Strategy V. Modify Type of Use and Visitor Behavior

TACTIC 25: DISCOURAGE OR PROHIBIT PARTICULARLY DAMAGING PRACTICES AND/OR EQUIPMENT

PURPOSE
To reduce impacts by discouraging or prohibiting visitors from taking particularly damaging actions.

DESCRIPTION
Certain practices and equipment are both unnecessary and severely damaging. Simple examples include carving on trees and littering. Although usually unnecessary, axes are often used to damage trees. Other practices, such as building campfires, are particularly damaging in some situations but not in others. Managers can reduce or eliminate such damage by establishing regulations or a set of suggested practices.

CURRENT USAGE
Common. This is the most widespread specific wilderness management technique. A majority of areas have both informational materials that discourage certain practices and regulations that prohibit others. Such programs vary considerably in the number and types of actions that are either discouraged or prohibited. Some of the most common discouraged or prohibited practices are having campfires, littering, cutting trees, shortcutting switchbacks, confining stock in ways that cause impact, disposing of human waste improperly, and washing in lakes or streams.

COSTS TO VISITORS
Low to high. Costs depend on the subtlety and degree of regulation used to change visitor behavior, as well as the importance to visitors of the practices they are being asked to forego. The highest costs are associated with regulation, because visitors lose their freedom of choice. Even without regulation, however, visitor costs can be high if managers aggressively try to change visitor behavior. This is particularly true if the contact with a ranger occurs within the wilderness. Costs also increase as visitors are asked or required to give up practices they consider important to their experience (such as campfires for many visitors). Costs to visitors can be reduced substantially by providing good reasons for regulations/suggestions, by communicating regulations/suggestions to visitors during the planning stages of trips and, where possible, by providing alternative areas where damaging but reasonable practices (such as campfires) are permissible.

COSTS TO MANAGEMENT
Moderate to high. Regulation requires effective communication of regulations and adequate enforcement. Enforcement costs can be quite high. Costs with persuasive techniques are usually lower. The principal costs are associated with deciding on what practices should be discouraged and in developing written materials and the communication skills of wilderness rangers. With both regulation and persuasion considerable effort should be invested in deciding which practices should be prohibited or discouraged and in which specific situations a given practice is either appropriate or inappropriate.

EFFECTIVENESS
Neither regulations nor low-impact information have been studied enough to determine their effectiveness. There is considerable evidence that the pack-it-in, pack-it-out antilitter campaign has been quite successful. Effectiveness can be increased by providing good reasons for regulations or suggestions, by communicating these to visitors during the planning stage of trips, and by providing alternative areas where damaging but reasonable practices are permissible. Most managers believe that personal contact is more effective in changing visitor behavior than written materials. Research on the effectiveness of different approaches to education and information is scarce, but some of it suggests that written material can be almost as effective in some situations (Roggenbuck and Berrier 1981). Enforcement can be important to increasing the effectiveness of regulations. Dalle-Molle (1979) and Parsons (1983) describe the success of programs that restrict certain practices in Mount Rainier and Kings Canyon National Parks, respectively.

COMMENTS
Lucas (1932) provides a step-by-step procedure for deciding whether to use regulations or education.

SOURCES