



INTERAGENCY
VISITOR USE MANAGEMENT
COUNCIL

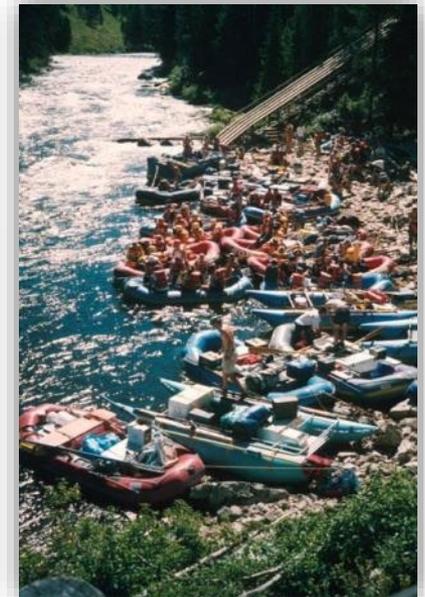
An Interagency Approach to Visitor Use Management



Wild, Scenic, and Beyond! River Management Symposium
Vancouver, WA
October 22-25, 2018

Importance of Visitor Use Management

Proactively and collaboratively managing visitor use maximizes the ability of agencies to **encourage access, improve visitor experiences, and protect resources and values**



Outcomes of Visitor Use Management

Investment in proactive and collaborative visitor use management results in ...

- High-quality experiences and customer satisfaction
- Protection of fundamental and valued resources
- Long term advocacy for public lands and stewardship of shared resources
- Enhanced relationships and partnerships with stakeholders, communities, and service providers
- Innovative solutions to address emerging and dynamic needs



Recent Media on Visitor Use Management

Forest Service eyes new management system for Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness

By Scott Condon

The Aspen Times

POSTED: 05/04/2016 07:25:03 PM MDT | UPDATED: 8 DAYS AGO



It's party time at the Conundrum Hot Springs in a shot from a recent s... evening. The Forest Service wants to limit visitors through a permit system. (River National Forest / Courtesy photo)

Record Visitation Strained Some National Parks This Year, Creating Concern Over What 2016 Might Bring

By Kurt Repanshek on December 16th, 2015



With record visitation at Zion National Park in 2015, will this scene be repeated frequently in 2016?/NPS



INTERAGENCY VISITOR USE MANAGEMENT COUNCIL



Council Vision

Providing a unified voice for excellence in visitor use management on our nation's federally-managed lands and waters to sustain resources and quality visitor experiences.

Council Mission

Provide guidance on long-term visitor use management policies and give direction on the most pressing needs by building technical competencies and improving interagency coordination.

<http://visitorusemanagement.nps.gov/>



Communication
Outreach to share information on the council and visitor use management.



Position Paper, Volume One: Visitor Use Management



Position Paper, Volume Two: Visitor Capacity

Guidance for policy and the basic positions that inform council products and activities.



Visitor Use Management Framework
A planning process for visitor use management, which can be incorporated into existing agency planning and decision-making processes.

How-to guidebooks that support the framework in greater detail.



Monitoring Guidebook



Visitor Capacity Guidebook

Helps managers work through the process of establishing key indicators and thresholds and setting up an effective program to monitor the indicators.

Provides information that can help managers establish visitor capacity and identify strategies to manage use levels within capacity.



Training
On the key elements of these various guidance documents and contemporary visitor use management issues.

Visitor Use Management

Process for managing all characteristics of visitor use and settings

- Sustain resource conditions and visitor experiences
- Variety of strategies and tools
 - Education
 - Site Management
 - Regulation
 - Enforcement
 - Rationing/allocation

