

# Park Use Estimation & Survey 2018 Final Report



Prepared By:



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## Background

As part of the Benton County Natural Areas and Parks Department (NAPD) led Strategic Plan (2018-in process) estimating park use, experiences, and values within the natural areas and parks system<sup>1-2</sup> was identified as vital to long-term community support. From May thru August 2018, project staff sampled vehicle traffic counts and collected park-user survey responses. The Outdoor Education & Recreation Program completed all project work, and provided key support for planning of park management projects and programs. NAPD plans to implement use estimation and survey methodology within a rotating set of priority parks, each peak season period, to inform future priorities and management while capturing important trends.

## Use Estimation & Survey Goals

1. Develop park use methodology that is repeatable and includes park reservations, vehicle counts, and statistically valid survey data (largest sample size possible).
2. Complete vehicle traffic counts, in-person and on-line surveys to collect past and current priority park user recreation data.
3. Collect and analyze data to support planning park management projects and programs.

The project was implemented at 5 priority park locations during the peak season (May-August) to understand and plan for:

1. Recreation preferences;
2. Motivations for recreation at a specific county park;
3. Satisfaction of park user;
4. Recommendations for enhancing recreation experience and helping inform future work at the park.

## Summary Findings

Survey questions focused on sampling park users regarding: recreation preferences, experience quality, enhancement recommendations, and priority user demographics (mode of travel, distance to park, gender, and income level). The final sample size (n=432), was composed primarily of online submittals through a survey monkey TM website with intercept surveys at the priority parks (n=74). The following graphs provide findings for all questions provided to survey participants (survey questions and open-ended responses are provided in **Attachment A & B**):

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<sup>1</sup> 'Priority Natural areas and Parks' are lands owned by Benton County and managed by Benton County Natural Areas & Parks Department, that currently allow consistent public access and are considered by the department as most desirable for past and current recreation users (Outdoor Education and Recreation Program 5-year Plan, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> Above definition updated based on highest current use during the Spring-Summer peak season, based on staff observations and reservation data available for facilities or sites.

Figure 1.

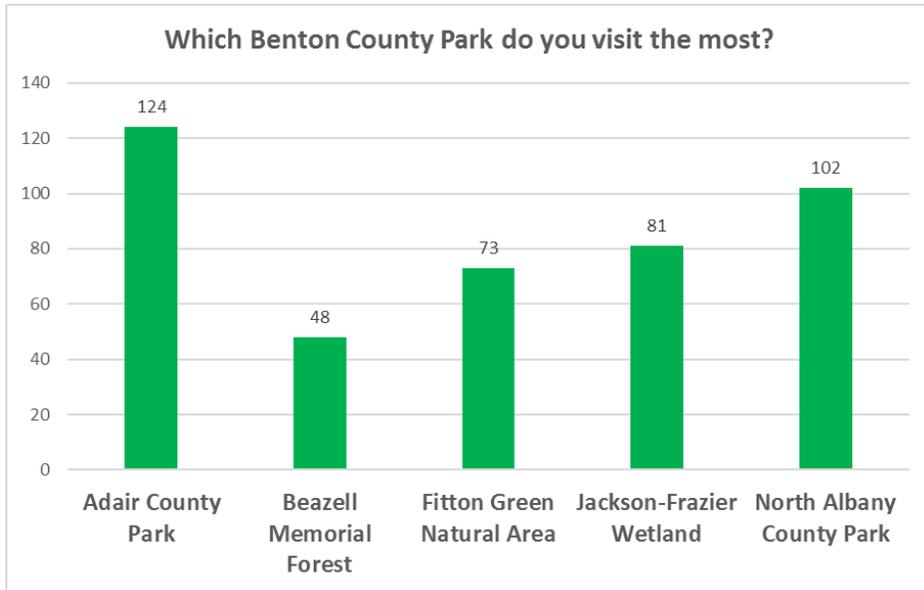
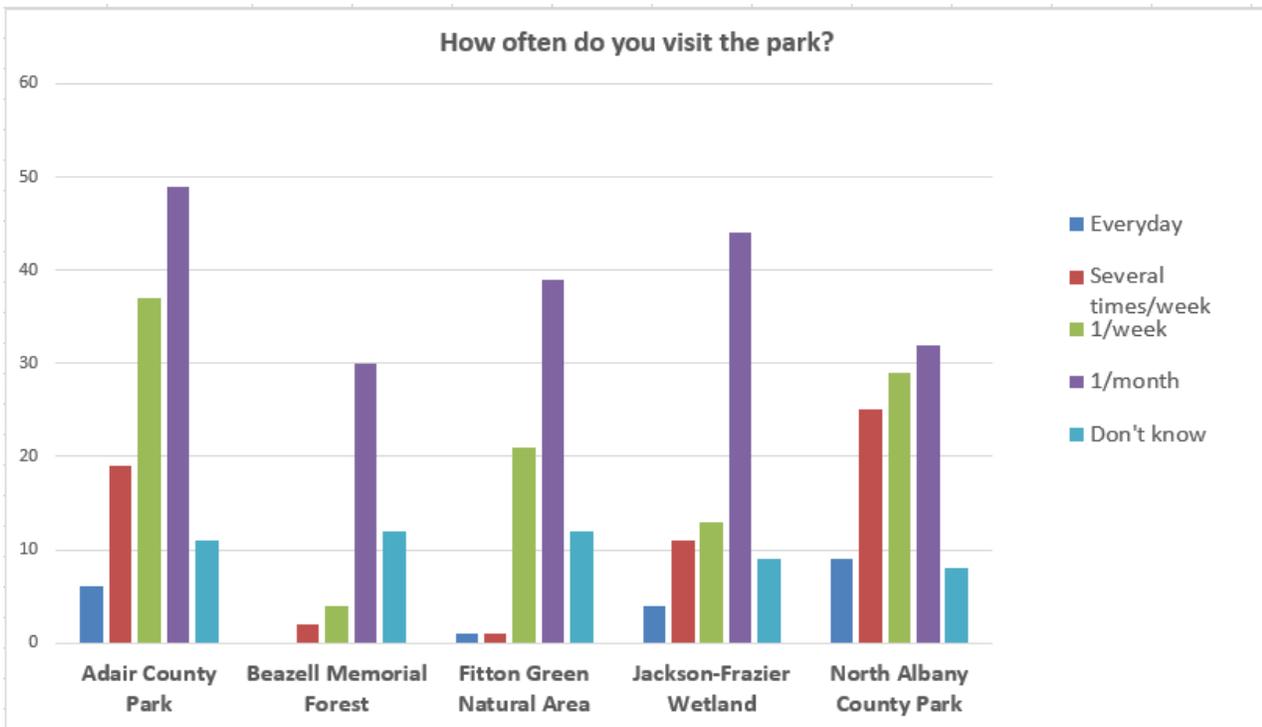
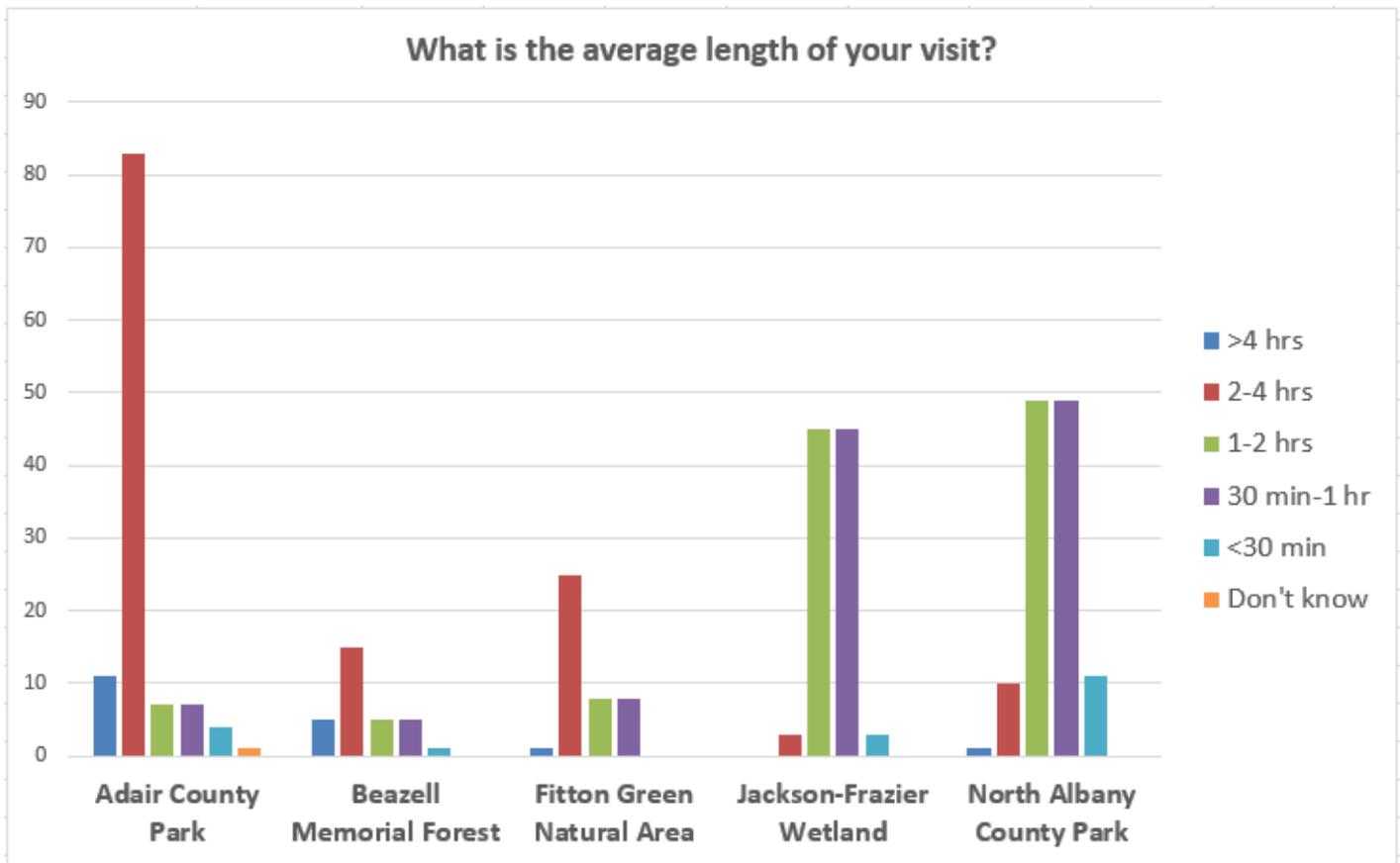


Figure 2.



