

Appendix E

National Survey Estimate Historical Highlights and Structure

Historical Highlights and Structure

There have been changes in structure and responsibilities since the original survey but the focus and intent have remained the same. Personal interviews of recreation participants were held during each of the four seasons for the first survey. The newly created Bureau of Outdoor Recreation (BOR) was assigned responsibility for the survey in 1965, and conducted personal interviews only during the autumn period for that update. The BOR also conducted the 1970 survey by a mailed supplement with the National Fishing and Hunting questionnaire. The BOR was reorganized and became the Heritage, Conservation and Recreation Service (HCRS). The HCRS conducted a telephone survey in 1977. Shortly thereafter, HCRS was abolished and their assigned duties were demoted to program status. The National Park Service (NPS) assumed these program responsibilities. The NPS created a national outdoor recreation partnership that included itself, the USDA Forest Service, the USDI Bureau of Land Management, and the Department of Health and Human Services Administration on Aging. This partnership did not conduct a mid-decade survey according to the intended schedule.

Primary responsibility for the national survey shifted again from the NPS to the USDA Forest Service in the 1980's. With this shift, the survey was expanded to the current NSRE by adding questions involving natural resources and the environment. H. Ken Cordell of the USDA Forest Service Southern Experiment Station has been a prominent leader of this effort since that transfer took place.

Sponsorship of the National Survey of Recreation and the Environment has also expanded with recent updates. The 1994/95 survey sponsors included the Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association, University of Georgia, and Georgia Southern University along with the typical federal land management agencies. This 1994/95 survey included the largest combined sample size of more than 17,000 interviews of Americans over age 15. The first telephone survey (S1) reached 12,214 people, who were asked questions about,

- 1) Participation in activities & number of days and trips spent in recreation activities.
- 2) The characteristics of recreation trips.
- 3) Barriers and constraints to outdoor recreation.
- 4) Alternative strategies for charging user fees for recreation.

The second survey (S2) interviewed 5,002 people who responded to questions about participation in specific outdoor recreation activities as well as,

- 1) Favorite activities & barriers and constraints to participation.
- 2) Wilderness issues.
- 3) Wildlife issues.
- 4) Awareness about public land management agencies.
- 5) Fresh-water based trips.

Proportionate sample sizes were taken from each of eight regions in the U.S. for the first survey of 12,000+ people. The densely populated Northeast and South were slightly under represented in this survey. On the other hand, survey two was based on population distribution so almost 47% of the sample was in the Northeast and more than 30% in the South. The split structure of the survey was most likely developed due to the need for additional information about wild land issues, boating, and popular perception of public land management agencies. When combining these two survey groups it is important to make sure the information is represented proportionately. That is, to determine the weight of the questions in each survey set. For instance, the first issue addressed in S2 parallels three of the issues covered in S1. Additionally, the new issues presented in S2 were compiled from a sample size of about 5,000 in which the Northeast and South were highly represented, and were not representative of the total sample population of 17,000.

In this particular survey questions were asked concerning participation in 68 specific activities. For the purpose of analysis and interpretation, it was practical to group these extensive activities under activity headings. Several different publications offer groupings that differ slightly from one another. For the purposes of this review it is perhaps most practical to use groupings defined by the Forest Service. It seems that these groups, as compared to groupings of other sources of research, combine activities in a way that is useful for managing Outdoor Recreation on National Forest lands.

National results from the 2000 NSRE have also been included here. The numbers come from a portion of the survey that reached more than 37,000 people in the U.S. using similar methodology as previous surveys; NSRE 2000 is still in progress. This data has not been broken down into regions or extensively presented and discussed in published literature as the 94/95 data has. For this reason, reference will be made to the 94/95 data for discussion purposes.

Supplemental Survey

The second major source of outdoor recreation data comes from Roper/Starch surveys. The data has been collected annually since 1994 to be presented at The Recreation Roundtable. This Roundtable is a cooperative partnership between federal land managing agencies and corporations in the recreation and tourism industries.

It was created to promote cooperation between the public and private sectors of natural resource management and add emphasis on visitor services.

Its primary purpose is to exchange career development techniques based on this data, as well as, the different procedures, practices, and insights developing in each agency of both sectors. Roper Starch Worldwide Research Group conducts the annual survey. The survey sample size has been about 2,000 every year except 1998 when it was close to 4,000. Personal interviews are conducted in the respondents' homes. Although the sample size of 2,000 people is relatively small compared to the size of the NSRE, the sample is chosen from 100 counties throughout the U.S. in accordance with probabilities proportionate to the population. These counties in 48 contiguous states and the District of Columbia are ordered by population size within 18 strata, constructed by classifying counties as metropolitan or non-metropolitan with each of the 9 Census Geographic Regions. The fact that these were in-person interviews is an advantage and eliminates the biases involved in sampling by telephone. Another advantage of this on going study is that the methodology has remained relatively unchanged which contributes to reliability in comparison of data from year to year. In 1995, a Recreation Quality Index (RQI) was created using this data to track the state of outdoor recreation in America from year to year. The RQI can also be useful when applied to specific groups within the population. For instance, the RQI for high-income participants verses average/low income groups. The important measurements for RQI include values on opportunity for outdoor recreation, actual participation in activities, and satisfaction with the experience.

Thirty-five individual outdoor recreation activities were included in this study ranging from general to specific. These activities can also be grouped for analysis and to determine trends or patterns. A comparative analysis of the two data sets and their integration has not been completed. However, both sets of data have been analyzed in recreation

trends nationally as well as regionally. Obvious differences appear in regional trends due to topographic and climate variations, amount of land, opportunities available, and scope of outdoor recreation activities included in the survey.

In each study of outdoor recreation trends, the random sample of individuals was at least 16 years of age. Different approaches were used in surveying. For instance, some individuals were asked to respond to questions that would place them in a group defined by numerous activities while others placed themselves in each activity individually. Although this may seem to bias a sample through convenience sampling, the activities within a group are so closely related that the technique should be appropriate.

This approach may also derive from a measurable national trend that suggests participants are taking part in more than one activity, often referred to as “cross-recreators”.

Roper/Starch’s on-going data supports the conclusion that Americans have been moving from participating frequently in few activities to spreading their time over a greater number of activities. One important assurance of accurate data is the similarities that appear across the board as reported in *Outdoor Recreation in America*.