

Jenny Lake Visitor Use Study

Summer 2025

Jennifer N. Newton, PhD¹, Elizabeth G. Haley¹, & Jenna T. Baker, MA²



Survey location at Jenny Lake

Cover Photo Credit: Jennifer N. Newton

¹ National Park Service, Grand Teton National Park, 103 Headquarters Loop, Moose, WY, 83012

² Oregon State University, College of Forestry, Research Forests, 3100 SW Jefferson Way Corvallis, OR 97331

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List of Terms or Acronyms

NPS – National Park Service

GRTE – Grand Teton National Park

User Type Definitions

- One-Way Boat = participants who took the shuttle boat one-way
- Two-Way Boat = participants who took the shuttle boat two-ways
- Hiker = participants who did not take the shuttle boat and who hiked beyond the east shore
- Jenny Lake Developed Area= participants who did not leave the East Shore/Jenny Lake Developed Area
 - (i.e. they did not cross the Jenny Lake Outlet Bridge or go up the stairs on the northern end of the east shore to enter the Jenny Lake Loop Trail).
- Other = Participants who did not fit in any of the other categories, includes those who took a scenic boat ride or brought their own watercraft.

Executive Summary

The 2025 Jenny Lake Visitor Use Study provides a comprehensive, mixed methods assessment of visitor movement, behavior, and experience within one of Grand Teton National Park’s most popular summer destinations. The study integrates GPS based visitor tracking, qualitative interviews, trail counters, vehicle counts, and camera monitoring of the West Shore shuttle boat line to document and understand current conditions in the Jenny Lake area.

Key Findings

High Participation and Strong Representation of User Types

- A total of 634 visitors participated (85% response rate) across five primary user groups: one-way boat, two-way boat, hikers, Jenny Lake developed area, and “other” (paddlers and scenic boat patrons).

Concentrated Spatial Use and Predictable High-Density Nodes

- Regardless of user type, the East Plaza, Jenny Lake East Shore, Hidden Falls, Inspiration Point, and the West Shore boat dock exhibited the highest densities of use. Hikers and boat users showed distinct patterns—hikers spread along the Southwest Loop Trail, while boat users showed concentrated movement between Hidden Falls, Inspiration Point, and Cascade Canyon.

Visit Duration and Behavior Patterns

- Across all participants, the average visit lasted nearly 3 hours and included 3.6 miles traveled, with participants spending 65% of their time walking. Hikers traveled the farthest and fastest, while developed area participants had the briefest stays and smallest spatial footprint.
- Peak time (9am – 2pm) participants across most groups experienced significantly more time stopped than those visiting during non-peak times, indicating behavior change during peak times.

West Shore Shuttle Boat Line Wait Times

- Camera data indicated that 96% of sampled days experienced at least one episode of the West Shore shuttle boat line exceeding 30 minutes of wait time, with an average episode length of 42 minutes and some episodes surpassing five hours.
- Most days experienced multiple long-wait episodes.

Undesignated Parking

- Parking demand routinely exceeds the designated parking lot capacity.

- During peak hours (9 am–2 pm), undesignated roadside parking averaged 155–221 additional vehicles, representing more than a third of visitors accessing Jenny Lake are parking in undesignated parking.
- Visitors generally anticipated parking difficulty and often self-mitigated by arriving early or parking immediately along the roadway.

Increased Trail Use

- Trail counters on the Southwest Jenny Lake Loop Trail recorded a 98% increase in users from 2016 to 2025.
- This reflects a sustained and accelerating rise in trail-based recreation at Jenny Lake.

Visitor Experience Generally Positive Despite Crowding

- Most interviewed participants reported that crowding did not detract from their experience, though some identified pinch points such as the Discovery Trail, shuttle boat queues, and the ascent to Inspiration Point.
- Signage was generally viewed as clear and helpful.
- The natural scenery and shuttle boat experience were frequently cited as highlights.

Introduction

Background

Jenny Lake offers a variety of recreation opportunities, making it a popular point of interest for many visitor types. The East Shore Plaza contains a visitor center, a backcountry permit ranger station, a general store, restrooms, shaded seating areas, wayfinding signage, and interpretive exhibits. It is paved, relatively flat, and accessible by Architectural Barriers Act standards to the lakeshore. There are a variety of hiking trails; some lead to iconic viewpoints such as Hidden Falls and Inspiration Point, continuing into Cascade Canyon, while others connect to the String Lake or Moose Ponds trail networks. A motorized shuttle boat is available to transport hikers between the east shore and the west shore of Jenny Lake. By taking the shuttle boat, hikers can reduce their total mileage by 2 miles one way. In addition to the shuttle boat, Jenny Lake Boating (the concessionaire operator) offers Scenic Boat rides for \$30. Otherwise, a one-way shuttle boat ticket is \$12 or \$20 round trip, available from 7am-7pm during peak season. Visitors can launch their own non-motorized boats, rent from Jenny Lake Boating, or go for a swim. Exum Mountain Guides lead guided climbing that begins in the Jenny Lake area. On the Northeast shore, there is a concessionaire campground and lodge along the scenic one-way road. The scenic one-way also offers a bike lane, continuing after the terminus of the GRTE pathway system.

In 2016, there was a multiyear multimillion dollar renewal project focusing on renovating trails and facilities in the area to improve the visitor experience. In 2017, the park conducted a Visitor Use Study that explored visitor motivations, expectations, perceptions, and behaviors. During that study, the Jenny Lake Renewal project was underway, and visitor access to the East Shore Developed Area, including the East Shore, was very limited. Below is a summary of the findings from that study:

Visit Highlights- Overall scenery and wildlife were the most frequent highlights of visits.

- Many people stated that “nothing” detracted from their experience (35.6%), with “crowding” being the second highest (28.0%)

Visitor Perceptions of Crowding- Most people stated that the possibility of crowding did not influence their Jenny Lake trip plans (60%) and difficulty finding parking was anticipated (54%).

Visit Characteristics- The majority of visitors at Jenny Lake were first-time visitors (63.1%)

- The majority of participants used the Jenny Lake Loop trail (67.1%) and Hidden Falls (61.2%)
 - However, there was a significant difference in where boat users went vs non boat users. Boat users were more likely to go to Hidden Falls and the North horse trail. These visitors were also found to spend less than 3 hours in the Jenny Lake area. Non-boat users were more likely to go on the Jenny Lake Loop Trail and the visitor center. These visitors were also found to spend less than 2 hours in the Jenny Lake area.

Purpose

Since the Visitor Use and Experience Study at Jenny Lake in 2017, no other visitor use studies have been conducted in the Jenny Lake area. Informal observations reveal consistent high use during peak times and consistent undesignated parking onto the Teton Park Road. The purpose of this study is to use spatial, quantitative, and qualitative data regarding visitor use throughout the Jenny Lake area to inform park management of current conditions regarding visitor use.

Methods

Study Area & Sampling Plan

Technicians sampled visitors to the Jenny Lake area using Garmin etrex 10 GPS units over 20 days between June 16-August 7, with 18 weekdays and 2 weekend days. For a full schedule, see Appendix A. Sampling times ranged from 7:30am-1:30pm, 10:30am-4:30pm, and 2:30pm-8:30pm. Technicians handed out GPS units at randomly generated times for four hours and collected units for the last two hours of the sampling timeframe. Sampling locations are symbolized in Figure 1. Jenny Lake South (yellow), Sign (Red), and North (Blue) were distributed to intercept visitors entering at different points. Drop boxes were available for participants to return GPS units in case the participant returned after technicians left for the day. Drop boxes were monitored at the beginning and end of each sampling period.

Technicians conducted 9 qualitative surveys on August 21 and August 29, intercepting visitors who were exiting the Jenny Lake Developed Area.

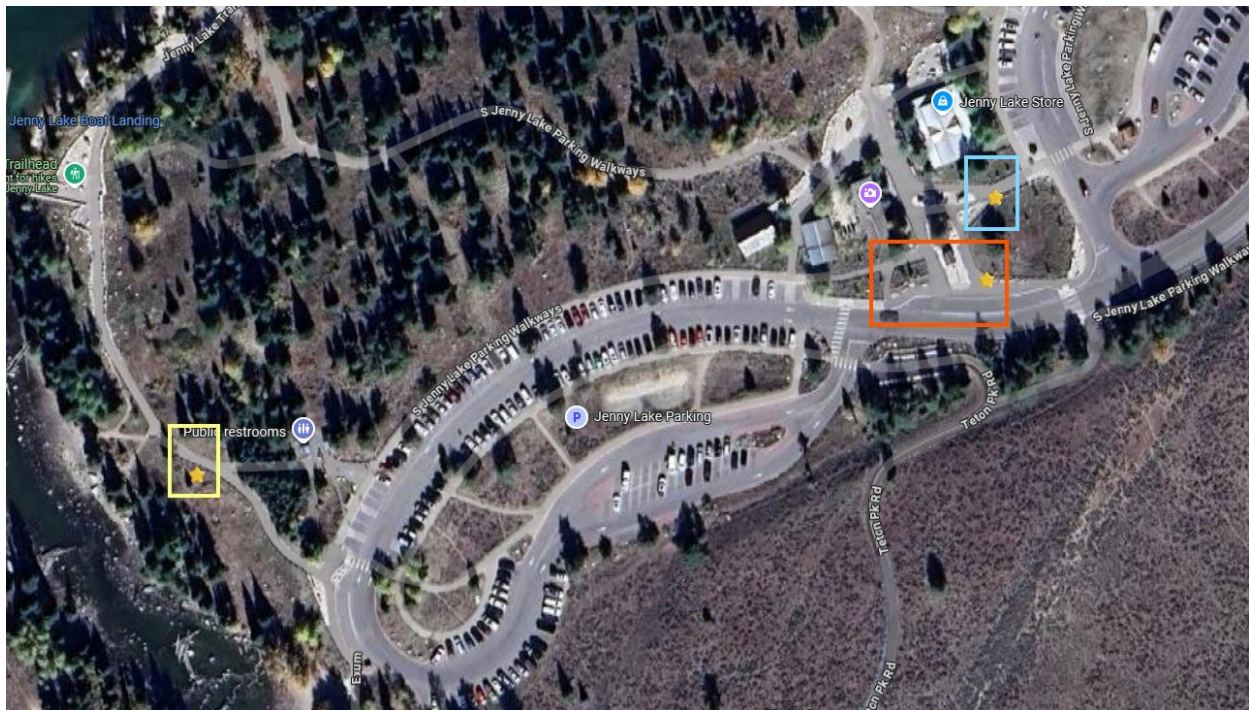


Figure 1. Map of Survey areas where the stars indicate Dropbox locations.

Data Collection

Visitor Behavior & Movement Patterns

Research technicians intercepted visitors and asked them to carry Garmin etrex GPS units with them during their visit to Jenny Lake. The units were programmed to collect a point every 15 seconds. Each participant's track was saved individually and later uploaded into ArcGIS Pro via DNR software for analysis. Tracks were cleaned after every sampling day to trim points that occurred at the end of tracks in Drop box locations. Research technicians used hardcopy logs to manage units in the field. These logs noted time the GPS was handed out and returned, group size, number of children, party description, and rejections. Copies of the logs can be found in Appendix B: Jenny Lake Visitor Use Study Log Sheet.

Qualitative Surveys

Technicians conducted 9 qualitative surveys to better understand visitor experience. Surveys were recorded and transcribed using Voice Memos. A copy of the questionnaire and survey transcriptions can be found in Appendix C.

West Shore Boat Line

A Reconyx Hyperfire 2 camera was installed on the West shore of Jenny Lake. It viewed the Jenny Lake Shuttle Boat West Shore line when the wait time is estimated to be over 30 minutes (see Figures 2 and 3). The camera was programmed to take a photo every five minutes. Technicians downloaded the images every two weeks from July 11 to September 16, 2025. There were 67 days included in the sample.



Figure 2. Camera installed on the west shore of Jenny Lake views the boat line around the 30-minute mark. See camera installed on the tree in the yellow box.

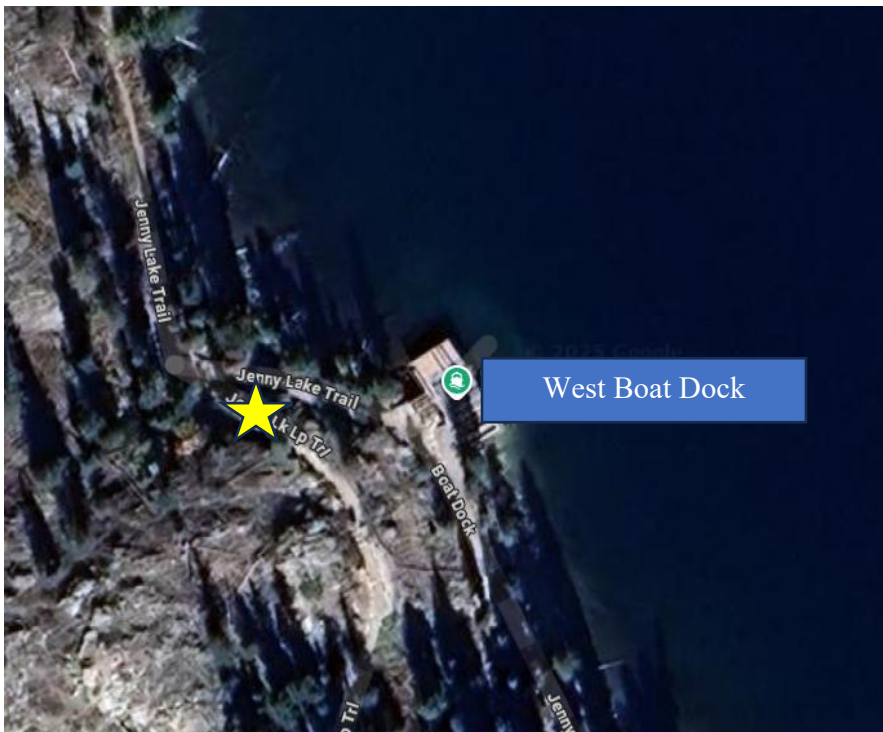


Figure 3. Map showing where Reconyx Camera was installed (Star) to monitor the line for the boat on the West Shore.

