San Juan Interviews

Special points of interest:

- Why People Recreate
- User Group Values
- Conflict Analysis
- Information & Signage
- Incompatible Uses
- Travel Infrastructure
- Resource Damage

Rural Planning Institute

Why People Recreate in the San Juan's

Interviewees reported similar reasons for recreating in the San Juan regardless of what type of activity they engaged in. Preeminent among these reasons was a simple "escape" from daily life.

Another common value frequently referred to by interviewees was related to having a "backcountry experience" or to seek "solitude." Often interviews would include a description of "nature unspoiled" or "pristine" natural environments as one of the primary reasons they recreated on USFS or BLM lands. A smaller number of recreationists specifically seek locations far away from civilization where no, or little, evidence of human presence exists on the landscape.

Recognizing these value trends RPI plumbed the data specifically for the following values:

- Backcountry Experience
- Solitude
- Quiet
- Pristine Natural Environment

"Urban interface trails offer alternative environments that are simply free of buildings" Bill Manning Director of Trails 2000

In addition, values associated with scenery, vista's, and travel routes were also included in the analysis.

Nearly everyone made referenced the core values of a backcountry experience and/or a pristine natural environment; almost half made a specific reference to solitude. Scenery also ranked highly and scenic resources are almost always stated in the context of vistas featuring mountains and/or views gained along travel routes including valley and creek/river trails. Common favorite vista's include Molas pass, and the "pristine' state of the West Lime Creek trail particularly favored by members of the Durango based Senior Outdoor Group.

Interviewees Citing Specific Values and the Recreation Experience
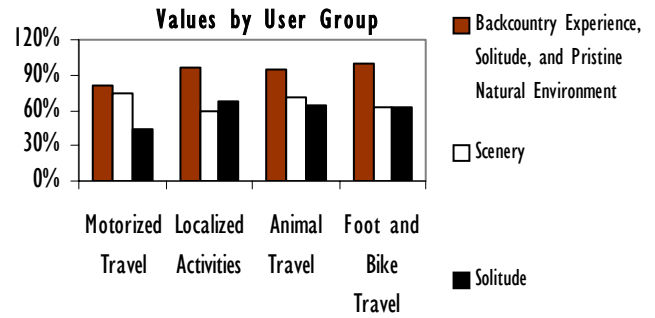
San Juan Interviews

User Group Value Analysis

High drainages such as Leviathan Creek in the Weminuche that have no trails accessing them are among the few "pristine" places we have left in Colorado" Columbine District Mountaineer

Using the values findings in the context of differing user groups is a constructive way to analyze the contrasts and preferences of these groups as well as gaining a better understanding of user conflicts.

Comparing the various user groups reveals a number of trends:

- Almost uniformly all user groups reference backcountry experience , solitude, and the pristine environment

- Non-motorized recreationists

Values by User Group

120%
90%
60%
30%
0%

Motorized Travel | Localized Activities | Animal Travel | Foot and Bike Travel

■ Backcountry Experience, Solitude, and Pristine Natural Environment

□ Scenery

■ Solitude

cite solitude more often than motorized users

- Motorized users value scenery more highly than non-motorized users

While both motorized and non-

motorized users both sought a backcountry experience, away from crowds in a natural setting, motorized users tended to emphasize the importance excellent scenery while non-motorized users emphasized solitude.

"Mountain biking is the perfect combination of exercise and scenery" Pagosa District Cyclist

Challenge & Adventure Values

A number of users in the user groups valued a challenge and adventure aspect to their recreation on public lands. The following trends are noted:

- Nearly two out of three users emphasized the importance of challenge and adventure to their recreation experience

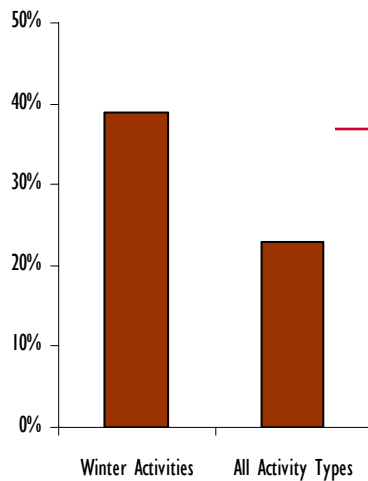- Users generally referred to the technical skills or

physical fitness required to participate in the activity

- All user groups valued challenge and adventure equally

Motorcyclists generally prefer single track trails (especially those in the Rico/West Dolores area) to roads because single track is more challenging. The Aspen Trail loop in the West Mancos/Bear Creek area is popular with ATV users because it offers a challenging, technical, and narrow route as

opposed to the Forest Service roads. "Jeeper's" generally seek routes that challenge driving skills as well as their vehicles. Snowmobiler's also want to find adventure which can mean long routes, deep snow, and steep hills.

