Visitor Use Management Framework and applications from the agencies

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Overview

• Overview on the Interagency Visitor Use Management Council
• Update on the Council’s activities
• Application to agency projects and planning
Importance of Visitor Use Management

Proactively planning for visitor use maximizes the ability of agencies to encourage access and protect resources and values.
Recent Media on Visitor Use Management

Record Visitation Strained Some National Parks This Year, Creating Concern Over What 2016 Might Bring

By Kurt Repanshek on December 8th, 2015

One million visitors.
That seems like a lot for an entire year, and definitely a lot in one month for Yellowstone National Park, which came within 10,000 of achieving that level of visitation.

Yellowstone, after seeing 1,100,000 visitors in July, is riding a 17 percent increase in traffic over last year. Rocky Mountain National Park is up 25 percent, Zion National Park is up 27 percent, and Yosemite National Park is up 16 percent, just to look at some parks.

Forest Service eyes new management system for Maroon Bells–Snowmass Wilderness

By Scott Condon
The Aspen Times

Updated: 2 days ago

It’s party time at the Conundrum Hot Springs in a shot from a recent summer evening. The Forest Service wants to limit visitors through a permit system. (White River National Forest/Courtesy photo)
The Interagency Visitor Use Management Council

Mission:
Provide guidance on long-term visitor use management policies and give direction on the most pressing needs by building technical competencies and improving interagency coordination.

http://visitorusemanagement.nps.gov/
Council Products and Activities

Position Papers
- Visitor Use Management on Public Lands and Waters: A Position Paper to Guide Policy
- Visitor Capacity on Federally Managed Lands and Waters: A Position Paper to Guide Policy

Visitor Use Management Framework

Coming Soon!
- Monitoring Guidebook
- Visitor Capacity Guidebook
- Training
Visitor Use Management

Process for managing all characteristics of visitor use and settings

• Sustain resource conditions and visitor experiences

• Variety of strategies and tools
  — Education
  — Site Management
  — Regulation
  — Enforcement
  — Rationing/allocation
Visitor Capacity

• Subcomponent of visitor use management

• Maximum amounts and types of visitor use that an area can accommodate

• While sustaining desired resource conditions and visitor experiences
Visitor Use Management Framework

1. **Why**
   - Build the Foundation

2. **What**
   - Define Visitor Use Management Direction
   - Universal to the Framework:
     - Law
     - Agency Policy
     - Sliding Scale
     - Public Involvement

3. **How**
   - Identify Management Strategies

4. **Do**
   - Implement, Monitor, Evaluate, and Adjust
Visitor Use Management Framework

Builds upon past frameworks:

- Takes the best and incorporates lessons learned.
- Application of sliding scale.
- Diversity of settings and opportunities.
- Clearly identifies where visitor capacity fits in the framework.
- Consistent terminology!
- Focus on process that integrates into agency planning procedures.
Visitor Use Management Framework

Sliding Scale

• The ‘thought process’ is the same regardless of complexity
• Match investment with level of uncertainty
• Consistent with National Environmental Policy Act
• Framework includes Decision Support Tool
• Criteria:
  - Issue Uncertainty
  - Impact Risk
  - Stakeholder Involvement
  - Level of Controversy/Potential for Litigation
Sliding Scale

Issue Complexity

Impact Risk

Stakeholder Involvement

Level of Controversy/Potential for Litigation
Visitor Use Management Framework

1. **WHY**
   - **Build the Foundation**
   - **Steps:**
     1. Clarify project purpose and need.
     2. Review the area's purpose and applicable legislation, agency policies, and other management direction.
     3. Assess and summarize existing information and current conditions.
     4. Develop a project action plan.
   - **Outcome:** Understand why the project is needed, and develop the project approach.

2. **WHAT**
   - **Define Visitor Use Management Direction**
   - **Steps:**
     5. Define desired conditions for the project area.
     6. Define appropriate visitor activities, facilities, and services.
     7. Select indicators and establish thresholds.
   - **Outcome:** Describe the conditions to be achieved or maintained and how conditions will be tracked over time.

3. **HOW**
   - **Identify Management Strategies**
   - **Steps:**
     8. Compare and document the differences between existing and desired conditions, and, for visitor use-related impacts, clarify the specific links to visitor use characteristics.
     9. Identify visitor use management strategies and actions to achieve desired conditions.
    10. Where necessary, identify visitor capacities and additional strategies to manage use levels within capacities.
    11. Develop a monitoring strategy.
   - **Outcome:** Identify strategies to manage visitor use to achieve or maintain desired conditions.

