

Inventory & Monitoring of Visitor Experiences

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April, 2006

Wilderness Experience:

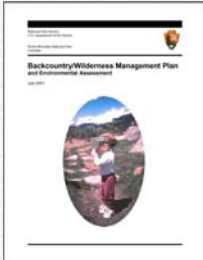
“Outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation”





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RMNP Backcountry/Wilderness Plan

- ☛ “Visitors...should have the opportunity for a variety of personal outdoor experiences, ranging from solitary to social”
- ☛ “The visitor experience should relate intimately to the splendor of the wilderness resource of RMNP”
- ☛ Solitude and challenge are specifically emphasized; freedom discussed a little



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How do you decide if you are providing these experiences?

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Social Impacts

Solitude

Conflict Crowding

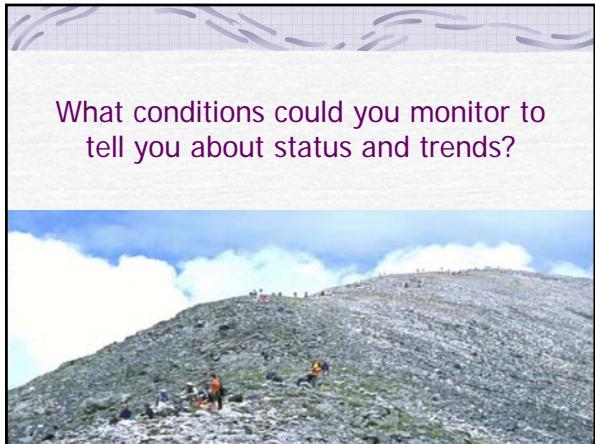
Freedom

“Experience Quality”

Primitive Recreation




What conditions could you monitor to tell you about status and trends?



What's the indicator?

- ☞ Does it meet the criteria?
 - Relevant
 - Measurable
 - Reliable
 - Sensitive
 - Low impact
 - Etc.



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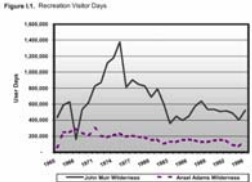
What are wilderness managers using?



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Documentation of Use Levels

- ☞ Sometimes done for overnight, but not day
- ☞ may require compliance checking
- ☞ Info can be quite valuable
- ☞ Can be costly



John Muir/Ansel Adams and Dinkey Lakes FEIS

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Documentation of Use Levels

- ☞ Many handbooks and examples are available
- ☞ Pros and cons of use measurement systems
 - Trailhead registers/permits
 - Traffic counters
 - Casual observations
 - Structured observations




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White River NF Plan

PRISTINE

- ☞ "Opportunities for solitude and self-reliance are excellent"
- ☞ "No more than two other parties encountered during cross-country travel per day on 80% of the days during each use season"
- ☞ "No other party within sight or sound of campsites should be encountered on 80% of the days in the summer and fall"




PRIMITIVE

- ☞ "Moderate to high occasions of solitude while traveling and camping outside the trail corridors"
- ☞ "Moderate-to-high level of risk and challenge"
- ☞ "No more than 12 parties encountered per day on trail 80% of the time"
- ☞ "No more than 6 campsites in sight/sound 80% of the days"

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Mt. Hood Forest Plan Social Standards

"Encounters with other groups shall be limited to no more than ten groups per day in semi-primitive areas, and no more than six groups per day in primitive areas, during 80 percent of the primary recreational use season."



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How would you design the monitoring program?

"Encounters with other groups shall be limited to no more than ten groups per day in semi-primitive areas, and no more than six groups per day in primitive areas, during 80 percent of the primary recreational use season."



What would you measure and how would you do it?

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Your monitoring plan...

- What's an encounter
- Who collects the data?
- What about sampling?

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Monitoring Encounters - Considerations



- Source of data?
- Sampling
 - Timing
 - Duration
 - Locations
- Training/standardization
 - Definitions
 - Additional data
- Concurrent data on use levels

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Mt. Hood Monitoring

- Identified spatial use patterns (zones)
- Required minimum of 3 hours of observation
- Required 5 weekdays and 5 weekend days of sampling
- Used rangers & volunteers
- Monitored trail encounters and camp encounters separately

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Mt. Hood Plan

- Defined an encounter:
 - A "group" (but people were counted)
 - Each repeat = an encounter
 - Any group seen (tracked whether it was on or off trail)

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Mt. Hood Plan

- Recorded other data
 - Start & end times in each zone – critical!
 - Day or overnight
 - Permit compliance
 - Entering/exiting
 - Dogs & stock
 - Campsite occupied
 - Campfire or not
 - Weather

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What do the data say?



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Issues in Using the Data

- ☞ Organization by location
- ☞ Standardizing for time
- ☞ Analysis by day of week



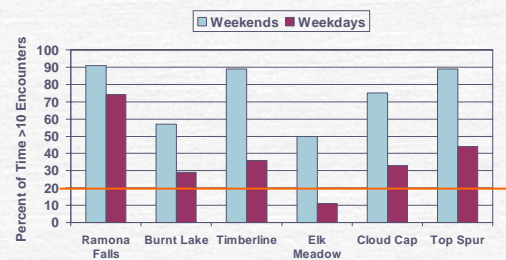
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The Ramona Falls data

Day	Time	Unique encounters	GPH	GP8
weekend	4.25	6	1.4	11.3
weekend	5.5	8	1.5	11.6
weekday	7	4	0.6	4.6
weekday	5	2	0.4	3.2

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Real Encounter Rates, Mt. Hood



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Conclusions for Mt. Hood?

- ☞ Outside standard in most places

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Alternative Approach: Talk to Visitors

- ☞ Less common as a form of monitoring
- ☞ Often used to help in setting standards
- ☞ Shenandoah
 - Compare ranger observations to visitor reports

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Shenandoah

- ☞ All groups seen were asked:
 - how long they had been hiking
 - whether they felt they had had “outstanding opportunities for solitude”
 - what percent of the time they felt solitude
 - how many groups they had encountered on the trail
 - what percent of time they were in sight of others

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Shenandoah- Visitors & Rangers

	Visitor Encounters Per 8 Hours	Ranger Encounters Per 8 Hours
Cedar Run	27.9	18.7
Jones Run	9.2	11.1
Upper Hazel	28.5	9.5

Number of groups seen

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Shenandoah - Visitor Responses

	Encounters Per 8 Hours	% Felt Solitude	% Time In Solitude
Cedar Run	27.5	87	84.5
Jones Run	9.2	100	90.4
Upper Hazel	28.5	100	93.4

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Talking to Visitors - Issues

- ☞ Obtaining visitor input
 - OMB clearance
 - What conditions to ask about
 - How to ask specific questions
 - Which people to survey
- ☞ Identifying proper indicators
 - For many visitors, there's little correlation between encounters and solitude
- ☞ How to use the data



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Coping with lack of resources

- ☞ Volunteers?
- ☞ Staggered observations?
- ☞ Internships?

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Conclusions

- ☞ Understand why you are monitoring and how you will use the data before you start
- ☞ Consider the spatial and temporal scope of needed data
- ☞ How important is the issue? How accurate do you need to be?
- ☞ How much information do you need before you act?
- ☞ Remember, no indicator is perfect!

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