

# LAS ANIMAS COUNTY OUTDOOR RECREATION & ECONOMIC IMPACT STUDY



Summary of Visioning & Synthesizing Phases

FALL 2022



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A scenic landscape featuring a gravel road leading through green trees towards a prominent flat-topped mountain under a clear blue sky. The road is in the foreground, leading the eye into the scene. The trees are lush and green, framing the road. In the background, a large, flat-topped mountain rises against a clear blue sky. The overall atmosphere is bright and natural.

# Public Engagement to Date

# Planning Process

## VISIONING

*Summer*

- ✓ Establish community goals for an outdoor recreation economy in Las Animas County
- ✓ Generating all possible recreational strategies

## SYNTHESIZING

*Summer/Fall*

- ✓ Qualitative analysis
- ✓ Initial screening to ensure ideas meet goals
- Narrow down list of potential recreational strategies

## EVALUATING

*Fall*

- Quantitative analysis, focused on top tier strategies
- Studying economic impacts
- Assessing physical feasibility

## PRIORITIZING

*Winter/Spring*

- Final Community Priorities
- Implementation Funding

Process Advisory Committee



# Tabling Events

- *Fishers Peak*
- *Santa Fe Trail Days*
- *Las Animas County Fair*

Engaged a diverse range of community members, including youth and families, disability advocates, as well as members of the Native and/or Latin communities



# Interest Groups

- *7 Topic-based Interest Groups*
- *50 total participants (including repeats)*

Engaged a committed group of community leaders, educators, and business owners who attended more than one session, as well as group specific attendance from the Ag community, local state parks, private landowners, and local organizations like ABC Disabilities and the Youth Club of Trinidad.



# Online Survey

- *18 Questions/10 minutes to complete*
- *Open for two months*
- *151 respondents*

Distributed during the Las Animas County Fair, through the website, by the PLT and PAC members to their local organizations, and by email blasts to our running contact list.



**Findings:  
Tabling Events & Interest Groups**



# Tabling Events

## Key Takeaways

- Excited to share all the unique and beautiful landscapes and locations in LAC
  - So many people would hang out showing us their favorite hunting, camping, or hiking spots, places they felt were so stunning & relatively undiscovered
- Many folks identified that they don't want to lose history and character of the community: Western, Ag, Mining, but to celebrate and highlight that through increased outdoor recreation activities.
- Many people mentioned concerns around Maintenance of existing trails & facilities, Safety, and Activities for children, youth, and families.



# Interest Groups

## Key Takeaways

*So much excitement and engagement, gratitude for the time and process of this study*

- Collaborative events & programs i.e. races
- Youth and family programs and activities
- Intro/beginner trails
- Trail connectivity
- Maintenance of trails/facilities
- Accessible parking, viewing areas and bathrooms
- Sensory gardens
- Welcome Center/Information Hub
- Agri-tainment learning center
- Farm and ranch stays
- Museum partnerships
- Experiential outdoor education and programs
- Educational signage
- & much, much more...





# Findings: Online Survey

# Online Survey

## Who responded

- 23% live outside Las Animas County
- Of county residents who responded, 91% live in Trinidad
- 57% estimate spending \$1000 or more each year on outdoor activities
- Bell-curve distribution of ages, weighted towards those over 45
- 32% have children 19 or younger living at home
- 62% have dogs



# Online Survey

## Who responded

	Survey Respondents	County Residents	Statewide Residents
Hispanic/Latin/Spanish	9.5%	40.7%	22.3%
Indigenous/Native American/Alaska Native	2.4%	3.9%	1.7%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.1%	0.2%
Black/African American	2.4%	2.3%	4.7%
Asian	0.0%	1.6%	3.6%
White	66.7%	53.2%	67.0%
Prefer not to answer	19.1%	n/a	n/a



# Online Survey

## Top Ten Outdoor Activities

Activity	%
Hiking/walking	80.5
Observing nature/wildlife	58.6
Scenic driving	49.2
Dog walking	44.5
Gardening	42.2
Biking	40.6
Fishing	34.4
Social gathering	30.5
Picnicking	28.1
Swimming	26.6



# Online Survey

## Time Outside

- 39% of respondents spend their free time outside in the county in their yard or property, more than the 30% who do so at state parks or wildlife areas
- 78% report spending their free time outside often; 21% sometimes
- 14% of respondents don't spend more free time outside because they don't feel safe, followed by 10% who cite health or mobility issues



# Online Survey

## Perceptions

- 27% rate their experience of outdoor activities in the county as okay or needing improvement
- 53% rate the condition of community parks, trails, and facilities (not including state parks and wildlife areas) as needing improvement





