



**Research** Report

# Lake County Split Rock Wilds 2022 Summer Visitor Profile

**PREPARED FOR** *Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission*

**BY** *Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota*

November 2022



## About the Parks & Trails Council

Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota is a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to acquiring, protecting, and enhancing critical land for the public's use and benefit. Founded in 1954, the Parks & Trails Council acquires threatened and critical parcels of land, advocates at the Minnesota Capitol, supports volunteers, and produces original research on issues and trends facing Minnesota's parks and trails.







More information about Parks & Trails Council is available at [www.parksandtrails.org](http://www.parksandtrails.org).

## About the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission

Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission is comprised of 13 members appointed by the governor, two members from each of the six districts, and one at-large member. The Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission was created to undertake system planning and provide recommendations to the legislature for grants from the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund to counties and cities outside of the seven-county metropolitan area that have been designated as regionally significant.

More information about the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission is available at [www.gmrptcommission.org](http://www.gmrptcommission.org).

# Contents

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Acknowledgments</b>   | <b>iv</b> |
| <b>Executive Summary</b>   | <b>v</b>  |
| <b>Introduction</b>  | <b>1</b>  |
|  <b>Trail Traffic Estimates</b> ..... | <b>4</b>  |
|  <b>Visitor Demographics</b> .....    | <b>10</b> |
|  <b>Trail Experience</b> .....        | <b>14</b> |
|  <b>Rider Characteristics</b> .....   | <b>19</b> |
|  <b>Trail Tourism</b> .....           | <b>21</b> |
|  <b>Trip Planning</b> .....          | <b>26</b> |
| <b>Methodology</b>   | <b>29</b> |
| <b>Appendices</b>  | <b>36</b> |
| Appendix A: Trail Count Fact Sheets .....  | 36        |
| Appendix B: Survey Instrument .....  | 42        |
| Appendix C: Responses to open-ended questions .....  | 48        |

# Acknowledgments

This report is a collaborative effort and wouldn't have been possible without the input, guidance, support, patience, and hard work of many people. A very special thanks to David Cizmas with Lake County; Grace Hill and the rest of the staff at Split Rock Lighthouse State Park; Jamie Tatge, Kate Williams, Kyra Bremer, and the rest of the staff at Cove Point Lodge; and Linda Picone for her excellent editing support.

## Project Team:

- Renee Mattson, *Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission*
- Joe Czapiewski, *Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission*
- Andrew Oftedal, *Parks & Trails Council*
- Fintan Lethert, *Parks & Trails Council*
- Zack Baltich, *Parks & Trails Council*
- Brett Feldman, *Parks & Trails Council*
- Lisa Filter, *Parks & Trails Council*

## About the Author

**Andrew Oftedal** is the Research and Policy Manager at Parks & Trails Council, where he leads research on the issues, trends, and attitudes shaping Minnesota's parks and trails. Andrew earned his Bachelor's degree at Iowa State University and his M.S. in Natural Resources Science and Management from the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities.

Parks & Trails Council's research program is made possible by generous support from its members.

*Cover Photo:* Split Rock Wilds by Paul Vincent Photography.

Published November 2022

# Executive Summary

## Lake County Split Rock Wilds

### 2022 Summer Visitor Profile



**About:** The Split Rock Wilds trail system, located near Beaver Bay and Split Rock Lighthouse State Park in Lake County, boasts more than 21 miles of some of the rockiest and most technical mountain biking trails Minnesota has to offer. The trails also offer beginner and intermediate loops and stunning views of Lake Superior. The Split Rock Wilds have been part of the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails System since 2016.

#### Trail Traffic Estimates

##### Total Traffic

Summer total traffic on the Split Rock Wilds ranged from **≈ 4,000 on the Shipwreck Loop** to **≈ 3,000 on Neovison**

##### Daily Patterns



**11am** Weekend peak \*



**11am** Weekday peak \*

\* Average across all locations. Individual site patterns vary.

##### Weekend Traffic



**35%** of trail use occurred on weekends

#### Visitor Demographics

+ Men **79%**  
+ Women **22%**  
+ Average age **≈ 40**

+ Gen Z **17%**  
+ Millennials **30%**  
+ Gen X **40%**  
+ Baby Boomers **14%**

+ White **96%**  
+ Asian **2%**  
+ Some other race **2%**

+ Bachelor's degree **85%**  
+ Income over \$100k **62%**  
+ Disability **4%**

#### Trail Experience



**95%**  
mountain biking



**70%**  
visiting to do something exciting and adventurous



**61%**  
visiting to experience nature



**19%**  
visiting with children



**59%**  
First-time visitors



**67%**  
Rated the trail "very good"





## Trail Tourism



**86%**

from  
Minnesota



**82%**

tourists visiting  
Lake County



**5**

Different states  
represented  
+ Canada



**52%**

of overnight visitors  
stayed in campgrounds



**58%**

stayed in  
Lake County  
for 3+ nights



**86%**

said the trails were  
part of the reason  
they visited Lake County



**Best trail I have ridden yet.**

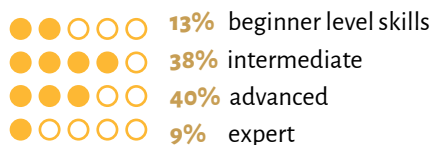
~ 18-year-old visitor from Stillwater, MN

**Will be back.** Amazing trails.

~ Visitor from Minneapolis, MN



## Rider Characteristics



## Information Sources



**71%**

used trail apps to  
learn about the trail

**Methodology:** In 2022, the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission contracted with Parks & Trails Council to conduct a visitor profile for Lake County's Split Rock Wilds trail system. Automated counters were installed at six locations across the trail system and a systematic visitor intercept survey collected information on visitor characteristics (n = 116). Results are representative of summer (Memorial Day through Labor Day) visitors to the Split Rock Wilds during 2022 and have a margin of error of +/- 9.1 percentage points.

For full results and methodology, see the full Visitor Profile Report.

# Introduction

Located along the rocky and undulating North Shore of Lake Superior between Two Harbors and Silver Bay, Lake County's Split Rock Wilds trail system offers more than 21 miles of purpose-built mountain biking trails. The trail system — which had a soft opening in 2021 and officially opened to the public in July 2022 — is one of the newest additions to Minnesota's growing portfolio of mountain biking trails. Widely considered one of the most challenging trail systems in the state, the Split Rock Wilds are natural, rough, and rocky. Visitors can access the trails through a newly-opened campground at Split Rock Lighthouse State Park or along a private road owned by Cove Point Lodge near Beaver Bay. The trails near the campgrounds offer beginner and intermediate-level trails for families and children; the more challenging trails are deeper in the system. The trails offer a backcountry feel with scenic bridges, cascading rivers, and overlooks of Lake Superior.

The Split Rock Wilds mountain biking trails are maintained by Lake County, in partnership with the Minnesota DNR, which owns and maintains the trailhead in Split Rock Lighthouse State Park. The trails were designated and became a part of the

Greater Minnesota Regional Park and Trail System in 2016.

In 2022, the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission (GMRPTC) contracted with Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota (P&TC) to conduct a visitor profile of the Split Rock Wilds. GMRPTC is responsible for system planning and providing recommendations to the legislature for grants funded by the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund to counties and cities outside the seven-county metropolitan area. The visitor profile was undertaken to understand user numbers, visitor origination, trip characteristics, and basic demographics of trail users. Ultimately, this data is meant to help inform planning and marketing efforts by GMRPTC and collaborative partners.

This visitor profile consists of two parts. First, automated trail counters were installed at six locations across the trail system (Figure 1). The trail counters collected data on total traffic, travel direction, hourly patterns, and weekly patterns. Second, a systematic intercept visitor survey was conducted at the Split Rock Lighthouse State Park and Cove Point trailheads (Figure 1). Staff used electronic

tablets to collect surveys during high- and low-use periods. A total of 116 surveys were collected. Together, the trail counts and visitor surveys provide a snapshot of how many people use the Split Rock Wilds and who those people are.

The visitor studies were conducted during the summer of 2022 and were designed to be representative of the summer season, defined as Memorial Day through Labor Day. Data collection began on July 15, 2022 to coincide with the Grand Opening celebration, and continued through September 5, 2022 (Labor Day).

Three important notes should be made about the scope of this project and how the data are presented. First, while the trails did not officially open until July 15 (and data collection did not start until that date), we've decided to use data from the second half of the summer to extrapolate use estimates for the *entire* summer season. While this approach has its limitations, we hope presenting estimates for the entire summer will simplify interpretation for readers and more easily serve as a baseline to understand future research.

Second, since the Split Rock Wilds is a brand new system, this visitor profile should be considered only a starting point for understanding its use. It would be unfair, for example, to assume use of the system in its first few months is

representative of how the system will be used next year or the year after. It often takes time for trail marketing efforts to reach a wide audience and for information about new trails to spread through word-of-mouth networks. Our data indicate this may already be happening, as trail visitation during the final weeks of the summer was significantly higher than during the trail's first few weeks of being open (see Section 1). This report is meant to serve simply as a beginning baseline; future research will be needed to better understand use of Split Rock Wilds as it matures as a trail system.

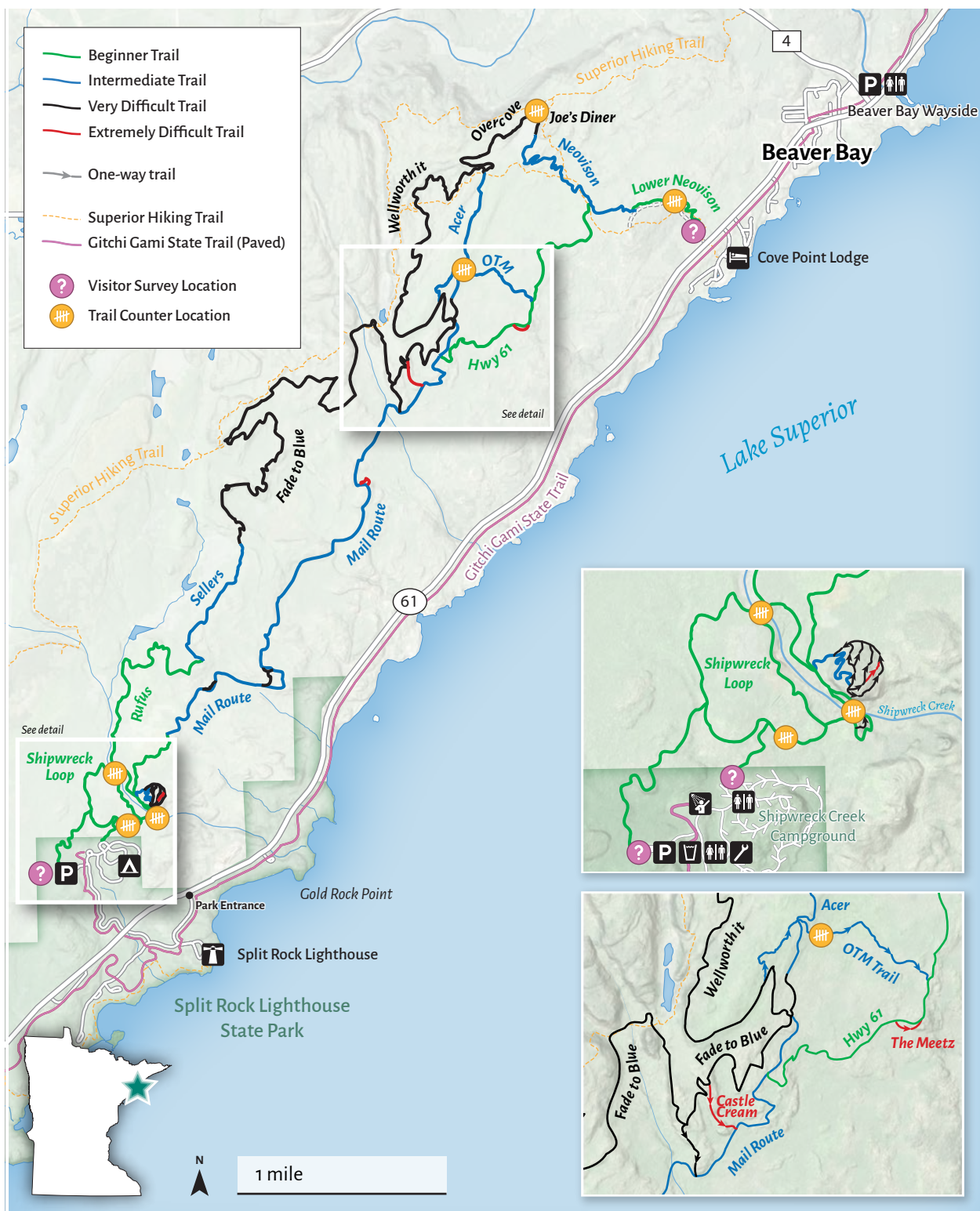
Finally, Split Rock Wilds trails are open year-round and visitation during the other seasons, particularly fall, may be significant. *This report focuses exclusively on summer visitors to the Split Rock Wilds.* Visitors to Split Rock Wilds during other seasons were beyond the scope of this project.

For more details on this report's methods, [see our methodology](#).



Figure 1

## Split Rock Wilds Trail System Map





## Trail Traffic Estimates

### Summer total traffic on the Split Rock Wilds ranges from approximately 4,000 on the Shipwreck Loop to 500 on the OTM Trail

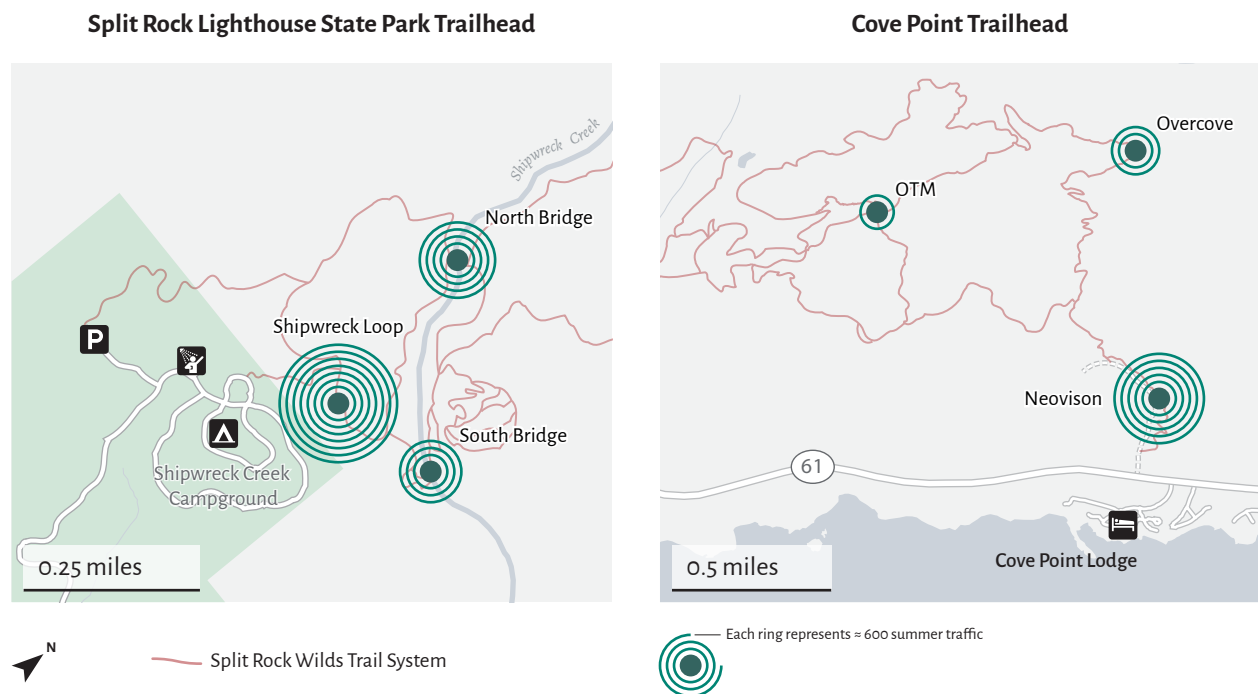
Traffic volumes varied significantly across the Split Rock Wilds. The southern section of trails, which offers beginner-level loops easily accessible through a trailhead in Split Rock Lighthouse State Park, were generally busier than the northern section of trails near Cove Point Lodge (Figure 2; Figure 3). The Shipwreck Loop was the busiest trail surveyed, where total summer traffic neared

4,000. The Shipwreck Loop provides access to two scenic bridges crossing Shipwreck creek, both of which received relatively equal use. Estimated total summer traffic on the north bridge ( $\approx 2,300$ ) was slightly higher than the south bridge ( $\approx 2,000$ ).

