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2003 SENATE JUDICIARY

CB 2221

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10/22/03

Date

2003 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES BILL/RESOLUTION NO. SB 2321

Senate Judiciary Committee

☐ Conference Committee

Hearing Date 02/10/03

Tape Number	Side A	Side B	Meter#
1	X		0.0 - 6

Minutes: Senator Stanley W. Lyson, Vice Chairman, called the meeting to order. Roll call was taken and all committee members present. Sen. Lyson requested meeting starts with testimony on the bill:

Testimony Support of SB 2321

Rep Dave Monson- Dist 10 Introduced Bill (meter 0.1) Reviewed bill.

This bill is modeled after a Texas bill in regards to what happens on private land, for example; bird watchers, snowmobiles, etc.

Rep Wayne Teeman - Dist 10, (meter 4.0) Discussed his support and would like to delay conclusion of bill until Senator Thomas L. Trenbeath who is also a sponsor was present.

Discussed his location in a recreational area and the liability problem.

Testimony in opposition of SB 2321 None

Testimony Neutral to SB 2321 None

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2003 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

BILL/RESOLUTION NO. SB2321

Senate Judiciary Committee

☐ Conference Committee

Hearing Date 02/12/03

Tape Number	Side A	Side B	Meter #
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Committee Clerk Signatu	re ////www of a	docuer	

Minutes: Senator Stanley W. Lyson, Vice Chairman, called the meeting to order. Roll call was taken and not all committee members present. Sen. Lyson requested meeting starts with committee work on the bill:

Discussion of the Texas ruling (meter 19.9) and Bird watchers. <u>Sen. Lyson</u> stated that he was amazed on all the e-mail's he had received in favor of this bill.

Senator Lyson, discussed a case (meter 20.8) that had regarded a pressurized ridge. Discussed farmers/ranchers using the land for other uses.

Motion Made to DO FASS SB 2321 by Senator Dennis Bercier and seconded by Senator

Thomas L. Trenbeath

Roll Call Vote: 5 Yes. 0 No. 1 Absent

Motion Passed

Floor Assignment Sen. Trenbeath

Senator Stanley W. Lyson, Vice Chairman closed the hearing

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10/29/03

Date: February 12, 2003 Roll Call Vote #: 1

2003 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ROLL CALL VOTES BILL/RESOLUTION NO. SB 2321

Senators Sen. John T. Traynor - Chairman Sen. Stanley. Lyson - Vice Chair	Yes A	No A	Senators Sen, Dennis Bercier	Yes	No	ì
Sen. Stanley. Lyson - Vice Chair			l Sen Dennig Hercier	X		
	X		Sen. Carolyn Nelson	X		
Sen. Dick Dever	Х					
Sen. Thomas L. Trenbeath	Х					
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Absent ONE Toor Assignment Sen. Trenbeat	th			- Northwess		
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REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE (410) February 12, 2003 1:09 p.m.

Module No: SR-27-2400 Carrier: Trembeath Insert LC: Title:

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE

SB 2321: Judiciary Committee (Sen. Traynor, Chairman) recommends DO PASS (5 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 1 ABSENT AND NOT VOTING). SB 2321 was placed on the Eleventh order on the calendar.

(2) DESK, (3) COMM

Page No. 1

SR-27-2400

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2003 HOUSE JUDICIARY

SB 2321

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2003 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

BILL/RESOLUTION NO. SB 2321

House Judiciary Committee

☐ Conference Committee

Hearing Date 3-19-03

Tapo Number	Side A	Side B	Meter #
1	xx		3.3-25.5
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Minutes: 12 members present, 1 member absent (Rep. Eckre)

Chairman DeKrey: We will open the hearing on SB 2321.

Operator's Signature

Rep. Wayne Tieman: Support, introduced the bill (see attached handout). We have a number of activities that we have during the year and it's due to the efforts of very energetic and enthusiastic group of volunteers in each one of the towns that form the anchor of the Rendezvous region, that would be Pembina, Walhalla, Langdon and Cavalier. There are a number of things that are going on, in terms of attracting visitors to our area and we feel that we have a lot to offer to people; not only in our state but in other parts of the world. Cavalier, where I live, is only 80 miles from Winnepeg, which is a population center of 650,000 and there are things that are offered up there, of course for culture and the arts, and so on. But that's not too far from our area. Also, we have Grand Forks, which is only about 80 miles away and that is, of course, a fast growing town and there's a lot of activities there. But within the Rendezvous region we have a number of activities which have been promoted in the past. We have, of course, snowmobiling,

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Date

Page 2 House Judiciary Committee Bill/Resolution Number SB 2321 Hearing Date 3-19-03

we have hunting, fishing and lately there has been a lot of emphasis on bird watching. Bird watching is one of the fastest growing sports and leisure activities in our country. I've been involved for a short period of time with the Rendezvous region bird club, which meets on a regular basis in Edinburgh in the General Store. We also have come in contact with Mike Jacobs, the editor of the Grand Forks Herald and in his regular column, always in season he talks about the many kinds of birds which are native to the Rendezvous Region and up around the Red River Valley, and he has done a very good job as far as helping us promote that kind of activity within our Rendezvous region. It's the type of thing that attracts people from all over the world. We've had visitors from Norway, Iceland, Germany, states like California, Florida, Texas, they come a long ways. They hear that there is a certain species of bird that's in our area, they will spend a certain amount of money to get up and see it. That's the kind of people we like to have as far as visitors in our area. For example, in June we have our Rendezvous Festival right outside the Icelandic State Park, 4 miles west of Cavalier, and we had the Governor, and a number of state officials up for the bird watching tour through Icelandic park and on some private lands right outside the park. That was very interesting and we saw some bluebirds, that apparently you don't see very much of, and we were able to see that. But one thing that seems to come up a lot in our discussions, and we do have meetings every so often to plan some of these activities, is the fact that there is the liability reasons. That is what brings me here today. I'm basically here to introduce this bill and just kind of give you, frame the issue for you. The fear of being sued or being held liable for injuries sustained by recreational users such as birders, and other users of private land is really a worrisome issue. The bill that you have before you, SB 2321, is one of those that is primarily, introducing it to limit liability. It's modeled after a law

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10/99/03

Page 3
House Judiciary Committee
Bill/Resolution Number SB 2321
Hearing Date 3-19-03

which is already, and has been in place for a number of years in Texas. I handed out some research on this, and we've done some research on this to kind of get some extra facts. I just want to point out that there seems to be, as the article title implies, myths, perceptions and yet there are realities about this particular issue. This is something that, as a recreation, as people want more recreation opportunities such as bird watching, they want to be certain that there isn't going to be legal ramifications to that. So I point this article out to you as a resource regarding this issue and as you see it is quite extensive as far as what is put together there.

