Visitor Information - Surveys and Countings in Finland

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LVVI- Project Aim

• To inventory and to assess nation-wide outdoor recreation demand and supply in Finland

• To monitor changes of participation in outdoor activities
• To monitor behaviour patterns of recreationists
• To monitor changes in supply of recreation opportunities and the quality of services
LVVI- Project Actions

• The project collects statistics and gathers data on a continuous basis

• The data are used for many types of analysis of different issues, such as predicting participation in recreation activities and nature tourism, assessing welfare impacts, recreational use of state-owned lands
LVVI- Project Schedule

- A pilot study in 1997
- The first inventory from 1998 to 2000
- The assessment study continues from 2001 to 2004
- A new round of inventories is planned to take place during the period from 2005 to 2010
Demand Study

- Population survey, sample 12 000, conducted by means of telephone interviews and questionnaires sent by post

- Visitor survey standardisation
  (for on-site visitor surveys)
The state owned recreation and protected areas

- 35 national parks
- 400 other protected areas
- 7 national recreation areas
- 100 recreation forests
Visitation on state land

• About one million recreation visits per year on state land
• The number of visits paid in the national parks has doubled in the past ten years, and the trend continues
• The management budgets for protected areas and recreation sites does not meet the growing demands of recreation services

Visitor information is needed
Visitor studies – why and what?

People are very critical as to where they want to spend their valuable leisure time

- That is
  - “why do people come to this specific area?”
  - “what makes this area so attractive?”
  - “how satisfied are the visitors with this area and the services?”

_visitor information support to evaluating these issues in planning and management_
Visitor Surveys and Countings

Visitor survey standard - manual
  survey instruments - questionnaire
  data management

Visitor counting standard - manual
  traffic counters – counting forms
  data management

Education and support for park staff
Outcome of the Visitor Survey Project

Visitor Survey Manual
- step-by-step instructions
- standard questionnaire
- “manager’s guide”

Software
- based on MS Excel
- standard analyses
- immediate results
- tables and pictures can be easily transferred to MS Word etc.

Reports
- standard form
- comparable
- monitoring of changes

Visitor Survey 2002
Most Important Visitor Information

Visitor Profile

Activities

Duration of Visit

Expenditure

Satisfaction and Motives

Distribution of Use in Area

Special Questions

Distribution of Use in Time
Standard Questionnaire

• Only the most relevant issues were included in the standard questionnaire
• Special attention was given to the formulation of the questions and structure
• The standard questions form the basis of the questionnaire, but there is also room for questions specific to the areas
• Standard questionnaire was tested properly and further developed in three areas

☞ Now the standard questionnaire is in active use and can easily be applied in different kind of areas
Interpreting and Utilising Visitor Information

- Management plans
- Controlled visitor guidance
- Resource allocation
- Visitor Centres and Service Points
- Marketing and communications
- Monitoring changes
- Comparison between areas
- National database of visitors
- Recreation demand at the national level
Visitor Surveys by Metsähallitus from 1998 to 2003

- A total of 30 surveys
- 5 to 10 new surveys annually
- Surveys will be repeated at 5-year interval

- National Park
- National Hiking Area
- Recreation Site
- Other Protected Area
Conclusions

• Standard methods put into practise quickly
• Reliability of visitor statistics improved
• Attitudes towards visitor surveys are very positive
• Visitor information is increasing and it will be exploited more actively in the future
• National database of visitor information will be created in near future
• Visitor Information Management System can include also new applications such as assesment of economic impacts
• The long-term monitoring of recreational use of our natural resources - visitor surveys and countings - are well under way in Finland

Thank you!
Tack!