

WEB-BASED SURVEYS IN OUTDOOR RECREATION PLANNING: A NEW HAMPSHIRE CASE STUDY

Kim Pawlawski
M.S. Candidate in Resource
Administration & Management,
University of New Hampshire, 309 James Hall,
Durham, NH 03824.

Robert A. Robertson
Associate Professor, Department of
Resource Economics & Development,
University of New Hampshire, 309 James Hall,
Durham, NH 03824.

Abstract: Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plans (SCORPs) in the United States are used to assist states and territories in qualifying for federal funds that can be used for the acquisition and updating of outdoor recreation facilities in the state. The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) mandates that public input is a required component of a SCORP. For New Hampshire's 2003-2007 SCORP, multiple methods of public participation were utilized to make the process as open as possible. These include two different advisory committees; a web-based survey; regional meetings; a SCORP website; and public comments. This paper will examine the web-based survey as a tool for helping to identify issues of importance throughout the state as perceived by outdoor recreation-related stakeholder groups and individuals, as well as New Hampshire residents. Of the six methods of public participation offered during the development of New Hampshire's 2003-2007 SCORP, the web-based survey involved the most amount of people, therefore receiving the greatest amount of public participation.

Introduction

Outdoor recreation planning can be described as a process that integrates outdoor leisure activities and decision making that deals with the allocation of resources to ensure that the short and long-term leisure needs of the population and natural environment are met (Gold, 1980). Ibrahim and Cordes (1993) illustrate the fundamental difference

between recreation and outdoor recreation, where recreation is focused on playing, whereas outdoor recreation is centered on involvement with the natural environment. Related to outdoor recreation plans, these definitions are combined to take into account both organized and non-organized outdoor recreation activities. Planning is intended to establish and update policies to ensure sustainable land use in the long-term. Outdoor recreation planning can then be defined as the preservation and updating of existing outdoor recreation facilities for current and future use. Created by the United States Congress in 1964, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) provides "money to federal, state and local governments to purchase land, water and wetlands for the benefit of all Americans" (United States Forest Service LWCF Information, 2003). Administered by the National Park Service through matching grants, the LWCF is "intended to create and maintain a nationwide legacy of high quality recreation areas and facilities and to stimulate non-federal investments in the protection and maintenance of recreation resources across the U. S." (National Park Service Land & Water Conservation Fund [NPS LWCF] Information, 2003).

To qualify for LWCF funds, states and U. S. territories must create and regularly update a statewide recreation plan, frequently referred to as a Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). NPS requests that these plans be updated every three to five years. The National Park Service says that SCORPs should address three main topic areas: first, the demand for and supply of local, state and federal recreation resources within a state; second, identify needs and new opportunities for recreation improvements within a state; and third, to set forth an implementation program to meet the goals identified by its citizens and elected leaders (NPS LWCF Information, 2003). Throughout the U. S. and its territories, the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan has been used to help states and communities to acquire and develop outdoor recreation areas and facilities (NPS LWCF Information, 2003).

Allocation of LWCF monies to states began in 1965. Distribution of the funds peaked in 1979 when \$369 million was appropriated, but received no monies from 1996 and 1999. As a result,

nearly all SCORP planning processes ceased. Since 2000, however, Congress designated increasing amounts of funding for LWCF grants, ranging from \$40 million in fiscal year 2000 to \$200 million in FY 2003 (proposed) (NPS LWCF Information, 2003). Joel Lynch from the National Park Service says that since then, states and U.S. territories have been working hard to develop new SCORPs (personal communication, February 11, 2003).

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) requires public participation in some form or another for SCORPs (National Park Service [NPS], 1992). No guidelines are set for receiving this input, and it is up to each state to conduct and interpret the input as it pertains to their SCORP document. Consequently, public participation techniques used in the development of SCORPs varies greatly. These include the establishment of advisory committees, conducting surveys (to determine supply and demand issues, recreation trends, etc.), holding public meetings, and offering the public the opportunity to comment on the SCORP process and document.