Chairman DeKrey: Thank you.

Sem. Trenbeath: Support. This bill is patterned after the Texas law. Introduced the bill further. It is just another one of the small steps that will accomplish a couple of purposes. First of all, it will encourage tourism which we all want to do these days, or seemingly so. Secondly, it will allow a land owner somewhat of a secondary source of income, so it wouldn't be a major source of income, or be the particular straw off the camel's back that would allow him to stay on the land, but it can't hurt. There are a number of folks up in our area, and I suspect in other parts of the state also, that would like to dabble in the tourism area, especially during the off season for their primary use of the land. This would allow them to do this without having to, actually this would allow them to do that. They are really not able to do it now, because the cost of liability insurance is so high for that occasional use situation. That's really it in a nutshell.

Rep. Klemin: Well I'm just not sure how this works. Can you go through section 2b.

Sen. Trenbeath: In existing law, of course, you are probably reasonably familiar with anyway, that indicates that there is no limitation of liability if you charge for what is being done on the land. But, there is a limitation of liability if the total charge in the previous year for the use on

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Page 4
House Judiciary Committee
Bill/Resolution Number SB 2321
Hearing Date 3-19-03

the land is less than, in the case of a farmer or rancher, 4x the annual taxes that were paid on that property. It also talks about 2x the total amount for other types of property. If you are an active farmer or rancher, on the ground, you could sell your services or sell access to your property to the maximum amount of 4x what you are paying in taxes in the previous year.

<u>Chairman DeKrey:</u> The thought being that if there was more than that, that it was more commercial venture.

Sen. Trenbeath: Yes, more than an ancillary use.

Rep. Klemin: So, in order to gain the benefit of this statute, the person doing the charging would have to keep accurate records of what he actually charged to persons, so he didn't go over the maximum.

<u>Sen. Trenbeath:</u> Yes, the theory of business, of course, is that you keep records of your business. You would have to keep records.

Rep. Delmore: In follow up to that, if a lot of the money that exchanges hands is in cash, you would rely on the person to be as honest as he can or whatever.

Sen. Trenbeath: That's certainly the case, but in that case, that's no different than any business either, especially if you are talking about small town main street businesses, you might say that those who deal in alcohol beverages, especially, they don't close their till until noon. It's no different than any other form of business. You have to rely on the honesty of the individual that is conducting the business, and of course, every time there is a slap on the hand when warranted, it brings everybody back into line.

Rep. Onstad: Let's take the situation of a landowner that does not charge.

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Page 5
House Judiciary Committee
Bill/Resolution Number SB 2321
Hearing Date 3-19-03

Sen. Trenbeath: The original statute applies in that instance, which relieves the landowner of liability.

Rep. Kingsbury: If you go on a birding trip, then you pay for the trip, and if you went on someone's land, do they reimburse the landowner in that case.

Sen. Trenbeath: Yes. I went birding.

Rep. Kingsbury: When we went it was 20 below and there weren't any snowy owls.

Sen. Trenbeath: 75 below when I was in it, but we actually did it in an urban setting and did birding in Cavalier, ND and went from back yard to back yard with someone who knew what we were looking at and looking for. We didn't pay anybody for that access, so obviously they would have been covered under the existing statute. Another situation we have up there is that we like to get something in the Rendezvous Region going as far as hiking trails through the gorge, etc. It's tough to get easements from landowners in there to cross their ground because of the liability problem. If you're able to compensate them for that easement, and they wouldn't have to pay a premium for increased liability, it would give us a better shot at doing that. That goes for hiking, horseback riding, snowcatting, cross-country skiing and any number of recreational activities.

Rep. Kretrchmar: Maybe I'm not reading this bill right, I hope I'm not, but it seems to me that if the landowner charges, and gets over the amount with the land, he has to insure for injuries suffered in any case. Maybe he isn't negligent at all. The way I read the statute he has to pay.

Sen. Trenbeath: I hope you are misinterpreting that. I hadn't read it with that in mind, I guess I read it that in any event he is, of course, liable for his willful and malicious failure to guard, you have to be able to warn, but just to verbalize, this chapter does not, in any way, any liability

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10/99/03 Date Page 6 House Judiciary Committee Bill/Resolution Number SB 2321 Hearing Date 3-19-03

Rep. Kretschmar: Subsection 2, there, line 11, injuries suffered in any case, if the charges are exceeding those limits. It would seem to me that guys are making the insured, like workmen's comp or something.

Sen. Trenbeath: I guess I couldn't agree with your interpretation, but I understand where you are coming from. If you read it in total, it says this chapter does not limit in any way, any liability that otherwise exists for injuries suffered in any case, in which the owner of the land charges more than 4x. I don't think it increases the exposure, that he would have absent the statute.

Rep. Klemin: We have the general statute which we don't have in front of us, I've got the book here, which says that subject to the provisions of section 53-08-05, which is the one we're dealing with. Subject to the section, the owner of the land owes no duty of care to keep the premises safe for entry or use by others for recreational purposes or to give any warning of a dangerous condition, use of structure or activity on such premises to persons entering for such purposes. So the general duty of care is there is no duty of care. So that's where the charges for entry unto the property, so what this bill does, instead of saying he charges 10 cents, he has a duty of care, establishes the threshold under which he would still have no duty of care, or over which he would have a duty of care.

Sen. Trenbeath: Exactly right. It carves out that line and then excepts out from that, which would be the section on willful or malicious.

