

Stewart Mountain Community Forest

Strategic Vision Framework

May 2023



Cover Image:

The proposed Stewart Mountain Community Forest is comprised of 5,500 acres of forestland in eastern Whatcom County, Washington.

“As the centuries passed and people made use of and changes to this land, effects have happened that allow us to both enjoy the way of life we experience and sometimes suffer the consequences of our actions. If you read or hear stories of the history of the South Fork Valley, you know that people have gathered together often over the years to face challenges. Many of us in recent history have worked together to educate ourselves, build understandings, and make plans that make sense to us all.

“The Stewart Mountain Community Forest is not yet a community forest. Yes, some of the land has been purchased and, as in all things, timing is everything. The opportunity to at least start the purchasing process presented itself and it makes sense that the core group pounced. Now, though, the opportunity has broadened, and we are here this evening to begin to work together to truly, over the next few months and probably years, develop a vision and reality that becomes the Stewart Mountain Community Forest. An area of land within our reach that we are connected to, that we know about, that we can sustain collectively. An important area that potentially can contribute to the overall health of the South Fork Valley in general.

“So this is not a happy ending ... it’s a happy continuance of the Story of the South Fork.”

— Val Lloyd’s opening remarks at the Community Forum
Van Zandt Hall, August 25, 2022

Acknowledgments

The Core Planning Team would like to express its deep gratitude to all those who participated and assisted in developing this Strategic Vision Framework, including Nooksack Indian Tribe, Whatcom County, Whatcom Land Trust, The Evergreen Land Trust Association, Western Washington University, local residents, and many other interested individuals and groups.

Core Planning Team

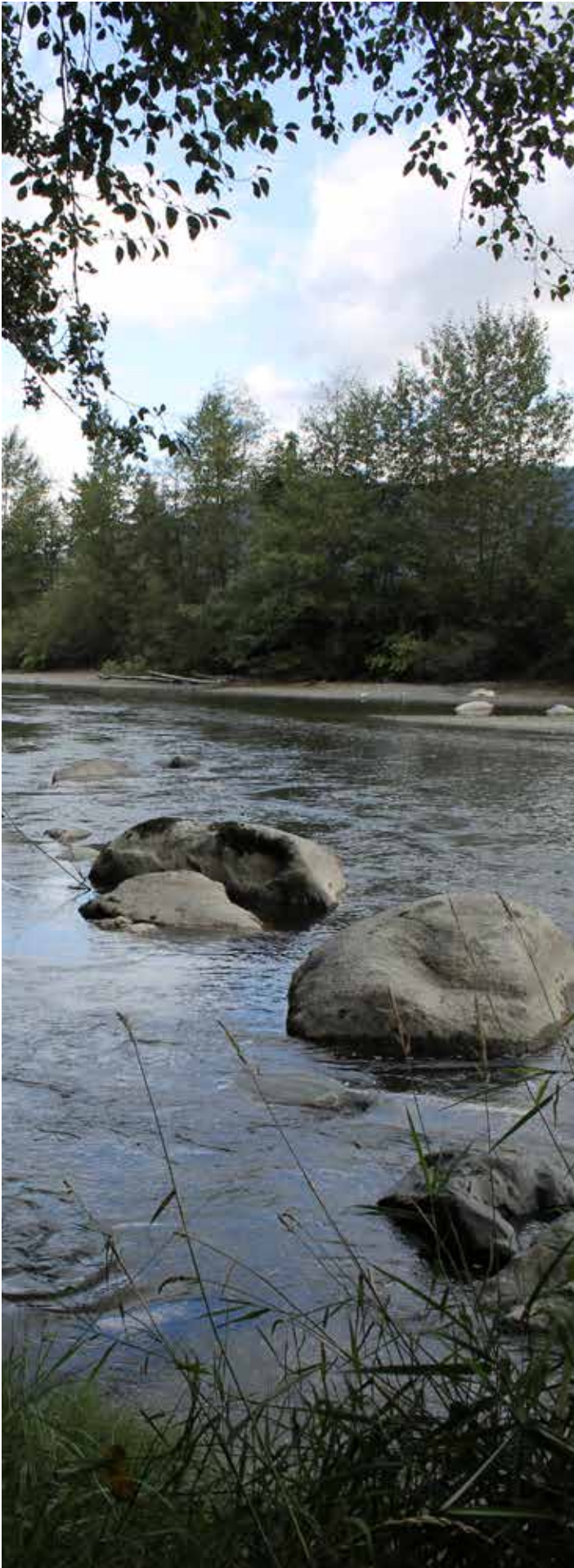
Maggie Taylor, Nooksack Indian Tribe
Chris Elder, Whatcom County
Alex Jeffers, Whatcom Land Trust
Holly O'Neil, The Evergreen Land Trust Association

Interim Community Advisory Team (I-CAT)

Current and Past Members

Community	Harry Patz Val Lloyd
Cultural	George Swanaset, Jr., Nooksack Indian Tribe Trevor Delgado, Nooksack Indian Tribe
Education/Research	Holly Koon, Mount Baker School District Tammi Laninga, Western Washington University
Forestry	Matt Grund, Roots Forestry Tom Smith, Retired DNR Forester
Habitat	Alexander Harris, RE Sources Rachel Vasak, Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association
Recreation	Cameron Kolk, Whatcom Intergenerational High School Mike McGlenn, Backcountry Horsemen
Water Resources	Jim Sutterfield, Acme Water Board Maggie Taylor, Nooksack Indian Tribe
Youth	Aila Elder Oona Carraba





“Like the pumping heartbeat, the blood that flows through the body, that’s how we see the Nooksack River in relationship to the Nooksack identity. The water is the biggest part, so to have clean water is something that we should hold in the highest regard. If we don’t have it, then we don’t exist.”

— Jeremiah Johnny,
Treaty Protections Advocate,
Nooksack Indian Tribe

The Stewart Mountain Community Forest sits along 1.75 miles of the South Fork Nooksack River, an important habitat for Chinook salmon and Steelhead trout.

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The intent is to manage the Stewart Mountain Community Forest as a working forest that balances a variety of ecological, economic, and community benefits.



Statement from the Nooksack Indian Tribe

The following are core goals of the Nooksack Indian Tribe with regards to the Stewart Mountain Community Forest:

1. Maintain and expand use of the forest for Nooksack tribal members by reducing barriers to access for harvesting wildlife and gathering plants and other materials. Secure exclusive access to certain areas for ceremonial and other cultural uses.
2. Expand the Tribe's influence in the management of our homelands by participating in management of the Stewart Mountain Community Forest and identifying opportunities for tribally-owned forest lands.
3. Protect, restore, and/or manage forests and the forest road network to restore natural ecosystem function and support Tribal needs, including salmon recovery, wildlife habitat, gathering of traditional foods and other materials, and cultural practices. Some specific issues of concern are high stream temperatures, high turbidity and suspended sediment, low dissolved oxygen, low summer flows, and low wood loading.
4. Manage recreation in a way that minimizes negative impacts to tribal natural and cultural resources.
5. Maintain good relationships with other large landowners (agricultural, forestry, private, and public) and the broader community and foster collaboration towards common goals.
6. Provide access and approval for and otherwise facilitate river and stream habitat restoration projects.



Executive Summary

The development of the Stewart Mountain Community Forest (SMCF) is a collaborative effort to acquire and sustainably manage 5,550 acres of forestland for the use and benefit of the local community. The Core Planning Team, consisting of representatives from Nooksack Indian Tribe, Whatcom County, Whatcom Land Trust, and The Evergreen Land Trust Association, drafted this Strategic Vision Framework based on community and stakeholder input.

The purpose of this Strategic Vision Framework is to develop a guiding document that will shape future ownership, governance, and management decisions for the community forest. To that end, this framework includes the vision, mission, values, and goals for the Stewart Mountain Community Forest. It also provides suggestions for the next planning stages and examples of possible ownership and governance structures.

Vision

Stewart Mountain Community Forest is a vital component of our healthy Nooksack watershed and serves as the common ground where we come together to sustain the land and our connection to one another for generations to come.

Mission

Stewart Mountain Community Forest supports cross-cultural community ties and robust local economies by implementing forest management that restores watershed health as well as protects cultural resources and a rural way of life.

Values

Respect for the environment, community, and the cultural traditions present in the South Fork Nooksack River Valley.

Stewardship of the forest and water resources of the South Fork Nooksack River Valley.

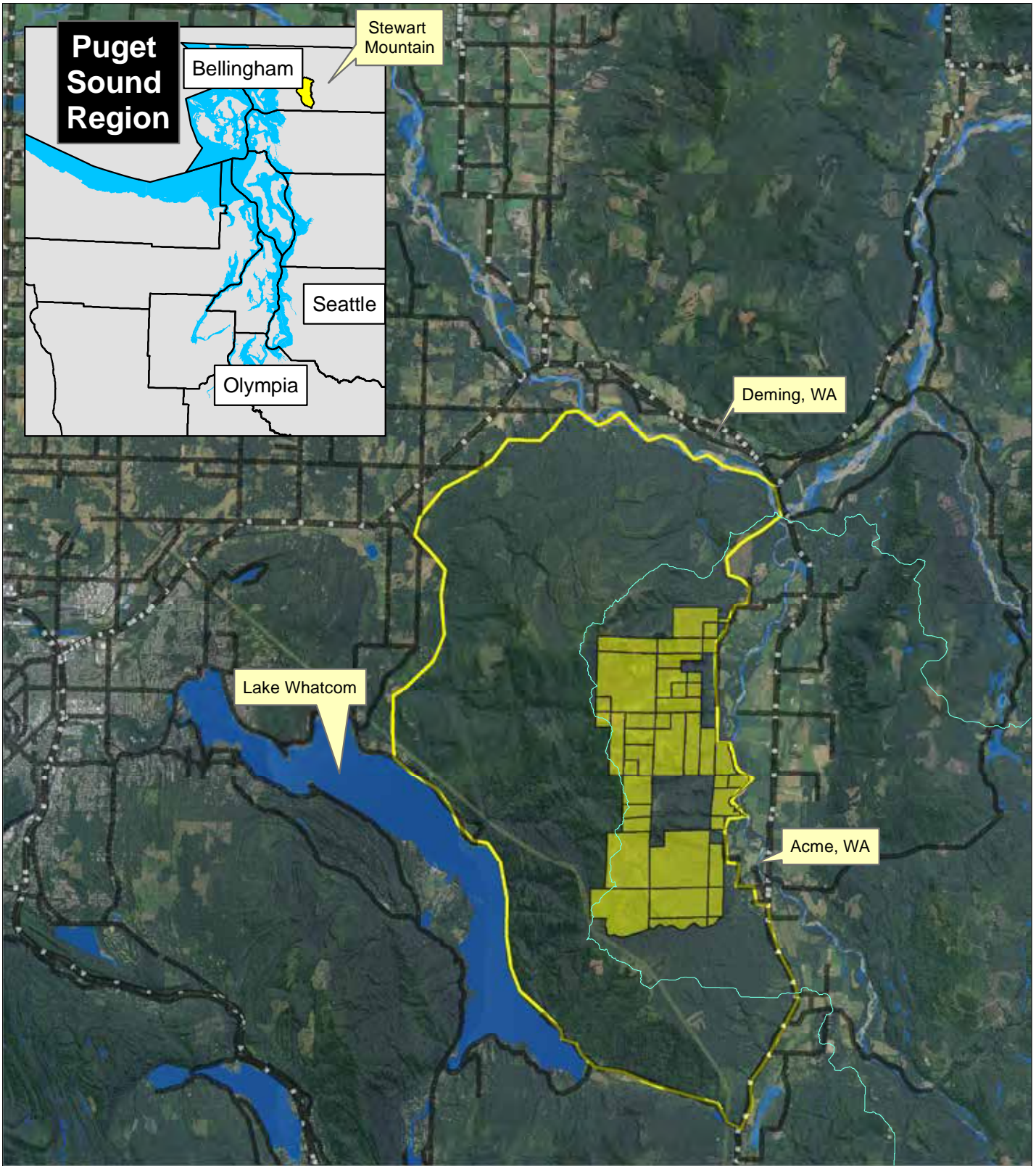
Responsibility for the ecological, economic, and cultural richness of the South Fork Nooksack River Valley.

Transparency among local residents, tribal communities, and other interested community groups.

Goals

The main purpose of the Stewart Mountain Community Forest is to manage the property as a working forest that balances a variety of ecological, economic, and community benefits in support of the following goals:

1. Enhance watershed health and improve water quality and quantity.
2. Promote an ecological forestry-based economy for living-wage jobs.
3. Increase biodiversity and enhance fish and wildlife habitat.
4. Expand community access for cultural uses and non-motorized recreation.

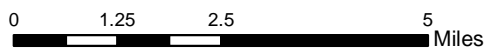


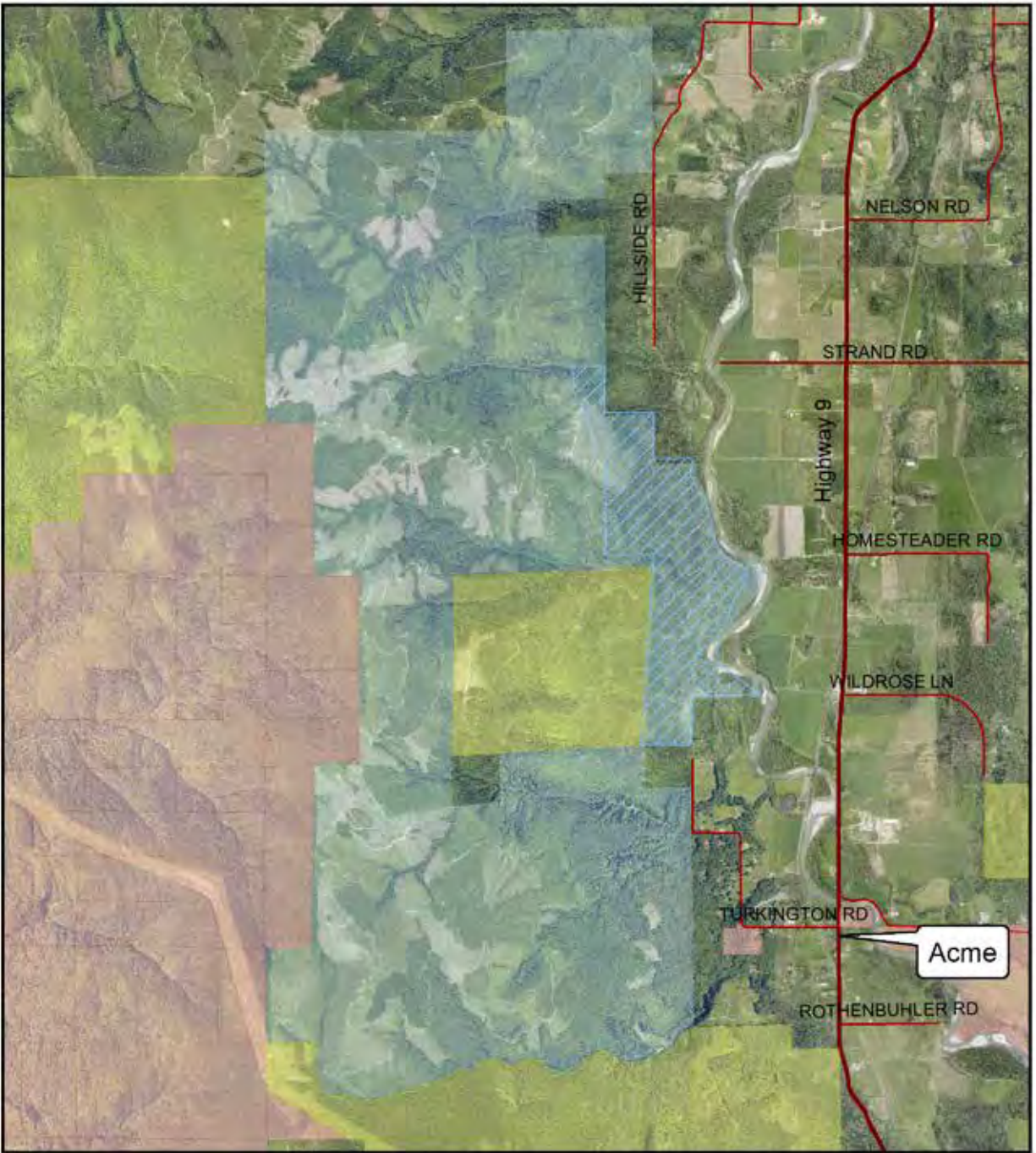
Legend

- South Fork Nooksack River Watershed
- Stewart Mountain Community Forest
- Stewart Mountain

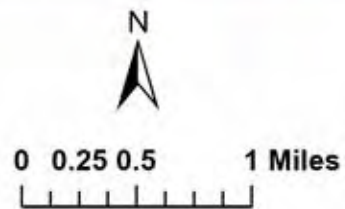
Stewart Mountain Community Forest

1:130,000





- Proposed Stewart Mtn Community Forest
- SMCF Acreage Acquired (as of publication)
- Washington Dept. of Natural Resources
- Whatcom County



Stewart Mountain Community Forest current acquisitions and proposed project area. Initial acquisitions targeted the steepest and potentially unstable slopes and were funded by a Washington State Streamflow Restoration Grant received by Whatcom County. Current ownership is held by Whatcom Land Trust until a SMCF governing entity is established (Phase 3).

Introduction

The waters of the South Fork Nooksack River sustain the lives and homes of the people of South Fork Valley. Located in the Mt. Baker Foothills east of Bellingham, Washington, Stewart Mountain is part of the ancestral homelands of the Nooksack Indian Tribe. Tribal members, along with generations of farmers, foresters, and homesteaders, live in the communities of Deming, Van Zandt, Five Cedars, Wickersham, and Acme.

Rising above the river and floodplain is the forested ridge of Stewart Mountain with its nearly 28,000 acres of forest habitat. The primary land use in the valley's lowlands is dairy farming and associated hay and corn fields; however, almost 90% of the South Fork watershed is forested, and commercial forestry has been the dominant land use in the greater watershed over the past century.

A Changing Environment

Today, our home is threatened by climate change and its profound impacts on water sources and the Valley's plants, animals, and ecosystems. In addition to rising temperatures, the area is likely to

continue to experience extreme patterns of seasonal precipitation, including summer droughts and winter flooding, along with dwindling salmon runs and increased risks of wildfire and landslides.

