

Recent Policy Change in Developed-Site  
Recreation Management in Two Federal Agencies

by

Paul F. Bradford

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APPROVED:

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Professor of Resource Recreation Management in charge of major

---

Head of Department of Forest Management

Graduate Committee:

Perry J. Brown, Professor of Resource Recreation Management  
(Chairman)

Donald R. Field, Professor of Resource Recreation Management

Rebecca L. Johnson, Assistant Professor of Resource Recreation  
Management

W. Bruce Shepard, Associate Professor of Political Science

Date policy study presented - June 13, 1985

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The recognition of important contributors to work can be a difficult task. For instance, should one put most important contributors first or last, and how is importance of contribution even determined, and finally, the decision on inclusion vs. exclusion of names, types of contributions, etc. becomes worrisome. In any event, to invoke a phrase that I've heard a time or two from a good friend (who happens to work for the Forest Service), I'll "do something, even if it's wrong".

Perhaps, because without the support of the agency, this paper would not have been written, the USDA Forest Service and those responsible for the maintenance of this one-year "sabbatical" should first be acknowledged. Logically, next might come the acknowledgement of the Oregon State University and those people directly providing the core of the learning experience with substantial amounts of mental stimulation. A large thanks should go to all the agency people, both Forest Service and National Park Service, who endured my inquisitions and fumbings, and special thanks must go to Tom Mower, a good and patient friend and an even better supporter. And finally, bottom-of-my-heart thanks to life-partner Sherry and son Jeremy who have withstood the ebbs and flows of pressure and frustration from this writer with personal sacrifice, understanding, and consistency. . .

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## PREFACE

In critiquing this paper, the reader is asked to understand that the paper has been written by an employee of the Forest Service, one who grew up watching Walt Disney movies and television shows with glimpses of "friendly rangers" going out of their way to be good "public servants". And in a fairly short career (relatively speaking) with the agency, this writer has come to understand the strength of the esprit de corps and sense of mission within the agency for which the Forest Service is noted. It becomes difficult to view agency activities in a detached, unbiased manner, especially after participating in affairs as part of a team of sincere, committed people trying to maintain a tradition of public service and pride in the agency.

In recent years, the Forest Service and the National Park Service have struggled, as have many federal agencies, with strong changes in the direction of federal programs. The national growth of the 60s and 70s resulted in substantial expansions in both agencies; the following 80s with difficult economic conditions coupled with a strong reversal of preferences by the American voters have required substantial adjustments by the Forest Service and the Park Service to respond to public desires, generally manifested through administration and Congressional direction.

The reader may find portions of this paper to be too long or more of a historical nature than analytical thinking. The rationale for the inclusion of some historical material is that most often, it seems that agencies act in fairly narrow ways--primarily deviations (or

corrections depending upon one's viewpoint) from current or past policy. To elaborate, the agencies tend to operate in an incremental fashion (as described by Lindblom, 1959) which relies heavily on past practices and evolved agency values (such as maintenance of the public service mission), essentially the history of the agency.

Also, in some cases, the reader may question the validity or source of a statement or idea. This writer has attempted to identify sources of information sufficiently; however, in some cases, anonymity was promised in exchange for candid views and observations from respondents. In any event, this work is solely the responsibility of this writer, and in no way, does the work represent agency positions in an official manner.

P.F.B.  
May, 1985

# RECENT POLICY CHANGE IN DEVELOPED-SITE RECREATION MANAGEMENT IN TWO FEDERAL AGENCIES

## INTRODUCTION

In the past 3-5 years, two federal agencies, the Forest Service (FS) and the National Park Service (NPS), have initiated pilot programs in concessioner-operation of developed-site government recreation facilities, specifically family campgrounds and related facilities. These programs have been generally successful by agency measure, and consequently, both agencies have modified previous operating policy (in varying dimensions) to authorize expansion of the concessioner-operation program.

The purpose of this paper is to document a study of the policy analysis and decision-making processes of the two agencies, specifically the processes that the agencies employed in moving from one established policy in recreation management, i.e. agency operation of government-owned facilities, to the current policy of continued government operation of some recreation facilities while providing for private-sector operation of selected government-owned facilities. This study draws heavily upon established decision-making theories such as Lindblom's (1959) study of incrementalism, and the rational-comprehensive and mixed scanning decision-making theories as detailed by Anderson (1984). For the purposes of this paper, however, a policy analysis framework (which essentially mixes some of the characteristics of the rational-comprehensive and the mixed scanning theories) proposed by Vars (1985) is used as a baseline policy analysis/decision

-making model for comparison of individual agency processes (important to note is Vars definition of policy analysis, i.e. policy analysis is something written designed to change some existing policy). The Vars framework was used as a baseline for comparison of agency analyses because of the logical, yet realistic, nature of the model and the ability of the model to accomodate varying time frames (i.e. short and long range problems).

The framework proposed by Vars (1985) includes the following steps: 1) Establishing the context of the problem requiring policy action; 2) Generating alternative courses of action; 3) Predicting probable consequences of the alternatives; 4) Evaluating the probable outcomes of the alternatives; and 5) Making a decision and proceeding with the implementation of that choice.

This paper examines Forest Service actions first by establishing historical precedents in the agency and developed site recreation management policies, then discussing recreation management policies in effect in 1981 and 1985, exploring the agency analysis supporting the policy change, and comparing the agency processes to the Vars framework (in a retrospective fashion). The National Park Service actions are considered in a similar manner (as detailed above for the Forest Service). The study concludes with a comparison of the actions and situations (i.e. similarities and differences) of the two agencies and suggestions for further investigation.



## POLICY CHANGE IN THE USDA FOREST SERVICE

Background

The Forest Service has been much studied over the years. Such studies include historical accounts such as Steen's (1976) The U.S. Forest Service: A History, Robinson's (1975) The Forest Service: A Study in Public Land Management, and Frome's (1984) The Forest Service. Other types of studies include administrative and policy analyses such as Kaufman's (1960) Forest Ranger: A Study in Administrative Behavior, Reich's (1962) Bureaucracy and the Forests, Clawson's (1975) Forests for Whom and for What?, and Dana and Fairfax's (1980) Forest and Range Policy.

Throughout the literature, the agency has been recognized as a generally well-managed entity (rated among the ten most successful organizations in the nation by a 1981 study by Gold) with high esprit de corps and a strong sense of agency mission. As Dana and Fairfax (1980) note, the Forest Service has been endowed with a strong sense of its management mission from inception, primarily through the vision of founder Gifford Pinchot. However, this strong sense of mission has sometimes resulted in criticism of the agency as being insensitive and unresponsive to public desires and/or comment, as Reich (1962), Dana and Fairfax (1980), and various other critics of the agency have noted in differing ways.

Yet, despite the increasing political and legislative demands over time which potentially could have led to more bureaucratic operations, the agency has struggled to maintain an attitude of responsiveness and high levels of public service. Fairfax, in Dana and Fairfax (1980), states in her dedication of the book to Roy

Feuchter, now Director of Recreation Management for the Forest Service, and George Lea of the USDI Bureau of Land Management:

"Their hopes and efforts should remind us that, among the bureaucrats, there are public servants. They need attentive critics; but they have also earned respect, support, gratitude, and affection."

