

**Recreation Experience Baseline Study Report**  
Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument  
*Phase 2: Grand Staircase Area*



Complete Report

The Natural Resource Center at Colorado Mesa University

2015

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## Executive Summary

In the fall of 2012, Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument (GSENM) entered into a five-year assistance agreement with the Natural Resource Center (NRC) at Colorado Mesa University (CMU) in Grand Junction, Colorado to conduct a recreational experience baseline study of the Monument. A recreational baseline study is designed to develop an understanding of the recreational use and demands of a particular location at a particular time to establish a baseline for future planning or projects. This baseline will also serve as a starting point for conversations between the BLM and their partners in the surrounding communities and beyond regarding recreation on GSENM. The study was planned to be conducted in five phases across the approximately 1.9-million-acre monument, beginning in 2013 with the areas accessed by Hole in the Rock Road. The Grand Staircase study area is located on the western third of GSENM and is accessed primarily by Johnson Canyon, Cottonwood and Skutumpah Roads as well as Highway 89 on the southern edge. This area connects the gateway communities of Bryce Valley (Cannonville, Tropic, Henrieville) with Kanab. Features include slot canyons, unique geographic features such as Grosvenor's Arch, and historic sites such as the Paria River settlements.

A mixed methodology focus group, using audience polling in addition to engaging participants in open dialogue, was determined to be the appropriate approach to establish the recreation experience baseline. In this case, a focus group is a structured conversation with a limited number of participants (less than 25) regarding recreation in GSENM. The small nature of the setting and open-ended nature of the questions allows for a good deal of interaction between the participants and the facilitator, and between the participants themselves. This methodology allows participants to express the subtleties and nuances of what really matters to them about recreating in the area. This mixed methodology approach provides a data set that captures both a complete set of responses from each participant using audience polling technology as well as documents a rich set of notes from the group dialogue that gives context and depth to the polling data. Dr. Tim Casey, a Professor of Political Science at CMU and director of the NRC, was named as the principal investigator to conduct the focus groups and prepare the analytical reports.

A total of 17 focus groups were conducted between March and September 2014 for this second phase of the study. Thirteen of those focus groups were conducted in person in the towns of Kanab, Cannonville and Orderville, Utah, in three separate visits during March, May and September. The remaining four focus groups were conducted digitally via the internet and conference call (these will be referred to throughout this document as "digital focus groups"). There were a total of 77 participants in the 17 focus groups. Of the 77 participants in the study, 41 attended a focus group in Kanab, 13 in Cannonville, two in Orderville, and 16 participated digitally via the internet. The participants were allowed to remain anonymous, although their responses were tracked and collated by the use of audience polling technology. Some basic demographic information was collected at the beginning of each session. Participants were asked to provide home zip codes in order to identify how representative this study was of the overall population. The majority of participants came from zip codes in Utah (63%). Most of those came from Kanab (38%) or the Bryce Valley communities of Cannonville and

Tropic (12.6%), the gateway communities to the Grand Staircase area, as well as other communities near GSENM including Escalante and Boulder (3.5%) and the nearby Arizona communities of Page and Fredonia (7%). Other participants represented a total of eight other states and a Canadian province. There were participants from 31 unique zip codes. Participants were also asked to select one affiliation (role) they have in relation to the landscape. Those selections included: visitor, local resident, community leader, outfitter/guide, business owner, other. The majority of the participants selected affiliations associated with the local area: local resident (39%), business owner (8%), and community leader (11.5%). Visitors represented (20.7%) of the total and outfitters/guides made up 8%. 7% of respondents did not select an affiliation, and 5.75% chose “other”.

The design of the focus group for data collection entailed a series of discussion questions designed to engage participants in open dialogue about their preferences, interests and expectations regarding recreation so responses could be captured in their own words, followed by a list of choices that represented a spectrum of possible answers to the discussion questions. They could respond to this list of possible responses by selecting them via anonymous audience polling using hand held remote response devices (clickers). The focus group script covered all the major elements needed in planning for recreation on public lands: preferences for outcomes and experiences, interests and expectations, setting characteristics, activities, and the services needed to support the recreation experience.

After analysis of the responses from 77 participants in 17 focus groups over seven months of data collection in 2014, the following observations and suggestions began to emerge regarding the Grand Staircase area of GSENM accessed by Johnson Canyon, Cottonwood and Skutumpah Roads. Although in a baseline study, the principal focus is on observations of the setting and context, inevitably some participants expressed their ideas concerning the area as suggestions for future action. These were not solicited in the study, but are recorded as part of the response given.

## Observations:

- The Grand Staircase is a special place because of its:
  - Uniqueness of Geology (large and small scale).
  - Scenic beauty and view-sheds.
  - Opportunities for learning – scientific study, discovery, public education about diversity of landscape.
  - Variety of recreational opportunities – from iconic to the unknown.
  - Time’s effect on dynamic landscape.
    - Seasonal variation and light variation throughout the day.
  - Archeological resources.
    - Abundant and important sites, but some threatened in the area.
    - Robust commitment of site stewards program.
  - Quietness, remoteness, naturalness.
  - Water in the desert – riparian areas.
- It is a land of contrasts among several important dimensions of human interaction with the landscape such as:

- Sense of place
  - Deep sense of place among locals, yet concern that increasing numbers of visitors have little connection to or understanding of the place.
- Accessibility and remoteness
  - Primary roads allow accessibility, but scale of landscape maintains remoteness and space between those recreating, thus solitude is maintained.
- Tourism blessings and curses
  - Beneficial to local economies and some participants expressed the joy of sharing wonders of landscape, yet increased numbers and crowding is becoming a concern in the area.
- Participants expressed mixed feelings about the roads that provide transit through and across this landscape.
  - On the positive side, participants indicated that:
    - Many people are using Cottonwood, Skutumpah, and Johnson Canyon Roads as primary access in and through landscape.
    - These primary roads in GSENM often are used to connect communities on the periphery of the Monument.
    - Some developed roads also allow those with reduced mobility to enjoy the landscape and features.
  - On the negative side, participants indicated that:
    - Weather can make the roads dangerous or impassable due to poor road conditions, wash outs, mud, etc.
    - Visitors can get lost. There is a lack of signs and GPS is not accurate.
    - Late night transit through GSENM might be connected to illegal activity such as smuggling/trafficking.
    - People can move too fast across the landscape to appreciate it with road development.
    - Back country aviation is on the increase; participants have strong but mixed feelings on this development. Some passionately advocate for this recreation opportunity while others suggest that the noise and visual image diminish the specialness of the place and their experience of the Monument.
- Several of the themes emerging from participant’s comments centered around displaced tourism as well as recreational tourism in a diverse landscape, for example:
  - On the southern end of the Grand Staircase area there is significant increase in use through the spill over from those who didn’t get selected in “The Wave” lottery. This provides an opportunity for those displaced tourists, but also increases pressure on the area resources.
  - Diversity of landscapes in Grand Staircase region is highly valued among participants. (Colors, canyons, wilderness and road variety)
- The Grand Staircase area has a strong connection to Western Heritage both real and imagined.

- Connections to ancestors and pioneers on landscape are very important to many participants, especially Paria Town Site and Cannonville Visitor Center.
- The mythic west is celebrated in festivals around the area. Tourism to old western movie sites in area is an important contributor to recreation and local tourism economies.

## Suggestions:

Numerous suggestions were offered by participants to address concerns:

- Development of recreational resources in the southern end of the Grand Staircase area might provide an alternative to restrictions and/or development in surrounding public lands that are more fragile to impacts such as the Paria Canyon and Paria Canyon-Vermilion Cliffs Wilderness Area (includes “The Wave”).
- A diversity of experiences is possible in the region; managers should consider recreational planning at a landscape scale to determine the best niches for GSENM.
- Several efforts should be made to educate public about GSENM
  - Including: maps, signs, visitor information, websites
  - Programs about how to properly respect the land
- Partnerships with local communities and organizations are successful and should be expanded to manage pressures on landscape.
- Maintain views and
- Provide unique recreation opportunities for a variety of travel modes.
- Natural landscapes, tranquil escapes and scientific learning are unique combination of qualities to be maintained in Grand Staircase area of GSENM.

## Full Report

### Introduction

The Grand Staircase region of Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument (GSENM) embodies such a geologic sweep of time that it is truly humbling to humans standing in the midst of it today. Using the metaphor of a “staircase,” one can both describe the physical geology moving chronologically and physically up through millions of years of change and thousands of feet of elevation from the south to the north in this part of the Monument in some sort of techno-color geologic atlas; but it can also be used as a metaphor to consider the layers of habitation and interaction between the land itself and the creatures and peoples that are connected to this place. Each physical layer of the “Staircase” took eons to form and holds within it not only unique geologic treasures, but remains of dinosaurs and other prehistoric life forms that have called this part of Utah home long before humans ever encountered this landscape. As humans began to move in and settle among the cliffs of the Grand Staircase, they too, left their mark in the form of petroglyphs and pictographs as well as the remains of their small villages and the tools of their daily challenges to live in this remote and unforgiving landscape. The ancestors of those first human inhabitants of the area still live near these ancient ruins practicing some of the same techniques that rise out of the human connection to a place. Drawn by religion and/or a sense of adventure, more humans came to settle in this region along the banks of the Paria River which starts in the highlands at the northern edge of the area and cuts through the middle of the Grand Staircase all the way down to the Colorado River. The remains of the nineteenth century town of Pahreah along the Paria River in GSENM reminds one of yet another layer of interaction between humans and the landscape. Ancestors of those early settlers also remain living in the area carrying on the traditions that tie them to the landscape so central to the lives of those who have gone before.

Today, the Grand Staircase area remains a living landscape connecting a variety of communities, local residents and an increasing number of visitors from far and wide to a unique and dynamic place that seems at once timeless and familiar, yet ever new and full of surprise and discovery. This report is an attempt to understand the many senses of place that people have with this dynamic landscape known as the Grand Staircase as they recreate in and around this western portion of GSENM and surrounding areas. It is a report on the data collected through a series of focus groups (conversations) in 2014 about the area and people’s connection to it.

In the fall of 2012, GSENM entered into a five-year assistance agreement with the Natural Resource Center (NRC) at Colorado Mesa University (CMU) in Grand Junction, Colorado to conduct a recreational experience baseline study of the Monument. A recreational baseline study is designed to develop an understanding of the recreational use and demands of a particular location at a particular time to establish a baseline for future planning or projects. This baseline will also serve as a starting point for conversations between the BLM and their partners in the surrounding communities and beyond regarding recreation in Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument. The study was planned to be conducted in five phases across the almost two-million-acre monument, beginning in 2013 with the areas accessed by Hole in the Rock Road. Phase 2 of the study began in 2014 focused on the Grand

Staircase region, and Phase 3 will focus on the landscapes within the Highway 89 corridor and on the Paria Plateau in 2015. Finally, the areas accessed by Highway 12 and the Burr Trail will be studied in 2016. The fifth year of the study will be dedicated to compiling a Monument-wide recreation experience baseline by combining and analyzing each of the earlier phases.

Although the principle focus of the study is on lands within GSENM, it is neither possible nor desirable to exclude the surrounding federal and state public lands from the dialogues. Lands adjacent to GSENM that are managed by federal or state agencies include Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, Bryce Canyon and Capitol Reef National Parks, Dixie National Forest, Vermillion Cliffs National Monument, Kodachrome Basin and Escalante Petrified Forest State Parks, Utah State and Institutional Trust Lands, and lands managed by the BLM Kanab and Arizona Strip Field Offices.

A mixed methodology focus group, using audience polling in addition to engaging participants in open dialogue, was used to establish the recreation experience baseline. In this case, a focus group is a structured conversation with a limited number of participants (less than 25) regarding recreation in the Hole in the Rock area. The nature of the small-group setting and open-ended nature of the questions allows for interaction between the participants and the facilitator, and between the participants themselves. This methodology allows participants to express the subtleties and nuances of what really matters to them about recreating in the area. This mixed methodology approach provides a data set that captures both a complete set of responses from each participant using audience polling technology as well as documents a rich set of notes from the group dialogue that gives context and depth to the polling data. Dr. Tim Casey, a Professor of Political Science at CMU and director of the NRC, was named as the principal investigator to conduct the focus groups and prepare the analytical reports.

When the five-year study is complete, each phase will collectively contribute to a rich understanding of the public's recreational preferences, their connections to GSENM and surrounding public lands, as well as the impact of recreational use of those lands on gateway communities.

## Methodology

The mixed methodology focus group<sup>1</sup>, using audience polling in addition to engaging participants in open dialogue, was determined to be the appropriate approach to establish the recreation experience baseline. This methodology captures both a complete set of responses from each participant using audience polling technology as well as documents a rich set of notes from the group dialog that gives context and depth to the polling data. Either approach used alone would leave an incomplete picture of the broad and deep relationships people have with this landscape.

The design of the focus group for data collection entailed a series of discussion questions intended to engage participants in open dialogue about their preferences, interests, and expectations so responses could be captured in their own words, followed by a list of choices that represented a spectrum of

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<sup>1</sup> The methodology discussion here is the same as that found in the Phase 1 report from the Hole in the Rock study area because the methodology for all 4 data gathering phases will be the same. This discussion is repeated here for those who only read this phase 2 report.

possible responses to the discussion questions that could be responded to via anonymous audience polling. The audience polling was captured by each participant using a handheld clicker linked to Turning Technologies software. The open dialogue comments were documented with audio recording equipment as well as by CMU researchers taking notes.

The focus group script covered all the major elements needed in planning for recreation on public lands: preferences for outcomes and experiences, interests and expectations, setting characteristics, activities, and the services needed to support the recreation experience. It included 20 questions, eight were open-ended, nine had prepared responses for audience polling, and three allowed for both polling and open-ended responses. All questions with prepared responses included an “other” option so participants weren’t constrained by the prepared responses. Of the open-ended questions, one included a mapping exercise where participants noted special places on a map of the study area, and another included a series of black and white images that focused dialogue on perceptions of crowding and levels of development. The number of questions included in the script was tailored to allow for a 90-minute focus group. See Appendix 1 for a copy of the focus group handout.

A total of 17 focus groups were conducted between March and September 2014 for this second phase of the study. Thirteen of those focus groups were conducted in person in the towns of Kanab, Cannonville and Orderville, Utah, in three separate visits in March, May and September. The remaining four focus groups were conducted digitally via the internet and conference call (these will be referred to throughout this document as “digital focus groups”). The digital focus groups were facilitated through Adobe Connect software and utilized the same discussion prompts and polls that were used during the in-person focus groups.

There were a total of 77 participants in the 17 focus groups for this phase of the research. Of the 77 participants in the study, 41 attended a focus group in Kanab, 13 in Cannonville, 2 in Orderville and 16 participated digitally via the internet. The participants were allowed to remain anonymous, although their responses were tracked and collated by the use of audience polling technology. Some basic demographic information was collected at the beginning of each session. Participants were asked to provide home zip codes in order to identify how representative this study was of the overall population. The table in Figure 1 indicates the dates, locations, and number of participants for each focus group.

Figure 1 – Table of Focus Groups, Dates and Locations

Focus Group #	Date	Location/Name	Number of Participants
1	3/7/14	Kanab #1 - Outfitters	11
2	3/8/14	Kanab #2	11
3	3/7/14	Kanab #3	1
4	3/8/14	Cannonville #1	6
5	5/14/14	Cannonville #2	4

6	5/15/14	Kanab #4	7
7	5/15/14	Kanab #5	5
8	5/16/14	Kanab #6	3
9	5/17/14	Orderville #1	2
10	7/17/14	Digital Focus Group #1	5
11	7/17/14	Digital Focus Group #2	5
12	7/29/14	Digital Focus Group #3	2
13	7/29/14	Digital Focus Group #4	4
14	9/19/14	Kanab # 7	2
15	9/19/14	Kanab #8	4
16	9/20/14	Kanab #9	2
17	9/20/14	Cannonville #3	3

Outreach to populate the focus groups included:

- Invitations shared with area board and committees (i.e. Monument Advisory Committee, Scenic Byway 12 Committee, etc.),
- Direct outreach to partners and key stakeholders (Grand Staircase-Escalante Partners, Glen Canyon Natural History Association, GSENM Outfitters and Guides, including wilderness therapy and other special use permit holders, etc.),
- Press releases in local newspapers,
- Flyers posted at Visitor Centers, local post offices, and in local businesses,
- Postcards distributed in visitor centers,
- Information packets with business cards in trailhead register boxes,
- Group email notices,
- Word of mouth, and
- Direct e-mail or phone contact with any who expressed interest in participating.

The methodology of audience polling allows each participant the opportunity to weigh in on every area of the research. This is important to avoid a wide variety of social setting dynamics that arise in traditional focus group settings, such as only hearing from extroverted participants who dominate a conversation. The polling also minimizes the undue influence of peer settings in small communities. If an individual is worried about the repercussions of their responses mentioned aloud in a focus group within their community, they are not likely to respond, or not as accurately. However, if they can anonymously record their preferences, they may feel more liberated to express their true opinion. The audience polling using electronic recording devices preserves participants' anonymity while being able

to link all of their answers together for the purposes of analysis. In traditional focus groups, one might be able to link comments and preferences back to a particular focus group, but unless the group was small and homogenous, it would be difficult to determine preferences for groups, or how those preferences might interact with other preferences (i.e. if a person is seeking solitude, do they choose particular activities or settings to achieve that outcome?). Traditionally, a survey was needed to link these variables; however, a survey often misses the nuance of the dialogue. The advantage of using audience polling and open-ended questions in a focus group setting is that participants are allowed to clarify what they mean when they select certain responses.

It is important to note the limitations of using this data. Because the sampling of participants was not random, it would be difficult to suggest this analysis is generalizable to the preferences of the entire population that might be interested in the area, and no attempt to do so is done here. However, effort was made to hear from a broad sample of groups who have a connection to the landscape including both locals and visitors that were willing to spend 90 minutes participating in the conversation. Participants did self-select to join the study, but given the diversity of participants and the depth of data gathered, this study is certainly defensible as a solid baseline for recreational experiences in the Grand Staircase area of GSENM.

## Demographics

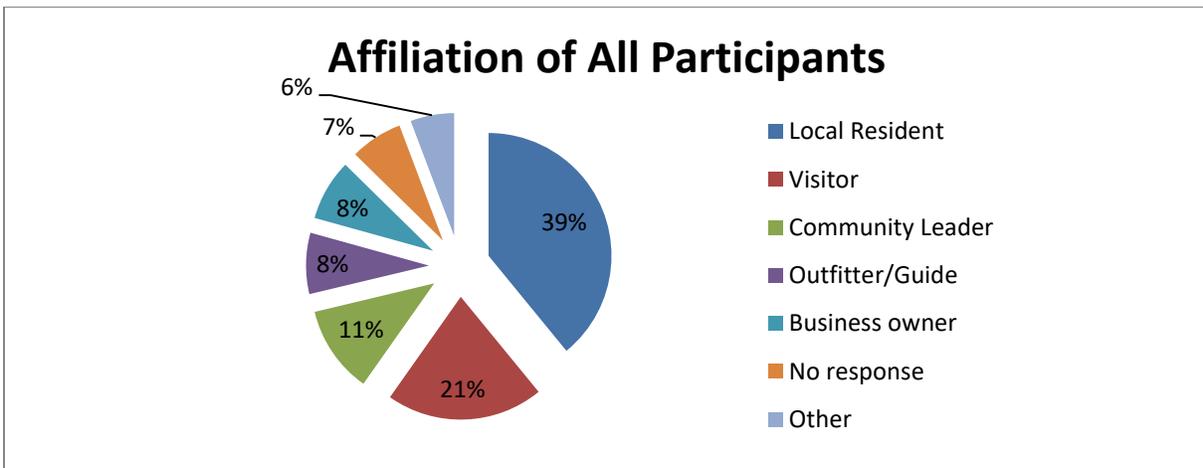
Participation in the study was anonymous and voluntary and no personal information was gathered or retained from the participants other than the two demographic questions of zip code and affiliation. Although participants were allowed to remain anonymous, their responses were tracked and collated by the use of audience polling technology. Participants were asked to provide home zip codes in order to identify how representative this study was of the overall population. There were 77 participants in this phase of the study. The majority of participants came from zip codes in Utah (63%). Most of those came from Kanab (38%) or the Bryce Valley communities of Cannonville and Tropic (12.6%). Escalante and Boulder residents (3.5%) as well as those from the Arizona communities of Page and Fredonia (7%) participated. Other participants represented a total of eight other states and a Canadian province. There were participants from 31 unique zip codes.

