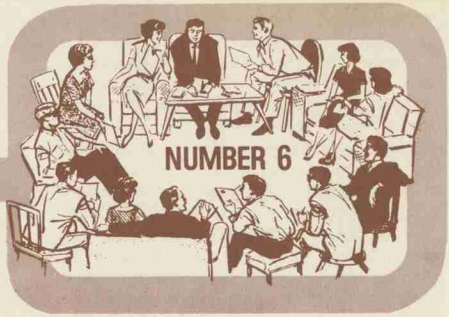
DECISIONS FOR PROGRESS



PREPARED BY THE STAFF OF THE AGRICULTURAL POLICY INSTITUTE, N. C. STATE RALEIGH, N. C.

Recreation and Economic Development

Americans have always valued the outdoors both for its beauty and as a place to hunt, fish, swim, tour or engage in a multitude of other leisure activities. Unless we take the proper steps, however, our children will lack the outdoor facilities we take for granted. All of us—public officials, community leaders, or citizens—should consider what action needs to be taken to provide facilities for outdoor activities and to preserve our country's heritage of natural beauty.

Increasing population and rising levels of income pose both a challenge and an opportunity for many communities. The challenge arises because continued economic growth and prosperity make it harder to find facilities for outdoor sports, places to enjoy natural scenery, or just to "get away from it all." The opportunity is the other side of this coin: as outdoor facilities become scarce, many communities find that catering to tourists or sportsmen can be a profitable source of local income and employment.

This dual challenge-opportunity becomes apparent when one examines statistics on outdoor recreation. An estimated 4,377,000,000 outdoor recreation visits were made during the summer of 1960. In 1961 recreation expenditures amounted to $43 billion. In North Carolina alone an estimated $888 million are spent by tourists each year. This is topped by several states. In 1957 New York, Florida, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania each took in more than a billion dollars. When one adds to these figures the expenditures on boats, fishing gear, camping equipment, and clothes, etc., it is obvious that recreation is big business.

Such expenditures can have a substantial impact on local communities. Around the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, for example, some 2.5 million visitors spent about $28 million in 1956; in 1958, nearly 3.2 million visitors spent about $35 million. A large share of the money spent on recreation remains in the local area which makes recreation especially attractive to those concerned with local growth.

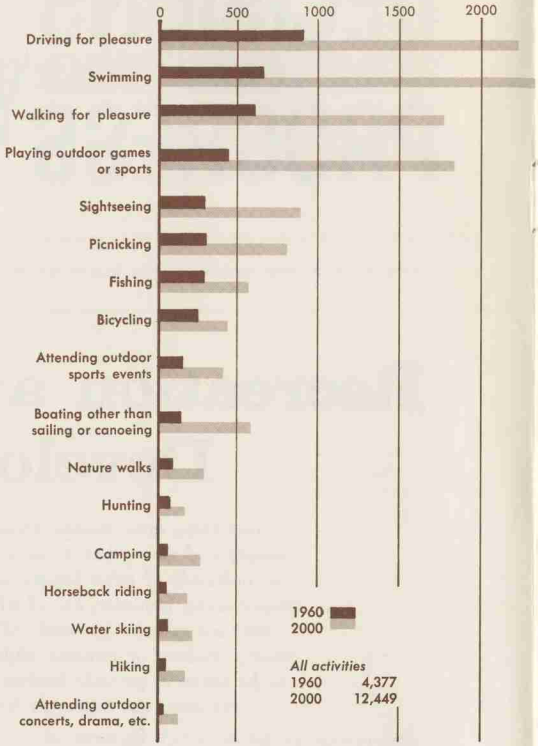
The demand for recreation is growing. The report of the President's Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission (ORRRC), *Outdoor Recreation for Americans,* which contains the figures quoted above, estimates that by the year 2000 summer recreation participation will increase over two and one-half times to 12,449,000,000 visits. This is illustrated in Figure 1, which also shows that driving, swimming, walking, and similar "uncomplicated" activities are the most popular. Figure 2 reinforces the latter point by showing the number of days that the "average" person spent on each major activity in 1960-61. The "average man" spent 20.73 days driving for pleasure as compared to 1.76 days horseback riding, to give just two illustrations.

