

# Plan for East Moraine a step closer to completion

Survey shows public concern focuses on preventing overuse

By ELLEN MORRIS BISHOP  
For the Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — The management plan for the public lands on the south end of Wallowa Lake's East Moraine is one step closer to reality.

After seven months of compilation, the survey of public opinions, concerns and vision for the 1,800-acre county-owned property is finally ready to become part of planning.

The survey showed broad support for maintaining the East Moraine in its open, natural state as it is now. But it also revealed a need to help the public understand the essential working nature of the property's landscape.

More than 450 people participated in the survey. Sixty-three percent were full-time residents, 16% part-time residents with the remaining 21% were visitors. The majority (86%) use the moraine for recreation. Additional input came from 35 people in seven focus groups. All but one live in the county full time.

"The survey and focus group questions were designed to gather input on specific values and uses which the Wallowa Lake Moraines Partnership (Wallowa County, Wallowa Resources, Wallowa Land Trust and Oregon Parks and Recreation Department) ... is committed to preserving," said Eric Greenwell, the Wallowa Land Trust's conservation director.

The survey also aimed to identify potential conflicts between multiple uses. Those conflicts might include grazing vs. recreation or forest management vs. cultural resource, for example.

Many survey respondents were concerned that the cultural, wildlife and vegetative resources not be overused.

"The moraine is beautiful; people are attracted to it," the survey summary says. "Respondents worry that we might 'love the moraine to death.'"

"If actions are taken to call attention to the East Moraine or turn it into an attraction beyond what it has been in recent years, tourist impact will increase and naturally create conflicts with wildlife and what have been traditional uses in recent decades," one respondent wrote.

Most respondents recognized that conserving Nez Perce cultural resources is important, and nearly 20% specifically mentioned the need to protect sacred sites, cultural artifacts, landmarks and archeological areas. But some expressed concern about recognizing only indigenous cultural sites and considered local traditions

## MORE INFORMATION

The 1,800-acre Yanke property on the south end of the East Moraine became Wallowa County property in January 2020. The funds used to purchase the property were raised by the Wallowa Lake Moraines Partnership, which was formed in August 2011 and is comprised of Wallowa County, Wallowa Resources, Wallowa Land Trust and Oregon Parks and Recreation Department. The acquisition was funded by a combination of federal, state, tribal and private dollars, with the expectation that their support would further the partnership's stated vision for the greater moraines of Wallowa Lake:

- Maintain sustainable working landscapes of farms, forests and rangeland to contribute to the local economy and rural ways of life.
- Provide public access respectful of the landscape and its scenic beauty.
- Protect open space for wildlife, recreation, and natural resources.

part of cultural heritage.

Dogs' potential to create problems for cattle, wildlife and recreationalists was a potential source of conflict for many. More than 40% of respondents said they'd like to see dogs on leash at all times or restricted in some way, including banning dogs from the East Moraine.

Respect for private property was important. More than 60% of comments supported posting signs or other information about private property. Some proposed fines, physical barriers, or even trail cameras.

The Partnership is committed to managing the East Moraine's forests as a sustainable working landscape, including some harvest as part of management. About 70% of comments indicated a support for some logging, especially selective thinning and sustainable forestry. Some comments supported use of fire as a management tool. But, the survey summary notes, "A fair number of responses simply rejected the premise that any logging should be allowed. The project faces continued consensus-building ahead."

Grazing, which would also be part of the moraine's working landscape, also faced some concern and opposition.

"Some folks saw positives in grazing ... in keeping with traditional use," the report states. "However, many tempered their response with caveats: make sure it's well-managed in a scientific way, don't allow overgrazing, etc."

Questions about events, including concerts, large weddings and other fundraisers that can help pay for



Ellen Morris Bishop/For the Wallowa County Chieftain

The East Moraine provides a commanding view of Wallowa Lake. A management plan for the public lands on the south end of Wallowa Lake's East Moraine is one step closer to reality.



Ellen Morris Bishop/For the Wallowa County Chieftain

Riders enjoy the grassy landscape atop the East Moraine property. A management plan for the public lands on the south end of Wallowa Lake's East Moraine is one step closer to reality.

management were included in the survey. More than a quarter of respondents opposed any special events. But about 75% of respondents said they would support some events, including weddings and special sporting events such as walks, runs or triathlons. Educational camps and musical concerts got a positive nod, along with nature field trips and events compatible with working lands uses.

"Education about the land's multiple use and its regulations will be an important part of the East Moraine's management to

both dispel misconceptions about natural resources and stewardship and continue an ongoing public information program," Greenwell said. "Again and again, respondents echoed the sentiment 'keep it as it is,' or expressed concerns about a future of increased use, conflicts and over development."

The East Moraine Community Survey summary report may be read and downloaded from a link provided at <https://www.morainecampaign.org>. The link to the report is located just beneath the main banner on this page.

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