Visitor Activities Management Process/Planning/Programme (VAMP)

Created by Parks Canada as a companion process to the Natural Resources Management Process within the Parks Canada Management Planning System.

The process provides guidance for planning and management of new parks, developing parks and established parks.

The Basic Principles

VAMP connects to three Parks Canada documents:
1. Guiding Principles and Operational Policies;
2. Management Planning Manual; and

Why VAMP?

- The process is specific to the planning program of Parks Canada and is paralleled by the Natural Resources Management Process.
- VAMP “incorporates” the principles of ROS.
- The framework benefits from the principles of VIM, LAC and VERP.
- The focus is assessment of opportunity, while the more precise impact question is left to the Natural Resources Management Process.

Where VAMP Came From

- Rooted in the planning and development of Interpretive Services in the 1960’s and ‘70’s.
- Managers were concerned with providing meaningful experiences appropriate to the setting.
- 3 problems:
  - What is a meaningful experience?
  - What does the visitor really need?
  - How can interpretive services be justified?

Management of Visitor Activities

- VAMP matches visitor interests and specific education and outdoor recreation opportunities for each conservation area through a management plan.
- Encourage uses that “broaden visitor understanding and appreciation” of the natural environment, and that cause minimal disturbance to the environment, wildlife and local life styles.
- Takes into account the different needs of visitors depending on their age, physical capabilities and levels of skill and knowledge to function safely in the environment.
Management of Visitor Activities

- Encourage the private sector and non-governmental organizations to provide skills and knowledge development programs to increase visitor understanding and enjoyment.
- As new or modified forms of outdoor recreation emerge, each will be assessed for its appropriateness nationally before consideration in the management planning process.
- Individual management plans will specify the types & ranges of both new and existing appropriate outdoor activities & facilities.
- Review national directives periodically to ensure that new forms of outdoor recreation are adequately considered.

Interpretation and Public Education

- Cooperate with others in developing interpretation & education programs that provide accurate information of the area's ecosystems, environmental issues and protection programs of these ecosystems.
- Visitors informed of activities permitted and the services and facilities available to them in the area and surrounding region.
- In particular, visitors will be made aware of the dependence of local people on the area’s resources, and will be asked to respect their values and traditions during their visit.

Interpretation and Public Education

- Conservation interpretation programs will be made available in a manner which causes little or no disturbance to the natural environment.
- Cooperate with schools, universities and other learning institutions in developing public education programs, and to encourage the use of conservation areas as centres for environmental education and research.

Visitor Services and Facilities

- Only provide facilities and services in conservation areas that are deemed essential for interpretation, public education and recreational activities in the approved management plan.
- In developing facilities, impacts on the area’s resources and established uses will be minimized, and due attention will be given to visitor risk management.
- Private and voluntary organizations will be encouraged to plan, develop and operate essential visitor services and facilities.

Process

- The overall process provides a comprehensive framework for the creation and management of opportunities for visitors within the Parks Canada Management Planning Program.

Three “simple” tasks!

1. Compare current expectations of visitors with current activity mix in terms of services, use and satisfaction.
2. At the Management Planning (regional) level—purpose and role of the park, type and location of appropriate visitor activities, the market for those activities, and availability in surrounding parks.
3. At the Service Planning (local) level—immediate future of targeted markets, activities, services and service delivery.
Steps of the process

- The process uses a model based on a hierarchy of decisions within the management program. (~"mixed scanning" + "strategic")
- Management plan decisions relate to the selection and creation of opportunities for visitors to experience the park's heritage settings through appropriate educational and recreational activities.
- Decisions about managing and delivering support services for each activity are reflected in the service plan.

General steps of VAMP

1. Produce a project Terms of Reference.
2. Confirm existing park purpose and objectives.
3. Organize a database describing park ecosystems and settings, potential visitor educational and recreational opportunities, existing visitor activities and services, and the regional context.
4. Analyze the existing situation to identify heritage themes, resource capability and suitability, appropriate visitor activities, the park's role in the region and the role of the private sector.
5. Produce alternative visitor activity concepts for these settings, experiences to be supported, visitor market segments, levels of service guidelines, and roles of the region and the private sector.
6. Create a park management plan, including the park's purpose and role, management objectives and guidelines, regional relationships, and the role of the private sector.
7. Implementation – set priorities for park conservation and park service planning.

Factors considered in developing indicators and standards

- Activity profiles
- Kind, quantity, diversity & location of activities (especially heritage and interpretive)
- Experiences/Benefits sought
- Support services & facilities required at all stages of trip cycle
- Stakeholder profiles
- Interpretation theme presentation
- Resource values, constraints and sensitivities
- Existing legislation, policy, management direction, plans
- Current offer of services and facilities at all stages of trip cycle
- Regional activity/service offered
- Satisfaction with service offered

Visitor Activity Groups (VAG’s)

- VAG’s are "half way between categories of activities and experienced-related visitor segments." A type of market segmentation
- Based on known information and criteria that reflect setting, activity mix, skill levels and availability of basic services.
- These will (are hoped to) describe market conditions—"what people do, as opposed to why they come."
### 4/1/2009

#### Consequences

1. Planners see the complete needs of each VAG.
2. They see the current status of services offered.
3. They see how interpretation meshes with visitor reception, public safety, accommodation, and the rest of the recreational services package.
4. There is now agreement about the nature of the opportunities to be provided and the basic service needs for each VAG.
5. There is a “return to reality...the park can only achieve a few of the major changes that have been identified.”

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