Consideration for the Sustainable Usage of the Forest Recreation Activities: the Case Study of Mountain Biking

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Introduction

Forest recreational activities such as the nature walk and the forest bathing become popular. The recreational function; one of the multiple functions of forest, becomes more and more important, as the expectation to environmental education and the natural experience activity has been raised. The mountaineering is one of the most famous forest recreations, and the mountaineering boom of the middle age and older are continues for decade in Japan. Recently, the new recreational activities (free climbing, tree climbing and mountain biking) become popular, and the recreational usage of the forest become diversified. The promotion of forest recreational function is very important to feel the importance of forest directly.

The land ownership and management of forest in Japan are very complicated, so that the free recreational usages should be fundamentally limited. However, it is usual to use the mountain trail for recreation without the permission of managers.

The activities such as mountaineering and the nature walk are already popular. On the other hands, the new forest recreational activities are still developing and spreading. One of the reasons of conflicts is that manager or other type recreational users cannot understand each other sufficiently. Moreover, the excessive promotion of forest recreational usage has possibility to impact to forest environment.

The purposes of this study are to analysis the conflicts and impacts of forest recreation, and to consider the problem for the sustainable forest recreational usage.

Method

In this study, we chose the Mountain Bike (MTB) as the case study of forest recreation and did the literature review about conflicts and impacts by forest recreational usage. We also collected the documents widely by not only academic journal, but also technical books and information by internet. We considered the problem and solution for the sustainable usage of forest recreation.

Conclusion

As for the mountain bike rider, the conflicts with hikers and local land managers are remarkable. There are a lot of cases that the traffic of accessing by MTB was confined by local land managers. As the solution of conflicts with hiker, there are two ways of approaches 1) local land manager’s control such as off limits or zoning. 2) self control by MTB riders such as enhancing the rule or
manner by themselves. There are the cases that MTB rider takes part in the forest maintenance for willingly, as adjusting the conflicts with landowners. It is indicated that new forest recreationists have the possibility to play a role of forest maintenances at the aspect of participatory forest management.

The erosion and destruction of vegetation are impacts for forest environment by MTB. Avoiding the erosion by MTB, the manager’s control and the self control by MTB rider such as low impact riding are practiced. For trail management, it is important to evaluate the impacts by user. In the United States, there are researches of evaluating the impacts of erosion by MTB. To promote the recreational usage of forest, it is necessary for further research for developing environmental impact indicator by user.

**Key Words:** Forest recreational use, Mountain Bike, conflict, Impact