Rep. Klemin: So if he is over this threshold and then he's going to have to either be insured or bear the risk of not having insurance.

Sen. Trenbeath: Right.

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House Judiciary Committee Bill/Resolution Number SB 2321 Hearing Date 3-19-03

Rep. Wrangham: If the farmer grants permission for birding on the NW quarter of this section. he charges a fee for it, would it just be the property tax from that quarter section or would it be 4x all the land he owns; does this need to be clarified.

Sen. Trenbeath: I've wrestled with that myself, and I guess I've come to the conclusion that without clarifying language, and clarifying language could be put in it, without clarifying language you would be talking about a taxable parcel. In other words, if you had quarter section which was part of a section, and the quarter section was used for a part-time recreational use, what the tax statement came for the section, then I would guess that you would be able to charge 4x what you are paying on that section. I've thought in my mind about describing something about contiguous parcels, or something of that nature, but I suppose there could be some language that could clarify that.

Rep. Delmore: First, how safe do I have to make my land. Obviously, if I have an old building that someone might go into and fall, do I have a liability for that or water hazards, those types of things on my mind.

Sen. Trenbeath: You still have the duty to warn if there is a hazardous condition on the property. If you are running snow cats in there, I think you probably ought to tell them where the barbed wire fence is. If you've got a precipitous drop-off at some point, yes you would want to mention that. Those hazards that are recognizable as hazards, you would have a duty to warn. Ren. Delmore: If I know I'm not making any money off my land, I know I'm going to be having a lot of people in and going to be over this amount, can I pick up liability insurance coverage. Sen. Trenbeath: I haven't the foggiest idea. I presume that you could, most risks are insurable. Of course, that's what gave rise to the bill is that it isn't cheap insurance and if what you are

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Page 8
House Judiciary Committee
Bill/Resolution Number SB 2321
Hearing Date 3-19-03

doing represents a minimal income stream to you, you're not liable for pay that liability insurance on this.

Rep. Grande: As you were describing this, you were talking about part-time use, but if we have a piece of land that has bird watching, horse trails, snow cats, which is not very part-time anymore, you could be running somebody through there...

Sen. Treabsath: I think that's why we set the income levels; because if there is a demand for the use of your property on a full-time recreational basis, that's probably what you are going to go to because you can make some money at it. So this really, by the limitation on the amount of money that you can make on it, would kind of dictate a part-time use.

Rep. Kretschmar: Let's see if I understand this correctly, the current law, if you charge any amount, you're subject to this statute, and now under this bill, you are raising that threshold, it has be twice or four times the amount of property tax.

Sen. Trenbeath: If you are charging for the use of your land, and somebody's on your land and you're making money at it, you are liable for any damages that any person would ordinarily be liable for. Obviously, you would have to prove the negligence existed, etc. This just exculpates you from that liability to a certain level of income.

Rep. Klemin: I just feel compelled to point then that if there are concurrent causes of the loss here, you won't have any insurance at all.

Sen. Trenheath: Please don't go there.

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Rep. Grande: If you are not charging for my land, but somebody comes through, and I've said go ahead and bird watch on here, and they fall into an old well, am I liable for that.

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Page 9
House Judiciary Committee
Bill/Resolution Number SB 2321
Hearing Date 3-19-03

Sen. Trenbeath: Those, unfortunately, are questions that make Rep. Klemin and Rep.

Kretschmar and myself wince, because there are no pat answers to that. Under certain circumstances, you may well be, but under other circumstances you may not be.

Rep. Grande: What if I charged you to be on the land, and you fell into the well.

Sen. Trenheath: I think it would be safe to say at this point, regardless of passage of this bill or not, if you charge me to be on your land and I fell into your well, because you didn't warn me about it, you would be liable.

Rep. Grande: And if I warned you that this house was in tough shape and I don't want you to go in there and you did it anyway.

Sen. Trenbeath: There are certain other legal duties that go with that, not the least of which is assumption of risk. But I don't think this bill has anything to say about the situation where you are actually warned and you do it anyway.

Rep. Klemin: I would like to response to Rep. Grande, this bill basically the language is not being changed in subsection 1, only makes you liable if your failure to warn is willful and malicious. If you know there is something that somebody is going to fall into, and you hope they fall in, that would be willful and malicious.

Rep. Onstad: On that subject too, why not make it 10x, is 4x the Texas law.

Sen. Trenbeath: I believe that is where it came from. At some point, in your own mind you figure what might be fair.

Rep. Onstad: 10 times.

Sen. Trenbeath: Works for me.

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Page 10 House Judiciary Committee Bill/Resolution Number SB 2321 Hearing Date 3-19-03

Chairman DeKrey: Thank you. Further testimony in support. Testimony in opposition. We will close the hearing. What are the committee's wishes in regard to SE 2321.

Rep. Boshning: I move a Do Pass.

Rep. Kingsbury: Seconded.

12 YES ONO 1 ABSENT

DO PASS

CARRIER: Rep. Wrangham

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Date: 3/19/03
Roll Call Vote #: 1

2003 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE ROLL CALL VOTES BILL/RESOLUTION NO. 2321

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Representatives	Yes	No	Representatives	Yes	No
Chairman DeKrey	<u> </u>		Rep. Delmore	L	
Vice Chairman Maragos	V.		Rep. Eckre	AB	
Rep. Bernstein	<u> </u>		Rep. Onstad	7	
Rep. Boehning	<u> </u>			_	
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REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE (410) March 19, 2003 10:34 a.m.

Module No: HR-49-5170 Carrier: Wrangham Incert LC: Titie:

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE 8B 2321: Judiciary Committee (Rep. DeKrey, Chairman) recommends DO PASS (12 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 1 ABSENT AND NOT VOTING). SB 2321 was placed on the Fourteenth order on the calendar.