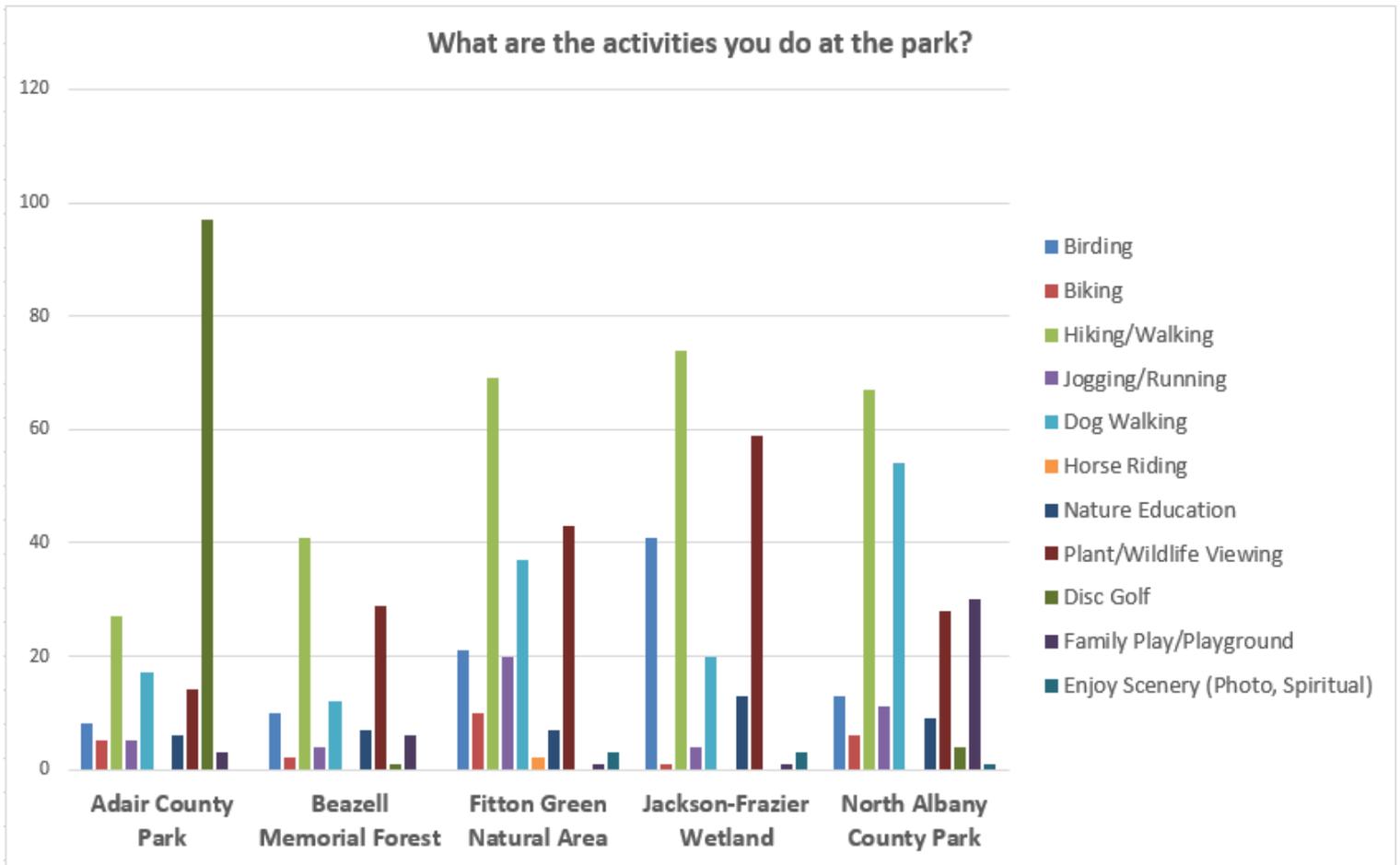
The majority of park users taking the survey are visiting once per week when pedestrian access is highly used, and once per month is the highest choice across the board demonstrating diverse use by participants.

Figure 3.



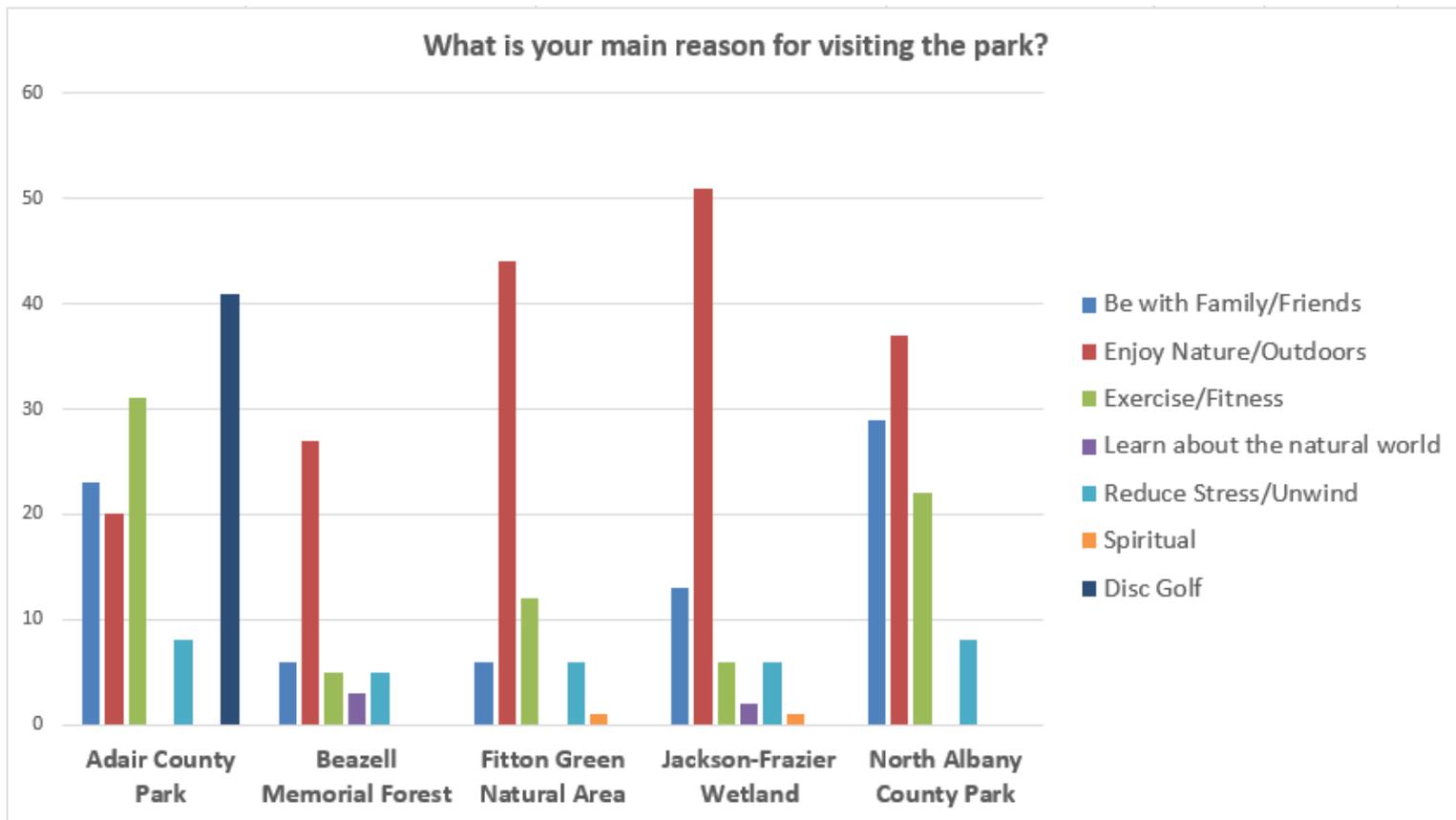
The majority of park visitors stay within the park for 2-4 hours to complete their preferred user activities. The greatest amount of activity occurring within this time period, for users completing the survey, was for disc golfers at Adair County Park.

Figure 4.



The majority of survey respondents selected hiking and walking as the main activity within the parks followed by plant/wildlife viewing and dog walking. All of these activities occur across the surveyed parks, in addition to a large amount of disc golf activity documented at the popular Adair disc golf course.

Figure 5.



There is a major interest in need in the enjoyment of the natural world at the park, allowing park users to 'escape' the built environment. This is a shared reason across natural area and classic park locations surveyed during 2018, pointing to the need for continued open space and natural resource protection/enhancement.

The following Park Use Survey questions focused on ranking the importance of current park amenities and features, in addition to the importance of possible future investments in new amenities and features (please see **Attachment B** for open-ended responses).

Figure 6.

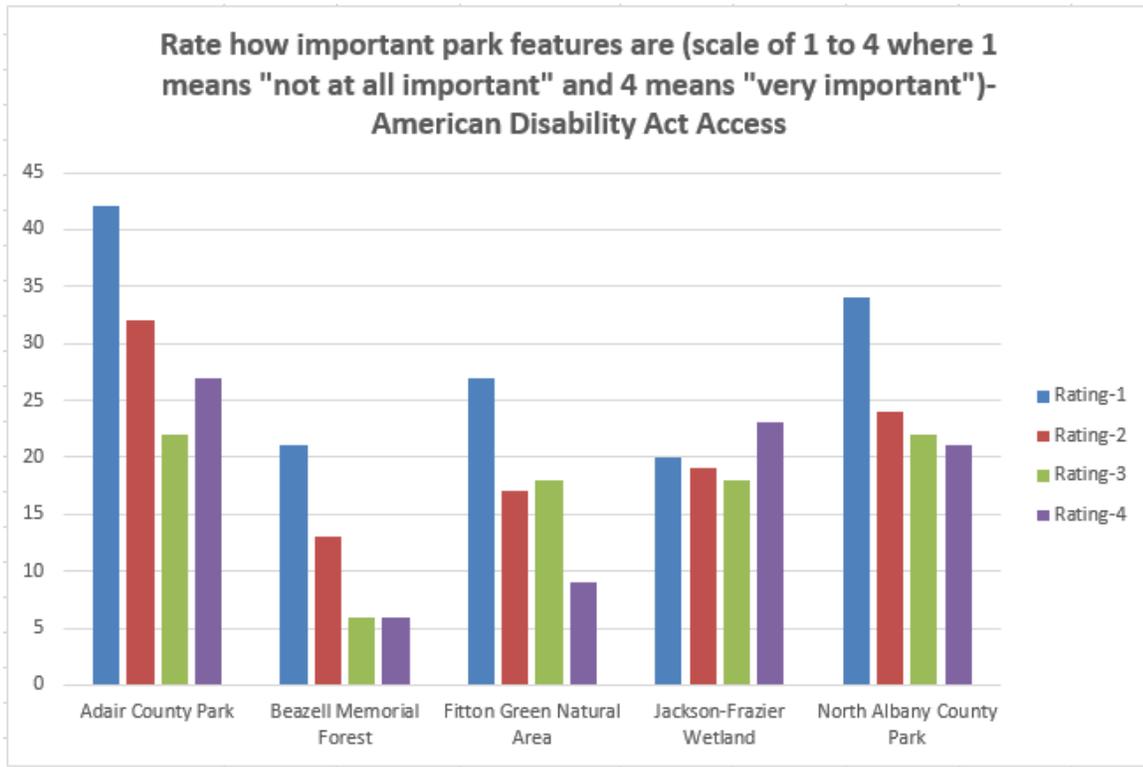


Figure 7.

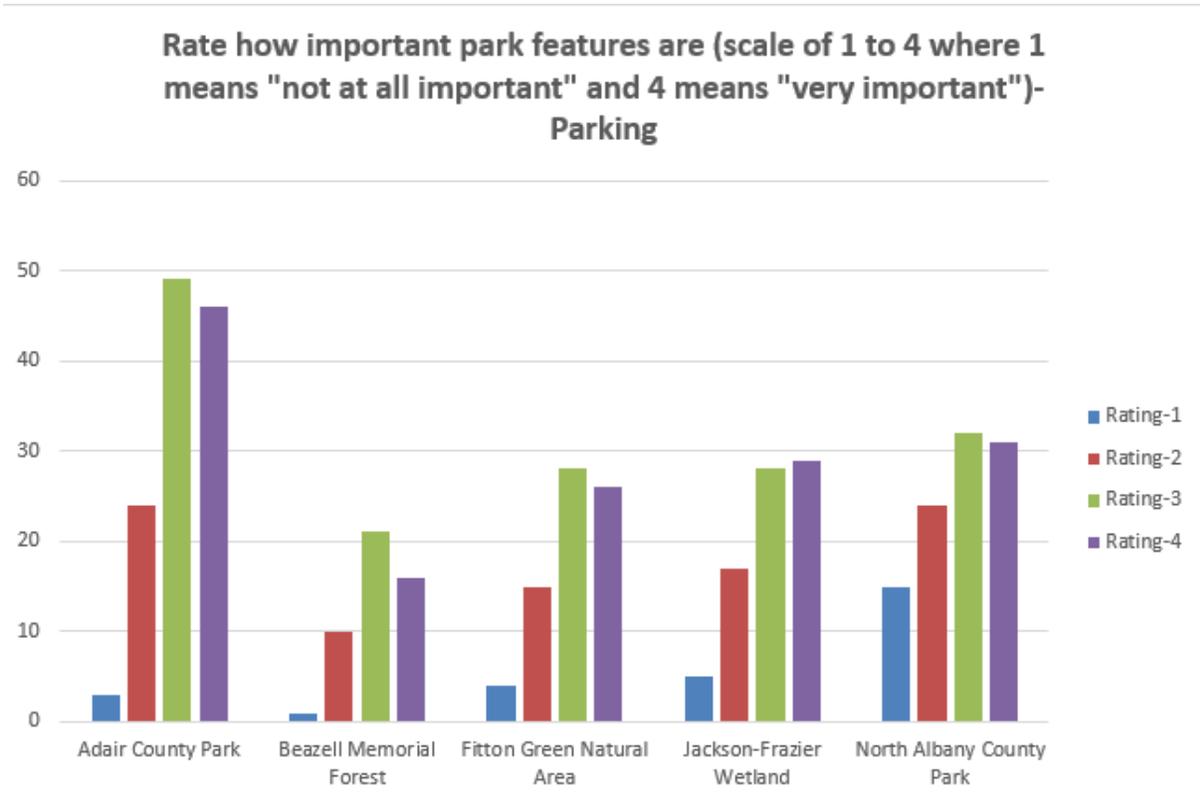


Figure 8.