4. **DO**
   - **Implement, Monitor, Evaluate, and Adjust**
   - **Steps:**
     12. Implement management actions.
     13. Conduct and document ongoing monitoring, and evaluate the effectiveness of management actions in achieving desired conditions.
     14. Adjust management actions if needed to achieve desired conditions, and document rationale.
   - **Outcome:** Implement management strategies and actions, and adjust based on monitoring and evaluation.
Visitor Use Management Framework

Element 1- Build the Foundation

1) Clarify project purpose and need.
2) Review the area’s purpose, legislation, policy and management direction.
3) Assess existing information and current conditions.
4) Develop project planning strategy.
Visitor Use Management Framework

Element 2 - Define Visitor Use Management Direction

5) Define desired conditions (resources, recreation opportunities, visitor experiences).

6) Define suitable visitor uses, facilities, and services based on desired conditions.

7) Determine acceptable levels of impact.
Visitor Use Management Framework

Spotlight: Step 7 - Determine acceptable levels of impact.

**Indicator:** Specific resource or social attributes that can be measured to track change in conditions so that progress towards achieving and maintaining desired conditions can be assessed.

**Threshold:** the “minimally acceptable” condition associated with each indicator.
Visitor Use Management Framework

Element 3 - Identify Management Strategies

8) Compare and document the differences between existing and desired conditions and, for visitor related impacts, clarify the specific links to visitor use characteristics.

9) Identify visitor use management strategies and actions to achieve desired conditions.

10) Where necessary, identify visitor capacities and strategies to manage use levels within capacities.

11) Develop monitoring strategies.
Visitor Use Management Framework

Spotlight: Step 9 - Identify visitor use management strategies and actions to achieve desired conditions.

- Modify type of use
- Modify visitor behavior
- Modify visitor expectations
- Modify timing of use
- Modify location of use
- Increase ability of site to handle use
- Modify spatial distribution of use
- Reduce use
- Increase supply
Visitor Use Management Framework

Spotlight: Step 10 - Where necessary, identify visitor capacities and strategies to manage use levels within capacities.

Two Parts:

1. Identify a visitor capacity.

2. Identify management strategies and actions to ensure use stays within the established capacity.
Visitor Use Management Framework

Spotlight: Step 10 - Where necessary, identify visitor capacities and strategies to manage use levels within capacities.

1. Determine the analysis area.
2. Review existing direction and knowledge.
3. Identify the limiting attribute(s) - the physical, biological, social, or managerial attribute(s) that most constrain the analysis area’s ability to accommodate visitor use.
4. Identify capacity.
Visitor Use Management Framework

Element 4-Implement, monitor, evaluate, and adjust

12) Implement management actions.

13) Conduct and document ongoing monitoring and evaluate the effectiveness of management actions in achieving desired conditions.

14) Adjust management actions if needed to achieve desired conditions and document rationale.
Case Studies

• Application to agency projects and planning
Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve

Frontcountry Management Plan

Implementing the Visitor Use Management Framework

GWS 2017
Comprised of 3.3 million acres of mountains, glaciers, forests, and waterways, Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve is a highlight of the Inside Passage and part of a 25-million-acre World Heritage Site—one of the world’s largest protected natural areas—designated by UNESCO.
Bartlett Cove is home to park headquarters and center of operations.

Central point of disembarkation for visitors making backcountry trips.

A focal point for park-related services and operations.

20 years since the last plan for Bartlett Cove.
Sliding Scale

- Issue Complexity
- Impact Risk
- Stakeholder Involvement
- Level of Controversy/Potential for Litigation
Visitor Use Management Framework

- **WHY** 1
  - Build the Foundation

- **WHAT** 2
  - Define Visitor Use Management Direction

- **DO** 4
  - Implement, Monitor, Evaluate, and Adjust

- **HOW** 3
  - Identify Management Strategies

**Universal to the Framework:**
- Law
- Agency Policy
- Sliding Scale
- Public Involvement
1. Clarify project purpose and need.

2. Review the area’s purpose and applicable legislation, agency policies, and other management direction.

3. Assess and summarize existing information and current conditions.

4. Develop the project strategy.

**Outcome:** Understand what needs to be done and how to organize the project effort.
The purpose of this plan is to set forth long-term management direction for Bartlett Cove and adjacent frontcountry areas of Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve.

