

TRENDS IN STATE OUTDOOR RECREATION FROM PERIODIC

TO PROCESS PLANNING: THE MINNESOTA EXAMPLE¹

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After a decade of trial, a change in federal planning philosophy is forcing many state recreation planning programs to change. Ten years of experience showed that plans produced periodically -- every five years -- grew stale and failed to provide the flexibility necessary to meet changing recreation markets and environmental problems. Recognizing these problems, the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service redrafted its planning guidelines to encourage ongoing planning processes, rather than static plans. This shift in emphasis, designed to give states the flexibility necessary to coordinate effective expenditures of Land and Water Conservation Fund (LAWCON) dollars, has required changes in the ways many states discharge their comprehensive recreation planning duties.

Under the periodic planning approach, states could receive up to five years' eligibility to use LAWCON funds. As new plans became due, states would reassess the public's rate of participation in outdoor recreation activities, reinventory the existing recreation facilities, seek public input on recreation issues, and determine acquisition and development needs for the next five years of action. Budgets and staff for recreation planning expanded and contracted on a five-year cycle like accordions.

In the ebb of the cycle, little staff power existed for data analysis and direction, channels of public involvement closed, and data and proposed actions grew stale. At the height of the cycle, staff time was occupied by the intense demands of comprehending and communicating the public's perceived needs for the next five years. In short, the periodic approach produced plans, but moved planners away from a role as continuous advisors to decision-makers.

The process approach seeks to level this cycle. By so doing, the planning staffs should be available to listen to concerned citizens, monitor resource acquisitions and development, give advice on fast-breaking issues, participation trends, maintain current inventories on recreation facility supplies and, most importantly, help decision-makers on a continuous basis.

Unfortunately, unless planners redesign their approach to planning, Process Planning will require a constant amount of budget and staff equivalent to the height of the five-year cycle. Only E. H. Porter's Pollwanna could foresee public financial support for a new cadre of permanent planners in state bureaucracies. Therefore, for Process Planning to come to fruition in state outdoor recreation planning, every possible economy must be used.

The primary economy possible is increasing efficiency in data collection and avoiding large-scale data collection for planning purposes that are not part of ongoing agency operations. This will free time for a more active role by planners in day-to-day decision-making.

Though the specific methods of implementation may differ from state to state, the general areas in which to look for economy hold true across all states: these areas are in the collection of resource, facility and user data, and in the collection of public input. Data inventories need to be collected on a continuous basis, must be computerized, and must be tied to the ongoing record keeping functions of state agencies and to the courthouse records of local governments. Public input processes must be designed as part of the ongoing input into more comprehensive decision structures such as state agency long-range plans, legislative committee processes and regional plans. With the shift to process planning, efficiency in data delivery becomes important. A publication format that accommodates continuous revision must be developed. States must develop and implement computerized management information systems that can quickly process planning data for

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day-to-day decision-making. But last and most important, states must train, employ and retain qualified staff, who will move toward a data liaison and a consulting role.

EFFICIENCY IN RESOURCE DATA COLLECTION

The essence of economical information gathering is the use of secondary sources and ongoing, in-place data input channels.

Many secondary sources exist for resource data: state as well as U.S. Forest Service inventories of vegetative cover, Soil Conservation Service Soils Surveys and U.S. Geological Survey maps all provide ready data sets for planners. If the recreation planner can locate a central, preferably computerized, clearinghouse for these data, the bulk of resource data collection is complete. In Minnesota, the State Planning Agency operates just such a clearinghouse, the Land Management Information Center (LMIC). LMIC stores resource data on a computerized grid system tied to the land survey and courthouse records, allowing data mapping and the creation of new, more useful variables from the original data set. For example, if we want to produce a map of scenically attractive areas using Minnesota's topography, forest cover and nearness to water as

independent variables, we can. All we must do is decide the data classes, determine proper scale and design map symbols and patterns for automated map production. Figure 1 shows a scenically attractive area map produced in just this way.