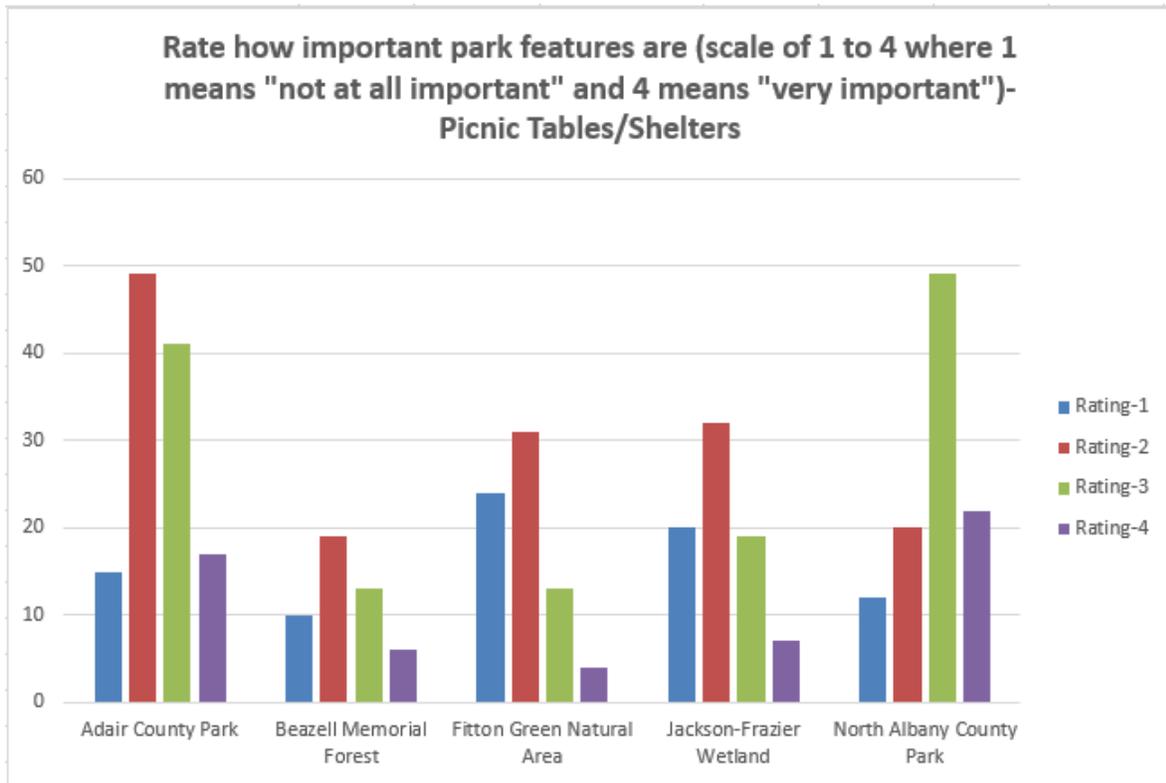


Figure 9.

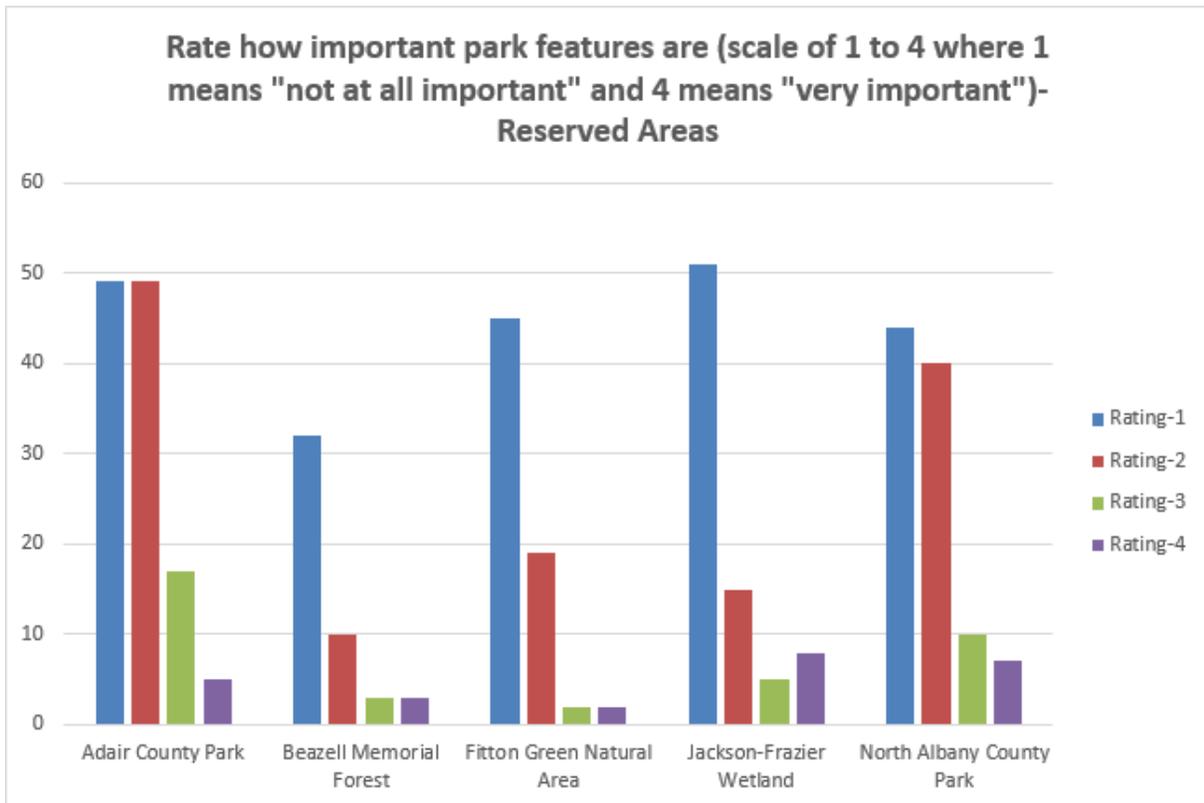


Figure 10.

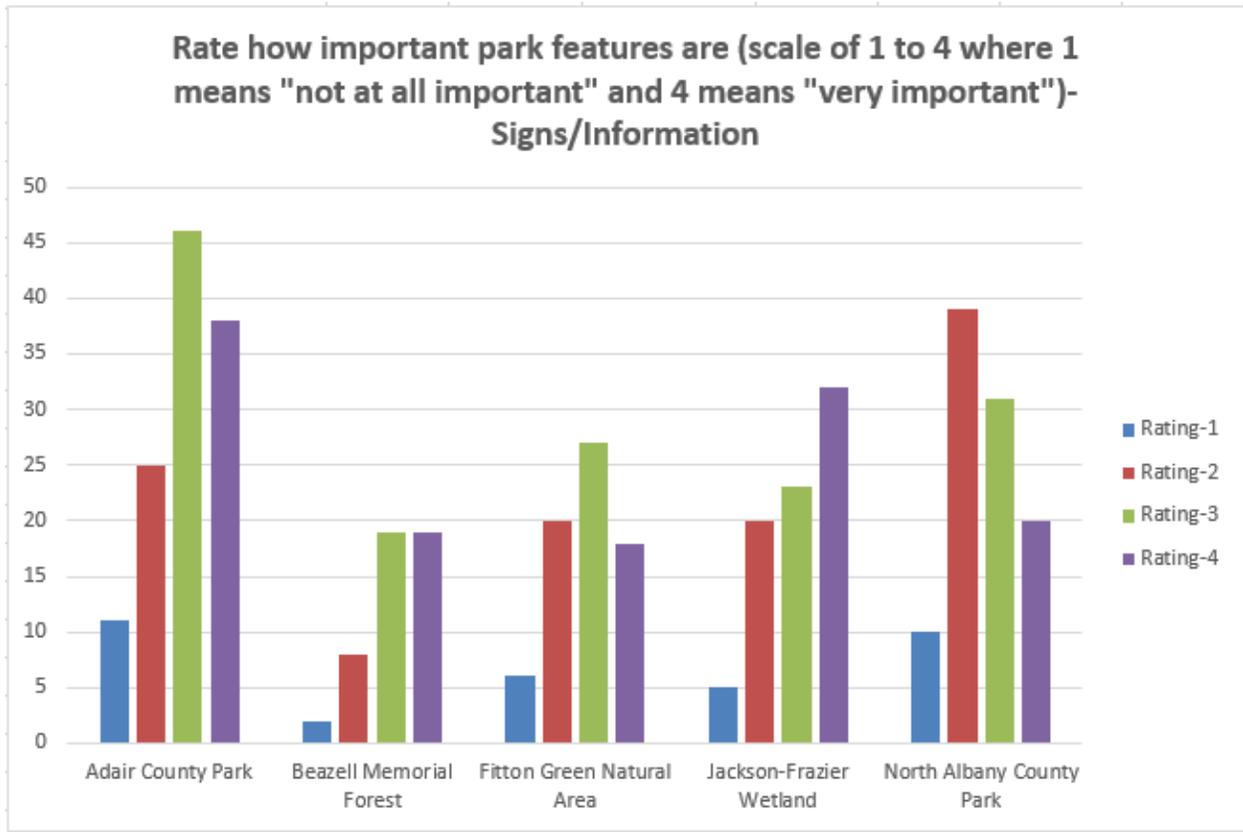
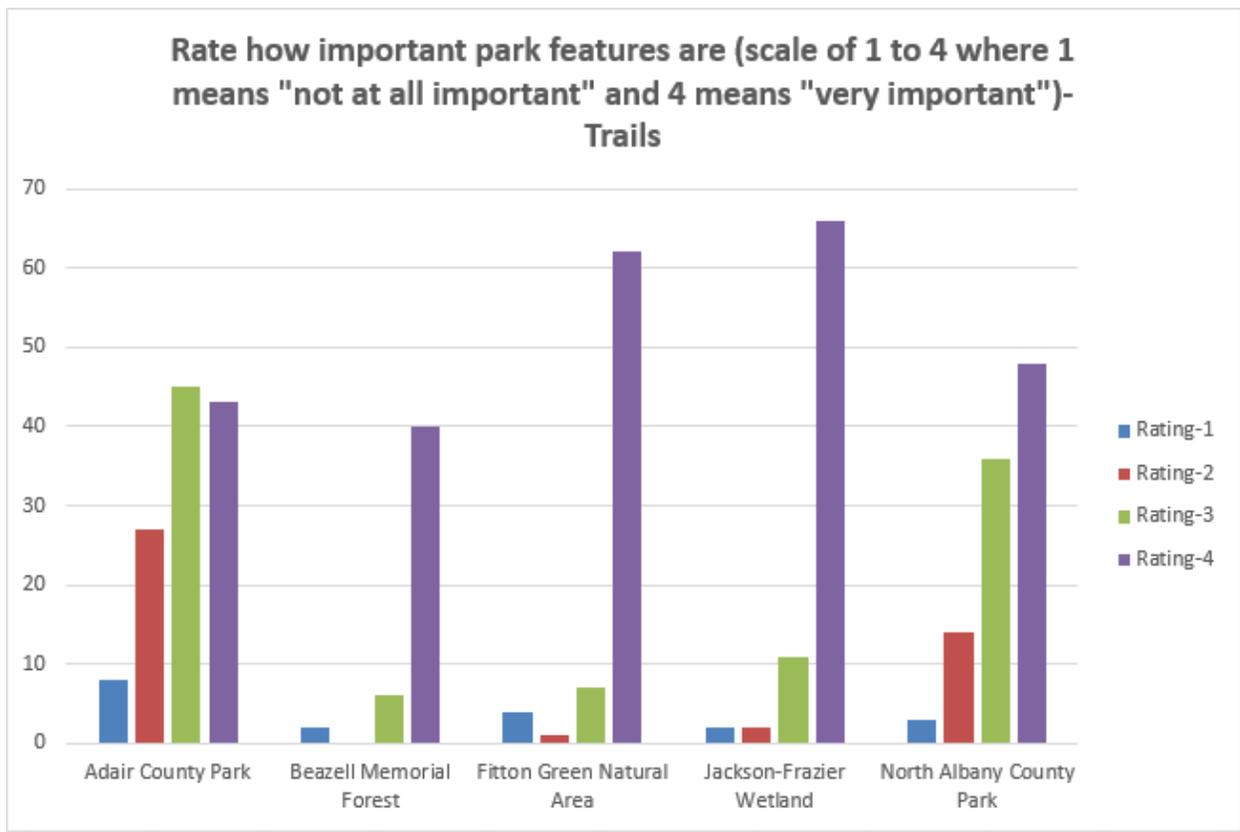


