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PROCEEDINGS OF THE 1990 NORTHEASTERN RECREATION RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM

FEBRUARY 25-28, 1990

SARATOGA SPRINGS, NEW YORK



NORTHEASTERN RECREATION RESEARCH MEETING POLICY STATEMENT

The Northeast Recreation Research meeting seeks to foster quality information exchange between recreation and travel resource managers and researchers throughout the Northeast. The forum provides opportunities for managers from different agencies and states, and from different governmental levels, to discuss current issues and problems in the field. Students and all those interested in continuing education in recreation and travel resource management are particularly welcome.

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The Steering Committee wishes to thank John Nelson for his assistance in developing the conference data base.

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RECREATION RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM**

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State Parks Management and Research Institute

Saratoga Springs, New York

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RECREATION IN THE 1990's

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The National Park Service is pleased to participate in this year's Northeastern Recreation Research Symposium. I am familiar with the work that many of the participants do through my involvement in recent years in the National Society for Park Resources, as well as the National Park Service.

For those who are not familiar with the inner workings of the Service affecting recreation research, our organization reflects the duality of our mission. Since 1916, the National Park Service has been charged with preserving resources and helping the public enjoy them. An Associate Director for Natural Resources, Dr. Eugene Hester, and an Assistant for Science and Technology coordinate and fund social scientists throughout the Service. On the other side of the table, an Associate Director for Operations and a Chief of Interpretation direct the Visitor Survey Project headed by Dr. Gary Machlis of the University of Idaho. These studies are funded directly by the parks that benefit.

A number of major efforts are now underway at the national level. We are planning to collect visitor baseline data, including demographics, values, expectations, and behavior. We will begin this summer to begin at a number of indicator parks throughout the country, repeating these surveys at three to five-year intervals to establish trends.

With the dramatic growth in visitor use of national parks, projected to total 357 million annually by the year 2000, we anticipate the potential for intergroup conflict. We recently have initiated a sociological carrying capacity research project. It will not attempt to set numerical limits for parks or specific facilities. Instead, we will develop comprehensive guidelines to help park managers recognize and control conditions that contribute to crowding or conflict.

Another example of work in progress in our intent to become more involved in the economic and marketing aspects of park visitation. We need to coordinate our programs with state park authorities, with other Federal agencies that provide recreational services, with neighboring

communities, and with the private tourism sector. By learning more about the economics of our parks we can broaden the range of constructive dialogue about common interests.

Finally, the National Park Service plans in the long run to use social science to develop Human Resource Management Plans for parks, balancing the detailed professional plans we have to manage natural and cultural resources. At Glacier National Park and Gateway National Recreation Area current research will give us information to prepare demonstration Human Resource Management Plans. This experience can be replicated over the next two to three years in one park in each of our ten regions, giving us a sound basis for further research and planning to make informed decisions on allocating available staff and funds.

The National Park Service commends your efforts to share your work in a wide range of important fields. There is a formidable recreation challenge for us in the 1990's, and only by working together like this can we hope to muster the knowledge necessary to succeed.

THE CHALLENGE OF RECREATION MANAGEMENT IN AN ERA
OF INCREASING ENVIRONMENTAL STRESS FROM THE PERS-
PECTIVE OF A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

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Outdoor recreation managers are facing overwhelming public demand for quality recreation opportunities. This challenge can be met through application of ecosystem management principles, better research into the needs of the resources and the users, adoption of professional standards for managers, and increased public education.

Thank you for giving me this great opportunity to participate in what looks to be a very informative and productive conference. I regret that not more representatives of conservation organizations are in attendance because their goals for the environment very much depend upon adequate research of all types.

Today I would like to address the challenges before recreation managers in this era of increasing environmental stress. I would like to focus my comments on the national park system because I think that the challenge facing national park managers are similar to those being faced by many recreation managers. What I would like to do is briefly review the primary stresses facing the national parks, and then discuss some of the recommendations that have been made for responding to these stresses. Finally, I would like to offer some comments on emerging recreation trends that are going to define outdoor recreation, not only in the next decade, but in the next century.

