ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
“BECOMING AN OUTDOORS-WOMAN® (B.O.W.)” PROGRAM:
FACTORS RELATED TO OUTDOOR RECREATION PARTICIPATION

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Abstract
The purpose of this study was to learn about factors that influenced women’s participation in the Illinois DNR “Becoming An Outdoors-Woman® (BOW)” program and outdoor recreation in general. Women were asked about their past experiences in outdoor pursuits, the perceived benefits they associated with outdoor recreation, and their impressions of a “women only” outdoor recreation training program. Socio-demographic information was also collected about the Illinois BOW program participants. Study outcomes included comments that they highly enjoyed the “women only” environment of the BOW Program, because it permitted them to learn in a safe environment (i.e., ridicule free, non-patronizing, supportive, on a level as equals). Other prominent comments emphasized how exciting it was for BOW attendees to learn new outdoor skills, to take time out for oneself for a change, and to feel more competent and confident in the outdoors. For some women, the BOW Workshop was a life transforming eye-opener concerning another world of play and social camaraderie that was made available to them.

1.0 Introduction
I tied a fly. I started a campfire. I shot a rifle and a muzzleloader. I identified several different tree species. I learned how to paddle a canoe for a river trip.

Today, more and more women may be heard making these comments and celebrating their newfound leisure skills. While these may be skills that boys and men are routinely exposed to, for woman these skills have not been the usual part of their leisure development and repertoire—until BOW®. The times and outdoor recreation opportunities for women and girls are changing for the better. Numerous girls and women today are increasingly interested in learning about outdoor recreation skills in endeavors that they previously have not typically participated in (e.g., hunting, fishing, skeet shooting, boating, wilderness treks, etc.). In the past, many women may have yearned to participate in outdoor recreation, but they did not have the know how, exposure, or access to the traditional means of passing on the skills as males do from an older male role model to son or younger brother or nephew (Yoesting & Burkhead 1973; Freysinger 1990, p. 49).

The Becoming An Outdoors-Woman® (BOW) Program began in 1991 when it was first offered at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. The first workshop was held at Treehaven Field Station and attracted over 100 participants. Dr. Christine Thomas, a natural resources professor in the College of Natural Resources at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, initiated the BOW program and developed the educational workshop series in association with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for women to acquire these desired outdoor skills. The Wisconsin workshops for women were very successful and became an indicator that there was a growing interest and need for more of this type of educational program in other states concerning outdoor leisure skills for women. Numerous state DNR’s began to sponsor BOW workshops across the U.S.

The BOW programs have expanded to over 40 states (e.g., state Department of Natural Resources (DNR) or Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) offices) and several Canadian Provinces (Becoming an Outdoors-Woman®, 2003).

BOW workshops offer women an opportunity to learn more about the outdoors, and to develop their skills, appreciation for, and confidence to participate in outdoor activities. Examples of popular workshops include hunting, fishing, canoeing, kayaking, backpacking and camping, nature identification, medicinal plant use, nature photography, archery, outdoor cookery, and bow hunting. Aside from learning valuable skills which enable women to participate in outdoor leisure pursuits, that have tended to be the domain of males in the past, BOW participants gain valuable insight about themselves, they learn what new leisure possibilities exist within their reach, and how their social circle may be enlarged by discovering other persons who share similar outdoor interests. Recent trends show that the growth areas in
outdoor activities are among girls and women, minorities, and people with disabilities (Ibrahim & Cordes 2002). Outdoor resource managers and marketers need to know more about this expanding user segment so they may be better prepared to provide appropriate areas, facilities, programs, and services for the expanding numbers of women involved in outdoor pursuits.

2.0 Study Objectives
The main objectives of this study were focused on learning about factors that influenced women's participation in outdoor recreation: the past experiences women had in outdoor pursuits, what BOW workshop participants perceived to be the benefits of partaking in outdoor recreation pursuits in general and specifically “women’s only” outdoor recreation training programs and activities. Also, this study asked women participants to characterize the nature and quality of “women only” outdoor pursuits and workshops, and to identify potential constraints and fears they associated with engaging in outdoor recreation. BOW participants were also asked to identify a preferred “women only” outdoor recreation endeavor they might wish to pursue and the reasons for that. A socio-demographic profile of the Illinois BOW program participants was also conducted.

