

Management of forest areas used for ecotourism and recreation in Turkey

Türkiye’de ekoturizm ve rekreasyon amacıyla kullanılan orman alanlarının yönetimi

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ABSTRACT

Forests have major natural attraction for tourists and play an important role in the interaction between the environment and tourism. Turkey is facing an increasing pressure on its natural resources due to uncontrolled tourism growth that is aimed at achieving short-term economic benefits. Hence, the main objectives of the study are to, describe the main features of Turkey's forest resources that are used for ecotourism and recreation, highlight the related issues in current policy documents, and emphasize the problems that have occurred during its management process. The data was collected by contacting officials and analyzing the contents of national policy documents. It was found out that the use of Turkey's forest resources for the purpose of recreation has increased recently. However, public authorities have not substantially improved the visitor management and monitoring systems. Harmonization of tourism and recreation-related utilization with conservation objectives, prioritization of more effective planning and controlling studies, and enhancing communication, cooperation, and collaboration among the interest groups are the major suggestions of the study.

Keywords: Turkey's forests, ecotourism, recreation, forest-tourism relations, protected areas

ÖZ

Ormanlar, doğal çevrenin temel bir bileşeni olarak, turistler için doğal bir çekim merkezi olup çevre ve turizm arasındaki ilişkilerde önemli bir rol oynamaktadır. Diğer taraftan, Türkiye’de kısa dönemli ekonomik faydalar için kontrolsüz turizm gelişimi ortaya çıkmakta ve doğal kaynaklar üzerinde bir baskı oluşmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın temel amacı; Türkiye’nin orman kaynaklarının ekoturizm ve rekreasyonel kullanımlar açısından genel özelliklerini açıklamak, bu kaynakların yönetimiyle ilgili bilgiler vermek, karşılaşılan sorunları vurgulamak ve çözüm önerileri geliştirmektir. Çalışmadaki veriler yetkililerle görüşülerek ve ulusal politika belgelerinin içerikleri analiz edilerek elde edilmiştir. Çalışmanın bulguları Türkiye’de orman alanlarındaki rekreasyonel kullanım yükünün giderek arttığını, buna karşın ziyaretçi yönetimi ve denetimine ilişkin etkin önlemler alınmadığını göstermektedir. Bu doğrultuda temel öneriler şu şekilde sıralanabilir: korunan alan yönetimi ana amaçları ile turizm ve rekreasyonla ilgili kullanımlar arasındaki uyumun sağlanması, planlama ve denetim çalışmalarının daha etkin hale getirilmesi, karar verme süreçlerinde bilimsel araçların katkısının artırılması ve ilgi grupları arasındaki iletişim, eşgüdüm ve işbirliğinin geliştirilmesi.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türkiye’nin ormanları, ekoturizm, rekreasyon, orman-turizm ilişkileri, korunan alanlar

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INTRODUCTION

The Global Forest Resources Assessment 2015/FRA 2015 shows that the world's total forest area amounts to almost 4 billion hectares, corresponding to 30.6% of the total land area or an average of 0.6 ha per capita. Between 1990 and 2015 the world's forest areas decreased by 129 million hectares (an area about the size of South Africa). While the annual loss rate was 0.18% in 1990, it has slowed down to 0.08% in the last five-year period. Today, about 31% of the world's forests is designated primarily for the production of wood. Globally, forest resources are increasingly being managed for multiple uses. Close to 28% of forest areas are designated for multiple use, and these areas also

slightly declined in the last 25 years (between 1990 and 2015). 13% of the world's forests is designated primarily for the conservation of biological diversity and 31% is designated for the protection of soil and water (FAO, 2015a).

