

**Rio Grande NF Forest Plan Revision
Awareness Meeting
October 3, 2014
South Fork, CO
7:00 pm - 9:00 pm
Meeting Summary**

Attendees

Forest Plan Revision Team

- *US Forest Service*: Mike Blakeman, Adam Mendonca, Henry Provencio, Martha Williamson
- *Peak Facilitation*: Kristin Barker, Heather Bergman

5 members of the public were also present.

Meeting Overview

Members of the public attended this kickoff Awareness Meeting to learn about and participate in the upcoming Forest Plan revision for the Rio Grande National Forest. The purpose of the meeting was twofold: 1) to inform meeting participants about the Forest Plan and upcoming revision process, and 2) to learn how community members use and value the forest, and about their key goals for the planning process.

Opening Remarks

Attendees heard two brief opening remarks:

- Local District Ranger Martha Williamson welcomed everyone and stressed that public participation is vital to creating the best possible Forest Plan.
- Peak Facilitation Group President Heather Bergman introduced herself as the meeting facilitator and gave an overview of what to expect from this and future meetings.

Presentations

Two presenters spoke for ten minutes each about the Forest Plan and revision process.

Forest Plan and Revision

Henry Provencio, USFS Planning Analyst, explained that the Forest Plan provides a high-level guide for all decisions and activities on the Rio Grande National Forest. All projects on the forest must follow the guidelines of the Forest Plan, which is revised every 15 years and amended as needed. USFS revised the key requirements of the Forest Plan in 2012 to include aspects of ecological and biological health, resource management, and sustainable forest use. [View the presentation slides at the RGNF Plan Revision website.](#)

USFS encourages members of the public to participate throughout the Forest Plan revision process, which consists of the following five steps:

Plan Revision Step	Opportunity for Public Involvement	Associated USFS Document(s)	Timeline for Completion
Assess current and possible conditions	Participate in assessment meetings	Assessment report	Summer 2015
Propose plan changes	Participate in planning meetings	Need For Change report	Fall 2015
National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process	Comment on published Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Forest Plan draft(s)	Progressive drafts of Forest Plan and EIS, culminating in Final EIS	
Address objections and make decisions	Voice objections during 60-day objection period (if desired)	Record of Decision	2017
Monitor process and revise if necessary	Ongoing		

Questions and Answers

- *Can a person living in New York City comment on the Draft EIS just like a local resident here can?* Yes. The National Forest is funded by everyone’s tax dollars and belongs to every American citizen.
- *You mentioned taking cultural aspects into account. How do you define “cultural”?* We primarily consider traditional cultural uses by Native Americans and the Hispanic community.

Rio Grande National Forest Planning Process

Heather Bergman, President of Peak Facilitation Group, detailed the overall plan revision process and its need for meaningful public participation. [View the presentation slides at the RGNF Plan Revision website.](#) Over the next year, USFS and the National Forest Foundation will host a series of public meetings to discuss specific forest management issues and areas of concern within the Rio Grande National Forest. Public participation at these meetings will help determine the scope of the planning process and will identify the key needs, values, and interests of stakeholders to be addressed in the Forest Plan. Additionally, local groups and organizations are encouraged to co-host meetings focusing on their issues of interest. In order to accomplish its goal of engaging the public frequently in a meaningful and transparent way, USFS brought in the National Forest Foundation and Peak Facilitation Group to ensure that meaningful public participation occurs throughout the planning process.

A new interactive website allows members of the public to answer questions, post comments and pictures, and be part of a conversation with community members and local leaders about the Rio Grande National Forest and the plan revision process: <http://riograndeplanning.mindmixer.com/>

Questions and Answers

- *Will the public have access to the draft Forest Plan?* Yes. Drafts will be available in paper form, on DVDs, and online.

Electronic Polling

Participants answered ten electronic polling questions identifying how individuals and their communities use and value the forest. Polling results can be found at the end of this summary.

Small Group Discussions

Participants worked as a group to discuss questions about the Rio Grande National Forest and the plan revision process. An overview of key themes from this meeting follows; a summation of the discussions from all awareness meetings (held in Antonito, South Fork, Alamosa, and Saguache) [is available online](#).

1. How and where do you use the Rio Grande National Forest?

Common Themes: Participants primarily use the forest for recreation (both motorized and non-motorized) in the Divide District.

