

# WASO SOCIAL SCIENCE PROGRAM

3/8/91

#37

## ITEMS OF INTEREST V

**Lake Clark flap  
pits park officials  
against residents**

**Some say Yellowstone Park attracts too many tourists for its own good**

**The federal role in outdoor  
recreation**

**NPS proposes snowmobiling on  
Teton National Park roadways**

**Ins and Outs: Staying in a Job,  
Saving, Seen as Trends for the '90s**

***Park plan means tourism, jobs, pride***



# United States Department of the Interior



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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IN REPLY REFER TO:

March 8, 1991

Memorandum

To: Park Superintendents

From: Assistant to the Director for Science and Technology

Subject: **ITEMS OF INTEREST V**

1. **NOTICE.** The first **SOCIAL SCIENCE FOR MANAGERS** training course will be presented at HATC during the week of May 6, 1991. Participation will be scheduled through Regional Training Offices per standard procedures. Content will be as outlined in my Superintendents' Memo #8:

- . . economic impacts of parks;
- . . crowding and carrying capacity;
- . . visitor surveys: costs, options, and how to proceed;
- . . use of socio-economic data in planning activities;
- . . development of Human Resources Management Plans;
- . . trends: visitor and visitor use patterns; and
- . . a series of NPS socio-economic case studies.

2. **RECESSION TRAVEL PATTERNS.** How do Americans' travel patterns change during recessions? Travel and Tourism looked at vacation travel data for the 1981 - 82 recession period and came up with the following:

- . . The number of weekend and other short duration trips fell about 33% during the '81-82 recession; much of this decrease resulted from fewer trips to visit friends and relatives. Conversely, the number of vacation trips of a week or more increased by 30%.
- . . Vacation trips to destinations less than 500 miles from home fell 25%; vacation trips to destinations over 500 miles distant increased by 20%.

The explanation here is that short trips frequently are discretionary in nature; they are regarded as "luxuries" by consumers, and are among activities typically cut back during tough economic times. Conversely, longer duration, longer distance vacation trips usually are put more in the "necessity" category by travelers, and tend to be maintained during recessionary periods.

Two additional Travel and Tourism observations:

- . . vacation plans of retired seniors are not changed significantly during economic slowdowns; and
- . . vacationing Americans frequently leave children at home during recessionary periods as a cost-cutting measure.

3. **1990 VISITATION STATISTICS.** Preliminary data indicate that NPS recreation visits increased about 0.8 percent in CY 90. The annual growth rate for the 5-year 1985-1990 period was approximately 2.9 percent per year.

4. **CONFLICT MANAGEMENT: SIMILAR VERSUS DISSIMILAR USER GROUPS.** A recently completed visitor survey of Everglades NP wintertime backcountry users has provided basic data for formulating a new Backcountry Use Management Plan for the park. Among the issues explored in the Texas A&M study were visitor conflicts and crowding as perceived by motorboaters and canoeists. While backcountry visitors in general reported some dissatisfaction with the number of other people encountered, the sense of crowding was much more pronounced amongst canoeists versus motorboaters:

- . . As regards the number of motorboats encountered, 46% of the canoeists expressed dissatisfaction, compared to only 11% of the motorboaters.
- . . As regards the number of canoes encountered, 4% of the canoeists expressed dissatisfaction, compared to 11% of the motorboaters.

The observation drawn from these data is that potential crowding problems in the Everglades backcountry environment can be alleviated more effectively by selectively reducing the likelihood of encounters between different types of users (e.g., canoeists vs motorboaters) than by reducing the total number of encounters. Similar findings have been reported for perceived conflict and crowding situations involving campground users (RV'ers vs tent campers), backcountry users (hikers vs horsebackers), water-based recreationists (water skiers vs rafters), etc. The message as relates to visitor management options is clear: the tolerance level for encounters between visitors who have similar recreation interests is much greater than the tolerance level for encounters between visitors who have dissimilar interests.

5. **CARRYING CAPACITY: UPPER DELAWARE SCENIC AND RECREATIONAL RIVER.** The latest edition of Park Science contains an excellent article summarizing the findings of six years of research dealing with visitor use, and misuse, of the Upper Delaware. The conclusions are interesting:

- o Yes, there are significant and persistent problems on the Upper Delaware caused by recreational river users.

- Yes, these problems frequently are exacerbated by increased levels of visitor use.
- But setting carrying capacity limits on numbers of users is NOT the preferred way to deal with these problems. The reason: The severity and the very existence of the visitor-related problems encountered on the Upper Delaware related more to behavior patterns of the visitors than to the number of visitors.

Conclusion . . . appropriate management responses for the Upper Delaware do not call for imposing carrying capacity limits on use, at least not at this time, but instead call for a series of carefully structured management actions that involve: improved visitor education; more effective law enforcement; better sited visitor facilities and services; and better visitor understanding of expected river use etiquette and necessary outdoor skills. These required management initiatives were developed by focusing attention initially on a very fundamental question: WHAT SHOULD BE THE APPROPRIATE RIVER RECREATION USE ON THE UPPER DELAWARE, rather than by trying to address separately each of the individual social, recreational and ecological problems caused by visitors. This is a valuable approach to consider when a manager faces visitor-related issues that appear to require establishing carrying capacity limits.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rich Briceland", written in a cursive style.

Richard H. Briceland