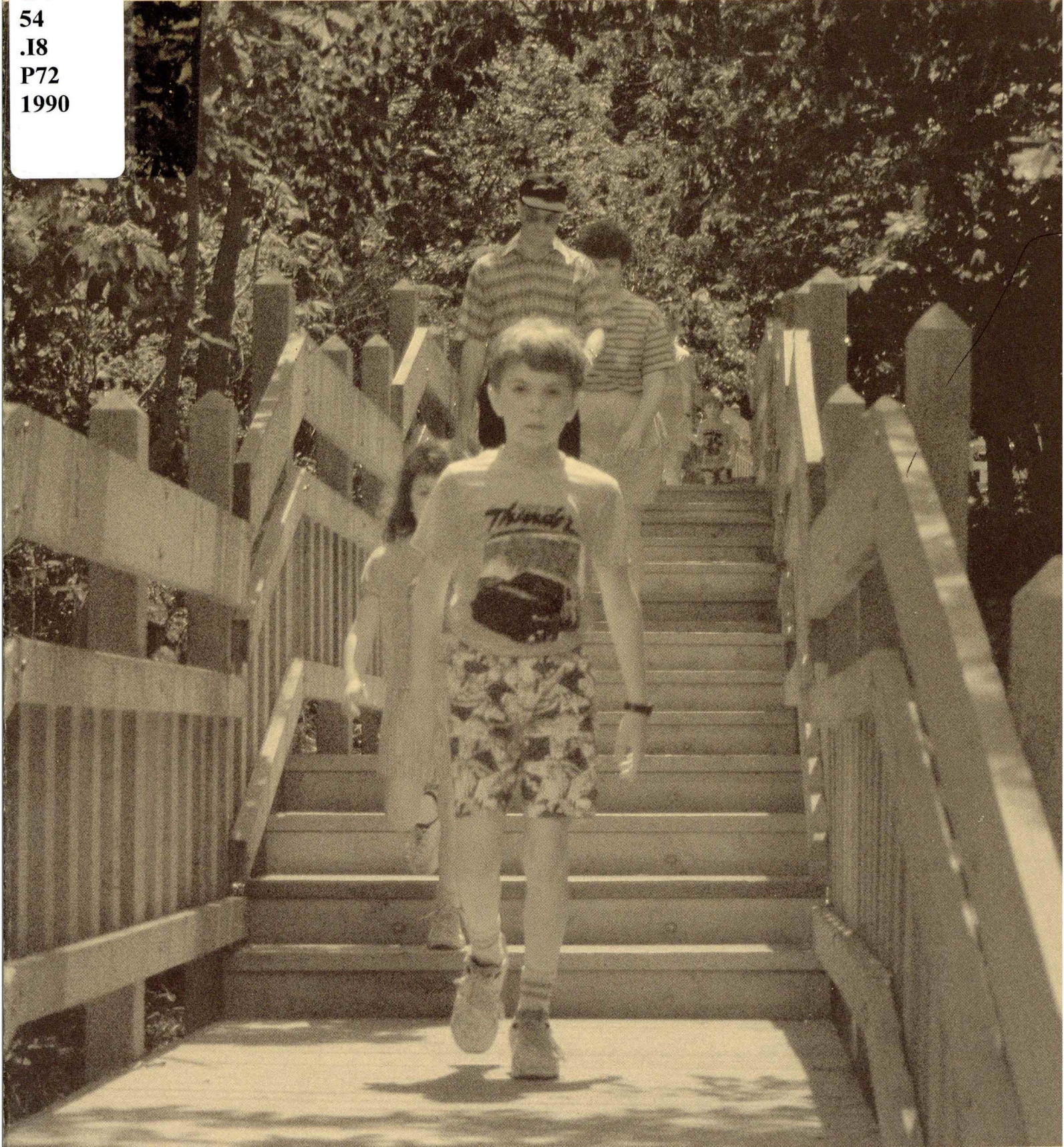


1990

Iowa State Park User Survey

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1990 State Park Visitors Survey

Prepared by:

**Tom Anderson
Outdoor Recreation Planner**

Division of Parks, Recreation and Preserves

November 1991

**Department of Natural Resources Commission
Douglas R. Smalley, Des Moines; (Mrs.) Marion J. Patterson, Cedar Rapids; John D. Field, Hamburg;
Richard C. Young, Waterloo; Barb Nelson, Ruthven; and Marion Kieffer, Bellevue.**

**Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Larry J. Wilson, Director**

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INTRODUCTION

Visitors at Iowa's 58 state parks have accounted for an average of 12 million visitor days each year for the last nine years. In an effort to better understand the strengths and weaknesses of the state recreation system and the needs, activities and level of park visitors' satisfaction, the Parks, Recreation and Preserves Division of the Department of Natural Resources, conducted a state park visitor survey during the months of May through September, 1990.

The survey method consisted of a brief on-site interview conducted as park visitors were exiting the facility. In addition to this interview, visitors were asked if they would be willing to complete and return, in a postage paid envelope, a more detailed take-home survey. If the park visitor declined a take-home survey, park staff conducted another exit interview with the next departing vehicle. This park visitor was asked if they would accept, complete and return the take-home survey. This process was continued until 2,002 take-home surveys were distributed.

**Over 12 million
annual visits**

On-site interviews were conducted and take-home surveys were distributed in a predetermined random manner by day of week and time of day at each of 52 state park and recreation areas. Random distribution by specific days of the week and hours of the day for conducting interviews and survey distribution was to ensure, to the greatest extent possible, that a mixture of day use and overnight park visitors were represented. The number of surveys to be distributed at each of the participating state areas was based on previous years' visitation records and the 1985 Park Visitors Survey distribution records. Appendix A contains the list of recreation areas at which surveys were distributed in 1990.

**Over 2,000 surveys
distributed**

On-site interviews and survey distribution took place between May 20 and September 15, 1990. This time period was selected as it coincides with months of high visitation. The number of surveys to be distributed was determined as of adequate size to be representative of statewide park visitation and usage. Of the 2,002 take-home surveys distributed, 1,033 were returned and tabulated. This accounted for a return rate of 52%. For this particular survey, no actions were taken that would allow for follow up contact with those accepting take-home surveys that did not respond within a reasonable length of time. The return rate for this survey is considered to be adequate and the survey effort successful.

The park visitor survey instrument was divided into three areas of interest, (1) questions specific to the park visit, (2) questions concerning the visitor's park use in general and (3) questions specific to the park visitor. The survey instrument is attached as Appendix B.

It is important to keep in mind that the survey and this report only deal with park visitors responding to the survey. The discussion, tables and figures do not include park visitation at federal, county, municipal, semi-public, private or other state areas. It is limited to the state areas identified in Appendix A. Consequently, no conclusions regarding statewide outdoor recreation in general can be made from this survey. Only conclusions relating to state parks, recreation areas and state forests can be made with any degree of validity.

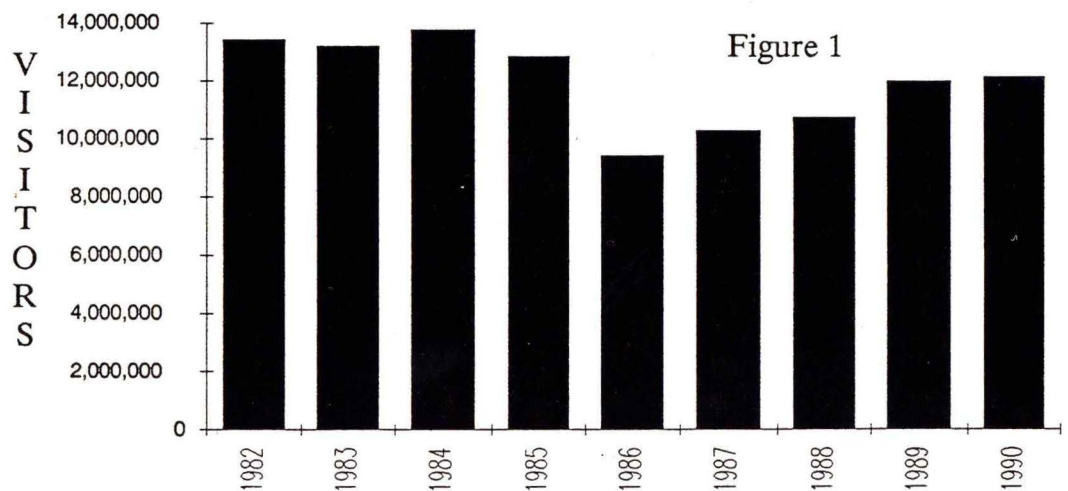
The discussion, tables and figures in section one of the survey and this report, "The Park Visit", relate to the particular park and park visit the day the survey was obtained.

Section two of the survey and this report, "General Park Visitation" describes the visitors' annual park use in general at both public and private recreation areas in and outside of Iowa.

Section three of the survey and this report, "The Park Visitor", relates to characteristics of the individuals that utilize our state parks.

Section four of this report is a summary comparing selective information from the 1985 and 1990 State Park Visitors Surveys.

Estimated Park Visitation 1982 - 1990*



*State Forest visitation not included for years 1986 - 1990.

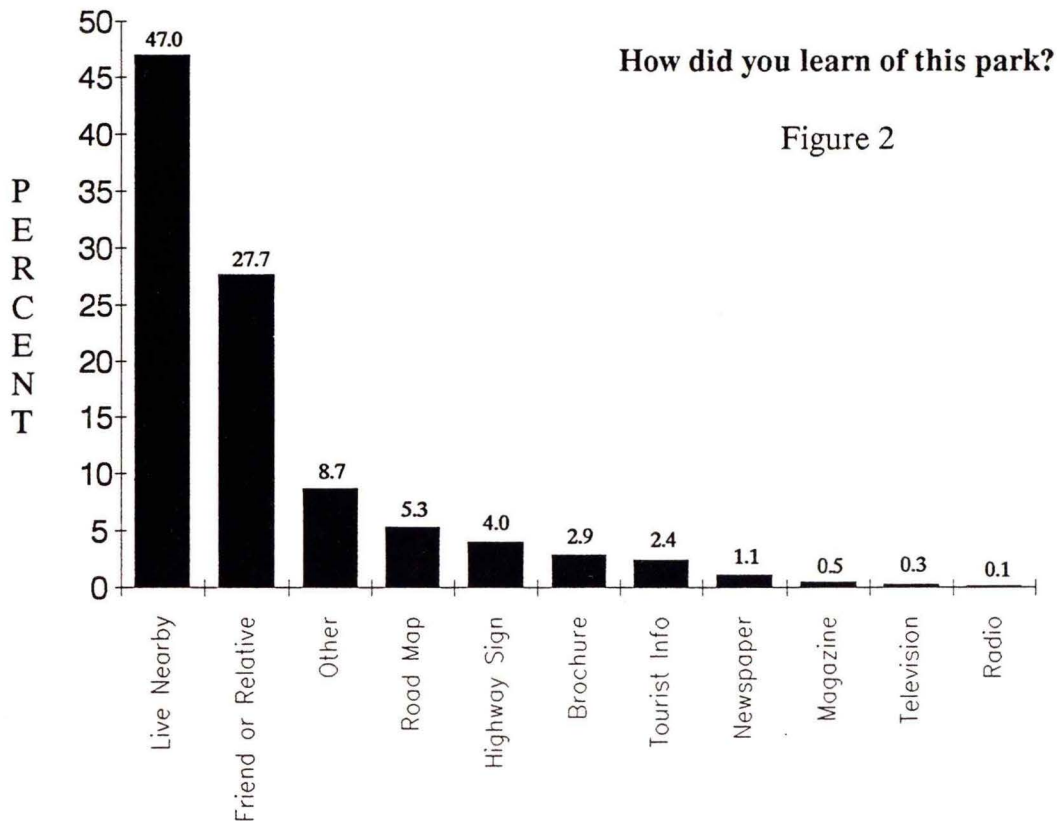
THE PARK VISIT

Most park visitors indicated they had learned about the park because they live nearby while other visitors learned of the park from friends or relatives. These two responses accounted for seventy-five percent (75%) of all responses given when asked "How did you learn of this park?"

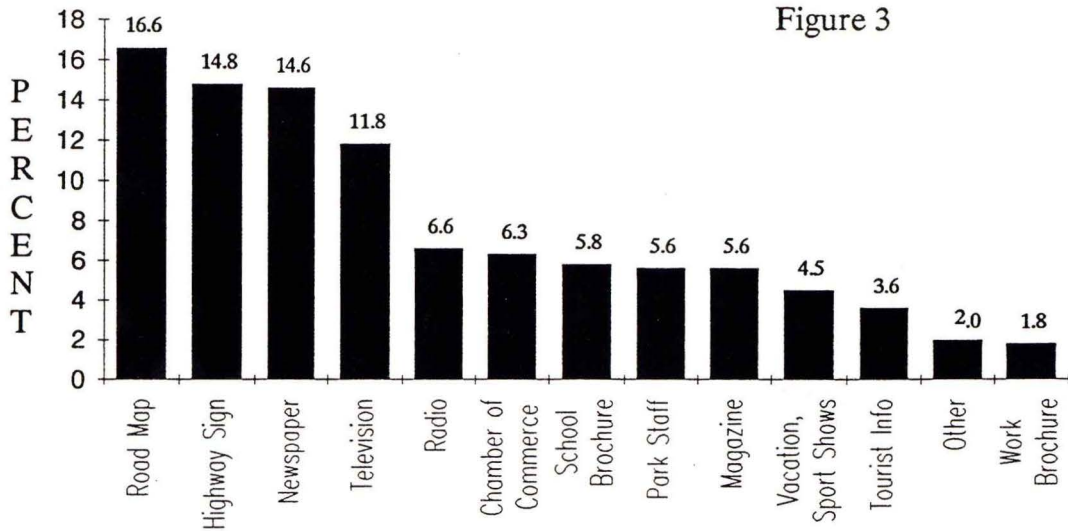
Most visitors live nearby

Park visitors were asked their opinion on the best way to inform the public about state parks. Four methods appear significantly better at "getting the word out" from a list of 13 options. These four include; road maps, highway signs, newspapers and television.

Figures 2 and 3 depict how park visitors learned about the particular park they were visiting at the time of survey and what methods they feel are the best to alert the public of our state parks.



