

PERSPECTIVES ON LAW ENFORCEMENT IN RECREATION AREAS

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ABSTRACT. The nature and scope of law-enforcement problems in the National Park System are of increasing concern to park and recreation area managers. A positive response by management in terms of formulating and executing a fully professional and effective enforcement program is vital for sustaining public confidence that Parks are safe for individual and family use. Law enforcement must be carried out in perspective with other management programs and developed with sensitivity to the changing nature of society and the changing needs and interests of park users.

IN THE SUMMER of 1970, the Superintendent of Yosemite National Park reported as follows about conditions in Yosemite Valley during much of the heavy use season:

At . . . times the overriding impression is one of confusion and noise. Motorcycle groups cruise aimlessly around the Valley floor, looping through Yosemite Village and the campgrounds; they ride along the foot and bridle paths, and congregate with others of their kind in their converted vans and delivery wagons. Singly and in groups, young people drink wine on Sentinel and Stonemen Bridges, invade the meadows and panhandle from park visitors in front of the Village Store. Theft, major and minor, is common in the campgrounds. The mobile camper, unable to find space in the campgrounds late at night, wanders through the Valley seeking parking areas and other places to pull off the road for a night's rest. Auto traffic in the easterly portion of the Valley where the major public use facilities are located is confusing and frustrating to the interested sightseer who is in no particular hurry to get to any particular place.

Although these impressions are generally valid, solitude and natural serenity are

still possible in the Valley. Not all motorcyclists operate noisy equipment; not all of the young generation of visitors behave wantonly or intolerantly of the feelings of others; many are not drug ridden nor panhandlers. Major crime is under control and the physical safety of the majority of visitors is not a problem.

CONFLICTS IN THE PARKS

Though the situation in that Park may not be critical now, the conditions noted by the Superintendent are typical of those that are becoming increasingly more evident in other national parks.

In 1970 several areas of the Park System experienced disturbances of major proportions and severity, posing new and unique problems to park management.

In Lassen Volcanic National Park a group of Indians attempted to occupy that park and take possession of it in settlement of land claims. The activity was successfully deterred by the cooperative efforts of Park rangers, U. S. marshals, California State Highway Patrol officers and the local county sheriff staff.

At Badlands National Monument and Wind Cave National Park, South Dakota, and at Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, North Dakota, groups of several hundred young motorcyclists tried to force entrance into those areas and to congregate for a weekend encampment. The local Park staffs, augmented by rangers from other National Parks and by a unit of United States Park Police from Washington, D. C., were able to maintain order and forestall a concentrated assembly of the group.

At the Mount Rushmore National Memorial, Indians engaged in a prolonged occupation and demonstration during the late summer and fall in support of grievances against the Federal Government.

In Yosemite a group of 500 to 700 young people confronted Park rangers in a near riot when attempts were made to assure quiet and good order in the Valley campgrounds. A staff of some 40 Park rangers required assistance from nearly 100 officers from neighboring police jurisdictions to restore order after the initial violence had subsided.

The parks of the Nation's Capital, administered by the National Park Service, are more and more the scene of demonstrations by scores of groups and organizations that seek to express a variety of beliefs and views on an array of issues and concerns. In May, and again in July 1970, massive demonstrations in Washington tested the capabilities of the United States Park Police in containing violence.

CHANGING SOCIETY

The United States is now moving from a rural-oriented to an urban-oriented society, and at the same time its population is trending toward a majority of young people under the age of 30.

Public use of the National Park System has risen to exceed 170 million visitors during calendar year 1970.

Urban dwellers and young people, whose attitudes toward the meaning of parks and whose needs and interests in park use differ markedly from the typical user of only a

few years ago, comprise an increasingly large proportion of park visitors.

The traditional role of park manager has been keyed to a philosophy which has held resource preservation as primary and public use (the visitor) at best secondary, if not substantially lower in priority, as an objective of management.

Urban visitors bring urban problems to parks and are forcing change in park management.

The traditional functions of the Park rangers have been oriented toward protecting park resources and providing interpretive services to visitors. This has led to recruitment of rangers largely from the natural sciences, history, archeology, landscape architecture, etc. These backgrounds are unsuited to the emerging situations, which demand involvement with the urban problems that are more and more evident in the Parks, especially in law enforcement.

DILEMMA

Statistics on crime in the National Parks (table) clearly suggest the need for positive action by Park managers to achieve professionalism in law-enforcement programs to deal with hard crime, and to make innovations in management programs that offer alternatives to law enforcement as the ultimate action. Failure on either count may increase the risk that the public will lose confidence in the Parks as places safe for family use—a suggestion that has already been voiced in public discussions of the issue.