The last New Hampshire SCORP was created in 1994, for implementation during 1994-1999. According to New Hampshire Division of Parks and Recreation, since the LWCF was established, New Hampshire has received over \$32 million in LWCF monies (Land & Water Conservation Fund [LWCF] Information, 2003). These funds have been used to complete over 600 projects all over the state, including the purchase of 50,000 acres or land, and the construction of more than 200 recreation areas (LWCF Information, 2003). Of the state's annual funds received from the LWCF, 60% is distributed to local communities through a matching grants program, while the other 40% goes to state parks (LWCF Information, 2003).

During FY 2002, some of the projects that received LWCF monies in New Hampshire included land acquisition and development of recreational facilities for water-based recreation activities, as well as for organized sports, like baseball and soccer. Also, several greenways and related trail systems were established. Additionally, a few of the projects involved updating facilities for ADA compliance (LWCF Information, 2003).

Study Objectives

This study has three objectives. The primary objective is to provide state agencies with a snapshot of outdoor recreation-related trends and issues in New Hampshire, as identified by outdoor recreation-related stakeholder groups and individuals from around the state. Two secondary objectives exist for this study. The first of these is to provide a description of the steps taken to identify outdoor recreation-related stakeholders for this study, as well as how participation was sought from both stakeholders and the general public. Lastly, this study will provide a detailed discussion of trends and themes as identified by survey participants.

New Hampshire Outdoor Recreation Planning Survey

The most recent SCORP in New Hampshire was undertaken in 2002, and intended to be applied during 2003-2007. The public involvement process for New Hampshire's 2003-2007 SCORP (called New Hampshire Outdoors 2003-2007) was a multi-dimensional process. The process was a combined effort between New Hampshire's Office of State Planning (OSP), New Hampshire's Department of Resources and Economic Development (DRED), the University of New Hampshire, as well as the University of New Hampshire's Cooperative Extension program. It involved the creation of two committees representing a wide variety of interests, the creation and distribution of a survey to outdoor recreation-related stakeholders and New Hampshire residents, a series of public meetings throughout the state, a public comment period, and a website. Between May 2002 and January 2003, the SCORP document went from being a goal to a thorough statewide plan.

Throughout the Steering Committee and Public Advisory Committee meetings, it became apparent that a only small group of interests and individuals were being reached for input and participation in the SCORP update process. Given the limited time and resources allowed for this process, it was determined that a survey would be the most efficient way of reaching a broader audience. The New Hampshire Outdoor Recreation Planning Survey was the primary and most widespread method of public involvement for New

Hampshire's 2003-2007 SCORP, and was unique because it provided all New Hampshire residents with internet access the opportunity to participate, unlike public involvement methods used by other states, where input is aggressively sought from a predetermined number of respondents.

Through a cooperative agreement between New Hampshire's Office of State Planning and the University of New Hampshire, a survey called the "New Hampshire Outdoor Recreation Planning Survey," was created and distributed statewide. The survey was initially intended for stakeholder groups, but was also made available to the general public for input. This public input tool was designed to provide outdoor recreation-related stakeholder groups and individuals in New Hampshire the opportunity to participate in the SCORP development process by replicating the first Public Advisory Committee meeting. This survey was intended to replicate the first Public Advisory Committee meeting, while offering this public input opportunity to a broader group, i.e. recreation-related stakeholder groups and residents of New Hampshire.

Two versions of the internet-based survey were created—one intended for completion by a member of organization leadership, and the other intended to be completed by organization membership and the general public. The two surveys differed only in questions relating to specific organization information and respondents' recreational behaviors and preferences. The purposes of the survey were to gather information, provide an opportunity for public participation, and communicate to the citizens of New Hampshire relating to recreation perceptions, behaviors and observations throughout the state (NH OSP, 2002). In the end, 573 completed surveys were received from outdoor recreation-related stakeholder representatives (n=259) and New Hampshire residents (n=314) alike.

