An Interagency Approach to Visitor Use Management
Providing National Leadership and Services for Advancing the Outdoor Recreation Profession

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Today’s Presenters

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- Recreation Team Lead
- SORP Board member since 2013
WORKING ACROSS AGENCY LINES
TO IMPROVE
VISITOR USE MANAGEMENT
ON PUBLIC LANDS AND WATERS
Presentation Overview

- History and mission of the Interagency Visitor Use Management Council (the council)
- Update on the council’s activities
- Overview of the VUM Framework
- Role of Visitor Capacity
- Case Studies
The Importance of Visitor Use Management

Proactively planning for visitor use maximizes the ability of agencies to protect resources and values while encouraging access.
The Importance of Visitor Use Management

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

By Scott Condon
The Aspen Times

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

By Kurt Repanshek on December 16th, 2015

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

Mission:
Provide guidance on visitor use management policies and develop legally defensible and effective interagency implementation tools for visitor use management.
Expected Outcomes

• Consistent guidance across agencies
• Elevate the professional and scientific approach to managing visitor use
• Increased communication and collaboration
• Cost savings and improved efficiency
• More defensible decision-making
Definitions

Visitor Use Management: The proactive and adaptive process of planning for and managing characteristics of visitor use and its physical and social setting, using a variety of strategies and tools, to sustain desired resource conditions and visitor experiences.
Definitions

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
Capacity and Visitor Use Management

Since sustaining desired resource and experiential values involves much more than managing amount of use, the real issue is doing good visitor use management, with capacity just one component.
Council Products and Activities

- Position Papers
- Framework for addressing issues
- Guidebooks (coming soon)
- Training (coming soon)

http://visitorusemanagement.nps.gov/
Visitor Use Management Framework

- Purpose
- Need for the Framework
- Elements
- Role of visitor capacity
- Examples
Visitor Use Management Framework

Purpose:

• Make decisions about VUM
• Analytical thought process
• Apply to all VUM issues/concerns
• Not a stand-alone process
• Flexibility - Sliding scale of analysis
Visitor Use Management Framework

Build upon past frameworks:

- Emphasizes need for desired conditions and management objectives
- Diversity of settings and opportunities
- Multiple management strategies to achieve desired conditions
Visitor Use Management Framework

Limitations of past frameworks:

- Agency-specific
- Not integrated with planning processes
- Confusion about when and where capacity is used
- Perceived complexity and cost
- Proactive instead of reactive implementation
Visitor Use Management Framework

Sliding Scale

• The ‘thought process’ is the same regardless of complexity
• Match investment with level of uncertainty
• Consistent with NEPA
• Criteria:
  - Issue Complexity
  - Impact Risk
  - Stakeholder Involvement
  - Level of Controversy/Potential for Litigation
### Visitor Use Management Framework

### Sliding Scale – Decision Support Tool

**CRITERIA** - Use the ratings assigned to questions 1-8 to evaluate the following 4 sliding scale criteria. Combine those criteria into a single qualitative rating (high, moderate, or low) of the project’s appropriate location on the sliding scale.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
<th>RATIONALE</th>
<th>HIGH</th>
<th>MODERATE</th>
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<td>A Issue Uncertainty</td>
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<td>Location on the Sliding Scale</td>
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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.
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.

Visitor capacity is defined as the maximum amounts and types of visitor use that an area can accommodate while achieving and maintaining the desired resource conditions and visitor experiences that are consistent with the purposes for which the area was established.
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.
Visitor Capacity

Element 3, 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 Capacity

1. Identify Analysis Area
2. Review Existing Direction and Knowledge
3. Identify the Limiting Attribute(s)
4. Identify Capacity
Delaware Water Gap Visitor Use Management Plan

**Purpose:** Reevaluating appropriate access and use types with an emphasis on reducing user conflicts, improving visitor safety, and reducing resource impacts.

**Issue:** User created trails and river access, inappropriate and unsafe uses throughout the park, visitors looking for solitude, visitor use impacts to cultural resources.

**Needed:** Realistic management strategies to address issues and impacts caused by visitor use and an associated funding strategy.

**Developed:** Alternatives that outline potential a range visitor use futures to discuss with the public and stakeholders.
Glacier Bay Frontcountry Management Plan

**Purpose:** It has been almost twenty years since the last plan was completed and several recent events have led to the need for new direction for the future of visitor use in this area of the park.

**Issue:** Visitor opportunities and how they could be expanded; Sustainable tourism and enhancing the Lodge’s economic viability and service; Vehicle access, circulation, wayfinding, parking, and related design.

**Needed:** A range of improved and new visitor uses in a challenging and limiting landscape.

**Developed:** A renewed vision for the visitor experiences and opportunities available in frontcountry areas of the park.
Cedar Creek Falls Permits

**Purpose:** Increasing use and serious safety incidents indicated a need for more direct management of a popular hike near San Diego.

**Issue:** Parking near a neighborhood, visitors not prepared for heat and exposure, climbing cliffs near the falls,

**Needed:** Clear management strategies to ensure quality visitor experiences and to protect water quality.

**Developed:** Stakeholder buy-in for a daily permit system to manage Cedar Creek Falls for desired resource and social conditions.
http://visitorusemanagement.nps.gov/
Questions?

Type your question in the QUESTION pane of the Control Panel.
2017 National Outdoor Recreation Conference
Scottsdale, Arizona
May 1-4, 2017

“Outdoor Recreation Planning” now available in print and as an eBook at sagamorepub.com

Providing National Leadership and Services for Advancing the Outdoor Recreation Profession
Watch for a follow up email and survey about this webinar.

Check out the SORP website (www.RecPro.org) for more outdoor recreation technical resources.

Question on the presentation?
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