

# Continental Divide Trail Coalition



SMALL BUSINESS SURVEY  
FALL 2019

# Executive Summary

The Continental Divide Trail Coalition (CDTC) is a non-profit organization dedicated to completing, promoting, and protecting the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail. While CDTC is headquartered in Golden, Colorado, we work “on the ground” in all five states traversed by the CDT – Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, and New Mexico. Moreover, our members hail from all 50 states and several countries – evidence of the international renown of the CDT and the widespread community of people who cherish and support it.

According to a [Headwaters Economics report](#) released in October 2019, the five CDT states all saw their outdoor recreation economies outpace their states’ overall GDP by a factor of at least 1.5 between 2012-2017. In particular, many small, rural communities are looking toward outdoor recreation as a sustainable way to retain and attract talent, both by providing jobs and improving quality of life.

From conversations with elected leaders, business owners, and community groups along the trail, we at CDTC have known for years that the CDT is a piece of the outdoor economy puzzle – but we wanted to find out how exactly it fit.



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**In August and September of 2019, we surveyed 200 business owners in 32 communities near the CDT. Their responses – detailed in this report – show that the Continental Divide Trail, the public lands it traverses, and the recreationists that use it are a vital and growing part of the economic activity in these towns.**

**The overwhelming majority – 97% - believe that protecting, promoting, and enhancing public lands is important to their community’s economy. And in the last five years, 88% have seen economic growth in their community due to use of the Continental Divide Trail.**

**Small business owners feel that the CDT puts their community on the map as an outdoor recreation hub, drawing visitors who spend money at restaurants, hotels, gear shops, outfitters, grocery stores and more.**

### **Acknowledgements**

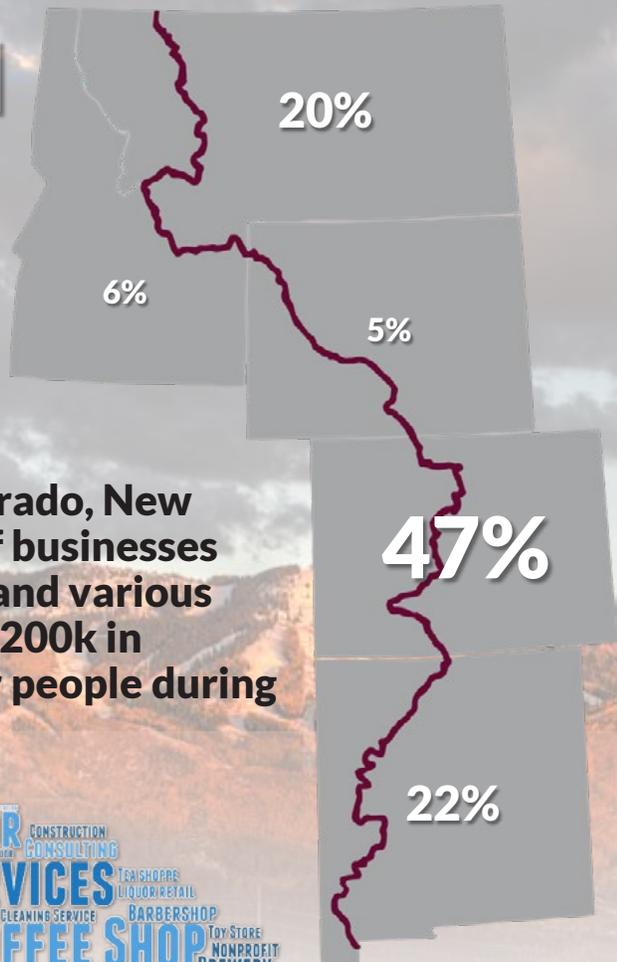
**The Continental Divide Trail Coalition would like to thank all the small business owners who took the time to complete our survey and provide valuable feedback that will inform our work in the future.**



# Who We Surveyed

We surveyed **200 small business owners** located along the Continental Divide Trail to learn more about how businesses and the local economy are impacted by having the CDT in their community, and how that influences their support for public lands.