Demographic distinctions are important to understand visitor experiences on public lands compare to local resident expectations and experiences on landscapes they have a very strong sense of attachment to through years, often generations, of interaction. Understanding these similarities and differences is absolutely essential for agencies to effectively manage public lands in partnership with local communities, while balancing local demands with visitor expectations constitutive of a broader national mandate to manage those lands.

Participants were also asked to select one affiliation (role) they played in relation to the landscape. Those selections included: visitor, local resident, community leader, outfitter/guide, business owner, or other. Often individuals had more than one affiliation (for example a business owner might also be a local resident, or an outfitter might also be a visitor), but they were asked to choose their primary

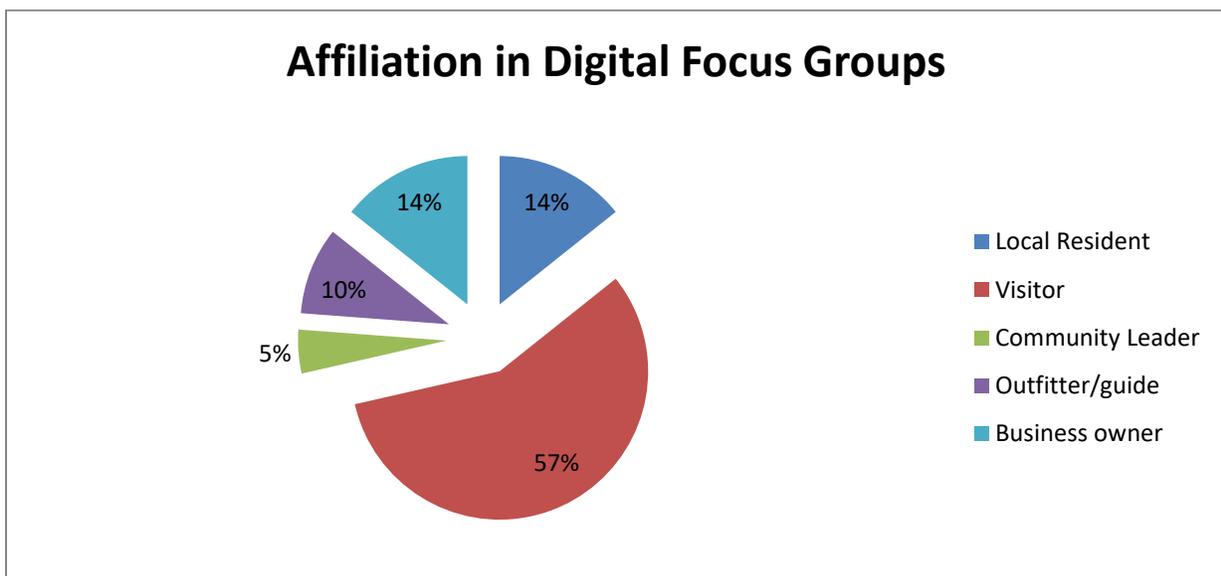
affiliation and respond to all questions "wearing that hat." The majority of the participants selected affiliations associated with the local area: local resident (39%), business owner (8%), and community leader (11.5%). Visitors represented 20.7% of the total and outfitters/guides made up 8%. 7% of respondents did not select an affiliation, and 5.75% chose "other". Those that selected "other" as a category often indicated that they were part time residents or former federal employees who had settled in the area but might have a different perspective than any of the affiliations offered. Figure 2 shows the composition of the focus group participants in terms of their affiliation with the Grand Staircase region of GSENM.

Figure 2 –Affiliation of All Participants in Study



In order to better capture the recreational experience of non-residents we continued to offer digital focus groups for this phase as well. Figure 3 below shows how different the make-up of the digital focus groups is from traditional focus groups in terms of who they can reach.

Figure 3 – Affiliation in Digital Focus Groups



## Data Analysis

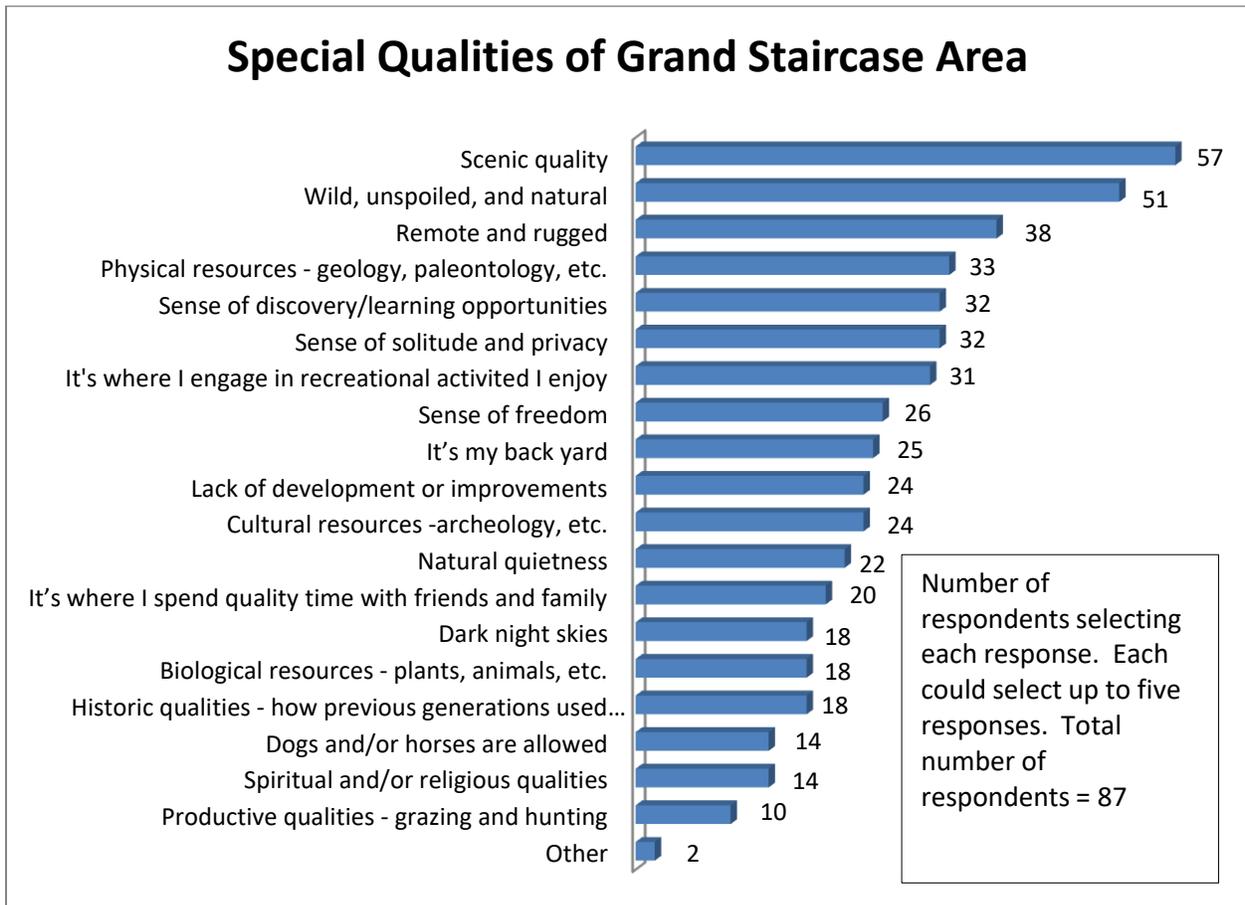
The data analysis that follows combines the polling data from each question with the spoken comments from the meetings as those particular questions were discussed. The result is a comprehensive and nuanced collection of participant preferences that will serve as a recreational experience baseline for future planning in the Grand Staircase area and across GSENM as these results are compared with other phases of the research on other regions of the Monument and surrounding public lands. For recreation planning, land managers need to know the desirable outcomes people are seeking for when recreating on public lands. They also need to know the activities that people engage in, as well as the landscape setting characteristics that support those interests and expectations. Finally, they need to understand the essential services provided by the agency or surrounding communities that support recreation on the public lands. The data analysis section is divided into these essential elements needed for planning and management of the Grand Staircase area. This recreational experience baseline data will not only be useful for planning, but it will serve as a background for conversations that BLM can have with its local public and private partners and service providers.

### Desirable and Undesirable Experiences and Outcomes:

#### What are the qualities of the Grand Staircase area that make it special?

Initially, focus group participants were asked to share the qualities of the Grand Staircase area that make it special. A wide variety of responses were given during the open-ended dialogue prior to the prepared list of responses was shared for polling. To allow for analysis, the dialogue responses were grouped with the choices selected through the polling. Comments were coded in terms of what response or responses they related to in the polling selections. There were several comments in each section that didn't neatly fit into the choices offered in the preset audience polling. These responses were coded and grouped according to their concern. Only a representative sample of all the comments is located in this report, but the total comments as well as the audio recordings for all focus groups were given to the BLM as part of the administrative record of the research. The responses are discussed in the order of their popularity as measured by the percentage of participants in the entire study (all focus groups) that selected them. Figure 4 (below) shows the overall distribution of responses by all participants.

Figure 4 – Special Qualities of the Grand Staircase Area



- **Scenic Quality**

It should not be surprising given the incredible vistas and visual features that abound in the Grand Staircase area of GSENM that the most popular special quality of the area is scenic beauty (74%). Several participants commented on how this particular landscape is particularly special in the way the scenery inspires their art as well. The following comments expressed during the focus groups identify the importance of scenery (often combined with other qualities) in the overall recreational experience in the Grand Staircase area.

*“The outstanding scenic beauty, strikes me”*

*“The relatively undeveloped, rugged scenery, access to hiking, opportunities for solitude, and I can visit with my dogs too!”*

*“History, vistas, the natural environment, along with the size and terrain all make it a special place.”*

*“Landscape—for visual artists this is the most spectacular place on the earth; I like the Staircase, people on the north end like the slot canyons. The colors are unmatched in their beauty and inspiration for art.”*

*“I paint western landscapes and I’ve been all over the West. There is nothing like the Vermillion Cliffs, the way the light contributes to the changing landscapes. It can be a very different place depending on time of day or the time of year the way the light interacts with the land.”*

- **Wild, Unspoiled and Natural/Remote and Rugged/Sense of Solitude and Privacy**

The relatively isolated location also contributes to the strong preference for the values of wild, unspoiled, and natural (66%) and remote and rugged (49%) as well as the opportunity for solitude and privacy (42%). This was beautifully expressed in several of the comments offered by the participants.

*“I agree with the sentiments expressed about the value of unspoiled, wild country. Wild country is such a valuable, fragile resource that will cease to exist in the absence of adequate protection.”*

*“Even when on a paved road, you can look out and for miles, and I feel like I’m seeing nothing but nature (of which humans are a part, but like metal or concrete modern construction is not).”*

*“I feel like I am encountering Nature one on one.”*

*“I prefer the quiet, and ability to have solitude and encounter a relatively pristine landscape, especially the relatively untouched places, away from the road.”*

*“You can be alone in a truly wild remote beautiful landscape. A place for discovery, beauty, inspiration and adventure.”*

*“The feel of it, I like the way I feel when I am out there. When I see the power lines it puts me back, and seems so disruptive.”*

*“Remoteness and the accessibility—close to remote places.”*

- **Lack of Development and Improvements/Natural Quietness/Dark Night Skies/Spiritual Qualities**

The lack of development and improvements on the landscape (31%) contributes to a setting that is conducive to a tranquil escape from the hustle and bustle of modern life including a sense of natural quietness (29%) as well as the opportunity to experience dark night skies (23%) identified as a special value by nearly 1 out of every 4 participants. From comments offered regarding these qualities, it is clear that the quietness and solitude also contribute to a spiritual quality (14%) to the landscape in the Grand Staircase area.

*“More undeveloped, not like a national park. You might see a few people but you don’t feel like you’re being herded.”*

*“It is a special place because of the dark skies, open spaces, archaeology, canyon exploring, diversity of landforms, views, plants, and lack of development/too many constraints.”*

*“The uniqueness, very remote, untouched for the most part by humans.”*

*“Terry Tempest Williams says the desert is important because it exposes; makes you naked; spiritual aspects.”*

*“There is a spirituality out there that could be positive or negative depending on the area and the history.”*

- **Sense of Discovery and Learning Opportunities/Natural and Cultural Resources**

Many participants also identified the Grand Staircase area as a *place of learning* as evidenced by their emphasis on the *physical* (43%), *biological* (23%), *historic* (23%) and *cultural* (31%) resources as well as the opportunity the landscape provides for a *sense of discovery and learning opportunities* (42%). Some of the many comments made by the participants give a better understanding of the value of these learning opportunities on the landscape.

*“Amazing history, in the sense of dinosaur bones, Native American trails; it’s buried in the rest of the US under pavement.”*

*“I emphasize the opportunity for discovery.”*

*“Contains resources that can’t be found anywhere else (geological)”*

*“The archeology, piles of old trash, etc. and connection to the past it important for me.”*

*“I am a volunteer site person for BLM and am very interested in the previous Indians who lived here. I like to Jeep and hike all over the landscape to discover the geology, paleontology, archeology of this place.”*

*“I like it because of the hiking, vegetation, wildlife (e.g., birds, insects), geology, and beauty.”*

- **My Backyard/Quality Time with Family and Friends**

One important theme that emerged out of the conversations about why this is a special place is how much the local populations utilize this landscape for recreational opportunities because it is in their *back yard* (32%) and it is a great place to *share with family and friends* (26%). They articulated this local sense of place in many comments offered.

*“It’s my home and it has been for some time and my children would be fourth generation. My grandfather first homesteaded in the area in the 1930’s.”*

*“I grew up here, it is home.”*

*“I have a sense of home here—it is my backyard—and I am familiar with it.”*

*“Nice to provide people with natural landscapes—spiritual escapes out my back door.”*

*“I love talking to people about the area, it’s like sharing my home. To share it with other people is wonderful.”*

- **Diversity**

Another important theme to emerge out of participants comments on the specialness of the place (but not captured in the list of options all could select) was the diversity of the landscape and resources available. The setting seems to match the diversity of recreational opportunities available in the Grand Staircase area. A selection of those comments will illustrate the point.

*“I like that there are some dirt roads with varying levels of maintenance that allow us to get a little further out there than we might on bike, foot, etc. But I like that when I’m out on one of those roads I don’t feel crowded. I don’t see and hear evidence of other visitors.”*

*“The Grand Staircase area is a unique progression from higher elevation to here (Kanab). There are many different layers of distinct cliffs all the way down to the bottom of the Grand Canyon.”*

*“The Monument as a whole is a special place because of its diversity—its scarlet plateau—its paleontology—Escalante Canyon completely different from the Grand Staircase side of the Monument.”*

*“Vastness. Can lose yourself out there. A lot of surprises out there. Extensive resources for landscape scenes.”*

- **Public Lands Context**

Finally, several participants commented on the value of GSENM as part of a network of public lands in the area. They suggested GSENM should be viewed in the context of these surrounding lands for the unique contributions it makes to the diversity of recreational settings in the area.

*“The Grand Staircase area of GSENM is special because of where it’s located between Bryce Canyon National Park and Escalante, which gets a whole lot of visitation. In the area by the Paria you know won’t really run into anybody. The Grand Staircase area has spectacular places where you can’t see anyone.”*

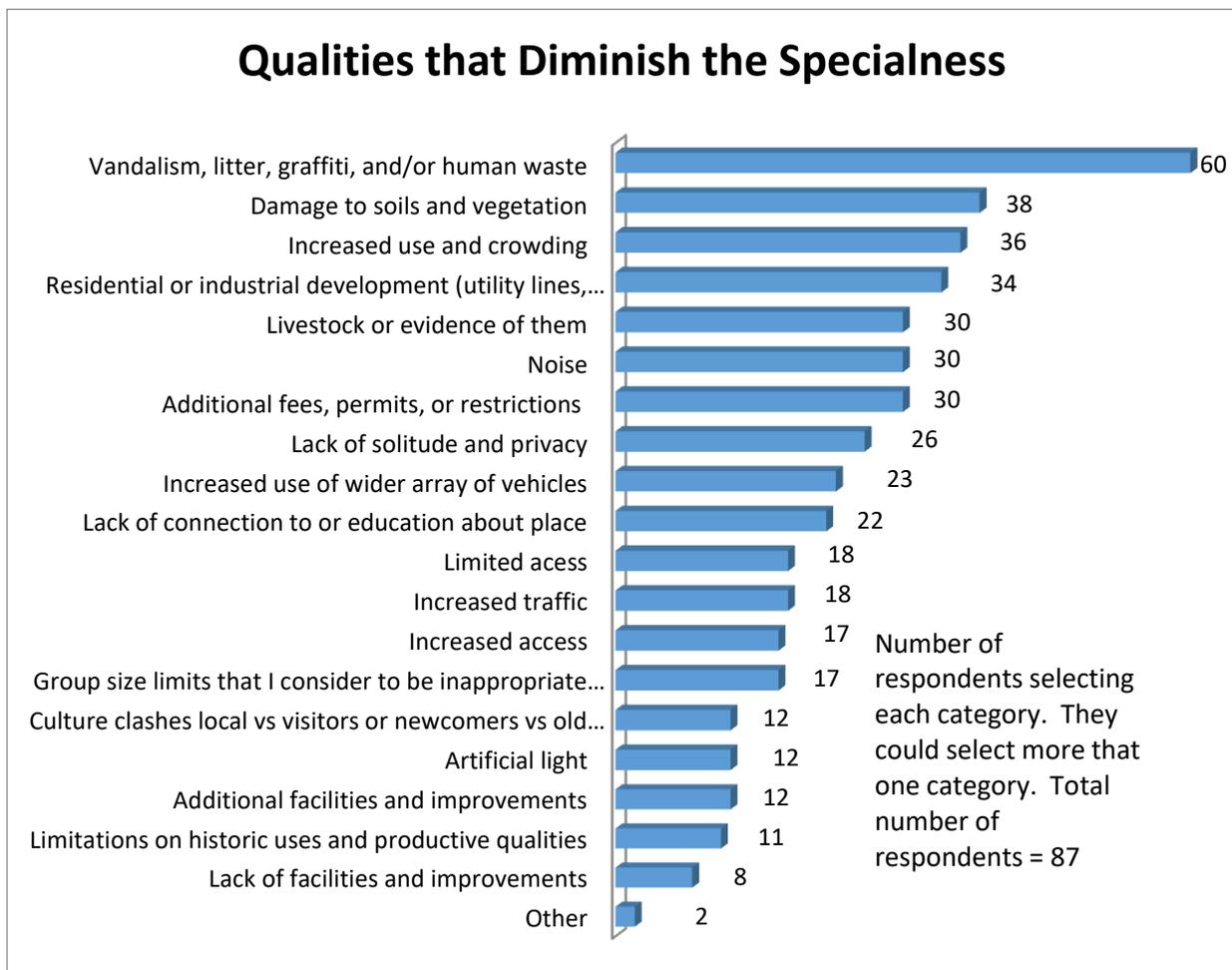
*“I grew up in the east in New York and Maine—access to public land is an extraordinary gift to the American people. The reason I moved from Maine is because of the Monument (GSENM) as a new addition to public lands.”*

*There are lots of things {in the Grand Staircase area} in close proximity to national parks. It is the last mapped region in lower US.”*

### What could or does diminish the specialness of the place?

While it is important to understand why people think a place special, it is equally important to understand what might diminish that specialness and affect their connection to place. After discussing why the Grand Staircase area is special, participants were asked to identify, “What could or does diminish the specialness of the place?” After the open-ended dialogue about the threats to specialness, the participants were given prepared list of qualities from which to choose using the audience polling clickers. Figure 5 (below) shows the percentage of responses selected by all participants. Details about the most commonly selected responses are then discussed in more depth.

