like? RAISE HANDS. For those of you who said yes, what are your secrets to time management? How do you make decisions to allow you to make time?
- For those who said no, what are the barriers to more time to participate in outdoor activities? (PROBE: constraints vs. interest?)
- Let's list some things that make it hard to do outdoor activities as often as you'd like. (FLIPCHART) Now let's look at these and find a solution or way that you might be able to overcome it as an obstacle. How do you overcome these barriers? (PROBE: how successful are you at it? What makes you successful?)
- What would need to change in order for you to participate in outdoor activities more often? (PROBE: time management, planning ahead, more access to information, awareness of options) Would you envision anywhere you could get help in overcoming these things?

### III. Biking with Children

(25 minutes)

- A. Think about all the outdoor activities that you do with your children. List the on the paper in front of you. What is your favorite outdoor activity to do with your children? GO AROUND TABLE. LIST ON FLIPCHART
- B. Tell me the reason that is your favorite activity? What type of experience does it provide you? What do you like so much about it? How does it make you feel? What are the reasons it is important for you to have this experience with your children?
- C. Tell me one out door activity you did as a child. Do you think that has an influence over what you do with your children outside?
- D. Let's talk about biking with your children. What motivates you to bike with them? What are the benefits?
- E. Where do you bike with your kids? (PROBE: from home, on a trail, bikes on the car, safe, close?)
- F. How often do you bike with them? Is it your idea or your kids? How do your kids feel about biking?
- G. Who does the planning? How do you plan for riding with your kids? What things do you have to consider when biking with your kids? (PROBE: where to go, weather, equipment) What kinds of things do you need to have and be prepared for? What's your decision process?
- H. What are the barriers to biking with your kids? (PROBE: time, attitude of kids, equipment, weather, planning) How do you overcome these barriers?

### IV. DNR off-road, non-motorized trails

(30 minutes)

- A. When you hear the term, off-road, non-motorized paved trail, what does that say to you? What does it describe? (PROBE: Appealing, negative, descriptive) Are there other words you would use?
- B. I am going to show you a couple photos and get your reactions. SHOW PHOTOS OF TRAILS. FOR EACH ONE ASK: What do you think of when you see this photo? What words or images come to mind? Where do you think this is? Positive reactions? Negatives? (PROBE)
- C. What activities could you do on this type of trail? (IF DON'T COME UP UNAIDED, PROBE: walking, dog walking, biking, running/jogging, in-line skating, biking, roller-skiing)
- D. What would motivate you to use a trail like this? Think about what the experience would look and feel like for you to consider it? What concerns do you have about using an off-road, non-motorized paved trail? What information would alleviate those concerns?

- E. What would the barriers be to using one of these trails? (PROBE: lack of awareness, access, where are the trails, near home, knowledge, lack of equipment, safety, cost, restrooms, drinking water, health concerns, bugs, kid-friendly routes and trails, other)
- F. Would it make a difference to have an itinerary like this one? (Share itinerary) How would this impact your possible use? What about if there were guided rides or hikes on the trails? What about package deals where you just showed up and everything was taken care of for you? (PROBE: willingness to pay and what) What would you want the guides to do?
- G. When you go on vacation, do you ever seek out trails like these? Reasons why or why not?

## **V. DNR Materials and Communication (10 minutes)**

- A. How do you learn about new things to do in with your kids outdoors? What sources do you use to gather information about things to do in your free time? (PROBE: email, Internet, Facebook, mail, advertisements) How would you see using technology to find out more about trails like these?
- B. When was the last time you tried something new that was nature-based with your kids? What was it and how did you find out about it? How much does word of mouth or talking to others play a role in your decisions?
- C. I am going to pass out a list of facts about DNR state trails for you to read. PASS OUT LIST. What are your reactions, surprises? Do you think these trails would be kid-friendly? Why or why not? How about more kid-friendly than other trails in Minnesota?