The dilemma that is presented to park management is identical to what faces university administrators, city officials, governors of states, and virtually every public and corporate official today. The changing nature of American society is causing millions of the population to question the validity of accepted traditions and values.

That segment of our society under 30 persistently hold the view that poverty in affluent America is intolerable; that black Americans have been shamefully treated and deserve equal sharing of opportunities; that National goals are materialistic, based

Table.—National Park Service law-enforcement summary, 1966-70

Criminal action	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	Increase
PART I CLASSES:						
	<i>No.</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>
1. Criminal homicide	4	6	9	14	8	100
Murder and non-negligent manslaughter	0	4	4	4	5	
Manslaughter by negligence	4	2	5	7	3	
2. Rape	17	41	48	56	34	100
3. Robbery	99	168	235	203	188	89
4. Aggravated assault	87	199	258	234	258	196
5. Burglary—breaking and/or entering	244	394	476	512	896	267
6. Larceny (except auto)						
\$50 and over in value	460	539	802	1,282	1,593	246
Under \$50 in value	1,255	1,955	2,430	3,050	2,773	120
7. Auto theft	96	97	140	134	154	60
Total, Part I classes	2,262	3,399	4,140	5,485	5,904	161
PART II CLASSES:						
8. Other assaults	20	21	39	30	51	155
9. Forgery and embezzlement	2	2	6	8	2	
10. Fraud	8	8	15	37	53	562
11. Stolen property—buy, receive, possess	24	30	74	114	38	58
12. Weapons—carrying, possessing, etc.	258	170	172	247	285	10
13. Sex offenses (other than No. 2)	96	89	65	63	41	-49
14. Narcotic drug laws	11	48	208	366	700	6,263
15. Liquor laws	415	525	574	787	953	129
16. Drunkenness	2,791	2,307	1,521	475	521	-81
17. Disorderly conduct	957	1,021	1,288	1,155	1,692	76
18. Driving under influence	273	272	227	365	541	98
19. Road & driving laws (moving; other than No. 18)	31,161	23,235	29,757	34,207	37,513	20
20. Parking violations	24,477	20,870	31,030	46,889	38,483	57
21. Traffic & motor vehicle laws (except Nos. 18-20)	3,765	3,088	4,245	6,619	5,631	49
22. Fishing regulations	254	255	443	688	827	225
23. Boating regulations	424	685	758	1,065	1,039	145
24. Protection of wildlife; firearms, etc.	755	490	593	1,984	2,173	187
25. Preservation of natural features	1,643	587	788	1,274	4,604	180
26. Destruction of Government property	83	119	276	194	179	115
27. Vandalism (other than No. 26)	152	227	219	217	331	
28. All other offenses: littering, fires, pets, miscellaneous	1,439	3,114	7,282	10,626	16,957	1,078
Total, Part II classes	69,008	57,163	79,580	107,410	112,714	63
All criminal actions	71,270	60,562	83,720	112,895	118,618	66

in the concept that public decisions are influenced primarily by economic considerations; that our Nation's basic resources have been plundered and abused for personal gain at the expense of National well-being for this and future generations.

A national dialogue along these lines has been taking place in varying degrees of intensity across the land for nearly a decade. Out of it has emerged the fixing of labels by opposing sides: "hippies" on the one hand and "the establishment" on the other. Park managers fall largely, if not entirely, in the latter category and are, by implication, resistant and unyielding to change.

INNOVATIONS IN MANAGEMENT

Within the Park Service, however, there are examples of innovations in management that reflect awareness and responsiveness to the changes occurring in American society.

The record of increase in crime in the National Parks has caused the Service to move aggressively to attain full professionalism in law enforcement. After comprehensive study of the problem in the Park System and evaluation of our effectiveness and capability of dealing with it by expert consultants from the International Association of Chiefs of Police assisted by repre-

sentatives of our own U. S. Park Police, we are proceeding with a program as follows:

- In this fiscal year the United States Park Police force in Washington will be increased by 40 positions. This added strength will permit formation of a police cadre capable of being dispatched to areas of the National Park System throughout the country to assist Park rangers in cases of special need such as have occurred in recent years.
- The law-enforcement program will be strengthened by providing professional law-enforcement assistance within the Washington region and Park organization structures. Maximum reliance is being placed upon the expertise and professional ability of officers of the United States Park Police to provide leadership and program direction.
- At the Washington level a Division of Law Enforcement has been created, headed by an inspector, United States Park Police. At the regional level a law-enforcement officer will be assigned to the staff of each of the Region directors. The position will be filled by an officer of the Park Police at the lieutenant-captain grade.

