

## Chapter 1 Introduction and Methodology

The Allegheny Trail Alliance (ATA) has contracted with the University of Pittsburgh to undertake a user survey of the Alliance's trail system in Western Pennsylvania. This trail system is shown in Map 1-1 below. In addition, the University has taken data collected by the Alliance on trail usage and, using trail count and user survey data, made estimates of user spending associated with trail use during the period from April, 15, through November 15, 2002. This Introduction describes in some detail the user survey methodology. The analyses of trail usage and user survey data are presented in the following chapters.

### 1.1 The Trail Counters

The ATA has positioned electronic trail counters at various points along the trail systems. These counter points are shown in Map 1-1. There were a total of 11 counters installed. However, the Greenock counter appeared to malfunction during the entire project period, so its data cannot be used in this study. All counters on the Montour Trail are not functioning, so usage and spending estimates cannot be made for this portion of the trail system. Chapter 2 describes in detail how the trail counter data are converted into usage rates.

### 1.2 The User Surveys

The University of Pittsburgh developed a survey and sampling protocol for trail users during the period, April 15 through November 15, 2002. The survey was distributed by volunteers at regular intervals at seven trailheads along the trail system. The survey was in a self-addressed, stamped return envelope and was placed on vehicle windows at the trailheads at mid-morning of the sampling days. In case of rain, the surveys were administered the next day. Surveys were distributed on several weekdays, typically Wednesday and Friday, and weekends. A trailhead would be surveyed on a Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday of the same week. This would be repeated twice a month. The survey distribution points are shown in Map 1-1.

The number of surveys distributed and returned is shown in Table 1-1. A total of 5700 surveys were placed on vehicle windows at the sample trailheads during the April-November period. A total of 2229 had been returned by the cutoff date, December 18, 2002. This is a **39% response rate**, which is good for no follow-up procedures. The table shows that response rates ranged from 24% at Confluence to 53% at Montour. Response rates were highest during May-August, when they were roughly 45%, but fell to as low as 12% in November. This may be because people had already been surveyed and wished not to fill in another survey. Return rates for Wednesday and Friday were identical, 35%; while return rates for Saturday were 42% for Sunday were 39%.

Map 1-1  
 The Regional Trail System with Trail Counter  
 and User Survey Locations

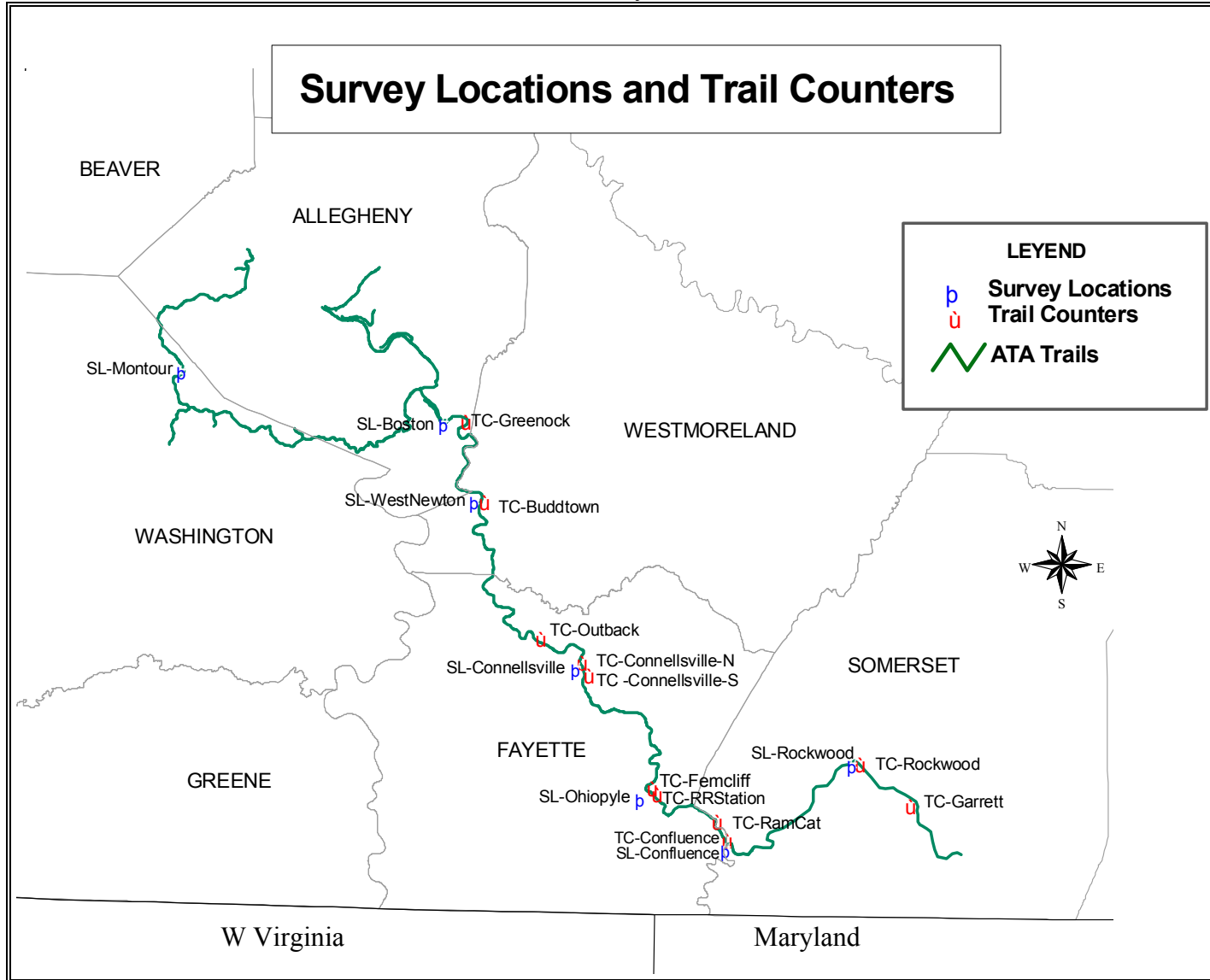


Table 1-1  
Surveys Distributed and Returned, by Trailhead Location

	Montour	Boston	W. Newton	Connellsville	Ohiopyle	Confluence	Rockwood	Sent	Return	%
Month	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
April	0	0	0	80	105	55	0	240	64	27%
May	125	160	125	80	105	55	160	810	364	45%
June	95	120	95	160	210	110	120	910	431	47%
July	125	160	125	180	235	125	160	1110	493	44%
August	90	115	90	110	145	75	115	740	341	46%
September	75	95	75	190	250	130	95	910	323	35%
October	55	70	55	80	105	55	70	490	152	31%
November	55	70	55	80	105	55	70	490	61	12%
Sent	620	790	620	960	1260	660	790	<b>5700</b>	<b>2229</b>	<b>39%</b>
Return	330	356	279	289	487	160	328	<b>2229</b>		
%	53%	45%	45%	30%	39%	24%	42%	<b>39%</b>		