

# GSNEO Properties Survey Summary

Prepared for General Assembly, April 17, 2010

## Primary Conclusions

1. Camping is essential to Girl Scouting.
2. At this time, there is no clearly “preferred” camp.  
The membership has not yet had the opportunity to accurately assess the camps since the merger.
3. Parents prefer camps to be close to their homes.  
Acceptable distance increases with age of child and length of program.
4. Camps must be affordable.
5. Troop camping is by far the most frequent usage of the camps, making troop leaders the primary providers of Girl Scout outdoor programming .
6. Camping should be strongly promoted and facilitated among GS membership.
7. Centralized, rapid-response camp and program registration system needed.
8. Alternative, income-producing usage should be pursued for times when properties are not being used for GS programming.
9. Utilize volunteers to assist with running and maintaining the camps.

The volunteers recognize that this survey was presented by the board in response to their concerns over camp closings. They appreciate having a vehicle to express their opinions. Although the survey has some flaws, it has generated some valid, valuable information.

## Demographics

Adults – 1096

Girls- 508

Adult - camper vs. non camper c. 600 /400

Girl – camper vs. noncamper c. 300/200

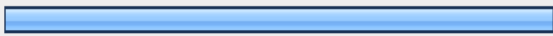
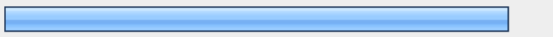
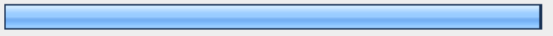
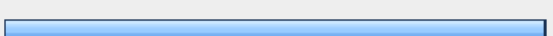
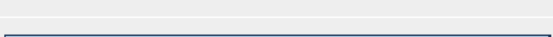
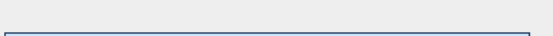

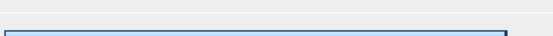
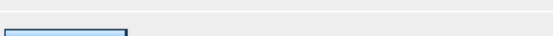
Geographic location of respondents roughly corresponds with member population

	Adult members	Adult responses	Percentage	Girl members	Girl responses	Percentage
Ashtabula	347	9	2.59	882	3	0.4
Carroll	37	4	10.8	171	1	0.5
Columbiana	216	11	5.09	530	2	0.37
Cuyahoga	3,143	237	7.54	7,773	161	2.07
Erie	347	20	5.76	1,154	8	0.7
Geauga	485	24	4.94	1,223	13	1.06
Huron	209	16	7.6	598	9	1.5
Lake	696	100	14.36	1,837	54	3
Lorain	1,540	86	5.58	4,757	40	0.84
Mahoning	468	18	3.25	1,267	5	0.4
Medina	935	81	8.66	2,156	24	1.11
Portage	487	53	10.88	1,311	41	3.12
Sandusky	86	9	10.46	338	2	0.6
Seneca	135	18	13.33	423	1	0.2
Stark	1,284	133	10.35	4,818	49	1.01
Summit	1,925	134	6.96	5,580	65	1.16
Trumbull	868	70	8.06	1,595	12	0.75
Tuscarawas	158	20	12.65	444	9	2.02

There was some concern whether the partial closing of Great Trail & Crowell Hilaka may have inspired larger responses from people caring for those camps. But this has turned out to not be the case.

The highest rate of girl responses was from Portage County followed by Lake County.

The highest rate of adult responses was Lake County followed by Seneca County.

18. What do you believe are the benefits of experiencing Girl Scout camp? (Check all that apply)			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Having fun		98.1%	1,072
Spending time with friends		89.6%	979
Making new friends		95.3%	1,042
Learning about nature and the environment		96.4%	1,054
Gaining confidence		97.2%	1,062
Developing leadership skills		93.4%	1,021
Personally rewarding		86.4%	944
The Girl Scout experience		89.3%	976
Other (please specify)		21.0%	230

For parents making the decision about where to send daughter to camp, the absolute first consideration is **safety and security**. **99.4 %** marked it as important or very important. After that, it's all about the activities and the quality of the staff.