Internet Searches

At the same time the survey was being developed, broad internet searches were conducted to identify recreation-related stakeholders in New Hampshire. These stakeholder groups did not necessarily have to be based in New Hampshire, but their primary recreation activities should occur within the state. To begin this process, a database was constructed

containing contact information about recreation-based clubs, organizations, associations, and similar groups in New Hampshire. These include: animal clubs (sled-dog, horse, dog, etc.); biking; business (guide services, gear rental, etc.); conservation commissions (local conservation commissions, conservation districts, etc.); economic development (Main Street programs, Chambers of Commerce, local economic development groups, etc.); environmental education (Audubon Centers, educational centers, interpretive centers, etc.); environmental/land conservation (land trusts, conservation associations, etc.); government agency (municipalities, state agencies, school districts, planning boards, planning commissions, etc.); hiking/trail (hiking, walking, running, rail-to-trail groups, etc.); historical/cultural preservation (museums, historical societies, etc.); hunting and fishing (sportsmen's clubs, fishing clubs, etc.); local athletic associations (adult and youth associations, community athletic associations, local YMCAs, etc.); motorized sports (ATV, OHRV, 4-wheel, etc.); recreation committee/commission (recreation committees, recreation departments, etc.); tourism (lodgings, campgrounds, etc.); water protection (lake associations, river protection groups, etc.); winter sports (skiing, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, etc.); and other (local fairs, gardening, metal detecting, etc.). This database contained several fields, including organization name, interest (ski club, snowmobile club, conservation commission, etc.), contact person, that person's relationship to the organization (director, president, contact person, etc.), website address, organization email address, mailing address, and mission statement.

Further Stakeholder Identification

In addition to the internet searches, contact information was collected from members of the SCORP Public Advisory and Steering Committees relating to groups and individuals that Committee members felt would provide important input to the SCORP. In total, 3,400 recreation-related stakeholder groups and individuals were identified from over twenty broad interest groups. From the database, a postcard was mailed to the head or contact person of each organization with an available address. The postcards included the internet addresses for both the organization and public surveys, as well as information for a toll-free phone number where organization respondents could request a paper copy of the survey. A few

weeks after the postcard mailing, an email was generated and sent to over 800 stakeholder groups with available email addresses, informing and reminding groups of the survey. Two weeks later, a final reminder email message was sent to all of the email addresses. At this point, the importance of this database should be discussed. The creation of this database was the first such broad collection of recreation-related stakeholder groups and organizations in New Hampshire. Since its creation, requests have been made to New Hampshire's Office of State Planning relating to this database (or information relating to it) by several groups.

General Public Participation

For the general public and organization membership, participation was sought through public service announcements on New Hampshire Public Radio, as well as articles in seven regional newspapers that provided information about the SCORP and the internet address for the public survey. Additionally, information was distributed by the organizations to their membership, providing the internet address and other information about the SCORP through a variety of methods, including message boards, word of mouth, newsletters, and emails.

The main data collection period lasted nearly six weeks (from August 16, 2002 to September 27, 2002), and 245 organization leaders and 296 members of the public completed the survey. The overall data collection period ran until December 6, 2002, when both websites were shut off, effectively ending the data collection process. In total, 259 organization leaders and 314 members of the public completed the survey. It should be noted that the intent of this survey was not to provide a representative sample of New Hampshire residents, but to offer the survey to the maximum diversity of stakeholder groups and individuals in terms of interests and perspectives.

Survey Framework and Data Analysis

The surveys consisted of both multiple-choice and open-ended questions. At the end of the survey, participants were given the opportunity to be contacted when SCORP public meetings were planned in their area. For the multiple-choice questions, a report was generated and delivered to the Steering Committee and the Office of State

Planning. In this report, the organization and public responses were analyzed and presented independently of each other, and provided response frequencies and trends for the data. The additional contact information was made available to the Office of State Planning, to be used at a later time in the SCORP update and public involvement process.

