Strategy VI. Modify Visitor Expectations

TACTIC 32: INFORM VISITORS ABOUT APPROPRIATE WILDERNESS USES

PURPOSE

One of the primary sources of visitor conflict occurs when visitors encounter uses that they consider to be inappropriate in wilderness. If visitors are aware of which uses are legally appropriate, they are likely to react less negatively when encountering a type of use that they would rather not encounter but that is legally appropriate.

DESCRIPTION

Visitors can be informed about appropriate uses through educational programs, written material, and personal contacts. Appropriateness can be defined in terms of both visitor preferences and legal definitions. The legal status of commodity uses, such as livestock grazing, mining, or water storage, could be explained. So could the appropriateness and legality of various types of recreational use that some visitors may not prefer, such as horseback riding or mechanized travel (in a few places).

CURRENT USAGE

Unknown. Use of this technique is increasingly common; more and more areas are developing educational programs that go beyond the mere “do’s and don’ts” of low-impact use.

COST TO VISITORS

Low. Management presence is subtle and occurs offsite. Visitors are not asked to change their behavior, so costs are negligible.

COSTS TO MANAGEMENT

Low. Costs are incurred in developing educational materials and providing educational opportunities. Because many areas have the same appropriate uses, the costs of developing materials can be shared widely.

EFFECTIVENESS

Although never evaluated, such a program should be effective in reducing conflict.

COMMENTS

Informing visitors of appropriate uses should be an integral part of either teaching a wilderness ethic or encouraging low-impact behavior and skills (tactics 26 and 27). There are virtually no visitor costs and additional management costs are minimal. Promoting better understanding of other types of use (especially horse-hiker relations) seems important. Finding ways of communicating to hikers the importance of the horse use tradition and how much it means to many horse users will be a challenge.

SOURCES