

Sierra Azul/Bear Creek Redwoods Preserves Master Plan

Stakeholder Questionnaire Results Summary

Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve (SA) is well known and used by the majority of the respondents, with 84% having visited at least once. About 40% of the users visit SA at least once a week, and some visit almost daily. In contrast, due to the fact a permit is currently required to enter Bear Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve (BCR), only less than a quarter of the respondents have been to BCR, and the majority of them have visited only once or a few times a year. Both Preserves are visited most during spring and summer months.

Based on the respondents, mountain biking appears to be the primary activity in both Preserves. In SA, over three quarters of the respondents biked, while less than a half hiked and a much smaller portion rode on horses or walked dogs. Although currently not allowed in BCR, more than half of the BCR users indicated they biked in BCR and about a fifth of them walked dogs.

The majority of the respondents did not provide a specific time for their memorable experiences but generally showed deep appreciation to the time spent in the Preserves. Many frequent users had many pleasant experiences and could not single out a special instance. The results indicate that the magnificent views of the ridges and valleys, the contact with old growth trees and streams, the effects of climatic and seasonal changes, etc. compose memorable “aesthetic experiences”. Also significant was the sense of vigor and accomplishment gained through physically demanding activities. Encounters with wildlife such as mountain lions, bobcats and deer were mentioned by a small number, usually with vivid details. A few also stressed the camaraderie enjoyed when participating in group biking or picnic events.

Most bikers enjoyed the existing trails, particularly the Kennedy Trail that connects Los Gatos residents to Mt. El Sombroso. The sheer slope of Priest Rock and Kennedy Trails are raved by bikers to be world-class biking trails, both challenging to climb and exhilarating to descend. It also allows true sense of accomplishment when one reaches the top. However, many commented that the trails are too steep to conquer. Some bikers recommend providing trails of varying levels so as to accommodate bikers with a wide range of skill and strength. Bicyclists consistently asked for more trails, particularly the “unimproved” single track trails instead of paved wide fire roads. Some bicyclists particularly mentioned the old single track “overgrown” in SA to be highly enjoyable. Although a few bicyclists demanded exclusive biking trails or “down-hill only” trails where higher speed can be allowed, most bicyclists wanted more multi-use trails that allow all kinds of uses. Many bikers expressed the desire to open BCR and some trails previously accessible to bikers in SA, such as Moody Trail. There is also a strong voice to open up the top of Mt. Umunhum and create loop trails. They believe mountain biking is a proper way to explore the extent of SA, since few hikers can make a roundtrip to the heart of the Preserve within one day.

Equestrians enjoy the shaded, woody trails in BCR the most and appreciate features such as water troughs. They demanded more trails to be reopened, such as the ones to the west of Bear Creek Road that traverses old-growth redwoods. Many equestrians voiced concern that Bear Creek Stables might be demolished and they might need to share the trails with bicyclists in the future.

Hikers, much like bicyclists, enjoy the physical workout, but they seem to avoid summer hikes when the heat on the trails can be intensive. Although there were a few hikers who did not want to share trails with bicyclists or demanded stricter bicycling speed regulation, most respondents appear to be multi-mode and choose to hike and bike at different times. Hikers also usually bring their dogs as company. Some dog walkers particularly desired to have off-leash dog areas within the Preserves to allow dogs to experience sufficient exercise.

The natural beauty and the trails were mentioned as the most valued features in the Preserves. Such appreciation was usually amplified by the fact that the Preserves are nearby and accessible for many visitors. For about half of the respondents, the Preserves can be reached within 15 minutes. A number of Los Gatos respondents particularly emphasized the importance to be able to bike to the trail head from Kennedy Road without the need to drive. The Preserves constitute for many a quick escape from the “hustle and bustle of city life.” They allow solitude experience and offer chances to observe and appreciate other life forms. It is this “close yet far away” character that is most valued by the surrounding users.

