

## CHAPTER 3

## Places and Trips for Outdoor Recreation

Two of the cooperating agencies in the NRS consortium—the Forest Service and the National Park Service—each sponsored a series of questions about the locales where outdoor recreation takes place. The Forest Service required trip and destination data for particular activities to use in a planning model. The National Park Service needed information about the availability and use of outdoor recreation environments in relation to where people live.

### PLACES FOR RECREATION

According to standards published by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) in 1983, a variety of settings are needed to serve the recreation needs of the people in a community.<sup>1</sup> Each type of setting provides different experiences and opportunities to engage in various activities. NRPA recommends provision of “local, close-to-home spaces” and defines these areas as easily accessible by neighborhood residents. These areas typically consist of intensely developed recreation facilities, natural environments, or a combination of both. Facilities on these nearby parks may range from ballfields to picnic areas to specialized equipment for limited populations such as tot lots or senior citizens parks.

In addition, NRPA also recommends the availability of regional parklands. These regional recreation spaces typically serve several communities within 1 hour’s drive and are contiguous to or encompass natural environment areas. These areas provide the environment for nature-oriented activities and outdoor recreation dependent on a natural setting, such as boating or hiking. Although not addressed in the NRPA standards manual, other recreation spaces include

<sup>1</sup>Lancaster, Roger A. (ed.). 1983. *Recreation, park and open space standards and guidelines*. National Recreation and Park Association, Alexandria, VA.

yards or areas located at residences and destination parks located more than 1 hour’s travel time from a person’s home. The 1982-83 NRS asked the respondents about all four types of recreation spaces—the areas’ importance, availability, and personal use during the 12 months prior to the interview. These measures provide an indication of how the recreation estate is distributed, at least as measured through the perceptions of the American public.

The 1977 Nationwide Recreation Survey also asked respondents about the importance, availability, and use of these different outdoor settings. The 1982-83 NRS repeated these questions. Because of methodological differences in the conduct of the two surveys, a strict comparison of the data resulting from these two collection efforts is not recommended.

Table 13 shows that most (67 percent) of the respondents said having a yard or play area to use for outdoor recreation was very important. The percentage saying a recrea-

tion area was important decreased as the distance from home increased. However, over half the sample claimed that the existence of parks or outdoor places at each of the four distances was important.

A large majority (81 percent) of the respondents had a yard or play area at their residence available for outdoor recreation. Table 14 indicates that people less likely to have a yard included those living in the central city of a SMSA, living in residences with multiple-housing units, in a smaller household, non-White, or with lower incomes. Fewer people (63 percent) said they had parks or outdoor recreation areas available within a 15-minute walk. People living in the central city of an SMSA and in multiunit residences had more nearby parks available, somewhat compensating for the lower likelihood of having a yard located at their residence. People who had a yard or nearby park available for their use were more likely to say these areas were important.

**Table 13. Importance of Recreation Areas at Various Distances From Home**

(Percentage of respondents assigning levels of importance)

Area	Very important	Somewhat important	Not very important
Yard or play area at residence . . . . .	67	19	14
Neighborhood park and recreation areas (within a 15-minute walk from home) . . . . .	39	32	30
Regional park and recreation areas (between 15-minute walk and 1 hour’s travel time from home) . . . . .	34	36	29
Destination park and recreation areas (more than 1 hour’s travel time) . . . . .	25	27	48

**Table 14. Availability of Yards and Nearby Recreation Areas**

(Percentage of respondents, by selected demographic characteristics, who said they had yards or neighborhood recreation areas available)

Characteristic	Yard	Neighborhood area	Characteristic	Yard	Neighborhood area
Total sample	81	63	Number of persons in household		
			1	65	63
			2	78	62
Number of housing units in residence			3	85	66
1	90	62	4	88	63
2	74	81	5 or more	85	63
3	50	88	Race		
4	44	72	White	83	63
5 to 9	52	67	Black and other	70	65
Over 10	47	71	Annual family income (dollars)		
Mobile home	73	34	Less than 6,000	67	58
			6,000 to 9,999	72	59
Place of residence			10,000 to 14,999	79	61
SMSA, <sup>1</sup> central city	69	81	15,000 to 24,999	86	65
SMSA, not central city	85	64	25,000 to 49,999	88	66
Not SMSA	87	48	50,000 and over	89	74

<sup>1</sup>Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area.