(2) DESK, (3) COMM

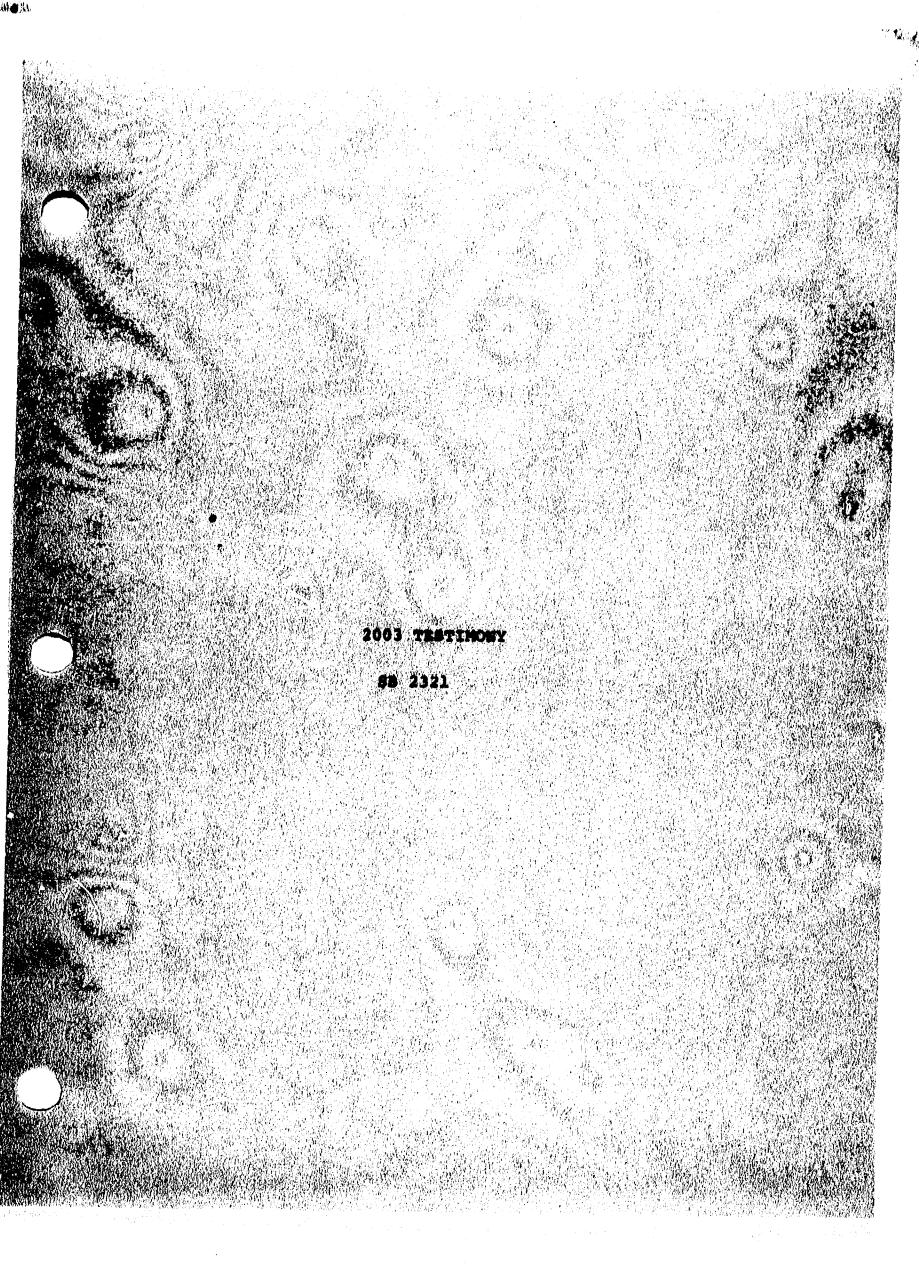
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HR-49-6170

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Rural landowner liability for recreational injuries: Myths, perceptions, and realities

B.A. Wright, R.A. Kaiser, and S. Nicholis

ABSTRACT: Concern about closure of private, rural lands to outdoor recreation has been documented in the research literature for several decades. While many reasons for this phenomenon have been posited, liability for recreational injuries has been identified as a particularly wordsome problem for landowners. However, landowners' perceptions of liability are not commensurate with the reality of legal risks. This article examines rural landowner Hability risks through an analysis of the 50 state recreation-use statutes intended to protect landowners from legal exposure tied to injuries sustained on their land. Further, data from the 637 appellate court cases heard since 1965 involving recreational injuries were compiled and analyzed based on the characteristics of the landowner (public or private), recreation activity pursued at the time of injury, and actual liability exposure. Although the focus of this article is primarily on the liability risks of private landowners and organizations, public agencies also are discussed. Recreation-use statutes are increasingly used in government defense, and cases provide more depth in understanding the reality of landowner liability. Recommendations to agencies oncerned with access to private lands and suggestions for future research are included.

Keywords: Private lands, landowners, liability, recreational access, recreational injuries

It has long been recognized that access to privately owned rural lands must play a strategic role in meeting the increasing demand for public outdoor recreation. The Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission (1962), perhaps the most comprehensive assessment of outdoor recreation demand ever conducted, predicted that the demand for outdoor recreation opportunities would triple by the year 2000. These demand projections were reached by 1977, 23 years earlier than expected (Resources for the Future, 1983). A decade later, the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors (1987) reiterated the strategic necessity of increasing access to and use of private lands as a partial solution for satisfying the growing demand for outdoor recreation. This strategy is still important today as public agencies with limited resources struggle to keep pace with outdoor recreation demands.

In an effort to encourage greater private sector involvement in meeting these outdoor investion demands, a growing number of huical reports and conference proceedings

opportunities and offered guidance on the operation of access programs (Copeland, 1998; Crupell, 1994; Kays et al., 1998; Lynch and Robinson, 1998; U.S. Department of Commerce, 1990; Yarrow, 1990). These reports university point to the need to provide legal, financial, business, and marketmg information to landowners. This need to inform landowners is most acute in the area of liability risks. If public access programs are to be successful, landowners need to understand and manage the legal risks associated with outdoor recreation enterprises.