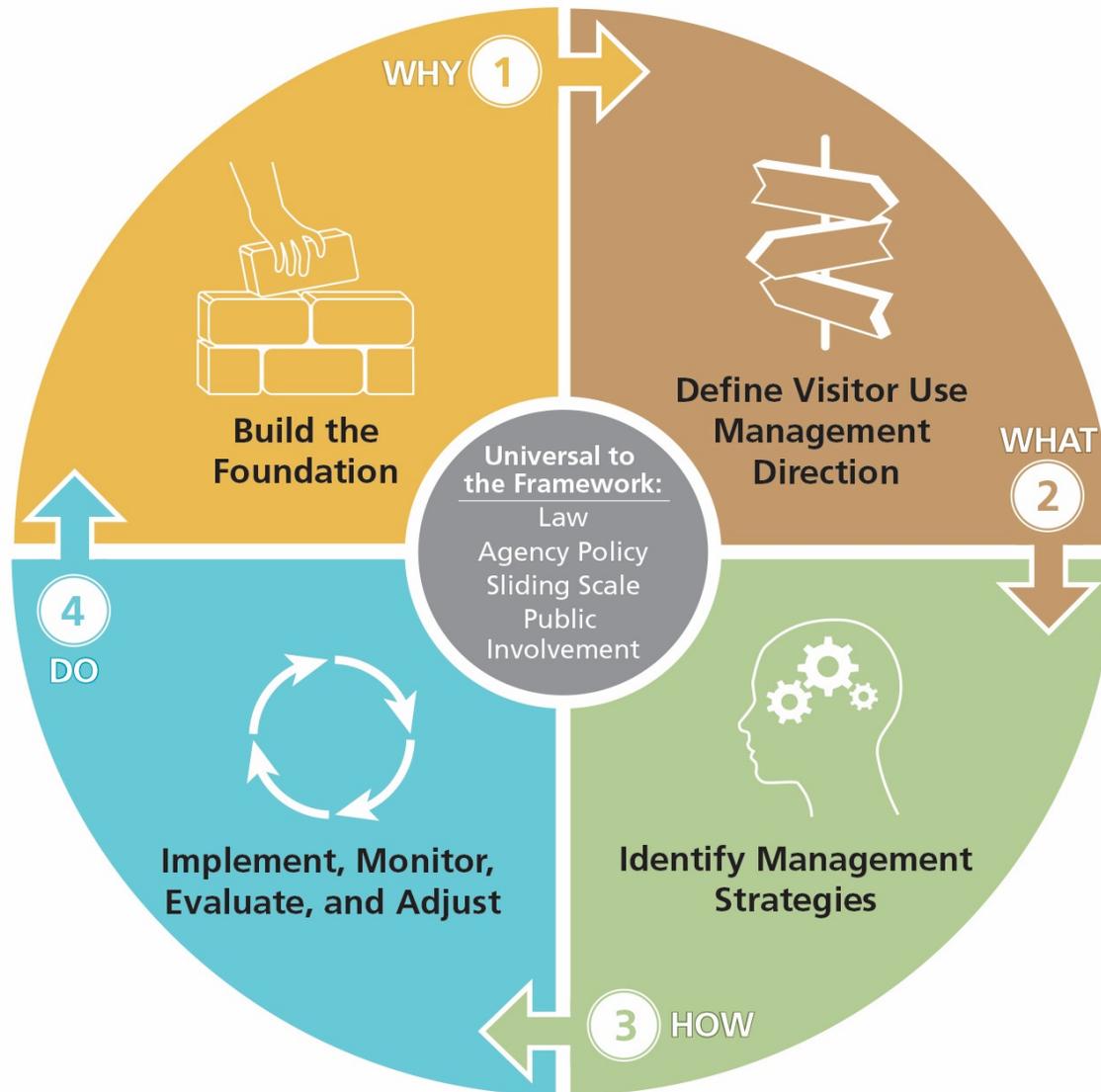


Visitor Capacity

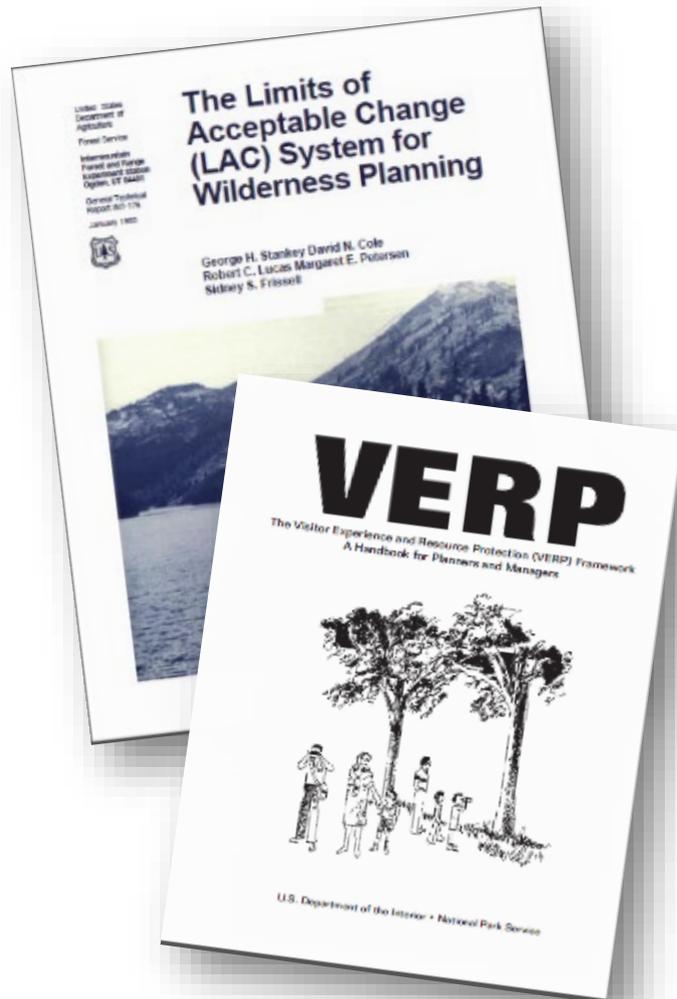
- Subcomponent of visitor use management
- Maximum amounts and types of visitor use that an area can accommodate
- While sustaining desired resource conditions and visitor experiences



Visitor Use Management Framework



Visitor Use Management Framework



Builds upon past frameworks:

- Takes the best and incorporates lessons learned.
- Clearly identifies where visitor capacity fits in the framework.
- Diversity of settings and opportunities.
- Focus on process that integrates into any agency planning procedures.