3.0 Methodology
A two-page post-BOW Workshop survey was developed and administered to participants attending a spring weekend Illinois Department of Natural Resources BOW Workshop held at Lorado Taft Field Campus adjacent to Lowden State Park at Oregon, Illinois and the Rock River. Closed-ended and open-ended questions were included, as well as several socio-demographic related items (e.g., gender, age, marital status, ethnicity, occupation, education level, residence, and household income level). Descriptive statistics were performed on the socio-demographic data and qualitative themes were generated from the open-ended question data analysis.

4.0 Results
Seventy-five women participated in this late spring Illinois DNR BOW weekend program. About one-fifth of the group had 0 to 5 years of outdoor recreation involvement and another fifth claimed 31-55 years of experience. Sixty percent of the group had between 6-30 years of outdoor recreation experience. The mode and the average number of years of involvement in outdoor pursuits for this group of women was between 20-25 years.

The overall number of outdoor recreation trips taken by BOW workshop participants ranged from novices with zero trips to the more experienced with 1000 trips. The median number of trips was 21 and the average was 72.77 trips. A little over a third had taken 0-15 trips (36.4%), a little under a third took 16-30 trips (26.8%), and a little over a third (36.3%) took 31-1000 trips.

The average number of outdoor recreation trips per year was 9.57 for these workshop participants, with the median and the mode being two trips per year, and the range was zero to 150 trips per year. A little over two-thirds (70.4%) averaged 0-5 trips per year.

The benefits the women associated with outdoor recreation included things such as the following themes: to be exposed to new experiences to share with family members, to appreciate and enjoy nature; to learn new skills; to take part in challenge, adventure, and exploration activities; to be more independent; to have a better sense of overall well-being; to attain a sense of accomplishment and the confidence that is attached to it; to expand one’s social circles; and to cooperate and share responsibility with others. Additionally, these women wanted to have fun in outdoor environments, to have a means of stress relief, to gain a sense of peace, and to develop their spirituality (Table 1).

Some of the benefits attributed to participation in a “women only” program to learn outdoor skills were as follows: to have time away for quiet, solitude, and to reflect; to be able to focus on one’s own self and interests; to enjoy nature; to get exercise; to participate in challenging activities that develop one’s skills; to learn in a supportive atmosphere; and to share and experience camaraderie with other women interested in outdoor recreation pursuits and not be subjected to competition or feeling intimidated with males around. Also mentioned were the benefits of meeting new friends, having a great time, getting away for a change of pace and to relax, and leaving the workshop with a more positive attitude towards living (Table 2).

If “women only” outdoor opportunities were made available, numerous women in the weekend program said they would like to take part in another BOW program or other specific outdoor activities. For the most part, they were interested in any outdoor recreation activity that
sounded interesting to them and that provided the chance to partake in it with other women (Table 3).

The workshop attendees indicated that they would like to participate in “women only” outdoor activities with other BOW participants. They would also like to try these endeavors with a wide range of other women, either family, friends, or women from other social circles or organized clubs.

If participating in “women only” outdoor activities, participants identified where they would like to take part in these outdoor recreation endeavors. The women mentioned places that were near home or local (i.e., less than 100 miles), relatively close to them (i.e., within a 4 to 5 hour/day’s drive), or at regional midwest sites (i.e., Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin). Other locations some of them would like to try included the western and northern parts of the country, the Appalachian Trail, wilderness areas, and various places across the United States in general. Wooded areas, such as state forests and parks, the prairies, warm weather areas, and shooting ranges were also preferred places for their outdoor recreation interests.

