Strategy III. Modify the Location of Use Within Problem Areas

TACTIC 19: CONCENTRATE USE ON SITES THROUGH FACILITY DESIGN AND/OR INFORMATION

PURPOSE The areal extent of impact can be reduced by channeling or concentrating use on or within individual sites.

DESCRIPTION The design and placement of facilities such as shelters, fire grates or rings, toilets, tables, potable water supplies, hitch rails, and corrals, where these are judged to be compatible with wilderness objectives, can be used to channel use. Even the design of access trails between facilities or the placement of discrete barriers can serve to minimize the areal extent of impact. Information about specific facilities and their locations, as well as education about the need to confine impact and not spread out on a site, can also be used to reduce the areal extent of impacts.

CURRENT USAGE Unknown. Despite the Wilderness Act’s definition of wilderness as a place “without permanent improvements,” facility development is common. More often facilities are provided to protect resources rather than to channel use. Fireplace grates, toilets, shelters, and stock-holding facilities are most common. Tent platforms are found in some places, and public cabins are provided in some Alaskan wildernesses. Information provided to visitors on the location of facilities ranges from nonexistent to good. In a few areas visitors are informed of the desirability of concentrating use both on a few sites and within sites; other areas consider concentration to be undesirable.

COSTS TO VISITORS Low. Visitors are neither required nor asked to alter their preferred behaviors. The major cost of facilities is to visitors who consider developed facilities to be inappropriate—a large proportion in many places. Such costs can be minimized by providing facilities only where absolutely necessary and informing visitors of the location of facilities and the reasons they are necessary.

COSTS TO MANAGEMENT Low to high. Depends on the number and type of facilities provided and the frequency of required maintenance. Information dissemination costs are low and no enforcement is involved.

EFFECTIVENESS In the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, provision of fire grates and toilets, improvement of tent pads, and rehabilitation of areas where unnecessary site expansion is occurring have effectively limited the area of campsite deterioration (Marion and Sober in press). In Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Bratton and others (1978) report less per capita areal impact around shelters than around campsites. Although not documented, stock-holding facilities are highly effective means of minimizing stock impact in places that receive at least moderate levels of stock use. The effectiveness of information alone is untested; we would guess that it would be low to moderate in effectiveness.

COMMENTS Providing facilities in selected areas is likely to increase use in these areas. It may also encourage more use by novices. This can be either desirable or undesirable but should certainly be planned for. The desirability of facilities should also be considered. Stankey and Schreyer (1987) review visitor preferences for facility development. Generally visitor preferences are mixed; usually the current level of facility development is preferred. If information alone is tried, systematic monitoring would be desirable. Information is noncontroversial and worth trying.