

PUBLIC RECREATION PLANNING: A POLICY DILEMMA FOR REFUGE

MANAGERS

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ABSTRACT

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Public recreation planning and preservation of natural resources are policy dilemmas for managers at national wildlife refuges in Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Minnesota. Data collected from a survey of refuge managers indicate that problems are arising from increasing recreation use. Problems include wildlife disturbances, vegetation disturbances, and the inadequacy of visitor facilities. Many refuge managers have implemented localized solutions to these problems. Solutions include fencing areas or closing them to public use, developing walking trails and auto tour routes, and searching out alternative funding sources and partnerships. Evaluation systems are also needed to describe resource impacts and the effectiveness of management plans in minimizing those impacts. A number of evaluation systems could be used; the main need is to use systems that have some recreational basis. As public recreation continues to increase on wildlife refuges, human dimensions must be considered to ensure refuges maintain their wildlife conservation mandates.