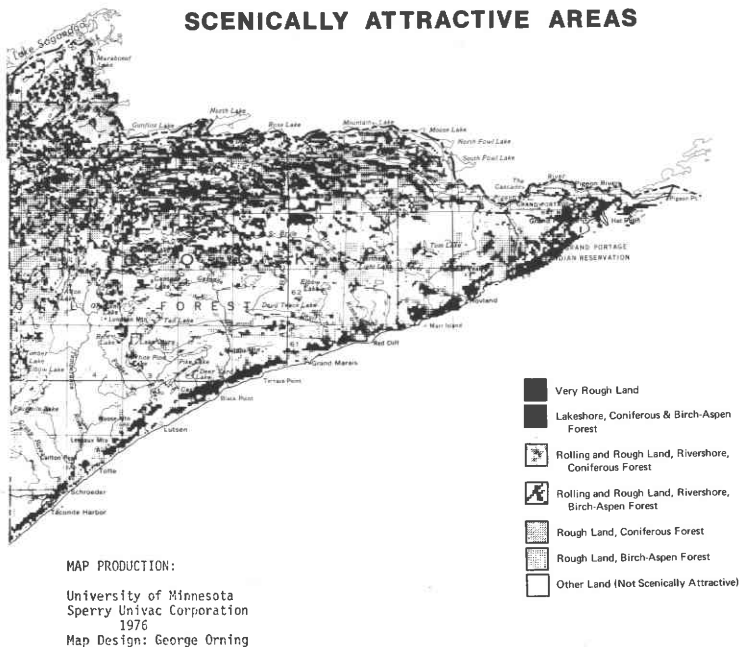
In addition to the more traditional resource data listed above, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resource has created a public land ownership data set that is LMIC system compatible. Unlike physical resource data, this cultural data changes often and must be continuously updated. Here is where ongoing, in-place channels of communication come into play. By redirecting the land ownership paper shuffle to include a key-punching step, land ownership records can be continuously updated. Thus, with minimal extra effort, quality data is maintained on an ongoing basis.

If the situation dictates, other types of data can be added to the system. For example, if mineral leasing in Minnesota accelerates to the point that it might threaten recreation options, mineral leasing records will be added to the system.

The state recreation planner, shifting from periodic to process planning, will be hard pressed to find a good secondary facility data source. In fact, state

Figure One

SCENICALLY ATTRACTIVE AREAS



recreation planning staffs usually keep the primary data set. The key to economy here is making sure the primary data set keeps pace with changes in the facility makeup. Keeping pace eliminates the need for massive, costly reinventories. Again, ongoing, in-place systems provide the efficient mechanism for updating facility data.

By tapping field facility inventories and expenditure records, facility can be kept up to date. In Minnesota, for example, the Division of Parks and Recreation and the Commissioner's special Trails and Waterways Unit have operations sections that administer LAWCON and matching state funds and acquire, develop and manage these facilities. These field people know where the state-owned facilities are located, when a new facility is built and when an old facility is abandoned. Figure two shows a validation form now being developed for the continuous inventory of the public access program.

Local LAWCON recreation funding programs may also be tapped for continuous data input. By plugging into the LAWCON paper work, continuous updating of a major portion of the facility data is achieved. Other recreation funding programs can also provide data. For example, in Minnesota many miles of recreational trail are annually added through the Grant-in-Aid Trail Program. The records of funded Grant-in-Aid trails are now funneled to the SCORP inventory for updating purposes, and are used as the official records of the trails operation unit. In addition, the computer mapping capability will be used to publish trail maps for public information.

Collecting facility data from private and federal sectors poses more problems because their development and acquisition programs lie outside direct state control. Therefore, facility inventory systems should be designed to expedite updating the private and federal sectors through mailed questionnaires and interagency agreements. In Minnesota the facility information is programmed to produce custom questionnaires for the administrator/owner of each inventoried facility, showing what we currently record as their facilities. When the private sector's mailing list is updated through public health records, a complete survey is easily produced on a biennial basis. Finally because only changes to the data base are entered, the workload is reduced substantially.

EFFICIENCY IN USER DATA COLLECTION AND PUBLIC INPUT

User data is an area where many record keeping systems exist for the most important recreation activities. By redesigning systems for hunting, fishing and boat licenses and for park camping permits, user populations do not need to be surveyed as often. The flow of licenses becomes a continuous flow of user information. A few simple questions added to each license or permit application yield significant dividends for planning and management. For example; the current SCORP work program in Minnesota includes adding to boat license applications questions on what lakes and lake areas are most often used by boaters. By continuously monitoring the distribution of summer water use we can better predict changes in boating patterns and utilize this information in our planning efforts.

Many recreation activities are free of licenses or permits; but in general these activities each hold only a small share of the recreation market. Where this is not the case, special data collection efforts should be undertaken. By narrowing the objectives of these investigations cost can be held to a minimum.

In the shift from periodic to process planning, public input can increase the workload and attendant expenses. If the process planner is dedicated to addressing fast-breaking issues and problems, personally meeting with the proper public to gain their advice will overburden and threaten the effectiveness of a small staff. However, the democratic process is founded on public input. As a result, many ongoing, in-place public input mechanisms can be tapped. In Minnesota the recreation planning staff does not hold many public meetings to gain public input. Instead, potential actions are reviewed through existing public forums. These include the Regional Development Commissions, each of which is charged with developing a comprehensive regional plan, the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources, which is a bi-partisan body made up of key legislators specializing in natural resource issues, and the Outdoor Recreation Advisory Committee, which represents elected local government officials from each development region.

