



Recreation Research Update



Pacific Southwest Research Station
Wildland Recreation and Urban Cultures

October 2001 No. 38
Caring for the Land and Serving People

Day Use on the San Bernardino National Forest

Day Use studies of the National Forests of southern California have been conducted by PSW since 1992. In summer 2000 data was collected from recreation visitors by students at California State University at San Bernardino under the direction of Marcia Marx for a study developed by Debbie Chavez, PSW. The study was designed to examine day use of the San Bernardino National Forest. In all, 182 visitors to 12 day use sites completed questionnaires. The randomly selected day use sites included picnic sites and trails heads on the forest. Though many topics were covered in the survey, this summary will focus on visitation patterns, activity types and preferences, and communication.

Most respondents were white (60%), the next highest proportion were Hispanics/Latino (14%). Just over half the respondents were on return visits. Most of these people had visited for an average 4 years and had been to the site twice in a 12-month period. More than two-thirds planned to return to the site in the next 12 months. Most respondents came to the forest for day hiking (74%), to picnic/barbecue (67%), to drive

for pleasure (48%), to sightsee (46%), and to watch wildlife (45%). Respondents also reported that they usually came to the forest for fishing, snow play, and stream play.

Activities planned that day included picnic/barbecuing and day hiking. Day hiking was the activity enjoyed most (26%) and the one that respondents do most often (27%).



About one-third of the respondents indicated they would participate in ranger led talks on animals and their habitats. Others would like talks on local mountain history (25%). While most first heard about the sites from family and friends (61%), only 8% first

heard about the sites from the agency forest sources such as brochures. Once on-site respondents indicated they would like information related to National Forests via brochures at

entrance area (86%), signs on the road (70%), and ranger visits (64%). Kinds of information respondents would prefer to receive included location of day hiking trails (77%), hiking trails (76%), camping in the area (74%), and picnic/barbecue areas (70%). Many respondents planned to tell other people about their trip to the site (87%), believed the site to be safe and secure (82%), and had a great recreation experience (82%).



Day use of the National Forests in southern California is a very significant proportion of overall use. Who visitors are, why they recreate on the forest, and how they receive communications are all very salient pieces of information for National Forest managers. The data suggest that hiking and picnicking opportunities remain important for this forest. The data also suggest that different tools are needed for communications off-site and those on-site. Additional results from the Day Use study will be in the 39th issue of this Update.

For additional information about this study please contact Debbie Chavez.

Studies Linked to the National Fire Plan

The National Fire Plan provided an excellent opportunity this year to initiate several studies exploring fire events and fire management from a social science perspective. In this summary we are focusing on a brief snapshot of each project. Please watch our future updates for the reporting of results from each of these collaborative endeavors.

Dr. Bill Hendricks (California State Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo) and Debbie Chavez

(PSW) are contacting recreationists on-site in settings in the Big Sur region in California to complete a self-administered survey. They are examining the impacts of prescribed fire management, fire restrictions, and wildland fire management on recreational activities and experiences.

Drs. Jerry Vaske and Alan Bright (Colorado State University) and Jim Absher (PSW) gathered names from urban-proximate National Forest recreationists in California, Colorado and Washington for a mailed survey. They will ask respondents their attitudes, beliefs and opinions about fire management policies, using a norm intensity and crystallization focus; as well as explore the influence of situational variables such as knowledge, prior experience, and recreation participation patterns.

The influence of wildfire events on tourism is being explored by Drs. Brijesh Thapa and Steve Holland (University of Florida) and Jim Absher (PSW). Individuals that traveled to Florida during a 12-month timeframe will be contacted via a phone survey. This initial effort will be aimed at tourists' understanding of, and behavioral responses to, fire issues with a goal of improved insight into the impacts of fire and fire management on this important segment of local economies.

Perspectives on fire, and fire management, in fire-prone communities is being explored by Drs. Chris Vogt and Chuck Nelson, along with Stan Cindrity (Michigan State University) and Pat Winter (PSW). Focus groups with key stakeholders (such as fire personnel and community leaders) are being conducted in three communities located on the San Bernardino (California), Gunnison (Colorado), and Appalachian (Florida) National Forests. In addition, seasonal and year-round residents in these communities are participating in a mailed survey exploring their attitudes, values, knowledge, and behaviors linked to fire and fire management.

Finally, a statewide phone survey is in progress in California, led by Dr. Doug Coe (San Diego State University) and Pat Winter (PSW). Residents are answering questions on recreational activities and patterns, degree of concern and knowledge about fire and fire management, degree of trust in the Forest Service to manage fires, perceived effectiveness and approval of various fire management strategies, and perceived impacts of fire.

For further information about these studies please contact Debbie Chavez.

Unit Publications Online

http://www.psw.fs.fed.us/Tech_Pub/rps.html

Chavez, D.J. 1996. Mountain biking: Issues and actions for USDA Forest Service managers. Research paper PSW-RP-226. Albany, CA: Pacific Southwest Research Station, Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. 33 p.

Tierney, P.T.; Dahl, R.F.; Chavez, D.J. 1998. Cultural diversity of Los Angeles County residents using undeveloped natural areas. Albany, CA: Pacific Southwest Research Station, Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Research Paper PSW-RP-236. 76 p.

Winter, P.L. 2000. Recreation at the Redding Resource Area in California. Res. Paper PSW-RP-244. Albany, CA: Pacific Southwest Research Station, Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. 72 p.

http://www.psw.fs.fed.us/Tech_Pub/gtrs.html

Chavez, D.J. 2001. Managing outdoor recreation in California: Visitor contact studies 1989-1998. Gen. Tech. Rep. PSW-GTR-180. Albany, CA: Pacific Southwest Research Station, Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. 102 p.

Update Delivered by E-Mail

Receive the Recreation Research Update by e-mail. Send an e-mail to dolson04@fs.fed.us with the words SUBSCRIBE UPDATE in the Subject of your message. To be removed from the "snailmail" list include your complete name and address. You can also view this and past Updates at our website:

http://www.rfl.psw.fs.fed.us/recreation/pubs_update.html.

Debbie Chavez, Update Coordinator
USDA Forest Service
Pacific Southwest Research Station
4955 Canyon Crest Drive
Riverside, CA 92507
909.680.1558
email: dchavez@fs.fed.us