Aside from the usual motivations for engaging in outdoor recreation (e.g., relaxation, a weekend getaway, just being outdoors, to hike, to go new places, to learn

Table 1.—Benefits Attributed To Participation In Outdoor Recreation Activities

- A total new experience I can share with my child (New ways to share with kids and family; Share experiences)
- To appreciate and enjoy nature (Appreciation of nature; Respect for the earth; Appreciation of the beautiful things and surroundings we have for free; Viewing nature; An increased knowledge and love of nature;
- Learning about natural history; Learn more about nature; Beautiful; Connection to the world and nature; Be one with nature; Seeing wildlife, stars, and scenery; Enjoying the outdoors in general)
- Learning new skills (Education leading to new hobbies; Increased expertise; Growth, knowledge; Interesting; The outdoor activities and skills (canoeing, biking, photography, camping, diving, fishing, picnicking, archery, backpacking, orienteering, hunting); The ability to teach others)
- Challenge, adventure, exploration (Transferability—I feel like I can do other things (like a work or business task) if I “conquer” a hike or figure something out)
- Freedom (Sense of independence)
- Better emotional, physical health, and mental well-being (Ways to keep in shape; Exercise, physical fitness; An active mind and body; Physical health, feel better physically and mentally; Good exercise)
- Feeling of accomplishment & confidence, better self-esteem (I’m much more confident about going out on my own; Builds confidence and self-esteem; Acquiring the confidence to try new skills and activities; Increases self-Esteem)
- Socialization (Socialize with others; Camaraderie; A circle of friends who enjoy these activities also; To meet new People; Making and keeping friends; Co-ed is OK, but some women don’t agree)
- Ability to cooperate with others and putting the group needs over self-needs (To cooperate with others; Responsibility)
- To have fun in the outdoor environment (Enjoyment; Fun; Fun with others camping and cooking; Pleasure)
- Stress Relief (Simplification of the life process: food, clothing, and shelter are our true needs; My sanity! A need for unaccounted time, quiet, & solitude, as well as adventure and challenge; Renewal, refreshment, relaxation)
- A sense of peace & a grounding in what is important in life (Feeling of peace; Peace in body, mind, spirit; A spiritual sense of peacefulness; Happiness; Serenity when alone in thoughts; Uplifting)
- Spirituality (Spiritual benefits)
Table 2.—Benefits Attributed To Participation In “Women Only” Outdoor Recreation Activities

- Occasional stretches of unaccounted time, quiet, and solitude (Sanity; Relaxation; Existence; Serenity; Spirituality)
- Self-fulfillment (Can center more on ourselves which is nice; Self-esteem)
- Appreciation of nature (Fresh air; Be one with nature)
- Good exercise
- Adventure and challenge (Canoeing, biking, photography, camping, diving, fishing, picnicking, archery, backpacking; Adventure; Exploration)
- Came here to learn (Specialized training on specific equipment for women; Better skill development; Enhanced learning with less competition, focused on learning, more comfortable asking questions; Knowing how to adapt [activities and equipment] to a women’s body strength & size; Properly sized equipment; Learning better techniques; the proper way to do things; Learning new skills and activities in a non-intimidating environment. Women are very supportive in a learning environment; Learning without competition; Less intimidated; more likely to ask questions of instructor; The learning aspect is very nurturing, supportive, and non-competitive; The opportunity to learn in a supportive and controlled environment; Women talk more about interesting topics)
- Camaraderie among other women (Discussing life issues with other women of different ages and backgrounds [Women] teachers who understand us better; Can try different things without feeling embarrassed; Good bonding and sharing experiences; Encouragement from other women; Nurturing, supportive environment; Really wonderful relationships & we all communicate the same way!; It’s more comfortable, very supportive, non-competitive; Supportiveness; Lack of competition; Low competition; More comfortable and laid back with women only; Comfortable learning without competition; Women are more understanding, supportive, and helpful; Less threatening environment; supportive; More willing to ask questions; Willingness to share; We support each other beautifully; We don’t have to worry what we look like; Good friends; Special bonding and camaraderie; great camaraderie; Patient partners; Better teamwork; Feeling of knowing I can be the equal or leader instead of the follower; Less social stress, great support/camaraderie; More relaxed, not so self-conscious about being evaluated, not as afraid to fail; Less pressure, more fun; No ego, increased comfort level; Non-competitive participation; In general, men are too arrogant around females; Men are condescending to women in outdoor activities and sports; Don’t have male competition; Less intimidating than when guys are around; Lack of male intimidators! Yeah!; No embarrassment; men don’t really bother me; I wouldn’t go with my husband; Non-threatening environment; Not having the stress of having men around (either being spoken down to or “hit on”); No one condescends to us; No competition from having men present)
- Meeting friends (Meet fun people)
- To enjoy a good time (Having fun; More fun!)
- More relaxing
- A positive attitude toward living
- Don’t really do “women only” activities