Figure 11.



As shown in the amenities/features ratings graphs, the highest ratings for each park aligns with the primary use and management focus for each park. For example, parks with extensive trail systems has the majority of uses occurring on these trails (hiking, walking, biking) and thus survey participants rank these features higher than in locations that may currently be lacking in trails or trails are not the focus of the park.

A follow-up question to the features ratings, is the quality ratings (shown below). There are several features rated as high importance at a given park however their current quality is rated below their importance rating. These locations merit further inquiry by staff and the community of users, to develop programs and projects that help ensure importance and quality ratings are equal to maximize park user experience.

Figure 12.

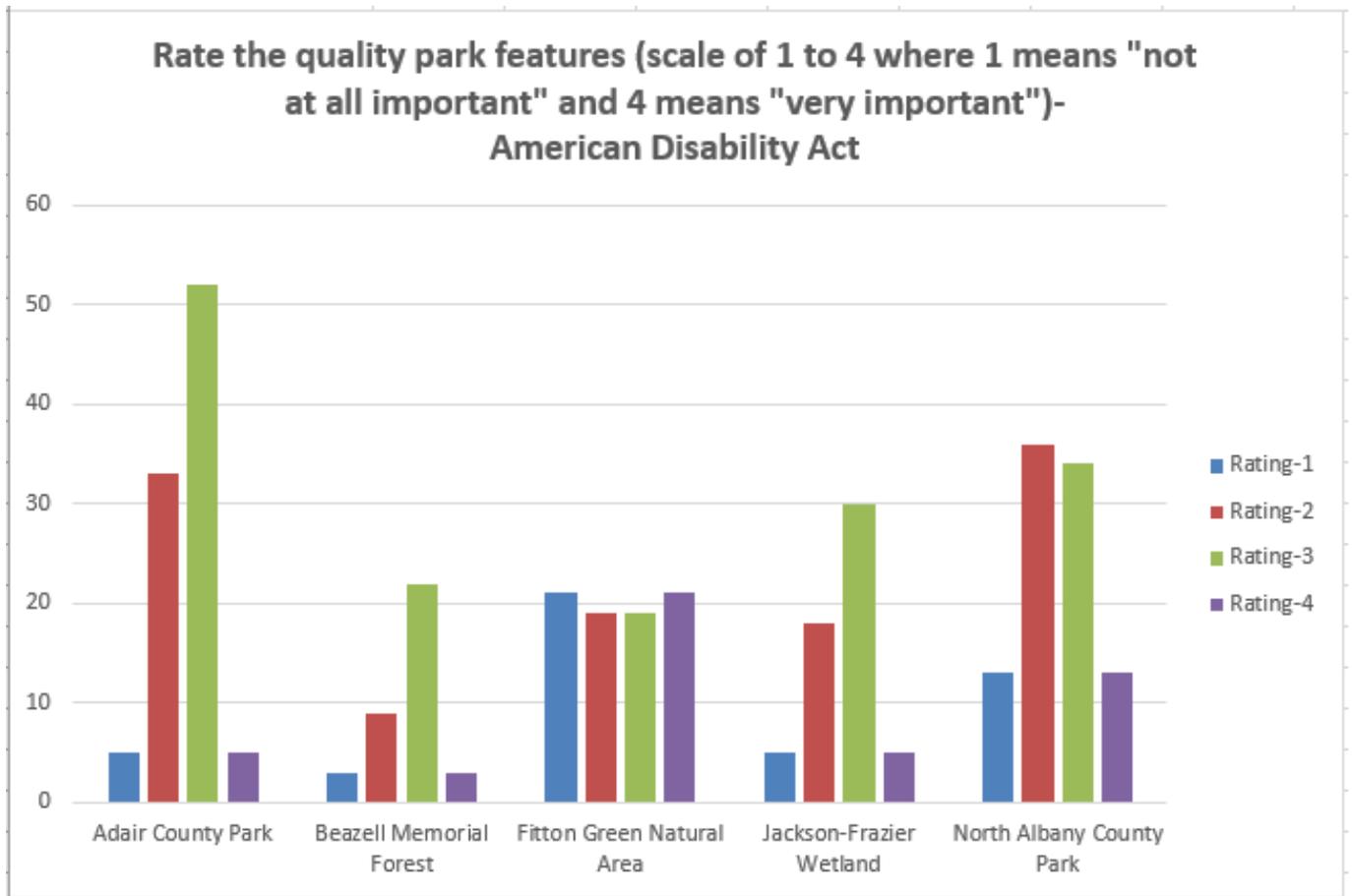


Figure 13.

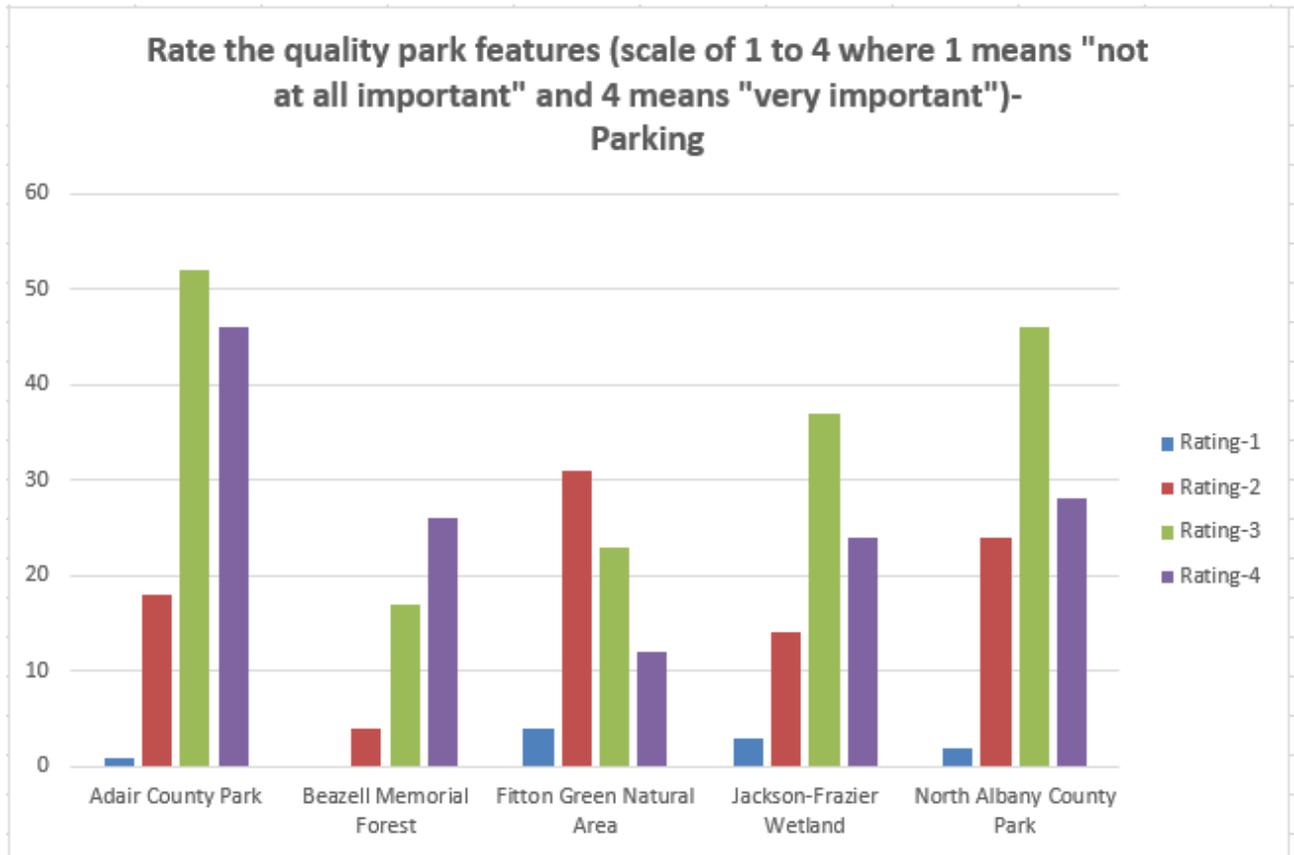


Figure 14.

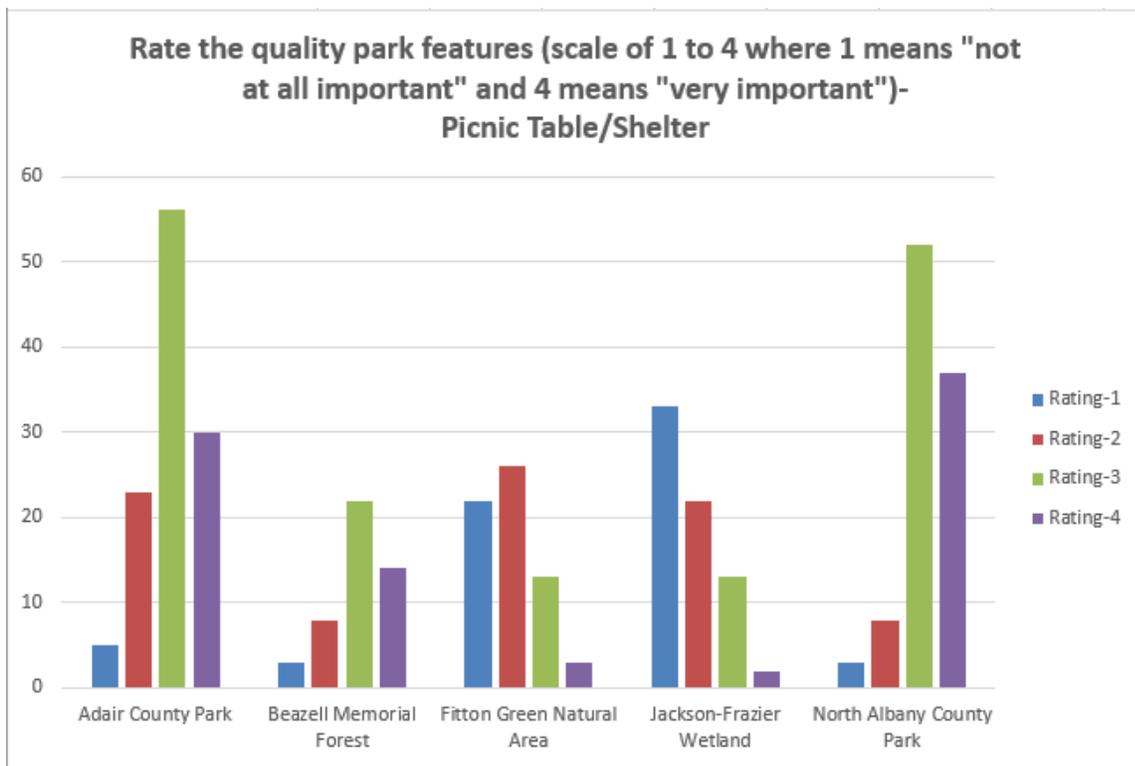


Figure 15.

