



Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Division of State Parks
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Missouri Department of Natural Resources Division of State Parks Visitor Research, 1997-2006

The diversity of Missouri's state park system is reflected in the diversity of its users. Comprehending and planning for this diversity is an important goal for the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Division of State Parks. Understanding the diversity of its users requires knowing who they are and knowing what they expect, a reason the division frequently surveys its users about their opinions, demographic characteristics and use patterns. Realizing that there is no such person as a "typical" park user but also confident in the knowledge that such information is beneficial in providing quality service delivery, the division uses demographic and use pattern data to anticipate changes in visitor characteristics and resultant changes in visitor expectations and demands. Additionally, user satisfaction is a high priority to the division, given rise to a series of visitor satisfaction surveys. From 1997 to 2005, 32 visitor satisfaction studies have been conducted, resulting in overall satisfaction ratings of 97%. Below is a list of user studies conducted from 1997 to present. The majority of these studies were conducted on-site within specific state parks or historic sites, either as exit surveys or roving route surveys. Several, however, were conducted entirely online while one, the Missing Masterpieces Survey, used both Internet surveys and mailback surveys. Included are executive summaries from several key studies, along with various survey instruments used.

Studies conducted in-house:

Missouri Department of Natural Resources: State park visitor study, 2005-2006
(Data were collected by in-house staff; report was compiled by D.J. Case & Associates)

2005 Centralized Reservation System User Survey

2005 eFriends Survey

2005 Missing Masterpieces Survey: A survey about Missouri state parks and historic sites

2004 Mastodon State Historic Site visitor count

Studies conducted by the University of Missouri-Columbia:

2003 St. Joe State Park visitor survey

2002 Economic impacts of Missouri state park visitors

1999-2002 Katy Trail State Park equestrian use study: Project completion report

2001-2002 Katy Trail State Park equestrian use study: Third year report, June 2001-May 2002

2000-2001 Katy Trail State Park equestrian use study: Second year report, September 2000-May 2001

2001 Management brief: The Missouri state park visitor

2001 Division of State Parks and Stockton State Park food service delivery study

2001 Recreational vehicle industry trends

2000 Missouri state park visitor attendance count

2000 Missouri state park & historic site visitor survey: Overall composite

2000 Arrow Rock State Historic Site visitor survey

2000 Castlewood State Park visitor survey

2000 Deutschheim State Historic Site visitor survey

2000 Route 66 State Park visitor survey

2000 Mark Twain Birthplace State Historic Site visitor survey

2000 Roaring River State Park visitor survey

1999-2000 Katy Trail State Park equestrian use study: First year baseline report, September 1999-August 2000

1999-2000 Katy Trail State Park equestrian use study: Preliminary baseline report, September-December 1999

1999 Dr. Edmund A. Babler Memorial State Park visitor survey

1999 Big Lake State Park visitor survey

1999 Finger Lakes State Park visitor survey

1999 Long Branch State Park visitor survey

1999 Pershing State Park visitor survey

1999 Trail of Tears State Park visitor survey

1999 Harry S Truman State Park visitor survey

1999 Wakonda State Park visitor survey

1999 Lake of the Ozarks State Park visitor survey

1999 Table Rock State Park visitor survey

1998 Bennett Spring State Park visitor survey

1998 Hawn State Park visitor survey

1998 Johnson's Shut-Ins State Park visitor survey

1998 Mastodon State Historic Site visitor survey

1998-1999 Meramec State Park off-season visitor survey

1998 Pomme de Terre State Park visitor survey

1998 Watkins Woolen Mill State Park and Historic Site visitor survey

1998 Weston Bend State Park visitor survey

1998 Katy Trail State Park visitor survey

1997 Meramec State Park visitor survey

Missouri Department of Natural Resources: State Park Visitor Study, 2005-2006 Executive Summary

This report documents a survey conducted by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) during 2005-2006 of 3,362 visitors to five Missouri State Parks (Castlewood, Meramec, Roaring River, Route 66, Thousand Hills) and one State Historic Site (Felix Valle), and profiles visitor perceptions, preferences, satisfactions, activities, and expenditures. In summary, large majorities of respondents at all parks indicated they were “very satisfied” with their visits. Of nine park services evaluated by respondents, highest-ranking or second-highest-ranking was “helpful and friendly staff,” described as “excellent” at all parks. Survey respondents spent a total of about \$340,000 in association with their visits to these 6 parks. The estimated expenditure by each visitor per day was \$31, strikingly similar to the \$30/visitor/day expenditure estimate from a 2002 visitor study. Very few visitors indicated that they felt “crowded” during their park visits. The presence of children in visiting parties varied from a high of 43% at Meramec, to perhaps a surprisingly low 8% at Felix Valle. The appeal of MDNR parks to adults, children, or both, obviously will vary in relation to the type of outdoor or cultural experiences featured. But the absence of children in many visitor parties should not come as a surprise, given the age demographic—predominance of older “baby boom” citizenry—of Missouri and the nation. It is recommended that a single, “standard” park visitor questionnaire be developed for future visitor studies (“MDNR Park Visitor Profile”).

