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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the long-term impact on public lands of human-powered adventure activities. These activities take individuals into federal- or state-owned wild areas to enjoy backpacking, hiking, camping, and a wide variety of sports. Trends in supply and demand for outdoor opportunities are explored. Factors influencing demand include growing population, an increase in per capita income, more accessible transportation, and more leisure time. Lack of wilderness "supply" can be caused by overuse, insufficient funding, inadequate management, lack of facilities, lack of staff, and lack of political support and legislation. In order to ensure that the supply of wild lands continues to meet the increasing demand, the education of professional outdoor leaders must include environmental activist skills, critical thinking skills, and environmental ethics. Expansion of the college curriculum to include education for environmental activism could create a "prairie fire of action" to protect the wilderness--our outdoor classroom. Case studies describe two programs that address environmental ethics: the Four Corners School of Outdoor Education in Utah, and the Environmental Studies program at the University of Montana. Contains 16 references. (SAS)

Will the Real Eco-Educator Please Stand Up?

Presented at the 10th Annual
International Conference on Outdoor Recreation and Education
November 7-9, 1996

By

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Abstract

When the outdoor education profession began in earnest in the 1960's, there were few programs and they had little impact on the land. Supply of natural resources easily kept up with demand. Although some permits were required, access was rarely a problem. Now thirty years later, there are millions of Americans using the outdoors, many through the hundreds of programs in the U.S. including, those for rehabilitation, self discovery, education, research, access for people with physical disabilities, recreation, and physical fitness/endurance events. Some of these programs are having a greater and largely unexamined long-term impact on public lands through their increasing numbers of participants, large media attention, and the messages they convey to their students. Despite their potential for damaging the land, the net effect can be positive if instructors include proper curriculum in their programs.

As instructors and guides, we welcome all these career opportunities, but can the land handle all the use? Federal land management agencies have established regulations and permitting systems, and other public and private groups have formed partnerships such as Leave No Trace and Tread Lightly to educate about minimum impact, but outdoor professionals also need to be advocates for legal protection of these lands, from over use and mis-use.

Four Corners School was founded in 1984 to provide hands-on wilderness advocacy education to people of all ages and backgrounds. Through scholarships, teacher programs, and working with outdoor corporations, FCS has built a well educated constituency who care about and work for the land and wilderness designation, particularly in Utah. More outdoor programs and outdoor corporations need to work to protect the lands that support their business, if we are to sustain the outdoor education profession. This presentation will explore outdoor programming and its impact on federal wildlands in the United States, as well as address ways we can work to protect these lands using FCS and others as case studies.

Introduction

There is no denying that the outdoor education and recreation industry in the United States has grown dramatically in the last thirty years and will continue to grow over the next fifty.

Let me first define what I mean when I say the outdoor education and recreation industry. For the purposes of this paper I am referring to organized field based programs that take individuals into wild areas for use

as an outdoor classroom to educate about subjects such as natural and human history, outdoor skills, self-discovery, spiritual growth, or mental and physical health.

> *Outdoor adventure activities include all pursuits that provide an inherently meaningful human experience that relates directly to a particular outdoor environment-air, wind, water, hills, mountains, rocks, woods, streams, rivers, lakes, ice, snow, or caves. A certain amount of risk, adventure, exploration, and travel are involved, depending on the skills of the participants, and the nature of the activity. Competition between individuals and groups is minimal, whereas competition between people and their environment is the norm. The emphasis is not on winning or losing, but rather facing the challenges of a natural environment (Jensen, 286).*

My discussion will focus with how outdoor programs choose to deal with three areas of programming: 1) types of activities, 2) location of these activities, and 3) curriculum development. The types of activities my discussion will focus on are human powered adventure activities. The location of these activities will focus on those that take place on federal or state lands, especially wild lands. These activities specifically include backpacking, cross-country skiing, hiking, running, mountain climbing, rock climbing, kayaking, rafting, canoeing, mountain biking, camping, and the newest member of these types of activities---extreme sports races. The curriculum I will discuss is what subjects have been included in the past and what should be included in the future.