Moreover, 14.8% of the world's terrestrial areas (including inland waters), 12.7% of marine areas and 5.1% of global oceans were protected in 2016 (UNEP-WCMC and IUCN, 2016). Legally established protected areas cover an estimated 17% of the world's forests. The area of forest within protected areas has increased by 200 million ha since 1990. Globally, about 40% of forest areas is used for ecosystem and sociocultural services (including recreation), and it was reported that there was an increase of 150 million ha. from 1990 to 2015 with 6.0 million annual average. There are currently 1163 million ha forest areas that have ecosystem services, in which cultural or spiritual values are upheld, and almost 93 million ha (close to 8%) of these areas are used for public recreation (FAO, 2015a; FAO, 2015b). Moreover, the protection of forests of ecological significance has increased on a global scale (7.7% of forests were protected in 1990 rising to 16.3% in 2015) (Morales-Hidalgo et al., 2015).

It can be seen that protective and environmental functions (especially for the mitigation of climate change and the conservation of water and soil, as well as biodiversity conservation) and socio-cultural functions (especially providing opportunities for recreation and tourism) have recently become more important (Kuvan, 2005a).

Tourism and recreation have become inevitable aspects of modern life, as they meet important human needs. As noted by Petrosillo et. al., (2007) people's recreation and tourism-related behaviors are indirectly affected by the quality of the environment. In this respect, in many regions of the world forests have become an increasingly important factor in developing and maintaining the attractiveness of a tourism or recreation product as an integral part of the quality of the environment (Kuvan, 2005a; Kuvan, 2005b).

Tourism is the fastest growing and largest industry of the world due to its economic impact and tourist volume increase. Worldwide, international tourist arrivals increased by 3.9% in 2016, a year which saw 1,235 million tourists travel the world. In the same year, international tourism receipts reached US\$ 1,220 billion (UNWTO, 2017). Many developing countries have seen tourism become a major source of foreign exchange earnings. However, the rapid and uncontrolled growth of the industry poses significant threats to natural and cultural resources of the countries. The academic community together with environmental groups are drawing attention to the environmental impacts and negative consequences of mass tourism on natural resources. Mass tourism is generally characterized by large-scale or rapid development, a heavy demand for coastal areas and nearby natural resources with a spatial concentration, low or limited contribution to local development, and negative environmental-social impacts (Kuvan, 2012a). On this point, ecotourism can be seen as a tool for mitigating the negative

environmental impacts of mass tourism and supporting nature conservation efforts.

The International Ecotourism Society defines ecotourism as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people and involves interpretation and education" (TIES, 2016). The prominent components of the concept of ecotourism can be listed as nature-based conservation, education and interpretation, sustainability, distribution of benefits; ethics/responsibility, local development, provision of activity diversity (Kuvan, 2012b; Fennel, 2015). It was not possible to find exact statistical data regarding numbers of people involved in ecotourism, but given that it relates closely to adventure tourism, which is characterized by the use of the natural environment and the activities that take place in this environment, statistics from adventure tourism will shed light on the topic. This kind of tourism has been one of the fastest growing categories recently and its receipts increased from US\$ 89 billion in 2010 to 263 billion in 2013 and grew by 195% in three years. Natural beauty is the most important factor for adventure travellers when they choose their destinations (UNWTO, 2014).

These facts all require making today's forestry agencies and researchers much more engaged in the use and management of forests for tourism and recreation. To achieve sustainable forest management and to minimize or eliminate the negative impact of tourism and recreation on forested lands, it is necessary to have a sound knowledge of such uses and impacts (Kuvan, 2005a).

