

National Parks & Protected Areas: Approaches for Balancing Social, Economic, and Ecological Values

Tony Prato and Dan Fagre

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The first chapter of *National Parks & Protected Areas: Approaches for Balancing Social, Economic, and Ecological Values* begins with the oft-quoted Wallace Stegner statement that "National parks are the best idea we (Americans) ever had." Readers of this book will learn how to keep that "best idea" alive and functioning to enhance the social, economic, and ecological benefits of national parks and protected areas.

The stated purpose of this book is to "enhance the science and management of national parks and protected areas by improving the understanding of (1) the causes and consequences of the underlying social, economic, and ecological values of protected areas; (2) how interaction of human and ecological processes influences functions and values of protected areas; and (3) ways to improve the design, evaluation, and implementation of management actions and policies for balancing social, economic, and ecological values of protected areas." The authors' hope is that the material presented "advances the understanding and science-based management of national parks and protected areas."

The geographic scope of this book is focused on national parks in the western United States and Canada, particularly Yellowstone National Park. However, there are several examples from countries outside of North America and the use of World Conservation Union (IUCN) designations and the discussion of concepts in light of those designations lend an international flavor to the book.

Natural resource law expert Joseph Sax notes, "Parks are cultural creations; ideas spun from our laws and the social values they reflect." The first four chapters of the book present background information on these "cultural creations" and expound upon the legal status and multiple values of national parks and protected areas in North America. The first two chapters answer such questions as, Why do we have national parks?, Who manages national parks?, What are the designations, classifications, and purposes of national parks?, and Why is national park management challenging? The third and fourth chapters present a thorough treatment of the cultural, social, economic, and ecological values of national parks.

Chapters 5 and 6 speak to the development and delineation of national parks and protected areas. Chapter 5 ("Institutional Environments") presents a theory of institutions and institutional change that is based upon the notion of incentives. The authors explain New Resource Economics and apply this perspective to the problem of mismanagement of protected areas. The chapter also provides an overview of the federal agencies involved in managing protected areas, and laws, executive orders, and court orders related to the development and management of protected areas. Chapter 6 is focused on the controversial and complex challenge of identifying the boundaries of a protected area.

Chapters 7 and 8 present ecosystem management concepts. These are the two most challenging chapters as they cover both economic and ecological concepts ranging from cost-benefit analyses to carrying capacity to decision-making models. These chapters are followed by two chapters (Chapters 9 and 10) that present case studies to illustrate the real-world application of the concepts and approaches found in previous chapters. The inclusion of many

examples and case studies in Chapters 9 and 10 and throughout the book is a strength of this book.

Chapter 11 focuses on the future and presents ideas about reducing external threats to protected areas and addresses what is often the biggest challenge facing park managers—striking a balance between visitor satisfaction and resource conservation.

Chapter 12 serves as the synthesis of the entire book. This concluding chapter presents 10 major themes woven throughout the book that can be used to produce social, economic, and ecological values from protected areas.

This book would serve as a useful reference for teaching faculty and an excellent textbook for graduate students and advanced undergraduates in such disciplines as natural resource economics, natural resource management, park management, ecotourism development, and biological conservation. The early chapters and the numerous case studies would be easily accessible and of interest to all undergraduates and practitioners in these fields.

The senior author is Tony Prato, a professor of ecological economics in the Department of Agricultural Economics at the University of Missouri-Columbia. He is also co-director of the Center for Agricultural, Resource and Environmental Systems and director of the Missouri River Institute. The second author is Dan Fagre, a research ecologist and global climate change coordinator at the USGS Science Center, West Glacier, Montana.

Stephen Mather, the first director of the National Park Service, said, "He is a better citizen with a keener appreciation of the privilege of living here who has toured the national parks." National parks and protected areas face a complex set of challenges and an uncertain future. Application of the principles and approaches presented in this book will help continue the creation of better citizens in North America and wherever parks and protected areas exist.

Review by Ted D Cable (<http://jeq.scijournals.org/cgi/reprint/35/3/950?ck=nck>)