

ROADSIDE CAMPING ON FOREST PRESERVE LANDS IN THE ADIRONDACK PARK: A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF PLACE ATTACHMENT AND RESOURCE SUBSTITUTABILITY

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Abstract.—Roadside camping is a popular and widespread public outdoor recreation activity on New York State Forest Preserve (FP) lands within the Adirondack Park (AP). While several roadside camping areas exist on FP lands throughout the Park, little is known about these camping areas or the visitors who use them. Recently, debate has developed over how to define and manage roadside camping settings on these lands. State University of New York-College of Environmental Science and Forestry (SUNY ESF) researchers conducted a qualitative study in order to better understand visitor attachment to these settings and visitor perceptions regarding the substitutability of other camping settings within the Adirondack Park for roadside camping. Twenty-nine structured interviews were conducted with visitors to roadside camping areas on FP lands. This paper describes the results of these interviews and their implications for research and management.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

New York State's Adirondack Park is composed of a variety of public and private lands. Of the approximately 6 million acres of land within the Park boundary, about 2.4 million acres are considered state Forest Preserve (FP) lands, which are under the jurisdiction of the New York State Department of

Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) (Adirondack Park Agency 2001). As stipulated in the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan (APSLMP), the NYSDEC is responsible for managing state FP lands in a manner that provides for sufficient protection of the physical, biological, social, and psychological aspects of the natural resources. While resource protection is of paramount importance to the management philosophy of the Adirondack Park (AP), the APSLMP also stipulates that public recreational use of state FP lands should be allowed and encouraged so that current and future generations can experience and enjoy Park resources. The AP provides opportunities for the public to enjoy a variety of outdoor recreation activities across several different types of settings. Overnight camping is one activity that is offered to the public throughout the AP.

Opportunities for camping in the Adirondacks are widespread and diverse, ranging from primitive camping in state wilderness areas to public and private campgrounds with a variety of amenities and services. Public land camping settings are categorized into three types: primitive/backpacking campsites and lean-tos; campsites within developed campgrounds; and roadside camping sites. Primitive and lean-to campsites generally have an undeveloped character, have no controlled access, and are located a significant distance from a road or trailhead within the FP. Developed public campgrounds on state FP lands are concentrated collections of campsites with controlled access and associated fees per night (typically about \$20), providing users with a number of different amenities including fireplaces or fire rings, picnic tables, showers and bathrooms with running water, playgrounds, and other day use facilities. The third type of public camping setting, roadside camping, could be described as a hybrid between primitive camping and campground camping, at least in regards

to level of development and amenities provided. Roadside campsites are located on FP lands near forest roads, do not have restricted access or fees, and often provide fireplaces, picnic tables, and pit privies. Like primitive sites, roadside camping sites are free and only provide a minimal set of amenities. However, like campground sites, roadside campsites typically provide enough space for one or more vehicles/tents in the interior of the site. Consequently, camping equipment varies among roadside campsite users (e.g., recreational vehicles, trailers, pop-ups, tents).

The APSLMP provides definitions and management guidelines for both primitive campsites and developed campgrounds within the FP, but does not include such information for roadside camping areas (Adirondack Park Agency 2001). Consequently, debate has developed over how to define and manage roadside camping areas within the FP. On one side, it has been argued that roadside campsites should be considered primitive sites and should, therefore, conform to the APSLMP definition and guidelines for primitive sites. As most of the existing roadside campsites within the FP do not conform to the APSLMP definition and guidelines for primitive sites, proponents of this view have argued that roadside campsites should be removed or should be brought into compliance with APSLMP definitions and guidelines. Opponents of this view have argued that roadside campsites provide opportunities for a distinct type of camping experience and should not be included under the APSLMP definition of a primitive site. Rather, roadside camping areas should be defined as a new camping setting category for management under the APSMLP. In an effort to inform land management decisions, the NYSDEC funded State University of New York-College of Environmental Science and Forestry (SUNY ESF) researchers to conduct a study examining roadside campsite visitor characteristics and perceptions.

