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Forests and Future

Resource Conflicts

William R. Burch, Jr.

J. Alan Wagar

Richard K. Hermann

VIRGINIA
AYLOR

The "Adequacy" of World Recreation Resources

J. Alan Wagar

Because we do not "live by bread alone," we want to know the potential of resources for meeting current and projected recreation needs. In examining this it has been useful, here in the United States, to classify recreation resources as locally, regionally, or nationally important. The temptation is great to add "internationally important" as an even higher classification. But, although we have various reasons for being interested in the recreation resources of other nations, we must avoid defining them from our particular set of assumptions.

The importance of recreation and recreation resources is relative rather than absolute, and when we move from one nation to another, we often find a people's priorities dramatically affected by beliefs, attitudes, conditions, and possibilities that differ substantially from ours. The idea that we in the United States can define what is or is not an adequate recreation resource in Africa or Afghanistan or the Philippines, or some such place, is nonsense. Even worse, it is probably ethnocentric arrogance.

Contrary to popular belief, resources are not fixed entities that have existed for thousands of years and have universal meaning. Rather, resources appear whenever our insights, desires, and technology lead us to evaluate selected parts of our environment as useful. For example, coal was not considered a resource 700 years ago in the British Isles. It was simply a black rock that made plowing difficult. During the 1700's, our western forests and mountains were not a recreation resource to American settlers. In the early 1800's, petroleum was not a resource of any consequence. And during the 1930's, uranium, beryllium, and titanium were of no commercial importance and were not considered resources. The point is simply this: what can be

considered a resource depends greatly on the value systems, the knowledge and technology, the relative abundance, and the options prevailing at a specific time and place. This is especially true for recreation resources.

Because recreation is a matter of experiences and preferences that differ from person to person and from culture to culture, recreation resources are even less definite than such commodity resources as timber supplies, crop land, and iron ore. The usual measures such as acres, gallons, and board feet simply have no application to either the quality or the quantity of recreation. Consider, within our own society, the contrasts between water skiers and canoeists, wilderness hikers and trail bikers, rock-and-roll fans and opera buffs. Then expect even greater differences in taste and perception between our society and others.

We must not judge the adequacy of other people's recreation resources by our own value orientations and experiences. Many societies lack our traditions of hiking and camping and our idea of wilderness. A dichotomy between man and nature is not assumed by all cultures, and most societies do not have romantic notions about "roughing it out West." For recreation, our ideas of adequacy have been conditioned by such general abundance that what we consider adequate is beyond the wildest dreams of a majority of the world's citizens. These people are too poor to travel anywhere for leisure pursuits, and recent events suggest that they probably will remain so. Amid poverty, the tradeoffs between recreation and other needs are quite different than amid plenty.

All this has direct implications for any discussion of worldwide recreation resources. Instead of examining world recreation resources as an extension of the ethic of **Outdoor Recreation Resources Review** (1), it is more appropriate to consider how recreation seems to be perceived in different places now, and how this perception might change. Thus the criterion for "adequacy" will be the expectations of local populations rather than the standards developed in the **United States**. For a rough examination of this adequacy, we can divide the world's

nations into three broad categories: rich and uncrowded countries, rich and crowded countries, and poor countries.

RICH AND UNCROWDED COUNTRIES

The easiest countries to consider are those most like us, the rather rich and uncrowded nations. These include Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Sweden, Norway, and perhaps the Soviet Union. Here our own values and preconceptions are at least somewhat valid. Here also, we have the most options and flexibility. The major recreational regions of these countries are often distant from their big population concentrations. These countries all have extensive areas of forests or other open lands, however, many of which are in public ownership.

With some foresight and zoning, recreation resources in these countries likely will be ample. In many instances, areas are still being set aside specifically for recreation. Current ideas of free access and quality probably cannot be maintained, especially for wilderness recreation in which the quality of individual experiences is often inverse to the total amount of use. But evaluation of quality tends to shift with what is available, and the richest and least crowded countries probably will continue to enjoy a better variety of recreation options than will ever be available in most other countries.