Trail & Vehicle Counts

Trafix trail counters monitor visitor use on trails in the Jenny Lake area by counting when an infrared beam is broken. Counters are located on the Southwest Jenny Trail, Cascade Canyon, and Hanging Canyon. Trail counters along the Southwest Jenny Lake trail and Hanging Canyon have been installed for more than 10 years, while the Cascade Canyon trail counter has been installed for the past 8 years. Additionally, vehicle counts were manually conducted on the Teton Park Road to quantify undesignated parking. The sampling plan for Undesignated Parking Vehicle Counts can be found in Appendix D. Figure 4 shows a map of how counts were subdivided.



Figure 4. Map of undesignated parking vehicle counts subdivisions.

Data Analysis

Visitor Behavior & Movement Patterns

GPS tracks from all study participants were merged into one layer in ArcPro GIS. The GPS Log was imported to ArcPro as a Table from Excel. The GPS Log, containing group size, number of children, start and end times, and locations visited, was joined with the point layer of GPS tracks based on the unique identifier (TIDENT). The layer was then projected into 12N UTM Coordinate System to include Cartesian Coordinates that are used for distance and speed calculations. The attribute table from the joined layer was then exported to Excel, containing a row for every point. In the master table, a series of columns were added for calculations (such as speed, moving, and stopped, etc...) based on the exported data.

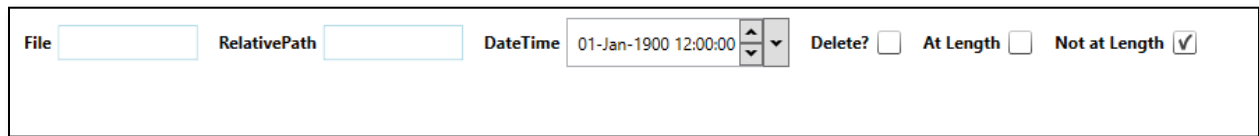
Qualitative Surveys

Nine Qualitative surveys were recorded and Transcribed using Voice Memos. Complete transcriptions can be found in Appendix C. Surveys were analyzed based on their Jenny Lake visit, parking experience, perception of crowding, use of the Shuttle Boat, and broader travel plans. Key quotes were extracted to convey visitor experience, and a Word Cloud summarizes their favorite aspects of Jenny Lake.

West Shore Boat Line

Images taken from the camera on the West Shore were sorted using Timelapse2 Software. Technicians used a custom template to tag photos when the line reached the 30- minute mark (Figure 5). The data set was exported as a .csv to be analyzed using Excel.

Each time the line reached the 30-minute mark, it was considered an “episode.” Lengths of episodes were calculated by the number of consecutive photographs depicting the line length over the 30-minute mark multiplied by 5 minutes. An “episode” ends when there is a photo showing the line length of less than the 30-minute mark. There can be multiple “episodes” each day.



The image shows a screenshot of a software interface for creating a timelapse template. It features several input fields and checkboxes. On the left, there are two empty text boxes labeled 'File' and 'RelativePath'. To their right is a 'DateTime' field containing the text '01-Jan-1900 12:00:00' and a small date/time picker icon. Further right are three checkboxes: 'Delete?' (unchecked), 'At Length' (unchecked), and 'Not at Length' (checked).

Figure 5. Timelapse Template created for this project to indicate when the line reaches the critical point.

Trail & Vehicle Counts

Trail counter data were downloaded from TrafX Datanet to quantify trail usage over time. Manual undesignated parking vehicle counts were uploaded and analyzed in Excel.

Results

Response Rate

There was an 85% response rate for participation in this study. Research technicians contacted 787 visitors to participate in this study.

- Of those, 44 were unable to participate in the study due to language barriers or they were not part of the sample (i.e. they were backcountry camping, only waiting to pick someone up, or were at the end of their visit).
- 110 individuals (15% of potential participants) refused to participate in the study. Common reasons for not wanting to participate include: being in a rush, not interested, and not wanting to carry the GPS unit.
- 634 individuals (85% of potential participants) agreed to participate in the study.

Visitor Movement and Behavior Patterns

Visitor User Types

The following results are organized by user type, as well as a total of the entire sample. Below the user types are defined:

- One-Way Boat = participants who took the shuttle boat one-way
- Two-Way Boat = participants who took the shuttle boat two-ways
- Hiker = participants who did not take the shuttle boat and who hiked beyond the east shore
- Jenny Lake Developed Area= participants who did not leave the East Shore/Jenny Lake Developed Area
 - (i.e. they did not cross the Jenny Lake Outlet Bridge or go up the stairs on the northern end of the east shore to enter the Jenny Lake Loop Trail).
- Other = Participants who did not fit in any of the other categories, includes those who took a scenic boat ride or brought their own watercraft.

Overall, 42% of participants took the Jenny Lake Shuttle Boat (either one or two ways). This is the largest combined user type, followed by those who stayed in the Jenny Lake Developed Area (30%), Two-Way Boat users (26%) and Hikers (26%) (Table 1, Figure 6).

Table 1. Percent of User Types

User Type	N	% of Total Sample
One-Way Boat	101	16%
Two-Way Boat	165	26%
Hiker	164	26%
Jenny Lake Developed Area Only	188	30%
Other	16	2%
Total	634	100%

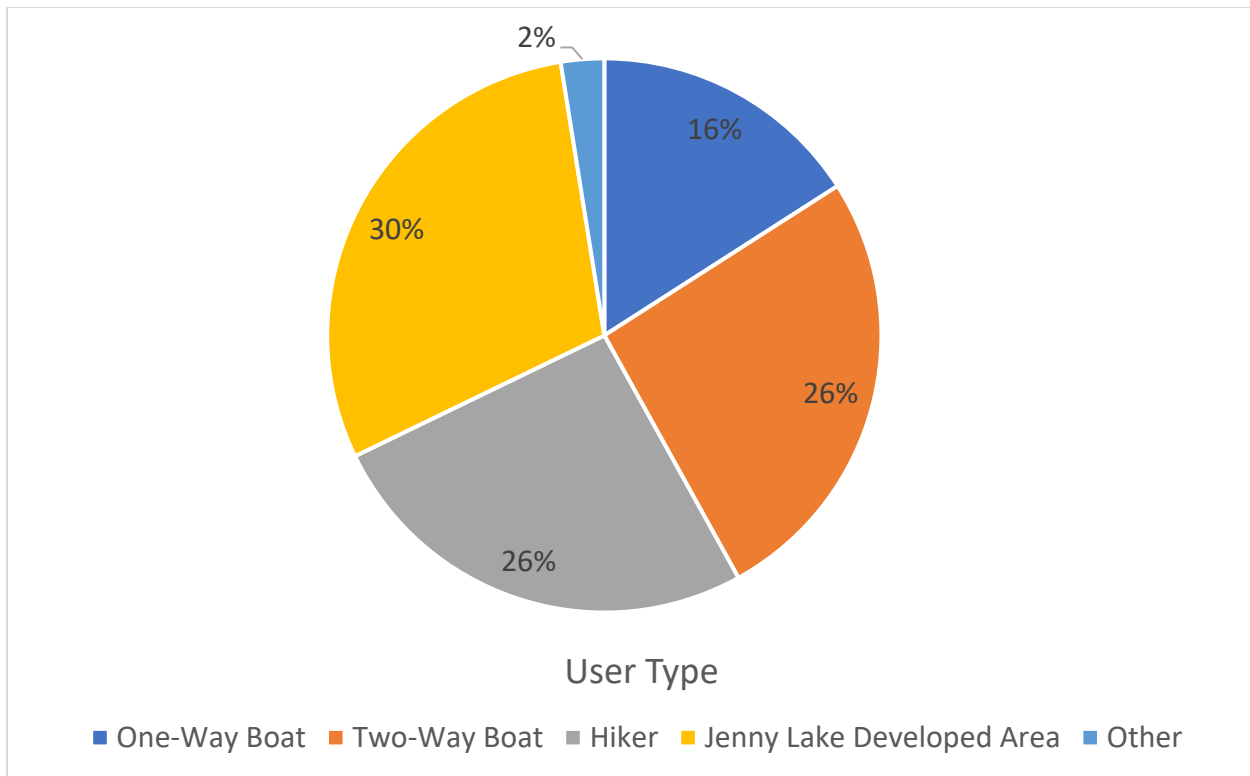


Figure 6. Percent of User Types

Locations Visited

The percentage of participants that visited or entered key locations of interest in the Jenny Lake area are summarized in Table 2 and Figure 7. A map of the zones used for the locations visited at Jenny Lake analysis is in Figure 8, while a close up of the Jenny Lake Developed area is in Figure 9.

- Overall, the Jenny Lake East shore was the most visited location at Jenny Lake with 80% of all participants going to that location.
- While the South Jenny Lake Loop trail had 97% of Hikers and 93% of One-Way Boat users visiting that location, only 40% of all users visited the South Jenny Lake Loop trail.
- Of those that stayed in the Jenny Lake Developed Area, the East Plaza (83%) and Jenny Lake East Shore (80%) were the most popular locations.

Table 2. Percent of User Type that Visited Different Locations at Jenny Lake

	Boat One-Way	Boat Two-Way	Hiker	Jenny Lake Developed Area	Overall
	N = 102 tracks	N = 166 tracks	N = 152 tracks	N = 186 tracks	N = 606 tracks
Location Zone	%	%	%	%	%
Jenny Lake East Shore	76	84	78	80	80
East Plaza	75	80	70	83	78
Outlook Overlook Trail	71	73	55	45	60
Hidden Falls	74	73	50	0	46
Discovery Trail	44	55	28	55	46
Boat	100	100	0	0	44
South Parking Lot Trail	41	33	53	38	41
South Jenny Lake Loop	93	2	97	0	40
Southwest Loop Trail	91	1	76	0	34
Inspiration Point	46	64	34	0	34
Jenny Lake Store*	20	16	13	18	20
Jenny Lake Visitor Center*	19	17	20	24	19
Cascade Canyon	15	30	11	0	14
Jenny Lake Loop NE	5	0	26	4	9
South Parking Lot Sidewalk	5	7	10	4	9
Northwest Loop Trail	5	1	23	0	7
Moose Ponds	2	1	9	0	3
North Horse Trail	2	3	2	0	2
South Horse Trail	1	0	5	0	1

*To be included in the Jenny Lake Visitor Center or Jenny Lake Store, participants had to spend 45 seconds or more in these locations.

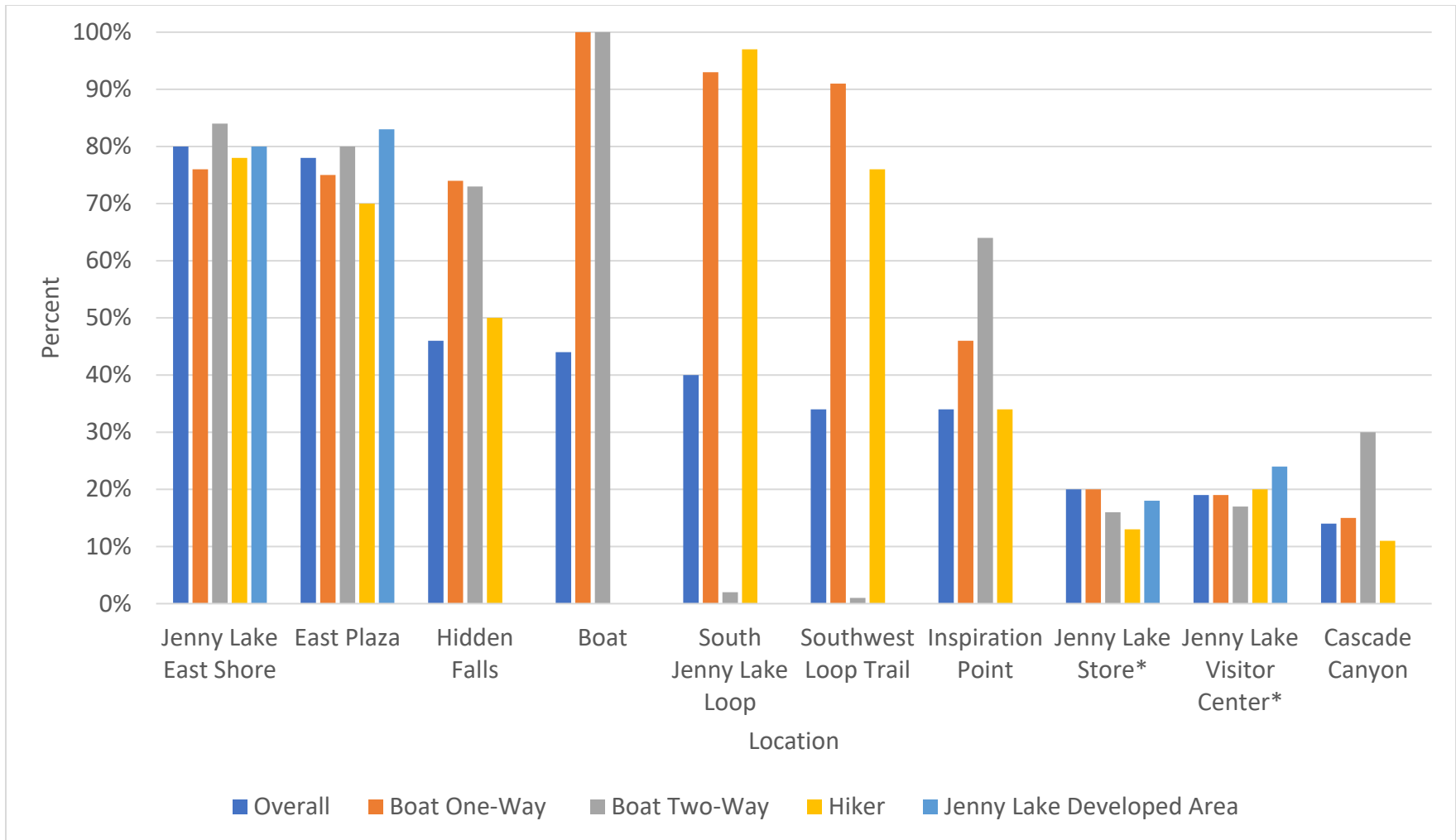


Figure 7. Percent of User Type that Visited Different Locations at Jenny Lake

*To be included in the Jenny Lake Visitor Center or Jenny Lake Store, participants had to spend 45 seconds or more in these locations.



