

Appendix A. 2019 Public Comment Form

Purpose

Initial external scoping was done to inform the management plan regarding public opinion on potential management actions at Lathrop State Park. In addition, the comment form was used to gather demographic information and activity preferences of respondents.

Methodology

A comment form was written by CPW staff in the Southeast Region and Policy and Planning. Park staff conducted intercept surveys in the summer of 2019 to get initial feedback from visitors which was used to develop the questions. The online form was open for comments August 12 – Sept 15, 2019. Anyone with the link could participate. As this was not a random sample survey, results apply to the respondents and are not representative of all park visitors.

The opportunity to provide input was advertised in many ways including: CPW website, a press release, Facebook posts (Lathrop State Park and Cuchara Foundation pages), flyers posted and handed out at the park (e.g., arriving campers) as well as sent to partners (World Journal, La Veta Library, Spanish Peaks Library, Francisco Fort Museum, Spanish Peaks Center for Youth, and Charlies in La Veta), and emails to local partners and summer program presenters.

COLORADO PARKS & WILDLIFE

Help shape the future of YOUR Lathrop State Park!



CPW is updating the **Lathrop State Park Management Plan**. The 1,594-acre park is west of Walsenburg and sits on a high plains grassland with plenty of pinion and juniper. It features two lakes and is a popular spot in the Southeast Region for fishing, boating, swimming, wildlife watching and camping. There are also trails and an adjacent city golf course.

The planning process will help determine what infrastructure changes or recreational opportunities may be needed to preserve high quality visitor experiences into the future while conserving the park's natural setting and wildlife habitat.



You can help shape the future of Lathrop State Park.
We are accepting public comments through September 15th online at:
cpw.state.co.us/placestogo/Parks/lathrop



CPW News Release

8/12/2019

Public is invited to help shape future management of Lathrop State Park as a new management plan is drafted by Colorado Parks and Wildlife

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



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Aug. 12, 2019

CPW invites public comment on management plan being drafted for Lathrop State Park

WALSENBURG, Colo. – The public is invited to help shape the future of Lathrop State Park as a new management plan for the park is drafted by Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW).

The public can share opinions and offer suggestions from now until Sept. 15 by using an online comment form at: <https://cpw.state.co.us/placestogo/parks/Lathrop>

The planning process will help CPW determine what may be needed to preserve high quality visitor experiences into the future while conserving the natural setting and wildlife habitat at Colorado's first state park.

The 1,594-acre park is west of Walsenburg and sits on a high plains grassland with plenty of pinion and juniper. It features two lakes – one for motorboats and the other reserved for "quiet water" for wildlife watching and angling opportunities. It was opened in 1962 and named for Harold Lathrop, the first director of Colorado State Parks.

The park is a popular spot in CPW's Southeast Region for fishing, boating, swimming and camping. There are also trails and an adjacent city golf course. It is flanked by scenic views of nearby Spanish Peaks.

In addition to gathering public comments, CPW is conducting a comprehensive review of environmental, recreational and cultural resources. CPW will prepare a draft management plan that it will release for review by the public in early 2020.

A public comment form can be found here: <https://cpw.state.co.us/placestogo/parks/Lathrop>.

Comment Form Questions

(note: Google Forms was used to format and distribute the questionnaire)

Input Needed - Lathrop State Park Management Plan

Help shape the future management of Lathrop State Park as a new management plan for the park is drafted by Colorado Parks and Wildlife. Your opinion is important - please fill out this survey to let us know what you think.

Deadline for responses is September 15, 2019.

1. About how frequently do you visit Lathrop State Park? *(Please select one option.)*

- Once or twice a week
- About once per month
- About 3-4 times per year
- Once per year
- Other (please specify)

2. Approximately how many miles (one-way) is Lathrop State Park from your home?

- 0-15 miles
- 16-60 miles
- 61-100 miles
- Greater than 100 miles

3. How long do you typically stay at Lathrop State Park? *(Please select one option.)*

- Day visits
- 1-2 nights
- 3-5 nights
- More than 5 nights

4. Which of the following outdoor recreation activities do you enjoy doing at Lathrop State Park? *(Please check all that apply and be specific if you check "Other".)*

- Tent camping
- RV camping
- Fishing
- Hunting
- Boating (motorized)
- Boating (non-motorized)
- Walking/hiking/running
- Horseback riding
- Biking (human powered)
- Biking (e-bikes)
- Bird watching/wildlife viewing
- Photography
- Education Programs
- Picnicking
- Golf
- Archery
- Swimming

5. When visiting Lathrop State Park do you or have you ever used the Walsenburg access trail (2nd Street)?

- Yes, occasionally
- Yes, frequently
- No
- I did not know about this trail

6. What, if any, additional activities would you like to see made available at Lathrop State Park?

Fishing Opportunities

The next set of questions ask about your experience fishing at Lathrop State Park.

