

Chapter 9: Global Dimensions: Trends, Lessons, and Collaborative Learning

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Go abroad and you'll hear news of home.

—English proverb

Purpose

This chapter identifies global dimensions and international perspectives that may help shape a research agenda for the future of sustainable recreation and tourism on public lands and in protected areas.

Problem Statement

Any attempt to better understand the future of sustainable recreation will benefit from considering the international context of tourism, recreation, and protected area management, in which important trends are emerging and valuable lessons may be shared. Although the United States was an early leader in recreation and tourism research, contributing to the training of managers around the globe, we have yet to systematically consider what international conservation, recreation, and tourism approaches can now teach us. Moreover, a better understanding of international recreation will further our overall initiative to increase access and diversity in the outdoors, as outlined in the prologue of this report (Cervený et al. 2020).

We have identified two interrelated layers of global dimensions of sustainable recreation that would benefit from further research. The first involves the growing numbers, ethnic diversity, and range of recreational pursuits of foreign visitors to protected areas in the United States. The second addresses how protected-area managers around the world, including those in the United States, can more effectively share and learn from collective experiences and discuss comparative challenges and opportunities.

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Dimensions of the Problem: Keeping Up With Increasing International Tourism on U.S. Public Lands

International tourism is a critical issue in sustainable recreation that will continue to provide opportunities and challenges for public lands management in the United States. An estimated 77 million international tourist visits were made to the United States in 2015, an increase of more than 17 million since 2006 (UNWTO 2016). About 35 percent of visitors to U.S. national parks and monuments are from other nations (U.S. Travel Association 2016), and from 2012 through 2016, international visitors to U.S. national forests averaged 3.3 million people per year (USDA FS 2017). These numbers will most likely continue to increase as more of the developing world gains the means to travel internationally. Many international tourists seek the same recreational opportunities as U.S. residents, while others seek a different form of experience and have distinct expectations that need to be better understood by recreation and tourism researchers and managers. Issues include addressing the influence of cultural norms on what is deemed to be appropriate behavior on public lands as well as ways to enhance cross-cultural understanding and deal with the difficulties of messaging to audiences whose first language is not English.

The increased pressure on protected areas resulting from international tourism requires innovative approaches to managing park and recreation settings. For example, the significant increase in international large bus-based group tours in Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks has put a strain on park infrastructure and services while compromising experiences for traditional visitors using personal vehicles. When large numbers of visitors exit a bus and arrive at a viewpoint, the character of the experience is immediately changed, often resulting in conflict among visitors and between visitors and staff, which at its foundation is a result not just of the number of visitors flooding into an overlook but also a function of differing cultural norms about public behavior, personal space, and perceptions of crowding (Hofstede 2001) (fig. 9.1).

Ethnocentric attitudes and stereotypes have developed about different types of international tourists; these may be countered by parks becoming more welcoming and inclusive. One recent strategy has been to hire multilingual interpretive rangers, as at Yellowstone National Park, which hired its first Mandarin-speaking rangers in 2016 to improve communication with a growing number of visitors from China (French 2016). Many of these issues are also shared by an increasingly diverse U.S. population; addressing them can in turn help conservation agency staff address management challenges of making public lands relevant to underrepresented populations and recent immigrants to the United States. Current research on



Figure 9.1—Visitors to Old Faithful Geyser in Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming.

international tourists to World Heritage sites and other protected areas (e.g., King and Halpenny 2014, Lai et al. 2013) could inform management and communication strategies considered for U.S. protected areas.

Barriers and Challenges

To address more diverse national and global public lands clientele, managers will have to navigate a complex web of local, national, and international users in a way that maximizes recreation fulfillment for diverse populations, while also minimizing adverse environmental, social, and economic effects and potential conflicts between these user groups and local residents. Local communities that may have been invested in nearby public lands for generations will need to be involved as an integral component of a more globalized model of public lands management that helps sustain their livelihoods and heritage. Barriers and challenges to global dimensions of sustainable recreation will primarily be tied to differing legal and governing structures among countries, cultural and behavioral norms, funding, and public policy.

