

The Development of Organized Recreation in the United States

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Most men and women of today have much more leisuretime than their grandparents did; tomorrow even greater leisure will most likely be available. What does this additional time mean for the Nation and for individuals? In the search for answers, widespread interest has been aroused in recreational needs and the role of public agencies in meeting those needs. The article that follows summarizes the development of public recreation programs and presents information on the amounts spent for recreation by public and voluntary agencies and by consumers in the United States.

THE greater leisuretime that has become available to most persons in recent years has stimulated both individual and national interest in recreation. Public and private agencies have developed recreation programs, and individual spending has increased.

During the past year the development of plans to meet recreational needs received a substantial share of the public attention. Recreation was one of the subjects considered by the President's Conference on Fitness of American Youth. This conference, held at Annapolis, Md., in June 1956, explored the problems involved in keeping American youth fit and possible solutions to the problems. A month later, President Eisenhower established by executive order the Council on Youth Fitness. The Vice President was made the chairman of this council, which was designed to promote both the efficiency of existing Federal programs in the field and the launching of needed additional programs. The President also established the Citizens Advisory Committee to consider and evaluate existing and prospective measures—governmental and private—that would make the youth of the Nation happier, healthier, and more completely fit.

Recreation for older persons was explored in June 1956, when the Federal-State Conference on Aging met in Washington to review State and Federal responsibility and to consider action in the field of aging.

Education and recreation made up one of the six broad subjects around which the conference was organized.

Though the term recreation is widely used, there is no generally accepted definition of the exact meaning. In a limited sense, recreation is thought of as participation in such physical activities as swimming, boating, and horseback riding, while in a broader sense it encompasses all socially acceptable leisuretime activities. This article uses the broader concept of recreation: "Any activity . . . including play, games, sports, athletics, relaxation, certain amusements, art forms, hobbies, etc. . . . pursued during leisure, either individual or collective. . . . having its own immediate appeal not impelled by a delayed reward beyond itself . . . participated in because of interest, enthusiasm, absorbing attention, enjoyment, and the satisfaction of wishes."¹

The increase in leisuretime has been a significant social development in twentieth century American life, brought about by the technological revolution. It is no longer necessary for nearly everyone to work from sunrise to sunset throughout the year in order to provide food, clothing, and shelter for themselves and their families.

As late as 1900 the typical industrial worker was employed 10 hours a day, 6 days a week; today the typical industrial worker is employed 8 hours a day, 5 days a week. Paid

vacations and paid holidays were rare in 1900, but today they are customary for practically all persons employed in industry and commerce. There are indications that industrial workers within the near future will seek shorter hours in the form of longer vacations, a 4-day week, or a 7- or 6-hour workday.

Furthermore, modern medicine has increased the life span to where it approaches the Biblical "threescore years and ten," and social innovations have made it possible for every man and woman to look forward to these added years as years of financially secure leisure. An infant born in 1954 had a life expectancy of nearly 70 years, compared with a life expectancy of 47 years for an infant born in 1900. In 1900 the 3.0 million persons in the United States aged 65 and over represented only 1 out of every 25 persons in the total population. Today the 14.5 million persons aged 65 and over represent 1 of every 12 persons. It is estimated that by 1975 there will be more than 20.0 million persons aged 65 and over in the United States and that they will represent 1 out of every 10 or 11 persons in the total population.

With the increase in life expectancy has come a decline in work-life expectancy. In 1900 a 60-year-old male worker could expect to live about 14 more years, of which 11 would be working years and 3 would be retirement years. In 1950, such a worker could expect to live 15 more years—9 at work and 6 in retirement. By 1975, if this trend continues, a worker aged 60 can expect to live 17 more years, 8 at work and 9 in retirement.

The amount of leisuretime available to youths has also increased. In 1900, it was not unusual for children in their early teens and even younger to be employed for at least 10 hours each day. The Department

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¹ *Dictionary of Sociology*, Physiological Library, New York City, page 251.

of Labor has estimated that in 1900 nearly 1 out of 8 children aged 10-13 and nearly 1 out of 3 children aged 14-15 were at work helping to support themselves and their families instead of attending school. Since then child labor laws and improved economic conditions have brought about a decline in the full-time employment of children. By 1955, fewer than 1 out of 6 children aged 14 and 15 were employed, and two-thirds of the employed children worked part time. Employment of children under age 14 is now restricted to such occupations as selling papers, agricultural work, and light employment outside school hours that is not harmful physically or morally.