- Application of sliding scale.
- Consistent terminology!

Visitor Use Management Framework

Sliding Scale

- Match investment with level of uncertainty
- The 'thought process' is the same regardless of complexity
- Consistent with NEPA
- Criteria influencing complexity



Visitor Use Management Framework

Sliding Scale – Decision Support Tool

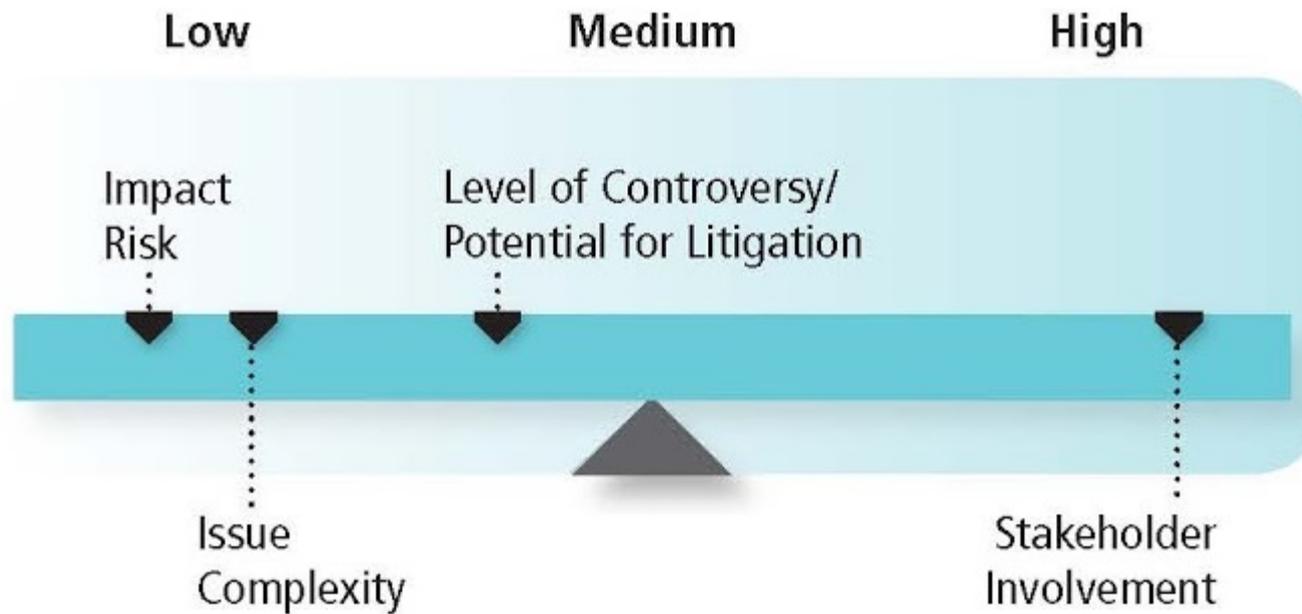
CRITERIA - Use the ratings assigned to questions 1-8 to evaluate the following 4 sliding scale criteria. Combine those criteria into a single qualitative rating (high, moderate, or low) of the project's appropriate location on the sliding scale.