Best Way to Inform The Public About Iowa State Parks



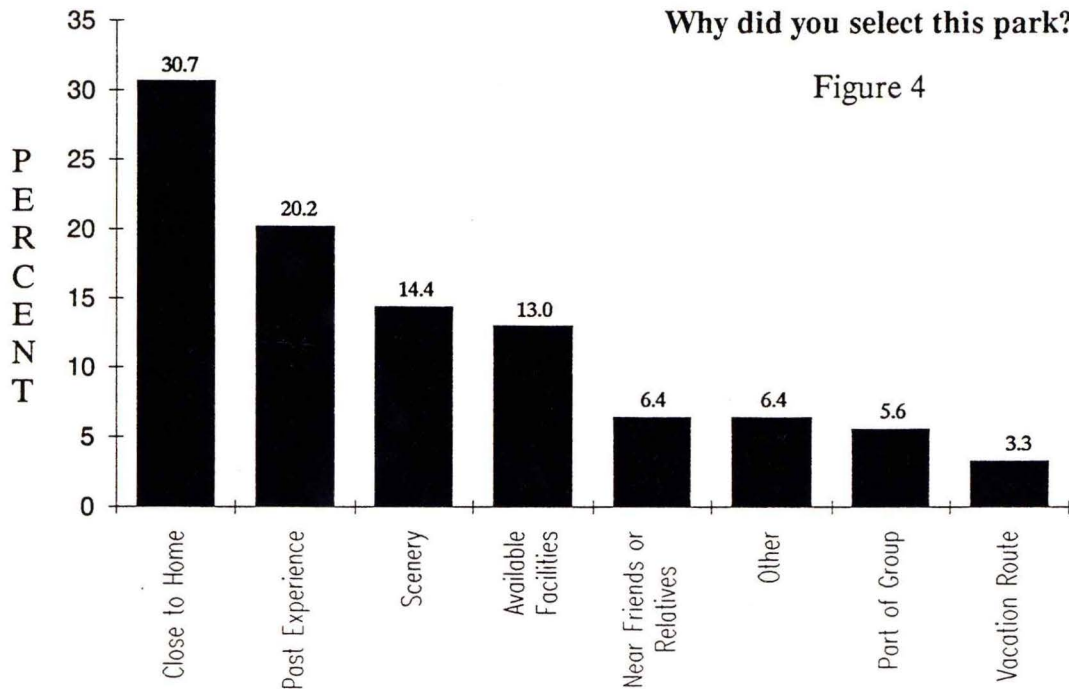
Park information tools

In view of Figure 2 and Figure 3, a recommendation could be made to make greater use of the media through television, radio and newspapers as a means of informing and promoting the availability and use of Iowa's state parks and recreation areas. The Iowa Transportation Map, published by the Department of Transportation, identifies state parks and recreation areas and the facilities these areas offer. Providing each Park Ranger's office telephone number may be one way to improve state park accessibility. The practice of providing this information should continue with each state highway map update.

Park visitors were asked if they had trouble locating the park. Ninety-four percent indicated they had no trouble. Of the six percent that did have trouble, inadequate signage accounted for over two-thirds of the problem.

The park's relative close proximity to the park visitor's place of residence and past experience at the park were the most frequent reasons survey respondents gave for park selection. The dominant survey response, "Close to home", was not defined in terms of miles or travel time. Figure 4 illustrates the responses park visitors reported for selecting which state park to visit.

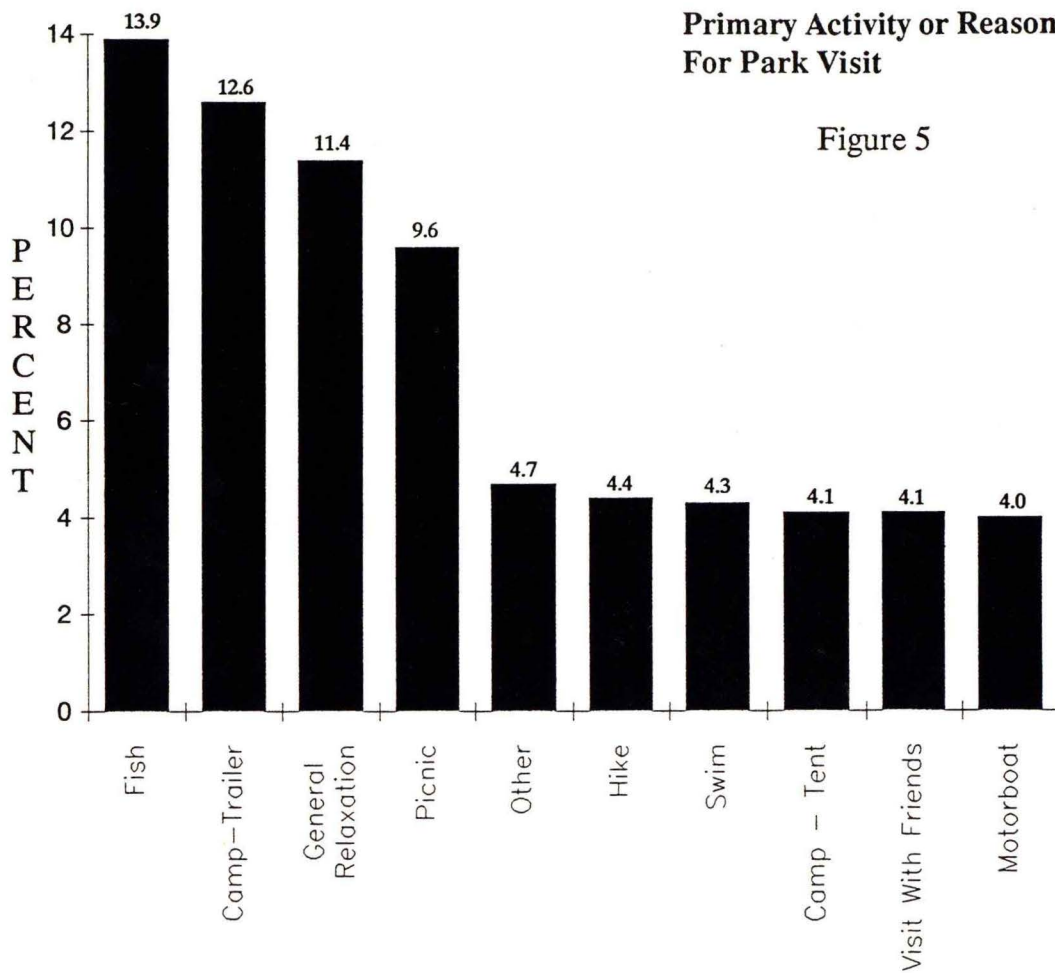
Park selected to minimize travel



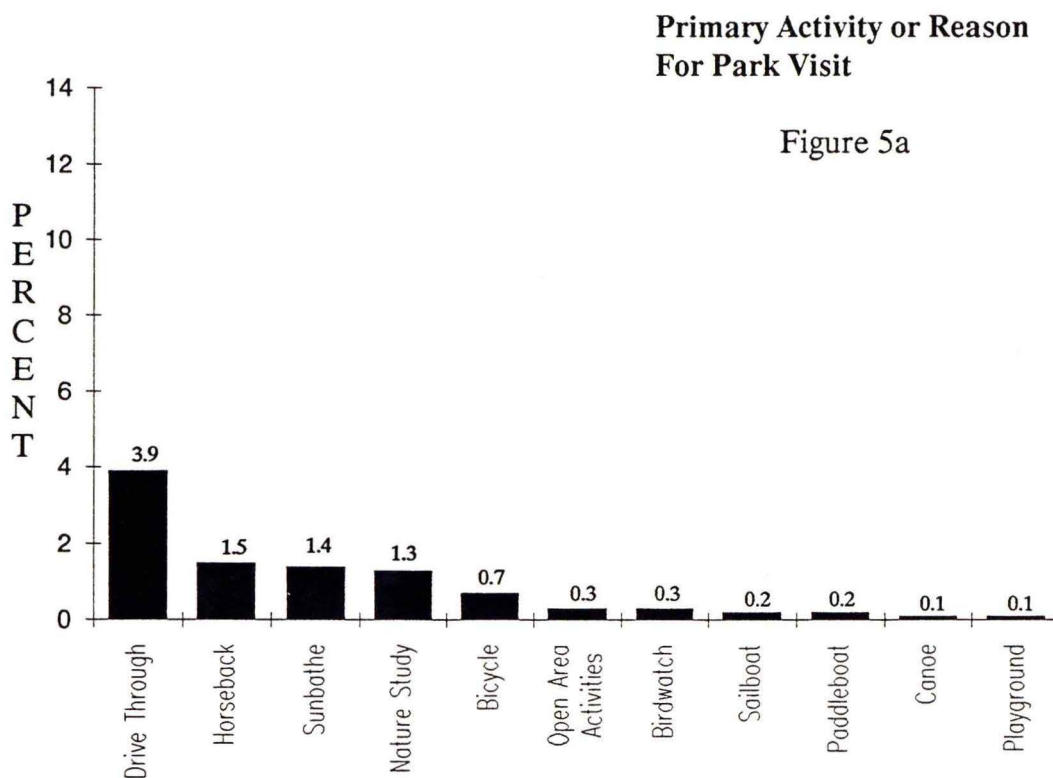
Scenery of the park was an important factor in park selection. This is not surprising given the importance of obtaining a "natural" type experience in the park outing. Available park facilities was another important reason for visiting a particular park and in many cases is part of the "natural" experience sought by park visitors. Capitalizing on the natural features and scenic beauty of a state park through the provision of complimentary manmade facilities or in certain cases, through no development, is important for continued and increased state park visitation and for park visitors to have the "natural" type experience that many seek.

Natural park features also important in park selection

Several activities were identified by survey respondents as the primary activity or reason for attending a particular state park. Figures 5 and 5a graphically illustrate these primary activities or reasons for the park visit.



Fishing, the primary park activity



The relatively low percentages of the various survey responses are fundamentally an indication that the primary activity or reason people recreate in state parks, recreation areas and state forests is quite varied. The survey question asked respondents to indicate only one answer for this question. However, nearly 17 percent of those being surveyed chose more than one primary activity or reason for visiting the park. Consequently, these responses for that question were dismissed.

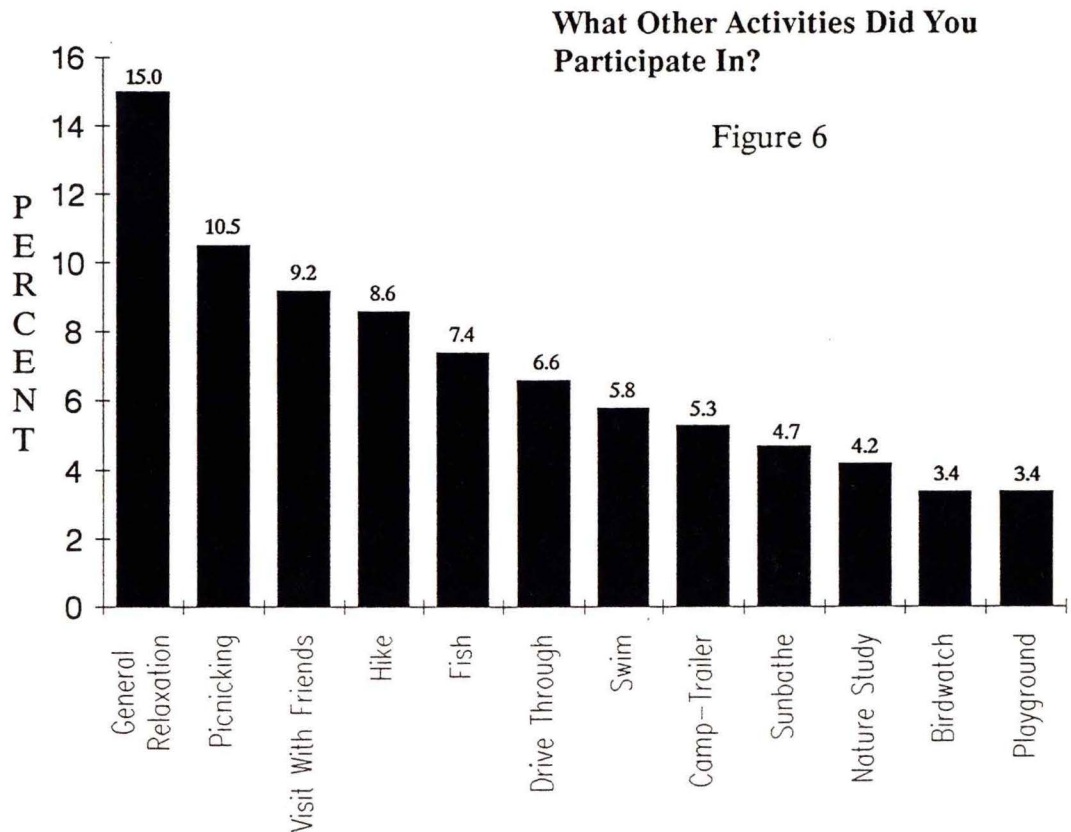
Participation in a variety of park activities

Fishing, trailer camping, general relaxation and picnicking were most often given as the primary reason for visiting the state park for that day. Three of the top four responses are most likely related to day use activities.

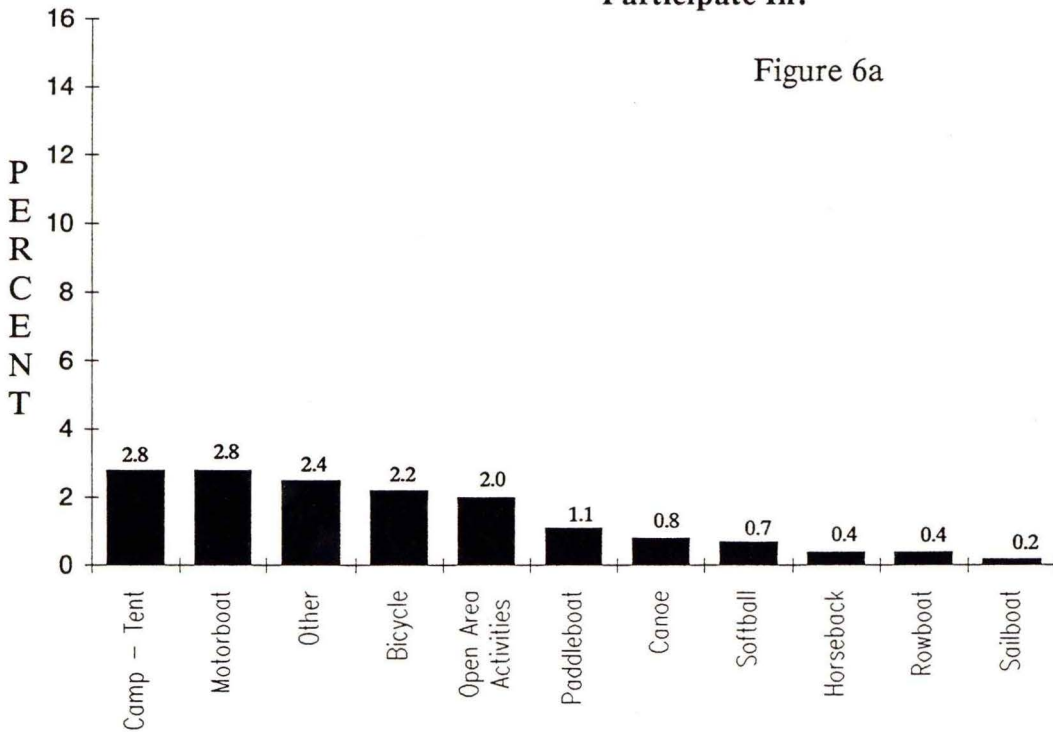
Several activities for park visitors

It goes almost without saying that not every outdoor recreation activity can be accommodated at every state park and recreation area. This is true for a variety of reasons including; natural features and topography of the park, incompatible recreation activities, park size, rule and regulation differences between state parks, state recreation areas and state forests, the presence or absence of lakes or rivers, etc.