Figure 5: Qualities that Diminish Specialness



- **Human Impacts**

From the selections of those things that would diminish the specialness of the Grand Staircase area, it is clear that human impacts on the resources are considered the most significant threat to the area. The vast majority of participants across the study identified the presence of vandalism, litter, graffiti and/or human waste (78%) as a significant issue to be addressed. Additionally, damage to soils and vegetation (49%) and increased use and crowding (47%) are human-caused impacts that are particularly salient as negative outcomes for recreation in the area. This increased use is accompanied by concerns for increased traffic (23%), a wider use and array of vehicles (30%) and other crowding issues. The following comments offer more detail on how these elements impact recreational visitation to the area.

*“I am concerned about the abuse of the land by anyone regardless of what group they represent of our cross section of people who use or visit the monument.”*

*“Where I’m at, I often have to clean up human waste and trash, and I really see the impact.”*

*“Many of my concerns about additional use and access relate not only to my personal experience and crowding, but also to the potential for increased damage to the natural world that can accompany greater use and visitation, both intentional and unintentional.”*

*“People don’t know rules and regulations and end up damaging the resources.”*

*“Non-compatible activities. Somebody out there tearing it up—in a vehicle or stomping across the landscape not having proper reverence for the place concerns me.”*

*“The presence of illegal OHV tracks to many places is a negative impact I experience regularly when hiking in the Monument.”*

*“Too many roads, paved roads, and too many people would diminish my experience. Paved roads all through the back country would negatively affect the recreational experience of visitors and displace existing values.”*

- **Working Landscape (Livestock, Hunting, Trapping)**

The Grand Staircase area of GSENM is a working landscape with transit corridors for local communities passing through it, cattle grazing across the landscape and numerous signs of development such as utility lines, and residential structures on private in-holdings, especially in the northern and western edges of the study area. For many participants, the consequences of cattle grazing (39%) and residential or industrial development (44%) diminish the special qualities of the landscape. The lack of additional recreational facilities and improvements (10%), and limitations on historic uses and productive qualities of the landscape such as grazing (14%) seems to be a concern for only a few of the participants, which is consistent with the concerns expressed about grazing and development. This

would support the claim that most participants want a minimal amount of additional development in the area. Participant comments indicate that cattle grazing poses a threat to riparian areas and the general aesthetic experience of the area, and some government actions to support that grazing also compromise the recreational and natural resource. While most participants did not advocate removal of cattle altogether from the landscape, they identified it as a potentially significant problem if not addressed. Similar comments were also expressed about residential and industrial development. There were also a number of concerned comments regarding trapping in this area. Below are a few of the comments to better understand how the working nature of this landscape can negatively interact with recreational expectations in the area.

*“Popular hiking areas like hackberry get trampled by cattle in the winter. Come spring it’s torn up and looks bad. Visitors think it isn’t that great.”*

*“The damage from livestock grazing and BLM management for “forage”. Disgusting and devastating to the landscape.”*

*“Pollution of backpacking drinking water in key hiking places by cattle feces.”*

*“Destruction of the landscape by failed vegetation treatments that were done to support cattle raising... but have failed to do so.”*

*“The result of cattle grazing diminishes my experience throughout the Monument. Cow pies, flies, destroyed vegetation, erosion, and seeing skinny and suffering cows.”*

*“Dust blowing around from roads and trampled soil crusts. Some grazing is okay, but it should be scientifically determined as to its validity.”*

*“Number of cattle for a grazing area is not too much, but I noticed over the years there is a recovery factor particularly when we get monsoons—too many cattle damage soil and vegetation; then we get dust from the soil erosion; The BLM should look at the allotments carefully so that they can be a little more long-term sustaining.”*

*“I know the Monument is multiple use, but I hate seeing traps out for coyotes, and grazing going on. They diminish my experience.”*

*“I’m a little scared to go out; been shot at or close to. Hunting trapping thing going on. The difficulty is an increase in hikers, and we have done a little study. People have been traumatized by being shot at or close to. Year-round-hunting and separating hikers from hunters/trappers.”*

- **Infrastructure Development**

*“Driving across the landscape and the power lines by the side of the road diminishes the experience for me. They disrupt the photography.”*

*"I really don't want any development I like the isolation up there. I like it to be as isolated as it so people can enjoy it. Think of how many national parks are crowded and you can't get in. You can feel like you are alone and enjoy nature. You can experience real wilderness. If there are developments, I will be there with a protestor sign."*

*"Inadequate signage and management of designated route system. Hard for users to determine what is OK and what is not thus abuse occurs. The damage from vehicles going across the land is terrible."*

- **Noise**

Given the value placed on naturalness and remoteness discussed above, one would expect that participants might express concerns about anything that would disrupt their expectations of tranquility and natural settings such as the presence of noise (39%), or a lack of solitude and privacy (34%), and even the presence of artificial light at night (16%) which impacts the dark night skies discussed in the previous section of this report.

*"I've been here for over 20 years and I find myself looking forward to winter for the quietness. Motorcycles and helicopter tours and definitely changing the character of the place."*

*"People are too loud. The sound of kids screaming destroys the mood of place for me."*

*"Aviation over-flights can be a real problem. It is not compatible with quiet recreation (witness the overwhelming noise on the flight corridor in the Grand Canyon). Aviation is certainly not a big problem now in GSENM, but it could be in the future."*

- **Administrative Controls**

While many participants acknowledge the need for some regulations of recreational activity on public lands in GSENM, concerns were raised by nearly 2 out of every 5 participants about the possibility of additional fees, regulations and restrictions (39%) in the area. These concerns were also associated with limitations on access, especially motorized access (although others expressed the need to limit just such access to avoid diminishing the resource). Recreational users with livestock and dogs seek out places with fewer restrictions than the parks regarding their animal companions. The following comments give a sense of what restrictions or fees are most troubling to the participants.

*"Too much development and management control would make it lose its specialness and sense of discovery. Permits to manage resource impacts and keep use dispersed are fine but fees and difficult to obtain permits are a real downer. People need to be educated. Enforcement of regulations needs to happen for all...grazing permittees and recreational users."*

*"I agree with supporting the lack of fees for backcountry/trailhead uses. It is appropriate for campgrounds or other similar developed areas."*

*"Size limits are usually set too small to accommodate a hiking club or similar themed group."*

*"I think it's very difficult to restrict people from a place from you love. The more people that learn to love an area that's good for the resource."*

*"Restrictions to accessibility—can't take my ATV back into those remote areas to hike."*

*"Leave it the way it is. Don't close things off so that only special people or a small group can get into places and things. Access is important—ATVs, Jeep, bikes, and hiking."*

*"Restrictions of responsible access—excessive restrictions—no more than 12 heartbeats—no competitive events—footraces or mountain biking—historic roads to get to places to hike—seems to be a conflict—remove problems by restricting access or by education about responsible use two choices—finding the cross-over between responsible use and restricted access. "*

*"If they didn't allow dogs or horses it would diminish the specialness of the place for me. I love that there's a place to go hiking with your dog. You can't take a dog to the National Parks."*

- **Increasing number and diversity of visitors**

Another real concern is how to manage the increasing tourism coming into the area, particularly from people who *lack a sense of connection to the place* (29%) which likely includes accommodating a growing number of international visitors (through additional and multi-lingual signage for safety in the backcountry when those visitors don't "know" the place). Visitors without a connection to place can often lead to *culture clashes* (16%) between locals and the visitors their tourism economy partially depends on. Although the iconic feature of "The Wave" in Coyote Buttes is to be discussed in Phase 3 of this study, the displacement of visitors who are unsuccessful gaining access to "The Wave" by the lottery system is putting pressure on the landscape and the recreational experience of the Grand Staircase region where many o after the disappointment of not getting a permit. The comments below show that the impact of The Wave displacement and tourists unfamiliar with the area is affecting the resources all around the area.

*"We have to deal with lots of visitors. GSENM gets international visitors who take their rental car off the pavement but still get stuck in the middle of nowhere, and they don't understand weather and other concerns."*

*"Sometimes, people don't understand what they are doing or understand what this landscape is. They were rolling rocks {vandalism} because they couldn't get into the Wave."*

*They have wrong ideas about wilderness, like it's a park with animals. People are disappointed because they have incorrect perceptions."*

*"Visitation restrictions can diminish the specialness of this place as people want to go to a particular area but not necessarily the area they end up going to. I don't want to go to The Wave; I study Coyote Buttes area, but it is enclosed in The Wave lottery so I can't get there."*

*"I have concerns of lack of connection to land or understanding of the land from people who have not been in the area. They are not aware of what, "leave no trace" really is.*

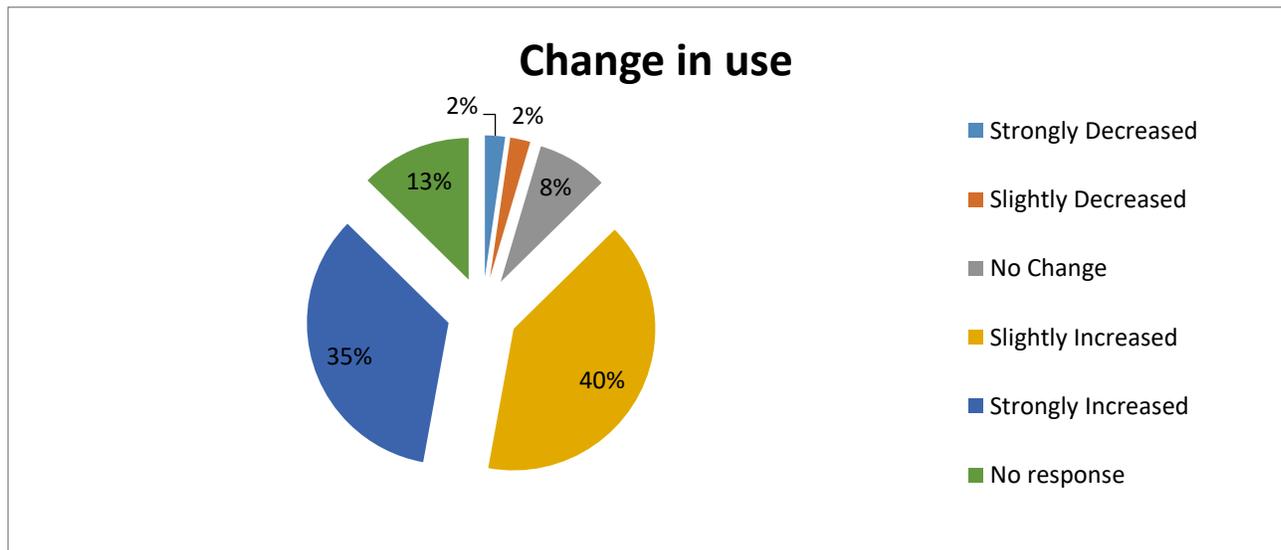
*"People want to hike the Wave but get shuttled over to the Toadstools Trail when they can't get into The Wave. There are social trails going everywhere out there."*

### How has the use of the area changed in the last five years? Has it been for the better or worse?

The next question revolved around the nature of change the participants had noticed and their perception of whether those changes in use were for the better or worse. These questions are related, and when discussing their answers, participants were encouraged to speak both of how much change they had noticed, as well as whether it had made things better or worse, and why. All participants were asked to record their selections on a series of two Likert scales using the audience polling clickers. The first scale recorded how much change in use they noticed in the area over the last five years from strongly decreased to strongly increase with a neutral value of no change in the middle of a 5-point scale. The second scale recorded whether they felt that the change they had indicated had made things much better to much worse with a neutral no change in the middle of a 5-point scale.

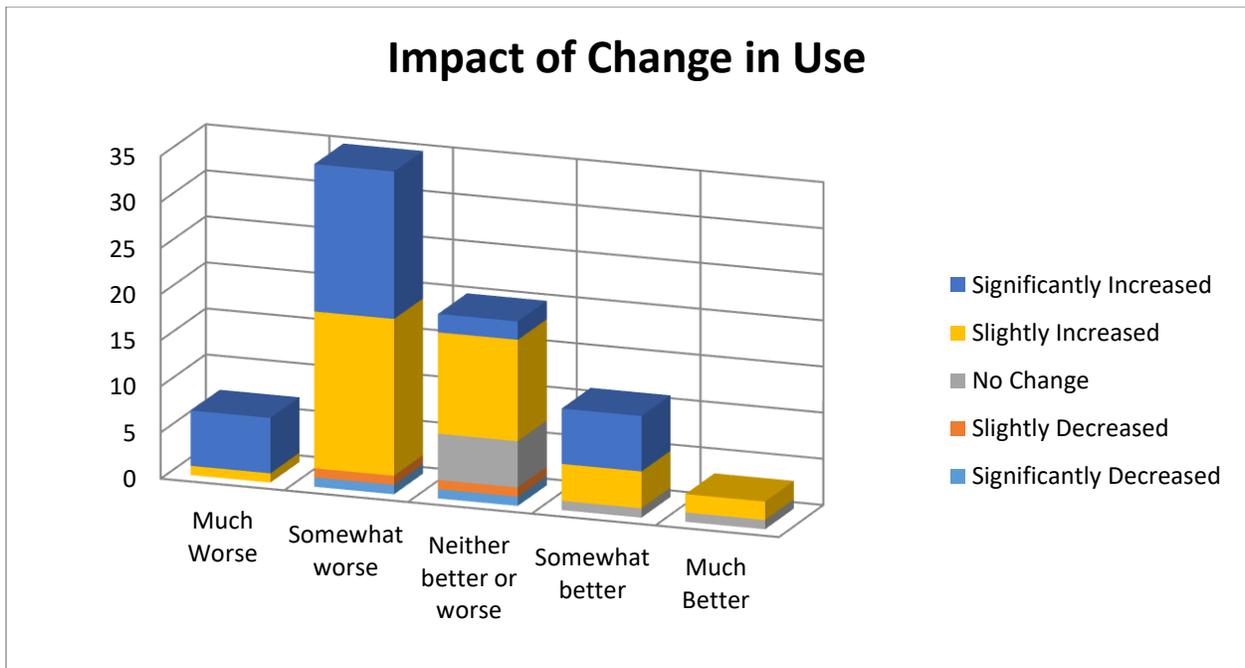
Figure 6 (below) shows the response to the question on the nature of change in use over the last five years.

Figure 6: Nature of Change in Use



It is clear from Figure 6 that use in the Grand Staircase area has increased in the last five years according to the participants in this phase of the study. Three out of every four participants indicated use had increased either slightly or strongly (roughly evenly split between the two). Only 4% of the participants indicated use had decreased in any way from their perspective. Twice that many (8%) indicated they had not seen any change either way. In their clarifying comments several participants indicated that there was a difference in the change between the front country/prominent locations and the backcountry locations. Each of these indicated that while use might be increasing in the front country, they have noticed little change or even a slight decrease in backcountry use.

Figure 7: Value of Change in Use over the Last 5 Years



When considering how the change impacted the landscape and their connection to it; few identified the change in use as making the conditions better. Large numbers of participants who indicated use had increased, also noted that change had made conditions somewhat worse. Seven participants indicated that the change made conditions in the area much worse. This is less than the number of participants that indicated that the increased use had actually made conditions somewhat better. Figure 6 depicts not only the nature of change in use over the last five years in the Grand Staircase region, but the perceived value of that change in use.

The following comments illustrate some of the ways conditions were perceived to be better or worse as a result of the general trend of increased use in the area over the last five years. It appears that determining whether conditions have worsened or not could depend on an individual's affiliation with (and expectations of) the landscape, and the management response to the increased use.

*"I would answer this differently depending on the visit. When there is more crowding or evidence of resource damage I feel it is worse, when I luck out and find solitude I feel the quality is still pretty high."*

*"[It is worse because of] lack of solitude, unconfined recreation. Seeing more campsites, more litter, more human waste, increased impacts from vehicles both on and off roads."*

*"Old timers say there used to be artifacts out there, now there is nothing. We are leaving future generations with less and less of the cultural connections."*

*"It is worse for those that live here, but for tourists, they are seeing a part of the world they would never see. It is totally selfish to want it to myself. It is public land and the public has a right to be a part of it. Management is key."*

*"More people have been able to enjoy the Monument and the beauty out there."*

*"Increased for the worse; resources are strained because of reduced federal budgets and lack of resources to make sure places are protected. Fewer rangers are available."*

### What are your interests and expectations when going out into the Grand Staircase area?

Research has indicated that people visit public lands to achieve a variety of beneficial outcomes and experiences for themselves, their communities, and the environment, while at the same time trying to avoid adverse outcomes and experiences. The list of such outcomes and experiences is extensive, but further research has discovered that people tend to bundle these experiences and expectations into a limited number of profiles of interests and expectations.<sup>2</sup> Participants were given a list of 12 profiles of interests and expectations they might have when visiting the HITS area. Each profile included a descriptive sentence of what someone choosing that profile might say. The profiles and descriptions included the following:

1. **Natural Landscapes** - I like to surround myself with the beauty of open space and the wildness of mountains, forests, rangeland, water and wildlife.
2. **Rural Landscapes** - I want to connect with the visual landscapes, sense of place and pace of rural areas where people make their living from the land.
3. **Cultural & Heritage History** - I am interested in how historic and prehistoric peoples lived in the area, and in exploring the connections I have with those peoples.

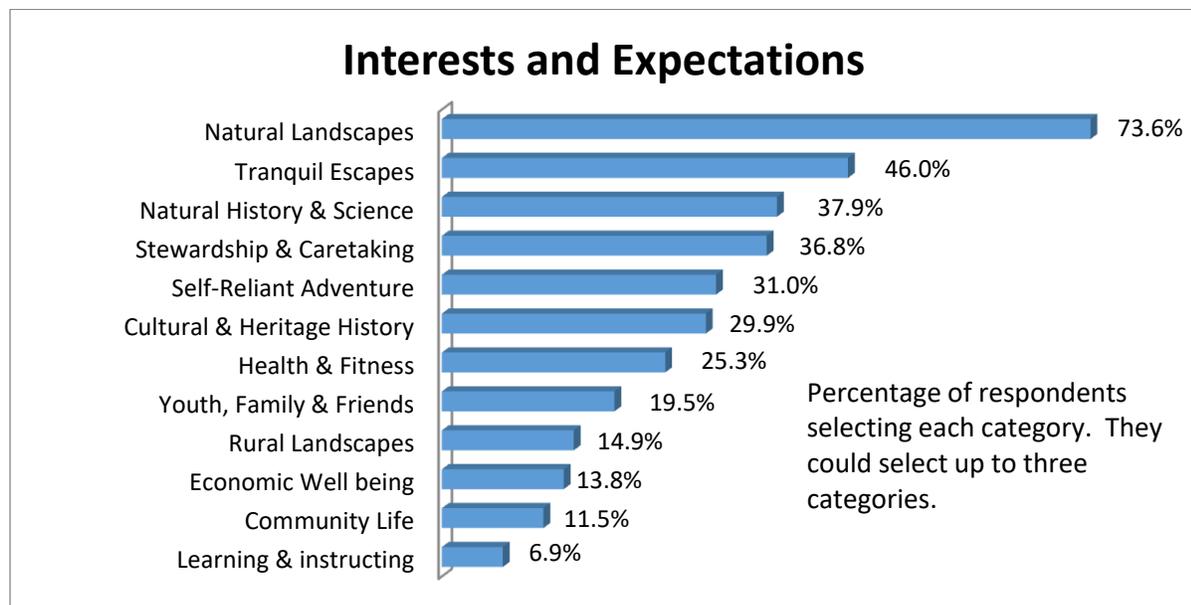
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<sup>2</sup> For a good discussion of the experiences and outcomes that people seek when recreating in public lands see the work of Driver, B.L. and D.H. Bruns. 1999. Concepts and Uses of the Benefits Approach to Leisure. P. 349-369 in Leisure Studies: Prospects for the Twenty-First Century E.L. Jackson and T.L. Burton et al. (eds.). Venture Publishing, State College, PA. Venture. To see the research that narrows the list of experiences and outcomes into profiles of interests and expectations see Parry, B., Gollob, J. and Frans, J. 2014. Benefits of public land usage: an analysis of outdoor recreationists. In Managing Leisure 19(4). That study narrowed the profiles down to eight (8). Those eight (8) are used in this study along with an additional four (4) that were added to more comprehensively capture people's expected experiences and outcomes for recreating in these landscapes.