7. Have you ever gone fishing at Lathrop State Park?

- Yes
- No

(Note: if respondents selected “Yes” they were then asked Questions 8-1-; Respondents selecting “no” skipped to the next section)

8. Where do you fish at Lathrop State Park?

- Martin Lake (eastern lake with boat ramp, swim beach and other infrastructure)
- Horseshoe Lake (western lake with wakeless boating only)

9. Which of the following species do you target when fishing at Lathrop State Park? (Check all that apply. Please be specific if you check “Other”)

- Rainbow trout
- Tiger muskellunge
- Northern Pike
- Wiper
- Bass (other than wiper)
- Catfish
- Other

10. Overall, how satisfied are you with your fishing experience at Lathrop State Park?

Scale used: ***Very dissatisfied (1) to Very Satisfied (5)***

11. Please provide any additional comments you have regarding fishing opportunities at Lathrop State Park.

Ideas for the future

CPW is considering some new/improved recreational opportunities and ideas for protecting the natural resources of the park while continuing to provide quality nature based recreation. IF funding and resource can be secured, how much of a priority should the following be for Lathrop State Park over the next decade?

12. How much of a priority should the following be for the next decade?

Scale used: ***Not a priority, Somewhat of a priority, Moderate priority, High priority***

- Upgrade/modify Yucca campground (e.g., camper services building, new picnic table and fire grates, electric hookups for RVs)
- Add new tent camping area in north side of the park
- More hiking on the hogback and/or its north side
- Fishing pier on northeast corner of Martin Lake
- Improve or relocate the Kids Fishing Pond for consistent fishing and fishing event opportunities
- Establish a Friends Group and/or expand volunteer opportunities
- Expand the swim beach

- Modify underused infrastructure (i.e., large parking lot) on west shore of Martin Lake to improve access and use
- Removal of invasive species (ex., Russian olive)
- Upgrade the equestrian and bike trail surface and/or add watchable wildlife informational signs
- Add picnic tables (or other amenities) at Horseshoe Lake
- Increase opportunities to learn about archaeology, history and other cultural resources

13. To what extent are you concerned about the following at Lathrop State Park?

Scale used: ***Not at all concerned, Somewhat concerned, Moderately concerned, Very Concerned***

- Crowding at the swim beach
- Crowding on Martin's shoreline for fishing
- Crowding on Horseshoe's shoreline for fishing
- Dogs off leash
- Resource damage

About You

14. How do you currently receive information or stay informed about outdoor recreation opportunities at Lathrop State Park? (Please check all that apply)

- Social Media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)
- Colorado Parks & Wildlife website
- Online searches (e.g., Google, Explorer, Safari, etc.)
- TV/Radio
- Local newspapers
- Word of mouth (from a friend/family member)
- Colorado Parks & Wildlife E-newsletter
- I do not stay informed about recreation opportunities at Lathrop State Park
- Other

15. How would you describe your racial or ethnic background? (Please check all that apply)

- American Indian or Native Alaskan
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- White

16. Please use the space below to provide additional comments about the future of Lathrop State Park.

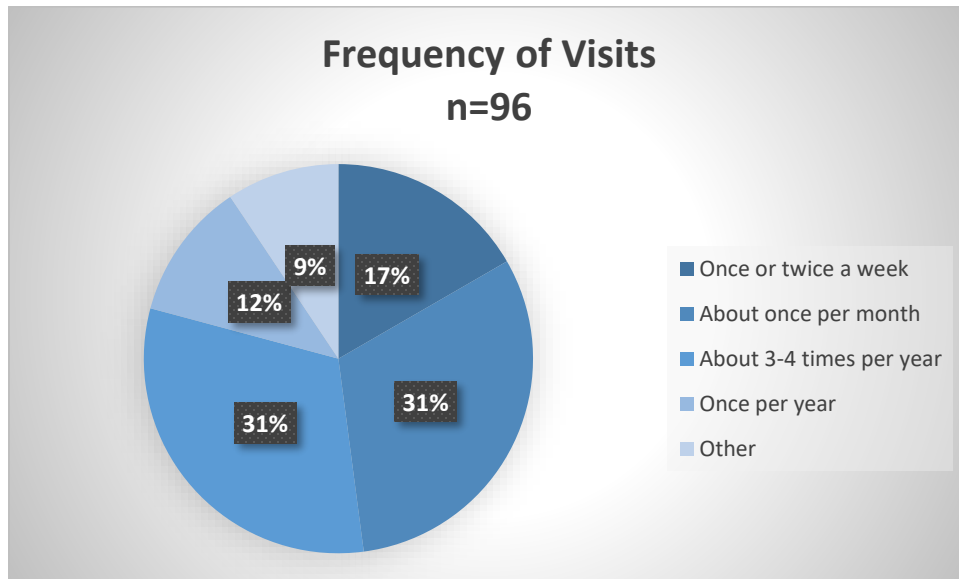
THANK YOU!

Results

Ninety-seven people answered questions via the comment form.

