MYOPIA--MAJOR BARRIER TO COMMUNITY-PARK COOPERATION

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Tourism and Parks Conference
Biloxi, Mississippi, March 9-11, 1988

Throughout my career, spanning over four decades, I have come to respect the accomplishments of the many dedicated professionals in the National Park Service. I do not understand how they have been able to cope with the monumental growth of visitors without comparable increases in staff over the last forty years.

At the same time, I have had the rare opportunity of working with the private sector, especially in the field of recreation and tourism. Only those as ancient as I can remember how horrible the accommodations and food services were in the 1920s and 30s--how we would have welcomed a Holiday Inn and McDonalds then.

Having said this, and knowing of the great progress in both the public and private sectors, we still remain tourism illiterate. We talk a lot about tourism these days but I find very few who can relate to more than their own activity. We know a great deal about the separate pieces of tourism but very little about tourism as a whole. This is why I have chosen for my topic today, "Myopia--the Major Barrier to Community-Park Cooperation."

In other words:
--Park managers are preoccupied with internal operations and resource protection. This prevents them from seeing the bigger picture. Not long ago a national park superintendent told me his main job is to keep people out of his park.
--Businesses and community leaders are equally preoccupied with a narrow view--that of business success. Some years back, the Chamber of Commerce of New Orleans promoted the establishment of a new expressway across town. However, if completed along the planned location, it would have destroyed the entire French Quarter. Tourism leaders generally are preoccupied with promotion and show little interest in what is to be promoted.
--Together, this results in a poor overall understanding of what tourism really is and how each one fits into the overall system.

And so, today, I would like to emphasize just three points--the overall functioning tourism system, the symbiosis between resource protection and tourism, and new processes that offer hope for greater cooperation between community and park interests.

THE TOURISM SYSTEM
also has the infrastructure for these services—water, waste removal, police, fire protection. Most communities also contain a variety of attractions—historic sites, entertainment, parks, events, homes of friends and relatives. A third part of the destination zone includes the attraction complexes, both urban and rural, such as national parks. Then, finally, the linkage corridors provide access from the community to the attractions.

Viewing tourism this way dramatizes the powerful linkages between all public and private development. Parks are intimately linked to communities and communities to parks.

For several years, some of us have been studying techniques that can improve our methods of discovering potential destination zones. Last year, I worked with Price Waterhouse on a master plan for tourism for the state of Oklahoma. As shown in this slide (4), we identified two primary zones as well as four secondary and six tertiary destination zones that have potential for development. These will be examined in more detail for resource protection as well as development of attractions and services.

And so, my first point is that tourism is a dynamic system that goes way beyond the Chamber of Commerce and hotels even though they are integral parts. It is a very comprehensive system demanding a clear view from the perspective of the traveler. The better we understand this, the better we can see ways of interfacing with the many other decision makers.

TOURISM-RESOURCES SYMBIOSIS

My next point is that we need to rise above the polarized positions of development versus resource protection. Resource protection is an essential element of tourism development because so much of tourism depends upon the many natural and cultural resources of an area. Water resources, wildlife, land relief, soils, vegetative cover, and clean air have much to do with successful destinations. This table (5) is a rough assessment of the relationship between tourism attractions and the resource base. The first column shows dependency on natural resources and the last, on cultural resources.

At the same time, resource managers are influenced greatly by decisions of tourism developers, managers and promoters. Only through better understanding of each other’s roles can the tourism system be made to run smoothly. There truly is a symbiotic relationship between resource protection and tourism.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR COOPERATION

My third point is to suggest to you with this diagram (6) that there are abundant opportunities for much greater cooperation between the private and public sectors, especially national parks and communities. This concept illustrates in a spatial way the need for national parks and nearby communities to plan and work together.

In my opinion, both tourism and national park areas could
Up the highway some 13 miles and on the banks of the Pedernales River is located the LBJ Ranch Unit—the "Texas White House." This unit includes Johnson's birthplace, his first school, where he signed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1964, his grandfather's farmhouse and his grave site. This unit has always been operated in cooperation with the LBJ State Park which provides visitor orientation, a variety of recreation programs and a living history farm.

