



**Saddleback Wilderness Overview**  
**Orange County Parks Trails Subcommittee — August 9, 2023**



# Overview



- Background
- Planning & Improvements
- Trail System
- Public Access
- Survey Feedback
- Conclusion

# Background – Location & Description

- Located along Santiago Canyon Road between the intersection of State Roads 241 and 261 and Irvine Lake access
- Approximately 430 acres
- Four major native habitat communities
- Multiple special status wildlife and plant species
- Orange County Parks Foundation and NCCP/HCP Conservation Easements



# Background – History

- 1967 – Saddleback Park open for motocross
- 1984 – Saddleback Park phases out
- 2014 – Donated to OC Parks by The Irvine Company
- 2019 – Complete Interim Recreation and Resource Management Plan (IRRMP)
- 2020 – Conduct baseline biological surveys
- 2021 – Begin preliminary trail routing
- 2022 – Initiate interim improvements and install trail network
- 2023 – Open for managed public access and begin visitor surveys



# Planning & Improvements

- Baseline biological surveys
- Parking area and lookout
- Trail system
- Signage and map
- Access plan



Field staff staking a future lookout area



Planning process for Saddleback Wilderness, considering recreation opportunities, natural and cultural resources, and facility operations



Parking and staging area for Saddleback Wilderness, in 2013 and 2023

# Trail Network

- Trail routing
  - Use of biological surveys
  - Subject Matter Expert (SME) assessments
- Trail installation



**Sensitive resources**, Catalina mariposa lilies and fossilized whale bones found during SME assessments



**Trail assessment**



# Public Access

- Opened March 27, 2023
- Self-scheduled access several Saturdays throughout April–May
- Trial to evaluate self-scheduled user group-specific access in June
- Beginning in July, monthly self-scheduled access the first Saturday of each month

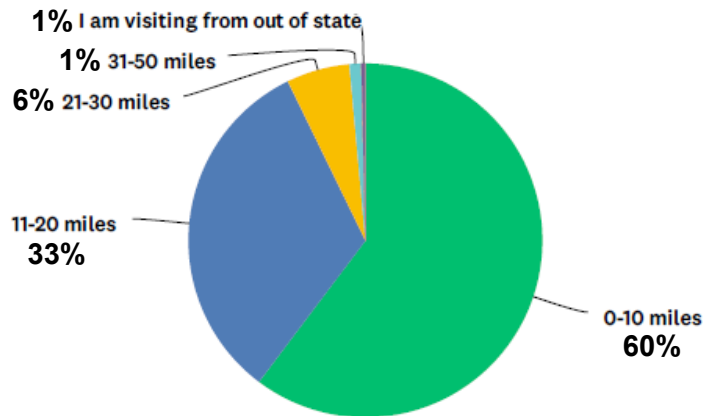


**Ribbon-cutting ceremony** to welcome the public to the newest OC Parks facility

# Survey Feedback

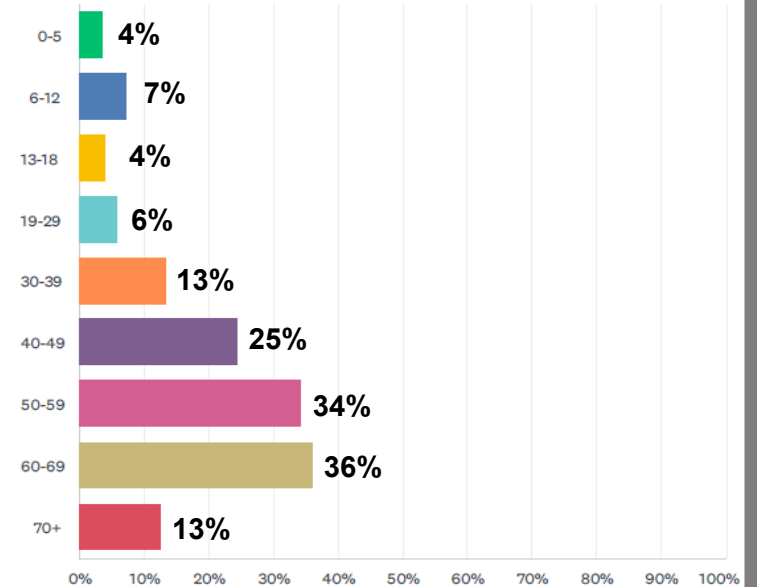
How far did you travel to visit Saddleback Wilderness?