In the past, the Nooksack watershed supported tens of thousands of fish each year, including the endangered Spring Chinook and Bull Trout. These fish populations, and others, have plummeted due a combination of poor water quality, insufficient water quantity, and habitat degradation. Most recently, the South Fork experienced a mass salmon die off in September 2021, with an estimated 2,500 Chinook salmon dying before reaching spawning grounds as a result of low flows and high stream temperatures. Water shortages also affect local farmers and other water users' ability to irrigate crops and water livestock.

Research conducted by state, federal, and tribal agencies, along with community effort, have contributed to the development of a series of detailed reports over the last several decades. These studies demonstrate that water quality and quantity in the South Fork Nooksack River have degraded



View from Stewart Mountain looking east towards the Cascades.

The Landscape



5,500 Acres of Forestland



1.75 Miles of South Fork
Nooksack River Shoreline



6 Salmon-Bearing Tributaries

Key Concepts

South Fork Watershed

The South Fork is one of three forks that form the Nooksack River. Its watershed drains an area of about 164 square miles before joining the North Fork Nooksack River to form the main stem Nooksack River. The watershed ranges in elevation from approximately 7,000 feet on the Twin Sisters Range to about 236 feet at the confluence with the North Fork.

Watershed Health

A healthy watershed is a well-balanced system capable of sustaining a variety of environments and many forms of life. Key components of a healthy watershed include:

1. Intact and functioning headwater streams, floodplains, and riparian corridors.
2. Habitat of sufficient size and connectivity to support native aquatic and riparian species.
3. Physical and chemical water quality conditions able to support healthy biological communities.

Ecological Forestry

Ecological forestry is a science-based approach that incorporates principles of natural forest development, including the role of natural disturbances. This approach acknowledges forests as complex and diverse ecosystems that provide a broad array of valuable ecosystem services, including various kinds of products, and not simply a collection of trees.

as a result of the legacy effects of past resource management, development, and climate change. Please see the appendix for a select list of these studies.

Community-Driven Forest Stewardship

A “community forest” is a forest owned and managed to provide secure and reliable access for local community members to the ecological, social, economic, and cultural benefits produced and provided by the forest. The local community plays a significant role in decision making concerning how the forest is managed and used. It involves collaboration between various interested groups, community members, governments, and non-government organizations.

The concept of a community forest is broad, and therefore the goals of the community forest must be established by the communities themselves. As such, no two community forest models are alike. Use and management of the forest is decided upon based on the needs of the community, including public health, environmental sustainability, economic sustainability, traditional cultural uses, and social uses such as recreation and education. We define “local” as the approximately 600 people who live in the South Fork Nooksack River Valley around Acme, as well as the Nooksack Indian Tribe, and others who work here, play here, and care about this place.

“Stewart Mountain Community Forest was identified as one of the most significant projects to increase stream flow in the South Fork. This is a good project to demonstrate commitment to improving watershed health and still maintaining working forest land. We’re excited to pilot out some active management techniques and work with the forest industry and our local watershed partners for a very collaborative project.”

— Chris Elder,
Senior Planner,
Whatcom County

Stewart Mountain Community Forest

Currently, nearly 5,000 acres of the proposed Stewart Mountain Community Forest are owned by Conservation Forestry, a for-profit private equity firm that acquires, manages, and harvests large tracts of forestlands. In November 2022, Conservation Forestry sold 550 acres of upland and riparian forest along the South Fork Nooksack River north of Acme to Whatcom Land Trust as part of the first phase of Stewart Mountain Community Forest. The next phase of the property purchase will expand the community forest in the upland portions of the watershed.

The overarching intention is to manage the property as a working forest that balances a variety of ecological, economic, and community benefits, such as watershed health, improved water quality, increased water quantity, sustainable forestry jobs, fish and wildlife habitat, and recreational access while improving climate resilience. The community forest will also expand access to the Nooksack Indian Tribe's ancestral lands for cultural, ceremonial and subsistence uses.

Background

Stewart Mountain Forestland

Stewart Mountain has been owned by six different landowners in the past 30 years, resulting in a relatively young forest plantation with diminished watershed function. This rapid turnover in ownership disincentivized management for long-term forest and watershed health, contributing to low river flow in the late summer and degraded fish habitat. Changes in land ownership also complicates public access and the ability for the local community to enjoy access for recreation, economic, education, and cultural uses.

In addition, debris flows and landslides have caused damage to homes and infrastructure, especially as extreme weather events increase in frequency and severity. When considering the continued impacts of climate change, these costs to landowners and the County become even greater.



Almost 90% of the South Fork watershed is forested. Stewardship of the forest and water resources is a key value for the Stewart Mountain Community Forest.

“Multiple long-term research projects have shown the high rates of evapotranspiration in younger tree plantations result in significantly lower soil moisture. Through alternative management practices, such as extending harvest rotations, restricting harvest in mature stands, and selective thinning, the Stewart Mountain Community Forest hopes to increase water availability and climate resiliency in the South Fork Nooksack watershed.”

— Maggie Taylor,
Water Resources Specialist,
Nooksack Indian Tribe - Natural Resources
Department

Community Engagement

The South Fork Nooksack Valley is home to about 600 people (based on best available 2020 U.S. census data), including approximately 125 members of the Nooksack Indian Tribe whose ancestors have lived here since time immemorial.

The community engagement described in this Strategic Vision Framework builds on five years of extensive public outreach conducted during the Nooksack Tribe's South Fork Nooksack River Watershed Conservation Planning effort, which included educational forums, community workshops, and a 44-member citizen Watershed Planning Group. This process resulted in the formation of the South Fork Watershed Education Committee, and the Stewart Mountain Community Forest initiative.

Building on the Watershed Conservation Planning and other community engagement efforts over the years, including decades of grassroots efforts led by the Downslope Neighbors Association and others, Whatcom Land Trust applied for technical assistance in March of 2021 with the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (NPS-RTCA) program to support the community forest planning process. The award of technical assistance was confirmed in May, and planning calls with the Land Trust and NPS-RTCA staff took place beginning in June 2021.

“We’re trying to make sure we’re bringing in as many perspectives as possible, and bringing in insight from people on the ground, in the woods, recreating up here, living at the base of the mountain so that we have as much information as possible to make sure all those different perspectives are honored and all those different needs are being met.”

— Alex Jeffers,
Conservation Director,
Whatcom Land Trust

Core Planning Team

A Core Planning Team with representatives from Nooksack Indian Tribe, Whatcom County, Whatcom Land Trust, and The Evergreen Land Trust Association was formed over the following summer. A kickoff meeting for the planning process was held at the base of Stewart Mountain at River Farm in September 2021, resulting in two major outcomes:

1. Consensus on developing a framework that articulates the benefits this community forest could provide in the South Fork Valley.
2. Outline for a community outreach and an engagement process that would inform the vision for this effort, articulate community values, and identify focus priorities for the forest.

A primary component of the community engagement plan was to conduct outreach with key groups in the forestry sector and community members who have been affected by, or expressing interest in, the health of the forest and the watershed. The initial process was to convene a series of coffee chats with individuals throughout the South Fork community to determine when and how to effectively and efficiently involve all communities who have a presence in the Valley. These conversations took place during fall 2021 and winter 2022.



Community members gathered in the Van Zandt Hall in August 2022 to learn about the community forest effort.

Interim Community Advisory Team (I-CAT)

Based on feedback from the initial informal discussions with local community members, it was determined that a more formal representative committee was needed for the community forest planning process. In spring 2022, an Interim Community Advisory Team (I-CAT) composed of people representing the sectors fundamental to this community forest — including forestry, water resources, cultural resources, wildlife habitat, recreation, education, research, youth, and the local community at large — was convened.

This group of stakeholders and community members were selected for their commitment to community-driven forest stewardship in the South Fork Nooksack River watershed. Their purpose was twofold:

1. Articulate a vision for the community forest.
2. Define how the broader community would be involved in this planning process.

The Core Planning Team continued to meet every other week to incorporate community feedback. In parallel to this planning process, this group continued work to find funding to purchase the property and identify options for permanent, local ownership of the Stewart Mountain Community Forest.

Community Input

The I-CAT worked closely with the Core Planning Team to promote broad community understanding of the project and gather input from the stakeholders and the community. Together they planned and co-hosted a community forum and developed and distributed a community survey.

Community Forum

The community forum was held on August 25, 2022. A total of 58 people attended (39 in-person and 19 via Zoom). Participants gathered in small groups led by I-CAT and Core Planning Team members to discuss hopes and concerns and identify questions and issues.



Members of the Interim Community Advisory Team (I-CAT) held regular, hybrid meetings over the spring and summer months in 2022 to define a vision for the Stewart Mountain Community Forest and discuss how best to engage South Fork Valley communities in this planning process.

Community Survey

After the community forum, a 15-question survey was distributed to stakeholders and South Fork Valley residents. Outreach included fliers and posters distributed throughout the South Fork Valley and neighboring communities, social media posts on partner organization sites, targeted outreach emails, and word of mouth. The survey closed on October 10 with a total of 119 responses received.

Findings

Feedback from the community forum and community survey were consistent (see reports in [Appendices](#) for more information).

Key findings included:

1. Large majority of respondents (more than 80 percent) had positive feelings about the Stewart Mountain Community Forest initiative.
2. Main questions were about long-term ownership, future management practices, funding, and recreational activities and their impact.
3. Respondents' main interests in supporting the community forest centered around care for the community, water resources, and salmon and wildlife habitat restoration.

Draft Plan

Based on the input and materials gathered from the community form and survey, the Core Planning Team drafted this Strategic Vision Framework and shared it with the Nooksack Indian Tribe, I-CAT members, and key community stakeholders for an in-depth review.

The framework was then revised accordingly and made available at two Open House events for the general public held in the South Fork Valley and the nearby City of Bellingham. The goal of these events was to update the general public about the current state of the Stewart Mountain Community Forest and what to expect in the future.

The Strategic Vision Framework is also available online, along with information about how to stay updated and engaged in the effort. Additional input can be submitted through the website's comment tool and will be used to guide future planning efforts for the management and operation of the community forest.

“It is essential that we strengthen our understanding of watershed processes and implement planning and voluntary activities that improve the health of the watershed for current and future generations. The Stewart Mountain Community Forest is a powerful way for our community to come together and do just that.”

— Oliver John Grah,
Water Resources Program Manger
(retired), Nooksack Indian Tribe



Hikers explore the Stewart Mountain forest.

Vision, Mission and Values

The following statements were drafted by the Core Planning Team based on community and stakeholder feedback from the I-CAT, the forum, and the survey, as well as decades of research to understand the challenges and opportunities facing this forest. These represent a shared understanding of vision, mission, and values for the Stewart Mountain Community Forest and provide current and future generations of stakeholders with a strong foundation for management decisions.

Vision

The Stewart Mountain Community Forest is a vital component of our healthy Nooksack watershed and serves as the common ground where we come together to sustain the land and our connection to one another for generations to come.

Mission

The Stewart Mountain Community Forest supports cross-cultural community ties and robust local economies by implementing forest management that restores watershed health as well as protecting cultural resources and a rural way of life.

Values

The Stewart Mountain Community Forest should be rooted in the values held by local communities. By articulating these values, future forest managers will have a guide to weigh future management and operational decisions to help ensure that the goals established for the forest are reached.

Respect for the environment, community, and the cultural traditions present in the South Fork Nooksack River Valley.

Stewardship of the forest and water resources of the South Fork Nooksack River Valley.

Responsibility for the ecological, economic, and cultural richness of the South Fork Nooksack River Valley.

Transparency among local residents, tribal communities, and other interested community groups.

Community Forest Goals

All forest management activities within the Stewart Mountain Community Forest will be guided by these four goals, chief among these is to enhance watershed health and recover native salmonid populations in the South Fork watershed through ecological forestry management practices. The purpose of the Stewart Mountain Community Forest effort is to manage the property as a working forest that balances a variety of ecological, economic, and community benefits.

1. Enhance **watershed health** and improve water quality and quantity.
2. Promote an **ecological forestry-based economy** for living-wage jobs.
3. Increase **biodiversity** and enhance fish and wildlife habitat.
4. Expand community **access** for cultural uses and non-motorized recreation.

Goal 1: Watershed Health

Enhancing the overall health of the watershed includes planning and implementing actions that will measurably improve watershed function and ecosystem services. This includes increasing stand ages throughout the forest, improving groundwater retention and allowing that water to be released into streams slowly throughout the year. Healthy



A mushroom grows on a nurse log in the Stewart Mountain forest.

watersheds are also less prone to disease and wildfire.

Goal 2: Ecological Forestry-Based Economy

Ecological forest management aims to produce higher quality timber over time. By extending rotations and advancing uneven-aged forest management practices, the Stewart Mountain Community Forest can help revitalize the local timber economy and support local jobs in perpetuity.

Goal 3: Biodiversity

Forest practices that improve habitat will help us recover our native fish and wildlife species and increase the likelihood of their survival as the climate changes. Restoring the biodiversity of the forest involves protecting old growth, wetlands, and riparian areas, reintroducing native species, and improving stand-level structural diversity across the landscape.

Goal 4: Access

Access provides an opportunity to educate the public about the importance of healthy watersheds

and the potential of ecological forest management. Increased access to medicinal and culturally significant plants and animals also supports the continuation of traditions Native peoples have been practicing on this land since time immemorial. Providing public access for non-motorized recreation encourages community connections to the forest.

“In the South Fork, we have extremely low flows and high temperatures during the summer. This has had a huge impact on Spring Chinook specifically but all salmonids. We reach a point every summer where we are seeing fish kills because of the high temperatures and low flow.”

— Ian Smith, Forester,
Evergreen Ecoforestry LLC



A group explores the banks of the South Fork River by the proposed Stewart Mountain Community Forest.

Ownership and Governance

In November 2022, Whatcom Land Trust bought 550 acres of upland and riparian forest along the South Fork Nooksack River from Conservation Forestry as part of the first phase of the purchase process. The next phase of the property purchase will expand the community forest in the upland portions of the watershed.

Planning Process

Determining the best legal ownership of the land, along with the process through which management decisions are made, is essential to ensure the long-term benefits for the local community. To implement this Strategic Vision Framework, additional planning and engagement will begin in 2023 in three stages. The first step in the planning process is to develop a sustainable model for the ownership and immediate management of the Stewart Mountain Community Forest. The second stage of planning will identify a governance model for the forest that aligns with community values and goals.

The Core Planning team will continue to steward community engagement processes throughout Stages 1 and 2. In Stage 3, the governance and management of long-term operations will be determined with long-term owners based on continued community engagement input and consideration of this Strategic Vision Framework.

Stage 1: Secure the Base

In this stage, the Core Planning Team will continue to help seek funding to acquire the land, as well as assist with the planning and engagement needed to determine long-term ownership and guidance for public access. Individuals and entities involved in the early planning stages will work with interim landowner(s) to create a formal governance body and structure and help develop a forest management plan.

Stage 2: Establish the Structure

Once the long-term land ownership has been determined, the community will help identify a governance model and refine a forest management plan in support of the overall vision for Stewart

Mountain Community Forest. This process will be informed by best practice guidance from community forest models throughout Washington State.

Stage 3: Steward the Forest

Once the base has been established and the structure defined, stewardship begins. This long-term ownership and operations phase includes facilitating forest management activities, such as planning, contracting, harvesting, and restoration, as well as long-term maintenance of the property. It will also include recreation and access management, along with administration, such as taxes and insurance, regulatory compliance, and conservation and cultural easements. Additionally, monitoring

Planning Process

Stage 1: Securing the Base

- Continue to seek funding and acquire land.
- Develop an initial forest management plan.
- Determine long-term owner(s)
- Ends when long-term ownership is determined.

Stage 2: Establishing the Structure

- Work with intended long-term owner(s) to develop governance model and refine forest management plan with community involvement.
- Ends when long-term owner acquires property.

Stage 3: Steward the Forest

- Implement governance and management plans as further articulated in Stages 1 & 2.
- Continue with monitoring and communications.

and communications with the local community – and the community at large – will be essential to keeping the forest truly aligned with its mission, vision, and values.

Ownership and Governance Examples

There are more than a dozen community forests in the Northwest, ranging in size from more than 50,000 acres to less than 500. Each has its own ownership and governance structure to suit its mission and goals. The Core Planning Team has identified the following examples as models relevant for Stewart Mountain Community Forest.

Nisqually Community Forest

Located in the foothills of Mount Rainier, the Nisqually Community Forest (NCF) consists of 4,120 acres. The primary goals of the NCF are water quality and quantity, active forest management, and fish and wildlife habitat.

Nearly 70 percent (2880 acres) of the NCF is owned by a 501(c)(3) organization with an independent Board of Directors. The remaining 30 percent (1200 acres) is owned by the Nisqually Tribe. Both properties are jointly managed as the NCF.

NCF’s Board of Directors is appointed by Nisqually Land Trust (NLT) with one seat reserved for an NLT representative. The board currently includes individuals from the Nisqually Indian Tribe, Northwest Natural Resource Group, Nisqually River Foundation, and National Park Service. The board

also plans to form an advisory committee in the future.

Teanaway Community Forest

The largest community forest in the Pacific Northwest, the Teanaway Community Forest (TCF) is owned by Washington State and co-managed by the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Fish and Wildlife. It includes more than 50,000 acres in the Upper Yakima River Basin 80 miles east of Seattle. Although its 23-member advisory committee does not hold final decision-making authority, the state often includes the committee’s recommendations in its final decisions.

Developed in response to a long-running water rights adjudication, the Yakima Basin Integrated Water Resource Management Plan identified TCF as part of the solution for addressing water supply issues. This makes TCF a good point of comparison with SMCF since watershed enhancement is also an important goal for SMCF and a water rights adjudication is expected to be filed in the Nooksack basin some time in 2023.

