TOURISM-RECREATION-CONSERVATION SYNERGISM

Contrary to popular belief there exists today a high degree of synergism between the forces of tourism, recreation and conservation. The purpose of this paper is to expand the explanation of this paradox and to suggest some important planning inferences.

Planning (all the way from the site to the international scale) of cultural-leisure-educational uses of land is now a challenge of great magnitude. It has been brought on by the enormous growth of travel, recreation and environmental awareness. As a consequence, the boom in land development by a multitude of organizations and individuals is revealing weaknesses and voids in the planning and management of land for these purposes. Three forces with quite different origins and doctrinal arguments now converge as never before. These forces are conservation, tourism and recreation.

THREE APPROACHES

Conservation

The North American concept of conservation grew from several independent and even conflicting roots. An understanding of these roots is essential to modern planning of parks and areas for tourists.

The park movement grew out of a social concern. The ills of expanding industrialization and industrial cities gave rise to a demand for park and open space. The
dedication of public land was (and still is) seen as an antidote to delinquency, crime, illness, and the drudgery of work. Moral and ethical values are strong components of conservation in the eyes of many.

Early conservation efforts, both in the United States and Canada, were expressions of efficiency of resource use. It was less "wasteful" of resources to consider long-range programs, especially those for renewable resources, such as timber. But, the emphasis was on utilization, not preservation. Water resources were to be harnessed and soils were to be made more productive. Much of modern agricultural production is based upon this concept of conservation.

The idea of land conservation in an aesthetic sense came relatively late, historically. The defense of conservation areas today on the grounds of scenic beauty is a complete capitulation of the frontier--mastery of nature. The most popular recreation activity today, sightseeing, depends heavily upon a strong contemporary definition of conservation. Wilderness beauty is described as timeless, dimensionless, all-encompassing, dynamic, uncluttered by the artist's conception and a form of beauty that gratifies all the senses.

A modern concept of conservation is that of science and ecology. The premise is that of man-environmental balance. The only way of striking this balance is to define conservation
as protection of natural resources. Conservation, to the exponents of science-ecology means the exercise of rigid controls to prevent habitat destruction, habitat homogenization, reduction of species and natural resource pollution.

Conservation, in the sense of preservation of the cultural heritage is popularly supported today. Many man-made artifacts have a scarcity value that becomes as important to society's well-being as do the natural resources. Therefore, conservation means their protection, restoration and interpretation.

Tourism

Currently well accepted into the language is a term that grew out of nineteenth-century society and technology--tourism. Although definitions vary, most include components such as pleasure travel, expenditures of money and more than a short stay.

Certainly, the element of travel is an important one and was perhaps the main one to give the phenomenon its foundation. The new mobility of people, dropping the slow, tedious, undependable and costly forms of travel, revolutionized both society and economics. The era of steamboats and railroads catapulted remote regions into the tourist business. But, it took the automobile and jet plane to compress the entire world into tourist destinations.
Tourism is now of such economic impact that states, provinces and countries cherish it and undeveloped nations seek it. Not only does it affect the more conspicuous commercial enterprises, such as hotels, restaurants and airlines, but thousands of supporting manufacturers and services as well. Some cities derive their total support from tourism and millions of people depend upon it for their livelihood.

A large proportion of this impact is created and managed by profit making private enterprise. While certain subsidies assist greatly, such as highways and parks, each enterprise must make profits. The failure of many farm recreation programs is due to misunderstanding this fundamental.

Another, and equally important segment of tourism is carried on by governments and non-profit organizations. Much of what tourists see and do is sponsored by the not-for-profit sector.  

Tourism derives ultimately from personal satisfactions. These satisfactions range from the most lofty to the most crass, depending upon your value system. The same traveler may at one moment derive great inspiration from a mountain lookout and soon thereafter may be thrilled in a strip-joint or by an exotic alcoholic beverage. Sometimes satisfaction
comes as much from the purchase of a souvenir as from an interpretive tour of an historic site.

Governments as well as businesses take tourism promotion seriously, spending millions of dollars directly for its support. Every state in the U.S., all provinces of Canada and many nations spend enormous sums on colorful, stimulating and informative material.

Recreation

Recreation, as pleasurable diversionary activity, has been practiced by man for centuries. Although it has met with varying social acceptance throughout history, it has been practiced by all people everywhere.

Recreation is defined in many ways but most definitions include such terms as: activity engaged in during leisure, activity for pleasure and enjoyment or activity that enriches the lives of people. But, in many countries the word does not even exist. Instead, the several components, such as sports, physical training, dance, hunting, and fishing are actively engaged in but are not under control of recreation agencies.

In North America, as soon as recreation became a role of government, definitions became more important. As it was formalized and institutionalized, recreation became whatever
the proponents created as policy.

