

# Station Note

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## CHARACTERISTICS AND PREFERENCES OF RECREATIONISTS IN SELECTED NORTHERN IDAHO STATE PARKS\*

by

Howard R. Alden  
Assistant Professor  
Forest Recreation

The State of Idaho is blessed with one of the outstanding recreation potentials in all of the 50 United States. She lacks, however, basic information necessary for planning and managing her recreation lands. This lack may be partially resolved by questioning the recreation user of her State Parks. Where he comes from, what he does, what he wants and how much he spends are integral parts of a basic "managerial tool".

A preliminary study of the recreation user was conducted at three State Parks in northern Idaho. These were Indian Creek, Heyburn, and Little Round Lake State Parks (Fig. 1). Families were interviewed during the 1964 recreation season to gain information on activity preferences, facility and service evaluations and preferences, and some tourist and economic data.

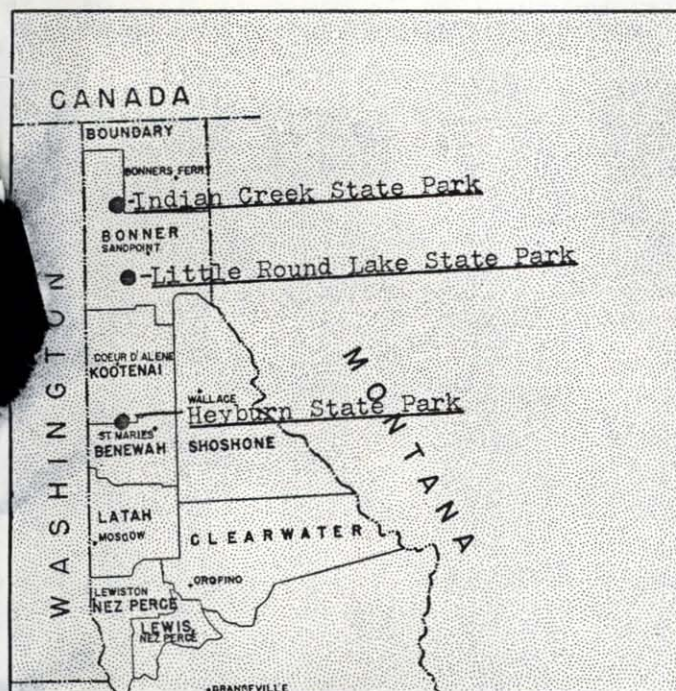


Fig. 1. Map of northern Idaho with location of Indian Creek, Heyburn and Little Round Lake State Parks.

Four hundred four families were interviewed representing 1612 users. Their responses were voluntary, interesting and in no case was there a refusal. Family sizes averaged 3.3 at Heyburn, 3.8 at Little Round Lake, and 4.2 at Indian Creek. The number of days each family spent recreating at one of these three parks varied from five at Heyburn to eight at Indian Creek. The young family group predominated in all three parks. This group, containing the parents (ages 20-44) and children (ages 12 and under), represented 34.2 and 36.8 percent respectively or 71 percent of the total people interviewed. The independent adolescents (ages 13-19) represented 17.5 percent and the people 45 years or older represented 11.5 percent of the total users.

How far will people travel to enjoy Idaho's lakes and scenic splendor? The study indicated that 75 percent of the people using Heyburn, 85 percent using Indian Creek, and 88 percent using Little Round Lake were from outside the State of Idaho. Of these out-of-state users, 74 percent were from the neighboring State of Washington. The remainder of the out-of-state visitors came primarily from Oregon, Utah, Montana and Wyoming. Many came from California, a few from the Canadian Provinces and some from as far away as Texas, Illinois and Pennsylvania.

The next consideration is the user evaluation of facilities and services. Users responded primarily to questions regarding parking, water supply, toilets, campgrounds and boat docks. Other facilities and services received relatively minor attention. Users were mainly dissatisfied with toilets, roads, trails, rental facilities, concessions and tours (Table 1).

Table 1. Recreational user evaluation of existing facilities and services at selected northern Idaho State Parks, 1964.

Facility and Service	Satisfied (%)	Not* Satisfied (%)	Not Interested in Using (%)
(High Response)			
Parking	95.6	4.4	—
Water Supply	86.6	13.4	—
Campgrounds	84.8	15.2	—
Roads	63.6	36.4	—
Toilets	61.7	38.3	—
Boat Docks	58.1	41.9	24.9
(Low response)			
Signs and information	73.5	26.5	—
Trails	47.9	52.1	21.5
Rental Facilities	33.3	66.7	39.5
Concessions	11.6	88.4	31.9
Tours	8.5	91.5	34.7

\*Not satisfied includes dissatisfaction due to lack of availability.