Table 3.—What Activity Would You Participate In If It Was “Women Only” Outdoor Recreation Endeavors

- The Becoming An Outdoors-Woman® (BOW) Program; Another Becoming An Outdoors-Woman® (BOW) weekend Learning different outdoor pursuits (Sailing; Canoeing / Wilderness canoe trip; Birding / Bird watching; Camping;
- Hiking; Archery; Shotgun shooting; Backpacking; Fishing; Sports; Big Skeet / Trap shooting; Kayaking; Boating; Plant identification; Reading the woods; Bringing nature home; Outdoor camp cooking; Rock climbing; Nature walks; Car camping; Climbing/rappelling; Eco-challenge; Orienteering; Nature (flora and fauna) trips; Anything that sounded interesting; It does not matter as long as there are other women)
about natural history), some of the reasons BOW participants gave for their interest to participate in “women only” outdoor endeavors included learning in a more comfortable environment among the camaraderie, support, and patience of other women. The women expressed that it was beneficial to learn new outdoor skills in the company of other women because they feel less nervous or intimidated than if the men were teaching them. They also believed they were better able to challenge themselves, become more independent and confident, and practice these techniques among other women, who they felt they were on a more equal basis with regard to outdoor pursuits (Table 4).

Other reasons given for participation in “women only” outdoor recreation endeavors were that it was helpful for
identifying other women who share similar interests. The opportunity to identify and network with other women was a valuable offshoot of being exposed to an organized outdoor program designed for women above and beyond the scope of the initial weekend workshop skill content. Women also expressed that it helped their self-esteem by knowing that there are other women out there who also dare to venture into new leisure interests and adventure territory (e.g., rock climbing, fishing, shooting, etc.), especially for women in middle or older adulthood who may not have had the chance to be exposed to these outdoor pursuits earlier in life. These women also mentioned that they appreciated the patience, gentle encouragement, and teaching skills of female outdoor recreation instructors. The BOW Program served as a valuable conduit for exposing women to other women who also shared a zeal for outdoor pursuit interests.

Becoming An Outdoors-Woman® (BOW) Program attendees in Illinois described the nature of their “women only” outdoor experience as having numerous positive qualities. Women expressed experiencing a supportive atmosphere wherein women feel free to try new things and make mistakes without feeling self-conscious. They felt that there was less competition and intimidation without men being in the courses, who they perceive tend to act like they know it all. The women observed that they act differently without men around, by taking on more active roles in outdoor activities versus being relegated to minor roles “as the followers, organizers, and cleaners” around a campsite or for other outdoor activities. Based on gender, they felt less defined in their outdoor roles amidst other women. This gave them the opportunity to actually participate in outdoor skills development and enjoy the pursuits, rather than merely serve on the sidelines to support men’s outdoor activities. For example, this comment was made: “Too often it’s the women work and the men recreate in the outdoors.” With other women in the outdoors, they did not have to be as concerned about their appearance and they did not feel afraid to be more assertive. This was liberating in terms of trying activities that may have had a connotation of being stereotypically a “male” activity (e.g., fishing, hunting, archery, backcountry camping). If men were involved in outdoor activities with the women, the women felt like the men tended to dominate the activity, used it to show off their male prowess, or used it as an opportunity to act superior or make disparaging comments about women participating in outdoor endeavors. One female participant stated, “a ‘women only’ outdoor group realizes women’s strengths and weaknesses, insecurities, and needs.” This helped to create a more conducive learning environment and pace for the women, leading to skill mastery, confidence, and heightened enjoyment of the outdoor pursuits (Table 5).