Answered: 277 Skipped: 5



Please provide the ages of all participants in your group

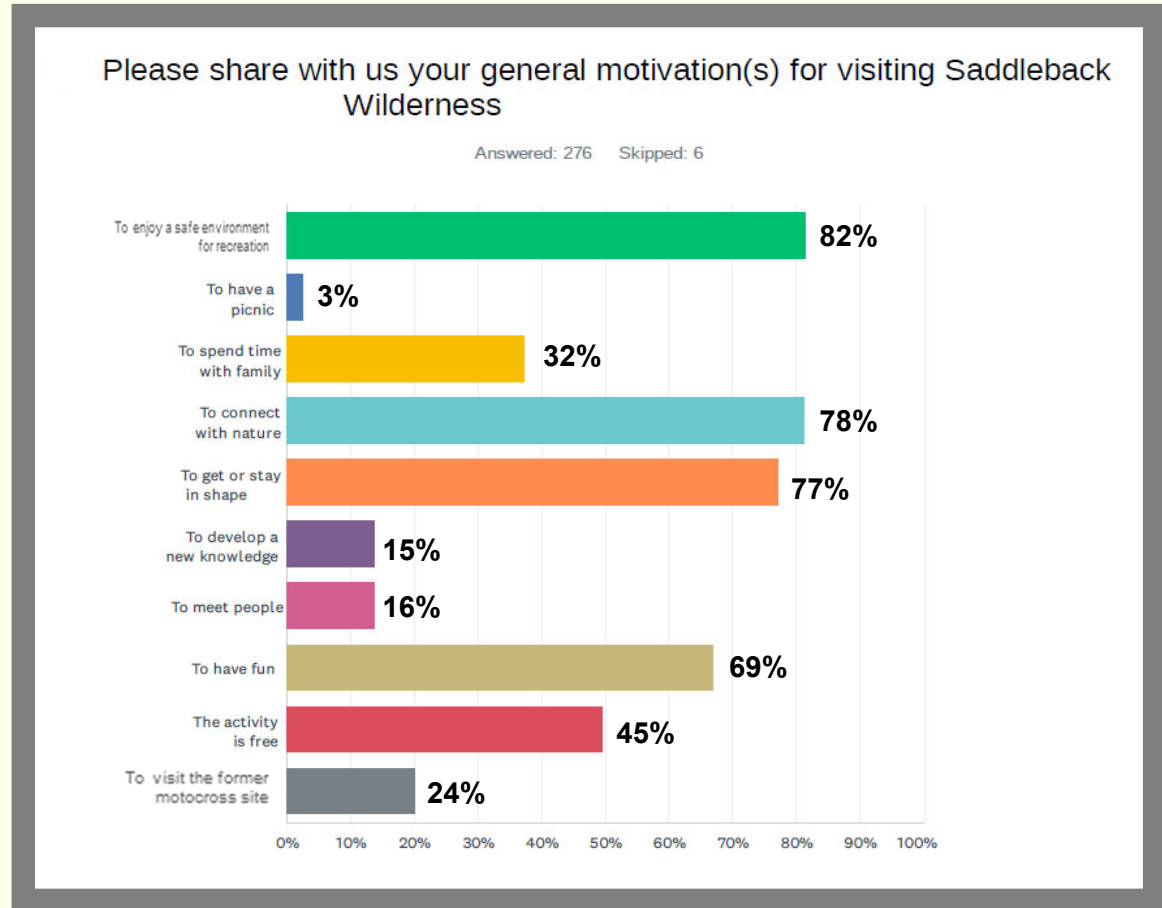
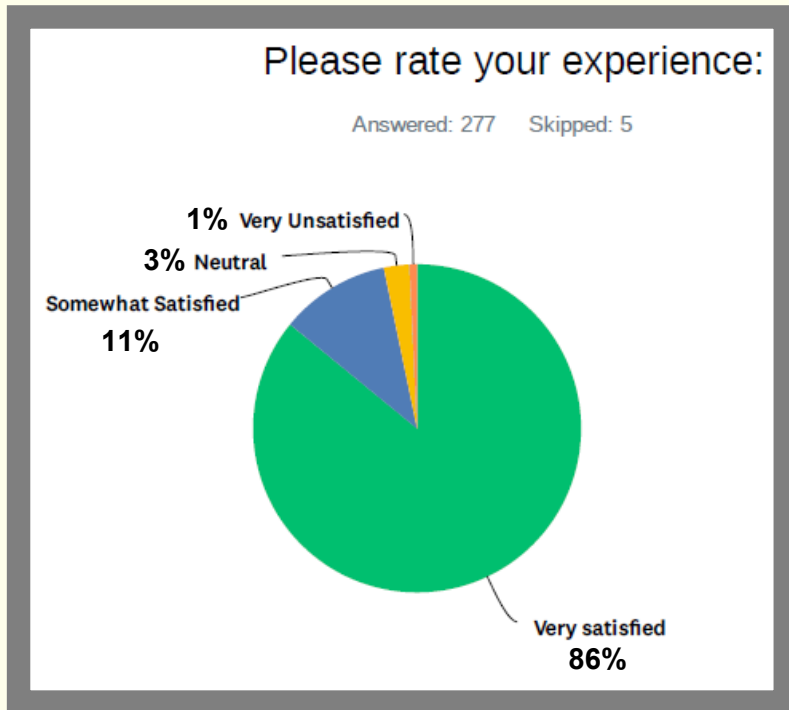
Answered: 277 Skipped: 5