Another report was generated that summarized a content analysis of the open-ended questions asked in the survey. Survey participants were asked to identify actions and barriers relating to four topic areas: (1) Recreation Opportunities for All; (2) Public Use and Resource Conservation; (3) Community Recreation, Health and Well-Being; and (4) Recreation Corridors and Linkages. These responses were coded and categorized using SPSS TextSmart, a text-based coding tool designed to group open-ended data. Here, each response was placed into one (or more) of twelve categories—planning (included topics relating to planning, growth, management, and zoning); legislation (policy changes, legislators, and leadership); access (restrictions on, improvements to, and opportunities); agencies (federal, state, and local); collaboration (cooperation, conflict, and partnerships); land acquisition (land and water acquisition, conservation, easements); funding; education (outreach, advertising, public relations, awareness, and educating public/private agents); enforcement; research; participation (public participation, more users, and volunteerism); and other (all uncategorized comments). Responses were sorted by their general content, including positive or negative sentiment. For example, for these two responses—"too much funding" or "too little funding"—both would have been placed in the "Funding" category. Several responses encompassed more than one category, and the categorization reflected those. From the TextSmart results, a report was generated and delivered to the Office of State Planning and the SCORP Steering Committee, noting trends among broad categories, and providing actual comments from respondents that captured the essence of the category. The Office of State Planning was also supplied with a complete list of all open-ended responses for each survey. Also, the OSP made each of these reports available to the public by posting them on their SCORP website.

Each of the twelve categories were derived from an

initial review of the responses in an effort to identify common themes that would aid in the categorization and interpretation process. However, given that these broad categories were designed to capture a wide range of responses for both “actions” and “barriers” across the four topic areas, the category placement varied somewhat, depending on the reviewer’s interpretation of the response.

Many of the individual responses touched on more than one category and were reflected accordingly in the response counts per category. Responses in the “barriers” section of the survey did not clearly fall into the above-mentioned categories, but several themes were present, both in the organization and public responses. There was no significant difference in responses between the general public and stakeholders’ perceptions on specific actions or barriers.

Actions. Education, access, and funding were common categories that were identified as important actions for all four topic areas across cohorts. Responses were mainly in support of increased education for the general public, environmentalists, planners, and lawmakers. Participants indicated that workshops and informational sessions were needed regarding a variety of subjects, like user etiquette, ecological awareness, and the benefits of preservation (both land and water). Issues relating to access ranged from increased/improved access to decreased access for specific recreation activities. There were also comments relating to the need for disabled access, and recognition of multi-purpose recreational sites. Funding was another popular category amongst survey respondents, and had specific comments relating to grants and the redistribution of funding mechanisms within New Hampshire.

Barriers. Common themes amongst respondents relating to barriers in each of the four topic areas included limited funding, lack of information/knowledge, lack of planning/management, and the need for a balance to be found between uses/interests. Some comments include: “helping folks understand the \$ and sense of open space and the need to NOW set land aside before the cost becomes prohibitive thereby necessitating huge bond articles in the future to save threatened lands”; “convincing local budget committees and

selectmen or city councilors that recreation is a priority”; “lack of local government interest and support of preserving open space for conservation/recreation”; “increased demand due to greater number of users cause deterioration faster than can be repaired”; and “No evidence of a comprehensive plan or ‘vision’ guiding the state’s management of its lands. State Parks and Forests should be managed in a coherent way, to protect what makes them valuable.”

Summary of Quantitative Results

This section will provide a brief summary of the quantitative survey results. Of the 573 New Hampshire residents that completed the “New Hampshire Outdoor Recreation Planning Survey,” 259 identified themselves as stakeholder group representatives, and 314 were organization members and/or New Hampshire residents. Among the stakeholder respondents, 36.1% identified themselves as executive directors or directors of their organization; 46.4% of the groups had a local geographic scope; 15.0% represented tourist groups and another 14.5% of participants represented government agencies; 61.5% of participants were male; and 38.9% of stakeholder respondents had at least a Bachelor’s Degree (either BA or BS).

