Strategy II. Reduce Use of Problem Areas

TACTIC 13: ENCOURAGE OFF-TRAIL TRAVEL

PURPOSE
If more visitors traveled off-trail, trail encounters would obviously be reduced. Crowding and visitor conflict might also be reduced in camping areas reached by trail.

DESCRIPTION
Off-trail travel could be encouraged in low-impact-use brochures and other sources of information, including contacts with wilderness rangers. Maps could identify areas favorable for cross-country travel.

CURRENT USAGE
Unknown, but probably rare.

COSTS TO VISITORS
Low. Costs are minimal as long as the suggestion to travel off-trail is not too value-laden, making some visitors feel guilty for choosing to use trails instead.

COSTS TO MANAGEMENT
Low. The major costs involve deciding where off-trail travel should be encouraged and communicating these recommendations to visitors.

EFFECTIVENESS
This is unlikely to be very effective because few visitors are comfortable traveling off-trail. Moreover, those who do enjoy off-trail travel will usually seek out remote areas on their own. This technique could reduce crowding and conflict in some places. It might increase crowding and cause ecological impact problems away from trails, however.

COMMENTS
Promoting off-trail travel can have a number of negative consequences; visitor hazards and the creation of undesired impromptu trail systems are the most obvious. Off-trail travel by stock can be particularly damaging. Increased disturbance of wildlife is also a possible undesirable side effect. Cross-country travel is fairly easy in some wildernesses but very difficult in others because of steep topography and heavy vegetation. In most situations, a preferable means of reducing use is to discourage use of problem areas (tactic 8).

SOURCES
None.