Figure 8. Jenny Lake Locations Visited Zone Map



Figure 9. Jenny Lake Locations Visited Zone Map: East Shore Close Up

Routes Traveled by User Type

There were 128 unique routes that participants traveled in the Jenny Lake Visitor Use study. A route is the order in which participants visited different locations during their trip to Jenny Lake. A full list of every route is available in Appendices E-H.

One-Way Boat User Routes

- The majority (56%) of one-way boat users hiked and then took the Jenny Lake Shuttle Boat. Other routes are listed in Table 3.
- Of those that hiked first, the most common route was to take the Southwest Jenny Lake trail to Hidden Falls and Inspiration Point, then return to the Jenny Lake Developed Area via Shuttle Boat.

Table 3. One-Way Boat User Routes

Route	N	%
Hike, then Shuttle Boat	57	56
South Loop then Hidden Falls and Inspiration Point area	20	19
South loop then Hidden etc (no Inspiration or Cascade)	19	18
South Loop then Shuttle Boat	12	12
North Loop then Shuttle Boat	4	4
South Loop then Inspiration Point Only	2	2
Shuttle Boat, then Hike	44	44
Shuttle Boat then Hidden Falls & Inspiration Area	21	21
Shuttle Boat then Hidden Falls	16	16
Shuttle Boat then Inspiration Point (no Hidden Falls)	3	3
Shuttle Boat then South Loop Only	3	3
Shuttle Boat then North Loop Only	1	1

Two-Way Boat User Routes

- The most common route for two-way boat users was to take the shuttle boat, visit Hidden Falls and Inspiration Point, and return to the Jenny Lake Developed Area via shuttle boat (30%). Other routes are listed in Table 4.

Table 4. Two-Way Boat User Routes

Route (all routes include the Jenny Lake Shuttle Boat at the Start and End of their Route)	N	%
Hidden Falls and Inspiration Point	51	30
Hidden Falls Only	32	21
Hidden Falls, Inspiration Point, and Cascade Canyon	32	19
Stayed on Boat	23	14
Inspiration Point and Cascade Canyon (no Hidden Falls)	4	2
Other	8	5

Hiker Routes

- The most common hiking route was hiking along the Southwest Jenny Lake Loop trail to the Hidden Falls and Inspiration Point area and back via the Southwest Jenny Lake Loop trail (44%). Other routes are listed in Table 5.

Table 5. Hiker Routes

Route	N	%
Southwest Jenny Lake Loop trail to the Hidden Falls and Inspiration Point area and back via the Southwest Jenny Lake Loop trail	67	44
South Jenny Lake Loop trail only	31	20
Full perimeter of the Jenny Lake Loop Trail (South to North)	25	16
Moose Ponds	11	7
Full perimeter of the Jenny Lake Loop Trail (North to South)	10	7
Other	8	5

Jenny Lake Developed Area Only User Routes

- The most common routes for users who only stayed in the Jenny Lake Developed area were walking from the East Plaza to the Discovery Trail to the East Shore to the Outlet Overlook Trail to the East Plaza (20%) and walking from the South Parking Lot Trail to the Jenny Lake east Shore and to the East Plaza via the Discovery or Outlet Overlook trails (20%). Other routes can be found in Table 6.
- See Figure 9 for a map that includes location names.

Table 6. Jenny Lake Developed Area Only user Routes

Route	N	%
East Plaza to the Discovery Trail to the East Shore to the Outlet Overlook Trail to the East Plaza	37	20
South Parking Lot Trail to the Jenny Lake east Shore and to the East Plaza via the Discovery or Outlet Overlook trails	37	20
East Plaza to the Discovery Trail to the East Shore to the Discovery Trail to the East Plaza	29	16
East Plaza to Outlook Overlook Trail to Jenny Lake East Shore and Discovery to Outlook Overlook to east Plaza	24	13
Other (Only 1 person per route did that particular route)	22	12
East Plaza Only	22	12
South Parking Lot Trail Only	15	8

Descriptive Statistics by User Type

Descriptive statistics of the GPS tracks of all participants were analyzed in SPSS and grouped by User Type. Time Stopped and Time Walking were analyzed as both percentages (i.e. percent of the time spent walking versus stopped) and as total time spent in minutes. Distance was calculated in miles, while speed was calculated as miles per hour. Visiting Alone and No Children were categorical data types where the group size is one or no children were present, respectively. As such, medians and ranges for these data were excluded from Table 7. Results are below in Table 7 and Figures 10-14.

- Overall, participants spent an average of 178 minutes, nearly 3 hours, at Jenny Lake. This average does not include time spent finding parking or walking to/from parked vehicles.
 - The majority (66%) of their time at Jenny Lake is spent moving/walking.
 - The mean distance travelled is 3.6 miles, while the median is 2.8.

Table 7. Descriptive statistics for visitor behavior grouped by user type.

		One-Way Boat (n=101)	Two-Way Boat (n=165)	Hiker (n=164)	Jenny Lake Developed Area Only (n=188)	Other (n=16)	Total (n=634)
Time Stopped (%)	Mean	30.6	37.5	18.7	37.1	33.0	31.3
	Median	30.5	36.5	16.7	33.8	30.3	29.7
	Range	11-94	12-70	1-56	4-89	8-62	1-94
	SD	10.7	11.4	10.6	19.4	53.5	16.1
Time Walking (%)	Mean	65.7	55.5	79.7	61.3	60.4	65.4
	Median	65.6	55.7	82.5	64.5	59.7	66.2
	Range	6-84	26-85	37-98	11-94	27-91	6-98
	SD	10.1	11.6	11.1	18.9	20.1	16.7
Time Stopped (Minutes)	Mean	75.0	90.6	42.6	24.2	57.8	55.1
	Median	71.8	90.0	33.1	13.1	55.8	41.9
	Range	16-220	15-289	2-253	0-193	5-186	0-289
	SD	37.9	44.8	40.3	32.0	41.6	47.3
Time Walking (Minutes)	Mean	157.5	140.0	170.8	27.3	100.5	116.8
	Median	143.3	112.5	167.6	23.0	83.0	107.9
	Range	15-624	21-436	21-517	2-165	39-281	2-624
	SD	70.8	81.7	84.0	20.0	63.4	90.6
Total Time (Minutes)	Mean	240.5	244.7	216.5	52.0	168.9	178.1
	Median	223.0	225.6	216.5	37.0	148.5	172.1
	Range	134-826	50-577	34-649	3-325	58-339	3-826
	SD	92.4	108.9	110.3	45.9	80.4	124.2
Distance Travelled (Miles)	Mean	4.7	3.8	6.0	0.8	3.0	3.6
	Median	4.3	2.8	6.0	0.6	2.3	2.8
	Range	0-17	1-16	1-21	0-4.1	1-10	0-21
	SD	2.1	2.9	2.9	0.5	2.3	3.1

		One-Way Boat (n=101)	Two-Way Boat (n=165)	Hiker (n=164)	Jenny Lake Developed Area Only (n=188)	Other (n=16)	Total (n=634)
Average Moving Speed (MPH)	Mean	1.8	1.6	2.1	1.7	1.7	1.8
	Median	1.8	1.5	2.1	1.7	1.6	1.8
	Range	1.4-2.4	1.0-2.4	1.0-3.2	0.9-2.6	1.3-2.4	0.9-3.2
	SD	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.4
Visting Alone (%)	Mean	7	8	17	14	31	13
	Median	---	---	---	---	---	---
	Range	---	---	---	---	---	---
	SD	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.3
No Children (%)	Mean	68	70	83	75	88	75
	Median	---	---	---	---	---	---
	Range	---	---	---	---	---	---
	SD	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.4

