

# The River-to-Ridge Trail

A REPORT OF THE OPEN SPACE INSTITUTE

SUMMER 2024

## Visitor Survey Reveals a Beloved Community Trail

In Fall 2023, the Open Space Institute (OSI) conducted an online survey of River-to-Ridge Trail users. This report documents visitor demographics, popular activities, and suggestions shared by more than 200 trail visitors.

Survey results show great appreciation for OSI's protection and management of the trail and surrounding land. The results also reveal challenges in managing the expectations of multiple trail user groups and highlight desire for additional trail amenities.



## Connecting People to Nature and Each Other

Protected, designed, owned, and managed by OSI, the River-to-Ridge Trail is a six-mile loop trail in New York's Ulster County, winding through 360 acres of productive farmland. Since opening in 2018, the trail has welcomed nearly one million visitors and is a treasured community asset.

River-to-Ridge is a picturesque place to walk, run, cycle, picnic, fish, birdwatch, horseback ride, walk a dog, gather with others, or learn about the natural world. The trail is praised for providing a safe, off-road connection between the Village of New Paltz and the famed Shawangunk Ridge.

“The River-to-Ridge Trail is the best thing to happen to New Paltz. From long bike rides to short walks, the trail has it all.”

— Survey Respondent

## A Community and Regional Asset

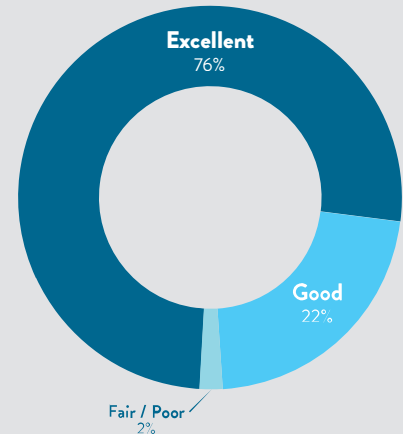
The River-to-Ridge Trail is a recreational hub for the community, with more than 70 percent of visitors enjoying the trail on a weekly basis. Several respondents who live outside Ulster County shared that they would like similar trails in their own communities.

“Walking on this trail has saved my emotional and mental and physical health. It’s my favorite place in New Paltz.” – Survey Respondent

An invaluable resource promoting health and wellness within the community, the trail hosts a variety of social and educational events, including festivals, races, and tree plantings.

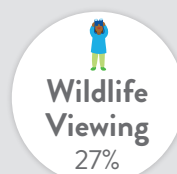
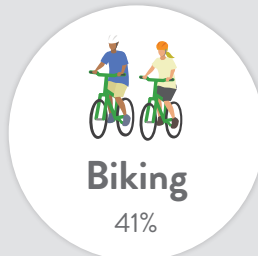
### Local Love for the Trail

“How would you rate the overall quality of your experience at River-to-Ridge?”



## Supporting Diverse Outdoor Activities

What people do on the trail.



**Horseback Riding**  
20%



**Running**  
20%



**Picnicking**  
7%



**Fishing**  
4%



**Crosscountry Skiing**  
3%

## A Welcoming and Accessible Trail for Everyone

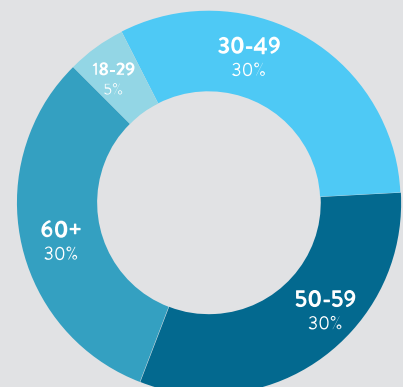
The River-to-Ridge Trail benefits visitors of all ages, gender identities, physical abilities, and races.

“The trail is a lifesaver for residents of all ages and abilities.” – Survey Respondent

The trail’s wide and gently sloping pathways make it uniquely usable for visitors of all physical abilities. Seven percent of survey respondents reported having a chronic health condition or disability and valued the accessibility of the trail.

### A Trail for All Ages

Trail users by age group.



\*18% of visitors reported visiting the trail with children under 18 years old



## Serving Varied Recreational Interests

OSI strives to balance the needs of multiple user groups enjoying the River-to-Ridge Trail. Survey respondents voiced concerns about trail user etiquette—particularly as it pertains to off-leash dogs and animal waste—and offered suggestions for additional amenities along the trail, including more seating, shade, and informational signage.

“We continue to urge all trail users to be respectful of each other so that all can have a safe, enjoyable experience at River-to-Ridge.”

— Peter Karis, OSI’s Vice President of Parks and Stewardship, and manager of the River-to-Ridge Trail

Visitors can help everyone at River-to-Ridge have a positive experience by adhering to the posted trail rules located at trailhead kiosks, being respectful of others, and sharing the trail.

## Enhancing River-to-Ridge

In response to survey suggestions, OSI is implementing the following improvements:



### New and improved signage

Signage along the trail will be updated and refreshed, including the addition of new informational and Spanish-language signage.



