
NON-ECOLOGICAL PRINCIPALS FOR PARK MANAGEMENT

The Winter 1984 issue of Park Science contains a Superintendent's Corner from Rick Smith, Assistant Superintendent for Everglades National Park. Smith presents a set of "non-ecological principles for park management," culled from a career in the National Park Service and illustrated convincingly using Everglades as a case study. The lengthy paper is here drastically condensed.

Rick Smith

It is odd, considering what the National Park Service is supposed to stand for, that the position of advocacy for resources is many times a lonely stance. I have come in contact with numerous Park Service employees who seem to have made a decision that separates them from this position. They have pledged their loyalty to the National Park Service, not to the National Park System.

For many of them, their careers come before the parks. They feel most comfortable when their performance is measured against standards which deal with personnel management, equal opportunity, or budget management. Conversely, they feel least comfortable when they have to stand up for the parks of the System--when they have to speak on behalf of the values for which the parks were established.

Smith then traces meticulously the history of compromise in the establishment and the subsequent management of Everglades National Park. Out of this history, he extracts the following "non-ecological principles of park management," inserting each into the park's history at the point where history best illustrates the principle.

Non-ecological Principle #1: The establishment of almost all our Parks was based not only on the significance of the resources but also on a series of implicit and explicit promises made to garner support for the project.

Corollary to Principle #1: The more recently the Park was established, the more promises, agreements, and deals will exist. It is important to recognize these arrangements not as evil but as, in fact, part of the way things get done. Recognize the promises and examine them for the problems and opportunities they present our resource management programs.

Principle #2: Parties to any agreements will assent to modifications in the agreements only when they are convinced that their own interests are thus being served. Arguments as to what will benefit the resources usually will prove futile.

Principle #3: Even in this day and age, with the attendant emphasis on science, it is possible to make decisions based on philosophical rather than scientific considerations.

Corollary 1 to Principle #3: Be sure to say that this is what you are doing. Do not try to hokey up your decision with a lot of non-relevant data. You'll get caught.

Corollary 2: Although Principle #3 is possible, you won't get away with it very often. There is no substitute for a well-planned, adequately supported research program in your park.

Corollary 3: Be prepared to be challenged.

Principle #4: Issues which appear to be settled, based on environmental considerations, can quickly become highly charged political issues.

Corollary to Principle #4: The political friends of the park should be prepared to play a role in the ensuing process.

Principle #5: No politician is immune to overwhelming expression of public opinion, even if that expression is contrary to what the politician's instincts tell him/her.

Corollary to Principle #5: The opinion (rendered by the park and its friends) should be based on resource considerations--not an attempt to grind any partisan political axe.

Smith refers in the paper to Frederick Law Olmstead and Joseph Sax and their references to national parks as "sanctuaries" where visitors can become aware of their relationship to the environment and to our historic past. Smith concludes: "In these sanctuaries, the Ranger is the minister, not merely the usher."

Rick Smith, Assistant Superintendent, Everglades National Park, Florida.

A FEW CONVICTIONS

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T. Destry Jarvis

When a speaker gets up he must have a few convictions, otherwise pronouncements from him are not particularly valuable. I have a few convictions, which I suspect are shared by many of you here today, regarding the National Park Service and the National Park System. One of my convictions is that the National Park System contains the single most important collection of our national heritage. If you agree with this then you must concede that we all individually and collectively must do everything in our power to ensure that this heritage is not eroded or lost.

Another of my convictions is that the National Park System is inseparable from the National Park Service. That is, the morale, esprit, integrity and professionalism of the National Park Service family is completely inseparable from the administration, management, interpretation and protection of the resources of the National Park System.