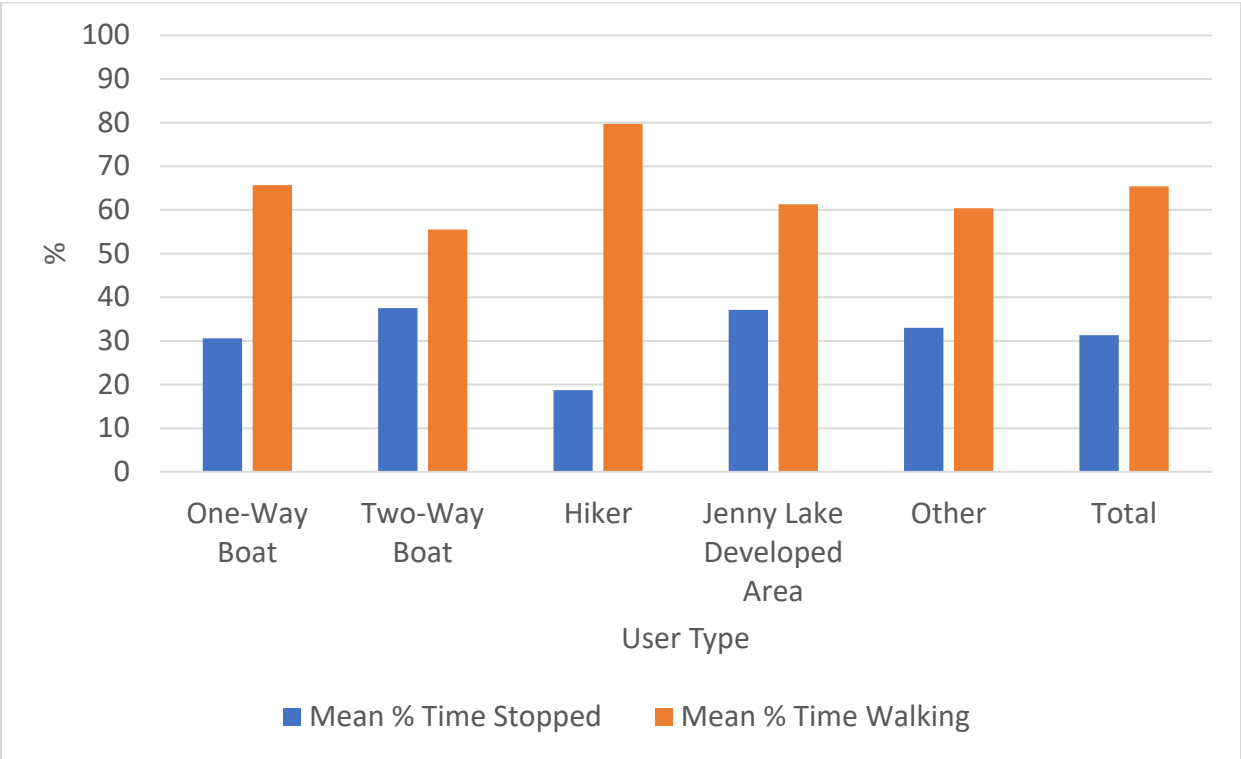


Figure 10. Average Percent of Time Spent Stopped and Walking by User Type

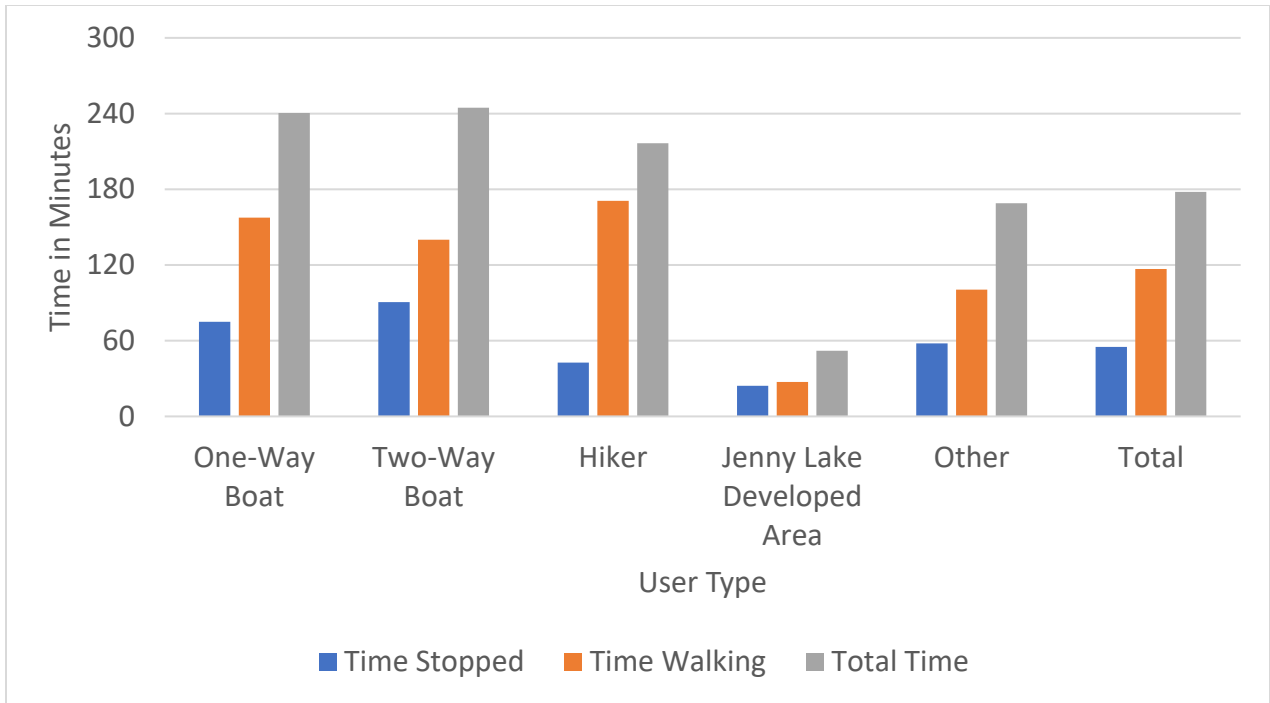


Figure 11. Average Time Spent Stopped, Walking, and Overall, by User Type

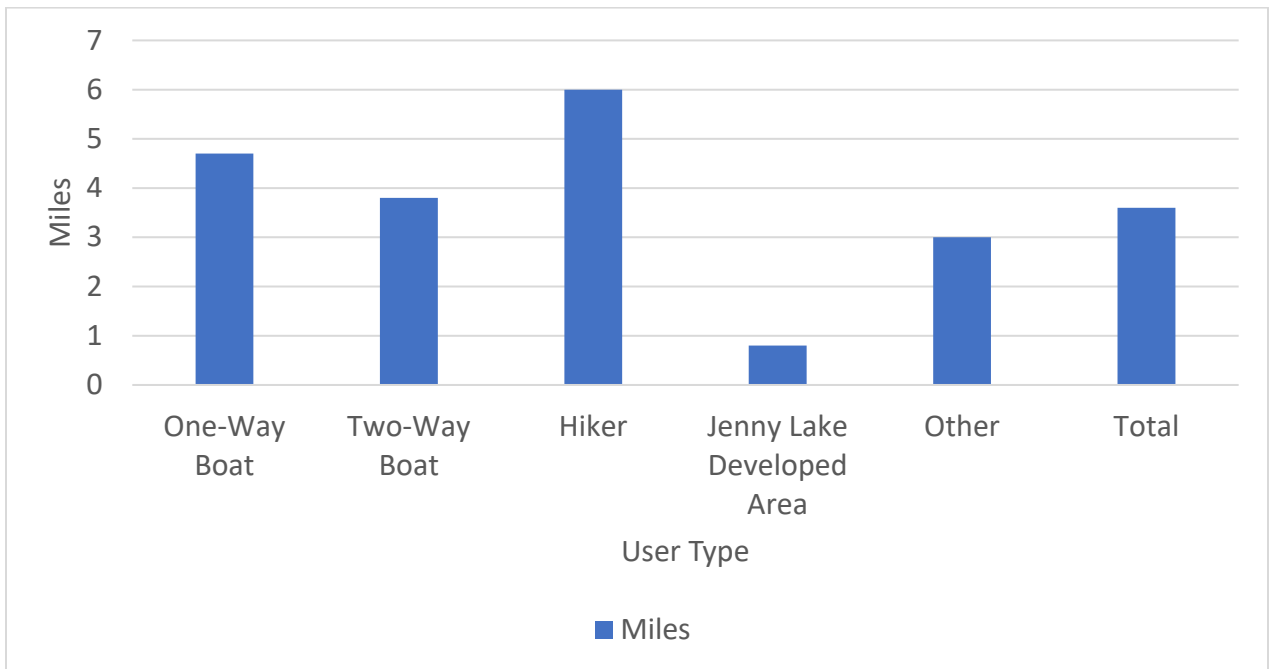


Figure 12. Average Distance Traveled by User Type

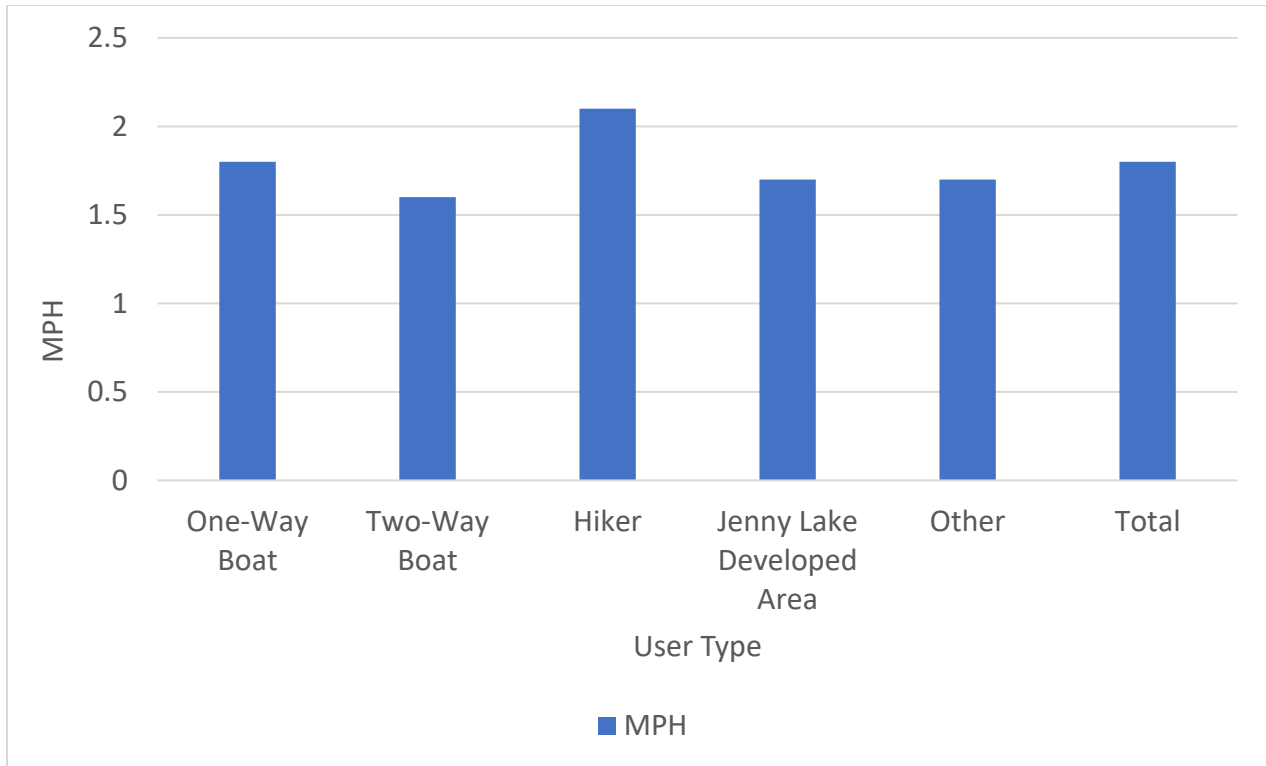


Figure 13. Average MPH by User Type

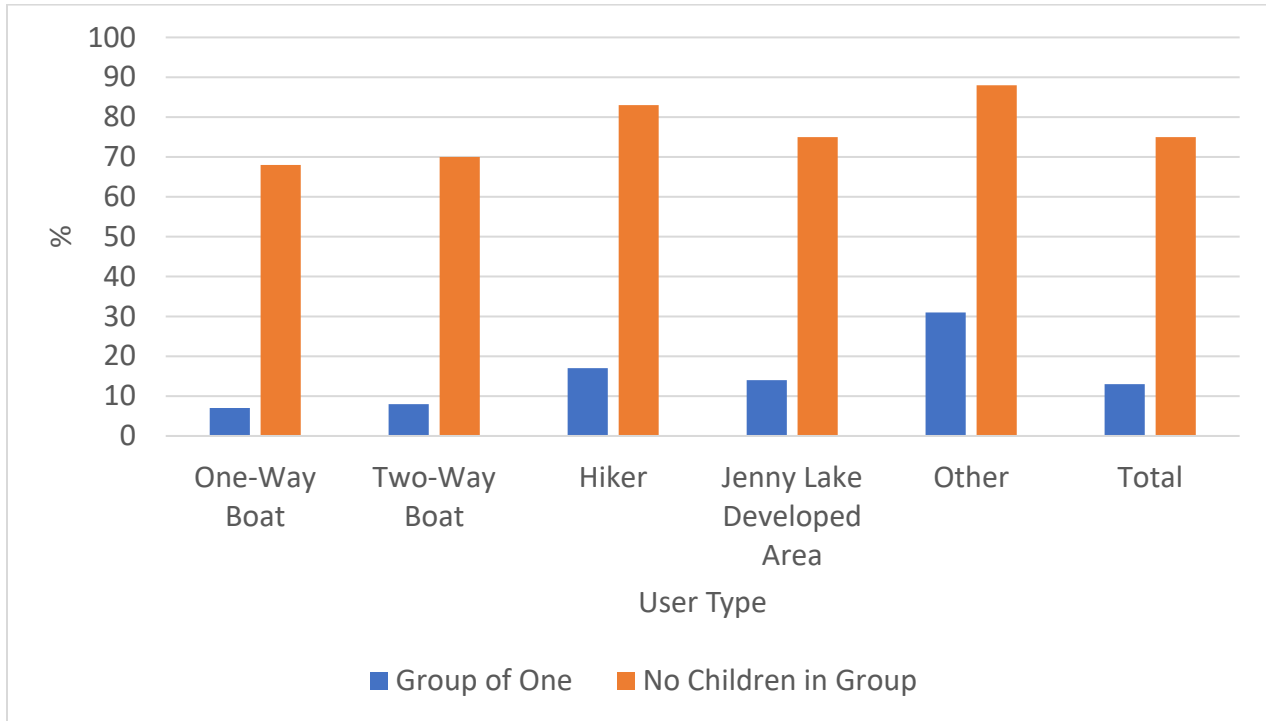


Figure 14. Average Percent of Groups of One and Groups with No Children by User Type

Comparing Means of Visitor Behaviors by User Type (One-Way ANOVAs)

One-way ANOVAs were conducted in SPSS to compare the effect of the four primary User Types (One-way Boat, Two-way Boat, Hiker, and Jenny Lake Developed Area Only) and time stopped, time walking, total time, distance traveled, and average speed. Results of each one-way ANOVA revealed there was a statically significant difference between at least two of the groups for each category tested (Table 8).

Scheffe's post-hoc test for multiple comparisons indicated (Table 8):

- The mean of time stopped in minutes were statistically significantly different among all user types.
 - Those taking the Two-Way Boat had the longest mean time spent stopped (91 minutes) and those who stayed on the East Shore had the shortest mean time spent stopped (25 minutes).
- The mean of time walking in minutes was statistically significantly different among user types.
 - Jenny Lake Developed Area only users were statistically different from all other user groups, with the lowest mean of 29 minutes walking.
 - Two-way boat users (140 minutes) and hikers (171 minutes) were also statistically different from each other and Jenny Lake Developed Area only users, however, were not significantly different from one-way boat users (157 minutes).
- The mean total time spent was statistically significant different between Jenny Lake Developed Area users (55 minutes) and all other users (>215 minutes). There were no significant differences among other users.
- The mean distance traveled was statistically significantly different among all user types.
 - Hikers had the longest mean distance traveled (6.0 miles) and those who stayed on the East Shore had the shortest mean distance traveled (0.8 miles).
- The mean moving speed was statistically significantly different among all user types.
 - Hikers moved the fastest (2.1 mph) and Two-Way Boat users moved the slowest (1.5 mph).

Table 8. One-way ANOVAs for Visitor Behavior Patterns, excluding "Other" category of User Type.

	One-Way Boat (n=101)		Two-Way Boat (n=165)		Hiker (n=164)		Jenny Lake Developed Area Only (n=188)		F (3, 615)
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
Time Stopped (Minutes)	75 ^a	38	91 ^b	45	43 ^c	40	25 ^d	34	99.8*
Time Walking (Minutes)	157 ^{a,b}	71	140 ^a	82	171 ^b	84	29 ^c	30	162.6*
Total Time (Minutes)	241 ^a	92	245 ^a	10	217 ^a	110	55 ^b	57	172.5*
Distance Travelled (Miles)	4.7 ^a	2.1	3.8 ^b	2.9	6.0 ^c	2.9	0.8 ^d	0.8	160.9*
Average Moving Speed (MPH)	1.8 ^a	0.2	1.6 ^b	0.3	2.1 ^c	0.3	1.7 ^d	0.3	99.5*

* $p < .001$, ^{a,b,c,d} Superscript with different letters indicate significantly different groups.

Comparing Timing in Relation to Visitor Behavior by User Type (T-tests)

A series of independent sample t-tests were conducted to compare the timing of visit to behaviors for each user type. The timing of visit was grouped as peak and non-peak. Peak time was defined as 9am-2pm based on start times of GPS Tracks. Below in Table 9 and Figure 15 are the statistically significant results.

- Among One-Way Boat users, Two-Way Boat users, and Jenny Lake Developed Area users, those who visited during peak times spent significantly more time stopped than those who visited during non-peak times.
- Among Two-Way Boat users, those who visited during peak times moved significantly slower than those who visited during non-peak times.
- Among Jenny Lake Developed Area users, those who visited during peak times spent significantly longer total time at Jenny Lake than those who visited during non-peak hours.

