

## **Summary of User Survey of Visitors at Fisher Farm**

Collected between July 15th and September 8th, 2023

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A user survey was conducted at Fisher Farm between July 15th and September 8th, 2023. In total, 39 responses were collected and 35 were analyzed, after filtering for incomplete responses. The survey was distributed through signs posted throughout the park alongside walking trails. Questions focused on understanding what visitors value most about the site, and how they perceive different types of management activity. A final short-answer question allowed for respondents to provide feedback that was non-specific to the goals of the survey.

### **Summary:**

The majority of respondents visit Fisher Farm at least once a week. When determining how people use the site, visitors equally visit for recreational activities and to experience nature. From this we can determine that Fisher Farm's visitors are attracted by the combination of access to recreational activities and the opportunity to experience a scenic and natural atmosphere.

Overall scenery and atmosphere were valued slightly higher than biodiversity of either plants or animal wildlife for respondents' experiences with Fisher Farm. While visitors did value biodiversity highly, this indicates that the general atmosphere is valued slightly more than the individual species and biological interactions that are present. In the management section of the survey, respondents gave a higher rating to management that would "enhance the diversity of trees, plants, and wildlife" than to management that would "remove invasive species." This suggests that visitors generally understand that biodiversity is valuable, but are not especially concerned about how invasive species impact biodiversity.

Overall, respondents only "somewhat" agreed that any form of management would enhance their enjoyment of the site. When specifically asked about their understanding, visitors did not indicate a strong understanding of the biodiversity of Fisher Farm, and indicated a slight interest in learning more about the biodiversity. These responses indicate an opportunity to educate visitors about the individual species, biological interactions, and biodiversity of Fisher Farm in order to improve public understanding of biodiversity and conservation and to increase engagement with and support for the work of conservation. They also suggest possible reservations regarding management activity, which is another area where outreach and education could improve visitor's understanding of how management activity contributes to their experience.

The written responses also provide helpful insights into visitors' values and concerns. There were about an equal number of responses from those concerned about management activity for biodiversity and those who were supportive of the current work they have observed and potential future management. Concern about management centered around desires to keep the park "natural" and specific concerns about how the park is being managed (concern about milkweed, meadows, etc.). These concerns echo common misconceptions about the historic use of land and the goals of conservation management, which indicates an opportunity to increase public understanding of conservation and the history of land use. Overall, the written responses provide positive feedback from visitors about their experiences at Fisher Farm and support for those managing the site for recreation as well as biodiversity.

**Average responses:**

Responses ranged from 1-5: Strongly disagree, Somewhat disagree, neutral, somewhat agree, and strongly agree.

<p><b>How do you use this natural area?</b></p>	<p><i>"I visit this site for recreational activities"</i>  <b>4.8 Strongly Agree</b></p>	<p><i>"I visit this site to experience nature"</i>  <b>4.6 Strongly Agree</b></p>	<p><i>"How often do you use this site?"</i>  <b>1.4 More than once a week / once a week</b></p>
<p><b>What do you enjoy most about the site?</b></p>	<p><i>"I enjoy the site for its scenery and peaceful atmosphere"</i>  <b>4.7 Strongly Agree</b></p>	<p><i>"I enjoy the site for the diversity of plants, trees, and wildflowers."</i>  <b>4.2 Somewhat Agree</b></p>	<p><i>"I enjoy the site to view wildlife"</i>  <b>4.2 Somewhat Agree</b></p>
<p><b>Do you think any of the following management activities would enhance your enjoyment of the site?</b></p>	<p><i>"Managing the site to remove invasive species"</i>  <b>3.7 Somewhat Agree</b></p>	<p><i>"Managing the site to enhance the diversity of wildlife"</i>  <b>3.9 Somewhat Agree</b></p>	<p><i>"Managing the site to enhance the diversity of trees and plants"</i>  <b>4.0 Somewhat Agree</b></p>
<p><b>Knowledge of biodiversity</b></p>	<p><i>"I know a lot about the diversity of this site"</i>  <b>3.4 Neutral</b></p>	<p><i>"I would like to know more about the diversity of this site"</i>  <b>3.8 Somewhat Agree</b></p>	

