Recreation Experience Inventory

Most Minnesotans report that outdoor recreation is important to them. People participate in outdoor recreation for a number of reasons, including experiencing nature, being with friends and family, and being active. Trail use, swimming and cultural site visits are more frequent among Metro Region residents. Hunting, fishing, camping, and off-road driving are more frequent among northern Minnesotans. The few who experience recreation conflict generally manage it themselves.

Activity Participation

Outdoor recreation is an important part of life for Minnesotans. A recent statewide outdoor recreation study found that 80% of Minnesota residents claim outdoor recreation is at least “moderately important” in their life (Kelly, 2005). The study found that although participation rates vary by activity and location, overall a wide variety of activities are participated in across the state. Participation rates for boating, driving for pleasure, picnicking, nature observation, and horseback riding are similar in each region. Participation rates in other activities seem to depend on the specific biophysical, socio-demographic, and/or infrastructure characteristics of

Figure 85 // Regional and statewide participation of select activities with similar participation rates across Minnesota

Activities that have developed infrastructure (e.g., trail systems, water parks, cultural attractions) are more frequently reported by residents in urban areas. Trail activities such as walking, jogging, biking, inline skating, and cross-country skiing have higher participation rates in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area than in rural Minnesota (Figure 85). Likewise, participation in swimming (likely dependent upon proximity to beaches and built water environments) and visiting developed cultural sites (e.g., nature centers, historic sites) is higher among residents in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area (Figure 86).

Figure 86 // Regional and statewide participation of select activities with greater participation rates in Metro Region
Recreation Experience Inventory

Activity Participation

Inversely, some activities are dependent upon remoteness, climate, and/or populations of flora and fauna. Such activities have higher participation rates in northern Minnesota, where low population densities, numerous lakes, and acres of federally- and state-protected land provides opportunity (Figure 87). Participation rates in hunting, fishing, and mushroom/berry gathering activities are all higher in northern Minnesota than other regions. Camping and off-road all-terrain vehicle driving are activities more frequently reported by residents of northern Minnesota than those living in southern Minnesota, as are winter activities of snowmobiling and snowshoeing.

Figure 87 // Regional and statewide participation of select activities with greater participation rates in Northwest and Northeast Regions

Experiences Sought

The reasons people engage in outdoor recreation are well documented: they want to experience nature, be with friends and family, escape typical daily demands, and be physically active (Driver, 2008). A statewide trail study (Schneider, Schuweiler, & Bipes, 2009) found similar motivations. The reasons people take part in outdoor recreation tend to be similar across the state (Figure 88).

Figure 88 // Regional and statewide experiences sought

Recreation Experience Inventory

Recreation Conflicts Encountered

Among Minnesota recreation trail users, conflicts happen, but fewer than 10% report them. When conflicts do occur, they usually result from the signs or sounds of other visitors (Schneider, Schuweiler, & Bipes, 2009) (Figure 89).

According to recent recreation research “following established trail etiquette,” “talking to other group members about the incident,” and “refusing to get too serious about it” are frequent responses to trail conflict (Schneider, Schuweiler, & Bipes, 2009). When people change their activity time or location in response to conflict, there are only slight variations across the state (Figure 90).

Figure 90 // Regional and statewide response to conflicts encountered

Left area (%)  
44% 38% 42% 44% 42%

Change time of activity (%)  
52% 53% 53% 55%

Moved within area (%)  
44% 55% 54%

Change time of activity (%)  
54% 43% 46% 48% 44% 47%