

**Tioga County Partnership for Community Health: Building a Better Community
Survey**

Qualitative Report for “Outdoor Activity” Responses

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This report is best understood in conjunction with the original Building a Better Community Survey and quantitative analysis prepared by Eric Larson, All Luloff, and Seth Tanner of AEL Associates as well as the final “Community Resources” reports prepared by Dr. Karri Verno.

Tioga County Partnership for Community Health: Building a Better Community Survey

Qualitative Responses Regarding “Outdoor Activity”

In conjunction with *Building a Better Community* survey quantitative results, 161 open-ended participant responses pertaining to desired outdoor activities were analyzed and coded according to qualitative inquiry. Qualitative analysis is a method used to describe, test relationships, or examine cause and effect relationships found in collected data, such as interviews, focus- groups, or open-ended responses. In this case, qualitative methods were used to identify major patterns and themes that emerged from participant’s open-ended responses. Respondents identified a variety of indoor and outdoor activity needs they would like to see developed. Based on the comments, categories emerged related to participant’s community resource needs. These specific categories were separated into:

- communication, advertisement, and resources,
- natural resources: forests and trails,
- kids, teens, and young adult activities,
- community events,
- indoor resources,
- water activities,
- individual or group-based activities for adults and animals

As such, each category differentiates specific viewpoints with a goal of strengthening the community’s activity repertoire. The following sections outline the resulting data analysis from these categories.

Communication, Advertisement and Resources

Almost 7% of residents who provided suggestions regarding outdoor activities mentioned the need for increased access, awareness, and resources for the current events organized in the county. Specific improvements included suggestions like, “better advertised schedules” and more communication about various events. Other responses focused more activities and resources in general. For example, providing more activities for “older people” and having more events “on the Green” might contribute to a better utilization of services and resources. Additionally, “hiring staff to enforce rules and regulations” in natural resource areas might reduce damage where areas are taken advantage of by residents; as one respondent mentioned, these “would stop hooligans.”

Natural Resources: Forests and Trails

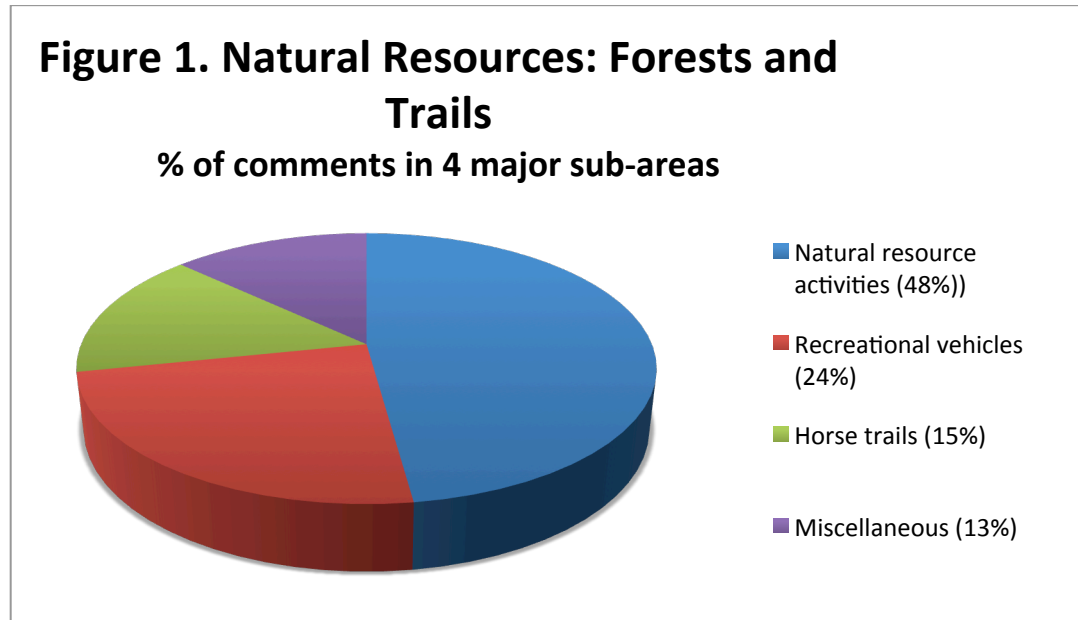
Of all of the specific outdoor activity suggestions, nearly 33% (n=46) of respondents commented on making improvements or expansions of activities related to the area’s natural resources. Close to 48% (n= 22) of these participants commented on expanding the walking, biking, and running trails to Wellsboro and other areas outside of the valley. For example, a number of participants wanted to extend the trails from “Roaring Branch to the Wheel (Inn)” (or near Ralston), “connect trails from Wellsboro to Pine Creek and Ives Run to the Wellsboro Junction”, “extend Rails to Trails”, and “lengthen the trails in Mansfield.” One respondent even suggested providing educational nature walks where tour guides would identify “historical

sites." Other respondents requested marking more of the trails due to the "lack of volunteers" to provide direct guidance, while others suggested creating exercise stations on the current walking trails.