Just a few years ago, NPS budget cutbacks forced the superintendent to eliminate the interpretive tour of the Johnson Settlement. This was upsetting both to visitors and to local tourist businesses. This, along with other changes in the region suggested to Superintendent Harry O'Bryant that something had to be done.

Because the area is well served by highways and is located fairly near major cities, it has experienced considerable growth, but all unplanned. Farimutuel betting, recently approved by Texas voters, will bring a new track close by. The many jurisdictions within the region have made cooperation difficult. The area includes two major incorporated town governments, several unincorporated villages, several county governments, three local chambers of commerce, four state parks, and one national park. Anticipated are thousands more visitors in response to the dramatically increased tourist promotion in Texas—from $3 million to about $10 million this year. With all of this happening, it became clear to Superintendent Bryant that he needed to reach out beyond his immediate jurisdiction of the park. In his words, "As sure as Texas bluebonnets bloom in the spring, there is hope for those who help themselves."

His first step was to engage a consultant to study the resources and potential of the area, not just the park. The results showed that it was absolutely essential for the several actors in the area to work closely together to solve the growing problems.

A meeting was called; people came; and from this emerged the "LBJ Heartland Council." This is made up of a wide cross-section of citizens interested in conservation, historic protection, tourism, agriculture, and business interests. It is a nonprofit organization dedicated "to encourage planned economic development of the region that protects, develops, and promotes the unique historical, environmental, and cultural resources of the geographic area surrounding Johnson City, Blanco, and Stonewall, Texas."

The LBJ Heartland Council has four long-range goals:

1. Resource inventory
2. Economic development plan
3. Broad-based membership representation
4. Public information and out-reach

The short-range objectives now set in motion are directed toward these goals. In three years the Council anticipates an operational budget of $1,254,654, the revenues to come from membership (5%), grants and fundraising (13%), and program income (83%), primarily from tours and interpretive programs.

While it is too soon to list major accomplishments, Mr. O'Bryan reports an entirely new working relationship between the
access have also been accomplished. Much cooperation and action now occurs between the City of New Braunfels Parks and Recreation Department, the New Braunfels Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Wurstfest Association and Friends of Rivers.

Perhaps the greatest statewide and long-range accomplishment was landmark legislation in Texas in 1987 that now allows the creation, by local election, of a local park district along a river corridor—the first in Texas. It provides for coordination between city, county, river authority, private business and environmentalist groups.

In November, 1987, a special river district in Comal County was created. A board has been named by the Comal County Commissioners Court and a work program to be performed by several volunteer committees has been set up.

Perhaps even this brief description of only two cases, both involving small towns, is sufficient to prove that park-community cooperation can be done. In both cases, more people are being handled and the resources are being given better protection.

CONCLUSION

The main conclusion I reach from this discussion is that tourism does function as an overall system and not just as parts, as we usually think of hotels and chambers of commerce. When this is more fully understood by NFS managers and nearby communities, they discover they are no longer adversaries but partners. The goals of each can be achieved even better when they work together in a constructive way. The ideologies of resource protection and free enterprise are not incompatible. The examples I have cited and many more across the country are showing that cooperation is highly productive for better traveler service and for better resource protection as well.

For better community-park (tourism-resource protection) cooperation in the future, I suggest the following action:

1. Public-private seminars, workshops. By means of local public meetings, issues can be aired, and with the proper catalyst, steps toward resolution can be started. Broad cross-section of interests must be represented.

2. Understand tourism system. A major agenda item at such meetings is gaining the broad perspective of how tourism functions.

3. Understand resource-tourism symbiosis. Environmentalists and developers gain an understanding of how dependent they are on each other.

4. Local public-private organization. In order to gain cooperation of the many agencies and interest groups, an organization with responsibility will be necessary. This may require new legislation.

5. Local public-private action program. Roles must be defined and an achievable program agreed upon.

6. Foster state tourism policy. Needed is legislative declaration of tourism-park-resource relationships and principles for public and private sector application.