Some recreation professionals draw a strong distinction between that which is an end in itself and that which is purposeful. They say that the former is negative while the latter is positive. Leisure, engaged in for its own sake, provides no focus whereas those recreation activities accepted by society as wholesome, creative and uplifting are worthy of public support.

Recreation agencies, having land, facilities and programs are now well institutionalized at all levels of government in both Canada and the United States. They vary from those that are resource-oriented (extensive parks that accept a minimum of people-use) to those that are user-oriented (marinas, beaches, picnic areas and playgrounds).

RELATIONSHIPS

Coexistence

For many years, the three separate forces, with their three separate leaderships and followings, functioned independently and without much conflict.

Recreation exponents were preoccupied with program emphasis and were busy promoting the establishment of playgrounds, parks and their staffs. Recreation became a motherhood goal that never failed for public support.
Conservation, even with its many meanings, retained its popularity and support primarily from its soil-erosion control and reforestation origins.

Tourism was seen as strictly a promotional program. It appeared that greater enticement was the only element lacking for the development and support of tourism. Therefore, the first expression was that of providing moneys for advertising.

During this stage, there was little contact between the agencies, organizations and individuals from these three groups. Whatever contact that did take place was casual, polite and tended to support their independence. Each saw his role as well-defined and clearly separate from the others. In many countries this is true today.

**Conflict**

As all three elements—conservation, tourism, recreation—grew in stature and in total public awareness, the next expression was that of conflict.

Park departments in cities saw their roles as clearly separate from those of recreation departments and opposed overtures toward amalgamation. Each saw the other as competing for public funds, public support and in some instances, competing for the same lands.
As mass recreation expanded and congestion at camp-
grounds and beaches became the rule in parks, conservation
interests cried "rape". In spite of the fact that early
park policies in both Canada and the United States supported
and promoted visitor use and visitor facilities, the
exponents of conservation (meaning resource protection)
believed people were ruining the parks.

With the promotion and increase of tourist travel,
parks were included as attractions. As the masses of
recreationists and tourists increased, the need for
commercial tourist facilities and services increased. The
manner in which these were located, built and managed were
not always to the liking of those who created and managed
the parks.

Park and conservation exponents couched their goals in
social welfare terms and justified land condemnation and
entrance into commercial operation as for the good of society.
Tourism exponents, as champions of private enterprise called
this unfair competition.

Further conflict came between all three of these forces
and outside interests. Competition for land occurred between
tourism-recreation-conservation forces and other developers--
for manufacturing, housing and agriculture. Sometimes tourism,
with the use of "outside" capital and labor disrupted both the social and economic order of a locality.

**Symbiosis**

In spite of continuing issues of conflict, the three forces of tourism, conservation and recreation have developed many symbiotic characteristics—mutual benefit by functioning together.

Tourism interests complement conservation and recreation efforts in many ways. Tourist literature expounds the virtues of recreation activities in the out-of-doors—swimming, fishing, hunting, hiking, boating and a host of others. Furthermore, it emphasizes the social and personal values of recreation, such as family togetherness, individual well-being and freedom from stress. The commercial enterprises of tourism—hotels, restaurants, shops, entertainment—offer much-needed and heavily patronized services and products that recreationists seek. Furthermore, tourist elements—transportation, guided tours, literature—stimulate interest in the landscape, heightening access to and understandings of the environment, an important component of conservation.

It seems quite obvious that much of conservation ideology and practice fosters tourism and recreation. Conservation, as a social value is supported by the popularization of the landscape by tourism and recreation interests. Conservation,
in the sense of efficiency, is fostered by the geographic clustering tendencies of business enterprise, especially at transportation nodes. Conservation, in its concern over esthetics, plays directly into the hands of recreation and tourism, especially in support of protecting and making accessible both vast and intimate areas of outstanding scenic beauty. Conservation of plant and animal life is providing basic appeal to society to view and understand biology. Concerns over species elimination and pollution are highly complementary to the interests of tourism and recreation. Certainly, conservation, in the sense of cultural and heritage protection, restoration and interpretation, heightens people's interest—hence complements this form of recreation and tourism.

Recreation, stemming from a social good is the very foundation for many of the functions now practiced in both tourism and conservation. The multiplicity of federal, provincial, state and municipal agencies in both Canada and the United States are solid evidence of social and political acceptance of recreation. Recreation principles and philosophies are fundamental to tourism activities engaged in by people.

Synergism

Although each force would deny it, tourism, recreation and conservation are abstractions that have greater total impact and interdependencies than their sums would imply; hence, strong synergistic characteristics.
Tourism, for example, is not only completed by the addition of commercialism to recreation and conservation. It is different, stronger and more penetrating because of the conservation and recreational components within its makeup. It could not survive without them.

Yet, seldom do institutions of tourism (tourist bureaus, agencies, organizations) include any consideration of conservation or recreation in their policies and scope of activities. Seldom are there joint projects of planning and development.