Nason Ridge Community Forest

Nason Ridge Community Forest (NRCF) is the newest community forest in the state and consists of 3,714 acres near Lake Wenatchee. The goals of the NRCF include recovering water quality and quantity, maintaining active forest management, restoring fish and wildlife habitat, and promoting a wide range of recreation opportunities. It is the most

Examples of Community Forests in Washington

Nisqually Community Forest

Ownership Model

Non-profit (Nisqually Land Trust)

Governance Structure

Nisqually Community Forest Board of Directors

Teanaway Community Forest

Ownership Model

State (Department of Natural Resources)

Governance Structure

WDNR + WDFW, advised by Advisory Committee

Nason Ridge Community Forest

Ownership Model

Local (Chelan County)

Governance Structure

Chelan County, advised by Stewardship Committee

recreation focused of the three examples. It is owned and governed by Chelan County and advised by a stewardship committee.

The questions of ownership, management, and governance are central to the foundation of any community forest. The case studies described above show how other communities around our region have approached these questions in a way that is tailored to their goals and their region.

As the SMCF vision continues to develop and be realized, it will be important that lessons from these existing community forests are reflected upon and applied to the communities of Stewart Mountain. For example, how should the SMCF balance and prioritize the goals of watershed health, working forestry, and public access? The NCF model provides a structure that prioritizes local and community expertise in conservation and ecological forestry, while the TCF relies heavily on state agencies with a long history of land management to address state- and region-wide water quantity goals. Both the TCF and NRCF prioritized community stakeholder involvement early in the planning process, prioritizing public access and reflecting accountability of the public agencies that own the property.

The SMCF will likely use a blend of these strategies to ensure that the community engagement completed thus far continues in a meaningful way, and that the goals of watershed health, working forestry, and public access remain front and center in the management of the forest.

Conclusion

After decades in the making, the Stewart Mountain Community Forest is now becoming a reality. This Strategic Vision Framework is a critical first step in developing the structure that will define the management and stewardship of the community forest. As land is acquired and planning continues, community engagement will continue to guide the process for determining the future of its ownership and governance structure, a critical component of its long-term success.

By defining the vision, mission, values, and goals of the Stewart Mountain Community Forest, we hope this document will serve as guide for future ownership and management decisions.

“Stewart Mountain Community Forest enables the South Fork community to have more control over our local resources. We already have the local skill and knowledge to practice selection-based ecological forestry. With this approach, we can keep jobs in the woods, while restoring biodiversity and hydrological function. This is the true definition of sustainability. This is the future we can create together.”

— Holly O’Neil,
The Evergreen Land Trust

Appendices

Appendix A.....23

[**Community Forum Summary**](#)

Appendix B.....29

[**Community Survey Report**](#)

Appendix C.....54

[**Reference Material Links**](#)

Summary Report

Van Zandt Community Hall
Thursday, August 25th, 2022
5:30 pm – 8:00 pm

1. Welcome and Purpose

Val Lloyd, member of the Interim Community Advisory Team and resident of the South Fork Nooksack River Watershed, welcomed everyone and asked members of Interim Community Advisory Committee who were in attendance this evening, to stand and introduce themselves:

Matt Grund – representing forestry interests
Alex Harris – representing habitat interests
Cameron Kolk – representing education interests
Holly Koon – representing educational interests
Mike McGlenn – representing recreation interests
Tom Smith – representing forestry interests

Val then spoke to the history of this place, and the purpose of this initiative. A complete copy of her introductory comments included at the end of this document.

Appreciations were offered for Julie Fonseca de Borges of National Park Service River Trails and Conservation Assistance Program, who has been providing technical assistance for the project.



A view of Stewart Mountain Community Forest – photo by Val Lloyd on 8.25.22

2. What is a Community Forest?

Nicky Pasi from Mountains to Sound Greenway offered shared the story of how the community in Kittitas county has been working to establish the 9600-acre [Checkerboard Forest](#), located adjacent to the [Teanaway Community Forest](#). Nicky spoke of the various challenges and successes in the process of establishing the community forest. She also emphasized the importance of working closely with the community both to seek input and to leverage local knowledge and expertise. View PowerPoint presentation at <http://www.stewartmountaincf.org>.

3. Overview of Stewart Mountain Community Forest (SMCF)

The Core Planning Team for the SMCF presented an overview of the history and concept for the project. View PowerPoint presentation at <http://www.stewartmountaincf.org>.

- Holly O’Neil of the Evergreen Land Trust (ELT) provided a history of the project, starting back in 1995 when the residents of Hillside Road (“Hill-slide Road”) started mobilizing to protect their homes from increased risks of landslides and debris flows due to logging activities.
- Maggie Taylor, Water Resources Specialist - Nooksack Indian Tribe Natural Resources Department, was unable to attend due to illness. Holly presented on Maggie’s behalf. The Tribe initiated a Watershed Restoration Planning process in 2014, to address water quality issues and salmon decline. Extensive community involvement. Restoration of the upland hydrology was identified as a key strategy to create climate resilience and recover water resources.
- Alex Jeffers, Conservation Director of Whatcom Land Trust (WLT), described WLT’s role in the project, how the current landowner approached WLT, and how WLT worked with other members of the planning team. Alex then described some of the other Community Forests, how we don’t need to re-invent the wheel, and how it will be important to make sure the Stewart Mountain Community Forest is tailored to our local and unique needs and values. He emphasized that there are a lot of big decisions ahead of us.
- Chris Elder, Senior Watershed Management Planner with Whatcom County Public Works, explained how the County is involved, provided an overview of the structure of the Water Resources Inventory Area 1 (Greater Nooksack River Basin) Watershed Management Board and described how upland forest management has been identified as high priority to support water resource and watershed recovery. Chris described next steps in the process:



4. Small Group Discussion:

Forum participants gathered in groups of 2-5 people, including an I-CAT (or) Core Planning Team representative in each small group, to discuss the following questions:

- *What questions are coming up for you?*
- *What are your biggest concerns?*
- *From what you understand about the project, what feels most interesting or important to you? What are your hopes?*

Small Groups Report Back:

Group 1:

- Project is more than 20-year project – people need to understand it will not happen tomorrow.
- Wonder if the term “community” being overused
- More local involvement. How do you define the South Fork Valley locality?
- Funding possibility - LID (Local Improvement District)
- Build up the community – not just an elite “god squad” that makes all the decisions
- Important that the people who have authority need to listen and be responsive
- Pride, water storage at 50% if you don’t log – why log?
- Who will own? Who will manage?

Group 2:

- Balancing access and uses with long term sustainability of our natural resources and wildlife
- Avoid garbage and over-use.

Group 3:

- What does the logging community think?
- How do we balance all the different priorities?
- Salmon survival is a critical element
- Young people are here!
- Long term management plan with staying power – across different generations of leaders
- Can we build infrastructure here locally?
- Hope that this will spark a broader recreational planning effort, more youth involvement overall, and engage the logging community to be able to make a change
- Hope for continued success

Group 4:

- What potential obstacles could we foresee?
- Does the amount of product we have to make and still be able to protect water, etc.
- How will we measure success?
- How to manage in a way that accommodates for climate change and population growth
- Local voice
- Risk of loss of production from forestland base
- Hope for prototype for others
- Actively managed for timber
- Passing both lumber and salmon onto our kids

Small Groups Report Back:

Group 5:

- Dead end of Hillside, Dead end of Turkington – that is the 500 acres
- Selective logging and benefits to hydrology and watershed health
- Selective thinning already happening in Whatcom County
- Logging revenue paired with carbon revenue
- Devil is in the details – what kind of logging and when
- Who gets to decide (at all levels)
- Need to look at other models rather than re-invent the wheel (e.g. ecological forest management)
- Table at Deming Log Show – talk about different models of silvaculture
- Recreation – thread the needle – balance

Group 6:

- Hopes that this will be a galvanizing thing that will bring all the parts of our community together
- Hope that we will beat the ticking clock on salmon recovery
- More youth in the outdoors
- How do we get more diversity in the community? We could have more conservative neighbors here tonight
- Tax impact – does that affect our project like it does in Checkerboard?
- Balancing the ideal of practicality and ideals, how can they co-exist
- Protect ecosystem integrity and old trees for future generations

Group 7:

- Outreach for private donors
 - Entities – explain more about what they do and what they offer
 - Why log at all?
 - Why log now?
 - All the information from Checkerboard was fascinating
 - Wonderful how many people showed up
 - Interesting how many people have ties to the River Farm and Hillside Road
 - Speed of the process – How we can accelerate the project.
 - I am experiencing new and different – and I have wanted that for a long time.
- It is dawning on me how great that is this evening.
- Long term – 100 years – expand our thinking on this – carbon sink, water
 - Fully funded recreation access

Group 8:

- What is the hands-on management going to look like
- Revenue? Will the profit stay in the community? Cost? Who will pay?
- Recreation – what kind will be allowed?
- How will existing roads be maintained? New road building?
- To show how ecological forestry can work and show how we can increase water quantity and quality and manage for salmon and wildlife in the watershed.
- If Phase One is a proof of concept, how will that extrapolate how Phase 2 will be managed?
- Hopes – how this can be an example of how we can scale up this model.

5. Wrap up, Next Steps, Survey reminder

Val thanked everyone for attending and shared her enthusiasm for the potential of the Community Forest Initiative. Everyone who is here tonight is part of making this happen. Our next step (for all of us) is to reach out to our neighbors and encourage them to take the Community Survey.

For more information or to get involved please visit: <https://stewartmountaincf.org/>.

Forum Attendance

In-person: 39 (including I-CAT members) Zoom: 19

Val Lloyd's opening remarks

Welcome to the Stewart Mountain Community Forest community forum.

I'm Valerie Lloyd and I live on Saxon Road a couple miles south of Acme. My view to the west is filled with Stewart Mountain. If you look at this photo I took this morning, you can imagine the town of Acme right there beyond these trees. I thought it would be good for us all to have a clear idea of the area we're talking about.

I'm here as a member of the Stewart Mt Com. Forest I-CAT (Interim Community Advisory Team). We're a group of people helping the Core Planning Team and Tech Team with this forum and the project in general as we move forward, however we move forward. That's where you come in.

This evening is filled with opportunities to find common ground, share perspectives, and learn new things. When I was offered the chance to host, I decided I'd take proscetic license (kind of like poetic license) and tell a story as an opening rather than try to fool you with more knowledge than I've actually acquired. So, without further ado:

Once upon a time, glaciers covered this land, the watershed that exists south of Mt Baker Hwy, east of Stewart Mountain, west of the Dike and north of Wickersham. Eventually the ice melted and people made their way here. Let's take a moment to think that as we move upon this land in cars or by foot or bike or boat, we are moving where countless others have gone before us and each of them have a myriad of tales about this place like we do.

As the centuries passed and people made use of and changes to this land, effects have happened that allow us to both enjoy the way of life we experience and, sometimes suffer the consequences of our actions. If you read or hear stories of the history of the South Fork Valley you know that people have gathered together often over the years to face challenges. Many of us in recent history have worked together to educate ourselves, build understandings, and make plans that make sense to us all.

In 2017 a timber company from New Hampshire bought the forestland on Stewart Mountain. This company contacted, as part of its business model, the Whatcom Land Trust, to see if there was interest in the acquisition of about 5,500 acres of the total holdings.

The Land Trust, along with a core group of partners, started the process to create what eventually may become a formal community forest. As we are gathered here this evening about 500 of those

acres are about to be purchased and you will learn more about this shortly.

The Stewart Mountain Community Forest is not yet a community forest. Yes, some of the land has been purchased and, as in all things, timing is everything. The opportunity to at least start the purchasing process presented itself and it makes sense that the core group pounced. Now, though, the opportunity has broadened, and we are here this evening to begin to work together to truly, over the next few months and probably years, develop a vision and reality that becomes the Stewart Mountain Community Forest. An area of land within our reach that we are connected to, that we know about, that we can sustain collectively. An important area that potentially can contribute to the overall health of the South Fork Valley in general.

So this is not a happy ending... it's a happy continuance of the Story of the South Fork Nooksack Watershed and Valley.

Thank you in advance for sharing and showing respect as the forum unfolds. We are here to work together. There are many challenges currently in our valley. We can't address them all this evening. If you have questions and thoughts about issues that seem to exist beyond the scope of this evening's topics, they'll be noted and we will help you find responses elsewhere.

Thank you for being here.

Community Survey Results

Survey Purpose

- Identify what beliefs and values matter most to South Fork Residents and Stakeholders
- Identify hopes and concerns about the SMCF
- Identify priority benefits and results to be achieved

Survey Details

- Survey window: August 25 – October 10, 2022
- 15 total questions
- Analysis by group
 - Responses by those who identified as a South Fork Valley resident or a member of the Nooksack Tribe (51) --- This group identified as South Fork Valley Responses throughout.
 - Total Responses (119)
- Preference is given to South Fork Valley Responses for sorting/ranking purposes.
- The following weighting was used throughout:
 - 4-3.5 = Very Important (Weight =4)
 - 3.4-2.9 = Important (Weight = 3)
 - 2.8-2.0 = Neither Important nor Unimportant (Weight = 1)
 - Below 2 = Not Important (Weight = 0)

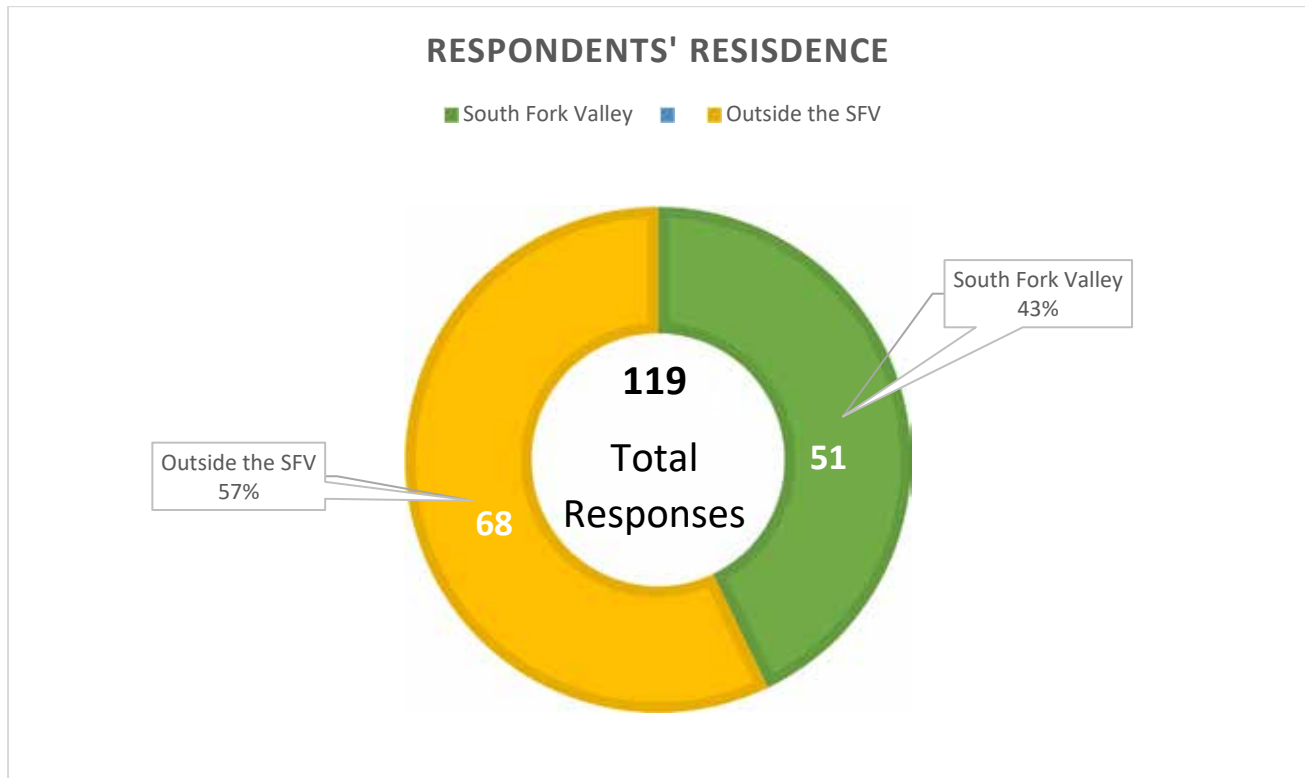
Key Findings

- Question 13 – General Feeling about the SMCF Effort
 - More than 75% of South Fork Valley respondents feel positive about this initiative (less than 12% of respondents indicated a negative response).
 - More than 80% of all respondents feel positive about this initiative (less than 8% of respondents indicated a negative response).
- Question 11 + 14 – Lingering Questions
 - Concerns about long-term owner and future management practices
 - Concerns about funding (who’s involved, what strings, who will pay)
 - Negative impact of recreation on landscape and larger number of people in the community
 - What activities will be allowed? Will there be a fee or will access be fee-free?
- Question 2
 - Top Interests in Stewart Mountain Community Forest were consistent between both groups.
 - I care about this community, and this watershed
 - I am concerned about protection of water resources
 - I would like to see us do more to recover salmon and restore wildlife habitat
 - Low ranking interests for both groups
 - My organization/agency/business has an interest in the South Fork Watershed, or Stewart Mountain
 - I am concerned about protection of water resources
 - I would like to work in the forest (either in timber, or non-timber forest products)
- Question 5 – Community Values (responses combined)
 - Very Important (1)
Improve the South Fork ecosystem to increase and support the salmon population
 - Important (4)
 - Maintain the rural way of life and protect it for our children
 - Ensure that recreational opportunities protect property rights and community values