The use of parks or outdoor areas was inversely related with distance—the closer the area to a person's residence, the greater number of days it was used. However, as table 15 shows, a majority of the respondents used outdoor recreation areas at each distance at least once during the year. Those people who did not indicate they had a yard or nearby park available were not questioned about their use of these two areas.

**TRIPS AND OUTINGS FOR RECREATION**

Only about a third of the respondents (32 percent) to the 1982-83 NRS answered

the questions about trips and outings. The subsample included persons aged 16 years or older who had made an outing or trip during the 12 months prior to the survey interview "primarily" to engage in at least one of the following activities: canoeing or kayaking, freshwater fishing other than trout or salmon, hunting other than big game, backpacking or hiking, camping in campgrounds, any other camping not in campgrounds, driving motorized vehicles off improved roads (including motorcycles), cross country skiing or ski touring, and snowmobiling. Information was collected only about trips and outings taken for the primary purpose of engaging in the specific recreation activity. The Forest Service, as

sponsor of this series of questions, wanted to apply the travel and cost information to each specific activity, therefore they excluded multiple-purpose trips. The activities were, moreover, selected with a view to the data requirements of the assessment process mandated by the Forest and Range Lands Renewable Resources Planning Act. Hence the data analyzed here reflect only a limited sample of the total recreation travel engaged in during a 12-month period by a subsample of the NRS respondents. The activity definitions also reflect Forest Service analytical requirements. They frequently differ from those used in the rest of the survey (e.g., "non-big-game hunting"). The results should be interpreted with these limitations in mind.

**Table 15. Utilization of Outdoor Recreation Opportunities**

(Percentage of respondents using outdoor recreation areas at various distances from home)

Area	Days area used in prior 12 months			
	Never	1 to 2	3 to 10	More than 10
Yard or play area at residence <sup>1</sup>	18	7	13	62
Neighborhood parks and recreation areas (within 15-minute walk and 1 hr. travel time) <sup>1</sup>	34	14	22	30
Regional parks and recreation areas (between a 15-min. walk and 1 hr. travel time)	36	18	25	21
Destination parks and recreation areas (more than 1 hr. travel time)	46	22	21	11

<sup>1</sup>Only respondents who indicated they had a yard or play area at their residence or a neighborhood park available were questioned about their use of these two areas.

Table 16 shows the percentage of respondents who reported information about outings or trips. The table also displays the percentage of the participants (respondents who said they did one of the nine selected activities in the past year) who took a trip primarily for that activity. A higher percentage (16 percent) traveled to go freshwater fishing than to engage in any of the other selected activities. As shown, of all the people who engaged in at least one of the nine selected activities, 70 percent took a trip or outing to pursue that activity. Participants were more likely to travel to engage in camping in campgrounds or hunting other-than-big-game animals. They were less likely to take trips to go snowmobiling or to go driving off improved roads.

Table 17 illustrates the number and percentage of trips or outings by activity and length of the outing. Figures in this table were left unweighted in order to show the numbers of trips or outings. Overnight trips accounted for half of the trips taken in these

activities. More trips or outings were taken to engage in fishing and campground camping than in any of the other activities.

For the remainder of the tables, information about other camping, cross country skiing, and snowmobiling has been eliminated because of small subsample size.

Respondents were asked about their most recent trip taken for each activity. To aid the respondent in recalling the trip, the interviewer asked the name of the main place where the activity was pursued. This information was recorded only to assist the interviewer in the conduct of the survey. Therefore, references to place refer to a specific area identified by the respondent.

Information about transportation mode, size of travel party, length of stay, distance and time traveled, and fees or charges paid were collected about each activity trip.

Table 18 aggregates the information about each activity trip. Multiple trips per year were taken to go driving off improved roads, freshwater fishing, or non-big-game hunting. People took shorter trips, in terms of time and distance, to drive off-road vehicles or to go freshwater fishing. More distance was traveled to go backpacking or hiking, but people traveled a longer period of time to go camping in campgrounds. Cars, trucks, or vans transported the majority of the recreation travelers. Pick-up campers,

camper-vans, and motor homes represented the second most popular mode of travel for not only camping but canoeing/kayaking, fishing, and hunting as well. Nearly 30 percent of the travelers driving off-road vehicles drove mopeds or motorcycles for travel to the recreation site as well.