The BOW participants identified several constraints they may have encountered with regard to their outdoor pursuits. Some did not have spouses, partners, or friends who were also interested in pursuing outdoor activities with them. Others were turned off by past experiences with overly patronizing males or those who were “too helpful” in an outdoor pursuit and did not allow a female to become more substantively involved in an outdoor activity or skill. Some women expressed concerns about physical limitations of strength or endurance hindering their participation, either now or in the future, in the outdoors. A lack of knowledge or information about outdoor recreation pursuits, as well as concerns about safety or dangers were other constraints that were reported. Finding the time away from work and family obligations (e.g., children, spouse) were cited as other potential constraints to outdoor endeavors for women. Some women mentioned that the costs involved with outdoor activities and the lack of suitable areas (i.e., land availability) were other concerns and potential limitations for them. Extremes in the weather (i.e., heat or cold) and the discomfort associated with those temperatures, winds, or rain were other drawbacks limiting participation for some women (Table 6).

Similar to the constraints related to outdoor recreation in general, some constraints women may encounter with “women only” outdoor recreation pursuits again included the following: concerns about the costs, as well as safety and potential injuries; having available time and energy, the necessary knowledge, and freedom from family obligations; and not being fit or strong enough to participate in outdoor activities. An additional factor, which may hinder participation specifically in “women only” outdoor recreation, was the lack of programs that are available or the lack of knowledge about similar programs for women only. Also, some women said that they did not know other women who might be interested in these types of outdoor pursuits, or their women friends were busy with work and their families.
Table 5.—Describe the Nature or Quality of a “Women Only” Outdoor Experience Versus A Mixed Gender Group

I think it’s a more supportive atmosphere

- In a female group, one can be free to try new things
- Better perspective
- Less threatening. Open to discuss fears and make mistakes
- More likely to share chores and do things by consensus. Less likely to have “hotdogs” or pointless competition
- Not as much competition, women are freer to be themselves without the pressure of males; non-competitive environment (nurturing, supportive)
- Women can do their thing without competing with men.
- Women develop different relationships with each other when there are no men around
- In the wild, going to the “bathroom” is easier without men around
- Women feel more comfortable in a “women’s only” group. More confidence in themselves. Willing to try different things that are stereotypically male activities.
- Women need bathrooms and showers! And go easy and slow with us; we want knowledge. We don’t have to master anything.
- Women act differently when there are no men around. We take on more [active roles]
- Less defined roles based on gender
- Not as much stress as with the men around and knowing it all already
- Less intimidated; more likely to ask questions of instructor; not feeling intimidated; less intimidating
- Less intimidating than when guys are around. Women are more understanding, supportive, and helpful.
- More comfortable in a “women’s only” group; women are more supportive in a “women’s only” group
- More confidence, not intimidating, more opportunity to meet and share experiences (platonic)
- More easy going, more relaxed; less competitive with females only
- Women are more supportive of each other; not as competitive as men with each other
- “Women only” group has less competition, different communication techniques are needed, and there are different interests and level of knowledge.
- Less competition, equal responsibilities, more support, less emphasis on results or achieving, more cooperative, And more fun!
- Women understand the limitations that one may have to overcome to do a task that has stereotypically been associated with men
- A “women only” outdoor group realizes women’s strengths and weaknesses, insecurities, and needs. Men can be distracting to the women’s overall experience. With an all women's group, it is a helpful to the learning environment. With men it could be more competitive, with arrogance, and an air of superiority
- “Women only” group is less self-conscious, more supportive, not worried about appearance, not afraid to be more assertive
- I think men would act superior, more experienced, maybe look down on women for wanting to become involved in what is traditionally male recreation
- It depends on the age and relationship of participants. Too often it’s the women work and the men recreate in the outdoors
- Women tend to be seen as the followers, organizers, cleaners, inferior
- It really depends on the individuals; competition with men or men competing with each other and taking a lot of time with this
- Many men are supportive and helpful, but too many put us down
- Men tend to “know it all” and probably would try to take over the class. We women would preen more, worry about how we looked more
- Too many distractions and not enough learning [with men around]
Women may not excel as much in a co-ed environment. Men have a harder time learning from women. Less mingling and more separation between groups. Men would be showing off, being center of attention, criticizing, “hogging” the equipment, making negative comments about the women. No male domination/superiority issues. Some men want to do things using their muscles, most women are interested in learning the correct techniques. Offer co-ed, but possibly split classes into male or female if it is better separate.