	CRITERIA	RATIONALE	HIGH MODERATE LOW
A	Issue Uncertainty		
B	Impact Risk		
C	Stakeholder Involvement		
D	Level of Controversy		
	Location on the Sliding Scale		

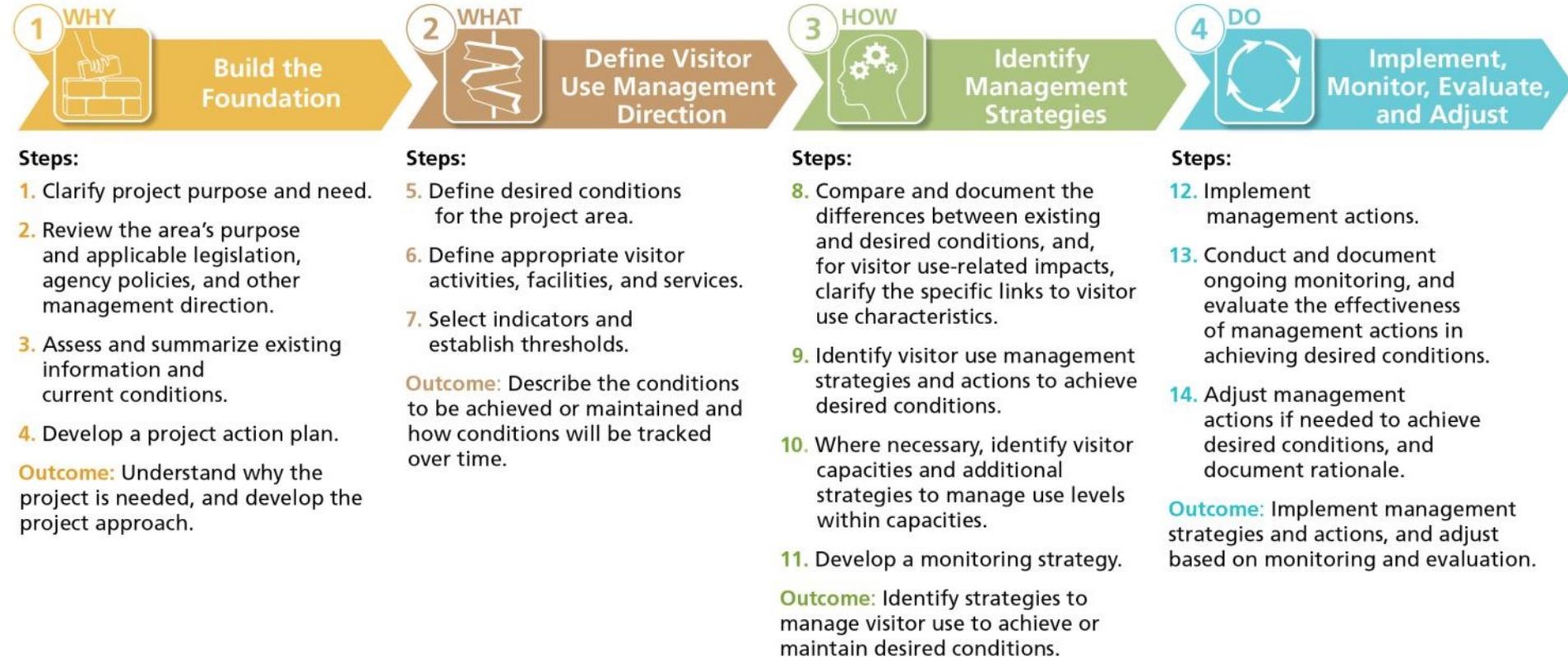


Visitor Use Management Framework

Sliding Scale



Visitor Use Management Framework



Visitor Use Management Framework

Element 1- Build the Foundation

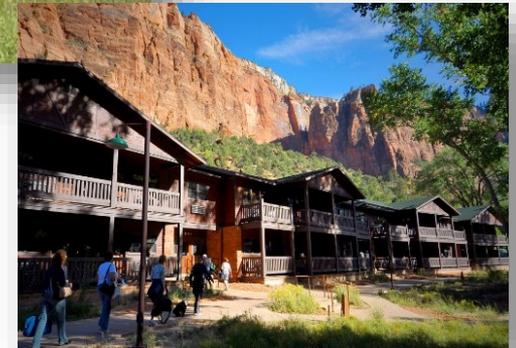
- 1) Clarify project purpose and need.
- 2) Review the area's purpose, legislation, policy and management direction.
- 3) Assess existing information and current conditions.
- 4) Develop project planning strategy.



Visitor Use Management Framework