The same trends are true of non-motorized users as skiers and bikers with advanced equipment and skill are venturing into ever more complex and remote terrain.

50%

40%

30%

20%

10%

0%

Winter Activities | All Activity Types

Percent (%) of Interviewees Valuing Ease of Access By Season

Other Values

Values less commonly held by users but less emphasized include:

- Ease of Access—while measured user patterns might reveal a greater emphasis on access than reported in the interviews, easy access was reported in approximately 15% of the interviews.

- Access was much more likely to be concerned with access

during winter—likely due to the concentration of uses due to closed roads

- A minority of interviews cited the importance of history and familial attachment to places and recreation experiences

- Many interviewee's implied and some specifically stated that social aspects were an important part of their recreation

- Safety was mentioned by a few participants who were concerned about motorized and

non-motorized user interaction

"This forest is our home, an extension of our home. This is where we spend a lot of time. It's why we live here." Dolores District

Conflict

What is Conflict

Conflict is defined by users as the following:

- Conflict occurs when one or more users adversely affects the experience or values that another user or user's expect

- Conflict occurs when one or more users adversely affect a resource that is central the experience of another user

Mountain bikers in the Dolores District often cite changes in the character of their favorite trails due to motorcycle or ATV traffic. Specifically, motorized uses tend to widen, flatten, and cut the corners of single track trails which bikers reports degrades the experience.

Conflict rarely results in confrontations between individuals or groups, but it can. Motorized users, particularly motorcyclists using single track trails report confrontations more commonly than other user groups. A number of conflicts occurred on the Hermosa Creek trail when hikers confronted the motorcyclists claiming that it was illegal to have motorized use on the trail (motorized use, is in fact, allowed on the trail under current designation)
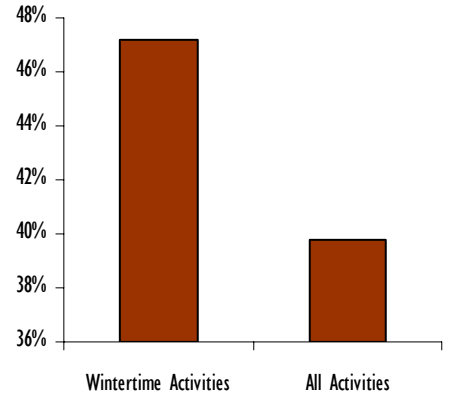
For the most part conflict is an adverse impact on a an experience that does not get communicated. Conflict was described by one long-time local snowmobile explorer of San Juan Forest and BLM lands as a "bad vibe or "negative body language."

Conflict Trends

Slightly more than 1 in 3 interviewees noted an increase in conflicts in recent years. More interviewees who engage in wintertime activities noted an increase in conflicts than for all recreation uses combined.

Percent of Iterviewees Citing Increased Conflict by Season

User Group Conflict Analysis

Considering conflict from the perspective of user groups highlights the potentially contrasting demands of these user groups, and more importantly, provides and analytical framework from which to evaluate the most common form of conflict—that between motorized and non-motorized users.

In order to organize the extent and range of motorized vs. non-motorized conflicts the interviews were scanned for the following types of statements:

- Specific reference to conflict between motorized and non-motorized uses

- Resource damage caused by motorized uses

- Statements suggesting the limiting or sequestering of motorized uses

- Statements suggesting the need for additional regulation of motorized uses

Motorized uses were the most frequently noted nexus of conflict. Nearly two of every three interviews described conflict with motorized uses or wanted additional regulations and limited access for motorized users.

None of the motorized users (approximately 20% of those interviewed) suggested that motorized uses be limited or further regulated. Furthermore, no motorized users cited conflict with other motorized users.

