

RECREATIONAL USER ATTITUDES TOWARDS MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES OF ALLEGANY STATE PARK

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Abstract: This project examines attitudes towards management strategies of four Allegany State Park recreational user groups: cabin users, recreational vehicle users, tent users, and day users. It investigates recreational user group attitude differences, and attitude change over a ten year time period, in regard to the following park management strategy categories: park attributes, recreation issues, forest management and diversity issues, preservation issues, oil and gas development issues, and nuisance wildlife control issues. Data analysis of the study results indicate that there is a statistically significant difference in recreational user group response to 5 of 49 variables. Comparisons are made between this study and a similar study conducted in 1986 in order to assess change in user attitude over time. From 1986 to 1996, user attitude, evaluated in terms of management significance and not statistical significance, changed in response to only 3 of 46 issues.

Introduction

Cattaraugus County in southwestern New York State. It is bordered on the west, north, and east by the Allegheny River, and to the south by the State of Pennsylvania. The park is 60,325 acres in size, and the topography consists of lakes, rivers, streams, and hills over 2300 feet in altitude. ASP is visited by 1.4 million park patrons each year.

Allegany State Park is administered for outdoor recreation by the Allegany Region of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation (OPRHP). ASP is a four season recreational facility, and provides recreational opportunities such as camping, swimming, hiking, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, hunting, and boating. In addition to the recreational resources of the park, ASP is rich in natural resources such as timber and subsurface hydrocarbons.

Due to the broad range of possible uses of these park resources, the resulting range of management options, increased pressure for both the utilization and preservation

of the park resources, as well as projected demand increases for recreational activities, the OPRHP initiated a master forest management planning process for ASP in the early 1970's. "Forest management is interrelated with facility development, trails, recreation program components, oil and gas, and other issues" (Palmer 1988). A comprehensive ASP forest management plan can help ensure appropriate and wise use and development of the park resources.

Surveys of park users regarding attitudes towards the management of ASP were conducted by James Palmer in 1986 in order to assess attitudes of the park users towards management strategies of ASP. This research was particularly useful in bridging the gap between ASP recreationists and ASP management. The park user - park manager gap is common, as recreation managers frequently misjudge what recreationists seek, and have inaccurate perceptions of their recreational attitudes (Buerger 1983). Information on recreationists' attitudes towards facilities and services is very desirable in formulating recreational policies which can improve visitor satisfaction, and create a high quality outdoor recreational experience.

Palmer's research examined the attitudes of park users based upon a sample of campers drawn from the list of camping permits. This information has been furthered by this research endeavor, which has assessed the differences in attitudes towards park management strategies in regard to four different recreational user groups. This information is valuable because different recreationists have different attitudes (Weaver 1988). Park managers must possess an understanding of the similarities and differences between user groups in order to formulate management plans and policies which can assure minimal user conflict, as well as maximize total recreational satisfaction (Buerger 1983).

Six categories of ASP management strategies are examined: 1) park attributes, 2) recreation issues, 3) forest management and diversity issues, 4) preservation issues, 5) oil and gas development issues, and 6) nuisance wildlife control issues. The park users are segregated into four user groups: cabin users, recreational vehicle (RV) users (inclusive of motor homes, pull along trailers, and pop ups), tent users, and day users.

This research will not only build upon the current literature base, but will also be useful to ASP managers. The ASP forest resources management plan has not yet been completed, and this research has updated the information of ASP managers as to the attitudes of ASP recreationists. This research has also determined significant differences in attitudes between the four major peak time park user recreational groups (cabin, RV, tent, day). The attitudes of these four user groups are important because they represent the majority of ASP users, and therefore the main recreational user focus of ASP management strategies.

Theoretical Foundation

Jubenville and Twilight (1993) state six relationships between the visitor, the natural resource base, and the management organization: 1) the resource affects the visitor; 2) the visitor affects the resource; 3) the resource

situation affects management programs; 4) the management programs affect the resource situation; 5) the visitor affects management programs; and 6) the management programs affect the disposition of the visitor. This research endeavor will focus on exploring the relationship between the recreational user (visitor) and the management organization in regard to recreational user attitudes towards the management organizations' management strategies of the natural resource base.