In this context, the main objectives of this study are to explain the key features of Turkey's forest resources used for ecotourism and recreation, to highlight the related issues in current policy documents and to emphasize the problems that have occurred during the management process.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study has qualitative research characteristics. Thus, the main methods used in the present study involve the collection and analysis of data and the evaluation of the content of national policy documents. In the first stage of the research, the data regarding the properties of national forests was collected using the published and unpublished data that was recorded by the national forestry organization (OGM, 2012; OGM, 2015a; OGM, 2015b; OGM, 2016; OGM, 2017a; OGM, 2017b). In addition, the data in terms of evaluation of Turkey's tourism growth was gathered using published documents of national and international institutions (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Association of Turkish Travel Agencies and World Tourism Organization) (KTB, 2007; KTB, 2017; TÜRSAB, 2017; UNWTO, 2017). The information about Turkey's forest resources used for the purpose of ecotourism and recreation was collected by both using published documents (DKMPGM, 2018) and contacting officials of the General Directorate of Nature Conservation and National Parks (GDNCNP). Information regarding i. management plans of

national parks, ii. ecotourism plans of protected areas, iii. visitor management, iv. education on ecotourism guidance, v. studies on carrying capacity and also vi. other current projects and studies on ecotourism was requested. The officials were called and e-mails were sent to collect the mentioned data, however they asked for an official application. After completing the process, some general information was given by the related officials but it was not possible to access further data. The findings of this study were also supported by site-specific observations.

Moreover, the current organizational structure was investigated by considering the legal arrangements (Decree-law on Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs Organization and its Duties no:645, Law on General Directorate of Forestry Organization and its Duties no:3234, Regulation on General Directorate of Forestry's Establishment and Duties, Regulation on Recreational Areas). Also, the content of current forest policy documents was analysed. National Forestry Program (ÇOB, 2004), 10th Development Plan Expert Commission Report on Sustainable Forest Management (KB, 2014), the strategic plan of the Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs (2013-2017) and two strategic plans of the General Directorate of Forestry (GDF) (2013-2017/2017-2021) (OGM, 2012; OGM, 2017b) were evaluated in the context of the research. In this regard tourism, ecotourism and recreation-related topics were examined in a qualitative way with respect to forest policy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

General Features of Turkish Forestry

Turkey's total forest area covers an area of 22.3 million ha or 28.6% of the country's total land area (Turkey has 78.004.644 ha land area). Productive (undisturbed or slightly disturbed) natural forests comprise an area of 12.7 million ha or 57% of the country's forests (forest area with canopy cover more than 10% is defined as productive forest while the area with a canopy cover of 1-10% is called degraded forest). A large part of the country's forests is located in the northeastern and southern regions of Turkey (OGM, 2015a).

According to the Turkish Constitution of 1982 and other forest-related legal arrangements, the State has the responsibility for the management and planning of the forested lands in Turkey. Almost all of the country's forests are publicly owned (99.9%). The managerial activities in forests of public institutes and private forests are performed by their owners under the control of the State as specified by the related legal provisions. The Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs is responsible for making and implementing decisions and policies with management activities in forest areas.

The main state organizations conducting various forestry activities under this Ministry are the following: The General Directorate of Forestry, the General Directorate of Combating Desertification and Erosion and The General Directorate of Nature Conservation and National Parks. The GDF generally focuses on the production of wood and non-wood forest products, afforestation and rural development studies, whereas the other

Directorates carry out the activities related to ecological-environmental, recreational-touristic, and water-soil conservation functions. There are also various regional directorates and attached provincial and field units under these general directorates.

The Forest Law No. 6831 of 1956 categorized the country's forests into three groups in terms of quality: production forests, conservation forests and national parks. The National Park Law No. 2873 of 1983 defines protected areas within the forest regime and stipulates managerial rules and principles. According to this law, the country's protected forest areas are National Parks, Nature Parks, Nature Monuments, and Nature Protection Areas. There are also wildlife conservation and development areas under the Land Hunting Law No. 4915 of 2003.

The General Directorate of Forestry produced around 16.6 million m³ of industrial wood and 5.02 million steres of fuel wood in 2015. This production provided for about 77% of the domestic industrial wood consumption. Private forests and agricultural land (mostly private eucalyptus and poplar plantations that are not considered to be forest) provide 3.4 million m³ of industrial wood to the market. The remaining demand was met by imports. The Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs is also responsible for controlling erosion and stabilizing sand dunes. Erosion control activities have reached 754.852 ha and also a green belt has been established around 212 dams and ponds (OGM, 2015b; OGM, 2016). There are 7.1 million forest villagers (OGM, 2017a) whose incomes depend heavily on forests and Turkish forestry organization provides some economic opportunities to support them.

