



Recreation Research Update



Pacific Southwest Research Station
Wildland Recreation and Urban Cultures

January 2002 No. 39
Caring for the Land and Serving People

Attitudes about T&E Species Management

An on-site survey of recreationists was conducted at recreation sites on the Angeles, Cleveland, Los Padres, and San Bernardino National Forests (approved for collection, OMB #0596-0153, expiration 10/31/2002).

The response rate was 70.6%. Group sizes ranged from 1 to 18 individuals (average of 5). More males than females participated, and though ages ranged from 16 to 78, most respondents were in their thirties. The majority had attended at least some college; household incomes varied.

Respondents were, on average, concerned about threatened and endangered species (mean of 6.35 on a scale from 1=not at all concerned to 8=very concerned). They saw themselves as more concerned than others recreating on the same forest. Of 687 ratings, 468 rated their concern as higher, 54 rated concern of others as higher, and 165 were tied ($z=-18.077$, $p<.001$).

Most respondents saw themselves as similar, in varying degrees, to the Forest Service regarding goals, direction, values, and thinking about threatened and endangered species management.

Of the five management interventions provided in the survey to address threatened and endangered species protection, signs in recreation settings received the highest approval rating, followed by staff visits and partial closures of areas. Less acceptable were closures lasting a year or longer, and banning specific recreational uses. Effectiveness ratings were, from highest to lowest: partial closures, closures for a year or longer, staff visits, signs and banning specific recreational uses. Personal impact was, from highest to lowest: closures lasting a year or longer, partial closures, bans on particular uses, staff visits and signs.

Respondents were asked to indicate a preferred agency action in cases where recreationists ignored area closures. The most preferred penalties were verbal warnings, assisting with area maintenance, paying a large fine, paying a small fine, or being asked to leave the forest. Less than 10% recommended having no penalty, requiring people to watch a forest conservation film, or arrest.

These findings provide insight into the preferences and opinions of individuals recreating on the four forests that were contacted for our survey, and are helpful in situations where public opinion can be taken into

account in developing management strategies to protect species and their habitats. *For further information please contact Pat Winter at (909) 680-1557.*

Communication for Visitor Management: Allegheny NF Case Study

A study of communication needs and approaches for visitor management has been completed by Dr. Alan Graefe (Pennsylvania State University) and Dr. James Absher (PSW), with assistance from Dr. John Confer and Dr. Brijesh Thapa (now at University of Florida), focused on Allegheny National Forest's Hickory Creek Wilderness (HCW) as a case study. Numerous management problems occur in outdoor recreation areas because of ill-prepared, uninformed or misinformed visitors. A variety of direct and indirect communication strategies can optimize visitor satisfaction as well as safeguard and sustain the recreational setting, especially if the information positively influences recreationists' attitudes and creates acceptable behavioral ethics.

The purpose of this study was to enhance existing understanding of communication, information and education as resource management techniques. This study provides an analysis of diverse user groups' knowledge, behavior, and attitudes about Wilderness in general and the HCW in particular. Surveys were conducted with users from five key groups encompassing campground users, day visitors, HCW hikers, adjacent landowners and equestrians. A combination on-site and mail survey methodology was used with mailback response rates from 41% to 61%.

The user groups studied varied in their demographic characteristics, use patterns, and information uses and preferences. Visitors were most interested in information on the location of trails and landscape features (i.e., maps), and would prefer to receive such information before their visit. In general, maps and signs were the most frequently consulted information sources, followed by travel guides and tour books, brochures and pamphlets and visitor centers. In general, Wilderness users tend to report the greatest information needs and are most likely to seek information before their trip. Adjacent landowners are mainly interested in information about hunting and fishing opportunities, and are least satisfied with existing information services. Day users generally expressed lower information needs

