

Michael M. Brunson, Ph.D., CPRP, CIG

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EDUCATION

Kansas State University 2021

Doctor of Philosophy; Park Management and Conservation

Dissertation Title: *Plans for the Future: An examination of research methodology and education in parks and protected area visitor use management.*

Prescott College 2017

Master of Arts; Environmental Studies and Environmental Education

Thesis Title: *Conservation strategies for Eastern Brook Trout (Salvelinus fontinalis; Salmonidae): A comparative analysis of management plans, stocking habits, and angler attitudes.*

Northern Arizona University 2009

Bachelor of Science; Parks & Recreation Management/Outdoor Leadership & Education

Canisius College 2006

Bachelor of Art; History and Classical Studies

ACADEMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE

Auburn University

Professor of Practice 2024-

Courses Taught

PARK 2010: Intro to Nature-Based Recreation

PARK 3010: Environmental Interpretation

PARK 3350: Programming in Parks and Recreation

PARK 3850: Professional Preparation in Parks and Recreation

PARK 3910: Field Skills Practicum

PARK 4300: Parks and Recreation Administration, Finance, and Management

PARK 4400: Park and Recreation Facilities and Infrastructure Planning and Management

Kansas State University

Assistant Teaching Professor 2022-2024

Courses Taught

PMC 120: Outdoor Recreation Certification

PMC 275: Intro to Natural Resource Management

PMC 350: Parks and Outdoor Recreation Practicum

PMC 475: Natural History for the Park Professional

PMC 489: Outdoor Recreation Programming and Event Planning

PMC 492: Internship in Parks and Recreation

PMC 580: Park Operations and Maintenance Management
PMC 635: Methods of Environmental Interpretation
PMC 690: Parks and Recreation Administration

Undergraduate Programs Coordinator 2022-2024

Instructor 2020-2022

Courses Taught

PMC 120: Outdoor Recreation Certification
PMC 275: Intro to Natural Resource Management
PMC 350: Parks and Outdoor Recreation Practicum
PMC 475: Natural History for the Park Professional
PMC 489: Outdoor Recreation Programming and Event Planning
PMC 580: Park Operations and Maintenance Management
PMC 690: Parks and Recreation Administration

Instructor of Record/Graduate Teaching Assistant 2018-2020

Courses Taught

PMC 120: Outdoor Recreation Certification – Instructor of Record
PMC 210: Intro to Outdoor Recreation – Instructor of Record
PMC 489: Outdoor Recreation Programming and Event Planning - GTA
PMC 710: Natural Resource Based Tourism – GTA

Prescott College

Graduate Teaching Assistant 2015-2016

Appalachian Mountain Club

Assistant Programs Coordinator 2013-2014

Environmental Educator & Wilderness Guide 2010-2013

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Auburn University

Principal Investigator 2024-

Understanding visitor use, type, and behavior in AL State Parks

Kansas State University

Project Coordinator – Applied Park Science Lab 2020-2024

Harper's Ferry National Historic Park, WV

Mammoth Cave National Park, KY

Cimmaron National Grassland, KS

Doctoral Research Assistant 2017-2020

Theodore Roosevelt National Park, ND; Project Coordinator

Project Title: *Visitor use and associated thresholds at Theodore Roosevelt National Park.*

Grand Canyon National Park, AZ; Project Coordinator

Project Title: *Visitor use management planning in the rim-to-rim corridor at Grand Canyon National Park*

Shenandoah National Park, VA; Project Coordinator

Project Title: *Evaluating Visitor and Manager Preferences for the Shenandoah National Park Visitor Mobile App*

Cumberland Island National Seashore, GA; Research Assistant

Project Title: *Conduct visitor use study at Cumberland Island National Seashore to support visitor experience and resource protection plan.*

Joshua Tree National Park, CA; Research Assistant

Project Title: *Research to evaluate visitor characteristics across and within seasons at Joshua Tree National Park.*

Little Jerusalem State Park, KS; Project Developer and Coordinator

Project Title: *Establishing management indicators and thresholds for visitor use.*

Brown v Board of Education National Historic Site, KS; Research Assistant

Project Title: *Research to support management decisions at Brown v Board of Education National Site.*

Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve

Research Intern

2017

OTHER RELATED EXPERIENCE

Summit Achievement

Wilderness Therapy Guide

2014

AmeriCorps

Conservation and Restoration Field Crew

2009

CERTIFICATIONS

Certified Interpretive Guide (CIG); National Association for Interpretation (NAI)

Certified Park and Recreation Professional (CPRP); National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA)

Wilderness First Aid; American Red Cross

Geographic Information Sciences (GIS) Certificate; Kansas State University and Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc (ESRI)

Leave No Trace Level 2 (formerly Master Educator); Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics
Outdoor Leadership; Northern Arizona University

AWARDS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

Kansas State University

Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching	2022
Graduate Student Council Travel Scholarship Recipient	2019
Excellence in Graduate Student Teaching Award	2018

Southeast Environment and Recreation Research (SERR) Conference

First Place – Graduate Student Research	2021
Graduate Student Award Scholarship Recipient	2018

