Estimating Access Values for the Dry Tortugas National Park

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Abstract

Environmental valuation techniques are widely used for the purpose of estimating values for recreational and other non-use environmental services associated with parks and protected areas. This study attempts to utilize stated preference techniques combined with appropriate economic models for the purpose of estimating access values for the Dry Tortugas National Park located in Florida. In addition to estimating access value, the study will also try to obtain a value for potential quality changes to the main natural attributes of the park; namely coral reefs, beaches, birds and other wildlife.

The estimated welfare values for these national parks can be used to provide data for improved conservation and management. This data also has the potential to contribute to impact analysis for damage assessment and habitat loss studies, and also contribute to an improved sustainable coastal management policy framework. The results of this study can be also be used to inform the development of revenue generation instruments for the sustainable management of the resources of the national park.

The study is relevant because it can assist in the improved management of US national parks and marine protected areas that are located in sub temperate locations. There appears to be very few studies on valuation of recreational values for US coral reefs and other tropical coastal ecosystems and therefore can add to the existing body of knowledge.

The results of this study can also be applied to Caribbean nations like Jamaica where sustainable revenue streams for national park management do not exist. For example this research can contribute to the development a system of access fees and enhance the implementation of Jamaica's National Park System Policy. The study also has relevance to other Small Island Developing States whose economies are dependent on increasing the number of coastal tourism development projects within and adjacent to protected areas. This development trend is likely to create the need for more accurate estimations of welfare value of environmental quality change, which can then be used for tourism policy planning leading to sustainable management of vulnerable natural resources.

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