



Recreation Research Update



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Day Use on the Mountaintop Ranger District

A day use visitor contact study was conducted on the Mountaintop Ranger District on the San Bernardino National Forest in summer 2008 (n=337). The purpose was to provide to managers information based on day use visitor opinions. Day use sites are those in which people visit for some portion of the day but they do not stay overnight. The survey is a replication of the day use studies conducted on National Forests in southern California from 1992-94, 2000-06. Day use sites were selected by the Mountaintop Ranger District for inclusion in the study. Dates of data collection were randomly selected from various week-ends and week-days throughout the summer months.

Most Mountaintop Ranger District day use visitor respondents were White, with the next largest group being Hispanic or Latino. Three-quarters of the respondents were U.S.-born. Average age of respondents was 42 years, and they reported an average 15 years of education. Household income was skewed toward upper incomes (almost 4 in 10 had household incomes of \$90,000 or more). Most respondents were English language speakers and readers.

Half 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 hiking, relaxing, picnicking/barbequing, or were taking photos. Many of the respondents were "local" visitors who said the area was close to home for them and also affordable. They also thought the areas visited were "peaceful and quiet."

Participants were asked to indicate how important it was to manage natural areas for environmental protection, low impact and high impact outdoor recreation activities. Average scores were highest for managing for environmental protection, especially for protection of water quality, protection of wildlife, and scenic value. Participants were also asked if more or less areas are needed for these purposes. Respondents felt more land was needed for managing for environmental protection, especially for protection of wildlife, protection of water quality, improved air quality, and protection of plants.

Managers of the Mountaintop Ranger District on the San Bernardino National Forest can use the results of

this report in several ways. Communications for day use visitors should be written for English-speaking, well-educated visitors. Although not many visitors were Spanish speakers and readers, some consideration should be given toward translations of educational and information materials for this group. It will be important for area managers to consider tapping into local day use visitors (perhaps as volunteers), to consider continuation of current pricing for site visits, and to continue to provide for peace and quiet. The large percentage of new day use visitors suggests an educational opportunity.

Primary activities of respondents were clearly tied to the sites where we located them. Our study sites were at two trailheads and two picnic areas. So it is unsurprising that the activities that most engaged in included hiking, relaxing, and picnicking/barbequing. This is good news—people are using the picnic areas and trailheads as intended. About one-third of day use study respondents mentioned photography as an activity. This may be something that site managers can use to entice continued use of the area or enhance current visits.

Important to visitors to the Mountaintop Ranger District were managing of areas for environmental concerns. We provided seven environmental protection items for visitors to rate the importance of and to determine if enough natural areas were currently set aside for each. All seven were important to visitors and they desired more areas be set aside for these protections. It does not mean they expect, nor necessarily want, Mountaintop Ranger District managers to provide them. *For more information please contact Debbie Chavez at 951-680-1558 or dchavez@fs.fed.us.*

Sustainable Recreation and Tourism

Preliminary results are available from a study conducted by Dr. Kelly Bricker (University of Utah) and Dr. Pat Winter (PSW) that focuses on sustainable recreation and tourism. Forest Service recreation managers (n=433) across the U.S. were surveyed for this study.

Findings suggest a shared commitment to sustainable recreation and tourism. For example, the majority agreed that they had a professional responsibility to practice sustainable operations, that

sustainable recreation and tourism was personally important in the area they managed, and that it warrants additional investment.

Most reported taking a number of actions surrounding sustainable operations such as recycling, use of green products, and sustainable fleet management (e.g., use of hybrids). Use of transportation management involving busses or shuttles in high use areas was less often implemented.

Respondents felt the following were all important considerations in sustainability: environmental impacts, increased environmental appreciation, economic impacts, capacity of agency personnel to support it, increased appreciation of surrounding communities, and improved health of the recreating public.

Economic impacts of sustainable recreation and tourism development were viewed as including new income and job opportunities to surrounding communities as well as diversifying the local economy. Additional benefits included an improved quality of life for surrounding communities.

Respondents believed local cultures should be considered in the provision of recreation and tourism opportunities, and considered in the provision of information to visitors. The vast majority agreed that community residents should be involved in decision-making surrounding sustainable recreation and tourism development.

Additional benefits of recreation and tourism beyond the community were believed to be an improved awareness of environmental protection and a strengthening of efforts for environmental conservation.

Increased demands on energy and water resources, and environmental pollution were sources of some concern.

Respondents felt that development of recreation and tourism on agency managed lands should be in harmony with the natural environment. They also felt the agency should provide environmental interpretation and educational programs to visitors as well as employees.

The majority felt that agency resources were not adequate to cover current demand for recreation and tourism. Most reportedly rely on partnerships to provide recreation and tourism opportunities, and volunteers assist with recreation and tourism management. However, less than a majority agreed the agency has a partnership with the sustainable tourism industry. *For more information about this study contact Pat Winter at 951-680-1557 or pwinter@fs.fed.us*

Unit Publications

- Chavez, D.J. 2009. Youth day in Los Angeles: connecting youth and nature with technology. 2009 Hawaii International Conference on Social Sciences, proceedings. Honolulu, HI; June 4-7. p. 284-293.
- Chavez, D.J. 2009. Youth day in Los Angeles: getting outdoors with technology. *Children, Youth and Environments* 19(1) 102-124.
- Chavez, D.J.; Fehr, J. 2009. *Planning for youth days: planting the SEED to get youth outdoors in nature*. 2300-Recreation Mgmt, 0923 1801-SDTDC. San Dimas, CA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, National Technology & Development Program. 35 p.
- Chavez, D.J.; Olson, D.D. 2009 Diverse users of four urban national forests: participation, preferences, and perceptions. 2009 Hawaii International Conference on Social Sciences, proceedings. Honolulu, HI; June 4-7. p. 294-308.
- Toman, E.L.; Shindler, B.; Absher, J.; McCaffrey, S. 2008. Postfire communications: the influence of site visits on local support. *Journal of Forestry* 116(1) [January/February]: 25-30.
- Vogt, C., Absher, J.; Graefe, A.; Hammitt, W.; Krueger, L.; Vaske, J. 2008. Natural resources research and management issues: 2007. In: LeBlanc, C.; Vogt, C. comps. *Proceedings of the 2007 Northeastern Recreation Research Symposium*; Gen. Tech. Rep. NRS- P- 23. Newton Square, PA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Northern Research Station; 139-141.
- Winter, P.L. 2009. Input requested from recreation managers. *Population and Environmental Psychology Bulletin* 4(2), 3.
- Winter, P.L.; Bigler-Cole, H. 2008. Information needs, acceptability of risk, trust and reliance: the case of National Predictive Services customers. In: Lee, D.C.; Beatty, J.; Shaw, C.G.; Pye, J.M.; Sands, Y. *Forest Environmental Threats*. <http://www.forestencyclopedia.net/p/p5/p3389/p3687>
- Winter, P.L.; Cvetkovich, G.T. 2008. Shared values and trust: the experience of community residents in a fire-prone ecosystem. In: Lee, D.C.; Beatty, J.; Shaw, C.G.; Pye, J.M.; Sands, Y. *Forest Environmental Threats*. <http://www.threats.forestencyclopedia.net/p/p5/p3389/p3697>