2005 Missing Masterpieces Survey: A Survey About Missouri State Parks & Historic Sites Executive Summary

From April to October 2004, the Missouri Department of Natural Resources’ Division of State Parks conducted a survey to gather public input regarding the standards the division uses to determine if potential new areas are worthy of including in Missouri’s state park system. Additionally, the survey allowed participants to suggest “missing masterpieces” – specific natural, cultural or recreational areas they felt were missing from the system.

Over 1,400 surveys were received from the public. Over half (52%) of those received were paper surveys, while the rest (48%) were received via the Internet. An overwhelming percentage of respondents agreed with the standards the division currently uses to evaluate new areas, ranging from 72% agreement (for the geography standard used to evaluate potential new cultural/historical sites) to 96% agreement (for the natural themes standard used to evaluate potential new natural landscapes).

Respondents who indicated that there were other standards the division should consider when evaluating potential new sites ranged from 12% (cultural landmarks) to 27% (natural landscapes). By far, the most frequently mentioned alternate standards for each of the three types of standards used (natural, cultural and recreational) were location and accessibility. Often this meant greater equality in geographic distribution as well as greater accessibility to parks and sites, usually by locating parks and sites closer to urban areas or large population centers. Another frequently mentioned alternate standard stemmed from respondents’ concerns about

changing land uses in Missouri, many of whom saw the division as a mechanism for preserving greenspace from urban and suburban encroachment as well as providing greenway connections/corridors between parks and sites, particularly in urban areas.

Although some respondents voiced concern regarding the division's ability to expand its state park system within a limited budget, numerous participants also favored expansion of the current system to incorporate new areas. Suggestions included:

- Development of additional sites that interpreted Native American and African American history and culture, as well as other under-represented cultures and/or ethnicities.
- Greater emphasis on preserving Missouri's diverse immigrant history.
- Development of additional sites close to urban population centers.
- Greater emphasis on acquiring and protecting watersheds, wetlands and lands adjacent to rivers and streams.
- Greater emphasis on acquiring prairies and areas of unique geologic significance, such as caves.

Perhaps the most gratifying result of the survey was the strong sense of ownership expressed by a large percentage of respondents, many of whom referred to Missouri's state park system as "our system."

This first report summarizes the survey results. From these results and staff input, an action plan will be developed that will help guide the Division of State Parks' future management decisions regarding how best to protect Missouri's natural and cultural resources. This plan will explore and recommend ways the division can most effectively protect those "missing masterpieces" that meet the standards established by the division, while still being an efficient steward of the funds generated from the parks-and-soils sales tax.

2003 St. Joe State Park Visitor Survey Executive Summary

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of visitors at St. Joe State Park (STSP) by describing their demographics, frequency and duration of visitation, place attachment, travel distance, activity participation, utilization and satisfaction with facilities / services, preferences, and economic impact. An on-site survey of adult visitors was conducted from late April to early November, 2003. Five hundred thirty-one park visitors completed a questionnaire which yielded an overall response rate of 76 percent. Results from this study have a sampling error of + 5 %.

- 65.6% of visitors were male; 96.1% of visitors were white; 22.1% of visitors had a college degree or higher; and 56.3% of visitors reported incomes of \$50K or higher
- 83.4% were repeat visitors; repeat visitation occurs about 16 times per year.