The technological revolution and social changes have also greatly benefited the housewives of the Nation. Laborsaving devices and increased commercial services have simplified housework and have given more leisuretime to housewives. Women today marry at an earlier age (the median age at the first marriage is now 20, compared with 22 in 1900) and have fewer children (2-3 compared with 4-5 in 1900). Their children are likely to leave home earlier than those of preceding generations, since they too marry at an earlier age. Consequently, the average mother today has completed the rearing of her children when she reaches her middle 40's, in comparison with the middle 50's for the average mother in 1900.

The technological revolution also introduced a change in the social concept of leisure. The idea of leisure is now accepted by most persons as socially desirable. As recently as the nineteenth century, the devotion of leisure to the pursuit of pleasure was frowned upon by some groups. The few leisuretime activities that most persons participated in were of an occasional nature and were centered around religious and national festivals, such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Halloween, or were related to production—for example, fishing and hunting; cornhusking, planting, or harvesting bees; and house-raising parties. During this period spectator sports, circuses, and other forms of commercial entertainment were beginning to gain in

popularity. Only a small minority of persons, who received their income from rents and interest and who did not have to work, were able to participate extensively in leisuretime pursuits—that is, they could devote considerable time to enjoyment of arts and letters, breeding and racing of horses, and traveling.

Public Recreation Programs

The interest of government in the use of leisure in the United States antedates the American Revolution. Originally, however, the role of government was limited to prohibiting or restricting leisuretime activities that were considered unwholesome. Under their police powers, local governments prohibited certain forms of leisuretime activities on the Sabbath, made gambling and vice illegal, and regulated hunting, fishing, racing, and so on.

Not until the problems brought on by overcrowding in urban areas became fairly serious did public authorities undertake to encourage recreation. Before 1850, 85 out of every 100 families lived in rural areas, Most American families therefore had available at only short distances from their homes a variety of natural outdoor recreational opportunities such as those provided by woods and rivers.

What seems to be the first legislation promoting public recreation programs was first passed in 1852, when New York City established Central Park for recreation purposes. During the remaining years of the nineteenth century, the public recreation movement concerned itself principally with the outdoors, as local governments provided parks and playgrounds and Federal and State Governments passed legislation establishing parks and forest reservations.

Local Governments

Today the principal responsibility for providing the great variety of recreation facilities and services available to the public rests with local governments.²

² George D. Butler, *Introduction to Community Recreation*, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., New York, 1949.

The public park movement, which started in the 1850's, stemmed from the recognition of the desirability of providing defined areas where residents of urban areas could enjoy the lakes, grass, and woods. By 1902, nearly 800 cities were reported to have established public parks.

The provision of safe play areas for children stimulated the growth of the playground movement, which started in Boston and several other cities in the late 1880's. Sand "gardens" and model playgrounds were first built with private funds, and then local governments began to purchase land for playgrounds, which they equipped with sand boxes, swings, and ladders.

During the first decade of the twentieth century, local governments authorized the construction or use of indoor facilities for recreation purposes. In 1903 gymnasiums and baths were constructed in New York City's Seward Park, and field houses were constructed in Chicago's small parks beginning in 1905. Rochester, N. Y., led the way in the use of school facilities for recreation, when it began its school-center demonstration program in 1907. Shortly thereafter, Wisconsin authorized a school tax for the purpose of enabling local governments to provide for recreation in the schools.

Before 1915, there was no State legislation expressly authorizing local governments to provide public recreation facilities and services. Local governments used other delegated authority, however, such as their police powers, which allowed them to take reasonable measures to ensure the health and morals of the people.

The passage of State enabling legislation, which authorized political subdivisions of the State to establish and operate recreation programs under public sponsorship and with tax funds, made it possible for localities to broaden the scope of public recreation programs by providing such facilities as swimming pools, beaches, athletic fields, golf courses, tennis courts, museums, stadiums, and the recreation services associated with these facilities. In 1915 New Jersey enacted the first legislation of this type.

The development of local recreation administrative agencies followed the

pattern of recreation legislation. Park, playground, and school authorities were the first agencies to be established to administer community recreation programs. After the passage of State enabling legislation, local governments began to set up recreation departments, commissions, and boards. Their functions included supervising parks and playgrounds and the use of school facilities for recreation. Today, authorities that have the administration of recreation programs as their sole function outnumber by a slight margin any other type of organization dealing with recreation. The National Recreation Association Survey for 1955,³ covering 2,660 public authorities, shows that 923 authorities administer recreation facilities as a single function, 343 in conjunction with school services, and 474 through city managers, councils and boards, departments of public works, youth commissions, and departments of public welfare; 920 authorities administer parks as a major function. Of the authorities with the administration of recreation programs as their only function, 58 percent reported employing full-time leaders the year round, in comparison with 31 percent for the authorities administering park departments, 13 percent for the authorities administering recreation programs in conjunction with school services, and 12 percent for the miscellaneous group.

