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MAP AND DETERMINANTS OF FOREST VISITING IN WALLONIA

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Abstract

The Walloon forest taken as a whole can be regarded as typical of rural areas even if its proximity to densely populated areas gives it a peri-urban character.

It is visited by local population but also by tourists (including a population coming from neighbouring countries). In order to provide spatial information on the level of visiting in woodlands throughout the Walloon region, a survey was conducted among managers of Forest Service districts (also called “cantonnements”). The methodology has been to make a cutting of forest mapping on the basis of their level of visiting, which has been qualitatively evaluated.

This map makes possible the identification of regional hubs in terms of recreation in forests and, conversely, the areas where this function takes much less important. The mapping work was supplemented by a statistical analysis of data collected from the forest managers but also from different thematic layers derived from a GIS (slope, hydrology, land use,...). The level of visiting is scaled in four levels ranging from low to very high. An equation using the level of visiting as dependant variable is fitted to a set of characteristics of the forest with an ordered Logit model. Results show that type of ownership, recreational facilities and hydrology significantly influence the level of visiting of a forest. It is also highlighted that the forest visitor prefers any other type of forest stand rather forests mainly composed of conifers.

These results combined with the analysis of the maps are particularly useful for forest policy and tourism as well as forest management. They also offer a set of information of particular interest within the framework of a regional economic study of forest recreation.

Key Words

Wallonia, forest recreation, GIS, visiting survey, ordered Logit model

Key References

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