I am discussing these types of activities, their locations, and curriculum because we have a limited supply of natural resources in the United States-i.e. wildlands, and an ever-increasing demand from recreational users--for human powered activities as well as mechanized activities such as hunting, fishing, snowmobiling, and other mechanized adventure sports. I will not focus on the mechanized recreation industry and instead focus on the human powered industry, because as professional educators I believe we have limited access to educating the mechanized recreation industry audience. Other educational programs such as Tread Lightly and Leave No Trace reach this user group through the federal agencies, but university and private sector curriculum has less impact on them. I will also be discussing whether we should meet all demand, in other words, is endless growth in outdoor recreation possible or desirable and how do we limit or control growth?

Typically human powered users are in middle to upper income brackets, college educated, with the leisure time and funds to participate in an instructor led group adventure (Widdekind,3). As many as 90% of all white Americans, with annual incomes of $25-100,000, and at least some college or high school education participate in some form of human powered recreation (Widdekind,3). As professional educators, especially in the university realm or as guides and interpreters we mostly have contact with those individuals that participate in human powered recreation activities. While it is true that the demographics are changing as participants are aging and users' ethnic backgrounds are becoming more diverse, it will take a long time for Black and other minority user groups to catch up with use by Whites. Use of the outdoors by non-whites will contribute greatly to the overall increase in future use of the outdoors (Cordell et al, 13).

Many people participate in outdoor activities on their own or with friends and not in organized groups. However, most of the human powered recreation users

at some point in their lives, and more likely numerous times, participate in some form of organized group outing which has an instructor, who has the implicit responsibility to educate their students. If that instructor uses effective curriculum on their program, they can make a difference in the future actions of that individual in regard to how they behave toward wildlands. I will be using a Four Corners School program and a program at the University of Montana as examples of how I believe we as professional outdoor educators at the university or military level or in the private sector can adjust curriculum to protect the limited supply of natural resources, and keep pace with the ever-increasing demand for our product--outdoor education--if we are to have an outdoor classroom in the future.

Trends in Supply and Demand of Outdoor Classroom Opportunities

The demand for outdoor recreation has grown and will continue to grow over the next fifty years. Factors influencing this increase in demand are a growing population, an increase in per capita income, more accessible transport to sites for recreation, and larger blocks of leisure time for larger segments of society. The 1986 Presidents Commission on America Outdoors reports, *over 75% of Americans consider themselves "outdoors" people* (Ewert,122).

The demand for outdoor education and recreation opportunities is projected to increase by 75% to 190% over the next forty years, in such activities as day hiking, backpacking, camping, canoeing, kayaking, rafting, cross-country skiing, biking, wildlife observation and photography (Widdekind,7).
It is unlikely that the supply of wildlands and associated facilities available to users will come close to meeting this demand. *"It appears that by the year 2000 demand for outdoor adventure opportunities as they currently exist will exceed the supply of natural resources, for example geographical locations needed to provide these opportunities"* (Ewert,147). In addition funds needed to manage these lands by federal, state, and private agencies has steadily increased over the last ten years, while funds awarded have steadily decreased (Widdekind,16-17,20). *"The greatest threat to outdoor recreation is inadequate support for the acquisition, maintenance, and operation of the places people go to enjoy recreation"* (Widdekind,21).

Lack of supply can be caused by several factors. One is simple overuse of the resource or "loving it to death", that results from too many users, lack of funding for law enforcement, or an inadequate management plan. Another factor that can affect supply is lack of facilities and staff to manage use, such as camp areas or sanitation facilities, a shortfall of educational staff, or a lack of funds for both. These factors can adversely effect soils, wildlife, water, air, scenic values, or vegetation(Cordell et al,81-85).