Additional Responses: Uses of the Forest

Hiking, hunting, 4-wheeling, ATV riding, snowmobiling, wildlife viewing, fishing

Additional Responses: Locations of Forest Use

Divide District, areas adjacent to private lands, facilities

2. What roles and contributions does the Rio Grande National Forest make to this community?

Common Themes: The group noted that the community benefits from natural resources (e.g., firewood collection), economic boons from tourism, and motorized accessibility to the forest.

Additional Responses: Roles and Contributions of the Forest

- Natural resources (e.g., firewood)
- Economics (e.g., tourism)
- Accessibility to USFS roads, ATV routes, etc.

3. What are things in the current plan or how the forest is currently managed that you would like to see changed in the plan revision?

Common Themes: The group would like the plan to ensure maintenance, improvement, and creation of roads and trails.

Additional Responses: Proposals for Change in the Plan Revision

- Maintain and develop hiking trails
 - Improve Continental Divide Trail and Colorado Trail
 - Address unmarked and dangerous trails around Platoro, Elwood Pass, and San Juans
 - Create specified loop trails

- Improve motorized roads and trails
 - Widen ATV trails to 60”
 - Create specific designation of ATV trails
 - Integrate South Fork and USFS roads
- Protect sensitive and riparian areas

4. *What concerns do you have about the Forest Plan revision process?*

Common Themes: Participants primarily expressed concern that their access to the forest would be diminished by road and trail closures. The group would like specific uses to be determined for areas within the forest (i.e., ATV, equestrian, and hiking areas).

Additional Responses: Concerns about the Forest Plan Revision

- Don’t cut out, ignore, or disenfranchise public from the process
- Get radar for weather/floods/irrigation
- Address the issue of RS2477

5. *If you could only tell the Forest Service one thing about the forest, how you interact with the forest, and/or the plan revision process, what would it be?*

Common Concerns: The group wants to remain included in the revision process in a meaningful way.

Additional Responses:

Consistent access to the forest is critical (open up all trails, old roads, etc. for ATV, snowmobile, and hiking access).

Additional Comments and Perspectives

In addition to the common themes among participants and between groups that are outlined above, multiple unique comments and perspectives emerged from the small group discussions, large group discussion, and on comment cards provided at the meeting. These are listed below.

- Maintaining forest health – especially concerning management of beetle kill spruce (more logging, encouragement of local use of trees, etc.)
- More “local” control of forest management
- ATV game retrieval