Three hundred fourteen New Hampshire residents completed the public New Hampshire Outdoors survey. 66.8% were male, and 34.2% had at least a Bachelor’s Degree (either BA or BS). 41.2% identified the White Mountains region as their favorite outdoor recreation destination in New Hampshire, while the Dartmouth-Lake Sunapee (5.1%) and Merrimack Valley (5.7%) regions were the lowest rated destinations. Many of the respondents to the public survey identified themselves as members of a voluntary conservation organization (34.7%) and/or members of a motorized recreation club (33.1%) and/or members of a voluntary outdoor recreation committee (32.2%).

One of the most important pieces of information that can be taken away from this study is that so few New Hampshire residents indicated that they were aware of the SCORP or the LWCF programs. About half of stakeholder group participants said that they were not familiar with New Hampshire’s SCORP, while 54.5% of public participants

indicated that they were unfamiliar with the SCORP. 27.2% of stakeholder group participants were not familiar with the LWCF, while 32.9% of public participants were unfamiliar. Both groups felt that the issues presented in the four broad topic areas had all improved in New Hampshire in the last 10 years. Funding priorities were similar across cohorts, including a low funding priority for motorized recreational trails, a medium funding priority for the development of a wide range of recreational opportunities for those who are disabled, and a high funding priority for the maintenance of existing park facilities and trails, among others. Responses were also similar for several land acquisition scenarios, in that both groups agreed with the statements.

Summary of Qualitative Results

This section will provide summaries of the open-ended responses provided for the four broad topic areas in the survey. In this part of the survey, the respondents were given the opportunity to provide input on four broad topics relating to recreation in New Hampshire: recreation opportunities for all; public use and resource conservation; community recreation, health, and well-being; and recreation corridors and linkages. Survey participants were asked to read through the descriptions of each topic area, and think about the conditions, barriers, challenges and potential actions in New Hampshire related to that specific issue. They were then asked to rate the recreation-based issue, and invited to share their comments relating to each question in as much detail as possible.

Recreation Opportunities for All. This section of the survey deals with the challenge of providing and maintaining a wide range of recreation opportunities for all citizens, regardless of socioeconomic circumstances. Specifically, “a wide range of recreational preferences exist across age, ability, etc. Issues exist related to the roles of state lands, federal lands, and local lands in providing these different, often competing, opportunities as well as understanding the role of private lands in public recreation provision. Park and facility maintenance, as well as self-funding of State Parks, are also important issues.”

57.5% of the organizations (n=148) felt that the overall range of outdoor recreation opportunities in New Hampshire over the past 10 years has

improved, while only 13.3% (n=34) indicated that they believe that these opportunities have declined. After rating the range of outdoor recreation opportunities in New Hampshire, participants were asked to describe why they responded in that way. 229 people provided comments relating to the rating of this issue. One respondent said that “Access and up-keep have improved overall. It is apparent when I visit many facilities that an effort is being made to promote our resources to visitors.” Another said that “Opportunities for wide range of recreational activities seems to have grown.” On the other end, another summed up their opinion by saying that “Sprawl, lack of funding to upgrade, conflicts between users for limited space” helped to shape their opinion. Nearly three-quarters of stakeholder respondents (73.8%, n=169) indicated that there are specific barriers or challenges, and provided 391 comments relating to this issue. Common themes in these comments included finding a “balance between various users to minimize environmental impacts”; a variety of “conflicts”; “costs” and “money”; “education”; “funding”; “lack of access”; “lack of knowledge” on the part of the public; and “staffing.” Also, over 80% (n=163) of stakeholder respondents said that there are specific actions that could be taken to address this topic, and offered 357 comments, including “access to all land and water”; “better access to state resources”; “acquisition of lands” for a variety of purposes; “better cooperation between agencies”; “education”; “incentives”; “better planning”; “money” and “funding”; “provide more publicity;” and “restrictions” on development and land use for recreation.