Supply can also be impacted by the actions of states and communities and thus ultimately politicians. The creation of more wildlands for recreation is politically determined and we depend on Congress for allocation and federal agencies for management after designation. *"Assuming that Congress continues to periodically add wilderness acreage on a state-by-state basis throughout the next decade, the recreational supply of wilderness, in general, may be adequate in terms of a national per capita acreage. However, the resulting distribution of the wilderness will require more time and energy by Americans to gain access to it, particularly among those living in the East (Cordell et al, 72).* As you can see there is evidence from various reliable sources that supply of natural resources is not likely to meet demand for outdoor activities.

Trends in Types of Outdoor Activities

Let me give you a brief history of the types of outdoor activities Americans have desired and are now desiring to participate in. In the 1940's through the 1950's environmental education was in the form of school camps and teacher education programs. When outdoor education began in earnest in the 1960's in the United States areas used diversified, program numbers increased, and curriculum included expanded dramatically. In the 1970's the term "environmental education" developed and the concept of "eco-education" expanded even more.

In the 1980's and 1990's the explosion in educational programs and recreational outfitters really hit. Federal expenditures for recreation increased from $75 million in 1960 to $1.4 billion in 1980 along with many new Congressional mandates for management such as the Wilderness Preservation System and the Land and Water Conservation Fund. In 1982 the Outdoor Recreation Policy Review Group stated *"Even with the tremendous growth in the involvement of the private sector, there is evidence that outdoor recreation opportunities are contracting overall, rather then increasing to meet increasing need"* (Cordell et al, 6). This led to the formation of the Presidents Commission on Americans Outdoors who recommended the creation of a *"prairie fire of action"* to protect, restore, and provide local recreational lands (Report of the Presidents Commission, 76). *This report stated that when the prairie fire catches, we will create a lasting corps of people who care about environmental quality and scenic beauty. We can build a movement of Americans investing in recreation opportunities for the future* (ROPC, 76).

In 1992 in the educational realm, the book Wilderness U describes 40 credit granting field study courses at the university or college level, 32 field institutes or natural history associations, 27 clubs and national associations, 55 tour agencies or lodges, and 43 miscellaneous organizations which span the gamut from intensive formal education in the outdoors to guided tours led by a trained naturalist that do not offer college credit(McMillon 13-142). According to Jerry Mallet of the Adventure Travel Society by 1991 between 45 and 50 million Americans engaged in some types of adventure or nature vacation annually. Over 25,000 recreational outfitters at that time served this demand (McMillon, 1). There is however a difference between recreational outfitters and educational programs. As educators and programmers we have an obligation to educate.

Now in the 1990's a new aspect of the outdoor recreation industry has been introduced--extreme sports events or as some call it adventure racing. As defined by the Adventure Racing Association, adventure racing is" *any race which uses three or more means of locomotion, both human powered and/or mechanically powered, and is run in wilderness or remote areas with low population density*" (Crawford, internet). Typical examples of adventure racing are: the Olympic Pentathlon, the Raid Gauloises, the Eco-Challenge, the Southern Traverse, and the Thredbo Enduro." These events are multi-day, competitive, and involve large numbers of racing teams (racers and media combined can include up to 700 people) competing in multi-sports activities over a long distance and for up to ten days. As this is such a new sport I could find no statistics as to the number of participants annually, but in 1995-6 there were 12 such races(Crawford, internet). According to Michael Hodgson an Eco-Challenge competitor and a Technical Editor for Outdoor Retailer Magazine, he *"expects the extreme sports industry to become huge very rapidly"(Hodgson,personal conversation)*. The outdoor retail industry must agree as they " *spent $50 million in 1995 to sponsor adventure related sporting events, triple the amount spent five years ago*"(Strategic Research,

1). However, according to Jack Crawford of the newly formed Adventure Racing Association, *"due to environmental regulations and pressures in the United States, the sport will not grow very fast in this country, but instead will expand outside of the U.S where races are welcome and regulations less strict"(Crawford, personal interview)*. The influence and impact of these activities is greater than most other outdoor activities, as they involve many more participants than most outdoor activities and they are conducted over a concentrated period of time. These activities also have a greater impact because they occur over large areas of land and their message is broadcast widely on nationwide cable and network to as many as 1 billion people annually (Eco-Challenge, internet).