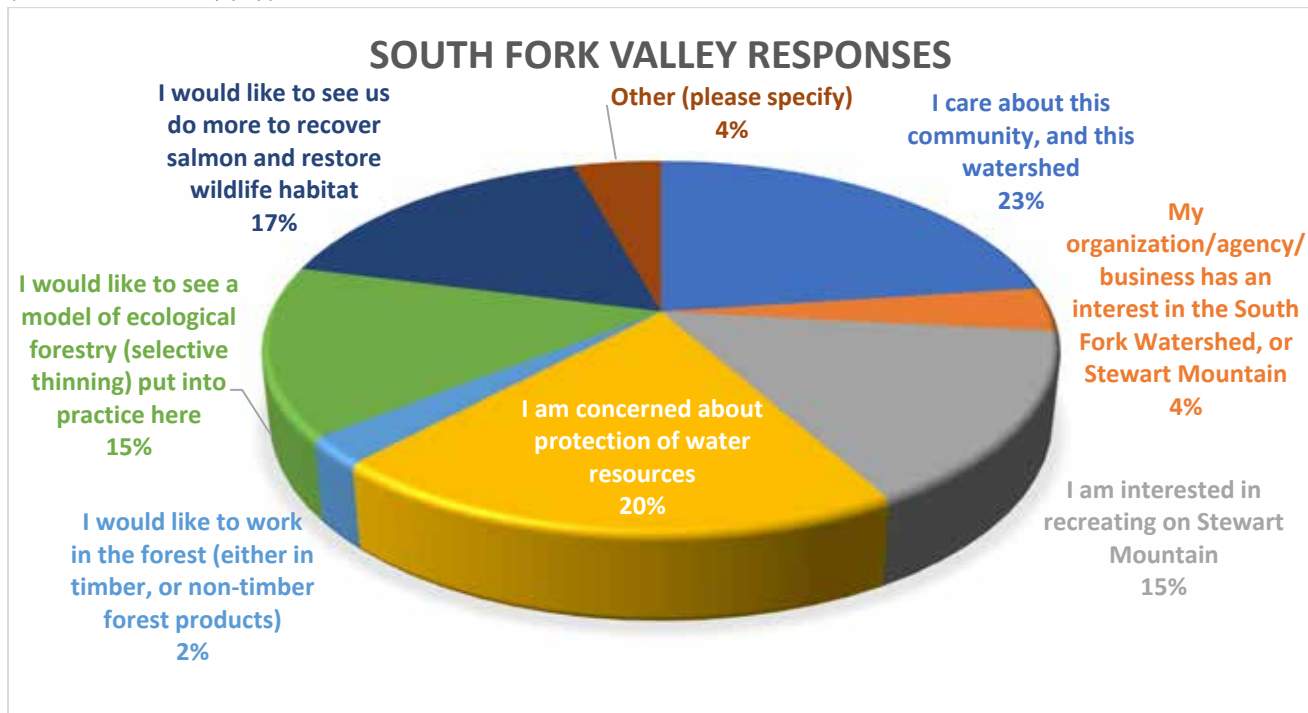
- o Ensure that recreational opportunities positively contribute to the health and safety of the watershed
 - o Promote long-term viability of resource-based economies
- Neither Important nor Unimportant (1)
Maintain a sustainable forest industry with a skilled and steady local workforce
- Question 6 – Planning Principles (responses combined)
 - Very Important
 - o Increase shared understanding and open dialogue around data, science and resource management
 - o Increase communication, transparency, and trust between landowners and other community stakeholders
 - Important
 - o Enable local residents to share relevant knowledge about land and water resource management
 - o Increase public education about the ways in which forestry can preserve and enhance water resources
- Question 7 – Potential Benefits of Community Forests category with most difference
 - Very Important (3)
 - o Improved watershed function and health (water quality, quantity) [3.8]
 - o Protection of sensitive/rare habitats [3.69]
 - o Reduction of risk of wildfire/landslides [3.5]
 - Important (6)
 - o Increased local job opportunities in the timber economy [3.15]¹
 - o Improved conditions for wildlife, habitat connectivity (biggest difference btwn groups)[3.09]
 - o Increased local job opportunities in other aspects of the forest economy (e.g. mushrooms, firewood, maple syrup) [3.08]*
 - o Forest management effectively and safely co-exists with other uses: recreation, cultural uses, and educational uses [2.87]
 - o Serving as a model, demonstrating ecological forest management practices for other communities [2.69]
 - o Production of high-quality lumber from the forest, for all future generations [2.5]*
- Questions 8 + 9 – Recreation/Cultural/Educational Activities
 - For South Fork Valley Responses, and overwhelming desire for hiking and other low- impact (like harvesting and stewardship activities) recreation opportunities were the most desired. Also, a sense of solitude was mentioned as being desirable.
 - A desire for low-impact recreation was also reflected in total responses.
 - A number of responses indicated they would not want to see any formal recreation be developed on the landscape.

¹ Ranked as Neither Important Nor Unimportant for South Fork Valley Responses.

Question 1 – Let’s start with the place! Where do you live?



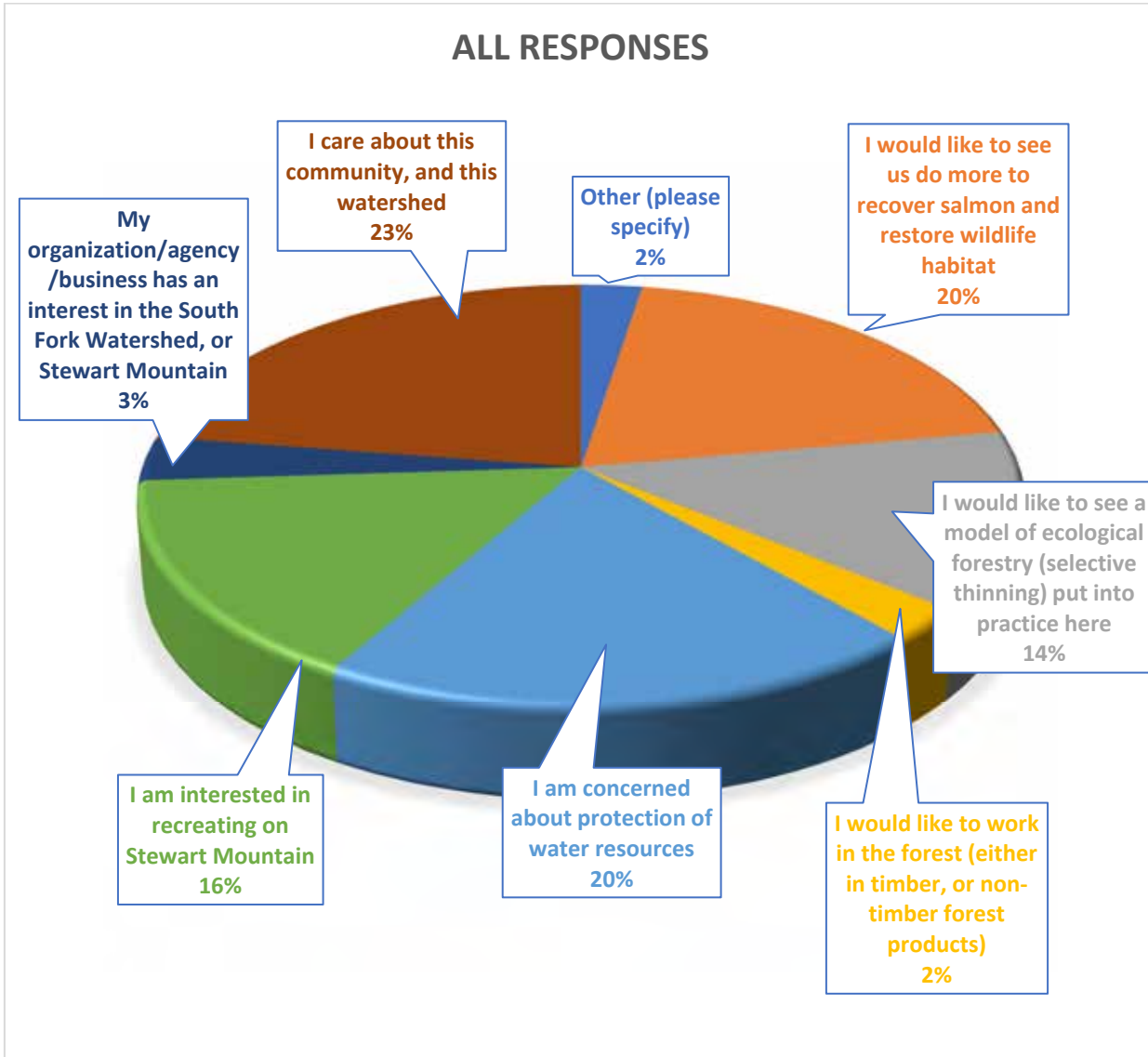
Question 2 – What are your main interests in the Stewart Mountain Community Forest?
(Select all that apply)



*51 unique respondents, average of about 4 selections per respondent

“Other” % of Responses (9 total)

- Reserve Conservation – 34%
- Hunting – 11%
- Recreation – 11%
- Limit Recreation in Favor of Other Priorities – 11%
- Impacts of Effort – 11%
- Jobs/ Economy – 22%



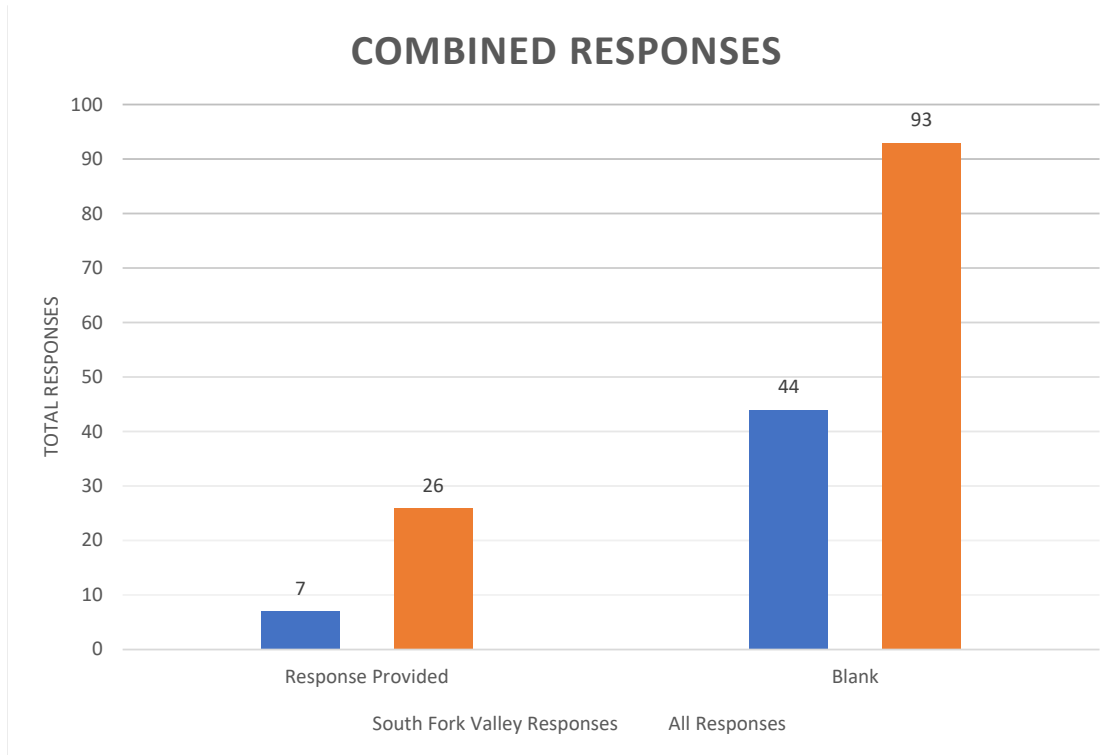
*119 unique respondents, average of about 4 selections per respondent

“Other” % of Responses (20 total)

- Reserve Conservation – 58%
- Hunting – 17%

- Limit Recreation in Favor of Other Priorities – 17%
- Impacts of Effort – 8%

Question 3 – If you belong to any groups that have an interest in this project, please write the name of your organization, agency, or business here:



Of those who responded from the South Fork Valley

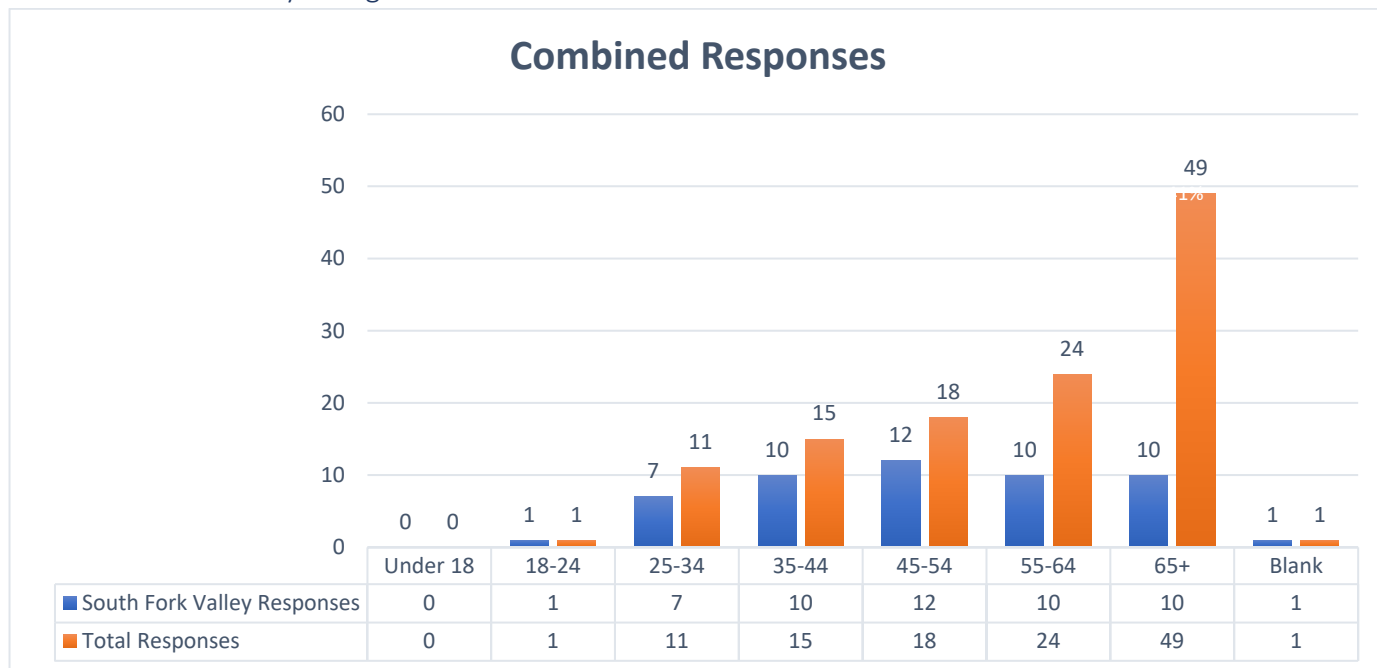
- Osprey Hill Farm
- Nooksack Tribe
- Whatcom Land Trust
- RE Sources
- East Acme Friends of Working Forests (FWF)
- Nooksack Natural Resources
- Teacher

Of those who responded from total responses

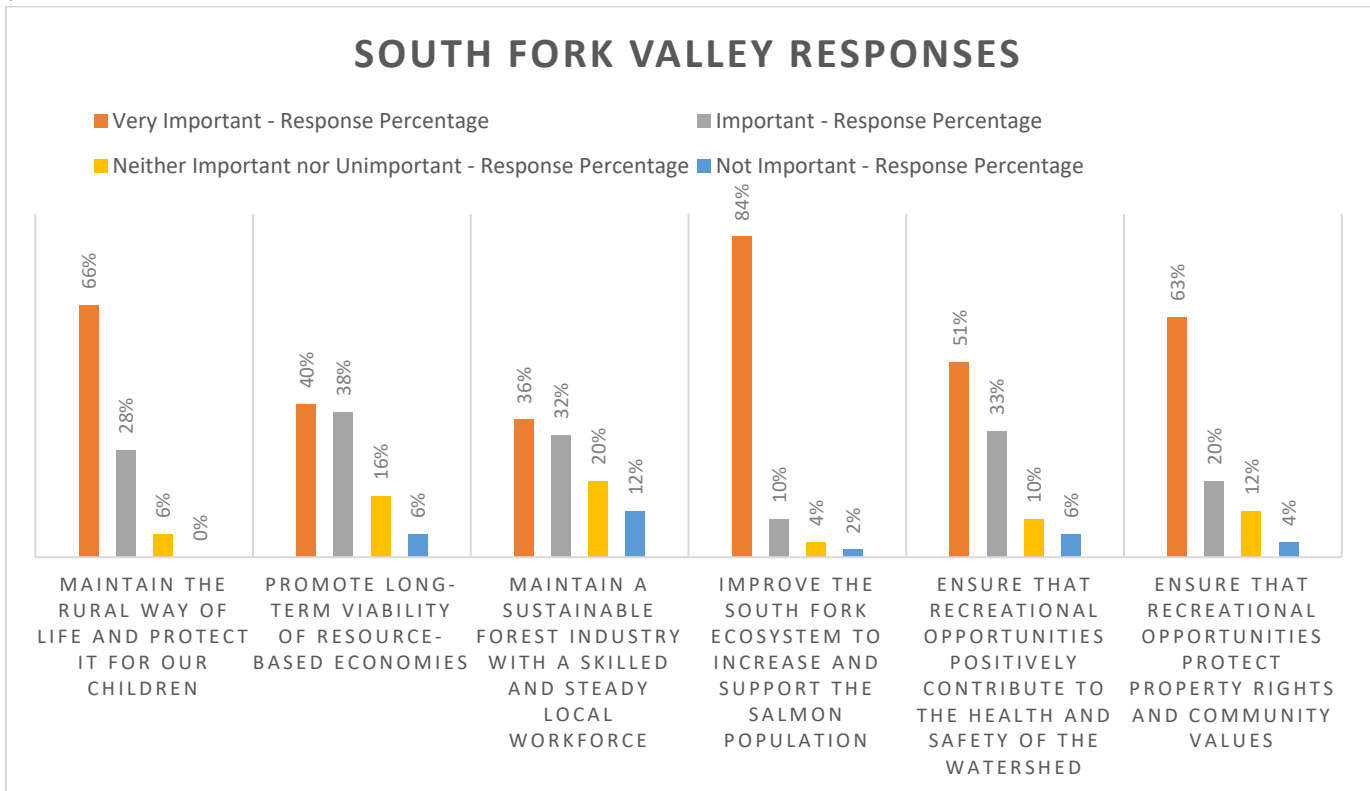
- Interested Individual (x2)
- Osprey Hill Farm
- Nooksack Tribe
- Whatcom Land Trust (x7)
- RE Sources (x2)
- Realtor
- Back Country Horsemen (x2)
- Sierra Club (x3)
- League of Women Voters (x2)
- Whatcom Climate and Water Issues Committee
- East Acme Friends of Working Forests (FWF)
- NSEA (x2)

- Whatcom Mountain Bike Alliance
- Nooksack Natural Resources
- Haggard Events LLC
- Whatcom Conservation District
- WRIA 1 Planning Unit
- Teacher

Question 4 – What is your age?