State Governments

Since the Civil War and particularly during the past 10 years, the State governments have passed many laws in the field of recreation. Their initial interest was limited to acquiring and maintaining State parks for recreation purposes and making them available to the public. The first State park was established in 1864, when the Federal Government granted the Yosemite Valley to the State of California for recreation purposes. Subsequently the management of Yosemite was returned to the Federal Government. Although the development of State parks was slow during the period from the Civil War to World War I, the two decades after

World War I witnessed an intensive expansion.

Today all States, with the exception of Arizona, administer State parks. The parks range in size from the Adirondack State Park in New York with 2.2 million acres to the 1-acre historical sites that are located in many States. The services available include facilities for swimming, boating, camping, hiking, and skiing; and there are restaurants and overnight accommodations in hotels, lodges, cabins, tents, and trailer camps. Altogether, 47 State governments have set aside for recreation purposes 2,030 areas covering more than 5 million acres. There is, however, considerable concentration of State park acreage; one State, New York, has more than half the total acreage in the United States, and the three top States—California, Maine, and New York—have two-thirds of the total national acreage.

Many of the units administering State parks also exercise all rights, powers, and duties over forests, public hunting and fishing grounds, and historic monuments, though some States have independent commissions, departments, or divisions administering these public lands.

The second type of State action in the field of recreation was the passage of enabling legislation; from 1915 to 1952, 39 States passed such laws.⁴ The enabling laws are usually either (1) general acts, or (2) special purpose acts that deal with some special phase of recreation, such as local parks, playgrounds, or use of schools for community centers. An examination of the *Municipal Yearbook* for the years 1935-56 indicates that most State enabling acts have been of the special-purpose type. Many States have amended their original special-purpose legislation, however, to broaden the scope of the recreation facilities and services that local governments are authorized to undertake.

Since World War II there has been an increase in enabling legislation authorizing two or more local government units to jointly operate recreation facilities and services. Wisconsin passed such legislation in 1947; Mas-

sachusetts, Ohio, and Washington in 1949; New York in 1954; and Arizona, Indiana, and Texas in 1955.

Beginning in 1945 State governments have passed a third type of recreation legislation, the establishment of State agencies to provide recreation services to local governments. California, North Carolina, and Vermont have established independent State recreation commissions to provide services—including surveys, studies, technical assistance with financial legislative matters, consultation, and research—to aid the local governments in developing recreation programs. Such services are also provided in these three States, and in other States as well, through park and conservation agencies, departments of education, and other units of State government. Many States coordinate their recreation programs through an interagency committee on recreation.

State governments have also passed a variety of special legislation providing earmarked revenues for State recreation activities or limited financial assistance to localities in the field of recreation. Kansas, for example, created a State Park and Resources Authority in 1955 to develop new State parks, to be financed solely from fees and tolls similar to those collected by turnpike authorities. New Mexico passed a new cigarette tax in 1955, earmarking part of the proceeds for local recreation programs. Rhode Island voters approved a \$500,000 bond issue in 1952 to construct two State beaches.

Federal Government

The Federal Government has provided park and forest areas, facilities and services for public recreation on a permanent and an emergency basis, through both direct and indirect action, for nearly a century. The first Federal measure in this field was taken in 1864, when Congress granted Yosemite Valley to the State of California for recreational uses. In 1872, President Grant signed the bill creating Yellowstone National Park as a "public park or pleasuring ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people." New park areas were subsequently added. In 1916 the National Park Service was organized "to conserve the scenery and the natural

³The National Recreation Association, *1956 Recreation and Park Yearbook*, 1956, page 30.

⁴Howard G. Danford, *Recreation in the American Community*, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1953, page 389.

and historic objects and wildlife therein, and to provide for the enjoyment of same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations." Today the nearly 20 million acres of national park areas, which are located in 33 States, attract more than 50 million visitors a year.