The theoretical foundation of this study is based upon the goal of recreation management, which is to maximize visitor satisfaction (Lucas and Stankey, 1974). This goal is accomplished through management strategies, and the structure of this study was created in order to work within the existing ASP management framework.

The literature base has many examples of how attitudinal differences occur between distinct recreational user groups, and how recreational managers are unaware of, and inaccurately predict, recreational user attitudes. This research was designed in order to bridge the gap between the recreation manager and the recreationist, and to hopefully define distinct recreational user groups based upon attitudes toward park management strategies.

The results of this research will not only be beneficial to the amelioration of the literature base, but will also greatly serve ASP managers in further refining the ASP forest resources management plan in order to maximize both recreational user satisfaction and responsiveness to the public purpose.

Research Methodology

From June 19 through August 30, 1996, 194 ASP recreationists completed a hybrid interview/on-site survey. This survey established the user group category of the respondent (cabin, RV, tent, or day) through an oral interview question. The respondent was then asked to complete a survey which ascertained the importance that the respondent placed on 20 park attributes, and the extent of agreement or disagreement that the respondent placed on 3 recreation issues, 12 forest management and diversity issues, 3 preservation issues, 5 oil and gas development issues, and 6 nuisance wildlife control issues. The responses were valued on a 9 point Likert scale, in which one signified very unimportant or strong disagreement, 5 signified neutral, and 9 signified high importance or strong agreement.

The data collection dates were selected via a judgmental sample, and a systematic sampling method was employed to sample the four recreational user groups during the sampling days.

The research methodology allowed for a statistical comparison between the four user groups. While this study used a nearly identical survey as Palmer's 1986 study, differences in data collection designs between the two studies disallowed a statistical analysis of user attitude change over time. Change in attitude over time is evaluated in terms of management significance and not statistical

significance. Management significance is defined as a change in user opinion greater than 10% (difference > 0.9).

Recreational User Group Attitude Differences

This study employed the Tukey-Honestly Significant Difference (Tukey-HSD) one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) post-hoc test in order to determine statistically significant differences among the four user group. Three park attributes, one recreation issue, and one oil and gas development issue, were found to have significant attitude differences among the user groups at a significance level of 0.05.

TABLE 1 summarizes the user group differences in regard to opportunities for outdoor activity such as swimming, games, and picnics. The Tukey-HSD test found that tent users to statistically differ only from day users.

Table 1. Recreational User Group Differences In Regard To Opportunities For Outdoor Activity (Swim, Games, Picnic, Etc.)

Test (P-Value)	User Group (Mean)	User Groups (Mean)	
Tukey-HSD (.05)	Tent (7.5)	Differs From	Day(8.6)

key: 1.0 = very unimportant, 5.0 = neutral,
9.0 = very important

Day users highly value opportunities for outdoor activity such as swimming, games, and picnics, because these activities fill an afternoon and thus are the primary park attraction for day users. In comparison, while tent users are also drawn to ASP for outdoor activity, it can be assumed that such activities as games and picnics do not serve as the focus of their recreational activities, and therefore these activities do not draw tent users specifically to ASP.

TABLE 2 summarizes the statistically significant difference between day users and cabin, RV, and tent users in response to the provision of overnight facilities.

Table 2. Recreational User Group Differences In Regard To The Provision Of Overnight Facilities

Test (P-Value)	User Group (Mean)	User Groups (Means)	
Tukey-Hsd (.05)	Day (5.9)	Differs From	Cabin(8.2) Rv(7.8) Tent(8.1)

key: 1.0 = very unimportant, 5.0 = neutral,
9.0 = very important

It is expected that day users would find the provision of overnight facilities to be of lower importance than overnight users because day users do not use the overnight facilities, nor do they have a need for them.

TABLE 3 illustrates user group differences in regard to organized programs such as performing arts, concerts, and fairs. The results of the Tukey-HSD test sound tent users to statistically differ from cabin users and day users in response to this park amenity.