Q1. Frequency of visits

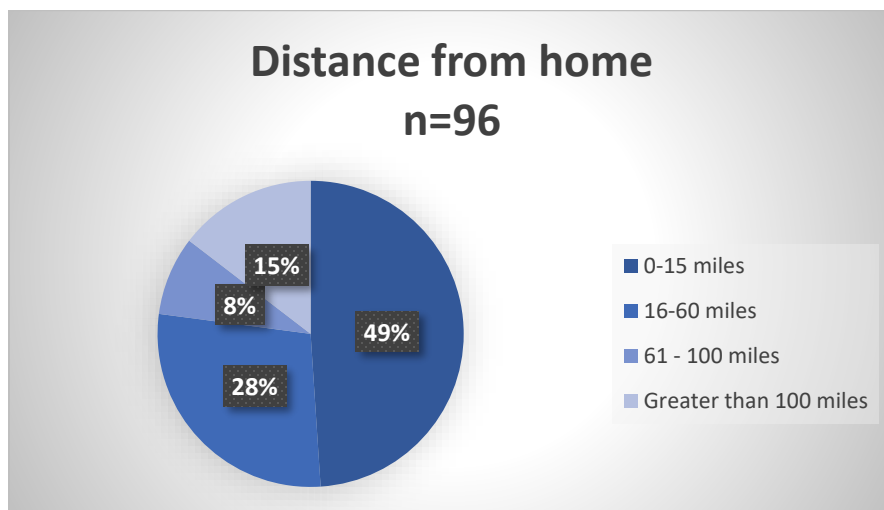
Nearly half of the respondents visit the park at least once a month.



Responses for “Other” included: periodically, first time, 3-5 times a week, less than once per year, etc. In addition, comments about what affected visitation included: too expensive to go regularly, used to visit more but “Just cannot stand all the habitat destruction ongoing all the time”, and used to visit a few times a month in summer but “never used to visit in colder months, but now have a park pass that I hope to utilize more frequently.”

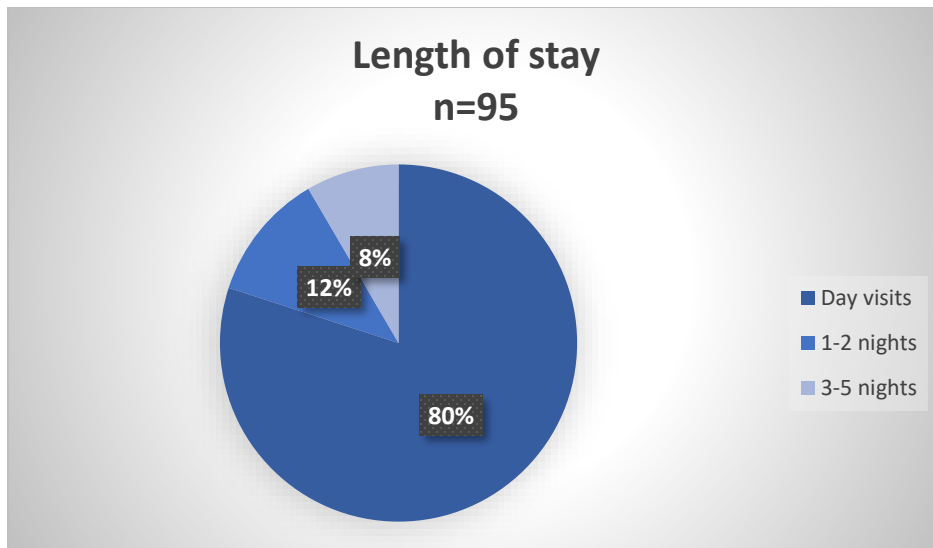
Q2. Distance travelled

Nearly half of the respondents live within 15 miles of the park and over 75% are within 60 miles.

