DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION AND CONSERVATION

PARKS BRANCH

SOME CONSIDERATIONS IN GENERAL PARK PLANNING

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by

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Planning for parks is not different in principle or application from planning for any other facility. In terms of local, regional, provincial or national planning, parks are only one element in the total plan. Hence, park planning should not be thought of as something unique or unusual. The speakers on this panel will concern themselves with various aspects of park planning. It must be kept in mind that park planning is only one part of planning, although it has its own requirements as to specialized knowledge and design techniques.

Park planning will be discussed by members of this panel from three viewpoints:

(a) general park planning, or planning on a large scale such as for a region or a province,

(b) land planning, or the considerations that must be given to the selection of land for recreation or park use,

(c) site planning, or the consideration that must be given to the development of a selected piece of land for park purposes.

This paper is devoted to general park planning. It is a function of general park planning to determine the land required to meet the recreational needs and demands of a given population. Needs and demands are not synonymous terms. A people may need

something but not demand it, conversely they may demand something they do not need. Several methods have been suggested for measuring recreational demand; there is no known way of determining recreational needs.

One method of determining recreational demand views it as a function of population, leisure time, income and mobility. These factors react on each other geometrically rather than arithmetically. A straight increase in population will not mean a similar increase in recreational demand. Rather the recreational demand will alter as population growth is affected by change in amount of leisure time, in the level of personal income and in mobility. Just how these various factors react upon each other is not known exactly. That they do affect each other is certain. A recent paper by Dr. Marion Clawson of Resources for the Future Inc., stated:

> "To get some idea of the total effect, we need to multiply rather than add. Twice as many people, twice as much income per person, 1.5 times as much leisure, and nearly twice as much travel comes out to roughly ten times as much demand for outdoor recreation in the year 2000 as in 1960...The projection we have just made is for demand and this is an index of potentiality rather than a prediction of how much outdoor recreation there actually will be at the start of the next century. The potential will not be realized unless there are more recreation areas and facilities than there exist today." 1

Dr. Clawson has used figures that apply to the United States of America. Similar figures could and should be worked out for any area as a basis for predicting future demand for recreation. In any park plan recreational demand must be determined.

1 Clawson, Marion, The Crisis in Outdoor Recreation, Resources for the Future Inc., Reprint No. 13, 1959.

Another method of forecasting recreational demand is based on visits per capita to a given type of recreational area. The trend of change in this measure can be projected over a short period of time to establish a future demand figure. Visits per capita to British Columbia Provincial Parks increased from 1.1 in 1955 to 1.7 in 1959. It is expected that the figure will be 2.7 by 1970. The effect of the increase in rate of visitation on an increasing population to establish a future possible demand is illustrated in the accompanying graph.

Most methods of projecting recreation demand deal with total population. It can be demonstrated that different recreations appeal to people in different age groups, in different occupations, in different places of residence, and in different socio-economic groups. The accompanying map illustrates one aspect of this assertion. Camping would seem to appeal to a definite segment of the population. There is a great need for more knowledge of relationships between various demographic factors and recreation.

Distances people will travel for recreation is a major element in general park planning. The planner needs to know how far people will travel for various recreational activities on different types of trip. For purposes of outdoor recreation, trips may be classified as follows:

(a) one-day trips: trips from home to the place of recreation and return on the same day. These trips may take place during leisure hours after work and will be fairly short, or on a non-working day when they will be relatively longer.

(b) weekend overnight trips: trips from home to the place of recreation and back with at least one night spent away from home. These trips usually take place on weekends.

(c) vacation trips: trips usually lasting several days taken as part of an annual vacation.

Recreation trips may take place either on land or water, and with the increasing popularity of pleasure boating there is a possibility that a larger share of recreation travel in the future will be by water than is the case at present. Studies have been made which indicate the distance people will travel on various types of trips.[2] Day trips by land average 60 miles one way, and on water 19 miles; weekend overnight trips by land average 140 miles one way and 46 miles by water; vacation trips by land average 800 miles one way by land and 200 miles by water.

There are indications that the actual distances people travel on day trips for recreation may be relatively short. It is a safe axiom that the nearer the recreation area is located to the population centre the greater will be the rate of use from that center. The rate of use as it is affected by distance is illustrated. The graph is based on attendance figures from several Provincial Parks.

2 Audience Research Inc., A Study of Outdoor Recreational Activities and Preferences of the Population Living in the Region of the Delaware River Basin, Prepared for the National Park Service, Princeton, New Jersey, January, 1958.
Taylor, G.D., A Survey of Yachting, Provincial Parks Branch, Victoria, March, 1958.
National Park Service, Extra-urban Recreation Activities Enjoyed and Desired by families in Eight Cities in the New England-New York Region, June, 1953.

The recreational activities that interest people are many. As far as outdoor recreation is concerned the most popular, from the active point of view, are swimming, picnicking, visiting historic sites, museums, etc., fishing, and boating. It is important to note that three of these five are water associated activities.

Little is known of the nature of changing patterns of recreational activities. In recent years there has been a rapid increase in the popularity of boating, water-skiing and skin diving. How the growth of these activities has affected more established recreations, if it has affected them at all, is not known. There is a need for much more knowledge about the reasons for the rise and fall of recreational activities, about the holding power of a new activity once tried, about the tenacity of an old activity under competition for a person's time. The whole inner structure of recreation and its relationship to human personality requires detailed study. This problem is very real to the park planner. Radical changes in popularity of a recreational activity could make many present developments obsolescent.

With a knowledge of the probable present and future demand for recreation, the distances people[3] will travel and the activities they will enjoy, it is possible to draw up a hypothetical park system based on a single developed urban centre. This park system will consist of four zones:

(a) inner zone: extends outwards for 20 miles from the city.

3 travel time could have been used instead of travel distance.

In this area parks will be required primarily for intensive day use. The chief land requirements will be waterfrontage with a usable beach, suitable swimming water and an adequate area for parking cars. Use will be steady day by day but with an emphasis on weekends.

(b) intermediate zone: extends outwards from the inner zone to a distance of 60 miles from the city. In this zone parks will be required for heavy day use on weekends and for weekend overnight trips. Land requirements will emphasize more scenic and more natural areas than is the case in the inner zone; waterfrontage will still be paramount.

(c) outer zone: extends outwards from the intermediate zone to a distance of 120 miles from the city. Weekend overnight travellers will be the main recreational users of this zone. Day use will come primarily from highway travellers passing through the area. A particularly scenic attraction may draw one-day visitors from a greater distance than would normally be anticipated. Scenic quality of the land will be emphasized in this zone and waterfrontage will remain important.

(d) outermost zone: extends outwards from the outer zone. Vacation use will be most important with people looking for a place to spend all or part of their annual holidays. Day use will come from highway travellers. Land requirements will become more complex as emphasis can be given to the aesthetic, scientific and historic in addition to the scenic and utilitarian.

In this hypothetical park system land requirements change from basically utilitarian near the city to a wider range of characteristics at a distance from it. Use changes from predominantly day to predominantly overnight.

In proposing a hypothetical park system there must be an awareness of the limitation of such a system. At best a hypothetical system can serve as a guide. It can be a tool of park planners, it should not become their master.