Until recently Americans took for granted that land, water, and open space would always be available. However, the growth of "Megopolis" or the "supercity" that stretches from Boston to Richmond shows that we can no longer assume that one can find all the outdoors he wants by driving past the city limits. Today, cities and towns need space to provide their citizens with natural beauty and outdoor recreation. At the same time, they need to consider the possibility of providing recreation opportunities for others and thereby increasing local income and employment.

Recreation development nevertheless is not a Royal Road to Prosperity. Not only is it usually costly and difficult, but it will not solve all the problems faced by underdeveloped areas. For example, it will not solve the problem of low farm incomes. Some have invisioned turning farms into game preserves or other tourists attractions. The investment needed and the optimal size of recreation enterprises means that, however rosy the future for recreation, not all the resources now underemployed in agriculture can be shifted to raising game or running camps.

Most localities have thought of economic growth in terms of attracting industry and have seen good recreation facilities as a lure. While it is undoubtedly true that executives desire amenities for their families and their employees, transportation facilities, trained labor, and raw materials are the primary determinants of location. It is not easy to attract industry to small towns. For many areas recreation development may be a superior method of increasing income. This is particularly true for many rural areas which have a pool of labor skilled in the use of tractors, saws, other farm equipment, and labor familiar with the techniques of soil and moisture conservation required for wildlife management, park maintenance, and recreation management. If the other necessary conditions are present it may be easier to utilize the labor force in recreation than to try to attract some industry requiring a different type of training. In short, while recreation is no cure-all, no area can afford to overlook its possibilities.

Figure 1. Number of Occasions of Participation in Outdoor Summer Recreation (1960 compared with 1976 and 2000 by millions)



Source: Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission, Outdoor Recreation for America (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1962), p. 34.

Goals

A sound recreation program must have a clear statement of its purpose. Two basic choices are open. The first is to pursue a *"preservationist"* policy and develop facilities with strict limitation on use in order to maintain the natural characteristics of the area. The second is to concentrate on **"developed"** or **"mass"** recreation facilities. Unlike the former type, developed recreation implies intensive use of each unit of land or water. This usually means an extensive modification of the natural characteristics of the areas. To give two extreme examples: the wilderness zones in national forests and parks where roads are forbidden, motor boating is not allowed, and similar restrictions are imposed illustrates the first type of facility.

Coney Island illustrates the second. A community may wish to have some of both types of facilities. The resulting "mix," however, should be subjected to close scrutiny because it will not only determine which natural resources will be developed but the types and amounts of costs and benefits to the community.

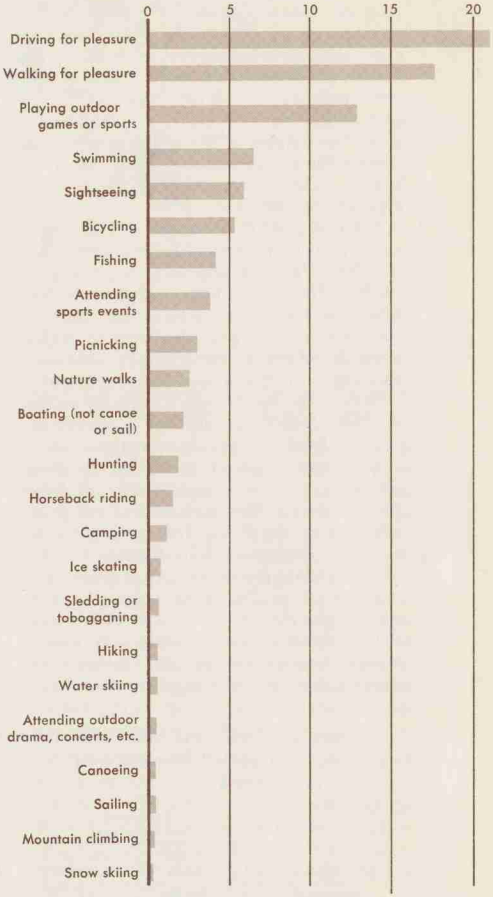
The basic decision to be made in deciding recreational goals can be rephrased: For whom are the recreational facilities to be developed? For the local citizens? For tourists?