The northern section of trails, which riders access through a private road owned by Cove Point Lodge, were used less than the trails near Split Rock Lighthouse State Park. Total summer traffic on the Neovison

Figure 2

### Estimated total summer traffic



#### Notes:

Trail officially opened on July 16, 2022. Estimate is for hypothetical scenario in which trail was open all summer. Summer defined as Saturday, May 28, 2022 through Monday, September 5, 2022 (Saturday of Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day).

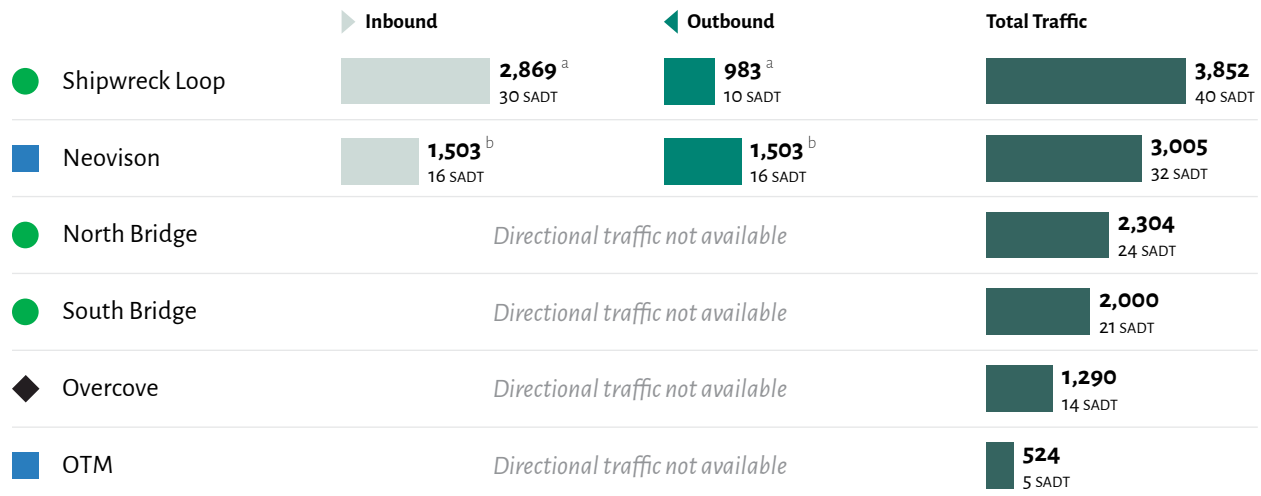
Trail, which is the sole entry and exit point on the northern end, was approximately 3,000.<sup>1</sup> Traffic on Overcove, an expert trail, was approximately 1,300. The OTM trail, which is even deeper in the system, received relatively little use during 2022 (estimated total summer traffic = 524).

Traffic volumes do not represent unique visitors. Depending on how visitors used the Split Rock Wilds trail system, they may have been counted any number of times. If every visitor at the Cove Point trailhead was doing an out-and-back trip, for example, traffic volumes on Neovison would

represent approximately 1,500 unique visits to the Cove Point trailhead. That's at least a slight underestimate as some riders likely ride a point-to-point route (starting at one trailhead and finishing at the other) or use the Gitchi Gami State Trail to ride a loop. We speculate that the vast majority of traffic on Neovison was indeed out-and-back, and assume so for analysis purposes, but future research is needed to test that assumption. In contrast to the Cove Point trailhead, visitors accessing the Split Rock Wilds from Split Rock Lighthouse State Park have two access points and many possible route options. Depending on the route, visitors

Figure 3

## Estimated summer traffic flows



### Notes:

Trail officially opened on July 16, 2022. Estimate is for hypothetical scenario in which trail was open all summer. Summer defined as Saturday, May 28, 2022 through Monday, September 5, 2022 (Saturday of Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day).

SADT = Summer Average Daily Traffic

<sup>a</sup> "Inbound" defined as traveling clockwise around the Shipwreck Loop. "Outbound" defined as traveling counter-clockwise.

<sup>b</sup> Directional counts not collected. 50/50 split assumes nearly all riders on Neovison are doing out-and-back trips from the Cove Point trailhead.

<sup>1</sup> Riders could technically bypass the Lower Neovison Trail (where counts took place) by riding a rough gravel road, but such use is believed to be negligible.

entering the Split Rock Wilds from the state park may have been counted multiple times or not at all (though that would be extremely unlikely). Since we don't have data on precise routes visitors took, we are unable to estimate the number of unique trail visits that originated from Split Rock Lighthouse State Park.

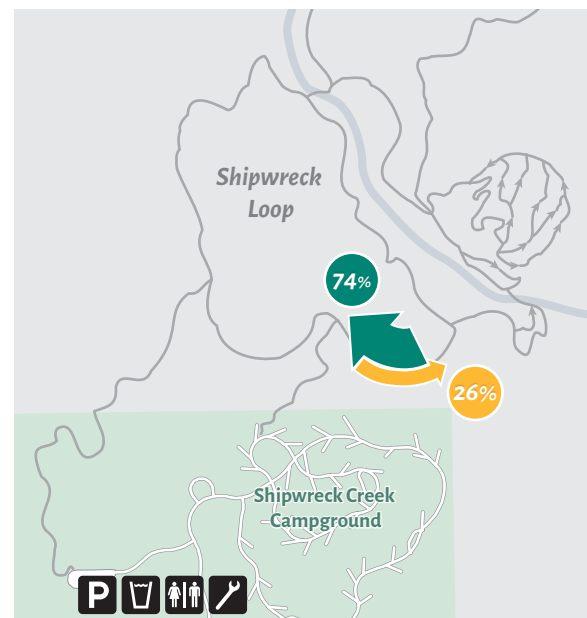
### **The majority of traffic on the Shipwreck Loop is traveling in the clockwise direction**

While we are not able to estimate unique visits on the Shipwreck Loop, our data indicate a large majority of visitors rode it in the clockwise direction. At the count location on the loop itself, just east of the campground connector trail, three-quarters (74%) of all traffic was moving in the clockwise direction (towards the trailheads; Figure 4).

Trail counts at each bridge over Shipwreck Creek also indicate that most visitors traveled the loop in the clockwise direction. Directional traffic is not available for either bridge, but hourly patterns show that traffic on the North Bridge generally peaked one to two hours before traffic peaked on the South Bridge (Figure 5). Combined, these two data sources suggest that the majority of visitors started at one of the two trailheads, traveled clockwise around the Shipwreck Loop, crossed over the North Bridge to explore the rest of the trail system, and returned to the trailheads via the South Bridge.

Figure 4

### **Shipwreck Loop In/Out Traffic Flow**



### **Hourly use patterns varies across the Split Rock Wilds trail system**

Several unique hourly patterns emerged across the Split Rock Wilds trail system. Recreational trails in tourist locations often follow a “destination trail” pattern, where the first visitors arrive around 7am, traffic picks up quickly in the mid-morning, peaks around the lunch hour, slowly tapers off through the afternoon, and most users are off the trail by dinner time. Traffic patterns at the Cove Point trailhead, especially Neovison and Overcove, generally followed this pattern (Figure 5). The OTM Trail showed a similar pattern, but with unique differences. Weekdays on the OTM Trail had a very exaggerated destination pattern with 84% of daily traffic occurring between 10am and 2pm, and weekends had a secondary

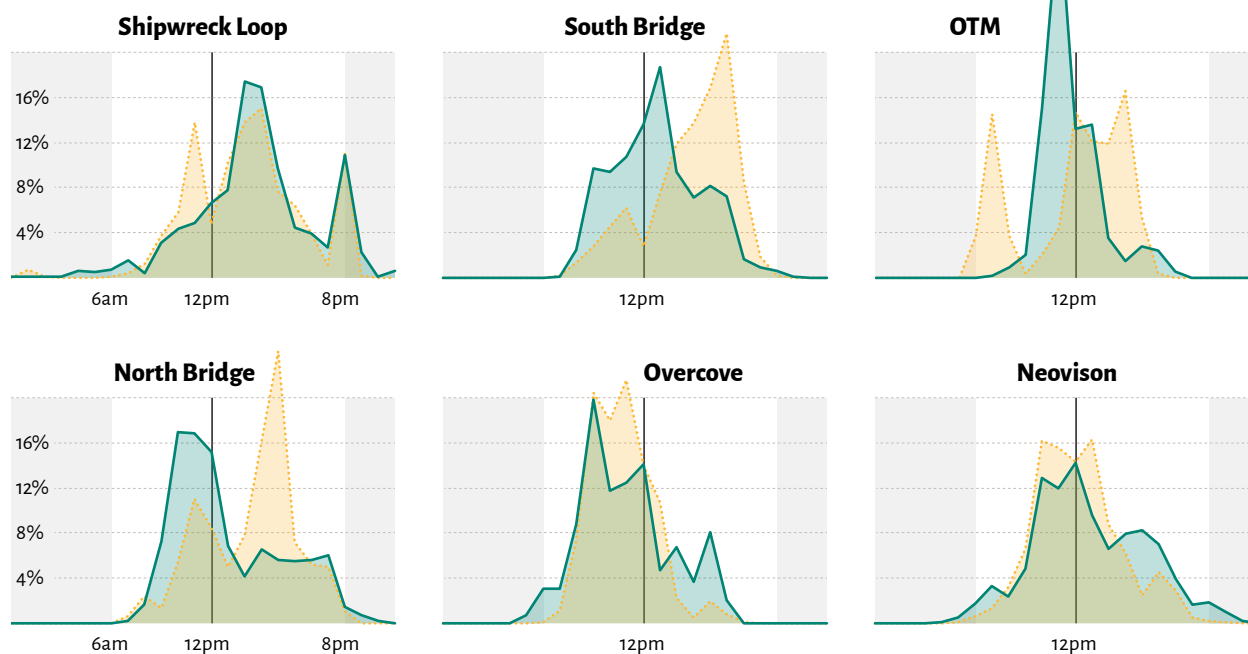
Figure 5

## Hourly traffic patterns

% of daily traffic

Weekday

Weekend



peak traffic hour first thing in the morning. One caveat to note when interpreting use on the OTM Trail is that because it received relatively little use in 2022, its hourly patterns were highly sensitive to the habits of just a handful of users.

Hourly patterns at the Split Rock Lighthouse trailhead are challenging to interpret. On weekdays, trail use on the Shipwreck Loop peaked in the early afternoon, decreased steadily until dinnertime, and then had a second peak in the evening before sunset. Weekday traffic on the two bridges peaked late morning (North Bridge) and early afternoon (South Bridge), with lower levels of use lingering through the late afternoon.

All these locations are close to the Shipwreck Creek Campground; we suspect the hourly patterns reflect that the trails serve both non-campers (peak use during the middle part of the day) and campers (using the trail later into the afternoon and around sunset). Why the two scenic bridges didn't see the same weekday peak around sunset as the Shipwreck Loop is puzzling, however, and deserving of future research.

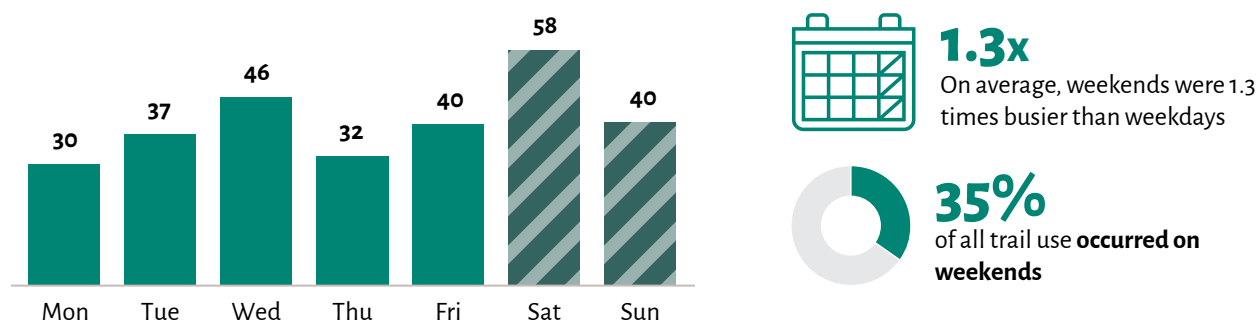
Weekend patterns at the Split Rock Lighthouse trailhead were similar to weekdays, with the exception that the two bridges received a substantially higher proportion of their use in the late afternoon (between 4pm and 6pm). The reason for



Figure 6

## Summer day-of-week traffic

Average daily traffic on Shipwreck Loop



*Notes:*

Data from July 16, 2022 (Saturday) through September 5, 2022 (Labor Day)

this is unclear. Future research is needed to better understand the hourly traffic patterns near the campground.

### Weekends account for 35% of trail use

Overall, the Split Rock Wilds trail system received similar levels of use on weekdays and weekends. Saturday was the busiest day of the week (average Saturday traffic on the Shipwreck Loop = 58), but overall, weekend days were only 1.3 times busier than weekdays (Figure 6). Mondays tended to be the slowest day (average Monday daily traffic = 41). Overall, 35% of all trail use on the Split Rock Wilds occurred on weekends.

Wednesdays were the second busiest day of the week. The relatively high traffic on Wednesdays (compared to other weekdays) is attributable to three exceptionally busy hours on three different Wednesdays.<sup>2</sup>

Without those three busy hours, average Wednesday traffic would look similar to that of the other weekdays. While the high counts on those three hours were unusual, we have no reason to believe they were invalid. We suspect it's a coincidence that three exceptionally busy weekday hours all fell on Wednesdays; however, future research is needed to confirm day-of-week patterns.

Fact sheets summarizing key trail count metrics for each location are available in Appendix A.

### Average Daily Traffic increased significantly in late August

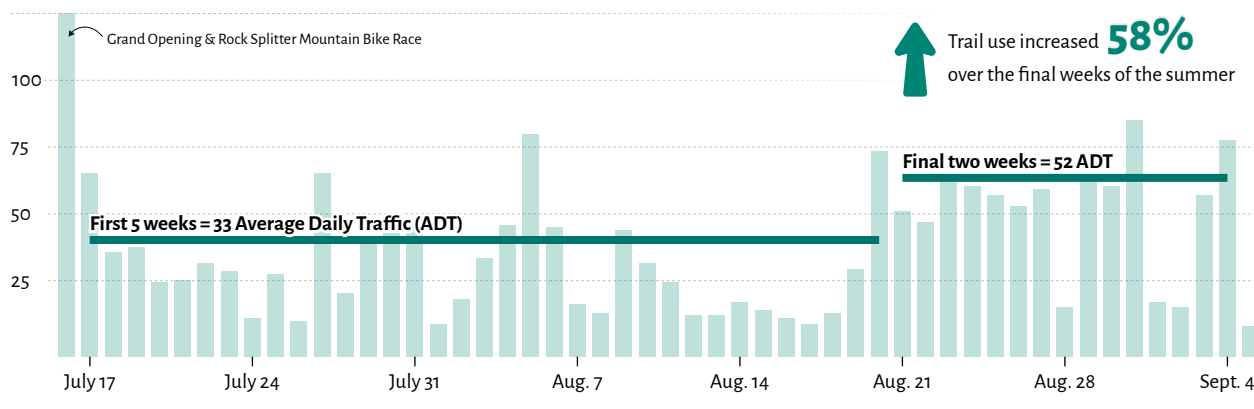
The Split Rock Wilds officially opened in July 2022 and is one of the newest trail systems in Minnesota. Our trail counts reflect a “first look” at the trail system before widespread

<sup>2</sup> 3pm on July 27 (25 visits); 8pm on August 24 (34 visits); 8pm on August 31 (44 visits)

Figure 7

## Trail use increased in the late summer

*Total daily traffic on the Shipwreck Loop*



marketing — both traditional and word-of-mouth — have had time to take hold. Trail use may look very different in the coming years as more and more people hear about the new trails. Our trail counts suggest this may already be starting to happen. The busiest day of the 2022 season was Saturday, July 16, which coincided with the trail's Grand Opening and inaugural Rock Splitter Mountain Bike Race. After that initial peak, trail use stabilized over the next five weeks at around 33 visits per day, on average.<sup>3</sup> Starting the weekend of August 20, however, there was an upward shift in daily patterns. For the final two weeks of the summer, average daily traffic on the Shipwreck Loop was 52, a 58% increase from earlier weeks (Figure 7).

suggest it's possible that news of the new the Split Rock Trail system is spreading. Future research will be needed to monitor trail use over time.