\* Note: All percentages are rounded, therefore responses may not equal 100%



# Survey Feedback

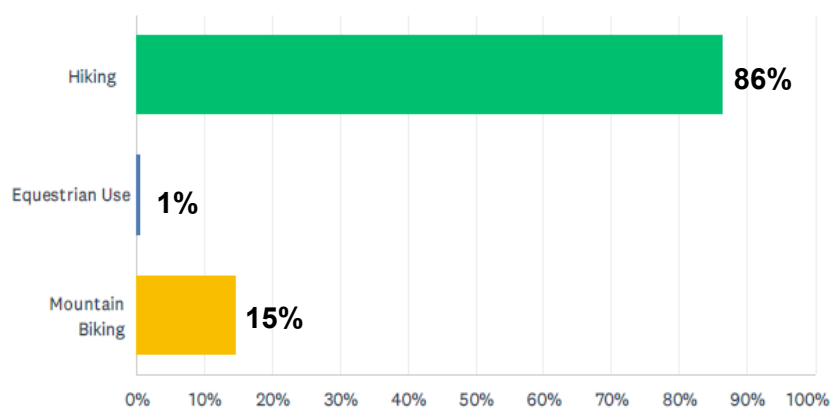


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# Survey Feedback

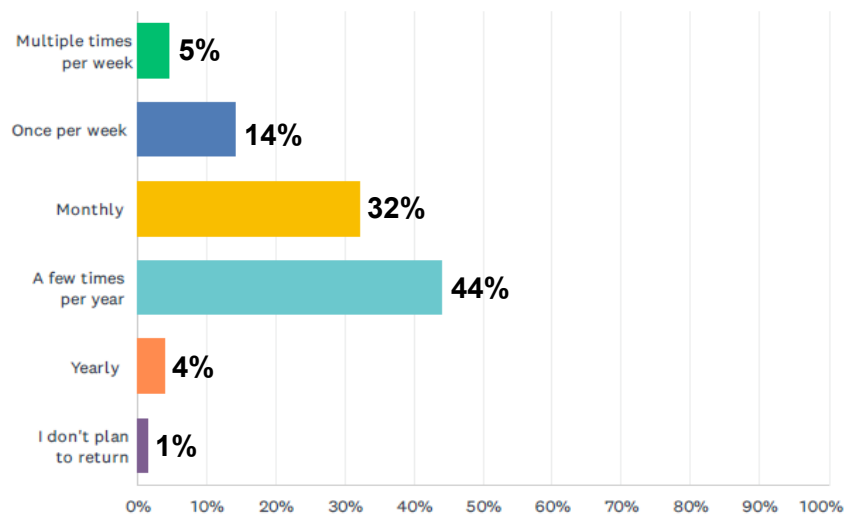
Please tell us the type of activity in which you engaged on the trail.

Answered: 273 Skipped: 9



After this visit, how often do you plan to sign up for future access opportunities at Saddleback Wilderness?

Answered: 274 Skipped: 8

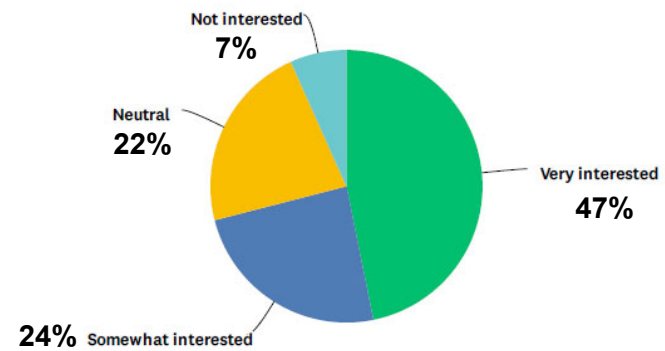


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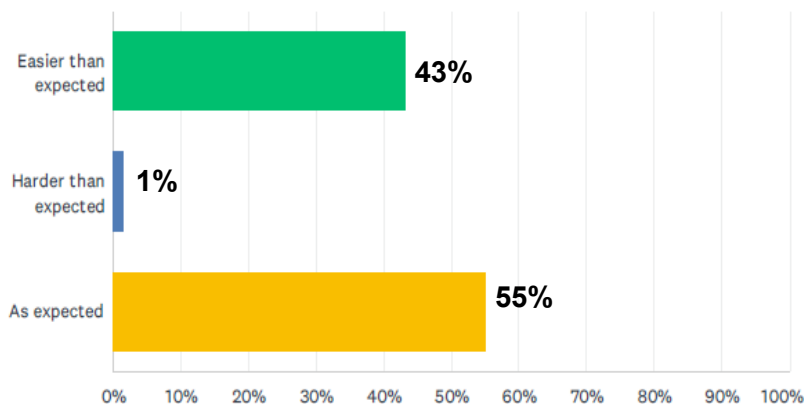
Please rate your level of interest in having user group specific (example: mountain biking only, hiking only) self-guided access opportunities offered:

Answered: 269 Skipped: 13



Did you find the trail categories (easy, medium) to be accurate?

Answered: 277 Skipped: 5



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# Looking Ahead

- Naming of the trails
- Reassess trail difficulty ratings
- Continue improvements



Native deerweed in bloom

# Questions?



**Grasshopper Sparrows, Catalina Mariposa Lilies, Orange-Throated Whiptail Lizards, and Intermediate Mariposa Lilies** are all special status species in Saddleback Wilderness