In 1987, the National Private Land Ownership Study provided the first national assessment of the access problem. Researchers found that only 25% of the nation's private landowners granted access to people to whom they were not personally acquainted (Wright et al., 1988). Among the findings, landowners in northern states allowed greater recreational access (31%) than did owners in the South (13%). When the study was repeated in 1997, the number of landowners granting access to people with whom they

dramatically. Nationally, only 12% of the landowners allowed recreational accessiva decrease of 50% from 10 years carlier (Teasley et al., 1997). Again, landowners in the North had a higher propensity (16%) to open their land than did southern owners (6.5%).

This finding has significant implications for state fish and wildlife agencies, because the majority of federal and state funding for wildlife management comes from hunting and fishing because sales and from federal excise taxes on hunting and fishing equipment (Wildlife Conservation Fund, 1996). Federal statistics indicate that the number of licensed hunters in the United States decreased by 10% between 1982 and 1998 (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1998). One of the reported reasons for this drop in heeine sales is the lack of access to public and private areas (McMullin et al., 2000).

Through the years, access research has identified a number of factors that keep landowners from granting access (Brown, 1974; Brown et al., 1984, Copeland, 1998; Durrell, 1968; Holenek and Westfall, 1977; Wright and Fesenmaier, 1990). Wright et al. (1988) postulated that five domains influence landowner access policies. These include: (1) landowner perceptions of users, (2) landowner objectives for the land; (3) economic incentives; (4) landowner adversity to certain uses (such as hunting); and (5) hability and risk

Liability concerns are a domain influencing landowner access decisions. The fear of being med or being held liable for injuries sustained by recreational users has consistently been cated as a primary concern of landowners (Holecck and Westfall, 1977; Kaiser and Wright, 1985; Womach et al., 1975). Even though all states have taken significant steps to insulate landowners from liability when they grant free recreational access, liability romains a concern among landowners and a barrier to public access (Becker, 1990; Copeland, 1998). This article examines rural landowner lia-



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VOLUME ST NUMBER 3 183

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bility risks through an analysis of state tecreation-use statutes and appellate court cases dealing with outdoor recreation injuries, focusing primarily on private landowners and organizations However, public agencies are mentioned because recreation-use statutes are increasingly used in government defense of injury lewsuits. Factors that influence landowner decisions to accept or restrict public access for outdoor recreation, including the perception and reality of landowner hability exposures associated with public access, also are decussed. The Lexis/Nexis computer retrieval system was used to compile recreation-use statutes and appellate court data. Statutes were analyzed against a set of landowner duty and hability parameters common to outdoor recreation and access programs. Appellate court data were analyzed based on the characteristics of the landowner (public or private), recreation activity pursued at the time of injury, and actual landowner liability exposure. Finally, recommendations are offered for public agencies and landowners interested in increasing access and contemplating public access programs

Landowner Liability

Private landowner liability concerns are congruent with those of public park and recreation agencies vested by the increasingly lingious nature of American society (Kaiser, 1986). As with many public policy issues, recreation liability concerns are unbused with certain myths, perceptions, and realities.

Liability perceptions. Most landowner public access studies indicate that landowners are concerned about the threat of liability and often use this as a justification to restrict public access (Burwn et al., 1984; Cordell and English, 1987; Gramann et al., 1985; Wildlife Management Institute, 1983; Wright and Kaser, 1986). Liability as a barrier to public access is a constraint also recognized by state wildlife administrators. Wright et al. (2001) found that administrators rated liability as the second-most-eignificant access problem facing landowners, exceeded only by concerns about trespass.

Research has clearly identified landowners' concerns about liability but has done little more than document that such liability is perceived as a problem. Lack of knowledge regarding recreation accident rates or landowner protections provided by state law contribute to this perception. Only 29 of the 50 state wildlife administrators reported that

their states had legislation minimizing landowner liability even though all states have enacted recreation-use statutes protecting landowners from liability (Wright et al., 2001).

The reality of landowner liability. Common-law tort and property rules govern landowner duties and obligations to recreational users are categorized as invitees, licensees, or trespansers. These categories are important because they establish the legal obligations of landowners in their relationships with recreational users. Among the three categories, invitees receive the greatest legal protection, licensees moderate protection, and tresponsers little protection.

An invitee is a person expressly or amplicitly invited on the property by the landowner for a public or a business purpose (Restatement Second of Torts, §332, 1965). For example, if a hunter leases or pays an access for to the landowner, the hunter may be classified as an invitee. Under this circumstance, the landowner owes the highest duty of care to the invitee. In layman's terms, the landowner has a duty to (1) inspect the property and facilities to discover hidden dangers, (2) remove the hidden dangers or warn the user about them, (3) keep the property and facilities in reasonably safe repair, and (4) anticipate foreseeable activities by users and take precautions to protect users from ressonably foresecable dangers (Kuiser, 1986).

Although this is a daunting task, the landowner is not required to ensure or guarantee the safety of the invitee. Landowners only have to use reasonable efforts in fulfilling these duties to prevent an unreasonable risk of injury.

A licensee is anyone who enters the property by permission only, without any economic or other inducement to the landowner (Prosser and Kecton, 1984). Commonly, a licensee is a social guest whose use of the property is gratuatous and not economically beneficial to the landowner (Restatement Second of Torts, §330, 1965). For example, a person permitted to hunt on a rancher's land without paying a fee is a licensee. The landowner's duty of care to a licensee is the same as to the invitee, except that the landowner does not have a duty to inspect the property to discover hidden dangers. However, once a landowner hecomes aware of a hidden danger, there is a

dition. Convenely, a landowner has no duty to warn the licensee of dangers that are known, open, or obvious to a reasonable person.

The law affords the adult trespaner scant legal protection. A trespasser is a person who is on the property of another without any right, lawful authority, expressed or implied invitation or permission (Restatement Second of Toris, §329, 1965). Generally, a landowner has no duty to maintain the land for the safety of the adult traspasser, except that a landowner cannot intentionally willfully, or wantonly injure a trespasser (Kadez, 1971). Most states have adopted an exception known as "the discovered trespasser rule," requiring that landowners exercise reasonable care to not injure the discovered trespaner (Proster and Keeton, 1984). The landowner has an obligation not to do something that would harm the trespassor. For example, if a landowner observes a trespasser entering a rifle range, that landowner has an obligation to stop firing and close the range until the trespasser is removed.

