

CURRENT TRENDS AND ISSUES:

PENNSYLVANIA STATE PARKS

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Background - Pennsylvania State Parks

114 state parks
275,000+ acres
19 pools
71 beaches (18 at Presque Isle alone)
40+ sewer systems
1400 pit latrines
14 water systems
588 full time employees
1200+ wage employees during the summer
\$40 million - Operating Budget
\$55 million - Total Budget

Issues

Two major issues (among others) face the Pennsylvania Bureau of State Parks at this time:

1. Aging infrastructure
2. Aging staff

Infrastructure

\$150-200 million backlog of roads, sanitary, and water systems, building renovation, and other infrastructure needs. In 1993 a bond issue was passed which would dedicate \$17 million to state parks for infrastructure renovations.

Also, beginning in 1995, 15% per year of the realty transfer tax will be dedicated to the Bureau of State Parks for infrastructure repair, which amounts to approximately \$8 million a year. Over time this "Keystone Recreation and Conservation Fund" will provide the needed revenues to bring the Pennsylvania State Park facilities up to standard.

Aging Staff

The average experience of the Bureau of State Park staff is 20 years. They have continually been asked to do more with less.

Most staff have seen every motivational technique known to man which makes it very difficult to ask them to do more for less.

Many changes in personnel over the past year causing ripple effect throughout the entire staffing structure. Many managers see recent promotional opportunities as their last opportunity before retirement. Obviously only one person can be selected to fill any given position leaving many with 20 years of experience behind.

As a side note, when I came to the organization nearly two years ago there was only one female manager in the system. Now there are five female managers, all promoted from within the system (none recruited from outside). In Pennsylvania, there are many females in the educational system, i.e. colleges and universities. However, very few, if any, apply for positions in state government (e.g., Bureau of State Parks). I do not know why!

Trends

Customer service is extremely important to the delivery of recreation in Pennsylvania. However, we are increasing our emphasis on resource stewardship. This resource stewardship emphasis is an outgrowth of strategic planning that was completed in 1991 (State Parks 2000). To place more emphasis on resource stewardship, we have developed and implemented a natural areas program and a classification system of parks.

- Multiple-use overnight parks
- Multiple-use day-use parks
- Limited overnight parks
- Limited day-use parks
- Environmental Education centers
- Specialized-use parks

The second trend that has grown from State Parks 2000 strategic plan is environmental education (teaching stewardship).

We expect to broaden the scope of our environmental education efforts (act locally, think globally). We will expand our education efforts into classrooms and schools. State parks will also become classrooms for local schools and we will administer environmental education grants to schools, conservation groups, community organizations, etc.

A specific trend of interest is our volunteerism effort. Not only the typical clean up, trail type volunteers but those who build structures. We must be wary of those more sophisticated volunteer organizations that they don't drive our planning and development programs in the name of volunteer help.