

UTAH RECREATION & TOURISM MATTERS



Institute for Outdoor Recreation and Tourism

December 2009

No. IORT/019

Outdoor Recreation Availability and Participation Across Utah's Seven Planning Districts Douglas K. Reiter, Steven W. Burr, and Jascha M. Zeitlin

Introduction

In order to be eligible to receive matching grant funding for outdoor recreation improvements and development from the federal government through the Land and Water Conservation Fund, each state is required to produce a State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) every five years. This document must be, primarily, a comprehensive study of outdoor recreation supply and demand within the state and involve sufficient opportunities for broad public involvement (National Park Service, 2008). As part of Utah's 2009 SCORP study, Utah State University's Institute for Outdoor Recreation and Tourism conducted a state-wide telephone survey of 2,678 adult residents. For the study, random samples were drawn from each of the seven state planning districts (Figure 1).

Outdoor Recreation Activities Statewide

Table 1 compares participation rates in outdoor recreation activities over the previous 12 months across the planning districts. Some of the activities show similar participation rates, such as camping and hiking, while other activities occur more frequently in certain districts. For instance, OHV (off-highway vehicle) recreation was only participated in by about 28% of respondents in the Wasatch Front Planning District, while about 56% in the Six County and Southeast districts indicated they had recreated using an OHV in the past year. Fishing and hunting are also notably more popular in the Uintah Basin than other districts.

In addition to participation rates, some interesting differences between planning districts emerged when researchers compared the number of times respondents reported they or a member of their household participated in specific recreational activities. Respondents in the Southeast Planning District went hiking more than three times as often as Six County respondents (averages of 10.2 and 3.2 times, respectively). Hiking

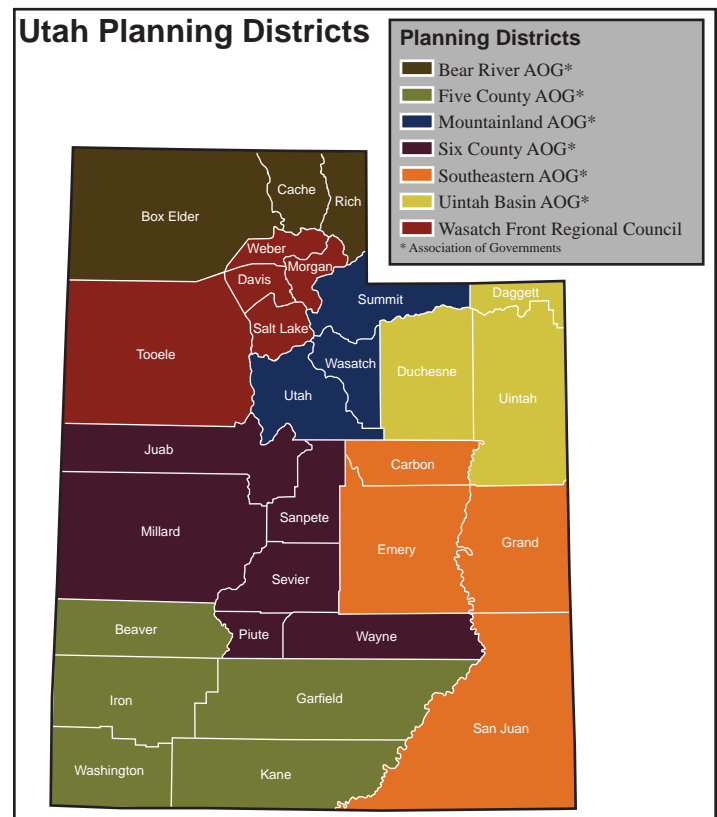


Figure 1

Table 1: Household Recreation Activity Participation Rates over Previous 12 Months by Planning District

