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USDA Forest Service Sustainable Recreation and Tourism Survey Results

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The slide background is a picture of a bare rock mountain.

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Current Study

- Explores Forest Service (FS) managers' perceptions of sustainable recreation and tourism
- Goal is to inform current and future efforts focused on sustainability

The slide includes a picture of a group of backpackers posing for the photo.

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Background: Sustainable Recreation and Tourism (SRT)

- Initial concepts derived from
 - Previous sustainable operations survey results (see Winter, 2008)
 - Conversations with key recreation and tourism contacts within USDA FS
 - Replication of concepts explored by Cottrell et al. (2007)

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Sustainability Defined

- SRT meets the needs of present visitors/tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future. It is envisioned as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social, and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support systems (UNWTO, 1996).

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Methods

- Conducted through online survey
- Gathered names from directories and FS contacts
- 872 surveys sent out, 1 volunteer
- 433 responses, 50.5% response rate

The slide includes a picture of a two Forest Service personnel sitting on folding chairs.

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Who Responded?

- Most:
 - Were recreation managers (47.8%) or recreation staff officers (28.9%)
 - Worked full-time (97.9%)
 - Were assigned at district (57.0%), or forest-level (33.5%)
 - Had been in current assignment an average of 7.4 years
 - Were well educated
 - Degrees included 59.1% BA, 21.7% MA, and 8.5% Ph.D.

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Respondent Distribution by Region

3-D pie chart goes here

Pie slice Region 1 11.3%
Pie slice Region 2 11.8%
Pie slice Region 3 12%
Pie slice Region 4 11%
Pie slice Region 5 14%
Pie slice Region 6 12%
Pie slice Region 8 12.7%
Pie slice Region 9 12%
Pie slice Region 10 2.8%

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Overview of Findings

- How important is SRT?
 - Was viewed as important and included professional responsibility
 - Was not always viewed as a FS priority

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Results: importance of sustainability

Chart goes here

Personal concern:

Strongly agree 55.9%

Agree 34.5%

Neither 6.1%

Disagree 2.3%

Strongly disagree 1.2%

Professional responsibility to practice sustainable operations:

Strongly agree 72.4%

Agree 22.1%

Neither 3.6%

Disagree 0.7%

Strongly disagree 1.2%

Personally important in management area:

Strongly agree 71.1%

Agree 25.5%

Neither 1.4%

Disagree 0.5%

Strongly disagree 1.4%

Warrants additional investment:

Strongly agree 62.5%

Agree 28.1%

Neither 6.3%

Disagree 1.9%

Strongly disagree 1.2%

Is a FS priority:

Strongly agree 18.7%

Agree 28.8%

Neither 24.1%

Disagree 25.1%

Strongly disagree 3.3%

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Overview of Findings

- How did respondents rate considerations important to sustainability?
 - A majority viewed the following considerations as important
 - Environmental impacts and capacity of FS personnel to support SRT were rated 'very important' by the vast majority

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Results: importance of considerations in sustainability

Chart goes here

Economic impacts:

Very important 42.6%

Important 49.4%

Neither 5.6%

Unimportant 1.2%

Very unimportant 1.2%

Environmental impacts:

Very important 67.3%

Important 30.1%

Neither 1.4%

Unimportant 0.7%

Very unimportant 0.5%

Increased environmental appreciation:

Very important 51.3%

Important 43.7%

Neither 3.5%

Unimportant 0.9%

Very unimportant 0.5%

Improved health for recreating public:

Very important 28.3%

Important 48.8%

Neither 20.3%

Unimportant 2.1%

Very unimportant 0.5%

Increased appreciation of surrounding communities:

Very important 31.5%

Important 48.6%

Neither 17.1%

Unimportant 2.1%

Very unimportant 0.7%

Capacity of FS personnel to support:

Very important 63.8%

Important 29.6%

Neither 2.8%

Unimportant 3.1%

Very unimportant 0.7%

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Overview of Findings

- Perceived impact of SRT development in respondents' management area was examined in relation to economic and community/cultural impacts....
 - Most agreed that positive economic impacts were an outcome
 - Local cultures were considered in the provision of information and in opportunities
 - Most agreed that visitors were encouraged to learn about local cultures