The management of the national forest areas for the purposes of conserving natural resources and providing recreation areas began in 1897, when Congress gave the Secretary of Agriculture authority to establish the Forest Service. Through the years Congress has recognized the Service as having some responsibility for providing recreation facilities in national forests. In 1915 Congress explicitly authorized the Secretary of Agriculture to permit persons or associations to use up to 5 acres of forest land in constructing hotels, camps, stores, or other structures needed for recreation or public convenience. In addition, the Forest Service has developed camp and picnic grounds, winter sports areas, roads and trails, swimming areas, resorts, and other public service areas. Each year more than 40 million persons visit the 150 national forests, which have a net area of 180 million acres.

The Fish and Wildlife Service of the Department of the Interior contributes to public recreation through the protection of wildlife and the propagation of fish, thus assuring the millions of hunters and fishermen the perpetuation of their sport. Federal interest in this area was first expressed in 1871, when the Bureau of Fisheries was established in the Department of Commerce. This Bureau and the Bureau of Biological Survey, which was established in 1885 in the Department of Agriculture, were both transferred to the Department of the Interior and combined as the Fish and Wildlife Service in 1940. The Service operates some 100 gamefish hatcheries, from which each year millions of young fish are distributed directly and through State cooperation to stock and restock fishing waters. The 270 national wildlife refuges serve not only as reservoirs for game but also as areas for camping, boating, pic-

nicking, nature study, and related activities.

The Fish and Wildlife Service also administers the Federal Aid to Wildlife Restoration Act of 1937 and the Federal Aid to Fish Restoration Act of 1950. Federal grants in aid to the States under the former act are based on appropriations equal to revenues derived during the preceding fiscal year from the tax on firearms, shells, and cartridges; grants under the Fish Restoration Act are based on revenues from the tax on fishing rods, reels, and other equipment. The grants are made on a matching basis, with the Federal Government providing \$3 for each \$1 of State funds.

Many other Federal agencies whose programs are not directed specifically toward promoting public recreation programs provide important recreation benefits.

Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.—The constituent units in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare promote a variety of recreation activities that are now coordinated by the Departmental Committee on Recreation, established in January 1957. Since 1863, when the Commissioner of Education stated that "the science of education includes the science of recreation," the Office of Education has provided services in the field of recreation to State and local school systems, colleges and universities, professional organizations, and others. Such services include sponsoring and participating in workshops and conferences on school-community recreation; conducting studies and assembling, analyzing, and disseminating information on conditions and trends related to school-community recreation; and assisting in preservice and inservice programs to improve the professional preparation of recreation leaders, physical educators, and others.

The Children's Bureau of the Social Security Administration has a continuing interest in the health and social significance of recreation and leisure-time opportunities for all children and youth. It places special emphasis on the importance of planned and competently led recreation programs in the care and treatment of physically, socially, and mentally disadvantaged children and of services for them. In providing recreational

opportunities and services to these children and to communities, the Children's Bureau has particular interest in using the social group-work approach to consultation and to practice. Through bulletins for parents and program activities the Bureau promotes recreation for families—parents and children together.

The Public Health Service consults with and assists Federal agencies directly concerned with the planning, development, operation, and maintenance of recreational facilities and areas regarding problems bearing on the transmission of communicable diseases. It also aids in the installation and operation of sanitation works and services. Through the National Institute of Mental Health, recreation programs are promoted both as preventive and therapeutic measures.

The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation provides certain recreational services as an integral part of the rehabilitation of disabled persons. In some phases of rehabilitation activities, recreation plays an important role, particularly when the person being rehabilitated is severely disabled and homebound and requires specialized recreational services.

Department of Agriculture.—The Department of Agriculture, through its Extension Service, helps persons in rural areas to attain greater efficiency in farming and in marketing and distribution and to have better homes and higher standards of living. An important function of the extension program is to provide leadership for recreation activities such as dancing, drama, choral work, community singing, handicrafts, sports and camping through 4-H clubs, home demonstration clubs, community meetings, and farmers' institutes.

Department of Defense.—The Corps of Engineers in the Department of the Army improves and maintains rivers and harbors for the primary purposes of navigation, flood control, and power development. Among the additional purposes of the projects are the conservation of fish and wildlife and the incidental development of recreation areas and facilities to serve the general public, including providing boatlanding and docking facilities, camp grounds, picnic facilities, access roads, and hiking trails.

Housing and Home Finance Agency.

—The Public Housing Administration, the unit administering the low-rent public housing program, permits the local housing authorities to provide space for certain indoor and outdoor community activities for recreation purposes in a project where such space does not exist in the neighborhood. Some of these facilities have become focal points for recreation in the communities, as they have often been leased to local recreation agencies for program operation. Often the recreation agencies have worked with housing authorities in the functional planning of the facilities. Local housing authorities are also permitted to provide playground areas for school-age children and for adults, play areas for children of preschool age, and some basic equipment.