Question 5 – Here are some of the Community Values that drove this project (developed by the South Fork Community Watershed Group in 2017). How important are each of these Values to you?



Order of Importance from weighted average:

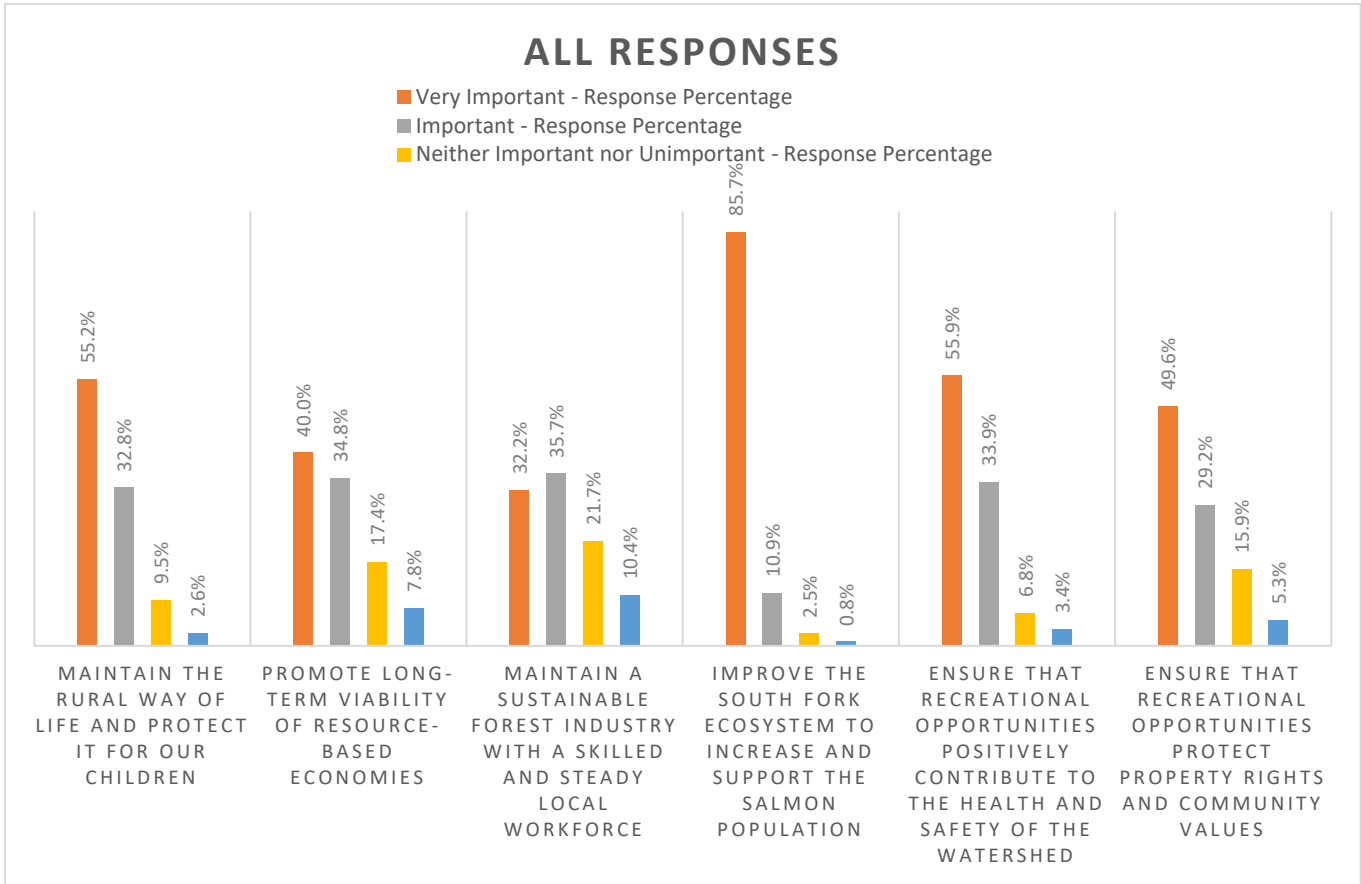
4-3.5 = Very Important (Weight =4)

2.8-2.0 = Neither Important nor unimportant (Weight = 1)

3.4 – 2.9 = Important (Weight = 3)

Below 2 = Not Important (Weight = 0)

1. *Improve the South Fork ecosystem to increase and support the salmon population (3.7) **Very important***
2. *Maintain the rural way of life and protect it for our children (3.54) **Very important***
3. *Ensure that recreational opportunities protect property rights and community values (3.24) **Important***
4. *Ensure that recreational opportunities positively contribute to the health and safety of the watershed (3.13) **Important***
5. *Promote long-term viability of resource-based economies (2.9) **Important***
6. *Maintain a sustainable forest industry with a skilled and steady local workforce (2.6) **Neither Important nor Unimportant***



Order of Importance from weighted average:

4-3.5 = *Very Important* (Weight = 4)

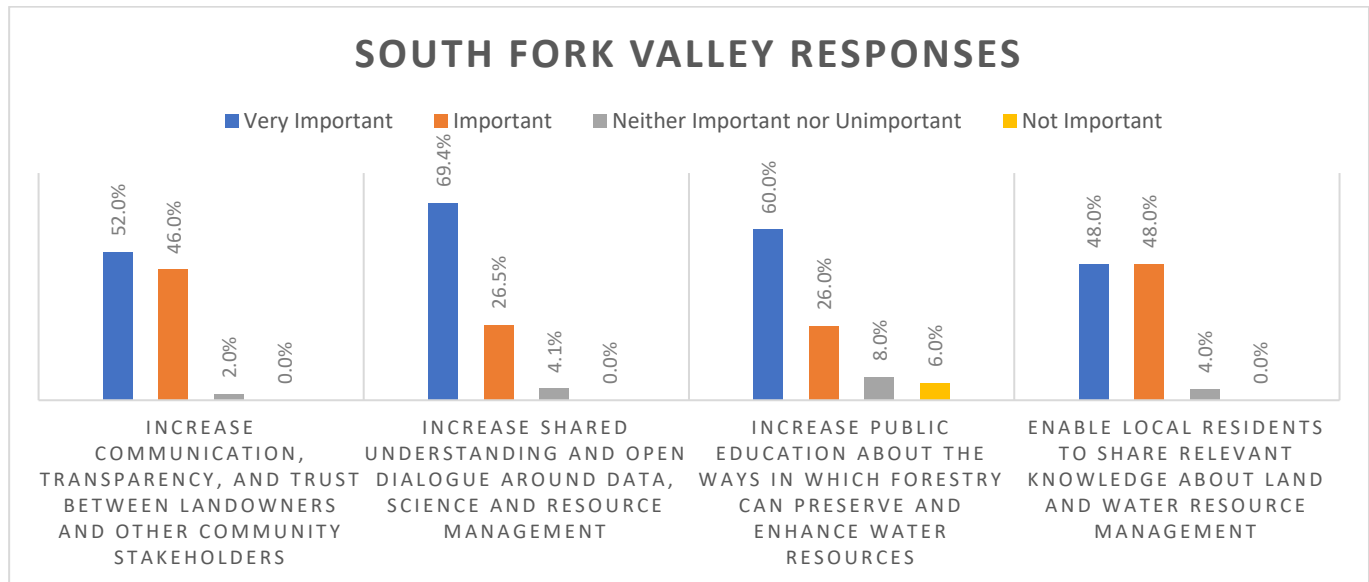
2.8-2.0 = *Neither Important nor unimportant* (Weight = 1)

3.4 – 2.9 = *Important* (Weight = 3)

Below 2 = *Not Important* (Weight = 0)

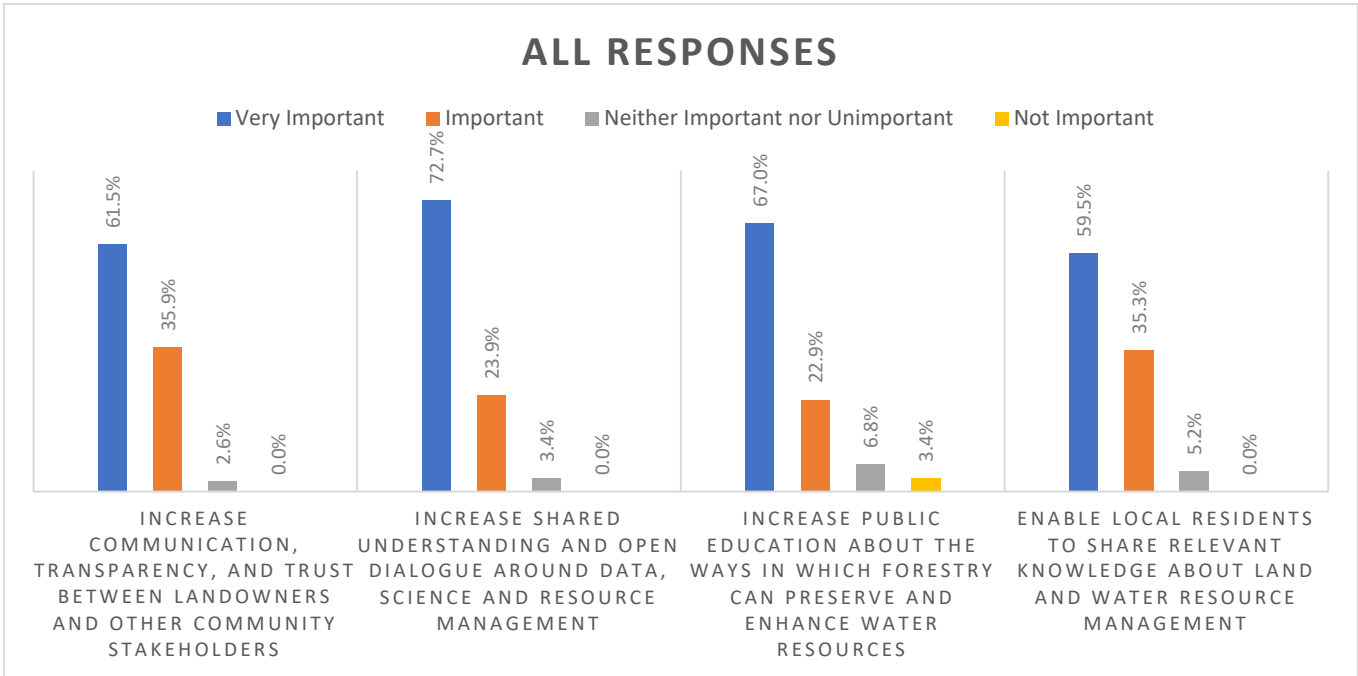
1. *Improve the South Fork ecosystem to increase and support the salmon population (3.8) **Very important***
2. *Ensure that recreational opportunities positively contribute to the health and safety of the watershed (3.3) **Important***
3. *Maintain the rural way of life and protect it for our children (3.3) **Important***
4. *Ensure that recreational opportunities protect property rights and community values (3.0) **Important***
5. *Promote long-term viability of resource-based economies (2.8) **Neither Important nor Unimportant***
6. *Maintain a sustainable forest industry with a skilled and steady local workforce (2.6) **Neither Important nor Unimportant***

Question 6 – How important are the following Community Planning Principles to you? (these were also developed by the South Fork Community Watershed Group in 2017).



Order of Importance from weighted average:

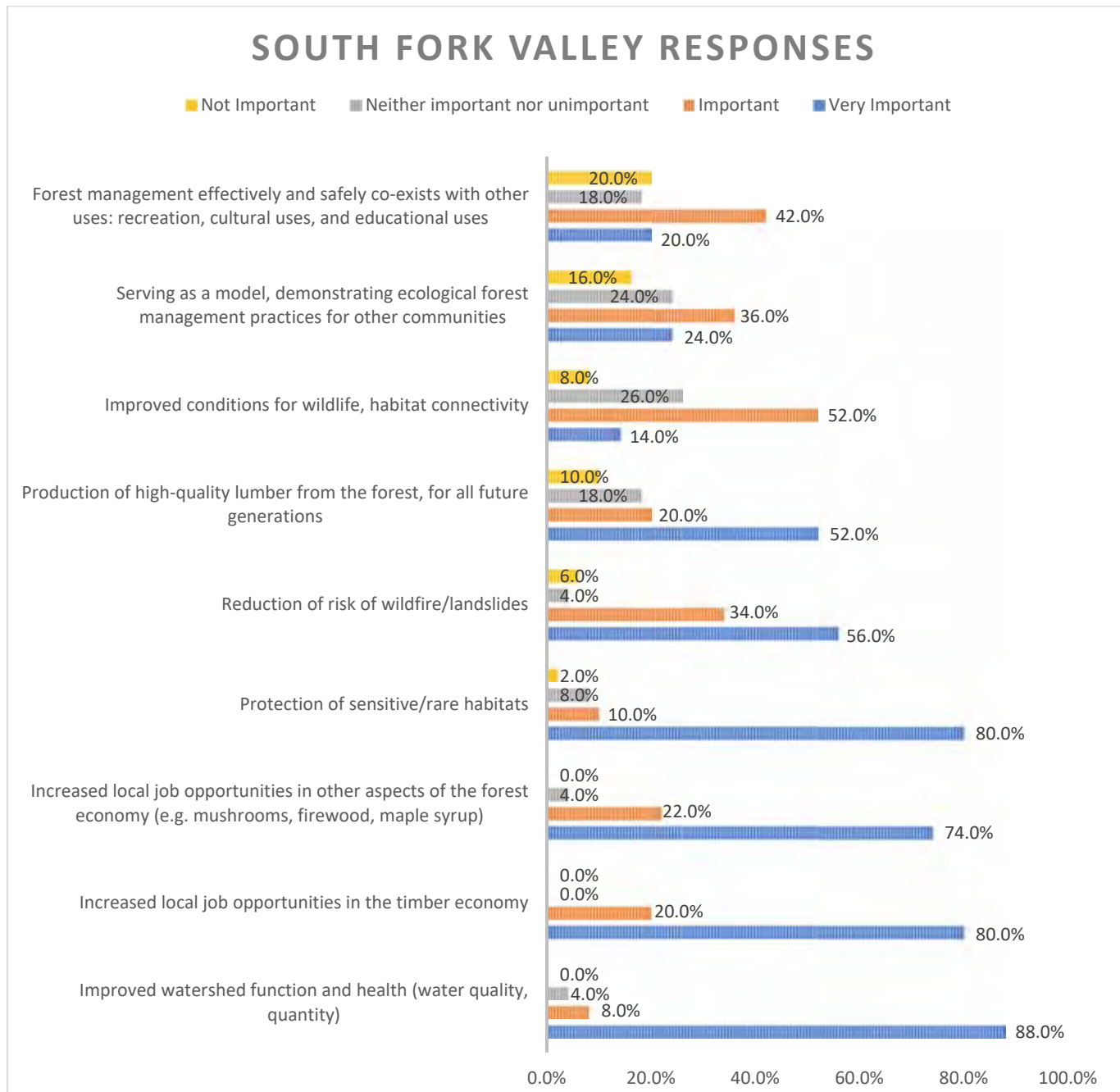
1. *Increase shared understanding and open dialogue around data, science, and resource management (3.61) **Very Important***
2. *Increase communication, transparency, and trust between landowners and other community stakeholders (3.48) **Important***
3. *Enable local residents to share relevant knowledge about land and water resource management (3.4) **Important***
4. *Increase public education about the ways in which forestry can preserve and enhance water resources (3.26) **Important***



Order of Importance from weighted average:

1. *Increase shared understanding and open dialogue around data, science, and resource management (3.7) **Very Important***
2. *Increase communication, transparency, and trust between landowners and other community stakeholders (3.6) **Very Important***
3. *Enable local residents to share relevant knowledge about land and water resource management (3.5) **Very Important***
4. *Increase public education about the ways in which forestry can preserve and enhance water resources (3.4) **Important***

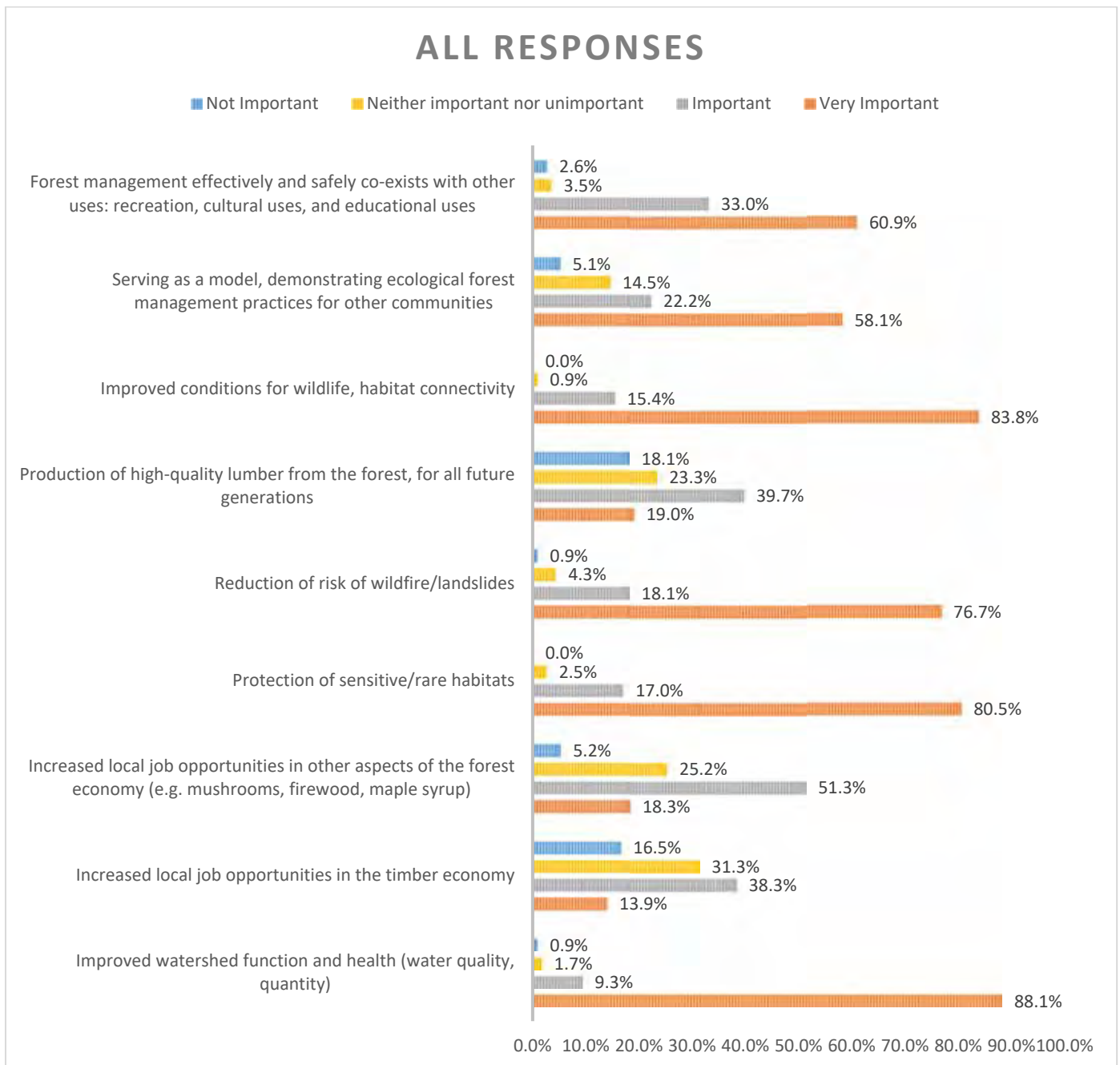
Question 7 – Community Forests are generally "working forests", which contribute to the local economy and improve the local ecology. How important are these potential benefits to you?



