

Development of a Values-based Approach to Managing Recreation on Ontario Crown Lands

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A key issue in sustainability is understanding the values of a particular place that are to be conserved. While many of the natural resource values of protected areas are mandated, values associated with public use and recreation are frequently less clearly defined and often hotly contested. Public involvement processes are often used to elicit these values and a number of mostly survey-based approaches have been developed to achieve this. However, theoretical considerations concerning the nature of values and the processes of value formation have brought into question whether survey approaches on their own are the most appropriate way of understanding values.

Consideration of public use and recreation values brings into play many of the issues surrounding place attachment and place identification. People value places because they symbolize something, because they have histories and memories associated with them, because they are interwoven in the stories we tell our self and others about who we are, and because they are rhetorical methods of making arguments for managing a place in one way or another. These ideas center on ‘meaning-based’ rather than ‘information processing’ models of value formation. In this context, values are seen as discursive constructions, which are continuously being contested and reconstructed through political dialogue.

It is argued that a ‘meaning-based’ approach to value formation is better suited to the developing models of collaborative planning than are the expert-driven, rational decision-making models that have dominated natural area planning. This paper describes a planning approach, which seeks to combine both qualitative approaches to data collection (focus groups and key informants) and survey methods in the elicitation of values attached to a multi-use area. A process will be detailed that links supply characteristics of an area with the spatial distribution of values ascribed to the same area utilizing GIS and photo-mosaic representations. The case study area discussed in this paper is the Dog River/Matawin and Quetico Provincial Park areas of North-western Ontario. Application of this approach to protected area planning will be discussed.