4. **Natural History & Science** - I am interested in knowing about natural processes in this area and the study of the scientific value of the landscape for enhancing our understanding of the world around us.
5. **Health & Fitness** - I like being able to regularly access public lands recreation areas that help me get and stay fit or improve my mental well-being.
6. **Self-Reliant Adventure** - I prefer outdoor adventure on my own that challenges my outdoor skills, improves my abilities, and maybe even involves some risk.
7. **Tranquil Escapes** - I look forward to the quiet serenity of getting away from it all for some mental and physical relaxation, reflection, and renewal.
8. **Youth, Family & Friends** - I am enriched by socializing with others: young people, my family and/or friends and enjoying companionship in the outdoors together.
9. **Community Life** - I like seeing what the discovery and enjoyment of nearby open space recreation does for my community and our visiting guests
10. **Economic Well-being** - I want to see public lands recreation areas contributing in a significant way to our economic livelihood.
11. **Learning & instructing** - I feel comfortable having others equip and enable me to do recreation and tourism outings—or being part of helping others learn how to do that.
12. **Stewardship & Caretaking** - I like giving back to the outdoors from what I’ve received by helping care for special sites and facilities so others can also enjoy them.

Participants were allowed to select up to three profiles. Figure 8 (below) indicates the percentage of total selections by all participants for particular interest and expectation profile options. Figure 8 (following page) shows the analysis by affiliation preference to see if additional insight could be gained on the motivation for visiting this area and how that might differ depending on who is visiting.

Figure 8: Interest and Expectation Profiles



The most popular sets of interests and expectations for the Grand Staircase area of GSENM are the natural *landscapes* (83%) and *tranquil escapes* (52%). This seems to support the strong interest in the wild, natural, rugged and remote characteristics of much of this landscape where one can find the desired experiences of solitude and renewal of mind and spirit in nature (discussed in earlier sections of this report). There is also a real interest in the learning and discovery characteristics of the *natural history and science* (43%) of this part of the Monument, as well as in *stewardship and caretaking* (42%). This interest in stewardship and caretaking indicates support for programs and management actions to support the unique qualities of the Monument. This affords the BLM staff a great opportunity to work with these potential (and actual) partners to create opportunities to exercise more stewardship and caretaking activities. This might build more support for management decisions and actions as the public takes ownership in those actions through cooperation. Given the small number of participants selecting the Learning and Instructing (8%), one might conclude that much of this discovery and study is self-directed.

Figure 9: Interest and Expectations by Affiliation

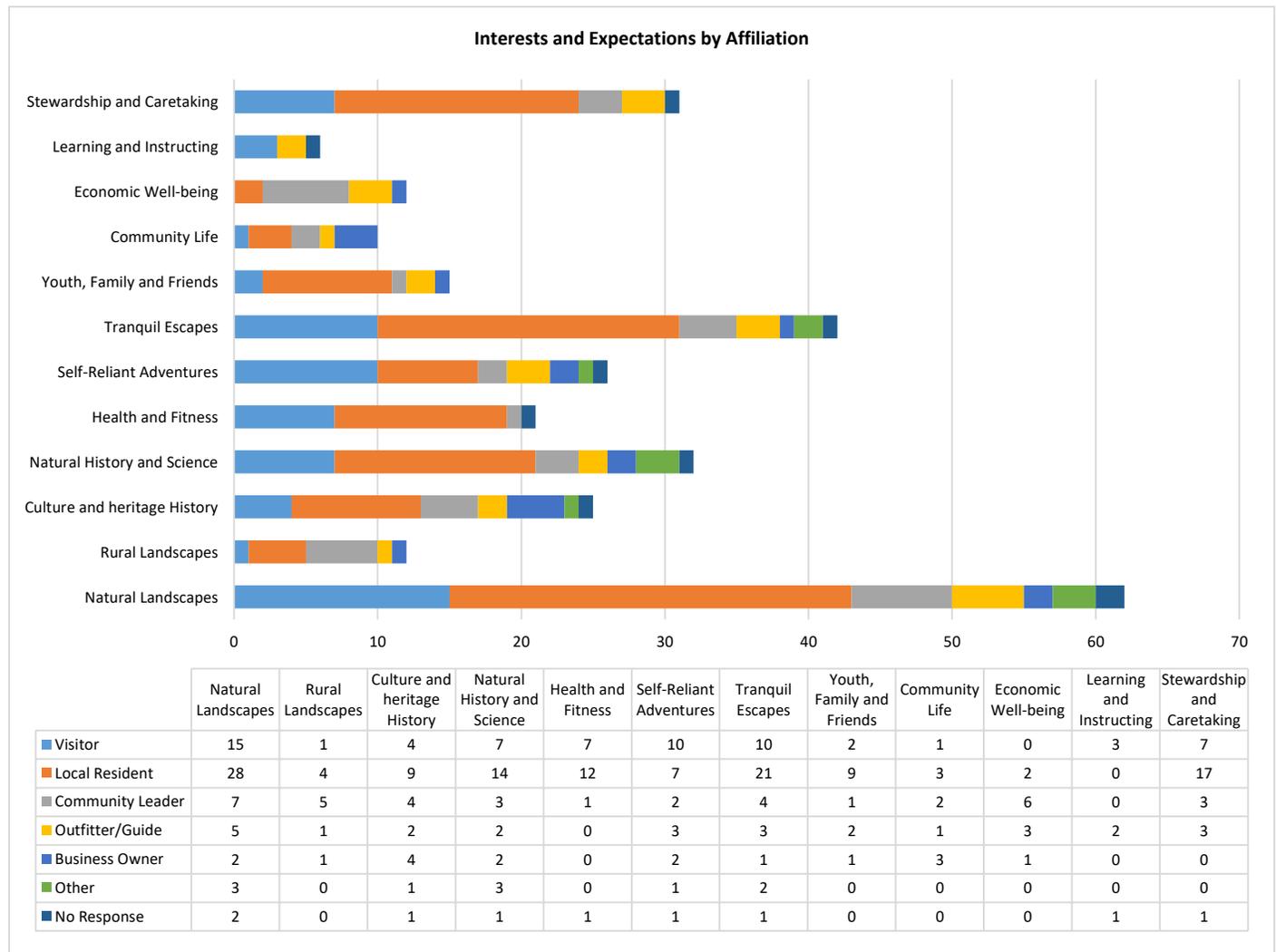


Figure 9 above displays preferences for particular interest and expectations of the landscape by affiliation. Read left to right the colors in sequence in the bar chart correspond to the attributes with color next to them from top to bottom in the table. The bar chart identifies the percentage of each option that was selected by a participant with a particular affiliation. For example, of those that chose local resident as their affiliation, nearly 20% selected natural landscapes as one of their choices, far fewer selected rural landscapes. For clarity, the table below the bar chart shows the number of participants in each affiliation that selected each of the interest and expectation options. It should be noted again, that they could chose up to three options.

Some values such as natural landscapes, tranquil escapes, cultural and heritage history, and self-reliant adventures appear in every affiliation. Other values such as health and fitness and stewardship and caretaking have relevance for some affiliations such as visitors and local residents, but less so for outfitters/guides and business owners. The value with perhaps the greatest divergence between affiliations was Learning and Instructing. This value of learning about the area by having others teach about it was perhaps predictably more important to the visitors and those instructing them (outfitters /guides), but not identified as a top value by those who are more familiar with the landscape such as local residents, community leaders, and business owners.

The following sample of comments illustrates the diversity of opinions about the interests and expectations (value profiles) of the landscape.

*“From Kanab to Boulder the Monument covers such an extraordinary spectrum of landscapes that it is hard to narrow it down to single points. I enjoy the entire place. It provides opportunity for vehicular access to beautiful landscapes in a number of areas, while others allow you to get out and hike through wild terrain for weeks on end.”*

*“To immerse in a landscape where I FEEL part of wild nature. Where I FEEL more alive and connected to the Earth than anywhere else on Earth.”*

*“Hiking in GSENM is invigorating, inspirational. It contributes to my physical and mental well-being. I just love the hell out of the place!”*

*“Nice that it can be economically enhancing so that things don’t have to be extractive.”*

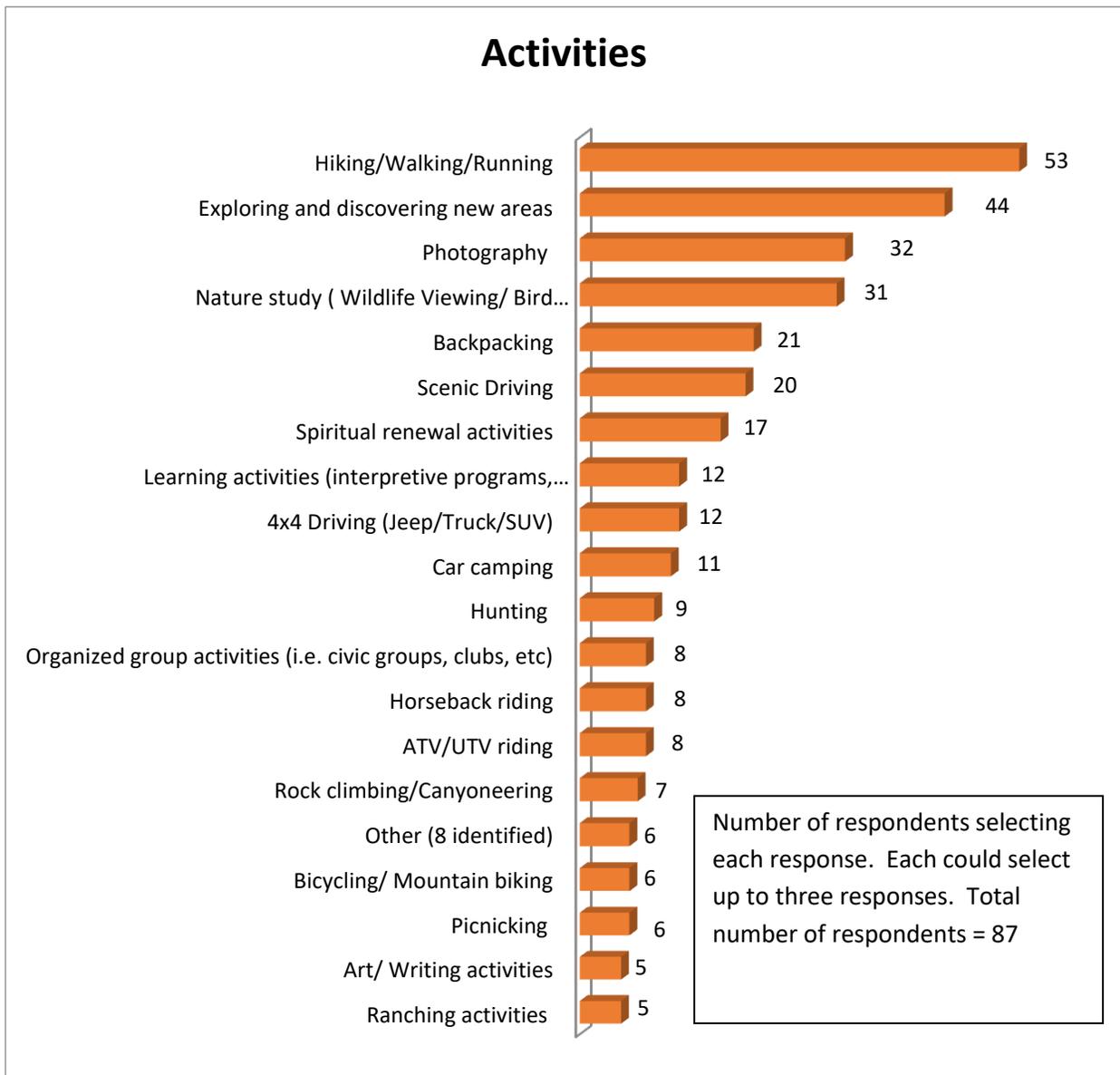
*“I like the openness of it; if I lived in Las Vegas or California I’d come here because there are so many places that are restricted there.”*

## Activities

Traditional recreation studies on public lands typically begin by determining which activities people engage in, then determining how and whether those activities could be supported by the land base. More contemporary recreation studies focus instead on the interests, expectations and benefits the public receives from recreating on public lands and the settings necessary to provide them, recognizing

that a variety of activities can provide similar benefits and meet expectations if the settings needed remain intact. Also, discussing preferred activities has a tendency to allow people to form “tribes” and allow stereotypes to cloud interactions. For these reasons, activities were not discussed until midway through each focus group during this study. After discussing the specialness of the place, threats to it, and participants’ interests and expectations, they were asked to select up to three activities they engaged in most often from a prepared list. Participants could select more than one activity and had the option of selecting "other" then were asked to clarify it. Figure 10 shows the number of participants that selected any given activity.

Figure 10: Activities Engaged in Most Often



When asked to choose the activities they engage in most often, a significant majority of participants selected hiking/walking/running (69%) as their top activity. A number of activities highlighted the observation, study and learning objectives outlined in the GSENM Management Plan. Examples include chronicling their visit with photography (42%), and nature study (40%) as well as more formal learning opportunities (16%) and the less formal self-guided discovery and exploration of the area (57%). Vehicles use plays a role for many participants in the area through activities such as scenic driving (26%), use of 4x4 vehicles (16%), and ATV/UTV riding (10%) as well as car camping (14%) and even back-county aviation which was mentioned several times in the comments. Another activity that is taking place on the landscape, but was not among the options in the list, is wilderness or outdoor therapy activities where participants are on the landscape for extended periods of time under a special recreation permit.

The results of this question indicate that there is significant preference for non-motorized recreation though recreational activities on this landscape are certainly not limited to only those pursuits, and that recreational plans in the area will need to address the diversity of activities that occur. The following comments from the meetings provide a more nuanced understanding of this recreational activity mosaic.

*“Explore landscape and make connection between landscapes.”*

*“Camping and four wheeling gives us access to hike and camp.”*

*“I like helping others discover the beauty of the outdoors while reconnecting with who they are by being part of nature and understanding our connection and stewardship with the land that provides us with everything we enjoy. “*

*“I can't choose only 3: I would say “human powered recreation” (which for me is foot or bike travel because I don't own a horse).”*

## Most Important Places Mapping

In order to contextualize comments from the focus groups as about the Grand Staircase area, participants were asked to identify particular areas of importance by writing place names on sticky notes and attaching them to the general location of the place on a large map. They were also asked “*Why is this area particularly special?*” They could either record those responses on the sticky notes or verbalize them in the discussion afterwards. Figure 11 indicates the most commonly articulated places and the discussion that follows captures some of the conversations about the places identified. The table includes the top 34 locations named by frequency, but there were a total of 288 places identified of which there were 114 unique locations named. The table contains all places that were mentioned at least three times by different participants which correlate to 30% of the total number of unique special places identified, and 68% of all special places identified. It is clear from this sample that the area is a diverse complex of special places, few of which are special to everyone, but many of which are particularly important to some people. All sites identified, along with their locations and comments on

why they are special, was recorded and mapped and included in the data provided to GSENM as a result of this study.

Figure 11: Identified Special Places

<u>Location Name</u>	<u>Number of selections</u>	<u>% of total special places named</u>	<u>Management</u>
Hackberry Canyon	16	5.56%	GSENM
Willis Creek	15	5.21%	GSENM
Cottonwood Road	11	3.82%	GSENM
No Man's Mesa	10	3.47%	GSENM
Bull Valley Gorge/Wash	9	3.13%	GSENM
Yellow Rock	9	3.13%	GSENM
Flag Point	8	2.78%	GSENM
Paria River	8	2.78%	GSENM
Cockscomb	7	2.43%	GSENM
Nephi Pasture	7	2.43%	GSENM
Glass Eye	6	2.08%	GSENM
Johnson Canyon Road	6	2.08%	GSENM
Kitchen Corral	6	2.08%	GSENM
Lick Wash	6	2.08%	GSENM
Paria Box Canyon	5	1.74%	GSENM
Skutumpah Road	5	1.74%	GSENM
Between The Creeks	4	1.39%	GSENM
Cottonwood Narrows	4	1.39%	GSENM
Johnson Canyon	4	1.39%	GSENM
Johnson Canyon Lakes	4	1.39%	GSENM
Molly's Nipple	4	1.39%	GSENM
Round Valley/Round Valley Draw	4	1.39%	GSENM

Sheep Creek	4	1.39%	GSENM
Vermilion Cliffs	4	1.39%	VCNM
Deer Creek/Paria	3	1.04%	GSENM
Four Mile Bench	3	1.04%	GSENM
Grosvenor Arch	3	1.04%	GSENM
Inchworm Arch	3	1.04%	GSENM
Kitchen Canyon	3	1.04%	GSENM
Long Canyon	3	1.04%	GSENM
Red Breaks	3	1.04%	GSENM
Seamen's Wash	3	1.04%	GSENM
Starlight Arch	3	1.04%	GSENM
Toadstool	3	1.04%	GSENM

The comments that surfaced as to why these places are special varied from unique qualities of the place to personal connections to the place. Some of the special places identified were highlighted because of concerns for resource damage that is taking place at the location. Many of the comments referred to the scenic qualities of the place, while others identified important features of the landscape such as historic characteristics, geologic formations and the uniqueness of the ecosystems. Access to these special places is an important part of their specialness for many participants. Some access is easy where as some is challenging and both were valued. Some participants expressed the need to understand better the impact of diverse demands on these special places in order to maintain their special characteristics.

A sample of the comments provides greater understanding of why places were identified, such as:

*“Hackberry is another fantastic backcountry area. The Cottonwood Wash road, via the Cockscomb also gives backdoor access to the Kaiparowits Plateau region. “*

*“The Cut has great views, rarely visited. It is a unique area for fossils and geology.”*

*“The Old Parea Township Site is important for its historical and archeological sites.”*

*“The access to canyon hikes from Cottonwood Road and Johnson Canyon Road is unequalled. Easy access to get into these unique ecosystems.”*

*“Between the Creek for the view, the height of the canyon walls - the access can be rocky and a little rough which adds to the remote feeling of the place.”*

*“Each time I visit GSENM I find new areas that are fabulous. They are all important in creating the sense of discovery, diversity of the area, expanse of the area, ability to get out and find incredible areas to explore and enjoy. “*

## Settings

### Is it the place or the activity or both that is most important to you?

There is a good deal of debate among academics and practitioners of recreational management on public lands as to whether the place is most important and people simply chose activities to enjoy the places where they want to be; or whether the activities they engage in are most important and they simply look for ideal places to engage in their chosen activities. The answer to this debate is likely to have a direct impact on the way the area is managed in order to provide desired setting characteristics. To better understand how these debate plays out in the Grand Staircase area, participants were asked whether the place is most important to them, or the activity, or a combination of the two.

This dichotomy turns out to be more of a constructed debate among academics and land managers than in the preferences of the participants involved in this study. Most of the participants (75%) said that both place and activity were important to them. The second most popular selection was that the place itself is inherently special (10%) and activity was only selected by 3% of all participants. Specific comments offered by the participants offer some clarification into the thinking behind their selections:

*“I first visited the Monument because of the activity: canyoneering. But now, I'm so in love with this place that I'm happy to just be there; doesn't matter what I'm doing.”*

*“For me, flying in remote areas is an act of discovery. While doing so, I love to practice the discipline of backcountry aviation, as well as backpack, camp, hike, even hunt and fish, depending upon the characteristics of the area. “*

*“Place matters because of the lack of people and the uniqueness of place—archeological, geological, biological are all special. I choose activities that don't diminish the specialness of the place, but add to its specialness: birding, hiking, canyoneering, spiritual experience.”*

*“This is hard to separate. We moved here because of the multitude of slot canyons to explore, so it started as activity. Over time the place has become important. Now I feel ownership of the place.”*

*“These areas provide a diversity of interest that is hard to find in other places.”*

*“Each place is special to each person based on the events that occurred or the time of life that we discovered them. The activity is something that adds to or helps others maybe find that connection as well. It's such a hard balance to find between them as a special place is special to each of us. “*

*"I could recreate the way I do in many places... but the Monument is a special place that is unique. I value this place beyond what I do there. Just being there is the key."*

### Crowding Analysis Using Series of Black and White Landscape Images

One of the principle considerations for land managers and recreation planners is the setting characteristics for the landscape that should be tied to particular interests and expectations of the public. Unfortunately, the settings matrix used to determine the appropriate setting (primitive to urban) along at least 16 different setting characteristics (see Appendix 2) can be overwhelming to members of the public, so it is difficult to determine what really matters most.

