

WASO SOCIAL SCIENCE PROGRAM

12/5/91 #57

ITEMS OF INTEREST XII

America Faces Middle Age

Tempers rising as park studies expansion needs

Recreation vs. conservation

Park plan means tourism, jobs, pride

Recreation trends and public lands tourism

New park can be political plum

Inholders vs. 'The Park'

The Changing Climate of Environmental Opinion

A glimpse of the '90s

Crowds threaten U.S. park system

Traffic, pollution problems grow



IN REPLY REFER TO:

United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20013-7127



December 5, 1991

Memorandum

To: Park Superintendents

From: Assistant to the Director for Science and Technology

Subject: **ITEMS OF INTEREST XII**

1. MUST TOURISM POSE A THREAT TO PARKS? Professor Emeritus Clare A. Gunn, Texas A&M, writing in a recent issue of *TRENDS*, sees it this way:

"No, tourism need not threaten parks. Yes, tourism and parks are compatible provided that joint planning and management programs are put in place."

However, Dr. Gunn also emphasizes that there are a number of critical barriers that can adversely impact cooperation among those in the public and private sectors who support the tourism/recreation industry . . . i.e., the park or other attraction component in the public sector, and the transportation, services, information and promotion components in the private sector. Some of the major constraints and points of controversy that often need to be addressed are the following:

- Turf protection that precludes staff interaction with outsiders;
- Overheated confrontation between environmentalists and developers that prevents cool-headed discussion of mutual interests;
- Legal mandates that proscribe agency functions so much that outside cooperation is prohibited or discouraged;
- Lack of personnel, public and private, trained in multidisciplinary tourism interaction;
- Philosophical and ideological differences that set apart public and private factors as adversaries;
- Misunderstanding by tourism and park developers of the entire day-by-day travel spectrum of tourists that requires integration of all supply-side functions; and
- Lack of area-wide approaches to planning and developing parks and tourism service centers as integrated land units.

Professor Gunn's suggestions for responding to these kinds of conflicts involve many actions being initiated by Superintendents throughout the System, for example:

- Hiring staff who have interdisciplinary training that includes knowledge of the tourism industry;
- Negotiating agreements with the tourism industry to establish mutually acceptable practices and expectations;
- Joint coordination with tourism interests regarding the scheduling, distribution, movement and management of visitors and the delivery of park interpretive services and other recreation opportunities so as to reduce pressures on environmentally sensitive areas and to mitigate local overcrowding conditions;
- Establishing channels of communication with tourism representatives to provide for routine identification and airing of differences; and
- Joint planning with tourism interests to insure that tourism industry activities are consistent with natural and cultural resource preservation policies and consistent also with the opportunity for all visitors to have a quality park experience.

2. GIS AND SOCIAL SCIENCE ISSUES AT THE BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY.

The SERO recently issued a report dealing with use of GIS technology to investigate social science issues along the Blue Ridge Parkway. In the study, GIS digital mapping is employed to represent multiple data sets at visitor use sites along the Parkway - - i. e., recreation areas and scenic vistas; scenic ratings of each vista; use levels at each recreation area; visitor-perceived quality ratings of each recreation area; average income levels of visitors to the various recreation areas; average trip expenditures of visitors to the various recreation areas; and 10-mile radius buffer zone exclusion areas for those scenic vistas that receive highest visitor use. One of the more interesting applications of GIS technology in the Blue Ridge situation is for assessing, a' priori, the potential impacts of various activities that might be proposed along the parkway . . . for example, the impacts of proposed future clearcutting adjacent private or Forest Service lands; siting of a proposed landfill; siting of a proposed housing development project; etc. By overlaying digitized topographic features on top of visitor GIS data sets, one automatically can plot line-of-sight intrusion areas for the various scenic vistas along the Parkway, or can produce images of what the visitor would see with prescribed levels of development. Then, by combining this information with other information such as visitation use data at these scenic vistas, the importance and uniqueness of the site, the scenic quality of the site, and other relevant features, one can make a comparative assessment of the impacts that a proposed activity (clearcutting, etc.) would have on the use and enjoyment of the Parkway. This is a very powerful technique, and one that can be used effectively by Superintendents to identify and evaluate potential impacts before they occur.