The majority (80 percent) of travelers went to one destination to pursue the activity. A greater percentage of people traveling to backpack/hike or camp in campgrounds visited other places to do the same activity. Most trips regardless of activity lasted 2 days. Campground campers tended to stay longer (4 days) and off-road drivers typically completed their outing in a day or less.

Travel for these activities tended to be a social event, with an average of four persons in the traveling party. Canoeing or kayaking trips appeared to be taken in larger groups, averaging seven persons. Less than a third of the travelers paid any entry fees, activity fees, rentals, or other charges to engage in the activity. However, the majority of canoeing/kayaking or campground camping trips required payment of some fees. People who traveled to hunt or to fish in freshwater paid the highest fees.

The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) is a system used by the Forest Service and other land-managing agencies to classify their land areas. The spectrum includes a range of settings from highly developed, more urban environments to wilderness areas with no evidence of human intrusion. According to the theory behind the ROS system, each setting results in a different experience for the recreationist, and land managers strive to provide a balance of these experiences. Therefore, the respondents were asked to provide further details about the environment in which they

**Table 16. Trips or Outings to Engage in Selected Outdoor Recreation Activities**

(Percent)

Activity	Respondents who took trip to engage in selected activity	Participants who took trip to engage in selected activity <sup>1</sup>
All activities <sup>2</sup> . . . . .	32	70
Canoeing/kayaking . . . . .	4	54
Freshwater fishing other than trout or salmon . . . . .	16	54
Hunting, other than big game . . . . .	7	63
Backpacking/hiking . . . . .	6	43
Campground camping . . . . .	13	68
Other camping . . . . .	2	52
Off-road driving . . . . .	4	39
Cross-country skiing . . . . .	2	57
Snowmobiling . . . . .	1	40

<sup>1</sup>Participants are those respondents who said they engaged in the activity once or more in the 12 months prior to the interview—whether or not on a trip or outing taken specifically for that purpose.

<sup>2</sup>Refers to activities listed on this table only.

**Table 17. Trips for Recreation, by Activity and Length of Trip**

Activity	Length of trip						All trips <sup>1</sup>	
	4 hours or less		5 to 24 hours		Over 24 hours			
	Number	Percent <sup>2</sup>	Number	Percent <sup>2</sup>	Number	Percent <sup>2</sup>	Number	Percent <sup>2</sup>
All trips or outings . . . . .	573	20	863	30	1455	50	2909	100
Canoeing/kayaking . . . . .	34	15	91	44	82	40	208	7
Freshwater fishing . . . . .	222	25	354	39	327	35	905	31
Hunting . . . . .	79	22	128	36	145	41	355	12
Backpacking/hiking . . . . .	103	32	92	29	125	39	320	11
Campground camping . . . . .	-	-	83	12	699	100	703	24
Other camping . . . . .	-	-	14	16	87	100	88	3
Off-road driving . . . . .	87	48	54	32	42	23	187	6
Cross-country skiing . . . . .	37	39	34	36	23	25	94	3
Snowmobiling . . . . .	11	22	13	27	25	51	49	2

- Not ascertained for certain activities.

<sup>1</sup>Totals do not add up across columns because of missing data about length of stay. The final column represents the total number of trips taken for these activities.

<sup>2</sup>Percent of all activity trips.

NOTE: Figures are unweighted.

**Table 18. Characteristics of Trips and Outings**

Characteristic	Trips or outings to engage in:						
	All trips or outings	Canoeing/kayaking	Freshwater fishing	Hunting, not big game	Backpacking/hiking	Campground camping	Off-road driving
Average number of trips or outings per participant . . . . .	6	3	9	9	5	4	12
Average distance of destination from residence (miles) . . . . .	148	151	105	104	244	208	103
Average one-way travel time (hours) <sup>1</sup> . . . . .	5	4	3	5	6	9	3
Transportation mode (percent)							
Automobile . . . . .	80	91	88	82	87	75	61
Other . . . . .	20	9	12	18	13	25	39
Travel to other destinations on same trip (percent yes) . . . . .	20	22	16	11	28	31	20
Average length of stay (days) <sup>2</sup> . . . . .	2	2	2	2	2	4	1
Average number of people in the traveling party <sup>3</sup> . . . . .	4	7	3	3	4	5	3
User fee:							
Percent . . . . .	32	59	28	16	17	70	8
Average dollars/person <sup>4</sup> . . . . .	22	17	20	42	5	13	10