In an interview in March, 1985, Deputy Chief Housley stressed the importance of maintaining public service in National Forest System operations, specifically in recreation management policy, despite reduced funding levels and increasing operation and maintenance costs. The positive "can do" attitude for which the Forest Service is well known is still a strong theme.

#### Evolution of Recreation Management Policy in the Agency

During the early years of the Forest Service (early 1900's), the agency was primarily concerned with the creation and implementation of policy that would further the wise use of the National Forests, despite the recognized biases of founder Pinchot towards timber management goals. The legitimacy of recreation use as consistent with wise use of the National Forests was recognized early in the agency's history, specifically by the Waugh Report of 1918, Recreation Uses on the National Forests, which detailed existing Forest Service recreation policy with some predictions for potential recreation use of the forests (Dana and Fairfax, 1980).

With increasing mobility of the United States population due to the coming of the automobile, Forest Service recreation management programs were forced to adjust to increased numbers of participants with new use patterns. This adjustment resulted in significant workload demands on many within the agency, financial drains on other

resource management programs (due to diversion of funds to the recreation management effort), and some dissension within the agency about the propriety of maintaining a recreation management program (Dana and Fairfax, 1980). Important to note is that the agency accomodated the recreation workload without significantly involving the private sector in the management of Forest Service facilities.

Over the next thirty to forty years (early to mid 1900s), the Forest Service faced recreation management policy issues such as wilderness debates, conflicts with the Park Service (over a variety of issues and/or federal lands), and continued growth in demand for recreation on the National Forests. Agency responses to these issues included wilderness regulation (L- and U-series regulations), collection of Congressional support, and the classification of recreation as a major use of the national forests equal to others (e.g. timber, range, etc.), although not legislatively recognized until the Multiple Use-Sustained Yield Act of 1960 (Dana and Fairfax, 1980).

The establishment of recreation management as a major use of the national forests resulted in increased and sustained visibility in funding debates, and in 1957 at the request of Chief McArdle, Dana studied Forest Service recreation programs and recommended creation of a Forest Recreation Research Division (Steen, 1975). Beginning in the late 1950s and continuing through the mid 1970s in response to the increasing demand for outdoor recreation on public lands, the Forest Service acted to rehabilitate and upgrade existing sites and constructed many new sites (Annual Report of the Chief of the Forest Service, Years 1957-1975). General recreation

management policy trends during this period were to accommodate and encourage recreation use and construct facilities with fairly high development and operation and maintenance costs (e.g. conversion of pit and vault toilets to flush systems, etc.)

Thus, the Forest Service recreation policy evolved over the years from the recognition and casual management of incidental use of the forests by "innocent trespassers" (Steen, 1975) to the extensive recreation management program of the mid to late 1970s with "full service" management of campgrounds and large interpretive programs. Throughout the evolutionary process, although private capital and interests were utilized in some situations where highly developed facilities were desired (e.g. resorts or stores under long-term special use permits), most of the developed site recreation management program, specifically family campgrounds and associated facilities, was supported with public funds and accomplished by government employees (excepting private construction contracted for and supervised by Forest Service employees).

Some perturbations to this general trend of public operation of government facilities occurred in the 1950s and early 1960s (USDA Forest Service, Campground Concession Study Report, 1983) when the Forest Service experimented in private sector operation of public facilities, with less than optimal results. Another recent trend in recreation management policy has centered on the user fee issue. Although a complete discussion of the evolution of user fees at Forest Service recreation facilities (as detailed in Driver, Bossi, and Cordell, "Trends in User Fees at Federal Outdoor Recreation Areas", 1985) is outside the scope of this study, it is important to note the

general trend of the 1960s and 1970s, i.e. attempts to recover some costs of publicly-provided recreation programs from users by use fees.

Recreation Management Policy in 1981

Forest Service developed site recreation management policy in 1981 stated fairly explicitly the agency's position with regards to private sector operation of public sector facilities. From the Forest Service Manual (FSM), Chapter 2330 - Development of Sites in Public Sector, under 2330.3 - Policies, the text reads:

"6. Sites developed by the Forest Service may be operated on a charge basis by a concessioner when that would result in improved service to the public or when the site is isolated and Forest Service operation is impractical. In any event, the Forest Service shall ensure protection of the public interest through administration of the site. For concessioner operated sites refer to FSM 2340."

And referring to FSM Chapter 2340 - Development Sites in Private Sector, the introduction to the chapter states:

"Sites described in this chapter are those usually developed under special-use permit through use of private, not Government, funds. Sites usually developed with public funds, such as campgrounds and picnic grounds, are discussed in FSM 2330."

Continuing with FSM Chapter 2340 under 2340.3 - Policies:

"Forest Service funding of facilities to be placed under private concessioner management, or complementary thereto, will be carried out only after a most careful analysis of other alternatives for meeting the public need. . ."

And under policies, specifically pertaining to campgrounds and picnic sites, 2340.3--1. Campground and Picnic Site:

"National Forest campground and picnic facilities will normally be operated by the Forest Service. They will be placed under private-concessioner operation only in very special situations where private development and/or operation of other recreation facilities cause it to be advantageous to National Forest management programs to do so. Washington Office approval will be required for each such case."

"Existing concessioner-operated areas not advantageous for National Forest-management purposes will be phased out as rapidly as feasible, recognizing existing agreements and permits."

And under FSM 2344 - Concession Sites, a section of the Forest Service manual discussing general management policies of the agency with regards to concession sites, the following from FSM 2344.03--9:

"Government-owned improvements to be operated as a concession usually will be covered by permit under section 7 of the Granger-Thye Act (FSM 2715.41d)."

So to summarize the Forest Service policy on developed site recreation management, specifically campgrounds and related facilities, in 1981, the Forest Service was directing that public campgrounds should "normally" be managed by the agency with the placement of public sector facilities under private concession-operation "only in very special situations ...advantageous to National Forest management programs..." Additionally, Forest Service field offices were moving to increase fees at qualifying recreation sites in line with five-year action plans to "recover 100% of operation and maintenance costs" by fiscal year 1982 (USDA Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region, Program of Work, 1980-1).

Levels-of-service distinctions were generally used in the budgetary process to differentiate between possible program options, i.e. full funding of Forest Service requests would mean full-service management of Forest Service campgrounds (higher levels of facility maintenance, visitor information programs, etc.) whereas 75% funding of Forest Service requests could translate into the same length of managed season of sites but reduced-service management (no-frills facilities management). The use of volunteers, in the form of campground hosts and recreation interns, served to substitute for

personnel not hired due to funding shortages in some cases (site operations), and augment and enhance programs in other cases (interpretive work).