- Overnight visitors stay approximately 2.7 nights; 83.8% of overnight visitors stay in the campgrounds.
- 69.4% of visitors come with family members or family & friends; the single largest visitor group is 7-15 years old.
- Most visitors are satisfied with the park ($x=3.56/4$); most visitors want SJSP to “Keep Up the Good Work.”
- 61.0% of visitors ride ATV/ORVs; woodland trails are preferred over sand flats (60% to 40%, respectively); and 13% of riders attend or participate in ATV / ORV special events .
- 32.0% of SJSP visitors use the beach area; no preference between beach use at Pim and Monsanto Lakes.
- Most visitors are not concerned with overcrowding ($x=2.3/9$).
- Place attachment was high (3.47/5), but showed little change between activities.
- SJSP visitors came from 195 zip codes, including 13 states.
- In 2003, visitors spent \$10.9M on trips to SJSP & generated \$13.5M in sales; visitor spending contributed \$3.9M in income and 165 jobs to the state; out-of-state visitors spent \$2.5M, generated \$3.1M in sales, \$0.9M in income, and supported 38 jobs; and total visitor expenditures contributed \$1.7M in taxes to the state.

2002 Economic Impact of Missouri State Park Visitors Executive Summary

- **Total Visitor Expenditures:** In 2002, visitors spent a total of \$410 million on trips to Missouri State Parks. Visitors to over-night parks spent \$280 million, visitors to day-use parks spent \$83 million, and visitors to historic sites spent \$47 million.
- **Average Visitor Expenditures:** State park visitors in general spent an average of \$29.67 per person per day during their trips to Missouri state parks. Although over-night park visitors stayed longer (4 nights per trip) than day-use park and historic site visitors (both stayed an average of 1 night in the area) during their trips to state parks, on average over-night park visitors spent considerably less (\$25.13 per person/day) than the latter two groups (Day-Use = \$48.83, Historic Site = \$48.44). Overnight visitors are defined as those visitors who stayed overnight within the park or site.
- **Leakage:** Of the \$410 million total visitor spending, \$370 stayed within the state, and about \$40 million (\$410 minus \$370) immediately leaked out of the state's economy. Purchase of

products by state park visitors that were originally manufactured outside the state account for this leakage.

- **Impacts on Sales:** The \$410 million spent by state park visitors included visitors' expenses within the parks and on route to the parks. Ninety percent of this amount (\$370 million) was the direct effect of sales – namely, sales generated in businesses and organizations that interacted directly with visitors (i.e. the tourism industry). Since the money spent by state park visitors was re-spent again and again in the state economy, Missouri state park visitors generated a total of \$538 million in sales when considering the multiplier effect: \$370 million in sales in the tourism industry and an additional \$168 million (\$538 minus \$370) in sales in related businesses and organizations.
- **Impacts on Income and Employment:** The \$370 million in sales of the tourism industry contributed \$99 million to employee income, and supported about 5,480 jobs in the tourism industry. Including the multiplier effects on income and employment, state park visitors' total expenditure had an overall impact on the state economy of \$538 million in sales, \$162 million in income and 7,660 jobs in employment.
- **Impacts on Taxes:** The total spending of Missouri state park visitors generated about \$71 million in taxes, including \$42 million in federal government (non-defense) taxes and \$29 million in state and local government taxes (non-education).
- **Out-of-State Visitor Expenditures:** Of the \$410 million spent by Missouri state park visitors, \$100 million (24%) was spent by out-of-state visitors. These visitors spent an average of \$37.09 per person per day during their trips to Missouri State Parks. Ninety six percent of the \$100 million (\$96 million) was sales generated in the tourism industry. While the \$96 million stayed within the state of Missouri, \$4 million leaked out of the state economy. Including the sales multiplier, non-resident state park visitors generated \$140 million in total sales in Missouri's economy.
- **Impacts of Out-of-State Visitor Expenditures:** The \$96 million in direct sales generated \$26 million in direct income and supported 1,440 jobs in the tourism industry. Adding the multiplier effects, their expenditures generated a total of \$43 million in income and supported a total of 2,013 jobs in the state economy. Out-of-state visitors contributed a total of \$19 million in taxes, with about \$11 million in federal taxes and \$8 million in state and local taxes.

1999-2002 Katy Trail State Park Equestrian Use Study Executive Summary

The Katy Trail State Park Equestrian Use Study was a three-year study to determine the impacts of multiple use on the Trail. More specifically, the purpose of this study was:

- To obtain information about Katy Trail visitors, their socio-demographic and use characteristics, and their perceptions of encounters with other users; particularly, to determine what, if any, social impacts may occur from the diverse and increasing uses on the Trail.
- To monitor trail surface and trailhead indicators and maintenance requirements to determine what, if any, physical and resource impacts may occur from this multiplicity of uses.

