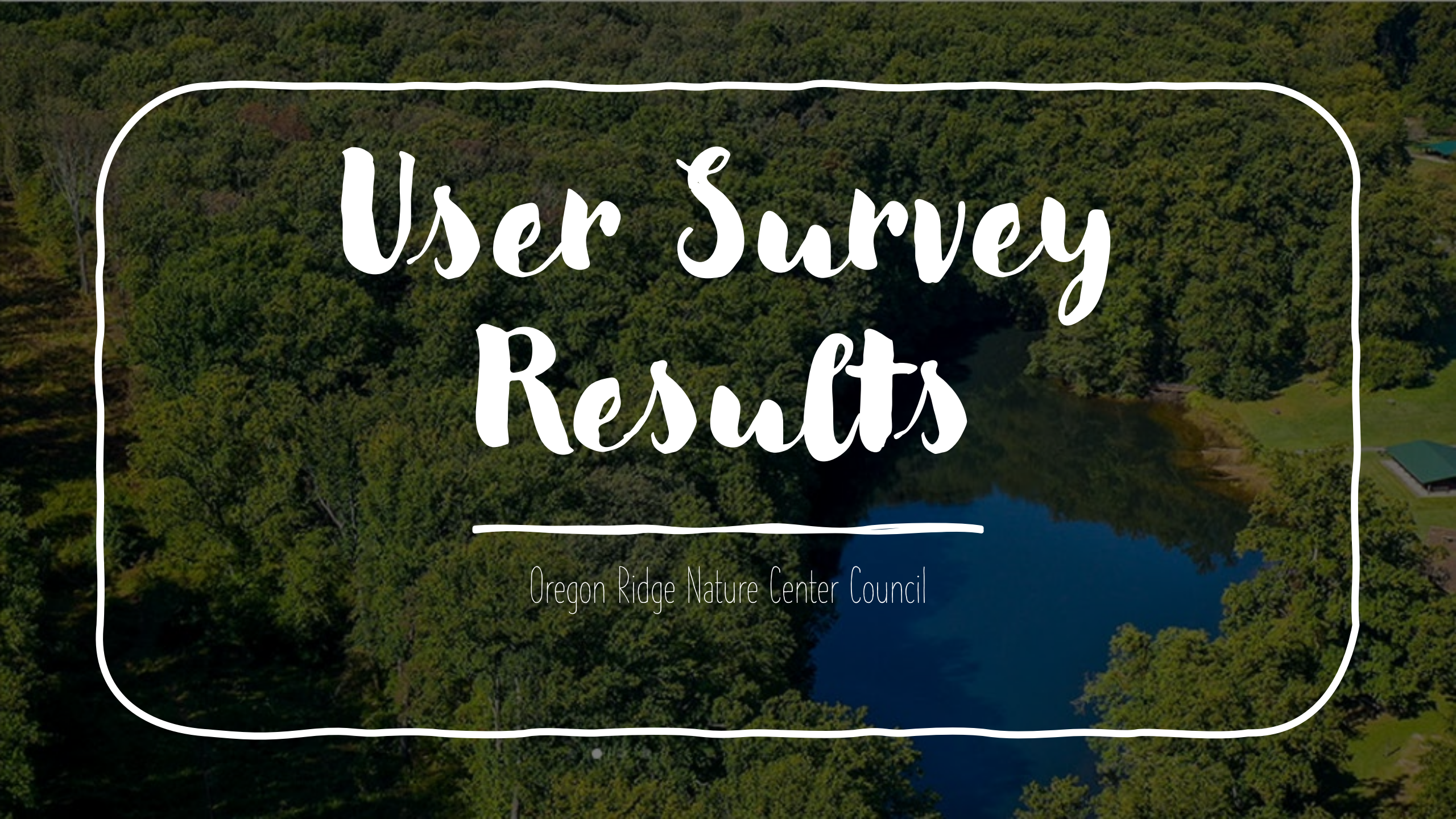


An aerial photograph of a lush green forest with a small pond in the lower right. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image, enclosed in a white rounded rectangle.

User Survey Results

Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council



Introduction

In September 2022, the Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council invited park users to share their experiences and opinions about Oregon Ridge Park and its future.