#### Recreation Management Policy in 1985

Forest Service Interim Directive No. 30 to FSM Chapter 2340 Development Sites in Private Sector, dated February 11, 1985, from Associate Deputy Chief J. B. Hilmon resulted in a substantial change in written policy direction for developed site recreation management for the agency. Significant portions of the directive are as follows:

"Introduction - This interim directive revises concession policy in FSM 2340.3 and FSM 2344.03 to allow concession operation of government-owned campgrounds and related recreation facilities without prior W.O. approval and provides additional direction for issuing concession permits.

2344.41 - Authority. Authority to permit concessioner operation of structures and improvements under Forest Service jurisdiction is found in Section 7, Granger-Thye Act of April 24, 1950 (16 USC 580d). See also FSM 2710 and 2780 for permit billing and required clauses.

2344.42 - Objective. Allow placement of Government-owned campgrounds and related recreation facilities under concession operation to enhance the quality of recreational experiences and overall service to the public. The concession program should be considered one of many tools for managing existing National Forest System campgrounds for the same type of recreation experience the public would receive under direct Forest Service management."

Other portions of the interim directive detailed specific policies for implementation of the concession program, such as concessioner-selection procedures, desired operation and maintenance procedures, and potential concessioner site selection guides for Forest and Regional use. Facilities still under government management

were to be operated at reduced or self-service levels (i.e. limited service to no service provided, translating to minimal provision of supplies and services to no provision of such benefits). The volunteer program and student internship programs were increasing in importance and usage in field situations as field managers struggled to maintain targeted levels of program accomplishment.

The most significant difference in recreation management policy from 1981 to 1985 can be summarized from the objective statement in the W.O. Interim Directive of 2/11/85, which stated that "...The concession program should be considered one of the many tools for managing existing National Forest System campgrounds..." This change in policy from a position that "normally, National Forest campground and picnic facilities will be operated by the Forest Service" to concession management considered to be "one of the many tools" for managing facilities is explored in the following discussion.

#### Forest Service Analysis Supporting the Policy Change

In the two to three years preceding 1981, the Forest Service recreation management program was adapting from a period of fairly steady growth in funding to one of fairly flat to falling budgets, compounded with inflation and increasing operation and maintenance costs (Annual Report of the Forest Service, FY 1979-81). Generally, reductions in funding were handled by reducing levels of service at campgrounds and related facilities, some adjustments of operating seasons to close low-use sites and/or minimize costs in low-use seasons, reductions in visitor information and interpretive services, and postponing facility rehabilitation and heavy maintenance. To summarize, the trend was to save money in a variety of the currently



performed tasks, or, "trimming the fat of government", to use a popular phrase of the era.

However, in the face of two major change elements, 1) continued reductions in recreation management program funding (translating into campground and related facilities operation and maintenance funding) despite increased recreation demand, and 2) Reagan Administration emphasis (through the Department of Agriculture) to decrease the size of government and encourage private sector provision of goods and services, people in managerial positions and recreation staff positions throughout the Forest Service began to look for ways to adapt to and cope with change. From conversations with various Forest Service personnel, it seems that the idea of trying concession management of campgrounds (already familiar to many of those associated with the experiments of the late 1950s and early 1960s, employees with 20 or more years of agency service) was supported by a prominent researcher (LaPage who had extensively studied private operations in the Northeast) and some high-level field managers, while some Washington Office (W.O.) recreation staff specialists had initial reservations.

As the Forest Service Campground Concession Study Report of December 1983 states, it was with some reluctance on the part of some Forest Service officials that the pilot campground concession program was reinaugurated in 1982. And from information gathered (which may not include all agency documentation), there was very little research or analysis of long-range implications of the pilot program. Rather, Forest Service policy-makers and staff specialists were adapting to forces affecting the agency by searching among possible options for

satisfactory solutions. Concession operation of campgrounds, although tried in earlier years with unsatisfactory results, was permitted on an experimental basis in response to field requests for the program, supported by analysis of varying applicability (Pederson, 1981; Burgeson, 1981; Rea and Lineback, 1982; Lund, 1980).

The pilot program was initiated on a limited basis and studied closely during the first year, 1982, by agency personnel to determine the effectiveness of the program. Agency recreation management specialists chose to measure effectiveness of the program on basically two criteria; 1) net benefits calculations (with benefits consisting of reduced government costs and fees from concessioners and costs consisting of foregone user revenues and administrative oversight costs); and 2) visitor satisfaction surveys. After the first year, which was judged to be successful by an informal agency study conducted by field and W.O. recreation specialists, the pilot program was doubled in size in 1983 to "gain more input and experience before giving permanent direction to the program" (USDA FS Campground Concession Study Report, 1983).

After the second season of experience in the pilot program, 1983, the Forest Service study team again reviewed results of the program, and subsequently prepared a report, the Campground Concession Study Report of December, 1983, which recommended "Utilize(ing) the 'Concession Program' as an alternative management tool for managing National Forest campgrounds, picnic grounds, and associated facilities." Other recommendations of the report included revision of stated policies in the Forest Service Manual and specific

implementation policies such as insurance requirements, special-use permit management, etc.

The concession program was substantially expanded again in 1984, particularly in the Pacific Southwest Region, although written policy direction had not changed (i.e. FSM had not been revised).

Authorization to expand the program was implied from the results of the 1983 study report on the pilot program, and, according to some of those interviewed, agreed to between top-level field managers (i.e. regional foresters) and W.O. policy-makers. The expansion of 1984 proved to be successful and further solidified the position of the concession program as a viable way to maintain public service and stretch recreation management allocations.

From the completion of the study report in December, 1983 to the distribution of Interim Directive No. 30, dated February 11, 1985 was primarily a period of refinement of the proposed policy (as summarized in study report recommendations) into final form. Continued flat to dropping recreation management program funding levels and the re-election of the Reagan administration may have contributed significantly to the final decision to change policy and integrate concession management into the "bag of tools available to the field recreation manager." In any event, as Deputy Chief Housley related, after several discussions among high-level agency personnel on the matter, a consensus emerged on the policy (although it is difficult to determine the type or level of analysis supporting the consensus due to very limited written material). The consensus coincides with some of the ideas suggested by Kaufman (1960) about Forest Service decision-making; when a decision must be made and those involved have

differing opinions, the general tendency in the agency is to close ranks once the decision is made and work as a group towards the success of whatever choice was made.

Currently, the concession program is solidly in place as one of the options available to field managers. To paraphrase Housley (1985), the W.O. management felt that the demands being made on field managers to continue to provide "good public service" warranted giving those managers the flexibility to manage as they saw fit, regardless of some feelings that the Forest Service should continue to operate government facilities exclusively. W.O. recreation management specialists will be responsible for giving overall program leadership, and monitoring and evaluating the concession program development.

#### Comparison of Agency Policy Analysis with Policy Analysis Model

In comparing Forest Service policy analysis actions against an idealized policy analysis model, some recognition must be made of the limitations of the model, the realities of decision-making processes, and the fact that hindsight is inevitably much clearer (some say 20-20) than foresight. The proposed policy analysis model assumes that the decision-makers actually want some sort of analysis done on a problem with alternative courses of action generated and valued, and a recommendation made to implement one of the alternatives based on some decision criteria. In reality, decision-making is often incremental (as described by Lindblom, 1959); an exhaustive policy analysis which generates vast arrays of alternatives and data will not be "appreciated" (as described by Vickers, 1983) or utilized by the decision-makers.