In order to obtain information about Katy Trail users, a visitor survey was conducted on-site at specified trailheads along the Trail. From the results of this survey, a profile of the “typical” Katy Trail visitor emerged: a 49-year old white male with a four-year college degree or a post-graduate education and an annual household income of between \$25,000 and \$50,000. This visitor was generally a bicyclist from Missouri who visited the Trail on the weekends, about 56 times a year. He was more likely to be a day-user of the Trail because he usually lived within 25 miles of a trailhead. The Katy Trail was most attractive to this visitor because of its convenient location, scenic beauty, and ease of use.

In addition to being able to profile a typical Katy trail user, the survey results revealed several significant trends during the course of the three-year study. The first of these significant trends was the steadily increasing household income reported by trail visitors during the third year of study, with a higher percentage of visitors reporting incomes of over \$75,000 when compared to the first and second years. Second of the trends was the increasing percentage of trail users traveling the entire distance of the completed Katy Trail, with a corresponding rise in the number of users staying overnight during a trail visit. These “go-the-distance” users may account for the increase in household incomes, as these users are also characterized by higher incomes, higher levels of education, and a higher percentage of out-of-state residence.

As the Katy Trail nears its completion, it will continue to attract new and diverse users while increasing visitation rates of its repeat visitors. Research suggests that the increase in use frequency, intensity and diversity has potential for visitor conflict as well as negative resource impact. The visitor survey results from this study, however, suggest that Trail users do not feel crowded, experience very little conflict, and have much higher expectations of the number of encounters of other users than generally encountered during a trail visit. The high satisfaction and performance ratings given by visitors, their low perceptions of crowding and the few reported negative encounters all serve as social indicators confirming the compatibility of a multiplicity of uses, including equestrian use, on certain sections of the Trail with low use frequency and intensity. Additionally, the physical indicators used to assess resource damage also reinforce the feasibility of maintaining multiple use on the Katy Trail.

2001 Management brief: The Missouri State Park Visitor Executive Summary

As we move into the 21st century, natural resource managers must respond to the changing population of visitors demanding access to nature-based recreational opportunities. In the face of ever-changing visitor characteristics, expectations, and patterns of use, the understanding of

public values regarding nature-based recreation is oftentimes elusive, frustrating managers into feeling as though they are chasing after a will-o'-the-wisp in their efforts to provide quality customer service. Cognizant of its stewardship role in managing Missouri's natural and cultural resources for Missouri's citizenry, the Missouri Division of State Parks (DSP) is seeking to determine if it is indeed providing quality customer service and meeting the needs of its visitors.

Since 1997, DSP has commissioned visitor studies at 26 of its 81 state parks and historic sites in an effort to learn more about the recreationists who visit them, resulting in a database of over 8,000 entries. These 26 parks and sites are truly representative of the diverse natural and cultural resources found throughout the state of Missouri and, although each park and site has its own unique features and resources, reflect the type of recreational opportunities to be found in the entire system. Of particular interest to DSP is the discovery of just who their visitors are and what characteristics go into making a "typical" visitor to the Missouri state park system. Knowing who their current customers are can assist DSP managers in monitoring for changes in their customer base and preparing for the potential accommodations associated with such changes.

The following summaries seek to provide this information and to provide managers with a quick reference guide to be used during management meetings, legislative sessions, public forums, etc. Each summary briefly profiles a particular segment of the adult visitors, 18 years of age and older, who were surveyed during the four years of study. Profiles include descriptions of visitors based on their socio-demographic characteristics of age, income, ethnicity, educational attainment, and resident location as well as a comparison of socio-demographic characteristics of Missouri visitors compared to Missouri's population as a whole. Also included are descriptions of visitors based on a recreation activity spectrum, a comparison of visitors based on their use patterns (i.e. historic site visitors vs. state park visitors, overnight visitors vs. day-users, etc.), and a park and site classification system.

2001 Division of State Parks and Historic Sites and Stockton State Park Food Service Delivery Study Executive Summary

The goal of this report is to provide management information and analysis specific to Stockton State Park (SSP), as well as to provide a means for determining the level of food service delivery required at other state parks and historic sites in the Missouri system. The following information summarizes the results of the study.

Industry Trends

A review of the literature regarding the food service industry clearly indicates several prominent consumer trends and delivery challenges.

- One-third of consumers say that eating out is an "essential" way of life. Convenience seems to be the driving force behind consumers' need to dine out: 70% of consumers feel that

eating out is a better use of their leisure than cooking and cleaning up, allowing them more time for other activities such as socializing with family and friends.