For those who wish to see nature as undisturbed as possible? For those who like their recreation complete with hot and cold running water and night-time amusement?

For people who will come and spend a two-week vacation? For people who wish to spend a few hours? The answers will have a significant effect on the aesthetic characteristics of the area and on its contribution to economic growth. In general, the direct economic benefits from a preservationist type of recreation are much lower than from a highly developed type of recreation. Of course, there may be indirect benefits from the former which outweigh the latter. For example, a community which pursues a preservationist policy may be a charming town which thus finds it easy to attract citizens and industry.

There are also social costs and benefits from each type of development. None of us would want to see Mount Vernon devoted to commercial development.

Figure 2. Number of Activity Days Per Person, 12 Years and Over June 1, 1960-May 30, 1961



Source: ORRRC, op. cit., p. 46.

On the other hand, few of us want to lock-up resources. There is little value in having outdoors areas which no one can enjoy.

The point is that each community must decide whether its basic goal is to maintain the beauty of its natural surroundings—subject to some recreational use—or whether its goal is to get the most recreational use out of its resources.

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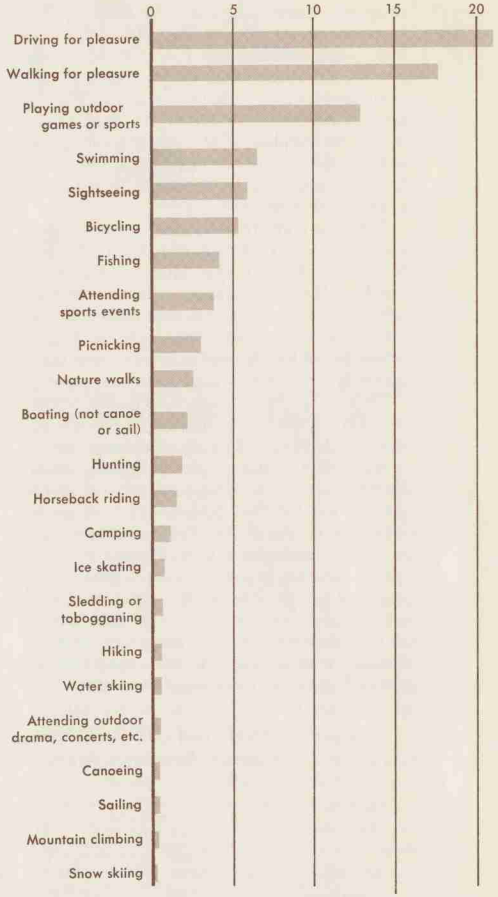

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Discuss and Decide

The first step in developing a recreation program, assuming goals have been chosen, is to assess its feasibility. Most localities have some areas—reservoirs, small forest groves, etc.—that could be developed. A program designed for local residents may require only modest facilities. But if the development is for the purpose of attracting people from outside the immediate area then resources, location, and investment in facilities must appeal to recreationists.

The first point to determine is what scenic and recreation resources the community has to offer. Water is especially important. A check of the most popular outdoor activities (shown in Figure 2) indicates that most require water. And activities such as hiking which do not require water usually seem more pleasant if there is a lake or stream nearby.

Even if the resources are available recreation development may still not be feasible because of location. There is no **national** shortage of most types of recreation facilities. However, most of the presently available sites are in the West and most of our population is in the East. This geographic inbalance is brought out by Figures 3 and 4 which compare population and availability of recreation sites. The South is in a relatively advantageous position as it has many potential recreation areas; increasing leisure, higher personal income, and better roads mean that more residents of Northern cities are able to come South for their recreation.

Assuming that the community has selected its goals, has the necessary resources, and is near enough to metropolitan population concentrations to make a development program feasible, the next choice is the kinds of facilities to be developed and who will provide the necessary investment. The ORRRC report lists six types of facilities each community should consider.