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Results: economic aspects of SRT development

Chart goes here; Note: Recreation and tourism is abbreviated as RT

RT brings new income to surrounding communities:

Strongly agree 41.4%

Agree 47.3%

Neither 8.3%

Disagree 3.1%

Strongly disagree 0%

RT diversifies the local economy:

Strongly agree 31%

Agree 48.8%

Neither 14.6%

Disagree 5.4%

Strongly disagree 0.2%

RT creates job opportunities for residents in surrounding communities:

Strongly agree 31.4%

Agree 48.3%

Neither 13.6%

Disagree 6.4%

Strongly disagree 0.2%

Prices of local products increase because of RT:

Strongly agree 11.1%

Agree 19.7%

Neither 41.4%

Disagree 26.5%

Strongly disagree 1.3%

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Results: community and culture aspects of SRT development

Chart goes here

There are more educational opportunities for locals:

Strongly agree 11%

Agree 30.7%

Neither 34.1%

Disagree 22.7%

Strongly disagree 1.5%

Quality of life improved for surrounding communities:

Strongly agree 18.4%

Agree 46.4%

Neither 22.9%

Disagree 10.6%

Strongly disagree 1.7%

Local cultures are considered in provision of information:

Strongly agree 10.9%

Agree 58.1%

Neither 23%

Disagree 7.6%

Strongly disagree 0.5%

Local cultures considered in provision of opportunities:

Strongly agree 10.6%

Agree 56.6%

Neither 24.5%

Disagree 7.8%

Strongly disagree 0.5%

Visitors are encouraged to learn about local cultures:

Strongly agree 9.1%

Agree 35.8%

Neither 36.8%

Disagree 16.6%

Strongly disagree 1.6%

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Overview of Findings

- Perceived impact of SRT development in respondents' management area was examined regarding partnerships and collaboration....
 - Partnerships were a part of RT development, though not typically with local businesses
 - Concessionaires/outfitters were expected to minimize impacts while maximizing visitor satisfaction
 - Most agreed opportunities for collaboration with local community were important, fewer agreed that good communication among involved parties existed

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Results: partnership aspects of SRT development

Chart goes here

RT facilities are developed in cooperation with local businesses:

Strongly agree 5.3%

Agree 25.2%

Neither 37.2%

Disagree 29.7%

Strongly disagree 2.6%

The FS relies upon partnerships to provide RT in my mgt. area:

Strongly agree 26.4%

Agree 44.3%

Neither 19.1%

Disagree 8.7%

Strongly disagree 1.4%

Volunteers assist with RT mgt.:

Strongly agree 33.1%

Agree 46.7%

Neither 11.7%

Disagree 6.9%

Strongly disagree 1.7%

The FS has a partnership with the ST industry:

Strongly agree 7.4%

Agree 33%

Neither 40.4%

Disagree 16.4%

Strongly disagree 2.8%

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Results: aspects of SRT development linked to outfitters/concessionaires

Chart goes here

The FS should require outfitters/concessionaires to follow established sustainability guidelines for all recreation activities in order to

Enhance visitor enjoyment:

Strongly agree 41.5%
Agree 44.1%
Neither 10.9%
Disagree 2.4%
Strongly disagree 1.2%

Minimize visitor impact:

Strongly agree 57.1%
Agree 34.8%
Neither 6.7%
Disagree 1.2%
Strongly disagree 0.2%

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Results: collaborative aspects of SRT development

Chart goes here

Community residents should have an opportunity to be involved in RT decision making:

Strongly agree 32.8%
Agree 51.7%
Neither 13.2%
Disagree 2.1%
Strongly disagree 0.2%

There is good communication among parties involved in the policy and decision making processes regarding RT:

Strongly agree 6.4%
Agree 43.8%
Neither 29.1%
Disagree 17.8%
Strongly disagree 2.8%