Department of the Interior.—The Bureau of Indian Affairs allows the use of Indian reservations for hunting and fishing; the permission of the Indian tribes is, however, necessary.

The Bureau of Reclamation plans, constructs, and operates facilities for irrigation, water conservation, power, and flood control. It permits fishing, boating, picnicking, swimming, and similar recreational activities in its reservoir areas and in some instances has allowed private individuals to camp, erect cabins, and operate limited concession facilities.

The Bureau of Land Management administers the 470 million acres of public lands in the United States and Alaska in the interest of conserving forest, range, mineral, and water resources. The Bureau makes available all vacant public lands to individuals or groups for hunting, fishing, camping, and similar forms of recreation.

Tennessee Valley Authority.—The Authority is responsible for the development and utilization of the recreation resources of the Tennessee Valley, as part of its program. It encourages the uses of its reservoirs and land for hunting, fishing, picnicking, and other forms of outdoor recreation.

Interagency committee.—The activities of most of these Federal agencies are coordinated through a Federal Interagency Committee on

Recreation, organized in 1946. Membership on the committee is made up of representatives from four units of the Department of the Interior—the National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, and Bureau of Reclamation; the Federal Extension Service and Forest Service in the Department of Agriculture; the Office of Education and the Public Health Service in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare; the Corps of Engineers in the Department of the Army (Department of Defense); and the Public Housing Administration—a unit of the Housing and Home Finance Agency. The committee serves as a clearinghouse for the exchange of information on policies, plans, experience, and procedures. It seeks to clarify the Federal Government's responsibilities in the field of recreation and to discover and as far as possible fill existing gaps in Federal recreation programs and services, with special attention to the needs of small communities and rural areas, minority groups, young persons, and older adults.

Temporary programs.—The Federal Government undertook emergency recreation programs of a temporary nature during the depression of the 1930's and World War II. The depression brought about direct Federal action in the field of recreation as part of the Federal programs that were introduced to stimulate production and to create employment. The Work Projects Administration was established to provide loans and grants to localities to secure needed recreation facilities. From 1935 to 1943, WPA funds were used to construct 2,300 stadiums, grandstands, and bleachers, 1,700 parks, 3,100 playgrounds, 250 golf courses, 800 swimming pools, and many other recreational facilities. WPA funds also were used to employ thousands of recreation leaders.

The Civilian Conservation Corps, organized in 1937, was another emergency program that made some contribution to the field of recreation. Members of the CCC had among their assignments the construction and repair of recreation resources in national, State, and local parks and forests.

During World War II the Federal Government provided consultation services to local communities and allocated funds for building and maintaining recreation facilities. The Recreation Division of the Office of Community War Services in the Federal Security Agency coordinated the recreation programs that were inaugurated in about 2,500 communities—industrial centers affected by the defense effort and communities adjacent to military establishments. The Federal Works Agency granted \$31 million for the construction of recreation buildings and \$7 million for the operation and maintenance of local wartime recreation programs.

Public Expenditures for Recreation

Data are not available on which to base estimates of total public expenditures for recreation under the broad definition used in the preceding sections of this article. It is necessary, therefore, to limit the concept of public expenditures for recreation to those expenditures directed specifically toward providing recreation areas, facilities, and services. Public expenditures directed mainly for other purposes—such as the development of rivers and harbors, education, welfare, agriculture, and related programs—are not included in this classification even though they provide important recreation benefits.

Under this rather restrictive definition, it is estimated that public expenditures for recreation in the fiscal year 1954-55 amounted to \$715 million. Of this amount, local governments spent \$509 million or 71.2 percent, State governments spent \$147.6 million or 20.6 percent, and the Federal Government spent \$58.5 million or 8.2 percent (table 1). These are gross expenditures; subtracting revenue derived from all public recreation areas, facilities, and services would greatly reduce the totals. Such revenues and fees obtained by local governments amounted to \$72 million, by State governments to more than \$96 million, and by the Federal Government to more than \$27 million. Additional millions

of dollars were derived from commercial uses of public parks and forest lands, such as the sale of timber and the sale of mineral rights.

