Strategic VII. Increase the Resistance of the Resource

TACTIC 34: SHIELD THE SITE FROM IMPACT

PURPOSE
The same amount and type of use will cause less impact if the durability of the site can be increased. We already described decreasing impacts by directing use to durable locations. Tactics under this strategy increase the durability of a given site. One means of increasing durability is to artificially separate visitors from the resource, thus shielding the site from visitor impact.

DESCRIPTION
Shield sites by constructing facilities, including bridges, turnpikes, and “corduroy” on trails, and tent platforms on campsites. Although toilets and shelters primarily serve to concentrate human waste and camping use (tactic 19), they can also be considered a means of shielding the site. Facilities need to be compatible with wilderness goals and definitions. This tactic should be focused on resource protection, not visitor comfort or convenience.

CURRENT USAGE
Rare to common. Actions to shield trails are extremely common. Toilets are less widespread and shelters even less so, but both are still common. Raised tent platforms are rare.

COSTS TO VISITORS
Low to moderate. Costs depend on the obtrusiveness of facilities and visitor preferences. Generally visitors appear to be more accepting of trail development than of campsite development (Stankey and Schreyer 1987). Visitor costs can be reduced by explaining the need for shielding measures to increase visitor understanding.

COSTS TO MANAGEMENT
Moderate to high: Costs depend on the facilities required and the number of sites that must be shielded. Costs are lowest when sites are shielded before they deteriorate. Both construction and maintenance costs need to be considered.

EFFECTIVENESS
This is one of the most effective means of avoiding trail deterioration problems. Unless the trail can be relocated to a durable site (tactic 18), deterioration of muddy stretches, in particular, can be avoided only through bridging of some type. This technique is less effective in avoiding other types of problems.

COMMENTS
The benefits of shielding, in terms of resource protection, must be weighed against the costs of obtrusive structures. (The cure may be worse than the problem!) The relative appropriateness of strengthening, in which conditions are purposely altered (the next technique), and shielding, in which structures protect conditions, must also be considered. Toilets and shelters may concentrate use undesirably and result in social and resource impacts.

SOURCES