When the country's forestry-related legal arrangements, development plans and the national forestry program (2004-2023) are evaluated from the standpoint of forest policy objectives, and it can be said that a set of objectives such as the production of wood and non-wood forest products, nature conservation (especially through protected areas), meeting the public's recreational and tourism-related needs, and improving the quality of life of forest villagers are mostly put in place within the framework of sustainability and multiple use principles. Although wood production continues to be an important function of the country's forests, the service production functions of forests in relation to supplying environmental or protective services and touristic-recreational opportunities have become more important today, in keeping with global forestry trends.

Tourism Growth and Turkey's Forest Resources Used for the Purpose of Ecotourism and Recreation

Providing touristic-recreational opportunities has become more important in recent times in Turkish Forestry. In the country, the use of forests for the purposes of tourism and recreation can be classified under two headings (Table 1): a) the allocation of forest lands for tourism (especially mass tourism) to build tourist facilities and b) the provision of opportunities for nature-based tourism and ecotourism with recreation activities without building tourist facilities (Kuvan, 2005a). This

study focuses on the provision of opportunities for ecotourism and recreation.

Tourism is one of the most rapidly growing sectors in Turkey, similar to many other parts of the world. From the 1990s until today, both in terms of tourist arrivals and tourism receipts, Turkey has shown faster growth than the world average and Europe's average, and has increased its share of global tourism in the last two decades. In 2016, Turkey moved down 4 places to 10th in international tourism arrivals and went down 5 places to 17th in receipts (UNWTO, 2017). International tourist arrivals dramatically declined by 25% in 2016 to 31.3 million. In the same year international tourism receipts declined to 22,107 billion from 31,464 billion in 2015 (TÜRSAB, 2017; KTB, 2017). Tourist numbers and income from tourism have grown rapidly with a substantial tourism-related facility expansion. In this direction, the allocation of forestlands for tourism and its consequences generates ongoing problems leading to clearing forestland or degradation of forest ecosystems. Rapid tourism development based on mass tourism has enormously increased the pressure on the country's coastal areas and nearby forests for the purpose of tourism and is creating serious environmental problems for natural habitats. While the economic benefits of tourism are emphasized by tourism businesses and government authorities, the academic community and environmental groups are drawing attention to environmental impacts, mainly to show the negative consequences of mass tourism on natural resources.

All areas allocated to mass tourism-related facilities are located within undisturbed forests comprising an area of 12.7 million hectares. The vast majority of the allocated forested lands are mainly concentrated in the Mediterranean and Aegean coastal regions. The conversion of forests into mass tourism facilities and associated deforestation or forest fragmentation are the most common characteristics of mass tourism development in Turkey (Kuvan, 2010).

According to the Tourism Strategy of Turkey-2023 The GAP Ecotourism Corridor (GAP Corridor and Winter Corridor) has been identified as the top priority ecotourism development zone in terms of biodiversity and high ecotourism potential. This corridor covers the cities of Bolu, Zonguldak, Bartın, Kastamonu, Sinop (Black Sea Region) and inland parts of East Antalya and Mersin near the Taurus Mountains. In addition, Terra Merre which is located in the Lake District of Turkey (and which includes the cities of Konya, Isparta, Afyon and Burdur) has been designated to become an ecotourism development zone. Moreover, two cities, Iğneada-Kıyıköy and Dağca, were determined as ecotourism regions in the strategy (KTB, 2007).

The other use of forests in Turkey is "the provision of opportunities for nature-based tourism and ecotourism with recreation activities" and these can be seen in various forest resources in the country. The main areas used for this aim are as follows: National parks, nature parks, nature monuments, forest recreation areas and urban forests (Table 1). National parks, nature parks and nature monuments are also protected forest areas which are designated by the National Parks Law No. 2873 of 1983. It should be mentioned that natural monuments provide limited recreational opportunities.