Local Governments

Of the \$509 million spent by local governments in 1954-55 for parks and recreation, \$406 million was spent by city governments, \$43 million by county governments, \$42 million by special districts, and \$17 million by townships.⁵ The total represents 1.9 percent of all expenditures made by local governments in that year. Additional sums were also spent in developing forests and parks and for fish and wildlife management. Data on the amount spent for each of these categories are included under expenditures for natural resources development but are not available separately.

Local governments have been increasing their expenditures for recreation at a fast rate during the past few years. The \$509 million spent in 1954-55 may be compared with \$424 million in 1953-54, \$374 million in 1952-53, and \$324 million in 1951-52. On a per capita basis, local expenditures for recreation amounted to \$3.14 in 1954-55 and \$2.11 in 1951-52.

About 43 percent of total local expenditures for recreation in 1954-55, or \$217 million, was spent to provide recreation leaders and other personnel at playgrounds, swimming pools and beaches, athletic fields, golf courses, zoos, auditoriums, museums, and so on. Most urban communities in the United States now have recreation leaders, some on a part-time or seasonal basis and some on a full-time, year-round basis. Of the 76,900 men and women employed as recreation leaders in 2,164 municipalities in the fiscal year 1954-55, as reported by the National Recreation Association, 11 percent or 8,400 were full-time, year-round employees.

Local expenditures for capital outlay in 1954-55 amounted to \$142 million or 28 percent of total recreation expenditures. This amount includes the cost of constructing

Table 1.—Public expenditures for recreation, fiscal year 1954-55

[In millions]

Source of funds and purpose	Amount
Total.....	\$715.1
Local governments: parks and recreation.....	509.0
State governments.....	147.6
Parks.....	55.0
Fish and wildlife restoration.....	92.6
Federal Government.....	58.5
Department of the Interior.....	52.0
Fish and Wildlife Service.....	27.0
Grants to States for restoration and management.....	14.9
Management of resources, construction, and administration.....	12.1
National Park Service.....	25.0
Management of parks and other areas.....	7.8
Park and recreation programs.....	.5
Construction and maintenance of buildings, utilities, roads, and trails.....	13.7
Acquisition of lands and water rights.....	2.0
Administrative expenses.....	1.0
Department of Agriculture, Forest Service.....	1.8
District of Columbia.....	4.7
Department of Recreation.....	1.7
National Capital Parks.....	2.2
National Zoological Park.....	.8

Source: Data for local governments: Bureau of the Census, *Summary of Governmental Finances in 1955, 1956*. State data: National Park Service, *State Park Statistics, 1955*, June 1956, and Bureau of the Census, *State Government Finances in 1955, 1956*. Federal Government data: *Budget of the U. S. Government for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1957*, and unpublished figures from the Forest Service.

such recreation facilities as beaches and pools, athletic fields, playgrounds, stadiums, zoos, and dance pavilions.

Many of the recreation facilities are operated by local governments on a fee-for-service basis. Revenue from this source in 1954-55 amounted to \$72 million or 14 percent of total local expenditures for recreation, in comparison with \$39 million or 12 percent in 1951-52.

State Governments

State recreation expenditures amounted to \$147.6 million in the fiscal year 1954-55. The major expenditure was for fish and wildlife restoration and management, which cost State governments \$92.6 million. In addition, the States also made expenditures for fish and wildlife management from Federal grants that amounted to \$14.9 million. State governments received in revenue from hunting and fishing licenses \$82.5 million, which represented 89 percent of State expend-

itures for fish and wildlife restoration.

The cost of operating, improving, and extending State parks, recreation areas, historical sites, and related types of areas amounted to \$55 million. For each dollar of expenditure, 41 cents was spent for salaries and wages, 28 cents for capital improvements, 21 cents for supplies, and 10 cents for land. Revenue from operations, including facilities, concessions, and entrance and parking fees, amounted to \$13.8 million or 25 percent of expenditures.

State forests, which are generally more extensive in area than State parks, are used principally for commercial timber, forage, water, and mineral resources. Recreation is not the principal reason for the maintenance of State forests, although some forest areas are set aside exclusively for the purpose. Data are not available on expenditures for recreation in State forests. The Bureau of the Census includes under miscellaneous State expenditures the amounts spent for special recreation programs, such as special grants to local governments for recreation services and facilities, including State-operated facilities, and the administrative expenses of State recreation agencies and committees, but these amounts are not shown separately.

Federal Government Expenditures

The Federal Government spent \$58.5 million on recreation in the fiscal year 1954-55—36 cents for every person in the country (table 1). The total represented less than one-tenth of 1 percent of all Federal expenditures during the year.