Class I — High-Density Recreation Areas. These are facilities designed for mass use. Examples are lakes or reservoirs developed for boating and swimming with docks, bathhouses, beaches, restaurants, and similar accommodations. This class of development has the most direct economic impact upon a region of any type of recreation. A Coney Island or even a fishing pier can provide substantial employment and sales potential. On the other hand, there may be significant social and economic costs. The natural characteristics of the area may become less attractive, and this may cause much resentment from local residents. For example, Massachusetts citizens successfully protested a project to convert Thoreau's Walden Pond into a swimming area. Also, Class I development may require a substantial increase in community services; more police and fire protection is usually necessary, extensive investment in roads and sanitary facilities is likely. Any locality desiring to maximize the economic growth potential of

Figure 3. Total Land and Water Area, Number and Acreage of nonurban Public Designated Recreation Areas, and Population, by Census Region, United States, 1960.

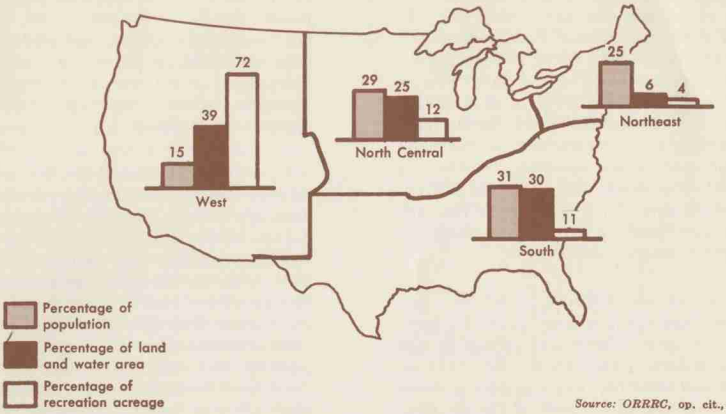
Area	Total land and water area		Recreation areas [1]			Population	
	1,000 acres	Percent of U. S. Total [2]	No.	1,000 acres	Percent of U. S. Total [2]	Millions of people	Percent
Northeast	108,386	4.7	2,569	9,288	3.3	44.7	25.0
North Central	489,939	21.1	10,969	29,064	10.3	51.6	28.9
South	575,841	24.9	5,554	26,495	9.4	55.0	30.8
West	760,162	32.8	4,956	169,153	59.8	27.2	15.3
Alaska	375,296	16.3	90	47,140	16.7	.2	—
Hawaii	4,111	.2	153	1,499	.5	.6	—
Total of 50 States	2,313,735	100.0	24,291	282,639	100.0	179.3	100.0

[1] *"Nonurban public designated recreation areas" means publicly owned and managed land and water areas upon which recreation is a recognized use. Hunting and fishing take place on some areas. The areas include the entire acreage of national, State, county, and local parks, monuments, historic sites, memorials, geologic areas, archeological areas, forests, recreation areas, public hunting and shooting grounds, water access areas, fish hatcheries, and wildlife refugees where the public is permitted to engage in recreation activities. Also included are about 15,000 small areas; about 11,000 are highway wayside and picnic areas, with a total of about 21,000 acres, and the other 4,000 are access areas, State, county, and other local forests, and recreation areas totaling close to 200,000 acres. Acreage is net; inholdings are excluded.*

[2] *Including Alaska and Hawaii.*

Source: Total acreage figures from Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1961, p. 161. Recreation area data from staff inventory studies, Public Outdoor Recreation Areas-Acreage, Use, Potential, ORRRC Study Report 1.

Figure 4. Regional Distribution of Population, Area and Recreation Acreage



Source: ORRRC, op. cit., p. 58.

recreation should give primary attention to recreation of this class. However, it should also examine all the costs as well as the benefits.

