

1-1-2014

# Whitefish Trail Visitor Study

Christine Oschell

*The University of Montana-Missoula*

Follow this and additional works at: [http://scholarworks.umt.edu/itrr\\_pubs](http://scholarworks.umt.edu/itrr_pubs)

 Part of the [Leisure Studies Commons](#), [Recreation, Parks and Tourism Administration Commons](#), and the [Tourism and Travel Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Oschell, Christine, "Whitefish Trail Visitor Study" (2014). *Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research Publications*. 246.  
[http://scholarworks.umt.edu/itrr\\_pubs/246](http://scholarworks.umt.edu/itrr_pubs/246)

This Report is brought to you for free and open access by the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research Publications by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@mail.lib.umt.edu](mailto:scholarworks@mail.lib.umt.edu).



College of Forestry  
and Conservation  
32 Campus Dr. #1234  
The University of Montana  
Missoula, MT 59812

Phone (406) 243-5686  
Fax (406) 243-4845  
[www.itrr.umt.edu](http://www.itrr.umt.edu)

---

# Whitefish Trail Visitor Study

Prepared by:  
Christine Oschell, Ph.D.

Institute for Tourism & Recreation Research  
College of Forestry and Conservation  
The University of Montana  
Missoula, MT 59812  
[www.itrr.umt.edu](http://www.itrr.umt.edu)

January 2014

Case Study Report 2014-1

This report was funded by the Lodging Facility Use Tax and Kalispell Convention and Visitors Bureau

Copyright © 2014 Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research. All rights reserved

## **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to provide the Whitefish Legacy Partners with information about the users of the Whitefish Trail. This includes how and why they are using the trail, the money they spent in Whitefish when they used the trail and how satisfied they were with aspects of the trail.

## **Methods**

Surveys were completed on paper and through an on-line web link. The surveys and web links were distributed to people who were currently using the trail and at other events in Whitefish. Surveyors asked people at the events if they have used the Whitefish Trail. If they had, they were asked to complete the survey. Events included the weekly farmer's market, fundraising events including the Whitefish Trail Hootenanny, Whitefish Trail Friends Week, the Whitefish Legacy Run, partner events such as Whitefish Lake Institute trail opening, Whitefish Community Foundation Duck Derby, Mountain Films Festival, the new trail opening event at Woods Lake, and community coffee day at Montana Coffee Traders.

## **Results**

Of the 327 respondents, 80 percent (259 people) were from Montana and of those, 95% were from Flathead County. Table 1 shows the number of respondents who reside out of state or country (68 people). Seventeen respondents were from Alberta, Canada and six reside in both California and Washington. Colorado was the next highest represented state with five respondents residing there.

**Table 1: Out-of-state Respondents**

<b>Place of Residence</b>	<b># of respondents</b>
Alberta, Canada	17
California	6
Washington	6
Colorado	5
Florida	3
Texas	3
British Columbia, Canada	2
Georgia	2
Idaho	2
Illinois	2
Wyoming	2
Calgary, Canada	1
Louisiana	1
Massachusetts	1
Maine	1
Michigan	1
Missouri	1
New Jersey	1
New Mexico	1
North Carolina	1
Pennsylvania	1
Washington, DC	1

## Characteristics

Respondents who were not from Flathead County were asked if using the Whitefish Trail was their primary purpose of being in the area. Nine percent of respondents indicated that ‘yes’ they were here only for the trail. Ninety-one percent said they were here for other reasons and used the trail. Table 2 shows what other purposes people not from Flathead County cited for being in Whitefish. Eighty percent indicated that they were vacationing and 40 percent were visiting friends and relatives. Fifteen percent indicated they were here for shopping.

**Table 2: Other purposes for visiting Whitefish**

<b>Other purposes of visit to Whitefish</b>	<b>% of respondents*</b>
Vacation/recreation/pleasure	80%
Visit friends/relatives	40%
Shopping	15%
Business/convention/meeting	5%
Just passing through	--

\*Respondents were asked to check all that applied to them

All respondents were asked how they used the Whitefish Trail. Most used the trail for hiking or walking (67%) and biking (50%). Table 3 also shows that although horseback riding does occur (2%), it is not done by a high percentage of respondents.

**Table 3: How respondents were using the Whitefish Trail**

<b>Activities</b>	<b>% of respondents*</b>
Hiking/walking	67%
Biking	50%
Dog walking	38%
Trail running	35%
Nature viewing	20%
Horseback riding	2%

\*Respondents were asked to check all that applied to them

All respondents were also asked how often they use the trail with the option to indicate that this was their first time using the trail. Table 4 shows that most respondents (48%) used the trail weekly and 22 percent reported using it monthly. Fifteen percent of respondents indicated that this was their first time using the trail.

