The Socio-Economic Benefits of Recreation and Tourism in Forests:
An Overview of WG1 COST E33

Forest Recreation & Tourism Serving Urbanised Societies
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Dr. MURRAY C. SIMPSON
• Senior Research Associate, Oxford University Centre for the Environment
• Principal, Sustainable Solutions Worldwide
• Associate Professor Estonian University of Life Sciences
‘Some of you will have heard this before…but I want to hear it again’

-Groucho Marx
(famous ‘forester’)
THE PRESENTATION

• Introduction and Features of Nature Based / Forest Tourism

- WG1: Findings and Observations……..

• Impacts on Rural Development

• Socio-Economic Contributions of Nature Based and Forest Tourism

• Fostering Factors for Success

• Barriers to Success

• The Future???
INTRODUCTION AND FEATURES OF NATURE BASED / FOREST TOURISM
Features of NBT - 1

• Concerned with direct enjoyment of some relatively undisturbed phenomenon of nature (Valentine, 1992)

• Emphasis on fostering understanding and conservation of natural environment (Newsome et al, 2002)

• Minimises negative impacts on natural and socio-cultural environment
Features of NBT - 2

• Relies on a range of natural areas and attractive scenery

• Increasingly people are seeking new experiences and there is a general desire to rediscover links to nature

(Maetzold, 2002)
Features of NBT - 3

- In 2006, there were 846 million international tourist arrivals (UNWTO, 2007)

- Market for nature-based tourism estimated to be increasing at six times faster than tourism overall (UNWTO, 2006)

- Finland, 80% of population live in urban environments 2004 40% of adult population took nature trips (Tyrväinen, 2004)
Features of NBT - 4

• Four types of FT/NBT recognised:
  1. Consumptive and active – fishing, hunting
  2. Consumptive and passive – beachcombing
  3. Non-consumptive and active – hiking, canoeing
  4. Non-consumptive and passive – guided birdwatching, photography tours
Profile of a nature-based tourist

- Understand the profile of tourists to:
  - Identify natural areas sought
  - Identify potential negative impacts on areas

- Group sizes are generally small (<20)
  Rinne and Saasamoinen, 2005

- Tourists now have increased expectations of nature-based tourism
  Hillery et al, 2001; Priskin, 2001
WG1
FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS
WG1 – THE WORK

• Focus on the economic and social values and benefits of recreation and nature tourism

• Understanding the economic and social impacts and benefits

• Evaluation of different means for integrating forest-based nature tourism into the wider rural economy

• Exchange of knowledge on existing projects/practices

• Evaluation of research and practices for assessing and reducing conflict
WG1 – THE WORK

- 3 Objectives – Country studies and comparative
- 2 Sub-groups Objectives – Fostering, Barriers and Conflicts
- Case Studies
- Surveys of Businesses
- 2 – 3 Academic Papers
- Overview Book
- On-line Objectives
- Chapters 2, 3 and 4 +
IMPACT ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT
Impact on rural development -1

• Decline in traditional forestry / agriculture in many rural areas, important to find new and alternative ways of generating income without damaging the environment.

• FT/NBT ‘can’ maintain and enhance economy of, and employment within, rural areas.
Impact on rural development -2

- Landowners diversifying businesses to accommodate increasing demand
- The more ‘rural’ an area gets, the higher priority that is put on nature and recreation by landowners. Elands et al (2002)
Impact on rural development - 3

Case study: Southern Norway

Rural NBT enterprises mapped
  – NBT in the region growing

• Owners interviewed
  – Mainly positive about future growth
  – Positive about development of further co-operation with other businesses
Impact on rural development - 4

• However, NBT may conflict with other livelihood activities such as fishing or agriculture (Ashley et al 2000)

• Tourism may create dependency on volatile, seasonal industry

• Many rural areas lack resources for effective management and unprepared for significant growth in visitor numbers (Wells, 1997)
Impact on rural development – 5

- Tourism opportunities in rural areas has knock-on effects to service providers
- Using local producers or suppliers benefits the rural economy
- Estimate forest-related tourism expenditure from tourism day visits was about £2.3 billion equating to over 3% of the total tourism expenditure in the UK (Hill et al. 2003)
Impact on rural development - 6

• Research debates the role that tourism has in rural development.

• Local communities insufficient understanding of tourism dynamics means unrealistic expectations / goals about what tourism may achieve in their locality (Saarinen 2007; Simpson 2008a)

• FT/NBT contributions to economy not always realised by local community (Berends et al, 2004; ZKA Consultants & Planners, 2004)
SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTIONS FROM NATURE BASED AND FOREST TOURISM
Socio - Economic Contributions – 1

Feeling Good!!!??!!

