

An Estimation of the Recreational Value of “Bopath-Ella” in Ratnapura: A Travel Cost Approach

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The recreational services provided by the natural resource systems to mankind are fast being recognized. However, the knowledge on valuing the flow of recreational services and creating a demand for ecological services is comparatively less explored in developing countries such as Sri Lanka. The recreation value of Bopath-Ella was estimated using the travel cost method in this study. Data on travel cost and related information were collected from randomly selected 86 visitors to the site from December 2004 to April 2005. The zonal travel cost method was employed as an economic tool. The estimated total recreation value was Rs.120 million per year. Using discount rates of 8% and 6%, the present values of total consumer surplus were Rs. 1,820 million and Rs. 2,000 million per year, respectively. This means that the unit value of the area (70 km²) is about Rs. 28.5 million. Such value is 7 to 10 times the purchasing price of agricultural land (Rs. 30,000 per acre), which was estimated through the survey for non-agricultural uses and is higher than the commercial land value price in rural areas. Thus developing Bopath-Ella as a recreational site is more profitable. Launching of educational campaigns about the importance of natural falls and the biodiversity with the implementation of conservation activities would enhance the successful preservation of the natural beauty of the country.

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