- Consumers are increasingly subscribing to the notion of “look before you leap”, as indicated by the growing number who are using the Internet and email to gather information about restaurants they’ve never patronized, view restaurant menus, and make reservations or place orders online.
- The biggest challenge to the restaurant industry is the recruitment and retention of employees. Other challenges include competition and rising operational costs.
- Growth in natural resource recreation and the need for greater self-sufficiency in revenue generation have compelled many state park systems to offer a diversity of amenity services not traditionally associated with state parks, including food service provision.
- In addition to the labor challenges, increasing competition and growing operational costs experienced by the restaurant industry, state park food operators also face the challenge of generating greater revenue in an industry known for its marginal ability to do so.

Stockton State Park Survey Results

It is clear from survey results that Stockton State Park has two demographically but equally important cohort groups.

- The typical SSP visitor was 48 years old, was white, was almost equally likely to be male or female, had some college, had an annual household income of between \$25,000 and \$50,000, was married with children grown, and was engaged in a professional or technical occupation. Most were from Missouri with over half coming from the Kansas City and Springfield areas.
- The typical SSP boat slip renter was also white and married with children grown, but was older (57) and more likely to be male than female, have a four-year college or graduate degree, have an annual household income of over \$75,000, and be retired, when compared to the typical SSP visitor. Most were from Missouri, with over half coming from the Springfield and Kansas City areas.
- The majority of both SSP visitors and slip renters were repeat visitors, although a much higher percentage of slip renters reported visiting SSP during the past year than was reported by SSP visitors. Additional differences included the fact that two-thirds of SSP visitors indicated they were staying overnight during their visit, while a little over half of the slip renters reported staying overnight during their last visit. Of the overnight users, the majority of SSP visitors stayed in one of the overnight facilities within the park (campgrounds, motel, duplex condominiums), whereas the majority of slip renters stayed overnight on their boats.
- Both groups were more likely to visit SSP with family and friends, and the predominant recreation activities participated in by both groups clearly reflects the water-oriented personality of SSP: boating, fishing and swimming.

- The majority of both cohort groups indicated having eaten at the dining lodge at least once in the past. Of interest is the fact that the subgroup of motel and condo visitors (for both SSP visitors and slip renters) was more likely to have eaten at the dining lodge than other subgroups, indicating a direct link between the amenity services.
- The results also indicate a clear preference, by both SSP visitors and slip renters, for eating breakfast and dinner at the lodge. This preference for breakfast and dinner at the lodge also translates into higher expectations and acceptance of service types. Dinner, in particular, had the highest expectations associated with it. The majority of both cohort groups expected table service for dinner and were least accepting of the possibility of prepackaged food for dinner.

Comprehensive Remarks from Focus Group Participants

Five prominent themes emerged from the focus group sessions.

- **Mission Clarity** – there was a consistent divergence of opinion toward the purpose of food service delivery in DSP, occurring at all levels of occupation from concessionaire to park superintendent to park planner. Opinions ranged from viewing food service dining as a destination itself to the opinion that DSP should base food service provision on the primary park visitor, consistent with the dominant recreational activities of the park.
- **Site-Specific Provision of Food Services** – there was a consistency of opinion throughout the focus group discussions that suggested food service should align itself with the distinguishing attributes and characteristics of the individual parks and historic sites, including the personality of the park or site, the personality of dominant recreation activity patterns, the personality of the visitor, the location of the park and site and community spillover, etc.
- **Flexibility** – a third focus group opinion was that food service delivery should display logical management flexibility to meet visitor needs, especially in contract development, particularly in regard to determining hours of operation, type of food service delivery offered, menu selection, and even building design and location, etc.
- **Food Trends** – much of what was discussed regarding food trends was consistent with the literature regarding consumers’ desire for convenience and the social aspect of eating out. Another food trend response by participants was the trend toward “branding” in food service delivery.
- **Concessionaire Operations Constraints** – uniformly recognized operational constraints from concessionaire forum participants provide the basis for this last theme, many of which were consistent with literature findings, particularly the problems of persistent labor shortages, the marginality of revenue generation, increasing operational costs, competition from other restaurants, etc. Additional comments focused on the amenity services at SSP, with a consensus of opinion among all focus group participants suggesting that the dining lodge be located closer to the water with a better view of the lake and be more accessible to marina users.

2000 Arrow Rock State Historic Site Visitor Survey Executive Summary

The purpose of this study was to describe visitors' socio-demographic characteristics, patterns of use, and satisfaction with site facilities, programs and services at Arrow Rock State Historic Site (ARSHS).