Element 2 - Define Visitor Use Management Direction

- 5) Define desired conditions (resources, recreation opportunities, visitor experiences).
- 6) Define suitable visitor uses, facilities, and services based on desired conditions.
- 7) Determine acceptable levels of impact.

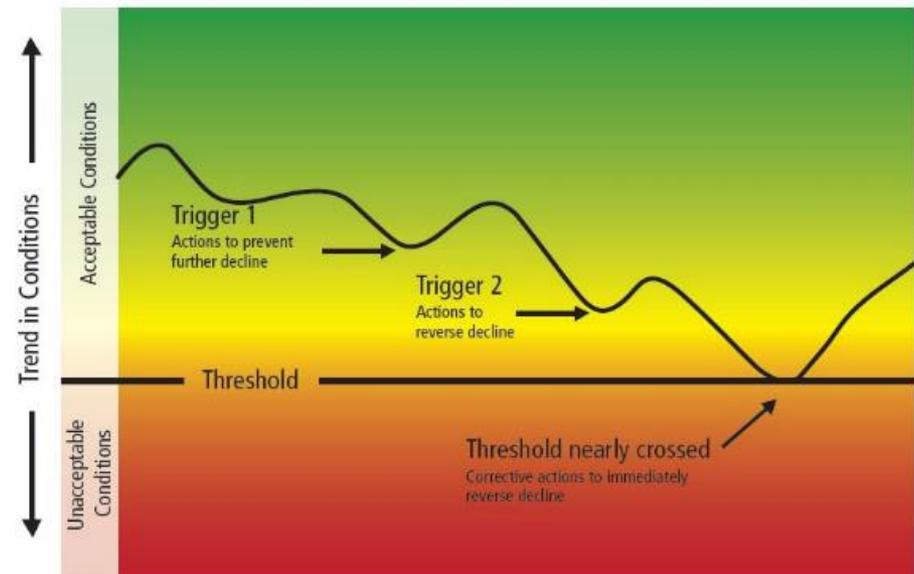


Visitor Use Management Framework

Spotlight: Step 7 - Determine acceptable levels of impact.

Indicator: Specific resource or social attributes that can be measured to track change in conditions so that progress towards achieving and maintaining desired conditions can be assessed.

Threshold: the “minimally acceptable” condition associated with each indicator.