In analyzing policy change by the agency, it should be noted that, in general, any policy is subjected to forces of change over time due to the dynamic nature of our society. In the Forest Service recreation management program, two main forces were identified (through personal interviews and discussions with agency personnel) as primary causes for changing existing (as of 1981) policy: 1) Decreasing budget allocations for recreation management programs, coupled with increasing costs of operation and maintenance; and 2) Reagan Administration emphasis (through the Department of Agriculture) to decrease the size of government and encourage private sector provision of goods and services. Thus, the Forest Service established the problem context of their analysis on reacting to these two primary forces, with a fairly short time frame for action to resolve the problem.

In preparing an idealized policy analysis, as suggested by the model, the two forces detailed above as creating the need for policy change would be included in the problem context. The idealized analysis would establish a problem context with more attention to long-term management needs and probable trends in recreation programs, such as the need to manage recreation facilities with continually flat to dropping budgets for the next two decades. The problem defined by the Forest Service appears to have been placed within a much shorter time frame, i.e. the need to manage recreation facilities and maintain public service during the next two to four years.

Although there may be information to the contrary in agency files, it appears that the agency did not embark on a formal (written) alternative generation and analysis phase as proposed in the policy

analysis model to contend with the identified problem. Rather, the agency continued the response patterns to recreation management problems previously established. Previous responses to funding problems included adjusting programs by small, incremental steps (such as reducing levels of service on some campgrounds while maintaining full service on other facilities) to save money and continue to provide public service. In this case, the agency chose to resurrect a program previously tried and rejected after searching among familiar methods of coping with shortfalls in funding, e.g. reducing service levels, closing sites, etc., and viewing the outcomes as unacceptable. Essentially, some analysis may have occurred in looking at possible management options and their outcomes; however, there was no documentation of alternative comparison or valuation discovered by this writer.

Comparing this stage of the agency analysis to the policy analysis model, the agency did not generate a wide array of possible alternatives, then predict probable consequences, and evaluate probable outcomes of the alternatives. Rather, the agency decided to experiment with an alternative (the pilot program), collect information on the experiment, and evaluate the outcomes of the experiment, with the final decision contingent upon the previous experiences. Use of the policy analysis model, however, theoretically would have resulted in a wide array of possible alternatives for consideration with predicted outcomes (with capabilities for projecting outcomes over longer periods of time while recognizing uncertainties of prediction), and evaluation of the outcomes based on

agency preferences and values. An alternative should have been identifiable as an optimal course of action.

The use of the policy model would entail some uncertainty, require confidence from decision-makers in policy analysts, and involve risk in implementing the decision. The Forest Service action basically moved the agency in a previously-tried direction, i.e. concessioner operation of government facilities, in an experimental mode until satisfactory results were reasonably assured (from an agency viewpoint). In implementing the pilot concessioner program, the agency attempted to resolve problems requiring agency response with a low-risk approach, an approach not demonstrated to be optimal by analysis. The agency action has produced satisfactory results to this point; however, the agency action could be summarized as a satisficing (or good enough) strategy rather than an optimal approach.

## POLICY CHANGE IN THE USDI NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Background

The National Park Service has been a prominent resource management agency for many years. Its widespread public recognition could be attributed to several factors, among them the agency's administrative responsibilities of 1) well-known national treasures of nature (examples include the National Parks - Yellowstone, Yosemite, the Grand Canyon, the Great Smoky Mountains, etc.) and 2) well-known treasures of history and human interest (e.g. Washington Monument and other Washington, D.C. attractions, Gettysburg Battlefield, etc.). Other factors contributing to widespread national recognition of the agency might include numerous television shows and movies (e.g. Walt Disney) which have featured national parks and "friendly rangers", and the growth of outdoor recreation demand coupled with the rekindling of the conservation movement in the 1960s and 70s (Foresta, 1984). And, several pieces of literature of varying objectivity have been available for public consumption including a magazine, National Parks and Conservation Magazine, and numerous books, among them Ise's (1961) Our National Park Policy: A Critical History, Everhart's (1983) The National Park Service, and Foresta's (1984) America's National Parks and Their Keepers.

Despite the relative prominence of the agency, the Park Service has had difficult management problems throughout the history of the Service (Everhart, 1983). Problems have included chronic funding shortages which have resulted in deterioration of facilities, burgeoning use patterns in times of national prosperity, and neglect



during times of national stress (for example, during World War II) (Dana and Fairfax, 1980; Ise, 1961). The Park Service has been subjected to the shifting winds of administration changes, perhaps more so than other agencies, by political appointment of agency leadership and increasing involvement in agency management by the Secretary of Interior's office (in recent years, i.e. the last 20 years, beginning during the Kennedy administration and continuing to the present). As a consequence of persistent change elements and politicalization, the agency has struggled to establish and maintain a clear, commonly agreed-upon mission (Foresta, 1984).

#### Evolution of Recreation Management Policy in the Agency

Since the creation of the National Park Service in 1917, the primary management responsibilities of the agency have been recreation-management oriented. Unlike the Forest Service or other agencies with broad organizational missions (e.g. "greatest good for the greatest number ..."), the National Park Service mission was more narrow, originally written by the Secretary of the Interior to Park Service Director Mather in 1918 as follows:

"First, that the national parks should be maintained in absolutely unimpaired form for the use of future generations as well as those of our own time; second, that they are set apart for the use, observation, health, and pleasure of the people; and third, that the national interest must dictate all decisions affecting public or private enterprise in the parks. Every activity of the Service is subordinate to the duties imposed upon it to faithfully preserve the parks for posterity in essentially their natural state" (Dana, 1956; Dana and Fairfax, 1980).

Paraphrasing the above, the mission of the Park Service could be summarized as preservation of the national parks in an unimpaired

state for future generations while encouraging and managing use by the present population, seemingly fairly incompatible goals.

The relatively narrow mission of the Park Service, initially preservation and administration of recreation use on National Parks, resulted in a fairly small constituency of supporters in the infancy of the agency. In the early 1900s, travel to distant places, such as western National Parks, was not a viable option for most of the nation's population, located mostly in the East. To increase public support, the first Park Service director, Stephen Mather, actively began promoting the expansion of the agency soon after the establishing legislation, realizing that to survive the agency would need to grow in funding levels and national interest (Everhart, 1983; Dana and Fairfax, 1980). Consequently, the Park Service began a development campaign to promote the use of the national parks and correspondingly increase public awareness, with hopes that Congressional support would follow (ideally in the form of funding of programs).

