

Washington State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) Summary of Findings and Recommendations

The SCORP is a five-year statewide recreation plan published by the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office. The Washington Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Planning (SCORP) document guides decision-makers in better understanding statewide recreation issues and is required to help maintain Washington's eligibility for federal Land and Water Conservation Fund dollars. The SCORP is designed to determine outdoor recreation issues and opportunities and helps explore local park and recreation planning strategies. It includes valuable data on current trends in recreation participation and demand in Washington. Findings from the Washington State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) were evaluated to help inform planning and funding considerations for future park and recreational facilities.

The 2013 Washington SCORP confirms that outdoor recreation is still an integral part of life for most Washington residents, 90% participate in the most popular category of activities, which includes walking and hiking, demonstrating the pervasiveness of outdoor recreation in Washington's culture. Significant increases in rates of participation in outdoor recreation activities since 2006 indicate the importance of the state and local communities to continue their investment in outdoor recreation facilities and opportunities.

According to the 2013 SCORP report, it is assumed that most people will continue to engage in the outdoor activities in which they previously participated. After listing the activities in which they participated, residents were then asked if they planned to do those activities in the coming year. An overwhelming majority of them (91%) indicated that they planned to do *all* of the same activities in which they had participated in the previous year, and another 3% indicated that they planned to do most of those activities. Therefore, it is likely that rates of planned participation would be roughly the same as the actual participation rates discussed previously in this section of the SCORP.

Low-cost activities, easy or less strenuous activities, or activities that can be done close to home have relatively high participation rates: walking is at the top. Near the top are recreational activities (which includes jogging), nature activities, and picnicking/BBQing. More specialized activities have lower rates with the categories of horseback riding and air activities (flying, parachuting, bungee jumping, etc.) having the lowest participation rates. Participation rates in the 2013 SCORP Outdoor Activity Categories are depicted in Figure 1.

The overall category of walking (in which 90% of Washington residents engaged) is made up largely of those walking without a pet (71% of residents do this), with hiking (54%) and walking with a pet (52%) being of medium importance, and climbing or mountaineering (10%) being of minor importance.

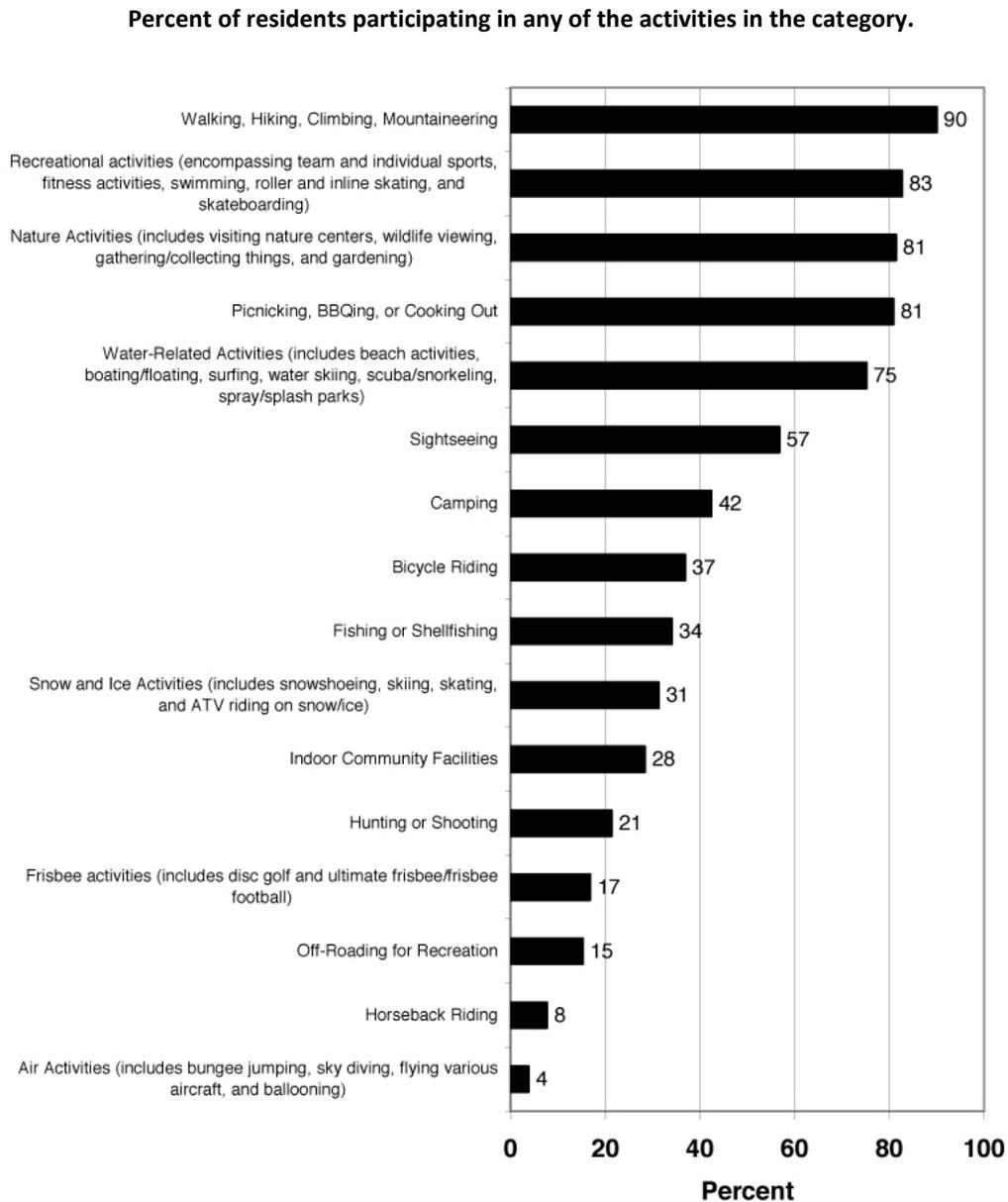
The breakdown of nature-based activities, in which 81% of Washington residents participated adds further details for wildlife viewing and photography (59%) and gardening (57%) each has a majority of residents participating. This overall category includes 16 different types of nature activities.