Landowner Liability Under Recreation-Use Statutes

In an effort to encourage landowners to make their lands available for public recreation use, all 50 states have adopted recreation-use statutes (Table 1). Most of these statutes are patterned after the Council of State Governments' model act (1965), which was based on previously enacted liability protection legislation in 14 states. (See dates in Table 1.) The underlying theory of the model act is that landowners protected from liability will allow recreational use of their land, thus reducing state expenditures to provide such areas.

Although the statutes vary in detail, they are all similar in limiting landowner liability and in altering the common-law duty of care. In effect, the statutes provide significantly greater liability protection for the landowner than is available under common law. As outlined in Table 1, most state statutes explicitly provide that the landowner has no duty to: (1) warn the recreation user of hidden dangers, (2) keep the property reasonably safe, or (3) provide assurances of safety to recreational users.

Only Alaska, Arizona, Massachusetta, Montana, Ohio, Oregon, Vermont, and Washington do not explicitly exempt landowners from these specific duties, but they do limit landowner liability.

184 JOURNAL OF SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION MIJ 2002

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Alekama Ala, Code § 35-15-1	1965	No	No	No	Yes	Not specified	No, if use for noncommercial purpose	
Alestia Als. Stat. § 08.88.200	1980	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified	Yes	Not specified	Yes	
Aftenn Artz. Rev. Stat. § 33-1551	1983	Not specified	Not specified			Not specified	Yes/no, only for nonprofit corp.	
Artenens Ark, State, Ann. § 18-11-301	1965	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No, provided fee only to offset cos	
Geltlerde Govt, Code g 846	dn ide 1963		No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Culerade Colo, Rev. Stat. § 33-41-101	1963 Not specified				Yes	Yes	Yes	
Connecticut Gen. State § 52-5571	1971 No		o No No Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes/no, If fee to hervest firewood	
Delaware Del. Code tit 7 § 5901	1953	No	No	No No Ye		Yes	Yes	
Florida Fin. Stat. § 375.251	1963	No	No	No No		Yes Yes		
Georgia Ge. Code § 51-3-20	1965	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Havell Havel Nev. Stat. § 520-1	1969	Но	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Idaho Idaho Coda § 36-1604	1976	No	No	No	Not specified	Yes	Yes	
##holio § 745 H.C3 65/1	1965	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yea/no, fees for land conservation allowed	
Indiana Ind. Code Ann. § 14-22-10-2	1969	Not specified	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	
towa lowe Code Ann. § 4610.1	1967	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Kanans annes Stat. Ann. § 56-3201	1965	No	No	No	Yos	Yes	Yes	
Kontucky Ky. Rev. Stat. 50.645; §411.190	1968	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	

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State	Year eracted	Duty to worn of homores	Duty to times tend auto	Assure lend sale for use	Lieblity for grees negligence/ within missendust	Protection retained for public agancy lease payments	Protection test if fee charged	
Louisiana La. Rov. Stat. § 9:2791	1964	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Maine Me. Rev. Stat. tide 14 § 159-A	1979	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes/no, fees allowed if use is noncommercial	
Meryland Md. Code Nat. Res. § 5-1101	1957	No	No No		Yes	Yes	Yes	
Massachusetts Mass. Gen. Law ch. 21 § 170	1972 Not specified		Not specified	Not specified			Yes/no, voluntary payments allowed	
Michigan Mich. Comp. Laws § 324.73301	Mehigan Comp. Laws 1953 2 24.73301		Only reasonably safe	Not specified	Vea	Not specified	Yes/no. fees allow for hunting, fishing and crop hervests	
Minnesota Min. Stat. § 604A.20	esota Stat. 1961 IA.20		ota art. 1961 No No No		Yes	Yes	Yes	
Miss. Code § 89-2-1.	code 1978 No		No	No Yes		Yes	Yes	
Milesouri Mo. Ann Stat. § 537 345	1963	No	No	Na	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Montana Mont, Rev. Code § 70-16-301	1965	Not specified	Not specified	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Nebraska Neb. Rev. Stat. § 37-729	1965	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes/no, group rental fees allowed	
Mnvada Nev. Rev. Stat. § 41.510	1963	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	
New Hampahira N.H. Rev. Stat. § 212,34	1961	, No	No	Na	Yes	Not specified	Yes/no, fees for crop picking allowed	
New Jersey N.J. Stat. § 2A:42A-2	1968	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	
New Mexico N.M. Stat. § 17-4-7	1973	Not specified	No	No	Ves	Yes	Yes	
New York N.Y. Gen. Law § 9-103	1963	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	
North Carolina N.C. Gen. Stat. § 38A-1	1996	No	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified	Yes	Yes/no, fees to cover damages allowed	
North Daliota N.D. Cent. Code § 53-08-1	1965	No	No	Not specified	Yes	Yes	Yes	

184 JOURNAL OF SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION MIJ 2002

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State	Year anacted	Duty to were of hecords	Dity to top	Assure land safe for use	Liability for grass negligenes/ withd missenduct	Pretaction retained for public agency icose payments	Protection last if for charges	
Ohio Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 1533.18	1963	Not specified	Not specified	No	Not specified	Yes	Yes	
Oklahemia Okla, Stat. Ann. title 78 g 1301	1965	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Oragina Or. Rev. Stat. § 105.670	1971	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified	Yes	Not specified	Yes/no, fee fi fireweed sutting	
Ponneytvania Pa. Stat., trile 68 § 477-1	1965	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Rhode Island R.I. Gen, Law § 32-6-1	1978	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	
South Carolina S.C. Code § 27-3-1.0	1962	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	
South Delicts i.D. Codified, Laws § 20-9-12	1966	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes/na, nonmonetary g of less then \$10	
Tennessee Tenn. Code Ann 707-101; 11-10-101	1965	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yea	
Texas Civ. Prac, & Rem. Code § 75 001	1965	No	No	Мо	Yes	Not specified	No, foes equal to 2x or 4x propert taxes allowed	
Utah Utah Code § 57-14-1	1971	No	No	No	Yes	Not specified	Yes	
Vermont Vt. Stat. trtle 10 § 5212	1967	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified	Yes	Not, specified	Yes/no, fees for firewood cutting allowed	
Virginia Va. Code § 29.1-509	1950	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes/no, fees for firewood cutting allowed	
Washington Mash. Rev. Code § 4.24.200	1967	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified	Yes	Not specified	Yes/no, fees for firewood outling allowed	
West Virginia W.Vn. Code § 19-25-1	1965	No	No	No	Yes	Not specified	No, fees up to \$50/persor/year	
Wisconsin Wisc, Stat. § 895,52	1963	No	No	Not specified	Yes	Yes	No, fee revenue up to \$2000/yeer allowed	
Wyoming Wyo, Stat. § 3419-101	1965	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	

meral disclaimer of liability for an injury to

Procreational user caused by the commussion gives permission to another to enter upon such caused by any art of persons to whom the permis-