In order to get at what matters most to the participants in terms of setting characteristics related to the issue of crowding, a series of black and white images without any sign of other visitors were offered. The same discussion prompt, *"If you came across other people while visiting the scene in this photo, how many people would be too many people before it would change the character of the place for you?"* was included with each image. Since many public landscapes have prescriptions that limit the number of people in some way, the prompt was good to begin discussion; but more important than the number assigned, was the rationale participants used to make their determinations<sup>3</sup>. Open-ended discussion was encouraged before participants were asked to record a number with the clickers.

The three images in the series and the comments they generated are shared below.

#### Image #1 – Representative Large Scale Landscape



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<sup>3</sup> This is interesting to note, because one of the major management tools to maintain characteristics of the landscape is the ability to assign a number to the total visitor count in an area, and the group size in an area. The fact that every focus group responded to a numeric question by suggesting "it depends on..." might cause one to rethink some of those prescriptions.

The first image was a black and white image of a large scale landscape without people in the scene so that participants would be able to use their imagination to locate people in the scene in order to comment on how many were too many. The scale of this landscape generated a number of comments regarding the larger number of people that could be absorbed without changing the character of the area, what those people were doing, and how close they were to the observer. While participants generally noted the values of solitude and the wildness of the landscape, asking about crowding in such a large scale landscape helped to clarify how the scale of the landscape, as well as the proximity, visibility, group size and activities of other people affect those values of solitude and wildness in the landscape. The following comments are an example of the overall conversations that arose surrounding this particular landscape image.

- *“Depends on how close they are to me. In the foreground 12+ would be too many. In the background and scattered, 200 would be too many. The activity is a key. If they were on an ATV making noise, one would be too many. Horses maybe 12 would be too many. If it were hikers, maybe 15 in one group would be too many.”*
- *“Depends on how close I am to the other people. There could be a lot of people out there. If I have to use my binoculars to see them they don’t bother me.”*
- *“That country holds a lot of people and you wouldn’t be stepping on each other. You could walk across there with 100 people and never notice it.”*
- *“This large of a landscape, it would depend on the visibility. If there were 50 people in blaze orange, compared to 200 people in subdued browns and greens that wouldn’t impact my experience nearly as much.”*
- *“I feel safer in a group. If you are not used to vastness, you might need to get closer to them, even if you don’t know them.”*
- *“What they were doing might affect me—if they’re doing what we are doing I’m more favorable.”*
- *“Smaller parties are different than larger groups which make it seem more cluttered.”*
- *“The landscape is huge and multiple groups could be using various canyons. If there was a huge group all in one spot, that would be negative for my visual experience.”*

Image #2 – Grosvenor Arch



This second image is a smaller scale landscape and includes the iconic feature Grosvenor Arch which has been widely publicized and is perhaps one of the most recognized locations in the Phase 2 study area. As such, many of the comments indicated that because it was such an iconic image, they expected to see more people around the area. Although the scale of the landscape depicted is smaller and participants expressed concerns about more people in close proximity, they also recognized that this area with developed facilities such as a toilet, picnic tables and a paved walkway) is likely to attract many visitors and it was generally acceptable to expect more people in these iconic areas. The following sample of comments underscores these changed expectations.

*“It’s a small landscape with high volume of traffic, but you’re not looking for a wilderness experience.”*

*“You’re gonna see people there. You know that before you go. But I know that if you go around it, and there’s nobody there.”*

*“If there were a dozen people there I’d drive by. It’s a destination. When I go to a place, I prefer solitude. I don’t begrudge people access; I want them to come.”*

*“The Grosvenor’s Arch is iconic so it attracts a lot of front-country visitors. One would expect to see larger numbers gathered around or walking on the walkways. I would not consider it to be unattractive and it would not ruin my experience. If I did not want to see a lot of people, I would avoid “named” spots like this.”*

*"It's an iconic image. When I go to the Louvre I want to see the Mona Lisa; I expect to see people, just like here. I am mentally prepared to see many people."*

*"Some areas lend themselves to needing some improvements- rest rooms or parking lots. Not a whole lot different than Bryce Canyon [that has] more people."*

*"Paved pathway going all the way to the arch. It's more developed and I know that there are picnic tables, a walkway, restrooms."*

*"Occasionally I have people who have difficulty walking, so for people I take out, I appreciate places like this for that reason."*

*"Photographers don't want a ton of people, photographic situation, reasonable number, not obscuring landscape or crowd scene."*

Image #3 – Willis Creek Canyon



The final image was taken in Willis Creek Canyon. The close nature of the canyon walls had an impact on the participant's responses. Generally, this setting had the fewest number of other people tolerated by participants; however, several did indicate that there is a time dimension to using the area when answering that question. If other people were moving through the canyon, one might need to simply wait a little bit before the crowding issue solves itself as those others move on. The following comments offer a description of the participant's reaction to this image.

*“Depends on if there is water there or if it is raining. Depends on the kind of people. This is a very limited place. No more than a few. There is more of spirituality to this place.”*

*“Knowing that it’s a popular hike I would expect to see some people, but not 2 dozen and that amount of noise.”*

*“This is a slot canyon area, narrow passage way. I like the isolation and solitude of it.*

*“A lot depends on if the people are with me or in other groups. I would not mind seeing a number of people recreating with me. But if I ran into multiple groups of lots of people, that would have a negative aspect.”*

Several comments focused on the impact larger numbers of people would have on the solitude experience, particularly as it relates to noise and visual impacts which are magnified in a slot canyon.

*“I would want to be in this canyon alone—like feeling solitude—I wouldn’t mind passing a small group of people—not like Zion Narrows—small number of people is best in this image.”*

*“Noise level and how boisterous they are. If there are a lot of them, [and I am] taking a picture and there were people there, it would diminish my experience.”*

*“Slot canyons special because of topography. Channel people, big groups look bigger in a spot like this.”*

*“Behavior, in a place like this commotion and noise is amplified.”*

When considering this image, several participants raised the issue of displacement of visitors from The Wave which is limited by lottery to 20 visitors per day and their impact on expectations of crowding in this area.

*Willis and Lick area are full of yuppie cars of people that don’t get into The Wave—but where do you send them when they lose? But then all those folks in the same place not the kind of experience you want them to have.*

*Large groups of Europeans who don’t get permit for The Wave will have an impact on the experience, but I understand the reason they are there and some other places on the Monument.*

Other participants indicated that to answer the question of how many would be too many, they would need to consider time - how many people would be in the area at the same time seemed as important as the question of how many people were there.

*“It’s a matter of timing. You can sit and wait for people to leave. As a photographer one is too many.”*

*“Timing is everything and you can’t restrict everyone. If you live close you know when good times to avoid people are.”*

*“Time and space matter. It depends if you are there all day or for an hour.”*

### Landscape Imagery Analysis

In general, there was reluctance amongst participants to assign a number answering the question, “*How many would be too many?*” to each image, but after extensive discussion several participants did so with the polling clickers. Fewer participants answered these questions related to crowding than any other question in the focus group. While other questions generally had 95% or higher participation with clicker responses, these images had response rates ranging from 71% to 62% response rate. This seemed to match the reluctance to respond with a particular number either because it was too contingent on numerous other factors described above, or fear that a specific number could be used to justify restrictions on the number of people who could visit a particular site. In general, for those who did identify a specific number for each photo image, they were more tolerant of higher numbers of visitors in a setting represented by the Grosvenor Arch image because of its accessibility and iconic nature. To a lesser extent, they were tolerant of higher numbers in the large scale landscape setting. Likewise, they were least likely to offer a number for human encounters in the intimate canyon setting image because of the smaller scale of the place and the desire to be uncrowded. Although there were exceptions to these general trends; taken together, the comments and numbers of acceptable people in the images indicate that some of the key determining factors that impact perceptions of crowding include the scale of the landscape, the activities and proximity of other people, impacts to quiet and visual values of the area, the accessibility and level of development, and the familiarity of the site. The more accessible a setting, the larger the scale of the landscape, and the more known a setting is (iconic), the more one expects to see others. Several comments indicate that these are significant criteria for visitors and locals as they try to determine where they will recreate based on crowding.

### Analysis of Road Development Preferences Using Black and White Images

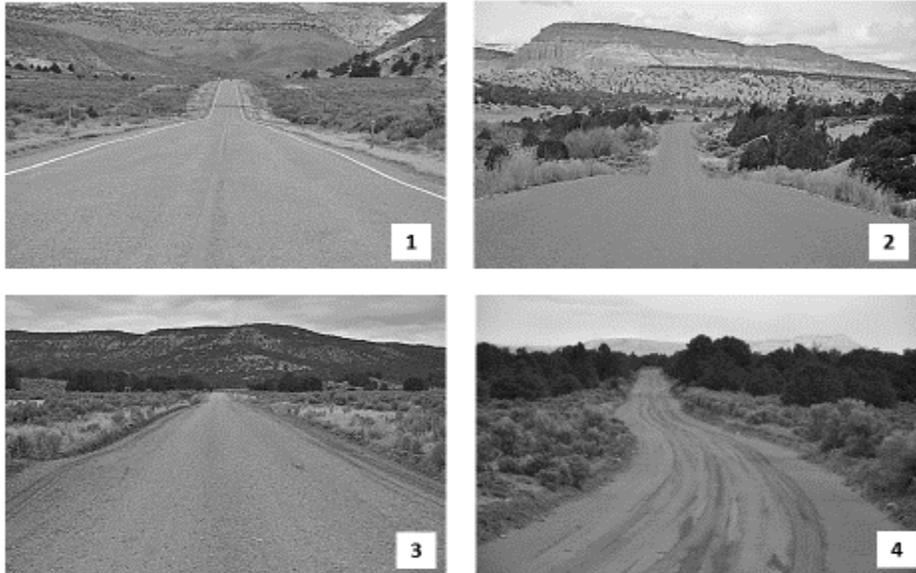
Participants were asked to compare images depicting various levels of road development in the Grand Staircase area to determine their preferences for travelling within the landscape. There were two sets of images. The first set asked participants about primary roads in the area (these were defined as roads such as Cottonwood Road, Skutumpah Road, Glendale Bench Road, etc.). The second set asked participants about secondary roads (defined as those roads spurring off the primary roads accessing specific recreational destinations such as the road through Nephi Pasture Road, Brigham Plains Road, Rock Springs Bench Road, etc.).

#### Primary Roads

The four images provided for the primary road question are shown in Figure 15 (below). The explanations associated with each photo included:

- Photo 1 – An asphalt paved road with painted striping
- Photo 2 – An asphalt paved road with no striping
- Photo 3 – A crowned and ditched gravel road – regularly maintained
- Photo 4 – A natural surface road - regularly maintained

Image Set 1: Primary Road Development Preference Images

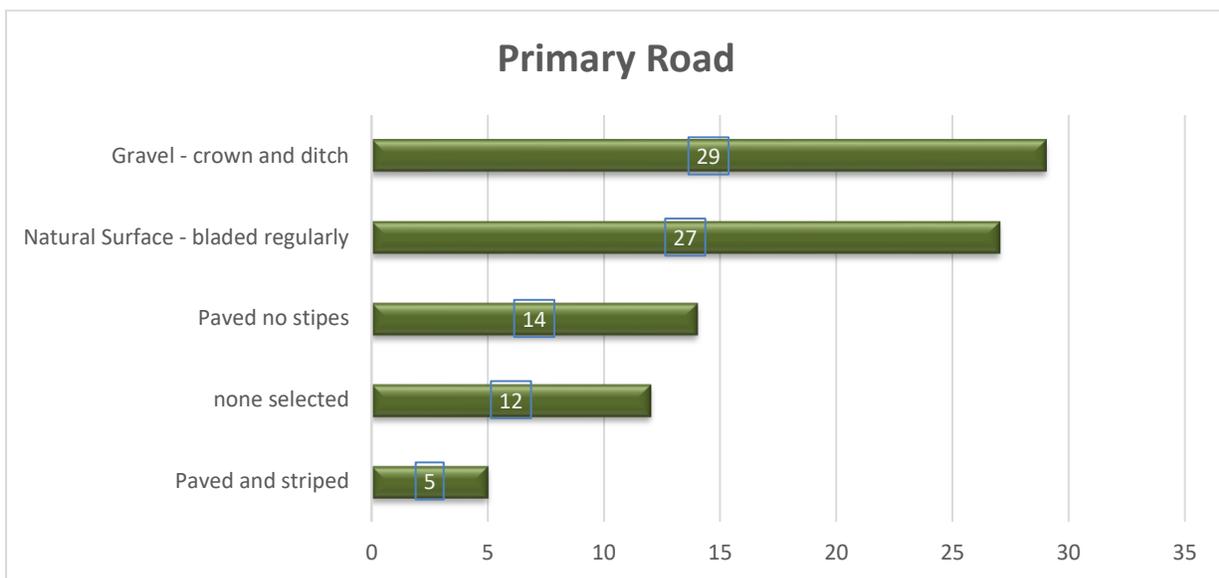


Which of these do you prefer as primary road?

23

Participants were allowed to select only one option when asked, “Which road would you prefer as a primary road when traveling through or going to recreate in the Grand Staircase area?” Figure 12 shows the percentage each choice was selected. The data revealed a preference for non-paved options (#3 and #4) from the majority of the participants. Within the non-paved options there was a pretty even split between the gravel and natural surface roads for the primary routes through the Grand Staircase area.

Figure 12: Primary Road Development Preferences



The most popular selection among the 87 participants that responded to this question was the crowned and ditched road (33%). This was followed closely by the natural surface road (31%). Nearly two of every three participants indicated a preference for non-paved roads. Only 22% of the participants identified one of the paved options as their preference, with 14% not offering any selection. While it is important to remember that these percentages are not generalizable to the larger population, they illustrate trends among those willing to commit the time and effort to participate in one of the focus groups, and thus show an active interest in GSENM management actions related to development of roads and travel corridors.

This set of questions illustrates the value of a mixed methodology in which participants not only select an option, but are able to offer comments about why they made their selection. The additional comments are useful information for managers and local officials responsible for determining the conditions of the roads in and around GSENM. Comments offered in clarification of their choices support leaving roads less developed, although an important minority of participants expressed support for the development of access to various points on the Monument for visitors who might not otherwise be able to access them.

The comments can be grouped along several themes. First, there were numerous comments about how the destination impacts the condition of the route. Clear distinctions were made between transiting through the Monument to get to from one community to another and a journey to undertake recreation activities. Primary roads in the Grand Staircase region of the Monument serve dual purposes as both travel corridors connecting communities and as routes to recreational destinations. The following comments illustrate these distinctions.

#### Theme #1 - Destination

*“Depends on where you’re going—trying to get to town and you have to go through the Monument as opposed to going to see a ruin. “*

*“Depending on where you’re headed 2 or 3 would be fine, but if I am headed for a backcountry experience I want 3 or 4.”*

*“It depends on if I am going to somewhere else or onto the landscape. Page, Arizona would be number 1. If I were traveling to explore a destination, I would prefer 4.”*

*“What am I doing? Am I going to Cedar City or am I going hiking?”*

#### Theme #2 - Crowding

Some participants commented on the trade-off between developed roads and the solitude experience that might be adversely affected by larger number of visitors. Participants noted this while acknowledging the need to accommodate the increasing number of visitors who are likely to come in the future. This accommodation of future increased use includes protection of the landscape from damage and the safety of the visitors themselves.

*“Complicated because it’s neat to drive on good roads, but these roads mean more people.”*

*“Primary roads do need to accommodate the general public, but there don’t need to be many that are considered primary.”*

*“I chose number 4 because I think less people will travel on this road and this makes me happy. Tougher roads narrow down the users.”*

*“For tourists that (No. 1) is what they expect to see when they come up Skutumpah. They see the spur off of Willis Creek and GPS tells them that it’s a short way to get to Bryce Canyon. They don’t realize it’s a dead end road. I work with search and rescue and ambulance and in the winter when situations are dire and we get calls 5 or 6 times a winter. There have been fatalities because people don’t know what to expect.”*

*“Harder question, images 1 and 2 I’m absolutely not going to have my clients {Wilderness Therapy} close to; however, road 3 is definitely helpful for medical access.”*

*“#2 is preferred; visitors are not causing damage to the surrounding landscape because of the roadway.”*

*“The quality of 4 is that people will be driving slowly (hopefully); fewer people. But if the dirt road is in a sensitive area that would be better protected with a higher level of stability, then I would prefer another level.”*

### Theme #3 - Setting

Road conditions also have an impact on the recreational experience people have in the landscape. Several comments indicated that the roads should match the natural, remote and rugged character of the area and contribute to achieving the much desired solitude experience (as documented elsewhere throughout this report).

*“Part of the remote adventure: travelling into the Monument. If it got paved, you’d just whiz right through it. I would hate to see it commodified. Speed has a lot to do with my experience. Duration of relationship with the landscape—spiritual renewal and if I go slow then that happens—vs. getting to the place and then I have my experience.”*

*“I am little conflicted on it, I answered 4, I like slow speeds, more engaged with the landscape, but part of me wants to have a gravel road because if it gets wet I don’t want to get stuck.”*

*“The setting is so wild you want the road to be compatible with experience.”*

### Theme #4-Type of access

Finally, several comments were made regarding how a particular road type might impact the access to certain vehicles or accessories used to travel through and recreate in the area.

*“Depending on what I’m doing - if I’m road biking or trail biking.”*

*“We need better roads for 4X4 and ATV travel.”*

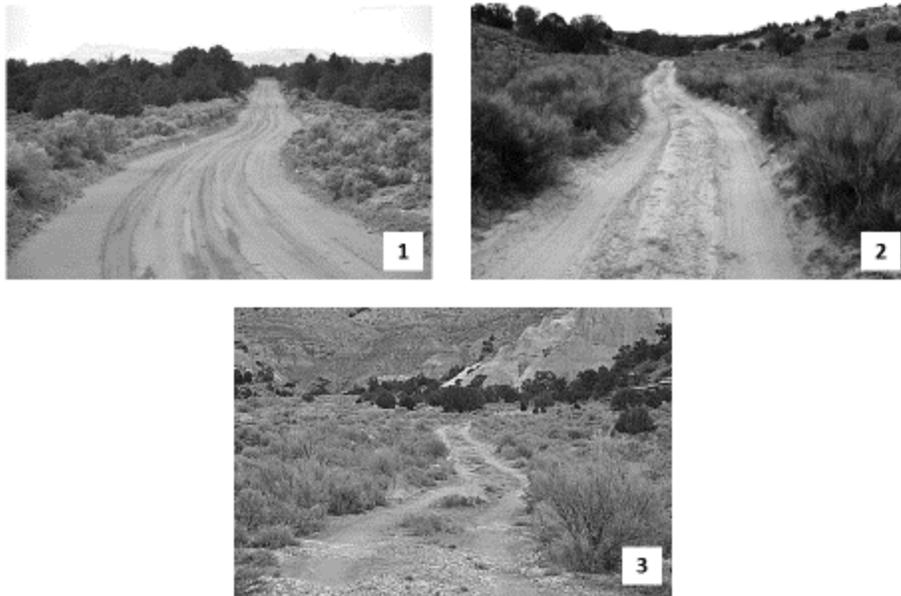
*“I picked road 2, since I might want to pull a pop-up camper.”*

## Secondary Roads

After discussing the relative merits of several primary road options, participants were asked to compare a second set of three images depicting various levels of road development for secondary roads. The three images provided for the secondary road question are shown in Image Set 2 and included:

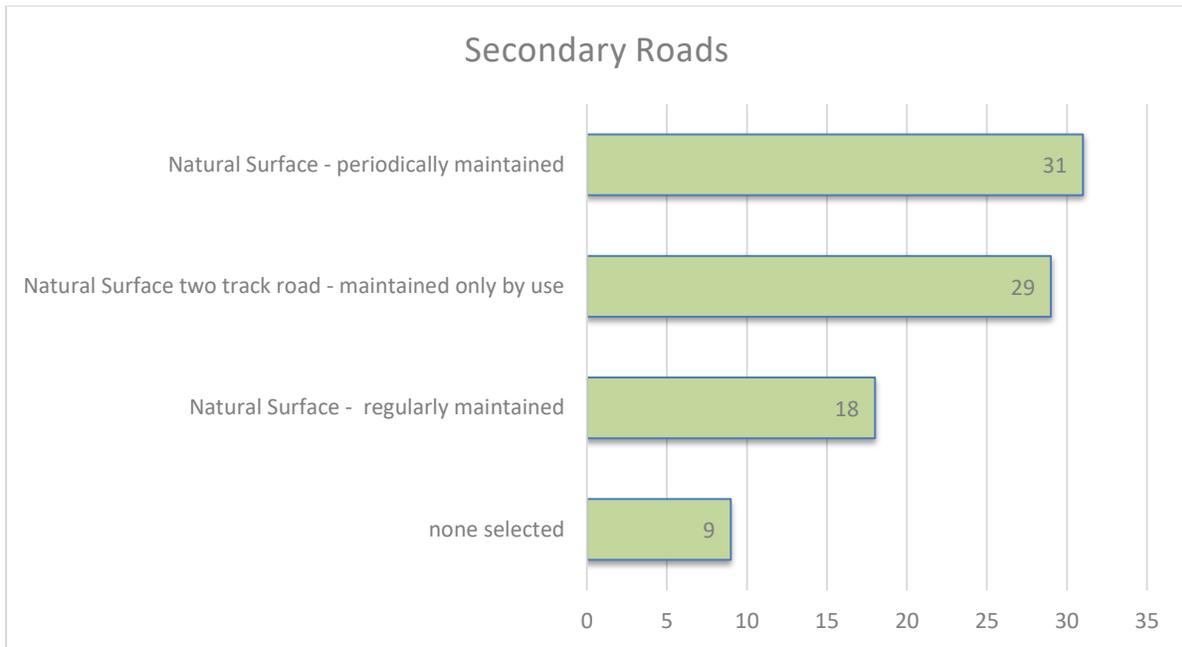
- Photo 1 – A natural surface road – regularly maintained
- Photo 2 – A natural surface road - periodically maintained (every few years)
- Photo 3 – A natural surface two-track road - maintained only by use

**Image Set 2: Secondary Road Development Preference Images**



Participants were allowed to select only one option when asked, “Which road would you prefer as a secondary road when traveling through or going to recreate in the Grand Staircase area?” Figure 13 shows the number of participants who selected each choice.