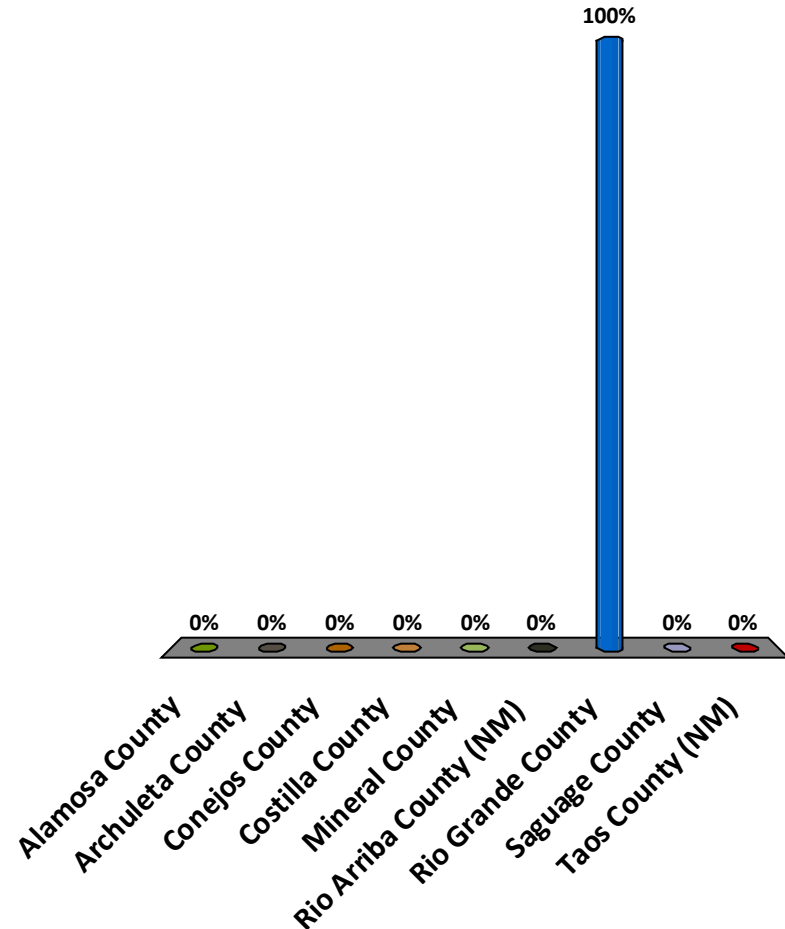


Rio Grande National Forest Plan Revision

Community Awareness Meeting
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SOUTH FORK

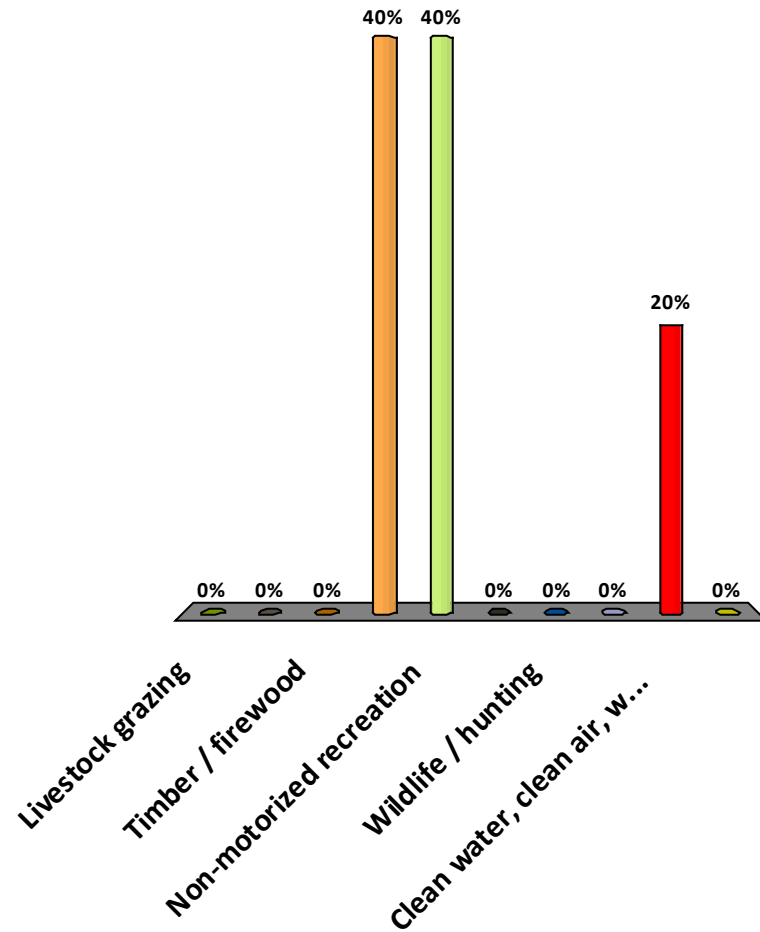
1. Where do you live?

- A. Alamosa County
- B. Archuleta County
- C. Conejos County
- D. Costilla County
- E. Mineral County
- F. Rio Arriba County (NM)
- G. Rio Grande County
- H. Saguage County
- I. Taos County (NM)