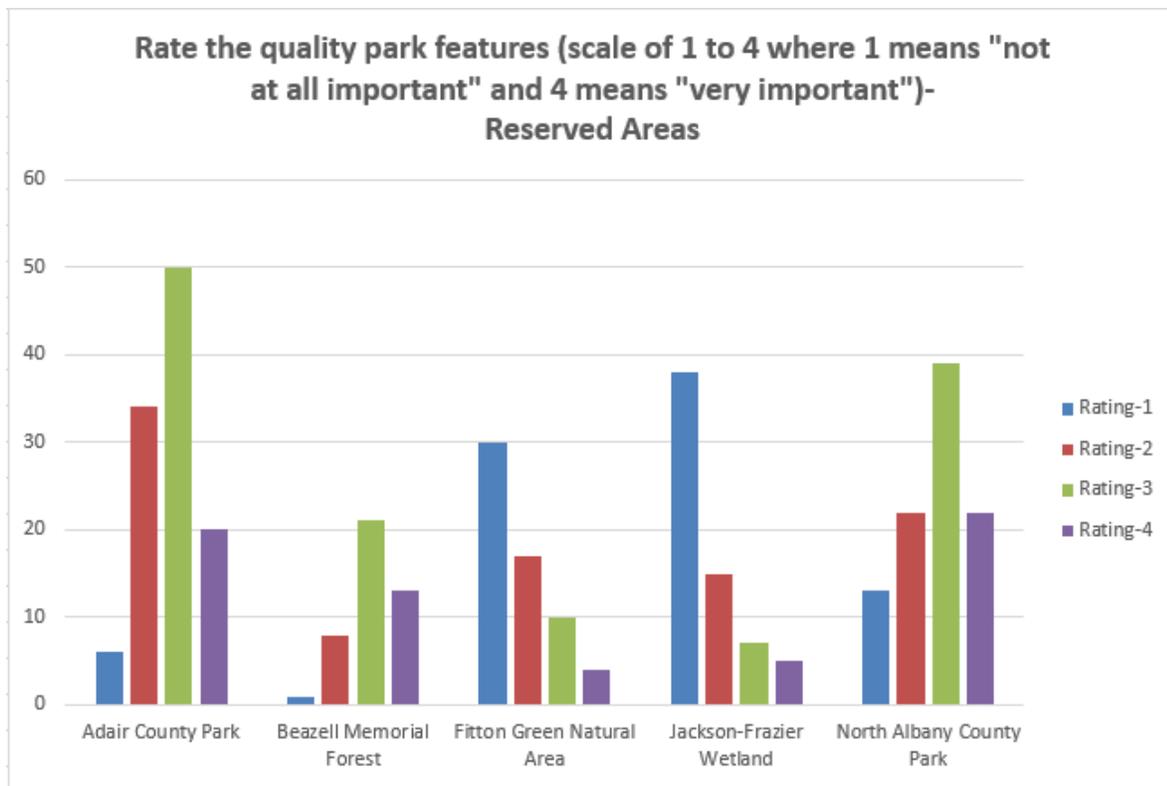


Figure 16.

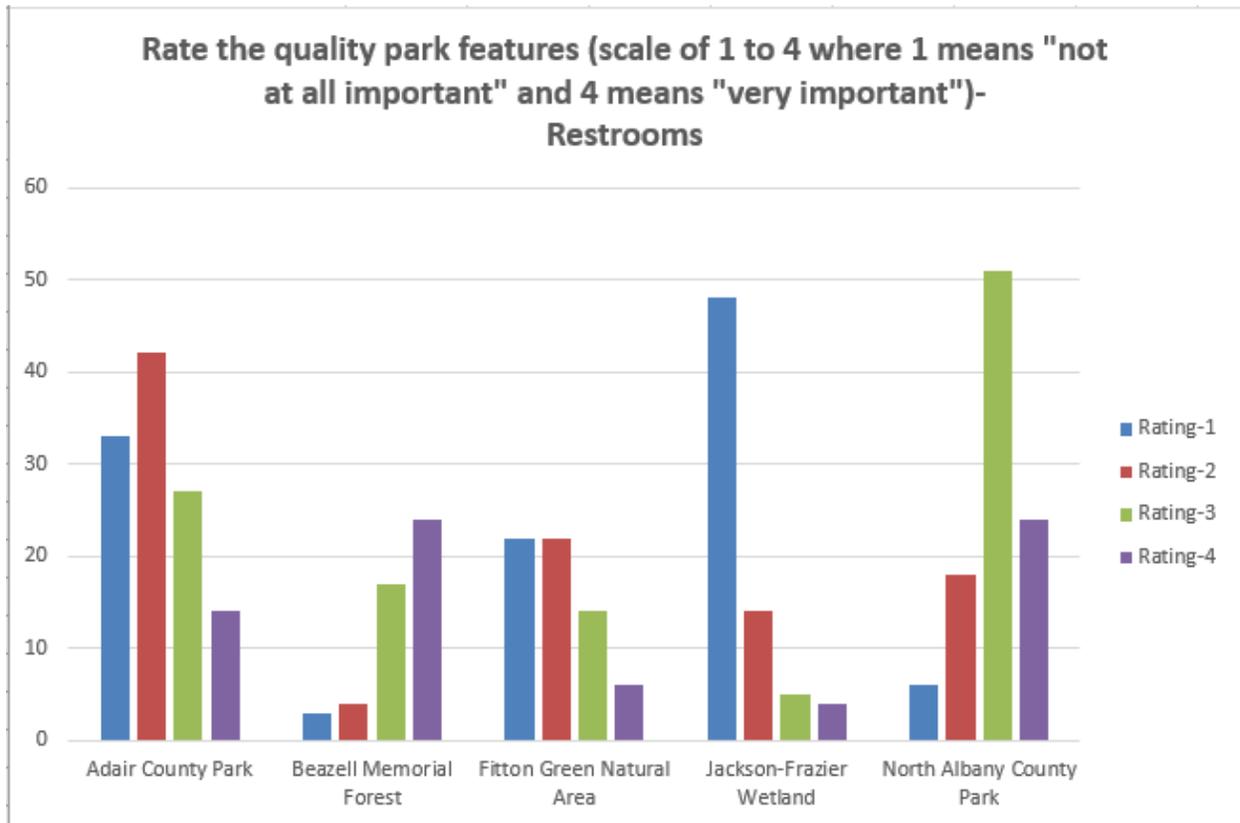


Figure 17.

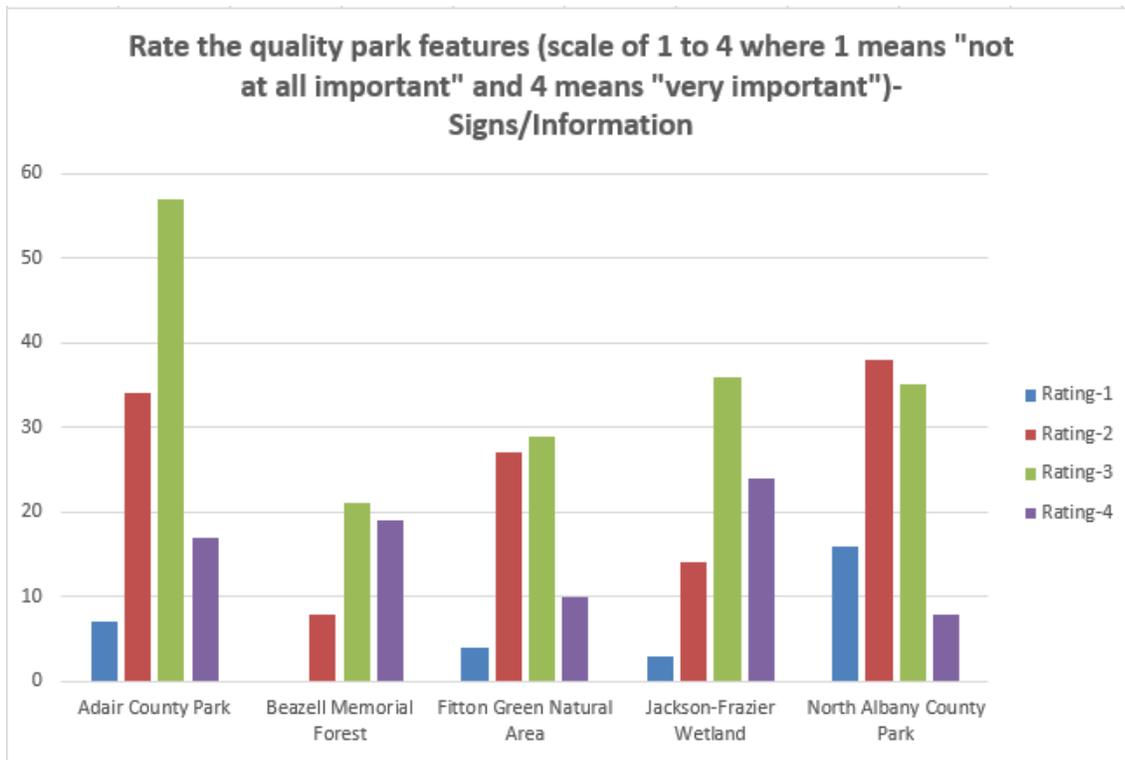


Figure 18.

