Strategy III. Modify the Location of Use Within Problem Areas

TACTIC 18: LOCATE FACILITIES ON DURABLE SITES

PURPOSE
A given amount and type of use will cause less impact if that use occurs on a more durable location.

DESCRIPTION
Locate all facilities on durable sites. This would apply particularly to trails, but in certain areas to bridges, agency-built campsites, toilets, and stock-holding facilities. The concept of a durable site can also be extended beyond resource considerations to sites where use is least likely to disturb other visitors’ experiences. Thus, managers would attempt to locate facilities in places where (1) physical deterioration is least likely and (2) facilities and parties using them are least obtrusive.

CURRENT USAGE
Unknown, but probably tried, with differing degrees of effort and success, in all areas with facilities.

COSTS TO VISITORS
Low. Costs are negligible except where visitors are required to use facilities and the facilities are not located where visitors want to go.

COSTS TO MANAGEMENT
Low. As long as the facilities would be built anyway, the only additional costs are associated with conducting research into which sites are most durable and then locating sites that meet the criteria established. These costs will be more than offset in the long run by reduced maintenance costs.

EFFECTIVENESS
There is ample evidence that this can be among the most useful techniques for minimizing trail deterioration. Much of the variation in the level of deterioration of neighboring trail segments is a result of differences in site durability. Level of campsite deterioration also differs substantially with factors such as openness of the tree canopy (Marion and Merriam 1985) and vegetation type (Cole 1981b, 1983b). Locating stock-holding facilities away from water effectively reduces the risk of water pollution problems. Routing trails away from areas that wildlife use to feed and breed reduces potential for wildlife impact. Locating facilities in areas with considerable screening and in places where sounds are dampened can reduce problems with crowding. Many other examples of how this technique can effectively reduce problems could also be cited.

COMMENTS
The benefit/cost ratio of this technique is very high, provided that the decision to provide facilities has already been made. Facilities should be justified, of course, as necessary for protecting wilderness resources, not for visitor comfort and convenience.

SOURCES