An on-site survey of adult visitors to ARSHS was conducted July, August, September and October 2000. One hundred ninety-three (193) surveys were collected, with an overall response rate of 89%. Results of the survey have a margin of error of plus or minus 7%. The following information summarizes the results of the study.

Socio-demographic Characteristics

- ARSHS visitors were comprised of more females (58%) than males (42%), and the average age of the adult visitor to ARSHS was 49.
- The largest percentage (47%) of visitors indicated a professional/ technical occupation, while the second largest percentage (20%) of visitors indicated retirement status.
- Thirty-one percent (31%) of visitors reported an annual household income of between \$25,000 and \$50,000, and another 31% indicated an annual income of over \$75,000.
- Most (35%) of the visitors were married with children grown.
- Over half (52%) of ARSHS visitors indicated having completed a four-year college degree or an advanced graduate degree.
- The majority (98%) of visitors were White, 1.1% were Hispanic, and 1.1% were African American.
- Most (77%) of the ARSHS visitors were from Missouri, with the majority (41%) residing within non-metropolitan areas.

Use-Patterns

- The majority (71%) of visitors drove less than a day's drive (a day's drive is defined as less than 150 miles one way) to visit ARSHS. Of those driving 150 miles or less, 36% drove 50 miles or less to visit the site.
- Almost two-thirds (62%) of ARSHS visitors had visited the site before, with an average of 4 visits in the past year.
- Two-thirds (67%) of the visitors were day-users, while 33% indicated staying overnight during their visit.

- Of those staying overnight, half (53%) reported staying in the site campground. The average number of nights overnight visitors stayed was 2 nights.
- The majority of ARSHS visitors visited the site with family and/or friends.
- The most frequent recreation activities in which visitors participated were visiting the visitor center, walking, shopping in Arrow Rock, self-guided tour of historic buildings, attending a Lyceum Theatre production, and dining at the Old Tavern.

Satisfaction and Other Measures

- Ninety-eight percent (98%) of ARSHS visitors were either satisfied or very satisfied overall with their visit.
- Of the six site features, the campground and visitor center were given the highest satisfaction ratings and the hiking trail was given the lowest satisfaction rating.
- Visitors gave higher performance ratings to the following site attributes: being safe, being free of litter and trash, upkeep of the facilities, and having clean restrooms.
- Visitors gave a marginal performance rating to care of the cultural resources.
- Only 19% of visitors to ARSHS felt some degree of crowding during their visit.
- Visitors who did not feel crowded had a significantly higher overall satisfaction rating compared to visitors who did feel crowded.
- Only a fourth (24%) of the visitors at ARSHS did not give site safety an excellent rating.
- Fifty-six percent (56%) of all visitors felt that nothing specific could increase their feeling of safety at ARSHS, while 11% of all visitors indicated more lighting at ARSHS would increase their feeling of safety.
- Visitors who felt the site was safe were more satisfied overall, less crowded, and gave higher performance ratings to the eight site attributes as well.
- The majority of visitors reported that word of mouth from friends and relatives is their primary source of information about ARSHS and other Missouri state parks and historic sites.
- The majority (37%) of visitors placed a value of \$5.00 per day on a recreational opportunity offered in a visit to ARSHS. The researchers believe that our initial attempt at attributing an economic value perspective did not prove beneficial.
- Eighteen percent (18%) of visitors provided additional comments and suggestions, the majority (51%) of which were general positive comments about the site and staff.

1999 Lake of the Ozarks State Park Visitor Survey Executive Summary

The purpose of this study was to describe visitors' socio-demographic characteristics, patterns of use, and satisfaction with park facilities, programs and services at Lake of the Ozarks State Park (LOSP).

An on-site survey of adult visitors to LOSP was conducted from June through October 1999. Two hundred (200) surveys were collected, with an overall response rate of 94%. Results of the survey have a margin of error of plus or minus 7%. The following information summarizes the results of the study.

Socio-demographic Characteristics

- LOSP visitors were comprised of more males (60%) than females (40%), and the average age of the adult visitor to LOSP was 45.
- Noteworthy is the percentage of visitors who reported incomes higher than \$50,000. Although the income category of between \$25,000 and \$50,000 accounted for the largest percentage (34%) of visitors, half (50%) of visitors reported annual incomes of either between \$50,001 and \$75,000 or over \$75,000.
- The majority (96%) of visitors were Caucasian, 2% were Asian, 1% were Native American, and 0.5% were Hispanic. There were no visitors reporting an ethnic background of African American heritage.
- Seven percent (7%) of the visitors reported having a disability.
- One-third (33%) of the visitors to LOSP were from out of state, with 12% from Illinois and 7% from Iowa.
- Most of the Missouri visitors came from either the St. Louis region (35%), or within 50 miles of LOSP (27%) with the remainder spread throughout the state.