RICH AND CROWDED COUNTRIES

The industrialized but more crowded countries, such as England, Japan, and most of western Europe, are regions that probably have reached a fair equilibrium in terms of recreation resources. In crowded parts of Europe, for example, it is unlikely that a great amount of additional land will be set aside for recreation. The recreation areas that these nations now have are about all they will ever have.

I have found the recreation habits of Holland, Germany, and Switzerland to be quite instructive. For example, sales of tents, trailers, and other camping equipment have boomed in recent

years. But campers don't expect wilderness when they camp. The quarter-million-acre Veluwe Region of Holland, for example, has more campsites than all of Switzerland. But most of these campgrounds are really closely spaced and self-contained resort communities. Although people live in tents or trailers, many of the sites have swimming pools, playgrounds, recreation halls, and pet farm animals so that people can vacation entirely on the site.

People in much of Europe, like urbanites in this country, do not seem to distinguish greatly between outdoor recreation and other recreation. They tend to seek pleasant settings without great emphasis on heroic challenges or getting away from people. Vacations usually center in villages located in such pleasant regions as Switzerland, the English Lake District, and the seaside. The many restaurants in scenic settings suggest an ethic of enjoying nature in comfort rather than "meeting it on its own terms." In the parts of Europe I have seen most trails seem to be walking trails rather than hiking trails—designed for a pleasant stroll rather than a test of one's capabilities. Also, although the word "natural" has much the same emotional load in Europe as in the United States, criteria for naturalness are considerably looser. For example, a Dutch colleague accepted the idea that national parks should be "natural" but was horrified by the fact that all the dead trees in Yellowstone were not being utilized. In Holland's Hoge Veluwe National Park, timber sales help provide operating income, and the Dutch idea of "nature" seems to be intensively managed land.

Although many Europeans have a higher tolerance toward crowds than we do, they have evolved some mechanisms to create uncrowded places. In Holland, at least, you can join an organization that leases areas for walking and excludes nonmembers. Also, the Dutch Forest Service has set up "passport campgrounds," open only to those who have earned their passports by passing an examination. In England, a national park is a scenic amenity area, usually in agriculture, pastoral but not natural.

Recreation patterns in the more crowded parts of Europe are, in many respects, an extension of the trends we see in going from west to east in the United States. With increased crowding,

we probably can expect to see our recreation patterns evolve toward those of Europe.

THE POOR COUNTRIES

The world's poor countries have highly varied cultures and governments that usually differ substantially from our own. Some of the oil-producing nations recently have become rich rather than poor, and other countries with rich lands and minerals are undeveloped but potentially rich. Such areas as India and much of the Middle East, tropical Africa, and South America, however, are undeveloped and overpopulated. That is, their populations are already too high to be supported by their cropland, other resources, and foreseeable levels of technology. Many of these countries have been kept backward by a feudalistic stratification of society and probably will stay backward because their rapid growth in population continually consumes the surplus needed for economic development.

In general, recreation in the poorer countries is of low priority, especially for the average person. Among the poorest countries, concern with survival must exclude all else. The few people who can afford recreation often take foreign vacations and tend to have European attitudes, with outdoor recreation being a pleasant diversion. In the poor countries, little sentimental fervor seems to exist for wilderness and the treatment of natural wonders as sacred trusts or shrines.

If expectations rise, they probably will be shaped so strongly by what is possible that, in a rather simple sense, we can expect supply to be adequate to meet demand. In the United States, general abundance has permitted us to demand recreation without the discipline of conscious payments or tradeoffs. With similar reasoning, the "demand" for Jaguar automobiles would be nearly infinite. In a worldwide sense, "adequacy" of recreation resources is largely a matter of human expectation rather than physical supply.

Rather than drop the matter of adequacy with this explanation, we should consider other commonly expressed ideas related to recreation in the poorer countries. Several need

examination. These include the idea of providing opportunities for international tourism, maintaining options for a later stage in the country's development, and preserving samples of a nation's heritage.

