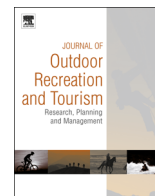




ELSEVIER

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

## Journal of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/jort](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/jort)

## Plan quality and plan detail of visitor and tourism policies in Ontario Provincial Park management plans

Paul F.J. Eagles<sup>a,\*</sup>, Julia Coburn<sup>b</sup>, Bobbie Swartman<sup>a</sup><sup>a</sup> Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies, University of Waterloo, ON, Canada N2L 3G1<sup>b</sup> School of Planning, University of Waterloo, ON, Canada N2L 3G1

## ARTICLE INFO

## Article history:

Received 23 January 2014

Received in revised form

17 September 2014

Accepted 18 September 2014

## Keywords:

Park planning

Management plans

Plan quality

Plan detail

Tourism

Visitor management

## ABSTRACT

Visitor and tourism management is a major component of parks and protected areas. Management plans are important public accountability documents. Research on the policy content of those documents is lacking. This paper uses the concepts of plan quality and plan detail to assess the scale and depth of visitor and tourism policies within park management plans of Ontario Provincial Parks. The research found low levels of plan detail for most of 30 identified areas of visitor and tourism policy in the management plans. However, the overall park organization often had such policies identified in park agency policy documents other than the park plans. The research concludes that these plans are not good plans, due to low levels of plan quality and plan detail, at least in regard to visitor and tourism policies. Suggestions are made on the factors causing this policy void and methods to improve planning practice in the future. The paper provides a method and definitions, with 5 levels of policy detail, which provide more guidance for planners than heretofore available. This research should enable a much more precise definition of policy detail for visitor and tourism policy in plans than has occurred in the literature to date.

## MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Legislation and policies provide guidance for visitor and tourism management by a park management agency, but are often weak in providing detail of plan content. This paper shows how an investigation of plan quality and plan detail can provide a new structure to guide such planning.

- A list of 30 management categories provides normative prescriptions for the creation of visitor and tourism policies within park management plans.
- The paper provides a method to improve the level of plan detail of the visitor and tourism components, and thus improve the quality of those plans.
- Use of these methods across a park agency would lead to higher levels of plan coherence and higher levels of transparency and accountability.
- Proper training of planning staff members in the special concerns for outdoor recreation and tourism would be important.

© 2014 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

## 1. Introduction

The park management plan is a fundamental public participation document with the potential to support good governance qualities, such as transparency and accountability (Graham, Amos,

& Plumpton, 2003). Management plans should identify the key features and values, establish the management objectives to be met, and outline actions to be undertaken (Thomas & Middleton, 2003). Management plans should also direct policy development in three important areas: (1) resource and cultural management of park resources; (2) visitor and tourism management; and (3) general management policies on environment, finance, and staffing (Eagles & McCool, 2002). These plans provide members of the public, including visitors, local citizens, and tourism operators, with a written statement outlining government policy intentions

\* Corresponding author. Tel.: +1 519 888 4567x32716.

E-mail addresses: [eagles@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:eagles@uwaterloo.ca) (P.F.J. Eagles), [coburnju@gmail.com](mailto:coburnju@gmail.com) (J. Coburn), [blswartm@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:blswartm@uwaterloo.ca) (B. Swartman).

in regard to park management activities that will be carried out, within one park. However, research on the policy content of those documents has been lacking (Hyslop & Eagles, 2007).

In resource-based tourism destinations, such as national parks, it is necessary to manage visitor use with policies to eliminate inappropriate activities, enhance visitors' experience and their understanding of the destination, while maintaining the quality of tourism resources (Cooper, Fletcher, Gilbert, & Wanhill, 1998; Kuo, 2002; McArthur, 1994; Moscardo, 1999). Visitor management can also be an important financial contributor to parks, as sufficient finance is required for parks to provide benefits to society, such as outdoor recreation and biodiversity conservation (Bushell & McCool, 2007; Crompton, 1999; Eagles & McCool, 2002; Emerton, Bishop, & Thomas, 2005). Successful tourism management requires a positive connection between plan quality and plan evaluation.

Starting in the 1990s, the issue of plan quality became important in the literature (Baer, 1997; Berke, Backhurst, Laurian, Crawford, & Dixon, 2006; Berke & Godschalk, 2009; Brody, 2003a, 2003b; Morckel, 2010; Norton, 2008; Tang and Brody, 2009). This literature attempts to outline what makes for a good plan, one that leads to successful implementation and one that can be evaluated against a set of criteria. Common elements of plan quality include: (1) factual base (Berke et al., 2006; Berke & Godschalk, 2009; Brody, 2003a, 2003b; Norton, 2008); (2) goals (Berke & Godschalk, 2009; Brody, 2003a, 2003b); (3) implementation (Berke & Godschalk, 2009; Brody, 2003a, 2003b; Norton, 2008); (4) policies (Berke & Godschalk, 2009; Brody, 2003a, 2003b); (5) internal consistency (Berke et al., 2006; Berke & Godschalk, 2009; Norton, 2008); (6) monitoring (Berke et al., 2006; Berke & Godschalk, 2009), (7) interorganizational coordination (Berke & Godschalk, 2009; Brody, 2003a, 2003b), and (8) plan presentation (Berke & Godschalk, 2009; Norton, 2008). Pröbstl & Prutsch (2009) suggest that transparent presentation of involvement and participation are important. Understanding these elements of plan quality can improve the production of plans. Berke and Godschalk (2009) state that understanding plan quality is critical for providing legitimacy to the planning process and to planning as profession.

