

Recreational Use Conflicts: Developing a Basis for Public Policy

A component of the 2005-2010 Wisconsin
Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Planning process

Introduction

Supplying outdoor recreation is taking on an increasing sense of urgency as open and publicly accessible lands experience increased demand pressures (Gunn 1994; Hall 2000). As rural landscapes become fragmented by private residential and commercial developments, the extent and quality of accessible public recreation lands becomes increasingly scarce. This is exacerbated by fairly dramatic change in patterns of recreational use. With technological progress and increases in disposable incomes, the last twenty years have witnessed a dramatic increase in alternative recreational uses of land including All-Terrain-Vehicles and jet-skis. With this alternative set of recreational activities come increased levels of crowding, displacement, and antagonism.

Recreation activities interact with different degrees of compatibility resulting in various levels of recreational use conflict. One logical approach to managing for recreational compatibility involves maximizing those uses thought to be complementary and supplementary while segregating those uses that are competitive and antagonistic (Clawson 1974; Marcouiller and Clendenning 2005; vanKooten 1992). Although the compatibility of alternative recreation types are conceptually distinct, there is scant empirical evidence upon which to base management decisions through recreation planning.

The Wisconsin State Park System has been actively addressing recreational use conflicts in site level master planning activities that act to develop sites to minimize antagonistic recreational uses. This is accomplished through both physical planning and regulation of existing uses. Fundamental aspects of recreation conflict involve goal conflict resulting from general dissatisfaction with the behavior of other recreationists. Factors that affect recreation conflict vary widely (e.g. experience level, characteristics of those encountered, asymmetric antipathy, location, level of specialization, individual levels of tolerance, and situational group norms) and provide a set of opportunities within which to focus pro-active planning and public policy.

Justification for Research

Within recreation planning, there is a strong need to base site-level and regional decision-making on sound conceptual models that represent both

individual motivations (including recreational goals) and the interactions between recreational users (compatibility between uses). Models to address recreation use conflict have not been neither fully developed nor applied within a Wisconsin context. This provides the basis for work to be undertaken as a result of this project proposal.

Specifically, this proposed project will extend the discussion initiated as a result of the 2004 Governor's Conference on Forestry. Specifically, we intend to continue development of a stakeholder dialogue within the issue theme of "Minimizing Recreational Use Conflict" and develop conceptual approaches for recreation planning that account for a multi-faceted set of alternative recreation phenomenon. Specifically, these aspects include alternative (1) types of recreation conflict, (2) levels of compatibility, (3) factors that affect recreation conflict, (4) forms of management approach, and (5) forms of appropriate dispute resolution techniques.

The specific problems to be addressed involve recreation policy that allows for more informed decisions to be made at both the site-level and in regional recreational planning exercises. The intent is to develop policy-relevant models for addressing recreation use conflict in Wisconsin.

Deliverables

Interim and final reports will outline the problem addressed and specific research objectives, relevant literature, and content methods used to compile, analyze, and develop specific models to address outdoor recreation use conflict and appropriate policy implications. Research reports and summaries generated from applied research will be offered for publication in both peer-reviewed and outreach educational venues.

Data sources for this work will include the Governor's Conference on Forestry - recreation conflict session, recreation provider's perspectives on current conflicts, and existing reports/literature on Wisconsin issues.

1. Wisconsin matrix of compatible/non compatible recreation uses for this state (will need to define how many uses)
2. Crowding overview - norms and satisfaction levels of Wisconsin users (from latest Wisconsin NSRE survey work)
3. Wisconsin recreational conflict model (adopted from national work)
4. Current state of Wisconsin recreation conflicts (media, limited interviews with WDNR field staff)
5. Recommendations / discussion at managing Wisconsin recreation conflicts (adopted from national work)

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