Trends in Locations of Outdoor Activities

Lands available for outdoor activities include primarily federal lands, but also state, local, and private. Over one-third of the United States, 690 million acres, consists of federally managed lands. Of these federal acres, 89 million acres are designated wilderness. State and local governments manage over 54 million acres of recreation lands (Widdekind,15). The federal agencies responsible for land management are the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Bureau of Reclamation. All of these agencies with the exception of the National Park Service manage lands for multiple uses including recreation. In addition the bulk of the acres used for recreation on federal lands exist in the west, approximately 95% of all federal lands. Factors influencing the trends in where people choose to recreate include the availability of opportunity, age, ability and disability, race, education, and income (Cordell,et al,7-8).

From about 1960 to 1980 there was a rapid increase in use of these federal lands. From 1980 to 1985 this increase slowed down, largely matching the increase in U.S. population and the economy and work habits of the population. Since 1986 wilderness use has begun to increase again with increases expected to be 30% for most activities by the year 2000. Now new activities are occurring, and are being substituted for some of the formerly popular activities. Extended long distance trips are being replaced by more frequent, close-to-home trips, which will put more pressure on wildlands closer to urban areas (Cordell, et al 8). The demand for recreational activities by the year 2040 is expected to grow by as much as 200% for land based activities with lesser, but still significant growth occurring in water, snow, and ice activities as well (Cordell, et al, 43-45). By the same token if recent trends continue, the amount of land, water, snow, and ice resources available for recreation is expected to decrease by as much as 30% to 40% by the year 2040 (Cordell et al,59) due to conversion of rural private lands to other uses, expansion of urban areas, and federal public lands being turned over to state or tribal entities(Cordell et al, 25).

Trends in Curriculum Development in Outdoor Education

The education of professionals and curriculum development in the university and college level in the outdoor recreation field has seen a great deal of growth over the last fifty years as well. In the 1960's the National Conference on Professional Preparation recognized recreation and park administration and camping and outdoor activities as new curricular areas on the college undergraduate level. Five years (1965) later other subjects were added at the graduate level; recreation programming,administration of recreation services, and natural resource management for recreation. Three (1968) years after that this same group identified the need for more qualified

leaders and more standardization of curricula in the area of education about the outdoors (Jensen 363-354). By 1975 there were more than 200 universities offering curricula which led to a Bachelors degree in outdoor adventure activities (Ewert, 123) and now there are as many as 600 university level programs, not all degree granting and approximately 5300 outdoor programs overall nationally.

Similarly in the private sector there are numerous programs to train outdoor leaders like the National Outdoor Leadership School, Outdoor Leadership Training Seminars, Boulder Outdoor Survival School, and the like. The Adventure Racing organizations have followed suit. In the last two years adventure racing schools to train racres have begun, such as Presidio Adventure Racing Academy and the Eco-Challenge Adventure School. There seems to be an inherent conflict in curriculum development however, between university and private sector curriculum, the Wilderness Act itself, and adventure racing curriculum--as in the first two competition is not taught or part of the law, and in the third competition is the main point.

How Curriculum Development Can Create a "Prairie Fire of Action"

Curriculum for outdoor leaders currently includes information on skills, natural sciences, teaching methodology, leadership training, and outdoor recreation management and policy. For some time, the profession has been looking at issues such as certification, accredidation,and professionalization (Ewert, 193). Little attention however, has been paid in this field to training outdoor leaders in environmental activist skills, critical thinking skills and teaching environmental ethics in degree granting programs or private outdoor leadership programs.