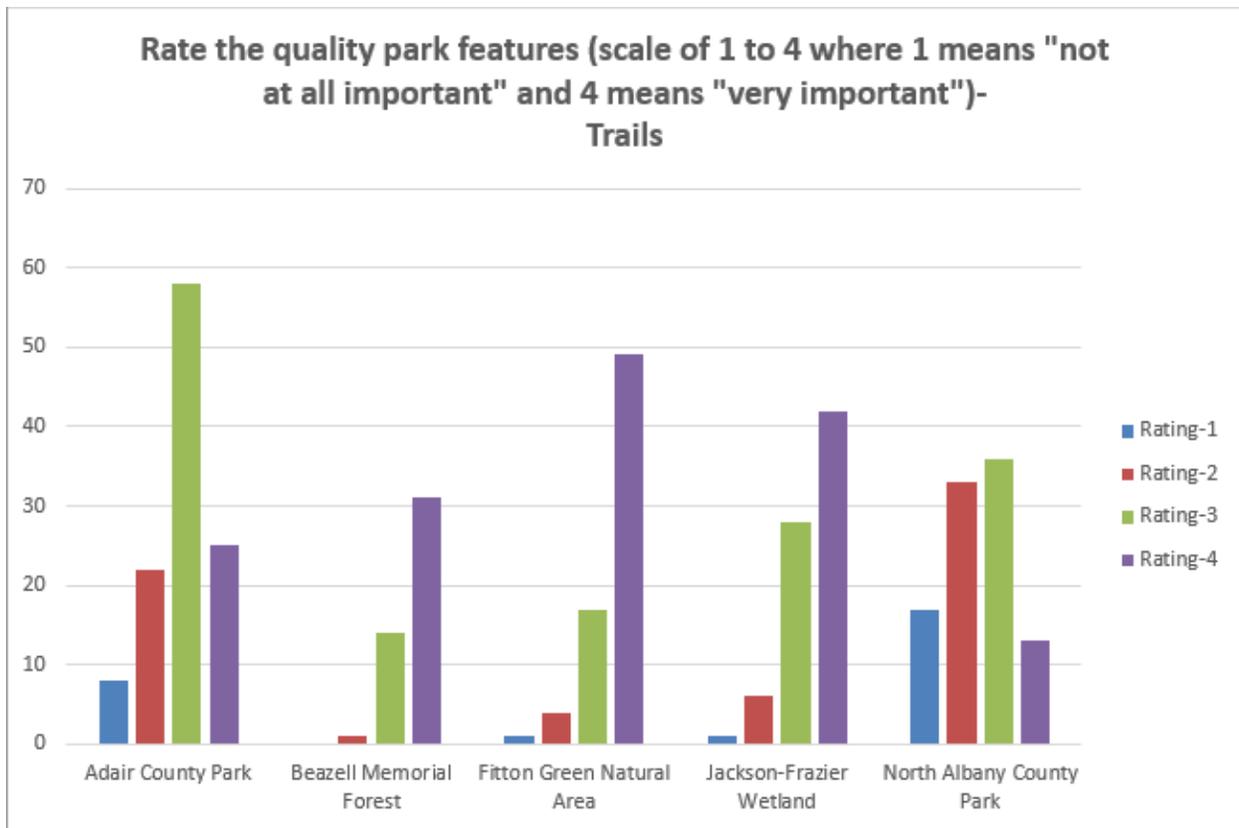
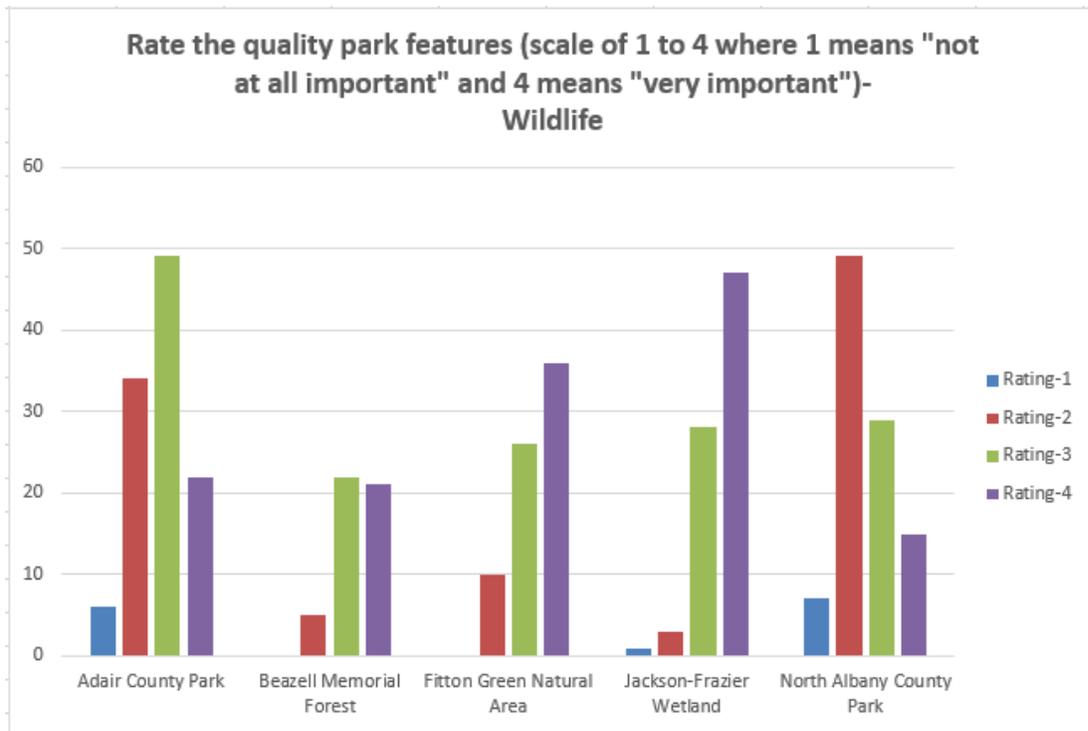
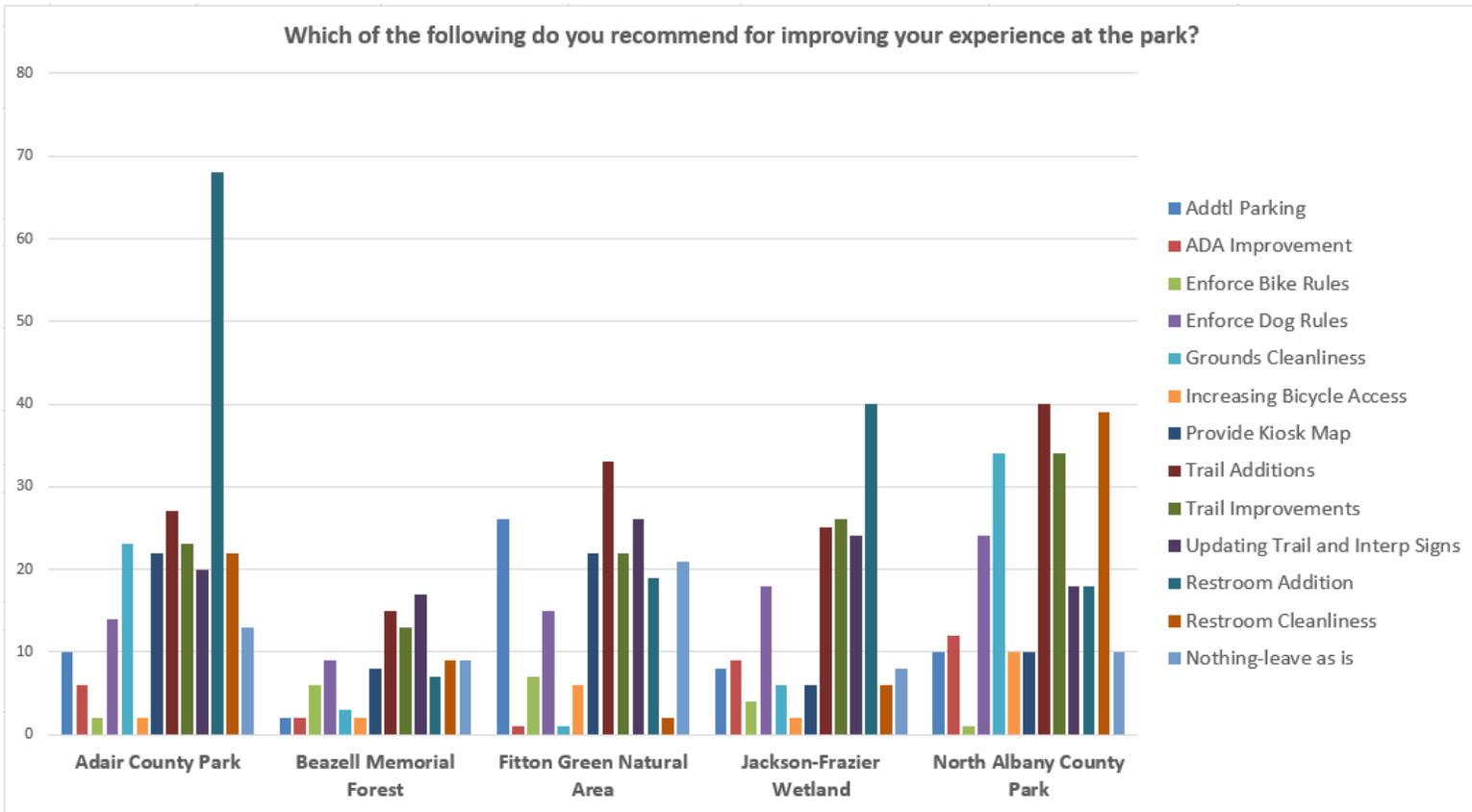


Figure 19.



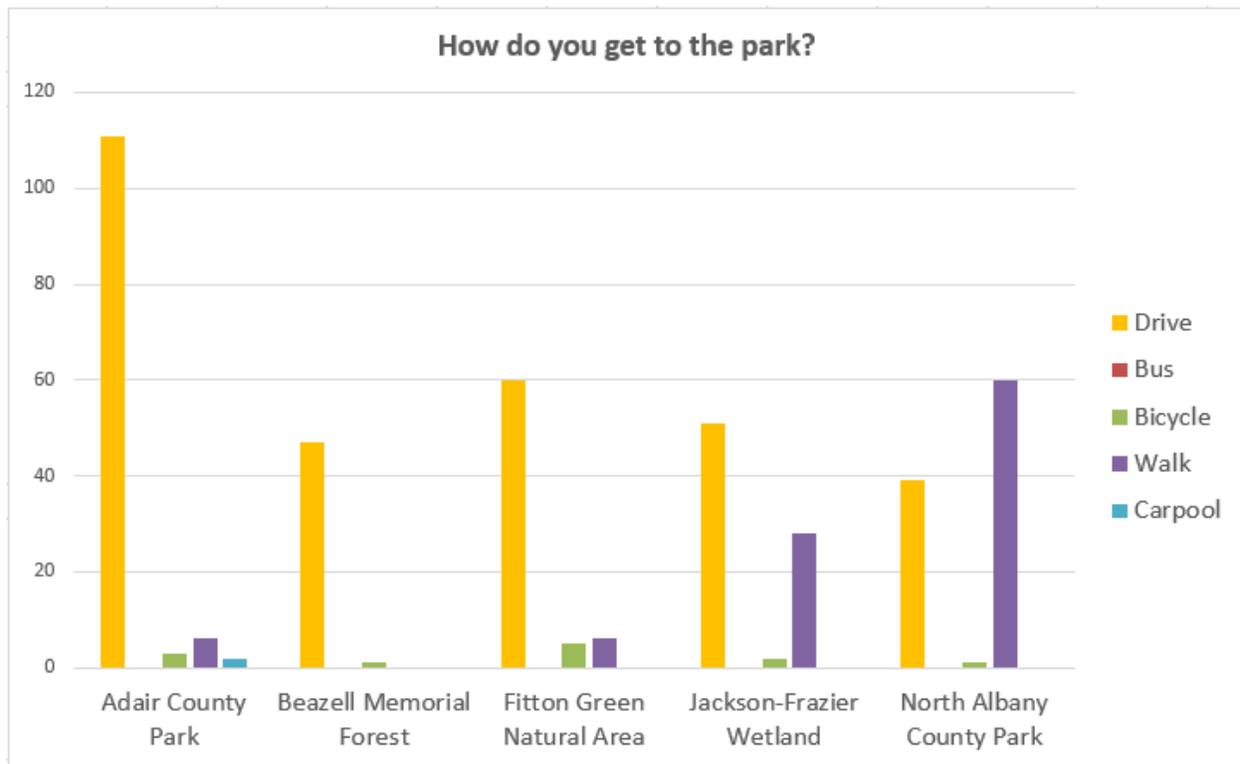
The final question focused on gaining recommendations from participants on improving, the range of amenities and services for the 2018 priority parks survey. There is clear enhancement of wildlife habitat desires within the majority of the park system surveyed.

Figure 20.