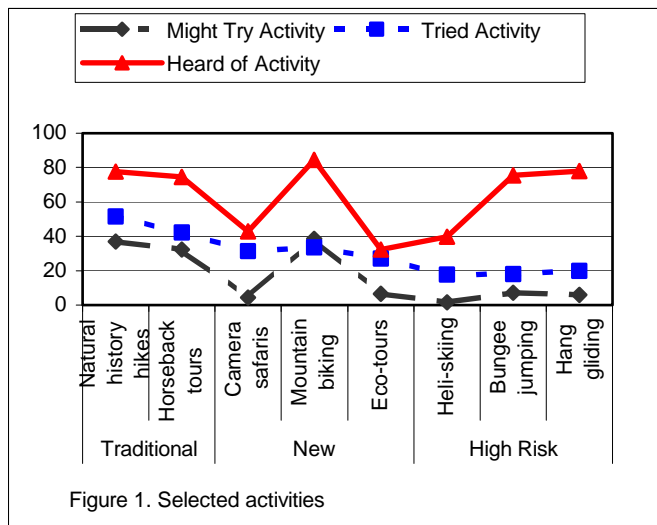
and used fewer sources, but were interested in natural and cultural history information. Equestrians rely most heavily on ranger stations and trailhead signs for information and expressed the greatest need for information about rules and regulations. Other results, e.g., “Leave No Trace” knowledge scores, from these and other groups are also detailed in the report.

Study results demonstrate the importance of knowing your customers and your windows of opportunity for information and education programs. These results also suggest the importance of a diverse and strategically implemented communication plan that includes all significant user segments/communities. ***For further information please contact Jim Absher (909) 680-1559.***

Day Use on the San Bernardino National Forest

In the last issue of the Update, Debbie Chavez reported on Day Use data from the San Bernardino National Forest. This issue continues by focusing on selected activities, site attributes, and personal preferences.

Figure 1 shows selected activities. Traditional activities are the ones that more people have heard of, have tried, and indicate they might try, as was mountain biking from the “new” list. Fewer people had heard of or tried camera safaris and eco-tours, or heli-skiing. More had heard of bungee jumping and hang gliding, though few had tried these activities.



Given choices of 15-minute trails, 30-minute trails, one-hour trails, and trails which take a few hours, most people preferred one-hour trail lengths (52%). Respondents were also asked if they wanted easy to walk trails, somewhat challenging trails or

very challenging trails. Most wanted somewhat challenging trails (51%).

Respondents said the following facilities and amenities were very important: trash cans (49%), water faucets (42%), picnic tables (35%), and parking areas (31%). Less important were cooking grills and fire pits/rings.

Events and behaviors at the sites which bothered respondents included: litter along the road, drawings or graffiti on man-made structures, drawings or graffiti on natural structures, litter at picnic sites, and carving of names, initials or messages on trees. Less bothersome were a lot of people at the site, dogs walked off-leash, people drinking alcohol, and cars parked in “No Parking” areas. Most respondents planned to tell other people about their trip, felt the site was safe and secure, said it was a great recreation experience, and was well worth the money spent to take the trip.

Day use of the San Bernardino National Forest is a very significant amount of overall use. Why people recreate there, what they like to do, and what they prefer to have for site amenities and facilities are all very salient pieces of information for National Forest managers. ***For further information about this study please contact Debbie Chavez.***

Unit Publications

Cindrity, S.; Vogt, C.A. 2001. **Full-year and seasonal residents living in the interface: Considerations for fuel treatment programs.** Program and Abstracts, The Wildland-Urban Interface: Sustaining Forests in a Changing Landscape; 2001 November 5-8; Gainesville, FL, p. 79.

Dwyer, J.F.; Chavez, D.J. 2001. **The challenges of managing public lands on the urban wildland interface.** Program and Abstracts, The Wildland-Urban Interface: Sustaining Forests in a Changing Landscape; 2001 November 5-8; Gainesville, FL, p. 34.

Hendricks, W.W.; Ramthun, R.H.; Chavez, D.J. 2001. **The effects of persuasive message source and content on mountain bicyclists’ adherence to trail etiquette guidelines.** *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration*, 19 (3): 38-61.

Winter, P.L.; Knap, N.E. 2001. **An exploration of recreation and management preferences related to threatened and endangered species: Final report for the Angeles, Cleveland, Los Padres and San Bernardino National Forests.** Unpublished report. Riverside, CA: USDA Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Research Station. 57 p.