- Visitors to the area have positive knock-on effects for other providers
- Local employment generated
- Money stays within area if local people employed or services provided
Socio - Economic Contributions – 2

*Reality Bites…..*

- Characteristics of FT /NBT make socio-economic evaluation difficult!!
Socio- Economic contributions – 3

• Estimate natural areas, associated local cultures, and recreational, leisure activities, contribute 50% total economic activity attributable to travel/tourism (Steuve et al 2002)

• Conceptual framework for defining the linkage between livelihood activities and conservation.
  – If direct linkage so livelihoods depend on biodiversity or where local community benefits economically, more likely to taken action to counter threats to resources

  (Salafsky and Wollenberg 2000)
Socio- Economic contributions – 4

• If local community gain economically from a resource or feature, they are more likely to be committed to protection
• And… Benefits should be shared locally
• Protected areas supply crucial part of FT/NBT experience BUT typically capture little of economic value of the stream of benefits (Wells, 1997).
Socio-Economic contributions – 5

Well-planned tourism ‘can’ provide economic and political incentives for proper management, conservation and provide additional benefits to local communities / regional economies.
Socio-Economic contributions - 6

Case study: Ireland
(Irish Sports Council and Coillte, 2005)

- Found that the direct expenditure by Irish trail users on items such as food, drink, accommodation and trail equipment totalled €307 million annually.
Case study: Kuhmo Municipality, Eastern Finland
(Rinne and Saasamoinen, 2005)

- Surveyed 385 tourist groups and 100 tourism operators
- Gross income impact amounted to €3.45 million per annum year, equalling exactly half of the total tourism income
- After income leakage, € 1.98 million net income impact
- NBT employed 53 man-year-units accounting for 48% of tourism jobs and 1.6% of total employment
Socio-Economic contributions - 8

- FT/NBT ‘can’ be a benefit, BUT little research into how to integrate FT/NBT into economies
- Economic impact assessments provide an indication of monetary impact and, indicate the direction and spatial distribution of flows of economic benefit

(e.g. Ní Dhubháin et al 1994; Berends et al 2004; Slee et al, 2005a)
In the UK, the largest benefit of forest recreation to rural economic development is to local businesses rather than woodland owners (Slee et al., 2003; Slee et al., 2005).
RELEVANT… Case study: Spenceley and Goodwin 2007; Simpson 2008a, 2008b)

NBT-RSA evaluate impact on poor
• Socio-economic impacts evaluated:
  – Employment
  – Gender equality
  – Procurement
  – Dependency on tourism and
  – Access to markets
• Studies demonstrate isolated efforts from individual tourism companies have little tangible impact on the majority of people living in highly populated rural communities
KEY FOSTERING FACTORS FOR SUCCESSFUL FOREST TOURISM
Key Fostering Factors...1

• Self-motivation
• Entrepreneurial attitude
• Capital to develop facilities, accommodation, activities
• Cross-sectoral
Key Fostering Factors...2

- Partnerships with other businesses, landowners to share knowledge, understanding, risk and capital
- Stakeholders with a range of skills and experience
- Local participation at all stages of product development
BARRIERS TO SUCCESSFUL FOREST TOURISM
Barriers... 1

- Lack of mechanisms whereby landowners can gain economically from alternative uses of their land
- Lack of awareness of the opportunities
  (e.g. Malnig (1996) and Mischkulnig (1996)).
Barriers...2

• Concerns surrounding access and public liability
• Lack of mechanisms where landowners gain economically from tourists
• Lack of co-ordination and support for FT/NBT (Irish Sports Council 2007)
• Small, fragmented nature of private land holdings limit types of enterprises that can be developed (Cregan and Murphy 2006)
Barriers...3

• Solutions?
  - integrated approaches to development (Tyrvainen, 2007)
    – New types of agreements and markets are needed between entrepreneurs and private landowners to achieve mutual benefits in tourism development at a local level
    – A compensation system for private woodland owners who manage sites specifically for recreational benefit is suggested
The Future...1

• Demand increasing
• Supply???
• Supporting landowners, businesses and the national, local, regional economy
• Understanding the various forms of interaction
• Multi- stakeholder engagement
The Future…2

- Research recreation use of forests
- Research contribution FT/NBT to socio-economics.
- Climate change
- ‘improve the quality of information available to policy makers and forest managers on the recreation and tourism benefits of forestry and to increase the cost-effectiveness of techniques for delivering recreation and tourism benefits from forestry’
‘Keep a green tree in your heart and perhaps a singing bird will come’
- Chinese proverb

THANK YOU

murray.simpson@ouce.ox.ac.uk