Trail use is highly sensitive to weather and gauging trends over short periods of time is rife with uncertainty, but early returns

<sup>3</sup> A "visit" in this sense refers to every instance one person passed by the trail counter on the Shipwreck Loop



## Visitor Demographics

### Visitors to Split Rock Wilds trail system span a wide range of ages

The average adult visitor to the Split Rock Wilds trail system was between 44 and 48 years old (median = 44; mean = 46; 95% C.I. [43.8, 47.8]). Among all adult visitors, the majority (58%) were in their 30s or 40s.

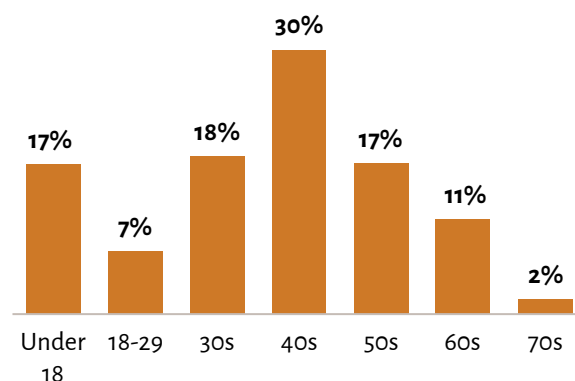
The average age of all visitors, however, was younger. The survey did not directly ask for the ages of children visitors (under 18), but it did ask how many children were in each visitor group. Overall, 17% of all visitors were children under 18 (Figure 8). If it's assumed the average age of children visiting was 12, the average age of all visitors was approximately 40 years old.<sup>1</sup>

Generations provide another method of understanding visitors by looking at their place in life, whether young adult, middle-aged, or retired. Looking at generations is helpful because it provides a way to understand how different formative experiences (e.g., world events, technological advances) interact with visitors' life stages to form recreational preferences. Generation X (those born between 1965 and 1980) made up the largest share of Split Rock Wilds visitors (40%). Millennials were the second largest

Figure 8

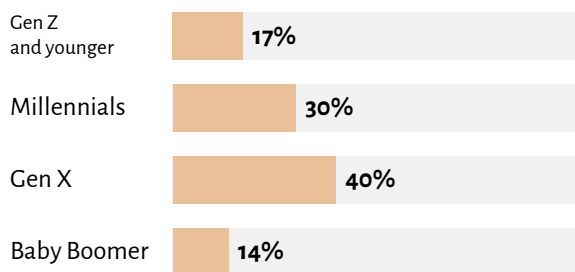
### Visitors by age

% of all visitors



### Visitors by generation

% of all visitors



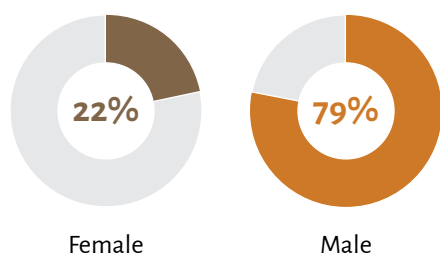
Q22: What year were you born? (n = 120)

Notes: Ages were only asked of adult visitors. Percentage under 18 is calculated based upon group composition (Q11) and includes non-respondents and groups without adults. Generations are defined as Gen Z and younger (born 1997 or after; Age 25 and younger), Millennials (born 1981-96; Age 26-41), Gen X (born 1965-80; Age 42-57), and Baby Boomer (born 1946-64; Age 58-76). Percentages don't add up to 100% due to rounding.

<sup>1</sup> The Loppet Foundation, a large organization that serves youth in Minneapolis, offers mountain biking camps for kids starting at age 7. Assuming a normal distribution of ages between 7 and 17, children on the trail have an average age of 12.

Figure 9

### Visitors by gender identity % of adult visitors



Q23. What is your gender identity? (n = 115)

Note: Percentages don't add up to 100% due to rounding.

generational cohort among Split Rock Wilds visitors, accounting for 30% of all visitors. Generation Z and younger (those born in 1997 or after) accounted for 17% of all visitors. Baby Boomers were the smallest generation on the Split Rock Wilds trails, and accounted for 14% of visitors.

### Males account for a significant majority of visitors to Split Rock Wilds trail system

Visitors to Split Rock Wilds were predominately male. Over three-quarters (79%) of adult visitors identified as male, compared to only 22% of visitors who identified as female (Figure 9). No visitors surveyed identified as a third gender or as transgender.

### The majority of visitors are White, highly-educated, and high-income

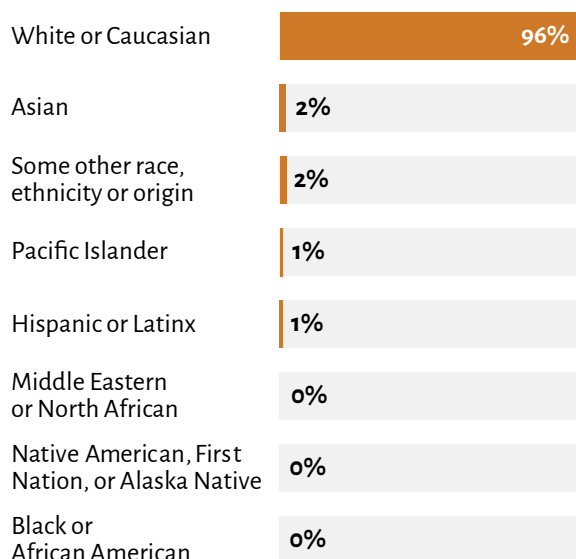
A significant majority of visitors (96%) identified as White (Figure 10). Small minorities of visitors identified as Asian

(2%); some other race, ethnicity or origin (2%); Pacific Islander (1%) or Hispanic (1%). No visitors surveyed identified as Middle Eastern or North African, Native American, or Black or African American.

Visitors to Split Rock Wilds had disproportionately high incomes compared to the statewide and local average. Nearly two-thirds of visitors (62%) had annual household incomes of \$100,000 or higher (Figure 11). For comparison, only 38% of Minnesota households, and only 28% of Lake County households, make over \$100,000 annually.<sup>2</sup> Visitors were also less likely to have below-average incomes.

Figure 10

### Visitors by race/ethnicity % of adult visitors



Q25. How do you describe yourself? Select all that apply (n = 115)

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 estimate (statewide) and 2020 estimate (Lake County).





Mountain bikers on the Split Rock Wilds / Paul Vincent Photography

Only 7% of visitors had household incomes below \$50,000 annually, compared to 31% of Minnesota households and 36% of Lake County households.

Visitors to the Split Rock Wilds were also disproportionately highly-educated compared to the Minnesota average. A large majority of visitors (85%) reported having a bachelor's or graduate degree (Figure 12).

For comparison, only 37% of Minnesotans over the age of 25 have a college degree.<sup>3</sup> In Lake County, 28% of adults over 25 have a bachelor's degree or higher.

A minority (4%) of visitors reported having a physical, mental, or sensory disability or condition (Figure 13). In comparison, nearly 11% of Minnesotans — and 16% of people in Lake County — have a disability.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (2020; 5-year estimates)

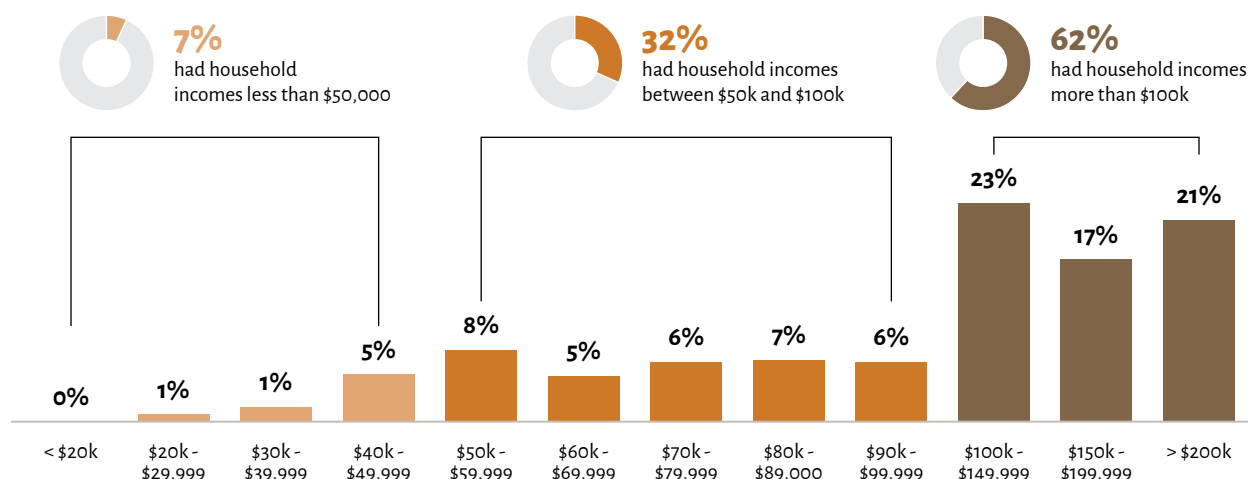
<sup>4</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (2020; 5-year estimates).



Figure 11

## Visitors by annual household income

% of adult visitors

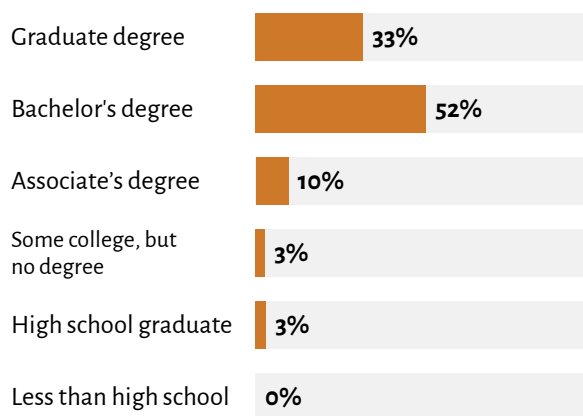


Q31. Please indicate your total household income before taxes last year (n = 102)

Figure 12

## Visitors by educational attainment

% of adult visitors

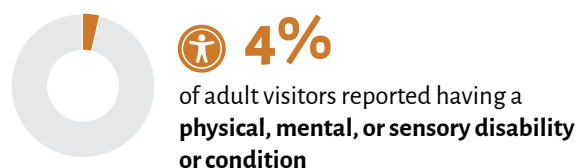


Q29: What is the highest level of education you have completed? (n = 111)

Note: Percentages don't add up to 100% due to rounding.

Figure 13

## Visitors with disabilities



Q30. Do you, or does someone in your group, have a physical, mental or sensory disability or condition? (n = 112)



## Trail Experience

### Split Rock Wilds' trails are used primarily for mountain biking

The vast majority (95%) of visitors using the Split Rock Wilds trails were mountain biking. Since the trails are designed and marketed primarily for mountain biking, this is not surprising. The trails were used for other activities, however: 16% of visitors were hiking or walking on the trails, 4% were dog-walking, 4% were running or jogging, 4% were doing nature photography, and 2% were birding or wildlife watching (Figure 14). A relatively high number of visitors (17%) reported participating in multiple activities during their visit. This

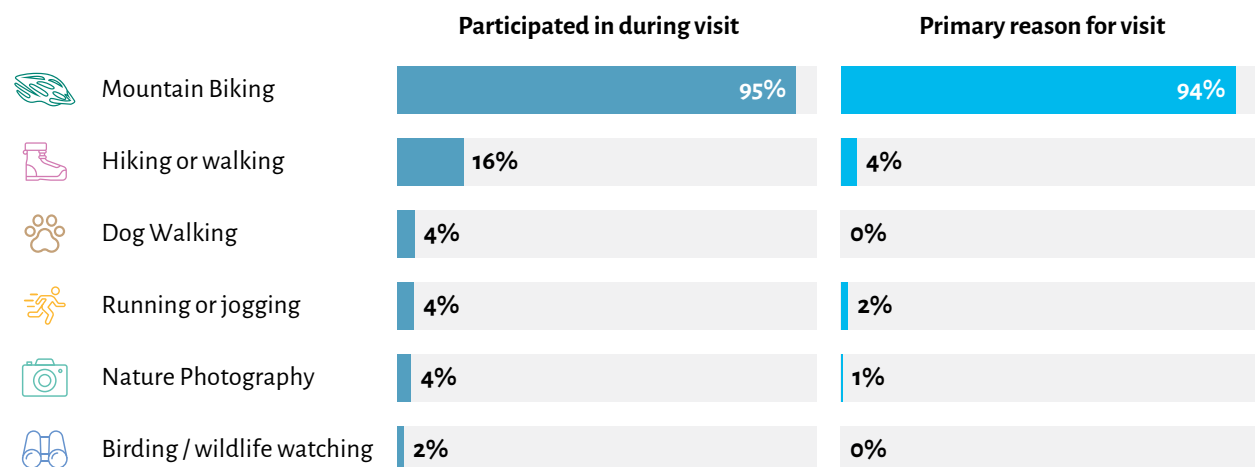
can be explained by some activities being complementary (e.g., a mountain biker who also took nature photos) or people within a visitor group doing different activities (e.g., a parent hiked while their children rode). It's also possible some mountain bikers selected "hiking or walking" partly in jest, indicating they got tired and had to walk part of the way.

Overall, mountain biking was the primary activity for 94% of visitors. Hiking was the primary trail activity for 4% of visitors, and another 2% of visitors said they were visiting primarily to go running or jogging.

Figure 14

### Participation in trail activities during visit

% of all visitors



Q1. Which trail activities are you and your group doing during your visit today? *Select all that apply* [Answers presented in randomized order] (n = 116)

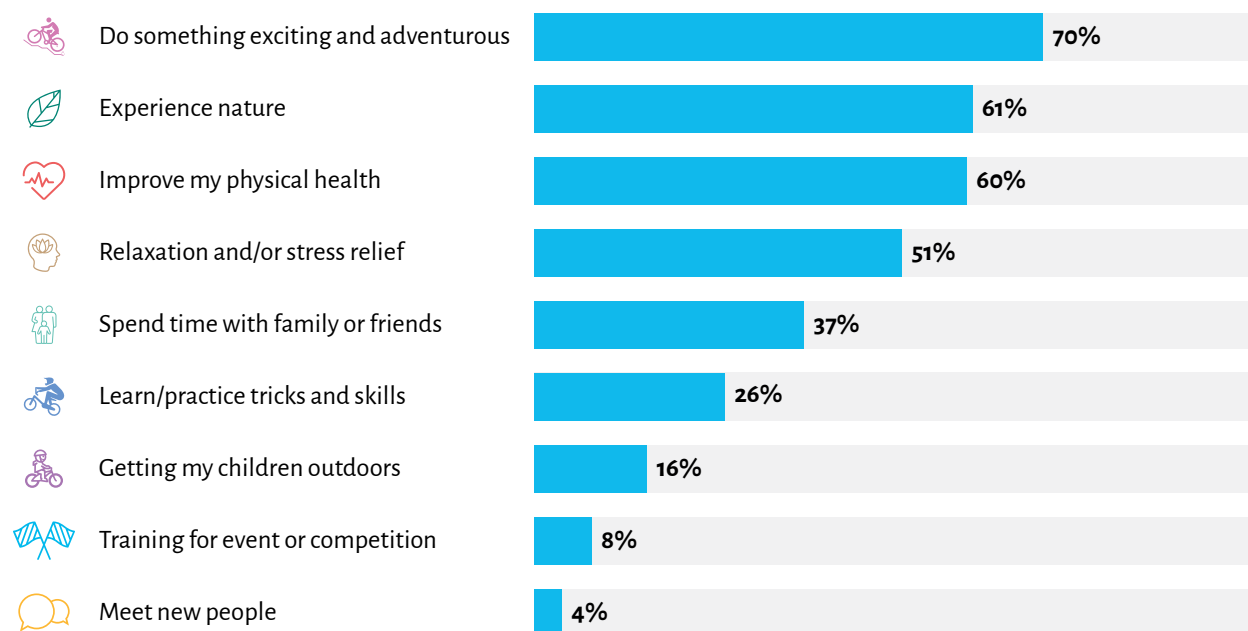
Q2. Which one of these activities was your main reason for visiting this trail? (Includes non-respondents and groups without adults; n = 136)

Note: Percentages for primary reason to visit don't add up to 100% due to rounding.

Figure 15

## Most important reasons for visiting the trail

% of adult visitors



Q7. What are your most important reasons for visiting the trail today? *Select all that apply* [Answers presented in randomized order] (n = 116)

### Doing something exciting and adventurous tops the reasons people visit Split Rock Wilds

Seven out of 10 visitors (70%) said doing something exciting and adventurous was one of their most important reasons for visiting (Figure 15). Other important reasons for visiting included experiencing nature (61% of visitors), improving physical health (60%) and relaxation and stress relief (51%).