Regarding new forms of recreation, several activities were newly tracked in the 2012 resident survey, including general frisbee play, with a participation rate of 16.8%, disc golf or frisbee golf (4.5%), and ultimate frisbee or frisbee football (3.0%). While ultimate frisbee requires nothing more than a field, disc golf requires infrastructure for the tees and the baskets, which has implications for recreation providers.

Another activity that is eons old but newly tracked in 2012 is swimming in natural waters, in which 35.7% of residents participated. While this activity does not require any facility for the activity itself, it may benefit from some infrastructure, including access to water. Likewise, snorkeling was also newly tracked (3.7%), as were two other water-related activities: using a splash park (8.1%) and using a spray park (6.4%).

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Figure 1. Participation Rates in the 2013 SCORP Outdoor Activity Categories.



The participation rates confirm that outdoor recreation is an integral part of life in Washington’s communities and a pervasive value in the Pacific Northwest. Research indicates that nature and outdoor recreation have a significant positive impact on human health, both physical and mental health. Washington’s economy also benefits directly and indirectly from outdoor recreation through consumer spending, tax revenue, and jobs. To maximize the value of these benefits, the SCORP identifies the issues that affect participation, supply and demand. In the 2013 SCORP, the greatest challenges among recreation providers over the next five (5) years will be:

- An increasing state population,

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- Changing demographics,
- Unpredictable funding for facilities development and maintenance, and
- Access to outdoor recreation facilities and opportunities.

The 2013 SCORP Recommendations encourage local park and recreation service providers to:

- Recognize a return to nature-based activities.
- Understand that the top constraints to participation are social factors (not facilities or opportunities).
- Capitalize on the social benefits of outdoor recreation.
- Focus on increasing and/or improving recreation facilities and opportunities that support active recreation.
- Continue to offer diverse outdoor recreation activities and opportunities.
- Take advantage of current technology by using a map-based information system to provide an inventory of supply.
- Recognize recreation types in which supply may not be meeting demand.
- Focus on the capacity of facilities.
- Consider the implications of changing demographics when making recreation decisions.
- Prioritize regional funding allocations.
- Foster collaboration and cooperation among user groups.
- Understand that access issues encompass an array of physical and psychological issues.
- Increase priority of wetlands management as a recreation asset. Based on scientific research and a comprehensive planning process, these recommendations are intended to contribute knowledge and guidance to the future development of outdoor recreation in Washington for the benefit of both residents and the natural environment.

As part of the SCORP update process, local park and recreation providers were surveyed on the relative importance of key issues and grouped into identified regional zones within the state to highlight any unique needs for each geographic zone. While some differences in ranking occurred, most regions shared top issues due to the economic slowdown and the political climate regarding taxes.

- **Creating new partnerships** is an important issue acknowledged by many providers to allow for the pooling of resources and/or sharing of costs.
- **Maintenance of existing public parks and/or recreation facilities** continues to face funding challenges and increased pressure to provide for growing populations or new user groups.
- **Increasing public access** is an important concern among recreation providers who work to keep facilities open and available as well as accommodate a diverse public.

From the 2013 SCORP, the broadest recommendation for all areas across Washington is to continue the investment in outdoor recreation facilities and opportunities as the foundation for fulfilling the needs and expectations for the benefit of both residents and the natural environment.