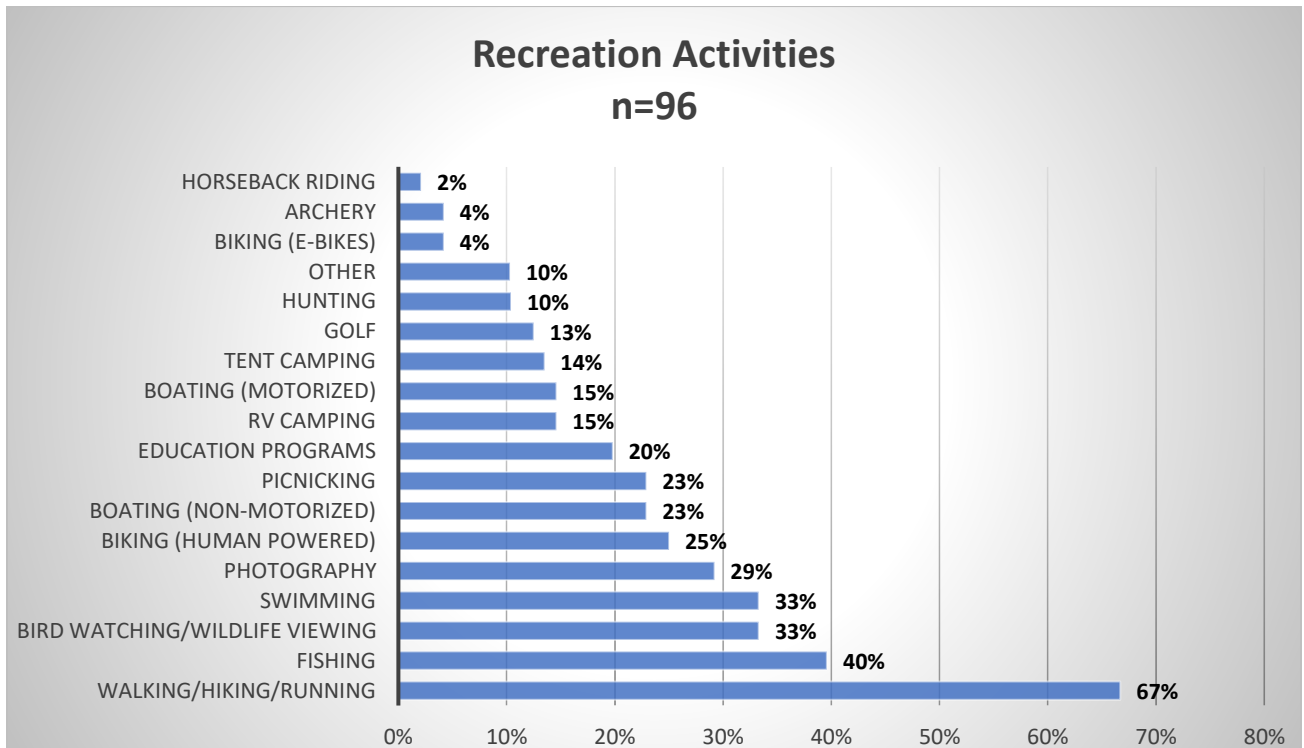


Q3. Length of visit

A majority of respondents are day visitors.



Q4. Activities – respondents could select all that applied.

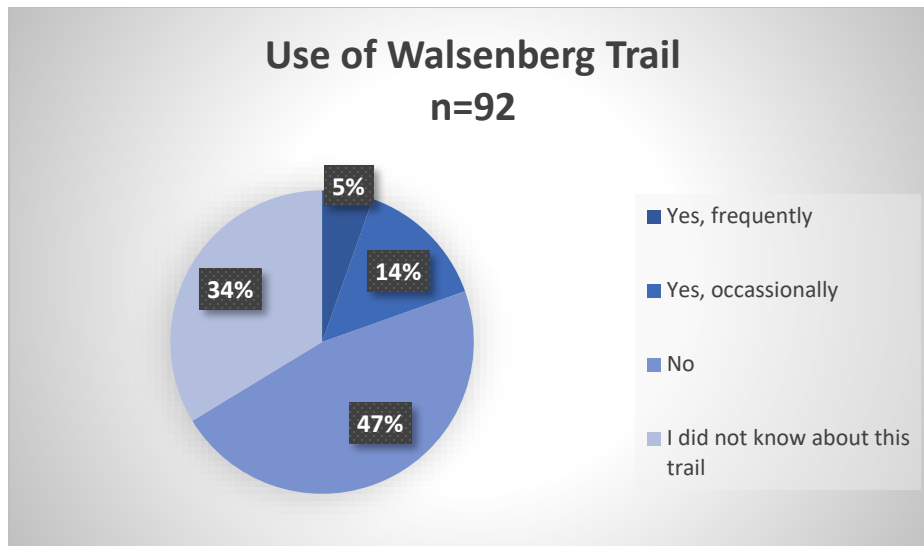


“Other” activities included: training dogs/hunt tests (4), paddle board/kayak (3), great meeting room, RV dump site and nature appreciation.

Nearly 30% of respondents selected just 1 or 2 activities and 63% selected 3-6 activities.

Q5. Walsenburg Trail

Less than 20% of respondents use the trail from Walsenburg and just over a third did not know about it.



Q6. Additional activities?

When asked what additional activities should be made available 50 respondents said:

Category	n	Examples of Comments
Boating, swimming	2	more swimming, boating all year
Camping	1	more camping spots
Disc Golf	3	
Dogs	1	A place to let your dog off leash and/or swim
Education	8	Topics: night sky, geology, birds, nature appreciation; all year, late morning/early afternoon, free
Event	3	triathlon, duathlon or other running event; Father's Day celebration (pancake breakfast?)
Fishing	4	more/better pike fishing, stock brown trout in Horseshoe, more youth events and family fishing spots
Rentals	8	boats, kayaks, canoes, paddle boat, horses, firearms range, dump station (special fee to access this only)
Trails	6	extend horseback trails (1), more biking/mountain biking trails (4), allow bikes on hogback trail, extend walking path to go around Horseshoe
None/Keep as is	12	park is perfect as is (3), continue: kayaking, hunting, hunting dogs event, developing waterfowl habitat on west side, have fewer activities (to appreciate nature)
Other	5	another 9 holes of golf, zip line, SCUBA, mini observatory, finish existing projects

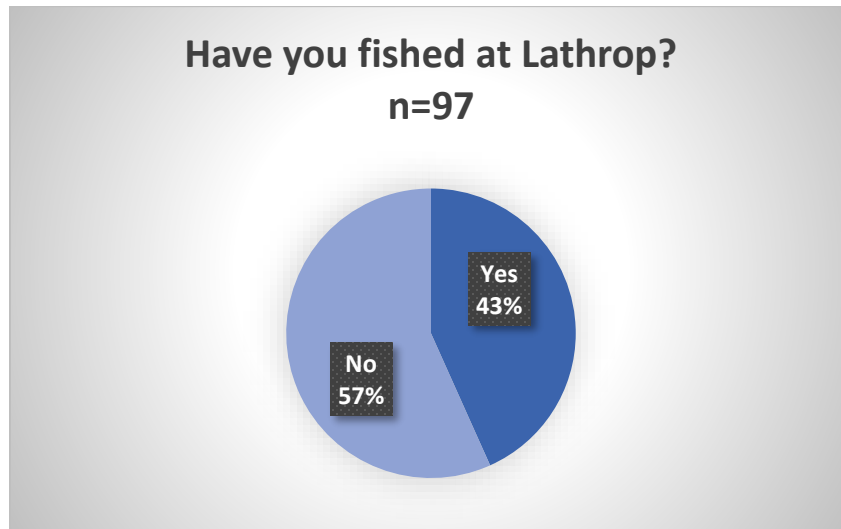
Quotes:

“This is a wonderful park, a great asset for Walsenburg, Huerfano County and Colorado!”