Other reasons for visiting were generally less important and cited by less than half of visitors. Approximately a third of visitors (37%) said spending time with family and friends was an important reason for their visit, 26% said learning or practicing tricks and skills, and 16% said getting

their children outdoors. Fewer than 10% of visitors were visiting to train for an event or to meet new people.

Overall, motivations for visiting were similar across visitor subgroups. But some notable differences emerged. For example, younger visitors (Gen Zers and Millennials) were more likely than Gen Xers and Baby Boomers to be motivated by improving physical health (71% vs 52%,  $p < .05$ ) and doing something exciting and adventurous (83% vs. 65%,  $p < .05$ ). Spending time with friends and family was more important for locals (compared to tourists), women (compared to men), and people visiting

with children (compared to those visiting without). Our analysis did not find any statistically significant differences in trip motivations across different mountain biking skill levels.

### Over half of visitors are first-time visitors

A majority of visitors (59%) were visiting Split Rock Wilds for the first time (Figure 16). The high proportion of first-time visitors makes sense considering the trails are so new and is another indication use of the trails may increase in future years.

A small number of visitors to the Split Rock Wilds were what might be called “regulars.” Only 2% of visitors reported visiting daily, and another 4% visit weekly. Visitors more commonly visit once or twice a year. Approximately 20% of visitors said they visit

monthly, while 15% said they visit about once a year.

### Most visitors spend between one and four hours on the trail each visit

On average, visitors spent approximately 2.6 hours on the trail per visit (median = 2; mean = 2.6, 95% C.I. [2.2, 3.0]). Overall, however, there was broad diversity in how long people spent on the trail: 18% of visitors spent between one and two hours, 38% spent between two and three hours, and 28% spent between three and four hours (Figure 17). Only a small number of visitors fell on the extremes: 13% of visitors spent four hours or more, and only 4% spent less than an hour.

Time spent on the trail did not vary significantly across most visitor subgroups. Tourists and locals, men and women, advanced riders and beginning riders, those visiting with kids and those without, and campers and non-campers all spent similar amount of time on the trail per trip. The one exception was weekend visitors, who on average spent an extra hour on the trail compared to weekday visitors (3.3 hours vs. 2.2,  $p < .05$ ).

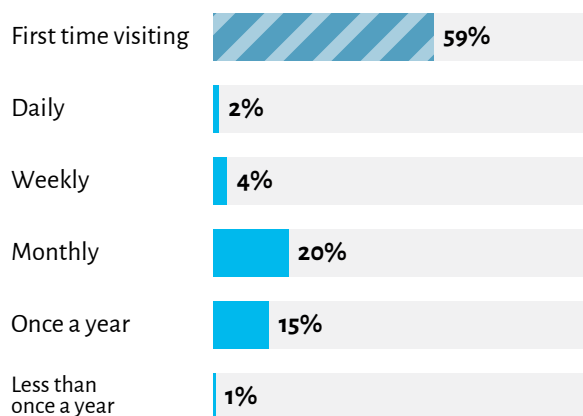
### The majority of visitor groups are pairs or individuals recreating alone

Most visitors (61%) were visiting the Split Rock Wilds with other people. However, most groups were relatively small. Half of visitors were visiting with one or two other people, whereas only 11% of groups were

Figure 16

### Visitation frequency

% of adult visitors



Q9. Approximately how often do you visit this trail during spring, summer and fall? (n = 113)

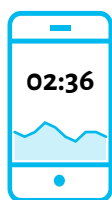
Note: Percentages don't add up to 100% due to rounding.

four people or larger. Over one-third of visitors (39%) were visiting alone (Figure 18).

The average visitor group size was 2.1 people (median = 2; mean = 2.1, 95% C.I. [1.8, 2.3]). Approximately one-fifth of visitor groups (19%) included children, and such groups tended to be larger than groups without children. The average group with children had 3.7 people, twice the size of the average group without children (1.7,  $p < 0.001$ ).

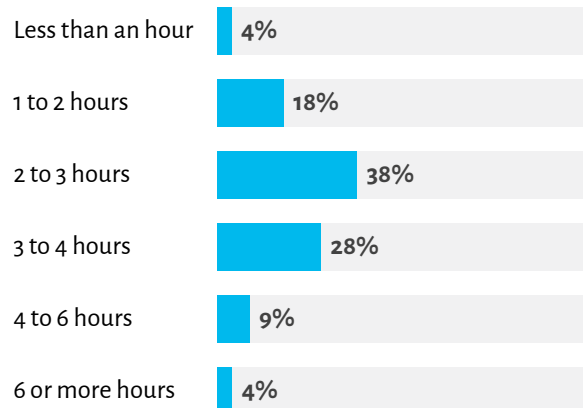
Figure 17

## Duration of trail visit



The average visitor spent **2.6 hours** at the trail

% of all visitors spending \_\_\_\_\_ at the trail



Q8. Approximately how much time did you spend at the trail on this visit? [Hours: Minutes] (n = 115)

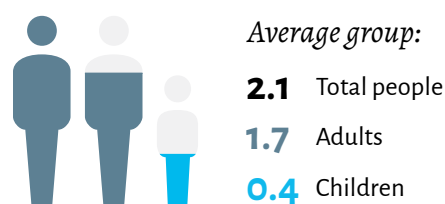
Note: Percentages don't add up to 100% due to rounding.

## Visitors give the Split Rock Wilds trail system high ratings

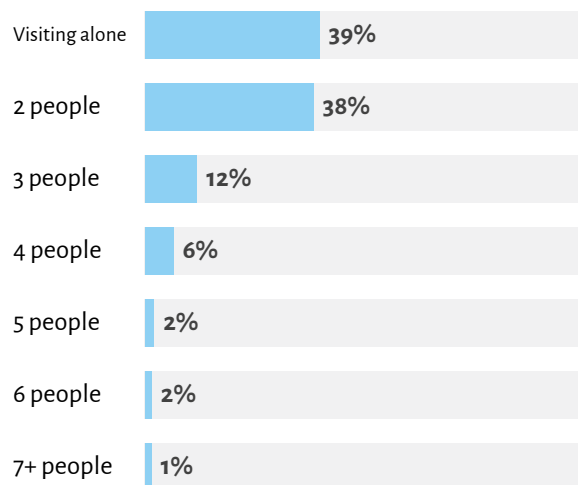
The Split Rock Wilds received generally high ratings from visitors. Two-thirds of visitors (67%) rated their trail experience as “very good” and another 22% rated their experience as “good.” A small minority of

Figure 18

## Group size and composition



% of all visitor groups



**19%**

of groups included children under 18 years of age

Q11. How many people are in the group you're recreating with today? [Adults 18 years and older, including yourself; Children under 18] (Includes non-respondents and groups without adults; n = 134)

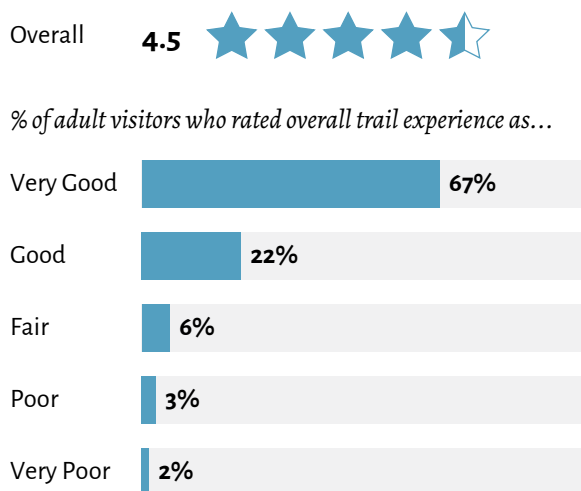


visitors gave the system lower ratings: 6% said their experience was “fair,” 3% said “poor” and 2% said “very poor” (Figure 19).

Visitors at the Cove Point trailhead gave the trails generally better reviews. A large majority of visitors (81%) surveyed at the Cove Point trailhead said their experience was “very good” and no respondents said their experience was poor or very poor. Approximately two-thirds of visitors (63%) at the Split Rock Lighthouse State Park trailheads said their experience was “very good.” Sample sizes at the two locations are relatively small, however, and the observed difference between experiences at the two trailheads is not statistically significant ( $p = .14$ ). Still, this is a finding worth considering and the difference in experiences at each trailhead warrants future study.

Figure 19

### Visitor ratings of trail experience



Q10. Overall, how would you rate your trail experience today? (n = 79)

Note: Overall rating based on scale where 5 = very good, 4 = good, 3 = fair, 2 = poor, and 1 = very poor



## Rider Characteristics

### All respondents rode their own mountain bike

Every visitor surveyed was riding their own bike, with none using a rental bike or borrowing a bike from a friend or family member. Approximately a tenth of riders (13%) were riding a fat-tire bike (Figure 20).

### The majority of mountain bikers have intermediate or advanced riding skills

Over four-quarters (78%) of mountain bikers on the Split Rock Wilds reported having intermediate or advanced riding skills. The largest share of respondents reported having advanced skills (40%), followed closely by visitors having intermediate skills (38%). Relatively few visitors reported being

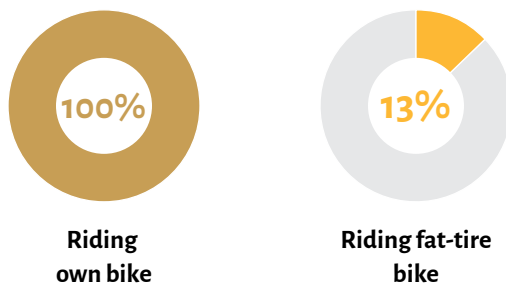
beginners (13%) or expert riders (9%) (Figure 21).<sup>1</sup>

Several differences emerged between beginner and intermediate riders and more advanced riders. More advanced riders were significantly more likely than beginner or intermediate riders to be men (96% vs. 67%,  $p < .001$ ). There's also some evidence that more advanced riders were younger, recreated in smaller group sizes, and were less likely to be visiting with children, although there was more uncertainty with those differences ( $p < .10$ ). Beginner and intermediate riders were more likely than more advanced riders to be riding a fat-

Figure 20

### Bike characteristics

*% of adult visitors, mountain bikers only*

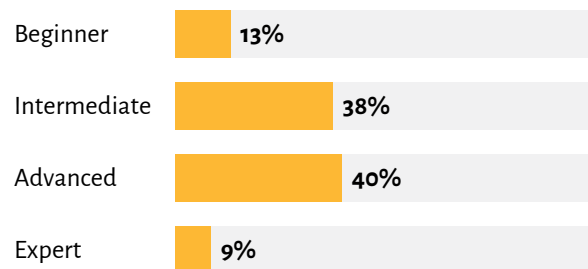


Q5. Are you riding a fat-tire bike today? (n = 111)  
Q6. Are you riding your own bike today? (n = 111)

Figure 21

### Mountain biking skill level

*% of adult visitors, mountain bikers only*



Q3. What is your mountain biking skill level? (n = 111)

<sup>1</sup> Skill levels on the survey were self reported, and the survey did not provide skill level definitions or descriptions. As such, results are based on each respondent's perception of their skills and their perception of what each skill level entails. Results should be interpreted with this caveat in mind.

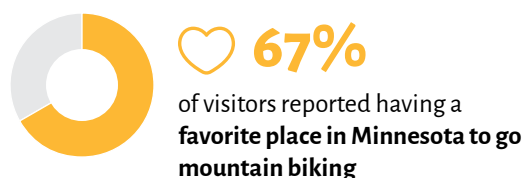
tire bike (20% vs. 6%,  $p < .05$ ). Regardless of mountain biking skill level, visitors were similar in terms of education, income, time spent on the trail, experience ratings, and trip motivations.

### Cuyuna and Duluth top Split Rock Wilds' visitors favorite places to ride

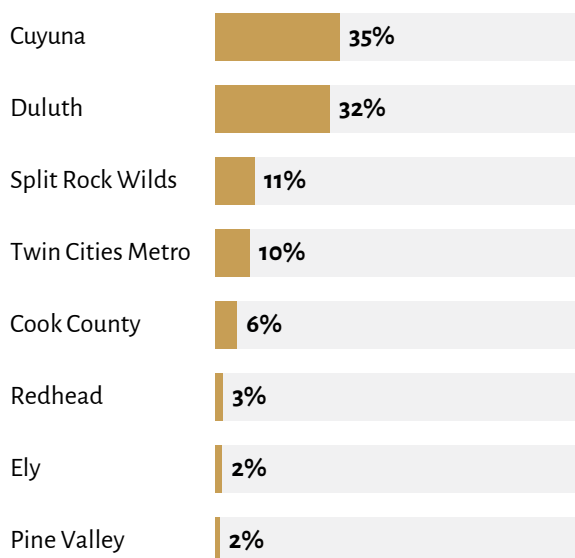
Visitors' choices of their favorite place to ride helps identify the top mountain biking facilities in Minnesota. Approximately a third (35%) of visitors at Split Rock Wilds said Cuyuna State Recreation Area was their favorite place to mountain bike in Minnesota and another third (32%) said Duluth (Figure 22). The remaining third were split among a wide variety of places: Split Rock Wilds (identified by 11% of visitors as their favorite), various trails in the Twin Cities Metro (10%), Cook County (6%), Redhead (3%), Ely (2%), and Pine Valley in Cloquet (2%).

Figure 22

### Favorite places to mountain bike



% of visitors who said \_\_\_\_\_ is their favorite place to go mountain biking in Minnesota...



Q4. Do you have a favorite place in Minnesota to go mountain biking? (n = 109)  
Q4a. If so, where? [Open ended response] (n = 68)

Note: "Northern Minnesota" was listed by 1% of visitors. "Duluth" includes Hartley Park, Lester Park, Hawk Ridge, Piedmont, and Mission Creek. "Cook County" includes Jackpot and Pincushion Mt. "Twin Cities Metro" includes Lebanon Hills, Theodore Wirth, Elm Creek, Murphy-Hanrehan and Sunfish Lake. Percentages don't add up to 100% due to rounding.



## Trail Tourism

### The vast majority of visitors to Split Rock Wilds are tourists

Nearly all visitors (82%) to the Split Rock Wilds were tourists, defined as someone who was 50 miles or more away from home and/or staying at least one night away from home (Figure 23). The majority of visitors were staying overnight (76%). Only a small minority (6%) of visitors were on day trips away from home. Local visitors were a minority on the Split Rock Wild trails, accounting for 18% of visitors.

Our analysis didn't find any major differences between tourists and local visitors in regards to trail experiences or socio-demographics. Tourists and locals were equally likely to visit with children, be in similarly sized groups, give the trails similar ratings, spend similar amounts of time on the trail, and give similar reasons for visiting. On average, locals and tourists were also similar ages and had similar levels of education and income.

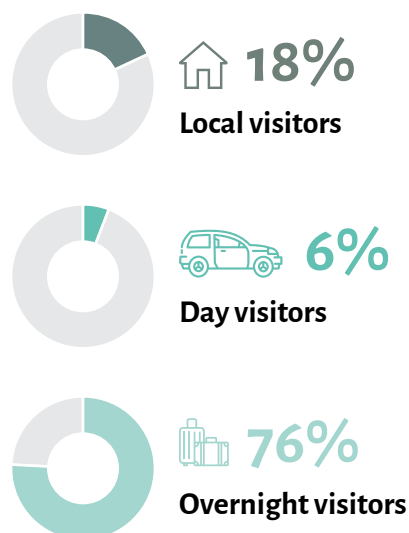
### Split Rock Wilds visitors are primarily from the Upper Midwest and Northern Ontario

The vast majority of visitors to the Split Rock Wilds during summer 2022 were from the Upper Midwest states of the U.S. and Northern Ontario. Minnesota, Wisconsin, and the metropolitan area of Thunder Bay, Ontario accounted for 94%

Figure 23

### Visitor travel segments

% of all visitors



Q15. Do you live more than 50 miles from this trail? (n = 116)

Q16. Are you on a trip where you have or plan to stay at least one night away from home? (n = 116)

Note: "Local Visitor" defined as someone who lives within 50 miles and is not spending a night away from home. "Day Visitor" is someone who lives more than 50 miles away but is not spending a night away from home. "Overnight visitor" is someone spending at least one night away from home, regardless of how far away they live.

of all visitors. Most visitors (86%) were from Minnesota and another 5% were from Wisconsin. Visitors did come from all across the country, however: five states were represented, along with one Canadian province. Visitors came from as far away as North Carolina and Colorado (Figure 24).

### The Twin Cities are the Split Rock Wilds' primary tourist market

Over half of visitors (55%) were from the

Twin Cities metropolitan area (Figure 25). Within the Twin Cities metro, Hennepin County accounted for the most visitors (55% of metro visitors), followed by Anoka County (14%), Dakota County (13%), Ramsey County (9%), and Washington County (5%).