Activity	Planning Districts						
	Bear River	Wasatch Front	Mountainland	Six County	Five County	Uintah Basin	Southeast
Camping	60.0%	53.4%	58.3%	60.9%	56.0%	69.3%	61.9%
Hiking or backpacking	48.4%	46.7%	55.1%	42.5%	55.2%	45.6%	45.5%
Mountain biking	21.5%	22.2%	28.1%	11.3%	17.1%	15.0%	13.5%
Bicycling, not including mountain biking	43.4%	41.8%	44.2%	36.2%	36.7%	34.3%	26.6%
Off-highway vehicle riding	40.4%	28.3%	36.4%	56.1%	45.7%	50.1%	55.9%
Rock climbing	12.3%	8.9%	11.5%	9.9%	13.6%	7.9%	14.3%
Horseback riding	21.8%	14.6%	19.2%	26.8%	22.2%	32.8%	23.7%
Swimming	63.9%	62.0%	67.0%	50.8%	63.3%	53.8%	52.0%
Motorized water sports including jet skiing, water skiing, and wake boarding	28.0%	24.5%	30.7%	24.5%	31.9%	28.8%	19.0%
Fishing	48.7%	42.3%	46.6%	57.1%	52.1%	70.4%	57.0%
Hunting	24.7%	18.8%	21.0%	37.2%	27.1%	49.1%	35.6%
Rodeos	36.4%	23.8%	28.2%	39.4%	30.3%	48.5%	34.0%
Running	34.6%	33.6%	42.0%	24.9%	30.2%	24.6%	23.1%
Picnicking	77.0%	70.9%	75.9%	68.3%	71.0%	74.1%	72.1%
Wildlife or bird watching	28.8%	37.9%	44.2%	46.7%	42.9%	50.3%	51.6%
Golf	32.4%	29.8%	32.9%	21.9%	31.2%	22.5%	21.4%
Walking for pleasure or exercise	87.4%	88.3%	86.1%	78.8%	85.1%	77.1%	80.4%
Playground activities	51.5%	48.2%	52.5%	43.0%	42.8%	43.0%	41.9%
Court-based sports such as basketball, tennis, volleyball, and racquetball	41.5%	38.7%	42.1%	33.7%	35.4%	35.7%	31.4%
Field based sports such as outdoor soccer, baseball, softball, and football	40.9%	34.7%	42.3%	36.7%	33.4%	38.9%	33.5%

participation averages ranged from 5.0 to 7.6 in the other five planning districts.

Also of interest was the finding that, on average, respondents residing in the Wasatch Front and Mountainland Planning Districts only engaged in OHV recreation 5.1 and 5.8 times per year, respectively, compared to 25.0 times for Six County residents, 16.0 times for Uintah Basin residents, 14.3 times for Southeastern residents, 13.9 times per year for Five County residents, and 9.2 times for Bear River residents. Horseback riding was participated in most frequently among those in the Bear River (12.3 times per year) and Uintah Basin (10.1 times per year) districts. Other districts’ averages ranged from a low of 1.6, in Mountainland, to 7.7 in the Six County Planning District. Respondents living in the Mountainland Planning District tend to run more frequently than respondents in other districts (40.6 times per year compared to 16.8 to 28.5 times per year for the rest of the planning districts).

Perceptions of Recreation Supply and Demand
The sections that follow report respondents’ percep-

tions of recreation supply and demand for each state planning district. Respondents were asked about the importance of various outdoor recreation activity settings to their community on a scale of one to five. Similarly, respondents were asked about their satisfaction with the availability of such settings on a similar five-point scale. Responses of one are reported as “not important,” two and three as “low importance,” and four and five as “high importance.” The same structure was applied to analysis of satisfaction questions. In the interest of brevity, we report only wildland recreation



Visitors watch bison at Utah’s Antelope Island State Park

Table 2: Summary of Respondents’ Perceptions of Recreation Area Importance and Availability by Planning District

	Natural Areas			Camping Areas			Hiking Trails			OHV Trails		
	High Importance	High Satisfaction	High Importance & Low/No Satisfaction	High Importance	High Satisfaction	High Importance & Low/No Satisfaction	High Importance	High Satisfaction	High Importance & Low/No Satisfaction	High Importance	High Satisfaction	High Importance & Low/No Satisfaction
Bear River	70.3%	55.4%	24.6%	69.9%	49.9%	29.3%	52.9%	44.7%	21.9%	39.0%	37.0%	22.3%
Wasatch Front	73.9%	47.1%	36.3%	67.6%	44.4%	33.4%	60.9%	51.8%	22.9%	32.0%	31.2%	20.1%
Mountainland	77.3%	56.5%	29.3%	71.2%	49.2%	32.2%	61.9%	55.2%	22.0%	37.9%	32.9%	23.6%
Six County	69.7%	72.1%	13.2%	75.1%	67.6%	20.0%	48.2%	43.9%	19.0%	65.0%	59.6%	19.4%
Five County	73.1%	67.8%	17.7%	65.3%	55.5%	23.7%	62.8%	64.2%	13.6%	45.1%	46.2%	17.8%
Uintah Basin	74.0%	69.4%	15.5%	82.2%	73.7%	16.5%	46.8%	47.7%	17.1%	60.8%	46.0%	27.9%
South-east	75.2%	69.7%	15.8%	80.3%	64.3%	24.0%	53.5%	55.9%	15.7%	69.4%	60.2%	21.2%

settings (natural areas, camping areas, hiking trails, and OHV trails), rather than results related to municipal/urban facilities and settings. Results are summarized in Table 2.

