

Responses to RE270 Weekly Prompts

1) Based on what you read in the text, how would you define Outdoor Recreation in your own words? What do you do to experience Outdoor Recreation? In your opinion, is the natural environment an internalized aspect of your outdoor experience or is it a “backdrop” used to create the experience?

Outdoor recreation is an activity that someone chooses to participate in during one's free time; it incorporates the natural world and its outcome benefits the individual. Outdoor Recreation is different than outdoor sports or outdoor play for a number of reasons. It foremost incorporates nature as a base for the activity. Often, not only is the nature required physically, but the appreciation of our natural world is often experienced as well. Recreation is generally an activity that can be competitive and has some structure, but it is not nearly as rigid and serious as sports. Recreation is an activity that can also incorporate aspects of play and often, during recreation is when adults feel the closest to the child play from their youth. Recreation is viewed as a social instrument in society and as a time of revival from work.

My most frequent outdoor recreation pursuits include downhill skiing, hiking, diving and camping. Some of these require very specific areas of our natural world. Skiing requires a steep hill and a decent amount of snow while diving requires a body of water and generally something to look at below the surface (a ship or reef). Other activities, such as hiking or camping, don't require specific environments; only a natural area that is accessible. With most of my outdoor experiences I try my best to internalize my surroundings and appreciate the natural world as I immerse myself in it; however, sometimes the activity becomes the focus and the nature fades to a backdrop. Skiing is a good example of this phenomena. Some of my favorite memories are in the backcountry, hiking up to the top ridge where the untouched powder lie in wait. The beautiful white and black starkness of the woods and the air so still and muffled around you, save for your own breath and the occasional falling bit of snow. Then the exhilaration of seeming to

bounce through the trees, spraying snow with every turn.... That is when I am filled with my surroundings and seem to become one with the natural world. I also have fond memories of the wind tearing at my exposed skin as I carve a large arc through the corduroyed snow. I can feel the muscles in my legs screaming and my heart in my throat as I lean hard on my edges pushing them to the limit before releasing my turn and rocketing the opposite direction. In this case I am on a large, open, groomed run and while nature remains a critical element in my experience, it merely sets the scene and is dropped from the focus. I am completely engrossed in my own venture rather than appreciating my setting.

2) For your reflection, you are asked to compare and contrast the western perspective and the Native American perspective of the natural environment. If there was a continuum with the western perspective on one side and the Native American perspective on the other, discuss where you would fall based on your true life. Please be honest. We would all like adopt the views of Chief Seattle but how true is that for you?

After reading this chapter and Chief Seattle's speech I found that the core difference of Western perspective and Native American Perspective is that to the Native Americans the natural world is their home and their entire culture. For the western world, nature was something separate from their home and culture. Dependency is another large factor in that, The Native Americans depended on the natural world to survive and that dependency connected all of nature and it's beings. In the western world however people depended on themselves and each other. They raised their own food via crops and domestic animals and built shelters with increasing technologies. The wilderness was to be avoided by the average person because that is where the dangers were.

Culturally the Native Americans differed from the Western world as well. While both believed in unseen powers these powers had very different roles in people's lives. In Native American beliefs, these unseen powers are in the forms of animals and control the seasons and natural phenomena. These spirits come to the people in dreams or hallucinations. In the Western beliefs, Christianity rose to the top and this focused on one God who ruled over the natural world as well as focused on human morality. The Western world's unseen power(s) were focused on humanity, taking human forms and in the Greek's case, representing human emotions.

Yet another key difference within the two belief systems is the afterlife. The Native Americans believed in spirits who continued to walk the earth and remained connected to their ancestors. Burial grounds were extremely sacred and important. This belief grounded the Native people to their land and built their history through a connection to that natural world. Western culture believes their deceased to move on from this world to the heavens and no longer have contact with those they've left behind. They sever that connection with the earth after death and so do not have nearly as much history built into it. Instead, history is passed down by names or wealth. As Chief Seattle said, "Your dead cease to love you and the land of their nativity as soon as they pass the portals of the tomb and wander away beyond the stars. They are soon forgotten and never return. Our dead never forget this beautiful world that gave them being".