After the Twin Cities, the next largest visitor markets were Duluth-Superior (20% of all visitors) and Lake County itself (6% of all visitors). Other regions made up only a small share of visitors. Approximately 3% of visitors were from Mankato. Thunder Bay, Ontario, where 3% of visitors were from, was the largest out-of-state market.

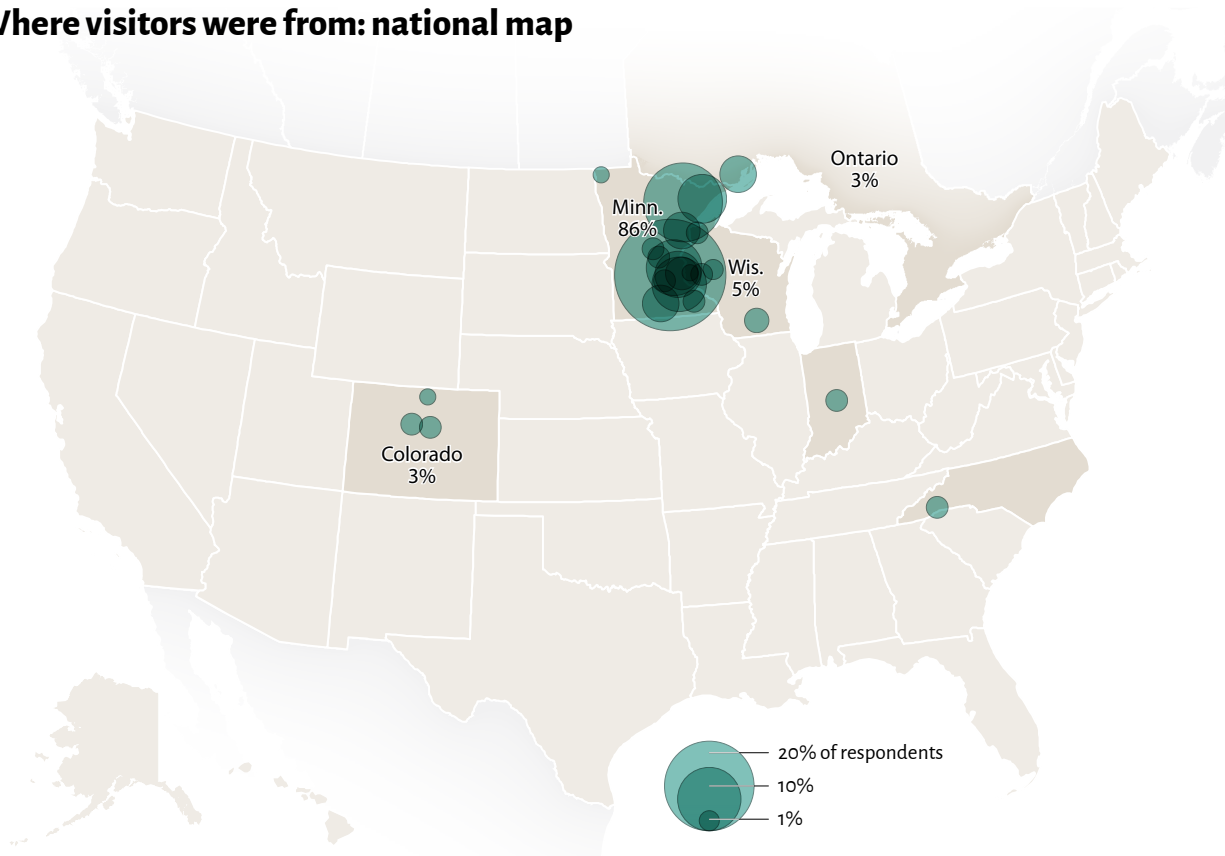
Day tourists and overnight tourists tended to be from different places. Every visitor surveyed from the Twin Cities metropolitan area spent at least one night overnight, whereas only 30% of visitors from Duluth stayed overnight in Lake County.

### **The majority of overnight visitors at Split Rock Wilds stay in campgrounds**

Approximately half (52%) of overnight visitors to the Split Rock Wilds were camping. This is perhaps unsurprising, considering a state park campground serves as one of the primary trailheads for the trail system. But even at the Cove Point

Figure 24

### **Where visitors were from: national map**

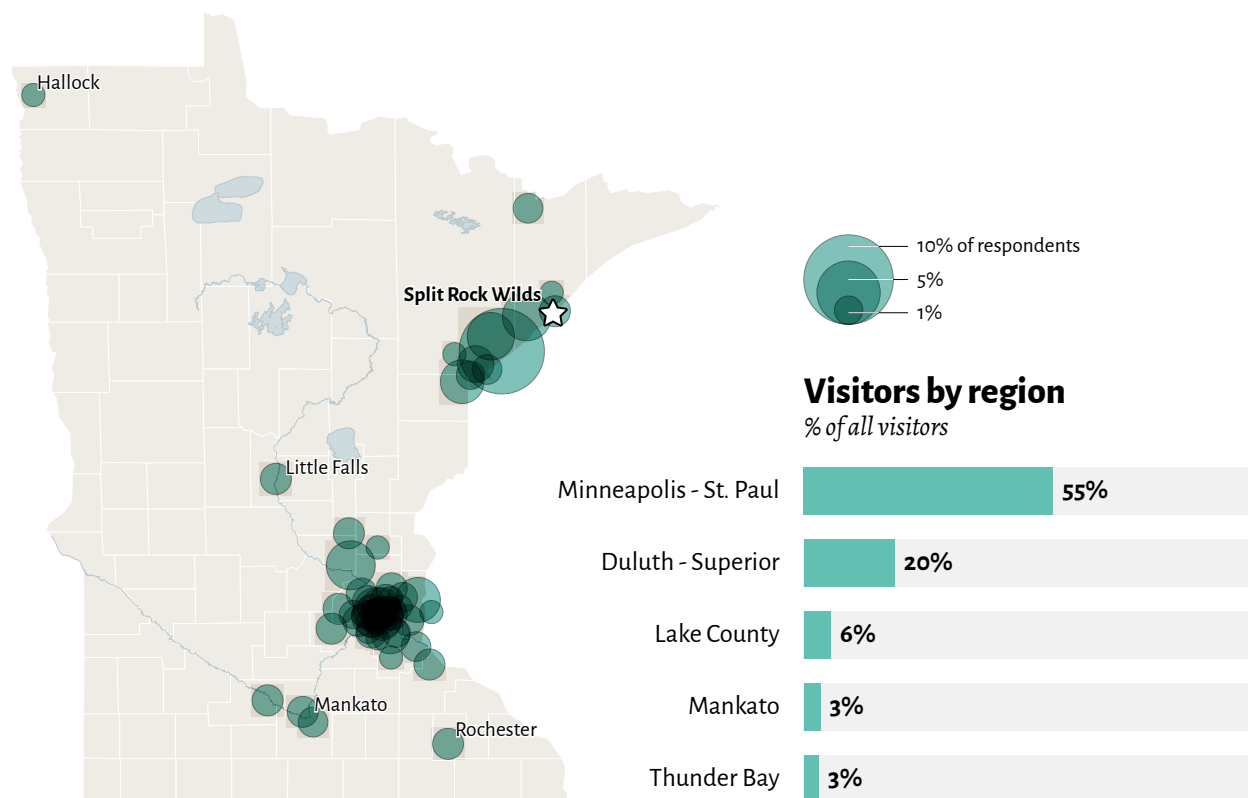


21. What is the zip code of your home address, or what is your country of residence? (Data displayed at county level; n = 102)



Figure 25

## Where visitors were from: Minnesota map



21. What is the zip code of your home address, or what is your country of residence? (Data displayed by zip code; n = 102)

trailhead, campgrounds were the most frequent type of overnight accommodation reported by visitors (41% of respondents at the Cove Point trailhead were camping).

Overall, over three-quarters (82%) of overnight tourists were staying in paid accommodations. In addition to the half of overnight visitors staying in campgrounds, 16% stayed at hotels or motels, 8% stayed at a resort or lodge, and 5% stayed in a vacation rental by owner (Figure 26). A minority of visitors stayed in private accommodations:

19% stayed at the home of a friend or family member and 5% stayed in their own vacation homes.

### Overnight visitors generally spend between one and three nights in Lake County

Overnight visitors to the Split Rock Wilds spent an average of three nights in Lake County (median = 3; mean = 3.5, 95% C.I. [2.1, 4.9]). Overall, over three-quarters of visitors (77%) stayed between one and three nights, with over half staying two or three nights (61%; Figure 26). Another 20% of overnight visitors were on longer, week-

long trips (four to six nights). Extended stays beyond one week were rare; only 2% of overnight visitors spent seven nights or more in Lake County.

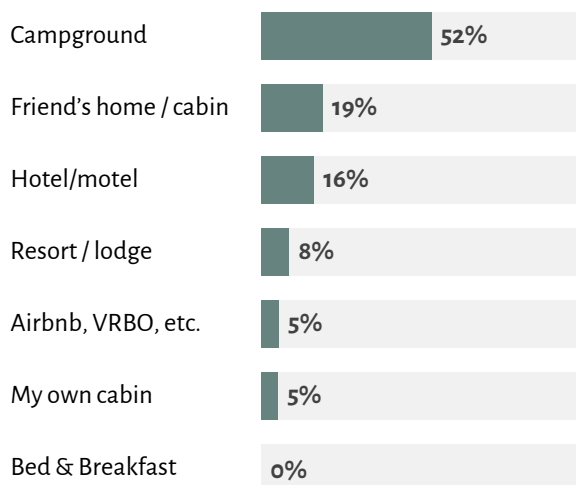
### Most tourists at Split Rock Wilds say the trails were a significant reason for their decision to visit Lake County

There are all kinds of reasons tourists choose to visit different areas. Some tourists visit for a specific reason (e.g., to ride the trail everybody's talking about), others visit for a complex mix of reasons (e.g. the area has great food, stunning scenery, and lots of activity options to choose from), and others visit for completely unrelated reasons (e.g., they're attending a wedding and jump on the trail during their free time). Understanding whether tourists at Split Rock Wilds were visiting Lake County primarily for the trails themselves, or if they saw the trails as just one of many attractions in the area, is helpful for tourism marketing and planning.

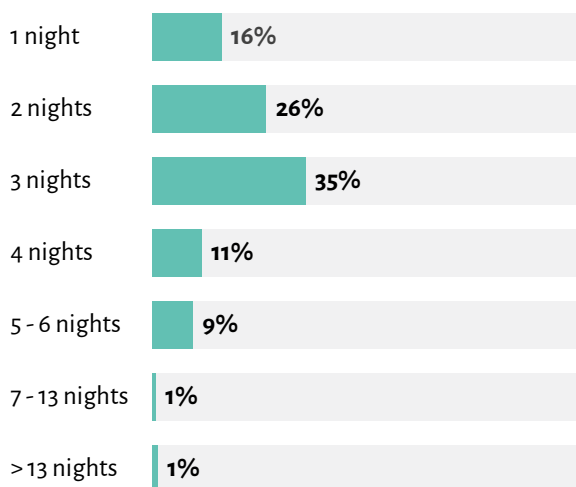
For tourists at Split Rock Wilds, the trails themselves were usually at least part of the reason for their trip (Figure 27). Among all tourists, a third (36%) said the Split Rock Wilds trails were the primary reason they were visiting Lake County; another 21% said they were a significant reason. Only 14% of tourists said they would have visited Lake County regardless of the trails.

Figure 26

### Visitor overnight accommodations % of overnight visitors



### Nights stayed in the Lake County area % of overnight visitors



Q17. How many total nights do you plan to spend in this area during your trip? (n = 88)

Q18. What type of overnight accommodations are you staying in during your trip? *Select all that apply*

[Answers presented in randomized order] (n = 88)

Note: Percentages don't add up to 100% due to rounding.

### There's a wide range in how far in advance tourists plan their visits

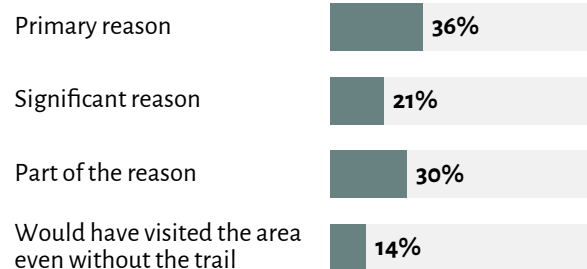
Overall, there's broad diversity among tourists in how far in advance they planned their trip to Lake County (Figure 27).

Tourists at the Split Rock Wilds were as likely to have planned their trip within one week of arriving (22% of tourist visitors) as they were to have planned their trip two or more months in advance (25% of tourist visitors). Nearly half of trips (46%) were planned within two weeks of arriving. The other half of trips were split roughly evenly between two to four weeks in advance (12% of tourists), one to two months (16%), two to three months (12%), and three months or more (13%).

Figure 27

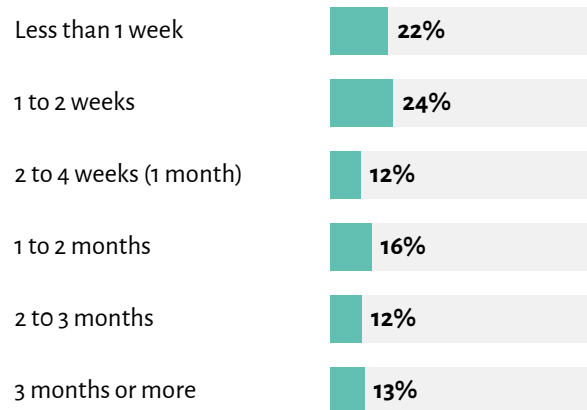
### Importance of trail in decision to visit Lake County

*% of adult visitors, tourist visitors only*



### How far in advance tourists planned their trip

*% of adult visitors, tourist visitors only*



Q19. How important was the trail in deciding to visit this area? (n = 92)

Q20. How far in advance did you plan this trip? (n = 91)

*Note:* "Tourist" defined as visitor who lives more than 50 miles away and/or is spending a night away from home. Percentages don't add up to 100% due to rounding.



## Trip Planning

### Trail apps are the primary information source visitors use to learn about the Split Rock Wilds

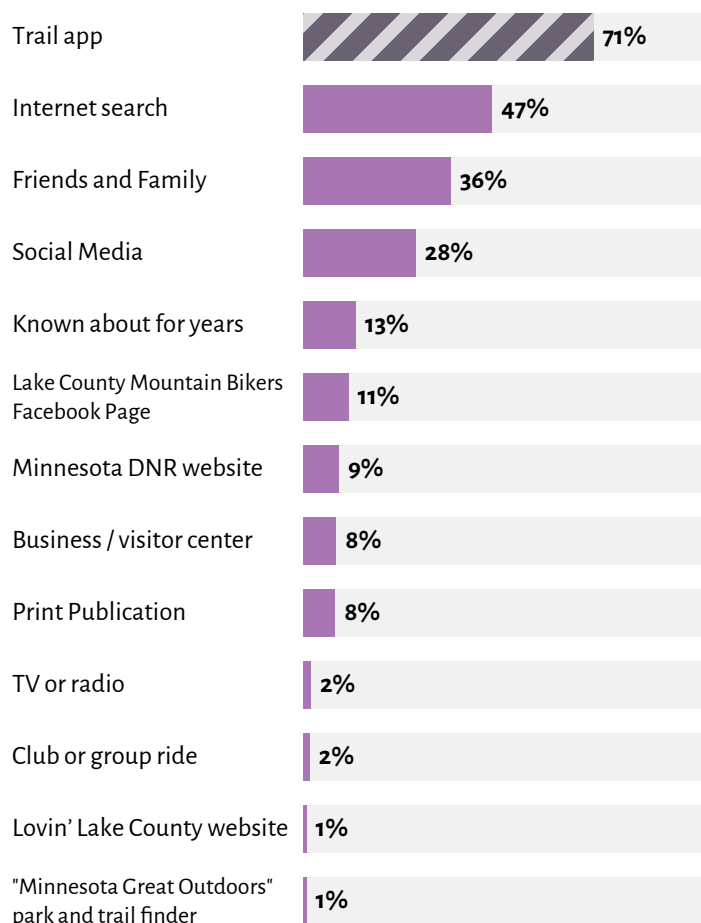
Trail apps were the primary way in which visitors learned about the Split Rock Wilds. Approximately 71% reported using a trail app to learn about the trails. No other

information source was used by a majority of visitors (Figure 28). Just under half of visitors (47%) learned about the trails through an internet search and another quarter (28%) used social media sites such as Facebook or YouTube. Friends and

Figure 28

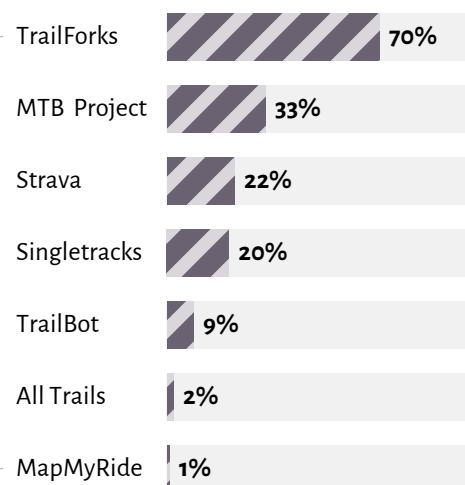
### Information sources about the trail

% of adult visitors who use information source



### Most popular trail apps

Of trail app users, % who use...