Probably the greatest collection of outdoor recreation settings in this country is contained within our national park system. This fact is not lost on the American public which has increasingly sought out the parks for those opportunities. Although the system has enjoyed sporadic bursts of expansion over its 74 years, its size has not kept up with demand. In 1946, visits totalled less than 20 million to the then 133 units of the system. That equalled 150,000 visits per unit. By 1960, there were 133 million visits to the 200 units comprising the system. That equalled 665,000 visits per unit. In 1989, there were 289 million recreational visits to 354 units which averages to more than 790,000 per unit (Szwak 1988). And there does not appear to be any leveling out in this demand. As a result of this trend, some park areas are so crowded on weekends and holidays that the qualities for which they were established are threatened.

Since the early 1960's, there have been calls for establishing visitor limits at the parks. In 1978, Congress complied and mandated in the National

Park and Recreation Act (P.L. 95-625) that visitor capacities should be established for all national park system units via the general management planning process. Over the years, the parks most concerned about visitor impacts have applied a number of impact reduction mechanisms ranging from boardwalks in popular alpine areas to locking the gates of Yosemite Valley after a certain number of vehicles have entered. But very few to date have attempted comprehensive park analyses of the visitor activity in the park. This is in a large part due to not knowing how to conduct such analyses and not having adequate baseline information on visitor activity.

As many of you know, NPCA has been working with Alan Graefe, Jerry Vaske and Fred Kuss in the development of a methodology to assist managers and planners in meeting this mandate. And a number of other people in this room have assisted us along the way. A literature synthesis that analyzes the current research and theories on visitor impacts to ecological resources and visitor experiences has been prepared. And we have drafted a guidebook on the visitor impact methodology we have developed. Both are to be published this spring.

As the Park Service continues to attempt to walk the tightrope between preservation and public enjoyment in this era of increasing environmental stress, it will need a longer and longer balancing pole. We hope that planning processes such as the ones we have devised and others, such as Levels of Acceptable Change, will help the Park Service in this balancing act.

It's not only the visitor pressures within the parks that are challenging park managers, but the pressure of civilization pushing on the parks from outside their boundaries. It has become increasingly apparent that most park boundaries--drawn to suit political rather than ecosystem realities--are inadequate to protect their resources. Since World War II, the wilderness that surrounded parks and served as a buffer has retreated before man's advance, slowly transforming park areas into threatened ecological islands (NPCA 1988b.) The stress of this ecological isolation is making the health and thus the recreational enjoyment of these areas even more precarious. Inspirational natural and cultural vistas are being lost to housing developments. Air and water pollution from nearby towns are pushing park resources to the brink.

These growing internal and external pressures on the parks demand bold and comprehensive policies and programs. Last year a blue-ribbon Commission on Research and Resource Management Policy in the National Park System was convened, with the assistance of NPCA, to provide guidance in the development of such policies. It produced a report, NATIONAL PARKS: FROM VIGNETTES TO A GLOBAL VIEW that proposed a new vision for the National Park Service to ensure its survival and the enhancement of the national park system (Commission on Research and Resource Management Policy in the National Park System 1989).

The Commission's vision is based on the principles of ecosystem management grounded in sound

research. It concluded that "the National Park Service cannot manage what it does not understand." (Commission 1989:1). The Commission recommends that the National Park Service focus on four major tasks:

First, it should "develop and use the concept of ecosystem management, emphasizing the relationship among the natural and cultural resources of the system, and recognizing that an ecosystem encompasses past and present human activities. Units of the national park system must become premier examples of the integration of natural and cultural values and systems." According to the Commission, there are few other opportunities for such developments (Commission 1989:1).

