

INTERPRETATION

Of Energy In General

Science as a solid base for interpretation probably has no better showcase than the energy story, where environment, economics and ethics all play a role in today's need for conserving and economizing. The University of Idaho Cooperative Park Study Unit in Moscow has produced a 34-page guide to energy interpretation that offers valuable tips for managers and interpreters who want to identify and utilize the energy interpretation opportunities in their parks.

The booklet was produced on contract for the Idaho Office of Energy as a guide for state park personnel, but its general approach and splendid References Cited and Annotated Bibliography sections make it an unusually useful tool for the interpreter who wants to develop a scientifically sound program without having to wade through a graduate course in thermodynamics. Gary E. Machlis,* Sam H. Ham and Robert P. Deyerberg (who wrote the book) take you to the promised land without dragging you through the desert.

The book focuses on energy interpretation as "the presentation of energy-related ideas in such a way

as to make these ideas meaningful and important to visitors." Throughout, the book suggests ways to relate facts and concepts to visitors' own personal experiences. The basic energy principles (which are not easy to grasp) are given fresh, relevant, accurate airing in ways that lead to increased awareness and understanding. Guides to deeper study are provided for the energetic, curious, ambitious interpreter.

Dispensing with jargon, clever use of analogies, development of topics and themes that relate to both the park and the visitor's home environment are dealt with in the context of both the energy subject matter and the interpretive process. The result is a document whose usefulness extends far beyond the Idaho state borders.

A well known axiom in communications is the one that goes "If you really want to learn, teach someone." Parks that undertake the communication of the energy story often wind up doing the top-notch management jobs. Such a story has pay-off points at both ends.

Understanding the way energy flows through systems — natural, humanbuilt, and the interfaces between the two — can "save a bundle" for those who put their knowledge to practical use. And in addition to management savings, there are personal rewards, as Supt. Betts and Site Energy Coordinator Matthews at Mount McKinley, and Supt. Hentges and SEC Harrison at Craters of the Moon found out recently when they received incentive awards.

Energy consumption in buildings at McKinley was reduced 43 percent per gsf; gasoline use was lowered 32 percent and diesel fuel, 41 percent. At Craters of the Moon, building use energy came down by 47 percent and gasoline consumption by 20 percent. Both parks had initiated demonstration projects and they went on to prove that they listen to themselves when they tell others about energy conservation. (Awards story first reported in PNR Energy Newsletter, 4/80)

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Energy Interpretation: A Guide for Idaho State Parks can be had by writing to Dr. Machlis, College of Forestry, University of Idaho, Moscow, ID 83843, and enclosing \$1. If checks are used, make them payable to College of Forestry.