



Stakeholder Meeting 3 | December 2023

Welcome

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Eastern Sierra Council of Governments



Land Acknowledgement

- Public lands in the United States hold the creation stories, burial grounds, and ceremonies of Indigenous people who were killed or forcibly removed from their ancestral homes during territorial acquisition.
- Many tribes, comprised of different bands, live in the Eastern Sierra region, caring for their native lands as they coexist with the ongoing impacts of colonization, in The Buttermilk area predominantly the Nüümü (Paiute) people.
- The Nüümü place name for the Owens Valley is Payahuunadü (The Place Where Water Flows). In the Buttermilks area we acknowledge Wünübü (Mt. Tom) and Paunibü (His wife, on his right hand side, Basin Mountain).
- This acknowledgement is an invitation to all organizations, residents, and visitors to recognize the way this history has shaped the present as all parties work together in anticipation of a better future.

Agenda

- Project Overview
- Community Input
- Themes and Alternatives
- Next Steps



Project Overview

History + Background





Study Area

BIRPI PROJECT AREA

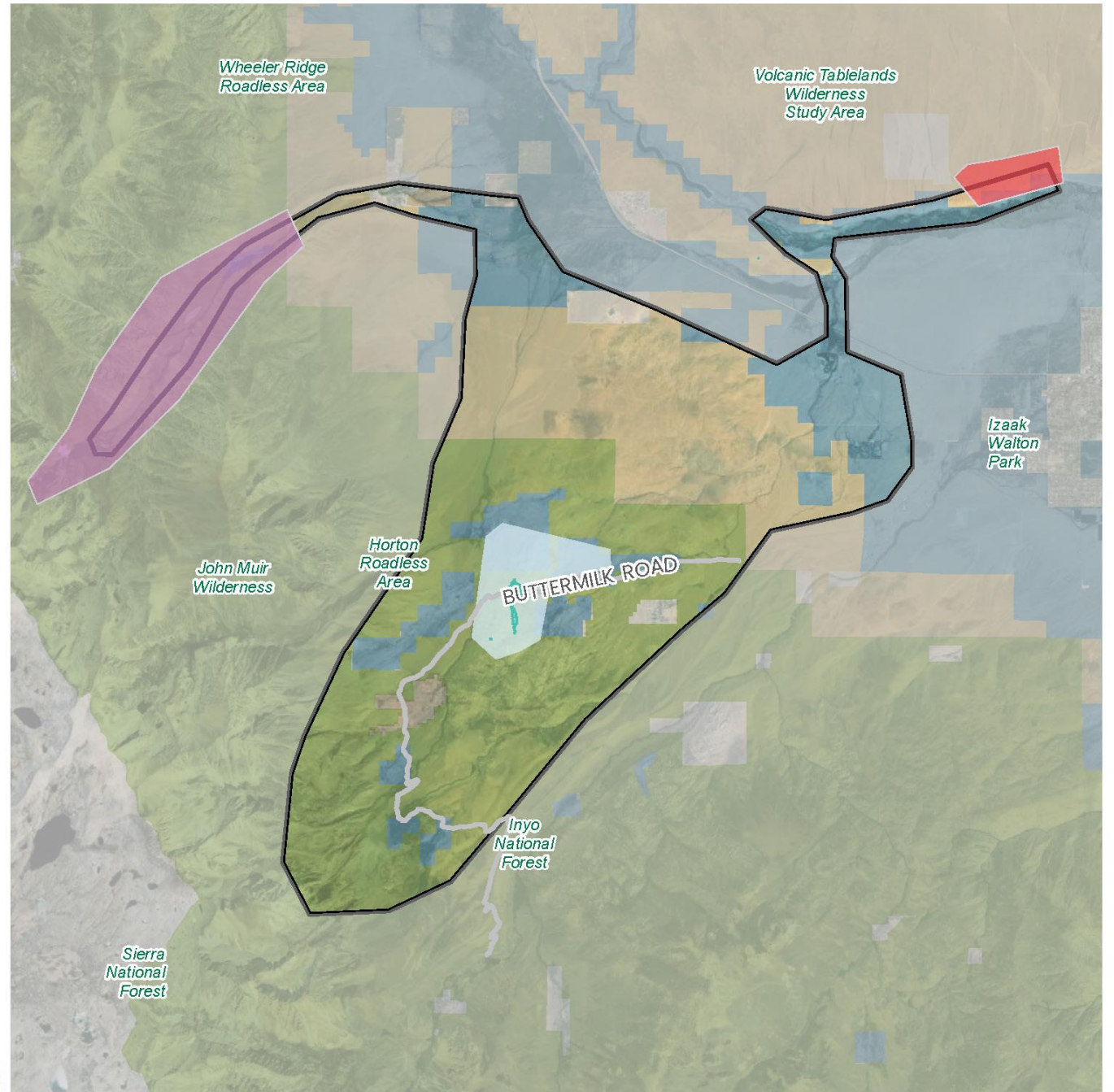
Legend

Boundaries

-  BIRPI Project Area
-  Buttermilk Country
-  Happy and Sad Boulders
-  Pine Creek Canyon

Primary Land Managers

-  BLM
-  LADWP
-  USFS
-  C.A. Fish and Wildlife



Overview

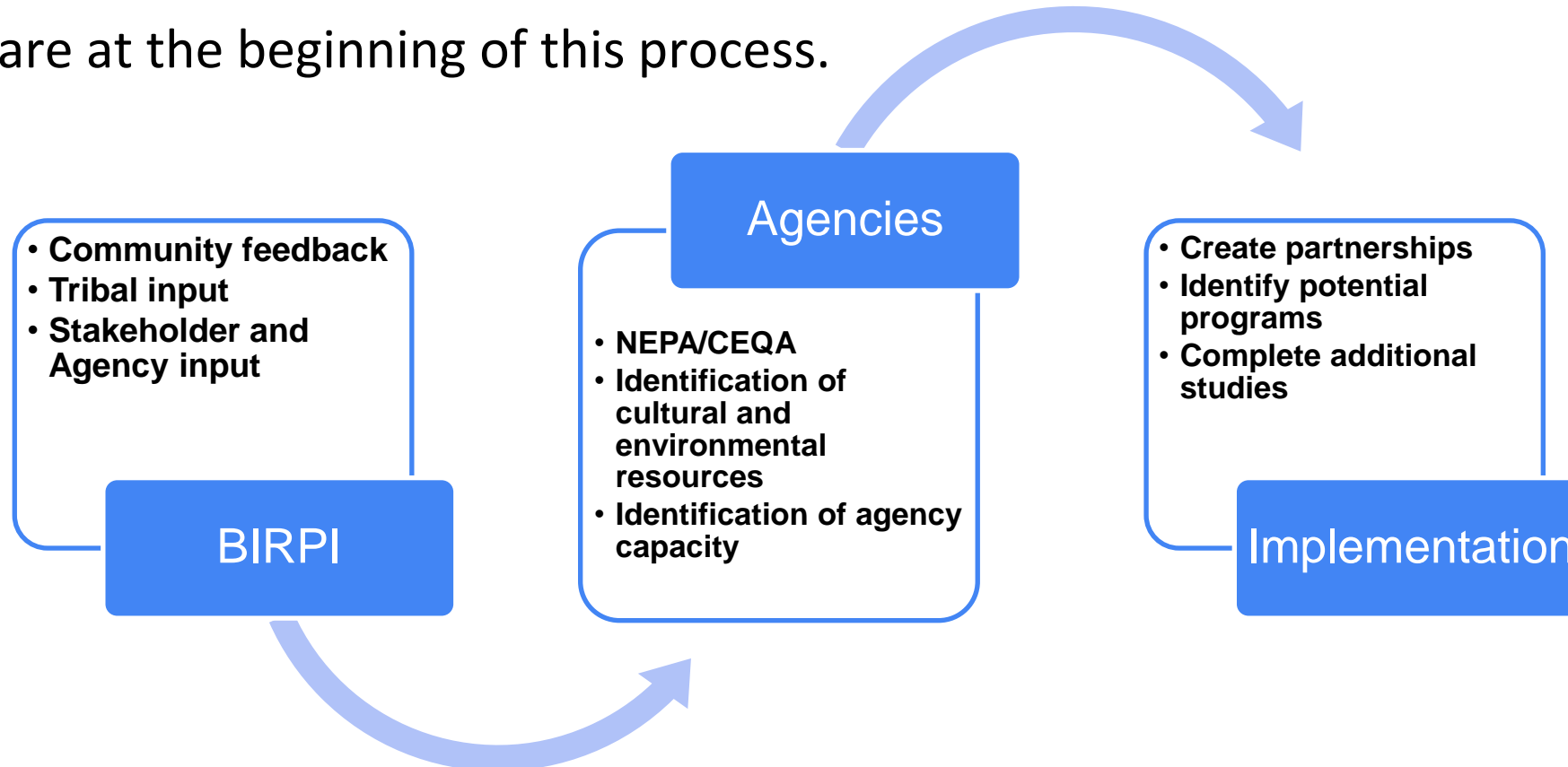
- The Buttermilk Project Area has emerged as an iconic destination in the Eastern Sierra Region and has seen **increasing numbers of visitors in recent years, straining existing recreation infrastructure while presenting opportunities to improve the visitor experience and conserve natural resource assets** through engaged recreation management.
- Conceptual recreation planning focusing on the interconnected nature of recreation activities in the Project Area and the **documentation of needs and gaps for future recreation infrastructure improvements.**