In addition to eliminating these specific of omission of the recreational user. The New premites for a sport or recessional activity or pur-landowner duties, all state statutes contain a Jersey statute provides an illustrative example: pose does not thereby assume responsibility for or "An owner, lesse or occupant of premises who incur liability for any minry to person or property

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Major exceptions. While landowners enjoy significant liability protection under these statutes, they are not without legal risks. Landowners may be liable for user injuries when they (1) willfully full to warn or guard against a dangerous condition on their property, or (2) charge an access or use fee. These exceptions have implications for landowners seeking to generate income from public access.

Wilful conduct or grees negligence. Except for Idaho, Illinois, North Carolina, and Ohio, all other state statutes contain provisions that hold a landowner liable for carrain types of bad conduct (Table 1). This landowner bad conduct is expressed as acts of willful misconduct or gross negligence. For example, the Kentucky statute provides that:

"This section shall not limit the liability which would advancise exist for wilful or malicious failure to guard or main against a dangerous condition, use, structure or activity (Kg. Rev. Stat. 150.645)."

Consequently, a landowner aware of a ecous situation has an affirmative duty to of the danger. The "discovered danger race requires action. However, the rule does not require the landowner to inspect the property to discover dangerous situations. For example, if a landowner discovers an abandoned well that is covered by brush, the landowner has a duty to warn guests of the location of the danger or to fill in the well to remove the landow.

State recreation-use statutes do not generally define willful conduct or gross negligence, leaving the courts to determine what constitutes such behavior. Some states reserve "willful and mulicious conduct" only for intercional or hateful acts (Mous, 1991), while other states include inaction that distegards possible harmful sesults (Burnett, 1982; Estate of Thomas, 1975; Krevics, 1976; Mandel, 1982; McGruder, 1972; Miller, 1976; Newman, 1993; North, 1981). An example of an intentional willful act would be if a landowner stretched a cable at neck height across a trail to deter snowmobile use, whereas willful discegard of consequences would be if a landowner knew that a cable existed and did nothing about it.

Charging a fee for access. Most recreation that takes do not provide liability protection the landowner charges an access or use hirty-one states provide landowner protection only for free access. Generally, the courts have strictly interpreted this gratunous-use requirement so that the landowner cannot charge a fee and retain liability protection (Copeland, 1970; Graves, 1982; Hallacker, 1986; Kesner, 1975; Schoonmaker, 1986; Veeneman, 1985).

During the last two decades, there has been a trend to relex the fee restriction. Nineteen states allow landowners to impose limited fees and charges for recreational use and still retain the protection (Table 1). Texas and Wisconsin allow landowners to generate significant treame from recreational access and use, while the other 17 states limit fees to certain uses or cap fee amounts.

Fees for hervesting plant products. Seven states—Connecticut, Michigan, New Hampshire, Oregon, Vermont, Virginia, and Washington—specifically allow landowners to charge fees for harvesting crops (gleaning) or gathering firewood and not lose liability protection (Table 1). These states do not cap the fee amount or the amount of annual revenue that can be generated from fees. Consequently, landowners can realize substantial sevenue, depending on the size of "pick your own" operations.

In addition to the seven states that allow gleaning fees, 12 others permit landowners to impose fees for other types of recreational activities, including gleaning. These states generally cap the fees or cap the total amount of revenue that can be generated. For example, South Dakots caps the fee at \$100 and West Virginia at \$50 per person per year (Table 1).

Governmental lease payments. Landowners often lesse land to state and local governmental agencies for park and other outdoor recreamonal uses. To encourage this practice, 38 states do not consider lease payments made to private landowners by public agencres as fees. Landowners in those states are allowed to return liability protection. Only Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Idaho, Michigan, New Hampshire, Oregon, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Washington, and West Virginia do not explicitly provide this protection for landowners (Table 1). Landowners leasing land to public agencies in these states must transfer the liability risk to the public agency via the lease agreement.

Private lease agreements. Landowners in a number of states often lease land to hunting landowner cases). However, a few of the clubs or private individuals. The lease payments made by private parties to landowners number of cases. Alabama, Georgia, Louisians, are considered to be fees. This means that the

free-access liability protections provided to the landowner under terms of the recreationuse statutes are lost. In contrast, governmental lease psyments are not considered fees, and liability protections are retained by the landowner.

One option available to landowners in private lesse arrangements is to transfer, by terms in the lesse, the liability risk to renting parties or tenants. This risk-transfer language is often supplemented by a requirement that tenants purchase their own liability insurance coverage. Landowners that follow this practice can require minimum insurance policy coverage and proof of insurance.

Lawsuit Data On Landowner Liability

Nearly four decades have passed since the model state secrestion-use legislation was drafted by the Council of State Governments (1965) to encourage public recreational access to private lands. This section discustes how the recreation-use statutes have been interpreted and applied by appellate courts since that time.

A total of 637 cases involving tripries or death to recreation users were identified and analyzed. The cases were nearly equally divided between public (n = 307) and private (n = 330) landowners A distinction must be made between the filing of an injury lawruit and a landowner being held liable for an injury. A person must file a lawsuit to establish hability, and not all lawsuits result in hability. Indeed, as that data indicates, hability was found in only about one-third of the cases. Only cases that proceeded through trial and reached an appeals court were included in the analysis. No data were included on cases settled out of court.

