

# Appendix D: Levee Managers Survey Summary

**Start Date of Survey:** July 30th, 2021

**End Date of Online Survey:** October 5, 2021 (original closing date was September 17)

**Total Respondents:** 14

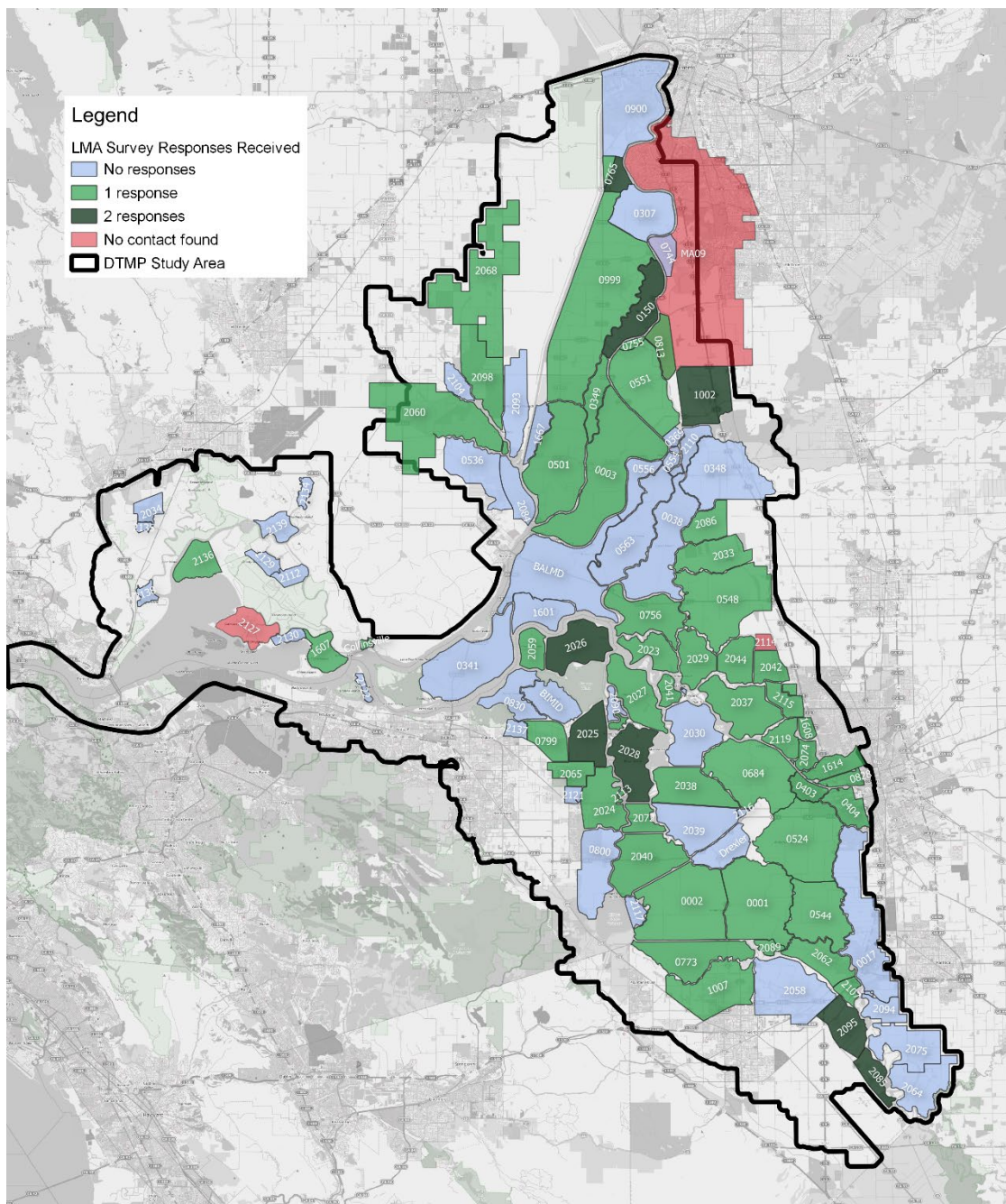
- **Paper Responses:** 3
- **Online Responses:** 11

**Email Addresses Shared:** 7 shared for follow up group discussion

## D1. Survey Format

The survey consisted of 8 questions. Most were multiple choice. Most survey questions offered an option for respondents to enter additional text as an “other” option. The final question prompted survey takers to provide their email address if they wanted to participate in a follow up group discussion. 8 respondents provided their email addresses. Two drop-in meeting times were scheduled in early October for these follow up discussion sessions. Responses from these follow up meetings are not summarized here.

