

Outcomes-Focused Management Focus Group Report

McCoy Flats SRMA and John Wesley Powell NCA

BLM Vernal Field Office – 2020

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Introduction

On March 12, 2019, the John D. Dingle, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act became law, setting aside thousands of acres of designated Wilderness and other federal public lands, and changing some of the management objectives for other landscapes in the federal system. Sections 1115 and 1118 of that act have direct implications for the management of federal lands in the purview of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Vernal Field Office. The act established the John Wesley Powell National Conservation Area as a 29,868 acre protected landscape in northeastern Utah. The act also identified McCoy Flats as a Trails System with 58 miles of interconnecting mountain bike trail loops for all skill levels. As a result of this legislation, new management plans needed to be developed for these landscapes and this study is part of that effort. The purpose of this study is to better understand the public's preferences for recreation in McCoy Flats and the John Wesley Powell National Conservation Area in order to develop the Resource Management Plans for the areas. In addition to understanding the public's preferences for recreational outcomes, this (digital) focus group study attempts to better understand the relationship between public lands recreation in the Vernal Field Office and the local communities that act as gateway communities to that landscape.

Methodology

A mixed methodology focus group was employed to establish a recreational experience baseline. This focus group method combined the use of audience polling to record individual responses anonymously with engagement of participants in open dialogue. This mixed methodology attempts to capture both a complete set of responses to fixed questions from each participant via the polling, and also a rich set of notes that document the group dialog and provide both context and depth to the polling responses. Either approach used alone could leave an incomplete picture of the broad and deep relationships people have with the landscape, so a mixed methodology is the preferred approach to capture as much input as possible when establishing a baseline to understand the recreational demands and desires of the public for this area. In 2020, at the time of the study, gathering in person was not possible due to COVID-19 restrictions, thus these focus groups were conducted through an online format using Adobe Connect software. This research team has used digital focus groups in prior studies, but usually only to address the challenges of getting visitors to the site of a focus group in remote areas. Fortunately, this alternative to face-to-face focus groups was available, so this research study could continue despite the challenging restrictions of 2020.

The design of the focus group script (for data collection purposes) entailed a structured series of discussion questions intended to engage participants in open dialogue about their preferences, interests, and expectations, allowing the capture of responses phrased in their own words. These open-ended questions were often followed by a list of discrete choices,

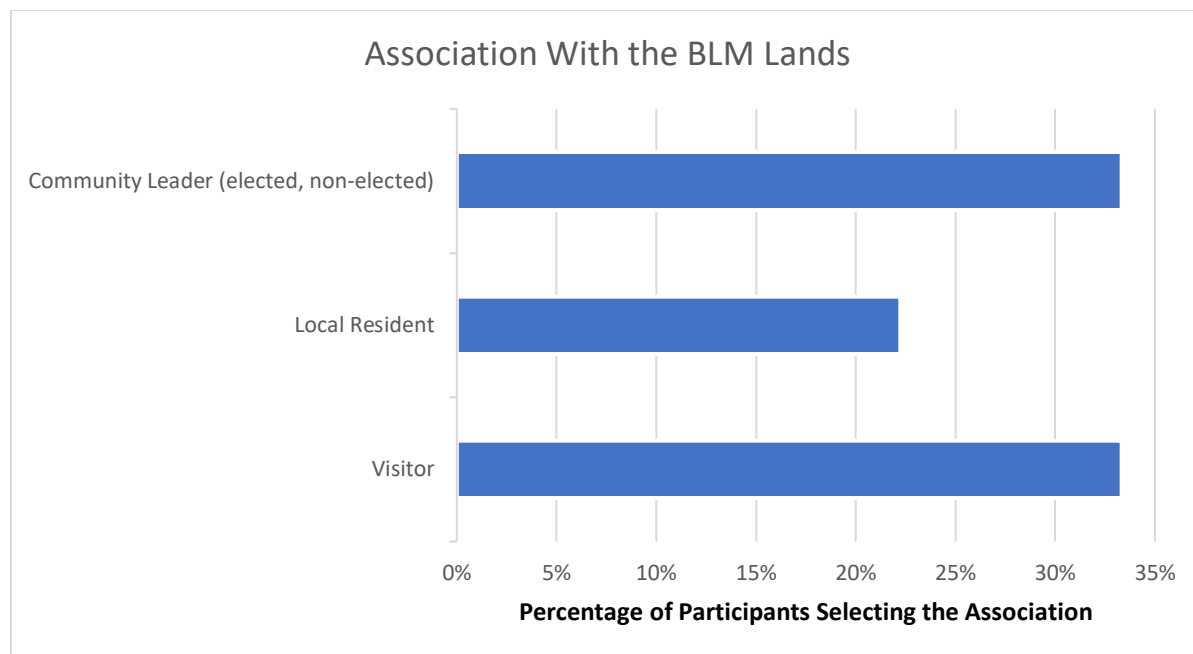
presented through anonymous polls in the digital Adobe Connect platform. The list of choices for each question represented a spectrum of possible responses to the discussion questions. Although participants had the option of responding to the open-ended questions out loud, most chose to use the chat box feature to type their responses to these questions. Appendix 2 contains the exact responses they typed, as well as any spoken comments that were recorded, both of which are incorporated into the analysis and conclusions of this report.

Participants were recruited through a series of email invitations and a flyer posted in various user group social media sites. Other efforts were made to spread the word about the opportunity to participate in the focus groups. Four focus groups were scheduled at a variety of times of day on different days of the week over a two week period in September of 2020. The email invitations and flyer asked prospective participants to email the Natural Resource Center at Colorado Mesa University to get a link to the meeting time of their choice. To preserve their anonymity, emailed instructions requested that participants sign in using the name of their favorite fictitious character. Eleven members of the public participated in one of the focus groups during the course of the study. Although it would have been preferred to have a higher number of people participate in the study, given the challenges of COVID-19 restrictions and loss of traditional avenues of participant recruitment, it was determined that the level of participation achieved was enough to generate this report. The depth of responses to the open-ended questions (see Appendix 2) should indicate that, despite their small numbers, the participants of this study gave a wealth of information on recreation experiences and outcomes on the landscape managed by the BLM Vernal Field Office.

Demographics

The eleven participants were first asked to provide their home zip code and to identify how they are most associated with the public lands managed in the BLM Vernal Field Office, including John Wesley Powell National Conservation Area (JWPNCA). All but one of the participants were from zip codes in the Vernal Field Office, the remaining participant was from Grand Junction, Colorado. Figure 1 below indicates their selection for personal association with the landscape. Participants were evenly split between seeing themselves as local residents, visitors, or community leaders. When asked about which part of the landscape they wanted to focus their comments on, the vast majority (9 out of 11) indicated McCoy Flats Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) while the remaining two chose JWPNCA. As such, the data in this report will be of greater utility for the planning surrounding McCoy Flats SRMA. Data for both areas are combined in the charts below, but responses to open-ended questions are separated by location in Appendix 2.