Visitor Use Management Framework

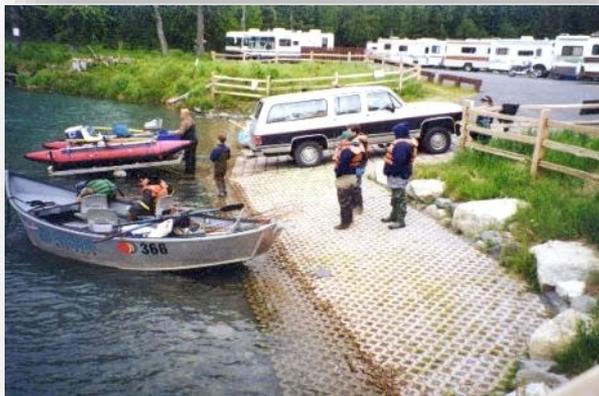
Element 3 - Identify Management Strategies

- 8) Compare and document the differences between existing and desired conditions and, for visitor related impacts, clarify the specific links to visitor use characteristics.
- 9) Identify visitor use management strategies and actions to achieve desired conditions.
- 10) Where necessary, identify visitor capacities and strategies to manage use levels within capacities.
- 11) Develop monitoring strategies.



Visitor Use Management Framework

Spotlight: Step 9 - Identify visitor use management strategies and actions to achieve desired conditions.



- ✓ Modify type of use
- ✓ Modify visitor behavior
- ✓ Modify visitor expectations
- ✓ Modify timing of use
- ✓ Modify location of use
- ✓ Increase ability of site to handle use
- ✓ Modify spatial distribution of use
- ✓ Reduce use
- ✓ Increase supply



Visitor Use Management Framework

Spotlight: Step 10 - Where necessary, identify visitor capacities and strategies to manage use levels within capacities.

Two Parts:

1. Identify a visitor capacity.
2. Identify management strategies and actions to ensure use stays within the established capacity.



Visitor Use Management Framework

Spotlight: Step 10 - Where necessary, identify visitor capacities and strategies to manage use levels within capacities.

1. Determine the analysis area.
2. Review existing direction and knowledge.
3. Identify the limiting attribute(s) - the physical, biological, social, or managerial attribute(s) that most constrain the analysis area's ability to accommodate visitor use.
4. Identify capacity.



Visitor Use Management Framework

Element 4-Implement, monitor, evaluate, and adjust

- 12) Implement management actions.
- 13) Conduct and document ongoing monitoring and evaluate the effectiveness of management actions in achieving desired conditions.
- 14) Adjust management actions if needed to achieve desired conditions and document rationale.



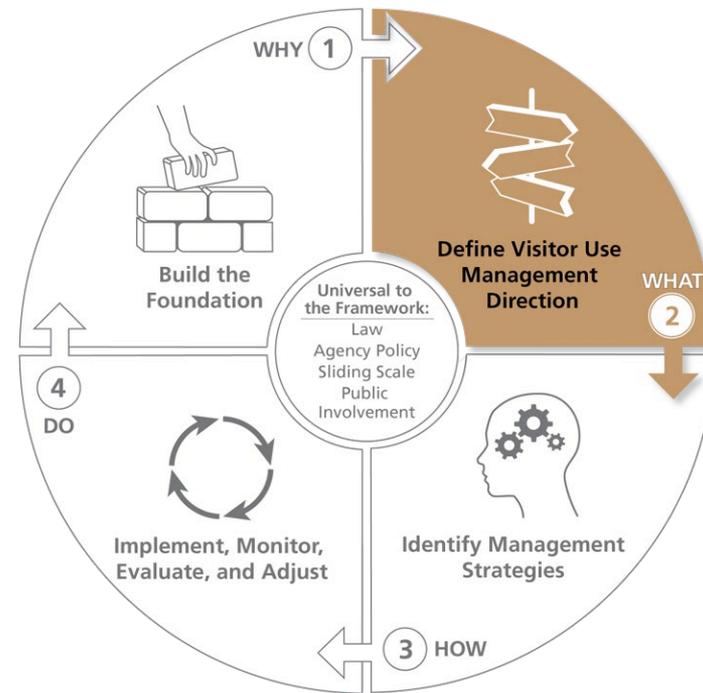
NPS Application of the Framework





Zion National Park Visitor Use Management Plan

- **Purpose:** Identifying how best to manage access and use levels using operational, transportation, and partner strategies.
- **Need:** New methods for pacing the amount and rate of visitation into the park to reduce crowding and congestion during peak season using a variety of strategies.
- **Current Status:** Plan/EA under development