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Ideas for Addressing the Problem: Learning From Others

Although the United States has traditionally been a leader in protected area management, many other regions of the world are dealing with similar issues and developing innovative ways to address the challenges of sustainable recreation and tourism. We have yet to systematically learn from these examples and have historically approached both domestic and international agency training in terms of North American and western views of outdoor recreation and nature (Harmon 1987, West and Brechin 1991).

International designations for protected areas, such as United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) world heritage sites, biosphere reserves, and Ramsar sites have long bounded U.S. protected areas to larger international networks, but the relationship of these networks' management practices to public lands agencies is not well understood. The new International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) best practice guidelines (BPG) on sustainable tourism and visitor management (Leung et al. 2018) provide a global collection of examples of how international recreation and tourism management issues and challenges are addressed. One aspect of sustainability pertinent to all areas of the world is rapid urbanization and influx to cities coupled with depopulation of rural areas, as well as the rise in international tourism. The recreation research agenda will involve analysis to garner a better understanding of (1) how the concept of recreation is translated internationally and cross-culturally; (2) how other countries are funding sustainable recreation and tourism efforts; (3) recreation and tourism policies at the international level; (4) strategies for outdoor recreation and tourism to diversify livelihoods, create jobs and income, and promote rural development; and (5) public engagement strategies and governance arrangements. As discussed in chapter 11 of this report, case study research is an effective and informative way to understand various contexts of outdoor recreation issues, which we implement below. The following four case studies represent a brief and selective survey of global trends, highlighting the diversity of issues facing sustainable recreation around the globe.

Case study 1: outdoor recreation access in Western Europe—

In Europe, home to about one-third of all protected areas in the world (WDPA 2018, World Bank 2018), there is a significant lack of opportunities to experience locations where natural processes dominate the landscape. Despite the high number of protected areas, these areas are often small or not pristine, or they consist primarily of land in private ownership. Thus, there are a lack of opportunities for such experiential dimensions as escape, stress release, solitude, and adventure (Bell et al. 2008).

Limited recreational access is particularly evident in what is termed the Atlantic Region, encompassing the northwestern-most European countries with the least amount of forest cover. Some European countries have tackled inaccessibility to open space by passing right-to-roam laws and by building trails that cross both public and private lands. In Norway, the age-old cultural practice of **allemannsretten** (“right to roam”) has been formalized through legislation that provides access to all uncultivated land for recreation, including hunting (Øian and Skogen 2016: 104). Similar laws to different extents have been enacted throughout the Atlantic Region, including public footpath infrastructure throughout Great Britain as part of the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act. This policy paved the way for the Countryside and Rights of Way Act of 2000, which provided complete right-of-way access to scenic areas. In general, landowner and public responses toward these policies have been positive and have improved stewardship, access, and conservation in tandem (Campion and Stephenson 2014, Church and Ravenscroft 2008, Sandell and Fredman 2010). Here, maintaining access to the outdoors regardless of land ownership is of paramount importance, more so than in other areas of the world—including the United States and much of the Western Hemisphere—where public access to private land is much more restricted. In the United States, policies regarding public access have been contested all the way to the Supreme Court, and center on rights of access versus the right to exclude (Anderson 2007) (fig. 9.2).

Although policies as extensive as Europe’s right-to-roam laws are unlikely to pass in the United States, domestic infrastructures for outdoor access can be improved, especially in such areas as the Southeastern United States, where public lands are sparser, creating massive inequities in terms of access. Strategies for improving access could include funding mechanisms and financial incentives for private landowners to provide rights-of-way for trails and hunting and fishing areas, especially near population centers without nearby public lands. Such an approach has been successful in establishing long-distance trails such as the Appalachian

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Figure 9.2—Cross-cultural differences in rights to roam and public-private property laws.

Trail, although these trail systems are typically located on public lands far from population centers. Management groups such as the U.S. Forest Service's State and Private Forestry division as well as nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) can play integral roles in working with state and private landowners to help improve outdoor access. The Nature Conservancy, for instance, has been purchasing and providing recreational opportunities in urban-proximate natural areas, such as the Potomac Gorge in Virginia. Many U.S. state wildlife agencies are also providing financial incentives to private landowners to open their lands to at least limited public hunting and fishing.