Project Vision

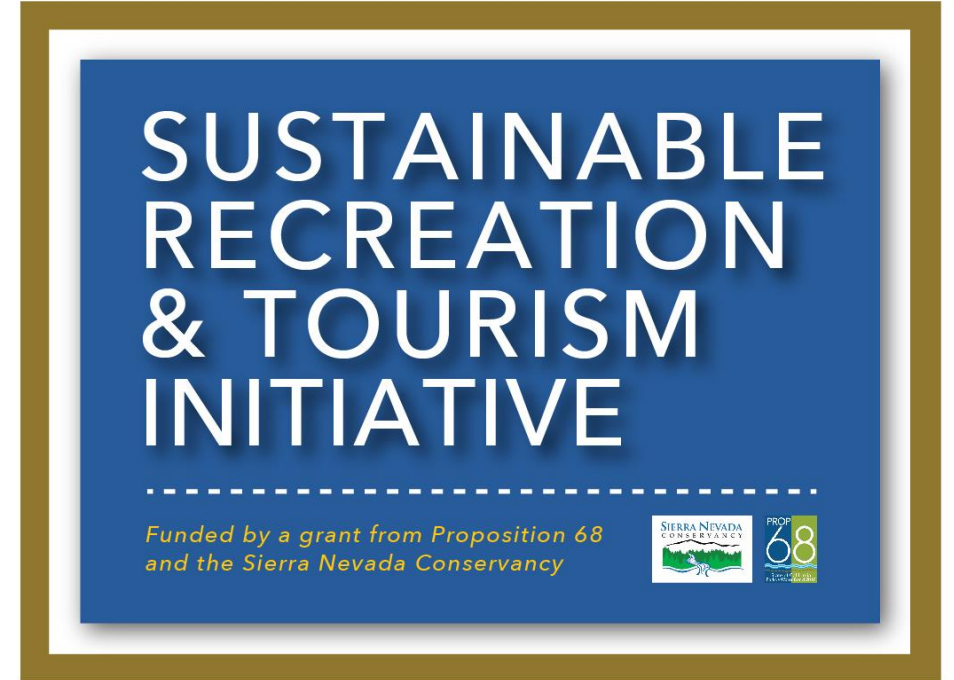
Understand the concerns and hear potential solutions from all stakeholders to create a **well-maintained, safe, and accessible destination** that supports all recreation while protecting the sensitive natural ecosystem and cultural resources of the area.

Process

- BIRPI is capturing community input and preferences for land management agencies to consider/reference when making improvements, developing a management plan, etc.
- We are at the beginning of this process.



History



History

**BUTTERMILK
INFRASTRUCTURE
& RECREATION
PLANNING
INITIATIVE
(BIRPI)**

SRTI PROJECT

Lead Agency:
Eastern Sierra
Council of Governments

EASTERN SIERRA
Sustainable Recreation Partnership

**SUSTAINABLE
RECREATION
& TOURISM
INITIATIVE**

SUSTAINABLE RECREATION & TOURISM INITIATIVE
PORTFOLIO OF PROJECTS
WITH ESSRP PROSPECTUS FOR FUTURE INVESTMENTS

EASTERN SIERRA REGION

Sustainable Recreation Projects on Behalf of the Eastern Sierra Sustainable Recreation Partnership

SRTI PROJECT

Lead Agency:
Eastern Sierra
Council of Governments

EASTERN SIERRA CAMPGROUND IMPROVEMENTS

SRTI PROJECT

Lead Agency:
Eastern Sierra
Council of Governments

DISPERSED CAMPING MITIGATION: CAMP LIKE A PRO

SRTI PROJECT

Lead Agency:
Mono County

REGIONAL RECREATION CAPACITY

SRTI PROJECT

Lead Agency:
Eastern Sierra
Council of Governments

VULNERABILITY IN CALIFORNIA'S EASTERN SIERRA: ASSET INVENTORY & GAP ANALYSIS

SRTI PROJECT

Lead Agency:
Eastern Sierra
Council of Governments

EASTERN SIERRA VISITOR CONNECTION PROGRAM

SRTI PROJECT

Lead Agency:
Eastern Sierra
Council of Governments

TOWNS TO TRAILS PLAN

SRTI PROJECT

Lead Agency:
Eastern Sierra
Council of Governments

EASTERN SIERRA SCENIC BYWAY ANALYSIS

SRTI PROJECT

Lead Agency:
Eastern Sierra
Council of Governments


Community Input



What we've heard



Public Input Map



BIRPI PROJECT AREA
Public Input Map Themes

- Camping/ Fire Concerns
- Climbing
- Crowding
- Damage to Environment
- Maintenance/ Infrastructure Improvement
- Parking
- Popular Destination
- Restroom
- Roadways
- Trash

Boundaries

- ▭ BIRPI Project Area
- ▭ Buttermilk Country
- ▭ Happy and Sad Boulders
- ▭ Pine Creek Canyon

Primary Land Managers

- ▭ BLM
- ▭ LADWP
- ▭ USFS
- ▭ C.A. Fish and Wildlife


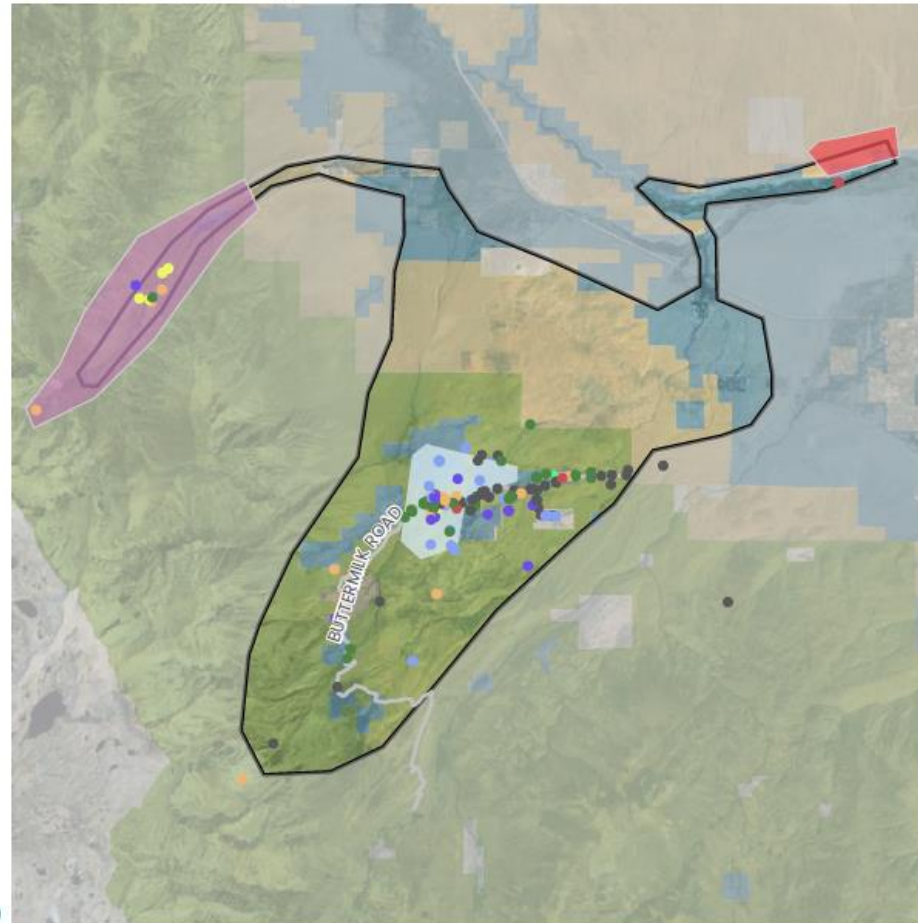
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Figure 6. BIRPI Public Input Map Themes



Stakeholder Meetings



Stakeholder Meetings

Enforcement
Sustainable
Recreation

SUSTAINABILITY
RESPECT
COLLABORATION

Collaborate
Enforce
Protect

Sustainability
Recreation
Preservation

GOAL

Reduce the amount of waste left behind from visitors and maintain facilities within the project area such as trails, fencing, and toilets.

POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

Quick/Easy: Regular volunteer clean-up days **Yes!**

Achievable/Implementable:

Educational signage and programming, hire a law enforcement ranger **\$\$\$**

Long Term/Big Vision:

Install additional trash facilities and hire permanent staff to maintain facilities, restrooms, campgrounds, and trails. Hire additional law enforcement rangers as needed **Yes!**

GOAL

Create a maintenance plan and implement permanent road improvements

POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

Quick/Easy: Seasonal maintenance plan

Achievable/Implementable:

Shuttle service from Bishop Drainages/culverts to prevent wash outs
Long Term/Big Vision: and require less maintenance
Pave Buttermilk Road and create a northern road route

↳ pave only to the boulders to allow for OHV recreation beyond the boulders

Circle the solution you prefer in each recommendation category then, rank your top three categories in order of importance.

Recommendation Category	Quick/Easy	Achievable/Implementable	Long Term/Big Vision
<input type="radio"/> Buttermilk Road	<input type="radio"/> Seasonal maintenance plan	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Shuttle service from Bishop	<input type="radio"/> Pave Buttermilk Road and create a northern road route
<input type="radio"/> Camping	<input type="radio"/> Camping permits and camping areas	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Formalize campsites	<input type="radio"/> Developed campsites with facilities
<input checked="" type="radio"/> Climbing Rangers	<input type="radio"/> Organize volunteers to assist rangers	<input type="radio"/> Create a small welcome center and hire a law enforcement ranger	<input type="radio"/> Hire several full-time patrolling rangers
<input type="radio"/> Collaboration	<input type="radio"/> Create an online comment box	<input type="radio"/> Join an existing organization's committee meetings	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Create an organizational body
<input checked="" type="radio"/> Education	<input type="radio"/> Signage, brochures and online educational campaigns	<input type="radio"/> Required permit and education for all visitors	<input type="radio"/> A more robust signage system and online resources
<input checked="" type="radio"/> Habitat Destruction	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Ban OHVs in sensitive areas	<input type="radio"/> Use physical infrastructure to show recreational users where they should use OHVs, set up crash pads, camp and park	<input type="radio"/> Create an OHV trail network and expand climbing ranger program to educate visitors

What recreational activities other than climbing do you see in the BIRPI project area? What other recreational activities would you like to do in the project area that are difficult now?

Birding, hiking, running, photography, wildlife observation, wildflower observation, quiet contemplation of beautiful spaces

Community Vision

Sustainable
Recreation
Management

Enforce
manage
protect

Safe.
Clean.
Sustainable

SUSTAINABILITY
RESPECT
COLLABORATION

Educationally
Focused
Accessibility

Clean
Peaceful
accessibility

- EDUCATION
- ENFORCEMENT
- COLLABORATION

Collaborative
Managed
Access

Sustainability
Recreation
Preservation

- SUSTAINABILITY
- PRESERVATION
- MANAGEMENT
PRESENCE *ASHUTTLE
SERVICE

Sustainability
Recreation
Access

- Education
- Respect
- Sharing

- Sustainability
- Preservation
- Management
- Agreed on
MANAGEMENT
Sustainability

Key Themes

- Consensus Management
- Buttermilk Road
- Camping
- Climbing Rangers
- Education
- Habitat Destruction
- Maintenance and Staffing
- Overcrowding
- Parking
- Trails
- Tribal Involvement
- Wildfires

Themes and Alternatives



Consensus Management

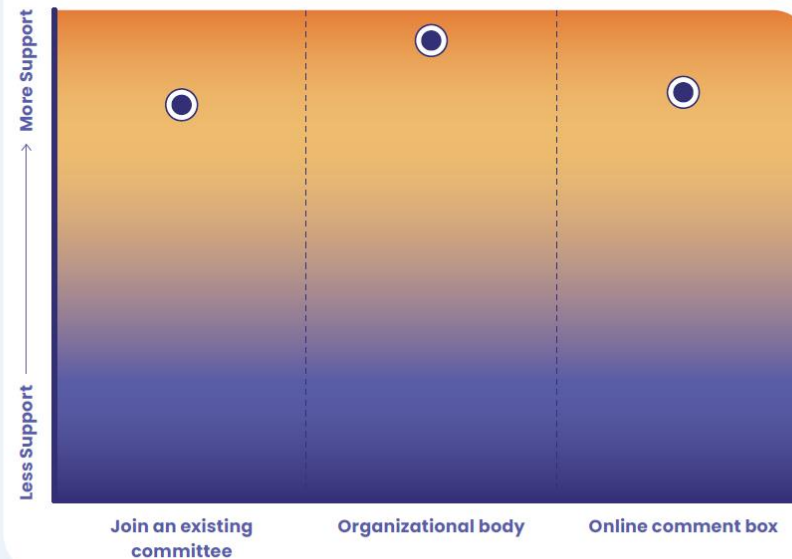
Goal:

Create a collaborative agreement between land management agencies to discuss challenges and opportunities within the project area.

No Action:

Subsequent alternatives or next steps identified in this document are likely contingent on the shared stewardship, continuity, and organization of all landowners and jurisdictions.

Table 1. Collaboration Public Support



SUMMARY OF RESULTS

- Alternatives were presented to participants, but without the creation of an organizational body, none of the other alternatives are feasible. **Furthermore, no other suggestions in this Plan can be implemented without the creation of this organizational body.**
- Although the online comment box and joining an existing committee received fewer total positive comments from participants, none of the presented alternatives received negative comments.

"Consensus is hard when fragmented across multiple independent groups. A single organizational 'board' with participation from all stakeholders speaking as a unified voice would be much more effective in advocacy to USFS."

"[...] an oversight committee must include representatives from all communities, including local Nüümü and Newe and environmental communities, not just from recreational groups and people from extractive industries."

Buttermilk Road

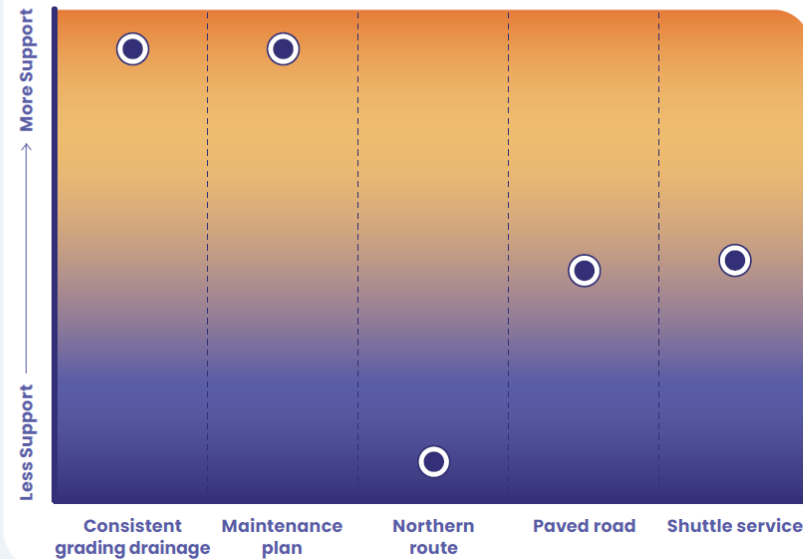
Goal:

Minimize impact to road bed by users.

No Action:

Continued road bed damage, dust, limited emergency access, and ongoing maintenance.

Table 2. Buttermilk Road Public Support



SUMMARY OF RESULTS

- Most participants were in favor of the creation of a maintenance plan. This plan can prepare the future stewardship group for the regular maintenance needs of Buttermilk Road.
- Most participants disagreed with the alternative to construct a northern route to the Buttermilk Boulders.
- Although not an initial alternative presented to community members, many people wrote-in their support for Buttermilk Road to be regraded with appropriate culverts and drainage.

PROS AND CONS OF PAVING BUTTERMILK ROAD

Paving Buttermilk Road was one of the most commented-on alternatives in this plan. 57% of respondents are against the paved road while 43% are in support.

"Please don't pave the road! Environmental impacts to water from asphalt, biological impacts from the road, and other impacts from paving would destroy the habitat value for the area. Plus, paving would only increase speeding and traffic problems by an order of magnitude."

"Paving the road could be the best way to facilitate campgrounds and bathrooms. Also reduces dust."