Who should undertake development of this type? Private firms and local governments are obvious candidates due to the economic attractiveness of such projects. If private firms are utilized, the locality may have to undertake public investment in roads, water and sewage systems, etc., before private capital will be interested. Also localities may have to extend to recreational entrepreneurs the same types of benefits and incentives offered manufacturing firms. If the municipality decides to develop the resources itself, consideration should be given to using private concessionaires to lessen the administrative burden. States and Federal Government agencies traditionally have stressed forms of recreation other than the Class I type.

Class II—General Outdoor Recreation Areas. Examples are camps in national forests, and most state parks. Such areas are managed for extensive use with some man-made facilities but, unlike Class I, an effort is made to limit use to provide more "natural" and uncrowded recreational opportunities.

Class II developments may provide substantial and direct economic impacts, but they will be less than Class I developments due to the limitation on number of people using each unit of land or water. On the other hand, the "aesthetic" and "amenity" aspects of this type of facility are usually higher.

Because of the constraint on mass use such development is not usually attractive to private capital. Local governments may find it desirable to undertake developments of this type particularly if local citizens wish a place to camp, picnic, or engage in other activities. Boy Scout Troops, church organizations, and similar groups need such areas. Most facilities of this type, however, are under state or federal management. Because of the need for skilled land and water management and the constraint on mass use, local governments usually prefer to put their efforts into developing other types of recreation.

Class III—Natural Environment Areas. In such areas manmade facilities are held to a minimum, but other uses may be made of the area besides recreation—lumbering, grazing, and mining are common uses. Scenic roadside zones in national forests are illustrations of this type of area.

Such developments provide less direct economic impacts than either of the previously discussed classes, but there may be extensive social benefits from maintaining attractive scenery and open spaces and preserving the beauty of a region. Many areas have found it beneficial to set aside "nature preserves," small areas (40 to 60 acres) to be maintained untouched for use by high school and college science students, nature enthusiasts, and others who wish to observe nature undisturbed by human "improvements."

Much of the Class III type of development can be undertaken through zoning, negotiation of scenic easements, local government purchase of small land areas, or encouraging private owners to deed land or easements to the public. The investment required is usually low—just a few picnic tables, fences, etc., but policing, maintenance, and sanitary and pollution control are required. To cite one potential often overlooked, the areas in highway "cloverleaves" not used for the road are seldom developed but could, with minimum investment, provide scenic areas.

The states and Federal Government are important agencies for Class III development. While local governments and private groups can contribute significantly, the national forests, and state highway and park systems will provide the major part of the facilities in this class.

Class IV — Unique Natural Areas. Such areas are of special scenic or scientific interest, for example, the Grand Canyon or Old Faithful. The primary use is educational or to provide an experience obtainable at few, if any, other locations. Most such areas are in national parks or monuments or under some other form of special management, usually by the Federal Government.

Class V — Primitive Areas. These are wild lands intended to allow the participant to enjoy a "wilderness experience." The user can get away from civilization and be alone with nature. Because they must be large most wilderness areas are in the western national forests or national parks. The essence of this type of recreation is that a few people use a large amount of resources. Thus, there will be less direct economic impact than for any of the other classes discussed. Guides, sporting goods stores, and similar businesses will be stimulated, but most areas will not find such development a strong impetus to economic growth. Because the motive for primitive areas is to preserve examples of what America looked like when it was a frontier, their maintenance is almost always undertaken by the Federal Government.

Class VI — Historic and Cultural Sites. Examples such as Mount Vernon and Kitty Hawk come instantly to mind. The motive for this type of facility is to preserve for future generations visible examples of our historical or cultural achievements. Recreation use, in the ordinary sense, is secondary though many sites, such as the Gettysburg battlefield, are important tourist attractions. Such areas are more analogous to museums than to campgrounds or other mass recreational facilities.

Localities with sites of historic or cultural interest should undertake to preserve them, although unless the area is of unusual significance there will probably be few direct economic benefits. Few towns have a Monticello, however, the social advantage of maintaining visible links with our history is obvious. Items with strong national interest—such as Independence Hall—are usually managed by the Federal Government. Items with more local interest are usually managed by state agencies, local governments, or private groups.

