Welcome to the 2014 Symposium

A difficult challenge for most new researchers is learning how to convey complex, often unfamiliar ideas to a diverse audience of scholars in the space of a few minutes. This annual event offers Environment and Society graduate students an opportunity to practice presenting their research at a scientific meeting. Rather than waiting for the thesis or dissertation defense, this symposium gives students a chance to present their ideas to an audience of peers and faculty at a time when they’re just beginning to focus on a researcachable problem.

We will hear from three students who seek Master's degrees in Bioregional Planning, Human Dimensions of Ecosystem Science and Management (HDESM) or Recreation Resource Management. Each will describe how they propose to undertake the research that will form the basis for their thesis or project. Some students are just beginning to determine how best to tackle their topic of interest. Others may have already started their research process, but still can benefit by further developing their ideas as influenced by the insights of their colleagues in the department, college, and university.

Comments and questions, then, are not only welcome but also necessary. Today is a venue for helping each other do the best science we can. The pace of presentations is rapid: each student has been asked to speak for no more than 15 minutes, leaving about four minutes for questions and suggestions. If you have an idea or question and don’t get a chance to raise the issue in the time allotted, please take advantage of the comment forms scattered around the room.

Schedule

8:45-9 am  Opening Social – Coffee and Breakfast Snacks

9-9:20 am  Jake Palma (major professor: Steve Burr) - Understanding Hispanic/Latino Outdoor Recreation Behaviors in the Central Wasatch Mountains

9:20-9:40 am  Julie Koldewyn (major professor: Roslynn Brain) - Applying the Sustainable Cities Initiative to Utah State University: Need, Interest, and Design

9:40-10 am  Michael Gottfredson (major professor: Dick Toth) - Commuter rail and the landscape: alternative futures for planning in northern Utah

Moderator: Michelle Arnold (PhD, Human Dimensions of Ecosystem Science and Management)
Commuter rail and the landscape: alternative futures for planning in northern Utah

Advisor: Richard Toth

The communities in southeastern Box Elder County, Utah, have shown strong interest in bringing rail mass-transit to the region. Doing so has implications for impact on the biophysical, social, cultural, and economic factors in the region. A bioregional analysis for the region is supported by a local stakeholder group to assess the impact of mass-transit on land-use and the environment. This study will use “A Planning and Design Methodology” to delineate multiple alternative future models that will envision the landscape character with the addition of mass transit. These alternative futures will be assessed by evaluation models that represent different types of lands and their uses. From this comparison between alternative futures and evaluation models, stakeholders will be able to determine which alternative future model is preferred. A brief discussion about implementation strategies will also be discussed. All models will be created through the use of a GIS using secondary data from online data-clearinghouses. Other data will be taken from unstructured interviews, city and county general plans, the 2010 Census, and Utah Transit Authority reports and studies.
Applying the Sustainable Cities Initiative to Utah State University: Need, Interest, and Design

Advisor: Roslynn Brain

The Sustainable Cities Initiative (SCI) at the University of Oregon is a program in which the University partners with a surrounding community for one year to tackle environmental issues. During that year, students address between 15 and 20 projects through 20-30 courses across 13+ academic departments. Students work on projects related to sustainable architecture and urban design, legal and policy analysis, community engagement, and others through a service-learning format, meaning that students and faculty use community service and formal instruction to complete real-world coursework. Because Cache Valley faces a variety of environmental problems such as air pollution, increased population, land development, the SCI program addresses these issues for the benefit of the community. This model would allow students and faculty to work with community partners including local non-profit organizations and government officials on pressing sustainability issues. While Utah State University already utilizes the service-learning model in various courses, the SCI model could create more opportunities for both the university and community partners to effect lasting environmental change. My research focuses on whether this model will work at USU, while potentially providing the framework for implementation for this program. Research methodology will include mixed-method qualitative and quantitative analysis through the use of surveys, and potentially some focus groups and individual interviews, for USU faculty and community partners.
Federal land management agencies are becoming increasingly concerned with the lack of minority outdoor recreation participation on public lands. In Utah, Hispanics/Latinos are the largest minority group and the trend of low outdoor recreation participation among them is present in the state. This study will be located in the Central Wasatch Mountains of the Salt Lake Ranger District in the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest and will address three main questions: 1) Why are Hispanics/Latinos not participating in outdoor recreation? 2) Where do Hispanics/Latinos currently participate in outdoor recreation? 3) Why are those places an attractive outdoor recreation destination? To fully understand these questions, mixed qualitative-interview and quantitative-survey methods will be used. Rather than trying to understand broad generalizations of Hispanic/Latino culture as much of the research on this topic has done, this study is an attempt to better understand outdoor recreation behaviors among Hispanics/Latinos at a local level. The product of this research will result in recommendations as to how the Salt Lake Ranger District can expand and increase outdoor recreation opportunities for the Hispanic/Latino population.