Tourism

Consider international tourism in East Africa, where survival of the tremendous herds of ungulates is in question. The Africans are under pressure to preserve this spectacle as an attraction of worldwide significance. Human populations are pressing so hard upon the land that many Africans think the wildlife must go. Supposedly, when a Britisher was scolding an African for such an attitude, he was asked in turn, "Where are the wolves in England?" In *The Mountain People*, Turnbull (2) provides a chilling account of the choices involved. He describes the Ik, a tribe living on the Kenya-Uganda border whose way of life was shattered when their traditional hunting lands were taken for Kidepo National Park. At starvation level, they seem to have lost all social integrity and all concern for each other.

Ultimately, the matter of East African wildlife as an international tourist attraction probably will be settled on the basis of human nutrition. If tourism provides enough dependable income to feed people better than would alternative uses for the same land, wildlife will be preserved. But if international tourism falters on energy shortages, international unrest, or some other problem, the wildlife probably will be lost. Conceivably, a middle ground exists. The native grazing animals of East Africa can produce several times as much protein per acre per year as can domestic stock and might be cropped as a food source. Intensive farming of the same land probably is not ecologically viable, but may be tried as human populations rise.

In other areas, tourism might be more viable. Until recently, for example, Ecuador apparently questioned establishment of a national park in the Galapagos Islands as only benefiting others. Now, however, Ecuador is moving ahead with a park and seems to have set up mechanisms to capture the foreign exchange generated by it. The islands probably can return more to Ecuador in tourist trade than in other uses.

Maintaining Options

The idea of maintaining options for later development is an appealing rationalization. But it is an idea that has merit for poor countries only if they evolve into rich nations. For the poorest nations, this seems highly unlikely. The "Green Revolution" has fizzled. Margins of surplus are extremely limited, and immediate needs are so pressing that future cultural and esthetic benefits seldom are given much weight.

Preserving Samples of Heritage

Although preservation is not the same as provision for recreation areas, the two often become tangled—especially in regard to national parks. During 1970 and 1971, I had the good fortune to visit several national parks in Chile and to consider the values of such parks. Average Chileans have little concept of the size of their more than 50 parks, some of which are quite large and impressive. Rather than thinking of a park as a large area, most Chilean visitors think of it as the small cluster of facilities they actually use—the hotel, campground, and picnic site. Thus, thoughtful zoning might permit heavy recreation that would generate public support for a park without much interfering with preservation.

In Chile, and in many other countries, the crucial reason for preserving natural areas is to provide benchmarks by which to judge what is happening to the rest of the land. In parts of Chile, land use is horrendous, with forests burned to provide pasture, which is then overgrazed until it slides off the mountainsides, to the detriment of both land and rivers. The issue is not an esthetic one, but one of helping people see what they are doing to themselves. The basic problem is to maintain viable ecosystems that will support people into the future.

CONCLUSION

The supply and demand for recreation are going to meet at whatever point a society says "This is what we can afford." In the rich countries, we let "demand" increase because we can afford to do so, and we have cultural traditions that encourage us to

demand ever more. But in the poor countries, demand will be limited because many other priorities come far ahead of recreation. Thus, their "demand" may be comparable to that for snowmobiles in the United States fifty years ago.

I do not subscribe to theories that the world's nations generally will evolve toward the abundance we take for granted. Many persons are starving to death right now, and the situation may become much worse. I even consider it probable that rich countries will become substantially poorer by the end of this century. In the rich nations, I think we will still enjoy rather abundant opportunities for recreation. But worldwide, I expect recreation to yield to more basic problems of survival in the planning and allocation of resources.

LITERATURE CITED

1. OUTDOOR RECREATION RESOURCES REVIEW COMMISSION. Outdoor Recreation for America. ORRRC. 246 p. Washington. 1962.
2. TURNBULL, Colin M. The Mountain People. Simon and Schuster, New York. 309 p. 1972.