### Use of trail apps depended on skill level

% of adults who use trail app



Q12. What information sources have you used to learn about this trail? *Select all that apply* [Answers presented in randomized order] (n = 116)

\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ .

family served as information sources for a third of visitors (36%). Other information sources were less frequently used. About a tenth of visitors said they learned about the Split Rock Wilds through the Lake County Mountain Bikers Facebook page (11%), the Minnesota DNR website (9%), a recommendation from a business or visitor center (8%), or a print publication (8%).

The heavy reliance on trail apps to learn about the Split Rock Wilds may be reflective of how new the trails are. Apps are a quick way to communicate and crowd source information and currently serve as the best source for maps of the Split Rock Wilds. Among visitors who used trail apps, 70% used Trailforks. All other apps were used by a minority of users. Between a fifth and a third of visitors reported using MTB Project (33%), Strava (22%), and Singlettracks (20%). Approximately a tenth of app users (9%) used TrailBot, a new app that updates users on trail conditions. All Trails (2%) and MapMyRide (1%) were used by only a small number of visitors.<sup>1</sup>

The relatively high use of trail apps should be of interest to trail managers and researchers alike, since trail apps track valuable data that can inform how trail systems are used. Both Trailforks and Strava, for example, provide heat maps of trail use based on data provided by

their subscribers. Such trail app data is undoubtedly informative, but may not always be representative of all visitors. Visitors on the Split Rock Wilds who use trail apps, for example, were more likely than other visitors to have advanced or expert skills (82% vs. 65%,  $p < .05$ ) and had higher incomes (68% of app users had incomes over \$100,000, compared to 44% of non app users,  $p < .05$ ). App users on the Split Rock Wilds were also significantly more likely to report a long list of motivations, including experiencing nature, improving physical activity, relaxation and stress relief, doing something exciting and adventurous, and learning and/or practicing tricks and skills. Data from trail apps should be interpreted with this context in mind.

### **Before hitting the trail, most visitors look for trail maps and mileages**

Approximately three-quarters of visitors (76%) looked for information about the Split Rock Wilds before their visit (Figure 29). That number is higher than other comparable trail systems and likely is reflective of how new the trails are.

Visitors who searched for information about the Split Rock Wilds before their visit typically were looking for information about the trails themselves (Figure 29). The top item, by far, that visitors searched for was trail maps and mileage (searched for

---

<sup>1</sup> The percentages don't add up to 100% because many trail app users reported using more than one app.

by 78% of visitors). Information about trail difficulty (searched for by 47% of visitors), trail conditions (47%), and trail reviews and photos (38%) were also frequently searched for. Other types of information about the trails were less frequently searched for. Only 13% of visitors looked up information about trail rules, 11% looked up parking information, 11% looked up park or trail hours, and 8% searched for information about fees (the state park campground requires a vehicle permit).

Visitors were far less likely to search for trip-related information. Only 15% of visitors searched for travel directions, 8% searched for lodging options, and 3% searched for nearby restaurants before their trip. No visitors surveyed looked up information about equipment rentals.

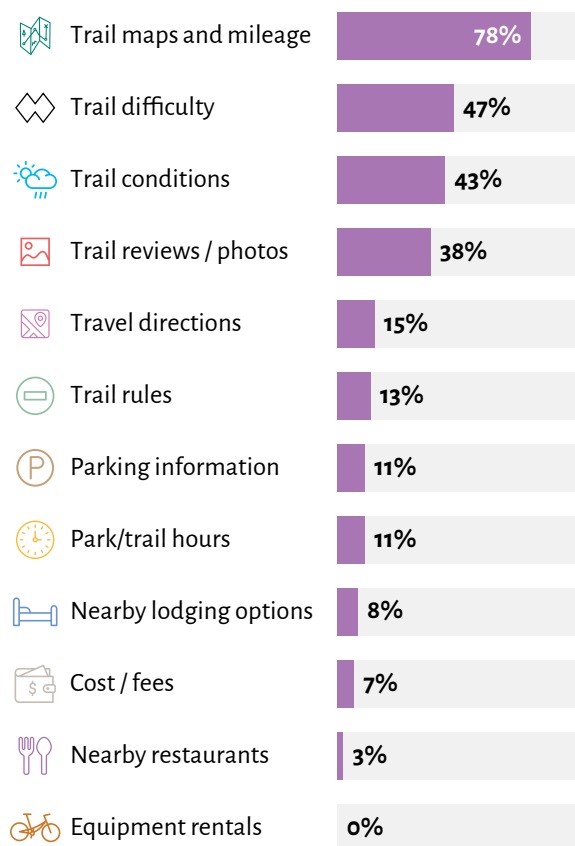
Figure 29

## Pre-trip planning information



## What information did visitors search for before their visit?

*Of adult visitors who looked for information before their visit, % who searched for...*



Q13. To prepare for your visit, did you or your group look for information about this trail before you came? (n = 116)

Q14. What information did you search for before your visit today?

Select all that apply [Answers presented in randomized order] (n = 88)



# Methodology

## Overview

Data in this report is drawn from two complementary studies conducted on the Split Rock Wilds trail system during the summer of 2022. First, to measure system use and traffic patterns, automated trail counters were installed at six locations across the system. Second, a visitor intercept survey contacted visitors at the Cove Point trailhead, the Shipwreck Loop trailhead, and the Shipwreck Creek Campground trailhead to collect responses on trail experience, trip characteristics, and demographics.

Data collection did not begin until the Split Rock Wilds trails officially opened with a ribbon-cutting ceremony on July 15, and continued through September 5 (Labor Day). Both studies were designed to be representative of summer use. Trail counts were extrapolated to be representative of the summer season, defined as the Saturday before Memorial Day through Labor Day. Focusing visitor studies on the summer season coincides with the peak visitation season and ensures comparability with other visitor studies conducted in regional and state parks and trails across Minnesota.<sup>1</sup>

While beyond the scope of this study, it should be noted that the Split Rock Wilds trails are open all year and use during other seasons (particularly the fall) may be significant. This report does not quantify the full, year-round regional impact of the Split Rock Wilds trail system.

## Trail use estimates

Data on trail use was collected using EcoCounter PYRO boxes, which are passive-infrared automated trail counters that detect trail users as they pass by. The passive-infrared counters count all users, and occasionally wildlife, that pass by and do not differentiate between bikers and hikers. Field staff validated the counters after installation by hiking or riding past each counter 50 times to ensure they were counting properly.

The Shipwreck Loop was chosen as the trail count location. A trail counter was installed on the trail just east of the junction with the campground connector trail. This location was chosen to try to capture all visitors accessing the trail system from Split Rock Lighthouse State Park, which currently provides the easiest access to the mountain biking trails.

---

<sup>1</sup> See “Regional Parks System Visitor Study Report” (Metropolitan Council, November 2016), “2017 State Park Visitor Survey” (Minnesota DNR, November 2017), and “2019 Minnesota State Trail Visitor Survey” (Minnesota DNR, July 2020).

To complement the permanent counting location on the Shipwreck Loop Trail, short-duration counts were conducted at five additional locations: the north bridge over Shipwreck Creek, the south bridge over Shipwreck Creek, OTM Trail, Overcove Trail, and Neovison Trail. Short-duration counts ranged in length from 16 to 18 days (Figure 30). All trail-counting locations were determined in consultation with David Cizmas, a forester and trail manager with Lake County.

At the end of the counting season, trail-count data were downloaded, checked, and cleaned. We then analyzed data at each trail location for daily traffic patterns, hourly traffic patterns, and estimated summer average daily traffic (SADT). Fact sheets for each trail-count location are provided in Appendix A.

SADT for short-duration count locations was estimated using the day-of-year factoring method. The day-of-year factoring method is a standard method to extrapolate short-duration non-motorized traffic counts because it captures the effects of local conditions such as weather, events, and holidays.<sup>2</sup> Under the day-of-year factoring method, observed traffic at a short-duration site is assumed to equal the proportion of season-long traffic observed at a nearby location (i.e., “reference site”)

Figure 30

### Trail counting locations and dates

| Location       | Dates             | Duration (days) |
|----------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Shipwreck Loop | 7/16/22 - 9/5/22  | 52              |
| North Bridge   | 8/2/22 - 8/17/22  | 16              |
| South Bridge   | 8/2/22 - 8/17/22  | 16              |
| OTM            | 8/19/22 - 9/5/22  | 18              |
| Overcove       | 7/16/22 - 7/31/22 | 16              |
| Neovison       | 7/16/22 - 7/31/22 | 16              |

where counts were collected for the entire season. We used the counts collected on the Shipwreck Loop as the reference site to extrapolate data collected elsewhere on the system. For example, if traffic between July 16 and July 31 accounted for 32% of total summer traffic on the Shipwreck Loop, it’s assumed that observed traffic on the Neovison Trail during the same time period also accounted for 32% of total summer traffic on the Neovison Trail. This method results in estimates with a margin of error of approximately 10-15% for each short-duration trail count location.

All our trail use-estimates are extrapolated to reflect a hypothetical summer in which the Split Rock Wilds trail system was open from Memorial Day through Labor Day. Estimates were extrapolated using data from Tioga Recreation Area, a comparable mountain biking trail system 100 miles to the west of the Split Rock Wilds near

2 Minge, E., Falero, C., Lindsey, G., Petesch, M., & Vorvick, T. (2017). *Bicycle and Pedestrian Data Collection Manual*. Minnesota Department of Transportation.



Mountain biker approaching a rock garden on the Split Rock Wilds / Paul Vincent Photography

Grand Rapids. At Tioga, trail use between July 16 and September 5 accounted for 54% of total summer use in 2022.<sup>3</sup> Our extrapolation assumes that, *had the Split Rock Wilds officially opened Memorial Day weekend*, then traffic between July 16 and September 5 would have accounted for 54% of total summer use (as it did at Tioga). This assumption is debatable, of course, but we hope providing extrapolated estimates for the entire season will allow for easier comparisons with other trail systems, and provide a more natural baseline for future trail counts that may take place on the Split Rock Wilds.

All summer traffic estimates are specific to 2022 and are not necessarily representative of the average year. Mountain biking and hiking traffic is highly sensitive to weather, which can vary greatly from year to year.

### **Questionnaire development**

The questionnaire was designed through a collaborative process between the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission (GMRPTC) and Parks & Trails Council (P&TC). GMRPTC designed a draft questionnaire based on the University of Minnesota's *Handbook for Minnesota Parks and Trails Surveying* and previous surveys

<sup>3</sup> See "Tioga Recreation Area 2022 Summer Visitor Profile" (Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota, 2022)



conducted by the Metropolitan Council.<sup>4</sup> P&TC reviewed the questionnaire and offered recommendations to improve questionnaire clarity, focus, and length. Whenever possible, questions were designed to collect data that is comparable to visitor survey data collected by the Metropolitan Council and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

The final questionnaire was 20 questions long, with 12 additional questions asked only of specific users (e.g., mountain bikers, tourists). Question topics included trail activities, overall quality of the trail experience, group characteristics, trip planning, information sources, and demographics (Appendix B). The 2022 questionnaire was the same instrument as used in GMRPTC visitor profile projects in 2021, with only minor changes made for clarity. On average, respondents took five to six minutes to complete the survey.

To limit potential language bias, the questionnaire was translated and made available in English, Spanish, and Somali. All respondents completed the survey in English.

Questionnaires were administered to visitors on Samsung 8" tablets using QuestionPro (a professional online survey software). The survey was stored on the

tablet and did not require Wi-Fi or cellular phone service. Skips and data validation were programmed into the survey to help speed up completion and improve accuracy of data entered by the visitor. Survey responses were stored on the tablet and later uploaded to P&TC's online account. Paper surveys were also available as a backup or if requested. The vast majority of surveys (95%) were completed electronically on the tablet.

### **Data collection protocol**

The visitor survey was conducted by P&TC staff. All staff attended a training session and received an 18-page training manual that reviewed project purpose, study design and procedures, checklists, and frequently encountered issues.

Surveying was conducted primarily at the the Shipwreck Loop trailhead and the Cove Point trailhead, with several additional shifts taking place at the Shipwreck Creek Campground. Only adult visitors (age 18 and older) using the trail system were eligible to take the survey and staff were trained to screen all visitors to determine visitor eligibility (Appendix B). Visitors were only allowed to complete the survey once during the summer. If visitors arrived as a group, the adult with the most recent birthday was asked to complete the survey.

---

<sup>4</sup> Pradhananga, A., Davenport, M.A., Saari, H. (2016). *Handbook for Minnesota Parks and Trails Visitor Surveying*. University of Minnesota, Department of Forest Resources.

To welcome visitors at each survey location, a survey station was set up at the beginning of each survey shift. The station provided a visual presence for staff and included a large “Trail Survey” sign, free water, maps, and a trash bag.

During each survey shift, staff made every effort to talk to each visitor entering or leaving the trailhead. Staff would approach each visitor group, introduce themselves, explain the purpose of the survey, and ask them to participate. If the visitor agreed, they were handed the tablet and self-administered the questionnaire. If the visitor asked for the questionnaire to be read aloud, staff read the questionnaire verbatim and recorded responses on the tablet. All visitors were assured their participation was completely voluntary and that their identities would be anonymous. Visitors who refused to participate were logged to track any potential non-response bias.

In instances where high-traffic volumes made it impractical to approach every visitor, the “next to pass method” was used to select respondents. During these periods, staff simply selected and approached the next group or person to pass the survey site after a questionnaire had been completed by someone else.

## **Sampling**

A stratified sampling plan was developed to ensure the survey sample was as representative of summer visitors as possible. Surveys were conducted for a total of 146 hours stratified across high-use and low-use periods. Surveying hours were split between weekends (37%) and weekdays (63%). On average, 0.7 surveys were completed per hour on weekdays and 0.9 surveys were completed per hour on weekends. A full sampling schedule and collection rates are available upon request.

## **Response rate and margin of error**

A total of 138 eligible visitor groups were approached and asked to complete the questionnaire. Additionally, one group was observed where no adults were present and so no one was eligible to complete the survey. Of the 138 eligible groups, 116 groups completed a survey for a response rate of 84%. This response rate is exceptionally high and allays any concerns of non-response bias (in which results are biased due to systematic differences between people who are willing to complete the survey and those who are not).

Whenever a potential respondent declined to participate, the surveyor recorded the group size and primary activity and inquired if they would be willing to quickly answer two short “non-response questions.”<sup>5</sup> The purpose of these questions

---

5 (1) Are you a local or a tourist? and (2) What year were you born?

was to test if visitors who declined to participate were systematically different from those who participated. Our non-response bias testing found that non-respondents did not significantly differ from respondents in terms of trail activity, age, visitor origin, or group size.

The final sample size (n=116) provides 95% confidence that the sampling error does not exceed plus or minus 9.1 percentage points. The margin of error is different for every single question depending on the sample size, the proportion of responses, and the population size. Margins of error are higher in subgroups (Figure 31).

Figure 31

### Margin of error for selected subgroups

| Member segment           | Sample size | Plus or minus... (percentage points) |
|--------------------------|-------------|--------------------------------------|
| All adult visitors       | 116         | 9.1                                  |
| Activity                 |             |                                      |
| Mountain bikers          | 110         | 9.3                                  |
| Tourism                  |             |                                      |
| Local visitors           | 23          | 20.4                                 |
| Tourist                  | 102         | 9.7                                  |
| Location                 |             |                                      |
| Split Rock Lighthouse SP | 79          | 11.0                                 |
| Cove Point trailhead     | 37          | 16.1                                 |
| Gender                   |             |                                      |
| Male                     | 91          | 10.3                                 |
| Female                   | 25          | 19.6                                 |
| Skill Level              |             |                                      |
| Beginner/Intermediate    | 57          | 13.0                                 |
| Advanced/Expert          | 54          | 13.3                                 |

In addition to sampling error, question wording and other biases can introduce error into surveys. To reduce answer option order bias, answers were randomized for non-ordinal answer choices.

