

Capacity Determination for Visitor Use in Wilderness

Pitfalls, Hints and Suggestions

- Build a foundation first by establishing a desired condition and identify any need for change.
- Select a methodology that is feasible within constraints on staff time to plan, implement, and perform monitoring.
- Determining a visitor use capacity is both science and art but ultimately relies on using a thoughtful, visible, and defensible process and sound professional judgment in collaboration with interested parties.
- Each wilderness has a unique character and issues that will drive selection of the process to be used and the degree of rigor to which it is implemented.
- Integrate the process by involving both the public and internal resource specialists throughout the process.
- Remember that the mandate to “preserve wilderness character” requires that managers provide for “outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation”, but also to “preserve its natural conditions” so that wilderness is “unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness”.