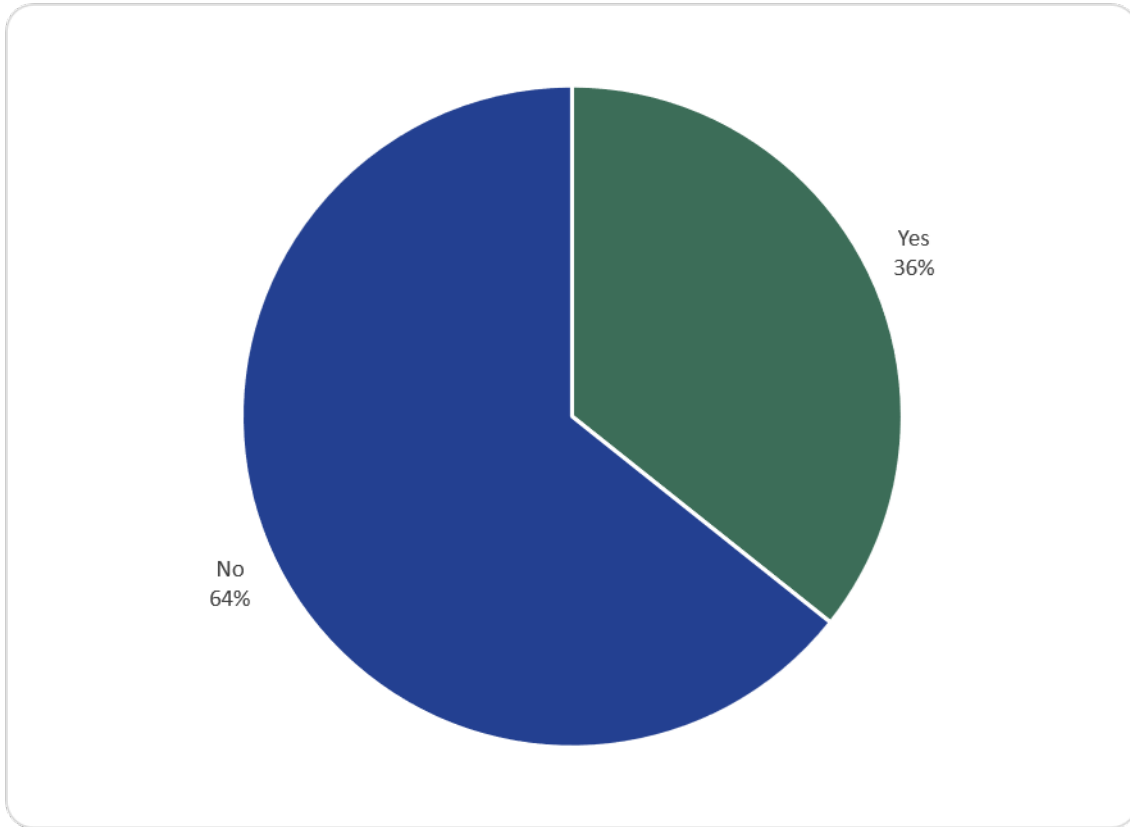
The survey results and analysis for each question are below.



**Figure D-1: Map of Levee Manager Survey Respondents**

The map of Levee Manager survey respondents above indicates which reclamation districts were represented by the 14 surveys submitted. Over 50 reclamation districts were covered, with the majority located in the northern and central portions of the Delta Study Area. Reclamation districts shown in lighter green had 1 survey response submitted for their district. Reclamation districts shown in darker green had 2 survey responses submitted. Reclamation districts show in blue had no response to the survey. Contact information for 3 reclamation districts could not be found and did not receive the survey.

