



Recreation Research Update



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Caring for the Land and Serving People

Green Inspirations from the Field

This column continues the presentation of results from the sustainable operations survey in Region 5 and PSW, conducted by Dr. Pat Winter (PSW). In this installment, specific ideas for sustainable operations are presented from the perspective of our respondents, focusing on ideas already in place at their locations, or ideas offered they felt would work. It is hoped that these ideas can be used by others inside the agency and in other settings to advance efforts that reduce environmental footprints.

Ideas to reduce energy use included: obtain an energy audit to understand level and sources of demand; monitor building temperatures – don't overheat/overcool; require leased buildings to meet minimum efficiency standards for heating, cooling, and lighting; install motion sensors in common areas without constant use to allow lights to turn on/off as needed; and as equipment is replaced ensure it is an energy efficient model.

Respondents offered ideas addressing landscaping (especially water use) around Forest Service facilities: install landscaping consistent with local conditions (native landscapes); install sustainable gardens with rain barrels; minimize lawn sizes; apply strict water conservation measures (don't over water); use chemicals on very limited basis; plant trees to shade south and west facing walls; and install efficient irrigation systems.

Suggestions around recreation settings included the following: have a beverage container recycling program in developed recreation sites; leave literature at campsites (focused on responsible actions); and conduct river and creek clean-ups.

Fire camps and incident situations were another focal point for several suggestions regarding sustainability: cache items should be packaged with reusable materials or in ways that reduce packaging; use refillable canteens instead of plastic bottles of water; mandate recycling in fire camps; locate someone who can use remaining life of alkaline batteries switched out at shift change; and explore possible use of recyclable batteries on fires.

Ideas that would address commuting issues included: telecommute when possible; use videoconferencing; locate Forest Service offices near public transportation; have secure bike racks so

employees can bike to work; trade in government vehicles for downsized or hybrid vehicles; provide tips to help increase fuel economy; don't penalize field crews for limiting miles logged on fleet vehicles because that discourages responsible use; and plan trips to save time and fuel while in the field. *For more information about this study contact Pat Winter at 951-680-1557 or pwinter@fs.fed.us.*

Longitudinal Monitoring of Recreation Fee Program

Natural resource managers need to better understand the impact of fees on outdoor recreationists. The debate about recreation fees involves both operational issues such as revenue use and social issues such as justice and fairness. A new paper by Dr. James Absher (PSW Station), Dr. Alan Graefe (Penn State University) and Dr. Robert Burns (West Virginia University) presents a comparative analysis of ongoing research to provide monitoring of the recreation fee program in the Pacific Northwest region of the United States. It highlights findings that describe public perceptions about the fee program over a six year period. Surveys of residents in Washington and Oregon were conducted in 1999, 2001, and 2003. The key issues are: Shifts in public attitudes about fees, perceptions about the balance between taxes and fees, equity and implementation concerns, and revenue uses.

In general, residents agree that fees are both acceptable and useful, and they strongly preferred imposing fees to closing sites or allowing them to deteriorate (when funds were inadequate). They do expect some balance between fees and taxes, and in all three surveys, supported a variety of implementation options designed to enhance the fairness of the fee program, such as setting aside some areas where no fees are charged or making certain days free of charge. The initial concerns about recreation fees being regressive and making the forest only accessible to the rich have been mollified substantially. Respondents had no problems with a broad use of fee revenue to support resource, facility and communication aspects of forest recreation management.

Results of the fee monitoring surveys suggest that public support for Forest Service recreation fees has been rather stable. There is some evidence of changes in opinions, and generally these have been support of

fees. This implies that the recreation fee program has been successful at communicating the reasons behind the program and the benefits that have come from the program. If this experience holds up elsewhere in the US, or perhaps internationally, managers cannot expect fast or dramatic changes in acceptance.