Public input through existing forums is used on the primary yearly component of SCORP - The Annual Action Program. We

deliver a draft to the legislature prior to the appropriations session. It is made available as one of the primary information sources legislators use to understand what public good recreation expenditures are supposed to accomplish. Reviewing the draft with constituents provides public input on upcoming recreation acquisition and development. When the legislators actually appropriate dollars to carry out the action plan, they assure that planned actions will be realized. .

During the course of legislative debate, advice and support are provided by Regional Commissions which have reviewed the draft action plan with local units of government and interested citizens in their regions. In addition, the Outdoor Recreation Advisory Committee provides input from the perspective of regional policy makers.

Finally, the state recreation planning staff is available to answer specific questions and give advice on recreation issues to legislators and local government officials.

EFFICIENCY IN DATA DELIVERY

The change from periodic to process planning not only provides for more flexibility but also demands more efficiency. In data delivery flexibility means efficiency. The process approach, with its dynamic data base, makes expensive printed data volumes less important. Meeting requirements of efficient, flexible planning necessitates a change in the format of State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plans from typeset, bound, professionally printed reports to loose leaf data sets. The planning staff then can systematically update the areas of

the plan where change occurs quickly. This approach assures that SCORP is continually current.

Distribution of a SCORP Report Series efficiently provides raw data and maps for state, regional and local planning efforts and for analysis of current issues. SCORP Report Series maps are provided at the state level: one example is a state map of public land ownership. Also, each Regional Development Commission has been supplied with an atlas map series to be used as an aid by them in development of their comprehensive regional plans. The raw data reports provide information such as region-to-region recreation occasion flows and detailed responses from specialized surveys.

Efficient planning must include the development of state recreation planning staff capable of assisting all planners in the state concerned with recreation. This liaison role is vital to carrying the process planning approach to the local levels, where much of the recreation facility provision takes place. Staff must have the ability to clearly explain the process approach. They must be able to sort through ideas provided by recreation planners, understand their objectives and the problems they confront, and propose solutions. Finally, they must be able to direct planners in utilizing the wide-ranging set of computerized data, analyzing it and drawing conclusions. In short, for the process planning approach to succeed, state planning staffs must attain a high level of competence in research and analysis of recreation-related data, and be able to utilize the latest computer modeling and mapping techniques.

VALIDATION REPORT / PUBLIC-ADMINISTERED WATER ACCESS / SCORP INVENTORY SYSTEM/P. 3
 MN DNR/RESEARCH AND POLICY SECTION/TRAILS AND WATERWAYS SECTION-RUN DATE: 01/14/80.

WRITE IN CORRECTIONS OR FILL IN MISSING INFORMATION AS APPROPRIATE:

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BUSH LAKE PUBLIC ACC          :      0 -MGMT AREA CODE      : DNR REGION- 6
                               : A77796 -REFERENCE CODE    : COUNTY NAME:
                               :                               : HENNEPIN
                               : ADMINISTRATOR - CITY      :
                               : MINOR CIVIL DIV- 53005    : COUNTY NUMBER- 27
                               :                               : MAP SHEET- 2
CITY PARKS DIR.              2 :                               : MAP SYMBOL- A369
2215 W. SHAKOPEE             :                               :
BLOOMINGTON, MN 55431       :                               :
612-8815811                  : ACRES- 8.7                :
                               : 0.0                    :
                               :                               : TWP RING SEC 40 1234
NUMBER OF VEHICLE/TRAILER    : NUMBER OF VEHICLE/TRAILER : 116 21W 20 33 B
PARKING SPACES - 51 55 :                               :
                               :                               : 0 0 0
RAMP TYPE (ASPHALT, CONCRETE, EARTH, GRAVEL,
METAL, ROCK, SAND, WOOD, PORTAGE, OTHER, UNK) - CONCRETE :                               :
                               :                               : 0 0 0
                               :                               : 0 0 0
                               : NO. OF FORTIES - 1
CLASSIFICATION AND FUNDING SOURCES - _____ : -----
LAKEID/NAME - 270047/ BUSH          RIVER NAME -
  
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LOCATION NARRATIVE:

**IN BLOOMINGTON, IN BUSH LK CITY PARK, FROM I494, 2.0 MILES SW
 ON BUSH LK ROAD, ON E SHORE.**

Figure 2.--Validation report. *Examples of forms sent to field:* This validation report is intended to be mailed to the field where it is reviewed and, if needed, corrected. Corrections are written directly on the

validation form by field personnel. The returned form is then used to enter corrected data into the computer. The entry is made directly to the data base through an on-line connection or by batch processing.