Based on the continuum of western vs native perspective I would definitely fall towards the western side. While I have grown up loving nature and feeling comfortable in it, my culture is based around technology and society; especially in this age with all of our climate controlled living spaces, transportation, medicines, foods and other forms of technology. My ideological tendencies are more human centered and egotistical. While I recognize the connections all things on this planet have, I don't fully embrace the dependency and equality of all life like the Native Americans believed. My scientific and factual upbringing makes it hard for me to understand or embrace ritualistic ways of thinking. Despite this, while I'm not religious, I do sympathize with

the Native American, or perhaps Romantic, way of connecting spiritually with my natural surroundings. Having said all this, I don't find myself wanting to rid myself of my western ways as many outdoor professionals do. I enjoy my climate controlled living space and the convenience of my current life. I don't see humans as equal to a blade of grass, or even a deer. While I may not think humans are necessarily "better" or "higher" than the rest of our world we're certainly different. I suppose if I were to place myself among a group of people it would have to be the intellectuals and artists of the romantic period who appreciated nature's beauty and power for what it is.

To wrap up this long ramble, I want to explore the option that there isn't only one Western perspective. It is hard to identify one ideology that captures all of the various stages of Western history. I am not defending the industrial, egocentric ways, but I am also not convinced that the only way for humans to connect and fully appreciate nature is the way of the Native Americans. In this day and age it is not possible nor practical to live the lifestyle of the Native Americans, so a compromise of beliefs should be reached in order to have respect for and conserve our natural world while still continuing to develop as an evolved species and contemplating our own role on this planet.

I believe the tension between the two groups stems from the fact that Native Americans never claimed to "own" the land. They believed to be living at one with it rather than "owning" it. This appears to be the core point of difference in the two ideologies. To the Native Americans the land was its own entity. No one could own it because every part of it was equal and dependent on each other. This derived from their hunter/gatherer lifestyle as opposed to Western culture which was heavily focused on self reliance. The land is a resource to use. I am extremely empathetic to your inability to choose a side. I too have the desire to take qualities from both cultures in order to gain an appreciation for nature without fully giving up my own culture and upbringings.

3) This week you will read chapter 3, which discusses pioneers in the field of Outdoor Recreation. For your reflection discuss one of those pioneers who has impacted you the most. Write what you feel they have done for the field. Then I would like for you to briefly share thoughts of someone in our day who would be in chapter 3 if they wrote about modern pioneers. In other words, who is an important person in Outdoor Recreation in current times?

John James Audubon has had a significant impact on my life starting from when I was only a young child. Through nature programs at our local parks and nature centers I learned about the National Audubon Society at an early age. I grew up flipping through Audubon's *Birds of America* and trying my best to identify the various species of birds in my hometown. I have always loved drawing, specifically animals, and reading and studying all of those hand-drawn pictures of hundreds of birds inspired me to pay attention to the details. Copying Audubon's drawings helped me develop an appreciation for detail and form. Not only did he inspire many of my nature drawings, but through studying birds I have gained an appreciation for bird watching and identification. John James Audubon helped perfect the art of cataloging hundreds of species for not only birds, but mammals as well. His experiments with tracking birds are still used today in the banding process and the society founded under his name contributes greatly to the identification and conservation of all types of birds. This is an important part of our field in that we must appreciate what else lives in the woods and knowledge of what each bird is or what their calls mean can give appreciation to our surroundings.