**Table 4: Frequency of use of the Whitefish Trail**

<b>Frequency of use</b>	<b>% of respondents</b>
Weekly	48%
Monthly	22%
First time	15%
Yearly	9%
Daily	6%

Respondents were also asked which sections of the trail they used recently and also which section they used most frequently. For those who were using the trail for the first time, they could indicate “N/A first time” when asked which trailheads they used most frequently. Table 5 shows that the majority of respondents most recently accessed the Whitefish Trail from Lion Mountain Trailhead (66%) followed by Beaver Lakes Trailhead (34%).

**Table 5: The section of the trail used most recently**

<b>Trail Section</b>	<b>% of respondents*</b>
Lion Mountain Trailhead	66%
Beaver Lakes Trailhead	34%
Swift Creek Connection	24%
Skyles Connection	19%
North Beaver Connection	12%
Lupfer Trailhead	7%
Spencer North Trailhead	4%
Spencer South Connection	2%

\*Respondents were asked to check all that applied to them

Lion Mountain Trailhead was used most frequently by 63 percent of respondents (Table 6). Beaver Lakes Trailhead was used most often by 22 percent of respondents.

**Table 6: The section of the trail used most frequently**

<b>Trail Section</b>	<b>% of respondents*</b>
Lion Mountain Trailhead	63%
Beaver Lakes Trailhead	22%
Skyles Connection	15%
Swift Creek Connection	14%
North Beaver Connection	5%
Lupfer Trailhead	3%
Spencer North Trailhead	3%
Spencer South Connection	1%

\*Respondents were asked to check all the applied to them

Table 7 shows that the largest percentage of respondents (25%) used the Whitefish Trail by themselves and twenty-three percent used the trail with family and friends. Nineteen percent used the trail as a couple and with friends.

**Table 7: Type of group with whom respondents used the trail**

<b>Group type</b>	<b>% of respondents</b>
Self	25%
Family & friends	23%
Couple	19%
Friends	19%
Immediate family	12%
Organized group/club	2%
Extended family	1%

Thirty-two percent of respondents indicated that they used the trail by themselves while 27 percent used the trail with one other person (Table 8). Seventeen percent were with two other people and 11 percent were with three other people on the trail. Table 9 shows the age groups of people in the respondent groups using the trail. The majority of users were between 25 and 64 years of age. Twenty-three percent of users were under 18 years of age.

**Table 8: The number of people in respondents' group on the Whitefish Trail**

Number in Group	% of respondents
1	32%
2	27%
3	17%
4	11%
5	5%
6	4%
7	1%
8	1%
9	---
10	1%
10 or more	2%

**Table 9: Age groups represented in trail user groups**

Age groups	% of respondents*
0-5 years	7%
6-10 years	7%
11-17 years	9%
18-24 years	4%
25-34 years	22%
35-44 years	33%
45-54 years	33%
55-64 years	25%
65-74 years	12%
75 and over	2%

\*Respondents were asked to check all that applied to them

Table 10 shows that many (60%) made plans to use the trail the day of their experience. Thirty-two percent made plans one to seven days before their visit. Not many plan their use of the trail a week or more before they use the trail.

**Table 10: When plans were made to use the trail**

<b>Time length</b>	<b>% of respondents*</b>
The day of	60%
1-7 days before	32%
1-4 weeks before	6%
1-6 months before	2%
Over 6 months before	<1%

Eighty-two percent of respondents heard about the Whitefish Trail through word of mouth (Table 11). The next highest source of information was the Whitefish Legacy website (21%) followed by newspaper (18%) and email (14%).

**Table 11: How respondents found out about the Whitefish Trail**

<b>Sources</b>	<b>% of respondents*</b>
Word of mouth	82%
Whitefishlegacy.org	21%
Newspaper	18%
Email	14%
Group or club	8%
Posters	7%
Facebook	7%
Flyer	4%
Other website	3%
Retail outlet	3%
Magazine	2%
Direct mail	1%
Television	<1%
Radio	<1%

Respondents who were not from Flathead County were asked if they spent any nights away from home when they used the Whitefish Trail. Respondents who spent any nights away from home spent an average of 4.03 nights away with 3.86 of those nights being in Whitefish. Table 12 shows that most respondents who spent nights in Whitefish stayed at a home of a friend or relative (42%) followed by second homes (24%) and in motels/hotels/B&Bs (20%).

**Table 12: Accommodation types**

<b>Accommodation type</b>	<b>% of respondents</b>
Home of friend/relative	42%
Second home/condo/cabin	24%
Motel/Hotel/B&B	20%
Public land camping	15%
Private campground	10%
Resort/Condominium	5%

## Expenditures

Expenditure information was asked of all respondents who were not from Flathead County. The survey asked that they report their best estimate of the total amount of money they and their family (if applicable) spent in the Whitefish area in the following categories: motel/hotel/B&B, groceries and snacks, transportation, retail goods, gratuity, and entertainment/recreation while using the trail. There was not much expenditure information in the results of the surveys. With little expenditure data (59 people reporting), it is not appropriate to make generalizations to the whole population of Whitefish trail users. It is helpful though to know that most respondents spent money on restaurant and bar, gasoline, and groceries and snacks.