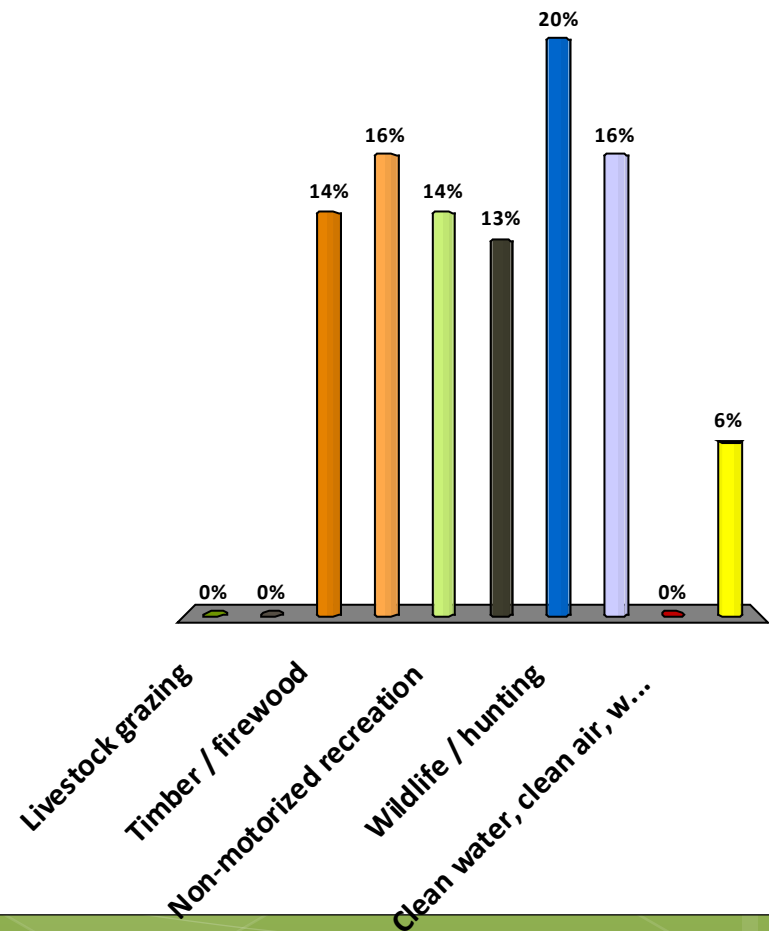
2. What is your primary interest in the Rio Grande National Forest?

- A. Livestock grazing
- B. Energy / minerals
- C. Timber / firewood
- D. Motorized recreation
- E. Non-motorized recreation
- F. Camping
- G. Wildlife / hunting
- H. Wilderness
- I. Clean water, clean air, water supply
- J. Other



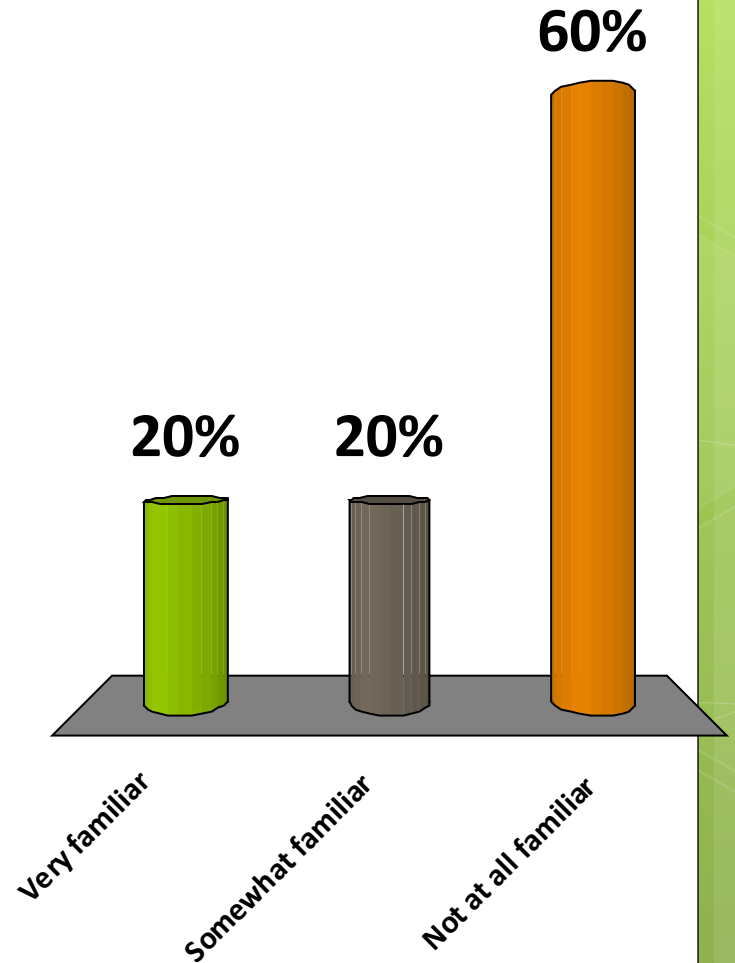
3. Which of the following are your **TOP 3** interests in the Rio Grande National Forest.