Order of Importance from weighted average:

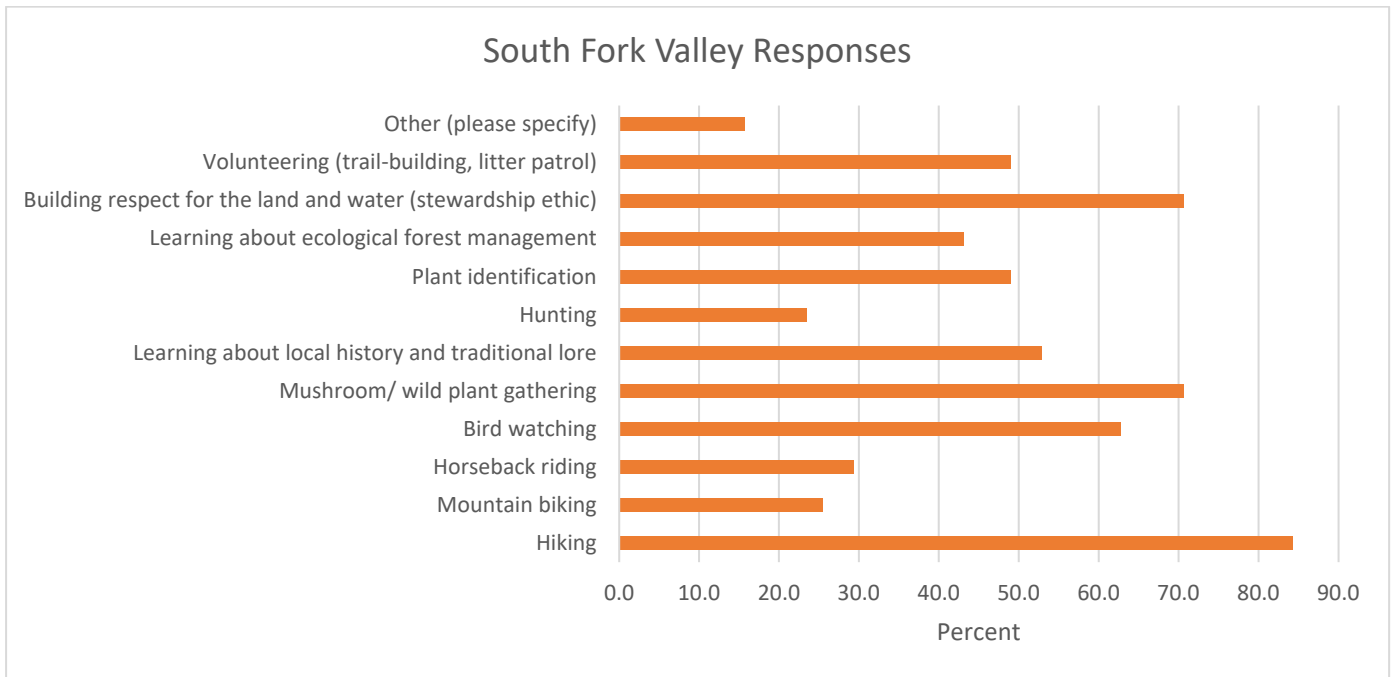
1. *Improved watershed function and health (water quality, quantity) (3.80) **Very Important***
2. *Increased local job opportunities in the timber economy (3.80) **Very Important***
3. *Increased local job opportunities in other aspects of the forest economy (e.g., mushrooms, firewood, maple syrup) (3.66) **Very Important***

- 4. *Protection of sensitive/rare habitats (3.58) **Very Important***
- 5. *Reduction of risk of wildfire/landslides (3.3) **Important***
- 6. *Production of high-quality lumber from the forest, for all future generations (2.86) **Important***
- 7. *Improved conditions for wildlife, habitat connectivity (2.38) **Neither Important nor Unimportant***
- 8. *Serving as a model, demonstrating ecological forest management practices for other communities (2.28) **Neither Important nor Unimportant***
- 9. *Forest management effectively and safely co-exists with other uses: recreation, cultural uses, and educational uses (2.24) **Neither Important nor Unimportant***



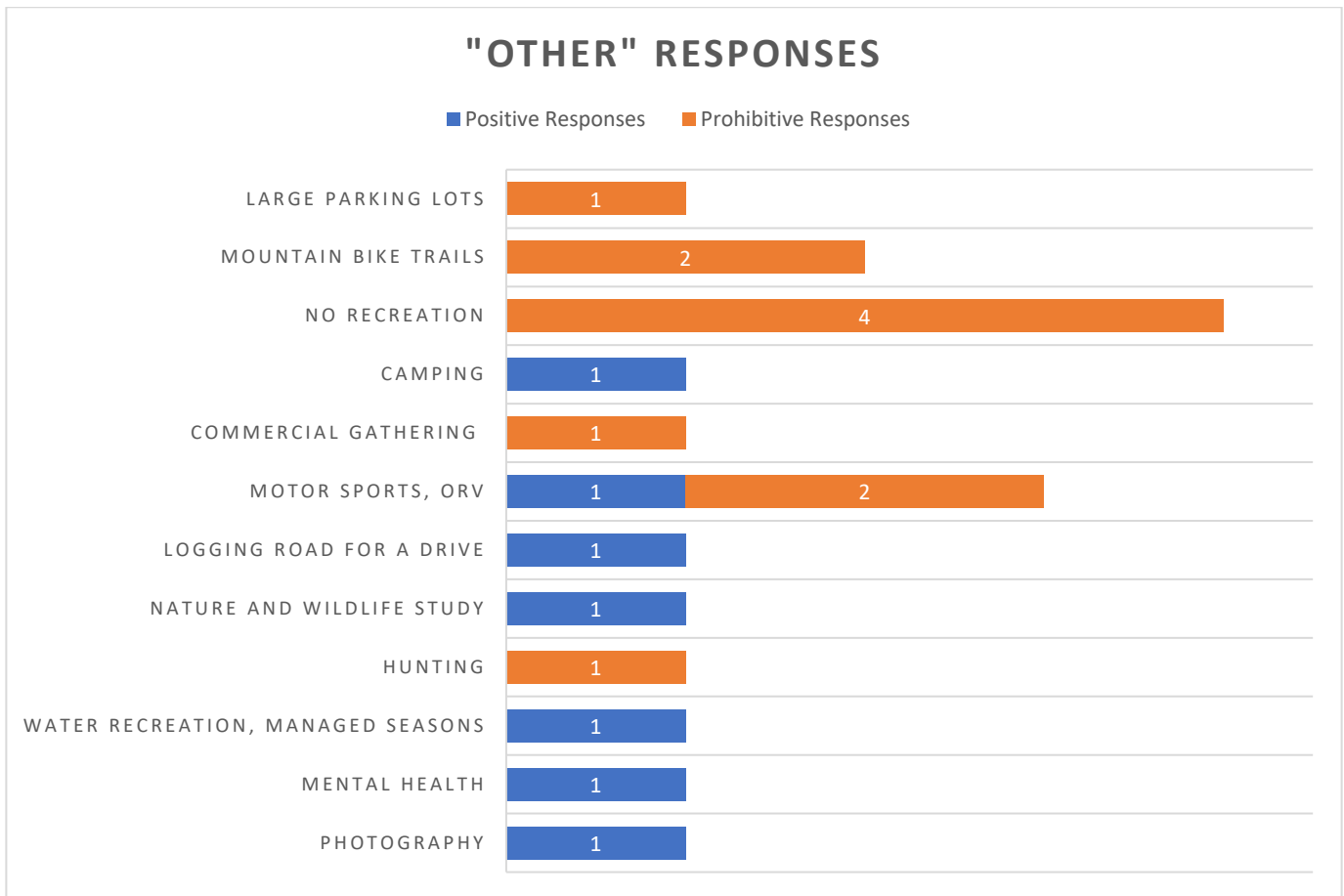
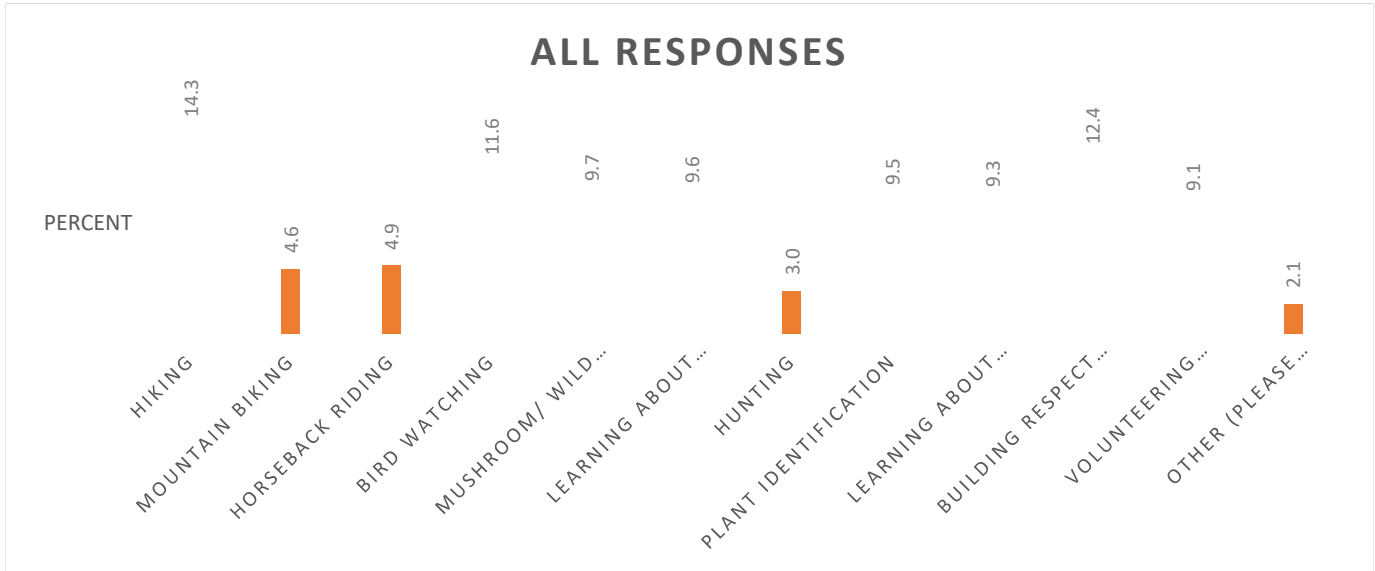
1. *Improved watershed function and health (water quality, quantity) (3.8) **Very Important***
2. *Improved conditions for wildlife, habitat connectivity (3.8) **Very Important***
3. *Protection of sensitive/rare habitats (3.8) **Very Important***
4. *Reduction of risk of wildfire/landslides (3.7) **Very Important***
5. *Forest management effectively and safely co-exists with other uses: recreation, cultural uses, and educational uses (3.5) **Very Important***
6. *Serving as a model, demonstrating ecological forest management practices for other communities (3.1) **Important***
7. *Increased local job opportunities in other aspects of the forest economy (e.g., mushrooms, firewood, maple syrup) (2.5) **Neither Important nor Unimportant***
8. *Production of high-quality lumber from the forest, for all future generations (2.2) **Neither Important nor Unimportant***
9. *Increased local job opportunities in the timber economy (2.0) **Neither Important nor Unimportant***

Question 8 – Which of the following recreational/cultural/educational activities would you hope were available in the Stewart Mountain Community Forest? **choose all that apply*



Summary of Responses in “Other”: *8 unique responses, one respondent discussed more than one point*

- 6 mentions of prohibiting recreation, recreation development – concerns focused on preserving fauna and landscape/watershed features, and potential conflict with neighboring landowners
- 3 mentions of supporting recreational: mental health benefits, joy of nice logging road to drive up, hunting away from residential areas



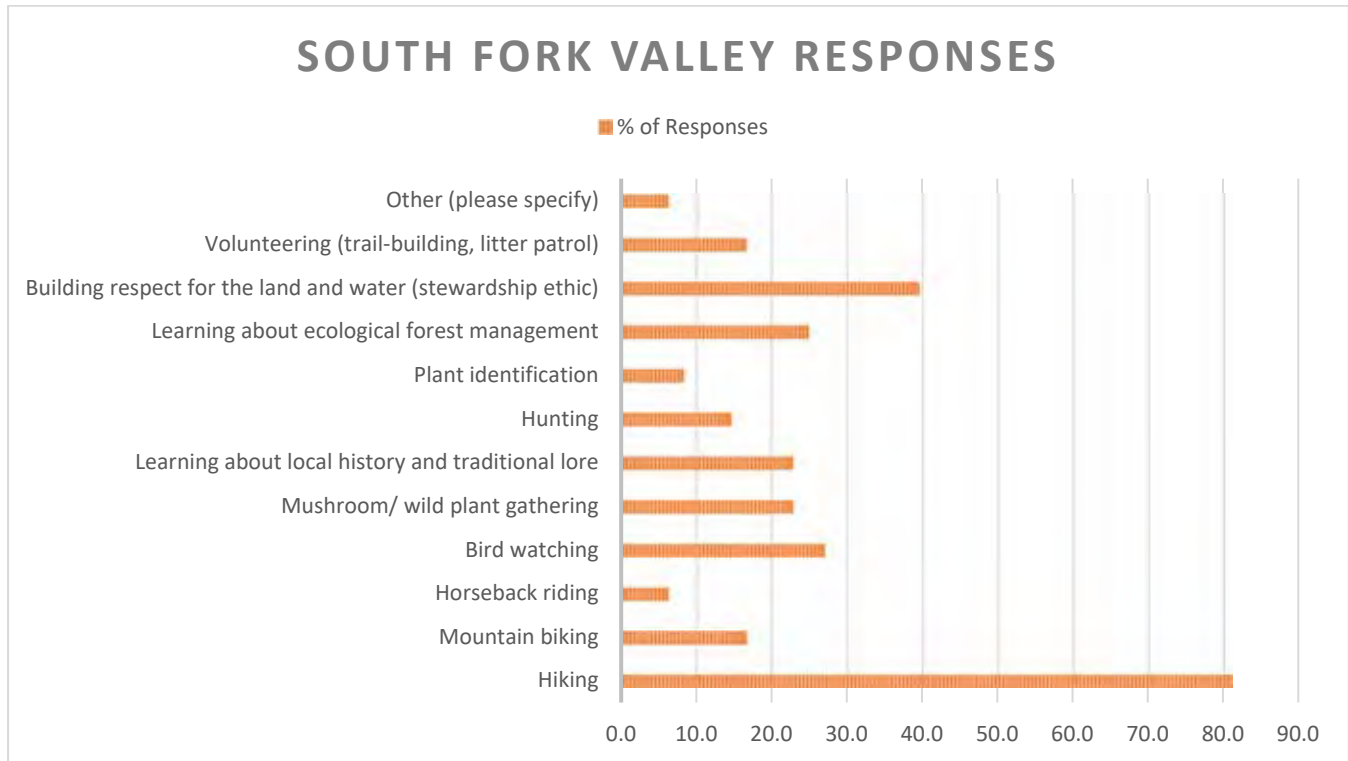
Additional thoughts from this question:

- Desire to engage in fundraising rather than other revenue generating activities to support the forest

- Desire for focused efforts on using the forest for carbon capture practices to alleviate climate change
- Desire to limit mt bike trails because of concern of damage to ecosystems and wildlife.

Question 9 – Which of those activities would be the MOST important for you and your family?

