

Introduction:
Crossing Boundaries in Managing
Recreational Use of National Parks
and Related Areas

The theme of the 2001 biennial George Wright Society conference was “Crossing Boundaries in Park Management: On the Ground, In the Mind, Among Disciplines.” As measured by conference attendance and the apparent enthusiasm of participants, this theme resonated with many planners, managers, and scientists both within and outside the National Park Service. More abstracts were submitted than the conference could accommodate, and there was standing room only in many of the conference sessions.

Those of us in the Park Studies Laboratory at the University of Vermont (faculty, staff, and students), along with colleagues with whom we work around the country, were especially excited to receive the conference announcement and the call for abstracts. Much of the research we conduct necessarily strives to cross boundaries in some fashion as management of recreational use of parks and related areas is inherently, unavoidably, and ultimately integrative. We were pleased when our abstract was accepted to organize and conduct a session on applying the conference theme to recreational use of national parks and related areas.

Our brainstorming about the multiple dimensions of the “crossing boundaries” theme identified nearly

a dozen papers that could and should be part of this session. (More papers than could be comfortably presented in one session, as those who attended the session will remember!) Dave Harmon of the George Wright Society was especially kind to offer us a special issue of THE GEORGE WRIGHT FORUM to properly present and document our thinking about this important topic. This special issue of the journal contains the papers that were prepared for our session.

Ten papers are included in this special issue. The paper by Lawson and Manning addresses visitor experiences in parks and wilderness, noting that such experiences are affected by the social, resource, and managerial conditions found. But

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how are these conditions related, and what are the inherent tradeoffs that visitors would prefer to make among potentially competing conditions? A stated choice model is applied to wilderness use of Denali National Park and Preserve to explore these issues. The paper by Newman et al. is related, but focuses more specifically on theoretical and methodological approaches to crossing the traditional boundary between the social and natural sciences. Recreational use of national parks and related areas has clear ecological and experiential implications, but how are these effects related, and how can they be analyzed and ultimately managed in an integrated fashion?

The papers by Floyd and Laven et al. address the increasingly important topic of cultural diversity and its relationship to national parks and related areas. Minority populations in the USA are traditionally under-represented in visitation to the National Park System, and this raises issues of social and environmental justice. However, minority populations may soon grow into the country's majority populations, with potentially profound political implications for national parks and related areas. Subsistence is another traditionally under-represented use of national parks and related areas. Both of these papers challenge us to integrate more directly into planning and management those uses and users that have traditionally been in the

minority.

The paper by Bacon et al. addresses the issue of integration across time. Many research studies, particularly in the social sciences, are cross-sectional surveys that capture a moment in time. But do conditions change over time, and, if so, how? A longitudinal study of wilderness use in Denali offers some empirical data on this question as well as a potential management strategy to minimize such changes. The paper by Borrie et al. addresses the subject of crossing methodological boundaries. Cross-sectional studies of recreation traditionally rely on quantitative research methods. However, qualitative methods have potentially important strengths, and might be combined with quantitative approaches to derive a more comprehensive understanding of park use and users. A study of snowmobiling in Yellowstone National Park illustrates this principle.

The papers by McCool and Cole, Warzecha et al., and Haas address the broad issue of planning and managing parks and outdoor recreation on a regional basis. Park and outdoor recreation planning and management, and accompanying research, have conventionally been conducted at the site or park level. However, these papers argue that an appropriate diversity of park and recreation opportunities will be forthcoming only if individual parks and related areas are considered within a broader

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geographic and institutional “visitation range.” Collectively, these papers address theoretical, empirical, and institutional perspectives on this subject.

The final paper by Budruk et al. addresses the issue of crossing programmatic boundaries. All organizations, including the National Park Service and other park and related agencies, are divided into divisions, departments, and, ultimately, programs for the sake of efficiency. However, there must be appropriate coordination across programs to ensure that broad agency missions are accomplished. This paper outlines several examples within the National Park Service where more coordination across programs might enhance the quality of visitor experiences in the National Park System.

I would like to thank all of the authors represented in this special issue of THE GEORGE WRIGHT FORUM. The authors presented their papers at the conference in a highly professional manner under harsh time constraints, and followed up their presentations with written papers in a timely fashion (with only modest prodding!). Thanks, too, to those who attended our conference session and contributed to the dis-

cussion. Special appreciation is expressed to staff in several parks where study data were collected, including Mike Tranel and Joe Van Horn, Denali National Park and Preserve; Laurel Boyers, Henrietta DeGroot, and Russell Galipeau, Yosemite National Park; Steve Ulvi, Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve; John Sacklin and Kristen Legg, Yellowstone National Park; Bruce Rogers and Dave Wood, Canyonlands National Park; and Karen McKinley-Jones and Jim Webster, Arches National Park. Several studies reported in this special issue were conducted under administrative auspices of the National Park Service’s Conservation Study Institute headquartered at Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park, and thanks are due to Nora Mitchell, Rolf Diamant, B.J. Dunn, and Mea Arego for their interest and assistance. Finally, thanks to Dave Harmon for allowing us to organize and publish our papers in this special issue of THE GEORGE WRIGHT FORUM. I hope readers find this collection of papers useful, and that it will help further our collective efforts at “crossing boundaries in park management.”

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