Certified Public Manager Project

Project Green:
Refuse Reduction & Trash Free Parks

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Chief of Park Operations
With the turn of the Century less than three years away the South Carolina State Park Service under the authority of the South Carolina Department of Parks Recreation and Tourism set forth a new strategic direction. This direction focuses on what we feel is the cornerstone of a quality park system, the concept of stewardship and service. Resource stewardship is the cornerstone of a quality park service. Effective management and stewardship will play an essential role in achieving the mission of the park system. The stewardship component is one that not only must be embraced by the employees of the Park Service, but also shared by the park visitor. Currently, there are several key initiatives that will educate and inform the park visitor of their role in the protection and stewardship of their state parks. “In the past, resource protection and stewardship has focused on controlling the activities of visitors without the proper educational follow up on why an activity was done or prohibited. There is a need for a more pro-active approach.”

An initiative specifically related to the objectives outlined in the State Park Strategic Management Plan, “A New Vision For the 21st Century”, will be the focus of my C.P.M. project. More specifically refuse reduction and the implementation of the concept of “Trash Free” parks. “To encourage citizen participation in a park’s sustainable management efforts, the state park service will:

- introduce trash free areas to enhance the cleanliness of the park and allow for a healthier wildlife populations.
- implement recycling programs where feasible.”

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Trash collection and the cost associated with this function has changed dramatically during the past 5 years. Several State Parks have had significant increases in the cost associated with this service. Dreher Island State Park for example has gone from a virtually free disposal service once provided by Newberry County, to the current system in which the park pays $25,000.00 annually in fees and services to provide for the collection of the park’s refuse. This variable alone would seem to be enough of a reason to pursue programs targeted to address this issue. Over the years trash cans have become a part of the landscape in campgrounds and picnic areas. This staple has become more habit than necessity. In most cases trash cans have not been used effectively, typically causing more problems than solutions. The opportunity exists to accomplish much more than just a cost savings on the reduction of refuse at a park. The opportunity exists to create a greater sense of stewardship and partnership with our park visitors in the protection of South Carolina State Parks.

With this in mind it is the goal of my CPM project to implement “Project Green”, a program that goes far beyond just the reduction of the amount of trash on a park and the cost associated with the disposal of that trash. This program will more importantly address the concept of stewardship; a genuine commitment to the resource. The stewardship component is one that not only must be embraced by park service employees but also shared by the park visitor. This process begins with information and education, both to the visitor and the employee.

In determining the approach and degree of which each park will participate input from park superintendents was received, during a formal presentation highlighting the concept of having parks that were trash free. From this discussion of team was established to discuss the pro and cons of each park’s ability to participate in the program. District Superintendents and
members of the central office staff have been involved in this process. In addition many states and associations were contacted for their input and advice on similar projects and their perception of the growing problems associated not only with solid waste reduction and it's associated cost, but also the feeling of apathy for the stewardship of our state parks.

**Force Field Analysis:**

In an attempt to analyze the information from various states as well as to determine if this project could be successful in South Carolina a force field analysis was done on the entire project (state-wide). This process enable me to determine the driving forces for a successful venture as well as targeting areas of resistance. (Appendix 1) After completion and lengthy discussions on the “state-wide analysis”, it was felt that while the driving forces and areas of resistance had been properly defined that there were possibly and probably several “local” factors that only could be determined by park employees who live in work at the local park. It was determined that in each park designated to participate in the program will complete a similar force field analysis during a planning session to be conducted during the Park Superintendents conference in February.

**Plan of Implementation**

The plan of implementation is as follows:

- Gather information from other states with similar projects.
- A review of information and discussion with Maryland State Park officials on a similar program already in place in Maryland.
- Work with District Superintendents to target parks where the program can be implemented.
- Work on public education components, to include signage and literature.

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• Develop a team of parks professionals to recommend and review recommendations by District Superintendents.

• Review recommendations with targeted parks, ask for a force field analysis from each participating park.

• Release information to the public concerning Project Green before the actual implementation.

• Implementation (Spring 1998).

A flow chart with specific dates and actions was used to identify action steps, support, and dates for review. (Appendix 2).