*pick your top 3



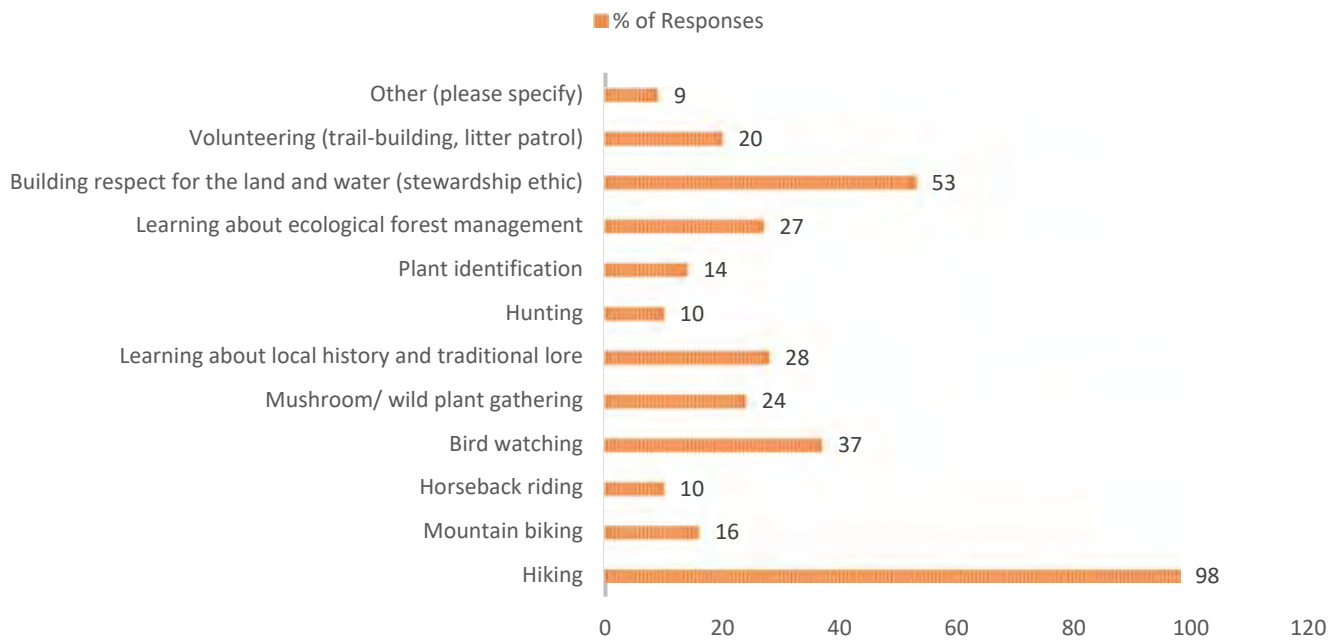
Top 3 Responses:

1. Hiking
2. Building respect for the land and water
3. Bird watching

Summary of Responses in "Other": 3 unique responses

- 1 mentioned of prohibiting recreation development
- 1 mentioned the importance to mental health
- 1 mentioned the desire for solitude

ALL RESPONSES

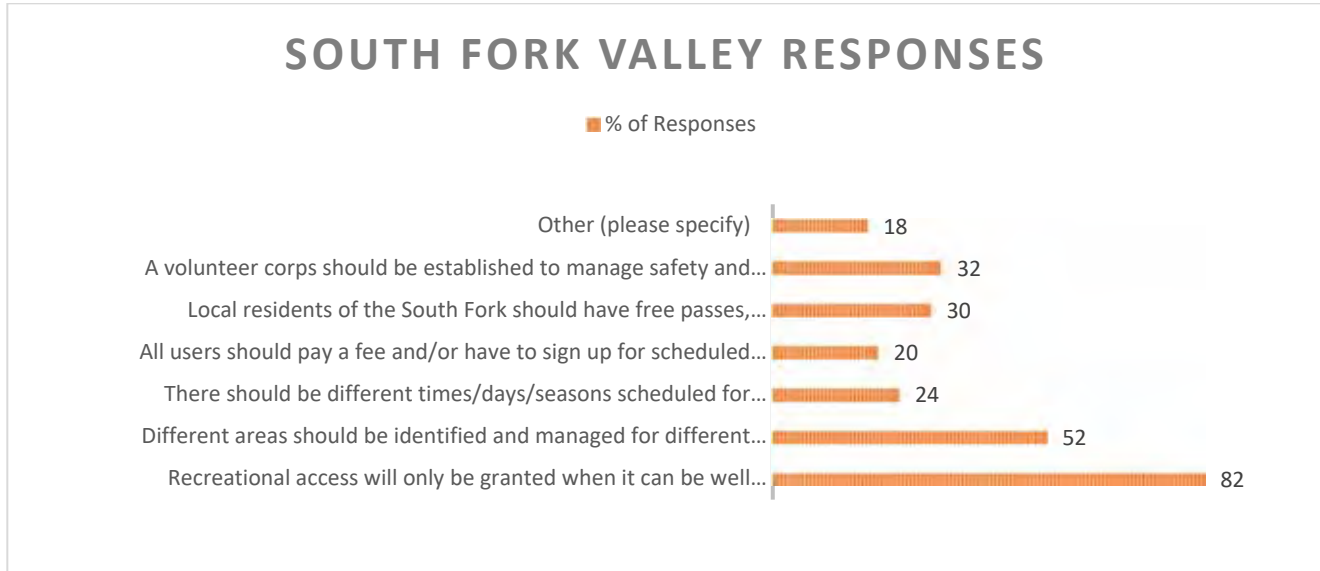


Nine other responses were recorded that documented the community's preferences for recreation (all received one mention):

- No recreation
- Mental Health
- Limited specific, seasonal public river access area (s) including parking & public bathrooms
- Importance to global warming
- Solitude
- Gravel biking
- Scientifically based Forest Management
- Trail Running
- Motor Sports

Question 10 – We know that opening up forestland to a wide range of users will require ways to protect and balance all of those uses. Which top strategies would you recommend?

**choose up to 3*



Summary of Responses in “Other”: 9 unique responses, some respondents discussed more than one point

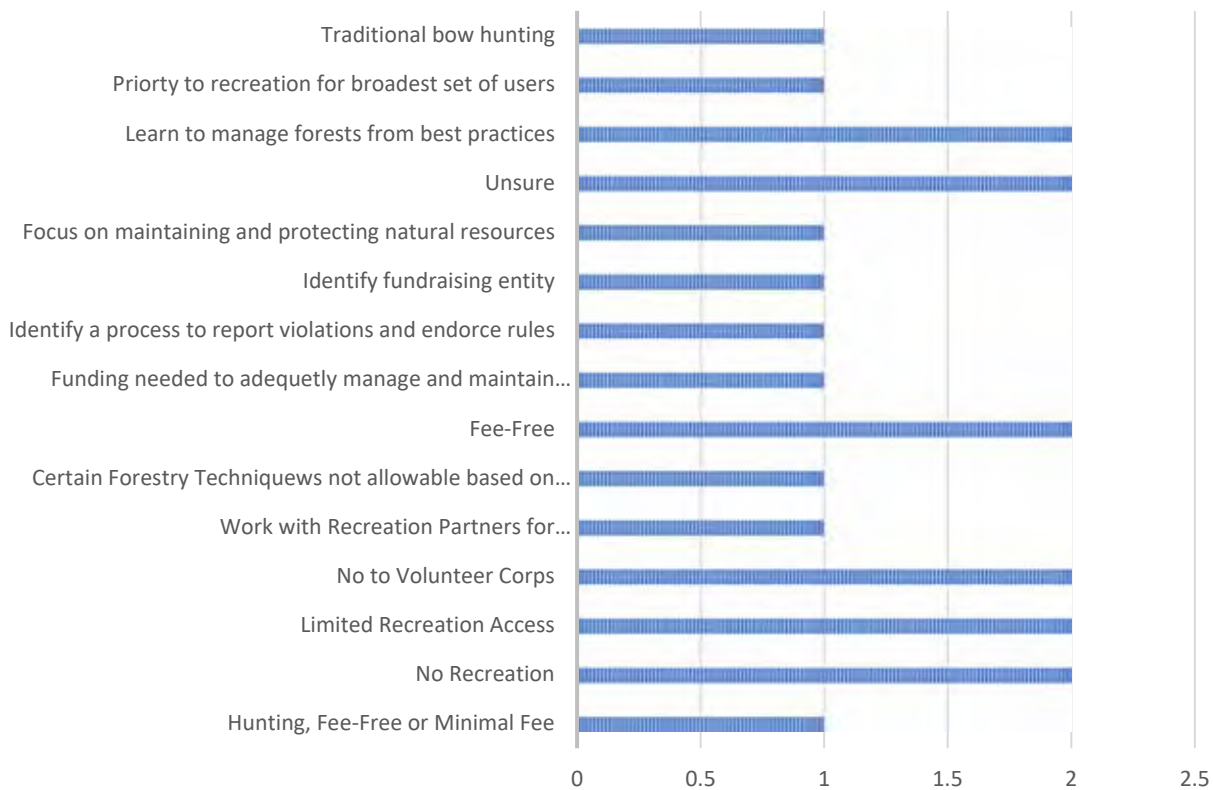
- 1 mention of permitting hunting for a small fee or fee-basis
- 3 mentions of concern that effective management and enforcement would be challenging
- 2 mentions of concern that effective maintenance would be a challenge, resulting in degradation of forest resources over time
- 4 mentions of not developing recreation or limiting recreation access to
 - South Fork residents
 - Local schools
 - Tribe’s needs
- 1 mention of concern of feasibility of landscape to support both recreational uses and foster goals
- 1 mention that access should be free
- 2 mentions of employing people to care, maintain the land and implement forestry practices
- 1 mention to prioritize recreational opportunity that accommodates the broadest number of audiences (i.e., hiking over specific user type)

ALL RESPONSES

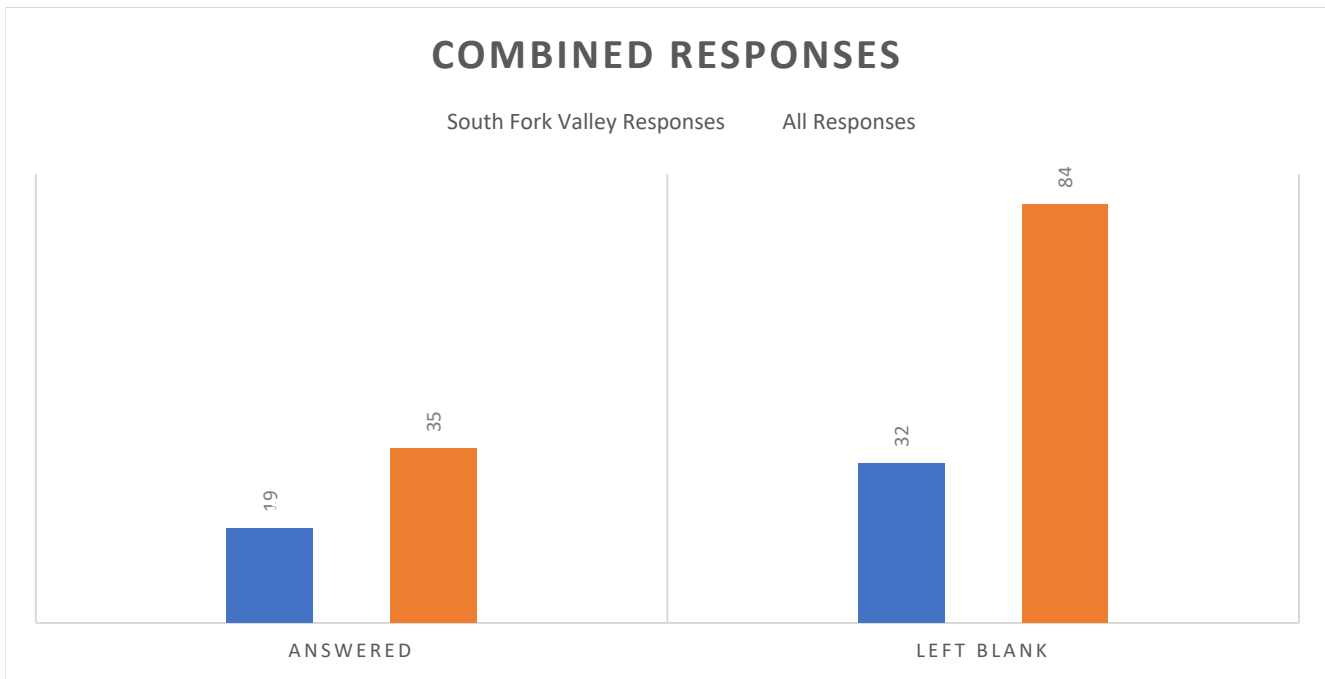
■ Responses



"OTHER" RESPONSES



Question 11 – What questions do you have about the initiative?



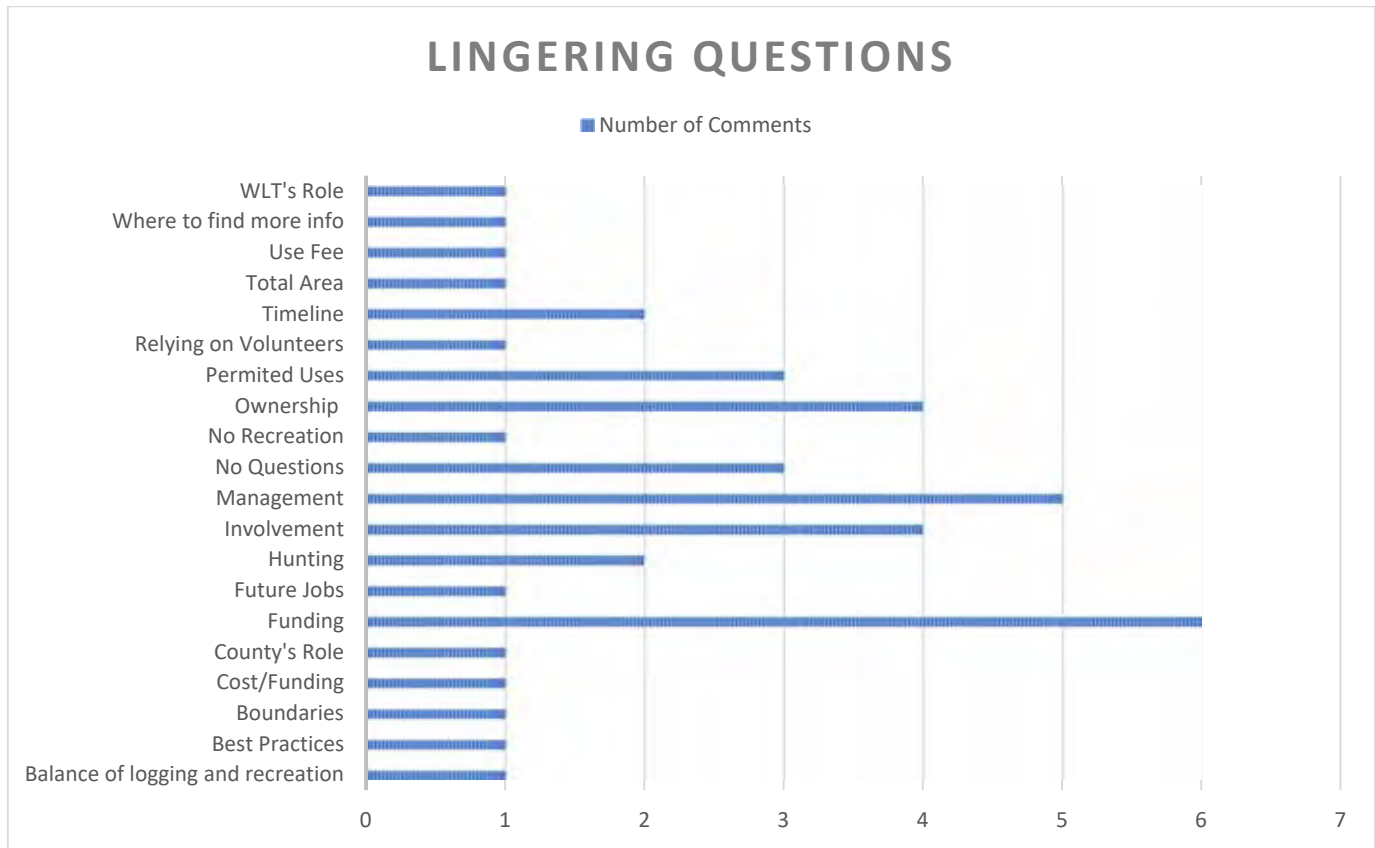
South Fork Valley

Summary of Responses in “Other”: *19 unique responses, some respondents discussed more than one point*

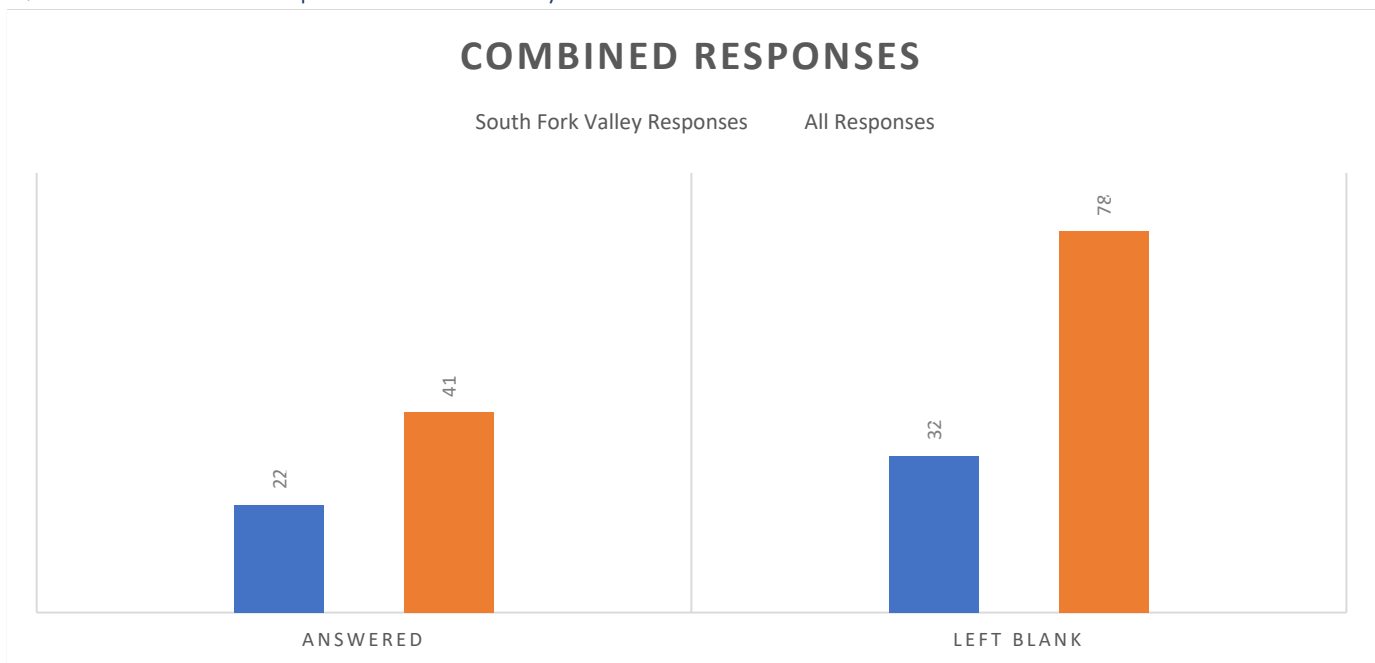
- Permitted Uses (6 mentions)
 - Allow hunting
 - How does the Forest Practices Act affect/ doesn’t affect Stewart Mountain
 - Why this particular property is being purchased to form the community forest
 - Don’t not allow recreation
 - What will be the permitted uses
- Ownership/Management/Governance (10 mentions)
 - What will be the ownership/management structure
 - Focus on working forest aspect or property rather than recreation
 - Does the county’s capacity to manage the property adequate – seeking precedent and outcomes
 - Nisqually forest as a favorable example
 - Can County Parks assist with teaching management practices
 - Who would be liable in case of injury or property destruction from landslide
 - Enforcement/ Patrol (4 mentions)
 - How will increased traffic/parking and safety issues be managed (and not need to rely on volunteers)
 - Make sure that visitors know when they encounter private property
- Community in Community Forest (3 mentions)
 - South Fork residents’ role/voice in management decisions moving forward
 - Including local, expert voices in this effort
- Overall Effort (3 mentions)
 - What’s the timeline
 - Desire to support the initiative
 - Is it feasibility for the landscape to support both recreational uses and foster goals
- Funding (3 mentions)
 - Where did acquisition funds come from, what requirements are attached to those funds

- Can proceeds from timber harvest be used to support (maintain and manage) community recreation sites/areas/activities?