Recreation is more than social concern over physical fitness or mental enrichment. Much of the participation would not take place if it were not for the components of tourism, such as travel, lodging, food service the the sale of products. Furthermore, elements of conservation, such as esthetics, resource protection, environmental education and heritage interpretation are included in definitions of recreation.

Yet, most conservation institutions today have taken a swing away from recreation and condemn it in all forms as destructive.

It would appear that the functions within the realms of conservation, tourism and recreation have outrun their
organizations and policies. It would seem that the time is long overdue for greater understanding of the interrelatedness, even synergism, of these forces among the land owners, planners, policy-makers and managers.

**PLANNING INFERENCES--CONCLUSIONS**

From this synopsis, even though brief, it would appear that a few important conclusions can be drawn for planning and management of personnel, facilities and services.

1. **Sole Institutional Policy-making is Obsolete**

   Policy-making in the area of synergism between tourism, conservation and recreation virtually does not exist today. Institutional boundaries do not generally allow interlacings between institutions. While each one has primary roles that are bound by function, by custom and even by law, there is need today for much broader policy-making.

   The purest, for example, who wish to designate parks for specific purposes are ignoring the facts of both environment and behavior. No piece of land is completely homogeneous and people are not singular in their behavior. Only parts of parks may, at certain times, provide only parts of people's interests and activities.

   The new master plan for Algonquin Provincial Park illustrates well a multipurpose set of policies. Included
in the policies are forest production, economic viability of nearby communities, recreation, tourism, and protection of special primitive areas. These show the influence of many institutions and outside factors as well as internal policies of the parks branch of the Ontario government.

2. **Sole Institutional Planning is Obsolete**

Institutional planning, primarily at the site scale—by park agencies, by conservation authorities and by private enterprise—is not enough. It does not reach the modern scope of interlaced functions of tourism, recreation and conservation.

Parks are part of a large tourism-recreation-conservation system. Each park succeeds or fails as much as it relates to nearby community services, transportation and surrounding land uses as it does to internal factors.

Tourism development also is part of a larger tourism-recreation-conservation system. Tourism depends as much on the identification and protection of natural and cultural resources as it does upon the building of facilities. A rare and exemplary case is that of a one resort complex business organization that operates in South Carolina, Puerto Rico, and Florida. It not only is an integral part of tourism but includes recreation and conservation. A major division deals only with
"environmental systems development".

Conservation areas are established for the good of man—the protection and management of resources to prevent abuses that would destroy them. Because they are a social good, they are supported by the public. Neither political nor social forces will allow restrictions that will prevent their use. Integral to their use are many tourism and recreation components.

Rarely is an integrated large-scale tourism-conservation-recreation plan developed. Such a case is the current CORTS (Canada-Ontario Rideau Trent-Severn) program, designed to analyze, plan, develop and manage two huge waterway corridors in Ontario. The agreement board includes officials representing agencies within all three sectors—conservation, tourism and recreation.

3. The Isolation of Policy-making, Planning and Management from each other is Obsolete

Both within institutions and between them, the roles of policy-making, planning and management have become isolated.

For example, the input of neither National Park managers or potential users is made (except as tokenism) upon the creation of a new National Park in both Canada
and the United States.

A new breed of park managers see operational problems daily that they cannot solve because they are hamstrung by isolated boards or administrative units. Parks are social places and reflect the changing interests, attitudes and activities of people. Resistance to nudity, group use, and unisex toilets exemplifies the inability to inject new use practices into policy and planning.

Most design and planning is taught in highly specialized schools in universities, isolated from both the policy-making and managerial realms. Schools of landscape architecture and park planning seldom include in their curricula on park planning and design courses in political decision-making or behavioral uses of parks.

Even within the field of planning, the relationships with policy-making and behavior are often weak. There are many instances where regional planners, county planners, tourism planners and recreation and park planners have virtually no communication with each other. Furthermore, their understandings of both the environment and people's interests and activities are frequently in direct conflict.

A striking forward step is that of the Federal-Provincial Park Conference held annually in Canada. This
offers a forum for Canadian policy, planning and managerial discussions about parks. However, even this is a closed conference and has not as yet been opened up to tourism, recreation and other outside interests.

4. **Boundary-maintenance is less important than the environment and society.**

A final conclusion from this discussion involves the issues that are most critical—the environment and society.

Agencies, organizations and other institutions are essential. These are the mechanisms through which we operate. No one suggests their abolition. However, when their vision and their mandates, and therefore their programs and accomplishments, are kept within constrained boundaries, the result is fragmentation and lack of integration. Both the environment and society suffer as a consequence.

If each tourism, recreation and conservation entity saw, as part of its role, its interface with the other segments, there would be great progress toward improved environmental protection and use for society.