Table 13 presents the expenditure data of respondents who reported spending money in the categories. The mean expenditure of those who spent money for each category can be found along with the percentage of people who reported that they spent money in that category. The last column provides the total dollars spent by respondents who reported spending money in each category. The total reported expenditure for respondents who were not from Flathead County and spent money was \$25,350.00.

**Table 13- Expenditure Data: Expenditures calculated using only respondents who spent**

Expenditure Category	Mean expenditures of attendees <u>who reported that they spent money in these categories</u> (n=59)	% of respondents who reported spending money in each category	Total dollars spent in each category <u>by respondents who spent</u>
Auto rental	\$300.00	<1%	\$600.00
Motel/Hotel/B&B	\$276.11	2%	\$2,485.00
Retail goods	\$193.41	7%	\$4,255.00
Entertainment/Recreation	\$186.92	4%	\$2,430.00
Campground	\$175.00	1%	\$700.00
Groceries/Snacks	\$130.00	12%	\$5,070.00
Restaurant/Bar	\$104.15	16%	\$5,520.00
Gasoline	\$81.63	15%	\$4,000.00
Gratuity	\$32.22	3%	\$290.00
Local transportation	---	---	---
<b>TOTAL</b>			\$25,350.00

**Table 14- Satisfaction with aspects of the Whitefish Trail**

	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	N/A	Mean
Trail conditions	85%	14%	1%	--	<1%	<1%	1.15
Signage	63%	28%	6%	2%	1%	<1%	1.36
Trailhead/Parking	75%	20%	3%	--	<1%	2%	1.22
Bike patrol/ambassador	41%	11%	14%	--	<1%	34%	1.23
Trail map and mileage	62%	23%	7%	3%	1%	3%	1.36
Courteousness of trail users	65%	24%	8%	1%	1%	1%	1.31
Number of people on the trail	57%	33%	7%	1%	1%	1%	1.40
Developed amenities	60%	27%	9%	1%	<1%	3%	1.33
Availability of restrooms/cleanliness	63%	22%	7%	1%	1%	6%	1.31
Overall experience	84%	15%	<1%	--	1%	<1%	1.17

1=very satisfied, 2=satisfied, 3=Dissatisfied, 4=Very dissatisfied



Table 14 shows the mean level of satisfaction with each aspect of the Whitefish Trail. The lower the value, the more satisfaction respondents had with this aspect. Table 15 shows that the most respondents indicated that they would be back to use the trail next week followed by tomorrow.

**Table 15- When respondents may come back to use the Whitefish Trail again**

<b>Timing of next visit</b>	<b>% of respondents</b>
Tomorrow	29%
Next week	45%
Next month	15%
Next year	9%
Within 5 years	2%

Respondents were aware of the Whitefish Trail. Ninety-two percent of respondents said they were aware that the Whitefish Trail is a non-profit/private/public partnership. Forty-one percent of respondents are a “friend” of the trail making an annual donation and 59 percent are on the Whitefish Legacy partner’s mailing list. Forty percent of respondents make between \$20,000 and \$59,999 (Table 16). More females completed the survey (57%) than males (43%) and the average age of respondents was 47.

**Table 16- Household Income of Respondents**

<b>Income Level</b>	<b>% of respondents*</b>
Less than \$20,000	4%
\$20,000 to \$39,999	20%
\$40,000 to \$59,999	20%
\$60,000 to \$79,999	16%
\$80,000 to \$99,999	12%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	15%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	4%
\$200,000 and over	9%

Appendix A contains all of the typed in comments given by respondents in response to three additional questions:

1. Please tell us what you liked about The Whitefish Trail.
2. Please tell us what you did not like about The Whitefish Trail.
3. What suggestions do you have for improvements to The Whitefish Trail?

## Appendix A- Open-ended Responses

**Question 29: Please tell us what you liked about The Whitefish Trail.**

Well maintained, light use, few people.
Well maintained
Well maintained
Well laid out and clean
Well designed. Love the berms and flow of the beaver lakes loop. It bikes really great in both directions. Also like the multiple access points to disperse trail users
Well constructed
well built trails with excellent drainage and obviously built to be sustainable.
Very well maintained. Pretty views
very well cared for trail and amenities
variety of ecosystem, trail layout, variety of trailheads, the further the trailhead the less the use, having pit toilets at trailheads, signage at junctions, management of State Forested lands, positive experience with the dogs we've met on the trail, variety of trail uses (walk, bike, horse, etc), recently viewing the variety of mushrooms popping up, good use of FaceBook.
variety
Tress and view of creek
Trails well defined and marked. Smooth
Trails are well-marked and in excellent condition. We wanted to hike 6-7 miles/day while staying in the area and there were several WT options. The maps were accurate and the trail heads were easy to locate. Toilets were exceptionally clean, and greatly appreciated! We also liked the fact that the trails were not heavily used.
trails are beautifully built and provide access to miles of great biking
Trail was nice and shady, lots of wildflowers, no weeds, very pleasant
Trail quality, proximity to town, multiple points of access
Trail layout and proximity to town.
Trail design and conditions are fantastic. Such a great resource for our community. Trailheads and facilities are great.
Trail conditions and community
They are close to my home and nicely maintained and in a beautiful area.
The woods and condition of trail
The vision and drive to execute such a grand vision. The trail is a huge asset for the whitefish area. Well maintained and anyone can use it.
the trails were great for mountain biking
The trails were easy to follow and had a generally gradual incline. Beautiful scenery.
The trails themselves . Close to town ,but in the woods.
The trail is in amazing shape for mtn. biking and trail running.
The trail is a wonderful asset to our area. We try to hike on it daily.
The proximity to Whitefish and the multi-use opportunities.
The opportunity for a lovely hike without a long drive. Also bonus of overlook points.
The mountain bike trails!!