## **VI. Wrap Up (5 minutes)**

*I have something for you to do. Please list the top three things that would get you to bike with your children on DNR trails.*

*(CHECK WITH VIEWERS IN BACK ROOM TO SEE IF THERE ARE ANY ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS OR CLARIFICATIONS)*

One more thing. Do any of you know where the state off-road, non-motorized paved trails are? Here is a map of state trails like the ones we have been talking about. Reactions? Any surprises?

Thank you very much for your time and opinions! Please check out at the desk and they will have a check for you. Also, I'd like to ask you to do me a favor. We have another group coming in after you so please don't tell them what we discussed. Thank you!

## **Appendix C**

### **Discussion Guide Group 5**

**DISCUSSION GUIDE-final**  
**DNR PAT Focus Group 5**  
**Wednesday May 23, 2012**

**INTRODUCTION:** Welcome everyone! My name is Wendy Lutter and I will be moderating your group today. We will be here about an hour and a half.

**PURPOSE:** We are here today to talk about your perspectives, experiences and opinions as related to outdoors in Minnesota. Your input will help the DNR understand residents' interests and expectations so they can tailor their services and amenities accordingly.

Before we get started, have any of you been in a focus group before?

For those of you who haven't, I'll give you some information. First of all, I have nothing to sell. The focus groups are for research purposes only. I am an independent, trained moderator, so please feel free to make any positive or negative comments today- my job is not on the line based on your responses.

This is a free flowing discussion. We're here to learn as much as possible about everyone's ideas. There are no wrong answers.

**GROUND RULES:** Here are some guidelines for you to know about:

Notice the tape recorder. I am taping this conversation so that I don't have to take notes. I will use the tapes for a report I have to write. No names will be used. Because of the taping, please speak in a loud voice and speak one at a time.

This is a one-way mirror. There will be representatives from the Minnesota DNR listening so they can hear what you have to say first hand.

Avoid side conversations with the person who is sitting next to you. This is usually the best information so tell it to all of us.

Everyone does not have to answer every single question, but make sure I hear from each one of you at some point this evening.

If I cut you off, I'm not being rude, we just have a lot to cover today in our short time together.

**ACKNOWLEDGE:** Thank you for being here. Your time is very valuable and your opinions important.

**INTRODUCTIONS:** Let's get started by having you introduce yourself to the group and tell us:

- Your first name
- Where you live
- What would you do if you had a day off?

## **I. Allocation of Leisure and Outdoor Recreation Time (15 minutes)**

- A. Let's start by talking about things you do for enjoyment and leisure. On the notepad in front of you, please write down all the ways you spend your free time, from big things to little. Think of this free or leisure time as time when you are not working or doing household or everyday duties. (GIVE A MOMENT TO LIST) Now, please go back and circle your top choice.
- B. Let's go around the table and tell us what which was your top choice. (FLIPCHART RESPONSES)
- C. Let's move now to talking about spending time outside as part of your free time. Close your eyes for a second and picture being outdoors in nature. What comes to mind? What words, images, phrases?
- D. What causes you to do an activity outside? (PROBE: health, wellness, social interaction, emotional, introspection, getting away from it all, learn, experience, others) What motivates you to do outdoor activities and get involved? (PROBE: do you consider walking the dog a chore or free time? How about exercising?)
- E. What do you like best about outdoor activities? What are the benefits? Reasons for benefit? (PROBE: reasons for motivator to get outdoors)
- F. What do you like least about outdoor activities? What are the reasons you dislike that aspect? (PROBE: barriers, constraints) How could that negative be removed or solved?

## **II. Barriers/Constraints to Outdoor Activity (10 minutes)**

- A. Describe your participation level in outdoor activities. How often are you outside for activities? Do you get out of doors as often as you'd like? RAISE HANDS. For those of you who said yes, what are your secrets to time management? How do you make decisions to allow you to make time?
- B. For those who said no, what are the barriers to more time to participate in outdoor activities? (PROBE: constraints vs. interest?)
- C. Let's list some things that make it hard to do outdoor activities as often as you'd like. (FLIPCHART) Now let's look at these and find a solution or way that you might be able to overcome it as an obstacle. How do you overcome these barriers? (PROBE: how successful are you at it? What makes you successful?)
- D. What would need to change in order for you to participate in outdoor activities more often? (PROBE: time management, planning ahead, more access to information, awareness of options) Would you envision anywhere you could get help in overcoming these things?

