



Recreation Research Update



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Caring for the Land and Serving People

Environmentalism and community: A study of diverse urban-publics

Benjamin Marcus (doctoral student) and Dr. Allen M. Omoto of Claremont Graduate University are collaborating with Dr. Pat Winter (PSW Station) on a study examining community as a pathway to environmental responsibility. Eight in-depth interviews were conducted with an ethnically diverse mix of urban-residents. Underlying this study was the working premise that environmentalism is both fostered by and can help foster connections to and sense of community.

Respondents were asked to think about environmentalism and what it meant to them, followed by a discussion of the meaning of community. Finally, interviewees completed cognitive content maps to explore any connections participants perceived between environmentalism and their ethnic community.

Each participant saw their outdoor recreation experiences as influential in shaping their ideas about the environment. However, ideas about environmentalism were varied. Some participants linked environmentalism to political- or social-action. A number of respondents referred to aesthetics and cleanliness. Other respondents thought about conservation, or relayed a sense of stewardship.

Conceptions of community were similarly diverse, ranging from thoughts about local neighborhoods to connections with other people based on shared interests. Most respondents did not view their ethnic or racial community as a predominant force in their lives.

The cognitive maps revealed a number of unique connections between environmentalism and community. For example, by overlapping environmentalism with concepts like helping others, being a good person, and caring for the community, one participant's map reflected ideas about environmental activity as an issue of social responsibility that affected all members of the community, rather than environmentalism as a unique construct in and of itself.

Findings reveal some of the unique connections between environmentalism and community formed among the participants. They help us to understand that connections to community, however varied, may represent important pathways to environmental engagement. *For more information about this study*

*contact Pat Winter at 951-680-1557 or
pwinter@fs.fed.us.*

A multi-ethnic comparison of forest recreation service quality

A collaborative paper authored by Dr. Chieh-lu Li (National Chung Hsing University, Taiwan), Jim Absher (PSW Station) and three others looked at perceptions of service quality on an ethnically diverse national forest adjacent to a large metropolitan area (Angeles NF). Specifically, it looks at differences among whites, Hispanics, and Asians in cross-cultural comparisons of perceived service quality. Because service quality can play a central role in serving minority populations better, managers will be aided by knowing how visitors perceive service quality components and be able to employ appropriate customer service quality strategies.

The measures focus on acculturation, assimilation, and 22 service quality attributes reported in domains of facilities, services, information, and management. Data were from a purposive sample of recreationists (n = 1,075) including 444 whites, 312 Hispanics, and 319 Asians. The results reveal that compared to whites and Hispanics, Asians are most distinct in service quality ratings after controlling for generational effects. Notably, Asians tend to perceive lower service quality than whites or Hispanics, and although whites reported the highest service quality, it was usually indistinguishable from Hispanics' ratings. The implications of these findings are discussed as they relate to the role of cultural values and service quality measurement in recreation management. The different characteristics between western and Asian cultures may explain some of these differences in perceived service quality. An item analysis of the individual service quality variables in this study found that Asians tended to feel unsafe, less secure, and needed more information about safety and emergency for their forest recreation trips. Overall, these results suggest that in order to serve an increasingly diverse clientele, national forest managers may want to better understand the diverse ethnic background of visitors they serve, and to focus on the relationship between cultural values and ethnic groups in each service quality dimension. *For more information about this study contact Jim Absher at 951-680-1559 or jabsher@fs.fed.us.*

'SINAMI': A tool for the economic evaluation of forest fire management programs in Mediterranean ecosystems

Wildland fires are a major problem worldwide, causing not only significant economic and natural resources losses, but loss of life. The economic analysis of fire management and protection programs in the US has been in use since the early 1980s with the development of the NFMAS model in the USDA Forest Service. The model was developed as a budgetary tool to determine the most efficient fire management program.

Outside of the US, Spain is the first country to develop an economic analysis model to evaluate economic efficiency of fire management and protection programs. A contributing factor was political developments in the country in 1984, which resulted in 17 Autonomous Regions and a Central Government. This resulted in increased wildland fire protection expenditures.

Data requirements for SINAMI like models are very high. This can pose significant problems for application in other Mediterranean basin countries where such data are scarce. The policy implication in choosing to implement such a model is that there will be an initially long and costly commitment to data development.

The economic analysis using the SINAMI model provides several useful results for strategic fire management planning and policy analysis. The potentially most relevant is determination of the most efficient fire management program and budget levels. SINAMI enables managers to quantitatively justify budget requests and permit them to demonstrate potential consequences of budget reductions or reallocation in response to specific requests. Tradeoffs between budget levels and potential losses and program composition can be easily identified. In addition, the model could provide valuable information for fire program composition and total resources to secure.

Although some limitations have been identified in the application of the C+NVC model, as a first step the SINAMI model is an improvement in applying economic analysis to fire management and protection programs in the Mediterranean basin countries, where none is applied today. As a decision support tool the model would help fire managers identify potential benefits of different fire management options and potential economic consequences. *For more information please contact Armando González-Cabán at 951-680-1525 or agonzalezcaban@fs.fed.us.*

Unit Publications

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Kyle, G.T.; Shafer, S.; Schuett, M.; Tseng, Y.P.; Bradle, T.; Richardson, J.; Graefe, A.; Absher, J.; Ivy, M. 2009.

- A Study of Recreational Boating on Lake Austin, Texas. Austin, TX: Lower Colorado River Authority. 77p. [APPENDICES, 65p]
- A Study of Recreational Boating on Lake Lyndon B. Johnson, Texas. Austin, TX: Lower Colorado River Authority. 111p. [APPENDICES, 113p]
- A Study of Recreational Boating on Lake Travis, Texas. Austin, TX: Lower Colorado River Authority. 127p. [APPENDICES, 154p]

Li, C., Absher, J.D., Zinn, H.C., Graefe, A.R. & Chick, G.E. 2010. A multi-ethnic comparison of perceptions of forest recreation service quality. *Journal of Tourism and Leisure Studies* 15(3): 213-238.

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Winter, P.L.; Wordell, T.A. 2009. An evaluation of the Predictive Services Program. *Fire Management Today* 69(4): 27-32.