Maryland State Parks
Diversity and Inclusion Efforts:
Staff Perspectives and Media Reporting

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Objectives

- To provide specific examples on how Maryland State Parks are responding to increased diversity in outdoor recreation.
- To discuss challenges faced by two state parks in Maryland in addressing the needs of diverse users.
- To identify the key messages used by media/social media to report the increase in diversity across Maryland State Parks.
Maryland in Numbers

**2016 Population**
- Total: 6,016,447

**Median Household Income**
- $74,551

**SEX by Age**

**Educational Attainment**

**Race & Origin**

**Poverty**
- 7.0%

**Unemployment**
- 5.0%

**Housing Units**
- 2,410,256

**Households**
- 2,166,389

Sources:
- United States Census Bureau. The US Census Bureau's 2016 Population Estimates dataset for the most current population estimates data.
- The US Census Bureau's 2015 American Community Survey dataset for the most current demographic data by race.
Maryland’s Hispanic population has experienced astonishing growth between 2000 and 2012.

Source: Maryland Department of Planning

US 2010 Census Bureau data
2014-2018 Maryland Land Preservation and Recreation Plan – Key Strategies
Maryland Park Service

66 state parks in MD

The mission of the Maryland Park Service is to manage the natural, cultural, historical and recreational resources to provide for wise stewardship and enjoyment by people.
Resource Map F: State Population Density

This map displays population density in the State of Maryland as reported in the 2010 U.S. Census and displayed by census tract. Most state residents live in the Baltimore/Washington D.C. vicinity.

Note: This map/data reflects the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and the National Park Service assets only.
2010 Maryland State Parks Economic Impact & Visitor Study

- Each year, the network of 66 Maryland State Parks welcomes nearly 10 million day visitors and 1 million visitors who stay overnight in campgrounds and cabins.
- The majority of state park trips are taken with family – 53 percent for day visitors and 79 percent for overnight visitors.
- 48 percent of day visitors and 63 percent of overnight visitors come to the State Parks with children. One in 10 groups came with five or more kids.
- 92 percent of state park day visitors originate in the top five states of Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Washington, D.C., and Delaware. 85 percent of camping groups originate from the top five states – New Jersey ranks as the fifth state of origin.
- Nearly one-third of both day visitors and overnight visitors report an annual household income of more than $100,000.
2010 Maryland State Parks Economic Impact & Visitor Study

Resident Perceptions of Maryland State Parks: An Analysis of Use, Activities, Goals, and Barriers to Visitation (2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/ethnicity</th>
<th>Day visitor respondents</th>
<th>Overnight visitor respondents</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American/Black</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spanish/Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caucasian/White</td>
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<td>Asian/Asian American</td>
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<td>Pacific Islander</td>
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<td>Native American/American Indian</td>
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<td>17.2%</td>
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<th>Preferred language</th>
<th>Day visitor respondents</th>
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<td>English</td>
<td>85.5%</td>
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<td>Spanish</td>
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<td>French</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
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<td>0.7%</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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<td>0.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>No data</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Rocky Gap State Park

- Located in Western Maryland’s Allegany County.
- 3,000 acres of public land for visitors to enjoy.
- Rugged mountains surround the park, featuring 243-acre Lake Habeeb.
- The lake is fed by Rocky Gap Run
- Overlooking the lake is Evitt’s Mountain, named for one of the first European settlers in Allegany County.
Greenbrier State Park

- Greenbrier is a multi-use park providing many kinds of recreation.
- The Appalachian Trail passes through the park.
- The 42-acre man-made lake and beach draw many visitors who enjoy swimming, canoeing, hiking, picnicking, fishing.
- A connector trail to the Appalachian Trail is located in the park.
- ~1,400 acres
Current Situation

- Three visitor groups – Caucasian (weekdays), Hispanic (weekends and weekdays), and African American (weekends)
- Traveling 2 to 3 hours to get to the park – Visitors from Silver Spring MD; DC area; Montgomery County MD; N Virginia
- Hispanic visitors looking for places to recreate around a body of water; engage in picnicking; play soccer; fish; rent the boats;
  