Western Europe presents an important case study for understanding the management of protected areas with high populations, and East Asia should be considered as well. As population densities generally increase throughout the world, providing sustainable recreation will require a reappraisal of which recreation opportunities are still feasible in some areas, such as solitude and escape, in light of the need to balance increased access to public lands with environmental protection. Management plans may need to be tailored to specific recreation opportunity goals depending on demographics, land use sustainability, and volumes of visitor use.

Case study 2: equity, commodification, and international tourism in developing nations—

For developing nations, ecotourism has become the primary framework through which many protected areas are funded and managed, more so than an emphasis on localized recreation such as the aforementioned European examples, or the U.S. National Forest System. This reliance on ecotourism depends on the premise that imperiled resources are best protected through a symbiotic relationship of environmentally sustainable tourism and community socioeconomic development (Brooks et al. 2006). However, such approaches have varied success rates and can produce unintended consequences, especially when dealing with indigenous, colonial, and power dynamics (Coria and Calfucura 2012). International issues pertaining to ecotourism can yield important insights to U.S. policies as we look to provide better opportunities for more robust and sustainable local economies adjacent to and within protected areas.

In southern Africa, nature-based tourism accounts for as much revenue as farming, forestry, and fisheries combined (Balmford et al. 2009), and constitutes a substantial portion of the gross domestic product of countries in this region. As such, protected area management has catered primarily to international visitation and generation of foreign exchange, which has resulted in colonial and equity-based conflicts with local populations. This is a problem found in many regions of the developing world where outdoor recreation tourism dominates (West et al. 2006). For example, in Namibia, high entrance fees and lodging costs have resulted in

parks being managed almost exclusively as methods of securing foreign currency (Novelli et al. 2006). But, at the same time, the rise of wildlife-based conservancies has also spread conservation outside of formal protected areas and has led to increased tourism and greater community benefits overall. Over half the total area devoted to conservation in sub-Saharan Africa is open to some level of sport hunting, with its own set of challenges and conflicts related to conservation, commodification, and ownership (Spenceley and Goodwin 2007). In contrast, in some Latin American developing nations such as Brazil, Chile, Argentina, and Costa Rica, in addition to high levels of international ecotourism, domestic visitation to parks and reserves is also increasing rapidly, creating more popular and political buy-in to conservation than in countries where most visitors to parks are foreigners (Sattler et al. 2016).

As we look to promote tourism alongside recreation, similar issues are likely to arise on U.S. public lands where local communities may feel excluded from the benefits of burgeoning national and international tourism. Disenfranchisement will be felt particularly when traditional activities such as hunting, grazing, forestry, or mining come into conflict with conservation paradigms, recreational visitors, and enterprises with different viewpoints toward extraction. In Tanzania, for instance, large game preserves were created that promoted tourism but restricted the ability of local Maasai peoples to subsist in traditional ways that were vital to their livelihoods, cultural identities, and social organization (Charnley 2005). As Charnley (2005) noted, ecotourism should provide a pathway not just for economic growth but also deeper social and political justice goals in ways that are not top-down or paternalistic by governments and NGOs. Successful ecotourism development approaches should also be culturally appropriate and should promote community empowerment, ownership, and co-management (Coria and Calfucura 2012), all of which will be important lessons for developing ecotourism policies domestically. Several more international examples of protected area tourism serving as sustainable financing tools in support of conservation and community development can be found in the IUCN BPG (Leung et al. 2018).