### Data analysis

Survey data were downloaded from the QuestionPro server and prepped for import into the statistical software SPSS using Microsoft Excel. SPSS was used for accuracy checks, recoding, descriptive statistics, cross-tabulations, and statistical significance testing.

Throughout the report, means are provided where informative with an accompanying confidence interval. Confidence intervals are written as 95% C.I. [#], where the bracketed numbers refer to the upper and lower bounds of the 95% confidence interval for the reported mean.

Statistical hypothesis tests are included throughout the report to indicate statistically significant differences between visitor subgroups (e.g., locals and tourists, men and women, skill levels, etc.). Probability values (p-values) are included alongside these tests to indicate the probability the observed differences are due to actual underlying differences in the population rather than sampling error. We use the standard threshold of 5% to indicate “statistical significance” ( $p < 0.05$ ), meaning there is less than a 5% chance the difference



Figure 32

## Data weights

| Visitor segment                 | Percentage of total traffic | Completed surveys | Percentage of survey sample | Weight |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|--------|
| <b>Split Rock Lighthouse SP</b> |                             |                   |                             |        |
| Weekday visitors                | 44%                         | 43                | 37%                         | 1.18   |
| Weekend visitors                | 22%                         | 36                | 31%                         | 0.71   |
| <b>Cove Point Trailhead</b>     |                             |                   |                             |        |
| Weekday visitors                | 21%                         | 22                | 19%                         | 1.13   |
| Weekend visitors                | 13%                         | 15                | 13%                         | 1.00   |

*Note:* Traffic at Split Rock Lighthouse based on traffic on the Shipwreck Loop traveling clockwise. Traffic at the Cove Point Trailhead assumes all visitors were doing out-and-back trips.

would be observed if no actual differences existed between the two subgroups. Due to small sample sizes, statistical tests comparing different visitor subgroups had limited statistical power. There are likely additional group differences that were missed by this study. Visitor segments may differ in more ways than this study was able to conclude.

Responses to the open-ended question (Q32: Do you have any additional comments about your visit you'd like to share?) were loosely grouped into categories and are provided in Appendix C.

### Weighting

Despite our best efforts to sample a representative set of visitors, weekday visitors at Split Rock Lighthouse State Park and the Cove Point trailhead were slightly overrepresented in our final dataset (Figure 32). To compensate for this sampling bias, the survey data were weighted by location

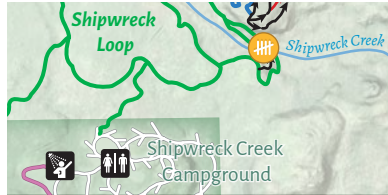
and day of week (weekday vs. weekend). Weighting the data should provide a more accurate reflection of all visitors, but must be done cautiously because it risks over-representing the views of several people who may not be an accurate reflection of their subgroup. For all analyses, we created two sets of cross-tabulations: one set weighted and one set unweighted. Cross-tabs were compared side-by-side to verify the weighting didn't cause any extreme or unexplainable changes in the dataset.



# Split Rock Wilds South Bridge

## 2022 TRAFFIC ESTIMATES

### Counting Location:



### Trail Rating:

● Beginner

### Counting Period:

Aug. 2, 2022 - Aug. 17, 2022

**Summer ADT: 21**

**Weekdays: 19**

**Weekends: 27**

**Weekday Peak Hour: 1 pm**

**Weekend Peak Hour: 5 pm**

### Estimated 2022 Summer Traffic

**2,000**

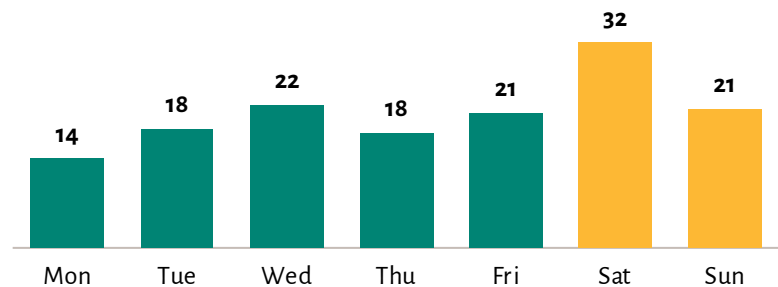
(Directional traffic not available)

Note: Trail officially opened July 16, 2022. Estimate is for hypothetical scenario in which trail was open all summer.

### Summer Day-of-Week Patterns

*Average summer traffic*

Sample data extrapolated to summer estimates

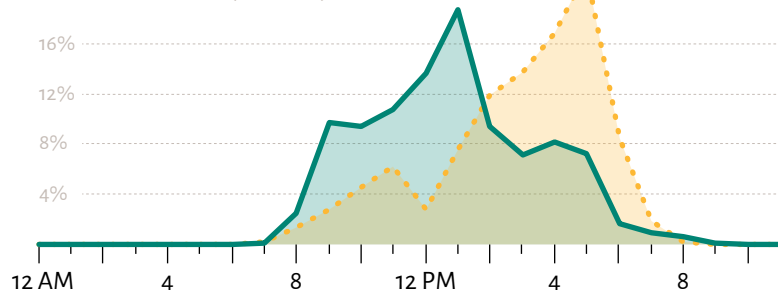


### Summer Hourly Traffic Patterns

*% of daily traffic*

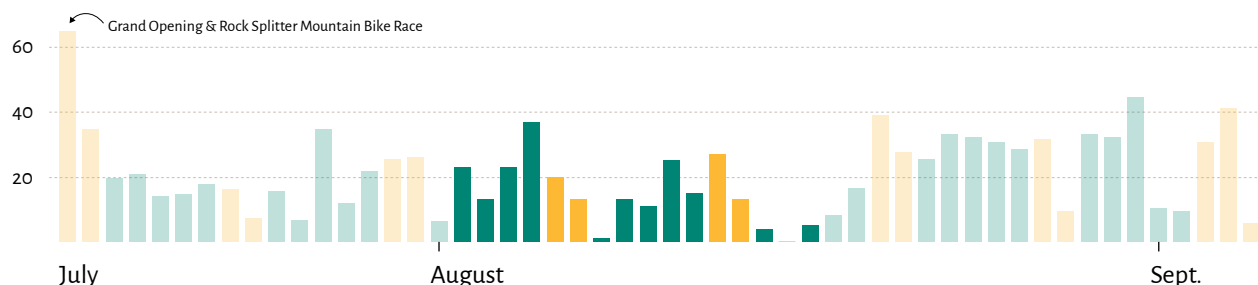
■ Weekday ● Weekend

Short-duration count data (smoothed)



### 2022 Summer Total Daily Traffic

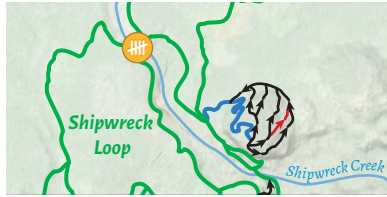
■ Weekdays (observed) ■ Weekend / Holiday (observed)  
 ■ Weekdays (estimated) ■ Weekend / Holiday (estimated)



## Split Rock Wilds North Bridge

### 2022 TRAFFIC ESTIMATES

#### Counting Location:



#### Trail Rating:

● Beginner

#### Counting Period:

Aug. 2, 2022 - Aug. 17, 2022

**Summer ADT:** 24

**Weekdays:** 21

**Weekends:** 31

**Weekday Peak Hour:** 10 am

**Weekend Peak Hour:** 4 pm

#### Estimated 2022 Summer Traffic

**2,304**

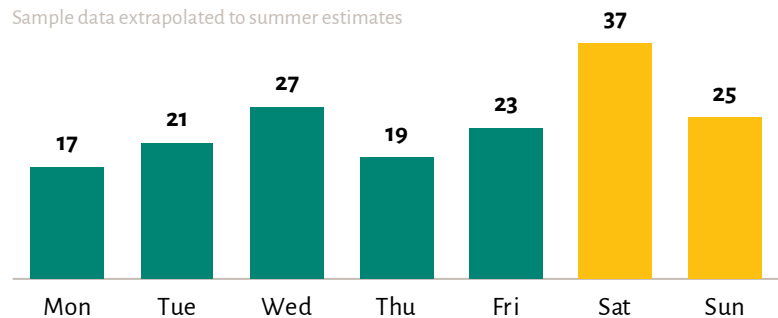
(Directional traffic not available)

Note: Trail officially opened July 16, 2022. Estimate is for hypothetical scenario in which trail was open all summer.

#### Summer Day-of-Week Patterns

*Average summer traffic*

Sample data extrapolated to summer estimates

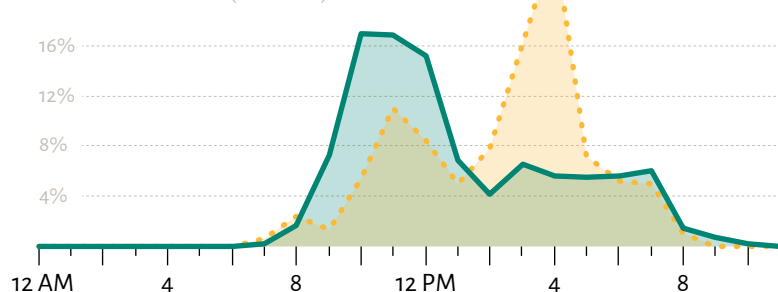


#### Summer Hourly Traffic Patterns

*% of daily traffic*

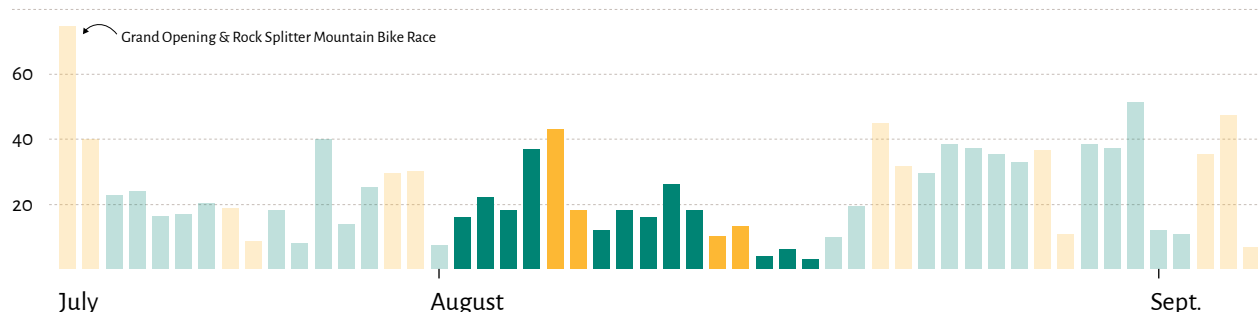
■ Weekday ● Weekend

Short-duration count data (smoothed)



#### 2022 Summer Total Daily Traffic

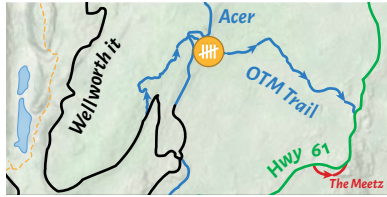
■ Weekdays (observed) ■ Weekend / Holiday (observed)  
 ■ Weekdays (estimated) ■ Weekend / Holiday (estimated)



# Split Rock Wilds OTM Trail

## 2022 TRAFFIC ESTIMATES

### Counting Location:



### Trail Rating:

Intermediate

### Counting Period:

Aug. 19, 2022 - Sep. 5, 2022

### Summer ADT: 5

Weekdays: 4

Weekends: 8

Weekday Peak Hour: 11 am

Weekend Peak Hour: 3 pm

### Estimated 2022 Summer Traffic

524

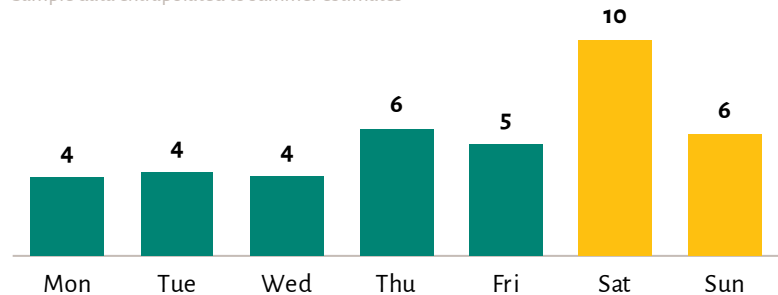
(Outbound traffic; one-way trail)

Note: Trail officially opened July 16, 2022. Estimate is for hypothetical scenario in which trail was open all summer.

### Summer Day-of-Week Patterns

Average summer traffic

Sample data extrapolated to summer estimates



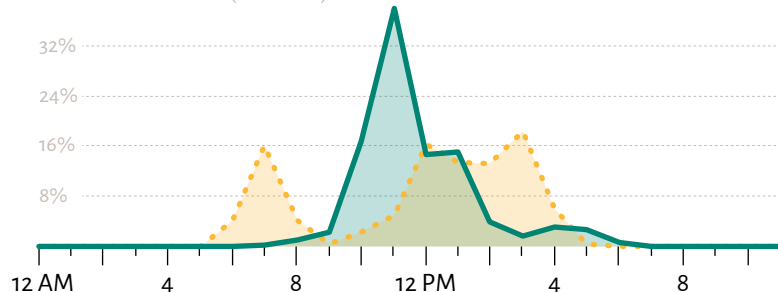
### Summer Hourly Traffic Patterns

% of daily traffic

Weekday

Weekend

Short-duration count data (smoothed)



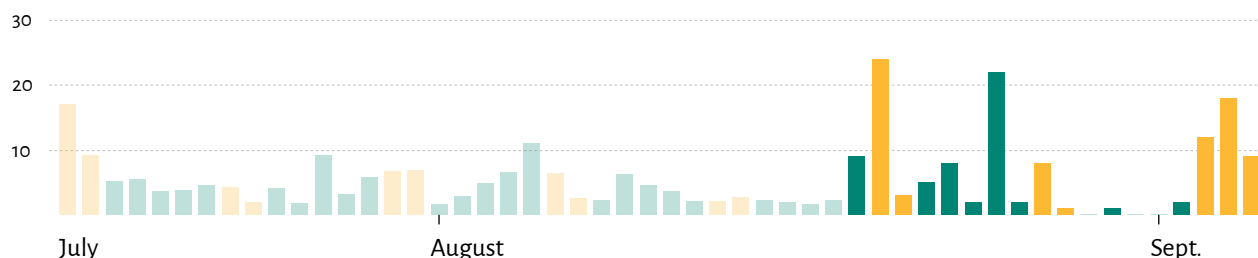
### 2022 Summer Total Daily Traffic

Weekdays (observed)

Weekend / Holiday (observed)

Weekdays (estimated)

Weekend / Holiday (estimated)



# Split Rock Wilds Overcove Trail

## 2022 TRAFFIC ESTIMATES

### Counting Location:



### Trail Rating:

◆ Very difficult

### Counting Period:

July 16, 2022 - Aug. 1, 2022

**Summer ADT:** 14

**Weekdays:** 11

**Weekends:** 20

**Weekday Peak Hour:** 9 am

**Weekend Peak Hour:** 11 am

### Estimated 2022 Summer Traffic

**1,290**

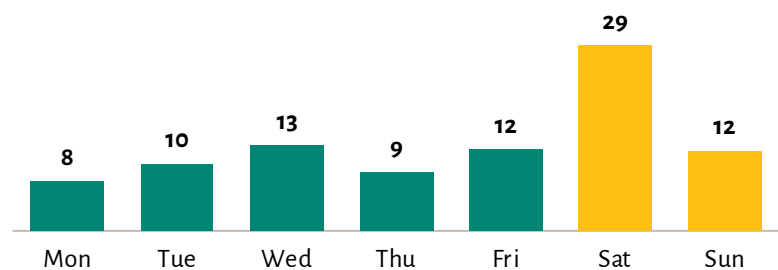
(Directional traffic not available)

Note: Trail officially opened July 16, 2022. Estimate is for hypothetical scenario in which trail was open all summer.