Expenditures made by the National Park Service for facilities and services that were principally of a recreation nature amounted to \$25.0 million, of which \$13.7 million represented capital expenditures for the construction and maintenance of buildings, utilities, roads, and trails. Excluded are such nonrecreational items as bridge and parkway construction, which are also administered by the National Park Service. Revenue received from visitors to the National Parks amounted to \$4.9 million.

⁵ Bureau of the Census, *Summary of Governmental Finances in 1955*, August 20, 1956.

Almost half (\$27.0 million) of the total spent by the Federal Government was for fish and wildlife restoration and management. Of this amount, \$14.9 million was in the form of grants to State governments and \$12.1 million was spent by the Federal Fish and Wildlife Service. The Federal Government received \$17.7 million in tax revenue from the sale of such items as sporting arms and fishing reels and \$4.4 million from the sale of stamps for duck hunting.

The Forest Service in the Department of Agriculture spent \$1.8 million to maintain and improve camping areas and for wildlife management.

A total of \$4.7 million was spent in 1954-55 by the District of Columbia. The Department of Recreation spent \$1.7 million to operate playfields, playgrounds, tennis courts, swimming pools, and so on. The National Capital Parks spent \$2.2 million to administer, maintain, operate, and improve the District's park system, and \$800,000 was spent for construction in the National Zoological Park, and for maintenance and operation.

Consumer Expenditures

Estimates of the amount of money that persons in the United States spend on recreation vary widely, depending on the items included. The detailed data on national income prepared yearly by the Department of Commerce show personal consumption expenditures for selected recreational items and services. The series identifies, for example, such items and services purchased as reading materials, sports equipment, radio and television, commercial entertainment, and payments to organizations and clubs. Under this definition of recreation, the Department of Commerce has estimated that Americans spent \$13 billion in 1954-55 for recreational goods and services (table 2).

This estimate would be increased considerably by including the cost of transportation for recreational purposes, room and board purchased while away from home on vacation, food and beverages consumed while engaging in recreational activities in the home, and sports clothes and

accessories. The exact magnitude of these expenditures is not known and cannot be readily estimated. Certain studies have been conducted, however, and data on the amount spent for some of these purposes are available and estimates have been made. The American Automobile Association, for example, has estimated that motorists spent \$11.2 billion in 1954-55 on vacation travel within the United States; this amount includes the cost of transportation, lodgings, recreational activities, and food and beverages purchased while vacationing. The Department of the Interior conducted a national economic survey of fishing and hunting in 1954-55 that showed that Americans spent \$1.9 billion for fishing and \$0.9 billion for hunting. These totals included the amounts spent for food (but only that portion of the cost in excess of the average cost of home meals), lodging, transportation, license fees, and equipment. The Department of Commerce has reported that United States residents spent \$1.5 billion on foreign travel in 1954-55.

The estimates for the exclusions given above contain some duplication and are also duplicated to some extent in the \$13 billion total reported by the Department of Commerce. There are, however, many other items of a recreational nature for which data—actual or estimated—are not available; they, also, are excluded from the Department of

Commerce total. It is therefore likely that consumer expenditures ranged from \$13 billion to more than \$30 billion, depending upon the items included. These amounts represent 5.1 percent and 12.0 percent, respectively, of total personal consumption expenditures.

Department of Commerce estimates show that the share of personal consumption expenditures devoted to recreation has remained fairly constant since 1929, averaging slightly more than 5 cents of each dollar spent by consumers. In 1909, 3 cents of each consumer dollar went for recreation.⁶

Family Expenditures

The 1950 survey of consumer expenditures made by the Bureau of Labor Statistics presents considerable information on expenditures for recreation made by urban families of different income classes, living in different parts of the country, and with other different characteristics.⁷ The recreational items covered in the survey included the purchase of radio and television receivers, admission to thea-

⁶ J. Frederick Dewhurst and Associates, *America's Needs and Resources*, Twentieth Century Fund, 1955, page 347.

⁷ *Study of Consumer Expenditures, Income and Savings*, Volume IX, *Summary of Family Expenditures for Recreation, Reading and Education*, University of Pennsylvania, 1956.