The great community effort. The beauty of the area
The grade, the scenery, the condition of the trail itself. Being able to have my dogs off the leash.
The closeness to town
The closeness to town
That it preserves our water around WF for all time, that dogs can run freely, that it's close in and easy to access all year round. Nice bathroom. Peaceful.
Thanks for all the hard work. The trail is a great asset to our community.
Swimming in Beaver Lake
Super fun place to recreate
Such a great amenity available to everyone regardless of the economy. Well maintained. Gorgeous views
Scenery, well maintained, away from town
Scenery, multiple paths, options.
Recent additions have become much more runner friendly, ie less rolly & curvy & obviously bike-focused.
Quality of trail and location near town.
proximity, grade, "safe" feeling
Proximity to Whitefish
Proximity to town. Variety of terrain. Exposure to natural beauty of the area.
Proximity to town. Great to have protected recreation so close, with driving. Love that it is family friendly for biking, not too difficult. Can take visiting friends and family there and know that it is not too difficult for them.
Proximity to town. Dog friendly
Proximity to town Accessibility for kids
Proximity to town
Proximity to home, varying levels of challenge
Proximity and quality and dog friendly
provides a great exercise opportunity in a more defined setting than out in the woods, more accessible to those wary of critters or navigation seems to attract a wide variety of people who are accepting of others
Pretty much all of it
Preserves an important asset for Whitefish.
Perfect for walking or bike riding
Numerous trail heads near town
Nice trails
Nature! The ability to go spread out in the woods and have it all to yourself.
Nature
Natural beauty and solitude
Native plants, close to town, nice curves for biking and skiing
Multiple trailheads and access points, close to town, good trail grade
Multiple access points Great community support Winter options
Most everything - good access, trail construction and condition, and the vision and goals.
Love the whitefish trails. Convenient, well maintained, friendly people and animals, good exercise for all levels of ability.
Love the trails- well maintained, banked, drained, accessible, etc!
Love the length... so much trail.

Love the biking community
Love it! Thanks
Love it! Easy access. Thanks Heidi for all your hard work
Love it!
Love it all
Love how close they are to home.
LOVE having this single tack to bike and run on, HUGE amenity to locals and tourists. Beautifully engineered, it's the freeway of single track Mtn biking! Thanks to ALL who had this vision and continue to execute it.
Locations of the trails, nice to try a variety of new trails. Your helpful maps. Great job.
location and access
Location
location
Level dirt (not rocky) trail. Easy to hike
Just getting ready to ride
Just easy shady forest walk
Just drove up
Its awesomeness.
Its a unique use of state school trust lands that provides income to the trust and conservation of historic, recreation and economic use
It's beautiful, convenient and not overgroomed... still natural.
It's accessibility and trail quality
it's a wonderful trail system - keep up the good work!
It's a great resource for the community, both locals and tourist \$\$\$. Great place to recreate close to town.
It's a great fun trail for biking. It's close to my home. It's not overused (Skyles access to Beaver)
It was pretty. Trail condition smooth for running. Elevation gain is perfect for trail running
It was fun
It is such a wonderful trail to have so close to us in Whitefish. It is well planned out and very well kept. Thanks!
It is so nice to be able to hike without driving very far.
it is nice to see Whitefish developing a decent trail system for the people who live here.
It is great for easy family-oriented hiking. It will accommodate all ages.
It is awesome!!! Whitefish is going to become a Mountain Bike destination town!!
It is awesome
it is a great trail system close to town.
I often walk alone and see other women running and walking alone- it feels safe here
I love the Whitefish trail system because I think it adds so much to the community. I may not be a very consistent user but I will always support it because of the positive impact it has on the Flathead Valley.
I love the variety of terrain, the great mtn bike riding that is challenging and fun, but not too hard that I have to get off my bike and push. I appreciate the closeness to town, great signage, and choices of trails.
i love the flowy-ness of the bike trails! and the community surrounding the trails.
I love the accessibility
I love that it is close to home, continues to expand and accesses some really incredibly beautiful terrain. It is wonderfully well built - so much so that I am inspired to learn to mountain bike for the first time in my life.
I love taking my dog out for trail runs in the woods all around town.