Canoeing, play with clay
Learning and teaching differences
Less distance every day; easy to prepare and clean up meals; an enjoyable “pace”

Table 6.—Constraints Women May Encounter with Outdoor Recreation Pursuits

Partners to do things with
• People that I am compatible with
• Not being in a traditional relationship

Competition, having males be too patronizing or too helpful
Physical limitations
• None except for creaky joints
• Personal handicaps slow me down. Walking is stressful and stairs are painful
• Physical strength and endurance and energy; physical limitations
• Heavy lifting; not being fit
• Sometimes I can't keep up w/the men athletically or skill wise

Safety; lack of knowledge
• I no longer choose to do dangerous sports such as rock climbing and caving
• Bugs, dangers of animals, injuries, reptiles, insects, and injury
• Lack of ability and knowledge
• Finding information about these activities and events
• Knowing what to expect

Children, spouse, not being able to get away for a weekend. Fridays are tough to take off from work; Cannot take off too many days, but for a program like this 3 days
• Family obligations
• Having (two) small children
• Kids cooperation and having a budget for it
• Difficult to finance; getting time off from work
• Having enough time to arrange work schedule
• Time and money available to do things
• Lack of time
• Cost
• Economic, right now it is affordable; physical concerns as health deteriorates

Comfort, depending on the weather
• Extreme heat or cold

Land availability
None
When asked about any fears they might have concerning participation in outdoor recreation in general, the women replied they had fears about personal injury from accidents, acts by others against them, or from wildlife. They also had some concerns about getting lost and coming in contact with poison ivy. Some expressed concerns about their physical abilities, learning the outdoor skills properly, and performing successfully in the field. They did not want others, especially men, to make fun of them (e.g., their lack of skill, getting sweaty, having no make-up on, and not being athletic enough). For others, potential group dynamics was an issue, as well as the possible curtailment of state and federal funding supporting outdoor recreation opportunities (Table 7).

The highest level of education among BOW participants was a doctoral degree (5.9%). Education level attained ranged from a high school diploma/G.E.D. (1.5%) to recipients of the doctorate. The most frequent (mode) education level reported was “some college” (27.9%) and the median was a “college degree” (26.5%). About twenty-two percent (22.15%) had a Master’s degree and another 13.2% had some graduate school coursework. A small number (2.9%) had attended vocational/technical school.

Most of the Illinois DNR Becoming An Outdoors-Woman® (BOW) Program attendees, not surprisingly, reported their home residence to be Illinois (88.9%). One person was from North Dakota (1.4%) and someone else indicated “other” (1.4%) as her home residence.

The majority (72.7%) of workshop participants indicated that they lived in a single-family house. The median and mode housing type was also a single-family house. Housing among attendees ranged from single-family homes to house trailers. About twelve percent (12.1%) lived in apartments, 6.1% in condominiums, 4.5% in townhouses, 3% in duplexes, and 1.5% in house trailers.

The mean total household income (for 2001) for Illinois BOW participants was $65,536.35, with a median of $60,000, and a mode of $50,000. The total household income (2001) ranged from $16,000 to $200,000 among BOW participants. The majority (43.7%) had a total household income in the middle-income bracket between $46,000 and $75,999. About a third (30.7%) had a total household income in the $16,000 to $45,999 lower middle-income bracket. About twelve percent (12.6%) had a total household income in the upper middle-income bracket. Another 14.4% were in the upper income bracket between $106,000 to $200,000.

5.0 Conclusions and Implications

Overall, from other miscellaneous comments made, many participants thought the BOW Program was “totally cool!” The women thought this was a “wonderful program.” They urged Illinois DNR staff to “please tell the [IL] legislature that we need to keep funding this [BOW Program].” In the Illinois program, the BOW staff has teamed up with national sporting goods manufacturers to sponsor scholarships for the women’s program. Additionally, numerous sporting equipment companies and instructors donate various outdoor recreation items for the auction and silent auctions that are used to raise funds for the program. The program is working effectively to expose a new population to the wonders, enjoyment, and personal enrichment to be found in our rich outdoor heritage. Outdoor recreation resource managers would do well to inspect or use this model program as a means to diversify use and access to our public outdoor resources.