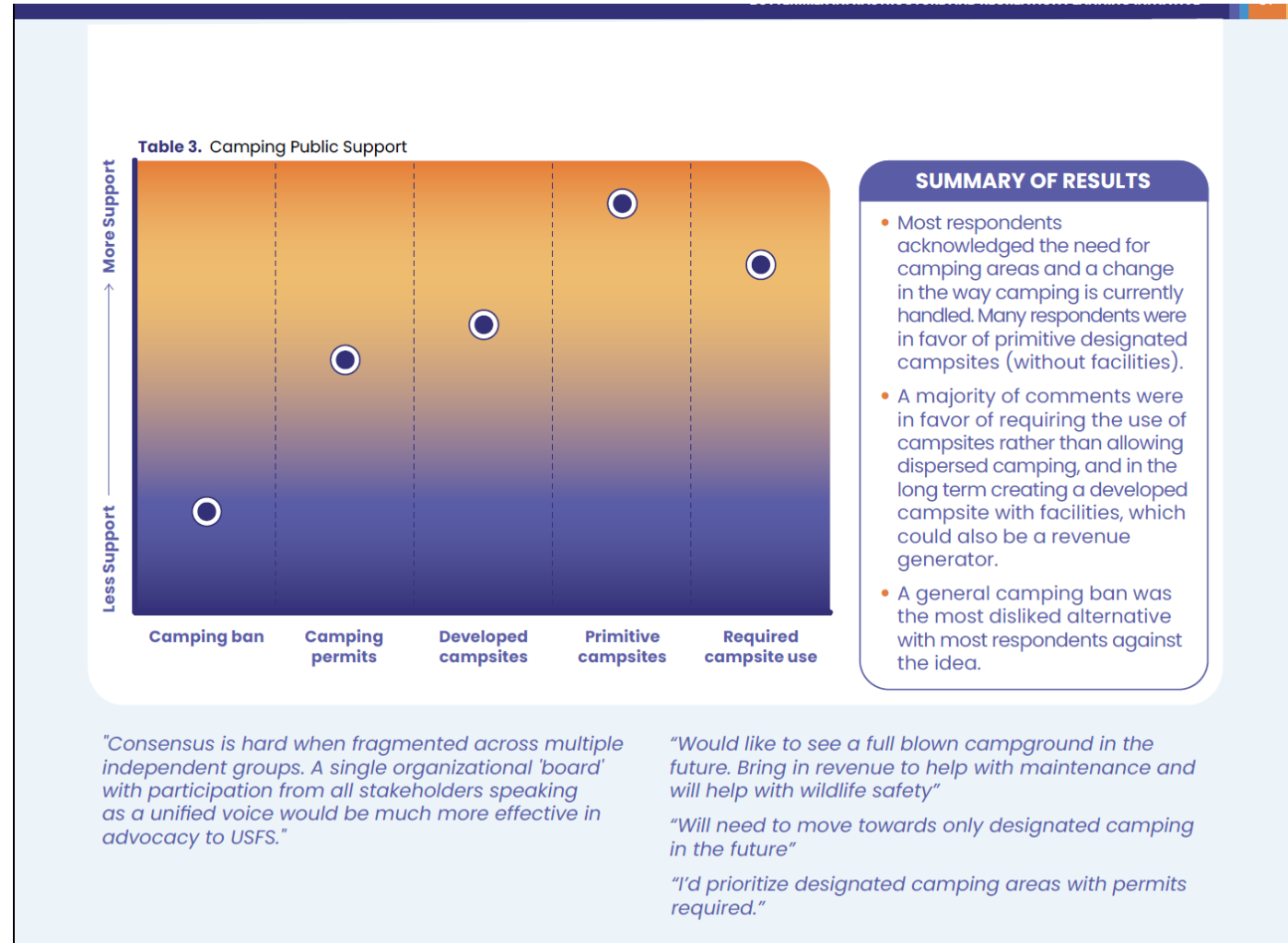
Camping

Goal:

Reduce impacts to the natural area from camping and plan for growth of visitors to the area.

No Action:

Buttermilk Boulder area campsites will continue to spread and impact culturally sensitive locations and vegetation. Increases in popularity, camping and use areas may see an increase in trash, vehicle debris, human waste, and fires.



Climbing Rangers

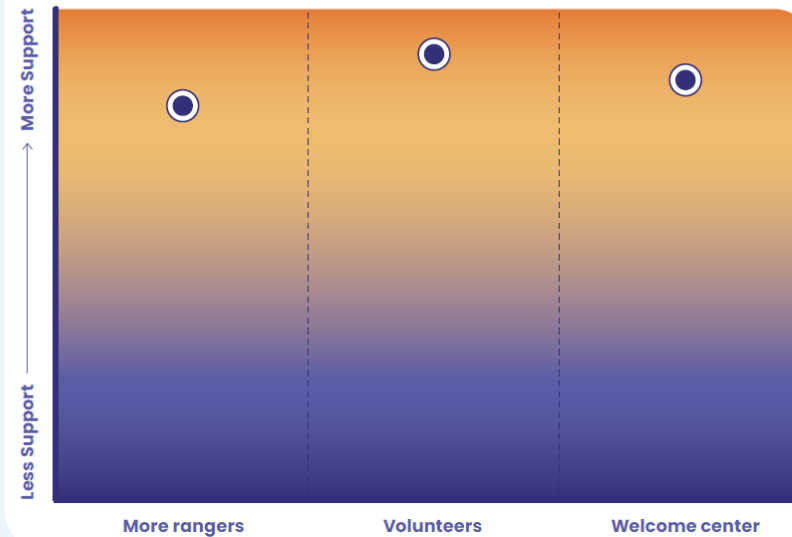
Goal:

Expand the existing ranger program.

No Action:

If the ranger program is not expanded, fewer visitors will be able to learn from the rangers, and undesirable impacts will continue.

Table 4. Climbing Rangers Public Support



SUMMARY OF RESULTS

- An similar number of participants liked the idea of volunteers helping with educational programs and the creation of a small welcome center prior to entering the Buttermilk Boulders area. A welcome center received one negative comment.
- Most respondents that commented on these potential alternatives liked the prospect of hiring at least one more climbing ranger. Approximately 10% of participants do not want to hire more climbing rangers.

"Consensus is hard when fragmented across multiple independent groups. A single organizational 'board' with participation from all stakeholders speaking as a unified voice would be much more effective in advocacy to USFS."

"A small welcome center ... with educational displays about local wildlife, cultural resources, and the land's first peoples, and ecological communities, would help remind climbers that the Buttermilks did not come into existence purely to entertain climbers."

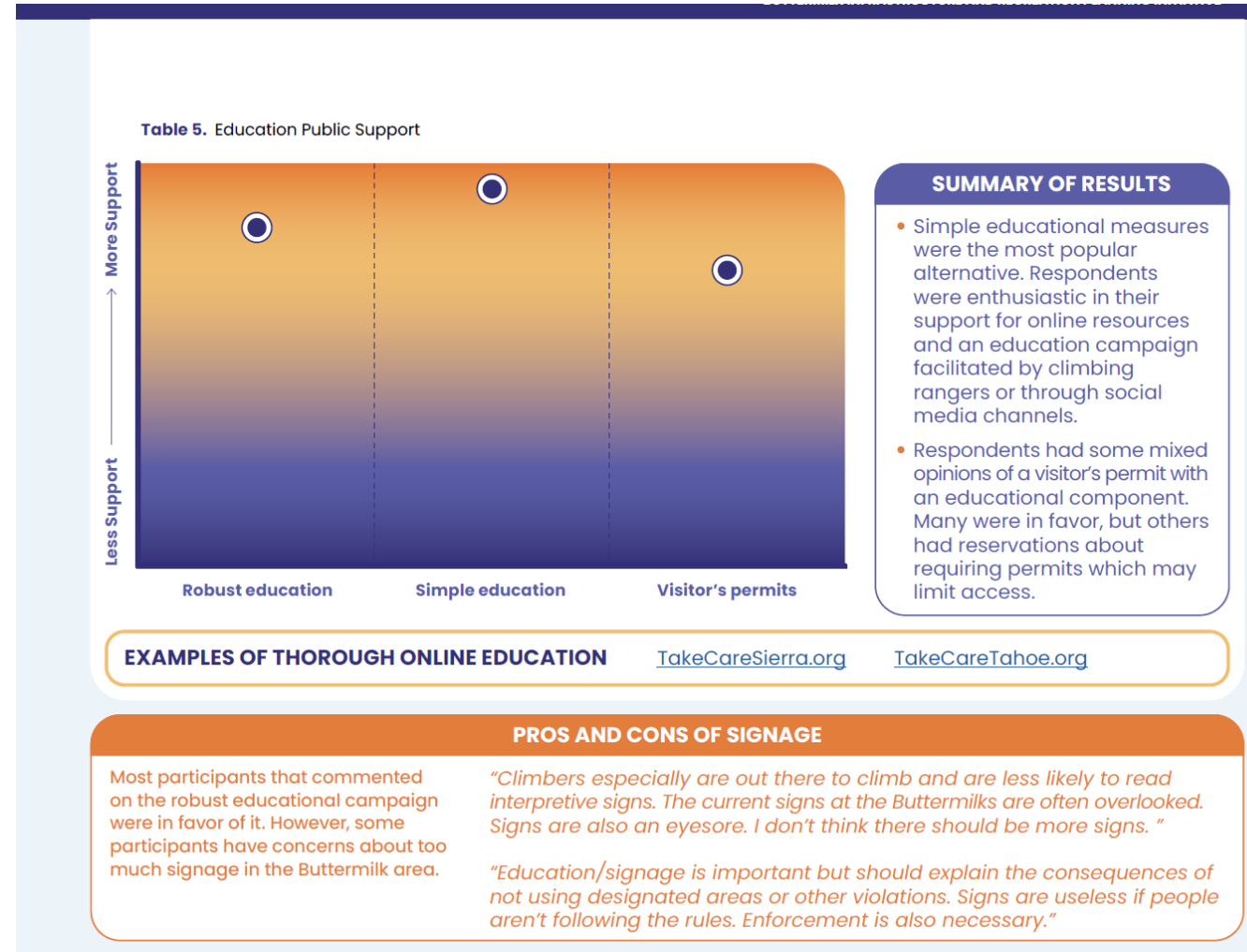
Education

Goal:

Create a information platform for visitors to learn the rules and regulations of visiting the Buttermilks and how they can help protect the land/access recreational opportunities.