- A. Livestock grazing
- B. Energy / minerals
- C. Timber / firewood
- D. Motorized recreation
- E. Non-motorized recreation
- F. Camping
- G. Wildlife / hunting
- H. Wilderness
- I. Clean water, clean air, water supply
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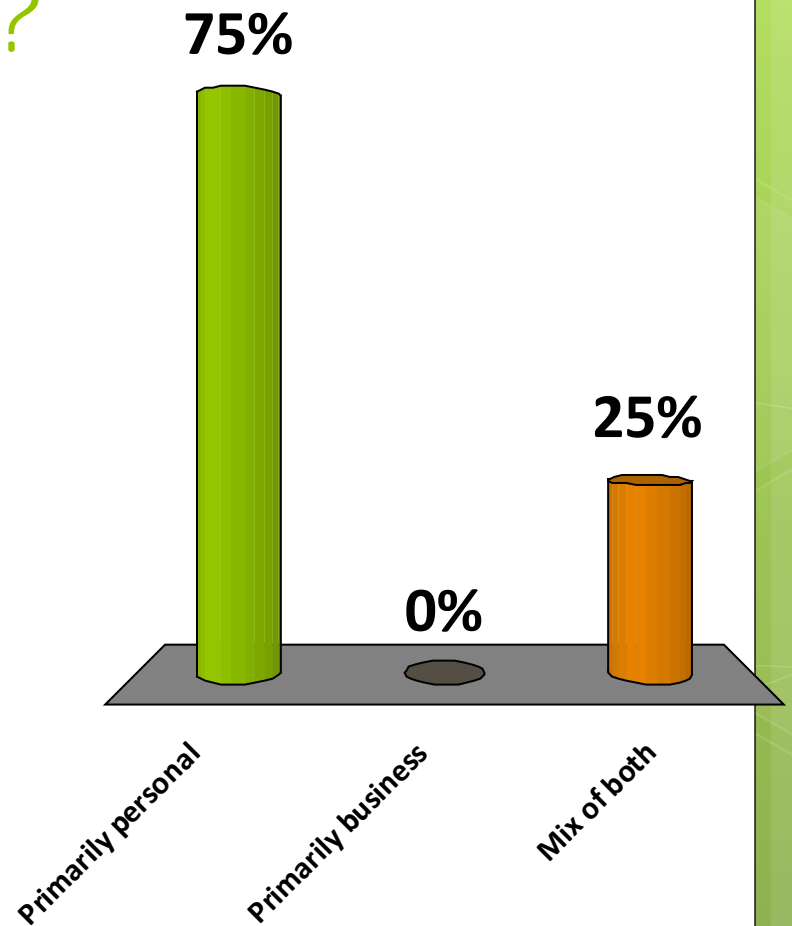
4. How familiar are you with the current Rio Grande National Forest Plan?

- A. Very familiar
- B. Somewhat familiar
- C. Not at all familiar



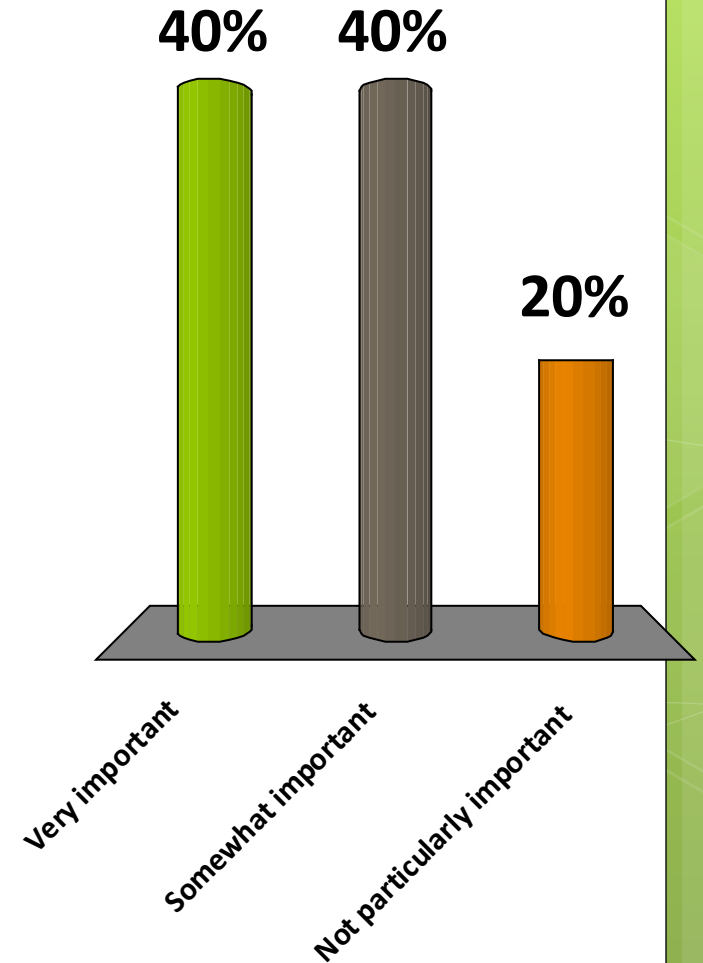
5. Do you use the Rio Grande National Forest primarily for personal or business purposes?

