Strategy VI. Modify Visitor Expectations

TACTIC 33: INFORM VISITORS ABOUT CONDITIONS THEY MAY ENCOUNTER IN THE WILDERNESS

PURPOSE
By informing visitors about which parts of the wilderness are crowded, which are used by recreational stock, which provide certain recreational experiences, and so on, visitors could avoid situations they do not like and not be surprised by conditions they did not expect to find. Beyond conditions related to recreation use, this can also apply to such conditions as the presence of dams or sheep and cattle grazing. By modifying visitor expectations so that they fit better with conditions they are likely to encounter, problems with crowding and conflict should be reduced.

DESCRIPTION
Visitor information and education programs can provide this information, using a variety of communication techniques. Some conditions (such as the presence of certain types of uses) or permanent features (such as dams) can be described on maps and in brochures. More detailed information (such as where bands of sheep are grazing) will need to be updated, perhaps by inexpensive, small handout maps or notes on maps in ranger stations.

CURRENT USAGE
Unknown. Quite a few areas provide highly selective information, but few areas provide very complete information of this type.

COSTS TO VISITORS
Low. Costs would increase if the information provided was inaccurate or biased in an attempt to get visitors to behave in a certain way.

COSTS TO MANAGEMENT
Low to moderate. Costs involve some monitoring of conditions, selection of information to be presented, and dissemination of this information. It is best to get information to visitors during the planning of trips so that they can plan accordingly.

EFFECTIVENESS
This should be an effective means of reducing visitor crowding and conflict. Visitors may still encounter situations they do not like, but they should not be surprised and they freely chose to visit the area. At some point, however, visitors will be dissatisfied with conditions whether they know about conditions in advance or not. At that point, additional management actions will be needed.

COMMENTS
If provision of such information results in pronounced shifts in the distribution of use, this may have to be managed. Visitor interest in information of wilderness use and conditions is high.

SOURCES