As seen in Table 1, the number of national parks and nature parks in the country has gradually expanded since the first national park was created in 1958. Today, there are 42 national parks covering an area of 845,814 ha, 209 nature parks covering an area of 99,378 ha and 111 nature monuments covering an area of 7,142 ha (DKMPGM, 2018).

Marmaris, the Dilek Peninsula-Menderes Delta, Kuşçenneti, Göreme, Köprülü Canyon, Kazdağı, Kaçkar Mountains, Küre Mountains and the Altındere Valley are the most popular and most visited national parks for ecotourism-oriented and other recreational activities. Additionally, there are many large-scale

Table 1. The Use of Forests for the Purpose of Tourism and Recreation*

Use Type / Allocation Purpose				
a-Allocation of forest lands for tourism	b-Provision of opportunities for ecotourism and recreation			
	Type of areas		Numbers	Areas (ha) 2016
Forest lands covered	Protected forest areas (managed by GDNCNP)	National parks	42	845,814
		Nature parks	209	99,378
		Nature monuments	111	7,142
	Total	362	952,334	
by tourism-related facilities	Other forest areas (managed by GDF)	Forest recreation areas (A,B,C)*	1304	16,266
		Urban forests (D)	145	10,550
		Total	1449	26,816
TOTAL			1811	979,15

*Forest Recreation Areas have four types which are classified as A, B, C, D; D type recreation areas and are also called urban forests in the regulation. Numbers and areas in the table were taken from two directorates (DKMPGM, 2018; OGM, 2017a)

tourism facilities in the Uludağ National Park which is a winter tourism center and in the Abant Nature Park used for general ecotourism activities and daily recreational use. It should be emphasized that such large-scale facilities are not compatible with the national park management objectives. Recreation and tourism-oriented uses should be in harmony with the conservation objectives of protected areas.

The country's national parks and other protected areas provide many opportunities and facilities for ecotourism activities. These activities can be listed as trekking, hiking, mountain biking, horse riding, bird and butterfly watching, wildlife viewing, climbing, camping, picnicking, water sports and rafting, botany tours, nature photography, photo safari, plant observation, nature education, winter sports and historical and cultural tours.

Forest recreation areas and urban forests are mainly established to meet the outdoor recreational demands of urban society. While forest recreation areas provide opportunities for both daily recreational uses and accommodation, urban forests provide opportunities only for daily use. On the other hand, urban forests are located in or near the cities (especially metropolitan cities), whereas forest recreation areas may be located far from the cities. There is a total of 1304 forest recreation areas covering 16,266 ha, and 145 urban forests covering 10,550 ha (Table 1) (OGM, 2017a).

Provincial units of GDNCNP have prepared Nature Tourism Master Plans since 2012. These master plans including ecotourism activities, were prepared for almost all cities of the country. The above-mentioned plans contain some sections regarding historical structure and general characteristics of the cities (topography, geomorphological situation, geological structure, climate properties, soil structure, forest area, flora-fauna, settlements, population, economical activities, transportation, accommodation opportunities etc.), nature tourism resources, protected areas and possible activities in terms of nature tourism.

In Turkey, 37 national parks have management plans, 23 of which have been made or revised since 2012. Management plans for 94 nature parks have also been prepared in the same period. However, only Beyşehir Lake National Park has an ecotourism plan, while Ilgaz Mountain and Küre Mountains National Parks have sustainable tourism and visitor management plans. Additionally, similar planning studies for ecotourism and sustainable tourism are in progress in Göreme National Park. The preparation of ecotourism plans for all the protected areas which have a master plan are being planned for the immediate future. In addition to the ecotourism plans, some ecotourism activities were fulfilled in the context of certain projects like the GEF-II Project and TUBITAK Nature Education and Science Schools Project. The GDNCNP also provides training activities for local guides in some national and nature parks. These activities had taken place for eleven National Parks and two Nature Parks by the end of 2016. Today there are 372 certificated local guides who work in protected areas.