The need for specific information about roadside camping suggested two applicable study topics: place meanings and attachment, and resource substitutability. During the summer of 2009, SUNY ESF researchers conducted 29 structured interviews with roadside

campers in the FP. The purposes of the interviews were to: (1) gain an understanding of visitor attachment to roadside camping areas; (2) obtain visitor perspectives regarding the comparability between the three types of camping opportunities in the FP; and (3) aid in the development of an in-depth quantitative field survey measuring visitor place attachment and resource substitutability. The purpose of this report is to summarize the results of the 29 interviews and discuss their implications for further research.

2.0 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The following paragraphs provide a review of existing literature concerning sense of place, place meanings, place attachment, and recreation substitutability. While not comprehensive, the following brief reviews are meant to introduce basic information regarding these topics as they relate to this study.

2.1 Sense of Place, Place Meanings, and Place Attachment

The types of meaning that individuals ascribe to recreation places and the types of relationships that people form with places have been topics of considerable study in the field of outdoor recreation management. Williams and Stewart (1998) defined sense of place as “the collection of meanings, beliefs, symbols, values, and feelings that individuals or groups associate with a particular locality” (p. 19) and explained that physical space, in and of itself, does not necessarily encompass all aspects of place within its boundaries. Rather, certain spaces become places over time as people experience these spaces/settings and begin to assign meaning and value to them. Consequently, a single space could represent a number of different, or even competing, places to different people or groups. Also, place meanings are dynamic and can change as a result of social, economic, and political pressure. As stated by Tuan (1980), “people are constantly making and unmaking places by talking about them...a place is its reputation” (p. 6).

The concepts of place and place attachment have been studied from a variety of perspectives and disciplines. However, many researchers in the field of

outdoor recreation have adopted an approach based in environmental psychology, which views place attachment as a positive connection or bond between a person and a particular place (Williams and Vaske 2003). Many dimensions of place attachment have been examined such as dependence and identity (Williams and Vaske 2003), rootedness (Tuan 1980), lifestyle (Bricker and Kerstetter 2000), familiarity and belongingness (Hammitt et al. 2004), and others. However, Williams and Vaske (2003) explain that the two dominant dimensions of place attachment that have emerged in outdoor recreation research are place dependence and identity.

Place dependence refers to a functional attachment to a particular setting and reflects the importance of a place in regards to its provision of features and the conditions necessary for the realization of outdoor recreational goals. Place dependence is related to the physical aspects of a place such as the resource opportunities that it provides (e.g., number of trails, range of technical difficulty of trails, social setting) and its proximity to recreationists' homes. While settings that are utilized mostly by local recreationists may be ideal for the facilitation of place dependence, Williams and Vaske (2003) indicated that these functional attachments also form within larger settings that attract a variety of regional and international visitors.

A second primary dimension of place attachment has been termed place identity. Williams and Vaske (2003) described place identity as "the symbolic importance of a place as a repository for emotions and relationships that give meaning and purpose to life" (p. 831). Place identity is associated with the formation of self-identity, enhanced levels of self-esteem, increased feelings of belongingness within one's community, and increased communication regarding environmental values and policy. Williams and Vaske (2003) have also suggested that place identity generally evolves through psychological investments with a recreational setting that develop over time. Consequently, place dependence may develop into feelings of place identity, although place dependence may not be a necessary determinant of place identity.

2.2 Recreation Substitution and Substitutability

While early research on recreation substitutability focused mostly on participation in activities, some research has shown that the concept of substitutability may be influenced by recreational settings as well. Shelby and Vaske (1991) developed a typology of substitution alternatives based on both the activity and the setting in which it is pursued. Four types of recreation substitution were proposed. (1) Temporal/strategic substitution involves participating in the same activity in the same setting but during different times or areas within the setting, similar to temporal and spatial displacement concepts (Hall and Shelby 2000). (2) Resource substitution involves continuing to participate in a specific activity but choosing to do so in a different setting; this substitution alternative might be most attractive in areas where similar resources exist in close proximity to each other. (3) Activity substitution occurs when a person continues to visit the same setting but chooses to participate in a different recreational activity; this type of substitution might be particularly prevalent in recreational areas where visitors perceive the setting as unique or special or in areas where there is a lack of alternative recreation sites. (4) Activity and resource substitution, which the authors viewed as a last resort for recreationists when activity substitutes do not exist within a setting and when resource substitutes do not exist within a region.