A detailed user group analysis revealed that about three of every four interviews who engage in foot or bike travel activities have negative experiences related to motorized activities. Approximately half of all interviewees engaging in localized activities and animal travel (primarily horses) also mentioned negative sentiment toward motorized users.
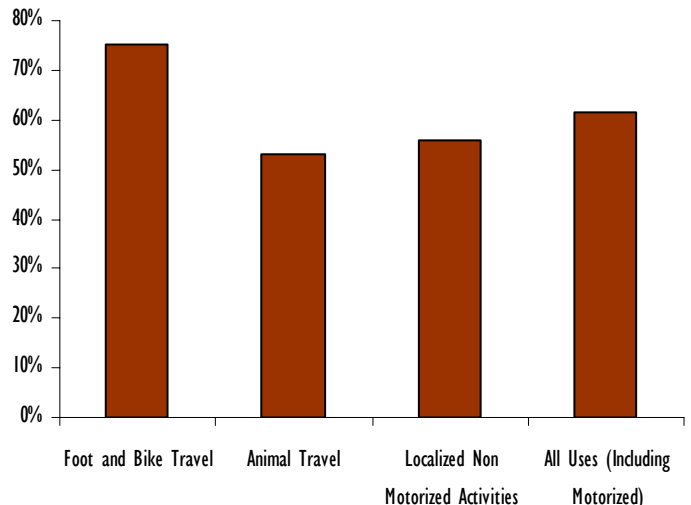
Negative comments about motorized uses typically related to the following:

- Noise

- Safety –i.e. motorized users endangering non-motorized users

- Smell—particularly snowmobiles

- Resource damage-particularly ATV and four wheel drive vehicles

"I don't go into the mountains to hear the vroom, vroom of engines—I go there to forget about that"
Columbine Hiker

Interviewees Citing Conflict or Negative Feelings Toward Motorized Uses by User Group

San Juan Interviews

User Conflict Analysis - continued

Fresh powder snow is a commodity—there is only so much of it to go around before it is used up" Backcountry Skier.
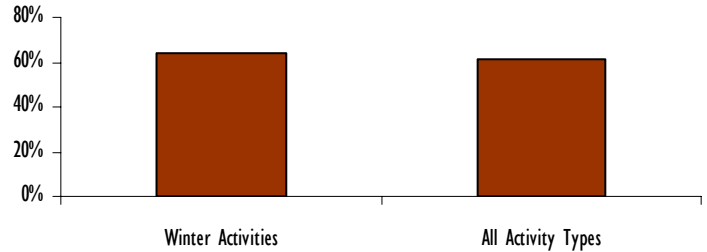
Interviewees who engage in winter recreation were just as likely as those engaged in summer recreation to have negative feelings about motorized use. Many of the cross country skiers, snowshoers and, backcountry skiers felt that some Snowmobilers drove recklessly and threatened their safety. A backcountry ski operator complained that a minority of Snowmobilers purposely tracked up as much snow as possible making the skiing conditions poor.

Motorized users are aware of the conflict other users describe. Some motorized users, particularly motorcyclists and ATV riders cited "lack of conflict" as one of the primary criteria for choosing places to recreate. After experiencing conflicts on busy single track trails in Hermosa and Jones Creek (Columbine District) some trail riders choose to drive to the Dolores District to ride single track trails in the west Mancos, Rico, West Dolores, Boggy Draw, Phil's World and Glade Areas.

"As a backcountry skier who uses a snowmobile for access I get frustrated when other skiers scowl at me in the parking lot" La Plata Canyon Snowmobiler
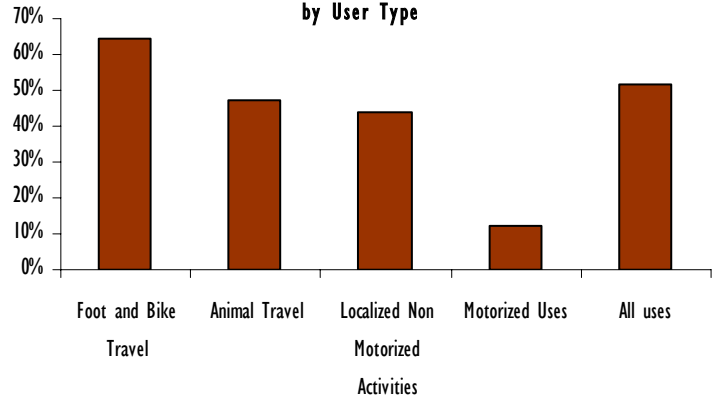
One snowmobilers describes the cold looks and negative body language skiers and other users have directed towards him when riding up La Plata Canyon. This rider admits that it doe3s negatively affect his experience to have someone regard him this way.