Great Plains Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit

Graduate Student Research Award	2020
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North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture

Graduate Student Teaching Award	2020
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Society of Outdoor Recreation Professionals (SORP)

National Outdoor Recreation Conference (NORC) Student Scholarship Recipient	2019
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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Auburn University

New Faculty Scholars	2024
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Course (Re)Design

Education for All: Expanding Accessibility Across Auburn University

Kansas State University

Inclusivity & Diversity Awareness Workshop	2023
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Online Course Design Institute	2023
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Faculty Exchange for Teaching Excellence (FETE)	2020
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Society of Outdoor Recreation Professionals (SORP)

Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity (JEDI) Training	2019 & 2020
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The Jane Goodall Institute

Growing Compassionate Leaders	2016
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Cornell University

Achievements of Environmental Education	2015
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PEER REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

Brunson, M., Wilkes, J., Sharp, R.L., & Brownlee, M. (2025) Shadows of Perception: The role of photographic context in visitor use management research. *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration*.

Doebelin, D., **Brunson, M.,** Sharp, R.L., & Brownlee, M.T.J. (2022) Utilizing social science data from river recreationists to inform river management. *Journal of Interpretation Research*.

Peterson, B.A., Sharp, R.L., Fefer, J.P. & **Brunson, M.** (2021) The Utility of GIS for Identifying Areas of Recreation Conflict for Targeted Interpretive Messaging. *Journal of Interpretation Research*.

Peterson, B.A., Fefer, J.P., Sharp, R.L., & Brunson, M. (2021) To connect or not to connect: Visitor perceptions of WiFi and cellular network service at a national park. *Social Sciences and Humanities*.

Brunson, M., Dagan, D., Hicks, R., Sharp, R.L. (in review) Methodological assumptions in visitor use management research: The researcher's perspective. *Sage Open*.

TECHNICAL REPORTS

Sharp, R.L., Zajchowski, C.A.B., Wilkes, J., **Brunson, M.**, Poudyal, N., & Smith, K. (2024). Social science research to support visitor use management at Harpers Ferry National Historic Park. Report delivered to management staff of Harpers Ferry National Historic Park, Department of Interior, National Park Service. In fulfillment of agreements P19AC01077 and P19AC00946. Harpers Ferry, WV.

Sharp, R.L., **Brunson, M.**, Reigner, N., & Cribbs, T.W. (2019) Visitor use management planning in the rim-to-rim corridor at Grand Canyon National Park. Report delivered to management staff at Grand Canyon National Park, Department of Interior, National Park Service.

Sharp, R.L., Mechels, B. & Brunson, M. (2018) Understanding visitors to Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site: Research to support management decisions at Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site. Report delivered to management staff at Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site, Department of Interior, National Park Service. In fulfillment of agreement P16AC00504. Topeka, KS.

BOOK CHAPTERS

Sharp, R.L., **Brunson, M.**, & Jackson, S. (in review) The Facilitation of Research to Practice for Parks and Protected Area Managers. In Visitor Use Management in Parks and Protected Areas.

OTHER PROFESSIONAL PAPERS AND PUBLICATIONS

Brunson, M. (2025) Where have all the employees gone? Addressing student recruitment in parks and recreation. *National Recreation and Park Association*. Vol. 60, No. 2. Pp 38-41.

Brunson, M. (2023, April 21). Three tips to create engaging pedagogy. Times Higher Education. <http://www.timeshighereducation.com/campus/field-journals-deceptively-simple-solution-improving-engagement>.

Jacobs, L.A., Blacketer, M.P., Peterson, B.A., Levithan, E., Russell, Z.A., and **Brunson, M.** (2020). Responding to COVID-19 and future times of uncertainty: Challenges and opportunities associated with visitor use, management, and research in parks and protected areas. *Parks Stewardship Forum*.

PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATIONS AND POSTER SESSIONS

Brunson, M. (2025). "Losing relevance? The State of Parks and Recreation Academic

Programs." National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Annual Conference. Accepted. September 15-19.

Brunson, M. (2024). Where have all the employees gone? A conversation about student recruitment in parks and recreation. *National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Annual Conference*. October 8-10.

Brunson, M. (2024). "In-tents" Teaching: Exploring the use of outdoor classrooms post-COVID. *15th Biennial Conference on University Education in Natural Resources*. April 23-24.

Boguki, T., Sharp, R.L., **Brunson, M.**, Zajchowski, C., & Wilkes, J. (2024). Testing the Abbreviated Place Attachment Scale at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. *Southeast Recreation Research (SERR) Conference*. March 24-26.

Brunson, M., & Sharp, R.L. (2023). Thinking like your visitor: Predicting visitor preferences as a manager of parks and protected areas. *International Association for Society and Natural Resources (IASNR) Conference*. June 11-15.

Brunson, M. (2023) Notes from the prairie: Journaling to increase student engagement. *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) Showcase*. May 8.

Peterson, B.A., Sharp, R.L., Fefer, J.P. **Brunson, M.** (2022) The utility of GIS for identifying areas of recreation conflict for targeted interpretive messaging. *16th Biennial Conference of Science and Management for the Colorado Plateau and Southwest Region*. September 12-15.