No Action:

Best Practices for the Buttermilk area will be up to the visitor to learn on their own. Visitors that are inadvertently damaging the land and cultural areas will continue to do so.



Habitat Destruction

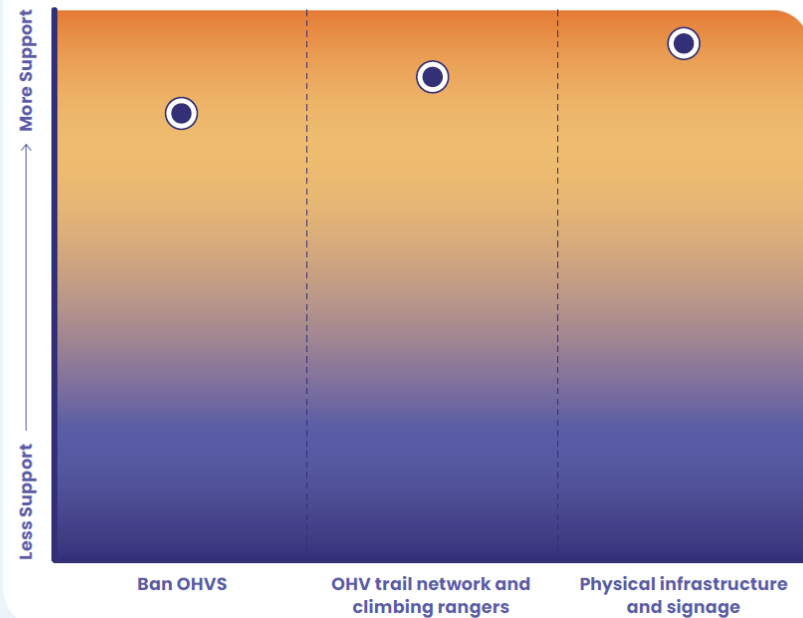
Goal:

Limit and redirect activities that lead to habitat destruction.

No Action:

The proliferation of informal trails created by hikers, climbers, bikers, and OHV riders will increase. These new trails may cut through critical habitats, cause changes to surface water flow patterns, and increase erosion.

Table 6. Habitat Destruction Public Support



SUMMARY OF RESULTS

- Respondents strongly preferred physical infrastructure and signage creating rules of use for the area, including OHV regulations, climbing rules, and where to walk and climb.
- There was also high support for the creation of specific OHV trails outside of the Buttermilk area, though this alternative received fewer overall comments than the physical infrastructure alternative.
- 82% of participants that commented on this category were in favor of banning OHVs in the Buttermilk area. Those against this idea had concerns about excluding certain recreational users.

"Create an actual OHV trail system. Tell them where to go, rather than where not to go"

"Please identify all environmentally/culturally sensitive areas and close them to OHV traffic."

"Education is important but excluding user groups won't work. They're already there and will continue to use existing trails - accommodate them - don't shut them out. Educate on sensitive areas but allow for other ways to connect with their network of trails"

"Signage and infrastructure may be a good place to start but enforcement will be necessary to prevent new trails/proliferation across habitat. Back to ranger programs..."

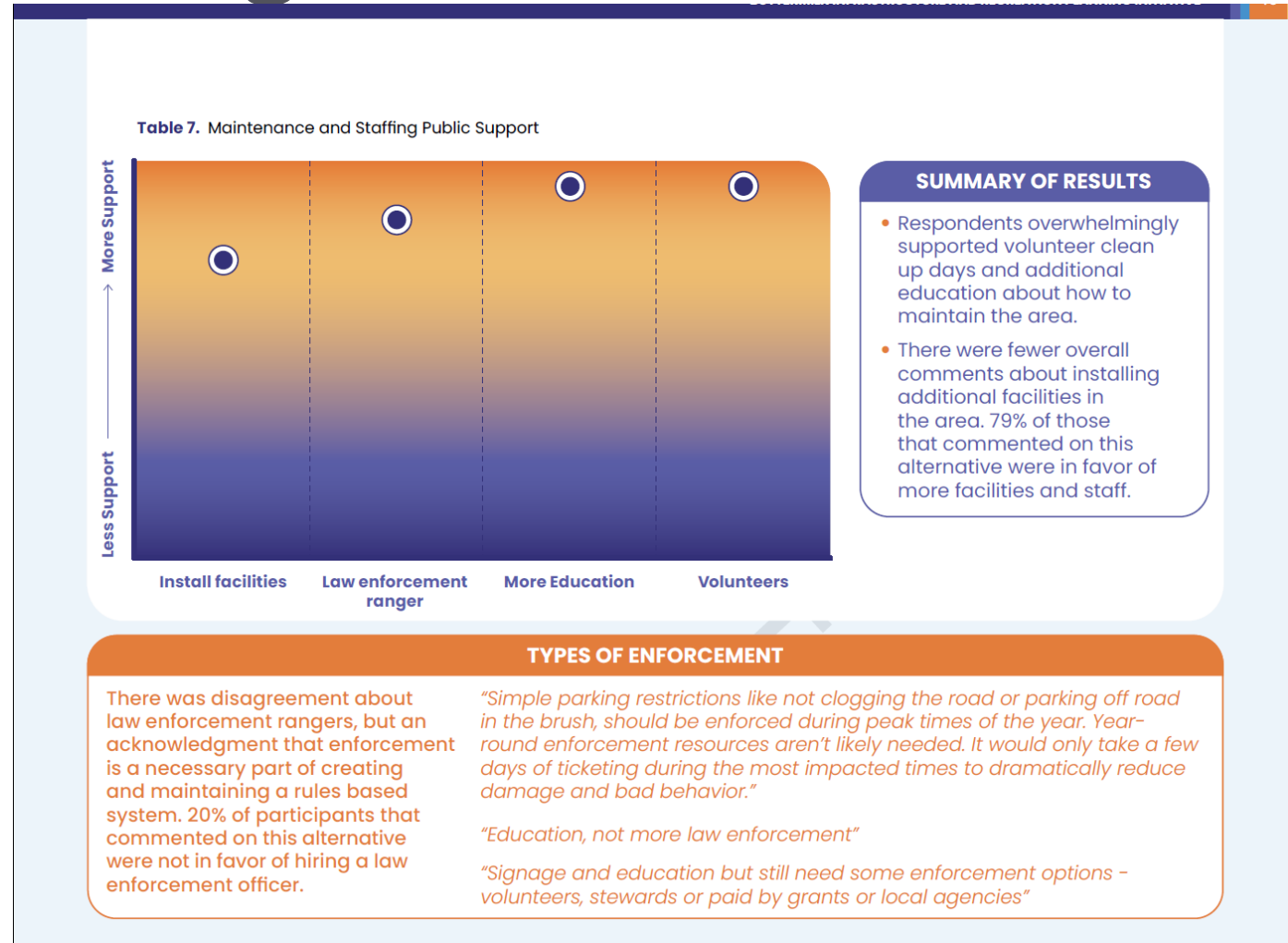
Maintenance and Staffing

Goal:

Reduce the amount of waste left behind from visitors, maintain infrastructure within the Buttermilk area and regularly groom trails, and repair fencing.

No Action:

Not keeping up with the maintenance needs in Buttermilk Country may negatively impact the immediate and adjacent innate environment.



