

bers of people enjoying a growing number of different, and sometimes conflicting, activities on a finite base of land and water.

Outdoor Recreation Opportunities for Americans

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The United States is one of the leading countries in the world offering an abundance and wide variety of outdoor recreation opportunities for its citizens and for international visitors. In this paper, we briefly overview the current status of these opportunities across all levels of government and as provided by the private sector. Over the last several decades, parks and recreation for general public use have been widely accepted as governmental responsibilities and as entrepreneurial opportunities. The federal, state, local governments, and profit and non-profit private system that has evolved is now a largely complementary supply system that serves well the vastly varied recreation demands of the American public. Generally, the roles within this system are as follows:

- Federal government: Managers of vast acreages of forests, parks, water resources and specifically designated systems that offer extensive access to mostly remote natural areas and scenery. Development and services are largely there to facilitate access to federal areas.
- State government: Providers of state parks, some forest areas, information services, and assistance to local authorities. Parks and other recreation sites are closer to population centers than most federal lands and often feature high-service facilities and resorts.
- Local government: Close-to-home parks, facilities, and programs, especially outdoor sports opportunities and programs for various disadvantaged groups, such as youth-at-risk and seniors.
- Private sector: High-service outdoor facilities, programs, equipment, and theme sites for profit, as well as information and outfitter services to facilitate access to state, federal, and other private areas, and non-profit services and programs that emphasize specific social groups or types of resources. These four sectors are briefly described below and where possible, trends are presented.

Federal

The total acreage managed by the seven primary federal land management agencies stands at about 650 million acres. Acreages by designation are as follows:

National Forests—191.6 million

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- National Parks—83.2 million
- National Wildlife Refuges—90.4 million
- BLM Lands—267.6 million
- Army Corps of Engineers Projects—11.6 million
- TVA Projects—1.0 million
- Bureau of Reclamation Projects—6.5 million

The large majority (about 93 percent) of federal land and water is in the states west of the Mississippi River. Yet, about 3/4 of the U.S. population lives east of the Mississippi. Still, many of the western federal ownerships are very popular recreation destinations to people in all 50 states.

Specially designated federal systems of land and water areas include (1) National Parks and Wildlife Refuges (as reported above), (2) the National Wilderness Preservation system (nearly 104 million acres within National Forests, Parks, Wildlife Refuges, and within BLM lands), (3) National Recreation Areas (about 7 million acres within National Forests, Parks, and BLM lands), (4) National Trails (Historic (12), Scenic (8) and Recreation (821) Trails, some co-managed by state and local governments and the private sector), (5) National Wild and Scenic Rivers (almost 11,000 miles), (6) National Scenic Byways (on National Marine Sanctuaries (12 sanctuaries), and (7) the National Marine Sanctuaries (12 sanctuaries). In addition to properties, which include three specially designated sites, the federal government is also involved in outdoor recreation through the provision of limited financial and technical assistance to states and local governments, through partnerships to provide public recreation opportunities, and through research.

Trends in the federal system have been mixed since the mid-to-late 1980s. Most agencies have experienced stable to only slightly increasing funding for management and assistance (in inflation adjusted dollars); severe reductions in staff working in outdoor recreation, and modest gains in sites and facilities offered. Some of the gains are summarized below:

Type of Opportunity	Period	Trend
National Wilderness System	1987-'95	+13.9 million acres
National Recreation Areas	1987-'95	+682,000 acres
National Recreation Trails	1987-'95	+1,229 miles
National Wild and Scenic Rivers	1987-'96	+3,117 miles
Campgrounds	1977-'96	-12 percent

State
All states provide some form of outdoor recreation sites, facilities, and/or services, but their levels of involvement vary. The principal component of the state systems are State Parks, which are generally much closer to the population than federal lands. But states also manage recreation, natural, historical, environmental education, scientific, forest, and wildlife management areas (McLean forthcoming). The numbers and acreages of areas across all 50 states are summarized below:

Type	Areas	Acreages (000s)
State parks	1,851	7,826
Recreation areas	769	1,244
Natural areas	622	1,028
Historic areas	547	89
Scientific areas	89	11
Environmental education sites	51	99
State forests	274	770
Fish and wildlife management areas	469	410
Other types of areas	871	335
Totals	5,543	11,811

There are a total of 7.8 million acres of state parks across the United States; about 42 percent of which are in the Pacific Coast states; and another 31 percent of which are in the North Region. Typically, state parks offer many more facilities than federal lands including camp sites, swimming pools, horse riding facilities, and in some, ski slopes.