Percent of Interviews Citing Conflict or Negative Feelings Toward Motorized Uses by Seasonal Activity

(Bar chart: Winter Activities ~64%, All Activity Types ~62%)

However, non-motorized users cited conflict between motorized and non-motorized users far less frequently. Only about one of four motorized users cited conflicts between themselves and no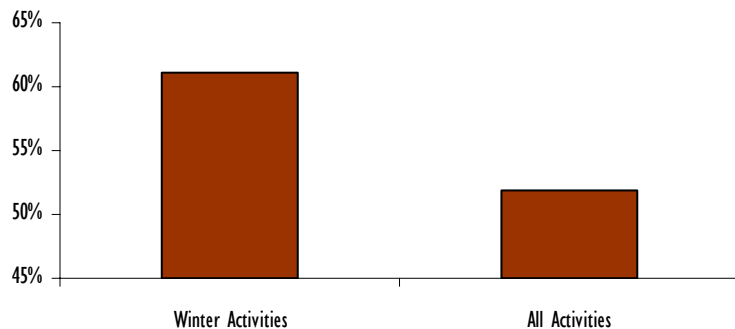n-motorized users while nearly three out of four foot and bike travelers cited conflict. This suggests that the conflict is not always reciprocal, and that much of the time conflict is simply an internal reaction to another user.

Percent of Users Supporting Separation of Incompatible Uses by User Type

(Bar chart: Foot and Bike Travel ~64%, Animal Travel ~47%, Localized Non Motorized Activities ~44%, Motorized Uses ~12%, All uses ~52%)

Separating Incompatible Uses

Percent of Users Supporting Seperation of INcompatible Uses by Seasonal Activity

(Bar chart: Winter Activities ~61%, All Activities ~52%)

Without any specific prompting about one half of the interviewees suggest that uses should be separated.

In most cases users were specific that motorized and non-motorized uses be separated but there were a minority who wanted to see mountain bikes, hikers, and equestrians separated as well. Some in the Columbine District stated a need for more trails designated only for hikers and skiers.

- Interviewees engaging in foot and bike travel on public lands were the most prominent user group to mention the need to separate uses
- Few motorized users suggested

San Juan Interviews

Incompatible Uses - continued

that uses be further separated

- Motorized users, particularly club leaders are interested in maintaining multiple use to greatest extent possible

- Equestrian users and localized activity users were generally more tolerant of motorized users

- Winter activity participants emphasized the need for more separation of uses then all users combined

- Localized activities are generally focused on a specific features (e.g. a crag, or fishing hole) not on trails and roads

and hence these users do not typically cite a need for separated uses

These finding raise further questions about the context in which conflicts occur. Where are users experiencing conflicts on the recreation infrastructure? It is possible in many areas to avoid other users by walking off trail but this is an uncommon behavior. It seemed likely that conflicts were arising near recreation features common to several user groups (e.g. a road or single track trail) this theory was explored in the following section.

"The Hermosa Creek trail is just stuffed with every kind of hobbyist from bikers to fishermen to horses to hikers. I am for multiple use — but let's face it, motorized dirt bikes and horses are a bad combination even when everyone is on their best behavior" Columbine District Horsepack Outfitter
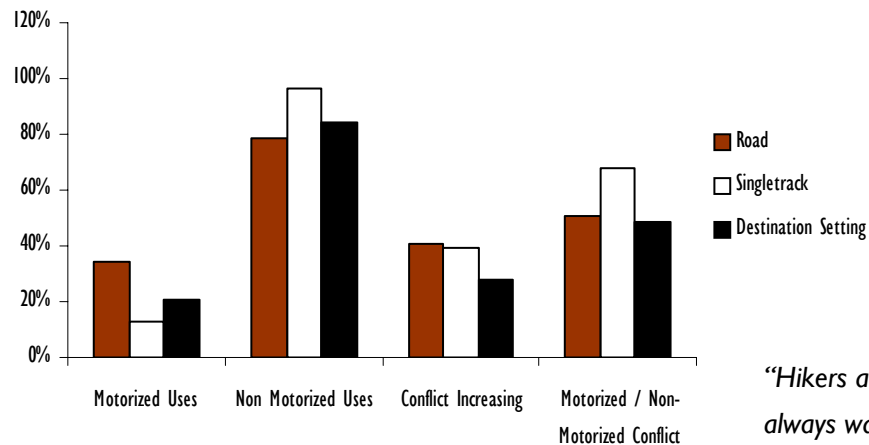
Forest Service/BLM Travel Infrastructure Analysis