### New benches and shade trees

OSI will be installing additional benches along the trail and planting native species of shade trees so that trail users will have additional shaded spaces to rest and take in the views.



### Trail resurfacing improvements

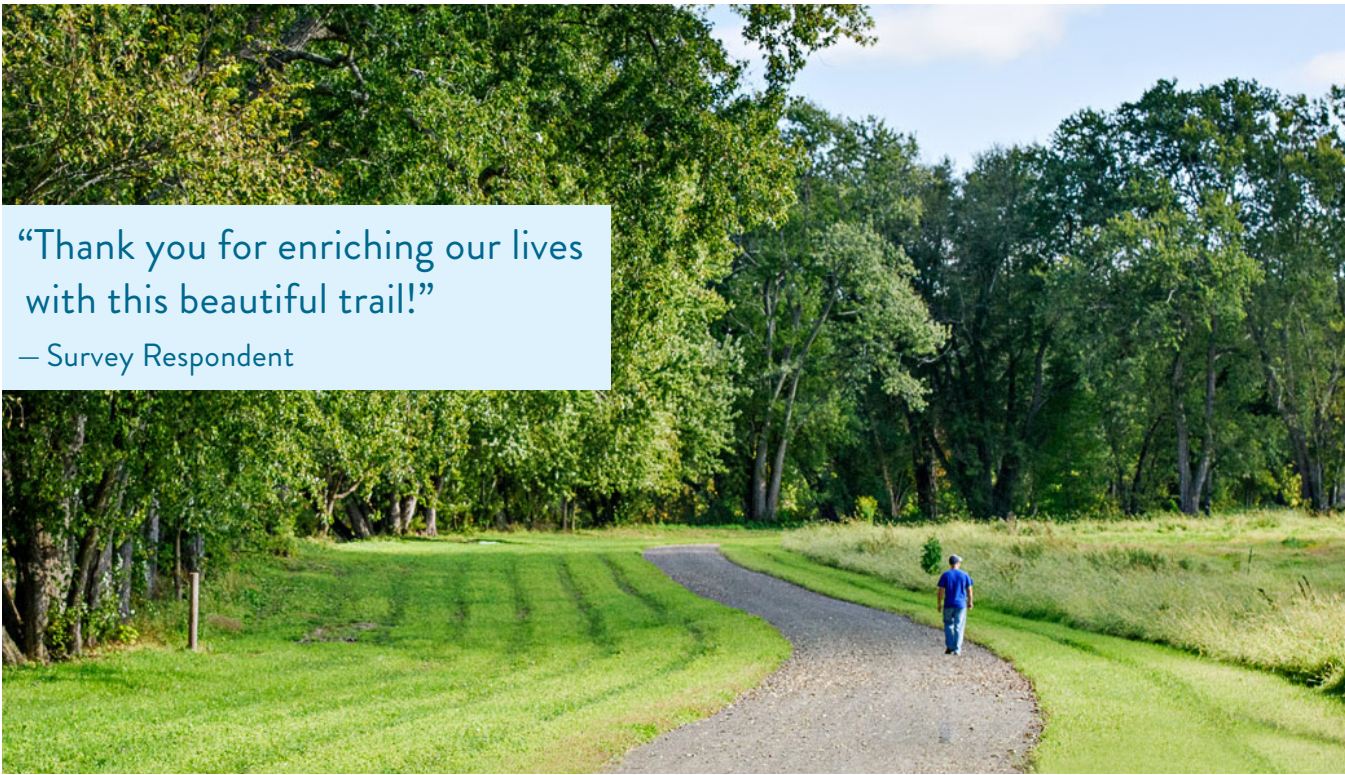
Since the trail opened in 2018, OSI has completed and continues to make significant improvements, including resurfacing trail sections and repairs after flooding events.



### New gates with wider openings

Gate openings at several key spots will be widened slightly to improve safety and accessibility, while continuing to prevent motorized vehicles from passing through.

There is an ongoing need for donations and community support for the continued upkeep and maintenance of the River-to-Ridge Trail. Help OSI keep the trail open and well-maintained by making a donation at: [openspaceinstitute.org/donate](https://openspaceinstitute.org/donate).



“Thank you for enriching our lives with this beautiful trail!”

– Survey Respondent



## About the River-to-Ridge Trail

The River-to-Ridge Trail is open year-round and free of charge for public use and enjoyment. The trail is owned and managed by the Open Space Institute (OSI) and was created by OSI in partnership with Mohonk Preserve and with the support of the Butler Conservation Fund.

The River-to-Ridge Trail is part of OSI's *Growing Greenways: West of Hudson Greenway Trails Vision Plan* to create a trail network spanning more than 250 miles and link dozens of communities throughout Ulster, Sullivan, and Orange Counties.

Read the [Growing Greenways Plan](#) here:



The Open Space Institute is a national leader in land conservation and efforts to make parks and other protected land more welcoming for all. Since 1974, OSI has partnered in the protection of more than 2.5 million at-risk and environmentally sensitive acres in the eastern U.S. and Canada. OSI's land protection promotes clean air and water, improves access to recreation, provides wildlife habitat, strengthens communities, and combats climate change, while curbing its devastating effects.