Secondly, it recommended that a research program should be implemented "to meet the needs of the National Park Service and to educate the public. Cooperative research, undertaken in conjunction with other federal and state agencies, universities, and private groups, can be the key to integrated management of ecosystems that include lands outside formal park boundaries. Studies in the natural sciences, in history and historic preservation, ethnography, archeology, and social science are all fundamental." The Commission believes, "it is critical that the National Park Service understand its resources and its visitors and integrate human activity successfully into park management." The Commission further stated that "the research program should draw in and draw on outstanding researchers in appropriate fields, promote information-sharing with other nations conserving world resources, and move generally toward improving the quality of life (Commission 1989:1)

I would like to digress from the Commission's report here a moment to also mention that according to an analysis of the National Park Service's research program conducted by NPCA in 1987, the role of research in the National Park Service is ill-defined, primarily due to a lack of specific legislative mandate making natural, cultural and social science an essential element of its mission. (NPCA 1988a). Conservationists are currently drafting legislation to address this and other inadequacies in the National Park Service's protection mandate.

NPCA also believes that the National Park Service should request from Congress a budget line item for research equivalent to ten percent of its budget rather than the traditional two to three percent (NPCA 1988a).

Back to the Commission's recommendations. The Commission's third broad recommendation was that professional standards should be adopted "for the recruitment, promotion and continued education and development of the people who manage the national park system. The increasingly complicated and technical tools needed to manage complex systems demand a high degree of professionalization." The Commission declared that "the organizational ethos of the National Park Service should be now reflect this in a fully professional staff (Commission 1989:1).

Finally, the Commission urged that the American and international publics be educated about natural and cultural systems and the ways which they change. "This education should be primarily an outward goal of the National Park Service. Education of the public is a critical output of the system, linking diverse sites, their values and purposes, and illuminating what is happening to natural and cultural resources both inside and outside the system." According to the Commission, "education goals should be established for each unit of the national park system." The Commission urged that these goals become tools with which to guide management and that they must contribute to the development of a conservation ethic among all segments of society, including those traditionally underrepresented in park constituencies, such as minorities, single-parent households, the handicapped, and the economically disadvantaged (Commission 1989:2).

This lack of public understanding of natural and cultural processes as addressed by the Commission was highlighted by the public's panic reaction to the Yellowstone fires of 1988. As R.W. Sellars (1989) points out in a recent article for Wilderness magazine, "pretty scenery creates an illusion of environmental health. Leaving parks 'unimpaired' in the public's mind has applied primarily to the parks' scenery, not the subtle elements of the biological community."

Yet I believe that the public can learn about the needs of our parks and other outdoor recreation settings. Not since the early 1970's has the environment as a whole enjoyed the wide public concern that it has today. Proof of the significance of this public interest was dramatically demonstrated when President Bush declared during the 1988 presidential campaign that he wanted to be known as the environmental president. The public's growing concern for the fate of the environment similarly has prompted the president recently to propose that the Environmental Protection Agency be elevated to a cabinet level position.

As we prepare for the twentieth anniversary of Earth Day, the focus of the environmental movement is "sustainability." Earlier this year, the World Watch Institute predicted in its latest "State of the World" report that unless society achieves sustainability by the year 2020, environmental deterioration and economic decline are likely to be feeding on each other, pulling us into a downward spiral of social disintegration (World Watch Institute 1990). Furthermore, the report acknowledged that this sustainability cannot be achieved without fundamental shifts in human attitudes and behavior.

Perhaps the greatest challenge facing recreation managers then, is to find ways to enhance public support for the research and resource management programs that may not necessarily expand recreation opportunities, but can lead to sustaining those opportunities that do exist. The public needs to understand the interrelatedness of all the resources found in a recreation area. And how the health and thus the enjoyment of that setting depends upon the preservation of all, not just the

obvious and the grand.

The public needs to understand the cumulative effect that their activities both indirect and direct can have upon fragile resources. Furthermore, they need to realize that many of our recreation resources, such as our national parks, are more than scenic recreation settings and refuges from civilization. Once considered worthless lands, our national parks may be invaluable to future generations as we try to understand global environmental change. Our national parks are the barometers by which we will measure the health of the world.

To accomplish this understanding it is going to be critical that the public no longer view itself as merely visitors, but instead partners with management in the preservation of our great outdoor resources. Broad public interest in the management and funding of our outdoor recreation resources must be fostered.

Despite successful education programs to sustain existing recreation resources, we will still need to expand recreation opportunities. It is probably fair to assume that the growth in park visitation that I described earlier is being experienced by most of the outdoor recreation resources in this country.