The answers on least liked features and desired enhancements both pointed to the need for more trails and extended access to broader areas of the Preserves. This includes a desire for night-time and year-round access. Some considered increasing trails as a way to reduce conflicts between dogs and horses, hikers and bicyclists, etc. The conflict between horseback riding and other modes of use seems more pronounced due to the fact that after wet weather, deep horseshoe prints are left on trails and horses tend to be frightened by speeding bicycles and dogs. A number of users provided detailed trail alignment plans for the District’s consideration. In addition to trails, facilities such as benches by the trail, potable water, restrooms, horse-trailer parking and signage are proposed by some. Equally present was the fear of over-enhancements and the strong desire to keep the Preserves wild. Several respondents pointed out that many users are willing to contribute to trail building/maintenance and small improvement projects. Local bicycle or equestrian associations also possess the know-how in trail planning that should be consulted in the planning process. The following tables provide more information about the results for each of the questions.

Question No. 1

Have you ever visited the Preserves?

	Yes	No	Unsure	Response Total
Sierra Azul	85% (225)	11% (30)	4% (11)	266
Bear Creek Redwoods (Permit Required)	24% (58)	66% (158)	10% (23)	239
Total Respondents				286
(skipped this question)				15

Question No. 2

What do you do on your visits?

	Hike	Bike	Horseback Ride	Walk Dog	Respondent Total
Sierra Azul	46% (111)	77% (188)	7% (16)	14% (34)	243
Bear Creek Redwoods (Permit Required)	44% (32)	53% (38)	31% (22)	17% (12)	72
Total Respondents					264
(skipped this question)					37

Question No. 3

How long does it take you to travel from your home to the Preserves?

	Response Percent	Response Total
Less than 5 minutes	11.4%	32
5-15 minutes	37.7%	106
16-30 minutes	32.7%	93
31-45 minutes	12.1%	34
Over 45 minutes	6%	17
Total Respondents		281

Question No. 4

How often do you visit the Preserves?

	Visited 1 Time Only	Visit Once a Week	Visit Once a Month	Visit a Few Times a Year	Respondent Total
Sierra Azul	4% (10)	40% (95)	24% (57)	33% (77)	236
Bear Creek Redwoods (Permit Required)	16% (11)	31% (21)	13% (9)	41% (28)	68
Total Respondents					259
(skipped this question)					42

Question No. 5

What time of the year do you most visit the Preserves?

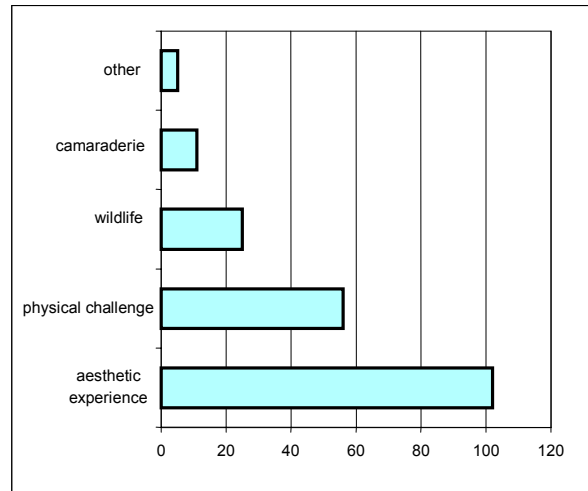
	Jan-Mar	April-June	July-Sept	Oct-Dec	Respondent Total
Sierra Azul	52% (116)	81% (182)	71% (158)	60% (134)	224
Bear Creek Redwoods (Permit Required)	47% (27)	75% (43)	67% (38)	54% (31)	57
Total Respondents					245
(skipped this question)					56

Questionnaire Open Ended Question No. 6

What was your most memorable experience at the Preserves? Please include the place, the activities, the environmental features, and your feelings.

Memorability

aesthetic experience	102
physical challenge	56
wildlife	25
camaraderie	11
others	5
Total respondents	203

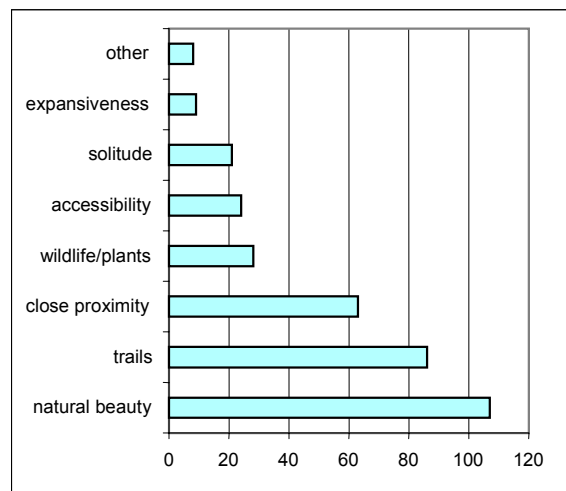


Questionnaire Open Ended Question No. 7

What do you value most about the Preserves?

