

ECONOMIC BENEFITS FROM RECREATION IN PROTECTED AREAS OF SOUTHERN CHILE

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Using the individual Travel Cost Method, the economic benefits from water and forest recreation activities were estimated and compared for a representative sample of visitors to Puyehue and Vicente Pérez Rosales national parks. Individual consumer surplus attached to forest-based activities (such as trekking or canopying) equaled USD 176 per trip and was significantly higher than the consumer surplus from water-based activities (such as visiting waterfalls) that equaled USD 46 per trip. The high values attached to forest recreation activities suggest that there might be good opportunities for new recreation products based on opening and improving existing forest areas within the parks.

KEY WORDS: *Chilean national parks, nature-based tourism, temperate forest ecosystems, travel cost method.*