Though no single state park or recreation area can satisfy all outdoor recreation activity demands, many state areas do offer a multitude of outdoor activity opportunities. Survey responses indicated a wide range of activities that park visitors participated in for the particular visit for which surveys were distributed. Figures 6 and 6a graphically display the percentage of participation in various outdoor recreation activities in which park visitors took part during this particular visit.



What Other Activities Did You Participate In?



The relatively low percentages for the various outdoor activities park visitors participated in gives a clear indication that Iowa's state park and recreation system provides the opportunity to recreate outdoors in a variety of activities. The relatively equal percentages give an indication that persons who visit Iowa's parks and recreation areas do so to participate in many of the available activities and that there is little domination of one activity over another outdoor recreation activity.

The natural beauty of the park may be a major reason for people to visit one of Iowa's state parks but people provide the comfort, convenience and safety that make the visit more enjoyable. Park visitors were asked to rate the condition of fifteen facilities at the park in which they were given the visitors' survey. The condition of park facilities in terms of cleanliness and state of repair as reported by park visitors are shown in Table 1 and Table 2 respectively on the following pages.

Parks are clean and in good repair

FACILITY CONDITION OF THE PARK

Table 1

| <u>Facility</u> | <u>Clean</u> | <u>Littered/ Dirty</u> | <u>No Opinion</u> |
|-----------------|--------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Campground | 99.5 | 0.5 | 0.0 |
| Restroom | 95.6 | 4.4 | 0.0 |
| Showers | 98.2 | 1.8 | 0.0 |
| Cabins | 99.5 | 0.5 | 0.0 |
| Trails | 95.7 | 3.9 | 0.4 |
| Beach | 85.6 | 14.4 | 0.0 |
| Roads | 99.3 | 0.7 | 0.0 |
| Parking Lots | 76.2 | 2.4 | 21.4 |
| Picnic Tables | 48.6 | 6.8 | 44.7 |
| Picnic Shelters | 60.2 | 7.0 | 32.8 |
| Grills | 96.4 | 2.8 | 0.8 |
| Boat Ramps | 83.8 | 8.1 | 8.1 |
| Lodge Area | 65.0 | 11.1 | 23.9 |
| Group Camps | 23.4 | 0.7 | 75.9 |

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

FACILITY CONDITION OF THE PARK

Table 2

| <u>Facility</u> | <u>Good Repair</u> | <u>Poor Repair</u> | <u>No Opinion</u> |
|-----------------|------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Campground | 91.8 | 8.2 | 0.0 |
| Restroom | 100.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Showers | 91.6 | 7.3 | 1.2 |
| Cabins | 99.5 | 0.5 | 0.0 |
| Trails | 97.6 | 2.1 | 0.3 |
| Beach | 99.6 | 0.4 | 0.0 |
| Roads | 100.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Parking Lots | 76.0 | 9.4 | 14.5 |
| Picnic Tables | 10.2 | 1.6 | 88.2 |
| Picnic Shelters | 41.9 | 7.3 | 50.8 |
| Grills | 93.5 | 2.0 | 4.5 |
| Boat Ramps | 62.7 | 1.8 | 35.5 |
| Lodge Area | 48.5 | 3.8 | 47.7 |
| Group Camps | 16.8 | 1.2 | 82.0 |

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

As Tables 1 and 2 indicate, the great majority of survey respondents indicated Iowa's park facilities are clean and in good repair. The condition of park facilities and the park itself are important factors in the level of enjoyment and in the public's decision whether or not any future visits will be made to the park. The perception of a particular park and its condition may very well reflect on attitudes of the entire state outdoor recreation system. Word of mouth as an advertising scheme also plays a role in future visitation. Persons who were satisfied with the condition of the park and park facilities will pass their positive experience on to others who in turn may visit one or more of Iowa's parks.

The survey also asked for park visitor's opinion of the park staff. Table 3 reflects the responses from the park visitor survey.

| CONDITION OF THE PARK STAFF | | | | |
|-----------------------------|------------|-----------|-----------------------|---------------|
| Table 3 | | | | |
| | <u>Yes</u> | <u>No</u> | <u>No Opinion</u> | <u>Unsure</u> |
| Neatly Dressed | 95.9 | 0.4 | 1.3 | 2.4 |
| Courteous | 96.2 | 0.4 | 1.2 | 2.3 |
| Helpful | 90.6 | 0.7 | 4.9 | 3.8 |

Numbers may not add to 100 due to rounding.

**Visitors find
park staff
exceptional**

As Table 3 indicates, an overwhelming number of park visitors viewed park staff favorably. This is another important factor in providing park visitors an enjoyable outdoor recreation experience at Iowa's state parks and increases the chance of a return visit.

Survey responses indicated by Tables 1, 2 and 3 reflect that Iowa's park and recreation system and the individuals managing these areas, collectively provide clean facilities that are in good repair and provide services to the general public that are exemplary.

| OVERALL CONDITION OF THE PARK | | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Table 4 | | | |
| <u>EXCELLENT</u> | <u>GOOD</u> | <u>FAIR</u> | <u>POOR</u> |
| 50.5 | 44.6 | 4.7 | 0.2 |

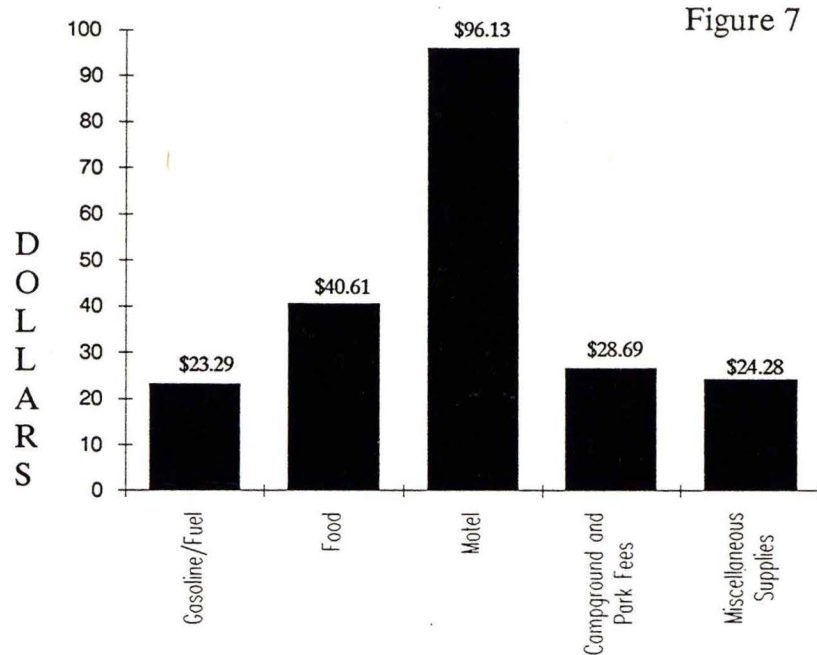
Overall, parks get solid vote of approval

Park visitors were asked to rate the overall condition of the park as part of the take home survey. It is of little surprise that responses to this survey question were favorable given the responses depicted in the previous three tables. Table 4 illustrates responses as to the overall condition of the park.

Park visitors were asked their level of expenditures on specific items during this park visit or during this vacation. Figure 7 identifies per group expenditures on gasoline\fuel, food, motels, campground and park fees and miscellaneous supplies. Having this type of information helps to identify the park system's role in Iowa's economy. However, it is not the intent of this survey report nor is it possible with the limited data collected, to provide an indepth economic study. Information from this survey provides approximations of what state park visitors spent during this park visit or vacation.

Motels, the single greatest expense

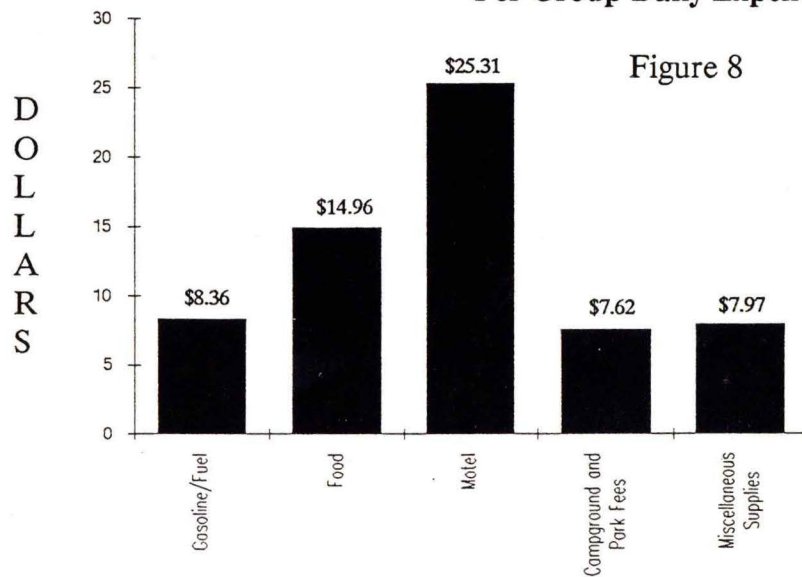
Approximate Expenditures During This Park Visit Or During This Vacation



Park visit averages more than two days

The survey asked the number of days over which these expenditure totals were spent. Survey responses indicated that the average number of days over which these expenditures took place was slightly more than two and one-half days. From this information Figure 8 illustrates the per group, per day expenditures for the five categories.

Per Group Daily Expenditures



The previous section, "The Park Visit", is a discussion of survey responses relating to the particular visit in which the park visitor obtained the survey instrument.

To summarize:

Over ninety-five percent of survey respondents indicated the overall condition of the park as excellent or good.

Survey responses were extremely favorable as they related to the condition of the park staff, and the condition and state of repair of the park facilities.

Park selection was primarily a factor of: 1) close to home; 2) previous experience; 3) scenery and 4) available park facilities

The best ways to inform the public about state parks is to utilize road maps, highway signs, newspapers and television.

Most survey respondents learned about the park they were visiting because they live nearby or through friends or relatives.

Three primary reason for visiting the park on this particular visit were to picnic, camp (trailer) and general relaxation.

Other activities most frequently participated in while on the park visit were general relaxation, picnicking and visiting with friends.

Park visitors spent approximately \$64 per day during this trip to the park or during this vacation.

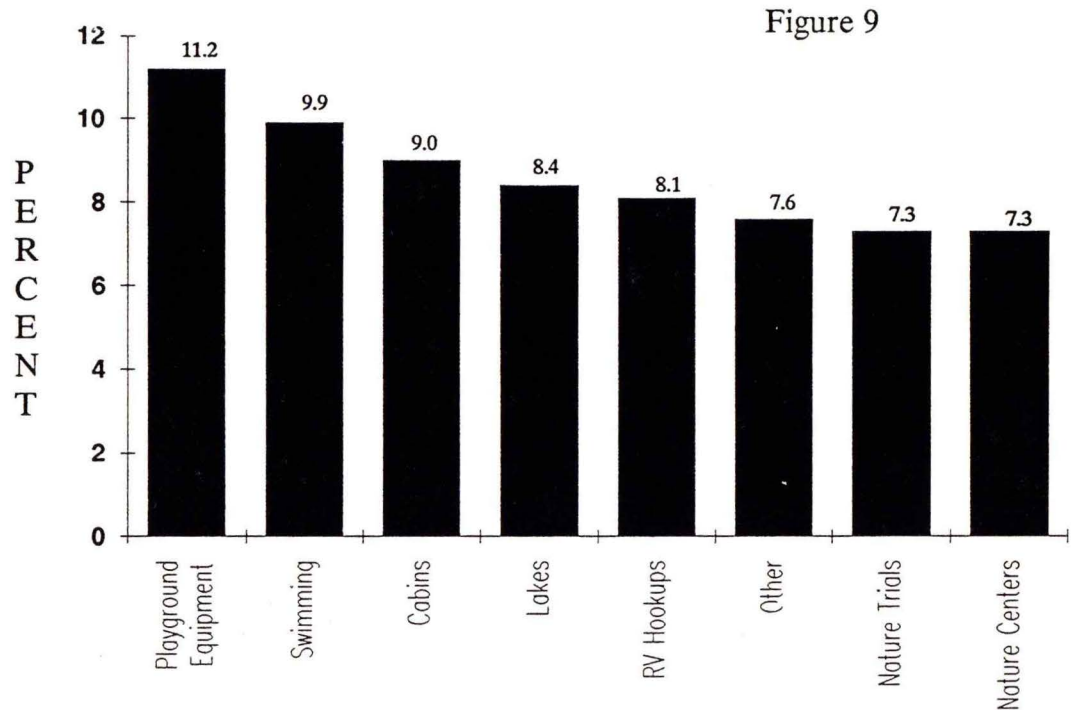
GENERAL PARK VISITATION

Visitors desire various new development

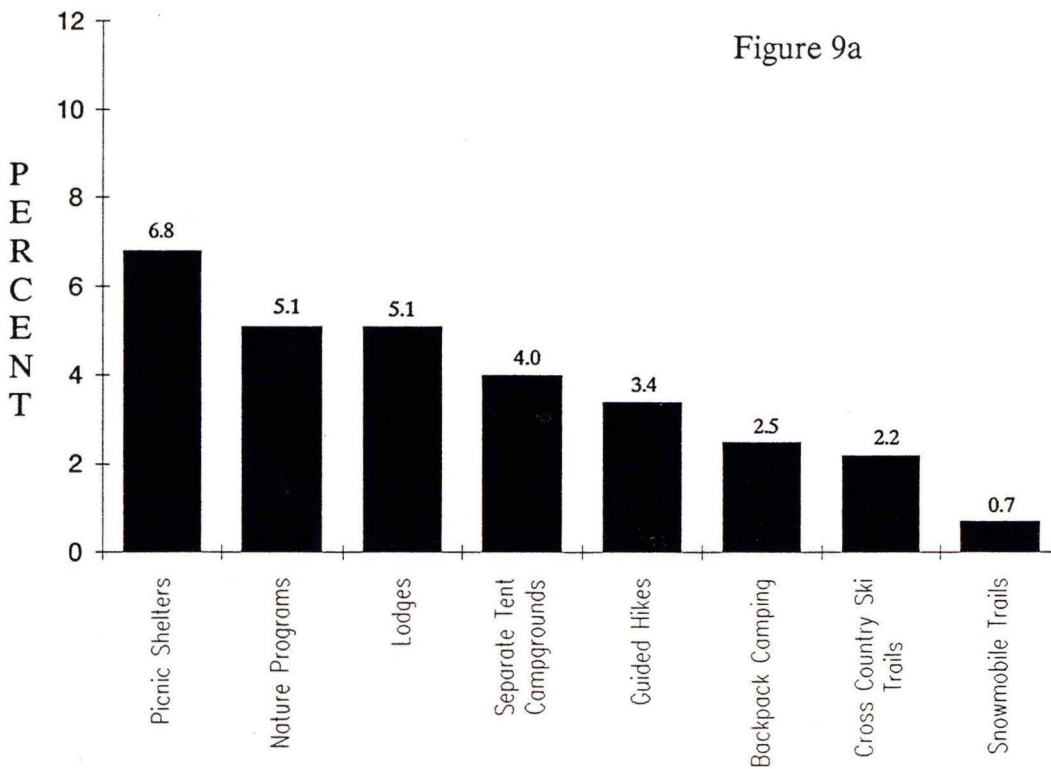
The "General Park Visitation" section of this report describes park visitors overall annual park use including both public and private recreation areas. Trends in state park use are discussed as is the amount of time devoted to and projected for participation in various outdoor recreation activities.