Case study 3: NGOs and the international promotion of heritage in protected areas—

With the exception of certain national parks and historical monuments, many public lands in the United States are promoted as places of pristine wilderness devoid of humans, rather than as places with deep human histories integrally linked to both natural and cultural heritage. In other areas, cultural heritage plays a more critical role in public lands management. In Peru, for instance, cultural identities tied to the country's indigenous and archaeological past permeate the country's public lands and parks and are promoted at a national level. Such approaches are useful as the

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United States looks to increase awareness of cultural landscapes, senses of place, and the place of indigenous peoples as well as rural historical lifeways within our public lands. One of the major challenges to such an approach is adapting existing concepts, such as the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (Clark and Stankey 1979) to cultural heritage, because these concepts rely on a set of environmental rather than cultural measures. Identifying cultural ecosystem services at distinct landscape and site levels and elevating them to the priority level of biophysical services is one approach to better integrate heritage recreation opportunities (Daniel et al. 2012), although such an approach is new and not well developed. In the Forest Service, the 2012 forest planning rule mandates that ecosystem services be taken into account during planning and management, thus lessons learned from international engagements with cultural services are especially pertinent.

International organizations are also assisting in the integration of cultural heritage into protected areas, including the IUCN and the International Institute for Environment and Development. They have been working to preserve what are referred to as “biocultural heritage areas” throughout the world, starting with the Potato Park in Peru. The Potato Park created a protected area aimed at preserving indigenous livelihoods alongside the protection of Andean food crops and cultural landscapes (Argumedo 2008). Recently, an ambitious transnational initiative has developed through UNESCO and the governments of six Andean countries to develop and conserve the expansive Inka road system, known as the Qhapaq Ñan, through an integrated natural and cultural resource ecotourism framework. The management plan, which was formalized in 2012, will preserve more than 30 000 km (18,641 mi) of ancient Inka roads, centered on local community co-management, with visitor management strategies still being developed (UNESCO 2018). Such approaches that integrate human dimensions of heritage with resource-oriented management (Hall and MacArthur 1996, McCool and Moisey 2001) and ecotourism will be critical to the sustainability of public lands both in the United States and abroad. In the United States, we have a troubled relationship working with indigenous and other marginalized resident peoples in public lands management (Castro and Nielsen 2001). Representation of American Indian connections to public lands, and co-management strategies that recognize tribal sovereignty, are among the many examples that require better models for the future, with significant lessons to be learned from international contexts.

Other NGOs, including the Paris-based International Council on Monuments and Sites and the George Wright Society in the United States are also key allies in conservation efforts and the promotion of sustainable recreation and tourism to both natural and cultural sites and landscapes. The Forest Service has long supported programs enhancing sustainable recreation in other countries through its International Program Division, particularly in Brazil (e.g., Cunha et al. 2018). The

program of capacity building in Brazil has emphasized connecting Brazilians with their public lands and natural heritage through a multithreaded process of courses, workshops, demonstration sites, twinning, seminars, and a community of practice. Lessons from this engagement and others can help public land managers domestically advance sustainable recreation management and research through direct agency engagement and knowledge exchange abroad. This allows us to not just learn from others, but to allow others to learn from us, and to chart a unified, global course toward the future of sustainable recreation.

Case study 4: lessons from national political agendas: the “ecological civilization” movement in China—

Finally, the economic boom and subsequent environmental conservation initiatives in China present another important case study for understanding the global dimensions of outdoor recreation. Longstanding issues with pollution and environmental conservation, coupled with climate change, have become key issues for national political agendas, with significant implications for outdoor recreation and protected areas management. China is introducing a series of new protected areas and national parks as places to serve both increasing national capacity for recreation and an increased prioritization of conservation (Cao et al. 2015, Xu et al. 2017). China is especially interested in quantifying ecosystem services, including economic benefits of ecotourism and protected areas, to promote rural community development alongside environmental conservation (Zhang and Zhou 2013). China’s relatively recent conversion from a rural and subsistence-based economy to an urban-industrial one has created a critical need for rural economic infrastructure that sustainable recreation and ecotourism may be able to provide (Cao et al. 2015, Stone and Wall 2004). However, many of these projects are in their early stages, and the results of ecotourism’s effect on local community development is yet to be determined.