Table 9. T-Test Significant Results Comparing Timing of Visit to Visitor Behaviors by User Type

	Peak		Non-Peak		t	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
One-Way Boat Total Time Stopped (Minutes)	85	35	64	38	t(99) 2.85	<0.01
Two-Way Boat Total Time Stopped (Minutes)	106	30	77	50	t(163) 4.34	<0.001
Two-way Boat Average Moving Speed (MPH)	1.5	0.26	1.6	0.26	t(163) -2.57	<0.01
Jenny Lake Developed Area Total Time Stopped (Minutes)	33	38	15	20	t(186) 3.94	<0.001
Jenny Lake Developed Area Total Time Spent (Minutes)	62	48	42	40	t(186) 3.03	<0.01

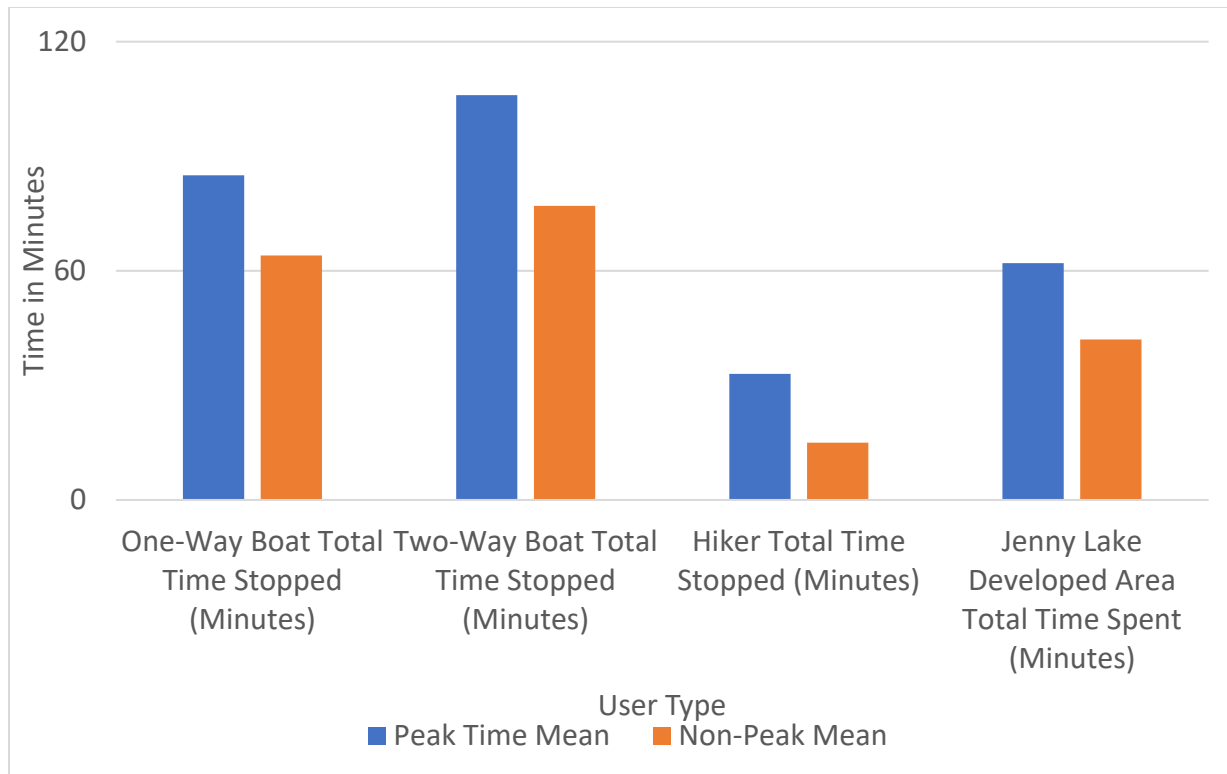


Figure 15. T-Test Significant Results Comparing Timing of Visit to Visitor Behaviors by User Type

Chi-Square Tests

Chi-Square Analyses evaluated the relationship between User Type and Visiting Alone as well as User Type and Having Children.

- The relationship between User Type and Visiting Alone was statistically significant (χ^2 (3, N= 620) = 9.07, p=.028).
 - Each User Type was more likely to be visiting in a group of 2 or more than visiting alone (Table 7).
- The relationship between User Type and Having Children was statistically significant (χ^2 (3, N=620) = 10.12, p=.02).
 - Visitors of each User Type were more likely to have no children than to have children in their group during their visit (Table 7).

Visitor Densities by User Type

To visualize the overall density of use in the Jenny Lake area, a Kernel Density procedure in ArcPro was conducted. Each track from every participant is comprised of a series of GPS points, and the Kernel Density method calculates the overall density of use based on these points. Figures 16-25 are maps visualizing the areas of high to low densities of use. The maps represent overall user density, as well as the user density by user type. All maps also show a full extent, as well as a magnified view.

- As indicated in the Route Traveled by User type section above, there is a wide array of user patterns at Jenny Lake. The full extent of visitor use starting their trip from the Jenny Lake

Developed Area includes String Lake, Paintbrush Canyon, Cascade Canyon, and the Lupine Meadows Trail System.

- Much of the visitor density observed is in the East Plaza, Jenny Lake East Shore, the West Shore Boat Dock, and the Hidden Falls and Inspiration Point Area.
 - This is consistent among One-Way Boat, Two-Way Boat, and Hiker user types with a few key differences:
 - Hikers and One-Way Boat Users have higher density of use along the southwest Jenny Lake Loop trail, with Hikers having higher densities along the trail, particularly at the top of Moose Ponds and at the Jenny Lake Public Boat Launch.
 - Two-Way Boat Users and Hikers both have a larger spatial extent than One-Way Boat Users.
 - One-Way and Two-Way Boat Users have a higher density in Cascade Canyon and the West Shuttle Boat Dock than Hikers.
- Of participants that stayed in the Jenny Lake Developed Area, the East Shore Plaza and along the Jenny Lake East Shore had the highest densities. Additionally, areas on the peninsula, west of the East Shore Shuttle Boat Dock, also show high densities of use.



