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**ASSESSMENT OF RECREATIONAL VALUE OF MINNERIYA
NATIONAL PARK: POSSIBILITIES OF SHARING BENEFITS
WITH STAKEHOLDER COMMUNITY**

A PROJECT REPORT PRESENTED BY

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**ASSESSMENT OF RECREATIONAL VALUE OF MINNERIYA
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This study was undertaken to assess the optimality of the present entrance fee charged at the gate of Minneriya National Park (MNP) and to examine the possibility of sharing the revenue with the local community who are dependant upon the natural resources of MNP.

Travel Cost Method, a non-market environmental valuation technique that is used in valuing the recreational benefits, was employed to value the recreational services of MNP.

In the estimation, average zonal travel costs were regressed against respective zonal visitation rates to derive the per capita demand function for wildlife viewing. The consumer surplus of viewing was calculated by deriving respective zonal per capita demand functions.

To estimate the dependency on natural resources by the surrounding community a survey was carried out in selected villages of the buffer zone of MNP. Based on the survey results, value of non timber forest products (NTFP) collected from a unit area of MNP as fuel wood and wooden poles was calculated.

The results of Travel Cost study indicate that the total consumer surplus of MNP is Rs. 3,902,050.08 for the year 2001. A 79.73% of the respondents those who were for price hike after some developments at the park whereas 31.58% of the respondents those who were for price hike were agreed to the proposed entrance fee, that is Rs. 200.00. However as an average respondents are willing to pay Rs.67.31 as the entrance fee for a local adult visitor.

The study reveals that the park entrance fee could be increased to maximize revenue. In such an effort per capita entrance fee should be Rs.733.72. This amount is far greater than what the respondents are willing to pay. And also this price hike may reduce the present visitor number by about 64.09%, though it will increase the total revenue.

The value of NTFP collected as fuel wood and wooden poles is Rs. 392.92 per ha. for Minnariya National Park. This is a total of Rs.3,492,665.88 per year. This exceeds both the revenue collected at the gate at present and the projected revenue at the optimum entrance fee.

Therefore the revenue generated at the gate after price hike would not be enough to compensate the community for depriving the NTFP collection from MNP. This calls for a measure that makes the monetary support available to the community to be refrained from collecting NTFP as fuel wood and wooden poles.

This study justifies incurring more money on conserving natural resources and calls for an effective mechanism of fund allocation for such an investment.