The following selected quotations from the interview forms represent a small percentage of all written comments but imply dissatisfaction of many users.

### A. Toilets:

1. "need lights and running water"
2. "need flush toilets — it will reduce smell"
3. "two ladies were locked in this morning because the door knob falls off on the outside"
4. "too dirty — show lack of maintenance"

\*The author expresses thanks to Idaho's Department of Commerce and Development for providing interview forms and the Division of Parks and Recreation, Idaho Land Department for providing sites and assistance in collecting data. This report is a portion of a McIntire-Stennis Cooperative Forestry Research Project.



- B. Roads:
1. "too rough and dusty"
  2. "roads terrible in camp area"
  3. "not enough road signs to area"
- C. Camping Area:
1. "disorganized locations"
  2. "too close together"
  3. "campsites not clearly indicated"
  4. "fireplaces totally inadequate"
- D. Information and Signs:
1. "didn't see any marked trails"
  2. "signs too small"
  3. "signs and information insufficient"
  4. "would like park information brochure"
- E. Miscellaneous:
1. "keep dogs on leash"
  2. "no loud radios after 10:30 p.m."
  3. "there is an open well in the bushes on campground. This is terrible and should be reported."
  4. "State should stop burning garbage in campground"
  5. "need covers on garbage cans"
  6. "need to outlaw motorcycles and scooters in parks"

Users were also requested to indicate what additional facilities they deemed desirable. Their response is shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. Indication of additional facilities desired by users of selected northern Idaho State Parks, 1964.**

Facility Desired	% Users who desired additional facility
Flush Toilets	61
Showers	53
More Concessions	28
Laundry	24
Horse Rentals	18
Boat Rentals	16
Community Kitchen	6

What do these recreationists do and how much money are they willing to spend while in Idaho? As individuals, each of us considers our leisure-time recreation a personal matter. Most of us, however, are ready to relate what we did on our vacation and the thrifty way in which we accomplished our enjoyment. Idaho's State Park users were no different (Table 3).

**Table 3. Recreation activity of families in selected northern Idaho State Parks, 1964.**

Activity	Average % of time a family spent participating in each activity
Water sports (swimming, boating water skiing)	32
Fishing	14
Hiking	13
Sightseeing	12
Taking Pictures	11
Watching for Wildlife	6
Picnicking	6
Collecting Rocks	2
Visiting Historical Markers	2
Berry Picking	2
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Water oriented activities including fishing were by far the most popular once each family reached a State Park and set up its campsite. Camping, by itself, was considered by most families as a means of living and enjoying activities together. Camping for leisure was mentioned by only one of the interviewed families.

When a family recreates in the foregoing manner, what is the cost — what is the family spending? It was found that the average amount one person spent per day was \$1.57. The amount one person spent per day in the area of the three State Parks was \$1.29. This amount spent by one person per day in the area represents 82 percent of the total amount each spent per day. The value of the amount of money spent in each area is questionable because, to the user, "in area" meant anywhere from in a park to 75 miles away. A more realistic figure was secured from late summer interviews at Heyburn State Park. By comparing total money spent with the expenditures at park concessions and the adjacent towns of Plummer and St. Maries, it was found that only 50 percent of the total money spent per person was spent in the area.

The question often asked by Chambers of Commerce, Tourist Information Departments, and State Agencies is "what motivated people to come and recreate in Idaho?" These groups will find it disheartening to know that 89 percent of the interviewed families had previously visited Idaho or came at the recommendation of friends or relatives. The initial family contact, however, may have come from various tourist and recreation information sources. The remaining families (11 percent) did receive motivation primarily from the Chambers of Commerce, State Agencies and Tourist Information Booths. Media such as newspaper and magazine stories and travel show booths provided the least amount of motivation.

Because this is a preliminary study related to a more detailed research project, final conclusions cannot be drawn from the information presented. The user has, however, provided the State with extremely valuable information relative to many aspects of its recreation program. This information should be evaluated in terms of planning and managing parks, providing facilities and services, providing recreational opportunities, and presenting a positive public relations and information program. This study should not imply that the State's recreation program bow to every wish of each user, but indicates that Idaho's program is lagging and that she should take corrective action where necessary.