Figure 1. Association With the Landscape



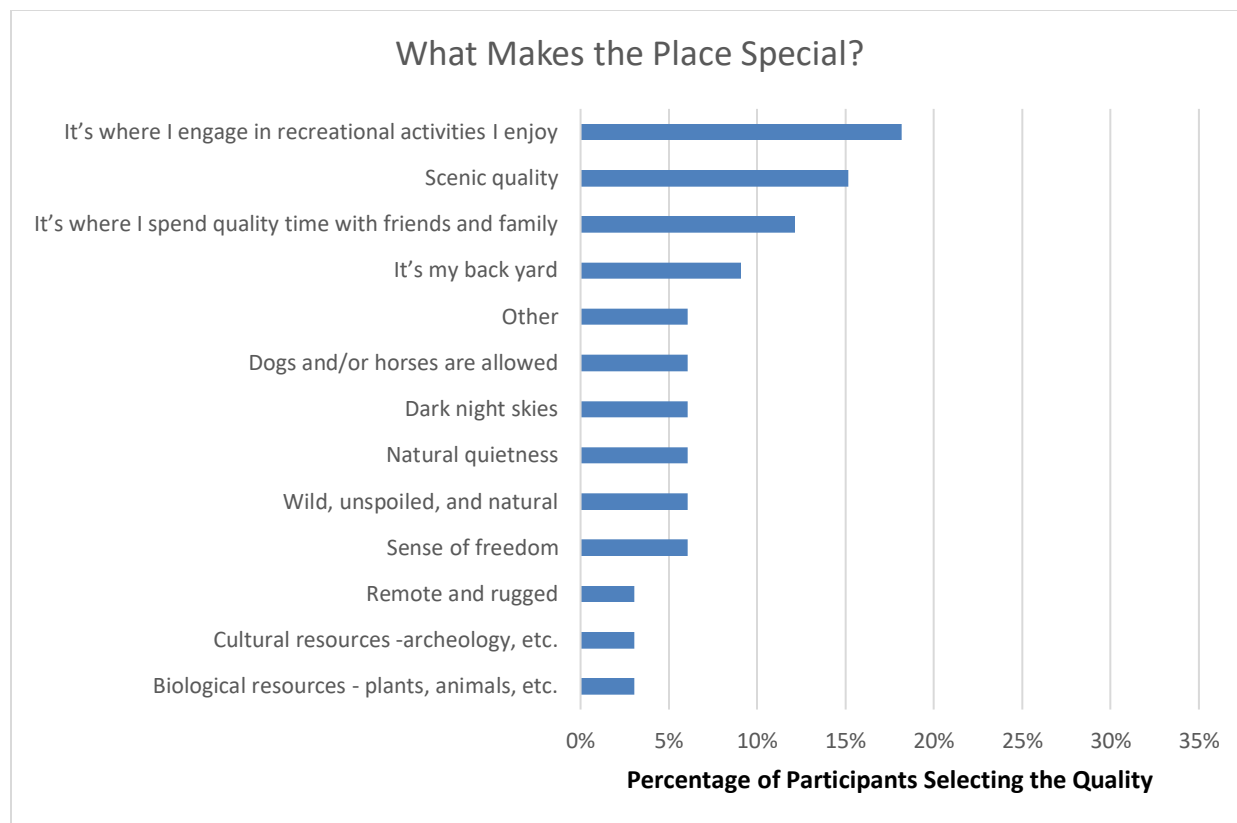
Recreational Outcome Preferences

Next, the participants were asked to reflect on what makes the area special to them and what things might threaten that specialness. The Outcomes-Focused Management (OFM) approach adopted nationally by the BLM as their planning guide requires that land managers take into account not only the recreational activities taking place on the land, but more importantly to consider the goals (outcomes) that the visitors and community members have for recreation on the landscape. Following this OFM approach, land managers should first consider the desired experiences and outcomes from recreation before focusing on the landscape settings and services needed to achieve these desired ends.

Initially, participants of the focus groups were asked to talk about what makes lands managed by the BLM Vernal Field Office “special” places in their mind. Participants were given a list of 20 qualities that often are identified as special characteristics of public lands according to past research.³ Figure 2 below shows the percentage of responses given for any particular quality. Note that participants were allowed to select up to five responses for this question and the next question, so the percentages show the overall strength of the value across multiple respondents.

³ All questions given in the form of a discrete list of choices had a final option of “other,” allowing participants to identify, in writing, qualities that are important to them but were not reflected in the lists. These written responses to “other” are recorded in Appendix 2.

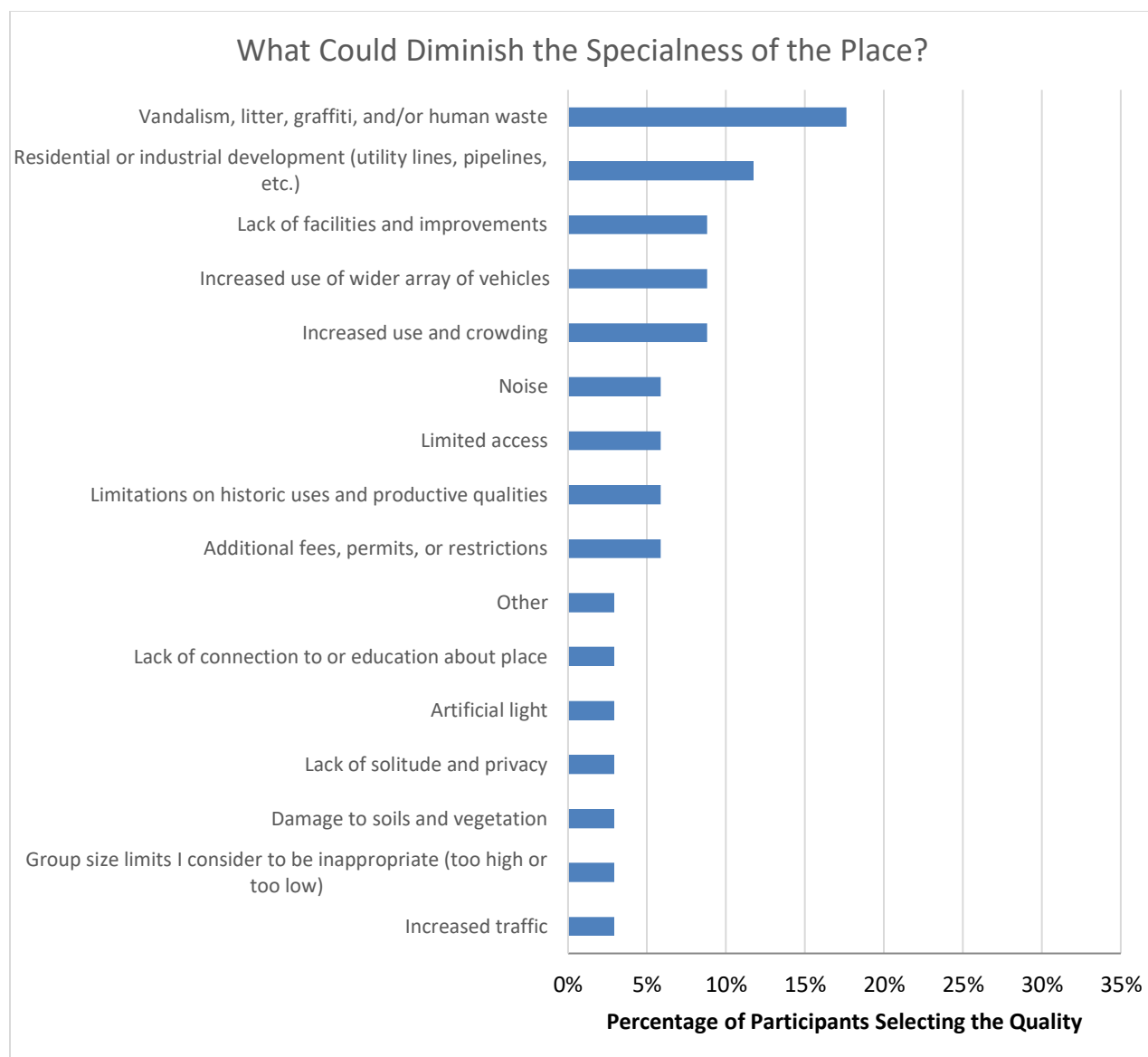
Figure 2. Special Qualities of the Landscape