Figure 13: Secondary Road Development Preferences



The selections made by the participants do not reveal a clear pattern as they were fairly evenly split between Road 2 - periodically maintained natural surface at 36% and Road 3 - no maintenance, two-track natural surface at 33%. Even Road 1 - regularly maintained natural surface had a significant number of participant preferences at 21%. With such an evenly matched set of preferences it is even more important to try to understand why participants made the selections they did through the comments. Comments offered in clarification of their choices offer a variety of issues that impacted their decision making which, again, might usefully be organized along a set of themes.

#### Theme #1 – Character of the experience

Similar to the responses for primary roads, participants identified a number of recreational experience characteristics such as ruggedness, wildness, scenic qualities and solitude that would be impacted by the type of secondary roads in the Monument, and generally preferred less developed roads in order to maintain those qualities. For example:

*“I chose 3 because I find better places where there aren’t a lot of people along those roads. It is more about the experience.”*

*‘One of the things when you have an area that is intended to be remote - then roads should be remote and hard roads making it hard to get to.’*

*“#3 because it seems to have the least visual impact.”*

*“#3 least degrading activity. #3 still has some of the actual terrain on it. #3 would have less erosion over time.”*

*"I like the more challenging road. I believe that helps protect the remoteness of the resource that so many of us have commented makes the Monument so special."*

*"#3 fits with the risk and sense of adventure."*

#### Theme #2 – Wildlife

Several comments were made about the impact of the roads on the local wildlife habitat, for example:

*"The purpose of retaining wild places is not about humans. Wildlife doesn't like roads. It's not always about humans."*

*"Site-by-site determination to protect environment and does not place wildlife at risk. For instance, sometimes a wide road is difficult for small mammals to cross."*

#### Theme #3- Safety

Another major theme of the comments on secondary roads mirrors the primary road discussion's focus on safety as it relates to road conditions in an area that can easily become inaccessible because of weather or other factors.

*"I want to be able to take a non-high clearance a little ways in. I want to be able to take a high clearance the whole way but I also want to have a low risk of getting stuck if I'm in the appropriate high clearance 4wd vehicle."*

*"I picked 2 (again) since I'd like at least the opportunity to be able to get out if it rains!"*

#### Theme #4-Vehicles

Related to these concerns about safety are comments regarding the amount and type of vehicles encountered and how the road conditions enable or inhibit these interactions. Depending on what the participant desires, these can be positive or negative effects.

*"I will vote here for #1 because many times I have come across vehicles on the roads who don't want to move over or help others pass. They expect that everyone else should get off the road, and 1 allows an easier passing of 2 vehicles. Whereas in number 2, someone has to drive off into the bushes to allow others to pass etc. including ATVs and tractors."*

*"I think it is important to be able to distinguish actual "roads" from user created routes that can encourage motorized travel in places it is not appropriate."*

*"Has to do with where that road is going and may not even be passable unless you have 4-wheel drive."*

*"When they are maintained, they help keep the roads open for further use."*

While these comments offer more insight into the rationale for the split choice on this question of secondary road preferences, the results are far from conclusive other than the need for a diversity of options when traveling to or through this landscape.

### Management Boundaries

There are many different administrative boundaries (BLM, USFS, NPS, state land, etc.) in the area and it is often times easy to cross from one jurisdiction to another without being aware of them. In order to better understand the challenges and opportunities this presents participants were asked if they were aware when crossing boundaries in the area. If they responded yes, they were also asked to explain whether or not crossing a boundary influenced their behavior, expectations or perceptions.

#### Theme #1 – Management Approaches and Regulations

The following is a sample of some of the comments that were made related to different management approaches and regulations.

*“I generally appreciate the level of management provided by BLM, especially on the Monument. Park Service's emphasis on access and regulation tends to make me feel I am in a museum or an amusement park. This detracts from the power of the landscape for me. I tend to experience a much more powerful feeling in the less structured, more remote sections of the Monument. “*

*“NPS has typically the highest standards; BLM the lowest.”*

*“It does matter to me what kind of public land it is. For example, I expect more development and use at Kodachrome Basin State Park than I do hiking off the Cottonwood Road near The Narrows.”*

#### Theme #2– Signs and Maps

Others were concerned that the lack of on the ground signage and adequate maps identifying boundaries might lead to confusion and a diminished recreational experience. For example:

*“Very difficult to know when you cross into State land.”*

*“If you live here, you know where stuff is, but visitors get confused easily, especially foreign visitors.”*

*“Yes, because I have worked for agencies in the past. However, most people have NO CLUE as to administrative boundaries or how use/expectations change with those boundaries. This is a huge problem. Seamless use and consistent management should be paramount and better coordination between agencies needs to happen. The Monument should have the highest level of protection as the “Science Monument”.”*

*“Unless there is something posted, I am not aware of it.”*

*“Boundaries are not always well marked.”*

*“The Monument’s travel map is so poor both in size and detail that it is almost impossible to tell which roads are legal and illegal to travel on... and where you are on the map.”*

*“Not aware when I am moving from one to another. I take a bioregional approach rather than focus on the differences between agencies.”*

### Theme #3– Private Property

Some private land is located in the Grand Staircase area, particularly along Skutumpah and Johnson Canyon Roads. Most participants were concerned that private lands are sometimes not clearly marked. Many expressed a desire to respect private land as the following comments indicate.

*“Private land is an issue. Some people just walk across people’s front yards.”*

*“The only thing that matters as to the boundaries is to know if it's private land and they don't want me on the land.”*

*“I am always leery when entering private land due to unknown expectations of the owner.”*

*“Yes, I use a map so I know when I am on private land. I try to be careful when I am on private land.”*

*“I like to stay on federal land. I am really excited because I feel a sense of ownership. If I am on private land I feel like I don’t belong.”*

### Theme #4– User Conflicts

Finally, several comments were directed toward the conflict over control of roads and grazing in the area that negatively affects the recreational experience.

*“The Monument's administrative boundaries when it comes to grazing are unclear. We've backpacked more than once into a riparian area with cattle polluting the water and have wondered whether these cows were legally allowed to be doing this in the spring when many visitors come to hike in the Monument.”*

*“The recent legal battles over roads are a problem and do cause conflict with roads and use.”*

### Wilderness Study Area Boundaries

Another question was added during this phase that addresses crossing into Wilderness Study Areas (WSA) in the region. Participants were asked if they were aware when they crossed WSA boundaries and if it influenced their expectations, perceptions or actions. The responses to this open-ended question surfaced a wide variety of perspectives on the topic of wilderness, and the management actions associated with WSAs in the area. The following samples of comments identify the key themes to emerge from this conversation.

### Theme #1—Awareness of boundaries

Many participants commented on how difficult it was to determine where the boundaries are, or even to be aware of them at all.

*“Some people don’t worry about them or are not aware of regulations.”*

*“I was not aware, and if I were, it would definitely change my expectations and my activities.”*

*“Most of them are poorly marked if at all and in many cases the maps that exist do not help to know for the average person. “*

*“I am aware visitors don’t care for boundaries. If they have some expectations, WSA’s make it harder for them and they don’t care either way.”*

*“When you do see the signs you are more aware of what is going on in the area.”*

*“I find that the Monument doesn’t adequately inform casual visitors about the importance and the rules associated with WSA’s and Wilderness Areas on the Monument.”*

### Theme #2– Management expectations in WSAs

Where people are aware of the boundaries or the existence of WSAs, they have an expectation that they are managed for wilderness characteristics.

*“I love wilderness study areas—preservation where all creatures can live without being disturbed.”*

*“I am inspired by these areas; it allows nature to exist without interference. “*

*“WSA’s are managed as de-facto Wilderness. I seek out and crave these wild landscapes.”*

### Theme #3- Misunderstanding purpose or activity in WSAs

However, many participants expressed their concern that WSAs “study” period has gone on too long and that officials should make a decision. Several assumed that the reason for the designation had to do with active scientific research in the area, rather than a management prescription using the language of the Wilderness Act.

*“It does matter to me too; hopefully someday someone makes a decision.”*

*“The study never ends. It seems like they put it up to keep ATV’s out. “*

*“Change sign then—it says “study area,” but not studying it.”*

*“Influence perceptions. Sign for study area. Way too often because they don’t have the gonads to enforce laws—No tracks, rangers, biologist, geologist, anthropologists, etc. If you’re going to say you’re doing a study, do a study.”*

*“Even though WSA's have out lived what they were set up to do. I still obey the law concerning them.”*

*“But they provide a good space for educational areas. Some people aren't aware of how to treat these areas.”*

*“Always welcome people doing studies—dinosaur studies, etc.”*

#### Theme #4– Restrictions on recreation

For many, the existence of WSA boundaries was interpreted as restricting or enabling certain types of recreational activity. In the words of the participants:

*“Primitive use - maybe horseback. If I see something in there like an ATV it disturbs me.”*

*“If I'm on foot I'm not doing anything inconsistent with WSA. On foot or on horseback. If I'm driving, I know pretty well where those are.”*

*“If I want to recreate in the absence of motor vehicles, I will pick a WSA.”*

*“I am very aware of activities within WSAs that are not in compliance, and know that Law Enforcement {personnel} can't enforce these rules as required.”*

#### Theme #5 – Land Ethic

Lastly, several participants spoke of the land ethic that treats all areas as if they are wilderness. Thus, the WSA boundary does not matter to them even if they are aware of it.

*“I believe I have been aware. It doesn't change my expectations. It is kind of convoluted, but I don't treat areas differently based on the designation. I don't misuse or throw trash out regardless.”*

*“I am aware, but I treat the landscape the same. Just because there's some sort of administration does not change how I treat the land.”*

*“I treat everything the same as wilderness.”*

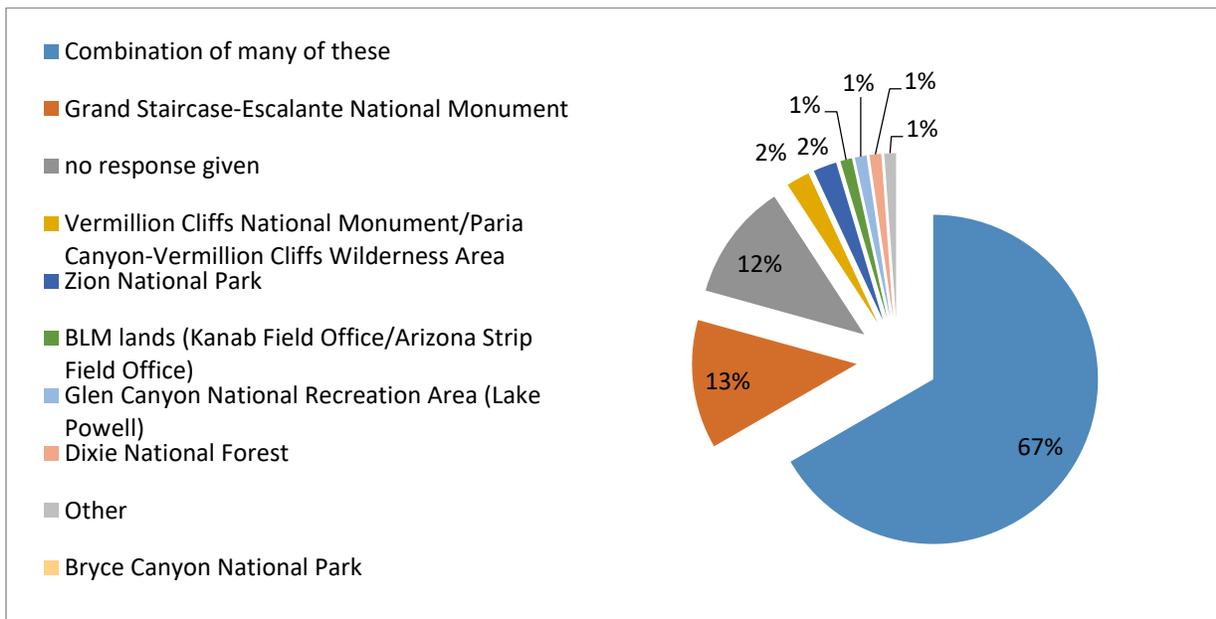
#### When choosing to recreate in the area, where do you spend the most time?

One of the remarkable aspects of the area studied in this phase is the context of the larger landscape the Grand Staircase is set in. Not only is the Grand Staircase area part of the Monument which includes the rugged and remote Kaiparowits Plateau and the stunning Escalante Canyons to the east, but there are numerous other world-class public lands and recreational opportunities in the surrounding areas. These include the Paria Canyon-Vermilion Cliffs Wilderness Area, Vermilion Cliffs National Monument, and other BLM managed lands. Zion National Park is to the west; Capitol Reef National Park is to the east; Bryce Canyon National Park is to the west; Grand Canyon National Park is to the south; and Glen

Canyon National Recreation Area is to the southeast. To the north is Dixie National Forest including The Box-Death Hollow Wilderness Area. Utah State Parks in the area include Coral Pink, Kodachrome, Anasazi, and Escalante Petrified Forest.

With so many recreational opportunities and amazing landscapes in close proximity to the study area, it is important to understand how the Grand Staircase area fits into the mix. To better understand where visitor spend the most time when recreating in the area, participants were provided a list of options including “other” and “a combination of many of these”. They were only allowed to select one option with the clicker but they could also explain their thinking through comments. Figure 14 shows the two out of every three participants selected the combination option. The Monument (13%) was the single largest destination followed by no given response and other BLM lands (2%) in Vermilion Cliffs National Monument and Kanab Field Office. Generally, the most popular choice was by far a combination of destinations.

Figure 14: Destination(s)



Participants indicated that there were a variety of factors that would influence their decision on what destination they chose to recreate at, including seasons, who they are with, crowding, regulations, and accessibility. The following comments are a sample of individual comments that further understanding of how participants choose locations in which to recreate.

*“When I have family and friends come to visit we pick a place that they haven’t been before. I sometimes get a bellyful of Bryce. It’s not a place I recreate. Everything’s different. Mostly I’m interested in accessibility depending on canyon.”*

*‘Spend time on Kanab Field land – closer. If I have a day to spend I’d go on the Monument, but it depends on road construction.’*

*“Most of my time is in GSENM, but I do spend significant time in Glen Canyon (Hole in the Rock/Escalante Canyons) and Dixie National Forest.”*

*“It’s a seasonal issue. In the winter time I don’t go north. Those are the places I avoid in the wintertime. In the springtime as the snows melts I migrate up the Staircase.”*

*“Depends on time and season—don’t usually go to Zion, unless it’s off-season.”*

*“I have a great love for all these areas and try to spend time in most of them. Each is unique and needs to be appreciated. There isn’t one area that I do not go to.”*

*“GSENM, Dixie National Forest, Parks with visitors, ...all are wonderful and call to be experienced at different times.”*

*“I prefer areas of least human presence, including livestock!”*

*“The areas are all adjacent to each other so you can cross boundaries very easily. Driving south off of Hwy 89 for instance, you cross NPS, AZ Strip, Vermilion Cliffs.”*

What is clear from most of these comments is that those who chose a combination of destinations are appreciative of and utilize the diversity of opportunities, settings and experiences available in the areas surrounding and including the Grand Staircase region.

## Services

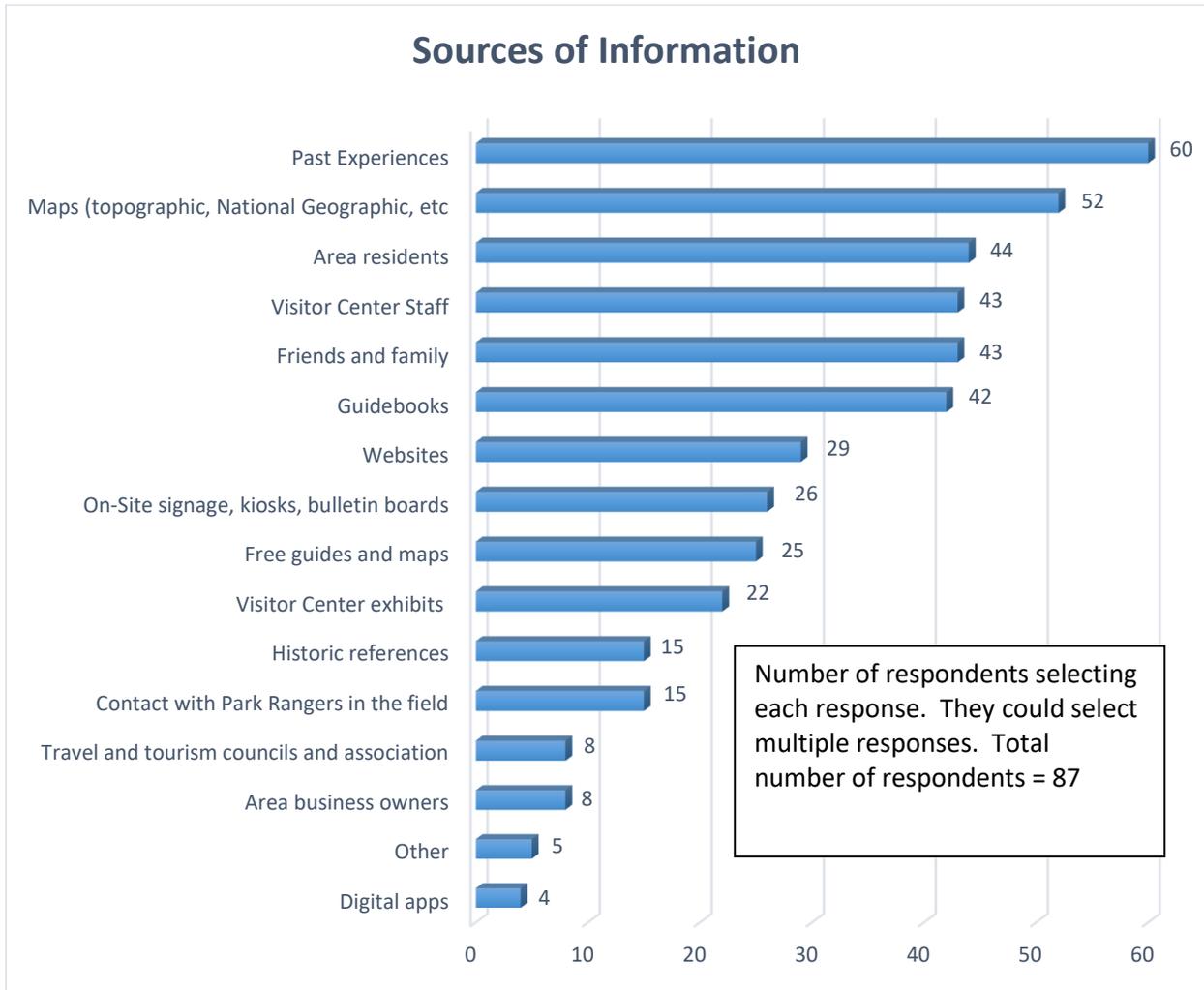
When individuals recreate on public lands they are concerned about the outcomes and experiences that they desire, the activities they want to participate in, and the setting characteristics that make all of those possible, but they are also reliant on the provision of services that make their experiences possible. These services typically range from information to fuel, food to gear, and accommodations to communications. While BLM does not provide many of the services needed by recreationists using the area, the agency does need to understand what services are necessary for visitors and local residents to be successful when recreating in the Monument and on adjacent public lands. The data about services allows BLM staff to engage in dialogue with business owners, community leaders, and residents to develop partnerships that enhance the livelihood and well-being of the local communities and supports visitor needs. The conversations that arise from these "practical partnerships" between the BLM and the service providers are one of the best values of this study. Done well, these will strengthen the ties of local residents, community leaders, business owners, to the landscapes surrounding their gateway communities.