Valued Features

natural beauty	107
trails	86
close proximity	63
wildlife/plants	28
accessibility	24
solitude	21
expansiveness	9
others	8
Total respondents	237



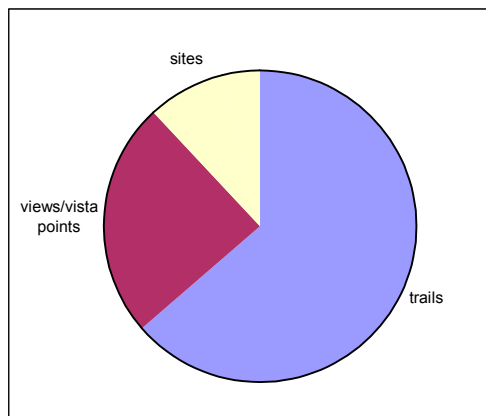
Questionnaire Open Ended Question No. 8

What feature or location do you enjoy the most in the Preserve?

Enjoyed Feature/Location

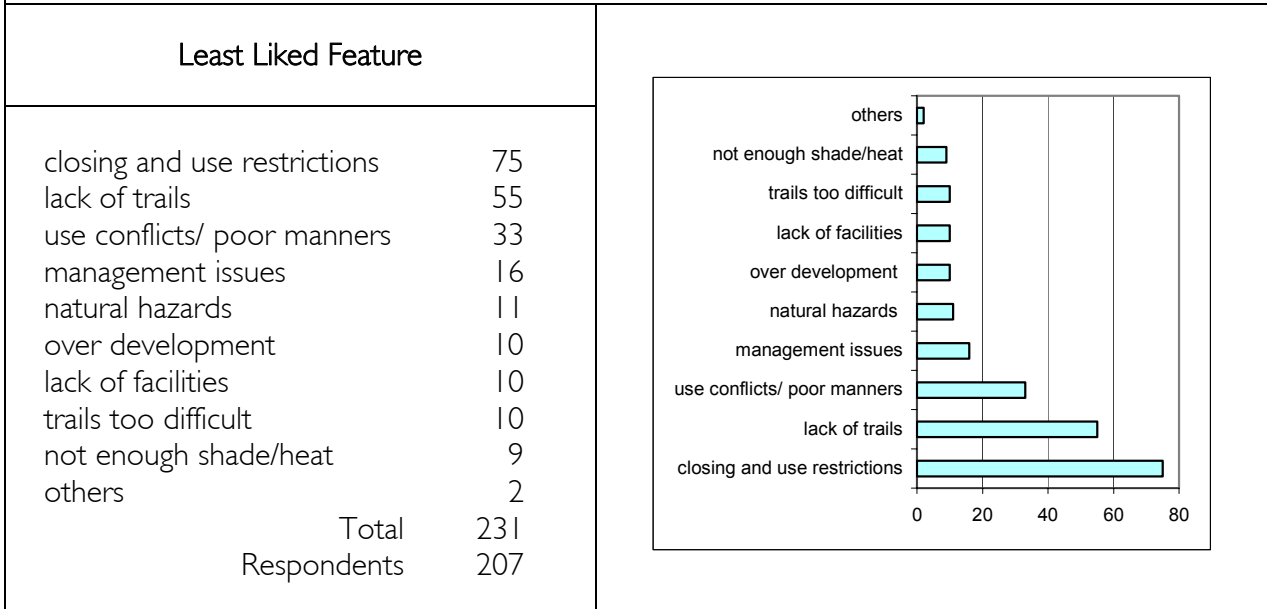
Trails		View	
trails in general	33	El Sombroso	2
Kennedy Trail	18	Bald Mountain	2
Limekiln Trail	11	Mt. Umunhum	4
single-track trails	8	Loma Prieta	2
equestrian trails	6	Long Ridge	2
Priest Rock Trail	6	view from top	21
Woods Trail	5	Lexington Reservoir	4
“Overgrown”	4	Total	37
loop trails	2		
“Moody Trail”	1		
“Rattlesnake Trail”	1		
trails above Lexington	1		
Barlow Road	1		
Total	97		

