Keeping Up With Research 43

Data Needs of Kansas Park and Recreation Agency Administrators[1]

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Introduction

The development of park and recreation agencies in Kansas has been significant over the last 20 years. Numerous public agencies have been established to create and administer park resources and recreation programs for use by Kansas residents.

As the agencies within the state have grown, their management has become more and more complicated. The park and recreation agency administrator today faces increasing demand for park areas, facilities, and recreation programs and a decreasing availability of tax dollars.

For park and recreation agency administrators to get the most benefits for each tax dollar spent, information on the demand for areas, facilities, and programs must be gathered, and so a study of these needs was conducted in the fall of 1978.

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Research Study

A questionnaire was devised and mailed to 70 municipal and county agency administrators in September, 1978. The 70 administrators surveyed represented all known existing municipal and county park and recreation agencies in Kansas. The questionnaire included the following list of possible survey data needs:*

1. recreation activities demand
2. park and recreation facilities demand
3. park site "carrying capacity" for highly used areas (social carrying capacity)
4. fee charges for use of park areas
5. fee charges for recreational activity instruction
6. energy use considerations for planning recreation activities
7. future park visitation patterns
8. future trends in recreation activity participation
9. aesthetics of park design
10. economic value of parks and park facilities
11. economic value of recreation programs
12. determination of "substitutability" for recreation activities
13. determination of "substitutability" for park areas
14. funding sources for park and recreation agencies
15. ways to reduce vandalism

The agency administrators indicated which topic areas they felt should be investigated within a time-frame of 1 or 5 years. The following tables summarize the questionnaire responses by administrative category: all administrators, park and recreation administrators, municipal park administrators, municipal recreation administrators, and county park directors.

Eighty-four percent of the 70 questionnaires mailed out were returned.

Discussion

A number of trends regarding research information needs are apparent from the survey results. In Table 1 for "all administrators," the greatest need for data (70% +) was in facilities and activities demand, fees charged for instruction in activities, and reduction of vandalism. Park and recreation administrators were concerned with these same issues, plus park fees and trends in recreation participation.

Table 1. Projected survey data needs all agency administrators
(59 respondents)

Area	Affirmative response (%)	Time-frame 1 (%)	(Years) 5
1. Activities demand	71	69	31
2. Facilities demand	74	60	40
3. Carrying capacity	44	42	58
4. Park fees	47	77	23
5. Activity fees	74	84	16
6. Energy use	47	59	41
7. Park visitations	40	50	50
8. Recreation trends	62	58	42
9. Park aesthetics	45	67	33
10. Dollar value of parks	55	55	45
11. Dollar value of recreation programs	62	66	34
12. Recreation "substitutability"	47	63	37
13. Park "substitutability"	33	55	45
14. Funding sources	64	84	16
15. Vandalism control	71	82	18

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* The list of topics used in this survey reflects only major information areas of use to park and recreation agency administrators.

Table 2. Projected survey data needs park and recreation administrators
(7 respondents)

Area	Affirmative response (%)	Time-frame 1 (%)	(Years) 5
1. Activities demand	85	29	71
2. Facilities demand	85	33	67
3. Carrying capacity	57	33	67
4. Park fees	71	100	0
5. Activity fees	85	83	17
6. Energy use	42	33	67
7. Park visitations	42	33	67
8. Recreation trends	71	40	60
9. Park aesthetics	57	50	50
10. Dollar value of parks	42	33	67
11. Dollar value of recreation programs	42	33	67
12. Recreation "substitutability"	42	67	33
13. Park "substituability"	28	50	50
14. Funding sources	42	100	0
15. Vandalism control	85	100	0

Table 3. Projected survey data needs park administrators
(21 respondents)

Area	Affirmative response (%)	Time-frame 1 (%)	(Years) 5
1. Activities demand	61	85	15
2. Facilities demand	71	79	21
3. Carrying capacity	52	36	64
4. Park Fees	42	67	33
5. Activity fees	66	79	21
6. Energy use	42	89	11
7. Park visitations	57	64	36
8. Recreation trends	61	67	33
9. Park aesthetics	52	80	20
10. Dollar value of parks	61	77	23
11. Dollar value of recreation programs	52	70	30
12. Recreation "substitutability"	38	63	37
13. Park "substitutability"	38	63	37
14. Funding sources	57	33	67
15. Vandalism control	66	80	20

Municipal park administrators were concerned with collecting data on the demand for park facilities: only that topic rated higher than 70 percent. Municipal recreation administrators showed strong interest in facilities and activities demand, fee charges for recreation activity instruction, funding sources and vandalism control.

County park administrators were most interested in fee charges for park facility use and recreation activity instruction. However, none of the topics ranked higher than 63 percent for county park administrators.

The time-frame for which the responding administrators felt they needed most management data was overwhelmingly within 1 year.

Table 4. Projected survey data needs recreation administrators
(20 respondents)

Area	Affirmative response (%)	Time-frame 1 (%)	(Years) 5
1. Activities demand	85	74	26
2. Facilities demand	85	56	44
3. Carrying capacity	30	60	40
4. Park fees	35	80	20
5. Activity fees	85	88	12
6. Energy use	60	45	55
7. Park visitations	25	25	75
8. Recreation trends	65	56	44
9. Park aesthetics	35	50	50
10. Dollar value of parks	55	40	60
11. Dollar value of recreation programs	85	71	29
12. Recreation "substitutability"	60	62	38
13. Park "substitutability"	30	40	60
14. Funding sources	85	94	6
15. Vandalism control	90	73	27

Table 5. Projected survey data needs county park administrators
(11 respondents)

Area	Affirmative response (%)	Time-frame 1 (%)	(Years) 5
1. Activities demand	54	67	33
2. Facilities demand	54	57	43
3. Carrying capacity	45	40	60
4. Park fees	63	75	25
5. Activity fees	63	88	12
6. Energy use	36	50	50
7. Park Visitations	36	50	50
8. Recreation trends	54	67	33
9. Park aesthetics	45	60	40
10. Dollar value of parks	54	40	60
11. Dollar value of recreation programs	54	60	40
12. Recreation "substitutability"	45	67	33
13. Park "substitutability"	36	60	40
14. Funding sources	54	83	17
15. Vandalism control	36	83	17

Conclusions

Of the research topics reviewed by Kansas county and municipal park and recreation administrators, those for which data is most highly sought include the prediction of future demand of facilities and programs, the charging of fees for activities, and the control of vandalism.

Until the time of this study, the survey data needs of Kansas municipal and county park and recreation administrators were unknown. With the completion of this survey, assistance can be provided to agencies in their collection and analysis of data for wise public agency decisions.