With limited funds, however, the Park Service was forced to look for alternative ways to government-funded construction of facilities to accommodate park visitors. As Dana and Fairfax (1980) note, Director Mather was innovative in his approach to promotion and expansion of the Service by involving the private sector in the development of the park system, specifically the railroads and the American Automobile Association (for transportation purposes), and numerous concessionaires (for services such as meals and lodging within the parks). Mather, as quoted by Hummell in a recent conference of national park concessioners, reportedly remarked on

appropriate levels of development of accommodations in National Parks as follows:

"Scenery is hollow enjoyment to a tourist who sets out in the morning after an indigestible breakfast and a fitful sleep on an impossible bed".

Consequently, the recreation management policy of the Park Service has been intertwined with private sector interests since the very early days of the agency. And the agency, since inception, has been primarily recreation-management oriented (broadly used to include the management of historical resources and natural resources through interpretation, protection, etc.), with no commodity uses (other than human enjoyment of natural beauty or national history) permitted.

Through the early years of the agency, there was competition with other federal agencies, most notably the Forest Service, as the Park Service struggled to expand administrative responsibilities into a larger public land base (Foresta, 1984). The national forests contained several sites of qualifying beauty (for national park status), and for many years, the Forest Service assumed a defensive position, attempting to ward off perceived Park Service "usurpations" (Dana and Fairfax, 1980). The Park Service, under the leadership of Mather and Albright, extended their administrative responsibilities into historical areas and the Washington, D.C. area to increase political awareness of the agency, as Albright is quoted by Foresta (1984) as writing,

"National Park Service management directly under the eyes of Congress and the President, would broaden the" "interest of members of Congress in the whole National Park System...this would bring stronger support in basic legislation and appropriations."

In 1936, the Parks, Parkway, and Recreation Act of 1936 established the Park Service as the preeminent federal recreation management agency (Ise, 1961) and broadened the scope of the agency's horizons to include planning and determination of recreation potential on all federal lands except those under the jurisdiction of the Department of Agriculture (Foresta, 1984). Many within other federal agencies resented the advancement of the Park Service in the 1930s, primarily because the agency's gains in power and influence were at their expense. The Park Service would suffer losses, however, during the 1940s when national interests turned to maximum commodity production and away from recreational pursuits.

Concession operations in the National Parks in the early-to-mid-1900s period had a fairly unpredictable subsistence. Problems that concessioners faced included multiple competitors at sites (resolved by the Park Service by the origination of the prime concessioner concept), fluctuating visitation and economic depression, and a proposal by Secretary of Interior Ickes and his successor, Krug, for government acquisition of concession facilities (Everhart, 1983). A citizen advisory group, formed in 1946 to investigate alternative courses of action regarding appropriate concession policy for the agency, recommended government ownership, but not operation, of basic facilities as being in the long-run public interest (Hummell, undated). No action was taken on the recommendation, however, because of the large capital outlays necessitating Congressional appropriations.

With the postwar baby boom and associated national prosperity, the National Park Service faced increasing recreation demand with

deteriorated and inadequate facilities. With Wirth taking over as Director and the initiation of "Mission 66" in 1956, the Park Service began a substantial construction and rehabilitation program that resulted in more government owned and operated facilities, such as campgrounds and picnic areas, in the system.

Meanwhile, the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission was established in 1958 to study problems and opportunities in future recreation management for the nation (Dana and Fairfax, 1980). Some of their recommendations included consideration of Park Service concessioner operations, as reported by Hummell (undated):

"The report concluded that 'The private sector of the economy (the concession system) is by far the most promising source of new funds for recreation facilities. The general health of the concessions system is good and has shown great capacity for growth'".

Also according to Hummell (undated), the Commission recommended that a clear federal policy should be developed establishing the role of concessions in the national park system, eventually set forth in Public Law 89-246, the Concessioners' Act of 1965.

With the Kennedy administration and Secretary of Interior Stewart Udall came a significant change in the Park Service administrative workload and the involvement of the Department of Interior in agency management. Udall, viewing Park Service Director Wirth as leading an unresponsive agency, sought to broaden the agency's awareness of national public needs by forcing Wirth's retirement and installing new leadership. Soon thereafter, Congress began a series of pork barrel additions to the National Park System (some additions with questionable qualifications in the eyes of many agency personnel). These additions with accompanying operation and

maintenance costs continued even as Park Service budgets fluctuated, with periods of retrenchment (Foresta, 1984). The agency was forced to accept more responsibility (from Congressman Burton's subcommittee on park authorizations) while not being adequately funded (by Congressman Yates' subcommittee on appropriations).

Consequently, the Park Service evolved from an agency with a narrow mission and a small land base to an agency with a diverse management portfolio (i.e. national parks, monuments, seashores, battlefields, etc.) still with a fairly narrow mission, i.e. the management of people pursuing satisfaction in their leisure time. And the Park Service, drawing criticism from former supporters, struggled to modify the agency's mission to satisfy the critics, with questionable success (Foresta, 1984). Throughout the evolution of the Park Service, concessioners have played important roles, and more recently have been influential through contacts with Interior Secretary Watt (Watt, 1981). Important to note, however, is that the Park Service had previously confined concessioner operations to privately-owned facilities (usually of a more capital-extensive nature such as hotels, restaurants, gift shops, etc.), while most campgrounds in the national park system were publicly-owned and operated.

#### Recreation Management Policy in 1982

National Park Service recreation management policy in 1982 was undergoing change. The Park Service had just completed two decades (60s and 70s) of rapid expansion with the acquisition of a variety of recreation sites and associated facilities. With the election of Reagan and the installation of Watt as Secretary of Interior, Park Service policies were under scrutiny. An indication of the Watt's

regard for the agency was exhibited in his address to the 1981 Conference of National Park Concessioners, the association of private sector concession interests. Some segments of the address are as follows:

"...Several years ago I spoke to this group (the concessioners) when I was heading the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation and got to know Warren and Don and several of you at that time. I have enjoyed those friendships and have been eager for this meeting to come because you folks are going to play a tremendously important role and a growing role in the administration of our national parks and we are going to reach out to involve you in some areas that you haven't been asked to be involved in before. I shouldn't say that. We are going to ask you to be involved in areas that you haven't been allowed to be involved in before...

...I will try to find the balance there (between Paradise or Playground - referring to a National Geographic TV film on PBS) as everyone has sought to do in the past. I will air (sic) on the side of public use versus preservation. I do not believe the national park system should run urban parks. I have strong views on that. We will use the budget system to be the excuse to make major policy decisions. So we address the budget, and I am concerned, as I'm sure each of you are concerned, that we have not been good stewards of much of the land resource base that we've been given in the Department of Interior and, particularly, in the National Park Service. I think a park a month is a little too aggressive for expansion. That's what you experienced the last two years. We must be stewards of what we have before we grab out for more. So, to use Russ's (Park Service Director Dickenson) phrase, we're in a period of consolidation and we need to marshall the resources and restore and improve what we have. So to do that, we have put a moratorium on Federal acquisition...We did increase the Carter budget request by 105 million dollars for the National Park Service in an effort to start an aggressive program of restoration and improvement of that resource base, and I think Russ has indicated we need to keep that accelerated pace for 5 or 6 more years to do that...