Brunson, M. (2022) Sketching your Surroundings: Nature Journals as Learning Tools. *Biennial Conference on University Education in Natural Resources*. March 23-24.

Brunson, M. (2022) Consulting the Oracle: Understanding Assumptions in Visitor-Use Management Research Using the Delphi Method. *Southeast Environment and Recreation Research (SERR) Conference*. March 20-22.

Brunson, M & Sharp, R.L. (2021) You know what happens when you assume? Addressing assumptions in visitor use management research. *Southeast Environment and Recreation Research (SERR) Conference*. March 22-25.

Brunson, M, Sharp, R., & Brownlee, M.T.J. (2020) (accepted - conference cancelled due to COVID-19). Evaluating Alternative Variables on Visitor Perceptions of Crowding when using Photographic Visual Methods. *National Outdoor Recreation Conference*. April 27-30.

Brunson, M. & Sharp, R. (2019) Not Your Father's Canyon? Historical, Current, and Future Perspectives of Visitor Use at Grand Canyon National Park. *Biennial Conference of Science and Management on the Colorado Plateau & Southwest Region*. September 9-12.

Brunson, M. (2019) Managing for the Long Run: Managing Trail Runners in Grand Canyon

National Park. *National Outdoor Recreation Conference*. May 6-9.

Sharp, R., Cribbs, T., **Brunson, M.**, Jackson, S., Sikorsky, K. (2019) Don't Forget about your Grasslands and Trails! An examination of visitor-use at Cimarron National Grassland and the Santa Fe National Historic Trail. *National Outdoor Recreation Conference*. May 6-9.

Brunson, M. (2018) Engaging Local Communities in their Natural World: Lessons from the East. *Kansas Green Schools & Environmental Education Conference*. November 2-3.

Brunson, M., Cribbs, T., Dagan, D., Kelly, A., Noren, K. (2018) From No-One to Everyone: An Assessment of Little Jerusalem Natural Area, KS and Recommendations for Management. *International Symposium on Society and Resource Management*. June 17-21.

Sharp, R., Mailey, E., **Brunson, M.** (2018) I was walking in Tallgrass: A National Preserve as a means to engage in physical activity in a rural setting. *International Symposium on Society and Resource Management*. June 17-21.

Brunson, M. & Steinberg, M. (2018) Angler motivations, preferences, and attitudes towards wild brook trout management. *Southeast Recreation Research (SERR) Conference*. March 35-27.

INVITED PRESENTATIONS AND LECTURES

Natural History for the Park Professional. Kansas State University. Fall, 2024. Lead instructor: Dr. Brian Peterson

Introduction to Nature Based Recreation. Auburn University. Fall, 2024. Lead instructor: Dr. Wayde Morse

Park Operations and Maintenance Management. Kansas State University. Spring, 2024. Lead instructor: Dr. Brian Peterson

Brunson, M., & Sharp, R. (2019) You didn't hike it unless you tracked it. Using GPS methods to monitor visitor-use in the cross-canyon corridor. *Grand Canyon National Park. Presented to GRCA staff, stakeholders, and public*. May 22.

STUDENT MENTORSHIP

Graduate Students

Sebastian Jeffcoat (2024-) - Master of Science; Natural Resource Management (Thesis Topic: Understanding Visitor Use in Alabama State Parks), Auburn University

Anna Calhoun (2024-) – Master of Natural Resources (non-thesis track), Auburn University

Anna Cooper (2025-) – Online Master of Natural Resources (non-thesis track), Auburn University

Sabra Rogers (2025-) Master of Natural Resources (non-thesis track), Auburn University

Kyle Kautz (2025-) Master of Natural Resources (non-thesis track), Auburn University

Russell Hicks (2022-2024) – Doctor of Philosophy; Park Management & Conservation, Kansas State University

Bijan Gurang (2021-2024) – Doctor of Philosophy; Park Management & Conservation, Kansas State University

COMMITTEES, ASSOCIATIONS, AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Peer Reviewer

Coastal Management Journal

Annals of the American Association of Geographers

Journal of Park and Recreation Administration

SCHOLE: A Journal of Leisure Studies and Recreation Education

Auburn University

Biggio Center for Teaching and Learning – Faculty Fellow 2025-

Appalachian Trail Conservancy

Stewardship Council – Resource Management Committee Board Member 2025-

City of Auburn, AL

Tree Commission; Board Member 2024-

Southeast Recreation Research (SERR) Conference

Co-Chair; Planning Council 2024-

Kansas State University

College of Agriculture Academic Standards Committee Member 2023-2024

College of Agriculture Course and Curriculum Committee Member 2022-2024

Student Recruitment and Retention Committee Member 2020-2024

Society of Outdoor Recreation Professionals (SORP)

Board Member 2019-2021

George Wright Society

Faculty Advisor: Tallgrass Chapter; Kansas State University 2020-2023

Trout Unlimited

Membership Chair/Board Member: Sebago, ME Chapter 2016-2017