

Criterion 6. Maintenance and Enhancement of Long-Term Multiple Socioeconomic Benefits To Meet the Needs of Societies

National Report on Sustainable Forests—2010

Indicator 6.42.

Number, Type, and Geographic Distribution of Visits Attributed to Recreation and Tourism and Related to Facilities Available

What is the indicator and why is it important?

Indicator 6.42 provides a measure of recreation and tourism use of forests. These activities are increasingly important as a source of forest-based employment and income. Engaging in outdoor recreation and tourism in forests tends to build support among participants for protecting and managing those forests, indirectly building support for sustainable forests. This indicator focuses on forest recreation visits, facilities, and capacities.

What does the indicator show?

Number of recreation visits to forests for selected recreation activities

The top 10 forest recreation activities, in terms of numbers of visits, are walking for pleasure; viewing and photographing

natural scenery; viewing and photographing flowers, trees and other forest vegetation; viewing and photographing birds; viewing and photographing wildlife; day hiking; visiting wild areas; off-highway driving; family gatherings; and visiting nature centers (table 42-1). The numbers of annual forest recreation activity days for these 10 activities (roughly equivalent to visits) range from a high of almost 7.5 billion (walking for pleasure) to just more than 680 million (visit nature centers, and so on). Snowmobiling, mountain climbing, cross country skiing, rock climbing, and snowshoeing account for a much smaller number of recreation activity days, but still they add up to a sizeable number of visits (ranging between about 20 to more than 62 million). Obviously, Americans are strongly interested in viewing and photographing forest natural life.

Table 42-1. Millions of annual forest recreation activity days by activity and estimated percentages on public forest lands and in urban forests, 2007–2008.

Forest Recreation Activity	Number of Activity Days (millions)	Public Forest (percent)	Urban Forests (percent)
Walking for pleasure	7,493.3	53.8	44.5
Viewing and photographing natural scenery	6,170.6	61.9	31.8
Viewing and photographing wildflowers, trees, and so on	4,858.9	55.4	36.3
Viewing and photographing birds	3,738.3	51.3	37.6
Viewing and photographing other wildlife	3,086.8	57.7	32.2
Day hiking	1,234.8	76.2	34.0
Visiting a wilderness or primitive area	947.6	76.4	24.6
Off-highway driving	837.5	50.4	23.2
Family gathering	805.3	55.9	43.5
Visiting nature centers, and so on	683.8	77.6	45.2
Gather mushrooms, berries, and so on	623.4	47.9	32.3
Mountain biking	463.3	60.2	32.1
Picnicking	455.9	68.4	44.4
Developed camping	356.0	72.8	21.3
Big game hunting	279.8	45.7	16.5
Primitive camping	211.4	75.8	21.4
Backpacking	198.8	78.5	22.1
Visiting historic sites	182.8	60.0	39.1
Horseback riding on trails	177.5	50.8	34.4
Small game hunting	161.5	46.8	17.4
Visiting prehistoric/archeological sites	138.9	70.0	41.6
Snowmobiling	62.1	55.1	27.4
Mountain climbing	57.1	78.6	20.5
Cross country skiing	41.9	60.5	33.7
Rock climbing	34.1	68.8	26.9
Snowshoeing	19.9	60.2	27.6

Source: National Survey on Recreation and the Environment, 2005–2008 (historical data specific to forest-based recreation were not available, thus, the trend in figure 42.3 below is for all outdoor recreation)

Over all activities listed in table 42-1, the percentage of forest-based activity days that occurs on *public lands* ranges from under 50 percent (for example, small-game hunting and gathering mushrooms and berries) to more than 75 percent (for example, visiting wilderness, day hiking, visiting nature centers, and backpacking). Over all activities, the percentage of forest-based recreation activity days that occur in *urban forests* ranges between roughly 15 to 45 percent. Activities with the lowest percentages in urban forests are hunting, camping, and backpacking. Activities with the highest percentages in urban forests include walking, picnicking, family gatherings, and visiting nature centers. Public lands and urban forests clearly play significant roles in providing opportunities for outdoor recreation.