  “Hispanic visitors did not know the nature center was free until we told them”
- Major conflicts between Hispanic and African American visitors
- Minimal bilingual staff – communication a major challenge
- Visitors are not being welcomed in the community (signs: “Illegals out”)
- Staff unapproachable – uniform concerns, “policia” look; staff is primarily Caucasian
Current Situation

- MD Park Service is aware of the increased visitation – they care about diversity and inclusion but they do not necessarily know how to address the needs of diverse visitors
- Efforts to speak with community leaders at various public events
- Staff is encouraging visitors to camp (increase in camping by African Americans was observed)
- A lot of racist behavior is being observed
- Connections with religious leaders were found helpful
- Literacy is a major problem – symbol graphics are being used; challenge when it comes to recycling
- Not enough knowledge (survey for day visits)
New and Increased Efforts to Enhance Visitor Experience

- Interpretive outreach with fluent bilingual Park Interpreter (@Rocky Gap)
- Bilingual signage for information and program announcements
- Collect information on every church bus/van for later contact by letter
- Letter (bilingual) inviting Hispanic/Latino visitors to help in serving their needs more by connecting with the park before their visit.
- Developed taglines for Ranger’s to memorize: If you throw your trash in an appropriate place, you can save wildlife. Si ustedes tiran la basura en un lugar apropiado, pueden salvar animales silvestre.
- Made direct contact with each group performing Baptism—created database for future contact
- Provided information about other parks, areas to visit
Bilingual Signage – Greenbrier State Park
Bilingual Signage – Rocky Gap State Park

Please do not throw toilet paper on the floor!
¡No ponga papel higiénico en el piso de baño, por favor!

If there are any issues with this restroom please call...
Si hay problemas con este cuarto de baño, llama...

Office: 301 722-1480
Duty Ranger: 240 357-4404
New and Increased Efforts to Enhance Visitor Experience

- Hiring minorities, bilingual staff - governor initiative to hire minorities
- Maryland Civic Justice Corps – targets inner city youth
- Hispanic Outreach group formed – programming efforts - “This is my park” “Es mi parque”
- Invest in more grills and picnic tables; add large grills to share
- Organize a church day; link churches – involve local churches
- Housing – tap into the cultural centers

“...visit experience is an important aspect of our mission...”

Jacqueline M. Carrera
CEO & President
Media Reporting

- Not a significant presence in the media – very descriptive of the situation
  Baltimore Sun – “Demographic shift causes state parks to adapt”
- Social media – some messages are being posted in Spanish
- Lack of materials that speak of the importance of inclusiveness in outdoor recreation

Rocky Gap State Park Trip Advisor reviews - “not what it used to be” – “I grew up going to rocky gap. and we took our kids there every summer for the last 10 years. (kids are 10,7,7) but it has gone down hill. not because the new casino either. which does diminish the "family type feeling." But because it is being trashed by ppl coming from mexico. whites&blacks are the minority for sure. which wouldn’t even be an issue, except it gets littered with trash, filth, etc. all over the beach area, picnic area, water, bathrooms, etc.”

Greenbrier State Park Trip Advisor reviews - “Get there at the crack of dawn or you are going to be turned away!!” – “Horrible.....The bathroom was dirty, no Americans and if you don’t get there by 10am, you will be turned away on the weekend.”
The journey continues…

- Costumer service
- Staff preparation – higher education needs to be more involved in recruiting and training minority students
- Hire a state wide liaison for minority recruitment
- Communication, cross-cultural programming and outreach
- Build knowledge – for staff and community – acceptance comes with knowledge
- Media could and should be used to communicate more on the importance of inclusiveness in outdoor recreation – building cultural competence
- Multi-lingual signage, technology, and print publications throughout the DNR system
- High visibility of the Spanish language option on the DNR website
- Gather information on the current situation; measure success
Thank you! Multumesc!
Questions…

Email: nbuto@frostburg.edu