Shelby and Vaske (1991) used these four types to investigate the substitutability of two river recreation areas in New Zealand. The results indicated several reasons that visitors did not consider the two similar settings to be substitutable: longer driving distances, increased expenses, poor quality activity experiences, crowding, and lack of scenery. The authors suggested several considerations for future research concerning recreation substitutability. First, they argued that while much research has focused on activity substitutability, outdoor recreation managers might be more interested in resource substitutability, especially if considering management alternatives that require closures of areas previously used for recreation. They also suggested that researchers focusing on resource substitutability

should: (1) identify variables that may affect peoples' willingness to substitute; (2) consider resource characteristics in conjunction with user perceptions of those characteristics; and (3) be aware that resource substitutes may not be symmetrical (site A is an acceptable substitute for site B, but not the opposite).

Brunson and Shelby (1993) discussed the limitation of activity-focused recreation substitutability research and redefined recreation substitution as "the interchangeability of recreation experiences such that acceptably equivalent outcomes can be achieved by varying one or more of the following: the timing of the experience, the means of gaining access, the setting, and the activity" (p. 69). Brunson and Shelby also identified several questions that remain relatively unanswered regarding recreation substitution and suggested a number of tasks for future researchers: (1) determining "acceptable equivalence" (i.e., how should equivalence of recreation experiences be determined and measured?); (2) further testing of the resource-activity typology; (3) examining the relationship between recreational intentions and actual behaviors; (4) examining trade-offs associated with temporal and strategic substitutes; (5) examining the effects of activity on resource substitutability (e.g., specialization); (6) examining the effects of place attachment measures on substitutability; (7) better understanding peoples' choices to participate in nonequivalent substitutes; (8) combining temporal and less similar substitutes (i.e., when an alternate time is substituted, what does the participant do during the time of the original activity?); and (9) integrating research on substitutability and leisure constraints.

3.0 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

The data in this paper were collected as part of a larger research project conducted during the summer of 2009 for the purpose of better understanding roadside camping areas on FP lands in the Adirondack Park and the visitors who use those camping areas. The larger research project consisted of three phases. During the first phase, an inventory of roadside camping areas was conducted in order to locate and assess roadside campsites existing on FP lands. The

second phase, which is the primary focus of this paper, involved conducting structured interviews with visitors to roadside camping areas. These first two phases were conducted simultaneously and researchers interviewed campers they encountered during the inventory process. Thus, a convenience sample was created for the qualitative phase of the study. Data collected during the first two phases were used to help inform the development of the final phase of the overall research project, which involved an onsite camper survey and a follow-up mail-administered questionnaire. As noted, the focus of this paper is on the data collected during the structured interview portion of this study (phase two only).

Structured interviews were conducted with visitors to roadside camping areas during the months of May and June in 2009. Twenty-nine interviews (over 90 percent response rate) were conducted within six different FP Management Units that included the majority of roadside camping areas: Black River Wild Forest, Ferris Lake Wild Forest, Jessup River Wild Forest, Moose River Plains Wild Forest, Horseshoe Lake Wild Forest, and Saranac Lake Wild Forest. A roving intercept sampling method was used and interviews were conducted at visitors' campsites. Visitor participation was voluntary and interview participants remained anonymous. Upon completion of each interview, participants were compensated with a small camping-related gift, not exceeding \$5 in value, for their time and effort.

Interviews typically lasted between 20-60 minutes and were audio recorded with the permission of each participant. Interview recordings were then transcribed and data were coded using the Nudist N6 software package. A content analysis was conducted in order to reduce response data to meaningful categories related to place attachment and/or comparisons between the three types of camping settings described above. One coder did the entire content analysis and then a second coder did a 10 percent random selection independently. The coding of the sampled content was highly correlated with the original coder's analysis and, therefore, the coding was reliable.

Nineteen questions were included on the structured interview instrument. The instrument was designed to collect visitor perspectives on a variety of topics. However, while a variety of topics were discussed during the interviews (e.g., visitor background information, motivations, management concerns), this paper only summarizes visitor responses to interview questions that were related to place attachment, place dependence, and camping setting comparisons.