“Would like to be able to continue training our hunting dogs on this site. Also hope you will continue to allow the Southern Colorado Hunting Retriever Club to hold their annual hunt test on the beautiful property.”

“I LOVE the place. It is perfect. “

Q7. Fishing



Q8. Which lake(s)?

A majority of respondents (91%) fish in Martin Lake and 71% fish in Horseshoe. Over half (55%) fish in both lakes, 36% fish in Martin only and 9% in Horseshoe only.

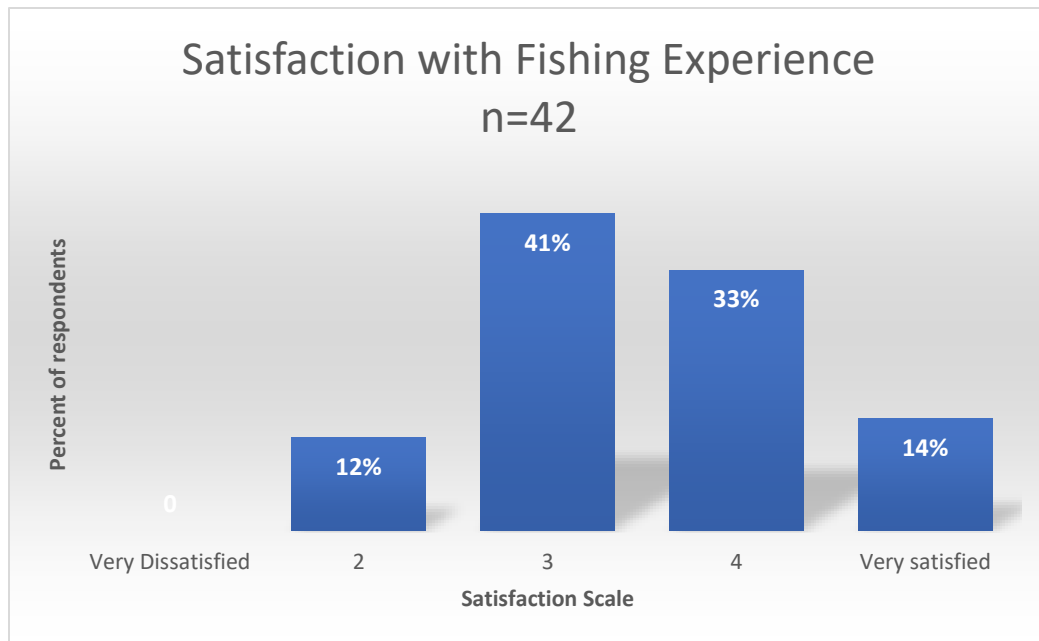
Q9. Which fish?

41 respondents selected the following target species:

Target species	n	%
Rainbow trout	30	73%
Tiger muskellunge	11	27%
Northern Pike	20	49%
Wiper	8	20%
Bass (other than wiper)	10	24%
Catfish	8	20%
Other	4	1%

“Other” included: no target, crappie, bluegill, carp and sauger. Three respondents fished for only pike and 10 for only rainbow trout.

Q10. Satisfaction with fishing experience at Lathrop



Q11. Comments related to fishing

Sixteen respondents provided additional comments primarily related to access/infrastructure and target species.

Access/infrastructure:

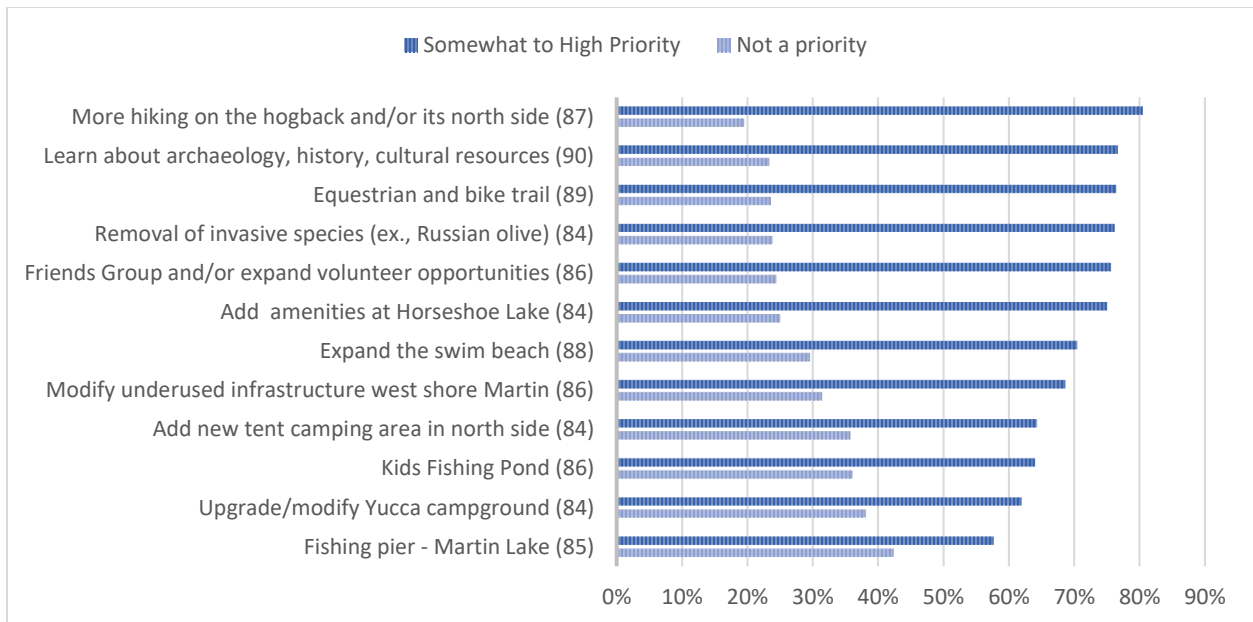
- A canopy picnic table or tables are needed at horseshoe, please!
- We wished there were better spots to get down to lake at Horseshoe lake.
- More fishing spots.
- I would like to see more youth fishing events
- Consider cleaning up more shoreline at Horseshoe for easier fishing access