All Responses



Question 12 – What hopes or concerns do you have about the initiative?



South Fork Valley Responses

Summary of Responses: 22 unique responses, some respondents discussed more than one point

Concerns:

That this will close hunting

That this will take too long and cost too much, nothing will be accomplished (x2)

Too much focus on recreation and not enough about resource conservation (x2)

That trails and recreational resources won't benefit residents or the forest (x3)

The influx of outside users impacting the land, increasing local traffic, taxing local resources (x6)

Capacity of Whatcom County to manage the property

Concern that intent of effort (values, vision, objectives) is not reflected in final management/operating practices (x4)

- Monetary decisions will dictate forest management policy and resource conservation goals
- Local voices are not heard/prioritized to outside interests

Hopes:

Become a model for new forestry practices/management (x2)

General excitement (x3)

501(c)3 ownership

Prohibition of all motorized recreational vehicles

Multi-use trails (x2)

That all human and non-human concerns are heard and addressed

No changes to current property owners' access and use of river

Help to mitigate climate change and improve salmon habitat

Increase use by Nooksack people

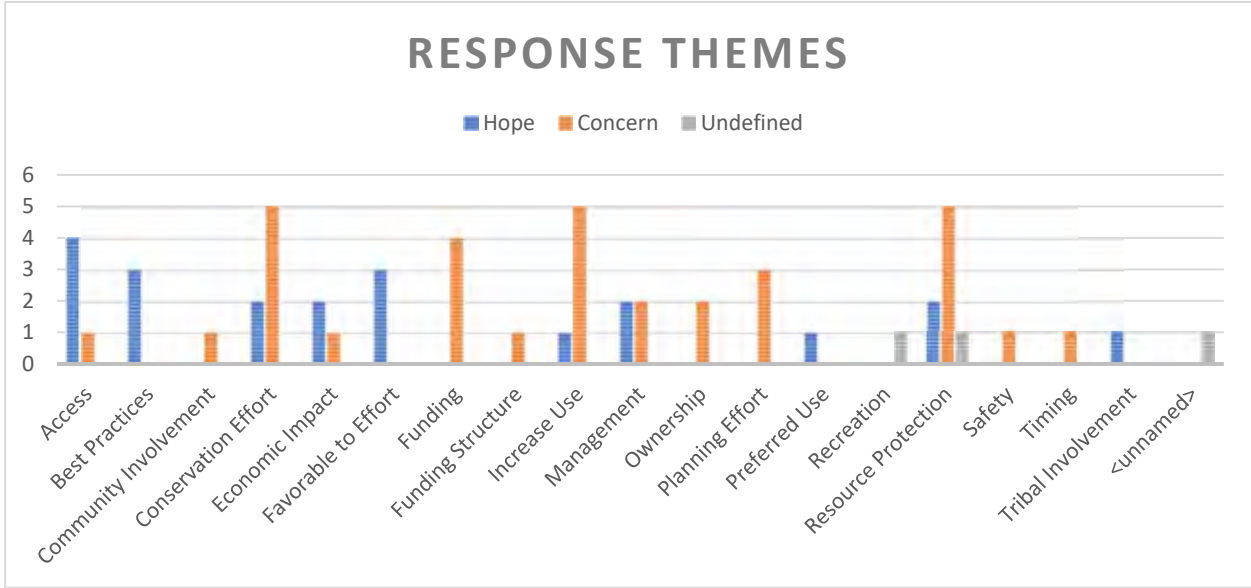
Of the respondents to this question, the top **concerns** involve Influx of Outside Visitors negatively impacting local resources, the Intent of the Effort is lost during the implementation (that the effort will not be able to live up to the vision, mission and values stated), and that any development for Recreation will Negatively Impact the Natural Resources of the forest and surrounding area.

The top sources of **hope** come from General Excitement about this effort, the potential for Multi-Use, Non-Motorized trails and use areas, and the ability to Share Best Practices on forest management practices.

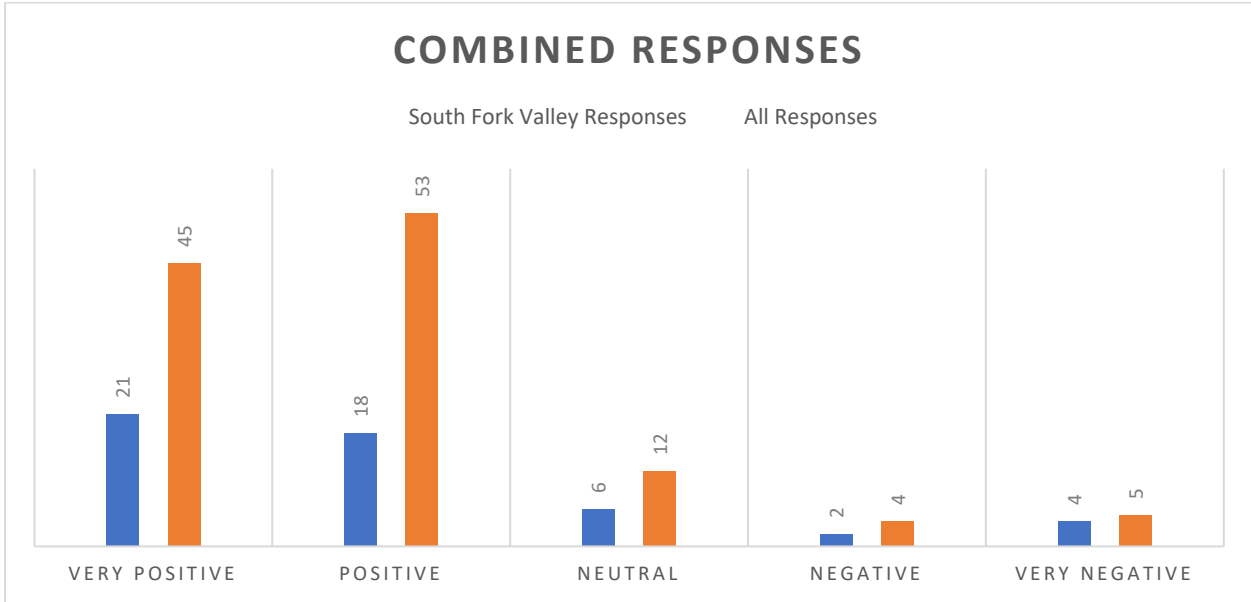
All Responses

community forest effort be able to conserve natural resources and improve habitat) as well as the ability to mitigate impacts to Increased Use from those outside of the South Fork Valley.

The top sources of **hope** come from improving Access to the landscape and a Favorable perspective toward this effort.



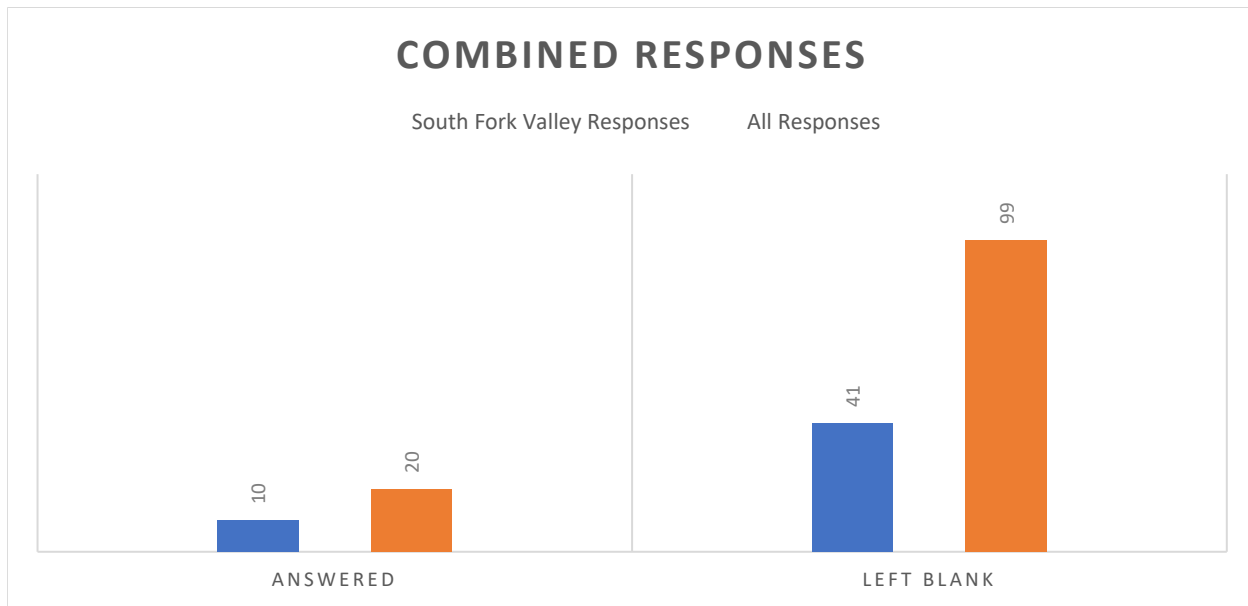
Question 13 – Given what you know so far about the Stewart Mountain Community Forest, what is your overall feeling about this initiative?



More than 75% of *South Fork Valley respondents* feel positive about this initiative (less than 12% of respondents indicated a negative response).

More than 80% of *all respondents* feel positive about this initiative (less than 8% of respondents indicated a negative response).

Question 14 – If your overall feeling about the initiative is less than positive, what would make it something you would be more likely to support?

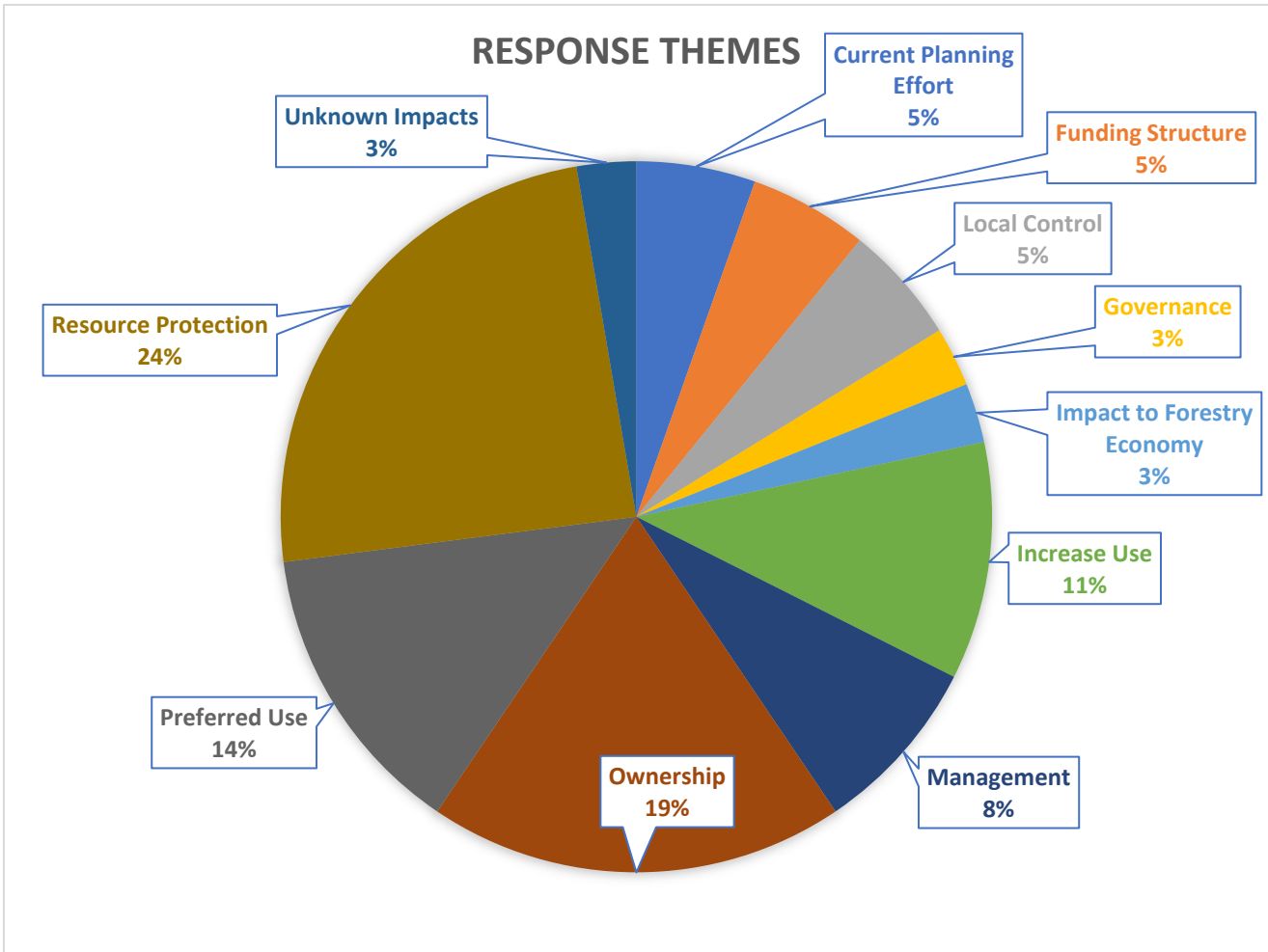


South Fork Valley Responses

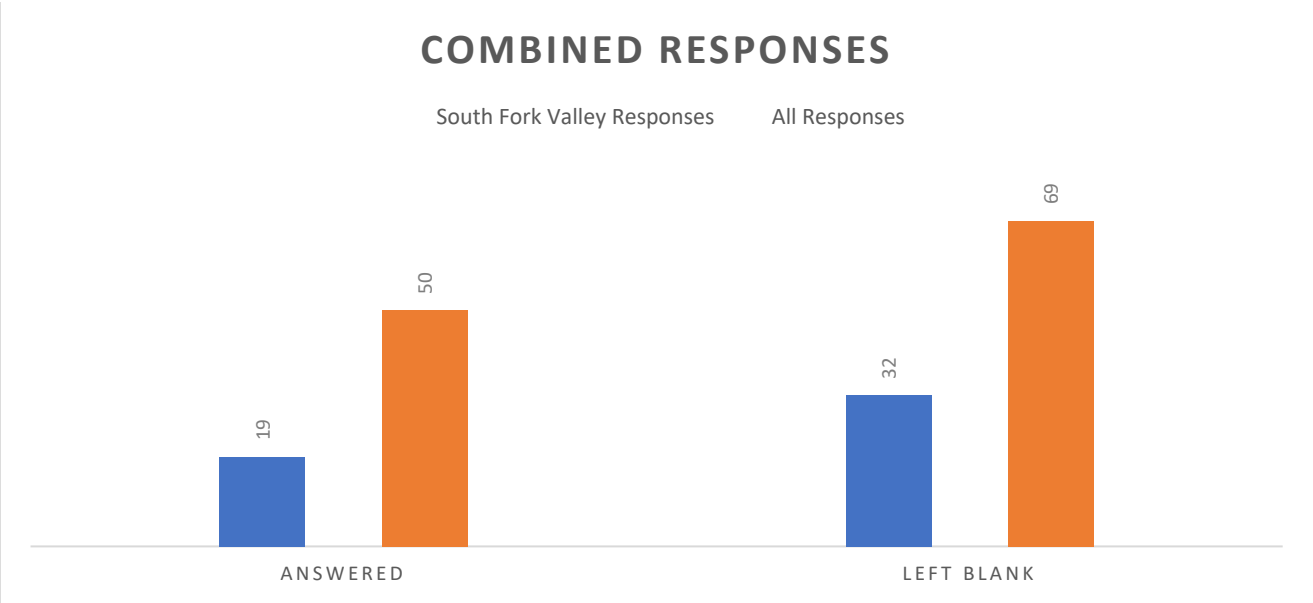
Summary of Responses: *10 unique responses, some respondents discussed more than one point*

- Allow hunting
- State that the primary forest is that of a working forest and not a park
- Limit recreation to intermittent educational activities, subsistence activities, and possibly limited access for locals (x2)
- Include South Fork Valley residents and adjacent landowners as part of the management team
- Plan for deliberate management practices that are measured, responsive and adaptive to local, immediate needs of the community (x3)
- Plan for protected zones (wild spaces) away from recreation
- Plan for increased traffic and parking
- Determine who will be the long-term owner (x5)
 - Ensure that long term owners will manage by doing what is best for the ecosystem
 - Ensure that long term owners will support the community and local timber economy (x3)

All Responses



Question 15 – If you would like to add your name to the mailing list for updates, feel free to write in your contact information here:



Reference Materials

The following materials are available on the Resources page of the Stewart Mountain Community Forest website: stewartmountaincf.org.

- [Water Resources Inventory Area #1](#)
- [South Fork Nooksack River Watershed](#)
- [Community Forests](#)
- [Forests and Climate Adaptation](#)



The Stewart Mountain Community Forest Strategic Vision Framework was developed with technical assistance from the National Park Service - Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program. NPS-RTCA supports locally-led conservation and outdoor recreation projects across the United States by assisting communities and public land managers in developing or restoring parks, conservation areas, rivers, and wildlife habitats, as well as creating outdoor recreation opportunities and programs that engage future generations in the outdoors.