It is clear from the above responses that recreation in beautiful places, with family and friends, and close to home are values that make McCoy Flats SRMA and JWPNCA special landscapes for the participants in this study. Other qualities associated with remote public lands locations, such as dark night skies, natural quietness, and the wild and unspoiled character of the landscape, are also valued aspects of the land in the study. Additional comments highlight the specialness of McCoy Flats SRMA as a result of the mountain biking infrastructure developed there, and of JWPNCA because it serves as an important corridor of connectivity for wildlife.

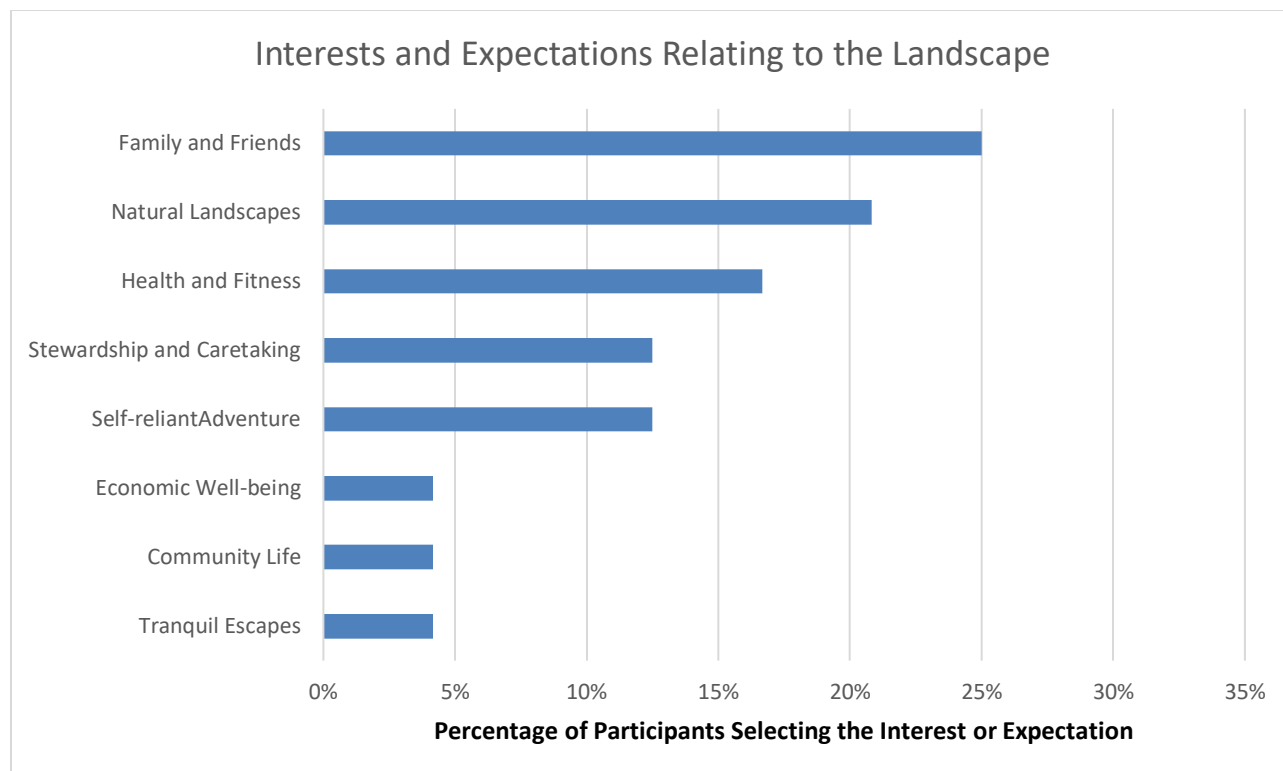
Next, the participants were asked to talk about what might diminish the specialness of places managed by the BLM in the Vernal Field Office. They were given a list of 20 qualities that are often identified as diminishing special characteristics of public lands, according to past research (as noted earlier, written responses for those who selected “other” are recorded in Appendix 2). Figure 3 below shows the percentage of participants selecting a given response from the list.