On a similar note, 24% (n=11) of residents reported wanting to open the Tioga Forest or other natural trails to recreational vehicles, such as jeeps, ATV's, or dual sport motorcycles. One comment furthered the notion of making paths more accessible to a variety of people, adding that "better walking paths [should] be created or updated and sidewalks [should] be improved for better mobility."

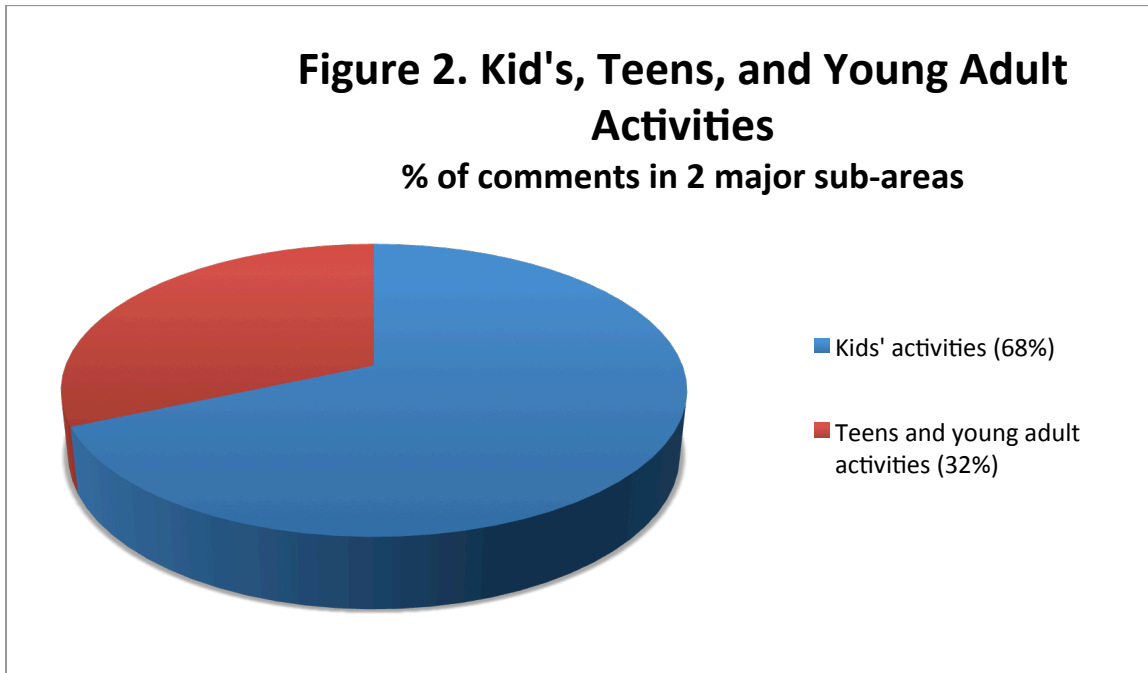
Over 15% (n=7) of participants requested the opening of horse trails and tours. One participant indicated that the current horseback riding tour "was not well kept." Another mentioned, "horseback riding would be good," and that "there was once a place to ride, but it is gone now." One respondent commented on wanting "to see a more reasonable priced place to ride horses," further mentioning that, "it gets really expensive when I do want to go." Offering horseback riding in places other than the Wellsboro area, for example, in Mansfield, was also indicated.

Other miscellaneous suggestions comprised over 13% (n=6) of respondent requests. These addressed opening cheap camping sites, grooming the ski trails for the winter months, and spreading out parks in the community, so parking would not be an issue. Further park improvements also made note of building a playground, making grills available for local picnics, and organizing more movie nights at parks.



Kids, Teens, and Young Adult Activities

Almost 12% (n=19) of respondents promoted the idea of increasing activity opportunities for kids, teens, and young adults. First, many comments focused on providing safe kid's activities, offering free children's activities and programs, including summer, "outside of the ACE program," organizing outdoor soccer for young kids, and building an "amusement park." Having accessible transportation for kids to take to the local swimming pool was also noted (n=13). Second, the rest of the suggestions highlighted the need for more teen and young adult activities in order to "give teens something to do" and keep them away from "drugs" (n=6).

