

PARKS AND PEOPLE: MANAGING OUTDOOR RECREATION

at Acadia National Park

Robert E. Manning, Editor
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It might be hard to imagine a whole book devoted to research at Acadia National Park. I mean, we are not talking about Yellowstone, or the Grand Canyon or even Denali National Park and Preserve. But we are talking about a National Park that got over 2.5 million visitors in 2010. Denali got nearly 400,000 but is a longer road trip.

This edited piece describes in detail twenty years of human dimensions research in Acadia National Park with studies previously published from a variety of journals, government reports, and conference proceedings. The editor, Bob Manning (University of Vermont) has conducted a majority of these studies with National Park Service staff, University of Vermont graduate students and other recreation researchers. The studies are condensed into a comprehensive and complete document devoted to outdoor recreation planning and management in the park.

Parks and People is organized into three sections. Following the acknowledgment and an introduction, Part I is devoted to Indicators and Standards of Quality and encompasses the bulk of the volume with fourteen chapters. Six chapters are found in Part II that provides a review of Monitoring research within the park. The final Part III has six chapters on Management issues. A conclusion chapter is found next followed by the references and an index.

The introductory chapter sets the framework for the collection of research papers and describes Acadia National Park, the local geography as well as introduces the management framework called Visitor Experience and Resource Protection (VERP) that is used to guide research in the National Park Service.

Chapters 1 through 9 illustrate a variety of research studies that identify the important indicators and standards used to guide management strategies in Acadia. Concentrating on the visitor is a primary goal of this section, since the user experience is important in this popular national park. These studies reflect the different use patterns in and along resources in the park, varying from scenic drives, the historic carriage roads, trails and campsites as well as the variety of outdoor recreation activities one may find in the park. These studies reflect the linkage of the natural and social sciences and are an important theme in the book. For example, chapter 6, Research to Guide Trail Management at Acadia National Park, originally published in the 2008 *Proceedings of the Northeastern Recreation Research Symposium*, authors Goonan, Manning and Valliere surveyed visitors on their perception of impacts along trails. Then the visitors were

shown photographs displaying multiple management strategies used to mitigate impacts. This use of VERP is a real and practical application of resource management guided by user preferences.

Crowding conflicts and the resulting management challenges are identified in chapters 10 and 11. Both qualitative and quantitative research is used to measure the indicators and standards of quality, a central theme of Part I.

Monitoring, as an essential element of any recreation management plan, is the premise in Part II. But as correctly identified by Professor Manning, it is more than just numbers that may impact a quality experience. Visitor behavior, impacts of resources and other concerns must be monitored and measured. The six chapters in this section illustrate the variety of tools that recreation planners can use to monitor resource concerns and includes field observation, visitor surveys, remote sensing technology and computer simulation. The use of satellite imagery, for example, is applied to study vegetation impacts of Cadillac Mountain (chapter 19). While the tool is explained, the lack of imagery is noticed by this reviewer.

These monitoring projects occur on typical recreation resources like trails, mountain peaks, the famous carriage roads, as well as parking lots. I find this important since so many studies concentrate on the resources people play on, like trails, but forget the important infrastructure, like a parking lot. Multiple studies rely on some form of stated choice modeling where visitors are asked to assess a pictorial simulation that highlights different use patterns of people and resource degradation that may have resulted from increasing numbers of users.

Part III summarizes management research at Acadia National Park. Again, a stated choice model is used to identify management concerns for trails and mountain peaks. Two chapters are devoted to traffic issues in the park, a seasonal matter for both the visitor and the local residents. While management issues are identified and discussed in other sections of the book, this final section provides a cumulative summary of the Indicators and Standards of Quality raised in Part I and how management can monitor these conditions in Part II.

A conclusion is found in the final chapter and attempts to summarize the content of the previous twenty-six chapters. At first glance, I thought twenty-six chapters was a bit much, but since the pieces were edited from the original research, some unnecessary redundancy and repeated literature review has been removed by Manning. While some linkages between chapters is found, an introductory and concluding chapter for each section might help direct the reader to connections between each chapter and how they would be interconnected.

Having one bibliography for the book is useful to eliminate the repeated references, and the reader can always seek the original paper to see the complete paper should they desire a more in-depth read.

How might this book be used? I suspect that park managers will appreciate the collection of research that might be relevant for their particular park. Educators will want this in their library for examples of human dimensions planning and management in parks and protected areas. And finally, I think the greatest audience would be the arm chair reader whose interest in Acadia National Park would be completely satisfied with *Parks and People*.