

WASO SOCIAL SCIENCE PROGRAM

6/18/92 #67

ITEMS OF INTEREST XV

THE AGING GENERATION
AMERICANS BORN BETWEEN 1946-1964 ARE PROJECTED TO BE THE
LARGEST ELDERLY POPULATION IN HISTORY

*Worldwatch Report Calls 1990's
Decisive Decade for Environment*

**Outdoor Recreation a Social Activity;
Enthusiasts Plan to Try New Sports**

Group Targets Environmental Movement

*'We are integrating
parks right into our
own backyards and
into our daily lives.'*

**Visitors Prefer Park Values to
Oil and Gas Development**

*Not Everyone's
Glad About Greenways*

**Property-Rights Advocates
Fight Against Restrictions**

*Number of Elderly Will Double by 2030,
Setting off Competition for Resources*



United States Department of the Interior



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

P.O. BOX 37127

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20013-7127

IN REPLY REFER TO:

June 18, 1992

Memorandum

To: Park Superintendents

From: Assistant to the Director for Science and Technology

Subject: Items of Interest

SOCIAL SCIENCE TRAINING, MAR. Dr. Jeff Marion, Social Science Coordinator for the MAR, recently conducted a two-day Social Science Short Course at Virginia Tech University. The course was designed to accomplish three things: (1) to assist park personnel in identifying social science applications and research needs; (2) to develop techniques for formulating funding requests for social science work; and (3) to deal with ways of using social science information effectively in addressing park management needs. Those who are interested in reviewing some of the output materials can contact Jeff at the Virginia Tech Cooperative Parks Study Unit on (703) 231-6603 . . . for example:

- - Recommended procedures for identifying social science research needs.
- - Guidelines for drafting social science project statements.
- - Examples of social science project statements.

THE ECONOMICS OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION. Studies completed recently for the National Trust for Historic Preservation have analyzed the economic and fiscal consequences of historic preservation activities in the communities of Fredericksburg, Virginia, and Galveston, Texas. These studies demonstrate two things: First, that a historic preservation initiative can result in a broad spectrum of economic and other benefits to a community . . . for example, benefits associated with: revitalization of declining downtown areas; aesthetically and architecturally-controlled development; maintenance of the historic character and culture of an area; enhanced private and commercial property values; improved public services; and expanded tourism. Secondly, the two National Trust studies demonstrate that a practical methodology exists for quantifying the values of these various historic preservation-related benefits, and for determining how historic preservation initiatives impact a community's economic and fiscal condition as measured by job opportunities created, tax revenues generated, and new business activity. Those who are interested in identifying and quantifying the economic impacts of historic preservation initiatives may contact the National Trust's publication office at (202) 673-4255 for further information, re "The Economic Benefits of Preserving Community Character: A Practical Methodology".

VISITOR ATTITUDES AND MANAGEMENT ACTIONS. Dr. Frank Noe, Regional Social Scientist for the Southeast Region, has co-authored a paper dealing with an issue of considerable importance to all resource management agencies, namely the paradox that exists between what people say are their environmental attitudes versus the actions that individuals actually take in the environment. The findings in the study were derived from a visitor survey conducted at Biscayne National Park. Essentially, what was done in this survey was to examine park visitors' responses to proposed management actions that would help protect the park environment and park resources, but that at the same time would result in varying degrees of constraint on what visitors could or could not do while in the park. In other words, the Biscayne survey was intended to determine how visitor support for resource protection measures was influenced by individual perceptions as to how those proposed resource protection measures would affect them personally. The visitors who were selected to participate in the survey were primarily direct users of the Bay's resources (fishermen, scuba divers, boaters, swimmers, etc.). These visitors first were asked a series of questions about their environmental values. They then were asked to respond to 16 possible management actions, each of which was designed to protect or to enhance the quality of the Bay's resources, or to provide improved water safety to different user groups. The results were as follows:

- Direct users of the Bay expressed strong ecological values. They exhibited pro-environmental attitudes that essentially were no different from environmental values and attitudes of more passive recreational visitors to Biscayne National Park (sightseers, etc.).
- Users of the Bay actively supported those proposed pro-environment management actions that were indirect and less personal in nature, such as informational and instructional campaigns or water safety and litter control programs.
- Users of the Bay also tended to support maintaining the status quo for current regulatory practices, despite the fact that these regulatory practices often place limits or constraints on their own personal actions. This perhaps means that a level of tolerance builds up over time regarding the acceptability of "old regulations".
- Conversely, users of the Bay showed significantly less support for proposed pro-environment management actions that would change existing conditions, if those changes would tend to constrain their personal activities.

SUMMARY. The Biscayne NP survey examined the relationship between visitor attitudes toward the environment versus the level of support visitors actually may be willing to give to management actions that would protect resources or enhance the park environment, but at a cost of impacting their personal behavior. The data show clearly that how an individual stands to benefit or lose affects that person's perceptions about proposed changes. The study also shows that publically expressed attitudinal beliefs about the environment or about ecological values may

not be a good indicator for predicting responses to proposed management actions designed to benefit the environment. The study concludes that "In the future it is not enough to judge management options or issues on the basis of how park users feel about these actions. It will be necessary to investigate the personal relevance of management issues on the bases of how they will restrict or control the user's activities."

Those who may be interested in reviewing the Biscayne NP report may contact Dr. Noe at the Southeast Regional Office on (404) 331-4916.

SOME OBSERVATIONS. Much currently is being written about changing family demographics, discretionary income levels, extended work weeks, less vacation time, etc. These all are matters that affect public recreation activities, and hence the use of the National Parks. Following are some published statistics that you may find interesting:

Single-parent families. The number of children in single-parent families has increased from 5.5% in 1960 to nearly 15% today. With roughly 50% of all current marriages projected to end in divorce, this trend is expected to continue.

Working women. Many more women are working, some by professional choice, others by necessity. The number of two-earner families continues to increase.

Work time. With the current economic uncertainties, and with sharply increasing costs for health care and benefits, more employers are choosing to pay overtime wages rather than hire new workers. Many who are employed have additional discretionary dollars, but less time available for leisure activities. Those who are jobless face just the opposite situation.

Leisure time. Taken as a whole, the amount of leisure time available to all Americans is increasing, driven in large measure by more people retiring at an early age and living longer. Ergo an expectation of many more senior visitors in the years ahead. However, this is not the scenario that applies to two-earner families with children. This particular subset of the population is working longer hours, earns a relatively high income, and generally functions at a hectic pace. They frequently are described as being on a treadmill . . . forced to run faster and work harder just to stay in place. Family members often have schedules that conflict. For them vacation planning frequently is difficult, particularly for trips far from home that last more than a few days. Note. The preliminary results from our eight-

park field test of the General User Survey indicated the following dominant visitor characteristics: 70 - 80% were family groups, most with children; 60 - 70% were from two-earner families; nearly 50% were in the top 20 percent income category. Thus, what happens to the two-earner-family segment of the population is very important to us.

SOCIAL SCIENCE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM (SSMP). A total of more than 350 social science research needs were identified and forwarded to me by 149 parks, with an estimated multi-year price tag of \$25 million. A request for FY-94 funding to support these projects has been submitted to the WASO Budget Office. If we are successful here, the Social Science Management Program will be established next year, with 100 percent of appropriated dollars going directly to fund field socio-economic research projects. Thank you to all who participated in this initiative.

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