

Alabama A&M University

Barriers and Constraints to Minority Participation in Outdoor Recreation on Public Lands in North Alabama



A McIntire-Stennis supported project

Program PI: **Colmore S. Christian, PhD**

This project, which stems from the findings of an earlier project, sought to (a) identify the factors which limit the use of the Bankhead National Forest/Sipsey Wilderness Area (BNF/SWA) in North Alabama by minorities, (b) investigate the behavior, use patterns, and participation levels in various recreational activities by visitors to the BNF/SWA, and (c) recruit, mentor, and train a few HBCU students (undergraduate and graduate) in the science of outdoor recreation research.

With the collaboration of community leaders, agricultural extension agents, and civic organizations, resident surveys were initially organized in six communities in relatively close proximity of the BNF/SWA. Two of these communities were within the 0-24.1 km buffer, two were in the 24.1 – 48.3 km buffer and two others were in the 48.3-96.6 km buffer zone. Based on preliminary data analysis the top three barriers/constraints identified by respondents from Atilla and Birmingham were: (a) accessibility issues, (b) lack of knowledge about the BNF/SWA and (c) being too busy.



About McIntire-Stennis

The McIntire-Stennis program, a unique federal-state partnership, cultivates and delivers forestry and natural resource innovations for a better future. By advancing research and education that increases the understanding of emerging challenges and fosters the development of relevant solutions, the McIntire-Stennis program has ensured healthy resilient forests and communities and an exceptional natural resources workforce since 1962.



COLLABORATION



Bankhead National Forest (BNF)
Community Leaders
Agricultural Extension Agents

About 2

undergraduate students, one master's student, one PhD student, and one post-doc participated in the project.

IMPACT

Enhancement of outdoor recreation research skills and knowledge-base of a small cohort of graduate and undergraduate students at Alabama A&M University.



The management of BNF/SWA may adopt strategies to address some of the barriers/constraints identified.



Outreach and cultivating partnerships are important in address the current challenges.



A well-conceptualized and implemented outreach program is likely to lead to changes in residents' knowledge, attitude and behaviors towards the BNF/SWA.