Number and capacity of recreation facilities in forests for selected types of recreation activities

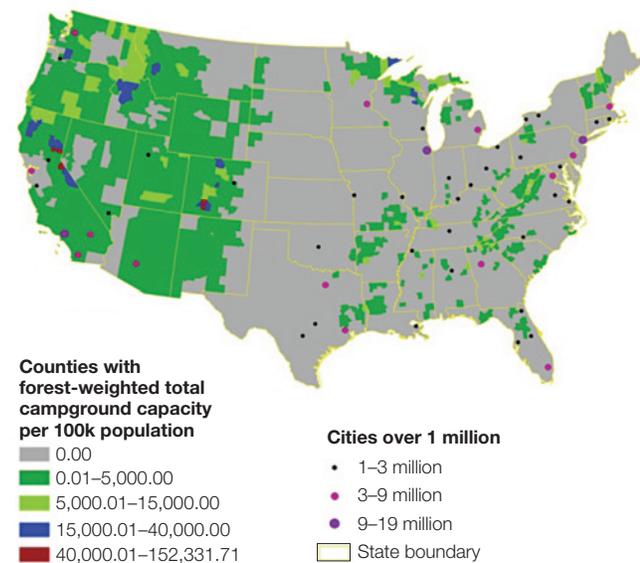
Across the United States, more than 6,000 Federal campgrounds exist; most are in the West, especially in the Rocky Mountains/ Great Plains and Pacific Coast, where Federal lands are abundant. Private sector businesses in the United States analyzed for this indicator include recreational vehicle parks and campgrounds, snow skiing areas, marinas, historic sites, nature parks and similar sites, and sightseeing and related tourism transportation services.

In 2005, an estimated 1,586 privately operated forest-based RV parks and campgrounds existed. More than 180 forest-based, privately run, snow skiing facilities existed in 2005, mainly

downhill ski slopes. Most of these skiing facilities were in the North Region. Privately operated historic sites in forested areas were estimated at about 330, almost all of which, 89 percent, are in the East. Estimated number of private, forest-based nature parks and similar sites in the United States was about 200 nationally, of which about 77 percent are in the East, mostly in the Northeast portion of this region. Nearly 160 private forest-based scenic and sightseeing transportation businesses existed, mostly in the East.

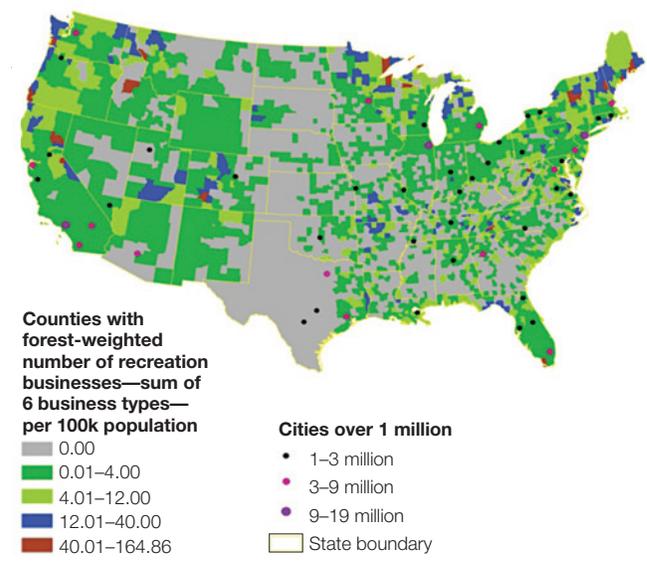
Figure 42-1 shows the county-level distribution of Federal forest campground capacity relative to county population and the location of major cities. The greatest amount of Federal forest campground capacity is in the southern Appalachian Mountains, the Ozarks, the Great Lakes area, the southern Rocky Mountains, California, and the Pacific Northwest. Figure 42-2 shows the distribution of private sector capacities summed across a variety of forest-based recreation and tourism businesses. The greatest concentrations of forest-based recreation and tourism businesses are in the New England States, the Great Lakes area, the Pacific Northwest, California, and the southern Rocky Mountain Region. Private facilities, sites, and services are also scattered throughout the Southeast. Many of these businesses are located near Federal and State public lands. Significant amounts of the private forest recreation capacity mapped here lies within a 2-hour drive of U.S. population centers of 1,000,000 or more (shown as red dots and scaled by size).

Figure 42-1. Location of forest-based Federal campground capacity per 100,000 people.



Sources: The primary source is the U.S. Census Bureau, County Business Patterns, 2001 and 2005

Figure 42-2. Location of cities and forest-based recreation businesses (5 types) per 100,000 people.



Sources: USDA Forest Service and U.S. Census Bureau

What has changed since 2003?

Overall, between 2000 and 2007, the trend has been increased participation in outdoor recreation overall. As reported in *Forest History Today* (Cordell, 2008), the total number of people who participated in one or more outdoor activities grew by 4.4 percent between 2000 and 2007 (fig. 42-3). At the same time, the number of recreation activity days, summed across all activities, increased by approximately 25 percent. (Trend data for forest recreation only were not available.) The number and capacity of public and private forest-based recreation sites have remained about constant or increased slightly.

Figure 42-3. Growth in number of people and number of recreation activity days in 60 outdoor recreation activities in the United States, 2000–2007 (reproduced from Cordell 2008).

