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Contact: Cara Carper, Community Resource Development Educator

Green County UW Extension

Phone: 608-328-9441

E-mail: cara.carper@ces.uwex.edu

Snowmobilers Spend More While on Trail

Preliminary results for the year long Cheese Country Trail survey indicate snowmobile users spend significantly more money than ATV users during their use of the Cheese Country Trail.

“While it is still too early to estimate overall user characteristics and local economic impact, December trail users who were surveyed spent, on average, about \$243 per person on trip-related items as a result of their use of the Cheese Country Trail,” said UW Extension Recreation Planning Specialist Dave Marcouiller. “Most spending during December was for gas and equipment repair, eating and drinking, and convenience items.”

During December, Cheese Country Trail study volunteers noted more than 8 individuals per hour using the trail on weekends and less than 2 per hour on weekdays. Virtually all weekend use consisted of snowmobiles while a small number of ATVs and golf carts were observed during the week. Higher levels of trail usage took place after the trail opened to snowmobiles.

Most December trail users who were surveyed lived in nearby communities and used the trail for day-use only. Roughly fifteen percent of trail users were overnight guests. Most stayed in a local hotel or motel. Those surveyed also indicated they dined in local restaurants during their visit to the Cheese Country Trail.

The Cheese Country Trail was open for snowmobiling 26 days during December. It was closed for 5 days. For time slots when the trail was open, observers reported an average snow

depth of almost 7 inches. During the month, study volunteers completed 38 two-hour observation periods and conducted a total of 28 face-to-face interviews.

The goal of the Cheese Country Trail Survey is to collect a representative sample of users and usage of the Cheese Country Trail along the more than 48 mile route from Monroe to Belmont and Mineral Point. Information is being collected using 1,000 randomly selected 2-hour time slots during the 12 month survey period. Eight intercept locations have been chosen along the trail in Monroe, Browntown, South Wayne, Gratiot, Darlington, Calamine, Belmont and Mineral Point.

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

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

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