A high priority for Benton County is supporting multimodal transportation to and from natural areas and parks. The department identified transportation as a major barrier to the community accessing the majority of county natural areas and parks (Outreach & Education 5-Year Plan, 2015). Participants overwhelmingly drive personal vehicles to the parks, with the exception of North Albany County Park with walking from neighboring/directly adjacent homes is 20% higher than driving.

Figure 21.



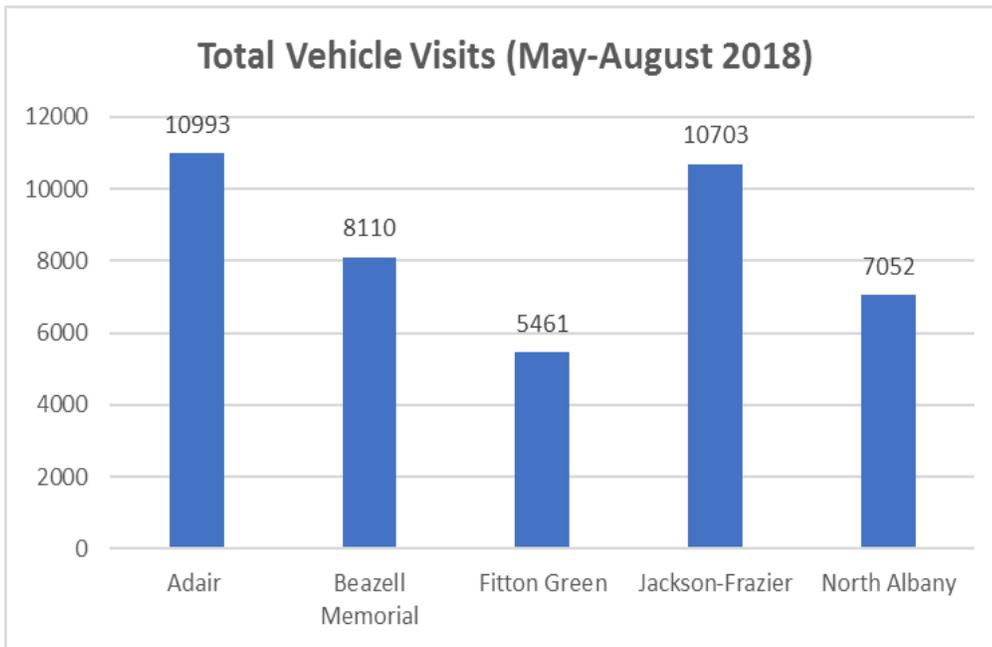
The closing questions of the survey was focused on demographic, socioeconomic, and geographic information to provide background on survey participants to better inform Benton County staff and management on participant background (see attachment). Key summary information for participants collected from these background questions included:

- 25 to 54 year old totaled 270 out of 432;
- 350 responders noted Benton County as home;
- 280 responses documented income \$55,000 to \$90,000 or more.

Improvements for future survey works include:

1. Developing a bilingual survey including questions that are focused on underrepresented park users as defined by the Benton County Outdoor Education & Recreation Plan.
2. Rotating priority parks for intercept surveys and electronic surveys each year will occur to gain current baseline responses for future evaluation and enhancements.

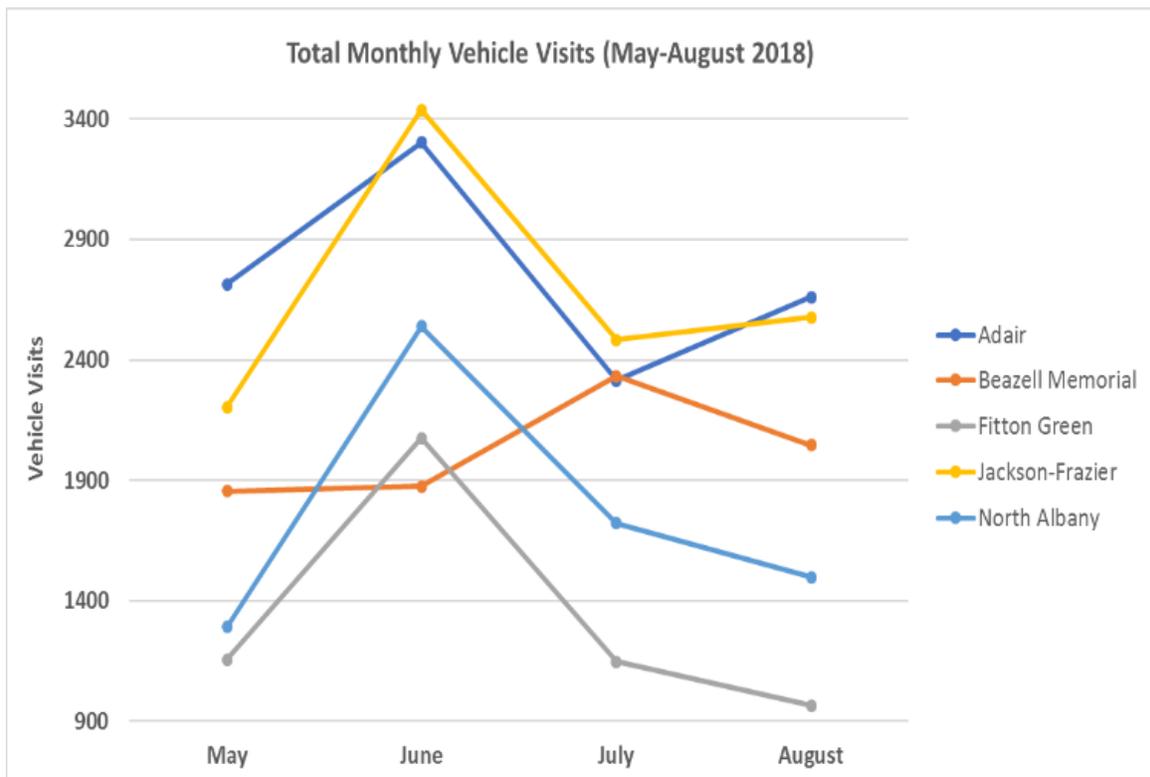
Figure 22.



Vehicle Counts

The highest use month, based on vehicle traffic counts with an estimate of 1+ people/vehicle, occurred consistently during June. During the highest use month, Jackson-Frazier Wetland had the highest count (n=3,439), with Bezell Memorial

Forest having lowest count (n=1,875). There was a significant drop from June through August for all parks, except for Bezell Memorial Forest which experienced an increase from June to July (n=459) likely attributed to seasonal wedding rentals. Adair County Park experienced the greatest total use of 10,993 car counts. Jackson-Frazier had slightly less. Given the proximity to the local neighborhoods, pedestrian access that was not accounted for is significant, resulting in



a total monthly estimate of 6,800 individual users (low estimate based on vehicle trips) with a likely additional 50% from pedestrian users (total of 10,200) for Adair County Park and Jackson-Frazier Wetland, during the sampling period.

A high priority for the department during the current period and likely ongoing each peak survey season, is to determine Fitton Green car counts at the Panorama entrance where parking is currently limited to approximately one dozen spaces. Vehicle visits were estimated at 2,230 during June, at the Panorama entrance. In addition, with support from Benton County Public works car counts were estimated to determine how much usage of the Chinook Road District was occurring. 3255 out of 3679 motorists turned left from Cardwell Hill to Chinook and Fitton Green Natural Areas. Out of those motorists, 472 (15%) entered into the Park during July 23 through July 30 (see map below- **Figure 23.**)



A breakdown of the cars per parking site at Fitton Green for the maximum peak season of June can be stated as follows. On average, the amount of cars that visited was 74 per day. There was an average total of 186 cars that used each of the 12 parking spots for the entire month of June. For the 30 day period, 6 cars parked in a parking space everyday on average. These numbers are just listed averages given from the collected car count data at Fitton Green for the

month of June. Use during the weekends would likely have been greater than during the weekdays.

The "Average length per visit" graph for Fitton Green shows that the majority of people visit for 2-4 hours. Therefore it can be estimated that each spot in the parking lot may be full for more than 13 hours per day on average in June. It can be assumed that during these hours visitors would not be able to find a parking spot. A flaw with using the car counters is that many of the cars counted may have not found a parking space and just turned around and left the area. It is fair to say that not all 2,230 cars likely stayed. If this is the case, the averages discussed in the above paragraph in association with the number of parking spaces used would not be completely accurate, but still provide an estimate of the parking need at Fitton Green.

## Next Steps

Benton County Natural Areas & Parks Department- Outdoor Education and Recreation Program, will continue to implement the annual Park Use Estimation & Survey within 4-5 priority parks within the Benton County system. During 2019 it was identified with the Benton County Health Action Team, that developing an additional survey for park users that have not visited a priority park within the past 2-years or possibly never. In addition, developing a Spanish language version of the survey would provide additional awareness of the parks and open the survey to the Hispanic community.

**Attachment A: Park Use Survey Questions (2018)**

Benton County Natural Areas & Parks is completing a Park Use Estimation Survey for 5 priority parks. The information you provide will help support improving these natural areas and parks features for future enjoyment.

**1. Which Benton County park do you visit the most?**

- Adair County Park
- Beazell Memorial Forest
- Fitton Green Natural Area
- Jackson-Frazier Wetland
- North Albany County Park

**2. How often do you visit the county park?**

- About once a month
- About once a week
- Several times a week
- Everyday
- Don't know

**3. What is the average length of your visit?**

- More than 4 hours
- 2-4 hours
- 1-2 hours
- 30 min-1 hour
- Less than 30 min
- Don't know

#### 4. What are the activities you do at the park?

- Birding
  - Biking
  - Hiking/Walking
  - Jogging/Running
  - Dog Walking
- 

- Horse Riding
- Nature Education
- Plant/Wildlife Viewing
- Other (please specify)

#### 5. What is your main reason for visiting the park?

- Be with family and friends
- Enjoy Nature/Outdoors
- Exercise/Fitness
- Learn about the natural world
- Reduce stress/Unwind
- Spiritual
- Other (please specify)

6. The following is a list of features that you can usually find in a park. Please rate how important they are to you when you visit the park, using a scale of 1 to 4 where 1 means "not at all important" and 4 means "very important".

American Disability Act  
Access

Parking

Picnic Tables/Shelters

Reserved Areas

Restrooms

Signs/Information

Trails

Wildlife

Other (please specify)

7. Please rate the quality of the following features at the park, using a scale of 1 to 4 where 1 means "very poor" and 4 means "very good".