Like the federal system, there have been mixed trends in state systems in the last few years but mostly there has been growth. Across all types of areas, there has been a gain in the 1990s in number of areas totaling 1,267 new areas, a 32 percent increase. This has amounted to an 8 percent increase in total acreage—850,000 added acres. In state parks, high-amenity campsites increased, but year-round high-amenity sites decreased 3.5 percent. Additionally, primitive (low amenity) campsites decreased in the 1990s, losing 2,100 sites. Seasonal cabins in state parks decreased 5 percent, while year-round cabins increased 14 percent. A rapid growth component has been revenue producing lodges, increasing 31 percent in the 1990s to a total of 110 within the systems of 26 of the 50 states. A significant overall trend has been the transition of state park sites and facilities from seasonal to year-round operating sites and facilities that offer a broader range of services and opportunities and greater revenue producing potentials.

Local Government

Municipal, county, and regional authorities, more than any other provider, supply outdoor recreation sites, facilities and programs near to and within the communities where Americans live. Description of the broad array of local sports fields, trails, greenways, parks, and other outdoor facilities and sites is difficult, however, because systematic accumulation of statistics does not occur. A recent study, however, provides some insight into the supply of local government resources (Beeler 1993).

Approximately 4,528 local government departments offer outdoor services and facilities. These departments are managed within the following governmental jurisdictions:

- Municipal—3 289 departments
- County—880 departments
- Special Districts—316 departments
- Others—43 departments

Percentages of local government departments offering different types of outdoor opportunities are shown below by size of population served:

Opportunity type	Serving < 50,000	Serving > 50,000
Beaches	24.8	35.5
Lakes	38.0	57.7
Logging/bicycle trails	54.2	69.8
Hiking/horse trails	22.5	51.0
Snow use trails	7.8	20.8
Mini parks	63.3	63.1
Neighborhood parks	72.5	69.8
Community parks	82.7	82.6
Metro/regional parks	27.2	68.5

Source: PKF Consulting (1985), Local Park and Recreation Facilities and Sites, Arlington, VA.

Departments range in size from small, one-person operations in small towns and rural counties to departments with several hundred employees in large cities. Smaller departments often rely heavily on volunteers to run programs and events while large departments will have numerous full-time professional park and recreation employees. Only about one-third of county governments have park and recreation programs and most of those are in the eastern states. Most of the operating funding for local park and recreation departments comes from property taxes, fees and charges. Large projects requiring substantial investments may additionally be financed through bonds, grants (federal and state) and special tax assessments. Operating budgets range typically from under \$35 thousand for small departments to over \$70 million for large ones.

Trends in local government offerings as shown in the PKF Consulting Study (1995) indicate that sports fields, ball courts, parks and passive recreation areas (trails, open space, etc.) have been the supply emphasis of the last 5 years. Recreation facilities, such as archery ranges or picnic shelters, and water-oriented recreation sites have received less emphasis.

Private Sector

The private sector has the most varied and wide reaching range of outdoor opportunities, services, facilities, and equipment of the four categories of outdoor providers in the U.S. It is not possible to fully describe this range in a few pages, thus selected supply elements are briefly described—land, campgrounds, ski slopes, and servicing businesses.

There are approximately 1.3 billion acres of private rural land in the contiguous 48 states. Of these acres, approximately 180 million acres are open to public recreation under various conditions—for example, for fee, with permission, through leasing. This represents a decrease of about 35 percent from the acreage open in 1985, which then stood at 278 million acres. Much of this decrease was in the Rocky Mountain region where access rights are changing dramatically because of rising population and settlement.