4.0 RESULTS

The following subsections describe four content categories that emerged from participant responses: place attachment; place dependence; comparisons between roadside camping and campground camping; and comparisons between roadside camping and primitive camping. The data categorized were far too numerous to provide a complete description of the results within this paper. Consequently, the following sections outline the major themes that emerged in relation to these four content categories and provide examples of data coded within them.

4.1 Themes Related to Place Attachment

Visitors were asked to describe any emotional attachment that they felt towards the roadside camping area that they were visiting or towards the Adirondack Park in general. The majority of campers indicated that they were emotionally attached to the camping area they were visiting. Seven themes emerged from the participants' descriptions of attachment to the setting.

4.1.1 Memories

The most widely mentioned source of attachment was a person's personal and/or family history with the area and nostalgia, or peoples' cherished memories of previous experiences with the area. The following quote provides an example of response data coded within this theme:

Absolutely, ever since I was a little guy, there's camping stories that have been around since before this road was actually drivable back in the 50s and 60s. My parents were up here

camping, they had jeeps, you were able to access whatever you could drive to at that point, so there's pictures and stuff floating around like that...nostalgia from the 60s, years ago now, so definitely an emotional attachment.
(Interview #4)

4.1.2 Setting as a Central Part of Visitors' Life Identities

Campers indicated that they had such a rich history with the camping area that it had become a central part of their lives. One visitor commented:

I think if I hadn't been coming here for as many years as I have my life would have a big chunk missing from it. This is a piece of my life that I rely on that makes my year. Everybody has markers throughout the year, and the June camp out here in the past, it's gelled at this point, and I could see me camping for the rest of my life, and if I didn't, there'd be a hole. (Interview #21)

4.1.3 Feeling at Home While Visiting Roadside Camping Areas

Participants described feeling at ease or "at home" while in their roadside camping area or in the surrounding natural area. One visitor said:

Emotional attachment? Oh yes...Now, if you come up here during hunting season, you'll see the same tents year after year. It's first come first serve, but out of respect I don't set up on your site if you don't set up on mine. We know it's not ours, but if you go to the same place every year so many times, it's like your home.
(Interview #9)

4.1.4 General Fondness or Love Associated with Roadside Camping Area Visited

Participants discussed enjoyment that they felt towards the camping area that they were visiting. For example, one visitor commented:

Just we really enjoy it, love it. Glad she talked me into doing it. (Interview #19)

4.1.5 Opportunities to Interact with Natural Beauty and Wildlife

Respondents discussed being attached to the roadside camp they were visiting as a result of the interactions with nature and wildlife that they experienced within the setting. One visitor said:

I just enjoy God's creation. No matter where you look it's just so beautiful. In a couple more months I'll be eating raspberries, strawberries, blueberries...all the streams and just everything about it, it's just so awesome. (Interview #15)

4.1.6 Concern about Potential Loss of Access to Roadside Camping Areas

Participants mentioned feeling concerned or worried about losing access to the camping area that they were visiting. One person said, "If they got rid of this I would be totally bummed" (Interview #17). Another participant commented:

I would hate the government that passed that legislation. Any politicians involved with that process that voted for that, I would vote against those guys . . . I would definitely challenge them. It's that important to me that they not put a restriction on that kind [roadside] of camping. (Interview #9)

4.1.7 Visitor Willingness to Pay for Roadside Camping Areas

Participants explained that they would be willing to pay a fee in order to use the roadside camping area that they were visiting. One of them reported:

I wouldn't care if they put a gate up there and charged us \$5 to come through that gate. That's how much we like it here. (Interview #25)

4.2 Themes Related to Place Dependence

A broad question related to emotional attachment was useful for gaining an understanding of some of the types, or dimensions, of attachment that are important to roadside camping area visitors. While a number of meaningful themes emerged that were related to emotional attachment, researchers were also interested in understanding potential functional attachments to roadside camping areas, or place dependence.

Therefore, interview participants were asked whether or not they felt like they depended on roadside camping areas for their outdoor recreational pursuits, and why.