Use-Patterns

- Most (77%) visitors drove less than a day's drive (less than 150 miles) to visit LOSP. Of those driving 150 miles or less, 13% live within 25 miles of LOSP.
- Sixty-two percent (62%) of LOSP visitors had visited the park before.
- LOSP visitors had visited the park an average of 3.5 times in the past year.
- Over three-fourths of the visitors were staying overnight.

- Of the visitors staying overnight, 79% stayed in the campgrounds at LOSP. The average number of nights visitors stayed was 3.7.
- The majority of LOSP visitors visited the park with family and/or friends.
- The majority (71%) of LOSP campers were aware of the reservation system, but only 42% used the system. Of those campers using the reservation system, 81% were satisfied with it.
- The most frequent recreation activities in which visitors participated were walking, camping, viewing wildlife, hiking, picnicking, fishing, swimming, and boating.

Satisfaction and Other Measures

- Ninety-nine percent (99%) of LOSP visitors were either satisfied or very satisfied overall.
- First-time visitors were significantly more satisfied than repeat visitors.
- Of the 12 park features, the campgrounds were given the highest satisfaction rating and the camp store was given the lowest satisfaction rating.
- Visitors gave higher performance ratings to the following park attributes: being free of litter and trash, care of natural resources, and disabled accessibility.
- Visitors gave lower performance ratings to the following park attributes: clean restrooms, being safe, and upkeep of park facilities.
- Half (50%) of visitors to LOSP felt some degree of crowding during their visit. The campgrounds were where the majority of visitors felt crowded.
- Visitors who did not feel crowded had a significantly higher overall satisfaction compared to visitors who did feel crowded.
- Half (51%) of the visitors at LOSP did not give park safety an excellent rating.
- Of those visitors responding to the open-ended opportunity to express their safety concerns, the largest percentage commented on what they perceived as a need for increased enforcement of speed limits.
- Although 24% of visitors felt that nothing specific could increase their feeling of safety at LOSP, 29% of visitors did indicate that an increased visibility of park staff and increased law enforcement patrol at LOSP would increase their feeling of safety.
- Visitors who felt the park was safe were more satisfied overall, felt less crowded, gave higher satisfaction ratings to the 12 park features, and gave higher performance ratings to the eight park attributes as well.

- The majority (89%) of visitors reported not being affected by “Party Cove.”
- A little more than half (56%) of visitors would not support a “carry in and carry out” trash system.
- Thirty-six percent (36%) of visitors provided additional comments and suggestions, the majority (23%) of which were positive comments about the park and staff.

1998 Bennett Spring State Park Visitor Survey Executive Summary

The purpose of this study was to describe visitors’ socio-demographic characteristics, patterns of use, and satisfaction with park facilities, programs and services at Bennett Spring State Park (BSSP).

An on-site survey of adult visitors to BSSP was conducted from July 1, to Aug. 31, 1998. Four hundred fifteen surveys were collected, with an overall response rate of 99.0%. Results of the survey have a margin of error of plus or minus 5%. The following information summarizes the results of the study.

Socio-demographic Characteristics

- BSSP visitors were comprised of nearly equal numbers of males and females, and the average age of the adult visitors to BSSP was 48.
- The highest percentage had a high school education or less and had an annual household income of \$25,000-\$50,000.
- The majority of visitors (93%) were Caucasian, 3% were Native American, 2% were Hispanic, 1% were African American, and 0.5% were Asian.
- Four percent (4%) of the visitors reported having a disability.
- Almost three-quarters of the visitors (72%) were from Missouri, and 8% were from Illinois and Kansas.
- Most visitors came from St. Louis, Kansas city and Columbia area with the remainder spread throughout the state.

Use-Patterns

- Four-fifths of BSSP visitors had visited the park before.
- BSSP visitors had visited the park an average of 3.9 times in the past year.

- About three-fourths of the visitors were staying overnight.
- Of the visitors staying overnight, three-fourths stayed in BSSP, with over half staying in the campgrounds, 10% staying at the cabins, and 5% staying at the motel in BSSP. Almost one-third stayed two nights. The average number of nights visitors stayed was 3.9.
- The majority of BSSP visitors visited the park with family and/or friends. Less than 1% visited the park alone.
- The most frequent recreation activities in which visitors participated were fishing, camping, viewing visitor center exhibits, swimming in pool, viewing wildlife, and picnicking.