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Overview of Findings

- Among additional aspects of SRT were the following:
 - FS operations were viewed as part of the SRT industry
 - Most agreed that visitor satisfaction should be monitored
 - The vast majority felt FS resources were not adequate to cover the demand for recreation and tourism
 - RT was not believed to be associated with a decrease in criminal activity

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Results: remaining aspects of SRT development

Chart goes here

We should monitor visitor satisfaction:

Strongly agree 28.4%

Agree 55.2%

Neither 13.8%

Disagree 2.3%

Strongly disagree 0.2%

FS operations are part of the sustainable tourism industry:

Strongly agree 32.5%

Agree 45.5%

Neither 14.9%

Disagree 6.3%

Strongly disagree 0.7%

FS resources are adequate to cover demand for recreation and tourism:

Strongly agree 2.1%

Agree 7.7%

Neither 8.2%

Disagree 47.7%

Strongly disagree 34.3%

Criminal activities have decreased due to RT in and near the forest:

Strongly agree 1.3%

Agree 6.7%

Neither 44.5%

Disagree 37.8%

Strongly disagree 9.7%

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Overview of Findings

- Additional items with majority agreement surrounding RT and the FS were:
 - FS lands increase the value of the tourist experience (94.3% agreed)
 - FS lands increase quality of life for surrounding residents (89.8%)
 - The quality of the available supply of RT services in my mgt. area is good (60.1% agreed)

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Overview of Findings

- The majority of respondents agreed:
 - RT should strengthen environmental conservation efforts
 - RT increases the public's awareness for environmental protection
 - However, RT puts increased demand on water and energy resources and may be associated with environmental pollution

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Results: environmental aspects of RT

Chart goes here

RT should strengthen efforts for environmental conservation:

Strongly agree 39.5%

Agree 50.9%

Neither 7.9%

Disagree 1.2%

Strongly disagree 0.5%

RT improves awareness of environmental protection:

Strongly agree 9.5%

Agree 54.5%

Neither 24%

Disagree 10.5%

Strongly disagree 1.4%

RT increases demands on energy and water resources:

Strongly agree 16.3%

Agree 46.7%

Neither 20.5%

Disagree 16%

Strongly disagree 0.5%

RT on FS lands causes environmental pollution:

Strongly agree 11.7%

Agree 37.6%

Neither 26.2%

Disagree 21%

Strongly disagree 3.5%

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Overview of Findings

- Additional items with majority agreement and an environmentally-oriented theme were:
 - RT on FS lands must be developed in harmony with natural envy. (93.2% agreed)
 - The FS should provide environmental interpretive/educational programs to visitors (90.4% agreed)
 - The FS should provide environmental interpretive/educational programs to employees (84.3% agreed)
 - The FS supports environmental conservation (85.6% agreed)

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Sources of Concern about Environmental Problems

- Respondents were most concerned about environmental problems because of the consequences for future generations and children
- They were least concerned about these same problems because of consequences for their lifestyle, their future, and their prosperity

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Issues Facing Mgt. Area of Most Concern

- An array of concerns were expressed...the most common themes were
 - Lack of resources (funding and personnel)
 - Unmanaged use
 - Increased use
 - Agency relationship with the public

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Personal Concern about Climate Change Related to FS Lands

Chart goes here

A great deal 31.2%

4 28.2%

3 13.6%

2 15.7%

Not at all 7.2%

No opinion/unsure 4.2%

Most expressed somewhat to a great deal of concern about climate change and FS lands.

