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## **Cheese Country Trail Usage Up for May and June**

During May and June, study volunteers completed 126 randomly allocated two-hour observation periods and conducted a total of 152 face-to-face interviews on the Cheese Country Trail. Observers noted steady trail use with an average trail pressure of almost 12 users per hour. Weekends and holidays saw higher trail use pressure. During peak usage, maximum trail usage rose to over 80 users per hour. The vast majority (about 95 percent) of users were riding motorized vehicles, primarily ATVs and UTVs. A smaller number of people used dirt bikes, dune buggies, golf carts and lawnmowers on the trail. On average, about 1 user out of every 20 on the Cheese Country Trail (5 percent) was not riding a motorized vehicle.

“May and June was marked by fairly typical spring and early summer weather which resulted in relatively heavy use of the Cheese Country Trail, from Monroe to Belmont and Mineral Point,” said UW Extension Recreation Planning Specialist Dave Marcouiller. “While trail conditions vary along its 50 or so mile route, users report generally good to excellent trail beds and superb South Central Wisconsin scenery.”

The average age of trail users during May and June was just over 44 years. Roughly 80 percent of users were males. Trail user expenditures represent important receipts for local retail and service businesses. On average, trail users spent over \$180 per visit to the trail; mostly on food/drink (\$58) and fuel/repair for their car and trail vehicle (\$56). A smaller amount was spent shopping for gifts and convenience items.

Most of the trail users were local day-users. This said, almost 30 percent of trail users spent at least one overnight in the area away from their primary residence. Of these overnight guests, most either stayed in a local motel/hotel or camped (roughly equal numbers in both). On average, overnight guests stayed 3 nights in the area and spent an average of \$104 on accommodations. Overnight guests spent more than locals per visit to the Cheese Country Trail. On average, these users spent 2.4 times the average amount spent by all users (\$433 versus \$180). The spending by non-local visitors to the area represents new local dollars that result from the Cheese Country Trail and serve as an important local export.

This ongoing year-long study will be completed in October and is a collaborative effort of local groups and UW Extension. The study has been designed and implemented to randomly assess use pressure, trail conditions, and user characteristics to develop an overall evaluation of the local economic impacts of this important recreational asset.

Information is being collected using 1,000 randomly selected 2-hour time slots during the 12 month survey period. Eight intercept locations have been chosen along the trail in Monroe, Browntown, South Wayne, Gratiot, Darlington, Calamine, Belmont and Mineral Point.

The Tri-County Trails Committee plans to use the results of the study to improve trail experiences for future users. The committee will also provide the resulting information to local communities, businesses and counties to help create economic development related to the trail and its users.

For more information, please contact Cara Carper at the Green County UW Extension Office at (608) 328-9440 or [cara.carper@ces.uwex.edu](mailto:cara.carper@ces.uwex.edu), or the website at <http://green.uwex.edu/>.

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