Table 3. Recreational User Group Differences In Regard To Organized Programs (Performing Arts, Concerts, Fairs, Etc.)

Test (P-Value)	User Group (Mean)	User Groups (Means)	
Tukey-Hsd (.05)	Tent (4.4)	Differs From	Cabin (5.9) Day (5.7)

key: 1.0 = very unimportant, 5.0 = neutral, 9.0 = very important

A possible explanation of the difference for this park amenity may be a result of the recreational attraction to the park of the user group. A majority of cabin users stay in the park for one week, thus organized programs provide them with a new and different activity; it gives cabin users something else to do beside swim, hike, or boat. Most day users travel between ten and sixty minutes to get to the park, and organized programs provide an attraction which encourages day users to take a quick drive to ASP. In contrast to cabin and day users, most tent users visit the park for one to three nights, where the main purpose of their recreational use is focused upon the natural resource base and not structured programs.

One recreational issue, that amenities such as electricity, running water, and separate sleeping areas should be provided in the cabins, was found to have a statistically significant difference among recreational user groups at a significance level of 0.05. TABLE 4 illustrates that the Tukey-HSD test found a difference only between day and cabin users.

Table 4. Recreational User Group Differences In Regard To The Provision Of Cabin Amenities (Electricity, Running Water, Separate Sleeping Areas)

Test (P-Value)	User Group (Mean)	User Groups (Mean)	
Tukey-Hsd (.05)	Day (5.4)	Differs From	Cabin (6.6)

key: 1.0 = strongly disagree, 5.0 = neutral, 9.0 = strongly agree

A possible explanation of the statistically significant difference between day users and cabin users is a result of these two user groups representing the polar extremes of this recreation issue. Day users are neutral in response to issues regarding overnight facilities, while cabin users respond higher than all other user groups in response to both the importance of overnight facilities and the provision of cabin amenities. Cabin users' recreational activities revolve around their overnight facilities, while day users recreational activities are absent of any overnight facilities. This is why cabin users respond more favorably to overnight recreation facility importance and cabin amenity provision, while day users are neutral in response to such issues.

One oil and gas development issue, that the state should consider the acquisition of privately owned subsurface rights under park land, was found to have a statistically significant difference among user groups at a significance level of 0.05. The Tukey-HSD found a statistically

significant difference between RV users and tent users. TABLE 5 summarizes this difference.

Table 5. Recreational User Group Differences In Regard To The State Considering The Acquisition Of Privately Owned Subsurface Oil And Gas Rights Under Allegany State Park Land

Test (P-Value)	User Group (Mean)	User Groups (Mean)	
Tukey-HSD (.05)	RV (4.4)	Differs From	Tent (6.0)

key: 1.0 = strongly disagree, 5.0 = neutral, 9.0 = strongly agree

It may be inferred from this management strategy that if the state did acquire privately owned subsurface oil and gas rights, that these resources would not be developed. RV users, whose mobile homes consume mass amounts of gasoline, may see this resource conservation as an indirect contributor to an increase in their cost of recreational activity (less gasoline, higher gasoline prices, higher cost of recreation). Therefore RV users are less in favor of state acquisition of these resources than tent users.

Study Comparison

This section will compare the results of this study to the results of the study conducted by James Palmer in 1986 titled *Attitudes Toward The Management of Allegany State Park*. Knowing attitude change over time is important information to park managers because it is their responsibility to continually be aware of shifting user attitudes. Examining attitude change can often not only demonstrate previous change in attitude, but more importantly can help managers predict future change in attitude. Sound foresight is a fundamental component of any long term management plan. The attitude change over time will be examined in terms of management significance. Management significance is defined as change in user attitude greater than 10% (change > 0.9).