Participants were asked several questions to prompt discussion about the kinds of services that are needed to be successful when they recreate in the Grand Staircase area and where those services are located. Their responses and a selection of clarifying comments follow.

### Information Sources for the Grand Staircase area

The first set of services almost every recreationist relies on to be successful is quality information. The participants were asked, "Which sources of information do you depend upon to plan your recreation in the Hole in the Rock area?" and were allowed to choose more than one response from the prepared list. Figure 15 contains the percentage of participants that chose particular responses.

Figure 15: Sources of Information about Grand Staircase Area



As one might expect, past experiences (69%), and maps (60%) remain very important sources of information about the area for over half of the participants. These sources of information seem to be complimented by personal interaction with family and friends (49%), area residents (51%) and Monument Visitor Center staff (49%). It is worth noting the important role that the information provided by GSENM plays in the preparation and successful recreation experience in the Grand Staircase area. Not only did roughly half the participants identify the Visitor Center staff as sources of information, they also indicated that on-site kiosks (30%), Visitor Centers exhibits (25%), and even occasional contacts with rangers in the field (17%) all contribute to their successful recreational experience in the area. Digital information seems to have a mixed review in terms of being sources of

information. While a significant number of participants indicate the usefulness of *websites* (33%) in their preparation, far fewer identified *digital apps* (5%). Because there was no distinction between government websites and other websites in this phase of the study, it is not possible to say how effective the effort of BLM websites were in supporting recreation in the area. Realizing that this would be useful information to have, starting in the next phase of the study, a distinction will be made between government and non-government sites to get a better understand the role BLM information provision plays in the successful recreational experience on GSENM.

#### Additional sources of information not listed in options given

The following comments help to identify other important sources of information not listed as options in the clicker responses.

*“Waitresses at breakfast who are talking about what’s available.”*

*“Google Earth is important in my trip planning.”*

#### Role of BLM in providing information

While several important sources of information surfaced in the discussion, most of the comments had to do with the role that BLM efforts play in the preparation and execution of a successful recreational experience in the Grand Staircase area. Here are a few of the comments that offer more nuance than simply identifying GSENM staff as a source.

*“Personalized visitor center staff that has the most up to date information is most beneficial.”*

*“I am always hoping the information person has really been in remote areas and cares about the condition of the Monument”*

*“Agency websites to check for specific requirements in popular areas and find out if there are restrictions.”*

Not all comments on the BLM information provision efforts was positive. It was noted that more positive news regarding GSENM could be shared in Kanab, and that more rangers would be needed in the field for them to be a reliable source of information. Nevertheless, it is clear from this phase of the study that GSENM efforts to provide recreation information is important so that people can be successful.

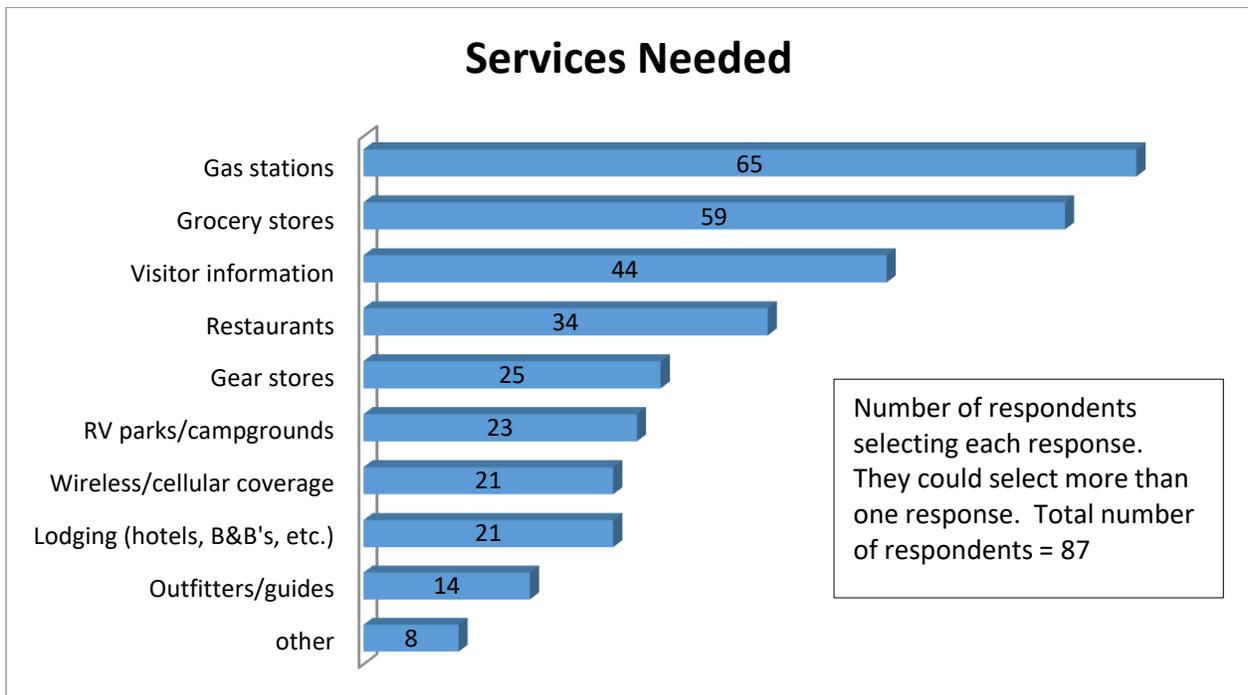
#### Other services needed for successful recreation experiences

In order to measure the other services that participants depended on, they were asked *“What services do you depend on to have a successful recreational experience?”* and asked to select as many responses from the prepared list as were applicable. These services range from gas to groceries, gear to accommodations. It is important to note that BLM is not planning on offering most or any of these services, but BLM planning efforts require that the agency understand the interactions between recreational users of public lands and the surrounding communities. *“Practical partnerships”* between

BLM and service providers can result from this understanding and provides support for the provision of quality recreational experiences on public lands. Done right, this will strengthen the ties of local residents, community leaders, business owners and the landscape surrounding their gateway communities.

Figure 16 indicates the percentage of total participants selecting each of the services.

Figure 16: Services Needed

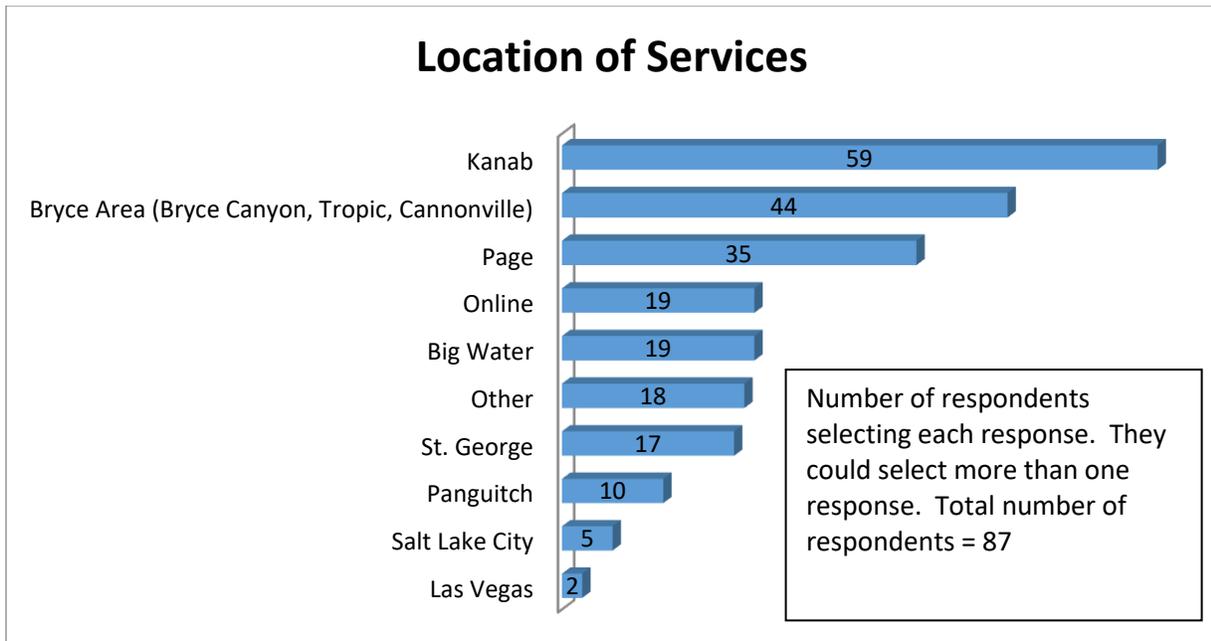


As one might expect, gas stations are the most common selection (84%) followed by grocery stores (77%), visitor information (57%) and restaurants (34%). Wireless/cellular coverage (27%) drew mixed reaction in the comments as a split between those who felt safer with cell coverage, and those who didn't need or want it because of a desire for self-reliance or a "wilderness" setting. Accommodations were split between RV parks / campgrounds at 23% and lodging (hotels, B&Bs, etc.) at 21%. 25% of participants selected gear stores (25%), and 14% selected outfitters and guides (14%).

### Where those services are located

The real power of a discussion of services that participants depend on is to combine it with the location of those services so we can better understand that dimension of the relationship between the gateway communities and the public lands surrounding them. Once again participants were encouraged to offer comments as well as consider a list of several of the communities from which they might obtain services. They were allowed to choose as many locations as they thought essential. Figure 17 shows the number of total selections for any particular location to obtain services.

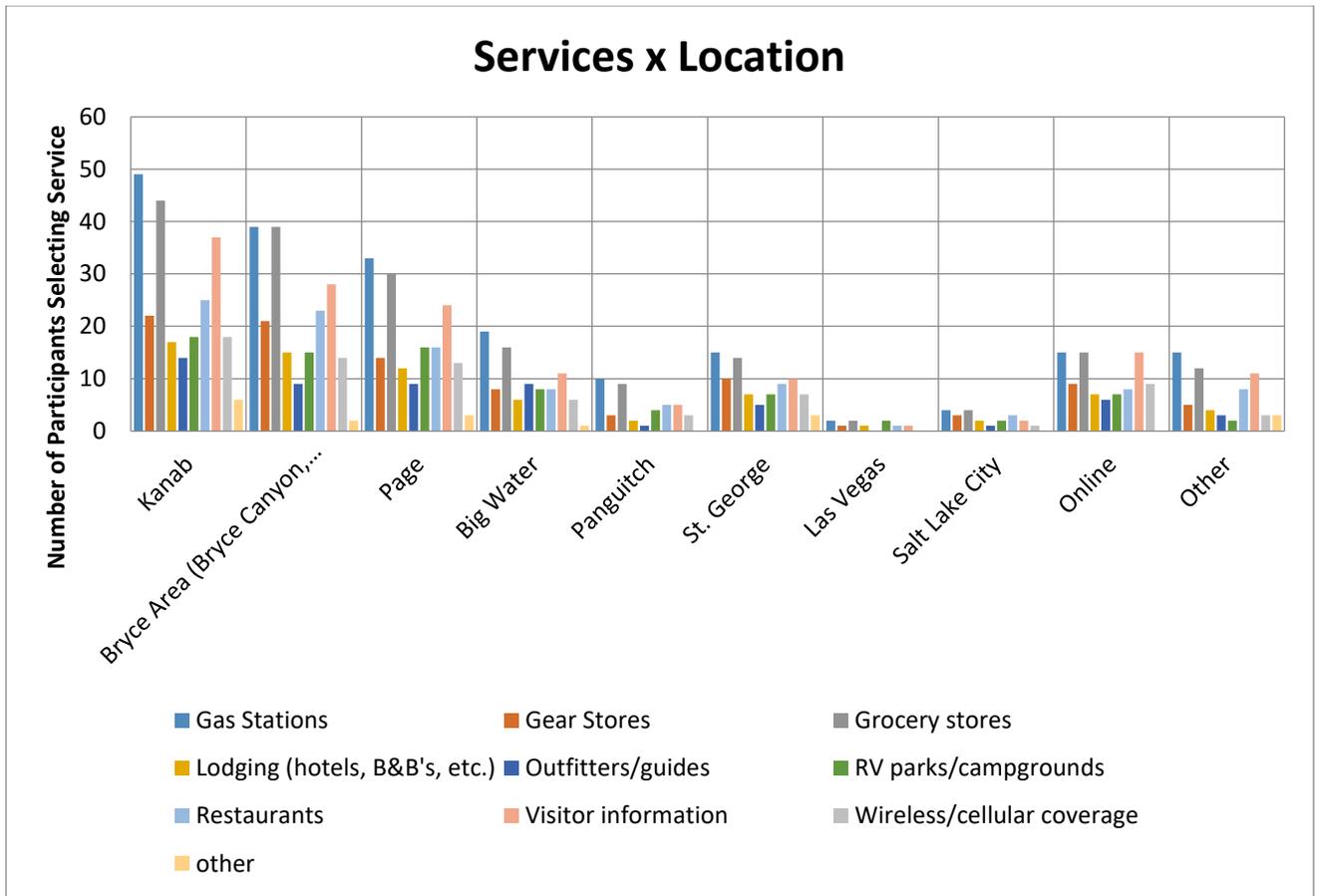
Figure 17– Location of Services



When asked about where the services are located that participants depend on for recreational support in the Grand Staircase area it is apparent the significant role played by the gateway communities of Kanab (76%) to the southwest; Cannonville, Tropic and Bryce Canyon City (57%) to the north; and Page, Arizona (45%) and Big Water (25%) to the southwest. Nearly a quarter of the participants selected other. And when asked to clarify they indicated that they obtained services from Escalante, Boulder and Torey, as well as the communities in Long Valley and Fredonia. Backcountry aviation participants indicated they rely on services often further away in the communities with local airports.

From these responses it appears that recreation in the Grand Staircase area provides an important contribution to the local tourist economy in the gateway communities proximate to the Monument and a spill-over economic effect on other communities in the region. In order to understand more precisely what types of services are utilized in each community, individual services were correlated with the communities selected by each participant and are displayed below in Figure 18 below.

Figure 18 – Services and locations of those services



### Missing Services

When asked what services were missing that hinder the participant’s ability to have a successful recreational experience in the Grand Staircase area, responses ranged from more social opportunities to increased law enforcement to expanded times services are available.

*“Bar/night life. I don’t live in a bar, but if I’m vacationing I want to have dinner and a couple of beers and then go home.”*

*“Services adequate but not available on a given day of the week - expanding availability.”*

*“Services missing after the season ends.”*

*“Adventure center. Find out outfitters and make contact with people and book a trip.”*

*“More information on the website - detailed maps on website.”*

*“Signage in multiple languages.”*

*“A little more signage might help. People often rely so heavily on their electronic devices that they get out there and in trouble. More signs.”*

*“Increased monitoring of biological impacts is essential; of human activities, that is.”*

*“Some type of shuttle services would be a great advantage to be able to make it across country to another area.”*

*“It would be great if there were some ways to learn in-depth from certain people who know the nature well. “*

### Most Recent Visit -Expectations and Surprises

The final discussion in the focus groups centered on the participants' memories of their most recent visit to the Grand Staircase area. They were asked to comment on whether that last visit meet their expectations and whether they were surprised by anything. Of course, the most important element of this discussion was their response to the follow up question, "Why?"

Based on their responses, the area is generally meeting or exceeding expectations as evidenced by this comment which is typical of many expressed about the area and its ability to surprise and delight.

*“Always meets expectations. Always see something that I don’t expect. Try to go someplace new - come around a corner and see something that knocks my socks off!”*

In addition to the value of surprise and opportunities for discovery, the Grand Staircase area was praised for its diversity of recreational opportunity as articulated in this comment.

*“The Monument always meets my expectations. It is a great place to have diversified activity, including ATV riding, 4x4 riding, cattle-raising and historical sites. Anyone who would shut the Monument down and not allow all people to enjoy it is truly mistaken. “*

Because of the outstanding opportunities for a diversity of recreation and other uses of the Grand Staircase area, it is in danger of being loved to death from increasing use according to several participants' comments. Some suggested the important role of management to protect the resources of the area by balancing restrictions and access to recreational opportunities.

*“Exceeded my expectations, which is the reason for increased interested and expanded use.”*

*“Still, it is my favorite place in the universe! It needs to be very carefully managed due to increased pressure from ranching, petroleum development, sheer human numbers, and ORV activity.”*

*“Last time I actually recreated, it was during the government shutdown. It was awesome.”*

*“I’m a lifelong southern Utah resident. I expected the Monument to have more restrictions so was a pleasant surprise. I have dealt with park service and national parks especially in the back*

*country, beyond where it {restrictions} is reasonable, so I was pleasantly surprised {in the Grand Staircase area}.”*

Several final comments identified seasonal experiences such as an abundant wildflower blossom in 2014 as another reason that you never know what you might encounter in this dynamic landscape. Others expressed concern in their last visit over seasonal road conditions, vegetative treatments, over-grazing, exotic species, and vandalism or other damage to the resources in particular locations. These locations have been noted in the administrative record for BLM attention on a case by case basis, but overall the impression is that the Grand Staircase area is a resilient landscape and an amazing place for so many successful recreational experiences.

## Conclusions:

After analysis of the responses from 87 participants in 17 focus groups over seven (7) months of data collection in 2014, the following conclusions began to emerge regarding the Grand Staircase area of GSENM. They will be separated here into observations and recommendations. Although in a baseline study, the principal focus would be on observations of the setting and context, inevitably as participants expressed their ideas concerning the area of study, some of these ideas came as recommendations for future action. These were not solicited, but are recorded as part of the response given.

### Observations

- One of the most important characteristics of the Grand Staircase area for recreational experiences is the land itself, in particular the uniqueness of the geology. The geology is unique at the large and small scale. The large scale of the “steps” of the Grand Staircase from the Vermillion Cliffs in the south near Kanab up north to the Pink Cliffs of Bryce Canyon give the area its distinctive name, but also provide the backdrop for every recreational experience in the area. On a smaller scale, unique geologic features such as Grosvenor’s Arch and the slot canyons of Willis Creek and Bull Gorge become iconic destinations within the broader landscape.
- The overall scenic beauty of the landscape and the unobstructed view-sheds also were mentioned again and again as essential elements of the recreational experience in the area. Threats to the scenic beauty such as power lines or other signs of development were identified as cause for significant concern because of the impact they would have on overall enjoyment of the landscape.
- Fitting of the scientific mandate in the Monument’s enabling legislation, many participants identified opportunities for learning as a critical characteristic of this particular landscape. Not only did they value the scientific inquiry that happens in GSENM, but they valued the opportunity to discover new and different aspects of this vast landscape. They also see this landscape as an opportunity to teach visitors and future generations about the important

connections between people of the past and the Grand Staircase area, as well as educating them about a broad respect for the land, its flora and fauna, and its protection.