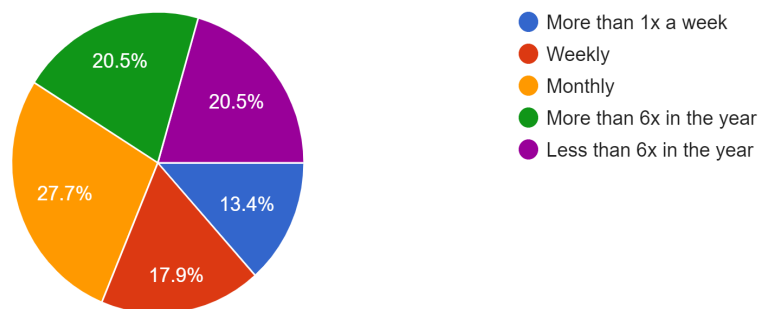
The following is a summary of what the 224 users told us:

- Oregon Ridge Park has been part of Baltimore County lives for generations.
- Families, friends, children, and adults go to the park to find tranquility and to savor the wonders of nature.
- Most ORNC Council survey respondents favor only gentle and necessary improvements that are consistent with a nature park.

Who are the survey participants?

How often do you visit Oregon Ridge Park and the Nature Center?

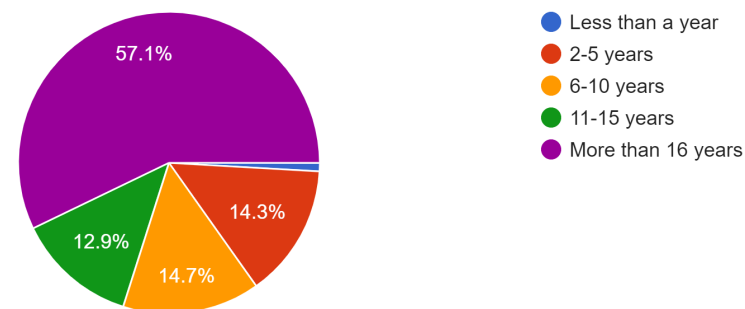
224 responses



- Representing **all seven Baltimore County Council districts** and 40+ zip codes; largely Cockeysville, Lutherville-Timonium, Owings Mills, Sparks, Towson; also Baltimore City and Harford, Howard and Anne Arundel counties
- Respondents are **frequent and long-time users** of Oregon Ridge.
- 31% visit once a week or more; 27% at least monthly.

How long have you been visiting the park?

224 responses

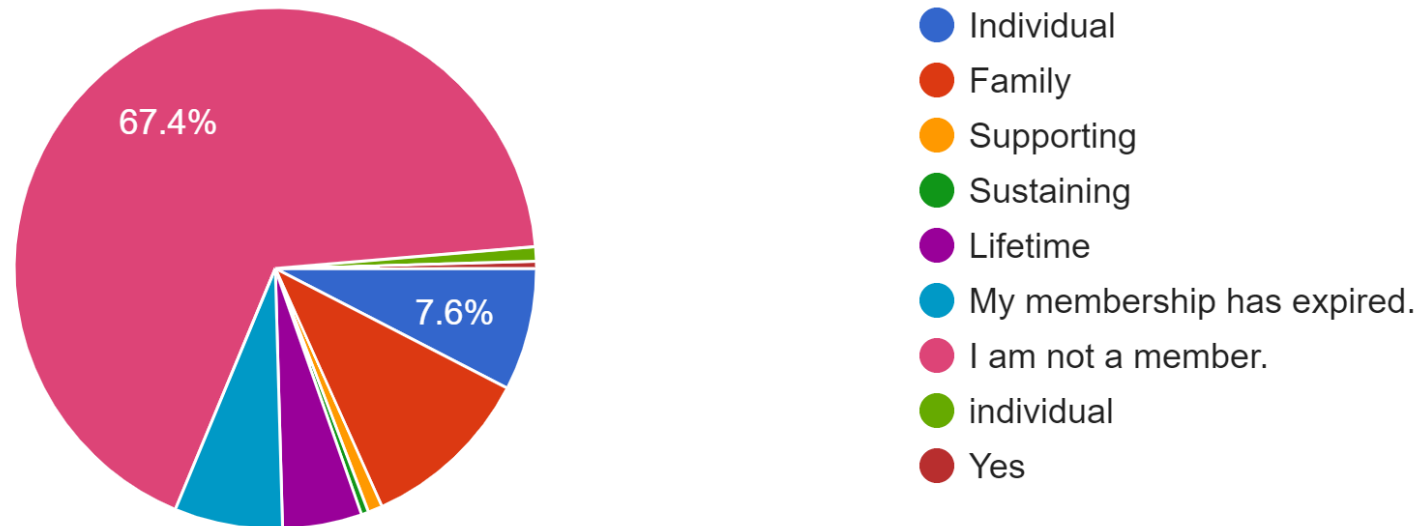


- Over half of respondents (57%) have been visiting Oregon Ridge for more than 16 years
- 28% for more 6-15 years
- 15% fewer than five years.