The first two and possibly the third classes of recreation facilities provide the recreation desired by people as **consumers.** Thus, they represent investment opportunities similar to other opportunities to produce wanted goods and services. The primary function of the facilities in the last three classes (and possibly Class III) is **non-economic.** Like museums they set aside things which are regarded as intrinsically valuable from a cultural standpoint regardless of their economic return. Further, like a museum such areas will yield some recreation, in the common sense of the word. Just as the worth of a museum is not measured by the number of visitors or admission fees, however, the worth of preserving Grand Canyon cannot be measured by the amount spent on hot dogs by the visitors. Maximizing the income from tourists would be inappropriate for many types of facilities. Any recreation at an area such as Mount Vernon should be in keeping with the goals which lead to its preservation.

Any community drawing up a recreation program must give close attention to which classes of facilities it will devote its efforts and funds. Such a choice will depend partly upon location and resources and partly upon the goals of the development. Communities with a preservationist's goal will stress Classes IV, V, and VI. Communities interested in recreation for economic development will concentrate on the first three classes.

What Now?

When a consensus about the issues discussed above has been reached, the first action item is a survey of the region for possible development sites. Then a decision must be made as to who should develop them; private firms, local governments, state governments, or federal agencies. Many organizations stand ready to assist both with this stage of planning and with the development and promotional work which will follow. At the federal level, the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, U. S. Department of the Interior, can assist. Other agencies which may be able to provide assistance are: Forest Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture; National Park Service, U. S. Department of the Interior; and Area Redevelopment Administration, U. S. Department of Commerce. On the state level, your department of conservation and economic development, or recreation commission stand ready, as do the state universities. Private organizations which can be particularly helpful with Class III developments are the National Audubon Society, 1130 Fifth Avenue, New York 28, N. Y.; and Nature Conservancy, 2039 K Street, N.W., Washington 6, D. C. The ORRRC report discussed above can be obtained from the Superintendent of Documents, U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington 25, D. C., for $2.00.

The most important step, however, is to get state and local authorities concerned with recreation. Municipal and county governments need to give recreation demands top priority in local planning. Zoning regulations, for example, should help achieve development and preservation goals. When public investment is undertaken, recreation should be considered. For instance, many dams used for municipal water developments can be used for recreation purposes without affecting the quality or quantity of local water supplies.

Most state and local governments need to undertake programs of land acquisition and public investment for development. This can be carried out in several ways—through eminent domain proceedings, by negotiated purchases, or by obtaining easements. The latter may be particularly useful because some rights—say, access to a lake—can be obtained without the expense of securing all the ownership rights. This method, as do all the others, has limitations as well as advantages and careful thought should be given to how to go about obtaining the land and rights needed.

State and local governments should exert their regulatory power to enforce pollution control and assure public safety and sanitation at recreation areas. A little litter along a highway can destroy millions of dollars worth of scenery. Finally, private individual and group recreation development of a type consistent with over-all goals should be vigorously encouraged.

CONCLUSION

The issues discussed here are problems which only rich nations face. Few countries in history—and America only recently—have had to consider how leisure time should be spent. Because this is a new problem there is a danger that we will neglect the chance to provide open space and recreation opportunities for both present and future citizens. At present, it is relatively cheap and easy to ensure that the outdoors remains a part of the American heritage. If we neglect present opportunities we may find it very difficult, if not impossible, to preserve the beauty of our natural resources and to develop outdoor recreation facilities. Every citizen should make it his duty to ensure that the proper action is taken now so we will continue to enjoy our outdoors.

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Prepared by:

George R. Hall
Profesor of Economics
University of Virginia

This leaflet is one of a series of six designed for use by informal discussion groups. The subject matter is concerned with economic development. The first five leaflets were published by the North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service and include the following: No. 1. Why North Carolina Must Grow. No. 2. Manpower and Growth. No. 3. Education and Growth. No. 4. Industry and Growth. No. 5. Agriculture and Growth. The last leaflet in the series entitled Recreation and Economic Development, was published by the Agricultural Policy Institute.