



Forest Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



Forest Futures

Bridger-Teton Forest Plan Revision Newsletter • April 2024



Social Survey Results

To obtain a better understanding of local residents' underlying values and connection to the Bridger-Teton National Forest, an independent social survey was conducted in 2023. The survey, grounded in social science theory, resulted in 387 responses from a random sample of people equally selected across the five counties

encompassing the forest, which include Fremont, Lincoln, Park, Sublette, and Teton counties. A summary of major results is provided below with the full report available on the Bridger-Teton National Forest *website*.

Forest Connection – Residents have intimate and direct connection with the Bridger-Teton National Forest, with more than 50% visiting more than 6 times annually and 30% reporting that 11% or more of their household needs are derived from the forest (e.g. fuelwood, hunting/fishing). The level of “subsistence” use makes the Bridger-Teton more like forests in Alaska than other forests in the lower 48 states.

Values – Residents rank four key reasons why they value the Bridger-Teton Forest (out of 14 total values): Recreation (place for favorite outdoor recreation activities), Biological diversity (provides a variety of wildlife, fish, plant life), Future (allow future generations to experience the forest as they are now), and Aesthetic (enjoy scenery, sights, sounds, smells, etc.). There are some differences among counties with Lincoln, Sublette, and Park counties ranking recreation most highly, while Teton and Fremont counties ranked biological diversity most highly. Overall, these top values are relatively stable compared with the same survey conducted in 2007.

Forest Uses – Recreational uses of the forest are favored by 60-95% of respondents, with only ATV recreation and jeeping falling below 50% favorability. The top recreational activities tend to be wildlife or fish related with driving for pleasure, nature enjoyment, fishing, hiking/backpacking, and hunting cited by more than 50% of residents. Economic uses are not as highly supported, with outdoor education, outfitting, filming, water use, livestock grazing, and commercial wood products favored by more than 50% of respondents (commercial mining and oil/gas activity received the lowest favorability).

Land Designations – Across all counties, 71-85% of residents favor conservation forest purposes with protecting fish and wildlife habitat most favored (other designations were existing Wilderness, watershed protection, wild and scenic rivers). Teton County residents favor these conservation purposes the most, while Lincoln County resident support is lower than the other four counties. Regarding the future of existing unroaded areas, 47% of respondents believe some or all of these areas should be recommended for as additional wilderness. Higher favorability exists for managing unroaded areas for backcountry (emphasis on wildlife habitat, non-motorized dispersed summer recreation, non-extractive uses), with 80% of respondents believing some or all of existing unroaded areas should be managed as backcountry.

Livestock Grazing & Mechanical Tree Removal – The strongest reasons for livestock grazing support are beliefs that grazing permits ranchers to maintain their way of life and cultural character of the region as well as helping retain open space that is important to wildlife. The strongest reasons to support mechanical tree removal include to reduce insect and disease infestations, protect life and property, and to salvage dead or dying trees. Lower support exists for mechanical tree removal to create or improve wildlife habitat or to simply produce commercial products.

Wildlife Species & Habitat – For wildlife species, the highest concern is around moose, bighorn sheep, cutthroat trout, elk, and mule deer. The lowest concern exists around grizzly bears. Ungulate migration corridors garnered the most concern followed by aspen forest and sagebrush habitats.

Motorized & Non-motorized Trails – Lincoln and Sublette county residents express the most favorable support for motorized recreation with emphasis on creating more motorized routes by opening roads that are currently closed. This support for motorized recreation contrasts greatly with Teton County residents. Across all counties, residents believe the amount and diversity of non-motorized trails near communities is appropriate with some support for providing more diversity in the trail system or creating more non-motorized trails.

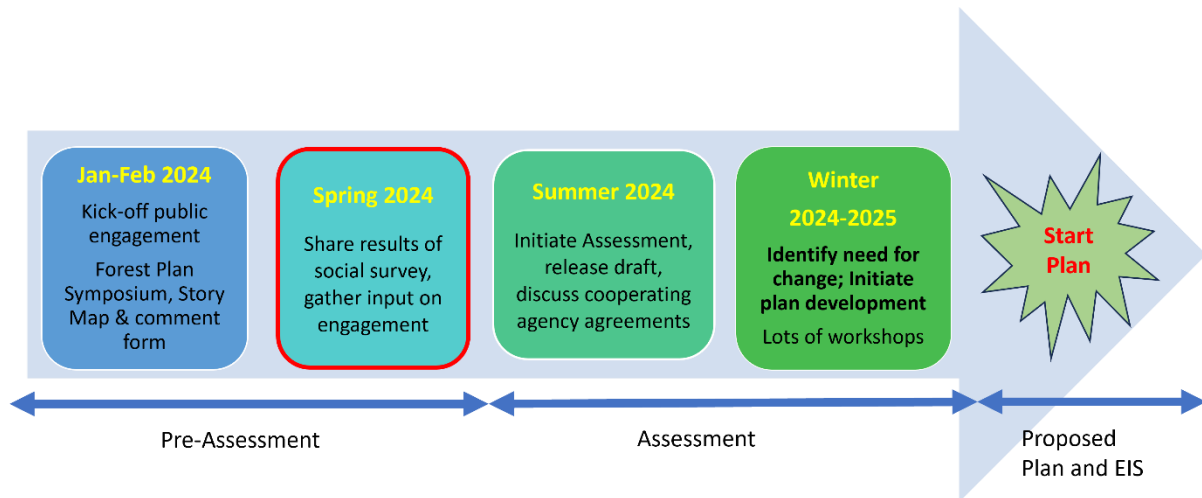
This survey is just one tool in the toolbox to help forest planners understand the views of those who live in communities within the Bridger-Teton National Forest, but we need to hear more. You can help shape the Forest's future by visiting the Bridger-Teton Forest Plan StoryMap [online](#) and submitting your public comments. Working together, we can preserve our national forest for generations to come.



Draft Assessment & Timeline Update

The Bridger-Teton National Forest is currently preparing the Draft Assessment and will complete an internal review of the document this spring. A Federal Notice will be published in late spring or early summer informing the public that we are initiating the Assessment phase of Forest Plan Revision. We anticipate having the Draft Assessment released for public

comment in summer 2024.



For more news, events, and information, visit fs.usda.gov/btnf and follow the Bridger-Teton National Forest on [Facebook](#) and [X \(formerly Twitter\)](#) @BridgerTetonNF.

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