The Future of Outdoor Recreation Research and Education in the USA: Preliminary Outcomes of a National Strategic Planning Process

IUFRO Division 6 Symposium Presentation

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Societal Importance of Outdoor Recreation
Economic Impact

- Estimated $730 billion industry in USA (Outdoor Industry Foundation, 2006)
- 6.4 million jobs generated
- $87 billion fed, state taxes
- Active outdoor recreation:
  (Biking; hunting; hiking; camping; paddling; fishing; snow sports; wildlife viewing)
Health & Well-being

- 1 in 3 kids are overweight in US (Alliance for a Healthier America)

- Last Child in the Woods? (Richard Louv)

- Nature Deficit Disorder

- Political movement to reconnect children & nature
Environmental Impacts

- Unmanaged impacts of Off-Highway Vehicles
- Snowmobile impacts in Yellowstone National Park
- Loss of open space; amenity migration
- Challenge to manage for sustainable experiences & ecosystems
Strategic Importance to Resource Management Agencies

- US Forest Service—Four major threats:
  * Loss of open space
  * Un-managed recreation

- USFS Strategic Goal: “Provide high quality outdoor recreation while sustaining natural resources, to help meet national recreation demand.”

- National Park Service. . . . President’s 2008 Budget Proposes $3 Billion investment in national parks over 10 years
Modest Investment in Science & Education

- 2005 US Forest Service R & D Annual Report
  - 15 soc. sci. of 486 scientists = 3.1 %
  - Numbers flat since 1995

- National Research Initiative Allocations 2007
  - TOTAL NRI ALLOCATION $181,000,000
  - Managed Ecosystems $4,000,000 (2.2%)
  - Rural Development $0
Outdoor Recreation Research & Education (ORRE): Defining National Strategic Direction and Building Capacity
USDA—CSREES

- Federal agency in US Dept. of Agriculture

- Advance knowledge for agriculture, environment, human health, and communities

- Fund research, education, and outreach programs

- Work through partnerships with Land-Grant University system and other partner organizations
Strategic Planning Context

- CSREES-sponsored

- Deliberative; participatory process/modest budget

- National Steering Committee (30)
  - May 2007 Meeting

- Professional Society Roundtables

- Iterative Plan Development; Draft form presently
Draft Strategic Plan Outcomes

- Vision
- Mission
- Strategic Themes
- Implementation Strategies
Vision

“Sustainable outdoor environments connecting people and nature through recreation, leading to healthier people, resources, and communities.”
Mission

- ADVANCE knowledge about sustainable outdoor environments, recreation experiences, and healthy communities.

- FOSTER innovative education programs to develop future leaders and engage citizens in sustainable outdoor environments, recreation experiences, and healthy communities.

- BUILD CAPACITY to transfer useable knowledge and communicate impacts about sustainable outdoor environments, recreation experiences, and healthy communities to policy-makers, industry, landowners, managers, and communities.
Strategic Themes

- Theme #1: Outdoor Recreation, Human Health and Well-being

- Theme #2: Sustainable and Accessible Outdoor Environments

- Theme #3: Outdoor Recreation, Resilient and Vibrant Communities

- Research, Education, and Outreach Strategies
Implementation Strategies

- Promote ORRE Strategic Plan to university and agency scientists, educators, extension specialists, and administrators.
- Develop multi-state research projects
- Develop more inclusive language in formula fund and competitive research programs
- Establish national Advisory Committee
- Support unified professional advocacy network for ORRE
Global Linkage Opportunities

- Social learning with national strategic ORRE plan development and implementation

- Coordinate efforts to leverage support for science and education programs

- Share strategic plan outcomes, impacts, and success stories

- Host coordinated science/policy workshops; other ideas??
Kiitos and Thank You!!