Nearly 35% of the public participants (n=108) felt that the overall range of outdoor recreation opportunities in New Hampshire over the past 10 years has improved, while 26.5% (n=82) indicated that they believe that these opportunities have declined. After rating the range of outdoor recreation opportunities in New Hampshire, participants were asked to describe why they responded in that way. 269 people provided comments relating to the rating of this issue. One respondent said that “Development has basically destroyed the opportunity for non-organized outdoor activities in the southern part of the state. Virtually all biking/hiking trails south of Concord seem to have been built on.” Another said that

"Different groups are fighting for the same uses of land instead of cooperating." This participant identified several barriers: "Poor management and overuse exhibited; more "forcing" of incompatible activities squeezed within trail system. Non-motorized modes of activities cannot compete with OHRV users. More upland hunting areas posted." On the other end, another summed up their opinion by saying that "Fish and Game has done a super job (since I was a kid), where as in the 60s and 70s things were not very well managed. Plus law enforcement has been stepped up around illegal activities around recreation and the environment." Over 80% of the respondents (n=229) indicated that there are specific barriers or challenges, and provided 494 comments relating to this issue. Common themes in these comments included finding a "lack of access" to land and water, for disabled people, and to information; "lack of coalitions among interested groups"; "lack of communication to public about activities"; "limited funding"; "poorly maintained" state access facilities; "population growth"; and the increase of "private land being posted." Also, over 90% (n=222) responded that there are specific actions that could be taken to address this topic, and offered 443 comments, including the acquisition of "more public lands" and of "building rights to land"; the designation of specific "recreational sporting areas"; "education" of the public and uneducated environmentalists; federal and state "funding"; "improve public access sites"; "improve disabled access"; and implement "user fees."

Public Use and Resource Conservation. This section of the survey deals with balancing the conservation and value of natural and cultural resources with public recreational access and tourism. More specifically, "this topic might include issues related to land and water conservation, open space protection, public recreational access, and balancing public use and resource conservation for public lands. Recreational access includes both motorized and non-motorized recreation. This topic also includes sustainable tourism development and the importance of natural and cultural resources in attracting tourism to New Hampshire. Resources include wetlands, lakes, rivers, coastal areas, forests, cultural/historic resources, rare/endangered species, etc."

Almost 80% of the stakeholder participants (n=200) indicated that the relationship between public recreational use and resource conservation in New Hampshire over the past 10 years has become more of an issue, while less than 1% (n=2) of respondents felt that it has become less of an issue. 212 respondents provided statements describing the way that they rated public use and resource conservation. Opinions included "Increased development has put pressure on natural and cultural resources." On the other hand, another participant said that "I don't think it's much of an issue. A very good job has been done." Another respondent said that "LCHIP, and other funding/awareness initiatives have made this a more important topic." Over 80% (n=166) of participants felt that specific barriers or challenges exist, and 334 comments were provided on this issue, like "competing interests"; "education" of environmentally-conscious individuals, across agencies, and town planning, conservation, etc. boards and officials; "communication"; "funding"; "lack of enforcement personnel"; and "politics." Over 85% (n=155) of respondents indicated that there are specific actions that can be taken to address this topic. 286 action-oriented recommendations were made by respondents. For example, "communication"; "education" of ATV riders, conservationists and the public; "increased funding"; "limit use" and access; "more public participation"; and implement or increase "user fees" were popular suggestions.

Over 80% of the public respondents (n=243) indicated that the relationship between public recreational use and resource conservation in New Hampshire over the past 10 years has become more of an issue, while only 2.3% of respondents (n=7) said that it has become less of an issue. 240 respondents provided statements describing the way that they rated public use and resource conservation. One participant said that "Increased public awareness, increased demand due to population, accessibility, income, and free time" all helped to shape their opinion, while another said that "More fees, less access. Trailhead parking fees, high registration fees." Conversely, a respondent felt that "There is a more balanced approach and more appreciation of the others perspective." 84.0% (n=204) felt that specific barriers or challenges exist, and 374 comments were provided on this issue, like "balance" between a variety of