Satisfaction and Other Measures

- Ninety-eight percent (98%) of the visitors were either very or somewhat satisfied overall.
- Non-campers at BSSP had a significantly higher overall satisfaction rating than campers. Weekend visitors also had a significantly higher overall satisfaction rating than weekday visitors.
- Visitors were most satisfied with the nature center and least satisfied with the dining lodge.
- The majority of visitors gave high ratings on being free of litter and trash and being safe.
- Clean restrooms and upkeep of park facilities were the areas identified as needing the most attention.
- Almost half (47%) of visitors with safety concerns listed lack of law enforcement (lack of personnel/rangers patrolling the park and/or lack of enforcement of speed limits) as a major safety concern.
- Almost 78% of visitors to BSSP felt crowded during their visit. More than half of them felt crowded in the spring and three fishing zones.
- Visitors surveyed at the spring and three fishing zones had a higher perception of crowding than visitors at the three other recreation areas.
- Visitors who felt the park was safe also were more satisfied overall and felt less crowded.
- Almost half of BSSP visitors supported locating the amphitheater attached to the nature center.
- Twenty-five percent (25%) of the respondents provided additional comments or suggestions, one-third of which were positive comments.

1997 Meramec State Park Visitor Survey Executive Summary

The purpose of this study was to describe visitors' socio-demographic characteristics, patterns of use, and satisfaction with park facilities, programs and services at Meramec State Park (MSP). The second purpose of this study was to develop an on-site questionnaire and methodology to gather visitor information in Missouri state parks.

An on-site exit survey of adult visitors to MSP was conducted from June 1 to Aug. 31, 1997. Six-hundred and thirty-eight surveys were collected, with an overall response rate of 71%. Results of the survey have a margin of error of plus or minus 4%. The following information summarizes the results of the study.

Socio-demographic Characteristics

- MSP visitors were comprised of nearly equal numbers of males and females, and the average age of the adult visitors to MSP was 40.
- The highest percentage had completed some college or vocational school education and had an annual household income of \$25,000-\$50,000.
- The majority of visitors (87%) were Caucasian, 11% were Native American, 1% were Hispanic, and 0.8% were Asian.
- Almost 5% of the visitors reported having a disability.
- Four-fifths of the visitors (80%) were from Missouri, 11% were from Illinois, and 9% were from 20 other states.
- Approximately two-thirds of the total visitors lived within a 30 mile radius of the park or lived in the St. Louis area.

Use-Patterns

- Two-thirds of MSP visitors traveled 75 miles or less to MSP.
- The average number of visitors per vehicle was 2.67.
- About three-fourths of MSP visitors had visited the park before.
- MSP visitors had visited the park an average of seven times in the past year.
- Almost two-thirds of the visitors were day-users.
- Of the visitors staying overnight, almost two-thirds stayed in the MSP campground, and over one-half stayed two nights.

- The average stay for overnight visitors was 2.6 nights.
- The majority of MSP visitors visited the park with family and/or friends. Ten percent visited the park alone.
- The most frequent recreation activities in which visitors participated were swimming, viewing wildlife, picnicking, camping, hiking, rafting/canoeing, exploring wild caves, and fishing.

Satisfaction and Other Measures

- Ninety-seven percent of the visitors were either very or somewhat satisfied overall.
- Respondents visiting MSP for the first time had a significantly higher overall satisfaction rating than repeat visitors.
- Visitors were most satisfied with the picnic area and least satisfied with river access areas.
- The majority of visitors gave high ratings on safety, park cleanliness, restroom cleanliness, a helpful and friendly staff, accessibility for disabled persons, upkeep of facilities, and care of natural resources.
- Clean restrooms were identified as needing the most attention.
- Twenty-five percent of visitors with safety concerns listed factors such as lack of park personnel presence, lack of rangers patrolling, lack of enforcement, and/or people breaking rules as safety concerns. Over one-half of the responses were factors over which management has no control.
- Over one-half of MSP visitors felt crowded on their visits. Half of them felt crowded in the campground and 16% felt crowded on the river.
- Weekend visitors' perceptions of crowding were significantly higher than weekday visitors', and campers felt significantly more crowded than non-campers.
- Visitors who felt the park was safe also felt less crowded.
- Visitors who felt crowded had significantly lower overall satisfaction ratings.
- Twenty-six percent of the respondents provided additional comments or suggestions, one-third of which were positive comments.