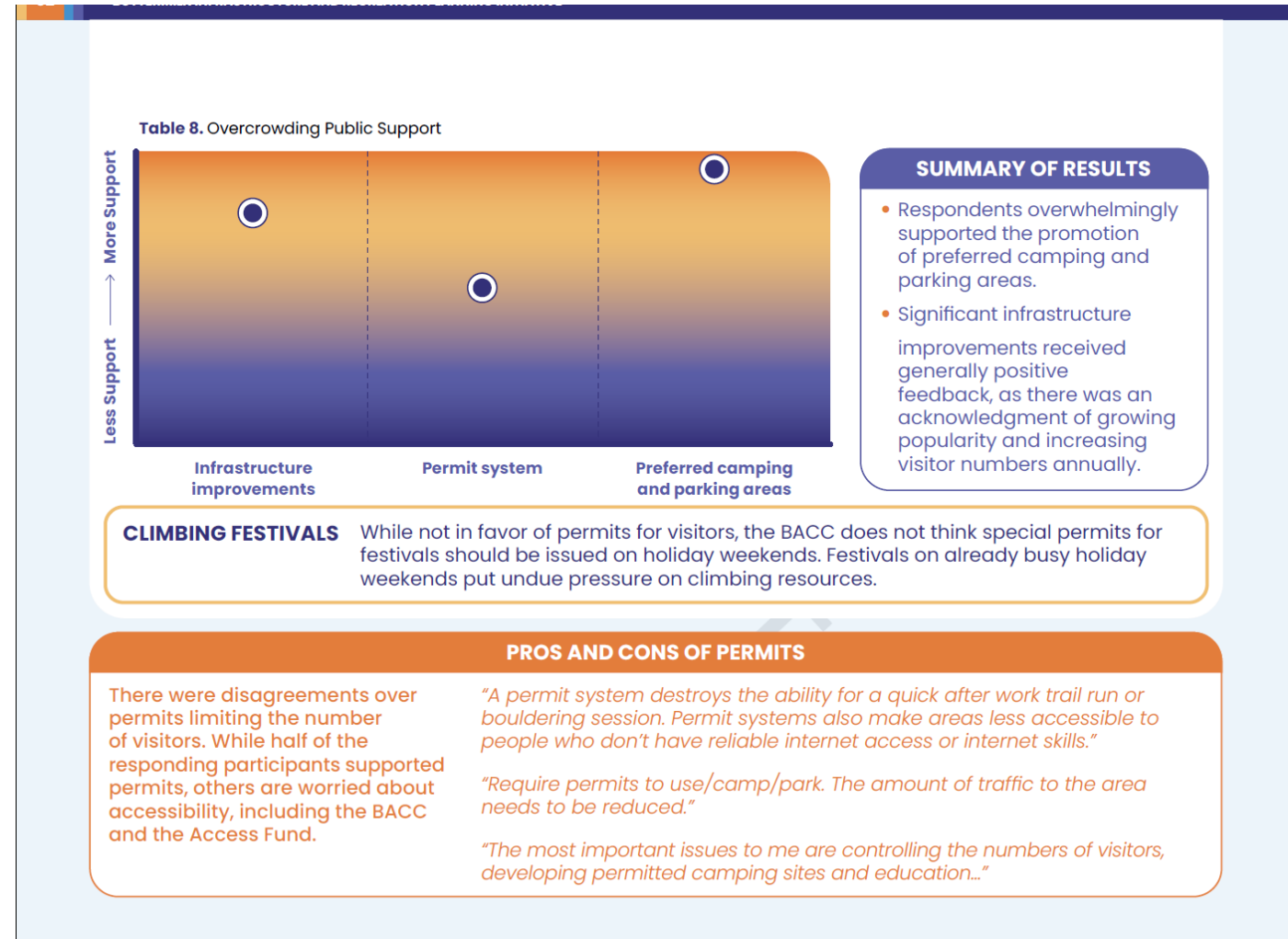
Overcrowding

Goal:

Address overcrowding challenges and consider options to best mitigate impact during peak season.

No Action:

The natural landscape will continue to degrade both in quality and experience.



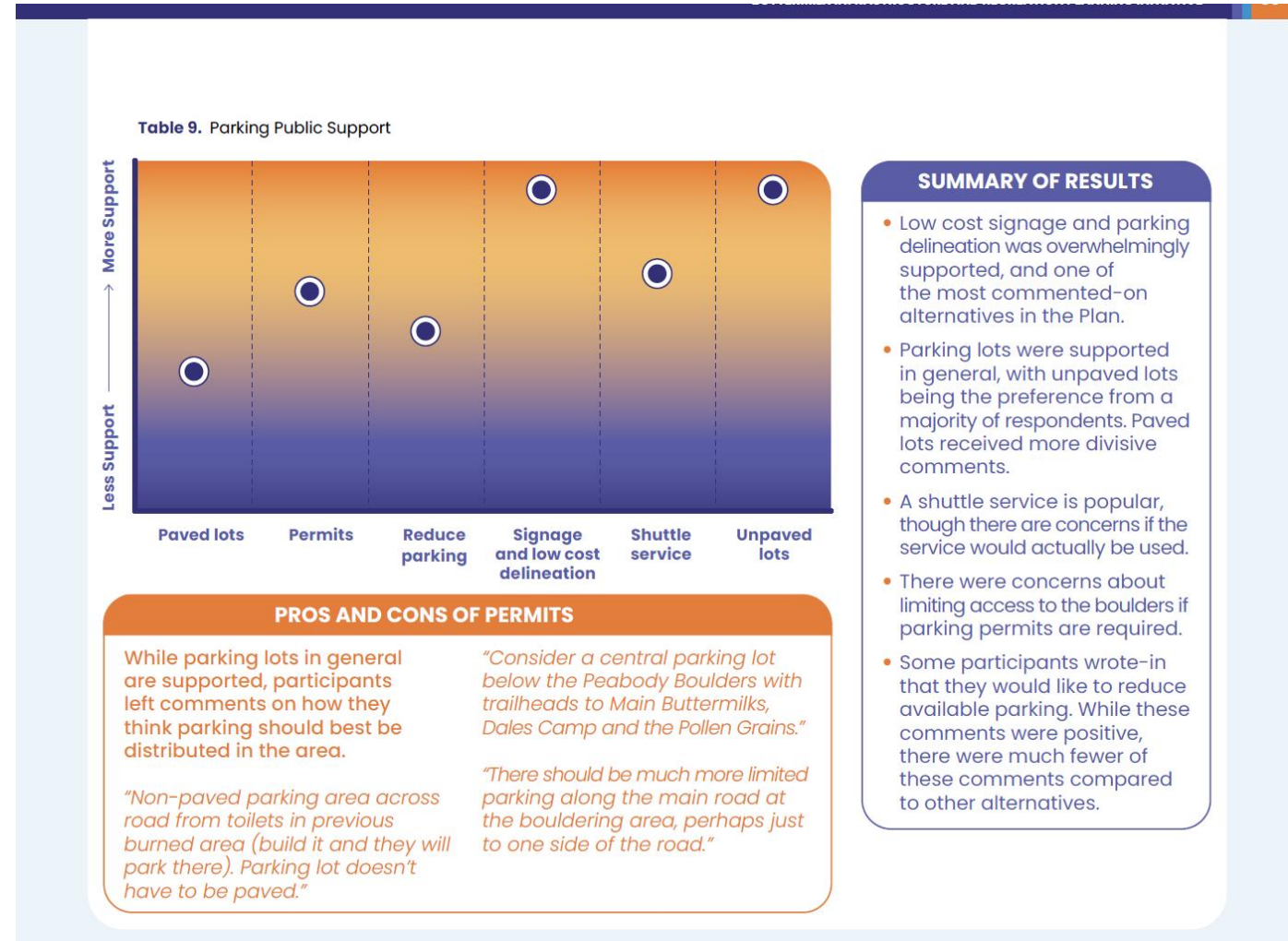
Parking

Goal:

Reduce informal parking areas and replace with designated parking areas that have barriers to prevent vegetation damage.

No Action:

The road will be impassable for emergency vehicles because due to parking along each side. Botanical and cultural impacts will continue as people park in new areas altering hydrology and increasing erosion.



