

**A Comparison of 1990 and 2017 Attitudes Toward Tourism Development in the
Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area**

Researcher(s):

Samuel Lankford, Ph.D., Interim Associate Dean, Professor
College of Health and Human Services, Fresno State
Department of Recreation Administration

Abstract:

Introduction: In 1987, the U.S. Congress established the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area (CRGNSA) in the Pacific Northwest. The development of a regional Management Plan rests in the joint responsibility of the U.S. Forest Service and the Columbia River Gorge Commission. This study addresses resident perceptions with regard to the tourism and recreation development that has occurred as a result of the formation of the CRGNSA and continued tourism development. In 1989, a base-line study for gauging residents' attitudes toward tourism and recreation development in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area was reported to the CRGNSA Commission, and later published in a number of academic journals (Annals of Tourism Research, Journal of Travel Research). The current study conducted in the fall of 2017 was designed to determine residents' current attitudes using the same survey scale. This project is designed to provide the CRGNSA Commission, U.S. Forest Service, and county/city governmental units with information that reflects resident concerns to date, and to compare changes over this 28 year period. It is important for Oregon and Washington counties to promote growth and manage resulting development that is consistent not only with the provisions of regional comprehensive plans as well as the concerns of local residents.

Conclusion: The results of this study provide important empirical data identifying the local Gorge area residents' attitudes toward tourism development. This information can provide the local and regional policy makers with base-line data to help all Gorge residents to better understand overall trends in how tourism is perceived among community members. Knowledge of the perceived impacts of tourism may encourage residents to actively participate in tourism planning activities which can directly impact their communities.