Element 2

VISITOR USE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

Visitor Use Management Framework

Element 2 - Define Visitor Use Management Direction

- 5) Define desired conditions (resources, recreation opportunities, visitor experiences).
- 6) Define suitable visitor uses, facilities, and services based on desired conditions.
- 7) Select indicators and develop thresholds

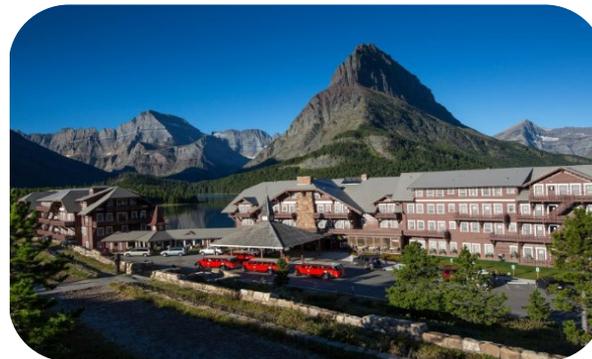




Element 2: Define VUM Direction

Step 5: Define Desired Conditions

Desired conditions provide a picture of the character, condition and quality of the area's settings and visitor experiences





Element 2: Define VUM Direction

Step 5: Define Desired Conditions

Consider the following questions:

- What are our core/fundamental resources?
- What are we trying to achieve?
- What is the long term guidance for this area/these resources?
- What is the best available information on this topic?
- How can I create a shared understanding for desired management of these resources?

Element 2: Define VUM Direction

Step 5: Define Desired Conditions

Criteria for evaluating desired conditions:

- Results oriented
- Focused
- Integrated
- Future oriented
- Responsive
- Useful



Element 2: Build the Foundation

Step 6: Define Appropriate visitor activities, services, and facilities

Some criteria for evaluating visitor use of federal lands and waters could be:

- The activity is consistent with the protected area purpose and significance, laws, regulations, and policies.
- The activity helps achieve the desired conditions of
- The activity does not unduly conflict with other protected area purposes, uses and activities and is consistent with existing plans for public use and resource management.
- The activity contributes to visitors' understanding and appreciation of area's purpose and significance.
- The activity enhances visitor experiences consistent with unit purposes, significance, and mission goals.

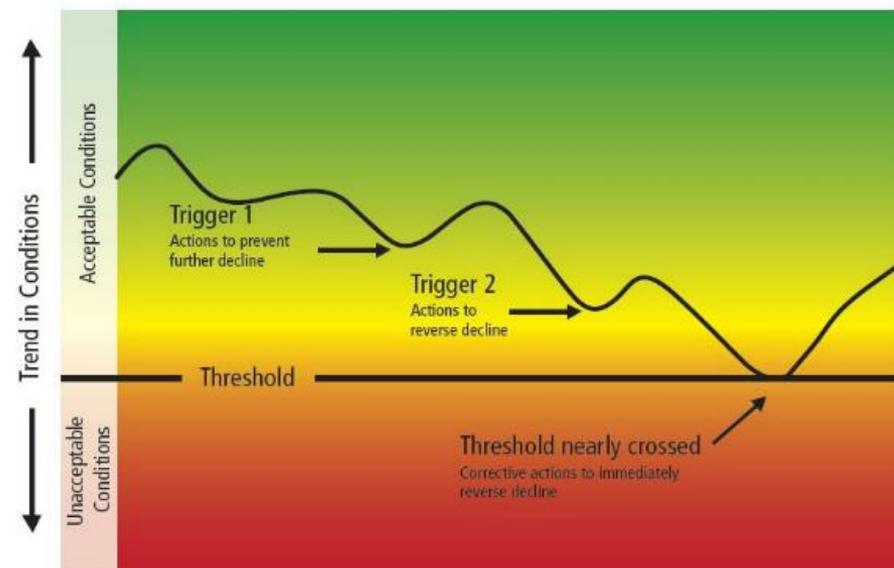


Element 2: Build the Foundation

Step 7 - Select indicators and establish thresholds

Indicator: Specific resource or social attributes that can be measured to track change in conditions so that progress towards achieving and maintaining desired conditions can be assessed.