About a third of the respondents indicated that they did depend on roadside camping areas, another third of the respondents indicated they did not, and the others were more neutral. Responses of those participants who did depend on roadside camping areas were categorized into three themes.

4.2.1 Unique Opportunity

Participants depended on roadside camping areas because they provide opportunities for a unique type of camping experience that could not be found elsewhere. One person said:

Yeah I'd say so. I mean we could probably stay at a motel or something, but it wouldn't be the same experience. It's not what we're looking for. We could stay in Indian Lake [campground] somewhere, rent a cabin or whatever for the week or two, but it's definitely not what we're trying to do. This is what we're trying to do. (Interview #27)

4.2.2. Physical Abilities

Some participants indicated that they depended on roadside camping areas because they were limited in their physical abilities and could no longer travel to primitive tent sites, which are often located a significant distance into the interior of the forest. For example, one person explained:

Yeah I do. It's so great for me, there's no way I could hike back into a place like that [primitive site]. There's just no way I could do it, and here I just pull up and I'm here. (Interview #15)

4.2.3 Costs Associated With Different Types of Camping

Participants indicated they were dependent on roadside camping areas because they could not afford, or did not wish to pay for, camping in other areas. One participant stated:

Yeah, for camping. Yeah because it really is a convenience, one of the cheapest vacations you can take. The state campgrounds, they're not cheap. (Interview #29)

4.3 Visitor Comparisons of Roadside Sites and Campground Sites

Roadside camping visitors were asked whether or not they had previously stayed in state campgrounds within the AP. Those who reported having previous experiences with this type of setting were then asked to compare their camping experiences between roadside camping settings and campground settings. Responses to this line of questioning were coded into five themes.

4.3.1 Differences in Social Atmospheres

Most participants indicated that they felt the state campgrounds were too crowded and/or noisy and that roadside areas allowed for more personal privacy. One individual stated:

It's just different, because right here there's nobody camping near us. It's like being in the wilderness. We're not packed into a campground. (Interview #17)

Another participant commented:

I like coming in here because there're not a lot of people. You can go hiking up to the ponds. It's just a nice outdoor experience versus going to [a state campground] where everybody's on top of each other. (Interview #16)

4.3.2 Differences in Amenities and Types of Groups Who Enjoy Them

Respondents indicated that campgrounds and the amenities provided within them are nice for certain types of groups, while roadside areas and their more-limited set of amenities are better for other types of groups. One person stated about group type:

There are a couple [campgrounds] around here but we don't stay in them because we don't have family and kids. If we had family and kids we'd stay at a park where there are showers and all. We just come out and camp like this, we've got

our own water, our own food. I would much rather do this. (Interview #17)

4.3.3 Differences in Cost

Participants mentioned the higher cost involved in campground site use. One participant commented:

Well, to me roadside campsites are more for your average person who doesn't have a lot of extra money to throw around. We can come up here a whole lot cheaper than we could go to a state campground for. (Interview #1)

4.3.4 Differences in Freedom Experienced by Visitors

Participants described feeling a greater amount of freedom from restrictions when visiting roadside camping areas. One person commented:

Last night my daughter was raising a ruckus, screaming and such. If we were in a campground and she was doing that the ranger would be like hey keep it down. Here you don't have to. You can sit out here and howl at the coyotes and stuff at night and let them howl back. You have a good time. We wouldn't get totally out of control, but you don't have to worry about the neighbors. (Interview #24)

4.3.5 Level of Primitiveness Associated With Each Type of Camping Area

Participants explained that they felt roadside camping was a more primitive type of camping experience than camping in a campground. One of them said:

I don't want to degrade state campgrounds and regular campgrounds, because they're really nice, but it's just not for me. I just want to be in the wilderness. (Interview #15)

4.4 Visitor Comparisons of Roadside Sites and Primitive Sites

In addition to comparing roadside and campground camping, respondents were asked to compare their roadside camping experiences with their experiences camping in primitive tent sites or lean-tos. Five themes emerged out of the responses to this question: one related to similarities and four related to differences.