Park visitors were asked to identify three facilities or activities they would most like to see more of in Iowa's state parks. Figures 9 and 9a display survey results to this question.

What Would You Most Like to See More Of in Iowa's State Parks?



What Would You Most Like to See
More Of in Iowa's State Parks?



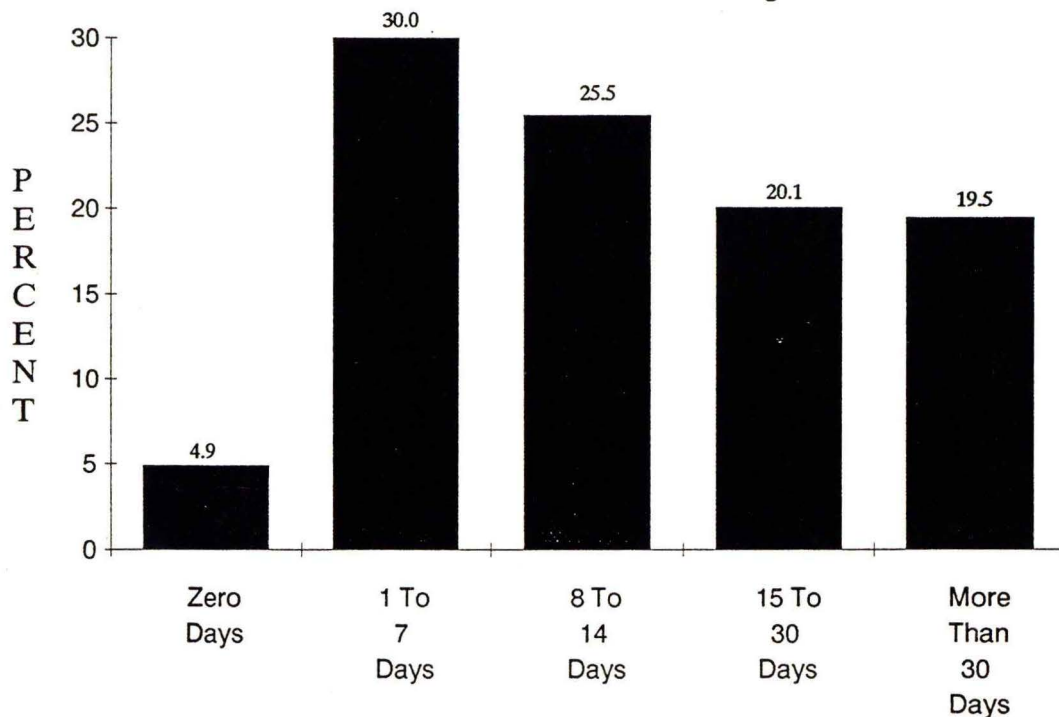
As Figures 9 and 9a indicate, there is a great deal of variety in the types of facilities and activities park visitors would most like to see more of in Iowa's state parks. As discussed earlier, it is not possible for every state park to provide every type of facility or activity park visitors would like to see. Park staff limitations, budget constraints and the nature of the park area itself are a few factors, of many such factors, that may limit the provision of these types of facilities and activity opportunities.

It may be possible to develop many of the desired facilities at Iowa's state parks and recreation areas as indicated from survey returns. However, given the current budget level, park topography, natural features, flora and fauna, existing master plans, etc., not every park or recreation area is conducive to the facilities desired. Considerable effort has gone into developing park master plans and future facility development should be in conformance with these plans. If park visitation continues to increase within the ability of the park or recreation area to withstand increased use, additional facilities may be desirable from the outdoor recreation opportunity and management perspectives.

**State parks
have facility
limitations**

Days a Year Visiting Iowa State Parks

Figure 10



Considerable leisure time spent in state parks

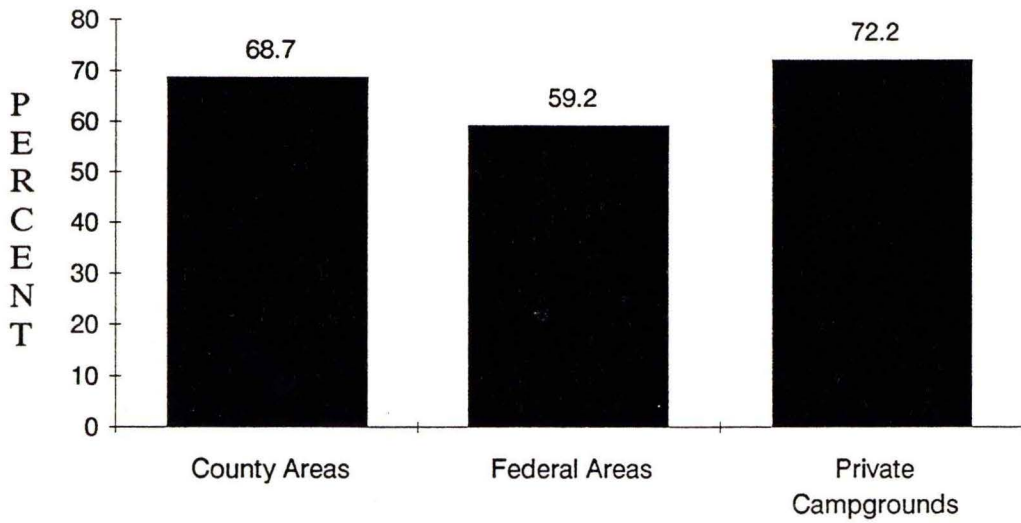
Park visitors were asked how many days a year they typically visit Iowa's state parks. Nearly on third of those responding to the park visitors survey indicated they spend up to 7 days visiting an Iowa state park annually. Over 25% of the survey respondents visit Iowa's state parks between 8 and 14 days. Figure 10 identifies park visitors response to this question.

Figure 10 shows that a great deal of time is spent visiting Iowa's state parks each year. This indicates that many Iowans seek their outdoor recreation through the use of state parks. How state park visitation compares to visitation at other public recreation areas and private campgrounds is information that can be used to assess if there is a need that state parks are not fulfilling.

Figure 11 indicates the awareness of park visitors, responding to the survey, of other than state-owned outdoor recreation areas within Iowa. Figure 12 represents survey responses comparing the frequency with which these areas are visited as opposed to visitation at state park areas.

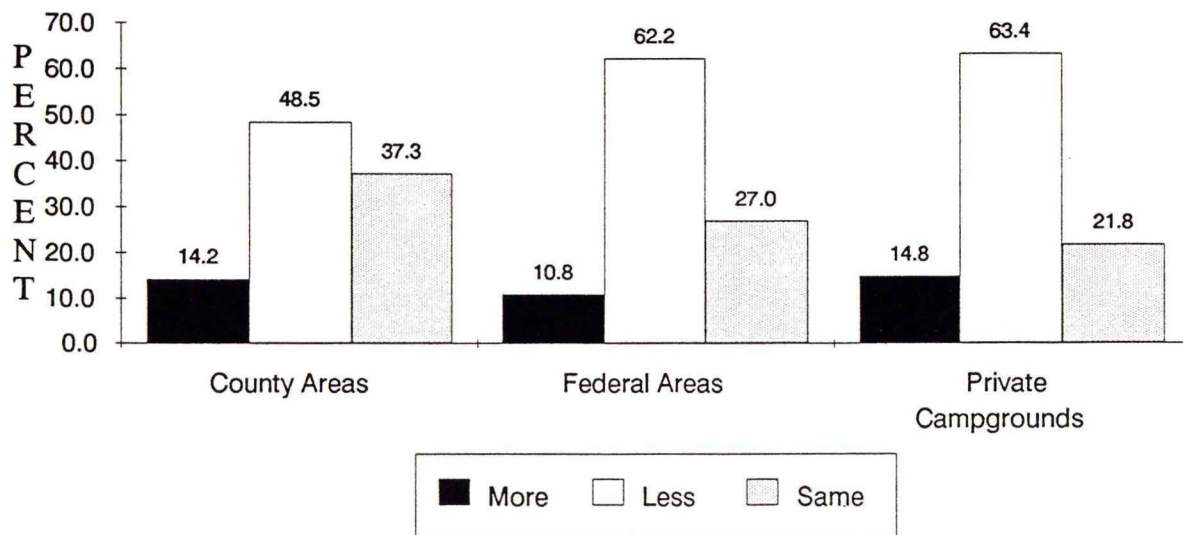
Those Aware of Non-State
Outdoor Recreation Areas

Figure 11



Frequency of Visits
Compared to State Parks

Figure 12

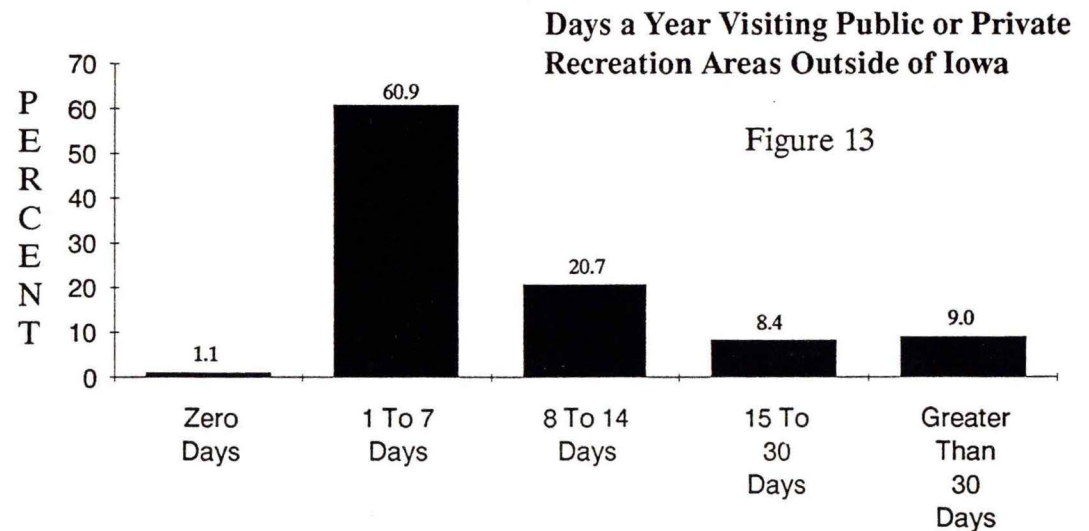


Visitors spend most time at state parks

Survey respondents are aware of county conservation board areas, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers areas, National Park Service areas as well as private campgrounds in the state and in each case, state parks are more often visited. This could be for a variety of reasons including the facilities state parks offer, park staff, camping fees, overcrowding at other areas, scenic beauty, familiarity with state facilities, etc. Further study would be required to fully assess the preference for state parks by visitors responding to this survey or ways to increase visitation at state parks by drawing from other public or private recreation areas within the limits of each state park, if increased use is desirable and if so to what level.

To further compare state park visitation, park visitors were asked if they have or intend to visit a public park or private campground outside of Iowa during 1990. 53.5 percent of survey respondents answered "Yes" they have or intend to visit areas outside of Iowa while 46.5 percent indicated "No" they have not nor have intentions to do so during calendar year 1990.

Of the 53.5 percent that have or indicated they plan to visit public parks or private campgrounds outside of Iowa, nearly two-thirds indicated the number of days visiting these areas would be 1 to 7 seven days. Figure 13 displays visitor responses.

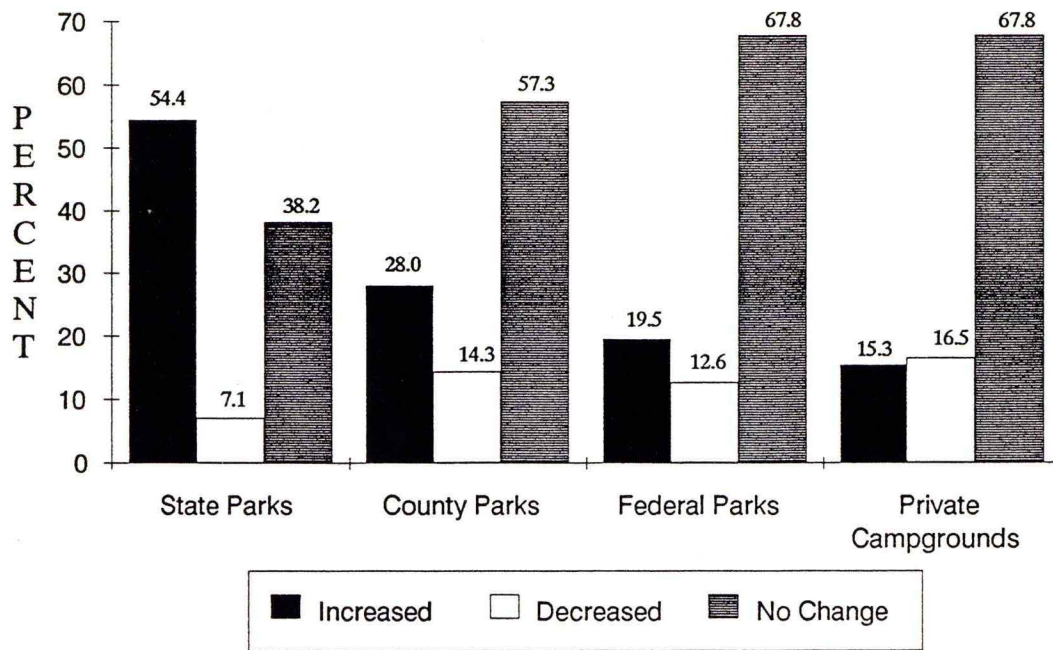


The 1990 Park Visitors Survey did not attempt to identify destinations of these out-of-state park visits or the reason(s) out-of-state park visits are taken.