...We're changing several things in government. But the issue then comes back to how are we going to properly manage the parks? There is no way that Russ Dickenson, or any of us, will be successful, if we wanted to be successful, in securing the needed monies to provide the services to people. Fortunately, we don't need to look for that because we need an aggressive program with the private entrepreneurs who are willing to invest and manage"

"resources in the National Park Service for people. That is our commitment. Now, we are going to do several things along that line and Russ and I have had some preliminary conversations and I appreciate his attitude on this as you folks do. If we need to change personnel under Russ to accomplish a more aggressive concessioners program, we will change the people. We mean business...

...I'm receptive to anything that will work. We have tremendous biases. We have a bias for private enterprise. We believe concessioners can do the job and so while I'm open to anything, I have biases that I lean heavily toward and that's why this group becomes critical to us. We do not have a plan of action for concessioners in our park system. We have open ears with a willingness to do what is right in a short time frame. We're tired of paralysis by analysis...

...We're going to put money first and foremost into the developed parks to salvage what is there rather than opening up new areas that have just been added to the system. Some of you will groan about that—I understand why you would—but as a policy matter, we are going to plow the money into restoring what we have before we start opening up other areas for concentration..."

As can be seen from Watt's comments, the Park Service was expected to be highly responsive to the Reagan administration's agenda. Consequently, the recreation management policies of the Park Service in 1981-82 were adjusting to come generally in line with some of the ideas presented above in excerpts from Watt's speech. Examples of policy actions include attempts to increase revenues generated from the national park system, concentrating funding allocations on facilities with the most potential for generating revenues, and becoming more responsive to the ideas and opinions of existing concessioners. The agency was receiving more money than in previous years for operation and maintenance functions; however, in line with Watt's comments, the funds were going to rehabilitate and improve existing facilities, mostly high-use areas, and not for development of newer additions to the national park system. The Park Service was



continuing to perform traditional functions, such as visitor interpretive services, operation and maintenance of government-owned facilities, and law enforcement.

### Recreation Management Policy in 1985

The National Park Service, in 1985, was still influenced by the biases and beliefs of now-departed Secretary Watt. Recreation management policy, which is primarily the bulk of the agency's responsibilities, had undergone change in several ways. Important to note for the purposes of this paper is the change in recreation management policy concerning the operation and maintenance of government recreation facilities, specifically family campgrounds. In 1985, the Park Service had expanded the role of their established concessioners (operators of privately-owned facilities within the parks) into an experimental program of concessioner operation of government facilities, i.e. campgrounds.

The specific policies pertaining to the implementation of the concessioner program were contained in the "Concessions Management Guideline NPS - 48" (an extensive reference manual for use in the administration of all NPS concessions) and in NPS Director Dickenson's memo of 4/1/83 which authorized the initiation of the pilot program. Dickenson's memo included direction on operating procedures to be followed, contract amendment language, and a strong charge to the field on administration of the pilot program. Excerpts from that charge are as follows:

"In Attachment No. 2, Operating Procedures, there is a section on reporting results of the pilot program. I cannot emphasize strongly enough the importance of keeping good supportable records of our progress through this program..."

"The way in which the public perceives concessioner operation of campgrounds is vital not only to this program but, even more, to continued support of all National Park Service endeavors. This is not a giveaway but rather it is a hard headed business decision on the part of the government which lets us concentrate available people and dollars on those functions which are critical to the operation of the parks. I urge you to use every opportunity to get this message across...

In the future, if other campgrounds are added to the pilot program, the procedures set out in this memorandum are to be applied..."

As detailed by Jim Owen (Concessions Staff, Washington Office, National Park Service) in April, 1985, a draft report (report on the second year of pilot program operations) on the Park Service campground concessioner pilot program proposed expanding the program to more areas within the national park system to generate more experience with the program before making a final decision. At the time of the interview, Owen said the report, prepared in February, 1985, was being held up until the new Park Service director was named, who would then make the decision on expansion of the program. It was expected, however, that the concessioner program would be expanded regardless of who was named Director.

#### Park Service Analysis Supporting the Policy Change

The Park Service was responding to two primary forces in initiating the pilot program to place government facilities under concession management. According to Owen (1985), those forces were 1) reductions in appropriations for operation and maintenance of facilities and 2) administration pressures for privatization, as exhibited by quotations from Watt previously in this paper. Park Service officials reacted to these forces by preliminary investigations into the feasibility of expanding existing concessioner

involvement into operations previously performed by the agency. The matter was referred to the Denver Service Center for analysis and assistance, and information on possible candidates for concessioner operation were solicited from the field offices (along with reactions to the concept).

From the best available information, it seems that the Service Center concluded that the concessioner operation of campgrounds was a feasible option and should be tried on an experimental basis. As part of their analysis, the Service Center suggested possible selection criteria for sites in the pilot program (Owen, 1985). In Dickenson's memo of 4/1/83 authorizing the pilot program, there is some recognition of the information exchange and analysis that had been completed, supported by the following:

"In the last few months you have provided us valuable information as to how the Service can turn over the operation of certain campgrounds to concessioners. Your efforts have been most helpful and will go a long way in making the campground pilot program a success.

I have approved a pilot program of concessioner operated campgrounds at...(various locations)...These areas were selected because of their economic viability and potential for savings to the Government. Additional parks may be selected for the 1984 season.

The financial data submitted with each nomination was analyzed to determine a franchise fee formulation which would be reasonably uniform and be fair to both the concessioner and the government..."

After the first year of the pilot program, the Park Service prepared a detailed report and analysis of the program (located in Appendix B). This report presented a general overview and evaluation of the first year of operation of the pilot program, and specifically identified visitor usage and satisfaction, and monetary impacts on the government as important indicators of success of the pilot program.

Excerpts from the report detail Park Service expectations and corresponding results after one year:

"The purpose of the pilot program is to test the potential for effective private management of campgrounds. The change in management relieves the park of a costly activity; the funds saved could be transferred to other activities that have been curtailed due to budgetary constraints. Such activities include park restoration, maintenance of buildings and programs that would better serve park visitors such as protection and interpretation programs. Additionally, concessioner managed facilities would permit extending campground usage by opening the campgrounds earlier in the season and closing later, whereas in the past, due to limited funds, the Service sometimes had to curtail camping opportunities.

The campgrounds used for the pilot program were selected to provide reasonable geographical distribution, use of sites near existing concessioner facilities so that the campground could be managed in conjunction with existing facilities, economic viability for the concessioner, and potential for savings to the National Park Service and the Government.

The purpose of this report (1984 Report on the Pilot Program) is to examine the impact that the management concept change had on the Government, concessioner, and the public. The report portrays the degree of public acceptance of the management concept, operational problems that occurred, amount of revenue lost to the U.S. Treasury, franchise fees paid, savings realized by the park and how the saved funds were reallocated, the net effect on Government revenues and the financial results the concessioner experienced in operating the campgrounds.

The data contained herein is preliminary only, but serves as a basis for identifying the need for changes in policy or emphasis needed for the second year of the pilot program."

