

Visitor Management in the National Parks: Recreational Carrying Capacity Assessment of Çıralı Coast, Turkey

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Abstract : National parks, which are rich in natural and cultural resources values are protected in the context of the idea to develop sustainability, are among the most important recreated areas demanding with each passing day. Increasing recreational use or unplanned use forms negatively affect the resource values and visitor satisfaction. The intent of national parks management is to protect the natural and cultural resource values and to provide the visitors with a quality of recreational experience, as well. In this context, the current studies to improve the appropriate tourism and recreation planning and visitor management, approach have focused on recreational carrying capacity analysis. The aim of this study is to analyze recreational carrying capacity of Çıralı Coast in the Bey Mountains Coastal National Park to compare the analyze results with the current usage format and to develop alternative management strategies. In the first phase of the study, the annual and daily visitations, geographic, bio-physical, and managerial characteristics of the park and the type of recreational usage and the recreational areas were analyzed. In addition to these, ecological observations were carried out in order to determine recreational-based pressures on the ecosystems. On-site questionnaires were administrated to a sample of 284 respondents in the August 2015 - 2016 to collect data concerning the demographics and visit characteristics. The second phase of the study, the coastal area separated into four different usage zones and the methodology proposed by Cifuentes (1992) was used for capacity analyses. This method supplies the calculation of physical, real and effective carrying capacities by using environmental, ecological, climatic and managerial parameters in a formulation. Expected numbers which estimated three levels of carrying capacities were compared to current numbers of national parks' visitors. In the study, it was determined that the current recreational uses in the north of the beach were caused by ecological pressures, and the current numbers in the south of beach much more than estimated numbers of visitors. Based on these results management strategies were defined and the appropriate management tools were developed in accordance with these strategies. The authors are grateful for the financial support of this project by The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (No: 114O344)

Keywords : Çıralı Coast, national parks, recreational carrying capacity, visitor management

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