

# Beyond recreation experience and expenditure: Well-being and resilience in natural area-human community systems

*Kreg Lindberg, Oregon State University, Tourism, Recreation, and Adventure Leadership program, 1500 SW Chandler Avenue, Bend, Oregon 97702, USA. Kreg.Lindberg@osucascades.edu*

---

Natural area agencies have managed outdoor recreation and nature-based tourism with varied priorities and considerations, from sustaining quality experiences and the natural resources on which they depend to contributing to local economies and sustaining public support for agencies themselves. The above priorities remain important, but societal goals evolve, and there is increasing recognition of the importance of natural area visitation's broader benefits. This presentation focuses on well-being and resilience effects of local (e.g., outdoor recreation) and non-local (e.g., nature-based tourism) visitation.

Well-being and community resilience provide new lenses through which to understand, develop, and manage natural experiences. They complement a traditional focus on experiences and the benefits of visitor expenditure. In so doing, they can enhance policy maker and general public support for the provision and management of natural experiences.

Although well-being can include many aspects, the focus here is on subjective well-being (SWB), which reflects affective (emotional) states and evaluations of one's life. Natural area visitation potentially combines the SWB benefits of both leisure and in-nature experiences. In recent years, researchers have found that nature experiences enhance hedonic (affective), evaluative (life satisfaction), and eudaimonic (flourishing) well-being (e.g., Wolsko and Lindberg, 2013). Moreover, natural area visitation may affect resident SWB not only via an individual's recreation engagement but also via the tourism – and associated SWB effects – catalyzed by nature experiences (Uysal et al, 2016).

Nature-based tourism (NBT) also may contribute to community resilience, which refers to a community's ability to thrive in the face of change; more broadly, Adger (2000, p. 347) refers to resilience as “the ability of groups or communities to cope with external stresses and disturbances as a result of social, political and environmental change.” Norris et al (2008) provide a foundation for community resilience concepts and evaluation, while Steiner and colleagues (e.g., Steiner and Atterton, 2015) provide a foundation for understanding the specific contribution of firms.

Resilience is complex, with interdependence across the traditional dimensions of economic, social, and ecologic. In the economic dimension, NBT can enhance sectoral, livelihood, and job type diversity. In the social dimension, NBT can enhance networks (both professional and personal), promote net in-migration (or reduce net out-migration), contribute flexibility and creativity, strengthen community identity, and sustain local institutions, facilities, and services. In the ecologic dimension, NBT may provide a complementary source of income for landowners, thereby reducing pressure to harvest natural resources in a manner that could cross ecological thresholds (Walker and Salt, 2012).

The sometimes part-time and/or seasonal nature of NBT employment illustrates relationships across dimensions. Such employment provides job type diversity and may contribute to livelihood diversity. On the other hand, it may limit contributions with respect to net migration and associated benefits in the social dimension.

Although NBT, and any associated migration, can generate important well-being and resilience benefits, literatures as diverse as recreation ecology, recreation conflict, and tourism's social impacts remind us that it also can generate negative impacts. For example, competition across activity groups for outdoor recreation resources (recreation conflict and contested spaces) can increase bonding (intra-group) social capital but harm bridging (inter-group) social capital. This may reduce generalized reciprocity, trust, and cohesion within the community.

Likewise, though multiplier effects may lead to community-wide economic benefits, immediate employment benefits may be limited to a relatively small portion of the community. However, negative impacts may be spread more widely – especially as attractions and lodging become more spatially distributed due to social media (e.g., expanded visitor awareness of previously-unpromoted attractions) and non-traditional lodging options (e.g., Airbnb and vacation rentals in residential areas).

This presentation will review well-being and resilience concepts and recent research, describe case studies and results, and suggest opportunities for future research and management. The well-being case study is based on a general population survey in Bend, Oregon, USA, while the community resilience case study is based on a nationwide survey of NBT firms in Norway.

## References

- Adger, W.N. (2000) 'Social and ecological resilience: Are they related?', *Progress in Human Geography*, 24, pp. 347–364.
- Norris, F.H., Stevens, S.P. Pfefferbaum, B., Wyche, K.F. and Pfefferbaum, R.L. (2008) 'Community resilience as a metaphor, theory, set of capacities, and strategy for disaster readiness', *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 41, pp. 127-150.
- Steiner, A. and Atterton, J. (2015) 'Exploring the contribution of rural enterprises to local development and resilience', *Journal of Rural Studies*, 40, pp. 30–45.
- Uysal, M., Sirgy, M.J., Woo, E. and Kim, H. (2016) 'Quality of life (QOL) and well-being research in tourism', *Tourism Management*, 53, pp. 244-261.
- Walker, B. and Salt, D. (2012) *Resilience practice: Building capacity to absorb disturbance and maintain function*. Washington, D.C.: Island Press.
- Wolsko, C. and Lindberg, K. (2013) 'Experiencing connection with nature: The matrix of psychological well-being, mindfulness, and outdoor recreation', *Ecopsychology*, 5, pp. 80-91.