4.4.1 Similarity between Camping in Each Setting

While most of the responses were focused on identifying differences between camping at the two settings, some participants commented on a general similarity between roadside camping and primitive camping:

I don't know if there's such a difference. It's different in that you're restricted in what you take, what you need to take, but then make do with what you've got on your back. Same experience, different amount of equipment I guess. (Interview #27)

4.4.2 Differences in Amount of Effort Required to Camp

Participants commented on the different amounts of effort required to camp in roadside and primitive tent sites:

I like to come just because there are certain times when I like to do the lazy kind of camping instead of backpacking and stuff like that. I can bring the creature comforts, some chairs and stuff, and also kids. I can't fold my son up and put him in a backpack and go in too deep with him because I end up carrying everything. It's just an easier type of camping. (Interview #13)

4.4.3 Differences in Vehicle Use

Participants commented on the importance of using vehicles while roadside camping compared to primitive tent camping. One participant said:

I know that roadside camping is a beautiful thing. There are a lot of people who just leave a lot of their stuff in their vehicle, work out of the back of their vehicle. It's safer, cleaner. (Interview #17)

Another participant commented:

One of the biggest reasons we come up here is because you can drive right to them [roadside campsites]. (Interview #25)

4.4.4 Differences Related to Secondary Activities and Experience Intentions of the Visitor

Participants indicated that reasons for using primitive sites differed from reasons for using roadside camping areas. One participant commented:

I go there [primitive sites] with different intentions...rock climbing or hiking...that's just a base camp. This is more of a sit and hang out. (Interview #28)

4.4.5 Differences in Level of Primitiveness and Privacy

Participants mentioned that they felt primitive tent sites provided a better opportunity to experience privacy, solitude, or quietness. One of them stated:

They're both [roadside and lean-to camping] great. That's [lean-to?] actually quieter; you don't have people going by all the time and all that stuff. (Interview #1)

5.0 SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The content analysis performed for this study provided valuable information for managers and researchers of roadside camping areas on FP lands within the AP. A number of themes emerged from the participants' responses and provided useful information regarding three research questions: (1) sources or types of emotional attachment to roadside camping areas, (2) sources or types of visitor dependence on roadside camping areas, and (3) potential reasons why roadside camping areas, campgrounds, and primitive tent sites may or may not be perceived by roadside campers as acceptable resource substitutes. Such information was particularly valuable in creating comprehensive and meaningful quantitative measures of place attachment and resource substitutability for surveying a much larger and more representative sample of roadside campers on FP lands in the Adirondacks.

The study results provide preliminary support for the belief that visitors to roadside camping areas on FP lands in the AP are both emotionally and functionally attached to these areas. Additionally, while some roadside campers perceive primitive

tent sites to be substitutable for roadside sites, others reported a lack of substitutability between roadside campsites and campgrounds. Thus, the level of substitutability between roadside camping settings and primitive settings seems to be higher than the level of substitutability between roadside settings and campground settings. Of course, due to the design of the exploratory research phase discussed in this paper, these results cannot be generalized to the population of roadside campers in the AP. The convenience sample, the sampling timeframe, and the limited number of sites included in the sampling frame resulted in an unrepresentative sample of the roadside camper population within the Park.

The utility of this research, rather, was to gain a rich qualitative understanding of the types/ dimensions of attachment and dependence that are most relevant to roadside camping areas and their visitors and to identify variables that are relevant to visitor perceptions of resource substitutability. This information was largely unknown in the Adirondack Park and only rarely reported in published literature. The next phase of this research was to develop a quantitative survey instrument to further study the population and be able to measure population characteristics related to place attachment and resource substitutability.

While a few participants discussed a general similarity between camping in roadside settings and camping in primitive tent sites, many other participants discussed specific differences between these two settings. Several participants described differences between these two settings in relation to the amount of effort required to use them and the use of vehicles during the camping experience. Also, several participants indicated that they were dependent on roadside camping areas for their recreation because they were limited in their physical ability and could not access primitive tent sites located within the interior of forests. However, the extent to which people would be limited in this fashion cannot be determined by the data presented here. Future research, such as the subsequent quantitative phase of this overall research project, will address this question in order to

gain a more complete understanding of visitor place attachment and perceptions of resource substitutability for camping on FP lands in the AP.

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