Yvon Chouinard is the founder of Patagonia. I believe he would be considered a modern pioneer of outdoor recreation. In his teens he began to rock climb for sport and taught himself blacksmithing in order to create some tools to help him climb more efficiently. By the 60s his tools had become popular among many climbers and he began to mass produce them. Over the next 9 years Chouinard Equipment would redesign and improve almost every climbing tool

leaving a big impact on the climbing world. Soon after, climbers wanted to wear the brightly colored rugby shirts that Chouinard wore while climbing. He saw this as another opportunity and began to sell clothing made for the outdoors as well. This venture became Patagonia. Patagonia is a hugely influential company in the world of outdoor recreation. Their clothing and fabric technologies have allowed outdoor enthusiasts the ability to explore our natural world no matter what the conditions are. Not only do they make clothing, but Patagonia also plays a large part in environmental activism. As a material based company they use and produce “stuff”, but they do their best to gather materials in an organic and environmentally friendly way. Employees are encouraged to eat sustainably and participate in local environmental projects. Patagonia supports political campaigns that want to conserve the environment and they also hold themselves accountable to be able to trace where their materials come from and how their products are made. Overall, Patagonia is a hugely influential company and Yvon Chouinard started it all. He also authored several books centered on conservation and founded the clean climbing movement in North America in the 70s.

Response

While you're correct in assuming that Kris Henker might not be considered a “pioneer” of modern OR, I enjoyed reading about the connection of studies in neuroscience and OR. There's also a good possibility that this side of the field will continue to grow over time as people begin to find more psychological value in outdoor adventure experiences, and people like Henker (if not Kris herself) will indeed become a “pioneer” someday.

I also like your point about Bear Grylls and Aron Ralston. Both are definitely more celebrity figures than thinkers or theorists, but they certainly spiked interest in the outdoors for many people. You said that they are saints of the survivalists and while I concur with your conclusion that they don't promote the teachings of many OR organizations, I do think they have a valid

contribution to the field. In my mind, they won't be recognized as "pioneers" necessarily, but in Bear Grylls case, as Natalie pointed out, he has a product line that is full of innovation and ultimately encourages the average person to get out in nature more and feeling capable of doing so.

4) After reading chapter four, reflect on how you feel Outdoor Recreation has an effect on human behavior. There are those in the field who have different perspectives from mine so feel free to express what you think.

The chapter begins by explaining leisure's role in human psyche and its importance. It then transitions into Outdoor recreation. This is an interesting point that Outdoor Recreation for some may be most of their leisure time but for others it plays no role in their free time. Because of this, it can be concluded that our personalities and interests weigh heavily in what we choose to participate during our leisure time. Outdoor Recreation affects many people differently. For some it can be calming or peaceful, for others it might be challenging or stressful. Some people thrive on challenge and uncertainty, but others break down when confronted with those things. Farley's T type personality study describes this phenomena perfectly. The large T side of the spectrum includes the thrill seekers and the small t side includes the people who like predictability. I found it interesting that the large T people have a low arousability and therefore seek highly stimulating activities whereas people closer to the small t side might be overwhelmed by that amount of stimuli. For me, this is the root of the opinion that Outdoor Recreation affects many people differently. Outdoor Recreation can include a broad range of activities and experiences which fortunately draws many types of people into the field. To encompass all of my thoughts into a single idea, I submit that Outdoor Recreation provides a stimuli of varying degrees that is not found in an average daily life. Whether that stimuli is adrenaline inducing or meditative, social or solo, it provides a new experience for the mind, body

and spirit while building a relationship with nature. This process of challenge and reflection ultimately provides internal satisfaction and growth for the participant.

It can be considered leisure when one experiences Csikszentmihalyi's "flow" or when the Outdoor Recreation activity delivers that sense of freedom or choice to the participant.

Oftentimes though, outdoor recreation

5) After reading Chapter five, reflect on the following: In a general sense who do you believe participated in outdoor recreation? Reflect on gender, ethnicity, generation, age... Also reflect on who you feel do not participate in outdoor recreation and what possible barriers for their participation are.

There are many opportunities as well as barriers in this world for outdoor recreation. To begin, outdoor recreation itself can pose barriers to participation. A few basic criteria for successful Outdoor Recreation are transportation/access to a wilderness environment, varying levels of equipment/wear, and physical health. While some of these can vary in intensity, all are required to some extent. There are many many ways of classifying groups of people who do and do not participate in Outdoor Recreation so I will cover a few of the groups that I find most noticeable. To begin, there is a large socioeconomic class that does not participate in outdoor recreation because of their lifestyle. These are considered the "need-driven groups" by the text. Generally, the lower class does not participate in OR for a number of reasons. Blue collar jobs are generally physically demanding and these workers prefer to use their free time to "recharge", opting to relax in their own homes and watch television. Most of these people live in an urban environment and cannot afford the time, transportation nor equipment costs of reaching and recreating in a wilderness setting. Another aspect of "city dwellers" is that the majority of minorities in America live in an Urban environment. This decreases their overall population's participation in Outdoor Recreation substantially.

