

# The economics of outdoor recreation participation among the Swedish population

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Participation in outdoor recreation often implies the consumption of market goods and services (travel, food, equipment, services etc.) associated with out of pocket expenditures. Such expenditures measure the direct economic impacts, but in most cases this kind of spending also involves several indirect and induced economic effects, such as re-spending by the tourism industry and households on other sectors of the economy (Loomis & Walsh 1997, Lindberg, 2001). Since natural resources provide the basis for recreation in the outdoors, most visits in natural areas also involve the consumption of non-market goods and services (scenery, wildlife, clean air, public trails etc.). The consumption of these services is often free of charge and not priced by any market, but nevertheless, they often represent a significant part of the total nature experience. The value placed above and beyond the actual expenses incurred to participate is considered a consumer surplus – which is a net benefit relevant for both market and non-market goods (Peterson et al. 1992). Understanding the economic values associated with outdoor recreation is important in various planning situations and when making strategic decisions, in particular when they concern the supply of different types of activities and services connected with outdoor recreation, both privately and publicly.

This presentation is based on two projects – a recently finalised review of the economics associated with outdoor recreation in Sweden, and an ongoing survey aiming at the measurement of economic expenditures, impacts and values among the Swedish population. The focus of this presentation is on the expenditure and impact parts of the study.

The review of economic values in Sweden by Fredman et al. (2008a) finds that there is no comprehensive illustration of the values studied, and figures found are sourced from various types of studies with different purposes. This means that a compilation of this kind shows not only great gaps but also that there are obvious overlaps and double calculations. Many of the studies reported do not consider the total of the values, i.e. the aggregate values for a certain population or group of practisers. In conclusion, Fredman et al (2008a) find that:

- (i) There is a lack of systematically collected data on the economic values of outdoor recreation on national and regional levels.
- (ii) Some forms of outdoor recreation and nature types (e.g. sports fishing and forests) have been more subjected to research than others.
- (iii) The perceived total value of outdoor recreation often reaches relatively high amounts in comparison with other sectors (such as forestry, fisheries), when summarising across the population in a region or a country.
- (iv) Commercial values of outdoor recreation mainly go towards 'traditional' products and services such as travelling, food and overnight stays whilst less is spent on activities and experiences.
- (v) An increasing amount of money is spent on equipment, a fact which is evident from the growth in the outdoor sector.

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## **The measurement of economic expenditures and impacts associated with outdoor recreation participation among the Swedish population**

Following the literature review, economic expenditures associated with the consumption of outdoor recreation in Sweden are measured at a national scale using panels of 2000 randomly selected individuals. An Internet-based survey was distributed on three occasions during 2009 in order to reduce the potential of recall bias. The first survey, distributed in early May, had a frame from January – April, the second survey, distributed in early September had a frame from May – August, and the third survey distributed in early January 2010, had a frame from September – December. A primary objective of the study was to ask about expenditures related to participation in a large number of outdoor recreation activities, i.e. the same activities that were used in an earlier national survey on outdoor recreation participation in Sweden (Fredman et al., 2008b). Among the expenditure items measured were transport, accommodation, food, restaurants, equipment, clothing and services, and for the total amount respondents estimated the geographical distribution (i.e. regional, national and international) of their expenditures. In addition to a summary of the above mentioned literature review, the presentation will address preliminary estimates of economic expenditure patterns, impacts associated with outdoor recreation participation among the Swedish population, and a discussion on sampling quality and coverage of the data used.

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