### Q1. Are any of the levees you manage and maintain open to the public?



Value	Percent	Count
Yes	35.7%	5
No	64.3%	9
TOTALS:	100%	14

The majority of Levee Managers who responded to the survey indicated that they do not allow any type of public access to the levees they manage and maintain. A little over one-third of the respondents indicated they do allow public access. In the following question, those respondents were asked to identify the type of public access they allow.

**Q2. If you answered yes to the previous question, what type of public access do you allow (e.g. roads, recreational trails, water access, etc.)?**

Answers to this open response write-in question included:

*Mainly roads, some recreational trails.*

*Pedestrian path adjacent and below the patrol roads on the waterside of the crown.*

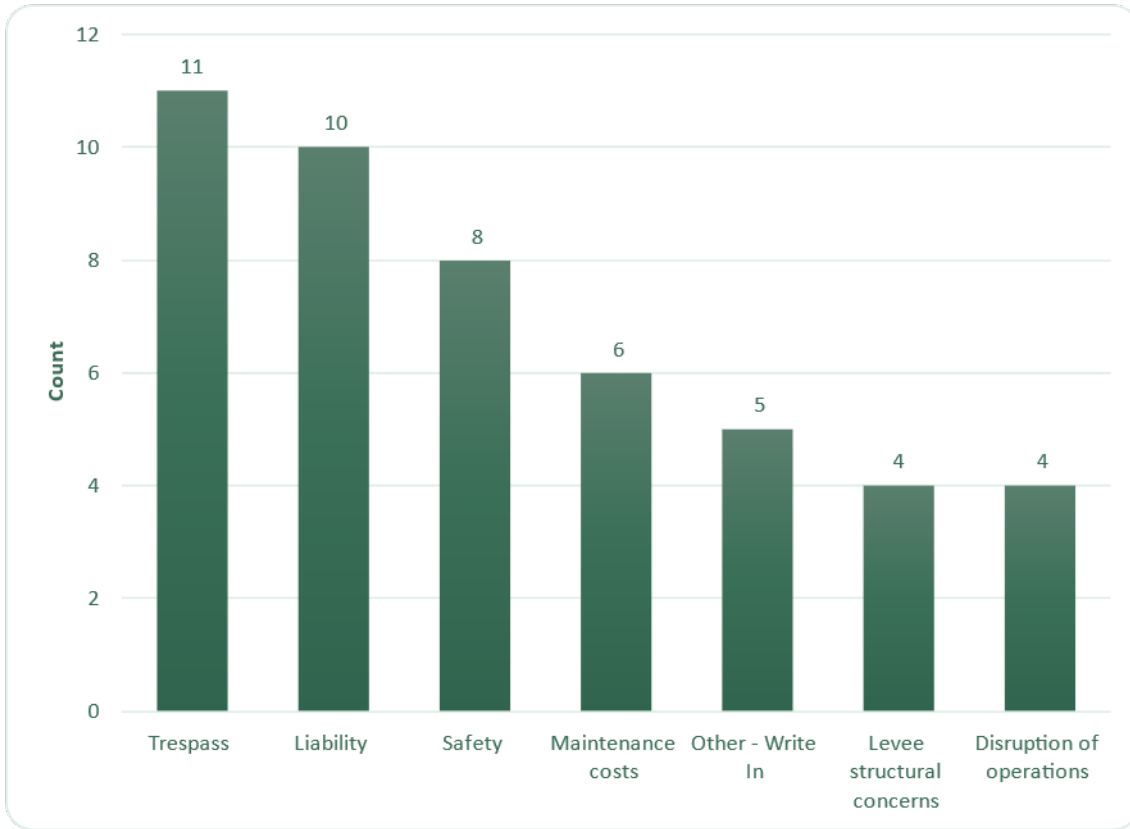
*Roads*

*There are County Roads on Lower Roberts Island (Neugabauer), Lower and Upper Jones (Bacon Island Road, Lower Jones Road), and Terminous Tract.*

*Highway 160. All other access restricted, including parking.*

Levee Managers who indicated that they allow public access on the levees they manage and maintain were asked to identify the specific type of access allowed. Most respondents indicated that public access is limited to specific roads and highways crossing through their reclamation districts. 2 respondents noted that they have trails within their districts.

