

Resource-based Recreation Studies

Resource-based recreation and tourism management is an area of particular specialization for the firm within the arena of natural resource management.

We have conducted studies for a diverse clientele across the nation on topics such as visitor use and experience, economic impact analysis of the tourism industry, and recreational facilities assessment. These endeavors have incorporated diverse themes such as ecosystem management, the human dimensions of resource use, and economic and fiscal modeling. We have also carried out a multitude of park and recreational facilities market and feasibility analyses.

Typical components of resource-based recreation projects are stakeholder interviews, visitor and user surveys, and quantitative and qualitative data analysis, including ethnographic techniques. Resource Dimensions has performed dozens of such studies and related analyses over the past several decades.

Selected Projects

Socioeconomic Analysis and Recreational Facilities Assessment. *Douglas County, Washington.* Active and passive regional recreation facilities throughout Douglas County are provided by a mix of federal, state and local agencies. In coordination with several regional land use and transportation projects, Resource Dimensions conducted community sociodemographic assessments and socioeconomic analyses to evaluate available recreation opportunities and determine the potential for new resources. Active regional recreational facilities provided by these agencies are typically associated with the Columbia River and its surrounding natural resource amenities. Our evaluation included day use and camping facilities, and passive regional recreational activities as hiking, hunting, fishing, nature watching and photography.



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Economic Impact and Contributions of Forest-associated Recreation. *Forestry Commission, United Kingdom.* This project assessed the economic value and regional economic impacts of different recreation activities (e.g. bicycling, horseback riding, nature watching, general visitors, etc.) in protected forests in the United Kingdom. Direct economic impact assessments were conducted for market activities, in addition to non-market valuation for public use of forest lands. The study also assessed other non-market values that users attach to their visits (e.g. aesthetic, service preferences, health, and ecosystem services). Resource Dimensions developed appropriate non-market valuation tools, conducted non-market valuation workshops, presented information and choice experiments in small group workshops, organized and facilitated focus groups to identify relevant information and criteria for design of the choice experiment model, and performed resulting data analysis. Assessment of local economic impacts of forest recreation was achieved using multiplier analysis, and three alternative valuation methods were used to examine the economic benefits associated with forest recreation. A travel cost model was used to examine per-visit values for various groups of visitors and users, while contingent analysis and choice experiments were used to estimate changes in visitor welfare associated with improvements to recreational facilities in forests.

Attitudes and Changes in Attitudes about Visitor Management at the Green Lakes/South Sister Area of the Three Sisters Wilderness. *USDA Forest Service.* For the Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute, Resource Dimensions investigated the influences of participatory public involvement processes on individuals' judgments about the management of a highly used wilderness area. Stakeholder involvement meetings were conducted in four communities within a two-hour drive of the Three Sisters Wilderness. Meetings were designed to provide participants with technical information (i.e., wilderness policy, demographic trends and recent visitor study data), and then guide them through value-focused, tradeoff deliberations. Attitudes about the management of the area were tested with a repeated measure questionnaire that assessed pre-meeting judgments, post-treatment judgments and post-deliberation judgments. Results indicated that attitude change is idiosyncratic, and that participants, even those highly vested in wilderness management, make more informed and well-considered judgments.

Niobrara National Scenic River Visitor Study. *National Park Service.* Resource Dimensions conducted qualitative content analysis on the motives, perceptions and natural resource values of visitors for use in development of a General Management Plan. A total of 923 visitors in 422 groups were contacted and interviewed on-site. Indicators of recreational experience quality were examined and perceptions of crowding identified. Comparative analysis on values that visitors assign to the Fort Niobrara Wilderness Area and values they assign to the rest of the National Scenic River was conducted using a questionnaire.

Examining Winter Visitor Use in Yellowstone National Park. *National Park Service.* Winter recreation use in Yellowstone National Park (YNP) was examined to assist Park managers in their decision making about winter visitation. Resource Dimensions undertook a holistic approach to investigating the social impacts of winter recreation and snowmobile use in YNP to evaluate winter visitor characteristics, motivations, satisfaction, and support for a range of management actions, as well as to evaluate visitor travel dynamics. Resource Dimensions developed an interview guide, conducted interviews and performed qualitative content analysis to examine meanings ascribed to recreational activities, experiences, and setting characteristics and identify factors shaping visitors' attitudes toward management decisions. Data were collected in mail-back questionnaires, on-site surveys, and hourly oversnow vehicle counts. This project was also instrumental in guiding development of the winter use plans for Grand Teton National Park and the John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway.



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