It will be critical, though, to locate these new recreation opportunities closer to population centers. A Louis Harris poll claims that leisure time for adults has dropped 31 percent since 1973 (Szwak 1988). Three-day weekend excursions are replacing one and two-week vacations. The urban park idea spawned in the late sixties is going to regain momentum--but perhaps not in the same form as it took then. Opportunities to establish large blocks of urban open space are going to be rare. Instead the greenway, greenline park and urban cultural park approaches to recreation planning, as heralded in the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors report, is going to move to the forefront (President's Commission on Americans Outdoors 1987).

Here in New York is the country's largest greenline park, the Adirondacks, the first urban cultural park system and numerous greenway projects. NPCA's New York chapter, the New York Parks and Conservation Association, for example, has been instrumental in the establishment of a greenway featuring the abandoned Delaware and Hudson Canal. The project involves three counties, the National Park Service, local businesses and private citizens. It is also an example of another emerging trend where the federal government is no longer assuming total control of recreation settings and instead is merely providing a support function for local entities and authorities.

The exciting aspect of this greenway and greenline park movement is that it is forcing people to appreciate the environmental and recreational value of the resources in their own backyards. It is also making them realize that in order to make these types of recreational entities work, there must be a great deal of cooperation

on the part of the private and the public sectors. It makes them partners in the management of their own local recreation settings.

In conclusion, national parks and other recreation areas are being pressured by the expansion of our civilization both from within and outside their boundaries. The problems before recreation areas as not new, but the time with which we have to solve them is growing very short. The challenge before us is to both sustain and expand those resources.

The complexity of the pressures upon recreation resources dictate that we adopt an ecosystem approach to management and that we seek to increase the skills and technical abilities of our managers. These pressures, however, will only be eased if the public is educated as to the problems and brought in as partners in the solutions. And I am not just speaking of the actively interested public as represented by conservation groups, but the entire public.

Many of the solutions will depend upon careful and comprehensive research. And support for this research will only come after the public has been made aware of the problems and of the need for research.

Finally, we must face the challenge that the American public is changing and the recreation resources of today may not meet the needs of tomorrow. Emerging recreation trends, such as greenways, greenline parks and urban cultural parks, offer a means to not only meet those needs, but to encourage public involvement in their local and global environment.

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STATE PARKS 2000

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The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources' Bureau of State Parks is undertaking a strategic planning initiative to assess the state park system and to plan for the future to the year 2000 and beyond. The planning process has been successful to date in generating support for the state park system.

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources initiated a strategic planning process to review and assess the Commonwealth's state park system. An extensive study such as this has not been accomplished since the 1960s.

As we approach our hundredth year in 1993, we in the state park system are facing a challenging time. The strategic plan referred to as State Parks 2000 will be completed in the fall of 1990.

Two major issues emerged in the process concerning resort development and financing of the system.

The chronological history of State Parks 2000 is as follows:

1987

1. Secretary Arthur A. Davis issued his "Agenda for the 90s." Included on the agenda was a strategic plan for the state park system.
2. November, 1987. The Bureau of State Parks' staff met at the Kings Gap Environmental Education and Training Center to begin the strategic planning process.

1988

1. Early 1988. DER's Citizen's Advisory Council began its study of the state park system.
2. June, 1988. Secretary Davis met with twelve invited persons at Kings Gap to review the system.
3. July, 1988. The Bureau of State Parks issued its "State of the Parks, 1988" report.
4. Summer, 1988. Citizen's Advisory Council members visited state parks as part of their study.
5. August, 1988. DER held four public meetings at Moraine, Bald Eagle, Ridley Creek, and Frances Slocum State Parks to receive input for the strategic plan.

6. October, 1988. On October 17, 1988, the Citizen's Advisory Council adopted its report, "Pennsylvania State Parks to Your Heirs Forever."