American Disability Act

Parking

Picnic Tables/Shelters

Reserved Areas

Restrooms

Signs/Information

Trails

Wildlife

Other (please specify)

8. Which of the following do you recommend for improving your experience at the park?

- Additional Parking
- ADA Improvement
- Enforce Bike Rules
- Enforce Dog Rules
- Grounds Cleanliness
- Increasing Bicycle Access
- Provide Kiosk Map
- Trail Additions
- Trail Improvements
- Updating Trail and Interpretation Signs
- Restroom Addition
- Restroom Cleanliness
- Nothing- leave as is
- Other (please specify)

### 9. How do you get to the park?

- Walk
- Bicycle
- Bus
- Drive Vehicle
- Other (please specify)

### 10. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

### 11. What is the zip code of your residence?

### 12. What county do you live in?

- Benton
- Linn
- Lane
- Marion
- Out of State
- Other (please specify)

### 13. How far do you travel to get to the park?

- Less than a mile
- 1-2 miles
- 2-3 miles
- 3-5 miles
- 5-10 miles
- More than 10 miles

#### 14. What is your age group?

15 to 18

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20 to 24

25 to 34

35 to 44

45 to 54

55 to 64

65 to 74

74 to 84

85 and over

#### 15. Which of the following best describes your total annual income for 2018?

Less than \$10,000

\$10,000-\$14,000

\$15,000-\$24,000

\$25,000-\$34,000

\$35,000-\$44,000

\$45,000-\$54,000

\$55,000-\$74,000

\$75,000-\$90,000

\$90,000 or more

DONE

**Attachment B: Open-Ended Responses to Park Use Survey Questions 2018**

## Question #4

<b>Other Response</b>	<b>Response Total</b>	<b>Park Location</b>
Disc Golf	41	Adair
Play guitar	1	North Albany
Dog walk	7	North Albany

## Question #6- all ranked highest (or 4 on the 1-4 scale)

<b>Off leash dog</b>	<b>Disc golf</b>	<b>Access to water</b>	<b>Access to open areas</b>	<b>play structures</b>	<b>Water fountains</b>
1	26	1	1	1	1

## Question #7

<b>Disc golf</b>	<b>Boardwalk</b>	<b>Playground</b>	<b>Trail</b>
10	dangerous	Playground outdated	Need more trail signage, trailhead markers
		Playground dangerous	
		Restroom should be open in winter	
		Excellent for dog owners	

## Questions #8

Adair	Bezell	Fitton	Jackson Frazier	North Albany Park
Warning sign about disc golf on trails	Picnic tables closer to parking lot	Don't expand parking	I think some of the signs were outdated/broken but otherwise I've always found this trail to be easy to follow, well maintained, and clean.	Play equipment for kids
Disc golf course additions and maintenance	Disc golf	prohibit bicycles	new wood for the paths	Don't cut down trees unless they are dead or dying. Healthy trees were cut last time.
Expand disc golf course	prevent all the nearby clearcuts (wishful thinking)	Would be nice to have good maps to carry along	we need to get some wood updates on boardwalk	Update playground equipment for kids
Less homeless camps	'Trail width management' along stream.....I know, hard to fund and keep up with.	Please don't let a few regular complainers change the freedom of this beautiful space	Dogs are often off leash and threaten nesting birds in the area	A bigger slide
More Disc Golf Layouts	Increase natural areas management to reduce non-native grass cover	Clean source of potable water	SOME OF THE BOARD PATH IS STARTING TO DETERIATE WILL NEED REPAIR	Water feature
disc golf improvements	More dog waste disposal stations along main trails. Too many people bag poop, but leave it Trailside.	More benches at view points	Many bolts are sticking out of the boardwalk at Jackson Frazier	Water feature
new disc golf baskets			Maybe having more interpretive signs - there is so much diversity! It feels kind of like a museum.	
Off leash dogs are a big problem!			Replace the signs. Bob Frenkel is turning over in his grave at the lack of attention.	More dog bag stations and a fence to separate dog area from kids' play area.
			Many bolts are sticking out of the boardwalk at Jackson Frazier	new playground equipment

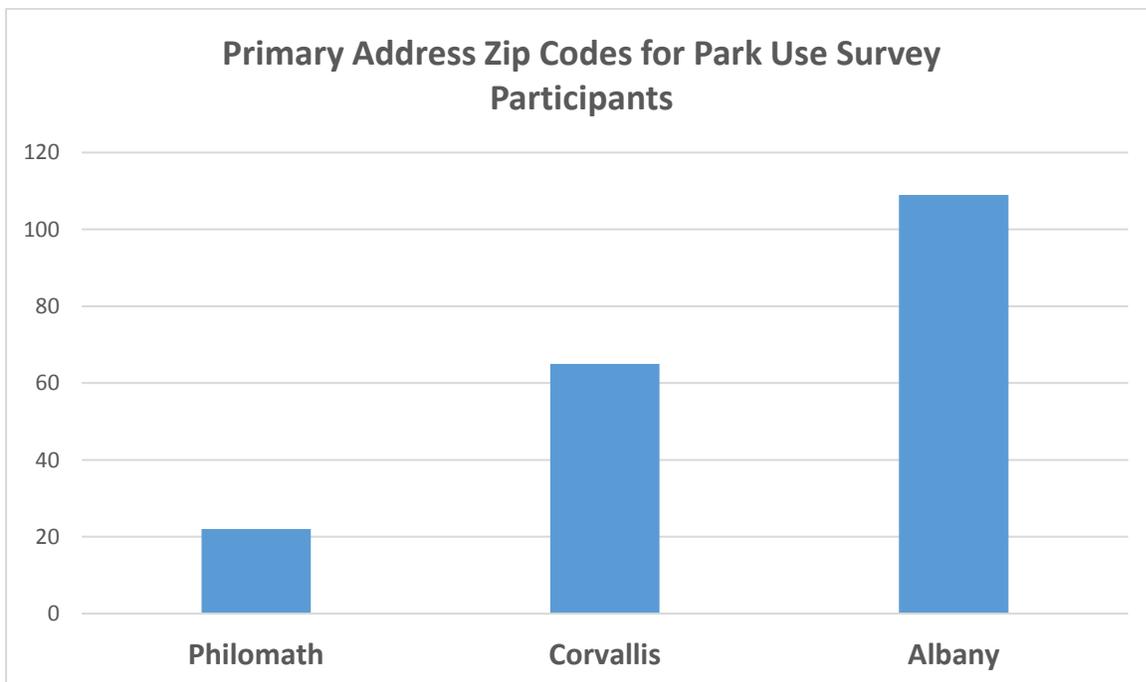
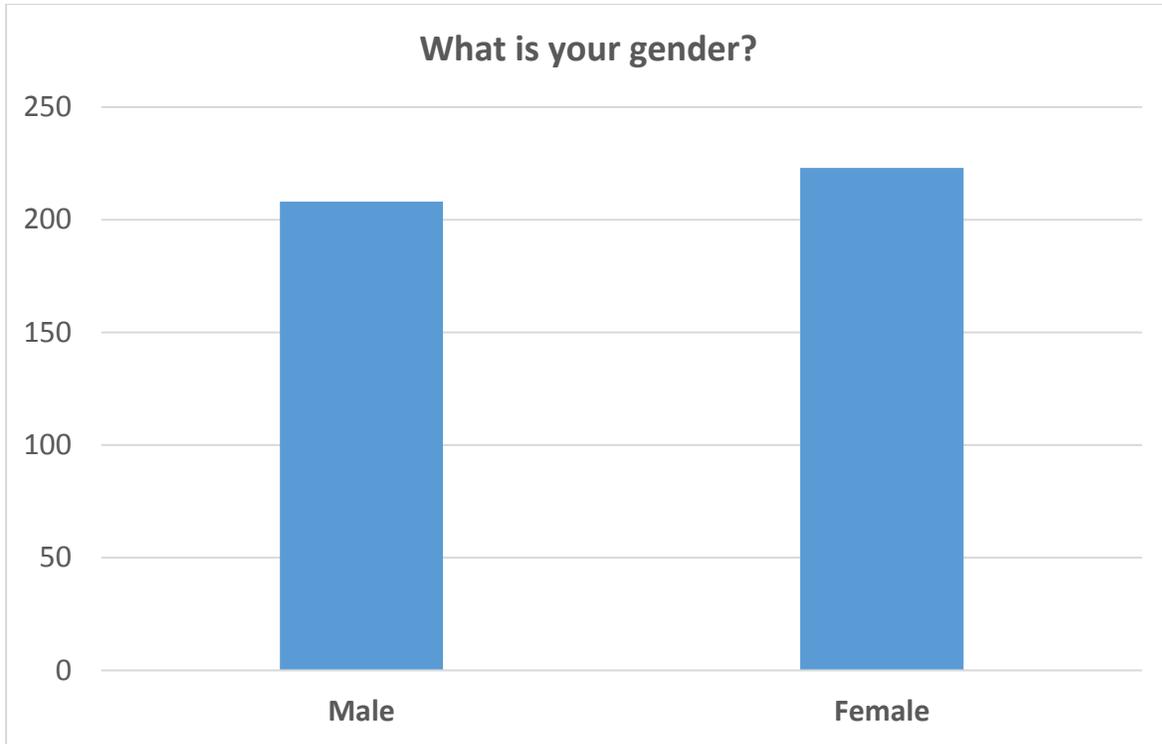
Disc Golf facilities				
New and or expanding disc golf courses.				
Disc Golf				
Great disc golf course at Adair				
More disc golf holes!				Don't cut down trees unless they are dead or dying. Healthy trees were cut last time.
More drinking fountains / water source				Update playground equipment for kids
More disc golf				A bigger slide
More disc golf courses				Water feature
Disc golf				Water feature
Expand Disc Golf Areas				Closing the park at night! Too much activity after closing hours!!! It's ridiculous actually!
Expansion of the disc golf park. Also it would be great if the park was an 'off leash' park for dogs				Improving the playground
More disc golf.				Basketball volleyball
Additional maintenance of disc golf course. Especially mowing, mulch in muddy areas.				Fence in the play structures
Upkept disc golf course				Special needs swing / wheelchair access
A larger Disc Golf Course				More unplanned areas
Clean up invasive brush, and fell dangerous trees on the disc golf course.				More dog bag stations and a fence to separate dog area from kids' play area.
Making sure disc golf is up to high standards				restrooms/water on year-round
Expansion of disc golf course				Better children's play structure
Disc Golf maintenance				new playground equipment
Expanding disc golf course				consistant cutting of grass during winter
enhance disc golf course with more benches and more holes				maintenance of playground swings and equipment
Add capacity to the existng facility (that's where the large crowds gather) and a NEW restroom facility on the opposite side of the park from the existing restroom.				I think the improvements scheduled for N Albany Park will help all these areas
				N. Albany is building so many new homes and eliminating wetlands and open space at a surprising speed. Having a very natural, wild park would allow residents an opportunity to connect with nature. A natural play area would be neat (like at Silver Falls). Getting a volunteer club to help with weeds and planting projects would be great as well.
				Mow the grass
				Timing of mowing. This year the grass was long on Memorial Day weekend and not cut until after the holiday. ??
				I'd like to see the planned trails in the forest area adjacent to North Albany park. When are they going to be ready for public use? I don't think work has started yet.

Disc golf				
Disc golf			Remove graffiti and stop destruction of park by domestic animals	consistant cutting of grass during winter
More disc golf amenities			Maybe having more interpretive signs - there is so much diversity! It feels kind of like a museum.	Adding trees for nature and wildlife
The trails I want are related to disc golf paths that remain dry enough to play in the winter. The signage is needed at each hole to help visiting golfers. Disc golfers don't go near the restrooms by the playground at Adair, so a restroom near the first two parking lots would be ideal.			Pull the dandelions that are next to the boardwalk. We don't want to see weeds when we're enjoying nature. Also, dandelions spread like crazy, so pull them frequently and save effort in the long run.	MAKE THIS A LEASH ONLY PARK FOR DOGS!!!!
Moore disc golf			Trailhead information	Frisbee golf
Disc golf			Handciapped accessible restroom that can accommodate a wheelchair	Improve the play area
Increase support of the disc golf course				
Disc Golf course improvements including baskets, tees, course maintenance, events				leave horse shoe and add basketball court where volley ball is
Disc Golf				The park is in desperate need of a new playground area. Please remove the boat structure ASAP, the boards are rotten and extremely dangerous!
Disc Golf				1) Improve bike access from west side new houses- hard for little kids to bike up existing North Albany Park Hill. Year-round restrooms would be nice.

Question #9

Adair	Bezell	Fitton	Jackson	North Albany
carpool		ride my horse		walk/bike/stroller combination, sometimes drive
Carpool		Walk, drive and/or bike. This should be a multiple choice question.		Walk sometimes, drive sometimes
run		walk/cycle/drive (in order) depending on park		walk, bicycle, drive

**Attachment C: Demographic, Socioeconomic, and Geographic Background Question Responses**



Almost half of the respondents were from Albany (97321 zip code). But the vast majority of participants reside in Benton County. So most of the Albany Zip Code respondents must live in North Albany. This is supported by the "Annual Income" graph with the largest group earning \$90K or more. North Albany has a higher average income than the rest of Benton County. The "Which park do you visit the most" graph results seems to be heavily influenced by North Albany residents as North Albany Park and Adair Park were the most frequently visited of the five parks in the survey.