Figure 14 graphically portrays how visitation at state, county, and federal parks, as well as private campgrounds, has changed between 1987 and 1990.

Change In Park Visitation, 1987 - 1990

Figure 14



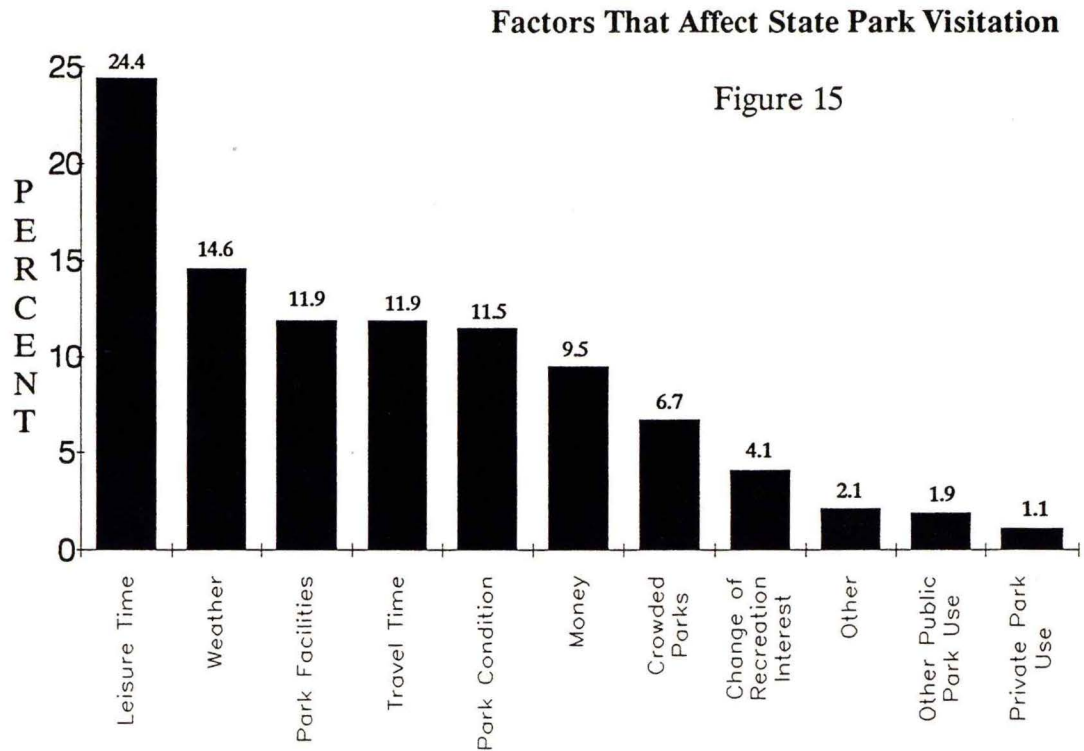
Percentages may not add to 100 due to unusable survey responses.

Several interesting conclusions relating to state parks can be drawn from Figure 14. First, responses indicating an increase in state park visitation were nearly double that of county parks, the second highest increase response. Secondly, state parks experienced the smallest decrease in visitation change over the three year period. Lastly, state park visitation change between 1987 and 1990 showed a higher increased visitation response as compared to the "No Change" response. State parks were the only public park or private campground where this type of response occurred. The survey did not detail why visitation over these three years had changed.

State park visitation has greatest increase

Only private campground visitation experienced a net decrease in visitation over the past three years. This may indicate survey respondents are increasing their use of public parks over private recreation areas.

Several factors affect the amount of time persons devote to outdoor recreation at state parks. Chief among these factors is available leisure time. Figure 15 depicts how park visitors responded to being asked "What factors most affect how much time you visit state parks?"



Park facilities are important factor

As Figure 15 indicates, various factors affect state park visitation. Survey respondents indicated they are slightly more affected by available park facilities than park condition though the difference is negligible. However, both of these factors play a large role in park visitation and the level of satisfaction park visitors experience. Leisure time and weather are the two dominating factors affecting state park visitation. The effect of these two factors is not limited to state parks however.

Survey respondents were asked to indicate no more than three factors. The fact that the majority of park visitors did indicate three factors had the effect of lowering the percentages shown in Figure 15. The survey instrument did not ask respondents to prioritize factors. Therefore, Figure 15 represents factors affecting state park visitation by total response.

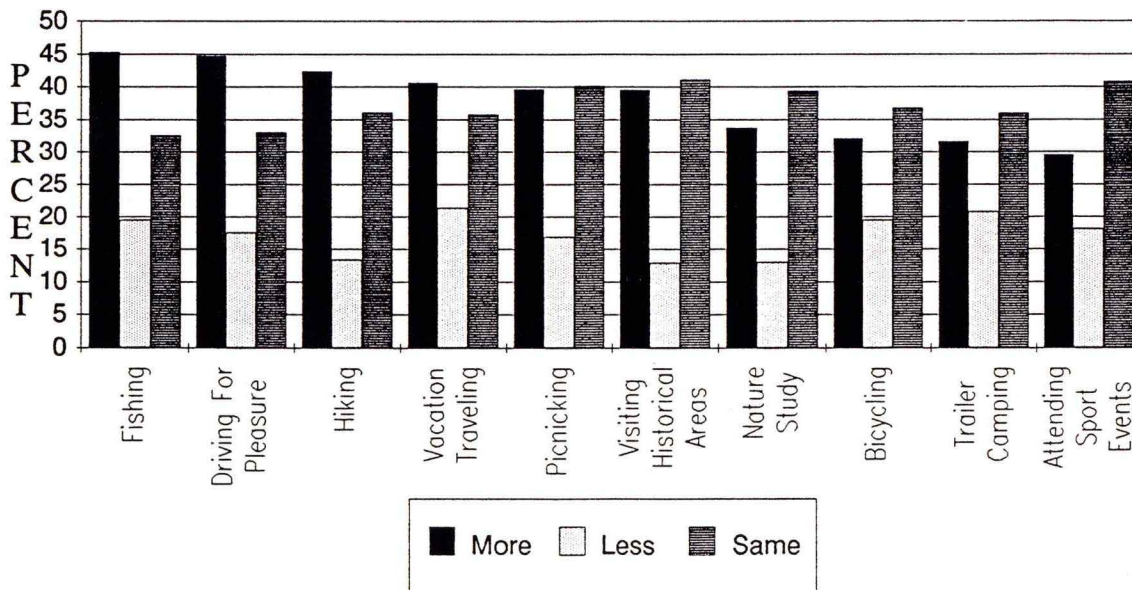
Just as leisure time and the weather affect state park visitation, several factors may affect the amount of time people devote to various activities over the course of time. Examples of factors that affect time spent pursuing various outdoor recreation activities may include disposable income, over abundance or lack of rainfall, personal health, and changing interests. The list goes on and on.

Fishing has greatest increase

Figures 16 and 16a graphically portray park visitors' responses to being asked how their time expenditure on various activities has changed over the past three years.

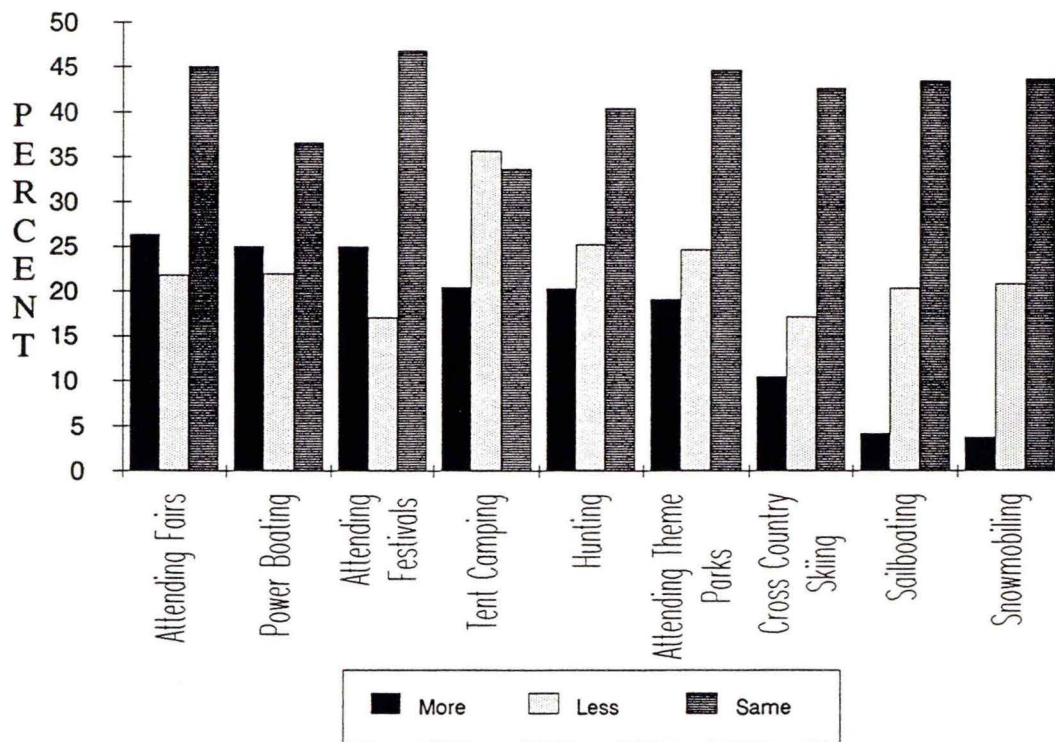
Time Spent Pursuing Outdoor Activities 1987 - 1990

Figure 16



Time Spent Pursuing Outdoor Activities 1987 - 1990

Figure 16a



Snowmobiling has greatest net decrease

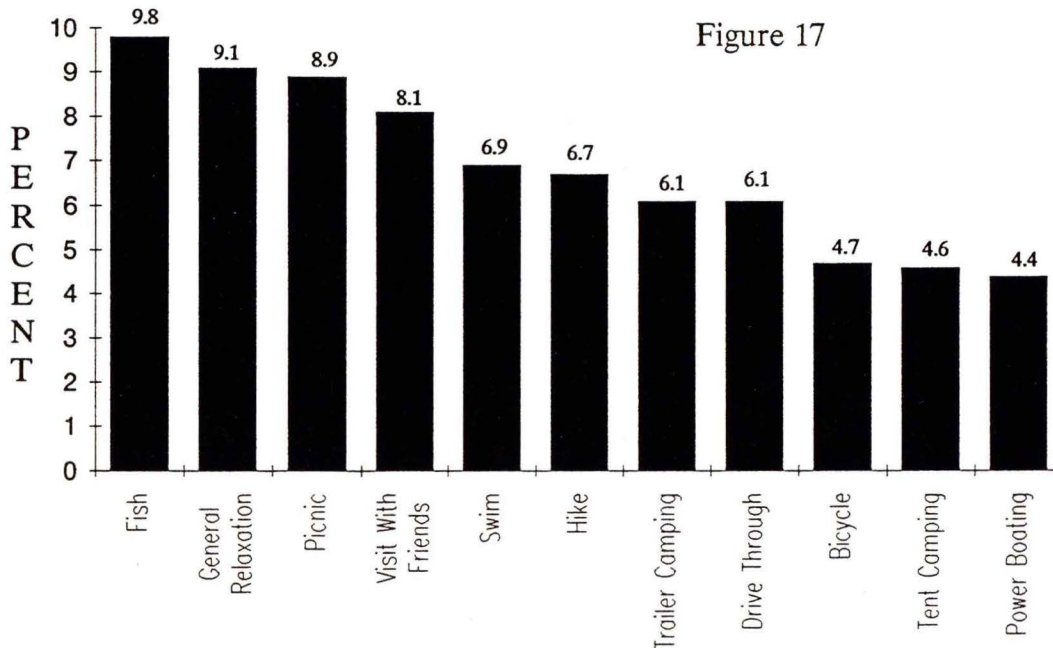
Analysis of Figures 16 and 16a indicates fishing, driving for pleasure, hiking and vacation travelling recorded the highest response of more time spent pursuing these activities over the past three years. Sailboating and snowmobiling recorded the smallest increase. One explanation may be the fact that during this period, 1987 through the summer of 1990, we experienced lower than normal rainfall and snowfall. Fishing, which would also be affected by these weather conditions, experienced the single greatest increase in time spent. The reason(s) are not clear but probably is in part due to a general increase in popularity. In the case of sailboating, one plausible explanation could be that the increase in power boating and fishing caused sailboating to increase at a lesser rate because of overcrowding or a change in interest. Many questions can be raised from data gained from the park visitors survey that would support the justification for undertaking a more detailed survey effort.

As seen from the preceding discussion several factors relate to the amount of time spent pursuing various activities. With leisure time remaining relatively constant over this period of time, an individual must choose between different recreation pursuits. Consequently, participation in one activity would lead to decreased participation in another activity without the addition of other interested persons joining an activity for the first time. The survey did not attempt to define the individual's reason(s) for increased/decreased participation.