- E. What activities did you do outside as a child? How does that influence your outdoor activities now?

### III. DNR Off-road trail use

(35 minutes)

- A. When you hear the term, off-road, non-motorized paved trail, what does that say to you? What does it describe? (PROBE: Appealing, negative, descriptive) Are there other words you would use?
- B. I am going to show you a couple photos and get your reactions. SHOW PHOTOS OF TRAILS. FOR EACH ONE ASK: What do you think of when you see this photo? What words or images come to mind? Where do you think this is? Positive reactions? Negatives? (PROBE)
- C. How often do you use trails like these? What activities do you do on these trails? PROBE: walking, dog walking, biking, running/jogging, in-line skating, biking, roller-skiing)
- D. Which trails do you use? What was your experience? (PROBE: positives, negatives, areas for improvements) What trails is your favorite? How come it is your favorite?
- E. What motivates you to use a trail like this? What experience do you have? How does it make you feel? What are the benefits? What about these trails make it a priority for a place you spend your time?
- F. What concerns do you have about using an off-road, non-motorized trail? What would alleviate those concerns?
- G. What are the barriers to using these trails? (PROBE: lack of awareness, access, where are the trails, near home, knowledge, lack of equipment, safety, cost, restrooms, drinking water, health concerns, bugs, other) How do you overcome these barriers?
- H. How do you plan to use one of these trails? What things do you have to consider when? (PROBE: where to go, weather, equipment) What kinds of things do you need to have and be prepared for?
- I. What improvements would you like to see to off-road, paved trails? (PROBE: specifics)
- J. Would it make a difference to have an itinerary like this one? (Share itinerary) How would this impact your possible use? What about if there were guided rides or hikes on the trails? What about package deals where you just showed up and everything was taken care of for you? (PROBE: willingness to pay and what) What would you want the guides to do?
- K. When you go on vacation, do you ever seek out trails like these? Reasons why or why not?

## IV. DNR Materials and Communication

(15 minutes)

- A. How do you learn about new things to do in your leisure time outdoors? What sources do you use to gather information about things to do in your free time? (PROBE: email, Internet, Facebook, mail, advertisements) How would you see using technology to find out more about trails like these?
- B. When was the last time you tried something new outdoors? What was it and how did you find out about it? How much does word of mouth or talking to others play a role in your decisions?
- C. I am going to pass out a list of facts about DNR state trails for you to read. PASS OUT LIST. What are your reactions, surprises? Do you think these trails would be kid-friendly? Why or why not? How about more kid-friendly than other trails in Minnesota?

## V. Wrap Up

(10 minutes)

*I have only one more thing for you to do. Please list the top three things that would get you to use DNR trails more often.*

*(CHECK WITH VIEWERS IN BACK ROOM TO SEE IF THERE ARE ANY ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS OR CLARIFICATIONS)*

One more thing. Do any of you know where the state off-road, non-motorized paved trails are? Here is a map of state trails like the ones we have been talking about. Reactions? Any surprises?

Thank you very much for your time and opinions! Please check out at the desk and they will have a check for you. Also, I'd like to ask you to do me a favor. We have another group coming in after you so please don't tell them what we discussed. Thank you!

**Appendix D**  
**Screeners**

**DNR PAT Focus Group Screener**  
**May 2012 Final**

NAME (CHECK SPELLING):		
ADDRESS:		
CITY:	ZIP:	
PHONE:		
ALT PHONE:		
GENDER: MALE...1 FEMALE...2		
INTERVIEWER	DATE	SUP

**INTRO:** Hello, this is \_\_\_\_\_ calling from Anderson, Niebuhr and Associates on behalf of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. The DNR has retained us to conduct focus groups to help them better understand the perspectives and experiences of metro area residents.

I'm calling to see if you would be willing to participate in a focus group meeting for this study. We expect the meeting to last approximately 1 ½ to 2 hours in length. Each participant will receive \$50 as a thank you for their participation. There will also be refreshments served.