Management of Forest Recreation and Tourism Areas and Related Approaches in Current National Policy Documents

The majority of the country's forest resources utilized for recreation and ecotourism purposes have protected area status. These resources are managed by the GDNCNP under the Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs. There are also 15 Regional Directorates that have responsibilities for provincial organization of the ministry (Figure 1). These units are responsible for planning, surveying, project designing, implementation, maintenance, and monitoring activities at regional level. As seen in Figure 1 "Division of National Parks", provincial directorates and "National Park Directorates" have duties for nature conservation, ecotourism and recreation related activities in Turkey's protected areas.

The problems regarding human resources management in the GDNCNP and management capacity in its provincial organizations has drawn attention. In this context, national parks are generally managed by one technical staff member, and forest rangers are in limited numbers (Yurdakul et. al, 2011). On the other hand, one technical staff member is responsible for a region which contains various types of protected areas (except national parks) with large amounts of land area. The other prominent problems connected with human resources are lack of effective human resources plans and policies, low personnel motivation and job satisfaction, inadequately qualified staff and deficiency of specialization (OSİB, 2017a; OSİB, 2017b).

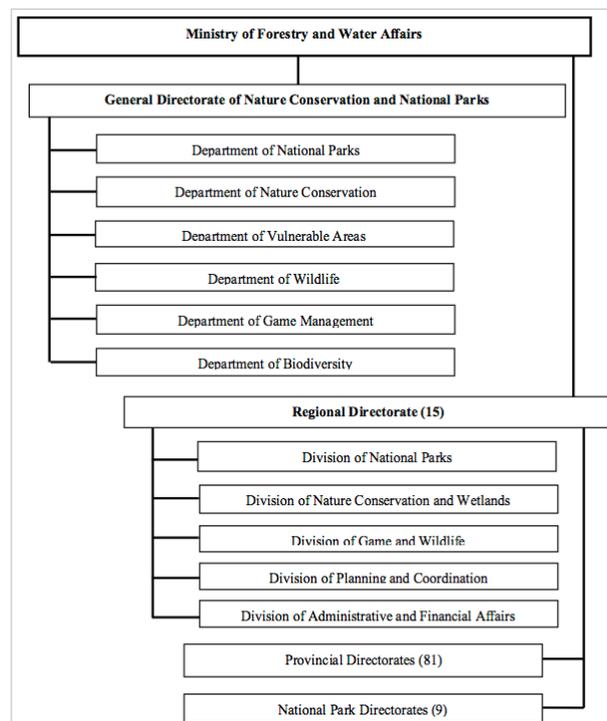


Figure 1. Central and Provincial Organizational Chart on Nature Conservation- Ecotourism and Recreation of GDNCNP (it only shows the related divisions of the organizational chart)

Urban forests and forest recreation areas are managed by the GDF. The Department of Non-wood Forest Products and Services, which operates under this directorate, has detailed duties related to these aspects together with supporting ecotourism activities and recreational utilization. Responsibilities for preparing development and management plans belong to the regional directorates, which work under the general directorate. Forest Enterprise Directorates and forest chief units also support the related activities at local levels (Figure 2).

Organizational structures and country level policies are important components of a natural resources management system. One of the main policy documents related to the forestry sector is the National Forestry Program (ÇOB, 2004), which was prepared for the period between 2004 and 2023. This long-term plan places the “assessment of protected areas and recreational resources” among national forestry policies. This document also stresses the importance of urban forests and plantations in terms of creating recreational areas, the increasing need and demand for recreational resources, and the contribution of recreational and touristic activities to rural development. “Enlargement of recreational areas and development of nature” and “rural dwellers focused eco-tourism projects” are points which are emphasized in the related strategies. The issues highlighted in strategies and action programs can also be listed as the contribution of these areas to sustainable development and rural development, participatory management approach, coordination and cooperation with stakeholders, organizational capac-

ity building, financial, educational, technical supports, creating awareness, and also supporting related scientific research.

