PhD Dissertation
Department of Environmental Science and Policy
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Title: The Loop Trail "Quest": Use of a choice-based digital simulation, an interactive video and booklet to analyze decision-making of park visitors

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Committee: Dr. Thomas Lovejoy, Dr. Kevin Clark, Dr. Danielle Buttke

ABSTRACT

Depreciative park visitor behaviors in protected areas can alter the relationship between humans, wildlife, and ecosystems providing new opportunities for pathogens to cause illness in people. We created communication interventions that illustrate to park visitors the impact of off-trail walking, dogs-off leash, and littering through choice-based digital simulations, interactive videos, and booklets. We aimed to uncover reasons behind park visitor decisions to comply with regulations, examine changes in perception of disease causation when presented with consequences and benefits of their choices, and compare differences between the media among the 1207 respondents from the Great Falls National Park in Potomac, Maryland.