TABLE 6 summarizes the comparison of the study results in regard to twenty park attributes. Courtesy of the park staff has the biggest difference, as 1996 overnight park users rated it as 0.7 less important than did park users in 1986. 1996 park users feel that opportunities to fish, the presence of law and order, and solitude while in the park are 0.6 less important than did 1986 park users. The natural park environment, opportunities to see wildlife, organized programs (performing arts, concerts, fairs, etc.), opportunities for socializing with family, friends, and others, and the provision of overnight facilities (cabins, camping) were all rated 0.5 less important by 1996 recreationists. 1996 recreationists rated the lake's water condition (clarity, color, litter, etc.) and the provision of trail opportunities to be 0.4 less important than 1986 recreationists did, and the provision of concessions and opportunities to hunt to be 0.3 less important than 1986 recreationists did. 1996 ASP recreationists feel that handicapped facilities are 0.3 more important than did recreationists in 1986. 1996 recreationists rate maintenance of the park (litter, repair, restrooms, etc.), opportunities for outdoor activity (swim, games, picnic, etc.), and scenic

features and overlooks to be 0.2 less important than 1986 ASP recreationists did, but feel that opportunities for nature interpretation were 0.2 more important than did 1986 ASP recreationists. 1996 ASP recreationists regard safety while in the park to be 0.1 less important. There was no change in opinion over time in regard to opportunities to passively watch people and activities.

None of these differences in recreational user attitude over time are large enough to constitute a significant change in user opinion over time for ASP managers.

Table 6. Comparison Of Study Results In Regard To Park Attributes

Park Attribute	Year Of Study		Difference 1996 - 1986
	1996	1986	
Courtesy of Park Staff	7.5	8.2	-0.7
Opportunities to Fish	5.0	5.6	-0.6
Presence of Law and Order	7.5	8.1	-0.6
Solitude While in the Park	7.1	7.7	-0.6
Natural Park Environment	8.2	8.7	-0.5
Opportunities to See Wildlife	7.9	8.4	-0.5
Organized Programs	5.1	5.6	-0.5
Opportunities for Socializing	6.9	7.4	-0.5
Provision of Overnight Facilities	8.0	8.5	-0.5
Lake's Water Condition	8.1	8.5	-0.4
Provision of Trail Opportunities	7.2	7.6	-0.4
Provision of Concessions	5.5	5.8	-0.3
Handicapped Facilities	6.2	5.9	0.3
Opportunities to Hunt	2.9	3.2	-0.3
Maintenance of the Park	8.4	8.6	-0.2
Opportunities for Nature Interpretation	7.3	7.1	0.2
Opportunities for Outdoor Activity	7.9	8.1	-0.2
Scenic Features and Overlooks	7.8	8.0	-0.2
Safety While in the Park	8.1	8.2	-0.1
Opportunities to Passively Watch	5.3	5.3	0.0

key: 1.0 = very unimportant, 5.0 = neutral, 9.0 = very important

TABLE 7 summarizes the comparison of the study results in regard to three recreation issues. The largest change in opinion over time is in regard to developing trail bike and all-terrain vehicle trails within the park, as 1996 ASP recreationists feel that this is 2.2 more important than did

1986 ASP recreationists. 1996 recreationists feel that building swimming pools in addition to the park's two existing beaches is 0.3 less important, and that providing cabin amenities such as electricity, running water, and separate sleeping areas is 0.1 more important, than 1986 ASP recreationists did.

Table 7. Comparison Of Study Results In Regard To Recreation Issues

Recreation Issues	Year Of The Study		Difference 1996 - 1986
	1996	1986	
Develop Trail Bike and All-Terrain Vehicle Trails	4.6	2.4	2.2
Build Swimming Pools	4.8	5.1	-0.3
Provide Cabin Amenities	6.4	6.3	0.1

key: 1.0 = strongly disagree, 5.0 = neutral, 9.0 = strongly agree

Only one recreation issue, that trail bike and all-terrain vehicle trails should be developed within the park, has a change over time large enough to constitute a significant management difference in user attitude towards management strategies of ASP. User attitude toward such development in 1986 was strong disagreement, but changed to neutral during the ten years between 1986 and 1996. This is a result of a sharp increase in the popularity of trail bikes and the sport of trail bike riding.