The 10th Development Plan Expert Commission Report on Sustainable Forest Management (KB, 2014), which was produced for the period between 2014 and 2018, is another current national document on forestry. The gap between conservation value analysis, ecosystem relations, and visitor capacities is described as an important problem in terms of the management of protected areas and recreational resources. The increasing demands of tourism enterprises with respect to land allocation was also determined as one of the threats on forests and protected areas, which are important resources for recreation and ecotourism. This plan emphasized the importance of visitor awareness and satisfaction, plans and projects focused on sustainability of the resources, effective monitoring mechanisms, and also multi-dimensional research.

In addition to this, the strategic plan of the Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs (2013-2017) (OSİB, 2012) emphasized preparing and implementing ecotourism plans and programs for protected areas. This plan included game tourism in terms of supporting rural development, increasing awareness, and protecting biodiversity. The plan also focused on visitor management and conservation of resources and sustainable management of protected areas. The following strategic plan (2017-2021) highlighted the need of improving nature-based tourism activities in protected areas and increasing the alternative sources of income by considering conservation-utilization balance (OSİB, 2017a).

Another forestry-related document is the strategic plan of GDF (2013-2017) (OGM, 2012), which noted the increasing demands regarding the use of forest resources for tourism and forest recreation. In this plan, there were some goals and strategies related to the extension of urban forests and recreation areas, public relations activities, functional planning on social and cultural services of forests, participatory planning and management processes, effective control mechanisms, and an increment of economic input for these services to forestry organizations by improving the costing system. The next strategic plan (OGM, 2017b) prepared for the period between 2017 and 2021 added the need for the establishment of new forest recreation areas and urban forests especially near the big settlement regions and the requirement of the preparation of sustainable plans.

As can be seen, the increase in utilization of forest areas for tourism, ecotourism and recreation is mentioned in all the examined national documents. This trend requires improving the country’s management capacity on forest-tourism/recreation relations. Currently, the public agencies in positions of responsibility have carried out some implementations (automatic vehicle entry system (HGS) in the entrance gate of national parks, free entrance on some public holidays, land allocation to municipalities etc.) which cause extensive use. However, these agencies have not focused on making decisions and implementations for improving visitor management (carrying capacity) and a visitor monitoring system.

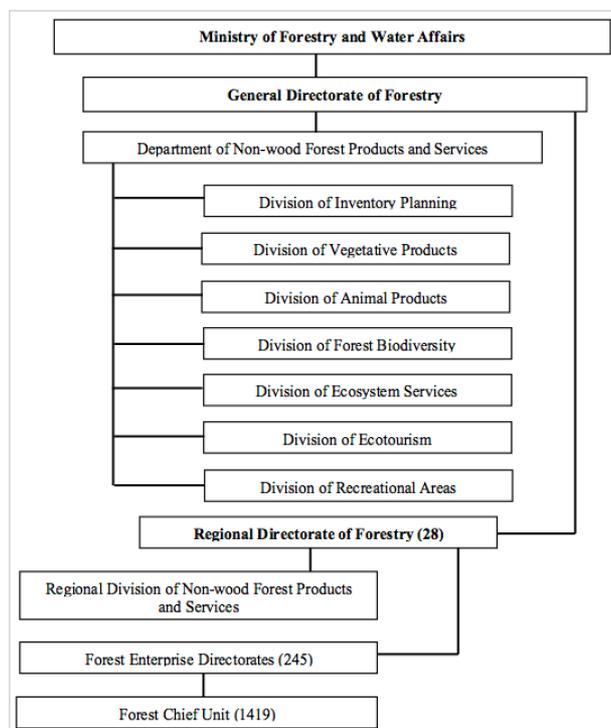


Figure 2. Central and Provincial Organizational Chart on Recreation of GDF (It only shows the related divisions of the organizational chart)