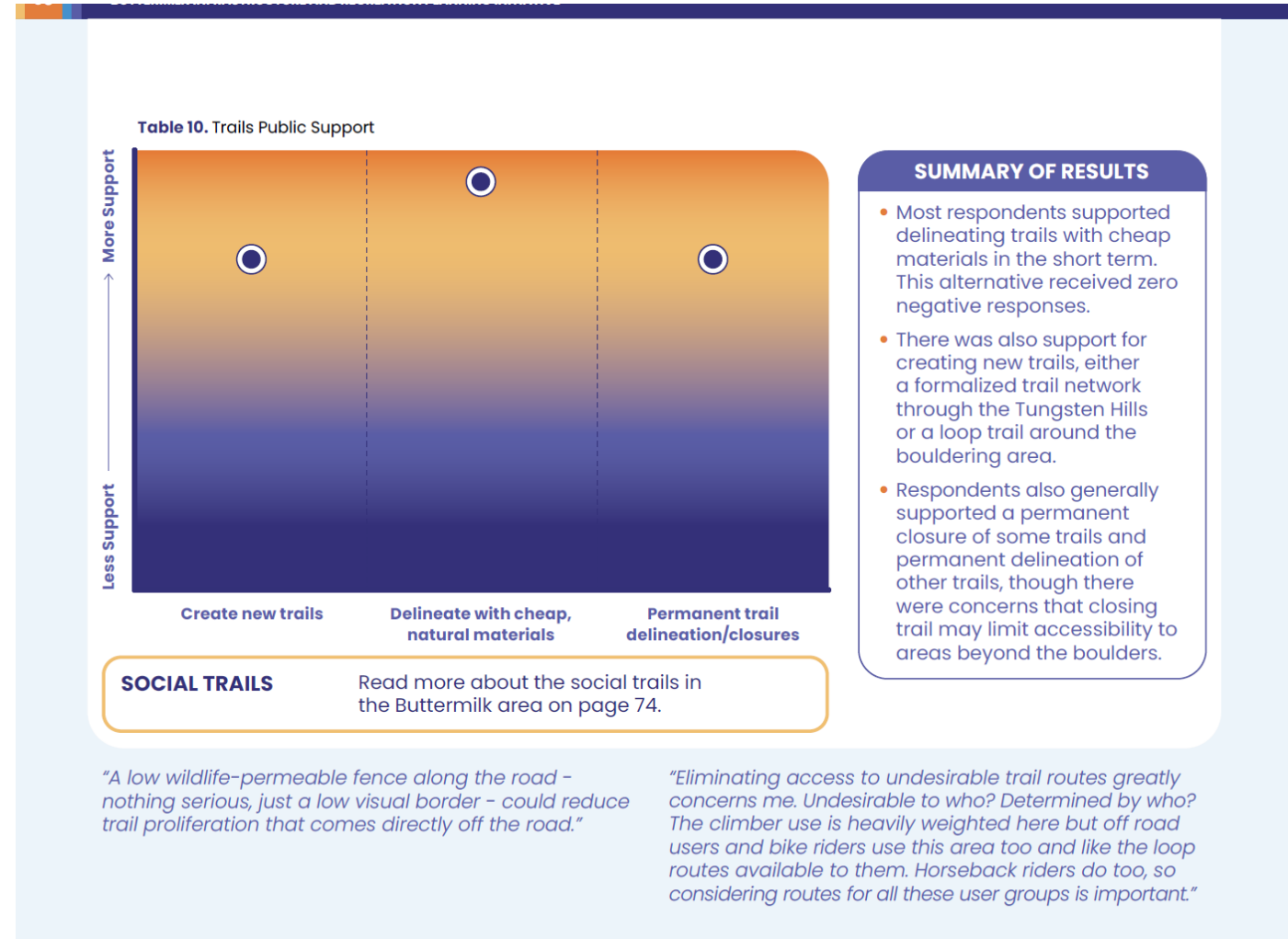
Trails

Goal:

Consolidate and formalize existing trails to alleviate the impact on natural areas and mitigate potential impacts to cultural resources.

No Action:

Informal trails will continue to form, leading to increased damage and erosion.



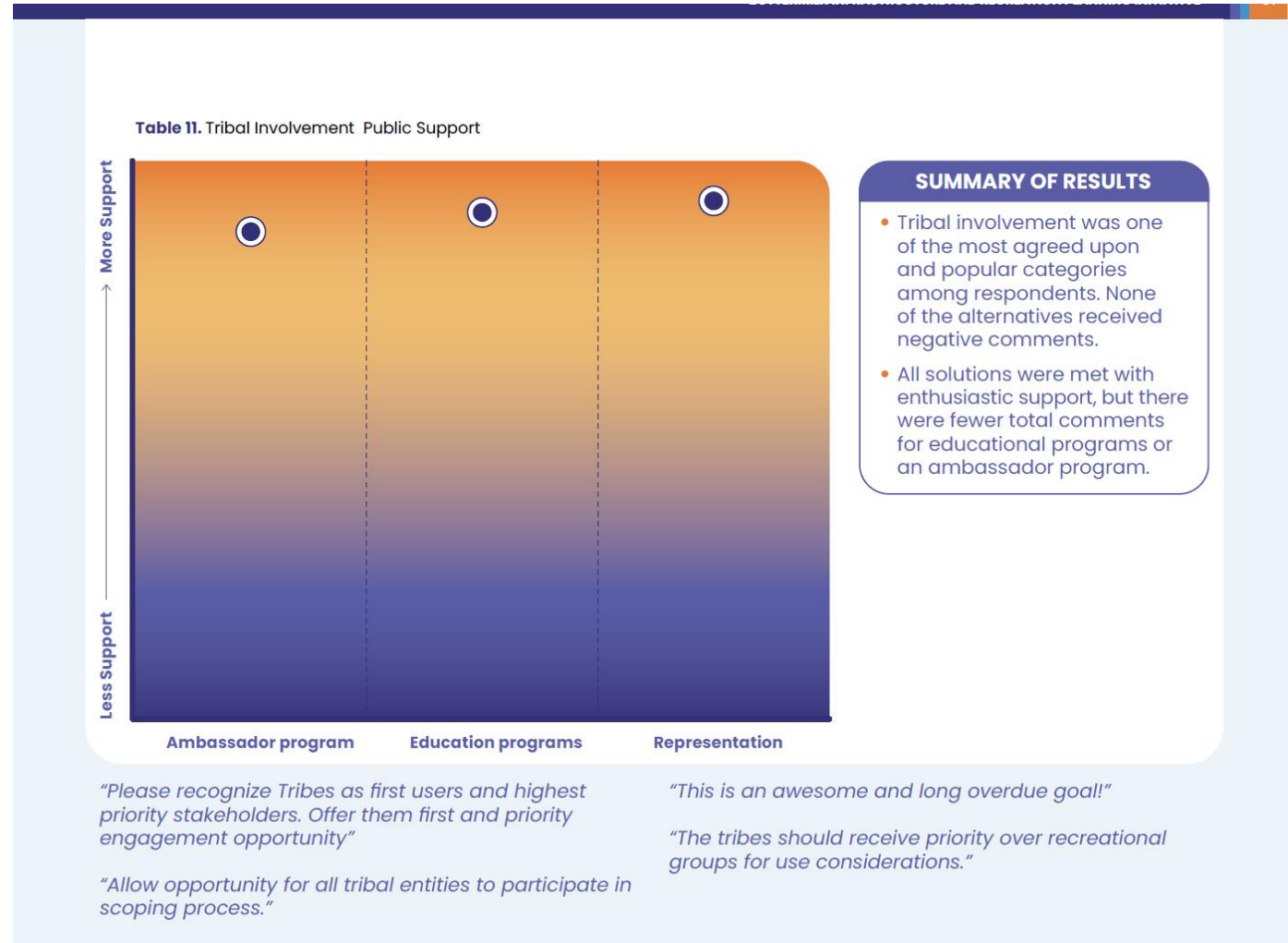
Tribal Involvement

Goal:

Agencies Consult with the Bishop Paiute Tribe regarding management decisions made in the Buttermilk area.

No Action:

The local tribes will be unrepresented in decisions affecting the management of their native land.



Wildfires

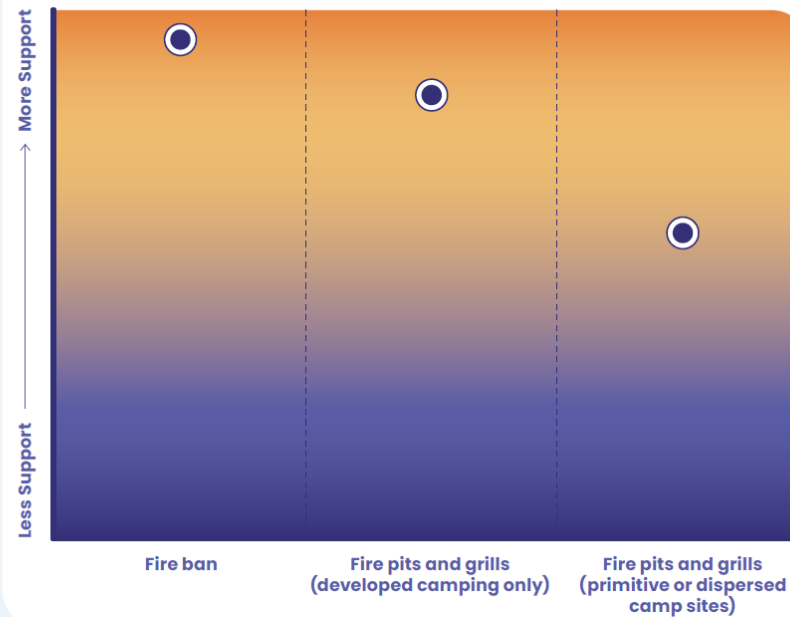
Goal:

Reduce the risk of fire throughout the area by implementing fire restrictions or providing formal infrastructure for the use of fire. Educate visitors about the danger of wildfire in the Eastern Sierra.

No Action:

Increased risk for wildfire.