# Online Survey

## Experience or perceptions of specific recreation opportunities in the county

	GOOD	OKAY	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	NOT SURE
Outdoor recreation events and programs	16.54% 21	26.77% 34	48.82% 62	7.87% 10
Agricultural and historic tourism	18.25% 23	26.19% 33	38.89% 49	16.67% 21
Outdoor activities for Children, Youth, and Families	4.72% 6	21.26% 27	48.82% 62	25.20% 32
Community trails, trailheads, and facilities	14.29% 18	33.33% 42	45.24% 57	7.14% 9
Accessibility in the outdoors	16.00% 20	30.40% 38	38.40% 48	15.20% 19
Opportunities for recreation in East County (East of Trinidad)	3.17% 4	5.56% 7	52.38% 66	38.89% 49
Opportunities for recreation in West County (Trinidad and West of I-25)	15.20% 19	25.60% 32	39.20% 49	20.00% 25



# Online Survey

Where would you most like to see improvements to outdoor recreation amenities?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Distributed throughout the County	35.16%	45
Focused around Trinidad and other towns	22.66%	29
Connecting Trinidad, other towns, and destinations	27.34%	35
Areas East of Trinidad	6.25%	8
Areas West of I-25	8.59%	11
TOTAL		128



# Online Survey

Imagine Las Animas County in 10 years. Which of the following statements describe what you would like to see?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
It looks and feels very much like it does today, with some outdoor recreation, some tourism, and little economic development.	14.06%	18
Some increase in tourism and supporting recreational amenities has helped grow the local economy.	40.63%	52
Las Animas County has developed a thriving recreation economy with high-quality recreational amenities, increased tourism, and increased cost of living for residents.	46.09%	59
Total Respondents: 128		



# Online Survey

## What improvements to outdoor rec would you like to see in LAC and why?

**128** long answer responses. Repeated ideas included:

- Improved trails and trail connections: 10 miles for Trinidad, work on Riverwalk
- Diverse use / multi-use trails: ATV and 4x4 access
- Maps and guides to highlight existing trails and areas- for safety and to know which areas are publicly accessible
- Better signage for safety and educational signs along trails and roadways to draw attention to important historic and geological sites. (example - mining signs outside of Aguilar)
- Recreational opportunities for kids, folks with disabilities, and the elderly (inclusivity)
- Cleaner and Safer facilities, environmental awareness = MAINTENANCE
- Family oriented camping spots
- Experiential programs- astronomy, archeology, history, encourage youth to explore county
- Embrace History and Character: Agriculture, Old West, Mining



A scenic landscape featuring a gravel road leading through a forest towards a prominent, flat-topped mountain range under a clear blue sky. The road is in the foreground, leading the eye into the distance. The forest is lush and green, and the mountain range is a mix of dark and light tones, suggesting different elevations and vegetation. The sky is a clear, bright blue.

# Overall Themes

# Analysis



**Individual  
Comments**

**Themes**



# Public Engagement Themes

- **Access:** Biking, hunting/fishing, parking, river, rock climbing, camping
- **Agritourism:** Celebrating what makes Las Animas County unique, supporting farmers and ranchers through other revenue streams
- **Business incubation:** Supporting outdoor recreation retailers, attracting/fostering new outdoor recreation industry partners
- **Events/Programs:** Accessibility, communication, history & culture, races
- **Facilities:** Accessibility, outdoor ed, organized sports, rentals, swimming, welcome center
- **Information/Interpretation:** Print and online guides, signs, visitor orientation
- **Maintenance:** Needed repairs, safety concerns
- **Partnerships:** Events/programs, history culture, private landowners, volunteering
- **Programming:** Ag, children/youth, conservation, families, history & culture, native american, organized sports, skill building
- **Trails:** General, hiking, biking, atvs, horses
- **Transportation:** Parking, connectivity
- **Workforce Development:** Career development, partnering with Trinidad State College

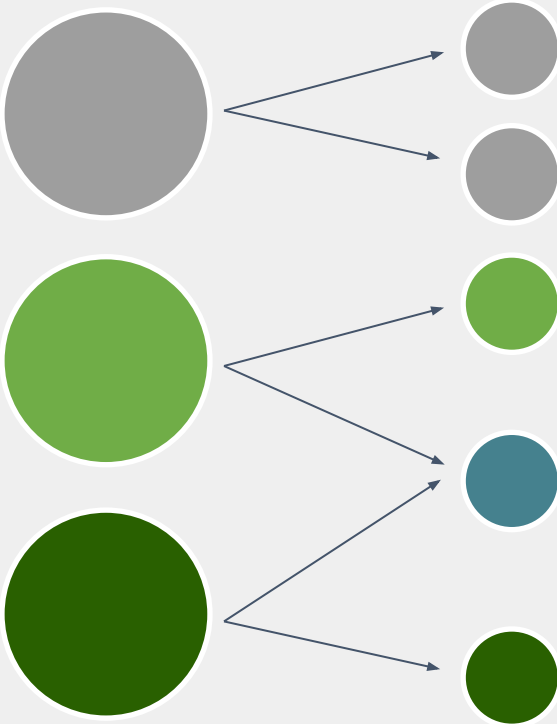




# Next Steps



# Developing Community-driven Strategies



Themes

Strategies





**Thank you for your participation!  
Stay tuned for future opportunities to shape  
Las Animas County's  
Outdoor Recreation Economy.**