It is important to understand how users utilize the forest services physical assets; or what might be referred to as infrastructure. Infrastructure includes roads, trails, rock crags, peaks, streams, lakes, and waterfalls among many other features. The purpose is to see what attitudes users express toward each of these physical attributes and how their activities interact with them.

The analysis revealed the following

- There are many non-motorized users recreating on roads

- Motorized users use roads more than other infrastructure types—The owner of a local cycle shop speculates that this is due to many motorized users are ATV riders who cannon negotiate single track trails.

- Motorcyclists are small market segment of motorized users and this segment is further subdivided into users, only some of whom ride single track trails

User Types and Conflicts by Infrastructure Type

Legend:
- Road
- Singletrack
- Destination Setting

X-axis: Motorized Uses, Non Motorized Uses, Conflict Increasing, Motorized / Non-Motorized Conflict

Y-axis: 0% to 120%

- The mixing of motorized and non-motorized users on roads could be a major setting for conflict.

- Many of the safety concerns with snowmobiles refer to encountering snowmobiles on roads, the main winter recreation thoroughfare

- Users of single track trails have more tendency to report conflict with motorized uses because the majority of single

track users are non-motorized who value solitude and a backcountry experience—hence encounters with motorized users (e.g. motorcyclists) on these single track trails are more upsetting than they are on roads where the encounters are expected.

"Hikers and bikers are always waving us down and telling us we can't be here —they just don't know the rules— we have as much right as anyone" Motorcyclist Referring to the Bear Creek Trail

San Juan Interviews

"There should be more educational information distributed in newspapers and on radio, especially community radio. Do more community outreach at places such as the Ag Expo..." Dolores District Cross Country Skiier

"There need to be better signs about hunting season—as a hiker, I want to know what is going on during hunting season!"

Pagosa District Hiker

Information & Signage

Nearly two out of every three interviewees cited the need for signage improvements related to recreational users (65% of all interviewees noted a need for improvement to signage on public lands). The need for increased or expanded signage typically surfaced in the three contexts. 1) as a solution to conflicts, 2) as a desired future conditions and 3) as a management issue the agencies need to address.

Interviewees cited three primary reasons for expanding signage.

1. Most commonly users suggested that improved signage was necessary to educate what uses are allowed where. Most interviewees wanted improved signage at the trailhead but others noted that signs about allowed uses should be placed at all common access points and extend throughout the trail system. Nearly one in six people felt that a lack of signage about use types was a major contributing factor to conflicts and that improved signage would go a long way toward ameliorating these conflicts.

2. The second most common

"We encourage our members to carry Forest Service User maps when they go riding so they can show the hikers and bikers who confront us that what we are doing is legal" Dolores river area motorized user

reason for desiring additional signage was to educate users about protecting natural resources and "leave no trace" ethics. These suggestions were generally referring to trailhead signage, camping areas, and areas used for hunting.

3. The least common reason cited for increased signage was to give travel directions. Some interviewees observed that well developed trailhed signage often leads to a misperception that a directional signage will be available throughout the system and may cause some frustration and safety concerns among less experienced backcountry travelers. Others imply thought it would open up opportunities to more users if trails and roads were better signed.

