Recreation Value in the United States: Does a Title such as ‘National Park’ Really Make a Difference?

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Abstract
The results of outdoor recreation consumer surplus studies for national parks, national forests, state parks and state forests in the United States from 1968 through 2003 were compared and analyzed across activity type, locational region, and park designation. The resulting data set includes 1,229 observations, spanning thirty-six years, twenty-eight types of activities, and 106 locations. It was discovered that activity and park type played a significant role in consumer surplus values. Activities such as mountain biking, windsurfing, and rock-climbing were among the highest valued activities while visiting environmental education centers was the lowest. When comparing park types, it was found that, on average, activities at National Parks had higher values than national forests, state parks, or state forests. Because the values for national parks were significantly higher than those of any other area, my current “work in progress” is attempting to discover why this might be.

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