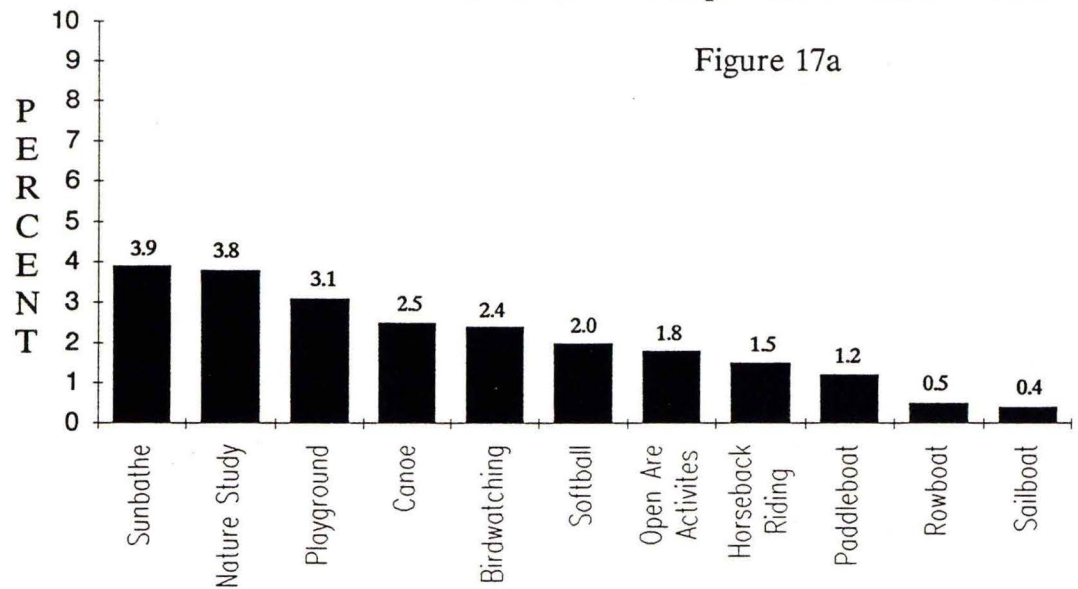
**Fishing
expected to
have the
greatest
increase**

Given a general understanding of how park visitors' recreation had changed over the past three years, the survey requested park visitors to identify activities they will spend the most time pursuing over the coming five years. As Figures 17 and 17a show, there are no dominating activities in which a significant amount of time will be devoted relative to the other activities identified. Survey respondents appear to be pursuing several activities rather than devoting an inordinate amount of time toward one or two outdoor recreation activities.

Greatest Time Expenditure Next Five Years



Greatest Time Expenditure Next Five Years



Comparing Figures, 17 and 17a, Figures 16 and 16a and Figures 5 and 6 show that popular activities which drew persons to the park in the past and at the time of the survey, appear to be the same activities in which the most time will be spent participating in the future.

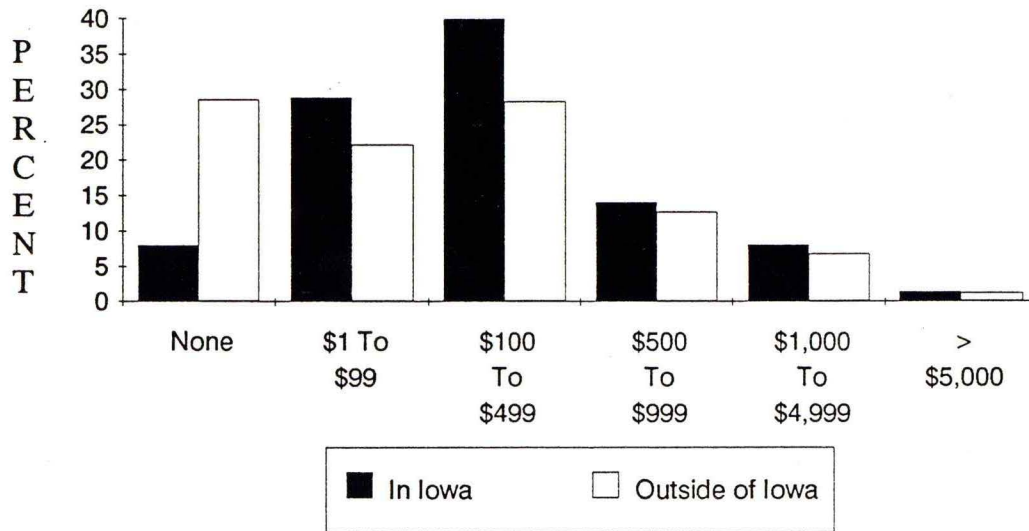
Visitors to continue their favorite activities

Figures 5 and 6 indicate highest activity participation responses at the state park for the visit in which visitors were surveyed. These activities were fishing, trailer camping, general relaxation and picnicking. Figure 16 told us the greatest increase in time spent participating from various outdoor recreation activities were fishing, driving for pleasure and hiking. Figure 17 showed us what park visitors plan on expending the most time pursuing over the next five years. These activities are fishing, general relaxation and picnicking. Comparing these park visitor activities indicates that state parks provide a useful function in today's society, both physically and psychologically.

When asked the level of survey respondents' outdoor recreation expenditures, nearly fifty-five percent indicated they spent more money on outdoor recreation in 1990 as compared to five years ago. Fourteen percent indicated they had spent less.

Figure 18 compares annual expenditures on outdoor recreation in and outside of Iowa in 1989.

1989 Outdoor Recreation Expenditures
Figure 18



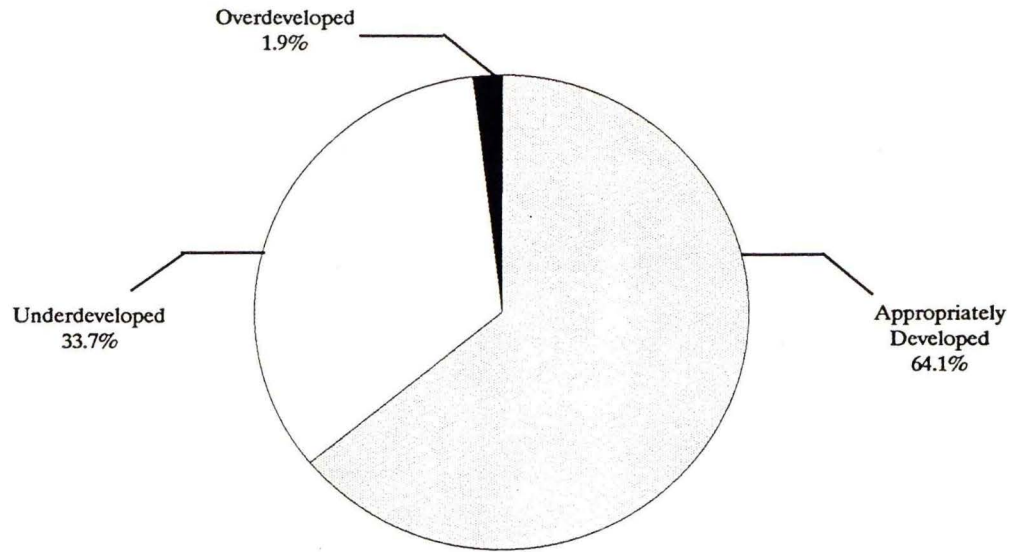
As Figure 18 shows, outdoor recreation expenditures were consistently greater within the state than expenditures outside of Iowa.

The final survey question regarding general park use dealt with whether the park visitor felt Iowa's state parks were underdeveloped, over developed or appropriately developed. The majority of park visitors felt state parks were appropriately developed as seen in Figure 19.

Visitor's average annual outdoor recreation expenditures is \$490

Development of Iowa's State Parks

Figure 19



Most park visitors feel parks are adequately developed

These numbers indicate strong support for the way parks are today and thus the philosophy that has guided the development and management of the present park system.

The "General Park Visitation" section of this report discussed several topics regarding the types of activities park visitors participate in, how participation has changed and projections of future participation.

To summarize:

Survey respondents would most like to see additional playground equipment, swimming opportunities and cabins in our state parks.

Over fifty percent of the park visitors spend up to fourteen days visiting Iowa's state parks. Over forty percent visit state parks in excess of two weeks.

The majority of park visitors are aware of county and federal recreation areas and private campgrounds but visit them less frequently than state parks.

The majority of park visitors spend from one to seven days visiting public or private recreation areas outside of Iowa.

Nearly fifty percent of the survey respondents indicated their state park visitation had increased between 1987 and 1990. Only seven percent reported their visitation had decreased over this three year period. State parks experienced the greatest increase and the lowest decrease in visitation compared to county and federal parks and private campgrounds.

Park visitors indicated leisure time, weather, available park facilities, travel time and park condition most affect their state park visitation.

Time spent fishing, driving for pleasure, hiking, vacation traveling, picnicking and visiting historical areas had the greatest increase in participation time between 1987 and 1990. Cross-country skiing, sailboating and snowmobiling experienced the greatest decline in time expenditures by survey respondents.

Park visitors indicated they will be spending the most time fishing, general relaxation, picnicking and visiting with friends as outdoor recreation pursuits in the next five years.

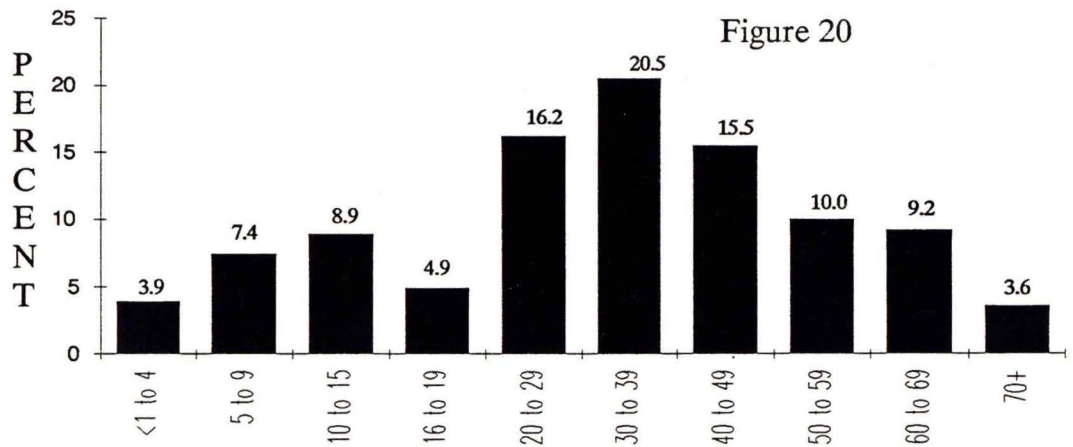
Nearly two-thirds (64.1%) of survey respondents feel Iowa's state parks are appropriately developed while thirty-seven percent indicate they believe the state parks are underdeveloped.

THE PARK VISITOR

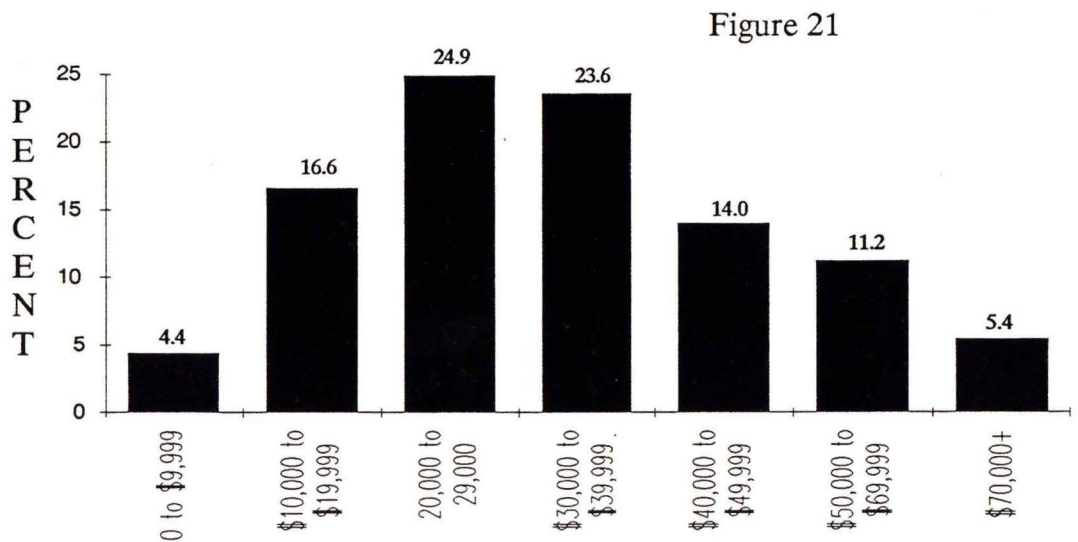
Average park visitor's age is 31

Iowa state park visitors are typically relatively young, family oriented and have moderate incomes. Figure 20 represents the age distribution of the state park visitors responding to the 1990 survey. Figure 21 identifies annual gross family income distribution of the park visitors.

Distribution of State Park Users By Age



Gross Annual Family Income Distribution



Survey results graphically depicted in Figure 20 show the average age of the park visitor to be 31.2 years. The 20 to 49 age group accounted for 52% of park visitors responding to the survey. Given the premis that typical park usage comes from relatively young persons and is family oriented, it is logical that the next largest group of park visitors is the 19 and under age groups, the children of the largest park user group. No attempt was made to identify the gender of survey respondents or park visitors.

Park usage was greatest among moderate-income familes as shown in Figure 21. Forty-eight percent of park visitors reported gross family incomes of between \$20,000 and \$39,999. The survey asked park visitors to indicate the range within which their gross annual family income fell. To determine the average annual gross family income it was necessary to use the midpoint of each of the six income ranges. \$70,000 was used in calculations for the \$70,000+ income range. It could be argued that the average annual gross family income of approximately \$33,910 is somewhat of a conservative figure.

Most park visitors of moderate incomes

Park visitors were asked to indicate their place of residence, length of residency and previous place of residence. Over two-thirds of the survey respondents indicated they had lived at their current residence for over five years. Twenty-five percent indicated the length of their current residency was one to five years. From this it can be concluded that park visitors are relatively stable in their lives. Figure 22 represents park visitors current place of residence while Figure 23 depicts survey respondents previous place of residence

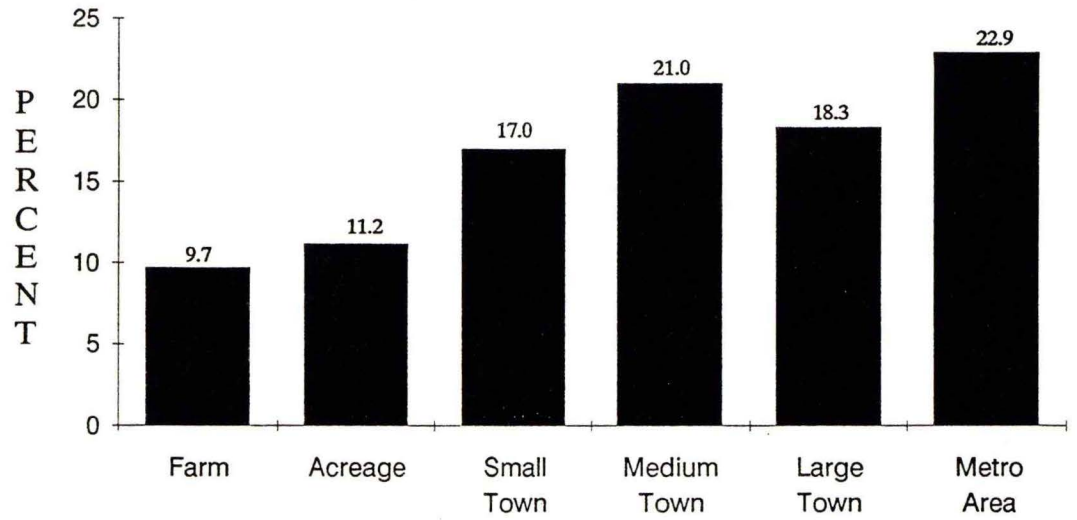
From Figures 22 and 23 a definite shift in park visitors' places of residence has taken place. In general terms there has been a movement from farms, to acreages, from small towns, to medium towns to large towns and from metro areas.