"I think a lot of people just don't realize that you can't ride your motorcycle past the wilderness sign—especially in areas that seem remote like the Highland Mary Lakes"
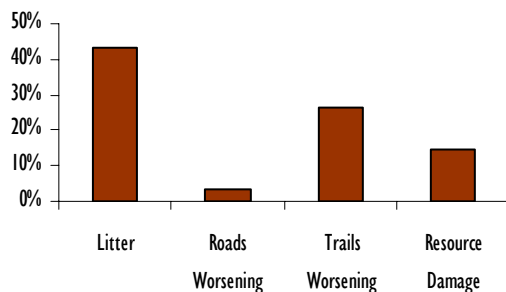
	Percent of Interviewees
Citing Signage as a Conflict Solution	14%
Citing Increased/Improved Signage as a Desired Future Condition	35%
Citing Signage as a Management Issue for Forest Service	52%

Resource Damage

Although resource damage was mentioned less often than other user concerns it does warrant some attention.

Litter was the most commonly cited type of resource damage. Hunters were often mentioned in connection to litter, particularly at their campsites.

Overall interviewees seemed to think roads and trails were in acceptable shape with less than 1/3 commenting that trails were degrading although commercial outfits and clubs did note some concern about the long-term durability of the trail system. Again, though over-engineered trails would likely be incongruent with the value of a backcountry experience.

Finally, some resource damage comments were vague (categorized simply as "resource damage" in the chart to the left) and were usually entailed a general perception that motorized users were generally causing ecological damage.

San Juan Interviews

Methodology

The analysis summarized in this document is entirely based upon the contents of 83 key informant interviews.

The interview process:

- The target key informants were members of local recreation clubs

- In practice most of the interviewees were club members and leaders, but in order to reach a critical mass of interviews, field researchers often drew from informal networks of recreationists not associated with any particular club.

- The interviews were split roughly evenly through the 3 districts in the San Juan Forest:

- See attached questionnaire for question format. Interviews were conducted in a conversational format, often skipping around the questionnaire to maintain the flow of conversation. Questions were asked in an open ended format.

District	# of Interviews
Columbine	30
Pagosa	27
Dolores	26

- All discussions involving specific locations of recreational activities were referenced to maps on hand at every interview. Interviewees were asked to locate areas on the maps, and these areas were marked and bundled with each interview.

Developing the content analysis database:

- Field researchers took detailed notes during the interviews and summarized the interviews individually by question.

- All interview summaries and maps were then returned to RPI for final analysis.

- Interview summaries were studied closely by analysts and RPI developed a qualitative content analysis database designed to capture the essences of interviewee statements and organize them into a Microsoft Access database.

Qualitative analysis:

- Some of the information contained in the content analysis database was re-categorized to address key questions.

- The 17 activities in the raw content analysis database were further aggregated into four user types:

  - Foot and Bike Travel- Category includes hiking, backpacking, running, cross country and backcountry skiing, snowshoeing, mountain biking, peak climbing

  - Animal Travel- Includes equestrian travel, dog sled, and other pack animals

  - Motorized Travel- Includes driving tours (standard vehicles), ATV use, Motorcycling, and Snowmobiling

  - Localized Activities- Includes activities focused on a particular localized destination setting: fishing, rock and ice climbing, hunting, car camping.

- These user-type categories were established for the following reasons:

  - Analysts needed to aggregate qualitative information into larger bundles for more robust analysis.

  - The breakdown allows for discrete analysis of motorized and non-motorized users.

  - The categories have distinct ranges (i.e. how far they fan out from the origin of their route), with foot and bike travelers covering less ground than horse packers, and motorized users with an even greater geographic range . Queries of the interview content analysis database using Arc GIS and Microsoft Access database software were the foundation of all analyses. These queries yielded frequencies, which were then stated in terms of % of total. For example, where analyzing the degree to which various user groups value solitude, RPI would calculate the % of that user group that values solitude. Since this analysis is a qualitative analysis not following statistical standards, the % of total results of the queries were treated as general trends, not statistical probabilities.

- Because RPI analysts were familiar with the raw interview summaries, where it was appropriate, analysts pulled specific insights directly out of the interviews to further inform the database analysis.

Note on Prominence: RPI included in this report only the most prominent themes manifest by qualitative analysis. Additional trends and insights exist in the database, but they were less clear and lacked identifiable patterns. As additional data needs arise in the Forest Planning process, the database can be further queried and the interview summaries can be mined for deeper insights.

RPI and two additional interviewers personally spoke with over 83 individuals in face-to-face hour long interviews over a three month period to gather this information.