Figure 3. Qualities that Diminish the Landscape



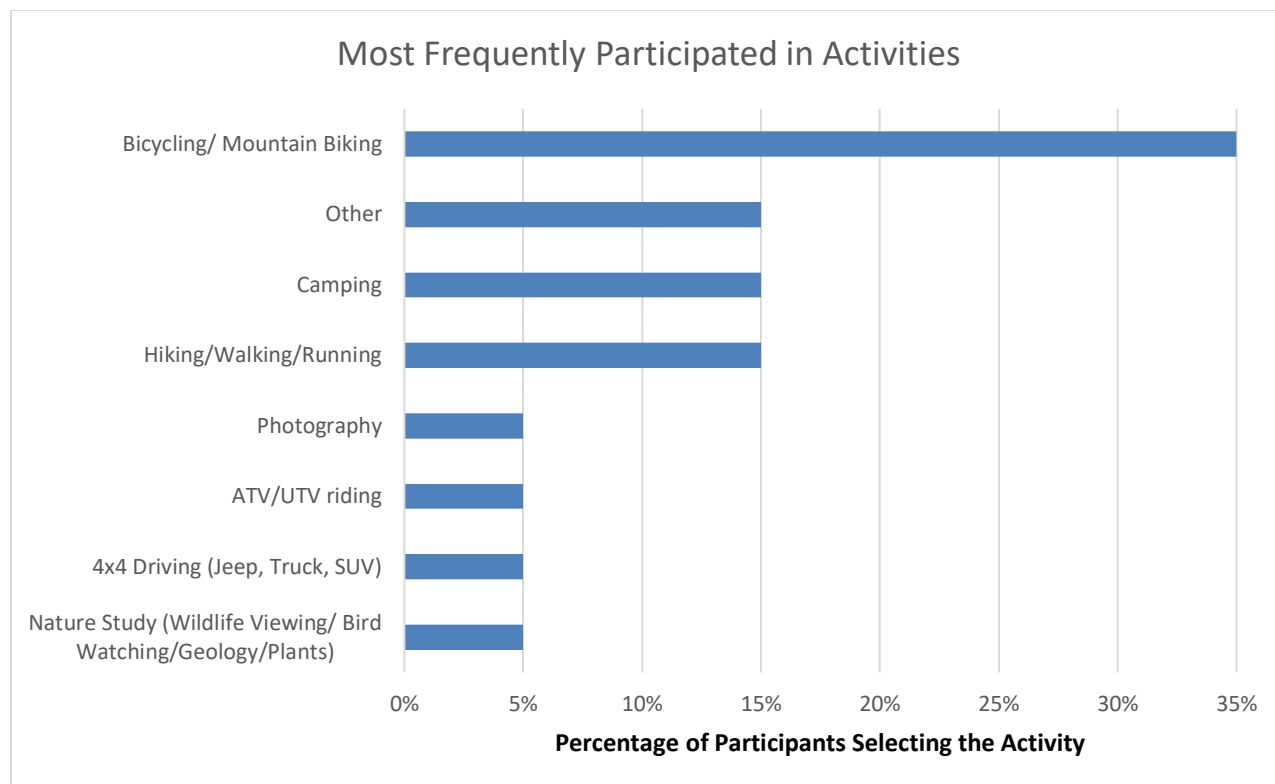
Vandalism, litter, graffiti, and/or human waste is the number one response to the above question in every focus group study conducted by the Natural Resource Center (this is now well over 100 focus group sessions across more than 20 studies), and is the most common threat identified in this study, as well. Although they would rather not see more residential or industrial development in the area, several participants indicated they would like to see development of recreational infrastructure such as campgrounds, toilet improvements, and trailhead development. In general, restrictions of access, activity, and historic uses of the landscape are not seen in a favorable light in the polls or additional comments recorded in Appendix 2.

Figure 4. Interests and Expectations Relating to the Landscape



Having a place to spend time with family and friends was, among participants, the most commonly chosen interest and expectation related to the landscape. This is consistent with their responses about why the area is special. This social time is best spent, according to participants, in a natural landscape. Another important outcome experienced on the landscape is health and fitness (see Figure 4). Based on the written comments to open-ended questions, this was especially important to public land visitors during COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. The landscape provides an outlet away from the confinement and restrictions that have been employed for pandemic mitigation in 2020. Outdoor recreation for health and enjoyment acts as an important safety valve; however, because of this rising expectation of the landscape, these areas are also experiencing exceptional pressure resulting in crowding and visitation by people who are not aware of how to treat the lands. Participants often recommended more maintenance and safety patrols to accommodate the growing interest in outdoor recreation as a result of COVID-19 conditions.

Figure 5. Activities in Which Participants Most Frequently Engage on the Landscape



By far, participants most commonly selected mountain biking as the activity they participate in most often on the McCoy Flats landscape (see Figure 5), which makes sense given the entire recreation infrastructure supports and encourages that activity in the SRMA. The activities in JWPNCAs are a bit more diversified, but it is worth noting that although participants were given the choice of 20 different activities (19 activities and the option of “other” allowing participants to list their own activity), only seven distinct activities were chosen. Participants were allowed to choose up to three, so they did not have to limit their interest to only one activity.

Changes in the Landscape

A few questions focused on recent changes to the landscape, particularly in the last five years. Initially, participants were asked for their perception of whether visitor use had increased or decreased on the landscape, and by how much. Most participants indicated that use had gone up, particularly in 2020 as a result of COVID-19 conditions, especially restrictions on other recreational activities at other locations. Next, they were asked if that change in use had made things better or worse (on a 5-point scale from “much better” to “much worse”), and why they gave that answer. Responses to that question were evenly split, with one third of the participants suggesting it had made things somewhat better, one third indicating there had been no change as a result of use increase, and one third stating the increased use had made conditions worse (those responses were evenly split between somewhat worse and much

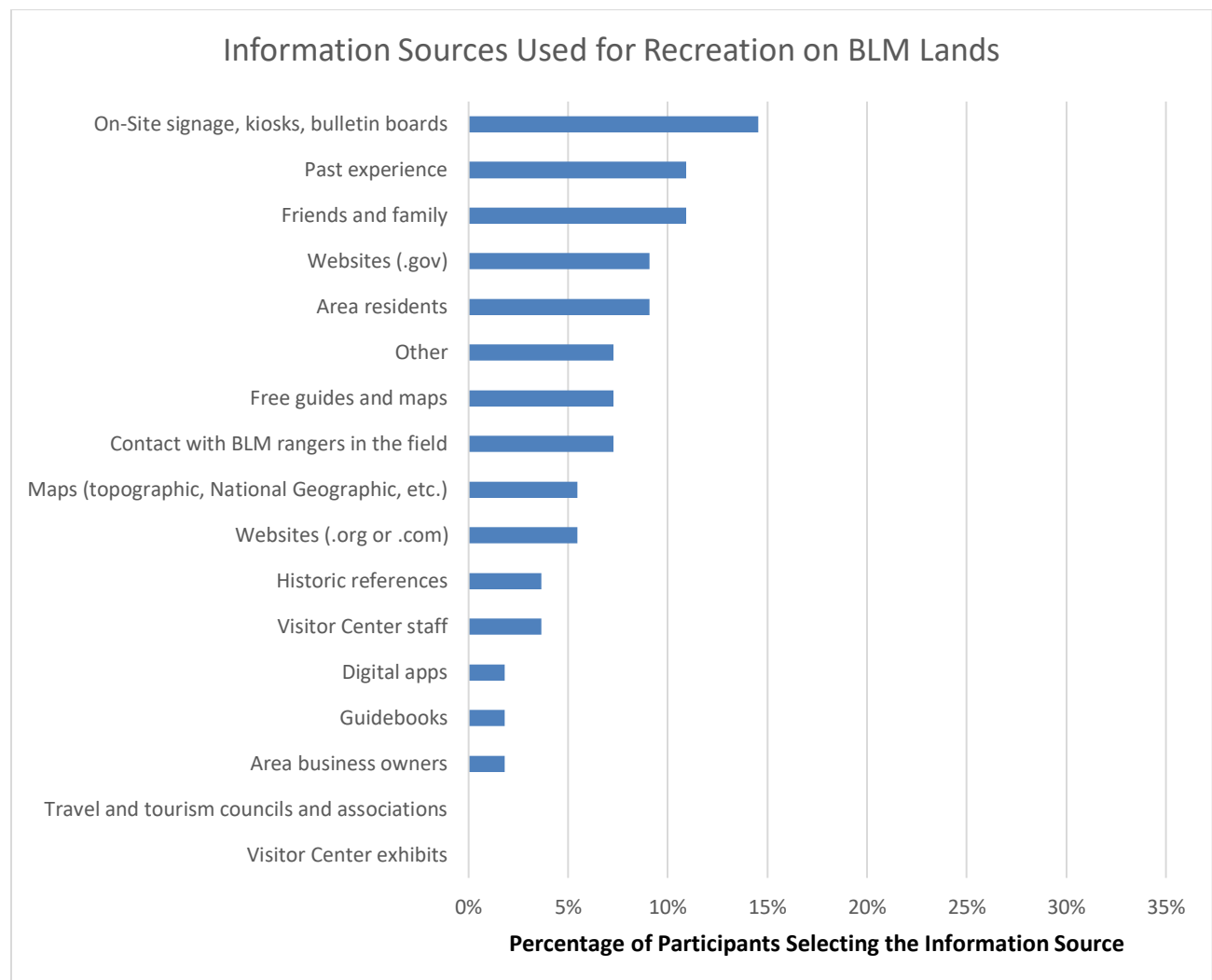
worse). Those who thought the increased visitation had improved the situation often pointed to the economic benefits to the local community from increased visitation, as well as an increased focus on outdoor recreation for the area by community leaders. They also cited the positive benefits to physical and mental health from outdoor recreation in the time of a pandemic. Those who thought conditions had worsened due to increased usage cited the damage to the landscape from more visitation, especially by those who are new to the area and are not as connected to the landscape or who do not understand how to treat it. Participants suggested an increased education campaign to address the lack of awareness, increased law enforcement presence, and increased staff presence to maintain facilities, pick up trash, etc. A few also identified the variation in behavioral restrictions required by COVID-19 regulations across the surrounding landscapes, due to the fact they are managed by different agencies. These differences can cause confusion and additional pressures if some restrictions are greater than others. Participants suggested a more coordinated effort between local landscape agencies regarding COVID-19 protocols in order to manage the displacement pressures and alleviate confusion.