The paper concludes with some implications from these results, notably the practicality and relevance to managers of using assessments. In particular, these results suggest that repeatedly obtaining data from affected users is important for fee program managers because it provides empirical evidence for program support and leads to better informed decisions. *For more information about this study please contact Jim Absher at 951-680-1559 or jabsher@fs.fed.us.*

Day Use on the Angeles National Forest: A Safe Haven for Latinos?

Results from a day use visitor contact study conducted on the San Antonio and San Gabriel Canyons on the Angeles National Forest in summer 2006 are reported. The purpose was to provide information based on day use visitor opinions. This write-up focuses on demographics and visitor use history (asked of all respondents n=270), and safety (asked of a portion of the sample n=134).

Most day use respondents at the San Antonio and San Gabriel Canyons were Latino (65%), with the next largest group being White (24%). About half the respondents were U.S.-born. Average age of respondents was 36 years, and average years of education was 12. Household income was skewed toward lower incomes (about 6 in 10 had household incomes of \$39,999 or less). Three-fourths of the respondents were repeat visitors and had visited several times in the past year. Most respondents planned to return to the site again within the coming year. On the day contacted, most respondents were relaxing, picnicking/barbequing, swimming/wading, and hiking.

Some participants were asked to indicate if their concerns about safety from crime changed the way they did things at the recreation site they visited. A majority said they pay more attention to what is going on around them and they carry a cell phone. Almost half of the respondents reported that they did not have any safety concerns at the site. The respondents' level of concern for safety was higher at recreation sites (as compared to their concern for safety in their own neighborhoods) for "threats to my health or life by wildfire," "vandalism to trees," and "carving of names, initials, or messages on trees." Latino respondents, however, had many more concerns about safety in their home neighborhoods; rating 9 items as more of a concern in their

neighborhood than in the forest. In comparison, non-Latino respondents rated 2 items as more of a concern in their neighborhood than in the forest.

Managers of these places can use the results in several ways. First the demographics suggest a mostly Latino clientele, indicating a need to focus efforts on serving this major group (e.g., provide communications in Spanish). The findings also suggest a need for actions that address respondent concerns for threats to health or life by wildfire, vandalism to trees, and carving of names, initials, or messages on trees. Especially important are actions that contribute to a sense of well-being while on the forest. *For more information about this study contact Debbie Chavez at 951-680-1558 or dchavez@fs.fed.us.*

Unit Publications

- Absher, J.D., Graefe, A.G., Burns, R.C. (2008). Longitudinal Monitoring of Public Reactions to the U.S. Forest Service Recreation Fee Program. In: Visitor Management in Nature-based Tourism: Strategies and Success Factors for Recreational and Protected Areas. Siegrist, D.; Clivaz, C.; Hunziker, M.; & Iten, S. (eds.) Volume 2. Series of the Institute for Landscape and Open Space. Rapperswil, Switzerland: Institute for Landscape and Open Space, HSR University of Applied Sciences.
- Chavez, D.J.; Olson, D.D. 2008. Day use of National Forest series: the Angeles National Forest San Antonio and San Gabriel Canyons, 2005. 53 p.
- Chavez, D.J.; Olson, D.D. 2008. Day use of National Forest series: the Angeles National Forest San Antonio and San Gabriel Canyons, 2006. 38 p.
- Chavez, D.J.; Tynon, J.F. 2007. Forest Service special agents, assistant special agents in charge, senior special agents, and supervisory special agents report: nationwide study. Res. Paper. PSW-RP-255. Albany, CA: Pacific Southwest Research Station, Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture; 43 p.
- Chavez, D.J.; Tynon, J.F. 2008. Forest Service national forest system perceptions of law enforcement and investigations: nationwide study. Res. Paper. PSW-RP-256. Albany, CA: Pacific Southwest Research Station, Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture; 38 p.
- Perez-Verdin, G.; Lee, M.E.; Chavez, D.J. 2008. Planning forest recreation in two natural protected areas of southern Durango, Mexico. *Madera y Bosques*. 14(1): 53-67.