Another barrier is familial upbringing. Many adult outdoor enthusiasts enjoyed outdoor experiences at an early age because their parents exposed them to that type of recreation. Oftentimes socioeconomic and culture can tie into this phenomena and affect the prevalence of Outdoor Recreation in one's life. Many middle to upper class families will travel or vacation together as a family unit. The youth of these families are also encouraged to participate in organizations such as Scouts, summer camps, or church youth retreats. Despite this, lower class rural families can also spend a lot of time outdoors in their own local area playing in the woods as kids and learning to hunt and fish at an early age.

Age is a large factor in who recreates outdoors. Young children are often encouraged to play outside as well as participating in organizations that engage in OR such as Scouts, YMCA, Church retreats and more. Once they reach the teenage years though, the outdoor play oftentimes turns into structured sport. While they might take the initiative to socially recreate outdoors, it is extremely dependent on the area of their upbringing. Young adults begin their adult lives as busy individuals but often find themselves drifting from the organized sports towards recreation. For some, this includes outdoor recreation such as backpacking, swimming, camping or rock climbing but for most this new recreation is socially centered and takes place at gatherings, interest clubs or bars. As people age to mid life adults, their leisure times and responsibilities change. They no longer have the time nor energy for solo recreation, let alone outdoor recreation. As their children age however and their jobs become stable and fruitful, the older adults begin to explore outdoor recreation opportunities once more. They can afford the equipment and travel expenses so are often found taking vacations which may include aspects of outdoor recreation. Their inner direction is reignited as their responsibilities slowly turn back to self centered concerns. Finally, the elderly have the time and oftentimes money to participate in OR but no longer the physical capabilities. To conclude, as we go through life; our responsibilities, social and psychological needs, and perceptions of leisure change with age and stages of life. This affects our level of participation in Outdoor Recreation over time.

6) For this week, select an outdoor activity or a managed property (park, forest...) do a little research on it and reflect on how it effects the economy.

Winter tourism is in reference to the huge industry related to snow sports such as skiing, snowboarding, and snowmobiling. While skiing is concentrated mostly out west, it remains a large part of the local tourism in the upper Midwest as well. The upper midwest is also the central hub of snowmobiling bringing in over 7 million visits per season to Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin.

Skiing not only brings in huge amounts spent at the resorts, but the surrounding towns and businesses thrive as well. With nearly 57 million skier visits, winter sports trips has become a \$12.2 billion industry. In the 2009/2010 season 212,000 jobs and a \$7 billion income was produced. Not only do local areas thrive, but the travel companies (airlines and gas stations) benefit as well. Baggage expenses rise during the winter months with the transportation of all the equipment. Speaking of equipment, Last season, nearly \$1.8 billion was spent at snow sports specialty stores on apparel, equipment, and accessories.

One of the interesting aspects of the skiing economy is the season pass concept. With large resorts charging between \$50 and \$100 a day lift tickets, a \$300 season pass would account for close to a 90% discount for people who ski regularly. With statistics showing that most resorts make almost 50% of their profits, this seems absurd. Large resorts such as Vail Inc. or Whistler/Blackcomb justify it by knowing that people with season passes are still buying food, lodging, ski lessons or inviting others to join them. They also have created a mountain monopoly. From top to bottom, and even some of the mountain towns, the resort owns it all. Their brand is on all the lodging, food services and equipment stores. This ensures that all visitors are continuing to put their money into the resort during their visit rather than outside entities. The other notable aspect in the ski resort industry is that there are no new competitors. Due to

environmental and land restrictions, starting a ski resort from scratch would require years of planning, let alone building, and hundreds of millions of dollars to get it functioning.