Target species:

- Pike: 6 respondents indicated they would like to see an end to killing pike; some mentioned catch and release as a preference or limited harvesting; several noted that the fishery for this species has declined
- Other: 1 person said "awesome job on the wiper" and would like to see more muskies in Horseshoe; 1 asked for more brown trout (please!)

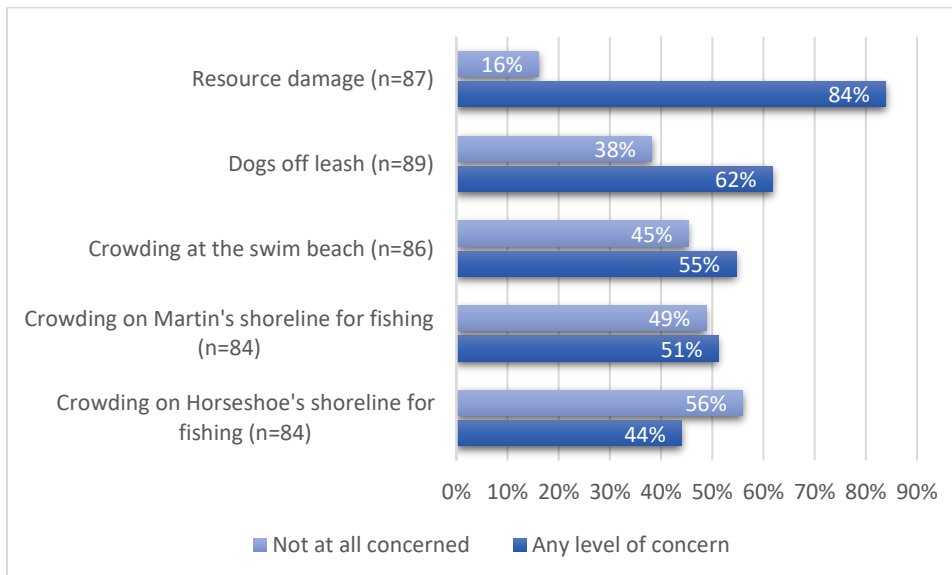
Q.12 Priorities for the future

The number of respondents for each topic is notes in parentheses.



Over half of respondents ranked each item to have some level of priority. The top 3 “high priority” topics are: removal of invasives (35% of respondents ranked this as a high priority), more hiking on the hogback (32%) and increased education around cultural resources (30%).

Q.13 Concerns



There was generally low reported concerns over crowding at the locations we asked about. Resource damage and dogs off leash were of higher concern. In addition, 13 of the 14 individuals that did not have concerns over resource damage also selected no concern for all other items and 18 of the individuals with some level of concern for resource damage selected no concern for 3 or more other items.

Q.14 Communication

Source	% respondents
Social Media	45%
Word of mouth	43%
Local newspapers	42%
CPW website	34%
Online searches	21%
I do not stay informed	14%
Other*	9%
TV/Radio	7%
CPW E-newsletter	5%

*Other included 4 local sources (at the park/park staff, spanishpeakscountry.com, posters in La Veta, Cuchara blog)

Q.15 Race/Ethnicity

Of the 93 people that answered this question, 86 % identified as “White” (83% selected only White), 8.6% as Hispanic/Latino, 8% as American Indian, Native Alaskan or Native Hawaiian, 2% as Black and 1% as Asian.