12. How important are the following in making a decision about choosing a Girl Scout camp (includes day camp, troop and overnight options):					
	Very Important	Important	Not Important	No Opinion	Response Count
Activities that are offered	<b>76.8% (836)</b>	20.8% (227)	1.7% (19)	0.6% (7)	1,089
Types of facilities (cabins, toilets, electricity etc)	<b>53.4% (584)</b>	38.6% (422)	7.6% (83)	0.5% (5)	1,094
Distance from home	40.8% (445)	<b>47.2% (515)</b>	11.1% (121)	0.8% (9)	1,090
Availability of transportation from others	21.3% (231)	36.1% (392)	<b>37.2% (404)</b>	5.5% (60)	1,087
Cost	<b>52.7% (577)</b>	43.0% (471)	3.9% (43)	0.4% (4)	1,095
Who is attending	22.8% (248)	<b>42.4% (462)</b>	32.2% (351)	2.7% (29)	1,090
Quality of the facilities	<b>53.8% (587)</b>	43.7% (477)	1.9% (21)	0.5% (6)	1,091
Camp accreditation	<b>43.1% (469)</b>	39.7% (432)	13.8% (150)	3.3% (36)	1,087
Safety and Security	<b>83.5% (910)</b>	15.9% (173)	0.4% (4)	0.3% (3)	1,090
Quality of Staff/Volunteers	<b>76.3% (829)</b>	22.1% (240)	1.4% (15)	0.3% (3)	1,087
All girl environment	<b>42.1% (456)</b>	39.4% (427)	16.3% (176)	2.2% (24)	1,083

# Favorite camps

## Girl responses

<b>Camp</b>	<b>Legacy Council</b>	<b>Legacy Council survey participants</b>	<b># visited</b>	<b>^</b>	<b>Favorite of</b>	<b>% visited favorite "popularity" rating</b>
Crowell Hilaka	Lake Erie	228	182	-46	111	61%
Great Trail	Great Trail	58	61	+3	35	57%
Ledgewood	Western Reserve	130	198	+68	90	45%
Lejnar	Lake Erie	228	90	-138	20	22%
Pleasant Valley	Erie Shores	60	23	-37	5	21%
Sugar Bush	Lake to River	17	78	+61	30	38%
Timberlane	Erie Shores	60	110	+50	52	47%

## ADULT responses

<b>Camp</b>	<b>Legacy Council</b>	<b>Legacy Council survey participants</b>	<b># visited</b>	<b>^</b>	<b>Favorite of</b>	<b>% visited favorite</b>
Crowell Hilaka	Lake Erie	397	433	+36	230	53%
Great Trail	Great Trail	157	189	+32	93	49%
Ledgewood	Western Reserve	268	446	+178	148	33%
Lejnar	Lake Erie	397	265	-132	31	11%
Pleasant Valley	Erie Shores	149	85	-64	25	29%
Sugar Bush	Lake to River	108	186	+78	80	43%
Timberlane	Erie Shores	149	262	+113	91	34%

To see if there was a more accurate way to determine camp quality based on user preference, I compared the number who listed a camp as their favorite with the number who actually had been to that camp. The percentage is shown in the last column.

Since familiarity with a camp is a major factor in liking it, I thought that at least the members from that camp's legacy council would prefer it. I added up the number of respondents from each county of each legacy council. Then I compared that number to the number of visitors each camp had had. The column marked with the " ^ " is the difference.

FOR EXAMPLE: Taking the first row across, Crowell Hilaka was part of Lake Erie Council. 228 girls from the Lake Erie legacy council answered the survey. (the total girl responses from Lake, Geauga, and Cuyahoga counties). Only 182 of them had even been to Crowell Hilaka: a difference of 46. I can't be sure that all 182 of those girls were from Lake Erie legacy, but it seems reasonable to assume that most of them probably were (see commentary following the adult chart about crossing borders). Of those 182 – wherever they were from - Crowell Hilaka was the favorite GSNEO camp for 61% of them.

Contrast that with Ledgewood of legacy council Western Reserve. There were 130 respondents from the counties served by that council, yet 198 girls have been to Ledgewood: an increase of 68 girls. These 68 "non-native" visitors may not have had the same inherent familiarity and fondness for Ledgewood as those who grew up there.

Three camps had significantly larger visitor numbers than their legacy council respondents. These are the same three camps where resident camp has been held. The three resident camps draw from beyond the legacy borders. If respondents are primarily choosing their "home" troop camping base as their favorite, then the three resident camp's "favorite" percentage is artificially "skewed" down in comparison with the other camps .

**Popularity ranking is important for understanding the interests of the current customer base.**

However, at this time, it is not possible to judge a camp's quality or its potential for attracting new membership by how many campers like it best.

It may be possible sometime after the members have been able to experience several camps.