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Impacts from Climate Change that will affect RT on Mgt. Area

- Some of our respondents felt climate change was not occurring
- Others felt if it was occurring it would not make a difference in recreation
- Some expressed concern over increases in wildfire risk and changes in vegetation
- Others suggested a shift in where recreation would take place
 - Geographic-based variations were evident
 - Decreased recreation was not always anticipated, sometimes more recreation was expected

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Results: Actions to Assist with Global Climate Change

Chart goes here

Educate visitors:

Strongly agree 22.5%

Agree 38.6%

Neither 23.4%

Disagree 11.2%

Strongly disagree 4.2%

Reduce climate-changing gases:

Strongly agree 37.2%

Agree 41.2%

Neither 14%

Disagree 6.2%

Strongly disagree 1.4%

Anticipate the effects:

Strongly agree 27.8%

Agree 41.1%

Neither 20.9%

Disagree 7.4%

Strongly disagree 2.9%

Most agreed the FS should take each of the above actions. Only 8% felt the agency should do nothing.

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Overview of Findings

- Other FS actions respondents offered to address global climate change included...
 - Invest in educational programs and delivery
 - Design FS buildings around sustainability guidelines
 - More science to examine impacts and how to manage
 - Encourage non-motorized recreation
 - Lead by example, show the public how it's done

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Overview of Findings

- The following slides show degree of consideration given to actions that would ensure SRT in the future on FS lands
 - Most respondents are recycling
 - Fleet-related measures are in place to some degree, with more being implemented
 - Visitor education programs focus on environmental issues
 - Some partnering with local community and business is used to develop RT
 - Less than one-fifth have transportation mgt. in high use areas involving shuttles or buses

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Results: Actions to Ensure SRT in the Future on FS Managed Lands

Chart goes here

Recycling at headquarters:

Have not considered this 0.7%

Have considered but not implemented 5.8%

We are in the process of implementation 9%

In place to some degree 41.5%

Routinely practiced 42.9%

Recycling in field:

Have not considered this 8%

Have considered but not implemented 18%

We are in the process of implementation 10.5%

In place to some degree 43.1%

Routinely practiced 20.4%

Use of green products:

Have not considered this 2.8%

Have considered but not implemented 15.2%

We are in the process of implementation 23%

In place to some degree 45.9%

Routinely practiced 13.1%

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Results: Actions to Ensure SRT in the Future on FS Managed Lands

Chart goes here

Include hybrid vehicles in fleet:

Have not considered this 7%

Have considered but not implemented 22.2%

We are in the process of implementation 21.1%

In place to some degree 39.1%

Routinely practiced 10.5%

Reduce number of vehicles in FS fleet:

Have not considered this 6.6%

Have considered but not implemented 12.9%

We are in the process of implementation 26.3%

In place to some degree 36.9%

Routinely practiced 17.4%

Use reservation/sharing system:

Have not considered this 6.6%

Have considered but not implemented 11%

We are in the process of implementation 12.9%

In place to some degree 39.8%

Routinely practiced 29.7%

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Results: Actions to Ensure SRT in the Future on FS Managed Lands

Chart goes here

Transportation mgt. with bus or shuttle in high use areas:

Have not considered this 57%

Have considered but not implemented 24.6%

We are in the process of implementation 4.2%

In place to some degree 11.3%

Routinely practiced 2.8%

Education and interpretation focused on informing visitors about environmentally important issues:

Have not considered this 8.9%

Have considered but not implemented 28.9%

We are in the process of implementation 18.8%

In place to some degree 35.1%

Routinely practiced 8.2%

Partner with local community to develop RT opportunities:

Have not considered this 7.1%

Have considered but not implemented 17.7%

We are in the process of implementation 21.7%

In place to some degree 38.4%

Routinely practiced 15.1%

Partner with business to identify & develop RT opportunities:

Have not considered this 11.5%

Have considered but not implemented 26.8%

We are in the process of implementation 18.7%

In place to some degree 33.5%

Routinely practiced 9.6%

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Additional Measures to Ensure SRT on FS Lands

- “The quality of sustainable recreation/tourism on FS lands will continue to spiral downward with the agency until there is appropriate staffing and budget support for the task at hand.”
- “FS needs to become more proactive in the field of educating the public about natural resources and their role in enjoying them, using them wisely and protecting them.”

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Where do we go from Here?

Additional work is being planned...if you are interested in these future studies or additional details from this manager study contact us.

The slide includes a picture of a group of hikers sitting on a rock arch.