Figure 16. Overall User Density at Jenny Lake

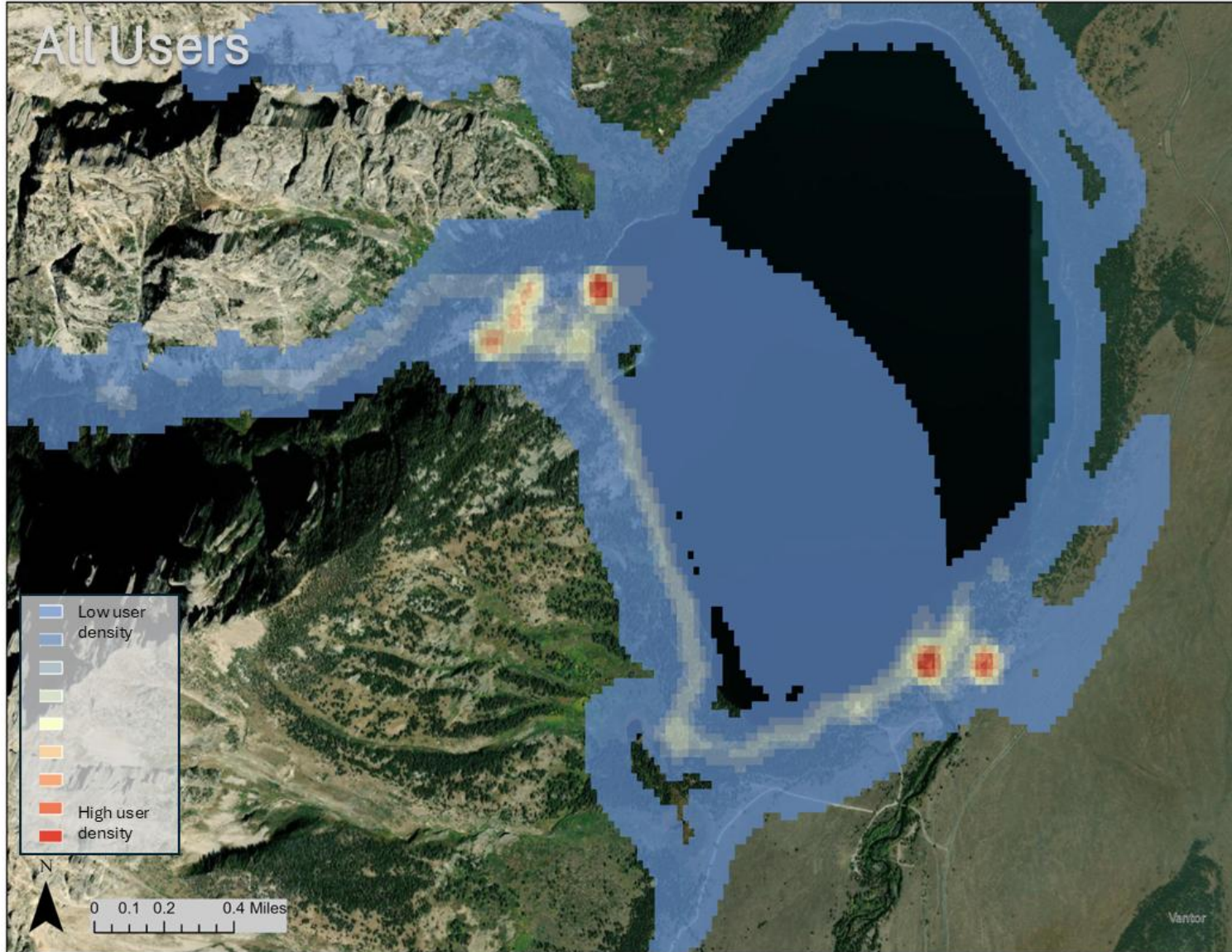


Figure 17. Magnified View of Overall User Density at Jenny Lake

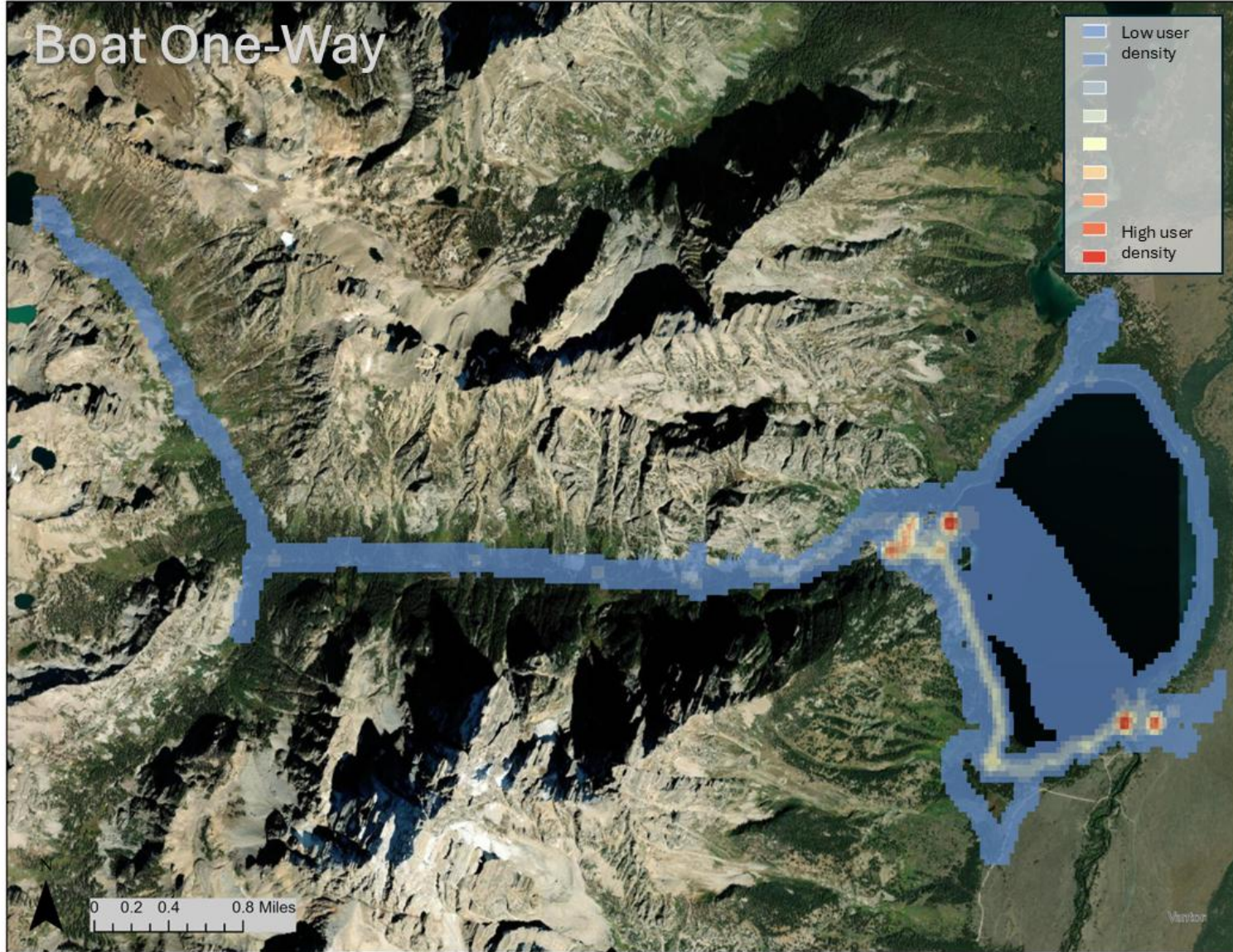


Figure 18. One-Way Boat User Density at Jenny Lake



Figure 19. Magnified View of One-Way Boat User Density at Jenny Lake



Figure 20. Two-Way Boat User Density at Jenny Lake

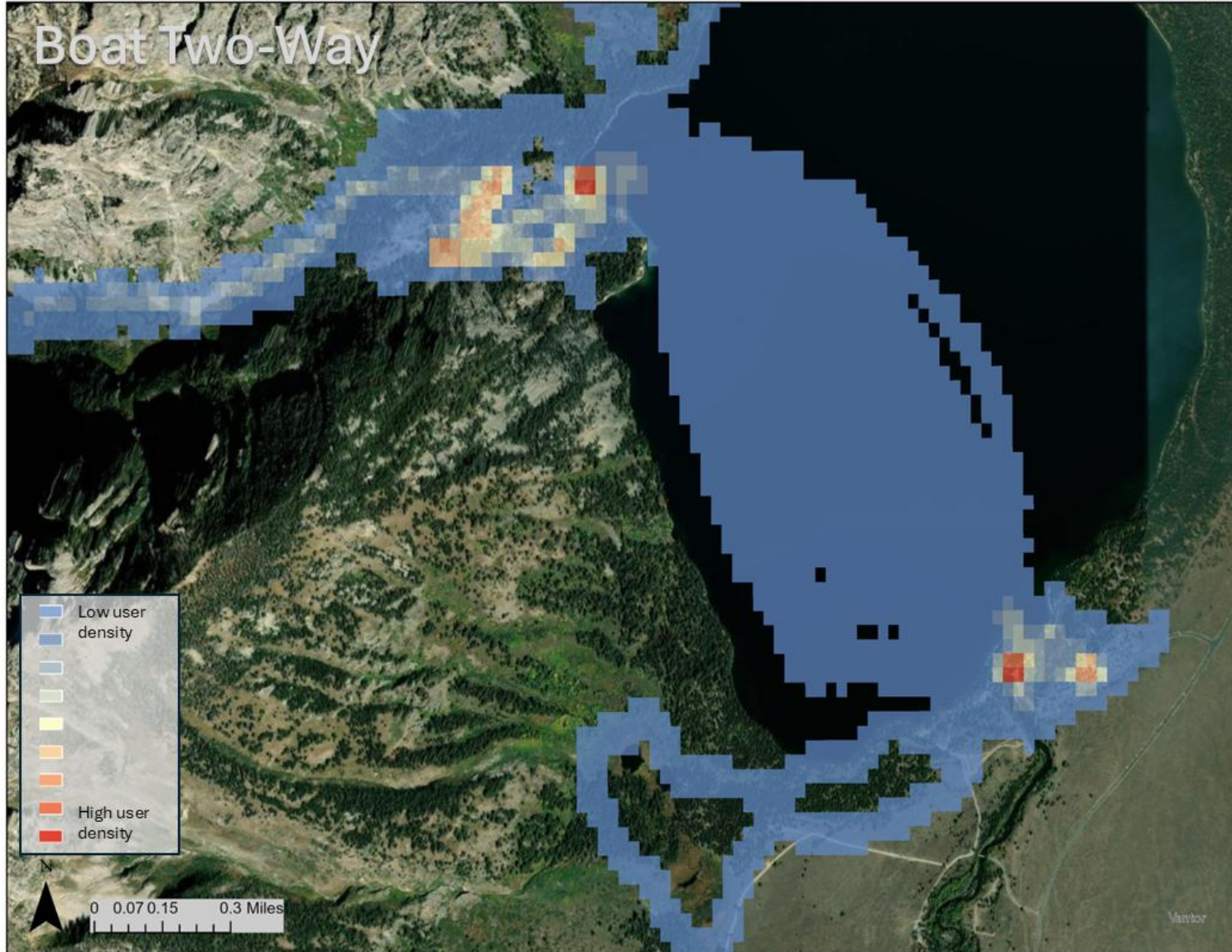


Figure 21. Magnified View of Two-Way Boat User Density at Jenny Lake



Figure 22. Hiker Density at Jenny Lake

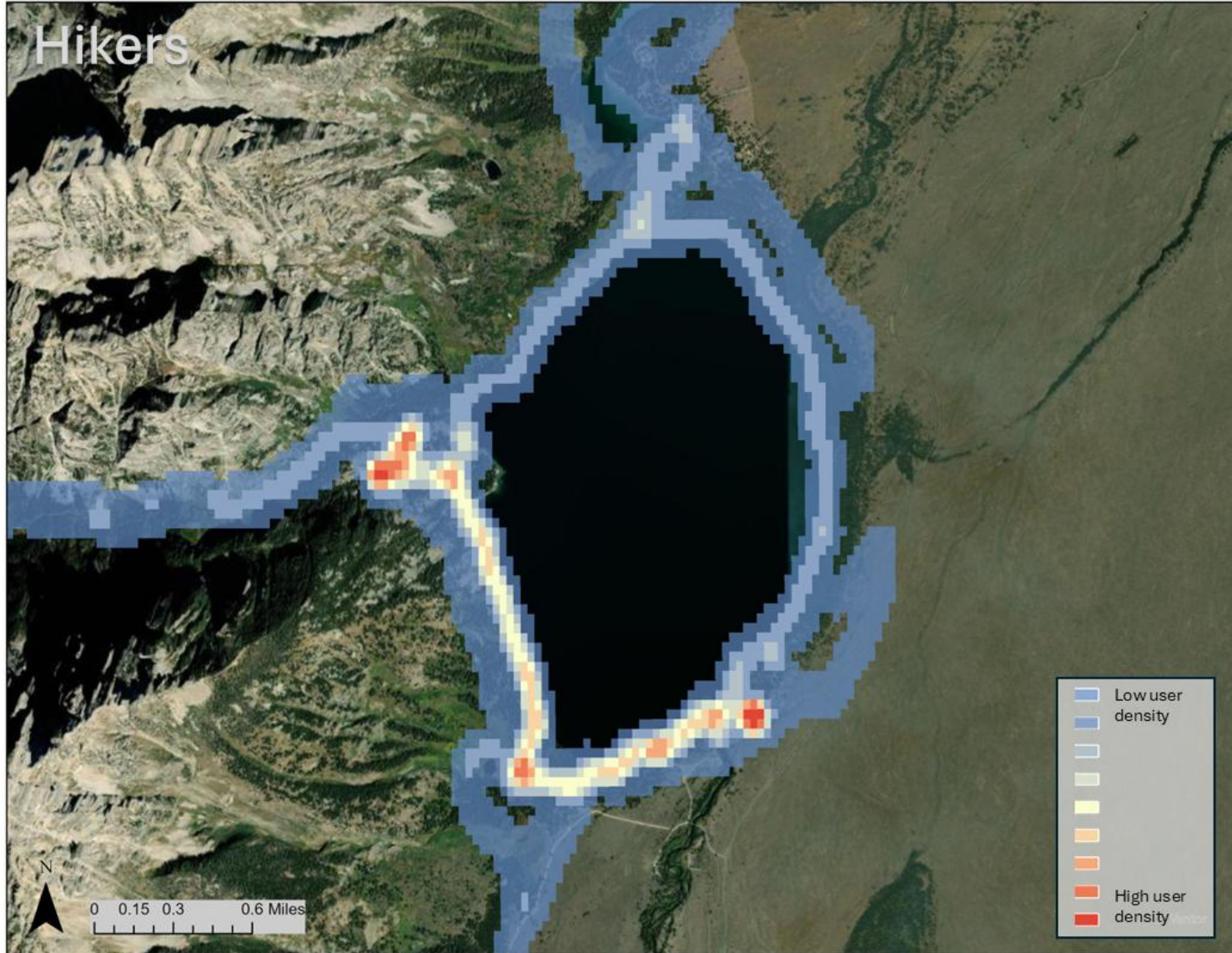


Figure 23. Magnified View of Hiker Density at Jenny Lake



Figure 24. Jenny Lake Developed Area User Density at Jenny Lake

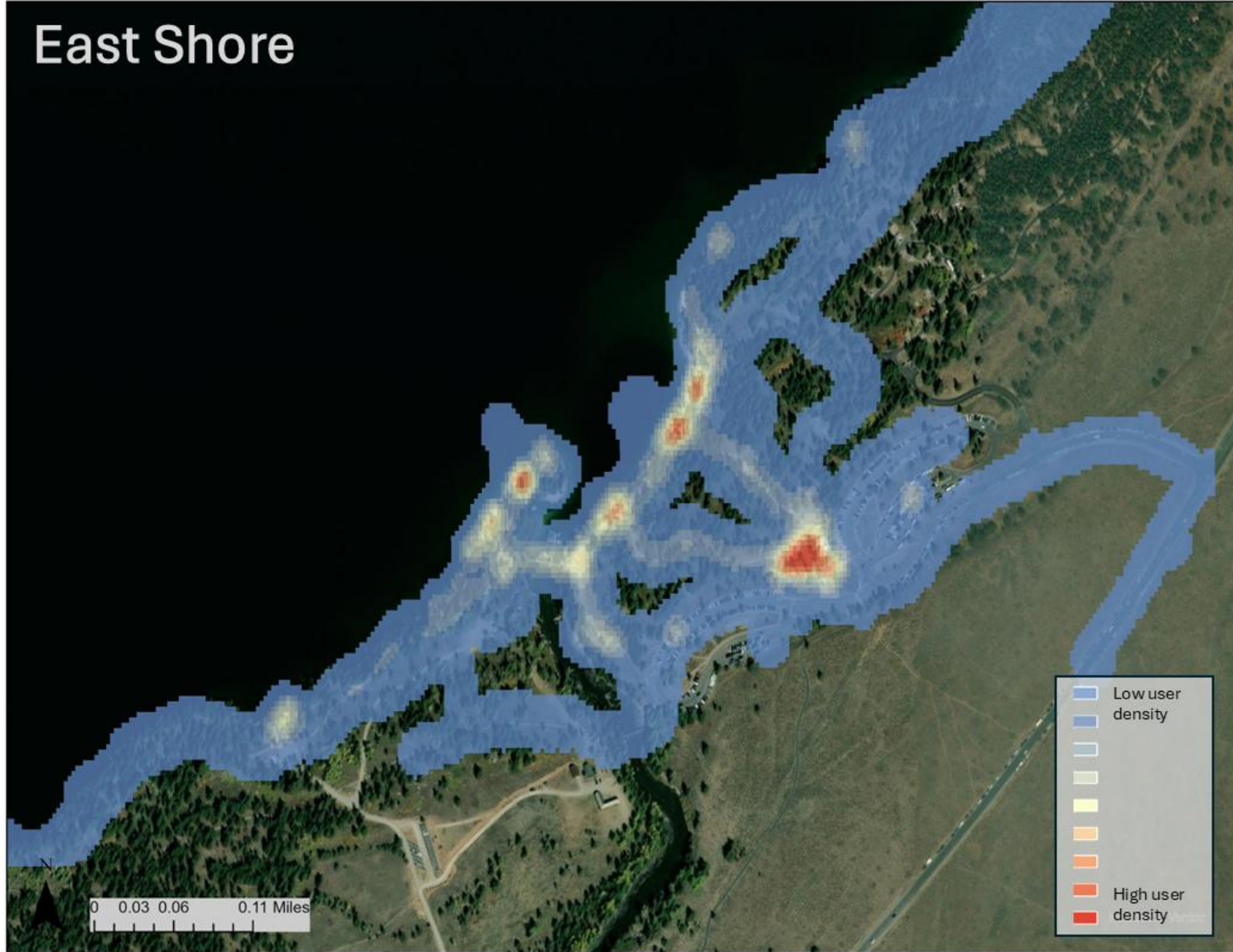


Figure 25. Magnified View of Jenny Lake Developed Area User Density at Jenny Lake

Visitor Use

West Shore Boat Line

There were 67 days included in the sample and 64 days (96%) had a West Shore Shuttle Boat Line past the 30-minute mark for at least 5 minutes (Figure 26). Most days (85%) had more than one episode of the West Shore Shuttle Boat Line going past the 30-minute mark for at least 5 minutes.

- Overall, the mean number of episodes per day was 3.7, with a range of 0 – 10 episodes in one day.
- The average length of one episode is 42 minutes, with a range of 5 – 325 minutes (nearly 5.5 hours).
- Many days that had shorter duration of episodes were associated with inclement weather (Figure 27).
- Wednesdays had the overall shortest duration of all episodes for that day, while Sunday had the longest duration (Figure 28).