I live in Columbia Falls but love the overall trail system. I like the fact that it is so close to everything and would love if it eventually had a tie-in to Del Ray/East Lakeshore Drive near the end of Whitefish Lake. I think that would bring even more users in to use the trail. I used my road bike today to bike around the lake, and I saw many people on mtn bikes.
I like the organization and the people who have made it possible through such hard work and dedication. I also like the experience when I'm on the trail/in the woods.
I like the mixed terrain. Very beautiful and peaceful
I like the design of the trails winding through the trees. Very attractive.
I like that they are easily accessible. There are just enough of other people most times that I feel that if something happened to me someone would come along shortly.
I like that it's there. Something nice for the residents of Whitefish to have.
I like everything about the Whitefish Trail, which is why I serve on the board of directors. :))))
i do not,those areas were always there
I am so thankful for the trail system and all your hard work. EVERY time I use one of the trails I sing you praises and I am so thankful to live in such a collaborative, vibrant community with such foresight. THANK YOU! My older body can't run on pavement any longer and the trails save my body and spirit - the trails are easy to access and so close to town. There's no excuse not to run. :)
I am amazed that you've been able to create such an incredible asset for the Whitefish community in so few years. The multi-use trail so easily accessed from town offers this resort town more than we could have ever hoped for during the years of planning. Good work and thank you for all you've done for NW Montana.
Hiking with family
Great variety of sections of trail; something for everyone
Great user friendly trail
Great trails!
Great trail running and biking
great trail great views
Great trail for hiking, running: biking...can't wait for the new additions
Great trail but conservation of area tops list
Great single tract well constructed, clean and maintained.
Great riding that's close to town without having to go up to the mountain and pay to ride
Great race!
Great place to hike and snowshoe, which we do whenever we are in Whitefish. Great addition to the Whitefish area.
Great machine built bike trail
Great for dog walking. Varied trail difficulties
Great for dog
Great flowing single track, nice to ride trails laid out by bikers.
Great dog run
Good trail for all riders
Good to have recreational trails.
Getting easy access to nature
fun
Flow

First time, not sure. Pet friendly
First time
Finally a plan to have trails accessible to folks as we have lost a lot in the past to development
Family access (so close). Friendly
Excellent trail preparation. Great signage.
Excellent flowing trails beautifully made
Everything!
Everything!
Everything!
Everything ...
Everything
Everything
Everything
Everything
Everything
Everything
Everything
easy of trail, appearance
Easy accessibility, great maintenance, good for multi-use
Easy access; nature experience; good trails.
Easy access, trail quality/diversity and length
easy access to trails, lovely views and nature experience.
Easy
Easily accessible. Able to spontaneously hike. I feel safe, even if alone. Easy for four and two year old grandchildren.
Easily accessible and well kept
ease of access. available all seasons
ease of access, well-maintained
Ease of access, close to home, lack of crowds
Ease of access to town, trail conditions and views
design
Convenient access from town. Well designed. Feel safe recreating on trail.
Convenient
Constructed well, maintained well, excellent access, good variety, very clean restrooms. Totally like the greater vision for the trail system.
Condition of trails
Condition of trail
Condition of trail
Community Involvement
closeness to home
Close, good trail, easy to walk
close to Whitefish easy to get to

Close to Whitefish
Close to where I live and scenic.
Close to town. Within Walking distance. Safe and well maintained. View
Close to town. Great trail conditions.
close to town, great place to walk our dog while on vacation in Whitefish
close to town and access to beaver lake area
Close to town alternative to Big Mtn, love all the different trails condition of trails is excellent
Close to my apartment. Good exercise hike, not too hard, not too easy
Close to home. Well maintained. Safe and beautiful
Close to home. Easy access
Close to home.
close proximity to town. Good place to exercise dogs
Clean and wide
Clean and friendly
Clean
Chance to exercise in a beautiful location. Bike, hike, etc.
Can take dog. Convenient
Buff flowy singletrack
Biking with friends
best thing to happen to Whitefish since the ski resort in the 60's
Beautifully done - super surface, easy to ride & hike
beautifully designed
Beautiful! Easy to get to from town. Great terrain
Beautiful, well-designed, mostly native, variety of trails, length, friendly and courteous users, no biker/dog walker conflicts
Beautiful wild
Beautiful trails
beautiful design, great footing, gravel where needed
Beautiful area to run in!
Availability - close to town
All of it!
Accessible and fun
Accessibility, great for trail running with dogs, and trail etiquette.
Accessibility to town
Ability to get out into the forest without driving a long distance.

