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Background
Outdoor recreation is a relatively large industry that can diversify public land based economies that have traditionally relied upon resource extraction. However, are nature based recreation expenditures and consumer surplus stable during times of national economic recession? To address this question, we replicate a 2006 high mountain recreation study in the same region, three years later during the 2009 recession.

Study Site:
Quandary Peak, Summit County Colorado
Quandary Peak, reaches 14,265 feet above sea level, qualifying as one of the 54 “Fourteeners,” in Colorado.

Hypotheses Tests
1) Do visitor expenditures change before and after the recession?
2) Does visitor WTP change before and after the recession?
   • Ho: Mean WTP2006 = Mean WTP2009 vs. Ha: Mean WTP2006 > Mean WTP2009

Data Collection
• In 2006, 199 mail back surveys were distributed at the trailhead of Quandary Peak. 129 surveys were returned, for a response rate of 65%.
• In 2009, 345 mail back surveys were distributed with a response rate of 72%.

Expenditure Results
• No statistical difference between visitor expenditures in 2006 and 2009 at the 5% level of significance, with the exception of gasoline purchases which is significantly different at the 10% level. The decreased expenditures on gasoline may be attributable to the fact that visitors, on average, traveled fewer miles to the recreation site in 2009 compared to 2006.

Problem Statement
1) Are high WTP values the result of a robust economy, or are these values reflective of a unique recreation experience?
2) Do expenditures and/or WTP change when the economy worsens?

The WTP question:
As you know, some of the costs of travel such as gasoline, campgrounds, and hotels often increase. If the total cost of this most recent trip to the recreation area where you were contacted had been $1 higher, would you have made this trip to this Fourteener?

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