Sites			
abandoned shed/barn	1	Bear Creek Stables	2
Four Trees	1	Fremont older	1
Oak tree	1	old vineyard	2
Power Poles	1	Saratoga Gap	1
spring house	1	Ugly Sisters	1
pond	2	Rancho De Guadalupe	1
Hicks Road staging area	1	Shaded resting areas	1
Total	17		



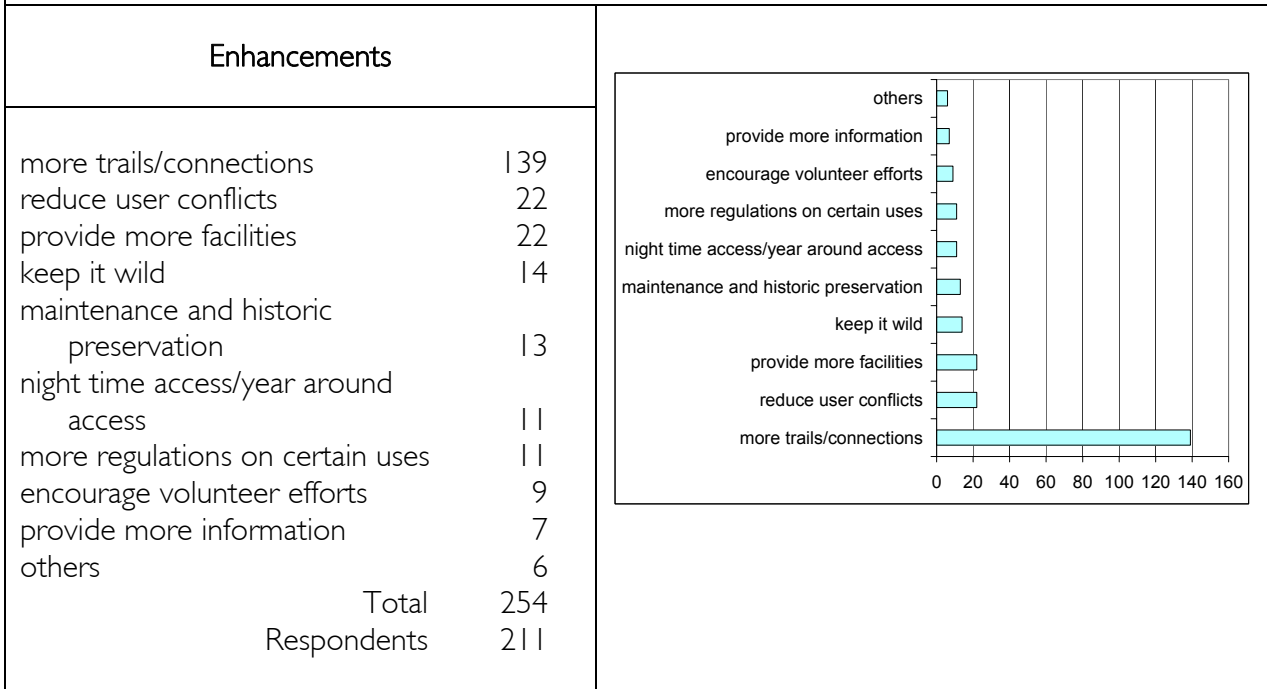
Questionnaire Open Ended Question No. 9

What do you like least about the Preserve?



Questionnaire Open Ended Question No. 10

What do you think can be done to enhance the Preserves?



Questionnaire Open Ended Question No. II

Is there anything else you would like to share with us? Please feel free to attach additional sheets!