First, I need to ask you a few questions to see if you qualify for the focus groups, as we are looking for people with a variety of experiences to participate in the discussion.

A. GENDER (record by observation)

MALE ..... 1 GROUPS 1, 2, 3 & 5  
 FEMALE ..... 2 GROUPS 1, 2, 3, 4, & 5

1. If you have participated in market research studies before, what have been the topics?

---

TERM AND TALLY IF PARKS/RECREATION ARE MENTIONED

Have you ever participated in a research study about Minnesota parks and recreation areas?

NO..... 1

YES..... 2 (THANK, TALLY AND TERM)

2. My records show that you live in the greater Twin Cities metro area. Is that correct?  
(CIRCLE CODE)

YES..... 1 (CONTINUE)  
NO..... 2 (THANK, TALLY AND TERM)

3. In which of the following categories does your age fall? (READ LIST & CIRCLE CODE)

Less than 20 years old ..... 1 (THANK, TALLY AND TERM)  
20-30 ..... 2  
31-40 ..... 3  
41-45 ..... 4  
46-60 ..... 5 (THANK, TALLY AND TERM)  
61 or older ..... 6 (THANK, TALLY AND TERM)  
DON'T KNOW/ REFUSED ..... 9 (THANK, TALLY AND TERM)

4. In the past 12 months, how many days did you go outside for recreation of ANY type  
(including walking, fishing, camping, biking, skiing, hunting, golfing, sightseeing, etc.).  
(READ LIST & CIRCLE CODE)

0 to 10 days..... 1 (3, 4, 5 IF MEET LATER CRITERIA)  
11 to 50 days..... 2 GROUPS 1, 3, 4, 5  
More than 51 days..... 3 GROUPS 2, 3, 4, 5  
DON'T KNOW/ REFUSED ..... 9 (THANK, TALLY AND TERM)

5. How many times have you used a designated paved bike path in the last 12 months for any  
activity including biking, walking, running or inline skating? (Clarify: This is not a biking lane  
on the road with traffic or a single-track dirt path, but a designated non-motorized trail)

NOT AT ALL..... 1 GROUPS 1 & 2  
ONE TO FOUR TIMES A YEAR..... 2 GROUPS 3 & 4  
FIVE OR MORE TIMES A YEAR..... 3 GROUP 5

6. Are there children in your household 16 years old or under? (CIRCLE CODE)

YES..... 1  
If YES, WHAT AGES? RECORD. TRY TO RECRUIT A MIX  
NO..... 2 SKIP TO INVITATION  
REFUSED ..... 9 (THANK, TALLY AND TERM)

7. How often do you bike with your children (anywhere outdoors)?

- NEVER..... 1 ((1,2,5 IF MEET ALL OTHER CRITERIA)
- ONE TO TWO TIMES A YEAR..... 2 (1,2,5 IF MEET ALL OTHER CRITERIA)
- THREE or MORE TIMES A YEAR..... 3 (GROUP 3, 4)

8. Based on your responses, you qualify for the focus group. The focus group that we would like you to participate in will be held on:

**Monday, May 21, 2012**

**Group 1: 5:30 PM Males/Females LOW to MODERATE outdoor use, NO off-road paved trail**

**Group 2: 7:30 PM Males/Females MODERATE to HIGH outdoor use, NO off-road paved trail**

**Wednesday, May 23, 2012**

**Group 3: 4:00 PM Males/females who bike with children on moderate basis**

**Group 4: 6:00 PM Females who bike with children on moderate basis**

**Group 5: 8:00 PM Males/females with MODERATE to HIGH off-road, paved trail**

The group will be held at Leede Research in Minneapolis. The group will be approximately 1 ½ to 2 hours in length. The gratuity will be \$50 cash for your time and participation.

Now all I need to do is get your name and address so we can send out a confirmation letter and a map with instructions on how to get to our offices. Someone will also call the day before the group with a brief reminder call.

**RECORD ALL INFORMATION ON THE FRONT PAGE. BE SURE TO VERIFY ALL NAMES AND ADDRESSES FOR CORRECT SPELLING.**