Table 12. Wildfires Public Support



SUMMARY OF RESULTS

- Respondents generally agreed about the safety and dangers of having fires, especially without proper infrastructure.
- The responses showed that participants want fires to be limited to areas with proper infrastructure, such as formal, developed campsites, or be banned all together. There were fewer positive responses and more negative responses for putting fire pits in primitive campsites or informal campsites.

"Easy to limit fires to stoves/portables below a certain altitude. No open pits. No open flames."

"Campfires anywhere in the area are a problem and should not be allowed."

"Banning fires seems like the best possible solution."

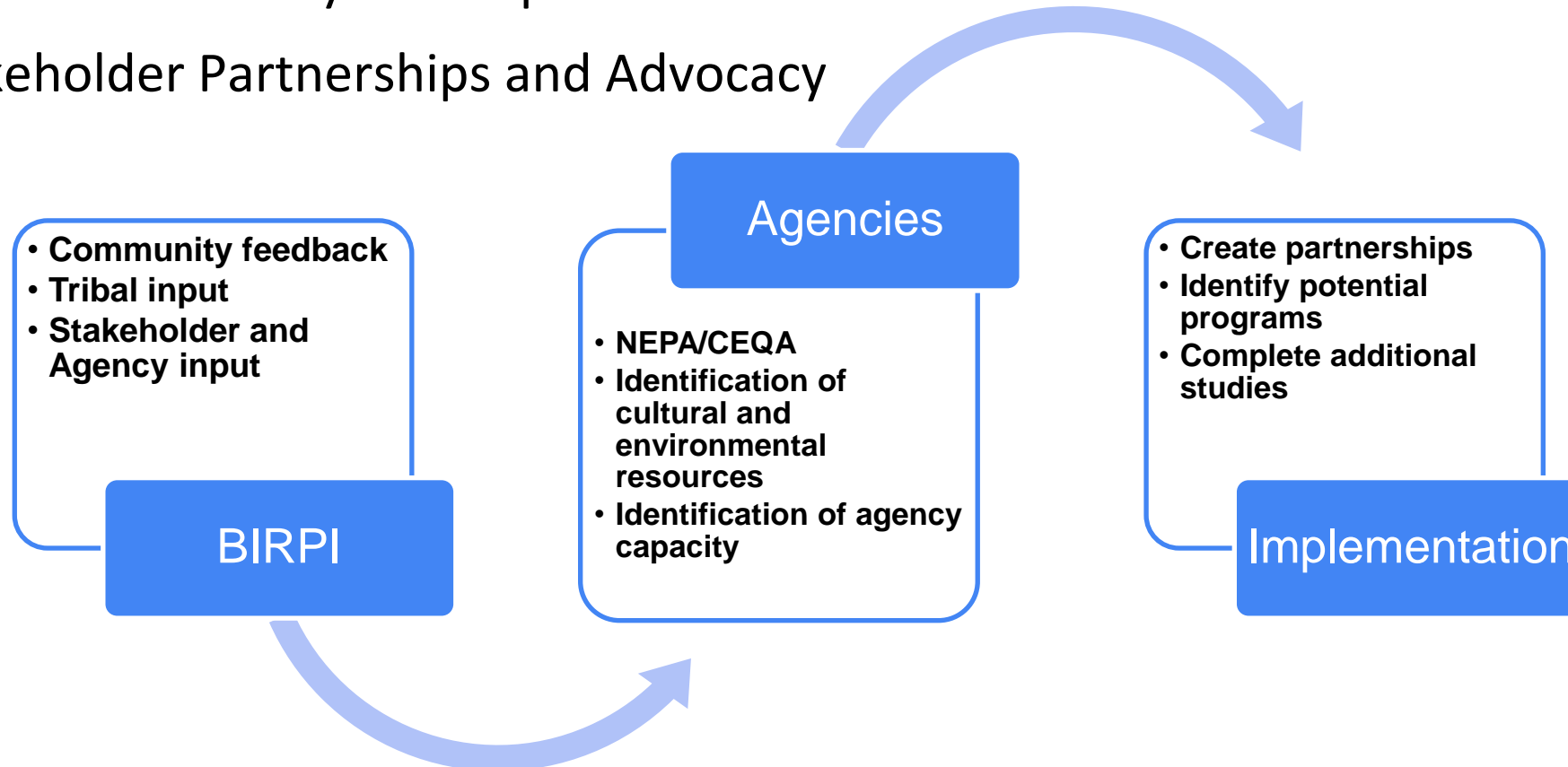
"Where would fuel to burn come from? (Right now, people are taking fence posts on their way through Starlite. No, really!) Any plan that allows fires must include a sustainable way for people to buy fuel (which they won't agree to pay for)"

Next Steps



Next Steps - Process

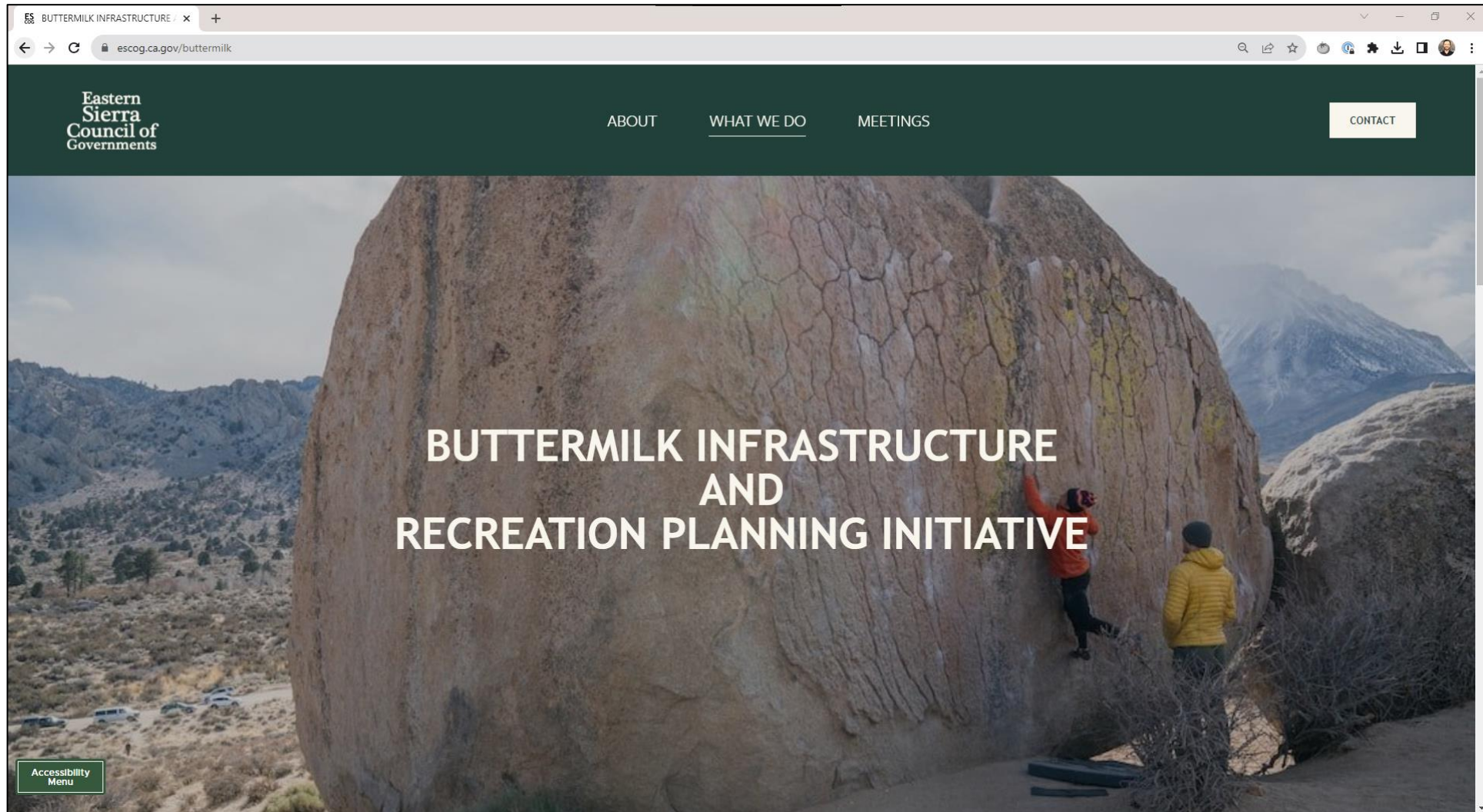
- Agency Review
- Collaborative Body Development
- Stakeholder Partnerships and Advocacy



Recommended Next Steps

1. Establish Consensus-Based Management Body
2. Climbing Rangers
3. Data Collection/Baselining
4. Education
5. Signage
6. Trail Delineation
7. Tribal Consulting
8. Welcome Kiosk
9. _____?

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