Another observation from the previous chart :

There has so far been little camping across legacy council borders.

It is surprising that there isn't a greater difference in numbers between respondents from a legacy council and visitors to that legacy's camp. It's been two years since the merger opened access to all the camps to all the troops in GSNEO. One might think that troop leaders are unable to move out of a familiar rut.

Except that adult respondents collectively list 24 pages of NON –GS camps they have been to. It is inconsistent to think that they were able to go camping everywhere from Alaska to Arizona; Mexico, Canada, Europe, Australia; trying out high adventure activities in assorted venues with various groups, but yet not cross a county line for the two years since the merger (see section on problems and barriers).

One can conclude that although we have been a merged council for the designated two years, there has not been a fully integrated, council-wide camping opportunity made available to troops. A longer trial period is indicated. If this is truly a girl-driven organization, then girls (as well as the full membership) need a fair chance to see what their properties offer.

Troop camping was the most common usage – for both girls and adults. It is also the most anticipated, along with family camping

## **REASONS for a FAVORITE CAMP from girls**

When tabulating results, I counted each reason a person gave. So if she said, " I camped here as a girl, it's nearby, well-maintained, and there's so much to do!" It was then marked off under 4 different headings

### **Familiarity – 118**

#### **Overall Facilities**

Good hiking and trails 34  
Beautiful 13  
Buildings/ lodges 8  
Big 10  
Cabins 13  
Woods/nature-10  
Tents 6  
Different kinds of sites- something for everyone 7  
Flushies 7  
History 7  
Small 7  
Quiet 6  
Old Houses 4  
Everything close together 3  
Rustic 3

#### **Special Features**

Dance Hall w/bouncy floor  
Mill Museum 7  
Tall Timbers 4  
Lake (s) 6  
Pool 4  
Hill 3  
Waterslide 2  
Adirondacks

#### **Experience**

fun 25  
lots to do 21  
the counselors 13

## **REASONS for a FAVORITE CAMP from adults**

### **Familiarity -319**

#### **Overall Facilities**

Good trails, hiking -86

Variety of campsite choices – 72

Scenic/beautiful 71

Variety of activities - 53

the historic houses- 47

nice cabins- 40

camp has interesting history/stories - 43

primitive/ rustic / simple/ "feels like REAL camping" - 36

has flushies – 32

affordable - 15

it has showers - 11

appreciates that camp is "well-maintained" -20

large capacity / can handle SU events / "still haven't seen all of it" - 23

it's small / " girls can feel in control of the environment" - 16

likes the river/creek - 11

has variety of terrain/diverse habitats - -16

easy terrain -1

new facilities -8

#### **specific features**

lake(s) -45

Dance Hall built on springs – 24

Pool/swimming – 21

Dining hall -12

Tree House -9

Cooking equipment supplied – 9

Brownie Land- 3

swinging bridge-2

Challenge course-10

Olive's grave -2

Dual Kitchen great for cooking competition

welcome center

loft

cricket's corners -3

ledges

barn



## Favorite activities - summarized

### **What girls want at camp:**

Cookout/campfire -85%  
Horseback riding-82.8%  
Crafts - 67%  
Boating -67%  
Hiking-65%  
Animal care- 60%  
Nature/environment/ecology -58%  
Helping younger girls 57%

**It's clear here that the majority of girls are NOT clamoring for financial literacy nor science,technology,engineering, and math.** That doesn't mean that they shouldn't be worked into the program anyway, since they are needed life skills. But the popular activities are the draw for girls.

### **What adults want for girls at camp:**

Cooking out/campfire. (only 0.1% list this as "not important")  
Other activities rated as very important in descending order:  
First Aid 80%  
Service 78.4%  
Helping Younger Girls 73.1%  
Leadership Programs 68.6%  
Nature Study 65.8%  
Ceremonies / Flag 64.2%  
Wilderness Survival 63.3%  
Hiking 63.2%  
Land Navigation 51.1% (map reading, geocaching, treasure hunts, letterboxing)  
Arts and Crafts 49.6%

The importance of camping in the Girl Scout program:

In the open forum “additional comments” section, 71 adults commented on the role of camping in the Girl Scout program. 2 said Girls Scouts do not need to own / manage so much property when the parks can do a better job / camps are a continuous financial drain. 2 of them equivocated –advocating doing what is right – without stating opinion. **67 said Camping is essential to Girl Scouting.**