China’s new public lands policy is part of its broader “ecological civilization initiative,” which looks to frame the entire future of China’s socioeconomic identity and policies in terms of ecological sustainability (Tiejun et al. 2012, Wei et al. 2011). As part of that effort, China has recently decided to pursue a centralized protected areas system and policy modeled partly on the U.S. National Park Service (Xu et al. 2017). The country has defined a series of high-priority protected areas as demonstration sites that should be monitored closely to learn about the applicability of U.S. models to other countries with quite distinct economic and political systems and levels of development. Most other countries, and most protected areas in the world, permit extractive and multiple land uses, and either allow for private and tribal lands within those lands or have extensive inholdings, mirroring the National Forest System model in the United States. Comparing and contrasting governance approaches, levels, and types of recreational uses in a land use and ownership

mosaic are important for protected area managers globally, with the clear understanding that no one management philosophy, governance arrangement, type of protected area, or levels and types of tourism and recreational uses or local involvement is appropriate for all conserved areas in a locality or nation or the world as a whole. In this case, the ecological civilization initiative in China highlights the ways in which protected area management and environmental conservation are becoming top-priority political objectives, and initiatives such as these should be consulted when thinking about how to frame outdoor recreation within broader social, political, and environmental frameworks.

Synthesis: Visions for the Future of Global Sustainable Recreation

Visitation to public lands is not only increasing in volume, but also in the diversity of visitors locally, nationally, and internationally. This includes the activities they pursue and the experiences, connections, and benefits they seek. As such, traditional views of stakeholdership tied primarily to domestic audiences are being transformed into a global and diverse user base in popular recreation areas. This environment is shifting the economics of land use and is creating conflicts between extractive industries and tourism and among different recreational user groups. As a result, demands on protected areas are growing and diversifying, which emphasizes the critical need for information on how to resolve not only provision of visitor experiences but also the resolution of conflicts over land use, recreational pursuits, equity of access, management, and representation.

We have provided a general overview of tourism, recreation, and public land use in selected areas around the globe. Global insights include cross-cultural differences in public-private land access seen in western Europe, a commodified and primarily international-based protected lands strategy in southern Africa, an emphasis toward cultural heritage and co-management in Peru, and a national agenda development-based model in China. Each of these examples is influenced by its own cultural, historical, and geographical trajectories, but has a clear parallel with most, if not all, the sustainable recreation issues being faced here in the United States. Although we were early leaders in designing outdoor recreation and land management programs worldwide, it is time for us to turn our gaze outward and look for international lessons that can improve the future of our own recreation and conservation systems here at home. Systems-based approaches, such as those described throughout this report, will need to consider the United States within its larger international context. This includes how management decisions within the country affect broader international systems and vice versa. Foundational changes

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toward an internationally informed land management system are critical as the world becomes increasingly globalized, and future research should continue to analyze international recreation and tourism trends, challenges, and opportunities from around the globe.

Compelling Questions

1. What can we learn from other nations about ways to increase the relevance of protected areas, expanding their use to immigrants and long-term foreign residents, in addition to short-term foreign visitors?
2. How can we use technology, social media, and state-of-the-art interpretive methods and techniques to relay messages and create memorable experiences for visitors without relying on English language skills?
3. What are international co-management strategies for better integrating and representing indigenous and marginalized groups within outdoor recreation and land management plans?
4. Do other parts of the world conceptualize human activities on public lands as recreation or tourism or both? How do their definitions of recreation and tourism or human and public use differ from our own?
5. Along similar lines to question 1, what precautions do we need to take with the lessons we learn from other countries, if there are indeed significant cultural differences between our concepts of protected areas?
6. How can we successfully use tourism and recreation to contribute to improving local livelihoods and create more robust, diverse and sustainable local economies around protected areas?
7. When should we be thinking of outdoor recreation as a global system, and when should we think about each area within its own local context?
8. What can we learn from others about how to increase buy-in and support for recreation on public lands by increasing opportunities for nontraditional visitor use activities often considered outside the realm of outdoor recreation, such as foraging, harvest of nontimber forest products, artisanal extraction, religious ceremonies, spiritual contemplation, and other activities that tie and bond communities to the land and waters and that might be more important for new immigrants, foreign visitors, and local inhabitants alike?
9. What role, if any, should international conservation groups play in U.S. public lands policy and management?
10. How can international designations of U.S. protected areas, such as world heritage sites and biosphere reserves, provide mechanisms to transfer knowledge and build collaborative learning with international counterparts?

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