The snow sports industry will continue to remain strong and steady as long as the snow continues to fall and middle-upper class families continue to have free time and the money to spend at these frozen playgrounds and havens.

7) Each year the federal government agrees on its budget. This time last year, elected federal employees had not voted on a budget resulting in the closure of all nonessential government agencies. The reflection for this week is to pick a federal land management agency, list its general mission and develop an argument why it is or is not essential to the US.

This prompt has an interesting twist that not many people have really addressed so far (from the few I've read). I looked up how the Department of Interior (all of the land management agencies) would be affected by a government shutdown and a majority of it would be shut down. Out of the approximately 72,500 employees, nearly 59,000 of them were deemed unessential. I chose to focus on the BLM as it is the largest agency in that department and found in their contingency plan that "The BLM has approximately 10,800 employees and would furlough 10,152 employees during a funding lapse." This leaves only about 600 as essential. Considering that this agency is responsible for the management of about "245 million surface acres as well as 700 million sub-surface acres of mineral estate", this is an extremely small number of people being kept on duty. That being said, after reviewing the contingency plan more, I began to understand why a large percentage of the agency is deemed "unnecessary". They kept just enough people to maintain the Law Enforcement Program, Wildland Fire Program, Oil and Gas program, Alaska Pipeline Operations and Wild Horse/Burro Holding Facilities. Each of these are essential positions to keep things safe and running at the basic level. Unfortunately, recreation is not an essential thing in the government's eyes, but only in times of government shutdown.

Beyond that it is obvious that the federal government thinks that the current land management agencies are essential because they exist. In the Bureau of Land Management's case, they are an extremely large, well known and important agency. Their mission is "to manage and conserve the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations under our mandate of multiple-use and sustained yield." This is a large responsibility to have, but a very important one. Efficient and conservation based use of our public land is an essential part for America's future. The BLM helps maintain the scores of land that provide our natural resources, recreation areas, grazing areas, wild horses and burro management as well as a large wildland firefighting program. Without these programs, much of the land in the US would be misused, overused and eventually become useless. There would be no management of the wild horse and burros and those animals would quickly lose out to the large ranches. Recreation areas wouldn't be nearly as pristine nor safe without the BLM. During your average day, the BLM is very much essential to the long term conservation and development of our country's lands.

8) The Water Conservation Act of 1965 encourages states to invest in natural resources by developing park systems. Michigan's state lands are managed by its Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The DNR is allocated 22% of the state's finances. Also, since 2010 it has offered to residents the ability to purchase a parks pass. The parks pass program has generated almost 19 million dollars annually.

Prior to the park pass initiative residents of Michigan we encouraged to pay to use state lands but truly could have gotten away without paying. In fact, even with the park pass program it is not difficult to use state lands without paying a fee. For your reflection this week, state and defend you're your opinion on whether you should or should not have to pay to play in a Michigan State Park. Be specific by using a particular park as an example in your statement.

I think that the Recreation Passport is a good thing. 11\$ a year is a small price to pay for the use of all of our amazing state parks and the fact that it raises 19 million dollars helps fund the parks which otherwise might get shoved to the bottom of the list for state funding. Adding it to everyone's annual taxes might make sense to raise funding, but not everyone uses the state parks so I believe that it makes more sense to have the people taking advantage of the parks to help fund them. Upon research I found that for an out of state vehicle it costs 31 dollars. This, I believe is a little steep and we might attract more tourists to Michigan if we lowered that amount, but I suppose with the daily fee of 9\$ as an option it all balances out. The system also cuts down on lines considerably. Growing up, my friends, family and I would drive out to Grand Haven State Park to enjoy the beach. I remember as a young child waiting in a long line of cars because people needed to pay an entry fee. Now, you zip right through as they just check your license plate. One last pitch for buying a recreation pass that I just discovered is that some businesses give "passport perks" throughout Michigan. In Marquette, Domino's pizza gives a 25% discount! Perks on perks for a college student!