For the project to be successful a educational process must take place, both with the employee and the park visitor. An article has been written and published in the Park Service’s publication Park View. Park View is mailed to park visitors and distributed to interested parties through the mail, travel shows and at the park. Currently Park View has a circulation of 50,000. (Appendix 3). In addition flyers and brochures have been developed and will be placed in the parks in February. (Appendix 4).

The success of the program is very dependent on getting the word out to our park visitors, not only through the above mentioned methods but equally important through the discussions with park visitors by the park staff. When done properly this education campaign has been very successful in other states. “State Parks are an appropriate place for the public to begin to understand and solve the solid waste problem in their state. Park visitors
complained very little about the policy and when park staff discussed it with them, expressed understanding and support.”

Many of the mechanisms are now in place for a March 1, 1997 implementation date, with ten parks targeted as the test group. The success of this project can be measured by comparing cost of refuse collection over a period of time, the reduction of trash and number of parks participating in the project. Other methods should include the monitoring of public opinion, through survey methods, as well as feedback from park superintendents concerning compliance and visitor acceptance at their particular location. District Superintendents will send in a report at the beginning of the summer and at the end of the summer, where they provide feedback from the parks on the number of trash cans removed, the successes, any problems and visitor reaction. After an evaluation of the first year of the program, Project Green will be a part of the standard operating procedures of all state parks. The true test of this project will be over time when the “New Vision for the 21st Century” becomes a reality in promoting exemplary standards for resource stewardship for both employees and park visitors.

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iv Maine State Park System, Annual Report
Appendix 1

Force Field Analysis

Worst State: Continue to spend more money, time, and manpower for the collection of solid waste, without educating park visitors on the importance of resource stewardship.

Present State: Refuse collection is timely and costly. There are several parks who have centralized collection sites for refuse.

Desired Outcome: Reduction of trash can in all parks. Have 5 trash free parks. Instill a renewed commitment to stewardship to the resource for both employees and the park visitor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Driving Forces</th>
<th>Restraining Forces</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Solid Waste Reduction Act</td>
<td>• Customer Expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Cost Savings</td>
<td>• History (Always been able to do that)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The New Strategic Management Plan</td>
<td>• Convenience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Educational Program</td>
<td>• Lack of Education and awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sensitive to the Environment</td>
<td>• Resistant to Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Wiliness from Park Employees</td>
<td>• Finding a sponsor or mechanism to supply</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Safety; with the Removal of Unsightly program</td>
<td>“trash bags” during the beginning of the Park Visitor Factor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pest Attracting Refuse Containers</td>
<td>• The unknown. How will the park visitor respond, and will he accept the change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It encourages an outdoor ethic that embraces the idea of parks free of trash and the role of the public in sharing stewardship of their parks.</td>
<td>• The possible problem with litter on and off the park, and the concern of park neighbors.</td>
</tr>
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Project Green: To develop a strategy and guidelines for the implementation for refuse reduction and trash free parks.

- Gather Information from other states
- Review Information
- Discussion with Maryland State Parks
- Target Parks (Work with District Superintendents)
- Public education components (signage and brochure development)
- Form Project Team to review and recommends parks in the program
- Information and education blitz

Implementation Project Green
Appendix 5

Plan of Action

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Steps</th>
<th>Accountability</th>
<th>Deadlines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gather information from other states.</td>
<td>Solicit by memo.</td>
<td>Phil Gaines</td>
<td>Fall 1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions with Maryland State Parks</td>
<td>Telephone conversation and written correspondence. Met with representatives at ASSPD meeting at Clemson.</td>
<td>Gaines</td>
<td>October 1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target Parks</td>
<td>Ask for input from District Superintendents, Park Superintendents, and staff. 10 parks targeted.</td>
<td>Gaines, District Superintendents, Park Superintendents Parkman, Harrison</td>
<td>October 1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Team</td>
<td>Select Team members make recommendations. Notify parks.</td>
<td>Gaines, Harrison, Stickles, Parkman, West.</td>
<td>Feb. 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information and Education Blitz.</td>
<td>Distribute literature and signs</td>
<td>Gaines, District Superintendents, Park Superintendents.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td>Remove Trash Cans</td>
<td>Park and District Superintendents.</td>
<td>March 1998</td>
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Bibliography


Organizational Dynamics, Inc. Quality Management Skills. Burlington MA.


Maryland Forest and State Park Service Annual Report. 1996. Annapolis, MD.