- A. Primarily personal
- B. Primarily business
- C. Mix of both



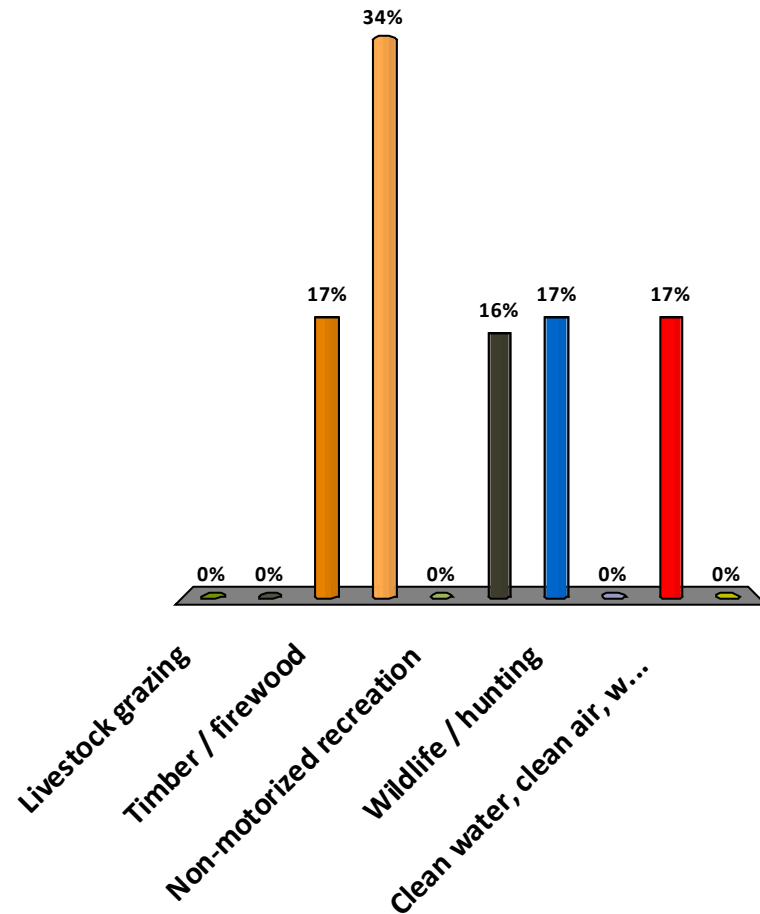
6. How important is the Rio Grande National Forest to your ability to make a living?

