

# WASO SOCIAL SCIENCE PROGRAM

11/26/91 #56

## MARKETING & VISITATION

Battle Involving U.S. Parks  
Pits Beauty Against Growth

Popularity strains  
U.S. park system

**Parks Reaching a New Age**

Critical Environmental  
Questions

Fiftysomething — and in Charge

**Some say humans  
are the problem**

Recreation trends and  
public lands tourism

National Parks not so restful  
Crowds are overwhelming  
the national park system

The federal role in outdoor  
recreation

**Crowd crunch, budget bind  
tarnish nation's crown jewels**



# United States Department of the Interior



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

P.O. BOX 37127

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20013-7127

IN REPLY REFER TO:

November 26, 1991

Memorandum

To: Park Superintendents

From: Assistant to the Director for Science and Technology

Subject: **MARKETING AS RELATES TO INCREASED PARK VISITATION**

The growing importance of the economic benefits of parks raises questions about whether it might be appropriate to place additional emphasis on tourism marketing efforts, both to increase visitation levels at lesser utilized areas and also to stimulate additional visits from foreign countries. Is tourism marketing cost-effective? The answer appears to be a resounding yes, with quoted numbers of typically \$5 - \$9 returned for every \$1 invested in this type of advertising. The Canadian government has been very active, and successful, in marketing their national parks to U. S. tourists. With the worldwide stature and recognition afforded our National Parks, marketing efforts in the U. S. could be equally effective.

The outstanding popularity of the national parks in the eyes of tens of thousands of foreign tourists, coupled with major dollar outlays in this country by foreign visitors, suggests a very substantial economic potential for the future. The profit opportunities here are so great and the national economic benefits in terms of balance of trade and new jobs so favorable, that personally I am convinced we soon will see systematic, coordinated and heavily-funded marketing of the national parks. The three paramount questions are (1) when, (2) will marketing efforts be designed solely to maximize business profits or will there be more balanced objectives, and (3) will the NPS be participants or observers in this process? Will we be actively involved in developing and implementing a responsible park-tourism marketing strategy, or will we reactively find ourselves in the position of having to serve rapidly expanding numbers of more diverse visitors, but with increasingly inadequate operating dollars and people resources. My estimate is that some 10 - 12 billion dollars per year of U. S. economic activity stems from combined direct and indirect sales of goods and services associated with park-related foreign visitor expenditures - - or roughly 10 times the total operating budget of the NPS. Will we have the opportunity to argue that some significant portion of these enormous park-generated foreign tourism monies should be diverted to help protect the very assets on which those expenditures depend? Or will we have to make do budgetwise with whatever a strained Federal treasury can provide, while others reap the benefits at the expense of the parks? These are timely, relevant and important issues, and I think that we need to begin to look seriously at the question of what role the Service should play as relates to future opportunities to influence foreign tourism visitation to the National Park System.

As part of that process, we also may wish to develop a much better understanding of how we might use different marketing techniques and strategies to influence general visitation patterns of our own citizens, with an eye toward perhaps further

popularizing some of our lesser known and underutilized areas. If we should choose to move in this direction, we further will need to look closely at the growth and possible redistribution of resources that would be necessary both to accommodate new visitors and also to provide the expanded recreation opportunities, facilities and services that would serve to draw additional tourists to current and future park areas. Even today when we do planning for new units, we typically base projected use on historic patterns of visitation growth as experienced in the past under similar circumstances. Effective marketing could change visitation use patterns markedly, particularly if accompanied by new attractions, expanded facilities, convenient transportation access, and the mix of private/public infrastructure needed to support a marketing-driven desired level of visitation.

There are many choices here. Perhaps it is time that we start to think about them.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dick Briceland". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "B".

Richard H. Briceland