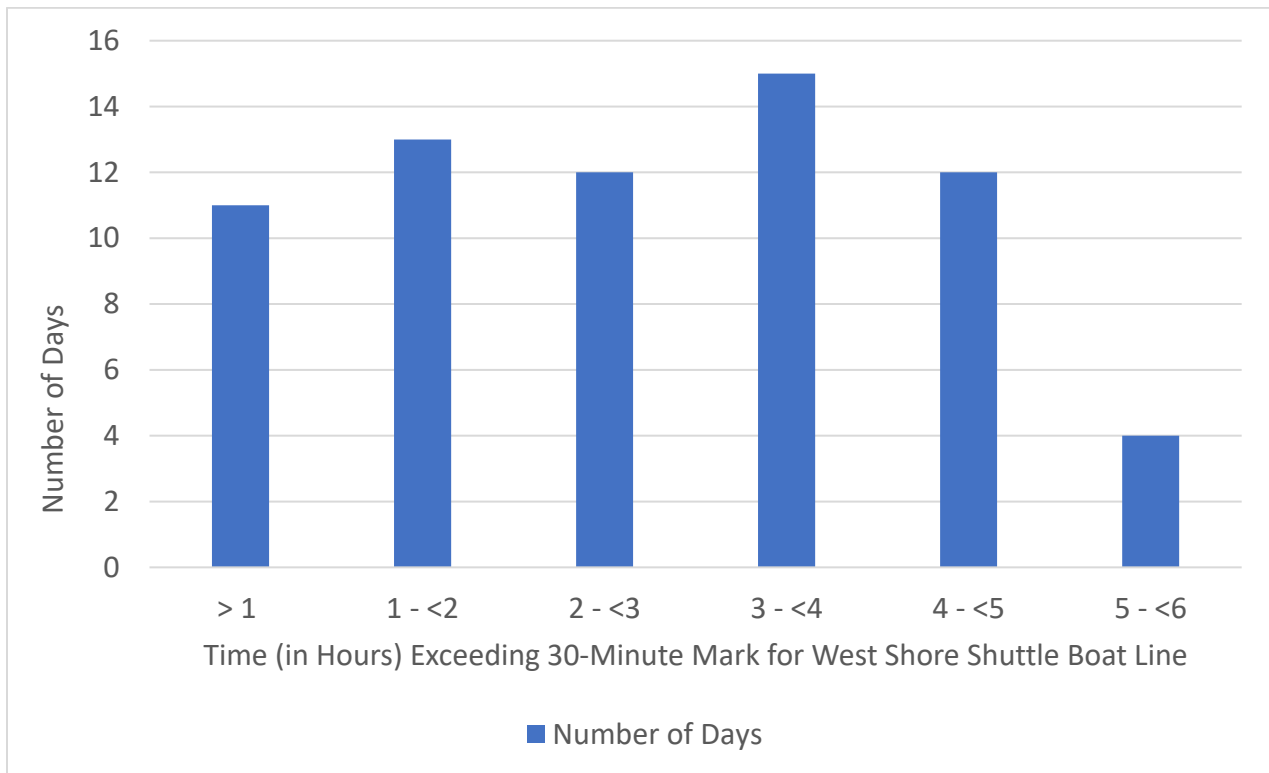


Figure 26. Time (in hours) exceeding the 30-minute mark for the West Shore Shuttle Boat Line

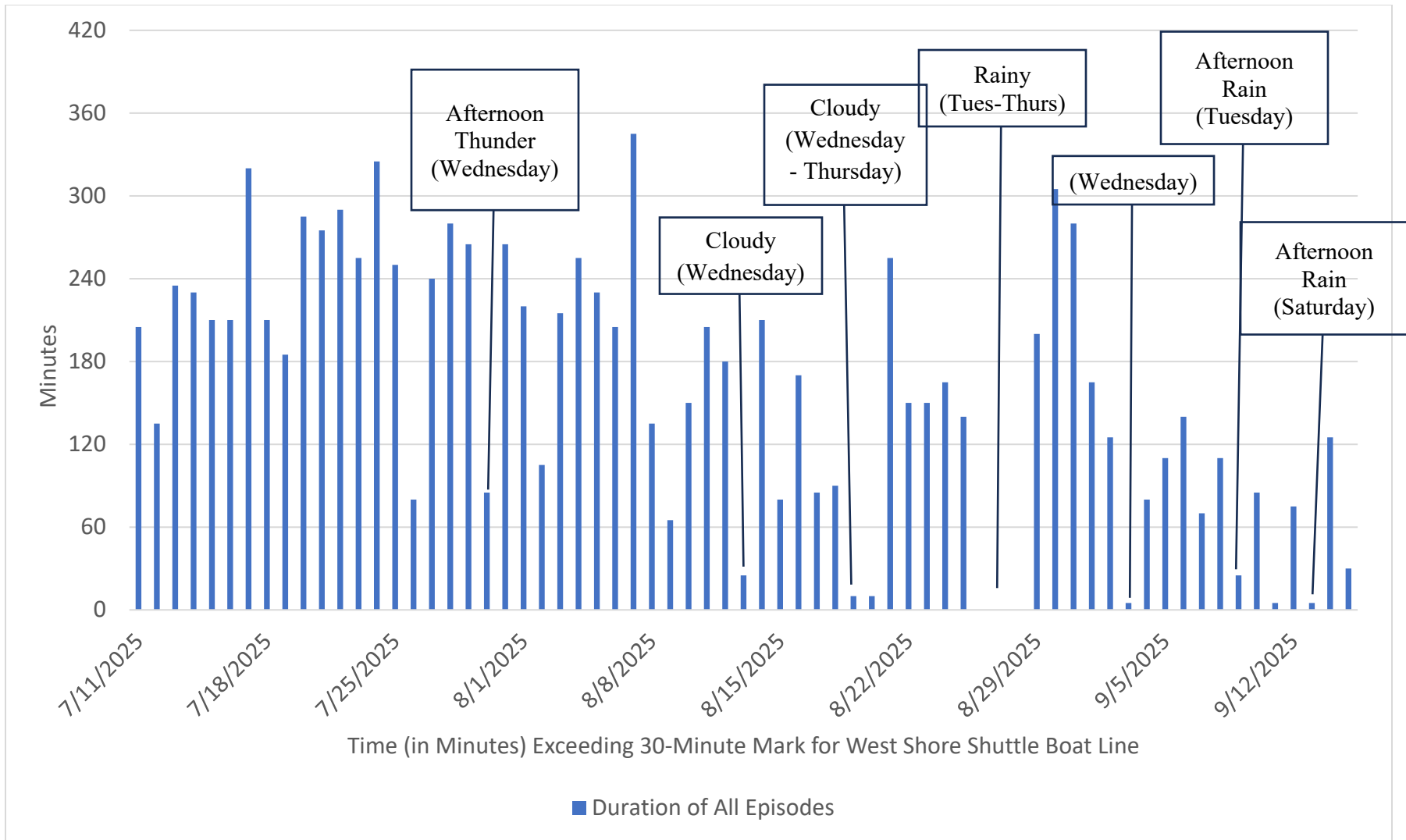


Figure 27. Duration of all Episodes by Day

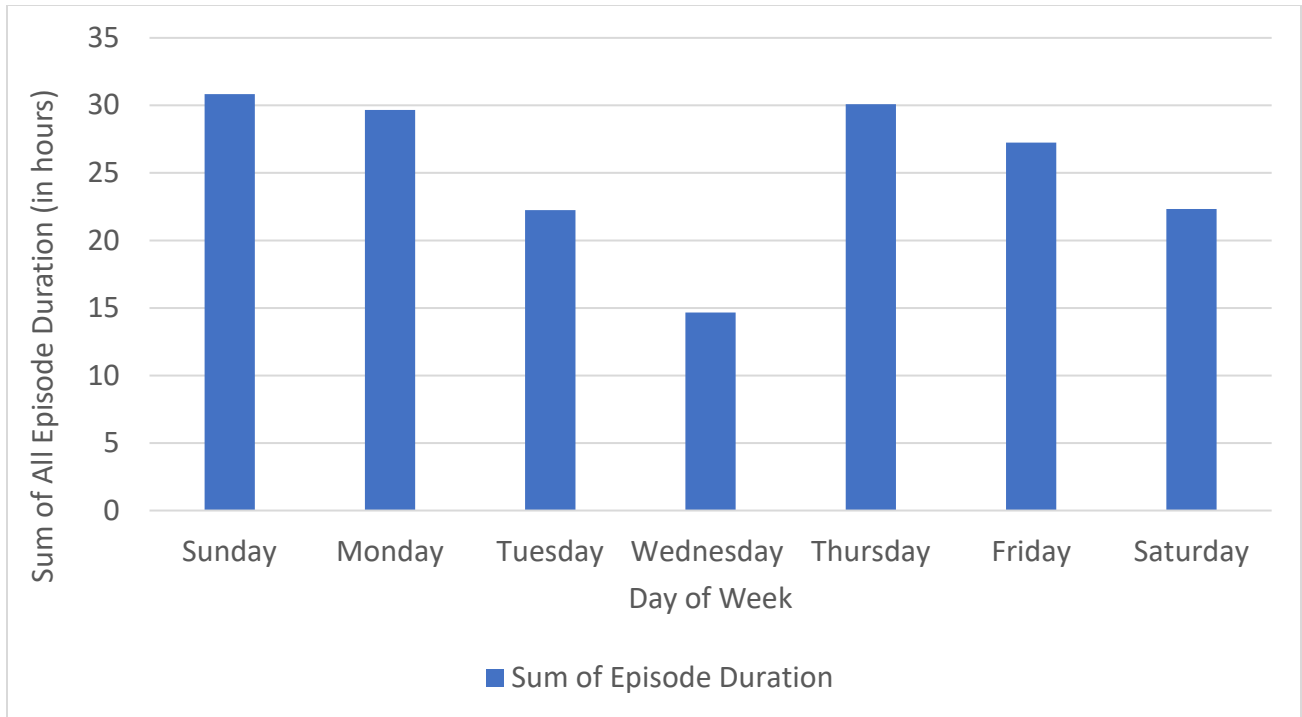


Figure 28. Sum of Episode Duration (in Minutes) by Day of the Week

Undesignated Parking Vehicle Counts

Undesignated parking vehicle counts were conducted over 5 days between the hours of 9am and 2pm. The Jenny Lake parking lot has a capacity of 414 vehicles: 17 of these spaces are accessible, and 38 of these spaces are along the South Jenny Lake Access Road, between the campground entry and first parking lot entry. Protocols and sampling schedule can be found in Appendix D.

- The average number of vehicles in undesignated parking was 155 and the median was 221, with a standard deviation of 79.3. The minimum number of cars parked in undesignated parking during sampling times was 35 (9am on Thursday, July 31) and the maximum was 275 (1pm on Labor Day) (Figure 29).
- The average number of bikes parked at the South Jenny Lake Pathway Hub bike racks is 19 bikes, with a median of 20, and a range of 1-47 (Figure 30).
- The Southwest segment of the TPR had the most average vehicles parked between 10am - 2pm (Figures 30 and 31).
- See Figure 31 for a map of all segments and the average number of vehicles parked at the 1:00pm hour (the most common peak hour).

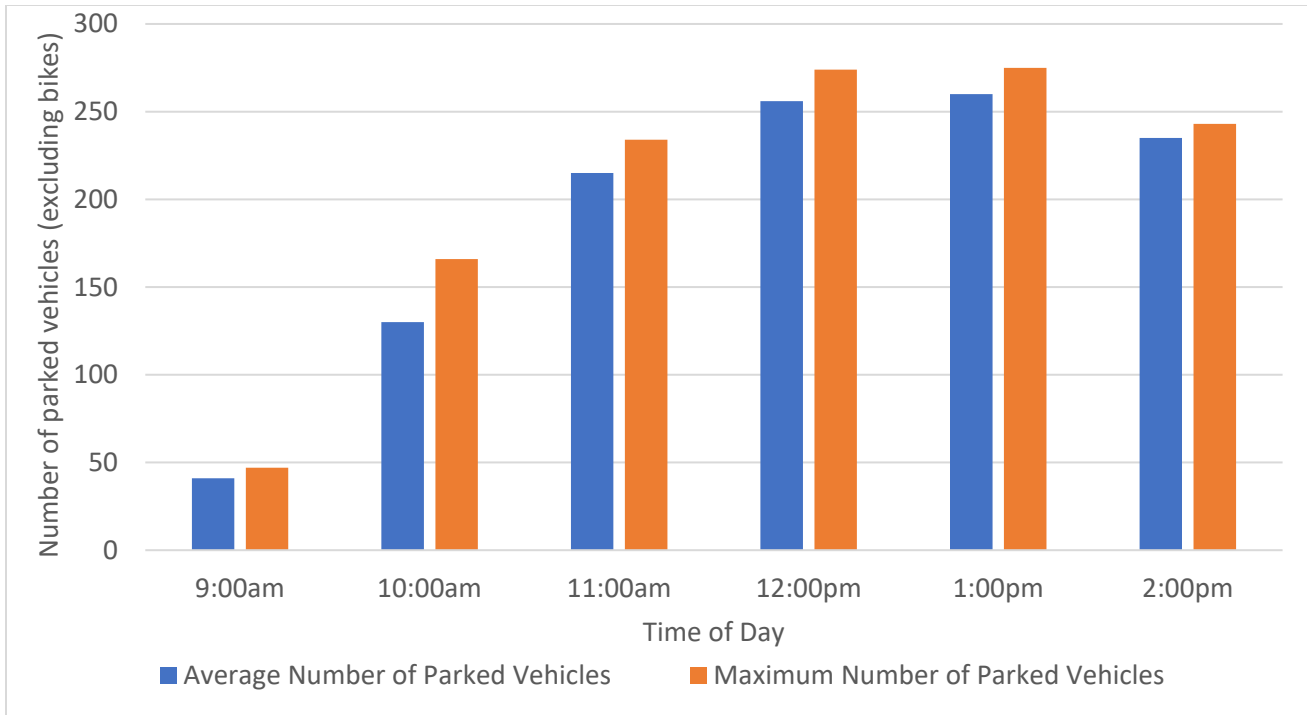


Figure 29. Average and Maximum Number of Parked Vehicles along the South Jenny Lake Access Road and TPR.