Two-Thirds of respondents are not members of the Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council.

Are you a member of the Oregon Ridge Nature Center? If currently a member, what level?

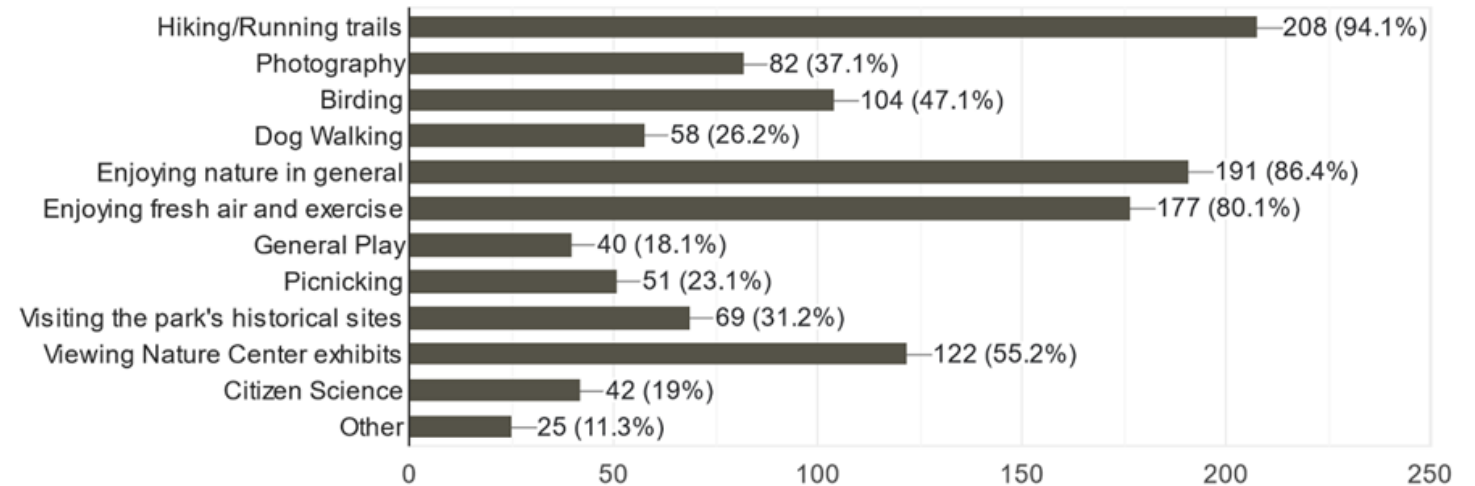
224 responses



People Enjoy Nature at Oregon Ridge Park

What casual activities do you or your family enjoy at the park? (Choose all that apply.)