Participants were later asked to reflect on the last visit they made to the landscape, and to identify if the visit met their expectations or if something surprised them about that visit. Most responses to this question related to the increased use during the spring as a result of COVID-19 restrictions, as well as some resulting trail damage in places. For the most part, the area met the expectations of these participants despite the increased use.

Services and Information

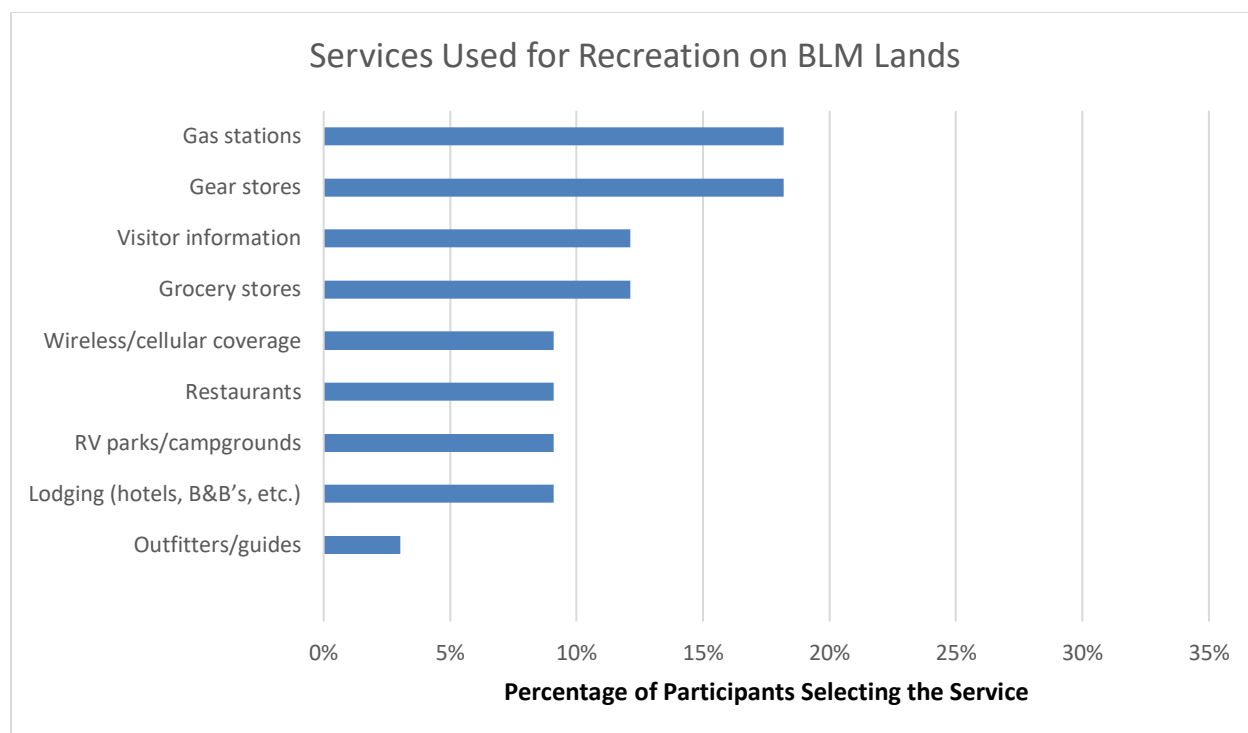
Participants were asked about the sources of information they rely on to be successful in their recreation on the landscape. They were also asked about other services they rely on for successful recreation on BLM lands.

Figure 6. Sources of Information Used for Recreation



It is worth noting that the number one source of information selected by participants in this study was the signage and kiosks at the site (see Figure 6). This is an unusual top selection and indicates how much the participants rely on information from the BLM to be successful in their recreational outings on BLM land. Other important information sources include the government website and contact with rangers in the field, which are both BLM-controlled sources of information. It is typical for past experiences, and family and friends to also be key sources of information.

Figure 7. Services Needed for Recreation



Participants were also asked about other services they rely on to be successful in their recreation. Typical of other BLM sites, gas stations and grocery stores ranked high among additional services selected by respondents (see Figure 7). It is less typical for gear sellers to be selected by such a high percentage of respondents in this question. The gear shops also received more than one mention in the written comments in Appendix 2. Additionally, quite a few participants chose visitor information, while on the previous question visitor center information was not selected as frequently as an important information source. In the written comments, one participant emphasized the economic benefit to gateway communities from increased visitation in the area.

Management Issues

The participants were asked a series of open-ended questions about management of the landscape. Initially, they were asked to set the management priorities for the landscape by imagining themselves as the “land manager for the day.” Many of their suggestions related back to the need from more recreational infrastructure to manage the increased visitation as a result of COVID-19. These participants like the natural feel, but believe the area would benefit from additional resources. Several participants indicated that the existing mountain bike trail system is excellent, but that other activities seem to be discouraged or crowded out by the emphasis on mountain biking in McCoy Flats SRMA. Others did not count cattle grazing as an acceptable activity.

Next, participants were asked to identify specific improvements to the landscape that managers should address in any future planning process. These responses emphasized the need to pay attention to the current infrastructure and to maintain the trails and facilities that exist already. Parking lot improvement at the trailhead also came up in the written responses to several of the management questions. Camping was another activity that drew a lot of attention in the written comments on management priorities and suggested improvements. Participants seemed to like the dispersed camping, but need more officially designated campgrounds to accommodate the growing numbers.