- A. Very important
- B. Somewhat important
- C. Not particularly important



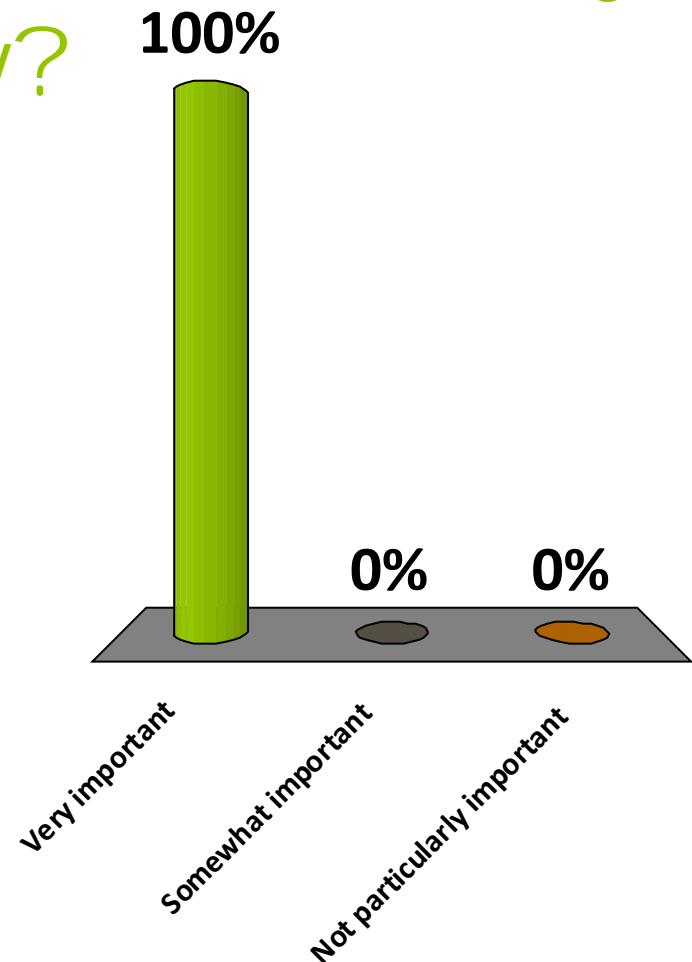
7. What are your community's TOP 3 uses or interests in the Rio Grande National Forest?

- A. Livestock grazing
- B. Energy / minerals
- C. Timber / firewood
- D. Motorized recreation
- E. Non-motorized recreation
- F. Camping
- G. Wildlife / hunting
- H. Wilderness
- I. Clean water, clean air, water supply
- J. Other



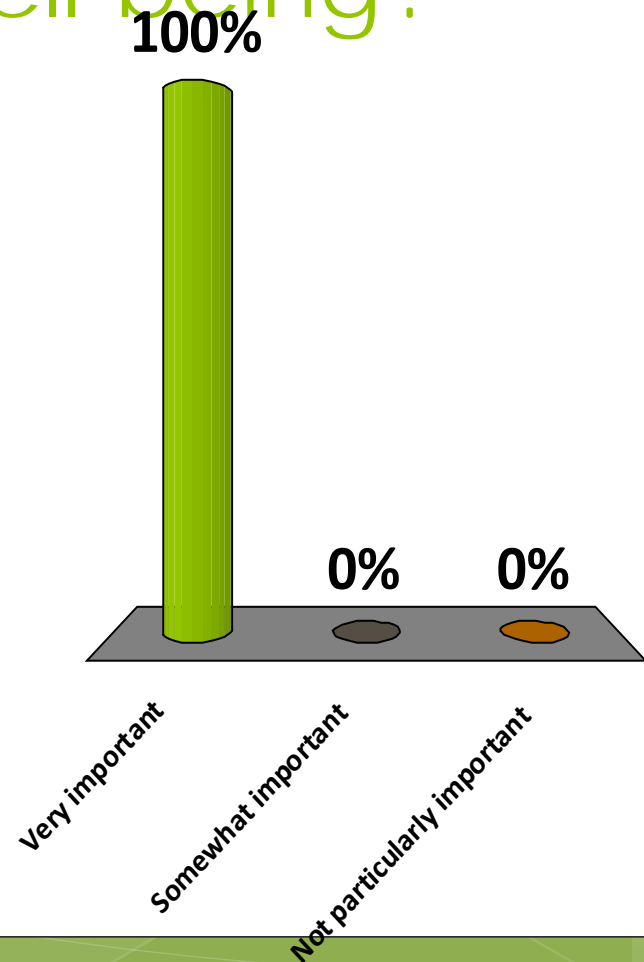
8. How important is the Rio Grande National Forest to your community's economic prosperity?

- A. Very important
- B. Somewhat important
- C. Not particularly important



9. How important is the Rio Grande National Forest to your community's social and cultural well-being?

- A. Very important
- B. Somewhat important
- C. Not particularly important



10. Which of these issues concerns you regarding the Rio Grande National Forest plan revision?

- A. Maintaining and building trust with stakeholders
- B. Maintaining multiple uses
- C. Addressing beetle kill impacts
- D. Wildfire preparation
- E. Maintaining forest health
- F. Protecting water supplies
- G. Ensuring developed and undeveloped recreation
- H. Other