Q3. From your perspective, what are the primary challenges related to public access on levees? Pick top 3 challenges.



Value	Percent	Count
Trespass	78.6%	11
Liability	71.4%	10
Safety	57.1%	8
Maintenance costs	42.9%	6
Other - Write in	35.7%	5
Levee structural concerns	28.6%	4
Disruption of operations	28.6%	4

This question provided respondents an opportunity to select their top 3 challenges related to public access on levees. Nearly all Levee Managers who responded to the survey indicated Trespass (78.6%) and/or Liability (71.4%) as top challenges. Concerns about Safety (57.1%) were also among the top challenges identified by most respondents. Just over one-third of survey respondents selected “Other” and wrote in a response to this question. Write in responses included:

*Garbage, etc. and vandalism*

*Only way on the levee is by ferry*

*Pollution, crime, homeless encampments*

*SEE ATTACHED LETTER.*

*Vandalism and other criminal activity*

Write in responses, including a letter submitted by one respondent, further clarifies that some of the biggest concerns associated with public access on levees are the specific impacts of garbage, crime, homeless encampments, and vandalism to reclamation district equipment, operations, and maintenance.

### **Question 3 Analysis**

“Trespass” and “Liability” were by far the greatest concerns of the Levee Managers who responded to the survey. Responses to the survey, though, did not provide details on specific challenges within these two areas of concern. For example, are the concerns around Liability associated with the threat of lawsuit, or more the potential financial liability and burden from additional public use of their facilities? In addition, understanding the specific impacts related to Trespass that Levee Managers have to deal with, as well as preventative measures taken, are other important details to understand as it relates to planning for the Great California Delta Trail. Clarification around the broad concerns of Trespass and Liability were a primary focus of the follow up discussion sessions.

#### **Q4. Are you aware of any examples where public access on levees has been successful? What strategies have been effective?**

This was an open-ended write in question to see if there might be helpful examples of public access on levees that could inform the Great California Delta Trail planning process and recommendations. Responses included:

*Not aware of any successes on levees that do not support public roads or highways*

*not aware of anything applicable*

*NO*

*Consistent patrol and coordination with law enforcement for trespassers.*

*no*

*RD 2074 successfully allows pedestrian access to certain reaches of our levee system daily (from down till dusk). A well organized security contractor and vigilant homeowners and other members of the public are instrumental in keeping a safe environment for the public.*

*Not aware of any*

*Not aware of any*

*Bike paths on the levees in the Sacramento area*

*None come to mind, public access brings mostly homeless people, trash and crime*