At the Park level a law-enforcement officer will be assigned to the staff of the superintendent in Parks where law-enforcement problems are identified as major in degree and proportion. We anticipate that 15 to 20 Parks need professional police assistance during the heavy travel season. The positions will be filled by the assignment of a Park Police officer at the sergeant-lieutenant level.

- A comprehensive law-enforcement training program has been designed and initiated that will reach 225 ranger candidates and selected management personnel. Before the opening of the travel season this year, 50 Park rangers from all parts of the country will have completed 540 hours of basic police training at the Service's Washington Center.
- Since seasonal rangers bear the brunt of the responsibility in accomplishing our objectives in public-use management dur-

ing the heavy travel season, a special training program in law enforcement has been developed to reach a minimum of 100 seasonal candidates from selected areas.

- An intensive 8-week training program heavily oriented toward police management and administration is being designed for supervisory ranger personnel from areas experiencing major law-enforcement problems.
- A seminar in law enforcement will involve top field managers of the Service in exposure to law-enforcement problems in our society. Its purpose is to develop a policy and philosophical base upon which to formulate and execute the Service's law-enforcement program.

The effort that is being mounted to achieve an effective posture in law enforcement is designed to meet a primary objective of management of the National Parks: to achieve ". . . proper use, management, government and protection of, and maintenance of good order in . . ." the National Park System.

FOR EVERY CITIZEN

The purpose of the law-enforcement program of the National Park Service is to assure for every citizen a park experience that is personally meaningful, free from apprehensions about the safety of his person and his property.

Law enforcement must be viewed in proper perspective and relationship with all other Park management programs, and must be able to withstand judgments as to viability and relevancy in accordance with the public interest. The National Park Service has accepted as a guide in formulating management programs—including law enforcement—the philosophy of Thomas Jefferson, who wrote:

. . . laws and institutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind. As that becomes more developed, more enlightened, as new discoveries are made, new truths discovered and manners and opinions change, with the change of circumstances, institutions must advance also to keep pace with the times . . ."

The National Park Service is such an institution that must “. . . advance . . . to keep pace with the times . . .” We believe we are doing so in upholding our law-enforcement responsibilities.

We are committed to measures that will achieve a professional stance in law enforcement through adhering to the highest principles of justice and the preservation of individual rights and liberties.

The record demands timely and equitable enforcement of Park regulations and other laws. But it is expected that enforcement actions be executed with that degree of professionalism that does not impair the quality of park experience that the public rightfully expects.

Finally, in further observance of Jefferson's caution that institutions change, the National Park Service has sought innovations in management programs to meet the special needs of special segments of our society.

In the National Capital Parks of Washington, D. C., and at Mount Rainier and Olympic National Parks in Washington State, funds especially appropriated by the Congress provide free busing for minority and disadvantaged children into the nearby Parks from Washington's inner city and from the depressed neighborhoods of Seattle and Tacoma. Special programs ranging from rock-music concerts to interpretive programs to camping and hiking outings are offered. This effort has been accepted enthusiastically in its initial application and offers encouragement that it should be extended to other Parks throughout the country. In Washington, D. C., it has proved to act as an effective deterrent to vandalism in the parks.

A recently inaugurated program known as Volunteer-in-the-Parks offers an opportunity for youngsters, and older people as well, to work as volunteers in Park programs. Volunteers serve without pay but receive compensation for costs of commuting, meals while on the job, and the cost of needed uniforms or required special clothing. The response has convincingly demonstrated the interest of citizens of every age and background in public service ranging from period costumed interpreters in historical areas of the Park System to performers in craft demonstrations to manning of public information desks in Park visitor centers. The Volunteers not only get a “piece of the action” but are found to be an effective non-bureaucratic means of communicating with park visitors.

These measures are challenging park managers to seek new ideas and fresh approaches in meeting the needs of today's public. They suggest interesting possibilities in responding to the unconventional interests and desires of today's youth such as recently occurred at the Padre Island National Seashore in Texas. There, 3,000 young people from the Corpus Christi area asked for, and received, permission to stage a weekend rock festival on the beach. The event was staged without incident, although accompanied by the array of bizarre behavioral patterns associated with such gatherings. At the close of the affair the Superintendent, who initially viewed it with apprehension, reported that the kids effectively policed their “happening” with a minimum of need for surveillance by the Park staff—and they left the beach cleaner than it was when they arrived.