Additionally, the essential problems regarding the management of Turkey's forests for recreation and ecotourism can be listed as follows: a) controlling and limiting visitor use related problems (explained above), b) inability to benefit from relevant representatives and experts in the planning process, c) overlapping of authority between "Ministry of Environment and Urbanization" and "Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs" regarding the planning of studies, d) the presence of two General Directorates responsible for the management of recreational activities and associated coordination/collaboration problems, e) inadequate numbers of staff and equipment in provincial units of GDNCNP, f) lack of education and interpretation services, g) problems of creating and supplying a database on the uses of the country's protected areas and h) ineffective cooperation among the tourism sector, national protected area authorities and local people. Atmıř et. al (2012) also expressed the following problems regarding urban forests in Turkey: absence of management plans for most of them, lack of information centers and service units, inadequate numbers of technical staff.

CONCLUSION

The mass tourism-related and outdoor recreation-focused demands have enormously increased the pressure on the country's forests located near cities and coastal areas for the purpose of tourism-recreation, and this has created serious environmental problems for natural habitats. In this context, to create well-planned forest recreation areas and urban forests is of critical importance to overcome urbanization pressure and to meet the recreational needs of the urban population. On this point Mann et al. (2010) mentioned the need of detection of societal demands for outdoor recreation opportunities, infrastructure and uses to ensure sustainable use of natural resources. Moreover, there are various environmental and social impacts that can result from outdoor recreation. In this context, these kinds of uses can impact soil, vegetation, water, wildlife, air and also historical and cultural components (Manning and Anderson, 2012). Thus, tourism and recreation-related uses should be in harmony with the primary protected area management objectives such as conservation of biodiversity and natural-cultural resources, and maintenance of environmental services. Ecotourism-based activities should be preferred in the protected areas and other forest areas used for recreation and tourism.

The country's forest areas used for recreation and tourism should be well planned and managed taking into account scientific tools or methods such as carrying capacity, limits of acceptable change, environmental impact assessment and effective monitoring studies. To ensure coordination, recreation-related activities should be managed by the GDNCNP (GDF should delegate recreation-related authority to the GDNCNP). Atmıř (2018) also emphasized that transfer of the authority of GDNCNP reduces effectiveness of protected area management and it was also suggested that the authority and responsibilities of this directorate should be increased to improve the effectiveness of conservation activities. Besides, provincial units of the GDNCNP

should be strengthened in terms of personnel and equipment. Communication and cooperation among the responsible protected area units, local people, NGOs and the tourism industry should be enhanced. "Coordination between public institutions and local governments" and also "establishing an association in local level" are among the aims of national tourism strategy-2023 (KTB, 2007). Erdođan and Erdođan (2016) also emphasized the necessity of linking local people, tourism industry and investors to maintain conservation and to develop ecotourism opportunities. Also, the Turkish Forestry Organization should improve its policies on public relations and make greater efforts to enhance public awareness.

Nature protection-oriented policy objectives and the uses of resources in harmony with nature should be essential for all relations between the natural environment and tourism-recreation. Ecotourism activities should be more effectively included in the protected area planning process. Much attention should be paid to interpretation, education activities and local development. Tırker et al. (2014) found out in a case study that ecotourism activities contribute to increasing local people's awareness of environmental protection. In addition, Tucker (2016) highlighted the necessity of building the capacity of local people regarding product development, business knowledge and marketing. Thus, it might be possible to further utilize Turkey's ecotourism potential. Moreover, it is essential to have visitor management plans and apply an effective visitor impact monitoring system in accordance with the qualities of the related areas.

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Informed Consent: Verbal informed consent was obtained from participants who joined in this study.

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