One of the questions that generated the most response had to do with the presence of boundaries between different land management areas. They were asked if they were aware of the different land management boundaries, and whether they made a difference in their perception of the landscape of their activities and expectations on that landscape. Several suggested that the boundaries are not very clear on the landscape and better signage would help with the expectations on the landscape. There were some comments on the difference of management approaches between BLM and other land agencies, particularly SITLA lands and Dinosaur National Monument that is adjacent to JWPNC. Others pointed to the differences of expectations on tribal lands and private lands also found in the area. In general, even though the boundaries between different management agencies are not always well marked on the ground, the lack of distinction, other than differences in regulations, seemed to have little impact on the participants even if it was the question that solicited the most interaction in the study.

Community Quality of Life and the Effects of Public Lands on That Quality

The final set of open-ended questions asked participants to reflect on the qualities that make the local community of Vernal, Utah, a good place to live or visit, and to then identify how public lands affect those values. When responding to the first question, over half of the comments related to the nearby public lands even though the focus on those landscapes was more direct in the second question. People live in the community because it is remote and there are wide open spaces and easy access to public lands for recreation. The image of backyard access with the opportunity to share the landscape with their family and friends seemed to dominate the comments on why the area is special. Another characteristic about the community that stands out is the diversity of activities possible on surrounding public lands. A few participants identified the place as fundamental to their sense of identity. They love the rural lifestyle and the tight knit community in which all neighbors look out for each other.

When asked the follow up question about how public lands helped support their vision and values of the community, many of the participants indicated it meant everything to their quality of life. They love the easy access to affordable family-based recreation on public lands. For

most, the public lands were their reason for living in the community. They also like the idea that even if they live in remote areas, one can still get out on the landscape and find relief from the stress of work and urban life. See Appendix 2 for a complete list of all responses to each question.

Conclusions

While the number of participants in the study was not very large, they offered some remarkable insight into the management of the McCoy Flats SRMA landscape in particular, and, to a lesser extent, JWPNCA. Although mountain biking is the predominant activity, especially in McCoy Flats, other activities are also enjoyed on the landscape. In general, people are pleased with the approach of the management of the landscape, offering little by way of improvements beyond accommodation for the influx of visitors this past year as a result of COVID-19 restrictions. The area, in general, is seen as vital to the quality of life in Vernal and surrounding communities. It offers both a place to go and recreate for health benefits and peace of mind, and also an economic boost to the local communities through increased tourism. Some management attention is warranted in the realm of campsite monitoring and development, as well as additional signage and maintenance on the already existing trails. Given the limited number of participants, if possible, future collection of data through focus groups or surveys on recreation would be helpful to develop a better understanding of the recreation needs on the landscape, particularly John Wesley Powell National Conservation Area.

Appendix 1 – Focus Group Questions

Q1 - What is your home zip code? Or country, if you are not a US resident?

Q2 - Which of the following choices best describes your primary association with the public lands in the BLM-Vernal Field Office area?

1. Visitor
2. Local resident
3. Community leader (elected, non-elected)
4. Outfitter / Guide
5. Business owner
6. Other

Q3 - The Resource Management Plan of the area divides the landscape into several Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMA) (labeled on map on the next slide), please indicate which SRMA you would like to tell us more about. (Choose one and unless we tell you otherwise, assume that SRMA as a focus when answering future questions)

1. McCoy Flats SRMA
2. John Wesley Powell NCA

Q4 - What are the qualities of the area you identified that make it a special place for you? (Choose up to 5)

- a. It's my back yard
- b. It's where I spend quality time with friends and family
- c. Historic qualities - how previous generations used the area
- d. Productive qualities - grazing and hunting
- e. Biological resources - plants, animals, etc.
- f. Physical resources - geology, paleontology, etc.
- g. Cultural resources - archeology, etc.
- h. Scenic quality
- i. Spiritual and/or religious qualities
- j. Sense of freedom
- k. Wild, unspoiled, and natural
- l. Remote and rugged
- m. Sense of solitude and privacy
- n. Natural quietness
- o. Dark night skies
- p. Sense of discovery/learning opportunities
- q. Dogs and/or horses are allowed
- r. Lack of development or improvements
- s. It's where I engage in recreational activities I enjoy
- t. Other

Q5 - What could diminish the specialness of the area you identified? (Choose up to 5)

- a. Additional fees, permits, or restrictions
- b. Increased use and crowding
- c. Increased traffic
- d. Increased use of wider array of vehicles
- e. Group size limits I consider to be inappropriate (too high or too low)
- f. Limitations on historic uses and productive qualities
- g. Additional facilities and improvements
- h. Lack of facilities and improvements
- i. Increased access
- j. Limited access
- k. Vandalism, litter, graffiti, and/or human waste
- l. Damage to soils and vegetation
- m. Lack of solitude and privacy
- n. Noise
- o. Artificial light
- p. Livestock or evidence of them
- q. Culture clashes – locals vs. visitors or long time locals vs. move-ins
- r. Lack of connection to or education about place
- s. Residential or industrial development (utility lines, pipelines, etc.)
- t. Other

Q6 - At the place you identified earlier, has use increased or decreased in the last five (5) years?

- a. Strongly Decreased
- b. Slightly Decreased
- c. No Change
- d. Slightly Increased
- e. Strongly Increased

Q7 - If use has changed in the last five (5) years in the area you have identified earlier, has it been for the better or worse? Why?

- a. Much Worse
- b. Somewhat Worse
- c. No Change
- d. Somewhat Better
- e. Much Better

Q8 - When you go to your area of interest, which of these phrases best captures your interests and expectations for going there? (Choose up to 3)

- a. To experience and appreciate the beauty and wonders of Natural Landscapes
- b. To experience Rural Landscapes where people live closely connected to the land
- c. To experience and learn about/connect with Cultural & Heritage History of the area
- d. To experience and learn about Natural History & Science of the area
- e. To improve my Health & Fitness
- f. To experience a Self-Reliant Adventure in the outdoors
- g. Tranquil Escapes - to get away from the hustle and bustle of daily life
- h. To have time outdoors to be with Family and Friends or share it with other generations
- i. It contributes to the richness of Community Life in the area
- j. It enhances the Economic well-being of myself or the local community
- k. To give back to the land by engaging in Stewardship & Caretaking activities

Q9 - Did your last recreational outing in the zone you identified meet your expectations? Why or why not? Did something surprise you on that visit?