221 responses

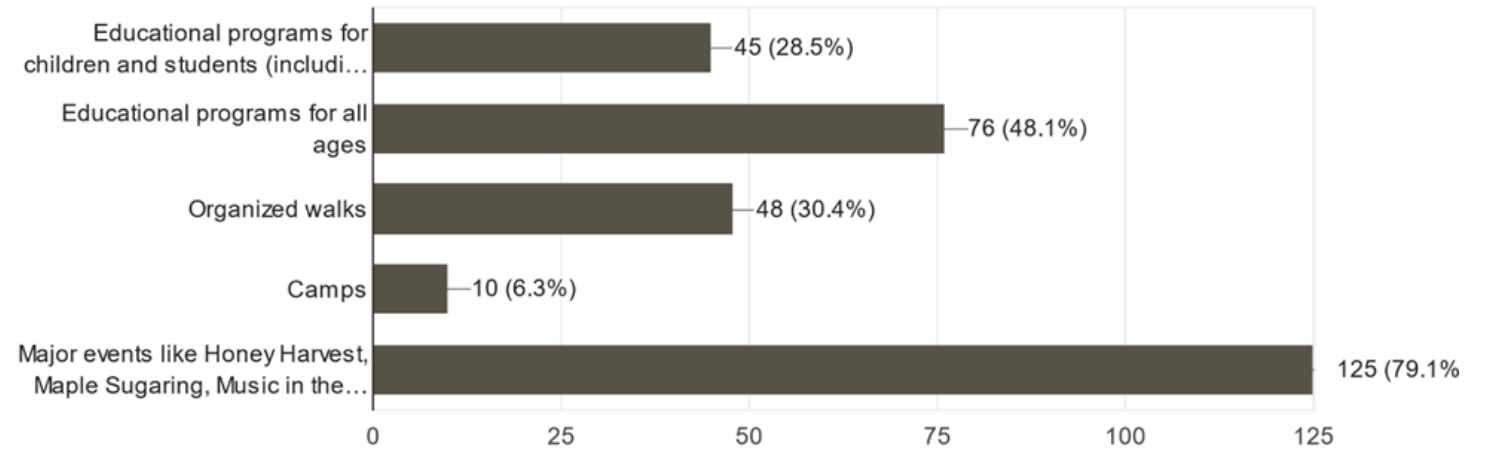


- **Most people visit to take a walk or hike and enjoy nature. Many also participate in programs and events to learn and celebrate nature.**
- **The most popular casual activities reflect deep dives into nature.** Virtually everybody takes to the trails! Hiking (208 mentions), enjoying nature (191), fresh air (177), Nature Center exhibits (122), birding (104), photography (82). Others include wildflowers/botany, children's playtime, dog walking and volunteering.

Many respondents also participate in ORNC educational programs and special events or organized walks.

What programs and events do you or your family participate(d) in at the park? (Choose all that apply.)

158 responses



"My kids love camp and we come to the festivals and occasional public programs."

"The programs are well planned, well-placed and interesting. Programs and camps are very popular."

"When my children were younger, they participated in summer camps and other nature programs. I appreciated the slowing down and appreciating nature focus of those programs. It's so important when everything else is fast paced and technology focused."

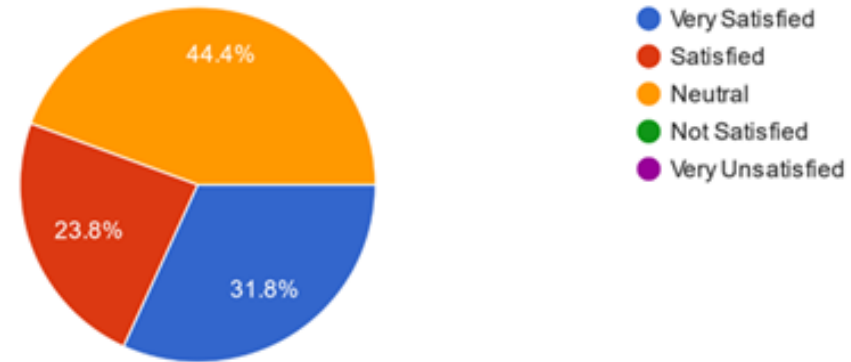
"The Park offers a wide variety of programs for all levels."

"Recently we've gone to the programs to identify plants, which we really enjoyed."

"There is a nice range of programming offered and we hope it continues!"

Nature Program Feedback

How satisfied are you with the nature programs and summer camps at the nature center?
223 responses



- 66% are satisfied or very satisfied with **nature programs and summer camps**. Some commented on waiting lists, citing limited staffing and facilities to meet popularity. Neutral respondents typically don't participate in organized programs.

"Creative, interesting and important programs offered by knowledgeable and engaging staff."

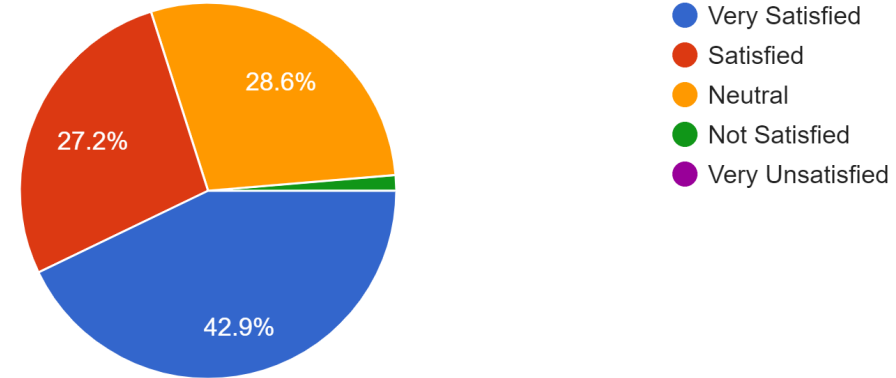
"We love the children's programs, we wish there were even more offerings!"

"The programs and camps often have long waiting lists. More staff would help remediate this problem."

