

Examining Differences among Off-Highway Vehicle Riders: An Application of GIS in Visitor Experience Planning

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Throughout the world many natural resource managers lack basic knowledge about what factors contribute to quality visitor experiences for motorized recreation, what may threaten a quality visitor experience, and whether or not all riders should be managed in similar ways. To help address this problem, this project uses the benefits-based management framework and Jacob and Schreyer's theory of goal interference to examine perceived differences among OHV rider population segments as it relates to motorized user conflict as well as what resource preferences are desired by riders. According to Jacob and Schreyer, in cases where tolerance between groups is extremely low, an unwillingness to share resources may become a source of contention. Therefore, if tolerance is low among motorized recreation user groups, but these groups are managed along the same spectrum of resource and social settings, then the potential for a degraded visitor experience greatly increases and the conservation of resources might be hampered. In order to help spatially reference where preferred resource settings exist within the study area, a modified version of Kliskey's (2002) recreation terrain suitability index was formulated and mapped within GIS software. In addition, information regarding tolerance between riding groups was inferred into a spatial suitability model in order to pin point areas where conflict would most likely occur, as well as sensitive ecological areas that needed to be managed for conservation. Results of the study indicate that not all riders perceive themselves the same, and some riders showed low tolerance towards different rider segments. The use of GIS in identifying areas where conflict was most likely to occur in conjunction with what areas needed to be managed for conservation proved to be a useful tool in developing management strategies that meet both of the Travel Management plan's objectives.