*No*

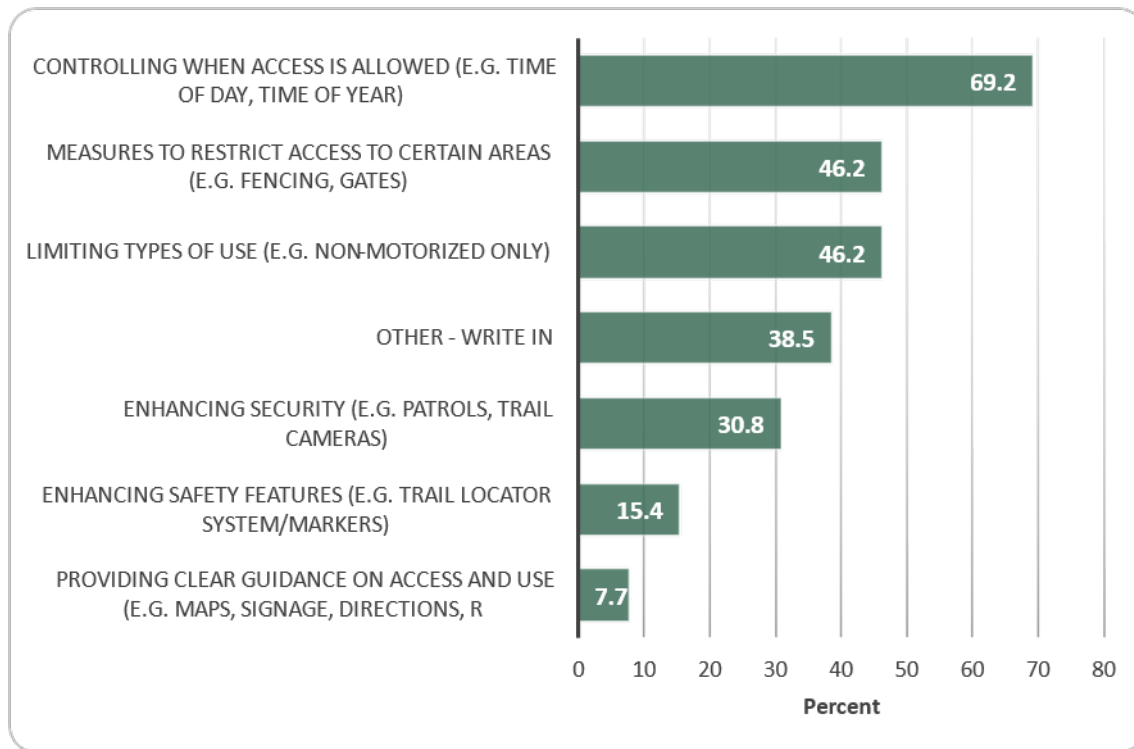
*No.*

*No.*

The majority of respondents indicated that they did not know of any successful examples of public access on levees. One response revealed a general skepticism about the ability to allow public access on levees without also increasing the presence of homeless people, trash, and crime. Another response highlighted the need for patrolling and a presence by law enforcement to control trespass in such situations.

Two responses did provide examples of areas where public access on levees has been successfully managed. Notable, both of these examples are in more urbanized and populated regions of the Delta Study Area. While this is a small sample to draw from, there seems to be an overall sense that public access on levees, unless provided with significant resources to monitor and maintain existing resources, may be better suited to urban areas.

**Q5. From your perspective, what conditions or parameters would be needed for public trail use on levees to be considered feasible? Pick your top 3 conditions.**



Value	Percent
Controlling when access is allowed (e.g. time of day, time of year)	69.2%
Limiting types of use (e.g. non-motorized only)	46.2%
Measures to restrict access to certain areas (e.g. fencing, gates)	46.2%
Other - Write in	38.5%
Enhancing security (e.g. patrols, trail cameras)	30.8%
Enhancing safety features (e.g. trail locator system / markers)	15.4%
Providing clear guidance on access and use (e.g. maps, signage, directions, rules)	7.7%



This question provided respondents an opportunity to identify specific conditions or parameters that might make public trail use on levees feasible. From the choices provided, the only condition identified by a majority of respondents was “Controlling when access is allowed” (69.2%). Just under half of the respondents selected “Limiting types of use” (46.2%) and “Measures to restrict access to certain areas” (46.2%). Just over one-third of survey respondents selected “Other” and wrote in a response to this question. Write in responses included:

*Design along waterside of levees supporting public roads*

*No one permitted on the working ranch without a liability waiver and an agreement by the project proponent to defend and indemnify landowners and their vendors (chemical applicators, etc.) from all liability and risk*

*None - all private property - no way of securing residences and club houses - trespass already a problem and there is no legal access*