interests; “education”; “funding”; “growing population”; “growing tourism”; lack of “public access,” “public information,” and “maintenance”; lack of “law enforcement”; “property rights”; and public “misconceptions,” “misinformation,” “perceptions,” and “opinions.” Over 87% (n=186) of respondents believed that there are specific actions that can be taken to address this topic. 334 action-oriented recommendations were made by respondents. For example, “education,” the “improvement” of interagency cooperation, “regulations,” and “land conservation” were popular suggestions. Community Recreation, Health and Well-Being. This section deals with the promotion of livable, healthy communities (and people) and supporting community-based recreation opportunities close to home. To be more specific, “this topic includes understanding local priorities for Land and Water Conservation Fund monies, maintaining existing local facilities, developing new local recreation sites, and securing sufficient funds for local recreation needs. This topic also includes the importance of outdoor recreation in promoting healthy communities and families, with a focus on the relationship between land use and the quality of life.”

Over 35% of stakeholder respondents (n=89) indicated that community-based recreation, health and well-being in New Hampshire over the past 10 years has improved; 31.0% (n=75) believe that it has stayed about the same; and 19.0% (n=46) say that it has declined. 188 additional comments were offered by the participants. One said that “Communities are being designed for auto travel and not walking.” Another said that “Increased growth and development is eating up open space and diminishing access to private land and the rural quality of life.” Someone else said that “There seems to be more awareness of the importance of physical well-being, and livable/walkable communities.” Over 75% of respondents (n=133) said that specific barriers or challenges exist, and provided 249 comments, like “adequate funding and planning”; “cost,” “finances,” and “lack of funding”; “lack of education”; “lack of good zoning and planning”; “no local support”; “no social capital”; “loss of sense of place”; “population pressures” and “sprawl”; and that “recreation funding at local level not a priority.” Also, over 80% (n=105) believed that there are specific actions that can be taken to

address this topic, and provided 197 recommendations relating to community recreation, health and well-being. Some of these recommendations include “adequate funding” for transportation/transit-related issues; “better planning” at local and regional levels; “better local zoning and growth ordinances”; “education”; “increase funding”; “plan based on long term sustainability rather than short term gain”; and to “promote this issue more in the state.”

31.4% of public respondents (n=89) believed that community-based recreation, health and well-being in New Hampshire over the past 10 years has improved; 30.7% (n=87) believed that it has stayed about the same; and 22.3% (n=63) said that it has declined. 189 additional comments were offered by the respondents. One respondent said that “Continued development of open space has neutralized many of the improvements made by communities.” Another said that “I see more parks in local areas but also much more urban sprawl in the southern part of the state.” Another participant said that “In my area, state funding has been decreasing, but local efforts are keeping resources available. It is a fragile and unsatisfactory solution. Consistent state funding is important.” Over 70% of respondents (n=131) said that specific barriers or challenges exist, and provided 230 comments. Common themes include “lack of funding”; “growth and sprawl”; improving “mass transit” and “urban planning” and “education.” Also, over 75% (n=115) believed that there are specific actions that can be taken to address this topic, and provided 204 recommendations relating to community recreation, health and well-being. Some of these recommendations include “better education” and “better communication”; “increase funding sources”; “public awareness”; “land use planning” to control sprawl; and “zoning restrictions.”

Recreation Corridors and Linkages. This section deals with the promotion of recreational/conservation corridors and linkages within a community, as well as linkages between communities and regions. More specifically, “this topic includes recreation and conservation issues related to trails, recreation corridors and greenways, across a range of motorized and non-motorized recreational activities. This topic also includes the role that trails play in linking and connecting

places within a community and between communities and regions. These corridors also play a role in promoting healthy communities and families, and making more livable/walkable communities, with a focus on the relationship between land use and the quality of life.”