Work is continuing on the Blue Ridge GIS project. Those who are interested in receiving copies of the 9/91 report may contact Regional Sociologist Dr. Frank Noe at the SERO, FTS 8-841-4916: "How a Geographical Information System Serves as an Interpretive Management Tool for Multiple Data Sets."

3. RESPONSIVE MANAGEMENT is a non-profit organization that works on wildlife and conservation matters and related recreation-oriented activities. Their constituents include the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, State Game and Fish Departments throughout the country; numerous State Parks and Recreation Departments, etc. Their projects include public opinion surveys, economic impact studies, assessments of public attitudes toward wildlife and wildlife management activities, focus group research, trends analyses, etc. I want to make you aware of this organization because they may be able to provide you with socio-economic data and other off-the-shelf information that you would find extremely useful - - - for example, survey results showing attitudes of Wyoming residents on wolf reintroduction issues; results of a statewide outdoor recreation surveys showing levels of interest and participation rates in various recreation activities; or survey results showing public attitudes toward hunting, fishing and other nature-oriented activities. If interested, contact Responsive Management at 3375 Capital Circle, NE, Building F, Suite 205, Tallahassee, FL 32308-3736; (904) 422-3709.

4. APPROPRIATE USES. The October issue of Recreation Executive Report cites growing controversy over use and misuse of NPS areas:

"Activities at Manassas and other sites have included sunbathing, kite flying and horseback riding, raising the ire of Civil War enthusiasts who consider these activities inappropriate.

Conflicts are getting nastier - not just over the battlefields, but in multiuse debates of public lands across the country, especially in the West - between preservationists and those who support activities for offroad vehicles and snowmobiles, to boaters and developers.

This time the opposing sides are history buffs and recreational users, though both groups have provided strong support in ongoing fights to preserve the battlefields against encroaching development.

Some Solutions. At Kennesaw Mountain, rangers have set aside three areas for frisbees, picnicking, ball playing and other recreational activities, which are banned in other parts of the park.

To protect the Petersburg (Va.) battlefield site, city officials had to enact laws to cope with people who came to the park to wash their cars and change motor oil; park officials banned many recreational activities that were

affecting the fortifications built during an 1864-1865 siege. Three years ago, a Park Service \$3 entrance fee for cars sharply reduced casual use of the site."

5. EXPLAINING VISITOR ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOR. Forest Service social scientist, Dr. Alan Ewert writing in a recent issue of TRENDS, has identified a number of factors that collectively influence individuals' attitudes toward the land, and how people behave in natural environment settings. For example:

Sociological Factors

Sense of place
Social status
Group normative behavior
Economic background
Perceptions of ownership
Achievement orientation

Site Perception Factors

Intensity of use
Environmental pollution
Urban encroachment
Law enforcement
Management orientation

I bring these factors to your attention for two reasons: first, because they illustrate the linkage that exists between demographic, cultural, and other social-economic considerations on the one hand, versus efforts to protect and preserve resources on the other. And the second reason is to emphasize that if there is a strong cause-and-effect relationship between selected sociological and demographic characteristics of visitors and how those visitors behave in our parks, then clearly these are the kinds of socio-economic factors that need to be examined very carefully when we conduct visitor surveys. Currently, our survey questionnaires routinely focus attention on visitor activities such as where visitors go in the parks, what they do, and how they spend their time. However, it is equally important to gather information about visitor values, attitudes, past experiences, beliefs, perceptions, expectations and cultural backgrounds.

These sociological data can be instrumental in pointing the way toward management actions that can change visitor behavior so as to accomplish protection and preservation objectives. It is primarily for this reason that the Visitor General User Survey that WASO will begin to implement in FY-93 contains numerous questions dealing with attitudes, values, etc. And finally, I might suggest that Superintendents who are planning park-specific visitor surveys also may wish to gather data about some of these attitudes and values issues. This may help you understand WHY visitors do what they do, and this well may turn out to be the most important information learned from your survey.



Richard H. Briceland