This paper uses the concept of plan quality (Berke et al., 2006; Brody, 2003a, 2003b; Norton, 2008; Berke & Godschalk, 2009) and introduces the concept of plan detail (Thomas & Middleton, 2003) to assess the scale and depth of visitor and tourism policies written within published park management plans in one location, Ontario Provincial Parks in Canada.

Managers must be aware of the needs of visitors, as well as the equilibrium between environmental protection and recreational use (Cole & Daniel, 2003; Eagles, 2002; Hendee & Dawson, 2002). Policy development and implementation requires fundamental information about visitors, their needs and wants, the impacts of their visits, as well as their distribution, and flow in space and time (Cole & Daniel, 2003; Eagles, 2002; Hendee & Dawson, 2002). Visitor management is an ongoing process and is considered to be a tool of sustainable tourism management; it ensures that the visitor receives a high quality experience, while encouraging visitors to adopt appropriate behaviour (Kuo, 2002; Cooper et al., 1998).

Policy detail is the amount of information provided for a specific policy area in publically-available management plans. For example, a low level of detail would include only background description of current activities, while a higher level of detail might include implementation and monitoring requirements. Presumably, higher amounts of detail stated for a policy area provides for higher levels of transparency and therefore accountability in regards to government policy, both laudable governance objectives (Graham et al., 2003). Thomas and Middleton (2003)

argue that policies which apply to specific areas within a park should be described in full detail due to their critical importance in outlining the activities that can and will be undertaken in those areas. They also argue that the amount of detail found in the management plan depends on the park agency policy structure. For those agencies with several layers of policies, some of the detail, such as that concerning monitoring strategies, can be relegated to lower level policy documents, such as operational plans. Financial and staffing plans are typically not included in long-term management plans, due to their rapid rate of change, but instead are placed in yearly operational plans. Thomas and Middleton (2003, p. 38) state that management options must be developed "to the stage where they have spatial expression and the management implications are clear. For management implications to be clear to readers, sufficient detail is necessary so that the implications are relatively obvious." The literature does not provide descriptions of what sufficient policy detail might entail in park management plans. The literature also does not provide normative rules for policy detail, but relies on phrases such as full detail or sufficient detail. Our research attempts to address these issues.

Hyslop and Eagles (2007) identified 30 visitor and tourism policy categories as found in Eagles, McCool, and Haynes (2002). When applied to the policy documents for four federal park agencies in the USA and Canada, the US National Park Service provided the most comprehensive visitor management policy structure, addressing 25 policies areas, while the Canadian Wildlife Service provided the least, addressing only six of the 30 areas (Hyslop & Eagles, 2007). This set of 30 policy categories proved to be a useful framework for the detailed analysis of the visitor and tourism policies of one complex management plan, Algonquin Provincial Park (Eagles & Bandoh, 2009). This current research adopted this policy framework as a normative standard to be used in policy analysis of the visitor and tourism component of park management plans.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. The concept of a good plan

The quality of a plan is often used as an indirect measure of plan implementation success and as a reflection of quality in the planning process (Brody, 2003a). Other possible explanations, besides plan quality, determined by Laurian et al. (2004, p. 472) that were considered to influence plan implementation success include: "(1) the commitment of the agency to implementing the plan; (2) the inclusion in the plan of provisions for implementation and of management techniques to implement plan policies; (3) the specification of appropriate management techniques in development permits, and (4) the actual use of these management techniques by developers". Other than item (2), which is just one element of plan quality (Berke & Godschalk, 2009; Brody, 2003b; Norton, 2008), the remaining three aspects are extraneous to the content of the plan. It is possible that one or more of these factors can have a greater influence on the success of plan implementation than the quality of the plan itself, but there is not enough empirical evidence to support either claim.

An evaluation of the outcomes of plan implementation helps understand if the plan was a success. Evaluation was defined by Weiss (1998), and restated by Baum (2001, p. 4) and Seasons (2003) as "the systematic assessment of the operation and/or the outcomes of a program or policy, compared to a set of explicit or implicit standards, as a means of contributing to the improvements of the program or policy." This definition provides substantial flexibility in how evaluation can be executed, where either

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/92397>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/92397>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)