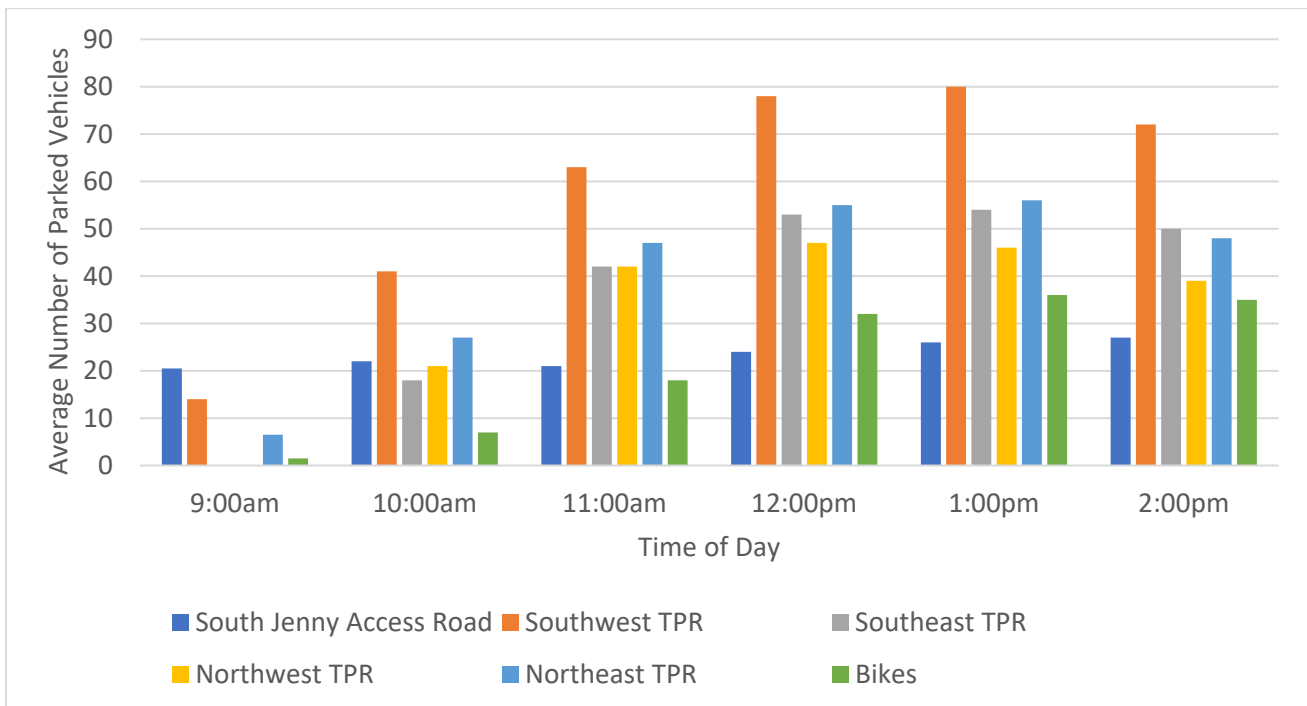


Figure 30. Average Number of Parked along the South Jenny Lake Access Road and TPR by Location.



Figure 31. Map of Road Segments and Average Number of Vehicles Parked per Segment at 1300.

Undesignated parking typically consists of parallel parking along the Teton Park Road. Sometimes vehicles park perpendicular to the road or in “no parking” zones (see Figures 32-34 for examples).



Figure 32. A car parked on the Jenny Lake Access Road over striping.



Figure 33. A car pulled head in to fit by a barrier.



Figure 34. Some vehicles parked diagonally to fit along the Teton Park Road.

Trail Use

The number of trail users observed passing the TrafX Trail Counter on the Southwest Jenny Lake Loop trail increased 98% in 10 years (2016-2025) during the summer season (June – September) (Table 10).

Table 10. The number of hikers observed on Jenny Lake SW Trail from 2016-2025

Year	Number of Hikers Observed at the Southwest Jenny Lake Loop trail (June-September)
2016	52,518
2017	48,594
2018	51,064
2019	60,559
2020	69,721
2021	81,241
2022	72,816
2023	83,167
2024	84,515
2025	103,779*

*The Jenny Lake Shuttle Boat was closed for four days in September due to construction on the bridge. This closure period is associated with much higher trail counts.

Qualitative Interviews

Demographics

- All participants of the qualitative interviews were from the United States.
- The median age surveyed was 33 out of ages ranging from 32 to 72. The average age was 42 years.
- Groups were comprised of Family only, Friends only, Friends & Family, and a Road Scholars Organized Group.

Grand Teton Visit

- 78% (n=7) of participants surveyed were first time visitors to Grand Teton.
 - The remaining groups were a mix of first-time visitors and returning visitors who had visited 1 & 4 times.
- 44% (n=4) of participants said Grand Teton was their sole destination, 44% said it was one of many on a greater trip, and 12% (n=1) were only visiting Grand Teton and Yellowstone.
- Every participant stated Jenny Lake as their primary destination for the day.
- 33% of visitors were lodging within the park (2 at Signal Mountain Lodge, 1 at Jackson Lake Lodge).
 - Other accommodations included Rexburg. ID, Bondurant, Murie Ranch (Road Scholar Partnership with Teton Science Schools), Teton Village, and Jackson.

Jenny Lake Visit

- Participants spent an average of 4 hours visiting Jenny Lake, ranging from 1-6 hours.
 - 78% (n=7) of people said this was as much time as they anticipated, others saying the heat shortened their visit or that they had no plan.

- 78% of visitors visited the West shore of Jenny, with 67% visiting Hidden Falls, 45% visiting Inspiration Point, and 22% hiking into Cascade Canyon. 1 participant hiked the loop and visited Hidden Falls, and another group rented canoes.
 - Visitors were generally satisfied with the navigation signage, but one noted room for improvement: "[The signage is] iffy when we were going to take the trail back to Jenny Lake Lodge [parking area]. You're missing one of the signs conspicuously does not have an arrow pointing "
 - Others praised the directional signage saying, "Better than most parks" "straight forward" and "clear to follow".
 - Other signage that stood out to visitors were related to the Shuttle Boat, Bear Awareness, Bathrooms, and the Interpretative Ranger Pop Up Tent. Yet, 44% said that no other signage besides directional signage stood out.
- All One-Way Boat users took the boat from the East Shore to the West Shore.
 - The wait in line at the West Shore was typically longer than the East Shore (Table 11)
 - The group doing the Scenic Boat Tour got dropped off at the West Shore and were able to take the Shuttle Boat back to the East Shore.
 - The group that had no wait time on either shore specifically arrived early to avoid crowds.

Table 11. Shuttle Boat Line Wait Times on the East and West Shore.

Wait Time in Minutes	East Shore Boat Line	West Shore Boat Line
Minimum	0	0
Maximum	30	40
Mean	17.5	20
Median	20	20

- When asked about what they liked most about their time at Jenny Lake, many people cited natural beauty (Figure 35).
 - The boat was popularly liked for both function and pleasure. A group that hiked into Cascade Canyon cited the Boat Ride as their favorite part, saying it was "novel, different, and worth it".
- Others valued being close to Jackson, accessibility and being able to go to the lakeshore.



Figure 35. World cloud depicting favorite parts of Jenny Lake. Size directly correlates to number of mentions.

- However, the boat was also a source of displeasure. 22% (n=2) of participants said that waiting in the boat line was their least favorite part of their visit to Jenny Lake.
 - Others said that the parking experience was their least favorite part, even though they found a desirable spot.
 - "It's like the anxiety of like, I'm not leaving yet, and people looking at you in the parking lot."

Parking & Crowding

- More than half of participants surveyed reported that they had a good or "as expected" parking experience. Those who didn't described it as "a little tough" and "could be better".
 - However, everyone agreed that it was acceptable and to be expected. One group wished there was more shade so that their dog would be more comfortable in the car.
 - No participants reported it to be more difficult to find parking than they had anticipated. 33% said it was expected.
 - "We gave up pretty quickly [on parking] when we saw all the lines", saying that they did not look hard, but rather, parked on the road immediately.
 - Additionally, 33% of participants said that their plans were influenced by the possibility of parking difficulties, saying that they specifically arrived early or on a weekday.
- When asked if crowding added or detracted to their Jenny Lake Experience, 66% said it did not detract.
 - One visitor said "It was perfect. It's better than Yellowstone. Way better than Yellowstone, but um no it was good. And there were just enough people that you know you're safe in case a bear comes, that we will be fine."
 - Another said "'Definitely more [people] than I expected, but I don't think it affected our experience."

- And another noted "I didn't feel like it was overly busy. I feel like the shuttle across kind of spaces people out. "
- Those who said the number of people detracted from their experience specified that it was the Jenny Lake Developed Area & Discovery Trail, the Shuttle Boat, and going up towards Inspiration Point where it detracted most (N=2).
 - "Going to Inspiration Point. That was all super, super crowded. Once we got in the whatever, the Cascade Canyon or whatever it's called, that was better. "... "it was not oppressive, um but there's a lot of people.... thought it would be much worse"
 - This participant, who said the number of people detracted from her experience eventually levelled out her opinion.
- Of the 3 participants who were repeat visitors, none of them reported wanting to visit Jenny and deciding not to due to crowds or parking on previous visits.

Discussion

Visitor Behavior Patterns

Active Recreation Across All User Types

- Including all user types, the average visit duration was nearly 3 hours (178 minutes). The longest visit duration was 13.75 hours by a One-Way Boat User. The shortest was 3 minutes by a Jenny Lake Developed Area Visitor (Table 7).
- Visitors spent most of their time walking (65%) regardless of user type.
- Although differences across user groups were statistically significant, the overall trend demonstrates that visitors to Jenny Lake participate in active recreation, with relatively limited time spent stationary.
- Hikers exhibited the highest activity levels, moving the most (171 minutes of moving time) and traveling the longest distances (6 miles on average).
- Boat users (one-way and two-way) had similar overall visit durations as hikers but spent far more time stopped, likely associated with viewpoints, navigating congested areas, and waiting in shuttle boat lines.
- Jenny Lake Developed Area participants had short visit durations (~55 minutes) and minimal distances traveled, reflecting a high-concentration use pattern.
- These patterns emphasize that different user groups contribute differently to the Jenny Lake landscape.

Visitor Movement Patterns & Spatial Concentrations

- GPS-based movement patterns revealed concentrated visitor use in predictable corridors.
 - East Plaza, East Shore, Hidden Falls, Inspiration Point, and the West Shore boat dock consistently showed the highest density of use among all user types.
 - Boat users had stronger presence in Cascade Canyon and the West Shore dock compared to hikers.
 - Hikers showed strong use of the Southwest Jenny Lake Loop Trail, particularly around Moose Ponds and the public boat launch.
 - Jenny Lake Developed Area participants rarely dispersed beyond the immediate East Shore facilities, creating persistent density adjacent to parking and visitor infrastructure.
- The high variability in different routes participants traveled indicates that there is not one dominant travel pattern at Jenny Lake. This is similar to other areas in the park, such as Taggart Lake trail system and Laurence S. Rockefeller Preserve.

- Of the Jenny Lake shuttle boat users and hikers, the most popular overall route only accounted for 10% of all routes.

Peak and Non-Peak Time Dynamics

- Peak period (9 am –2 pm) had strong, statistically significant effects on stopping behavior for all user types except hikers.
 - Boat users and Jenny Lake Developed Area users spent more of their visit stopped during peak hours, supporting the conclusion that peak-time congestion is slowing visitors down.
 - Among Two-Way Boat users, peak visitation also produced slower average hiking speeds, further reinforcing the influence of more people in the system on movement.
- Collectively, these peak-time effects indicate that more people at Jenny Lake is not only perceived but measurably alters visitor behavior, particularly among users dependent on infrastructure such as the shuttle boat.
 - One-Way Boat users spent significantly more of their visit stopped and significantly less of their visit walking during Peak Time compared to Non-Peak Time.
 - Two- Way Boat Users spent significantly more of their visit stopped and significantly less of their visit walking during Peak Time compared to Non-Peak Time. They also had a significantly slower Average Speed during Non-Peak Time.
 - Jenny Lake Developed Area Visitors spent significantly more of their Visit Stopped and less of their Visit Walking during Peak Time compared to Non-Peak Time. Also, they Walked significantly further during Peak Time than Non-Peak Time.

West Dock Shuttle Boat Line

- Camera-based data confirmed that wait times over 30 minutes at the West Dock shuttle boat line are fairly consistent throughout the sample period.
 - 96% of sampled days had at least one episode where the line exceeded 30 minutes.
 - The average episode lasted 42 minutes, with some extending more than 5 hours.
 - Most days within the sample (85%) experienced multiple episodes of wait times more than 30 minutes, demonstrating that >30 minute waits are not isolated events but a regular occurrence of peak-season operations.
- The West Dock shuttle boat is a structural driver of visitor stopping behavior, especially during peak times.

Undesignated Roadside Parking

- Undesignated roadside parking was consistent. Employee observations support this, as do the few days of data collection.
 - Jenny Lake’s lot capacity (414 spaces) was exceeded by an average of 155 undesignated vehicles during sampling, with a median of 221 vehicles.
 - During peak hours, more than a third of visitors accessing Jenny Lake are parking along the Teton Park Road.
- Qualitative interviews revealed that many visitors anticipated difficulty parking and were not surprised. Some adjusted their plans by arriving early or parking immediately along the road.
 - This suggests that while limited designated parking availability is normalized among visitors, it remains a management and safety concern.

Jenny Lake Trail Use Trends

- Trail counter data show a 98% increase in use on the Southwest Jenny Lake Loop Trail from 2016 to 2025. This highlights a significant and accelerating rise in trail-based use.
- These numbers, paired with the spatial density maps, make clear that the southwest loop and Hidden Falls/Inspiration Point corridor remain key areas of visitor movement.

Visitor Experience & Qualitative Perspectives

- Interviews reveal generally positive experiences despite objectively high use levels.
 - 78% reported that crowding did not detract from their experience.
 - Some noted crowding on the Discovery Trail, boat lines, and the climb toward Inspiration Point, but still described conditions as “expected” or “better than Yellowstone.”
 - Signage was widely considered clear, and helpful.
- These sentiments indicate visitors are tolerant of high use, but the pinch points they highlighted (e.g. shuttle boat lines) align with the quantitative findings.

Summary

- Results from this study indicate that Jenny Lake continues to offer meaningful recreation opportunities and the current volume and spatial distribution of visitors produce predictable high density areas, more than 30 minute wait times at the West Dock shuttle boat, and consistent undesignated parking along the Teton Park Road.
- Key takeaways include:
- Wait times more than 30 minutes that are associated with the shuttle boat, particularly from the West Dock are frequent and affect visitor movement patterns.
- Developed Area congestion is persistent and affects movement speeds and visitor stopping behaviors.
- Hiker volumes on the Southwest Jenny Lake Loop trail have nearly doubled in the past 10 years, increasing pressure on the loop trail system and iconic destinations.
- Undesignated roadside parking presents growing and consistent operational complexity.
- Changes in visitor behavior during peak periods is not just perceptual, but varies meaningfully across user types.