“ I think that a main focus of Girl Scouting today should remain in the camping / outdoors sphere. With technology today, kids need to get away from their cell phones, video games, and computers once in a while. It is good for their health (exercise), self-esteem, (meeting new friends) , and confidence (learning something new). Environmentalism should remain a main tenet of Girl Scouting. Girls need to be outside to remember why it is important to protect nature and to understand why conservation is necessary...”  
(#20)

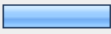


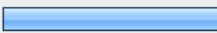
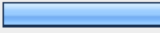

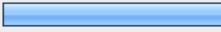
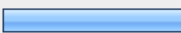
“...As a leader, I can attest to the changes that happen to girls when they camp. They become closer, and learn to care about the girls who are different than they are. They learn to work together with others and value other opinions. They become leaders we can be proud of. They develop life skill. They learn to care about the world around them. They become productive members of society. PRICELESS. “  
(#26)

“...while it is admirable to see Girl Scouts reaching out to connect with today’s world, I truly believe that people expect Girl Scouts to come with an Outdoor Experience facet to meet their daughter’s needs.”  
(#32)

“...the girls love the outdoors and are finding it more difficult to truly explore in a safe environment. That is why our camps are so important to the girls. In this day and age when makeup, hair, and clothing seems to be marketed to our girls younger and younger, where running, exploring, and being free is offered and encouraged. “(#37)

**Girls were more personal in their open comments.** Out of 110 (125 counted - 15 blanks) comments, 45 were pleading to keep specific camps open. 19 were about the positive effect of camping in general.

## Barriers and Problems

19. If you or a girl did NOT go to camp, why not? (Check all that apply)			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Did not know about camp opportunities		19.5%	82
Did not like the activities that are offered		9.3%	39
Do not like to be outdoors		5.7%	24
It costs too much money		39.7%	167
Camp is too far away		29.2%	123
Friends don't go to camp		11.6%	49
<b>Time was not convenient</b>		<b>40.6%</b>	<b>171</b>
Other (please specify)		33.5%	141

Cost, Value, Distance, Timing, Outdated registration process

For Non campers

Inconvenient time (40.6%)

Can't afford it (39.7%)

Camp too far away (29.2 %)

There are only very few who did not like the offered activities (9.3%) or plain do not like being outside (5.7%).

Open Forum – includes campers

**EXPENSE**-23 comments-including suggestions that the camps could be more affordable if better managed. Camp Y-Noah was cited more than once as an example of a good value for the money

“ My girls and I Love all the Girl Scout Camps!. As a leader, I do feel safer to have a camp that is regulated by our council and for the most part are fenced in when the girls were younger. However, I often have to go outside the council to find the high adventure stuff I need, with trained personnel and at a reasonable price. For example, rock climbing at Ledgewood went up from \$15 to \$30..I can take them to Camp Y-Noah for the WHOLE weekend of high adventure...zip lines, giant swings, high ropes, a cabin, archery, BB guns, etc. Why should I spend \$30 per girl for just one afternoon? I really do my homework when it comes to costs. I have 3 girls and myself in scouts and often many of my co-leaders have multiple girls...it can get very expensive. If I can do it cheaper myself, I will” ( #13)

**DISTANCE TO CAMP TOO LONG** 17 comments

## **AWKWARD AND OUTDATED REGISTRATION PROCESS** 10 comments

“I really appreciated the old system we had of making reservations on-line! I could sit there in my PJ’s, check out which sites were available and when. Then after I had done my research, I could register, fill out my information, and pay for the site, right there at 2AM online if I wanted to. It was the best! I really want to see that brought back for all the various camps” (#13)

“...Fill out paperwork and submit, wait to see if we have the selections, in the meantime parents, leaders and girls are in limbo waiting to see what date we get. Sometimes it seems last minute to know if we are in or not. I work weekends – which makes it even harder, because then I’m scrambling around trying to get days covered at work.....if the process were easier, we could do more.

## Suggestions for action

- Utilize volunteers/ let older girls help run programs
- Rent to outside groups
- Camps to specialize
  - Every camp should have outdoor cooking, hiking, etc. But not every camp needs an observatory or a full sound stage. Identify which camps would be best for which activities and focus development in those directions.
- Publish program guides way in advance
- Complete, accurate information in program guide and on web
- Better marketing ; think outside the box
- Anything that makes life simpler for leaders
- More Juniors and up programs
- Allow/encourage camping during school break time
- More handicapped accessibility