

National Park Designation – Visitor Flows and Tourism Impact

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National parks around the world are increasingly attracting visitors to experience pristine and unique natural environments. While increases in national park tourism provides business opportunities both in the parks and in adjacent communities, there are several economic, social and ecological aspects that need to be monitored in order to sustain high quality visitor experiences. Increases in visitation may cause negative impacts on the environment, conflicts between different user groups or within groups. At the same time, data on visitor numbers, distribution and attitudes is needed in order to design efficient management strategies and provide appropriate recreation opportunities. This paper reports preliminary findings from two different surveys of visitors to Fulufjället National Park in Sweden – one year before and after national park designation respectively. Both surveys used on site counters and self registration boxes to collect visitor data. Follow-up mailed questionnaires were sent to a sample of Swedish and German visitors after returning home. The survey of 2001 (one year prior to national park destination) collected data on visitor numbers, nationality, demographics, trip characteristics, crowding, willingness to pay, attitudes towards management actions and tourism development etc. The purpose of the 2003 survey (one year after national park designation) is to monitor possible short term changes in these parameters as a consequence of the national park designation in 2002. In addition, the 2003 survey is designed to estimate the regional economic impact of the park. Data from the two surveys are compared and the results are discussed from both a methodological and impact perspective.