

Preface

Recreation, tourism and nature in a changing world

Introduction

Human activities impact the natural environment. We all know the examples. The oil spill in the Mexican Gulf that threatens hundreds of species of wildlife. Polar bears whose future is endangered because of climate change. Erosion and disturbance of wildlife by visitors of protected areas. But besides signs of despair, there are signs of hope as well. An increasing number of hectares are being protected, e.g. in the form of national parks. And in several countries we are seeing an increasing number of people being actively engaged in nature. More and more we become aware of the importance of nature for human beings, for example, for our welfare and our health. Concern for the quality of life and the environment as well as bringing people through recreation closer to nature brings scientists, researchers, policy makers, managers together at the biennial MMV-conferences

In 2010, Wageningen hosts the 5th MMV conference, following on from Vienna, Austria (2002), Rovaniemi, Finland (2004), Rapperswill, Switzerland (2006), and Montecatini Terme, Italy (2008). MMV has been organised because of the growing concern about increasing recreational use of protected areas and concern about the limits of ecological and social carrying capacities in these areas in many parts of the world. As more and more scientists, managers and policy makers are involved in the relationship between outdoor recreation, tourism and the natural environment, the interest in MMV-conferences and consequently its participants is increasing yearly. Today, recreation and tourism are ever growing important aspects of quality of life as well as the natural landscape is important for the spatial quality of our living environment. Participants in the MMV-conference are involved in questions of how to improve quality of life and quality of the environment simultaneously. This is a challenging assignment because demands of visitors are diverse and subject to external factors such as climate change, economic situation, natural hazards and fashion. At the same time, the notion of 'nature and outdoor recreation as partners' is becoming more accepted.

MMV 2010

The fifth MMV-conference in 2010 takes place in the Netherlands. If we look back, we notice not only a growth in the number of presentations (from 81 in 2002 to 143 in 2010), but also in the themes that are presented. While the original themes such as monitoring methods, user conflicts, visitor behavior, and visitor management are still important today, new themes have come up that are also of importance for nature management. Examples of these themes include economic impacts, landscape images and visitor experiences, participation processes, human-wildlife interactions, perceptions and preferences. This development clearly shows that nature management is much more than only area management. The significance of nature for humans is understood by nature managers, who more and more have an eye on the benefits of nature for people. In the end, public support is necessary to preserve precious/vulnerable nature areas. In her opening speech on May 31st, Princess Irene deepens and intensifies this viewpoint by stating that 'being in connection' with life on earth is necessary for a sustainable future of our planet. To quote her own words "*the goal of my plea is to restore the relationship of human beings and nature so that we will stop destroying her and start to appreciate and love her, and to understand the intrinsic value of all life*" (Van Lippe-Biesterfeld and Schouten, 2010: 88). Princess Irene is highly motivated to enhance personal commitment to, and awareness of, the values of our natural environment. This is especially important in highly urbanised countries such as the Netherlands where untouched nature is non-existing. As such, new nature areas have been created not only for ecological values, but also for the opportunities they offer for e.g. relaxation, sports and inspiration.

Book of abstracts

The 5th MMV has all ingredients to become successful, with participants coming from more than 25 countries all over the world. Learning, exchanging ideas and networking are the key elements in the MMV-conferences. This MMV-conference has 10 special organised sessions where the participants can learn and exchange ideas on a special issue. More than 140 interesting abstracts and 15 posters were submitted. We clustered the contributions into 11 groups:

- *Visitor experiences*: This theme prioritises nature experiences and motives as key factors to acknowledge into the design and management of nature areas

- *People and landscape*: Many people appreciate forest and nature areas for its aesthetic and symbolic values. The perceptual relations of people with forest and landscape are explored within this theme.
- *Target groups*: Some user groups, such as ethnic minorities, hardly ever visit nature areas or have different views upon nature compared to native groups. Other user groups have special requirements for their recreational activities. Target groups or visitor segmentation are a means to deal with this diversity,
- *Human-conservation*: This theme relates important conservation issues, such as wildlife, risks and hazards, to attitudes and perceptions of human beings
- *Public involvement*: Increasingly different societal and market groups are considered to be essential partners in nature management. This theme discusses nature outside nature areas with people inside.
- *Ecological impact*: Many papers deal with the ecological impact of visits to nature areas as well as the development of management strategies for it.
- *Nature and economy*: Increasingly monetary values and economic effects of nature areas are considered and dealt with in the management of nature areas. It is also considered how monitoring data can benefit the economy of nature areas
- *Visitor management*: High visitor density needs to be managed with respect to e.g. conflicts, crowding and mobility. Visitor management frameworks contribute to the solution of problems.
- *Knowledge for management*: Up-to-date knowledge is essential for adequate visitor management. Papers within this theme discuss the potentials of (scientific) knowledge and monitoring data for management.
- *Instruments, tools and technology*: All kinds of tools and media as well as new technology can contribute to the development of user friendly visitor management. Several papers discuss the possibilities of these innovative techniques.
- *Planning*: Finally, we discuss regional planning issues with respect to sustainable development in general and the functions of recreation-ecology in particular.

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