According to C.B. Pearson, Director of the Environmental Organizing Semester at the University of Montana, "*environmental activism is seldom included in university level curriculum especially at the undergraduate level*". Mr. Pearson further states, "*much has been done to repackage and remarket hard science for students, but activism is often avoided at universities because it is controversial*".(Pearson, personal interview). David Orr states, "*A constituency able and willing to fight for the long-term human prospect must be educated into existence...What are schools, colleges and universities doing to reeducate the citizenry or their own faculty, administration, and trustees for that matter? The short answer is 'not nearly enough', and in most cases the answer is 'nothing at all'" (Orr, 126).*

In specific outdoor education curriculum must include experiential lessons in how to teach environmental ethics, critical thinking skills and environmental activist techniques. The 1986 President's Commission on America Outdoors Report recommends that, "*each geographic community and community of interest develop an outdoor ethic and work towards reflecting that ethic in personal and organizational action."(PRAO,81)*

Curriculum such as teaching environmental ethics, environmental activism skills, and critical thinking skills are important because students need to develop the ability to decide what is ideal human behavior for them with regard to their relationship to the environment. They must also develop skills that enable them to become action-oriented members of their community to solve environmental problems and the conflicts that surround them.

Some of these curricula goals could be accomplished by using environmental issues in local areas as a springboard for discussions relating to land use concerns all over America, Then students can develop the ability to analyze

opposing viewpoints and form a personal opinion, thus helping to bring balance to the environmental discussion and the ability to make informed decisions. Another curricula goal, environmental activism skills should include how to use critical thinking skills, the political system, and scientific knowledge to effectively protect wildlands. These subjects are essential to include in university and private sector programming as well as in individual guides and interpreters lesson plans.

Students often become motivated to protect wildlands while in the wilderness setting. We can strengthen this motivation through discussion of facts and concerns about a particular area. But motivation must also be coupled with effective ways to be activists in their own communities through participation in local groups, research on issues, attending hearings and then making an informed decision on which to base their actions.

Case Study: A Program that Helps Create a "Prairie Fire of Action"

Four Corners School of Outdoor Education, a private non-profit outdoor orgainization, created a course called Teaching Environmental Ethics to help teach teachers some of the above skills. Over the seven years we have run this course we have educated over 150 teachers who have used this information in their Kindergarten through college level classrooms and in non-traditional teaching settings such as Outward Bound and NOLS.

The course, Teaching Environmental Ethics, was created by myself as, Director of Four Corners School of Outdoor Education with the help of Hardy Redd, a Utah rancher and former Utah legislator. Each teacher trained multiplies the impact of the information because each teacher reaches 15 to 40 students a year giving them the tools they need to make educated choices about land use, both in their respective states and nationwide and act on them in their own communities.

The course is structured to be hands-on and community based. Over eight days it takes teachers out of the classroom and to places where decisions are made. Guest speakers spark personal and sometimes heated discussions on the participants' sense of place, understanding of the history and economics of land uses, conflict resolution skills, and environmental and philosophical concepts.

Program goals are:

To help teachers help their students develop critical thinking skills.
To provide teachers with the skills needed to identify local environmental issues which can help students understand the biological, economic and emotional cost of land use decisions.
3) To help teachers develop classroom activities which will enable students to create and examine the belief system from which they will make environmental decisions.
To provide teachers with the ideas and activities to help students become local and national advocates for their chosen environmental position.

Teachers attending the course have felt it to be a very valuable experience. The following quote attests to this:

Bonnie Robinson,from New Orleans, Louisiana said,*"I appreciate the opportunity to attend the course which laid the foundation for my decision to enter into the environmental career field... I wanted to learn the steps I could take as an educator to facilitate the understanding of the connection between our*

actions and the resulting environmental impact. I wanted to feel and I wanted my students to feel that their actions made a difference."