Natural Areas

Most respondents in all districts reported that natural areas were important to their communities. The percentage of respondents indicating a high level of importance ranged from 69.7% in the Six County Planning District to 77.3% in Mountainland.

More variation is evident in respondents’ satisfaction with the availability of natural areas. Percentages reporting high levels of satisfaction ranged from a low of 47.1%, for the Wasatch Front, to 72.1%, for the Six County Planning District. Except for the Wasatch Front, more than half of respondents in all planning districts reported high levels of satisfaction with the

availability of natural areas.

Respondents who reported that natural areas were highly important to their communities but indicated no or low satisfaction with their availability were also most prevalent in the Wasatch Front Planning District (36.3%). Percentages for other planning districts ranged from a low of 13.2% in Six County to 29.3% in Mountainland.

Overall, natural areas are perceived to be highly important to a majority of respondents in all planning districts. However, results seem to indicate room for improvement in providing residents with access to natural areas in the Wasatch Front, Mountainland, and, to a lesser extent, the Bear River Planning Districts.

Camping Areas

Results indicate that camping areas are also very important to respondents. High importance ratings ranged from 65.3% of respondents for the Five County Planning District to 82.2% of respondents in the Uintah Basin.

Between 44.4% (Wasatch Front) and 73.7% (Uintah Basin) of respondents reported high satisfaction levels regarding camping area availability.

Respondents who rated importance highly but indicated no or low satisfaction with availability made up between 16.5% (Uintah Basin) and 33.4% (Wasatch Front) of respondents.



Hikers in Utah’s Arches National Park



OHV recreation along the Colorado River

Camping areas appear to be very important to Utah residents, generally, though this appears to be particularly true of Uintah Basin and Southeast Planning District residents, with more than 80% rating importance highly. The Wasatch Front, Mountainland, and Bear River Planning Districts appear to be the areas with the greatest unmet demand for camping areas.

Hiking Trails

Overall, hiking trails seem to be of somewhat lower importance to Utah residents than either natural areas or camping areas. Nevertheless, substantial importance was reported across the state. The percentage of respondents who reported that hiking trails were important to their communities ranged from 46.8% (Uintah Basin) to 62.8% (Five County).

High satisfaction levels for hiking trail availability were reported by between 43.9% (Six County) and 64.2% (Five County) of respondents.

Slightly lower percentages were evident for respondents who rated the community importance of hiking trails highly but reported no or low satisfaction with availability. These ranged from 13.6%, for the Five County Planning District, to 22.9%, for the Wasatch Front.

OHV Trails

Large differences between districts were reported regarding perceptions of the importance of OHV trails to

respondents' communities. The percentage of respondents who rated OHV trail importance highly ranged from 32.0%, for the Wasatch Front Planning District to 69.4%, for the Southeast. Three planning districts—Southeast, Six County, and Uintah Basin—had more than 60% of respondents reporting a high level of community importance. In the other four planning districts, less than 50% of respondents reported a high level of importance.

Satisfaction with OHV trail availability ranged from 31.2%, in the Wasatch Front Planning District to 60.2%, in the Southeast. Overall satisfaction levels for OHV trail availability are notably low for the Bear River, Mountainland, and Wasatch Front planning Districts.

The prevalence of respondents who rated the importance of OHV trails highly but reported low satisfaction with their availability ranged from 17.8% (Five County) to 27.9% (Uintah Basin). Results seem to show a noteworthy unmet demand in for OHV trails in the Uintah Basin Planning District.

The Utah State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, 2009 is available online in its entirety at:
http://static.stateparks.utah.gov/plans/09SCORPFinal_1-27-09.pdf

References

National Park Service (2008). *Land and Water Conservation Fund state assistance program: Federal financial assistance manual, volume 69*. Washington, D.C.: National Park Service.

For More Information:

Copies of this and other publications are available through Utah State University's Institute for Outdoor Recreation and Tourism, or visit our website at <http://extension.usu.edu/iort/>

Institute for Outdoor Recreation and Tourism
Utah State University
5220 Old Main Hill
Logan, Utah 84322-5220