Special Event Feedback

How satisfied are you with the special events at the nature center sponsored by the Council? i.e. Honey Harvest, Pancake Breakfast, Music in the Woods

224 responses



- 69% are satisfied or very satisfied with **special events**; 30% neutral.

"They are well conducted and informative, designed to reach many levels of interest."

"The low-cost activities are great for families."



OR Nature Center

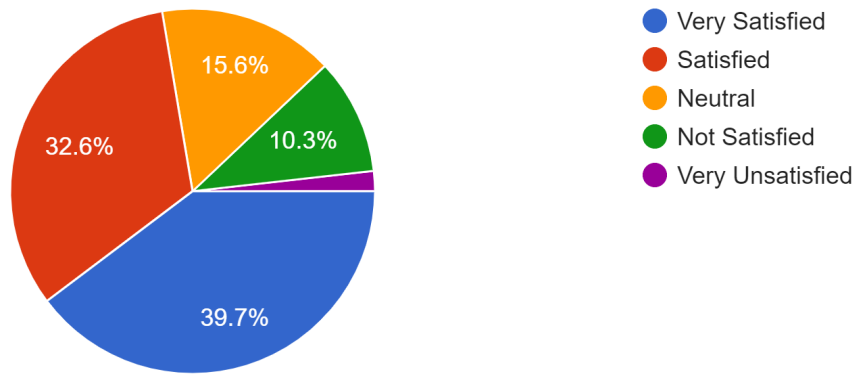
Facility age, restroom access and parking topped concerns. Concerns that need to be addressed:

- Many want basics like lighting and restrooms improved and the building modernized.
- Restroom and water fountain availability before and after visitor hours.
- Parking is limited during busy weekends and events.

73% Satisfied to Very Satisfied with the Nature Center

How satisfied are you with the Oregon Ridge Nature Center facility, including restrooms and parking?

224 responses



Top Park User Comments:

- #1 Building and restrooms need updates
- #2 Restrooms outside of building hours
- #3 Need additional parking
- #4 More staff



OR Lodge

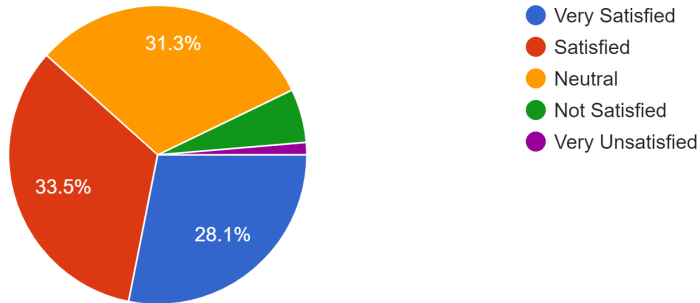
More than 60% are satisfied with Lodge facilities; 31% neutral. Building age was a common concern. Where is there room for improvement?

- Better restroom access
- Modernization of building

Lodge and Pavilions

How satisfied are you with the Oregon Ridge Lodge facility, including restrooms and parking?

224 responses

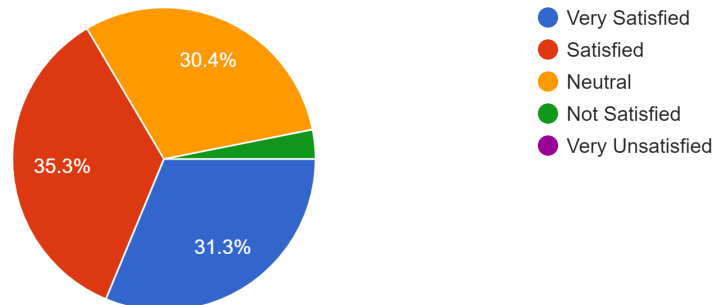


Comments about the Lodge:

- Very dated and needs an upgrade.
- Updating it would be great. It is so dark and old looking.
- Tons of parking is great. Restrooms are never open when I am there.

How satisfied are you with the picnic and pavilion facilities?

224 responses



Comments about the picnic and pavilion areas:

- More staffing to properly manage areas after 5 pm and holidays when large crowds are in the park.
- Some of the pavilions need upgrades and better trash cans to keep out the wildlife.
- Plentiful

What can improve your park experiences?

- Improve current trails, have accessible trails and safer stream crossings
- Improve parking
- Restroom availability outside of building hours
- Invest in improving current buildings and areas
- Protect the natural feel of the woods

(Top comments from survey.)



What amenities would you like added?