### Written Responses in Order of Submission:

(Edits made to grammar / spelling for clarity)

1. A bridge is needed in a hiking trail area known for flooding between fisher farm and abersham. Gravel road is rough on vehicles at fisher farm entry.
2. This place is like no other. Some changes could be tolerated (invasive or harmful species removal) but it largely functions well as is. The stream restoration effort has been a very good enhancement.
3. We visit Fisher Farms nearly every day. It is the perfect place to walk our dog. The site is absolutely gorgeous with the wildlife and mother natures beauty. And the trails in the woods and cut paths down by the water are perfect for our pup.
4. I think the site has been very well managed and developed a date. It is good to see areas that support specific activities, like archery, hiking, biking, etc. I would like to see this balance maintained as biking seems to be taking up more space these days.. one other area of concern is some of the litter left behind by photographers, especially foil, glitter/confetti. If there was a way to prevent that, that would be good for the site.
5. We really enjoy this site and appreciate Davidson's foresight in acquiring it and the diligence with which it is maintained. Thanks! I would like to have "off-leash" hours for dogs (e.g., before 8am on weekdays or something like that).
6. Parents need to manage their children better
7. Love the park, especially the wooded walking trails. Love that it connects to additional trails in Abersham
8. I am a daily visitor to the park. I really support the rewilding initiative and would like to see more effort put into the trails through the woods
9. We most enjoy the natural landscape. The new additions that feel more man orchestrated feel less interesting. This site is a great amenity. In thinking of biodiversity I wonder if the paved surface would benefit from some variation of surface finishes, i.e. paved sets that let grasses grow through them, or mulch tracts if the budget allowed.
10. Please keep it natural. Please keep the effects of human hands off of this beautiful place.
11. Request to clear fallen tree on hiking path in woods and repair the old rotted bridge!0
12. please leave it natural and stop trying to "improve" it.

13. Love the passive nature of the park (ie, no ball fields and associated crowds and noise). I also think a leave no trace behind campaign would be beneficial. Too many ribbons and course paint markings starting to show up/accumulate
14. Add more activities for fitness
15. Been coming here for almost 2 decades. Great park with a lot to see and do 5 stars!!!
16. Signage could be improved, especially as it pertains to extensive walking/running trails, which are mostly unmarked. Fields seem underutilized (really the park in general seems this way), but perhaps better left alone. Perhaps I could be more proactive, but publicity seems to be lacking.
17. This park is better off kept lowkey
18. I do appreciate the open meadows, even if they impede biodiversity. The open sight lines are helpful for safety and I find them to be very peaceful.
19. Thank you to all those people who work on the trails and the biodiversity of this site!
20. Thank you for providing this nature area. It is very valuable and life enhancing to me, and I'm sure many others, please continue, and we're possible raise the investment so that more people can enjoy this great area.
21. Tell a certain hiker named Richard to stop building illegal trail in Abersham.
22. I love Fisher but the off leash dogs are a problem for the safety of others enjoying their right to not be jumped on or chased and it affects wildlife. More importantly allowing off leash dogs to continue and not take a hard stance on it is resulting in people with disabilities not able to safely enjoy the park. Those in a wheelchair with dogs running up at them, those with hearing impairments who can't hear the dog coming up behind them or those who have a fear of dogs. Please do something to ensure these groups of people can safely enjoy the park. Don't discriminate them. Thank you
23. Some attention needs to be paid to the erosion on the trails as there are several areas that have washed out.
24. You guys have done an incredible job. Keep up the good work. It's amazing to have a place to come and walk around.
25. Management practices seem wonky. Nice stands of milkweed are repeatedly mowed. The plantings of new trees all in rows and close together doesn't enhance the natural attributes of the park