**Question 30: Please tell us what you did not like about The Whitefish Trail.**

zero
Would like to see some more technically challenging mt bike spurs and loops Not free ride stuff just intermediate to advanced cc rider type trails.
Wish it extended to Columbia Falls
Wide sections
What's not to like!
What is not to like?
Weed control has been good but needs some attention now. I look forward to a better bike connection to downtown
Unleashed unruly dogs
Unleashed dogs!!!!
Trails are very wide ... too wide?
Took too long to get here :)
Too narrow. Bikes flying over hills not visible and not much area to get off the trail if your supposed to stay on it. Have to get off trail to get out of the way. Noted signs stay on trail but its more of a one way trail. Would be much nicer if like Lion mountain it was wide enough for two way traffic. People on bikes seem to be the main users and I don't like stopping my walking every time a bike is behind or in front of me to get out of their way. And its a lot! I like having a nice brisk walk with no stops.
Too much dog poop on the trail.
Too many turns for runners
Too many people sharing the trail between the Lion Mt trailhead and the cliff band/Skyles Lake overlook. No formal connection to Lakeshore Drive from the north end of the trail.
Too developed, logged, But I understand the relationship with the state and that the land is school trust land.
There were too many trees in the forest, couldn't see the views :)
The bikers can be very fast and not always courteous around hikers. Would like signs to be more clear. Also I don't really know how to get to the other sections to try them out--the new one on WF Lake isn't even marked yet, (unless I was in the wrong place!!).
That it doesn't yet go to Happy Valley, but maybe someday
steep banked corners on woods lake trail
Some trail junction signs are confusing.
Some of the signage is already being vandalized.
Some of my favorite places might get more traffic.
Some dog owners leave bags of poop or do not pick it up
Some dog owners do not control their dogs and even worse, don't pick up feces.
Slash piles are unsightly. Firearms - shooting especially during hunting season at the Swift Creek trail.
Signs at entry trailhead seem overdone, minimal signage seems most appropriate.
Signage/mileage
Signage was confusing
Signage is a bit confusing. hope posts are well anchored.
People who won't pick up their dog poop (or leave it in baggies by the side of the trail but not come back for it) - certainly no reflection on the trail itself!!



People still don't clean up after dogs (not your fault). Dogs off of leashes. What's with the number of Pitbulls?! (not your fault).
People not picking up dog poop and people leaving litter
People leaving dog poop
People don't pick up poop
Out and back. need more loops
One off leash dog charged me a couple of times. Some owners just throw dog poo in the forest.
Occasionally inconsiderate dog owners not picking up after pets. No excuse for this since bags are available. My only complaint since the trails are the most beautiful. Thank you!
Nothing. It's too short :)
Nothing. Sometimes too crowded.
Nothing!
Nothing!
Nothing
Nothing
Nothing
Nothing
Nothing
Nothing
Nothing
nothing
nothing
not sure
Not a thing
none
No mileage signs
No maps provided to show us information about additional trails, we did find more information online.
No complaints, great job everyone
No complaints
Newer trails were a bit bare- obviously.
NA.
N/A
N/A
N/A
n/a
n/a
n/a
Mostly an out and back trail at this time. More loops off the main trail or other options would be nice.
Most of the promotions or events seem to be bike-centric. Would like to see more walking/hiking centered events.
More signage on actual trail for loops, etc. Not just at the beginning
More people on the trail that minimizes solitude.
More maps need to available
More information regarding access to the trails from the beaver lake road
Mileage should be on trail signs

Mean dogs. dogs on leashes can be more aggressive toward other dogs but understand the need. Please clean up after your dogs. Especially around the Skyles trail. Not sure how I feel about horses not being cleaned up after either
Lack of mountain views.
Just recently I have come across people that have stopped on the trail to rest or get a drink of water but they do not move off of the trail. I don't think they know it would be helpful to move out of the way, but it's happened 5 times in the last 10 days.
Its the best
Its fast on a bike, tough & the mix of hikers/bikers etc. All good though.
It would be nice if it looped back to the trailhead and if there were more/any advanced or expert trails
it is too wide
It is becoming to Mountain Bike oriented. Cyclist are often rude and do not abide by the stated trail etiquette. Not giving the right of way to hikers and others.
It has brought more people to an area I use to have to myself.
I wish there was more done to help out with the influx of people who camp at Murray lake. There is always trash left behind and one can only imagine where all the campers are going to the bathroom. I know it is not a part of the trail system. But it definitely gets used by people using the trail system.
I love the trail.
I love it- nothing I don't like.
I like the Whitefish Trail.
I am a walker/hiker/former long distance (up to marathon) runner. I strongly urge management of the trail network to set aside portions for walk/run use only. Cyclists approach speeds which tend to intimidate foot users. Doing this may encourage financial support from a segment of prospective trail users. This would be consistent with national forest trail management which has non-equestrian routes.
Horses
First time
far too many people bagging dog poop and leaving it not a negative , but a concern- have seen a fair number of women running alone late in the evening- could be somewhat dangerous come fall/winter with increased lion populations
everything is positive. It would be nice to have the road plowed in the winter to the first main Beaver Lakes Trailhead, so winter use could originate there (skiing and snowshoeing
Everybody going different directions
Dogs off leash
Dogs not under control of owners and dog feces not cleaned-up.
Dog poop. But that's not your fault.
dog poop,owners,and lack of respect
Dog poop smell
Didn't see wildlife
Designed by mountain bikers for bikers primarily
Crowds
Couldn't find entrance to South Spencer Connection from Whitefish Rifle Range Road as is indicated on map. I tried the trail from the North Spencer Trailhead and ended up on KM Ranch Road. But maybe signs for the (southern section) area are planned for the future. Don't like dogs not on a leash.
Close to perfect