TABLE 8 summarizes the comparison of study results in regard to the forest management and diversity issues. One issue, that no action should be taken to affect diversity, cannot be compared between the two studies because of differences in the survey question. Conducting the controlled cutting of trees to generate money for other public purposes has the largest difference in user attitude over time, as 1996 park recreationists are 1.0 more in agreement of such action. 1996 ASP recreationists are 0.8 less agreeable with conducting the controlled cutting of trees to provide wood for facility rehabilitation, 0.7 less agreeable with conducting the controlled cutting of trees for firewood, and 0.5 less agreeable with conducting the controlled cutting of trees for facility rehabilitation. 1996 park users agree 0.4 more than 1986 park users that diversity is not important to their recreation. 1996 ASP recreationists feel 0.1 less agreeable towards conducting the controlled cutting of trees to generate money for ASP, conducting the controlled cutting of trees to improve scenic vistas, and conducting the controlled cutting of trees to improve wildlife observation. However, 1996 ASP recreationists are 0.1 more agreeable towards conducting the controlled cutting of trees to improve hunting and to increasing diversity via the cutting of trees. There is no change in user opinion over time in regard to conducting the controlled cutting of trees to improve bird watching.

Only one of these differences is large enough to constitute a significant change in user opinion over time for ASP managers. This difference is in regard to the controlled cutting of trees to generate money for other public purposes. As the state and national debt increases, and

people are becoming more aware of possible impending economic disaster for our governments, perhaps park users are more inclined to sacrifice our natural resource base in an attempt to reverse our nations current economic trend. It may also be that there is a lesser fear of cutting abuse as compared with ten years ago.

Table 8. A Comparison Of Study Results In Regard To Forest Management And Diversity Issues

Forest Management/ Diversity Issues	Year Of The Study		Difference
	1996	1986	1996 - 1986
No Action to Affect Diversity	5.4	N/A	N/A
Cut trees to generate money for other public purposes	3.2	2.2	1.0
Cut Trees to Provide Wood for Facility Rehabilitation	4.5	5.3	-0.8
Cut Trees for Firewood	3.5	4.2	-0.7
Cut Trees to Improve Trails	5.5	6.0	-0.5
Diversity is Not Important to Recreation	4.9	4.5	0.4
Cut Trees to Generate Money for ASP	4.0	4.1	-0.1
Cut Trees to Improve Scenic Vistas	5.5	5.6	-0.1
Cut Trees to Improve Wildlife Observation	5.3	5.4	-0.1
Cut Trees to Improve Hunting	2.8	2.7	0.1
Increase Diversity by Cutting Trees	3.8	3.7	0.1
Cut Trees to Improve Bird Watching	4.9	4.9	0.0

key: 1.0 = strongly disagree, 5.0 = neutral, 9.0 = strongly agree, N/A = not applicable

TABLE 9 summarizes the comparison of study results in regard to three preservation issues. 1996 park users are 0.6 less agreeable with preserving portions of the park where any changes that occur are primarily the result of natural processes or events, and 0.6 more agreeable that no preserve areas are needed in the park. 1996 park users are 0.2 less in favor of preserving areas for unique environmental features (e.g. wetlands, geologic features, rare or endangered habitats) than were 1986 park users.

Table 9. Comparison Of Study Results In Regard To Preservation Issues

Preservation Issues	Year Of The Study		Difference
	1996	1986	1996 - 1986
Preserve Areas for Natural Processes or Events	7.6	8.2	-0.6
No Preserve Areas Needed	2.3	1.7	0.6
Preserve Areas for Unique Environmental Features	8.3	8.5	-0.2

key: 1.0 = strongly disagree, 5.0 = neutral, 9.0 = strongly agree

None of these differences in attitude regarding the three preservation issues are large enough to constitute a significant change in user opinion over time for ASP management.