Over 45% of the organizations (n=112) said that the quantity and quality of recreation corridors and linkages in New Hampshire over the past 10 years have improved; 25.3% (n=60) felt that they have stayed about the same; and 12.2% (n=29) believed that they have declined. 187 comments were provided, including “Development has eliminated many unofficial corridors and linkages. In the planning and development process this is usually not considered.” Another respondent said that “Efforts to improve linkages like the Heritage Trail seem to be moving slowly.” Someone else said that “I have seen little improvement in recreational corridors (i.e. bike lanes, trails) despite increased press coverage and local advocacy (in Seacoast area). Some new construction includes bike access, but then doesn’t link with trails on either side.” Over 80% of respondents (n=138) believed that specific barriers or challenges exist, and provided 241 comments. Common themes among these comments include “education” of property owners, public officials and trail users (ethics); “funding”; “inadequate enforcement”; “inadequate penalties”; “lack of coordination” between towns and between state agencies; “lack of regional planning”; “lack of zoning/planning regulations”; “sprawl”; and “un-smart growth.” Over 80% of respondents (n=101) said that there are specific actions that can be taken to address this topic, and provided 159 recommendations relating to the quantity and quality of recreation corridors and linkages. Some of these include “coordination”; “create master plans for recreational uses”; “education”; “enforcement”; “increased funding” for a variety of state programs; “regional planning”; and “smart growth planning.”

Almost 40% of the public respondents (n=112) said that the quantity and quality of recreation corridors and linkages in New Hampshire over the past 10 years have improved; 22.8% (n=64) felt that they have stayed about the same; and 26.4% (n=74) believed that they have declined. 207 comments were provided, including “I see little if any improvements, and no linkage between or within communities.” Another participant said

that “Highway construction, parks, et all must meet the needs of the pedestrians, handicap, bikers, etc. There must be opportunities for all.”

Alternatively, another said that “In Amherst and surrounding towns, wildlife and recreation corridors have been specifically addressed and considerable progress made.” Almost 85% of respondents (n=163) believed that specific barriers or challenges exist, and provided 272 comments. Common themes among these comments include “public awareness”; “development and lack of planning”; “education”; “funding” for a variety of actions; “lack of awareness” and “knowledge”; “lack of leadership” at the state and community levels; “lack of cooperation” between recreation clubs and between landowners; “local planning regulations”; and “population growth” and “sprawl.” Over 86% of respondents (n=141) said that there are specific actions that can be taken to address this topic, and provided 219 recommendations relating to the quantity and quality of recreation corridors and linkages. Some of these include “education” of landowners, the public, communities and state agencies; encourage private land to be “opened up” to public use; “funding” to purchase land; “more planning”; and “more public awareness.”

Summary

Many of the trends and themes identified by stakeholder representatives and public participants were very similar, and helped to identify important issues, either locally, regionally, or statewide. These comments offered the SCORP Steering Committee important insight into outdoor recreation-related issues around the state that may not have otherwise been obtained. Many of the Steering Committee members, however, chose to not read the reports that were provided to them by UNH, which leads to the supposition that the survey results did not provide members of the Steering Committee with much insight into recreation trends and issues experienced by stakeholders and residents in New Hampshire.

The public participation techniques used for the development of New Hampshire’s 2003-2007 SCORP document allowed residents from all social, economic, educational, and political backgrounds the opportunity to provide input towards the SCORP development process. Over 600 residents provided input in some form or another, whether they completed the online survey,

attended regional meetings, provided comments to OSP, visited the SCORP website, or were on a committee. It can be presupposed that these residents likely would not have participated had these opportunities not been so abundant and accessible. By using multiple forms of media to inform and attract participation (internet, newspaper, and radio), it is unlikely that as many residents would have participated had no media been used.

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Contains articles presented at the 2003 Northeastern Recreation Research Symposium. Contents cover planning issues, communications and information, management presentations, service quality and outdoor recreation, recreation behavior, founders' forum, featured posters, tourism and the community, specialized recreation, recreation and the community, management issues in outdoor recreation, meanings and places, constraints, modeling, recreation users, water-based recreation, and recreation marketing.

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