Threshold: the “minimally acceptable” condition associated with each indicator.



Element 2: Build the Foundation

Step 7 - Select indicators and establish thresholds

Identifying Indicators

- How is the public affecting natural and cultural resources, or the visitor experience?
- What data do you already have on human use impacts?
- What indicators related to human use are being monitored?
- What do conditions look like on the ground?

Prioritizing Indicators

Which of these impacts/topics are of highest priority because of:

- Importance of the natural or cultural resources or visitor experiences that are being impacted
- Vulnerability of the natural or cultural resources or visitor experiences being impacted
- Clarity of connection between visitor use and the impact?



Element 2: Build the Foundation

Step 7 – Select indicators and establish thresholds

Developing Thresholds

Most important: It represents an acceptable condition and is a threshold for management action well before reaching a degraded or impaired condition.

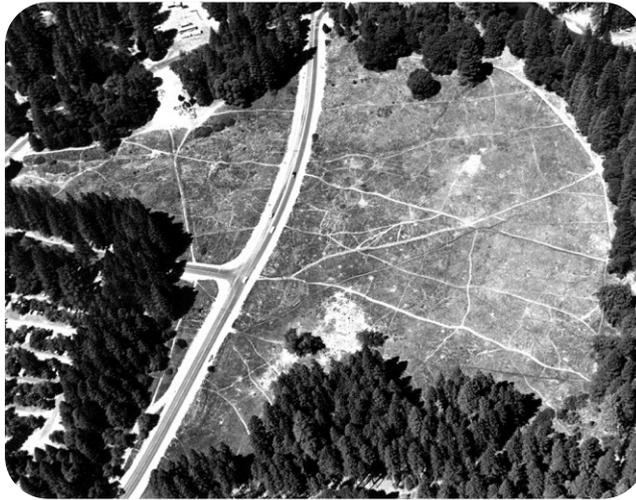
There is no one, absolute, “right” threshold





Indicators and Thresholds

**YOSE Stoneman Meadow
1978**



**YOSE Stoneman Meadow
2012**





Cultural Resource Indicators

- **Indicator:** Percent change in integrity of cultural resource condition every year.
- **Threshold:** 0% change detected on 80% of sites surveyed each year.
- **Indicator:** Number of incidents of vandalism to historic structures.
- **Threshold:** No more than 1 incident reported per year for every 20 sites surveyed



Natural Resource Indicators

Informal Visitor Created Trails

Indicator: The number of visitor-created trails leaving designated trail (measured every mile).

Threshold:

Zone 1: No more than one visitor-created trail leaving designated trail per 1 mile measurement.

Zone 2: No more than three informal visitor-created trails leaving designated trail per 1-mile measurement.

Indicator: Amount of roadside disturbance to soil and vegetation

Threshold: No more than 1 roadside disturbance area greater than 5 square feet off of X road.



Social Indicators

- **Indicator:** The number of people encountered on trail
- **Threshold:** Visitors will not encounter more than 20 people on segment B of the trail, 80% of the time
- **Indicator:** People per viewscape at select destinations
- **Greatview Overlook Threshold:** No more than 20 people per viewscape, 80% of the time
- **Lily Pond Threshold:** No more than 10 people per viewscape, at all times



Element 2: Build the Foundation

Step 7 - Select indicators and establish thresholds

Overcoming Barriers

Keep *focused* on the most important topics

Consider existing monitoring activities and identify those related to visitor use – can we overlap monitoring efforts?

Find simple, easy to monitor indicators **that matter** to make the process efficient and effective

Only set indicators and thresholds for conditions that we are willing or able to take actions to correct





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