TABLE 10 illustrates the comparison of study results in regard to five oil and gas development issues. The issue with the greatest difference in user opinion over time is in regard to developing oil and gas resources in order to generate money for other public purposes, as 1996 park users feel 1.2 more in agreement with this issue than did 1986 park recreationists. 1996 park users feel 0.9 less agreement with developing oil and gas resources to heat buildings within the park, 0.6 less agreement that the state should consider the acquisition of privately owned subsurface rights under the park land, and 0.4 less agreement with developing oil and gas resources to generate revenue for ASP operations and development than did 1986 park users. 1996 park users are 0.4 more in agreement that there should be no oil or gas exploration, development, or extraction within the park than did 1986 park users.

Table 10. Comparison Of Study Results In Regard To Oil And Gas Development Issues

Oil And Gas Development Issues	Year Of The Study		Difference
	1996	1986	1996 - 1986
Develop Oil and Gas for Public Revenue	3.2	2.0	1.2
Develop Oil and Gas to Heat Buildings	4.0	4.9	-0.9
State Should Acquire Oil and Gas Rights	5.3	5.9	-0.6
Develop Oil and Gas for ASP Revenue	4.1	4.5	-0.4
No Oil and Gas Development	6.5	6.1	0.4

key: 1.0 = strongly disagree, 5.0 = neutral, 9.0 = strongly agree

Only one of these differences is large enough to constitute a significant management change in user opinion over time for ASP managers; this issue is the development of the oil and gas resources beneath ASP land in order to generate revenue for other public purposes. As with the forest management and diversity issues, this difference may be the result of 1996 park users being more inclined to develop our natural resource base in an attempt to mitigate what is perceived to be a negative national economic trend. It may also be a result of low salience of this issue. Oil and gas development, and its threat of massive ecological degradation, was a big issue in the media during the mid-1980's. This is no longer the 'hot topic' it once was, and therefore may have influenced change in user opinion response.

TABLE 11 summarizes the comparison of study results in regard to nuisance wildlife control issues. Two issues cannot be compared between the two studies because of differences in the wording of the questions. They are the controlled hunting of raccoons should be allowed when

they become a nuisance or threat to park patrons, and that the controlled hunting of bear should be allowed when they become a nuisance or threat to park patrons. The trapping of raccoons when they become a nuisance or threat to park patrons has the greatest difference in user attitude over time, as 1996 park users are 0.8 more in agreement with this nuisance wildlife control issue. 1996 park users are 0.2 more in favor of trapping beaver to control flooding of buildings and roads. 1996 park recreationists are 0.1 less in agreement that trapping should not be conducted in the park under any circumstances, and 0.1 more in agreement to trap beavers to control adverse impacts on forests and trout streams.

Table 11. Comparison Of Study Results In Regard To Nuisance Wildlife Control Issues

Nuisance Wildlife Control Issues	Year Of The Study		Difference 1996-1986
	1996	1986	
Hunt raccoons when nuisance or threat to patrons	6.5	N/A	N/A
Hunt Bear When Nuisance or Threat to Patrons	5.8	N/A	N/A
Trap raccoons when nuisance or threat to patrons	6.6	5.8	0.8
Trap beaver to control flooding of buildings and roads	5.7	5.5	0.2
No trapping should be conducted	4.4	4.5	-0.1
Trap beaver for adverse impacts on forests and trout streams	5.5	5.4	0.1

key: 1.0 = strongly disagree, 5.0 = neutral, 9.0 = strongly agree, N/A = not applicable

None of these differences are large enough to constitute a significant change in user opinion over time regarding nuisance wildlife control issues for park management.

Conclusions

This descriptive study examined differences in recreational user group attitudes in regard to park management strategies and change in user attitude over a ten year time

period. This study found statistically significant attitude differences among user groups in response to 5 of 49 issues. Change in user attitude over time, evaluated in terms of management significance, was found in regard to 4 of 46 issues.

These findings are important to the ASP management staff in their completion of the forest resources management plan. Further research on this topic may want to explore attitudes of other user groups such as overnight backpackers, hunters, or non-peak time park users. Additionally, it may be valuable to repeat this survey in another ten years in order to assess attitude change between 1986, 1996, and 2006. If such a project is undertaken, it would be useful to reproduce the methodology or either this research or Palmer's so that statistical comparisons can be made between the two studies.

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