Strategy IV. Modify the Timing of Use

TACTIC 23: DISCOURAGE OR PROHIBIT USE WHEN IMPACT POTENTIAL IS HIGH

PURPOSE
Resource fragility varies between seasons. The same amount and type of use can have very different effects during different seasons, particularly on the severity of wildlife disturbance, trail and campsite deterioration, and packstock impacts. Reducing use during times of high-impact potential can limit impacts.

DESCRIPTION
Limit or avoid all use or certain types of use during particularly sensitive periods. This could either be regulated or suggested. Dates could be standardized or vary, based on specific conditions each year related to soil moisture, stage of plant growth, and so on.

CURRENT USAGE
Rare. A few areas prohibit stock use in the spring and early summer when soils are saturated with snowmelt water and, consequently, are unusually fragile. Other areas have seasonal closures where conflict with wildlife is likely to be detrimental.

COSTS TO VISITORS
Low to moderate. Costs will be low as long as the number of closed areas is low and there are attractive alternative areas to visit. Costs can be minimized by increasing the predictability of closed seasons, providing advance information, and explaining the rationale behind closures. Visitors who have preferred times for visits during critical periods can bear high costs. This might include some hunters in the fall or early-season anglers.

COSTS TO MANAGEMENT
Moderate. Costs include dissemination of information and enforcement. Costs should usually include monitoring of conditions to assess whether closures are really necessary and when they should be in effect. The timing of closures may differ from year to year. DeBenedetti and Parsons (1983) describe a system of seasonal stock closures, the timing of which can be adjusted to compensate for year-to-year differences in moisture.

EFFECTIVENESS
Where variation in fragility from season to season is high and significant amounts of use occur during fragile seasons, this technique can be highly effective. Moreover, costs to most visitors would be low, although some types of use could be eliminated.

COMMENTS
None.

SOURCES