(Included in these results are comments or issues raised in email correspondence)

Issue Topics	Comments	Counts
Access in general	Connect trails to more areas	10
	Open more trails	5
	Open the trails after sunset	4
	Open up Mt. Umunhum	3
	More multi-use trails	3
	Provide general (non-permit) access to BC Preserve	2
	Do not use Thompson Road as access to the Preserve	2
	Want access to ALL the preserves	1
	Use the corner of Summit Road and Bear Creek Road for parking	1
	Use Bear Creek Road instead of Summit Road as an access route to BC Preserve.	1
	Trail networks allow people to appreciate and further support the open spaces	1
	Provide year-round permits for neighbors	1
	New trails should be single-track to avoid environmental impacts and enhance aesthetics	1
	Do not discriminate or limit use if possible	1
	Currently there is little variation in routes	1
Create good multi-use trails to make maintenance easy	1	
Subtotal		38
Biker Accommodation	Do not restrict bikes from the Preserves	19
	Open more trails to biking	5
	Make single-track trails more technical to reduce speeding bikes.	3
	Studies show that bikes and hikers do an equal amount of damage to the trails.	2
	Open more single-track trails to biking	2
	Open BC Preserve to mountain bikers	2

Questionnaire Open Ended Question No. 11

Is there anything else you would like to share with us? Please feel free to attach additional sheets!

(Included in these results are comments or issues raised in email correspondence)

Issue Topics	Comments	Counts
	New trails should be multi-use or biking only.	2
	The Preserves are too large to allow foot travel as the only use	1
	Studies show that bikes and hikers do an equal amount of damage to the trails.	1
	Speeding tickets for bikers are pointless	1
	Horses are the cause of trail damage, not bikes	1
	Subtotal	39
Equestrian Accommodation	Preserve BC Stables where boarders have formed a close-knit community.	5
	Preserve BC Stables and equestrian-only trails	5
	Preserve BC Stables	5
	Provide horse trailer staging areas	4
	Preserve BC Stables - it is a sacred retreat for us	4
	Preserve BC Stables - it teaches children to respect nature	3
	Re-open BC Preserve trails for equestrians	1
	Provide more access to horses	1
	Subtotal	28
Dog Accommodation	Provide dog off-leash areas	5
	Treat dog owners fairly	1
	Open the Overlook Trail to dogs	1
	Subtotal	7
Use Accommodation (other)	Allow hang-gliding and paragliding activities in the SA Preserve.	9
	Consider odd/even days for hikers/bikers to reduce use conflicts	2
	Seek creative solutions to conflicts & problems without discriminating uses	1

Questionnaire Open Ended Question No. 11

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(Included in these results are comments or issues raised in email correspondence)

Issue Topics	Comments	Counts
	Provide water fountains at trailheads	1
	Provide better access for the elderly	1
	Provide a limited area for motorcycle use	1
	Open space is for everyone	1
	Keep it available to wildness users	1
	Equestrians, bikers and hikers can share the same trail	1
	Educate users of all to share the trail through signage, postings and maps	1
	Consider safe parking and staging areas	1
	Allow backpack camping	1
	Subtotal	21
Planning Process	Interested the planning process	4
	It takes too long to open the acquired lands to the public.	2
	Talk to the Jesuits, former residents and neighbors to clarify the mission	1
	Conduct objective survey to understand the true impacts of different uses and the effect of regulation	1
	Bear Creek Preserve is a misnomer because Bear Creek does not pass the Preserve.	1
	Subtotal	9
Community Resources Utilization	Use bike groups as a resource for trail building and maintenance	4
	Would like to donate time to maintain the areas	3
	Would like to provide maps and expertise	1
	Would like to help install more horses water troughs	1
	Develop a pool of volunteers and academics for planning and construction	1
	Allow more community trail building	1
	Subtotal	11

Questionnaire Open Ended Question No. 11

Is there anything else you would like to share with us? Please feel free to attach additional sheets!

(Included in these results are comments or issues raised in email correspondence)

Issue Topics	Comments	Counts
Others	Thank you for the good work	18
	Thought both areas were off limits to the public	2
	Thank you for listening	2
	Preserves need to be larger	1
	Preserve Alma College	1
	Open space is anti property rights	1
	Observed trail damage caused by ranger trucks	1
	Keep public off source of drinking water in BC Preserve	1
	keep people away from areas infected with sudden oak death	1
	Good job opening up Mt. Umunhum Road	1
	Subtotal	29