Ways in which teachers have used their experience include:

Dianne Hormann a fourth grade teacher in Ft Wayne, *Indiana uses her experience with her 100 students, the teachers, and parents in her school. She is also in charge of Program Development at her school and uses this program in curriculum development.*

Terry Pipkin a third grade teacher in Clovis, New Mexico *has prepared a workshop for her students on Teaching Environmental Ethics, which includes lesson plans and curricula on environmental issues. She has also held workshops in her church youth group.*

Fonda Mullins, a teacher in Richmond, Indiana, *presented a paper at the National Art Education conference in 1995 using her experience on this course.*

Case Study:Another Program that Helps Create a "Prairie Fire of Action"

In 1996, the Environmental Studies Program at the University of Montana began its first Environmental Organizing Semester, directed by a veteran organizer C.B. Pearson. C.B. has over twenty years environmental and public organizing experience with Ralph Nader. The sixteen week program focuses on helping students to be better prepared to put ecological values to work in a career of winning positive environmental changes.

The program, like FCS's is experiential, with extensive work on real issues, problem-solving skills, and training on key civic skills. Its goals include:

working on strategies and tactics for solving environmental problems
mentoring opportunities with veteran environmental activists
planning and conducting a series of real-world projects
extensive reading and discussion led by experienced scholars
leadership training for students serious about a career as and environmental organizer
study in an area of the country where many pressing environmental debates rage

Student comments have included:

"Continue to let this course be taught at least every year. It has been the best semester of my life and I have never been more satisfied with education at a university."

Projects accomplished by the students include: a fundraiser for a local green belt campaign-initiative to purchase elk habitat on the edge of Missoula, plan and execute a petition drive in support of two Montana initiatives, and an examination of Missoula's trash to see how much of it could have been recycled.

The Responsibility of the Outdoor Education Professional

As an outdoor education professional we have an obligation to protect our outdoor classroom. We must do that not only so that we may have jobs in the future, but so that we can help human and other species survive into the next millennium. As "influencers" of others--i.e. teachers--we can ensure that this message gets to our students and thus we will help create a "prairie fire

of action" for protection of this essential and magnificent resource--the wildlands of the United States, our outdoor classroom.

The question still remains, given the impacts of any activity on wildlands beyond natural processes, is growth in demand good for growth's sake? Is there a limit to acceptable growth in order to maintain quality recreational experiences? Just because demand is there, and rightly needed due to the impacts of an ever increasing population, and the stresses and strains of urbanization and, should we meet it--or strive to preserve the quality and quantity of the outdoor experience and the ecosystems themselves?

I believe that if we as professional educators work, and teach our students to work, toward preserving the wildlands we have, creating additional wilderness, and designating additional funding to manage these resources, that we can meet most future demand. Ultimately, however I do not believe we can or should meet all future demand for outdoor experiences. I believe that the impact on the resource and its inhabitants will be too great and the quality of our individual and group experiences will decrease too much. We are already facing large problems with overcrowding on lands near urban areas, user conflicts, wildlife, water, soil, and air degredation, an unequal distribution of wild areas nationwide--with over 95% of wilderness lands in the western states, and lack of funding for adequate management (Cordell et al, 73-85).

From my personal experience,I believe that most guides do not regularly include action oriented curriculum in their daily lessons. Nor do I believe from the research I have done, that universities include this curriculum in their degree granting programs very often. I believe that if we do not update our curriculum to educate our students to be effective activists, and they do not teach their students in turn, demand for outdoor recreation opportunities in this country will have to be filled in other ways. That could include, going to other countries to fulfill demand, waiting in line for opportunities, or looking for other ways to fulfill demand--such as relying on multi-media coverage, less land intensive opportunities like ropes courses, or by using opportunities such as virtual travel on the internet.

As outdoor educators we control the message that goes to our students. The question now is--how can curriculum, in both traditional and non-traditional settings, in universities and in the private sector, keep pace with the decreasing supply of natural resources for our outdoor classroom and the increasing demand for their use? I believe that we can do this by teaching our students, and asking them to teach their students in turn, critical thinking skills, environmental activists skills, and how to help their students develop an environmental ethic and act on it in their own communities. In this way we will begin a "prairie fire of action".

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