

Abstract

Fern Tree Park and Bower (FTPB), Tasmania was chosen to study the relationship between Mount Wellington and its visitors. The study of visitor's sense of place for FTPB was incorporated into a use and values survey. The use and values survey was undertaken to provide information for the development of a master plan for FTPB. Natural resource management and cultural heritage management literature supports the inclusion of sense of place in planning and management of natural-setting recreation and cultural heritage sites. This research included measures of place attachment and motivations for visiting, and assessed the important attributes of FTPB sense of place using multiple methods. The research was conducted using questionnaires, interviews and content analyses.

The results showed local residents were more attachment to FTPB than non-locals. Other factors affecting place attachment levels were concern for management issues, the motivations of 'nature' and 'solitude' for visiting, and appreciation of restorative qualities of the site. Local residents preferred to visit for solitude, whereas non-locals preferred to visit the site to be with others. This pattern was not found in the literature. Local residents valued historical aspects of the site, whereas non-locals preferred visual aesthetics. Recreation, vegetation and psychologically-restorative attributes were the favourite qualities of FTPB. During the early period of FTPB site from the 1870s to early 1900s the Bower was used as a picnic and beauty spot, and fern trees and picnic shelters were the most valued features.

Results showed use at the site is increasing. Walking was by far the most popular recreational activity. Water catchment infrastructure at Silver Falls, dog-walking, mountain biking and parking were the most frequently raised management issues. 'Keep as is' was the most frequent recommendation for the site. One interviewee suggested FTPB is for 'nature lovers' rather than users desiring high-quality facilities and the results supported this claim. To further summarise sense of place for the site a second round of research was recommended. Taking statements thought to characterise sense of place from the survey responses and having FTPB users rate

how much they agree with the statements was recommended to provide succinct expressions that characterise people-place relationships at FTPB. Recommendations were given for the development of a site master plan including prioritising important values of the natural environment over provision of facilities, and curbing peak usage periods to reduce site pressures.