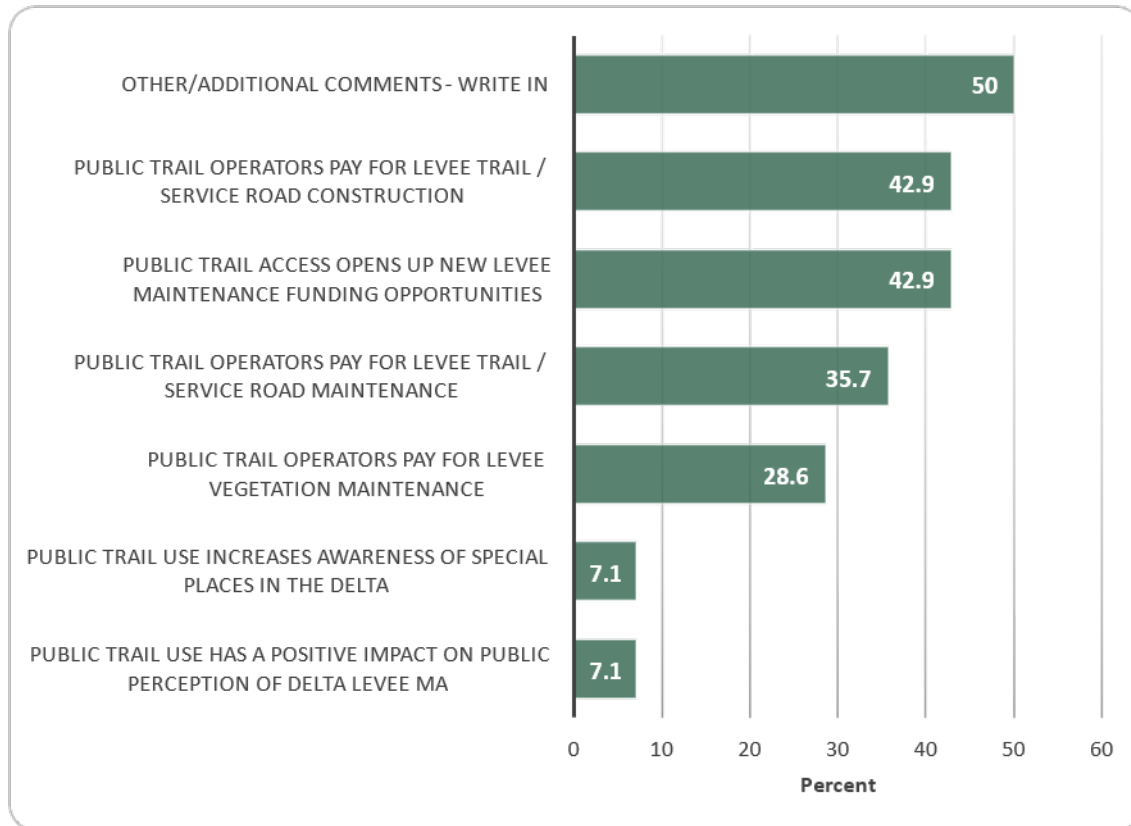
*Simply not feasible. No way to supervise usage creating safety issues and risking theft and property damage.*

*This assumes that public access could be made feasible. I do not think public access is feasible even with limitations.*

While one response did indicate that design of trails along the waterside of levees could support public access, most of the write in responses reveal a fairly high level of skepticism that any measures or conditions could make public trail use on levees feasible. Combine this with the fact that only one of the multiple choice responses was selected by more than half of the Levee Managers, and it is clear that many significant challenges exist with considering placement of public trails on levees.

As seen in prior responses, major concerns are centered around issues of Liability and Trespass. One response even notes the need for specific liability waivers for anyone entering the property and agreements in place with the trail managers to protect landowners and contractors from all types of liability and risk.

**Q6 In some cases, establishing public trail access provides mutual benefits to levee owners / managers and nearby landowners. Which of the following might increase your interest in considering public trail access on any portion of the levees you manage and maintain? Pick your top 3 options.**



Value	Percent
Other / Additional Comments - Write in	50.0%
Public trail access open us new levee maintenance funding opportunities	42.9%
Public trail operators pay for levee trail / service road construction	42.9%
Public trail operators pay for levee trail / service road maintenance	35.7%
Public trail operators pay for levee vegetation maintenance	28.6%
Public trail use has a positive impact on public perception of Delta levee managers / owners	7.1%
Public trail use increases awareness of special places in the Delta	7.1%