Q.16 Additional comments

Topic	Comments (not edited)
Overall positive	Really well organized and managed park.
	I (Erik Brekke, President) am representing the Southern Colorado Hunting Retriever Club and we conduct an annual sanctioned hunt test for retrievers at Lathrop under a CPW permit. Our weekend is in early April when conflicts with other users are minimal. Our relationship with CPW at Lathrop has been outstanding and our group brings in at least 100 handlers and dogs that support the local community. We would like to continue with our yearly event at Lathrop and hope the new management plan is written to support these types of activities. We also would like to see the ponds on the west end of the park maintained as waterfowl habitat. A plan for ensuring water is available for these ponds is very important. Thank you.
	As a member of Southern Colorado Hunting Retriever Club, thank you for your cooperation with our annual HRC Hunt Tests conducted at the park each April.
	Excellent outdoor resource, making it even better would be wonderful.
	Lathrop is just a beautiful area. Keep up the good work.
	I love the park, I'm happy to support it in any way I can!
	The Park is a wonderful resource and I suppose the increased usage of the park by folks from all over and potential traffic issues could impact enjoyment but you already know that!!
	The park is beautiful!! I can see a lot of great opportunities for the park and community.

	Gratitude for the facility, visitors center and the rangers are so friendly and helpful!
	I love the lap lane, please keep it
	Please continue to provide the hunting area. It is a great place that is often overlooked. It is especially useful for youth hunting/tag along youth hunts as it is fairly easy walking. Being close to town is a plus too. While the lake portion of the park may be very busy (especially during holidays) the hunting area will be nothing but peace and quiet. Many good memories with my family have been spent in the hunting area of Lathrop. Definitely a hidden gem! Thank you CPW for providing this hunting access as public hunting land is few and far between in Huerfano.
	I'm excited about the future and love Lathrop!!
	I love the newly redone bike and walking trail around Martin Lake. I love the rustic quality of Horseshoe Lake area, and the quiet, no wake boat scene there. I have been using Lathrop for decades for my family and feel it is better now than it used to be, though I am cautious about development and overuse. Thank you!
	I love Lathrop Park, appreciate the La Veta Library Parks Pass program (which I've used a few times), and really enjoy hiking on the off season. Lathrop Park in particular, and State parks in general give so many people the chance to benefit from & enjoy being outdoors - parks should be a high priority for our legislators & our tax dollars. I hope what is happening at the national level to our parks & recreation areas never happens in Colorado
	We are buying our first annual pass in the next couple weeks. We love Lathrop, and spend the majority of our time on the swim beach with our kids. I haven't been able to ride the equestrian trails but hoping to next summer.
	My husband and I live south of Albuquerque NM and 4 years ago we bot a vacation home in Walsenburg largely due to Lathrop State Park. We are in Walsenburg quite often and make it a point to walk the lake every day we are there regardless of the weather. The new walking path is AMAZING and was even cleared when it had snowed. We also try to kayak on Horseshoe Lake several days a year. We have also enjoyed some of the evening programs and fireworks.
Camping	Please do something about the bathrooms in campground. They have been redone and are awful. The fact that there is ONE shower stall per campground is awful. You have to stand and wait along time with all the Frogs and the shower house is full of frogs. I understand they were redone to be more handicap accessible, but now they are useless. In ADDITION, the ladies toilet side only has one toilet and women tend to lock the door, so there again you are just standing out there waiting in line. We were forced to camp there after our home burnt in the Spring Fire and I was SO disappointed with all of this. I have spent countless summers camping and recreating at Lathrop as a child and loved that place. You have ruined the facilities. We actually camped elsewhere in the Fall because of this when dealing with our burnt home. Please please consider fixing this.

	Dishwashing stations would be a fantastic addition! We are tent campers and when we've visited other parks that have them it has made our camping experience much easier!
	I HATE the reservations I have had nearly 50 friends so far unable to get a site as they are all taken until Sept!
	It'd be great to have more sheltered tent camping away from the road and turn the Yucca campground into RV sites. It was already full of RVs with generators. Noisy!
Limit future development	<p>I am a tent camper. I loved my stay at Lathrop because of the Yucca campground. It is so hard to find a primitive campground now. So many places (like Ridgeway) don't even feel like a State Park any more because of the amenities and huge RVs. If I wanted that experience I would go to a KOA. But I just want to be alone with nature and my family. That's all I want and you'd think that would be easy but it's really not. PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE don't add any hookups to Yucca Campground!!! It would totally ruin it!</p> <p>Leave it alone. More development means more stupid rules.</p> <p>I have been going to Lathrop State Park for almost 40 years. The changes in the past decade have been heartbreaking. The changes in the past 2 years have caused me to go less and less frequently. Whereas I used to visit the park 3-5 times a week, I now find it hard to make myself go there more that once a month. This is the first year in a long, long time when I almost did not buy a season pass. To paraphrase the old song..."You paved paradise and put up a parking lot." I would truly like to see the unnamed wildlife ponds (where the duck blind is) restored. It seems the only time they are filled is for the "Sporting dog trials". This is critical habitat for migrating and nesting birds - some very special ones such as Green Heron and Sora. It was some of the most diverse habitat in the park. Now, even when there is water, the first pond is always blocked off by debris from park "mitigation" and "fishing access" programs. DO NOT expand the swim beach any further. The last "enhancement" and expansion eliminated one of two places in the park suitable for Semi-palmated Plover and many other migrating birds. I remember right after the expansion they were spraying the newly added sand with pesticide...in the middle of Spring migration! The last time I was at the park I saw someone mowing around Yuccas in one of the picnic areas...why? I took a photo because I just could not believe my eyes. It made, and makes, no sense. It breaks my heart to see what is going on. The other day as I was walking the (in comparison) rather unkempt dirt trails around Wahatoya and Daigre Lake, a fellow hiker asked me about Lathrop. When I told her about the 13 ft. concrete multi-use trail (5 ft. of concrete with 2ft. of red gravel and 2 ft. of mowed grass on either side) she was as dismayed as I was. She asked if there was anyplace to hike without pavement. I did tell her about the Hogback Trail and the small never filled wildlife ponds. I just wish there was more appreciation of the unique habitat of the park, instead of this constant trying to "tame" it, constant urbanization...I have heard there are plans for frisbee golf....seriously??? That said, the seldom used archery range is a great place to look for all kinds of wildlife. Did not know it was even a part of the</p>