- Have areas for some with disability as well as older adults. Access is important and places to rest can allow people to tackle small challenges.
- Green features to the buildings and permeable parking
- Bridges to cross streams on trails
- Independent restrooms/drinking fountain to use when Nature Center and Lodge are closed.
- Replace culvert crossing at Oregon Branch due to increase flooding, reduces ability of the park to be open.

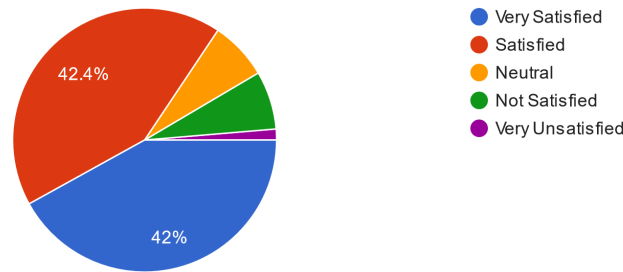
(Top comments from survey.)



Keeping Trails and Grounds for Nature

How satisfied are you with the walking trails?

224 responses



High satisfaction with **trail** network (84%), but considerable concern about erosion and other trail conditions.

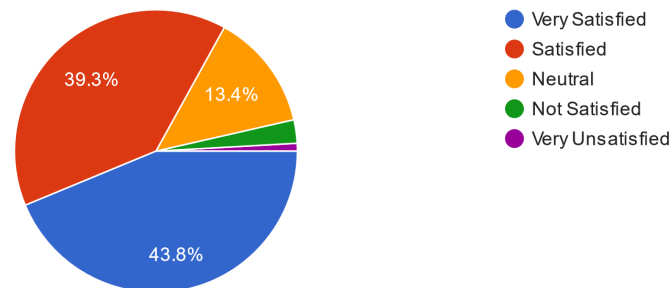
"Favorite trails in the area. Love the ability to mix and match trails to vary distance and experience different nature scenes."

"Love how lengthy they are and how you can add on with cross trails. Also love the fording of streams and that there are no bikers."

"Some of the trails are experiencing significant erosion."

How satisfied are you with the grounds of the park, including the fields, forest, and ball fields?

224 responses



High satisfaction with park **grounds** (84%). Most indicate that they like the wildness best, with some suggesting the need for better stewardship.

"Love the natural areas in particular. Would like to keep those wild if possible, we have such few places remaining in the county."

"Although I occasionally take my granddaughters to the playgrounds, it is the natural areas I go for. Please leave them natural."

Summary of Survey

- The trails, hiking, being surrounded by nature are by far what respondent say they **like most** about Oregon Ridge.
- Survey participants support upgrades to current park features and add more staff to assist with the increased visitation.
- When asked what respondents **like least** about Oregon Ridge, occasional crowds, parking and trail conditions were most mentioned among those who commented. Additionally, nearly 20% volunteered that ongoing concern about plans to develop, commercialize or “take away from the natural setting” of the park is what they liked least about Oregon Ridge. [In other words, what many people like least about Oregon Ridge is always having to worry about its future.]
- The majority of respondents (70%) oppose permitting **bikes and/or horses** on the trails under any condition. Among the rest, horses (8%) were preferred over bikes (5%), with most who favored or accepted either bikes or horses advocating dedicated trails separate from hikers and the park’s natural settings.

Oregon Ridge is a special place where memories are made.

In the words of survey respondents:

- *It is the crown jewel of Baltimore County and should be preserved as a wildlife habitat/nature education facility like it has been since its inception decades ago.*
- *Oregon Ridge is a big part of our family's life - and it has had something for every age as they have grown. When the children were small, we enjoyed the nature center and swimming. As the children grew, they attended camps and we hiked. Now, when our children visit, we always plan an Oregon Ridge hike. We also meet friends there for hiking. I hope to repeat the cycle when the grandchildren arrive.*
- *Oregon Ridge is, simply, a Baltimore institution that is most special for its consistent qualities of maintaining natural beauty, welcoming the public to enjoy, and helping the next generation love the outdoors as well.*
- *I visited Oregon Ridge often during the height of the pandemic, which really was a lifesaver. While I was there it was easy to escape the mayhem amongst the trees, listening to the wood thrushes' songs. ...There is always something interesting and beautiful to see. There was a spot on the Blue Trail where Red Admiral butterflies would hang out - if you stood there quiet for a while they would come down for a visit, fluttering against your cheek with their wings, and sometimes landing on your shoulder - magical!*