The pilot program was continued in 1984 and was generally judged to be more successful than in 1983 (Owen, 1985). The report on the second year, due in final form very soon, identified increased user satisfaction with concessioner operation of government campgrounds and greater benefits to the government. Owen (1985) hypothesized that the more favorable financial results were due to better (i.e. less adverse conditions such as late openings due to heavy snows) weather

conditions primarily. Also noted in the second year was an increased effort by the Park Service and the concessioners to keep better records, from both a financial accountability and a visitor satisfaction standpoint. Increased confidence in the information gathered had resulted in qualified support of the pilot program by most Park Service policy-makers, although the final decision has not yet been made.

#### Comparison of Agency Policy Analysis with the Policy Analysis Model

In comparing National Park Service policy analysis to the idealized policy analysis model, the Park Service was constrained in the first step of their analysis, establishing the context of the problem, by direction originating from the Secretary of Interior's office. As Watt stated to the Park Service concessioners' convention, "...We have tremendous biases. We have a bias for private enterprise..." So, the problem that the Park Service was faced with (i.e. reduced operation and maintenance allocations) was also compounded by administration pressures to involve private enterprise in the national park system in new ways. Consequently, in establishing the context of the problem facing the agency, the agency was forced to "appreciate" (as defined by Vickers, 1983) the views of Watt and the administration and limit the management alternatives considered to a realistic set (given the views of those overseeing the agency).

In the generation of alternatives phase, from best available information, it seems that the agency was pursuing the verification of the feasibility of transferring the operation and maintenance of government campgrounds to established concessioners in the area,

essentially just examining one alternative. Utilizing the policy analysis model, however, there would have been a range of feasible alternatives for consideration (examples include competitive bidding to maximize return to the government, etc.). The agency action is understandable, given the fact that Secretary Watt was demanding responsiveness from the agency and had solicited expansion propositions from the current concessioners. Thus, the agency had a very limited number of options to consider.

In predicting outcomes (as proposed using the policy analysis model), the agency (Denver Service Center) examined data submitted by parks and concessioners to determine possible franchise fees to be paid by the concessioners. From projected use and revenue data for the next year, decisions were made on what percentage of concessioner receipts would be returned to the government. The prediction process was utilized only to the extent that estimated usage and corresponding revenues were generated for the next year. From best available information, there were no long range predictions of probable outcomes resulting from the implementation of the pilot program. Utilizing the policy analysis model, however, alternative outcomes would have been projected with appropriate time frames (appropriate in view of the decision-maker's needs) and the alternatives ranked against a preference set (again representing the decision-maker's preferences and objectives).

In actual practice, the Park Service exhibited incremental analytical and decision-making behavior, as described by Lindblom (1959) and Anderson (1984). The policy analysis model proposed as a baseline for this study, somewhat similar to the widely recognized

(although perhaps seldom used) rational-comprehensive theory, could theoretically have produced an alternative that might have been optimal (for the solution of reduced budgets, per se). In this case, however, the Park Service was severely constrained by administration direction and established decision-making patterns of the agency (i.e. usually incremental). Resultantly, the agency exhibited fairly standard incremental behavior by taking small, cautious steps in an established, familiar direction, while conducting much analysis (to serve as the basis for refinement and redirection) on the only alternative generated.

## COMPARISON OF AGENCY ACTIONS AND SITUATIONS

### Similarities

In comparing the actions of the agencies, perhaps the most striking similarity is the type of decision-analysis and process used to implement policy change. Both agencies exhibited fairly classic incremental (as described by Lindblom, 1959 and Anderson, 1984, and noted by several others) processes by considering very limited alternatives (if any), evaluating the alternatives in a very limited context (i.e. visitor satisfaction and net benefits calculations which may not recognize long-term costs), and the initiation of a "pilot program" which served as a test policy readily accessible to marginal tinkering before the establishment of "final policy". These incremental policy changes would constitute rational responses to problems at hand using the incremental decision-making theory, as Anderson (1984) and Lindblom (1959) suggest.

Both agencies were reacting to basically the same change elements, reduction in budgets and administration pressures to reduce the size of government. Although the type and/or level of pressure may have varied somewhat between agencies, most agency personnel identified those two forces as key ingredients in the policy change process.

The outcomes of both pilot programs were basically similar, and the evaluative elements used by the agencies to determine success or failure were generally alike. Both pilot programs were judged to be successful, and the judgements of success or failure were based on visitor satisfaction (a broad consolidation of visitor responses,



levels of service provided, and usage statistics) and savings to government (essentially a net benefits calculation considering administration costs and lost revenues as costs and fees from concessioners and operation and maintenance allocations saved as benefits).

The Forest Service and the Park Service have similar facilities, i.e. campgrounds, and have generally tried to provide the same kind of camping opportunity (with the provision of parking spurs, firepits, tables, etc.) with similar operating and maintenance costs. The locations of the facilities have some variability (e.g. national parks with outstanding scenic points vs. national forests with high quality outdoor recreation), but the agencies generally accommodate the same user groups. And, prior to the initiation of their respective pilot programs, both agencies were increasing user fees to generate more revenue, essentially trying to recover more of the costs of operation and maintenance.

The agencies both have rich histories and traditions, especially traditions of public service and loyalty among employees. Although recent years have resulted in more diversification among the work forces (accompanied by some division in the ranks), there still remains a strong commitment to public service and high-morale, quality workforces (interesting to point out is Fairfax's comment in Dana and Fairfax, 1980, "I never met a Forest Service person I did not like"). And, though there were many similarities, there were also many differences noted in the reactions and situations of the agencies.

### Differences

One of the most prominent differences has been the speed and the extent of implementation of the policy change. The Forest Service initiated their pilot program in 1982, substantially expanded in 1983, and has firmly established concessioner operation of government facilities as one of the options available to field managers. The Park Service, however, after initiation of the program in 1983, did not expand the program significantly in 1984, and has still not made a final decision on expansion of the pilot program in 1985. Consequently, the Washington Office of the Park Service has maintained administrative control of the program with no delegation of authority observed yet. It should be pointed out that the Park Service initiated their pilot program one year later than the Forest Service, however.

Another difference is that the Park Service generally seemed to be more interested in collecting large amounts of information to base their decision upon. For example, after the first year of operation at the Lake Mead National Recreation Area, the field office of the park and the concessioner were both reprimanded for failure to adequately collect visitor surveys to measure visitor satisfaction (Memorandum of 10/17/84 from W.O Associate Director for Park Operations to the Western Regional Director). In general, the Park Service reports seemed more concerned with collection of information, although the information may have served more of a justification function than support for an analytical decision (also perhaps to give appearances of analyzing a more extensive alternative set, as might be suggested by a rational-comprehensive approach).

Other differences, more of a situational or structural nature, include the highly developed concessions program within the Park Service whereas the Forest Service has much less of an organizational hierarchy (regarding concessions). Throughout the history of the Park Service, concessioners have played important roles while the Forest Service concessioners have been far back in the agency's list of constituencies. In implementing their program, the Park Service contracted with the existing concessioner in the selected park; the Forest Service, however, advertised for offers to operate their facilities, consequently reaping the benefits (or disbenefits) of competition.