Can't think of anything!
Can't think of any?
Bikes came up fast behind you without alerting you to their presence. They acted like you were in their way, and should hurry up and move out of the way.
Bikers coming up behind and not letting you know they are there.
At times people don't pick up after their dogs. I just pick up extra
All the dog poop within first quarter of trail
Add dog poo bag stations further on trails
Absolutely nothing
A few blind spots on single track sections that have potential for biker/hiker running into each other. I am a biker and don't want for the runners and hikers to be upset with the biking community if there is an accident out there.
1. Lack of formal connection to Lakeshore Drive on the north end of Whitefish Lake and the Smith Lake Trailhead. 2. Too much crossover traffic (Bikers, hikers, runners, dogs) in the first few miles from Lion Mountain Trailhead. 3. Too many dogs that are not being controlled by their owners.

**Question #31: What suggestions do you have for improvements to The Whitefish Trail?**

You need better donation boxes at the trailhead to draw attention to the donor-supported aspect of the trail system.
Would love to see the trail finished with the connection all the way round the lake . I know the difficulties...but worth keeping it in sight :)
would like to get to know them better. this was my first time and I was very very impressed.
weeds and poo
Too much of the same. The Whitefish Trail is a wonderful place but is pretty much all the same except for the area that starts from the Two Bear Development road and goes towards the Beaver lake Trailhead. This section gives you at least one sweeping view of the mountains. Other than that....it's basically just all trees (except when the wildflowers color the landscape).
To add mileage
There should be 1-2 garbage cans along the trail. a lot of people pick up their dogs poop, but don't want to carry it the entire hike. if there was a place to put it, you would get many more people picking up after their dogs
The trail signage is poor and ambiguous. Change it to signs that Actually point the way down the trail. Not these posts With four sides.
The trail is great. I love it! Keep up the good work.
Thanks for the gift of the trail for the community and visitors
suggest different trails on your Facebook page to see.
some of the signage has been removed / tampered. needs to be fixed. maybe add a few more signposts with mileage info
Some freeride (even though I am not a freerider. More connections to the lakes
Some areas are a little too steeply angled for trail running but really like the banked things for biking
So looking forward to the day when the trail sections connect and I can go for miles and miles! Please keep up the great work.
So far, just more signs for the South Spencer Connection as mentioned above.

Signage at the beginning of the trail to inform people that if they need to stop on the trail for any reason, please move to the side to let other user trail users have room to go around you.
signage
Separate/dedicated trails from the Lion Mt trailhead to the Skyles Lake overlook, one for Mountain Bikers and one for foot travel. A formalized trail down to Lakeshore Drive.
Separate trail designations for bikes. And designated trail for horses and hikers. Make it much safer for both.
See above. Maybe better access to the lakes along the trail in the beaver area.
see 28
Putting out more instructions on trail courtesy .
Printed map at trail heads.
Please place more garbage cans and signs about picking up after your dog.
Planning to come back
Perhaps a mini-map at junctions
Outreach to bike riders to be courteous on the trail
Not sure
not sure
Not about the WF Trail itself, but about the access to it from town. Riding or walking along Hwy 93 is super dangerous for getting out there, and it would be great to encourage less car traffic to the trailhead. Hopefully the sidewalk project along 93 will proceed as planned over the next two years.
None. You all are doing an amazing job!
None.
None.
None keep up the good work!
None at this time. You all are doing an awesome job.
None at this time
None
none
none
none
No horses
Name the trails so directions are easier to give to people
NA keep up the good work and thanks!
More!
more wild natural areas, less developed.
More trails!
More spur trails and alternate loops
More signs for directions
More signage
More signage
More please, much more!
More of them!
more of the same
More of it.