Definitions of small, medium and large towns and metro areas for the purpose of this report are as follows:

| | |
|---------------|-----------------------------|
| Small Towns: | Population less than 2,500 |
| Medium Towns: | Population 2,500 to 10,000 |
| Large Towns: | Population 10,001 to 50,000 |
| Metro Area | Population over 50,000 |

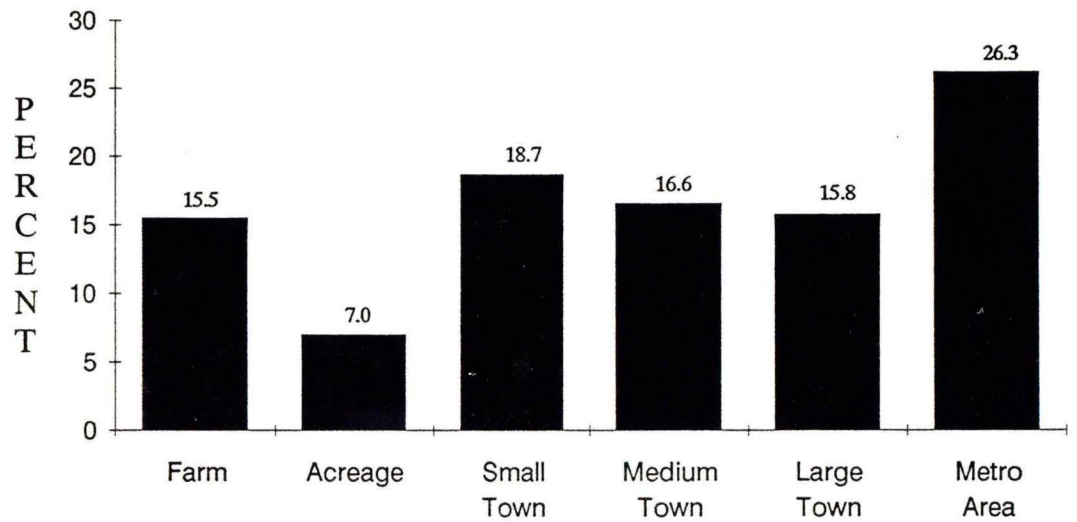
Current Place of Residence

Figure 22



Previous Place of Residence

Figure 23



Section three, "The Park Visitor" has provided a brief park visitor profile of age, family income and place of residence. Additional survey information is necessary to better understand who uses Iowa's state parks.

To summarize:

The majority of state park visitors are between the ages of 30 and 39 with the state park visitor's average age being 31.2 years old.

Park visitors' average gross family annual income is approximately \$33,910. The greatest number of survey respondents indicated their gross family income fell between \$20,000 and \$29,999.

Over two-thirds of park visitors (67.5%) indicated they had lived in their current place of residence for over 5 years. Twenty-five percent indicated their current place of residence has been for one to five years.

Park visitors have tended to move away from farms, small towns and metro areas.

Park visitors tend to reside in metro areas and medium towns.

SURVEY COMPARISON

A park visitors survey was conducted in 1985 at a similar time of year and at essentially the same state parks. In many respects the 1985 and 1990 State Park Visitors Survey mirror each other in survey make-up and in many cases, survey results. The survey instrument was designed in such a way that the two survey years' results could be analyzed and comparisons between them be as accurate as possible. This was to facilitate the recognition of trend indicators at Iowa's outdoor recreation areas and park visitors' activity preferences. The following is a series of comparison statements between results of the 1985 and the 1990 State Park Visitors Survey.

From both surveys, visitors learned of a particular park because it was close to home or through friends or relatives. The best ways to inform the public of parks remained unchanged. Newspapers, television, highway signs and road maps were identified as the best means.

Reasons for selecting certain parks remained the same. Close to home, past experience, scenery and available facilities are the predominant factors in park selection.

Primary activities while visiting the park did vary between the two surveys. Fishing rose from third to the first most cited visitation activity and trailer camping rose from seventh to second. General relaxation and picnicking also remained primary reasons for park visitation.

Condition of park facilities (i.e. showers, restrooms, campgrounds, etc.) were seen as clean and in good repair by a larger proportion of park visitors responding to the survey in 1990 than in 1985's survey.

Overall condition of the park was rated as excellent or good by the majority of park visitors in both surveys. Ninety-five percent in 1990 and ninety-eight percent in 1988. The response of "Poor" decreased in 1990 but visitors rating the overall condition as "Fair" increased by over two percent.

Expenditures on fuel, food, motels, park fees and miscellaneous supplies all increased in 1990 for this particular park visit or on this vacation. Total daily expenditures increased by \$11.82.

**State parks
given higher
approval in
1990**

Annual number of days spent visiting a state outdoor recreation area in Iowa remained relatively unchanged. Thirty percent of the survey respondents indicated they spend from one to seven days and twenty-six percent indicated they visit eight to fourteen days. In 1985, survey responses were twenty nine percent and twenty five percent respectively.

Although in a slightly different order, playground equipment, swimming, R.V. hookups and lakes remained among the facilities most park visitors would like to see more of in Iowa's state parks. Cabins, nature trails and nature centers had a significantly greater percentage of responses in the 1990 survey. In fact, cabins were the third most requested park facility.

Visitation at county conservation board areas and private campgrounds compared to state parks has not changed over the last five years. State parks remain significantly more often visited by those responding to the survey.

Survey respondents indicated in 1990, a greater inclination to visit areas outside of Iowa than in 1985. Increases were seen in the frequency of visits outside of Iowa for trip lengths of one to fourteen days.

Park visitation at state and county parks and private campgrounds over the past three years occurred just as 1985 park visitors projected. State park visitation has significantly increased and county park and private campground visitation remained relatively unchanged.

The most often cited factors affecting park visitation did not change from 1985 to 1990. Leisure time, weather, park facilities and travel time remained the four top factors.

Time spent in pursuit of several outdoor recreation activities over the past three years was asked both in 1985 and 1990 surveys. The frequency, of 1990 survey responses for those activities where more time was spent over the past three years, was greatest for fishing, driving for pleasure, hiking, vacation traveling, biking and visiting historical areas. This does not indicate activities where the most time is currently spent, only those activities that are represented by the largest increase in participation time responses. The top five responses in the 1985 survey were fishing, reading, camping (both tent and trailer), vacation traveling, and driving for pleasure. If tent and trailer were combined in the 1990 survey it would have been the activity with the greatest increase in participation time as it was in 1985.

**Visitors
participate in
similar
activities**

**Non-Iowa
expenditures
decreases**

Non-Iowa outdoor recreation expenditures had decreased in 1989 compared to that reported for 1984. How these expenditures will be affected in 1990 is unclear as more survey respondents indicated they have or intend to leave the state to visit a public or private recreation area.

Fewer of the park visitors surveyed, based on response percentages, indicated current place of residence as metro areas, small towns and farmsteads in the 1990 survey.

The percentage of park visitors responding to the 1990 survey indicating their gross annual family income as above \$30,000 increased by over twenty percent.

The average gross annual family income rose by approximately \$6,600 between the 1985 and 1990 surveys.

The percentage of park visitors responding to the survey indicating their annual gross family income was less than \$30,000 decreased by twenty-one percent.

APPENDIX A

1990 State Park Visitors Survey

Surveys were distributed at the following state parks, recreation areas and forests.

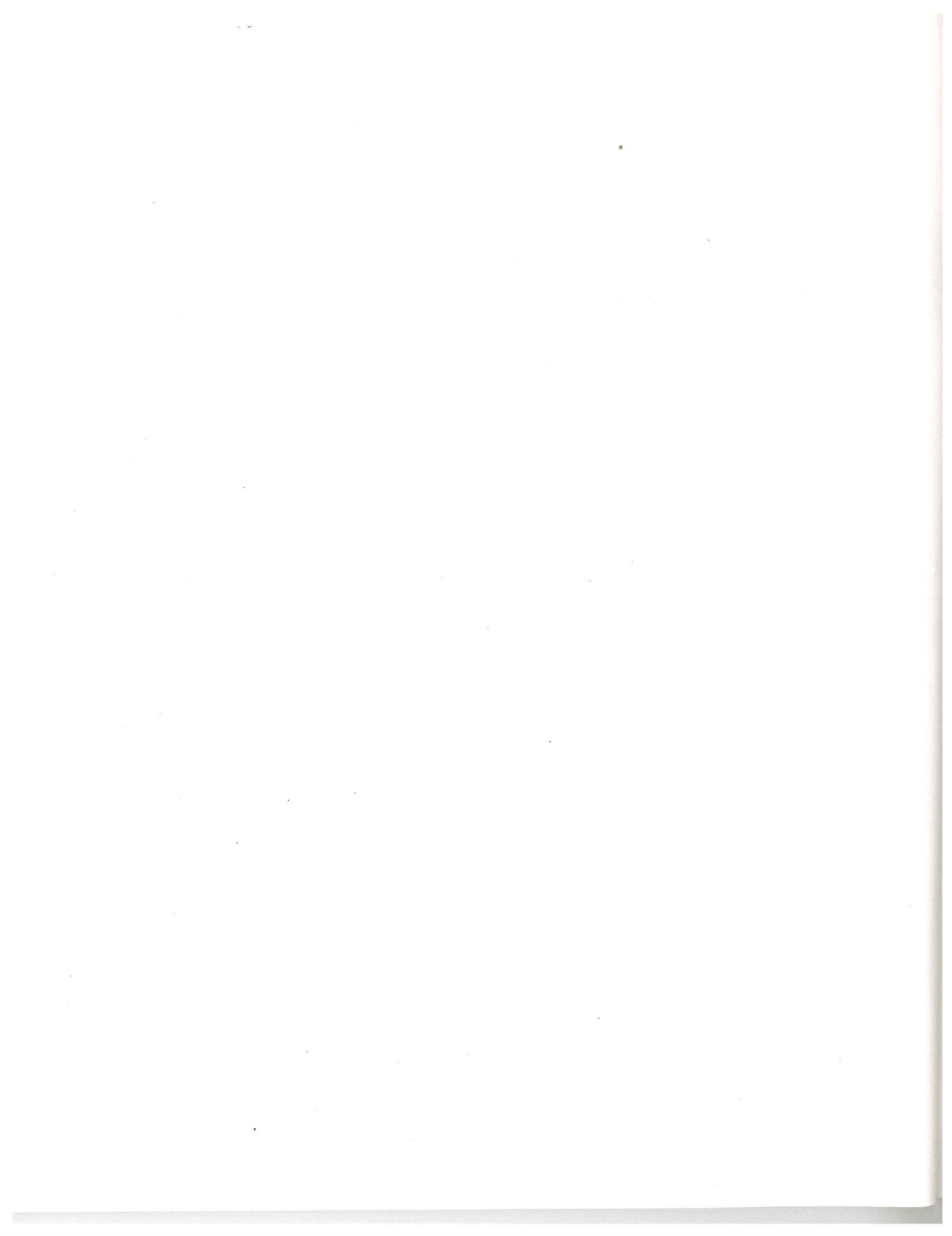
| | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| A.A. Call | Lake Darling | Springbrook |
| Backbone | Lake Keomah | Stephens Forest Camping |
| Beeds Lake | Lake Macbride | Stone Park |
| Bellevue | Lake Manawa | Union Grove |
| Big Creek | Lake of Three Fires | Viking Lake |
| Black Hawk | Lake Wapello | Volga River |
| Bobwhite | Ledges | Walnut Woods |
| Brushy Creek | Lewis and Clark | Wapsipinicon |
| Clear Lake | Maquoketa Caves | Waubonsie |
| Dolliver | Macintosh Woods | Wild Cat Den and Fairport |
| Elk Rock | Nine Eagles | Wilson Island |
| Fort Defiance | Palisades-Kepler | Yellow River Forest Camping |
| Geode | Pikes Peak | |
| George Wyth | Piolt Knob | |
| Green Valley | Pine Lake | |
| Gull Point Complex | Pleasant Creek | |
| Honey Creek | Prairie Rose | |
| Lacey Keosauqua | Red Haw | |
| Lake Ahquabi | Rock Creek | |
| Lake Anita | Shimek Forest | |

APPENDIX B

Appendix B contains the survey instrument used for the take-home portion of the 1990 State Park Visitors Survey. Where appropriate, response frequencies, in terms of percentages, are included to allow a greater understanding of how park visitors responded to the survey.

Many of the survey questions offered "other" as a possible response. If the park visitor chose to mark "other", they were asked to specify their response. Percentages reported for the "other" response, in some cases, appears high. However, after reviewing the surveys it was found that a wide variety of specific answers were indicated. This in effect, serves to lower the percentage reported for the responses.

Representative examples of "other" responses are provided.



1990 STATE PARK VISITORS SURVEY

INSTRUCTIONS

Please answer the following questions by placing an "X" in the parentheses () next to the most accurate response or write your answer in the available space. Some questions may require more than one response, so check or write in as many answers as appropriate. Your answers will be kept confidential.

Please return the survey in the pre-addressed, postage-paid envelope that is attached. If the envelope is misplaced, you can return the completed survey to the address below. Your assistance in our attempt to provide the highest quality state park system, is greatly appreciated. Thank you.

Department of Natural Resources
Thomas Anderson
Planning Bureau
Wallace State Office Building
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Questions 1 through 13 concern the park where you were given this survey booklet. Your answers should pertain to that particular state park and visit. We ask that these questions be answered with respect to everyone in the vehicle at the time you received this booklet, to the best of your ability. In other words, when a question asks you for a response, it is asking you and the other people in the vehicle.