	park before it was set up. Because it is so seldom used and aside from the mowed portion fairly undisturbed it is a nice place to just walk in the grass.
	Preserving natural assets should be a priority.
	Love the park! You are doing a great job! Please don't over develop it. The more nature/wildlife, the better!
	Please don't do anything drastic - it's so wonderful just the way it is!
Signage	It would be nice to find a way to get the exit area to be less confusing. When you go out of the parking lot like your going to the swim area and instead of turning right to go to the swim area you go left to exit, that area. I don't appreciate one park maintenance guy, Louie, throwing their hands up at me because I got confused on who goes first and didn't realize they didn't have a stop sign on that side. I thought they did and started to go only for him to throw his hands up upset that I went. I'm a local, I sure hope our visitors don't get treated that way. It was an honest mistake and not like we almost collided. I don't recall there being a yield sign or anything. Confusing.
	The signage to direct visitors to the Ampitheater is terrible.
Water-based recreation (swimming, boating, fishing)	It would be nice to have more shoreline at both lakes to provide recreational activities for those of us who don't own boats, jet skis, Rvs, campers and such. Thank you for the opportunity to voice my opinions.
	Make this a great pike lake. With limits and promote catch and release. Keep stocking wiper and tiger Muskie. I have enjoyed the increase in boating hours/schedule in the fall and spring
	I love the lakes, I just wish they didn't get abused so much. The trout fishing is always just stockers. We have enough stocker lakes in CO and even in the area. Why can't Lathrop be managed as a trophy pike fishery?
	Most the pike hate in CO has to do with western slope endangered fish. There is absolutely no reason to destroy the pike fishery at Martin. It is the best habitat in the state, and trout fisheries are abundant all over. Trophy pike fishing at Martin not only brings new anglers, it brings increased revenue to the struggling local economy. The anglers fishing for pike often are spending money at motels, restaurants, and the state park. You have the opportunity to create a fishery people come from all over to partake in. A fishery where most will respect the resource. In addition, the common practice of catch and release fishing among trophy pike anglers makes them a recyclable asset that continues to give value to the lake. Unlike put and take trout fishing.
	Brown trout in Horseshoe or both lakes!! They do better in warm waters than any other trout. People do not fish these lakes like they should, unless they have a boat or are trying for bass, carp or cats. People ask me how the trout fishing is down here all the time. I am an honest person. I tell them in the fall it's decent and early spring is the best other than that unless you have a boat, good luck. It gets too hot here for rainbows. Browns would do better!

	I would like to see the pike fishery to stay where it is at right now. It is almost perfect. Since the pike weren't introduced into the park by cpw, it seems the trout fisherman wage war on the pike and encourage killing them. Myself and many of my friends travel from around the state just to pike fish at Martin. We spend a lot of money on pike fishing gear, restaurants and hotels in walsenburge, and camping fees.
	i would definitely like to see some improvements done to the swim beach! maybe an expansion, it does get quite crowded. umbrella rental would be wonderful as there isn't much shade. the youth pond could also use some updating, and more youth fishing or outdoor programs.
	This place could be great. With proper management of the trophy pike and muskies, lathrop could be renowned.
	PLEASE clean out the plant life in the swim lanes - they aren't useable like that. It is a great place to swim, but not when it is grown up right underneath where swimmers swim. Thank you!!
Other/Multiple Topics	Don't have photo contests open to all when what you really want is free pictures from professional photographers.
	Allow county residents access for free.
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rebuild the playground, apply for grants or something. Try to get a playground such as, Trinidad State park has. Lathrop's is pretty pathetic. 2. Repaint all handicap symbols and white lines in every paved parking area. Repaint the crosswalk lines near the playground and near the golf course turn off. 3. Repave the large potholes in D-loop, better yet repave all loops or at least top seal them with black top sealant. 4 Add second dump station, very difficult to pull out of B-loop and make the turn into dump station. Also really backs up on Holiday weekends. 5 Remodel the main bathroom/shower (THE ONE CLOSEST TO THE AMPHITHEATER) put in new toilets and sinks lights and stalls. Reopen the camping store especially before programs sell snacks and drinks. 6 Add lights and sound to the amphitheater to enhance the experience. 7 Prohibit all dogs from the camping areas and beach.
	Very desperately need canopy table at horseshoe in several areas, the dam, the north side
	I would volunteer more but nothing is posted about opportunities

Management Implications

- Resource protection and maintaining opportunities to appreciate nature are important to the respondents
- Respondents report high level of appreciation for the park and live nearby
 - Engaging them in volunteering may be possible
- Any 'development' should be undertaken with messages about why (i.e., to protect the resources, to accommodate visitor experience)