The BOW Program has experienced a wellspring of interest, growth, and support over the past decade and it has reached a previously under-tapped segment of our population with regard to educating people for outdoor pursuits.

In the past, as children, adolescents, or young adults, many women may not have had the same opportunities, access, skill development, or encouragement to participate in outdoor recreation, as male do from role models (Yoesting & Burkhead 1973; Freysinger 1990, p. 49). Today, programs like BOW are helping to change that by opening up a wider venue of leisure possibilities for woman. Knowing what motivates and satisfies this user segment and the benefits they reap from outdoor participation is important to state DNR/DEC offices, BOW Program coordinators, environmental educators, community recreation providers, and outdoor resource managers as our user base is becoming increasingly more diversified. This program is now well established and we have only begun to pose questions to help us to learn more about this clientele.
Table 7.—Fears Concerning Participation In Outdoor Recreation

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fears Concerning Participation In Outdoor Recreation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I like to feel personally safe (i.e., not get assaulted), and I have a fear of heights</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Bugs, creatures, dangers of bites of critters, falling</td>
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<td>• Predators: human and wildlife</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Accidental injuries and those in commission of a crime against me</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Getting injured; Injury; Hurting myself</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Getting lost</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Safety in some classes; safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Poison ivy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Being “good” or learning it “right”</td>
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<tr>
<td>• That I’ll screw up</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of knowledge or skill</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Not knowing “enough” [about the outdoors]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Loss of state and federal funds to support programs</td>
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<td>Physical ability/competition</td>
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<tr>
<td>• I’m strong enough to not do something I don’t want to do</td>
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<td>• Men making fun of me; lacking skills; looking “fat”, sweaty, no make-up, etc.; not being athletic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group dynamics issues (unless I’m solo)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Too many unknowns</td>
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<tr>
<td>None, No fears</td>
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</table>

Fears concerning participation in “women’s only” outdoor recreation again included concerns about personal safety, physical ability, inexperience in outdoor endeavors, and cutbacks in government funding of outdoor programs. Some unique fears associated with “women’s only” programs were having women in the group who were pre-occupied with their appearance (i.e., hair and make-up) or who were “anti-men.” Others indicated a concern about being able to fit in with the group and its dynamics. Someone mentioned having no fears so long as they were prepared for an endeavor.

A socio-demographic profile of this Becoming An Outdoors-Woman® (BOW) group of participants follows. All the BOW Program participants were females. There were, however, several male instructors for the weekend workshop courses.

The mean and median age of BOW participants was about 44 years old, with attendees ranging in age from 20 to 76 years. Almost half (46.9%) of the program participants were between 41 to 50 years old, with 41 years being the most frequent (mode) age of attendees. A little over a third (38.5%) were between the ages of 20 and 40 years old. Almost one-fifth (18%) of the group was 51 to 60 years old.

With regard to marital status, the majority of the BOW participants were married (40.9%), a little over one-fifth (22.7%) were single, and another fifth (19.7%) were divorced. Additionally, 10.6% had domestic partners and 6.1% were separated.

The BOW workshop participants had an average of .74 dependents under the age of 21, with a range of zero to three of these dependents. The majority of attendees (59.6%) had no dependents less than 21 years old. Almost one-third (31.9%) indicated they had one or two dependents younger than 21 years of age.

The BOW workshop attendees had an average of .56 dependents over the age of 21, with a range of zero to three of these dependents. The majority of participants (70.7%) had no dependents over 21 years old. A little over one-fifth (22%) had one or two dependents over 21 years of age. In both cases regarding the age of dependents, the majority of BOW participants reported having no dependents. Certainly, having dependents seems to make it more difficult for women to make arrangements to cover their family responsibilities or to take the time to get away for some leisure of their own.

With respect to ethnicity, 96.9% of the BOW participants were Caucasian and 3.1% were Asian. These statistics indicating the under-representation of minority ethnicities are consistent with data on U.S. outdoor recreation participation in general, for both males and females (Ewert 1989, p. 2).

In terms of occupational field, the largest cluster of BOW participants was associated with the education field (16.8%). Seven percent (7%) were in a business related field. BOW workshop attendees otherwise represented a wide array of career fields.
6.0 Citations


