

## CHALLENGES IN USING GIS DATA AND METHODS TO YIELD INFORMATION FOR RECREATIONAL SUPPLY ASSESSMENTS

Petri J. Shemeikka

Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE), Data and Information Centre, Geoinformatics and Land Use  
Division, P.O. Box 140, FIN-00251 Helsinki, Finland, +358-40-0148 753,  
petri.j.shemeikka@ymparisto.fi, www.environment.fi/syke

### **Abstract**

Some basic questions in recreational supply assessments are: "are there enough recreational areas for people to refresh themselves in?", "how do these areas fall into various classifications?" and "are current locations of these areas the most suitable in the regional structure?" This presentation focuses on demonstrating and evaluating some of the most usable GIS data available to assess recreational supply. The most valuable data can be classified into a) databases on recreation opportunities (either direct: areas, trails, services, or also indirect: data on forests, land use etc.), b) databases that can be used to estimate demand and its location (population and its distribution etc.), and c) enquiries or existing research material.

To create a reliable image on the state of recreational opportunities on any larger region, e.g. a specific country or whole Europe, one is dependent on databases of variable characteristics and quality. By giving examples of different aspects regarding scale or quality issues (e.g. accuracy, precision, reliability, scope, comparability) this presentation aims to illustrate the useful albeit sometimes problematic nature of integrating various GIS databases in recreational assessments. Before using GIS, one must carefully assess the nature of the phenomena in question and particularly how correctly the database projects it. Regional differences, e.g. spatial differences in demand, or practices such as everyman's right, place requirements for the methods applied in recreational supply assessments.

There are plenty of databases available, both GIS and conventional. Although most of them were originally made for quite different purposes, they are fully practicable when utilized with care. Nevertheless, to ensure that all available areas and opportunities are included, it is obvious that precise databases on recreational areas, trails and services are invaluable for large-scale assessments.

### **Key Words**

Outdoor recreation opportunities, GIS, land use, recreational supply assessments