Q10 - When visiting the area you identified earlier, what activities do you engage in most often? (Choose up to 3)

- a. Scenic Driving
- b. Exploring or discovering new areas
- c. Hiking/Walking/Running
- d. Backpacking
- e. Camping
- f. Picnicking
- g. Rock Climbing/Canyoneering
- h. Nature Study (Wildlife Viewing/ Bird Watching/Geology/Plants)
- i. 4x4 Driving (Jeep, Truck, SUV)
- j. ATV/UTV riding
- k. Bicycling/Mountain Biking
- l. Horseback Riding
- m. Organized group activities (i.e. civic groups, clubs, scouts, church, etc.)
- n. Ranching activities
- o. Hunting
- p. Photography
- q. Learning activities (interpretive programs, educational outings, etc.)
- r. Art/Writing activities
- s. Spiritual renewal activities
- t. Other

Q11 - Which sources of information do you depend upon to plan your recreation in the area you identified earlier? (Choose all that apply)

- a. Friends and family
- b. Past experience
- c. Area business owners
- d. Area residents
- e. Visitor Center staff
- f. Contact with BLM rangers in the field
- g. Visitor Center exhibits
- h. On-Site signage, kiosks, bulletin boards
- i. Travel and tourism councils and associations
- j. Free guides and maps
- k. Guidebooks
- l. Websites (.gov)
- m. Websites (.org or .com)
- n. Digital apps
- o. Historic references
- p. Maps (topographic, National Geographic, etc.)
- q. Other (Please specify in writing)

Q12 - What services do you depend on to have a successful recreational experience? (Choose all that apply.)

- a. Gas stations
- b. Gear stores
- c. Grocery stores
- d. Lodging (hotels, B&B's, etc.)
- e. Outfitters/guides
- f. RV parks/campgrounds
- g. Restaurants
- h. Visitor information
- i. Wireless/cellular coverage
- j. Other (Please specify in writing)

Q13 - If you were the public lands manager for a day and could set management priorities for the BLM lands you have been considering here, what would your priorities be?

Q14 - When traveling in the BLM Vernal Field Office area, are you aware when you travel across administrative boundaries (BLM, NPS, USFS, private land, state land, etc.)? If so, how does that influence what you do, your expectations, or your perceptions?

Q15 - As you think about this area, what is/are the most important improvements(s) that recreation managers could make to enhance your visits in the future?

Q16 - What are the things you like about living in or visiting this community and surrounding area?

Q17 - How do public lands in the area affect the quality of life issues you just described?



Appendix 2 – Focus Group Comments

McCoy Flats SRMA:

Q4 – Special:

- There are purpose built mountain bike trails.

Q5 – Diminish:

- A lot more trash and human waste from dispersed camping.

Q7 – Better or Worse With Change in Visitation?:

- There are more people but not so many that it has made it less enjoyable.
- There have been some improvements completed in the area.
- The increase in traffic has brought economic benefits to this area and increased awareness of the need for outdoor rec to the community leaders.
- COVID restrictions on neighboring landscapes caused displacement pressures.
- Use has greatly increased over the past few years, not just due to Covid.
- There is a general lack of awareness for trail etiquette: social trails, people riding off trails, adding features, riding around obstacles. Especially this year there has been damage to the actual trails from increased use.
- Uncontrolled primitive camping--people are making too many fire rings, driving over vegetation to make additional camping spots. Range cattle trample delicate soils. People should use existing roads and camping sites.
- Increased Usage, increased trail damage and lack of etiquette, increase in both motorized and non-motorized use, going off trail leading to damage.

Q8 – Interests and Expectations:

- I go for dispersed camping and the bike trails. Always pack out our own waste and more.
- Love the recreation and solitude of the area.

Q9 – Met Expectations?:

- Yes, it was enjoyable and there were no real issues.
- It met my expectations, no surprises.
- Yes, I spent time with friends and did not encounter many other visitors while enjoying the outdoors
- Memorial Day was too busy. Hundreds of RV's all over. Normally, we love the wide open vistas and sunsets and quiet when you walk around on a "normal" weekend
- I was surprised by the number of visitors from out of state during a pandemic.

- We went “early pandemic”. I was surprised by how many people. It was the beginning of everyone going outside. May need another trash can. More antiseptic wipes and masks that went flying.
- Colorado is a huge user of the area, especially from Steamboat Springs. They are able to drive there faster than us from Park City.
- We really appreciated the area was open when so many other areas were closed.
- Last time was pretty standard. The out of town use has died down for now. The trails are in somewhat rough shape, but it was largely natural and I had a good outdoor solitary experience
- Large groups crowding the trails. The large groups barreled thru on the trails and were rude. Vegetation was trampled in camping areas. It really lost tranquil setting that I love.
- It was nuts for 2 months straight in the spring because of COVID recreation
- Out there quite a bit as a coach, things rarely surprise day to day, a lot of people were riding in spring when sick, lot of use this spring, nothing surprising last visit though, some new usedue to COVID, increase in license sales for fishing, people have been getting outside

Q10 – Activities:

- Dirt Biking
- Walking the dog.
- Dispersed camping is a good way to meet up with friends and still be socially distanced.

Q11 –Information:

- Local stores like bike or sports stores, also local clubs and their websites
- Local mountain bike group
- Agree. I always head to a local bike shop for info, and of course gear.

Q12 – Services:

- McCoy Flats has trail signs and a good trail map at the trail head.
- Services may be optional, including Wi-Fi. We try to be prepared but it’s great having a place like McCoy Flats that is not too far from a town, but still accessible.

Q13 – Priorities for Management:

- Restroom facilities, improved campgrounds nearby, near the parking area for the bike trails
- Take advantage of the multiple uses and the benefits that all can bring. While the Mountain biking is great, there are also great motorized and equestrian trails in the area that can be designated and promoted.

- Campgrounds, and ADA accessibility to most of their recreation sites
- I agree with multiple use as well.
- Don't have a microphone or camera on computer! Fencing off delicate cultural to protect them as ATV's and bikes can damage them.
- Build McCoy Flats facilities to deal with the large increase of visitors. Build more parking, create a designated camping area with facilities, have more BLM rangers patrolling the area
- Keep it as natural as possible. It's great like it is. I don't know if a ranger ever comes by to check on what is happening, especially rowdiness and noise.
- Discourage those people out shooting their guns across the trails, leaving garbage (like couches!), and just taking shots off in random directions.
- Perhaps keep cows out of areas where trails are, to protect trails. As popularity increases, perhaps limit dispersed camping (although we love dispersed camping).
- Hand out beers at the end of a hot day.
- Second set of drop toilets for parking area. Garbage cans.
- perhaps put toilet out at east end (by cow pond area)
- designated camping areas to accommodate increased use, more trail opportunities for non-motorized recreation, also to address increased use and spread people out and increased maintenance of existing facilities
- Would prioritize the campground, has been usage out there, maybe even two campgrounds to spread people out, two additional trails (user created) that haven't been designated, some trails designed but never built, add more trails (whether connectors to town or other trails) more variation, easy trails, technical trails, allow for local residents as well as new users, reroute motorized users

Q14 – Boundaries?:

- The boundaries are very unclear to people not familiar with the area. There are no fence-lines or signs to let users know what land they are on. When I first started recreating at McCoy, I thought it was all BLM so I expected the same experience throughout.
- Most boundaries in the area are not marked which makes it almost impossible to know when you are leaving or entering areas that are administered by different agencies.
- If the management does not change at the boundary I don't feel they need to be marked
- For the McCoy area I don't think it is that important to the users, but it could make a difference to the land administrators
- It would be nice to know what ground you are on to know what to expect
- SITLA has priorities that don't match with BLM and having users be aware of what land they are on helps manage expectations