- Participants identified the variety of recreational opportunities in the area as a highly desired characteristic of the landscape. Preferred activities often change depending on time available, seasons, company, etc. Additionally, they were supportive of a diversity of activities, as long as those activities are compatible with other valued characteristics of the place.
- Part of what makes recreation in the Grand Staircase region so desirable for many participants is the way time interacts with this dynamic landscape. This includes the variation of experiences one can have depending on the season (wildflowers, solitude, and flash flooding); as well as the way the light changes throughout the day and into the dark night skies of evening. Moving up the Staircase, one can transcend over 100 million years of geologic change, and yet be swept away by the beauty and serenity of a rare flower in bloom for only a day after a rain.
- The history of human settlements is etched into the very rock of the canyons even as the footprints of the most recent visitors disappear in the flow of a stream. Some of the most important resources for many participants in the study were the archeological and historic resources. There are many sites in the area covering the many layers of human occupation in the area from pre-history to the homestead era that people enjoy visiting, but some of these sites are being damaged by thoughtless or malicious visitors. There is a robust commitment to the preservation of these sites through the Monument's site steward program that several participants were proud to participate in.
- Several qualities identified as significant to the recreational experience included the quietness, remoteness, and naturalness of the area. Others identified the creeks and the Paria River as critical corridors for recreation around water in the desert.
- The Grand Staircase area of GSENM is a land of many contrasts. While there is a deep and rich sense of place among the locals, there is a concern that increasing numbers of visitors have little connection or understanding of the place.
- The accessibility and remoteness of the region was noted as having an impact on the quality of the recreational experience in the Grand Staircase area. There are several primary roads in the area that allow for access throughout the landscape, yet the scale (vastness) of the area maintains a sense of remoteness and space between those recreating. This supports the highly desired values of solitude and tranquil escapes. Some areas such as the WSAs are only accessible by foot and hoof which supports both the variety of experiences and recreational settings that most participants valued.
- The local communities and their residents seem to struggle with the contrast of the tourism industry being both a blessing and a curse. The tourism industry is beneficial to the local economies of the gateway communities and many local participants described their joy in sharing the wonders of the landscape that is "right out my back door." However, an increasing number of visitors can lead to crowding and a diminishment of the specialness of the place characterized by solitude, wildness, and other attributes of the area.
- Participants seemed to be torn on the benefit or harm that comes from the many roads and transit corridors that cut across this region. Roads such as Cottonwood, Johnson Canyon and

Skutumpah are used as primary access in and through the landscape. These roads are often used not only to access recreational opportunities, but they serve to connect communities on the periphery of the Monument. Some of these roads also allow those with reduced mobility to enjoy the landscape and its features. However, these roads (with mostly natural surfaces) make travel in the area very weather dependent and force travelers to pay attention to road conditions that may be effected by washouts, mud and other hazards. Some participants indicated that the roads may be used as transit corridors for illegal activity at night. There were also concerns that developed roads would encourage people to move too fast through the area to gain a meaningful connection to the place.

- The internationally-known, iconic geologic formation known as “The Wave” in the Paria Canyon-Vermilion Cliffs Wilderness Area draws visitors from around the world. However, there is a limit of 20 visitors a day to preserve the area’s wilderness characteristics. A daily lottery is held to determine who will receive the ten walk-in permits for the following day, but there are exponentially more attempting to get permits than spaces available, so those not receiving permits are displaced onto surrounding landscapes including the Grand Staircase region of GSENM. Several participants highlighted this *displacement* as a potential problem, while others suggested that this was more of an opportunity to share other recreational opportunities in GSENM with those who might not have been aware of the incredible recreation, resources and scenery available there.

## Suggestions

There were several suggestions offered to address concerns expressed by participants. These suggestions appeared in a variety of comments from various focus groups throughout the study. This report does not necessarily endorse the suggestions; however, because this study is intended to develop a baseline for recreational interests and expectations in the Grand Staircase region of GSENM, they are certainly worth consideration and further conversation between all relevant stakeholders including the GSENM staff. They are summarized here.

- There should be a number of efforts made to educate the public about the unique resources in GSENM as well as how one can recreate without diminishing those resources (e.g. maps, signs, visitor information, websites).
- GSENM should develop existing and future partnerships with local communities and organizations to manage pressures on the landscape.
- With such a heavy value placed on the diversity of experiences offered in this landscape, the GSENM staff and partners should maintain [the] unique recreation opportunities for a variety of travel modes.
- The natural landscapes, tranquil escapes, and scientific learning are unique combination of qualities to be maintained in Grand Staircase area of GSENM.

Future research in this five-year study will include three additional phases. In 2015 Phase 3 will encompass the southern part of GSENM accessed by Highway 89, Vermillion Cliffs National Monument in Arizona, as well as parts of the Kanab BLM Field Office (Paria Canyon/Vermillion Cliffs Wilderness

Area). In 2016 Phase 4 will concentrate on the northern region of the Monument accessed by Highway 12 and Burr Trail Road. The last year of the study will take a comparative look at all four areas of the Monument covered in earlier phases. A final report released in 2018 will identify a recreational baseline of desired outcomes across the entire Monument, with emphasis on unique qualities of one or more regions.

Appendix 1: Meeting Handout phase 2 - Grand Staircase region

# **Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument**

## Grand Staircase Region

### Recreation Experience Baseline Study – Phase 2

**Tim Casey, PhD**

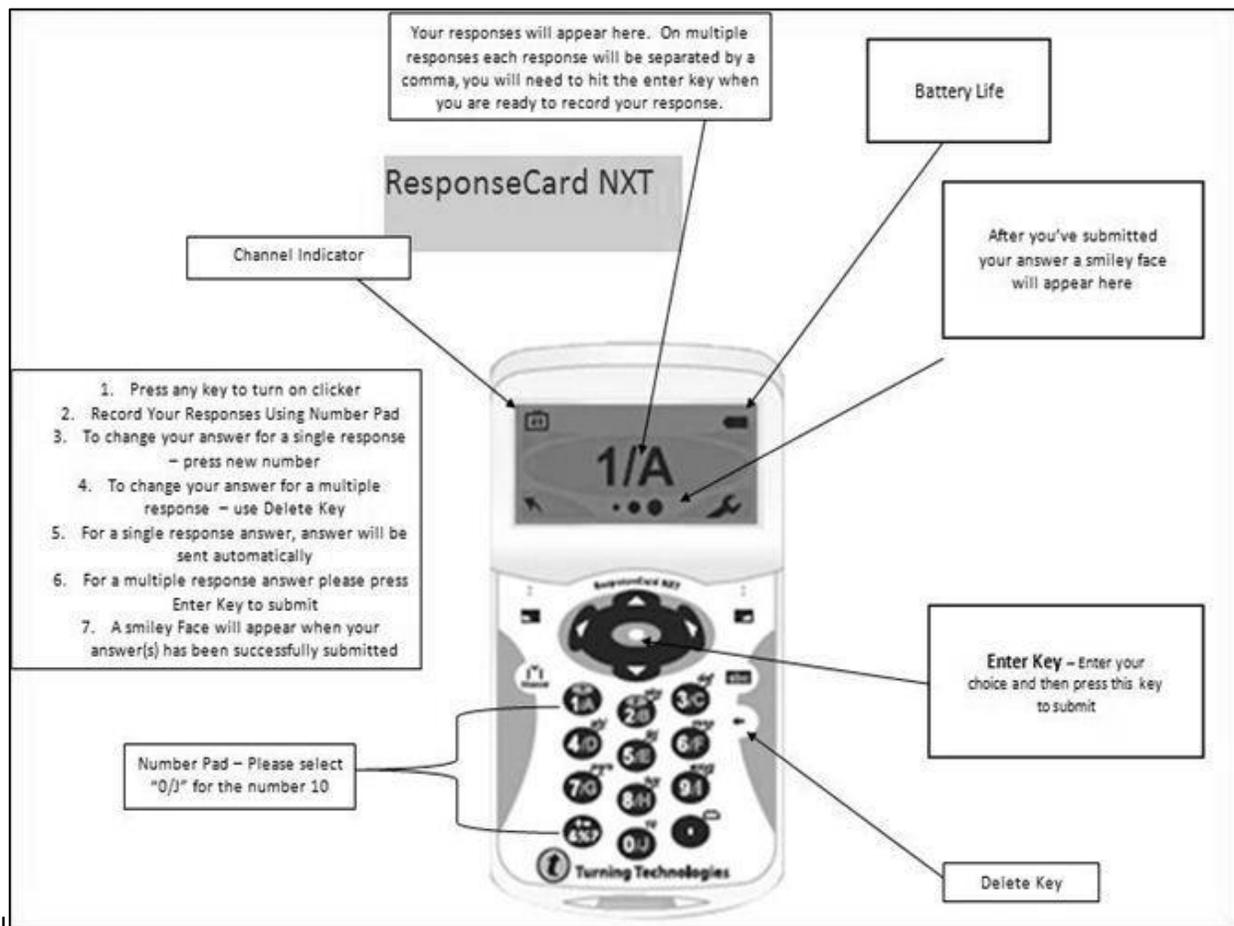
Natural Resource Center - Colorado Mesa University



2014

## Participants:

- ✓ Listen, contribute, and stay focused on the subject at hand
- ✓ Feel free to keep or change your opinions in response to what you hear
- ✓ Respect others' right to share their thoughts; do not interrupt
- ✓ The moderator will stop anyone who attempts to block another's views
- ✓ Feel free to get up, obtain refreshments, or visit the restroom
- ✓ Do not engage in separate, private discussions
- ✓ Remember, participation is voluntary on all questions



*To ensure that we all can use the clickers to help record your preferences throughout the focus group, let's try them now.*

**1. Would you start by entering your home zip-code when the slide is available and the polling bar in the corner of the slide is green.**

*To submit your response, select the enter key in the center of the arrows. You should see a smiley face at the bottom of your screen, if your response has been received.*

**2. Which of the following choices best describes your primary association with the Grand Staircase region of GSENM?**

1	Visitor
2	Local Resident
3	Community Leader (elected / non-elected)
4	Outfitter/Guide
5	Business owner
6	Other

**3. What are the qualities of the Grand Staircase region of GSENM that make it special for you? (Open ended discussion)**

**3. What are the qualities of areas along or accessed via Hole in the Rock Road that make it a special place for you? (Choose up to five.)**

<b>SP-1</b>	1	It's my back yard
	2	It's where I spend quality time with friends and family
	3	Historic qualities - how previous generations used the area
	4	Productive qualities - grazing and hunting
	5	Biological resources - plants, animals, etc.
	6	Physical resources - geology, paleontology, etc.
	7	Cultural resources - archeology, etc.
	8	Scenic quality
	9	Spiritual and/or religious qualities
	0	Sense of freedom
<b>SP-2</b>	1	Wild, unspoiled, and natural
	2	Remote and rugged
	3	Sense of solitude and privacy
	4	Natural quietness
	5	Dark night skies

	6	Sense of discovery/learning opportunities
	7	Dogs and/or horses are allowed
	8	Lack of development or improvements
	9	It's where I engage in recreational activities I enjoy
	0	Other

**Discussion:**

**4. What could or does diminish the specialness for you? (Open ended discussion)**

**4. What could or does diminish the specialness for you? (Choose up to five.)**

<b>DIM-1</b>	1	Additional fees, permits, or restrictions
	2	Increased use and crowding
	3	Increased traffic
	4	Increased use of wider array of vehicles
	5	Group size limits I consider to be inappropriate (too high or too low)
	6	Limitations on historic uses and productive qualities
	7	Additional facilities and improvements
	8	Lack of facilities and improvements
	9	Increased access
	0	Limited access
<b>DIM-2</b>	1	Vandalism, litter, graffiti, and/or human waste
	2	Damage to soils and vegetation
	3	Lack of solitude and privacy
	4	Noise
	5	Artificial light
	6	Livestock or evidence of them
	7	Culture clashes – locals vs. visitors or long time locals vs. move-ins
	8	Lack of connection to or education about place
	9	Residential or industrial development (utility lines, pipelines, etc.)
	0	Other

**Discussion:**

**5. At the places you enjoy visiting has use increased or decreased in the last five (5) years?**

1. Strongly Decreased	2. Slightly Decreased	3. No Change	4. Slightly Increased	5. Strongly Increased
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**6. If use at that these places has changed in the last five (5) years, has it been for the better or worse?**

1. Much worse	2. Somewhat worse	3. No change	4. Somewhat better	5. Much better
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**Why?**

**7. Are there particular places that are most important to you?**

(Please write the names of these places on the sticky notes provided and place them on the general location of the area large map.)

**Why are these areas particularly special?**

**8. 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)**

<b>CS-1</b>	1	<b>Natural Landscapes</b>	I like to surround myself with the beauty of open space and the wildness of mountains, forests, rangeland, water and wildlife
	2	<b>Rural Landscapes</b>	I want to connect with the visual landscapes, sense of place and pace of rural areas where people make their living from the land
	3	<b>Cultural &amp; Heritage History</b>	I am interested in how historic and prehistoric peoples lived in the area, and in exploring the connections I have with those peoples
	4	<b>Natural History &amp; Science</b>	I am interested in knowing about natural processes in this area and the study of the scientific value of the landscape for enhancing our understanding of the world around us.
	5	<b>Health &amp; Fitness</b>	I like being able to regularly access public lands recreation areas that help me get and stay fit or improve my mental well-being
	6	<b>Self-Reliant Adventure</b>	I prefer outdoor adventure on my own that challenges my outdoor skills, improves my abilities, and maybe even involves some risk
<b>CS-2</b>	1	<b>Tranquil Escapes</b>	I look forward to the quiet serenity of getting away from it all for some mental and physical relaxation, reflection, and renewal
	2	<b>Youth, Family &amp; Friends</b>	I am enriched by socializing with others: young people, my family and/or friends and enjoying companionship in the outdoors together
	3	<b>Community Life</b>	I like seeing what the discovery and enjoyment of nearby open space recreation does for my community and our visiting guests

	4	<b>Economic Well-being</b>	I want to see public lands recreation areas contributing in a significant way to our economic livelihood
	5	<b>Learning &amp; instructing</b>	I feel comfortable having others equip and enable me to do recreation and tourism outings—or being part of helping others learn how to do that
	6	<b>Stewardship &amp; Caretaking</b>	I like giving back to the outdoors from what I've received by helping care for special sites and facilities so others can also enjoy them

**9. When visiting that area, what activities do you engage in most often? (Choose up to 3)**

<b>Act-1</b>	1	Scenic Driving
	2	Exploring or discovering new areas
	3	Hiking/Walking/Running
	4	Backpacking
	5	Car Camping
	6	Picnicking
	7	Rock Climbing/Canyoneering
	8	Nature Study (Wildlife Viewing/ Bird Watching/Geology/Plants)
	9	4x4 Driving (Jeep, Truck, SUV)
	0	ATV/UTV riding
<b>Act-2</b>	1	Bicycling/ Mountain Biking
	2	Horseback Riding
	3	Organized group activities (i.e. civic groups, clubs, scouts, church, etc.) including historic reenactments
	4	Ranching activities
	5	Hunting
	6	Photography
	7	Learning activities (interpretive programs, educational outings, etc.)
	8	Art/Writing activities
	9	Spiritual renewal activities
	0	Other

**10. Do you recreate in this area primarily because:**

<b>1</b>	The <b>PLACE</b> is inherently special to me
<b>2</b>	The area allows me to engage in a favored <b>ACTIVITY</b>
<b>3</b>	Both <b>PLACE</b> and <b>ACTIVITY</b> are important to me
<b>4</b>	Other

**11. Photos & Preference:** The next set of slides show images from the Grand Staircase region of GSENM. The images depict settings and travel routes in this region and we will use those to discuss your preferences.

**12a. When traveling in the Grand Staircase region of GSENM 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?**

**12b. When traveling in the Grand Staircase region of GSENM are you aware when you go into and out of Wilderness Study Areas?**

**If so, how does that influence what you do, your expectations, or your perceptions?**

**13. When choosing where to recreate in this region, where do you spend the most time?**

<b>Dest-1</b>	1	Grand Staircase- Escalante National Monument
	2	Vermilion Cliffs National Monument/Paria Canyon-Vermilion Cliffs Wilderness Area
	3	BLM lands (Kanab Field Office/Arizona Strip Field Office)
	4	Bryce Canyon National Park
	5	Zion National Park
	6	Glen Canyon National Recreation Area (Lake Powell)
	7	Dixie National Forest
	8	Area Utah State Parks (Coral Pink, Kodachrome, etc.)
	9	A combination of many of these
	0	Other

**14. Which sources of information do you depend upon to plan your recreation in the Grand Staircase region of GSENM?**

<b>S-1</b>	1	Friends and family
	2	Past experience
	3	Area business owners
	4	Area residents
	5	Visitor Center staff
	6	Contact with park rangers in the field
	7	Visitor Center exhibits
	8	On-Site signage, kiosks, bulletin boards
<b>S-2</b>	1	Travel and tourism councils and associations
	2	Free guides and maps
	3	Guidebooks
	4	Websites
	5	Digital apps
	6	Historic references
	7	Maps (topographic, National Geographic, etc.)
	8	Other

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

<b>Service</b>	<b>S-1</b>	1	Gas stations
		2	Gear stores

	3	Grocery stores
	4	Lodging (hotels, B&B's, etc.)
	5	Outfitters/guides
	6	RV parks/campgrounds
	7	Restaurants
	8	Visitor information
	9	Wireless/cellular coverage
	10	Other

**16. Where are those services located? (Choose all that apply.)**

<b>Services- 2</b>	1	Kanab
	2	Page
	3	Bryce Area (Bryce Canyon, Tropic, Cannonville)
	4	Big Water
	5	Panguitch
	6	St. George
	7	Las Vegas
	8	Salt Lake City
	9	Online
	10	Other

**17. Are there services that are missing and prevent you from having a successful experience?**

**18. Did your last recreational outing in the Grand Staircase region of GSENM meet your expectations? Why or why not?**

**19. What was the most surprising thing about your visit compared to what you expected?**

*We appreciate your involvement in this important focus group.*

*Your input is an important part of maintaining an ongoing inventory of our recreational users' preferences, expectations, and concerns.*

*Contact Information:*

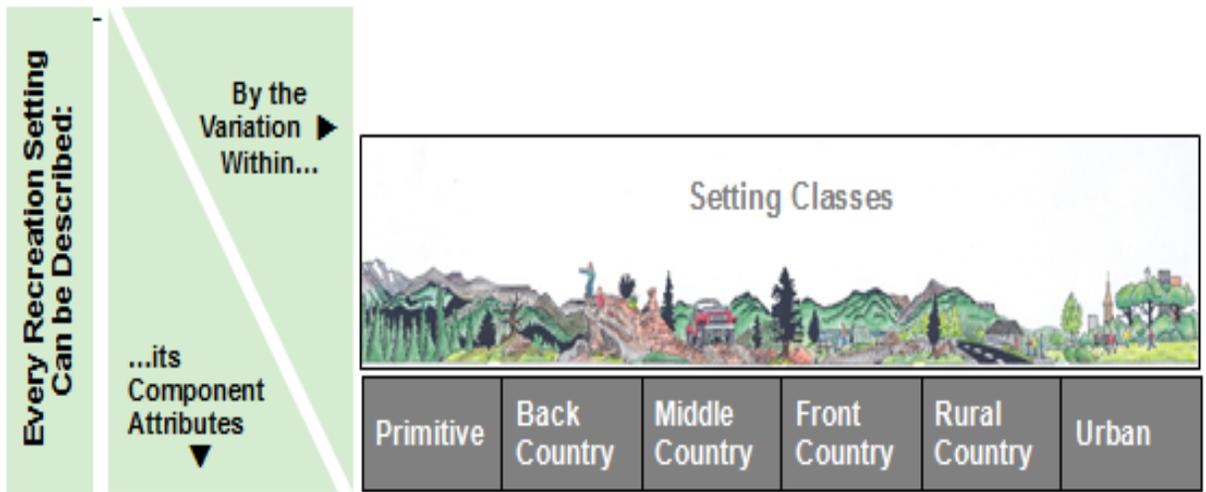
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Appendix 2 – BLM Recreational Setting Characteristic Matrix



<b>BIO-PHYSICAL:</b>	a. Remoteness:						
	b. Naturalness:						
	c. Facilities:						

<b>SOCIAL:</b>	d. Group Size:						
	e. Contacts:						
	f. Evidence of Use:						



<b>OPERATIONAL:</b>	g. Visitor Services:						
	h. Management Controls:						
	i. Travel Mode:						