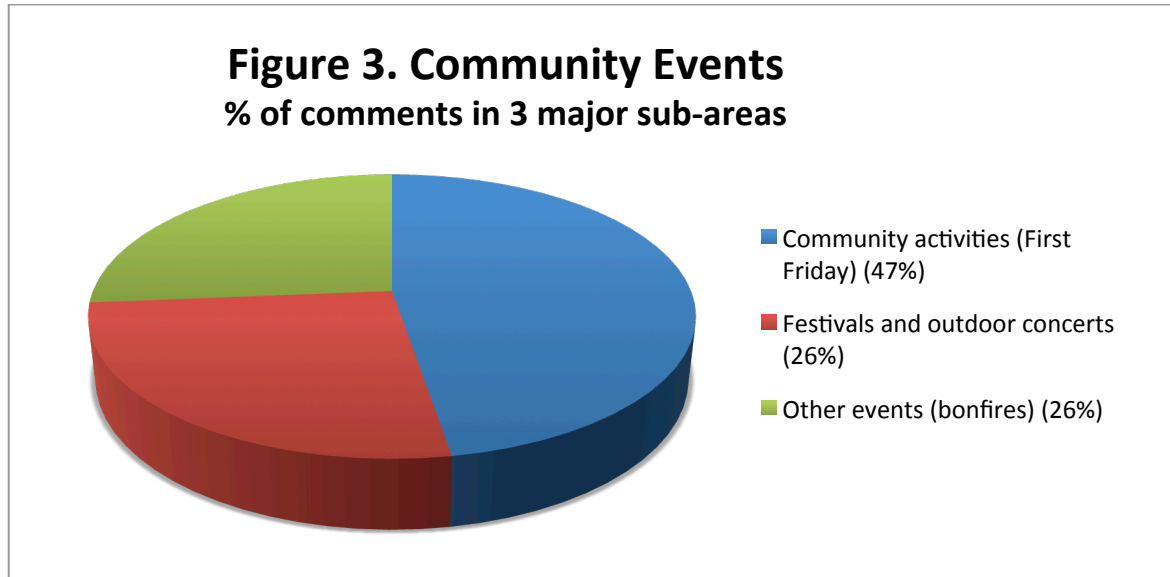


Community Events

Although a few respondents were content with the current activities offered in Tioga County, nearly 11% (n=19) stressed the need for more community-based activities. Residents are content with "First Friday" events, though many respondents suggested having more of these activities, especially outside of the Wellsboro borough, like Mansfield or "the Valley". Others reported wanting more festivals similar to the Laurel Festival in their area, art festivals, and free outdoor concerts (n= 5). Introducing other events like bonfires, community barbeques, and picnics were also addressed in respondents' requests (n=5).

A couple of suggestions also focused on incorporating local community competitions, which might better utilize some of the available facilities that are not effectively or efficiently used. Examples mentioned included: having a large community event at Smythe Park or another workable facility where people can engage in a number of activities such as,

horseshoes, softball, fireman competitions, car shows, craft shows, and showcase Christmas decorations.



Indoor Resources

Participants also commented on the need for more indoor activities, especially during the heavy winter season. Close to 5% of comments mentioned opening a 24-hour health gym, developing, updating, or increasing the accessibility to indoor swimming, depending on the area residents lived, creating indoor racquetball courts, and hosting indoor yoga programs.

Water Activities

Almost 4% addressed some activities related to water sports. Comments suggested that having a place to dock a boat for "extended periods of time" would be helpful. Another comment added to this by stating that it would be more convenient to have "boats to rent at the boat launch." Several comments were made towards developing a water splash park in the area for kids. A final comment requested that a paddleboard clinic be held, not knowing if there were any currently scheduled.

Individual or Group-Based Activities for Adults and Animals

The following categories were based on very few respondent reports, however, each highlights different areas to consider in terms of organizing more diverse activities for the lifestyle preferences of local residents.

Adult Education and Shooting. Very few participants commented on education and shooting.

Nonetheless, 4% of comments targeted the need for more educational opportunities.

"Public" or "adults education" in general was a highlighted need; one comment specifically pinpointed wildlife preservation. Along similar lines, holding archery and firearm courses are of interest to a few locals. Another resident wanted to see more skeet shooting and team rifle shooting events planned.

Group Developments. Respondents also commented on having "plein air art groups", gardening groups, walking groups, outdoor fitness classes, organized mountain bike rides, and holistic health programs (targeted mainly at older adults as a way to encourage positive physical health as residents age).

Informal and Formal Recreation and Facilities. A number of summer activities were requested, including "better recreational leagues." Developing more formalized softball and baseball "teams" and leagues, especially in Mansfield. Organized events like a 5k walk or run (e.g. color run) would also be appreciated by local residents. Creating a place to rock climb, have go-karts, play "Munzee" and "letterboxing," and having stamp and coin collection activities were also requested.

As far as additional space related to activities, a few comments honed in on having a space for disc golf, mini golf, and developing tennis courts ("in Liberty") and a roller and ice

skating rink or park, creating bike lanes and providing bike racks in front of local businesses, and having a winter designated sled hill for kids.

Animals. Almost 6% of responses wanted an available dog park and dog swimming area for their animals.

Conclusion

Although respondents only commented on outdoor recreational activities in the open-ended question section of the survey, this information should be considered in conjunction with the final quantitative report. Less than half of all respondents who filled out the survey contributed ideas to outdoor and indoor recreation. This information represents only some of the survey respondents and while it cannot be generalized to all county residents, it provides useful leads for further exploration and action.

The majority of respondents commenting requested activities related to the natural resources available in the area. Commonly cited activities included expanding trails, parks, horseback riding, and recreational vehicle access. Kids, teens, young adults (families could also be included in this), and community-based activities were also important features that respondents prioritized. These suggestions relate to other open-ended responses that stressed the importance of "building community" within the area.