

Tourism and Recreation: in a changing climate

Impacts on Winter Tourism and Recreation

In Ontario, climate change will take a toll on tourism and recreation activities that rely on cold, winter weather conditions. As winter temperatures increase, the duration of snow and ice coverage will progressively diminish, thereby shortening the period of operations for these seasonal venues.

- Studies suggest that the ski season in the southern region of the province could decrease in duration by 0 to 16% in the 2020s and 7% to 32% in the 2050s due to warmer temperatures, decreased snowfall and snow coverage (Scott et al., as cited by Chiotti and Lavender, 2007).
- Larger ski facilities that have diversified operations to stay open in the warm seasons (e.g. adding a golf course) or have high-tech snowmaking equipment will be less at risk to negative impacts (Scott et al., as cited by Chiotti and Lavender, 2007).
- Studies also suggest that future skating seasons could start an average of 43 to 52 days later by the 2020s and 20 to 49 days later by the 2050s (Scott et al.; Jones et al., as cited by Chiotti and Lavender, 2007).
- As with skating, the ice fishing season in the southern region of the province could become increasingly shorter, as was evident when the Canadian Ice Fishing Championship on Lake Simcoe had to be canceled in 2002 due to unsafe ice conditions (Chiotti and Lavender, 2007).
- Northern Ontario's snowmobiling season is projected to be 25 to 45 days shorter in the 2020s and between 32 to 87 days shorter by the 2050s (Scott and Jones, 2006b).



Adaptation in Tourism and Recreation

- In the ski industry adaptation options include technological practices such as snowmaking, slope development and operation practices, cloud seeding, or business practices such as ski conglomerates, revenue diversification and marketing (Scott, 2007)
- Governments could potentially aide adaptation by considering the effects of climate change on new and existing regulations (Browne, 2007).
- Policy changes, including changes in the fishing regulations to take advantage of the benefit of the increase in population and distribution of certain species, will help maximize the benefits to anglers while ensuring that these fisheries are not over-exploited (Browne, 2007).



Tourism and Recreation

Warm Weather Tourism

Tourism during the summer and shoulder months has the potential to benefit significantly from a warming climate, provided that the proper adaptation measures are put into place. Warmer temperatures will allow many operations to prolong their working season; however probable increases in severe weather events will have to be prepared for to minimize risks.

- Projections suggest that overall annual visits to Ontario's provincial parks could increase between 11 to 19% in the 2020s, 16 to 48% in the 2050s and 27 to 82% by the 2080s. Preparations will need to be made in anticipation of an increase in forest fires, which negatively affect the industry, among other things (Scott and Jones, 2006a).
- The golf season in the central Great Lakes region is projected to be 10 to 18 days longer under the lowest emission scenario by the end of the century, however under the highest emission scenario, it could be up to 68 days longer by the 2080s (Scott and Jones 2006b).
- The beach season in the Southern Georgian Bay is expected to increase by 9 to 30 days in the 2020s, 14 to 64 days in the 2050s and 20 to 172 days in the 2080s. Other beach areas, including the Toronto Waterfront, could experience increases as well.

If this occurs, the staffing of lifeguards and the quality of warm lake water conducive to algae growth and pollution will be among the concerns to limit beach closures during the season (Scott and Jones, 2006b).

- The recreational boating and fishing seasons in the Great Lakes area could profit from a longer ice-free season, however it may suffer from lower water levels due to increased evaporation as a result of hotter temperatures (Thorp and Stone; American Sportfishing Association, as cited by Chiotti and Lavender, 2008).

References

- Browne, S. (2007) Climate Change and nature-based tourism, outdoor recreation, and forestry in Ontario: Potential Effects and Adaptation Strategies. CCRR-08. Ministry of Natural Resources.
- Chiotti, Q. and Lavender, B. (2008): Ontario; in From Impacts to Adaptation: Canada in a Changing Climate 2007, edited by D.S. Lemmen, F.J. Warren, J. Lacroix and E. Bush; Government of Canada, Ottawa, ON, p. 227-274.
- Scott, D. and Jones, B. (2006a). Climate Change & Nature-Based Tourism. Implications for Park Visitation in Canada. Waterloo, ON: University of Waterloo, Department of Geography.
- Scott, D. and Jones, B. (2006b). Climate Change & Seasonality in Canadian Outdoor Recreation and Tourism. Waterloo, ON: University of Waterloo, Department of Geography.
- Scott, D. and McBoyle, G. (2007) Climate Change Adaptation in the ski industry. Mitigation and Adaptation Strategies for Global Change. 12:1411-1431.



Ontario Centre for Climate Impacts and Adaptation Resources (OCCIAR)

The OCCIAR specializes in communication of climate impacts and supports adaptation planning to a wide range of stakeholders throughout the province of Ontario.

OCCAR

MIRARCO/Laurentian University
935 Ramsey Lake Road
Sudbury, ON P3E 2C6
P: 705 675 1151

www.climateontario.ca