Some of these differences in action could be due to other situational differences that exist between the two agencies. One significant difference noted from the literature is that the Park Service has been struggling to define a clear sense of mission for approximately the last twenty years (Foresta, 1984; Everhart, 1983) while the Forest Service has continued with the same basic mission of resource management initiated by Pinchot, although significant buffeting has occurred (e.g. Monongahela controversy, herbicide appeals, land management planning delays, etc.). The actions of the Forest Service in moving quickly to install concessioner management as an accepted tool could be attributable to a sense of confidence in agency decision-making processes and to a strong commitment to maintain "public service", whatever action is necessary. The Park Service action (or cautious attitude) could be attributable to a more conservative agency bias due to previous experiences where the agency came under criticism from many factions (for example, in the 60s when

the agency was attacked by Udall, it was forced to be more responsive to political pressures, and subsequently, was distrusted by the environmentalists of the 70s, Foresta, 1984). The Forest Service has traditionally had a wider base of support (due to the breadth of the agency's mission) than the Park Service (appealing foremost to the preservationists and some conservationists), which might explain what seems to be different confidence levels in decision-making between the agencies.

Some alternative theories to the previous discussion of Park Service and Forest Service differences in policy change processes and subsequent implementation of concessioner programs might suggest that the Park Service has been pursuing a delaying strategy ("foot-dragging"), rather than lacking confidence in agency processes. To elaborate, the agency may have plans to appear responsive to administration goals (i.e. privatization) but agency leaders may be waiting for the next administration (after Reagan) in hopes of shifts in administration emphases. Perhaps complementing the idea of delaying tactics is the fairly substantial influence of Congressional leaders on Park Service matters. The Park Service leadership may feel less of a need to be completely responsive to administration direction because of long-tenured Congressional supporters (with substantial numbers of national parks and other facilities in their states) in key positions (i.e. budget appropriations/agency oversight committees).

Another theory on underlying reasons for differences (i.e. speed of decentralization/implementation) in agency actions would be tied to centrality of the policy change to the agency's mission. For example, the Forest Service has a broad mission (e.g. timber management, range

management, essentially multiple use) whereas the Park Service mission is much narrower, essentially people-management (in recreational activities) in the national park system. The change in Forest Service recreation management policy was not of broad importance or of a threatening nature to the agency's overall mission; in contrast, the Park Service leadership may view the privatization of recreation services as a more important issue (central to the agency's mission), and correspondingly, act in a more cautious, studious manner. A related factor may be the Park Service's long history of concessioner operations in the national park system. As Everhart (1983) relates, there have been many problems with concessioners through the agency's history, many in smaller (perhaps marginal) operations. The agency may be moving slowly into campground concessions (generally of smaller size) because of past experiences and failures.

## SUMMARY AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY

In investigating the policy changes of the Forest Service and the National Park Service, the logic and decision processes used by people in both agencies are understandable and defensible. As Lindblom (1959) and Anderson (1984) discussed, the incremental approach to decision-making and policy analysis is widely used in the public sector because, among other reasons, the approach reduces the risks and costs of uncertainty, reduces the time and information-gathering needs, and generally yields practicable, acceptable, although limited decisions.

As detailed in this study, the policy changes implemented by the two federal agencies have led to modifications in the established developed site recreation management practices of the agencies. In their analyses supporting the policy changes, the agencies considered factors such as visitor satisfaction levels and net savings to the government in deciding whether to continue the pilot program, issue final policy implementing the concession program throughout the agencies, or discontinue the program altogether.

There may be a need, however, to examine possible long-term effects of the concessioner program. One example of a growing trend, particularly in the Forest Service, is the concessioner operation of the larger campgrounds and related facilities. The rationale for concessioner operation of these larger sites is fairly clear; the larger sites require more budget allocations to operate (representing a greater public subsidy/provision of recreation services), and consequently, yield bigger savings in budget allocations when

concessioner-operated. Also, the larger sites generate more revenue in most cases, and have been shown to more likely to be profitable for the concessioner (which is a primary consideration for being selected for concessioner-operation). Several questions arise from this trend: 1) If the current downward budget trend continues for the agencies, what will happen when the most feasible (highest revenue producing) sites have been concessioned and those remaining cannot be operated by the agencies or feasibly operated by concessioners? 2) Should the agencies consider the costs of the facilities (i.e. the taxpayers' investments in building campgrounds) in their analysis? and 3) If the agencies were trying to make recreational facilities recover the costs of operation and maintenance, is it reasonable to concession the "bigger sellers" and accordingly, reduce government revenues?

There has been substantial rhetoric from the Reagan administration about inefficiencies in government and requiring users to pay for their consumption of public goods. The agencies have struggled with the issue of fees at government facilities (as detailed in Driver, et. al., 1985) and have attempted to cut operating costs (e.g. reduced service levels) while increasing fees. One comment that was noted from an agency employee was that concessioners can do the job more efficiently. An immediate challenge to that statement is "Why should government operations at recreation facilities be inherently inefficient?" and "Has it been proven that private concessioners are more efficient?" A follow-up question might ask whether campgrounds (built with public funds) on public lands should be administered as private goods or should they be provided as a public good. And concessioners, increasing fees to generate more

revenues, have probably priced some citizens out of the outdoor recreation market on public lands. Is that equitable?

Some questions arise concerning the difficulties in managing the concessioner program. For instance, the Park Service is contracting with an established concessioner with no competitive bidding; will there be pressures to establish a lower franchise fee than would be "correct", thereby saving the concessioner money and costing the government? Another consideration is the past experiences of the Forest Service; previous encounters with concession management of government facilities resulted in degraded facilities turned back to the Service. Have the proper changes in administration of such programs been made, or will administration of contracts again pose a problem?

Continuing with questions, is it in the interest of field managers to submit information contrary to policymakers' biases (e.g. Watt's stated bias towards private enterprise) or will the information be "massaged" to yield more "acceptable" results? Will employee morale (i.e. those displaced by private operations) suffer and contribute to performance problems? Will the recreation facilities operated under concession be professionally managed (in the sense of recreation management) by private operators or will the operators manage only for profits? Will there be a need to develop administrative skills to manage the concessioner programs? What kinds of costs will be associated with developing skills, coping with employee morale problems, and administrative problems with concessioners? And lastly, agencies are currently using allocated dollars which would have been spent in operation and maintenance of



campground facilities (spent on revenue-generating services) to fund such services as interpretive programs and other non-revenue generating programs (although some money has gone into deferred maintenance of facilities, and other capital improvements); are the agencies being responsive to Congressional/Administration intentions and desires by using allocations previously used for revenue-generating operations to support programs which generate no revenue?

To summarize, my belief is that both the Forest Service and the National Park Service have made good-faith efforts to maintain levels of public service...over the short run. As in most cases, the future will tell whether the decisions to implement concessioner programs for operation of government facilities were good ones. It might be prudent for interested observers to closely watch these new policies evolve.

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