

Quantitative impact indicators for footpaths: effective proposals

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Spain has a protected surface over 4 million hectares, with more than 830 natural areas protected by some type of legal figure -regional, state or international-. This supposes almost 8% of the total surface of the State. Annually, more than 30.000.000 of people visit Spanish parks, obtaining an average of 16 visits by hectare of protected surface. This gives an idea about the tourism pressure that these zones support. One of the most used equipment in protected areas are footpaths, allowing to discover and promote the space, but also supporting a big pressure. In order to avoid its degradation we need suitable indicators of impact.

Opposite, exists remote places like Byers Peninsula (*Antarctic Special Protection Area No. 126*) with a very low human presence (6-8 researchers during two-three months by year). Is needed to study the environmental impact in these areas too.

In this paper, are analysed different indicators which are quantitative measures that give objective evaluations of impacts. The selection of the indicators is related to footpath location conditions. Finally, the most important is to design a suitable system of indicators to make compatible the recreational-tourist use with the conservation of the natural values of the protected area.

Key-words: impact indicators, footpaths management, protected areas.