### Summer Day-of-Week Patterns

*Average summer traffic*

Sample data extrapolated to summer estimates



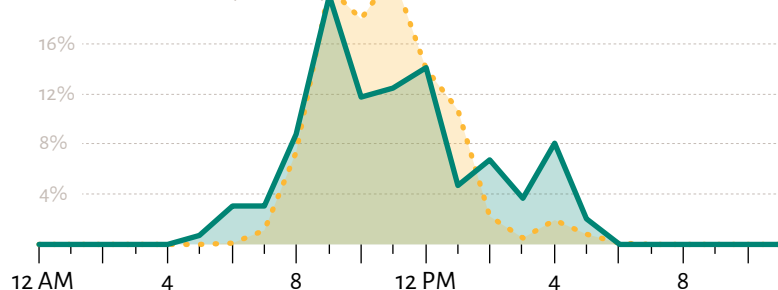
### Summer Hourly Traffic Patterns

*% of daily traffic*

■ Weekday

● Weekend

Short-duration count data (smoothed)



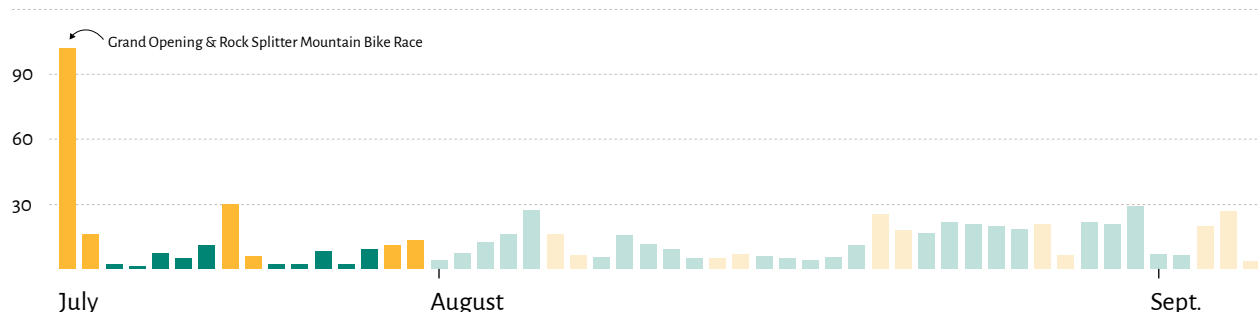
### 2022 Summer Total Daily Traffic

■ Weekdays (observed)

■ Weekend / Holiday (observed)

■ Weekdays (estimated)

■ Weekend / Holiday (estimated)

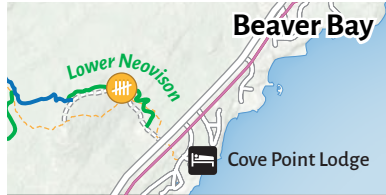




# Split Rock Wilds Neovison Trail

## 2022 TRAFFIC ESTIMATES

### Counting Location:



### Trail Rating:

● Beginner / ■ Intermediate

### Counting Period:

July 16, 2022 - Aug. 1, 2022

**Summer ADT:** 32

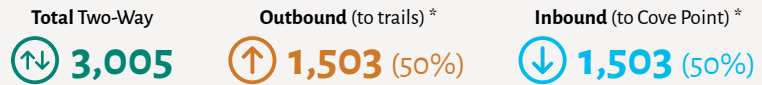
**Weekdays:** 27

**Weekends:** 41

**Weekday Peak Hour:** 12 pm

**Weekend Peak Hour:** 1 pm

### Estimated 2022 Summer Traffic

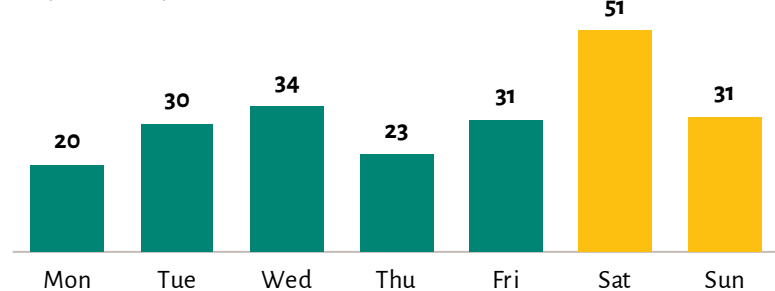


Note: Trail officially opened July 16, 2022. Estimate is for hypothetical scenario in which trail was open all summer.  
\* Directional traffic assumed

### Summer Day-of-Week Patterns

Average summer traffic

Sample data extrapolated to summer estimates

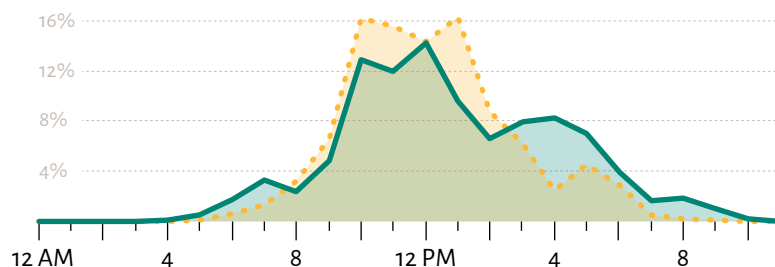


### Summer Hourly Traffic Patterns

% of daily traffic

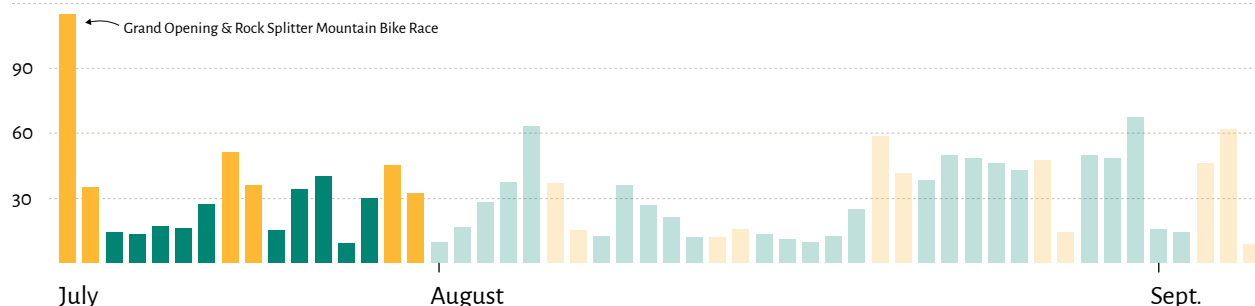
■ Weekday ● Weekend

Short-duration count data (smoothed)



### 2022 Summer Total Daily Traffic

■ Weekdays (observed) ■ Weekend / Holiday (observed)  
■ Weekdays (estimated) ■ Weekend / Holiday (estimated)



### Example Survey Script:

Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm working with Parks & Trails Council conducting a 5-minute trail survey to understand visitor experiences at the Split Rock Wilds trail system. Are you using any of the Split Rock Wilds trails today?

- ☐ Yes **[Continue]**
- ☐ No **[Discontinue; thank visitor and let them continue on their day]**

Are you willing to participate in the survey? All your answers are voluntary and confidential.

#### If **YES**:

Is anyone in your group 18 years old or older?

- ☐ Yes **[Continue]**
- ☐ No **[Discontinue; log Non-Response]**

Have you already taken this survey at this trail this summer?

- ☐ Yes **[Discontinue survey]**
- ☐ No **[Hand visitor the tablet and let them complete the questionnaire; If multiple adults in the group are willing to participate, only the adult in the group with nearest birthday should complete the survey]**

#### If **NO**:

That's okay, no problem. Thanks for your time. Do you mind if I ask you two quick questions before I let you go?

- ☐ Yes **[Ask questions, log Non-Response Qs]**

1. Are you a local visitor or a tourist?

*(Tourist is anyone more than 50 miles away from home or staying at least one night away from home)*

2. What year were you born?

- ☐ No **[Discontinue; log Non-Response]**

## Split Rock Wilds Trail Survey

**1. Which trail activities did you and your group do during your visit today?**

*Select all that apply*

- ☐ Mountain biking
- ☐ Hiking or walking
- ☐ Dog walking
- ☐ Running or jogging
- ☐ Geocaching
- ☐ Nature photography
- ☐ Birdwatching / wildlife viewing
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

▶ *If multiple activities are checked...*

**2. Which one of these activities was your primary reason for visiting this trail today?** \_\_\_\_\_

▶ *If mountain biking...*

**3. What is your mountain biking skill level?**

- ☐ Beginner
- ☐ Intermediate
- ☐ Advanced
- ☐ Expert

**4. Do you have a favorite place in Minnesota to go mountain biking?**

- ☐ Yes. Where? \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ No

**5. Are you riding a fat-tire bike today?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

**6. Are you riding your own bike today?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No, I'm using a rental bike
- ☐ No, I'm borrowing a bike from a friend or family member

**7. What are your most important reasons for visiting the trail today?**

*Select all that apply*

- ☐ Experience nature
- ☐ Improve my physical health
- ☐ Relaxation and/or stress relief
- ☐ Spend time with family or friends
- ☐ Meet new people
- ☐ Training for event or competition
- ☐ Do something exciting and adventurous
- ☐ Learn/practice tricks and skills
- ☐ Getting my children outdoors
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**8. Approximately how much time did you, or do you plan to, spend on the trail during today's visit?**

\_\_\_\_\_ hours      \_\_\_\_\_ minutes

**9. Approximately how often do you visit this trail during spring, summer and fall?**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> This is my first time visiting | <input type="checkbox"/> Once a year           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Daily                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Less than once a year |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Weekly                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly                        |  |

**10. Overall, how would you rate your most recent experience on this trail?**

- ☐ Very good  
☐ Good  
☐ Fair  
☐ Poor  
☐ Very poor  
☐ I've never used this trail before

**11. How many people are in the group you're recreating with today?**

\_\_\_\_\_ Adults (18 years and older, including yourself)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Children (under 18 years)

**12. What information sources have you used to learn about this trail?**

*Select all that apply*

- ☐ I've known about this trail for years  
☐ Friends and family  
☐ From a club or group ride  
☐ Recommendation from a business or visitor center  
☐ Internet search (e.g., Google)  
☐ Social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter)  
☐ Print publication (e.g., magazine, newspaper)  
☐ TV or radio  
☐ Official Website:
  - ☐ Lovin' Lake County website
  - ☐ Lake County Mountain Bike Trails Facebook Page
  - ☐ Minnesota DNR website
  - ☐ "Minnesota Great Outdoors" online park and trail finder
- ☐ Trail app/website:
 

|                                       |                                      |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> MTB Project  | <input type="checkbox"/> Trail Forks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Singletracks | <input type="checkbox"/> Strava      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> MapMyRide    | <input type="checkbox"/> All Trails  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trailbot     |                                      |
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**13. To prepare for your visit, did you or your group look for information about this trail before you came?**

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

► *If yes...*

**14. What information did you search for before your visit today?**

*Select all that apply*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Travel directions                | <input type="checkbox"/> Equipment rentals      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trail rules / Allowed activities | <input type="checkbox"/> Parking information    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trail maps and miles             | <input type="checkbox"/> Park/trail hours       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trail difficulty                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Nearby lodging options |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trail reviews / photos           | <input type="checkbox"/> Nearby restaurants     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cost / Fees                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trail conditions / closures      |   |

**15. Do you live more than 50 miles from this trail?**

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

**16. Are you on a trip where you have or plan to stay at least one night away from home?**

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

► *If spending at least one night away from home...*

**17. How many total nights do you plan to spend in this area during your trip?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**18. What type of overnight accommodations are you staying in during your trip?**

*Select all that apply*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hotel / motel                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Campground                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resort / lodge / commercial cabin             | <input type="checkbox"/> Home/cabin of friend or relative |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vacation rental by owner (Airbnb, VRBO, etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> My own vacation home             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bed & Breakfast                               | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____                     |

► *If 50 miles away from home and/or spending at least one night away from home...*

**19. How important was the trail in deciding to visit this area?**

- ☐ The trail was the primary reason why I visited the area  
☐ The trail was a significant reason why I visited the area  
☐ The trail was part of the reason why I visited the area  
☐ I would have visited this area even without the trail  
☐ Don't know

**20. How far in advance did you plan this trip?**

- ☐ Less than 1 week  
☐ 1 to 2 weeks  
☐ 1 month  
☐ 1 - 2 months  
☐ 2 - 3 months  
☐ 3+ months

**21. What country do you live in?**

- ☐ United States. If yes, what is your home ZIP code? \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Canada If yes, what is your home Postal Code? \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**22. What year were you born?** \_\_\_\_\_

**23. What is your gender identity?**

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Non-binary / third gender
- ☐ Prefer to self-describe: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Prefer not to answer
- ☐ Don't know

**24. Do you identify as transgender?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to answer
- ☐ Don't know

**25. How do you describe yourself?**

*(Select all that apply)*

- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Black or African American
- ☐ Hispanic or Latinx
- ☐ Native American, First Nation or Alaskan Native
- ☐ Middle Eastern or North African
- ☐ White or Caucasian
- ☐ Pacific Islander
- ☐ Some other race, ethnicity or origin

► *If Native American, First Nation or Alaskan Native...*

**26. Which tribe do you affiliate with?**

*(Select all that apply)*

- ☐ Bois Forte Band of Chippewa
- ☐ Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
- ☐ Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
- ☐ Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe
- ☐ Lower Sioux Indian Community
- ☐ Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe
- ☐ Prairie Island Indian Community
- ☐ Red Lake Nation
- ☐ Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community
- ☐ Upper Sioux Community
- ☐ White Earth Nation
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Prefer not to answer
- ☐ Don't know



**27. What language do you speak most often at home?**

- |                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> English | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hmong   | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to answer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Somali  | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish |   |

► *If you speak a language other than English at home...*

**28. How well do you speak English?**

- ☐ Very well
- ☐ Well
- ☐ Not well
- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ Prefer not to answer
- ☐ Don't know

**29. What is the highest level of education you have completed?**

- ☐ Less than high school
- ☐ High school graduate or GED
- ☐ Some college, but no degree
- ☐ Associate, vocational, or technical degree
- ☐ Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Graduate or professional degree
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

**30. Do you, or does someone in your group, have a physical, mental or sensory disability or condition?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to answer
- ☐ Don't know

**31. Please indicate your total household income before taxes last year**

- ☐ Less than \$20,000
- ☐ \$20,000 - \$29,999
- ☐ \$30,000 - \$39,999
- ☐ \$40,000 - \$49,999
- ☐ \$50,000 - \$59,999
- ☐ \$60,000 - \$69,999
- ☐ \$70,000 - \$79,999
- ☐ \$80,000 - \$89,999
- ☐ \$90,000 - \$99,999
- ☐ \$100,000 - \$149,999
- ☐ \$150,000 - \$199,999
- ☐ \$200,000 or more
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

**32. Do you have any additional comments about your visit you'd like to share?**

## Appendix C: Responses to open-ended “Additional Comments” (Q32)

### Positive comments about the trails:

Awesome trail.

Awesome trails! Loved the black trails!

Best trail I have ridden yet. Needs trail maps.

Fun trail more technical than expected on the intermediate.

It's an incredible trail.

Love these trails.

Parts of hwy61 is Intermediate. Which was great.

Sweet trail!

Thanks for helping make this trail happen.

This is an AWESOME trail.

Will be back. Amazing trails.

Wonderful Trails.

Wonderfully built trails and great time.

### Comments about expanding the system:

Build more trails on the north shore.

Mountain biking is a great way to get out.

Build more trails!

Keep building trails!

### Comments about pea gravel:

Hopefully the loose deep pearock will firm up as it becomes contaminated with the clay. Bridges are well placed. Nice route. Will need regular maintenance-brushing etc.

Nice trailhead. Do not like the pea gravel.

Some parts of trail were too soft and difficult to cycle through. Needs better signage for direction back to parking etc.

The pea gravel is not fun more advertising for trail.

**Comments about the signage:**

Google maps will direct you to private property, not the trailhead.

An overall trail system map at the Trailhead, and maybe one more at a central location would be good.

Maps of the entire trail system at trailheads and middle.

Maps please.

Need posted maps at trailheads and miles.

Please include trail maps at intersections.

Signage at intersections please.

**Recommendations:**

Parking at trailhead [Cove Point].

Bike trail goes right by a latrine at the SHT campsite. A privacy wall would be nice.

Bike wash. (2)

Close trail during deer hunting season.

More frequent trail condition updates via trailbot. Or post guidelines similar to cuyuna.

For more information:



**Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission**

Renee Mattson, *Executive Director*  
[renee.mattson@gmprptcommission.org](mailto:renee.mattson@gmprptcommission.org)

Joe Czapiewski  
[coordinator@gmprptcommission.org](mailto:coordinator@gmprptcommission.org)

**[www.gmrptcommission.org](http://www.gmrptcommission.org)**



**Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota**

275 East 4th Street, Suite #250  
St. Paul, MN 55101  
651.726.2457

**[www.parksandtrails.org](http://www.parksandtrails.org)**