This plan will provide direction covering visitor opportunities for the area, facilities (including Glacier Bay Lodge and Huna Tribal House), commercial services, resource management, and park operations.
Need for Frontcountry Plan

- Update 20-year-old plan.
- Enhance and expand visitor opportunities.
- Provide a sustainable tourism model.
- Address visitor access, wayfinding, circulation, and related design.
- Update inefficient park administrative facilities and operations.
- Promote stewardship of the park’s natural and cultural resources in a changing environment.
- Identify and evaluate various visitor use management strategies.
- Prioritize strategies for protecting sensitive resources.
- Identify priorities for allocating operational resources.
Existing Conditions

• Leverages existing data sources
  – Ferry loadings
  – Room occupancies
  – Regional tourism information

• Incorporates existing park monitoring
  – Trail counters
  – Permits
Frontcountry Vision

• A focal point for park-related services and operations;
• A gateway to Glacier Bay and launching point for backcountry excursions; and
• A destination that welcomes all to explore and connect with the park’s ever-changing natural environment, scientific legacy as a living laboratory, and Huna Tlingit heritage and renewed living cultural traditions.
5. Define desired conditions for the project area.

6. Define appropriate visitor activities, facilities, and services.

7. Select indicators and establish thresholds.

**Outcome:** Describe the conditions to be achieved or maintained and how conditions will be tracked over time.
Park Significance and Fundamental Resources and Values

- Scientific Investigation
- Prehistoric and Historical Sites and Records
- Ecological Integrity
- Dynamism and Succession
- Wilderness
- Protected Marine Ecosystems
- Tlingit Ancestral Homelands
- Visitor Experience
Public Scoping

• What experience(s) do you value or want to have in the Glacier Bay Frontcountry?
• What is your vision for the Frontcountry of Glacier Bay?
• Do you see any issues regarding access to the Glacier Bay Frontcountry?
• Are there additional visitor services the Glacier Bay Frontcountry should provide that would complement those already offered in Gustavus?
• What opportunities should be provided in Glacier Bay's Frontcountry to help visitors learn about ongoing science at the park?

• Do you have any other thoughts on visitor opportunities or the management of the Glacier Bay Frontcountry that the planning team should consider?
8. Compare and document the differences between existing and desired conditions, and, for visitor use-related impacts, clarify the specific links to visitor use characteristics.

9. Identify visitor use management strategies and actions to achieve desired conditions.

10. Where necessary, identify visitor capacities and strategies to manage use levels within capacities.

11. Develop a monitoring strategy.

**Outcome:** Decision on strategies to manage visitor use to achieve or maintain desired conditions.
QUESTIONS

http://visitorusemanagement.nps.gov/
Maroon Bells - Snowmass Wilderness
Visitor Use Management Issues

Overnight Visitation in MBSW

2006 – 2015 Overnight visitors to Conundrum TH increased **285%**
2007 – 2015 Overnight visitors to Maroon Lake TH increased **132%**
Visitor Use Management Issues
Internal /External Outreach

1. Focus on Issues and get messaging right from the start
2. Video productions, pictures, pictures,
3. Cultivate press/media relationships
   1. Provide PSAs
   2. Be responsive to inquiries
   3. Field visits with key players, newspaper, radio, et
4. Always keep all partners, local governments and stakeholders engaged.
5. Field visits with key players
6. Match internal support (resources) with external support mutually supporting.
The Need for Action

1. Reduce biophysical impacts from overnight visitor use

2. Manage the MBSW in accordance with the Wilderness Act, Land and Resource Management Plan direction, standards, guidelines and desired conditions.
Define Visitor Use Management Direction

Core components of the VUM plan

1. Desired condition definitions from LRMP

2. Overnight groups at one time (GAOT) capacity

3. Adaptive Management Strategy

4. Indicators and thresholds

5. Monitoring Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Monitoring Schedule</th>
<th>Threshold Non-Compliance Determination</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GAOT/Zone</td>
<td>Required registration</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>1 or more nights/year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campsite Encounters</td>
<td>Patrol logs</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>&gt;20% of observations/year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11. Adaptive Management Implementation Guidelines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Phase 1</th>
<th>Phase 2</th>
<th>Phase 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GAOT/Zone</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>Annual after Phase 1 Mgt Actions implemented</td>
<td>Any 3 years within a 5 year period</td>
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Implement, Monitor, Evaluate and Adjust