<sup>1</sup>Rounded to the nearest hour. <sup>2</sup>Rounded to the nearest day. <sup>3</sup>Rounded to the nearest person.  
<sup>4</sup>Rounded to the nearest dollar. Zeroes (trips not subject to a user fee) not included in average.

**Table 19. Destination Characteristics of Trips and Outings**

Characteristic	Trips or outings to engage in:						
	All trips or outings	Canoeing/kayaking	Freshwater fishing	Hunting, not big game	Backpacking/hiking	Campground camping	Off-road driving
Nearness of outing/trip destination to cities or towns (percent)							
In city or town . . . . .	11	12	13	2	7	5	14
Just outside . . . . .	33	29	40	33	31	44	36
Away . . . . .	56	60	48	65	62	51	50
Place accessible by motor vehicle <sup>1</sup>							
Percent yes . . . . .	87	95	92	86	72	96	91
Usual distance of participant to roads or trails <sup>2</sup>							
Less than 1/2 mile . . . . .	50	56	73	48	25	74	26
1/2 to 3 miles . . . . .	34	34	21	40	44	23	49
Over 3 miles . . . . .	16	10	7	12	31	4	25
Number of people encountered <sup>1</sup>							
Less than 3 . . . . .	30	6	31	60	33	19	42
3 to 10 . . . . .	28	34	27	28	34	24	19
11 to 50 . . . . .	27	41	29	11	21	38	23
51 to 100 . . . . .	7	13	8	2	5	12	6
Over 100 . . . . .	9	5	5	0	6	8	10
Prominence of physical structures (dams, buildings, powerlines) <sup>1 3</sup>	2.4	2.4	2.7	2.2	1.9	2.5	2.1
Prominence of industry activity (farms, quarries, mines) <sup>1 3</sup> . . . . .	2.0	1.9	1.9	2.5	1.4	1.8	2.2

<sup>1</sup>Figures based only on outings or trips where the activity was pursued in a place away from cities or towns.

<sup>2</sup>Refers to roads or trails open to motor vehicle use. For outings or trips to drive off improved roads, the question was rephrased to refer to the distance from an improved road, rather than a trail or road open to motor vehicle use.

<sup>3</sup>Figures represent an average on a scale from 1 to 5. 1 = not noticeable; 5 = extremely noticeable and prominent.

recreated at their trip destination in order to place their experience in an ROS category. Table 19 describes the information obtained about these trips. As shown in the table, nearness of the place to an urban area, accessibility of the place to motor vehicles, number of people encountered while pursuing the activity, and prominence of human activity or presence represent measures which place the experience on a wilderness-to-urban spectrum.

A higher percentage of trips for backpacking or hiking took place in the wilder settings. More freshwater fishing trips and trips for camping in campgrounds took place at the opposite end of the spectrum, in strongly man-modified environments. However, the majority of trips or outings tended to depict wildland experiences.

The figures in tables 18 and 19 were based on a small number of cases. The reader is cautioned against using these data to generalize about trips for outdoor recreation.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>For further information and more detailed analyses about the use of the data in the travel cost model and ROS planning, contact the Southeastern Forest Experiment Station, USDA Forest Service, Athens, GA 30602.

## SUMMARY

Most respondents had access to both yards and neighborhood parks for close-to-home recreation. They used nearby recrea-

tion areas more frequently than those farther away, but most took at least one trip to an outdoor recreation destination more than an hour's travel from home during the 12 months prior to the interview.

Participants in certain activities were queried about the details of trips they took to engage in those pursuits. Most respondents in these activities took an average of six trips traveling about 150 miles to reach their destination. A large majority traveled by automobile, and stayed an average of 2 days. Four people usually made up the traveling party, and approximately \$20 per person were spent on user fees for the particular activity. Differences in these averages by activity illustrate the types of experiences generally encountered by outdoor recreationists.