



Understanding Sustainable Recreation and Tourism in the Lake Simcoe Watershed

What is the issue?

Different stakeholders have different levels of power and knowledge, as well as diverging interests; therefore it is important to consider all actors in determining the potential for developing and managing tourism opportunities in a region. As outlined in the Lake Simcoe Protection Act, recreation and tourism providers have an influence on the sustainability within the region.

What did the researcher do?

The purpose of this research was to outline the current level of environmentally sustainable recreation and tourism activities and practices currently being undertaken in the Lake Simcoe Watershed. The researcher first undertook a web content analysis with 100 businesses within the region to determine sustainability practices. Then an online survey of 428 businesses and organizations (25% response rate) was collected to determine opportunities as well as barriers to sustainable recreation and general sustainability measures within the region. Finally 43 face-to-face interviews with 39 companies in the region were carried to further determine issues, opportunities and barriers to sustainability within the region.

Why is this research Useful?

This research is useful for policy makers as well as different business and government stakeholders as it outlines that although there are conflicts between sustainable recreation and tourism user, for the most part, different user groups can share the lake and efforts for conservation and sustainability are possible. Stakeholders are eager to work towards having more environmentally sustainable tourism and recreation put in place. This research is a useful study of how a multi-stakeholder approach is needed to understand diverse interests.

What were the outcomes?

Findings showed that there are few organizations within the watershed that are practicing sustainability (>5%). Economic development and larger environmental issues must be addressed if sustainable recreation and tourism opportunities are to be pursued and there is a current need for a shift in mentality towards celebrating the watershed and keeping it and the user healthy. In order to achieve more sustainable tourism practices, increased marketing and education to visitors about conservation and sustainable recreation and tourism is necessary. Key messaging needs to showcase that tourism can be good for the visitor as well as the community. Best practices should be recognized and highlighted to encourage such behaviours.

About the Researcher

Rachel Dodds is an Associate Professor at the Ted Rogers School of Management and her work focuses on sustainable tourism, policy, tourism development and marketing.

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