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Land and Leisure: Concepts and Methods in Outdoor Recreation, edited by D. W. Fischer, J. E. Lewis & G. B. Priddle

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Land and Leisure: Concepts and Methods in Outdoor Recreation

Edited by
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A leading economic theorist has remarked that the allocation of non-working time may now be more important to economic welfare than that of working time.¹ The related notion that time, rather than traditionally scarce resources valued in money terms, will increasingly be the limiting factor on consumption possibilities in the U.S. is put forward by Marion Clawson in the first in this collection of papers dealing with outdoor recreation. Specifically with respect to recreation, rapid and sustained growth in demand, coupled with threats to prime natural environments that could help meet the demand, have given rise to a concern doubtless shared by many readers of this Journal: How do we best prevent the crowding and deterioration of existing recreation areas and provide for new ones?

This sounds like an economic problem and one is not surprised to see several contributions by economists here. More of an eye-opener, at least to one who has worked solely in economics, are the pieces by members of other disciplines. Some articles are quite complementary to the economic analyses, whereas others provide a useful challenge to the assumptions. To promote interdisciplinary communication is a stated purpose of the editors, and the selection of materials seems well suited to this. In addition to a section on the economics of recreation, there is one section offering a general overview of values and approaches, one on spatial patterns of recreational travel and resource use, one on behavioral aspects, and one on environmental impacts. Each section contains from three to five papers, followed by a list of additional references. These latter are likely to be particularly useful to researchers.

A strength of the book is the accessibility of the selected papers to nonspecialists such as undergraduate students, for whom, according to the editors, it is intended. The temptation to include more technical materials wisely has been resisted. At the same time it seems to me that the choice could have better reflected both the analytical rigor and policy relevance of some recent contributions—at least in the field of economics—without appreciable loss in accessibility. In the remainder of the review I consider in a bit more detail the choice

1. See Becker, *A Theory of the Allocation of Time*, 75 *Econ. J.* 493 (1965).

of the readings in economics and also remark briefly on a couple of matters of substance.

The concern for maintaining and augmenting recreation facilities in the face of growing demand suggests that the important questions are marginal ones. That is, how do we assess the value of a new site, say for downhill skiing, in the context of an existing system of ski sites? What is the social value of an improvement in local water quality that makes possible certain forms of water-based recreation there? And what are the expected changes in patterns of recreation activity as a function of projected population and facility characteristics? Considerable study has been given to each of these questions, but this is not reflected in the choice of readings, or even, for the most part, in the list of references given by the editors. Although I would agree that it is unfair to criticize a particular study on the basis of topics it does not happen to address, the importance of omissions does seem relevant to an assessment of an edited collection.

I also have reservations about some of the included material and the editors' comments. The article by Peter Pearse on indirect evaluation of non-priced recreational resources, although an interesting and valuable contribution to the literature, in my judgment does not represent much of a departure from the fundamental travel cost approach described in the preceding selection by Jack Knetsch and Robert Davis. Pearse stresses the advantage in his method which requires data only from actual users, but some of the relevant information, for example on the influence of alternative recreation opportunities, is much more easily, and probably more accurately, obtained simply from knowledge of the travel costs to each of the alternatives from a given location.² Furthermore, although Pearse is explicitly not guilty of this error, in introducing his paper the editors assert that the travel cost method ignores income. Of course it need do nothing of the kind. It is simply a matter of whether one wishes to control first the income level and then look at variations in travel costs and visit rates (as Pearse does), or whether one wishes to conduct a multivariate statistical analysis of the relationship between costs, incomes, and visits (as in typical demand estimation).

A study of Ernst Swanson of so-called "secondary benefits," the income generated in local areas, due to the national parks is presented uncritically. Swanson concludes that the aggregate (over all parks and associated regions) contribution to personal income (direct and "indirect" via a recreation spending multiplier) is approximately

2. See, e.g., Burt & Brewer, *Estimation of Net Social Benefits from Outdoor Recreation*, 39 *Econometrica* 813 (1971).

\$5 billion. For this figure or any other derived in the same manner to have meaning, it would have to be the case that the money spent on park-related items otherwise would not have found its way into the income stream, that it would literally be hoarded in pillows and piggy-banks. It is certainly true that spending generated by a park can affect income in the surrounding area, but in the absence of the park, and given some independently determined level of macroeconomic activity, the money would be spent on other items in the area or in other areas, and income accordingly affected.

Although I do have some reservations concerning the editors' judgment, I think on balance the book makes a useful contribution to a field of growing importance and should be especially useful in undergraduate courses dealing with one or more of the aspects of outdoor recreation.

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