This question focused on identifying any perceived benefits that could be realized by allowing public trail access on levees. Notable, half of the Levee Manager respondents chose to write in a response to this question. Also of note, the option to write in a response surpassed any of the potential financial benefits that could be selected as a response to this question. The write in responses included:

*I do not believe that benefits can outweigh negatives.*

*Link to levee improvements to provide a larger levee to support trail*

*No advantages apparent.*

*None of the above*

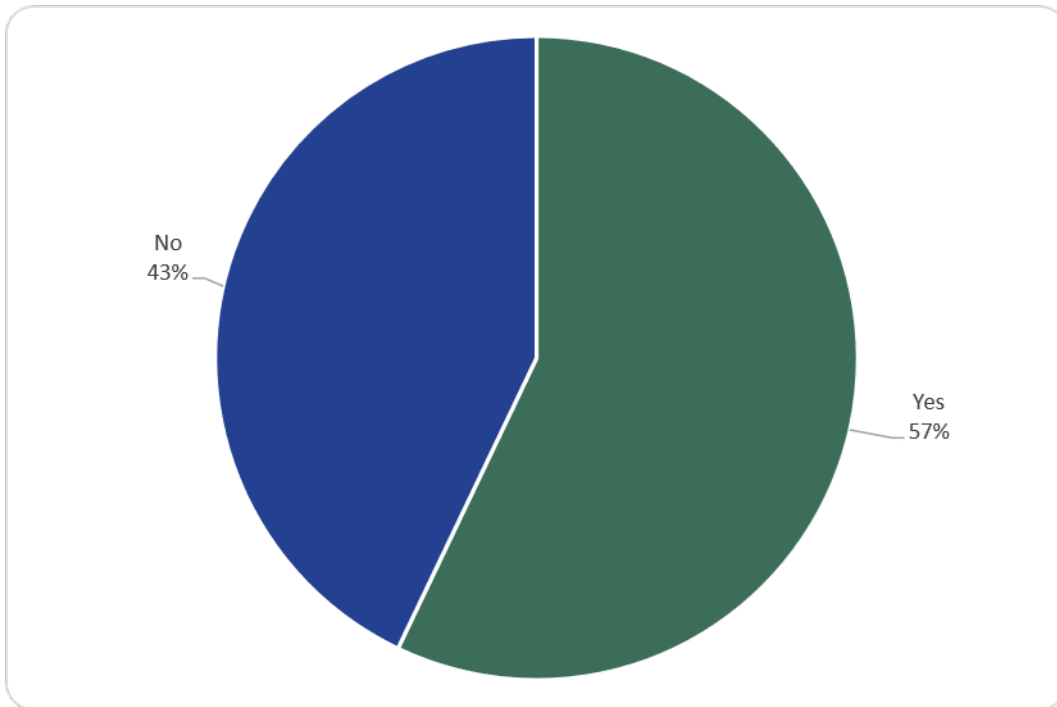
*Not interested in adding more access to reclamation district facilities.*

*Use of land in the middle of a working farm for recreation provides no benefit to the landowner. It is a public burden that the rights of way did not anticipate.*

*We see no advantages - only disadvantages. We are a private property surrounded by private property. Trespass is a problem. We already have the risk of theft and property damage*

One response suggested that trails could be supported with a link to levee improvements that increased the size of the levee. Beyond that, overall responses indicate a very low level of support for allowing public trail access on levees, at least from the standpoint of realizing any meaningful benefits to the landowners and to levee operations. As one respondent noted, "I do not believe that benefits can outweigh negatives."

**Q7. Would you be interested in participating in a brief follow up conversation to share more about your perspectives on public access on levees in the Delta?**



Value	Percent	Count
Yes	57.1%	8
No	42.9%	6
<b>TOTALS:</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>14</b>

The majority of Levee Managers who responded to the survey indicated an interest in participating in a follow up discussion to explore further their perspectives on public trail access on levees. Two drop in meeting times were scheduled in early October for these follow up discussion sessions.

**Q8. Please provide your email address below.**

The final question simply collected email addresses from the 8 Levee Managers who indicated an interest in a follow up discussion on the topic of public trail access on levees.