

Preface

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The Second Conference on Monitoring Visitor Flows in Recreational and Protected Areas (MMV) is taking place in Rovaniemi, in Finnish Lapland. The first MMV -conference was organized by Bodenkultur University Vienna in 2002. The location of the second MMV conference is very different from Vienna, Austria, the venue of the first MMV conference. Austria is a country with a well-developed tourist industry, including use of protected areas relating to nature-based tourism. Lapland in Finland represents a region in Europe where nature-based tourism has become the most important source of income only recently, and where the vast wilderness areas, the 'last in Europe', are the attraction for tourism. Nevertheless, in both places, a major management challenge faced by recreational and protected areas is how to successfully manage visitors. This is a necessary condition in order to maintain sustainable development of the natural areas in recreational use. Sustainability concerns the ecological state of the natural areas as well as the social and economic sustainability of life in local communities. The aim of the MMV conference is to exchange information and ideas among those researchers, administrators, and park managers and practitioners who are responsible for the sustainable recreational use of natural resources, particularly in protected areas.

The conference provides a forum where all those working with visitor management can share their experiences and know-how on the information base for monitoring and management of visitor flows in recreational and protected areas. The conference program includes presentations of research and development projects, which will hopefully lead to constructive discussions on managerial policies, problems, practices and solutions regarding issues related to the monitoring and management of visitor flows.

The ten conference topics were chosen to reflect current on-going research work that has aroused international interest and is also a focus of activity. All the topics have attracted great interest among the international community of recreation researchers and practitioners. The conference program covers all these topics. Some of them are more popular than the others, but interestingly, the presentations and articles presented in these proceedings are very representative of each topic group. Monitoring visitor flows and also other types of recreational inventories are discussed in the sessions on Visitor Monitoring Methods, Experiences of National, Regional and On-site Visitor Inventories and Visitor Flow Modeling and Data Management. There are altogether 16 papers on these subjects. Papers discussing visitor management research from several perspectives, such as issues of visitor conflicts, implementation of visitor information in management processes, different aspects of sustainability and carrying capacity issues in recreational settings are the largest group of papers. The third major subject group deals with visitor management policy issues, nature tourism policies in recreational and protected areas, and finally economic and social impacts of recreation and nature tourism in the surrounding communities, regions and countries.

We hope that the conference will fulfill all the expectations that the participants have for attending this conference. We also hope that these proceedings will be a useful document in recording the status of research on monitoring and management of visitor flows in recreational and protected areas in our international community of researchers and practitioners working in the field of nature based recreation and tourism.