more more more!
More miles!
More loops- options
more loops
More information to the public via the newspapers.
More
Mileage markers
Mileage "markers" of some kind
maybe place more dispensers on trail for waste
Maps, especially of the Beaver Lakes area, can be improved. Distances between junctions and overall specificity of the accessible areas from each trailhead (rather than the same global view of entire system at each trailhead) would be useful
Make sure there is weed and dog poop control
Make signage more obvious
Make people less selfish . really everybody is great I meet on the, trail good to see people out and using. Great JOB!
Make more trails!
maintain with volunteers to clear trail
Love it- great work
laws posted, upheld or fined, removed, etc.
Keep up the great work!
Keep up the great work!
Keep up the great work!
Keep up the good work. What a fabulous asset to have. Love it.
Keep up the good work!
Keep up the good work
Keep the trail more hiker friendly. The berm-ed turns are difficult to walk on. Keep the trail grade manageable for hikers/walkers. Don't get me wrong, I also ride a MTB on the Whitefish Trail, but also like to walk and have heard similar complaints from others.
Keep making it longer!
Keep it up!
Keep it single track. You've got a great trail system, wish we had one similar in the Bitterroot. Will be back in spring to ride the whole of your trails.
Keep it preserved
Keep it going!
Keep going. It is great. Thanks
keep doing what you are doing
Keep adding more- i have a lot of fun out there!
Keep 'em comin'!
Just keep doing what you're doing. It's a wonderful trail. Maybe - if you have the Hootenanny again, you could have more food. If you offer free stuff, lots of people will show up. That was a fun event. I think you could even charge a fee to get in and people would still come. Suggest picnic lunches, have some food for purchase, and provide music, games and hayrides at no charge.
Just keep doing what you are doing.
Just keep adding miles!!

It's not an improvement , but it would be nice if there was public transportation that made a stop at Lion Mtn Trailhead. Could reduce car traffic on road that runs through neighborhood.
It's awesome, thank you!
It would sure attract more tourists and make locals way happier if their was a trail that went went around Whitefish Lake. To me that is the saddest thing about this town. We have a beautiful lake that we can't run or walk or bike or hike around like some other outdoor towns. The access to the Lake is also not so great.
it is great
I like the fact that it is so close to everything and would love if it eventually had a tie-in to Del Ray/East Lakeshore Drive near the end of Whitefish Lake. I think that would bring even more users in to use the trail. I used my road bike today to bike around the lake, and I saw many people on mtn bikes.
How about adding in Sampson Lake, Coon Lake, maybe even Tally Lake or the Stillwater (maybe this is already done). Also, cross-country skiing on certain areas in the winter might be nice.
Hope dead downed timbers rot in next few years so bushes and saplings can grow.
greater eventual connectivity of sections, multiple pods of trails-beaver,smith,lupfer etc. should have a few more mellow options (slightly fewer grade reversals/steep sections) this will appeal to a broader audience and allows for a more varied experience for the more accomplished user. Some trails could be developed with a great emphasis on views.
Great Job! Thank you!
Future trails should be more narrow.
For the legacy run...more port a potties
First time- just heading out
extend it to WF Lake....eventually a loop from Lion Mtn back to WF
Don't get hung up on the bike thing and make it to bike specific. It would be great to see the trai to the top of the ski hill be at such a grade that it can be used to hike to the top.
Continued expansion of the system including safe linkage to the Whitefish city trails
Continue it around the lake
Connecting all routes for one long awesome trail
can't wait until connects all around the lake.
Can't think of any.
Campsites, primitive, or developed on certain trails.
Build more trail.
Better signs, better maps, a few more benches for people to sit on to rest and look over vistas and I think it might be good to have water available in the summer at the trailhead, and clear notice that no water is available for dogs on most of the hike. I doubt it's possible to restrict usage to bikes but it would be nice if we could have a time where bikes aren't around..they are kind of dangerous sometimes. Also, shouldn't we have a first aid kit at the trailhead with bee sting kit? Maybe I'm just a worry-wort..trying to prevent problems I guess after so many young folks have been dying from falls, etc. lately. Thanks for doing this!
Better education/enforcement on good dog etiquette.
Better dog education/enforcement.
Bench at look out. On northern most trail a sign at the overlook maybe a bench
Around north tip of WF Lake section
Are you still looking for bike patrol? I heard you have a program that provides the trail donation based on how much you bike patrol. I would like to give back to the trail. Thanks! Tiffany Nitschke tiffnitschke@gmail.com
App that has the trails on it linked to GPS trails can be confusing sometimes but overall incredible project
Additional trail markers indicating distance on the trail.

Additional spurs in pre existing trail sections that provide / promote trail riding in one direction to avoid conflict. i.e. sections of trail clearly built for climbing that lead to sections clearly built for one way down the hill. Could reduce trail conflicts and free up other sections of trails that are more often accessed by walkers, families, etc. The trail is a great asset, thanks for doing such a great job putting it all together.

Add more trails to connect Beaver to Swift, keep up the good work!

Add more benches We hiked from Lion Mtn to Beaver Lakes Tr Hd and when we stopped for a snack, two of our group of 6 had to sit on the ground. Perhaps have an additional bench area too

A bench at the lake overlook.

1. Connection to Lakeshore Drive/Smith Lake Trailhead. 2. Separate, dedicated trails to the Skyles Lake overlook area, one for bikes and one for feet. That is the most heavily used area of the trail system and most foot traffic does not go past the cliff band. Having two separate routes would allow less conflict on the trail and greatly reduce the potential for biker/hiker/runner incidents. 3. Figure out how to get people to control their dogs. As a mountain biker I've had numerous encounters with loose dogs resulting in near collisions or me having to bail off the trail to avoid hitting dogs.