Campgrounds are among the more widely thought of type of recreation site to most people. However, the traditional view of camping in a quiet forest setting does not fully describe camping

in the 1990s. An examination of Woodall's campground directory (McEwen forthcoming) indicates a wide array of private campgrounds ranging from rustic and nature-oriented sites with modest amenities to high-service, luxury sites for RVs and motor homes. In 1996, Woodall's listed around 6,900 private campgrounds that met their standards for listing. This represented a 15 percent decrease in number over the preceding 20 years. Most of this decrease occurred between 1987 (8,062) and 1996 (6,900). From the 1987 level of 948,000, the number of individual campsites fell to 812,000 in 1996. By level of amenity, numbers of campsites are summarized below:

Full hookup—480,783
Water and electricity—220,521
Electricity only—17,689
No hookups—94,667

A growth area in the private sector is downhill ski slopes and cross-country areas:

	1987	1996
Number of downhill areas	384	449
Lift capacity/hour (000s)	2,221	3,078
Cross-country areas	421	636

Most of this growth has been in the Northern region of the country with lesser, but substantial growth in the Rocky Mountain and Pacific Coast states.

Trends for other privately provided recreation services and sites have been mixed, some growing, other declining (American Business Information Inc. 1997). Selected private supply elements are summarized below by year:

	1985	1996
Marinas	5,008	5,771
Boat rental	4,835	4,802
Bicycle rentals/tours	554	938
Organized camps	8,630	6,725
Golf courses for the public	6,161	8,898
Membership golf courses	2,387	3,001
Archery ranges	226	440
Outfitters/Guides	898	1,330
Rifle/pistol ranges	351	557

Summary

Overall, outdoor recreation opportunities in the U.S. have been increasing. But opportunities to add to the federal estate are very limited, thus added acreages are not occurring in any appreciable amounts. On existing federal lands, facilities, and services have increased only modestly, but there have been gains in special designations such as Wilderness and National Rivers. State government supply has been increasing modestly as well, with emphasis on revenue producing, high-service facilities, and year-round facilities. Local government supply has emphasized growth in parks, open space, and sports areas. It is apparent that across all levels of government, change is occurring as political, economic, and pub-

lic demand environments shift. Federal and state systems seem to be moving (of necessity) toward pay-as-you-go recreation offerings, partnerships in providing public opportunities, and more private, for-profit operations in their areas. The local sector has seemed to continue its traditional role of service and opportunities for all circumstances, whether on a pay-as-you-go or on a for-free basis. Private sector supply is mostly growing, but there seems to be some shifts toward the more profitable offerings to higher-income households. In this mixture of trends across supply sectors, one potential outcome that merits monitoring is the distribution of various opportunities for outdoor recreation across social groups within American Society.

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Parks, Recreation and the Environment: Allies or Adversaries?

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The words of John Denver's "Whose Garden Was This?" may have been prophetic for the park and recreation profession. Twenty years after that song was written, can those in the profession attest to stewardship of nature, or are we contributing to the deterioration of the environment?

During the summer of 1964, I began my career in parks and recreation, working for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Division of State Parks. The work environment was beautiful, along the eastern border of the state in the Dalles of the St. Croix River. In those days, before the passage of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968, park managers along the St. Croix relied on its natural attributes to attract outdoor recreation enthusiasts. Over the centuries, the river has cut a gorge through basalt, leaving cliffs towering on either side of the river. Mixed hardwoods and pines have replaced the areas deforested in the late 19th century, leaving small river towns, pasture land and one of the nation's outstanding canoe rivers. By the mid-1960s, white pine blister rust had invaded the remaining stately pines growing out of the basalt and up the walls of the valley.

My job was to mix 2-4-5-T, 2-4-D and water in correct ratios, load the mixture into a pump sprayer carried on my back, and search the acreage of Minnesota's Interstate State Park for ribes. Ribes became the enemy as our two-person teams searched for these plants, sprayed them as instructed, and went on about the job as the defoliant and herbicide did their duty. Ribes were targeted because they served as the host for the blister rust. Removal of that plant species would possibly save the white pines.

During that summer, frequent park visitors hiked the trails along and above the St. Croix River, picking and eating wild gooseberries, as they do today. Some visitors encountered these park employees carrying sprayers and commented on our good fortune to work in such a beautiful place. No one warned them that gooseberries are ribes. No one warned them that the defoliant and herbicide were also harmful to humans. No one warned the young employees who daily mixed and sprayed dangerous chemicals.

Almost 20 years later, I questioned the director of another park and recreation agency on the type of defoliant used on roadsides

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