Table 2.—Consumer expenditures for recreation, selected years, 1909-55

[In millions]

Item	1909		1929		1940		1950		1955	
	Amount	Per cent	Amount	Per cent	Amount	Per cent	Amount	Per cent	Amount	Per cent
Total.....	\$859	100.0	\$4,331	100.0	\$3,761	100.0	\$10,768	100.0	\$13,034	100.0
Reading, hobbies, pets...	207	24.1	1,308	30.2	1,316	35.0	3,120	29.0	3,854	29.6
Radio, records, television, and musical instruments.....	166	19.3	1,038	24.0	526	14.0	2,703	25.1	3,024	23.2
Theaters, entertainments, and amusements.....	189	22.0	847	19.6	806	21.4	1,571	14.6	1,507	11.6
Spectator sports.....			74	1.7	153	4.1	460	4.3	657	5.0
Sports equipment.....	100	16.3	555	12.8	560	14.9	1,977	18.4	2,771	21.3
Organizations, clubs.....	134	15.6	302	7.0	203	5.4	470	4.4	590	4.5
Commercial participant amusements ¹	23	2.7	207	4.8	197	5.2	467	4.3	631	4.8

¹ Represents commercial amusements that require active participation by the consumer, such as bowling, dancing, riding, shooting, skating, and swimming.

Source: Data for 1909 from J. Frederick Dewhurst and Associates, *America's Needs and Resources*,

A New Survey (Twentieth Century Fund), 1955, p. 974; for 1929, 1940, and 1950, from the Department of Commerce, *National Income Supplement to the Survey of Current Business*, 1954 edition, p. 206; for 1955, from the *Survey of Current Business*, July 1956, p. 21.

ters, spectator sports, and commercial amusements, toys, sports equipment, phonograph records and sheet music, cameras, films, and photographic supplies. The survey was conducted in a sample of large cities, suburbs, and small cities throughout the United States during the first half of 1951, and detailed information was obtained for the year 1950.

The amounts that families spent for recreation were almost invariably directly related to the level of family income. As family income increased, considerably more dollars and also a greater percentage of income were spent on recreation. Families in the \$1,000-\$1,999 income class (after taxes) spent an average of \$43 a year or 2.4 percent of current consumption expenditures for recreation; families in the \$7,500-\$9,999 income class spent \$361 or 5.1 percent; and families with incomes of \$10,000 or more spent \$596 or 5.5 percent. Because the families with higher incomes also had more persons in each family, differences in per capita expenditures by income class are not so great but are still considerable. Per capita expenditures for recreation that were made by the families, for example, in the \$1,000-\$1,999 income class (with 2.1 members per family) were \$20, compared with \$90 for families in the \$7,500-\$9,999 income class (with 4.0 members).

The percentage of families reporting some expenditures for recreation increased from 60 percent for those with incomes of less than

\$1,000 to 87 percent for those with \$1,000-\$1,999, to 96 percent for those families with \$2,000-\$2,999, and to 100 percent for families with \$5,000 or more.

Families headed by persons aged 55 and over, families living in small cities, and Negro families all spent considerably less on recreation than other families. Families in each of these groups had substantially lower incomes than other families.

Voluntary Agency Expenditures

During the past century, voluntary agencies have been active in providing a great variety of specialized leisuretime facilities and services. The movement started in the middle of the nineteenth century, when neighborhood houses, Young Men's Christian Associations, and Young Men's Hebrew Associations were organized to enable people of similar religious, national, and cultural backgrounds to gather together to follow their common social, cultural, educational, and recreational interests. The desirability of providing vacations for children who live in crowded city tenements stimulated the development of summer camps starting in the 1880's. Recreation programs for children were expanded and put on a year-round basis a few decades later, with the formation of the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts.

Today the voluntary agencies providing recreation include the Y's, the Catholic Youth Organization, Jewish community centers, boys'

clubs, settlement houses, scouting organizations, local golden age clubs, and many other national and local organizations. One agency, the National Recreation Association, established in 1906, provides field consultation and other services, including leadership training and research, to assist communities obtain and develop recreation programs. Some voluntary agencies also provide other services, such as sleeping and dining facilities and informal education. Some serve persons of all ages, while others specialize in providing recreation facilities and services for children or older persons. Most operate on a membership basis, but at times participation in their programs is available to nonmembers.

Voluntary agency recreation programs are financed by a variety of methods, including philanthropic contributions, membership fees and dues, investment earnings, and sale of products or services. Data (actual or estimated) are not available on total yearly expenditures made by all national and local voluntary agencies. Preliminary data from a survey sponsored by the United Community Funds and Councils of America indicate that national and local agencies with major recreational programs received roughly \$200 million in the calendar year 1955 from philanthropic contributions. It is not known how much of the \$200 million was spent for recreation and how much was spent for sleeping and dining facilities, informal education, and other non-recreational activities.