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Abstract

This article examines the U.S. Forest Service administrative response to the growth and diversification of recreation. It observes that recreation's ecological and economic impacts have changed dramatically, and provides an overview of the new political landscape created by the professionalization and political organization of the recreation industry and its interest groups. It concludes that Forest Service recreation administration remains informal and variable by district. The agency response to changing recreation is constrained by budget, pulled by shifting alliances among interest groups, and driven by norms.

This article analyzes recreation as a dualistic administrative task, consisting of *provision* of recreation opportunities and *management* of recreation impacts (Brower in review). Using this analytical framework, it examines recreation administration in three Western national forests, looking at forest plans, outfitter guide permit administration, and regulatory enforcement patterns on motorized recreation.

The research began with the hypothesis that the Forest Service would respond to the growth and diversification by shifting its administrative emphasis from providing recreation to managing it. This shift is found to be nascent, but has not taken hold. Whereas recreation has grown, diversified, and organized, Forest Service administration remains decentralized, informal, and variable by district.

Analytical Framework: Recreation Provision vs. Recreation Management

Recreation is a dualistic organizational task, consisting of providing opportunities and managing the people who use them. The Forest Service provides recreation opportunities in the form of roads, trails, campgrounds, and ski resorts; and thus invites the public into the agency's domain. After the Forest Service creates recreation opportunities, the recreating public uses National Forests to create its own outdoor experiences, as well as social and ecological impacts.

The Forest Service played no part in inventing mountain bikes, snowboards, snowmobiles, or off-road vehicles. Yet these new technologies, the people who use them, and the political and economic implications of their use exert pressures on the Forest Service. In short, the Forest Service is faced with *providing* for new activities and simultaneously *managing* a new landscape of recreational impacts. To an organization, provision of a good and management of its impacts are very different tasks. In recreation, the Forest Service must balance between the two. In so doing, the

more high-adventure. (Wagar 1954; McAvoy and Dustin 1981; Greeley and Neff 1968; USDA Forest Service Northeastern Forest Experiment Station 1998; Ewert 1987)

Patterns of use and ecological impact have become both more concentrated and more pervasive at the same time. Firstly, recreationists are more concentrated now in the "front-country" (developed recreation sites close to roads and parking lots) (cite). Secondly, although backcountry visitation numbers have declined, (Lucas and Stankey 1989) technological advances have allowed the still extant backcountry visitors to travel further into the backcountry on foot, mountain bike, or motorized vehicle. As such,

The rocky relationship between recreation and preservation

Discourse analysis of 50 years of the Journal of Forestry reveals that recreation has always been key in political debates over land use in National Forests. (Brower 2004) Politically, over the course of half a century, recreation has been used as a tool to justify both resource extraction and land preservation (Brower in review). In the 1950s and '60s, preservationists claimed the banner of recreation in order to advocate for land preservation (read timber exclusion) in the form of parks and wilderness areas (jfor cites). Of the five forestland uses in the Multiple Use and Sustained Yield Act (MUSYA) of 1960, preservationists effectively appropriated recreation as their own (jfor cites). Further, they made recreation an exclusive use, incompatible with timber harvesting. In the Journal, foresters chronicled the preservationists making use of the recreation boom of the 1950s to pursue their own ends of preserving land and ultimately excluding timber (jfor cites).

The profession of forestry responded to the preservationists' cooptation of recreation by embracing recreation to promote timber (jfor cites). How can demand for forest recreation justify cutting down trees? Foresters countered preservationists'

formalized, Forest Service administration remains informal, decentralized, and inconsistent.

Planning

Analysis of first and second-generation NFMA plans reveals that the plans recognize ecological and social impacts of recreation, but exhibit an inconsistent and incomplete shift from provision to management. The first generation plans emphasize provision, often using provision as a management tool to address ecological impacts and conflict (cites; Brower 2004). The older plans use provision to disperse recreationists, and dilute their ecological and social impacts, mimicking the old adage "the solution to pollution is dilution." The urban San Bernardino National Forest introduced the concept of qualified provision (cite), implying that recreation is a limited resource and that too much recreation can have "unacceptable" impacts on the ecosystem and on the quality of the recreation experience (cite).

In 1999, the White River revised its forest plan in the midst of the lynx listing debate, and in the wake of the still unsolved arson of the Vail ski resort expansion into newly established lynx habitat (Glick 2001). The White River had never produced much timber, and the 1999 plan moved further from resource extraction activities (Best 1999a, b). The 1999 draft plan balanced between the former allies, recreation and preservation. At the time, the preservation interest was long established, well organized, and wealthy, while the recreation interest was just starting to come into its own (cites).

In balancing between recreation and preservation, the White River chose preservation (cite), and its new ally, the endangered lynx (Glick 2001). This choice rallied the recreation interest. The newly organized recreation interest, with a little help

staff point to outfitter permit administration as a collateral duty of many responsible agency staff. Thus there is variable rule enforcement on individual outfitter businesses (cites). Likewise, allocation of user days can be informal and on-demand (cites). It can be for prospective outfitters to obtain a new permit because the agency aims to protect existing outfitters by not saturating the market (cites), and because administrators are often too busy to attend to this incidental duty (cites). Similarly to the informality of user day allocations, agency application of NEPA to outfitter permit renewals varies by district. For example, until a recent legal settlement, the outfitter permit allocation in Teton Division of the Bridger Teton National Forest held a categorical exclusion to NEPA, meaning that permit renewals and expansions were not subject to NEPA's environmental assessment requirements in this District. By contrast, other districts and other forests routinely apply NEPA to outfitter permit allocation and expansion (cites).

Regulatory Enforcement on Motorized Recreation

Research on motorized recreation enforcement patterns reveals the Forest Service to be constrained by budget, but driven by norms. Historically and culturally, the agency tends to favor primitive recreation opportunities over developed, hence favoring a less interventionist enforcement style over a legalistic, ticket-writing, style (cites). Vast landholdings, multiple entrypoints, and limited enforcement budgets are just a few of the limits on the effectiveness of Forest Service legalistic enforcement on motorized recreation (cites). To overcome these constraints, individual forests have devised compensatory mechanisms such as: patrolling areas with high traffic and high violations with extra attention (cite); using motorized user groups to concentrate individuals into groups that are more amenable to enforcement (cite); using motorized recreation groups for patrol and enforcement by peers (cite); forming partnerships to

not happen. While recreation use patterns, interest groups, and the industry have grown, diversified, formalized, and professionalized, Forest Service recreation administration remains decentralized, informal, and variable by Ranger District.

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