1. How did you learn about this park?

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| (47.0) live nearby | (2.4) tourist information packet |
| (5.3) road map | (1.1) newspaper |
| (4.0) highway sign | (0.1) radio |
| (2.9) brochure(s) | (0.3) television |
| (27.7) friend or relative | (0.5) magazine |
| (8.7) other <u>various camping directories, family reunion</u> | |

2. Which 3 methods listed below are the best ways to get information to you about state parks? Please mark no more than 3 answers.

- | |
|---|
| (11.8) television |
| (6.6) radio |
| (14.6) newspaper |
| (5.6) magazines |
| (14.8) highway signs |
| (16.6) road maps |
| (2.0) other <u>CCB offices, motor home clubs, DNR park guide</u> |

3. Why did you select this park?

- (30.7) close to home
 - (3.3) close to vacation travel route
 - (6.4) close to friend's or relative's home
 - (14.4) scenery
 - (13.0) available park facilities
 - (5.6) part of a group attending this park
 - (20.2) past experience
 - (6.4) other (specify) new experience, other parks closed, other parks full
-

4. Did you have trouble locating this park? (6.2) yes (93.8) no

4a. If yes, for what reason(s)

- (68.3) inadequate signs
 - (7.9) unclear brochure
 - (23.8) other poor road map, unclear directions
-

5. What was the primary activity/reason for coming to this park? (Check only one)

- | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| (4.3) swim | (9.6) picnic | (0.0) softball/baseball |
| (1.4) sunbathe | (4.1) camp-tent | (0.3) open area activities |
| (0.2) paddleboat | (12.6) camp-trailer/vehicle | (0.1) playground |
| (0.0) rowboat | (4.4) hike | (11.4) general relaxation |
| (4.0) motorboat | (0.3) birdwatch | (4.1) visit with friends |
| (0.2) sailboat | (1.3) nature study | (3.9) drive through |
| (0.1) canoe | (0.7) bicycle | (4.7) other <u>boy/girl scout activities</u> |
| (13.9) fish | (1.5) horseback ride | (16.7) too many chosen |

6. What other activities did you participate in while attending this park? (Check only one)

- | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| (5.8) swim | (10.5) picnic | (0.7) softball/baseball |
| (4.7) sunbathe | (2.8) camp-tent | (2.0) open area activities |
| (1.1) paddleboat | (5.3) camp-trailer/vehicle | (3.4) playground |
| (0.4) rowboat | (8.6) hike | (15.0) general relaxation |
| (2.8) motorboat | (3.4) birdwatch | (9.2) visit with friends |
| (0.2) sailboat | (4.2) nature study | (6.6) drive through |
| (0.8) canoe | (2.2) bicycle | (2.4) other <u>sightseeing, volleyball</u> |
| (7.4) fish | (0.4) horseback ride | |

7. Please list the facilities and activities you did not find in the park that you expected to be there.

better restrooms, more showers/drinking water/restrooms, boat rental, paddleboat,
playground equipment, water hook-ups, swimming area, firewood

8. Please mark the appropriate column(s) below to give us your opinion of the condition of the facilities in the park. Check all that apply.

| | Clean | Littered or Dirty | Good Repair | Poor Repair |
|-------------------|--------|----------------------|----------------|----------------|
| campground | (99.5) | (0.5) | (91.8) | (8.2) |
| restrooms | (95.6) | (4.4) | (100) | (0.0) |
| showers | (98.2) | (1.8) | (91.6) | (7.3) |
| cabins | (99.5) | (0.5) | (99.5) | (0.5) |
| trails | (95.7) | (3.9) | (97.6) | (2.1) |
| beach | (85.6) | (14.4) | (99.6) | (0.4) |
| roads | (99.3) | (0.7) | (100) | (0.0) |
| parking lots | (76.2) | (2.4) | (76.0) | (9.4) |
| picnic tables | (48.6) | (6.8) | (10.2) | (1.6) |
| picnic shelters | (60.2) | (7.0) | (41.9) | (7.3) |
| grills/fire rings | (96.4) | (2.8) | (93.5) | (2.0) |
| boat ramps | (83.8) | (8.1) | (62.7) | (1.8) |
| lodge area | (65.0) | (11.1) | (48.5) | (3.8) |
| group camps | (23.4) | (0.7) | (16.8) | (1.2) |

9. How would you rate the overall condition of the park?

(50.5) excellent (44.6) good (4.7) fair (0.2) poor

10. During your visit, was the park staff:

| | Yes | No | No Opinion | Unsure |
|----------------|--------|-------|---------------|--------|
| Neatly dressed | (95.9) | (0.4) | (1.3) | (2.4) |
| Courteous | (96.2) | (0.4) | (1.2) | (2.3) |
| Helpful | (90.6) | (0.7) | (4.9) | (3.8) |

11. Please write in your comments you have about the park staff that were not asked in the survey.

park staff is knowledgeable, friendly, helpful, etc.

12. Approximately how much money did you spend on the following items during this trip to the park or during this vacation?

| | | |
|--------------------------|----|--------------|
| gasoline/fuel | \$ | <u>23.29</u> |
| food | \$ | <u>40.61</u> |
| motels | \$ | <u>96.13</u> |
| campground and park fees | \$ | <u>28.69</u> |
| miscellaneous supplies | \$ | <u>24.28</u> |

13. Over how many days was this money spent? 2.8 days average

Questions 14 through 25 concern overall public park and private campground use. We ask that the person responding to this survey answer the questions with respect to members of your entire group.

14. How many days a year do you typically visit Iowa state parks?

- (4.9) 0 days
- (30.0) 1 to 7 days
- (25.5) 8 to 14 days
- (20.1) 15 to 30 days
- (19.5) more than 30 days

15. Which of the following facilities and activities would you most like to see more of in Iowa's state parks? Please mark no more than 3 answers.

- (11.2) playground equipment
- (6.8) picnic shelters
- (4.0) separate tent campgrounds
- (2.5) backpack camping
- (8.1) RV hookups
- (9.0) overnight cabins
- (5.1) lodge complex (restaurant-overnight accomodations)
- (9.9) swimming areas
- (8.4) lakes
- (7.3) self-guided nature hikes
- (3.4) ranger-guided nature hikes
- (5.1) evening nature programs in campground
- (7.3) nature centers or museums
- (2.2) cross-country ski trails
- (0.7) snomobile trails
- (7.6) other (specify) more horse trails/water/restrooms, picnic shelters close to camping
- (1.5) too many chosen

16. Are you aware of county conservation board parks in Iowa? (68.7) yes (31.3) no

16a. If yes, do you visit them? (81.3) yes (18.7) no

16b. If yes, how often compared to state park visits?

- (14.2) more often
- (48.5) less often
- (37.3) about the same as state parks

17. Are you aware of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and National Park Service parks in Iowa?

(59.2) yes (40.8) no

17a. If yes, do you visit them? (76.1) yes (23.9) no

17b. If yes, how often compared to state park visits?

- (10.8) more often
- (62.2) less often
- (27.0) about the same as state parks

18. Are you aware of private campgrounds in Iowa? (72.2) yes (27.8) no

18a. If yes, do you visit them? (32.2) yes (67.8) no

18b. If yes, how often compared to state parks?

(14.8) more often

(63.4) less often

(21.8) about the same as state parks

19. Have you visited or do you plan to visit a public park or private campground outside of Iowa this year?

(53.5) yes (46.5) no

19a. If yes, how many days a year do you typically visit a public park or private campground outside of Iowa?

(1.1) 0 days

(60.9) 1 to 7 days

(20.7) 8 to 14 days

(8.4) 15 to 30 days

(9.0) more than 30 days

20. What is your primary reason or reasons for visiting a public park or private campground outside of Iowa?

near relatives/friends

different scenery

vacationing

different opportunities

21. How has your public park and private campground visitation changed over the past 3 years (1987 - 1990)?

| | Increased | Decreased | No Change |
|---------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| state parks | (54.4) | (7.1) | (38.2) |
| county parks | (28.0) | (14.3) | (57.3) |
| federal parks | (19.5) | (12.6) | (67.8) |
| private campgrounds | (15.3) | (16.5) | (67.8) |

22. What 3 factors most affect how much you visit state parks? Please mark no more than 3 answers.

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| (24.4) leisure time | (11.9) travel time |
| (9.5) money | (4.1) change of recreation interests |
| (14.6) weather | (6.7) crowded parks |
| (11.9) park facilities | (11.5) condition of the park |
| (1.9) use of county and federal parks | (1.1) use of private campgrounds |
| (2.1) other (specify) <u>proximity to home, closeness to major highways</u> | |

23. Are you and members of your group spending more, less or the same amounts of time pursuing the following activities as you did 3 years ago?

| | More | Less | Same | Unsure |
|--|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| vacation travelling | (40.6) | (21.4) | (35.7) | (2.2) |
| camping-tent | (20.4) | (35.7) | (33.7) | (10.3) |
| camping-trailer/vehicle | (31.6) | (20.8) | (35.9) | (11.7) |
| picnicking away from home | (39.6) | (16.9) | (40.1) | (3.5) |
| fishing | (45.3) | (19.5) | (32.5) | (2.8) |
| hunting | (20.3) | (25.2) | (40.4) | (14.2) |
| bicycling | (32.0) | (19.5) | (36.7) | (11.9) |
| power boating | (25.0) | (21.9) | (36.6) | (16.6) |
| sailboating | (4.1) | (20.3) | (43.4) | (32.2) |
| snowmobiling | (3.7) | (20.8) | (43.6) | (31.9) |
| cross-country skiing | (10.4) | (17.1) | (42.6) | (30.0) |
| driving for pleasure | (44.7) | (17.6) | (33.0) | (4.7) |
| attending outdoor sporting events | (29.5) | (18.2) | (40.8) | (11.5) |
| hiking | (42.4) | (13.4) | (36.0) | (8.3) |
| nature study | (33.7) | (13.0) | (39.3) | (14.1) |
| visiting historical areas | (39.5) | (12.9) | (41.1) | (6.5) |
| attending fairs | (26.3) | (21.8) | (45.0) | (6.9) |
| visiting theme parks | (19.1) | (24.6) | (44.6) | (11.7) |
| attending festivals | (25.0) | (17.0) | (46.8) | (11.2) |
| other (specify) <u>horse riding, outdoor ed.</u> | (75.0) | (4.6) | (9.1) | (11.4) |

24. Please indicate below, the recreation equipment your group owns. Write in the number if you own more than one.

- (3.0) motor home - average length is 26.6 feet
- (7.4) trailer - average length is 22.6 feet
- (9.7) boat - average length is 16.0 feet
- (2.7) pickup camper
- (3.1) pop-up trailer
- (14.0) tent
- (13.8) hunting equipment
- (23.5) fishing equipment
- (2.2) snowmobile
- (4.8) motorcycle
- (1.8) ATV-3 or 4 wheeler
- (3.7) cross-country skis
- (2.1) downhill skis
- (4.9) water skis
- (3.5) other (specify) bicycles, golf equipment, cameras, horses

25. Approximately how much money did your household spend on outdoor recreation during 1989 in Iowa?

- (7.9) none
- (28.8) \$1 to \$99
- (39.9) \$100 to \$499
- (14.0) \$500 to \$999
- (8.0) \$1000 to \$4999
- (1.4) more than \$5000

26. Approximately how much money did your household spend on outdoor recreation during 1989 outside of Iowa?

- (28.6) none
- (22.2) \$1 to \$99
- (28.3) \$100 to \$499
- (12.7) \$500 to \$999
- (6.8) \$1000 to \$4999
- (1.2) more than \$5000

27. What types of recreation do you think you will spend the most time at in the next 5 years?

- | | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| (6.9) swim | (8.9) picnic | (2.0) softball/baseball |
| (3.9) sunbathe | (4.6) camp-tent | (1.8) open area activities |
| (1.2) paddleboat | (6.1) camp-trailer/vehicle | (0.5) rowboat |
| (6.7) hike | (9.1) general relaxation | (2.4) birdwatch |
| (8.1) visit with friends | (0.4) sailboat | (4.4) motorboat |
| (3.8) nature study | (6.1) drive through | (3.1) playground |
| (4.7) bicycle | (2.5) canoe | (1.4) other <u>photography</u> |
| (9.8) fish | (1.5) horseback riding | |

28. Do you feel that Iowa's state parks are:

- (1.9) overdeveloped
- (33.7) underdeveloped
- (64.1) appropriately developed

29. Suppose some friends or relatives who had never been to Iowa asked you to recommend 3 places, anywhere in the state, they should visit during an upcoming vacation. What 3 places would you advise them to visit?

1. Iowa Great Lakes region, Amana Colonies,
2. Living History Farms, West Bend Grotto
3. Northeast Iowa, various favorite state parks, Des Moines area attractions

Questions 30 through 36 concern your background which will give us general information on the characteristics of people that use our state parks. Once again, we ask that the person completing this survey answer with respect to your entire group.

30. Which best describes your current place of residence?

- (9.7) farm
- (11.2) acreage
- (17.0) small town
- (21.0) medium town
- (18.3) large town
- (22.9) metro area

31. How long have you lived at your present residence?

- (6.9) less than 1 year
- (25.5) 1 to 5 years
- (67.5) over 5 years

32. Where did you live prior to your present residence?

- (15.5) farm
- (7.0) acreage
- (18.7) small town
- (16.6) medium town
- (15.8) large town
- (26.3) metro area

33. Please list the ages of all your household members.

33a. Heads of household: 45.5 years of age (average)

 years of age

33b. Children's ages: average of children was 13.0

34. What is the age of the person who completed this survey? 23.0 years of age average

35. What is your annual gross family income?

- | | |
|--------|----------------------|
| (4.4) | \$0 to \$9,999 |
| (16.6) | \$10,000 to \$19,999 |
| (24.9) | \$20,000 to \$29,999 |
| (23.6) | \$30,000 to \$39,999 |
| (14.0) | \$40,000 to \$49,999 |
| (11.2) | \$50,000 to \$69,999 |
| (5.4) | \$70,000 and over |

36. Please write in the space provided any other comments you may have concerning parks in Iowa.

sufficient money for maintenance, expansion, resource protection is needed

more cabins, make supplies available in park rather than nearest town

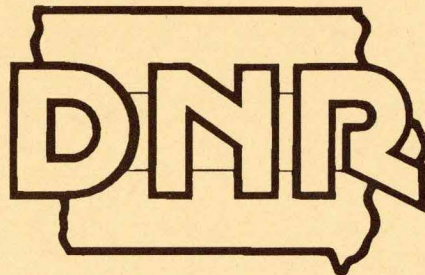
Iowa has a good park system, excellent park staff

need more paved trails, need to spray for mosquitos

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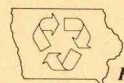


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