Most businesses surveyed are located in Colorado, New Mexico, and Montana, and include an array of businesses including retail, hospitality, service industry, and various others. More than half (54%) made less than \$200k in revenue in 2018, and 76% employ 10 or fewer people during peak season.



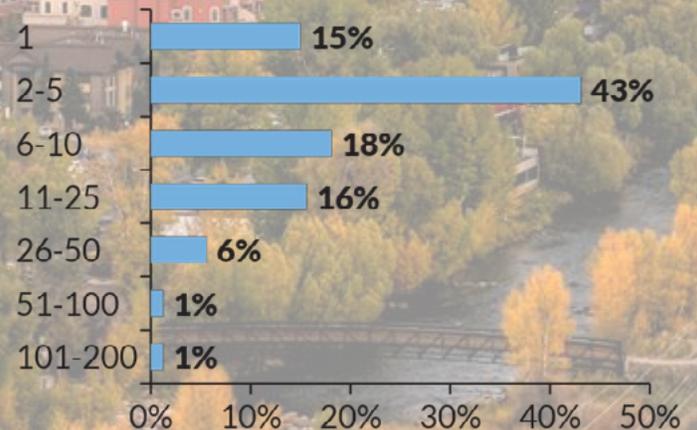
## Types of Business



## 2018 Revenues



## Employees During Peak Season



# The Value of the CDT

Of all business owners in surrounding CDT communities who responded:

**97%** believe protecting, promoting, and enhancing public lands is important to the well-being of businesses, jobs, and their community's economy.

**88%** have seen growth in business in their community at large due to use of the Continental Divide Trail since 2014.

**86%** believe protecting, promoting, and enhancing the Continental Divide Trail is important to the well-being of businesses, jobs, and their community's economy.

**58%** have seen growth in their business in particular due to use of the Continental Divide Trail since 2014.



# CDT Gateway Communities

81% of those surveyed own a business located in one of the 15 official CDT Gateway Communities – towns and counties recognized by the CDTC for their work to protect the CDT and provide a welcoming atmosphere for trail visitors.

Gateway Community designation can provide many benefits. Since designation, of all business owners in CDT Gateway Communities who responded:

**65%** have experienced an increase in trail users coming through their community.

**51%** have noted an overall increase in awareness of their community as an outdoor recreation hub or destination.

**50%** have noted an overall increase in awareness of the CDT among business owners in their community.

**45%** have noted an overall increase in business in their community.

**40%** have noted an increase in traffic from trail users at their business specifically.



# Support for LWCF Funding

For more than 50 years, the Land and Water Conservation Fund, or LWCF, has used money from offshore oil and gas leasing - not taxpayer dollars - to help protect public lands in every state, including iconic places like the Continental Divide Trail. Congress made LWCF permanent earlier this year, but the program's funding remains in jeopardy; most years, Congress diverts significant LWCF funds for other purposes.

**98%** of all business owners who responded **support Congress providing dedicated, full funding for LWCF to be used to protect natural areas, clean water, local parks and access to outdoor recreation.**

The Continental Divide Trail Coalition, a non-profit organization dedicated to completing, promoting, and protecting the Continental Divide Trail, has stated that, "While the CDT was designated by Congress as a National Scenic Trail in 1978, it is still incomplete, primarily because it can only be routed along highways and other paved roads in areas without access to public land. Without the funding that LWCF provides for public lands, it is unlikely that the CDT will ever be completed."

**65%** of all business owners who responded **said they are more likely to support dedicated funding knowing that LWCF funding is vital to the completion of the Continental Divide Trail.**





For more information or to join our efforts contact us at:

[info@continentaldivide-trail.org](mailto:info@continentaldivide-trail.org)  
[www.continentaldivide-trail.org](http://www.continentaldivide-trail.org)

710 10th Street Suite 200  
Golden, CO 80401