Litigation patterns by state. As outlined in Table 2, litigation patterns varied significantly among the states. Only Maryland, Missouri, North Carolina, Rhode Island, and Vermont did not have any cases involving the application of the recreation-use statute to a user injury.

With a few notable exceptions, private landowner litigation generally patterned state population. Not surprisingly, the larger states of California, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania reported 161 cases (49% of all private landowner cases). However, a few of the smaller states also reported a significant number of cases, Alabama, Georgia, Louisians, and Wiscomin reported 79 cases, or about

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24% of the total. Surprisingly, Texas, the second-most-populated state in the nation and a state with 98% of its land held in private ownership, reported only two cases against private landowners.

Ten states (Alsbama, California, Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin) accounted for about 70% of all the private landowner litigation (n = 229 cases). Of these, New York reported the highest number of cases imposing liability on private landowners (26%) was not higher than the national average. Michigan reported 29 cases, but only 7 of those (24%) resulted in landowner liability. Louisians is notable for its litigation pattern. Twenty-seven cases involved private lands, and 12 of those cases (45%) imposed liability on the landowner.

Beyond these observations, few trends can be gleaned from landowner langation patterns among states. Further analysis beyond the scope of this investigation may reveal patterns based on a state's heritage of outdoor recreation pursuits or the number of people pursuing outdoor recreation in each state.

Risks associated with different recreational activities. Clearly, the legal risk factors associated with different types of recreational activities are an important landowner consideration in allowing, restricting, or denying public access. Thirteen outdoor recreation activities were used for categorical analysis because they encompass the majority of traditional outdoor recreational pursuits. Because of the size and complexity of the cases, landowner hability determinations were not made for each of these 13 categories. The data reflect only the aggregate number of cases involving each type of recreation activity.

Water-related injuries from rwamming, boating, and fishing generated the largest number of cases (n = 196, 31%) and potentially pose the greatest lawsuit risk exposure for landowners. Although lawsuit risks may be greater from water activities, it does not follow that the liability risk is also greater. These data simply indicate that more appellate lawsuits involved water than any other single recreation activity, and it should not be interpreted that landowners are more liable if they allow water-based recreation.

Over the last 30 years, motorized recreobligations to the recreational user. The most and the various other distinctuties experiational acquires have increased in popularity. notable difference among states relates to the enced by landowners and how they collectively influence landowners' decisions. For number of motorized-vehicle injury cases. charge access or use fees and retain liability example, some ownership objectives, such as

Injury cases from motorized-vehicle accidents (n = 82) comprised about 12% of all the appellate cases brought under recreation-use statutes. Snowmobiles were involved in 63% of these cases. Nearly two-thirds of these cases arose in six states-California, Idaho, Michigan, New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. More than 25% of all cases came from New York.

Hunting, an activity traditionally associated with public access, provides very little lawsuit and liability exposure for landowners. Only 15 cases involved hunting accidents, and seven of those occurred in Louisians. These data suggest that landowners allowing access for hunting have minimal lawsuit and liability exposure.

Public agency protection. Although reconation-use statutes were originally intended to protect private landowners, the majority of states (n = 27) have extended this same protection to government agencies (Table 2). The history behind this transition is interesting in that it closely tracks the decline in sovereign immunity that once protected public agencies. Today, all states have enacted tort claims statutes allowing people to sue public agencies for personal injuries. Because many of these state tort clams statutes hold the public agencies to the same negligence scandards as private landowners, the courts have extended the protection of recreation-use statutes to public agencies (Kozlowski and Wright, 1989).

Public agency landowners were held hable in 36% of 307 reported cases, and private landowners were held liable in 27% of 330 reported cases. A large majority of the public agency cases included in Table 2 involve municipal park and recreation agencies and those recreation activities associated with these city agencies.

Summary and Conclusion

The myth and perception of landowner liability appears to be greater than the actual liability risks. State recreation-use statutes provide significant liability protection for landowners. This analysis shows that while eignificant similarities exist across the states, important differences also are present. All states limit landowners liability for free access, and most states also lessen landowner obligations to the recreational tuer. The most notable difference among states relates to the ability (or inability) of the landowner to charge access or use fees and retain liability

protection. Clearly, landowners in these states have a greater ability to generate income from access and outdoor recreation activities than do landowners in states requiring free access. In free-access states, landowners are required to make a choice between income generation and liability protection. In states that permit access frees, landowners do not have to make this choice.

Despite the extensive liability protection provided landowners by state recreation-use statutes, a significant gap persists between the perception and the reality of landowners hability. Research indicates that landowners and a number of resource management professionals are not aware of the significant liability protection afforded by recreation-use statutes. If the gap between landowners' perceptions of hability and the reality of liability is to be hridged, the following three points must be considered.

- Landowners must be made more knowledgeable regarding the degree of insulation they are afforded under state recreational-use statutes.
- 2. Organizations concerned with access to private lands, such as state Extension and fish and wildlife agencies, must endeavor to better understand and communicate to landowners the reality of private landowner liability exposure, rather than automatically accepting the myth of the hability crisis. Perpetuation of the liability myth exacerbates the access crisis.
- 3. Public agencies should consider initiating public/private lease partnerships as a means of increasing access and providing income to landowners. Thirty-eight states exempt public lease payments made to landowners from the no-fee provisions. This encourages landowners to lease their land to public agencies, receive substantial monetary payments for these leases, and retain liability protection.

Furthermore, additional research is needed in several areas before one can fully assess the impact of liability on landowners' access decisions or meaningful policies and programs developed. First, research producing a better understanding of landowners' perceptions of insurance availability, affordability, and the ability of insurance to increase access is needed. In addition, it would be desirable to determine the relative importance of liability and the various other disincentives experienced by landowners and how they collectively influence landowners' decisions. For example, some ownership objectives, such as

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wanting to maintain exclusive recreational use of the property for personal or familial use, may run counter to allowing public access. Finally, contingent valuation methods or similar approaches should be used to determine the level of incentives needed to overcome the disincentives experienced by landowners.

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