1989

1. Early, 1989. DER staff worked on the questionnaire for public input.
2. May, 1989. DER distributed 120,000 copies of the State Parks 2000 questionnaire (110,000 were either mailed out or distributed at state park offices and 10,000 were mailed out to a "statistical sample" of Pennsylvania residents).
3. June, 1989. the Joint Legislative Air and Water Pollution Control and Conservation Committee of the Pennsylvania General Assembly began its study of the state park system. Seven state parks were visited by Committee members.
4. August 1989. State Parks 2000 questionnaires were returned to the Bureau of State Parks 13,257 were returned).
5. October, 1989. The Joint Legislative Air and Water Pollution Control and Conservation Committee adopted its special report on Pennsylvania State Parks.
6. November, 1989. DER printed 15,000 copies of the "State Parks 2000 Preliminary Plan."
7. December, 1989. DER distributed 10,000 copies of the "State Parks 2000 Preliminary Plan" by mail to those who requested them.

1990

January-February, 1990. Eight public meetings were held throughout the Commonwealth. They were as follows:

<u>DATE</u>	<u>ATTENDANCE</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>
1/16/90	357	Bethlehem, PA
1/18/90	76	Williamsport, PA
1/29/90	185	Erie, PA
1/30/90	240	Monroeville, PA
1/31/90	83	Hollidaysburg, PA
2/13/90	125	Wilkes Barre, PA
2/20/90	250	Norristown, PA
2/21/90	175	Harrisburg, PA

The eight public meetings that were held in January and February, 1990, had a total attendance of 1,491 persons. All meetings were recorded with a standard recording device. The eighth meeting was videotaped by cable Channel 16 in Harrisburg.

In spite of the very high attendance at all meetings by special use groups, there was a great variety of interests presented. Radio controlled model airplane flyers were in attendance in great numbers at all of the meetings. It was an orchestrated effort by the American Modelers Association to show their strength throughout the state.

There were many comments which commended the Department for holding the public meetings while the strategic plan is still in a preliminary stage. At every meeting, all persons in attendance were given an opportunity to present their views.

After listening to all the people at the eight public meetings, discussion issues before and after the meetings, and in reading many letters from citizens, observations relative to various issues as they relate to the Pennsylvania state park system follow:

1. A majority supports or is not in opposition to
 - a. The basic concept of the state park system
 - b. Keeping the state parks natural in character
 - c. Keeping a rustic appearance to our park structures
 - d. Upgrading of the sanitary facilities
 - e. More environmental education
 - f. Increase user fees
 - g. The creation of a park classification system
 - h. More security in campgrounds and marinas
 - i. Adding more staff members
 - j. Adding more trails for mountain bikes and equestrians
 - k. Additional land acquisition
2. A majority opposes
 - a. Resort development in Pennsylvania state parks
 - b. Admission fee
 - c. Excluding special interest groups
3. Many suggestions were offered in lieu of a parking fee. The suggestions are as follows:
 - a. Increase user fees
 - b. Increase General Fund appropriations
 - c. Income tax check off
 - d. Dedicated tax, i.e., real estate transfer tax
 - e. State Park foundation
 - f. Volunteers
 - g. Use Welfare recipients
 - h. Seek corporate donations
 - i. Add a swimming fee or beach fee
 - j. Create a trust fund
 - k. Fee sticker on R/C model airplanes
 - l. Out-of-state visitor license
 - m. Add a fee on the motor vehicle license
 - n. Bond issue
 - o. Charge visitors to campgrounds
 - p. Fines
 - q. State Lottery
 - r. Endowment Fund (Use Oil and Gas Fund)
 - s. Percent of state sales tax
 - t. Oil and Gas Fund for land acquisition

In addition to the foregoing comments, there was not a majority, either pro or con, relative to exploring the feasibility of one or two rustic lodges.

Also, we must determine a way or a system to aid in selecting special uses for the state parks. Because of the unusual amount of interest shown in radio controlled model airplane flying, mountain bike usage, hot air ballooning, horseback riding, camping, and golfing, we are facing decisions on a frequent basis regarding these activities.

The State Parks 2000 initiative has been very successful in terms of generating news media coverage of state parks and in citizen support. The public meetings were well attended and the subsequent news coverage was very supportive. The citizen involvement has been very encouraging and we look forward to completing the plan for our use and guidance in the future.