- Each area has its own story. Hydrocarbons, multiuse mission. NPS reminds us of area agriculture and grazing etc. USFS are in the higher landscapes and different from lower areas. Private land is easier to recognize for fencing and irrigation. SITLA and all are interesting back story. It has a huge influence from all the stories. Rich history in relationships.
- I try to be aware and act accordingly/appropriate
- I am not exactly sure where the 'lines' are.. is there private land near McCoy?
- Can I camp or not? Ride a bike? Hike? Or where are wilderness boundaries?
- Not too aware of land owner boundaries. I am extra vigilante when on ranch with the petroglyphs. I do educate people that BLM is not meant as a dumping area
- Yes. Usually going on BLM I expect basically a laissez faire free for all in terms of mgmt. I rarely see a BLM ranger, etc. to monitor what's happening. As a result, I have seen and expect a general degradation on BLM lands
- other public lands are managed with more oversight and response to what's happening
- When moving through, not acutely aware of the dividing lines, the expectation for experience doesn't change, always the same expectation, even though know it's not necessarily true, no fencing, potential for oil on both, many other things don't see a difference, SITLA property can be sold, biggest difference is process

Q15 – Improvements?:

- trail maintenance and expansion of other uses
- Get ahead of the game with maps, signage, and trail designations. The trails out there are being promoted more by organization outside of BLM (legal or not) than the BLM itself.
- Create a nice camp ground (along with allowing dispersed camping), build more bike trails and maintain existing trails.
- Campground in the pinions might be a nice addition for those that don't/can't primitive camp. Maybe put a dumpster near the highway or at a campsite, if it is installed.
- It is a tough balancing act to manage the growing popularity of McCoy flats.
- As previously mentioned, another potty and trash can, as well as ranger monitoring.
- more attention to trail maintenance and expanded opportunities to accommodate the rapidly increasing use
- Do some improved parking designated areas, those areas also expanding, allow for different access for parking, help communicate what the parking expectations are, help with more signage for directing people as to what they need to do, people should value it for the natural species and vegetation that is there, could help keep people on those trails

Q16 – Qualities of the Community:

- I really enjoy (and often take for granted) the availability of this recreation in my own backyard. It's important for me to have that available to me and my family so my kids can experience more outing time than screen time
- Being able to get away from the urban areas in just a few minutes, easy access to public lands and open space. There is a lot of multiple use
- I like the ability to get such a wide range of landscapes in very little time
- Landscapes and identity are closely tied to who people are and how they fit in the world.
- The character brings back memories of childhood and deepest roots of who I am.
- Natural desert beauty, good community, and lots of outdoor recreation choices.
- Love the open landscape, cliff formations, evidence and sighting of antelope. It is such a breath of fresh air so close to Vernal.
- Love the trails!!!!!! Been going there 12 years.
- I moved to Utah from the Midwest 25 years ago. Vernal is about two hours from where I live. I discovered it early and have gone back often. For the reservoirs, Dinosaur, mountain biking, etc.
- historically, I have generally had the place to myself for the recreation I participate in. I like the small town atmosphere and very unique landscape (in the larger scale picture)
- Work brought, work outside predominantly, outside area is diverse, liked that it is rural, even in town people are rural, not as many people, love job, mountain biking and fishing, access to the forest and BLM lands, value public lands and access, nice to live higher in the watershed, good drinking water

Q17 – Effects of Public Lands on Community:

- I feel they increase the quality of life by providing escapes from the urban environment close by and make recreating affordable for families
- It affects the quality of life in a wide range from mineral lease money coming back to the community to having places to recreate within a short distance.
- Worried about the future of the area from COVID impacts, but it is interesting to see how people interact with local economy Oil crashes hurt livelihood.
- Worried that a huge influx of people will come to these areas. The areas may not be prepared for the influx. How do these visitors think about gateway communities?
- Trails both at McCoy and a number of other areas like Red Fleet, etc.
- I love the wild areas. I grew up in a state with few public areas and I appreciate having access to so much public lands for free.
- Fantasy island formations and wildlife. River with the cranes provide a varied visit. and the petroglyphs at the ranch (don't remember the name)
- I work with a Keep Public Lands in Public Hands effort. That's my main motivation. Once it's privatized, it's gone.

- Do not want a highway bypass for trucks thru McCoy! Red Fleet is cool also.
- Extremely important. I live here cause it's not Salt Lake City or Denver, where I have to drive forever to get to recreation and public lands
- Would not live in the area without the public lands that are there, even gets out in the winter, work is enhanced by public lands (easier access), work and play are all benefitted, makes life much better

John Wesley Powell NCA:

Q4 – Special:

- Connected landscapes for seasonal migration and other wildlife benefits.

Q5 – Diminish:

- Further encroachment of extractive uses/infrastructure.

Q7 – Change Better or Worse?:

- I visit mostly NPS lands or BLM lands bordering NPS, and it is remote enough that it doesn't get a lot of visitors. An increase in use is still not a lot of use

Q8 – Expectations:

- Dino NM was closed to access early on and the region saw all kinds of visitation to areas not previously enjoyed so much.
- Yes. Again, it doesn't get a lot of visitors and it has not changed much since I moved here. It was quiet and largely natural.

Q10 – Activities:

- River Running.

Q11 – Information:

- I often engage with BLM at the field office level for good information as well.

Q12 – Services:

- I can't stress enough how important services available in gateway communities are to visiting public land resources in the region. In particular considering the inconsistent boom bust cycle of other industry.

Q13 – Priorities for Management:

- Bonding reform on well pads. Increase recreational infrastructure to handle the impacts of heavy visitation.
- Route inventory in the JWP NCA
- Maintain it as a wildlife/scenic natural area. Limit motorized vehicles to existing, legal routes.

Q14 – Boundaries:

- Absolutely. There's so many different entities. SITLA, The Uintah Ouray Ute Tribal lands drives a lot of reflection, thoughts on equity and much more. Then from the county level up to different federal agencies speaks for a lot. The endangered fish recovery program is located in Vernal and habitat for those fish along the green river. There's so much to talk about with this.
- Huge difference! So much to say here with each different authority and how they communicate. Ozone non-attainment overlaps all these different jurisdictions.
- Generally, there is a patchwork in some areas that can be confusing. I generally expect the NPS lands to be less developed, impacted, and more natural

Q15 – Improvements:

- Route inventory, analysis. Enhanced recreational opportunities.
- I'd really like to see this maintained as a natural area, in connection with the NPS lands in Dinosaur N.M. As a river runner, what happens in the JW Powell NCA could have a significant impact on the river experience within the monument. I would like the NCA recreation plan be complementary to the NPS management.

Q16 – Qualities of the Community:

- Remote, rural, access to public lands

Q17 – Effects of Public Lands on Community:

- Net positive for the economy. Energy, recreation, agriculture. But Impacts come along with it such as the ozone non-attainment across the Uintah Basin.
- Highly important to my decision to reside here. Without the vast and accessible public lands and recreation, there is really no reason to live here.

Appendix 3 – Maps of McCoy Flats SRMA and John Wesley Powell NCA

