Strategy II. Reduce Use of Problem Areas

TACTIC 15: CHARGE DIFFERENTIAL VISITOR FEES

Purpose:
By charging visitors more to enter problem areas, the use of these areas is likely to decline.

Description:
Charge a fee to visit problem areas, but not other areas that are either better suited to accommodate use or lightly used. Another option would be to charge higher fees in problem areas than elsewhere. Fees might be per visit or per day in problem areas.

Current Usage:
Apparently untried for purposes of reducing use in problem areas. Fees are charged on a few whitewater rivers, but not to visit adjoining parts of the wilderness. Fees are associated with the need to administer a use limitation program only on the river.

Costs to Visitors:
Low. Costs are significant only for those visitors who are unable or unwilling to pay the fee and who only want to visit problem areas. Costs to visitors obviously rise as fees increase.

Costs to Management:
Moderate to high. Costs are associated with fee collection and enforcement; costs would increase with the number of places within the wilderness where fees were charged. The cost/benefit ratio for this technique would depend on the extent to which managing agencies benefited from retaining revenues generated to strengthen management and protection of wilderness.

Effectiveness:
Should be quite effective if fees are high enough to encourage many visitors to go elsewhere.

Comments:
Beyond the problem of lack of general authority for charging fees, and particularly differential fees, this technique would have many advantages. Visitor costs are low, particularly if visitors are made aware of fees when planning their trip, and fees are not excessively high. Management costs would not be increased if agencies were allowed to keep the revenues the fees generate and the technique should effectively reduce use of the problem area. The imposition of a fee might make visitors more careful to minimize their impact, although this is uncertain. Some people believe fees can have the opposite effect. It is important, however, to plan for increased use and impact in other places. Acceptability to visitors of fees in general varies from low to high (for example, Stankey 1973; Shelby and others 1982).

Sources:
Manning and others (1984).