

# **From Blue Ridge Parkway**

In October, 1982, the Blue Ridge Parkway took delivery of three Vector Graphic Model 4-30 microcomputers. Each unit included the CP/M operating system, an integrated software package (database, spreadsheet, word processing, graphics, and communications), a printer with graphics capability, a modem for telecommunications, and 5 megabytes of hard disk storage. The Parkway already had several Apple II Plus computers running the MOSS (Maintenance Operations Scheduling System) program.

Prior to acquiring the hardware and software, Supt. Gary Everhardt established an inter-divisional committee to examine Parkway information needs, inventory computer applications, and survey software and hardware configurations. During 1983, several applications were up and running with excellent results in the area of protection (incident records) and accident files, safety, electronic mail, word-processing, personnel records, training inventories, property management, monthly and annual interpretation and visitor services reports, budget, and volunteer hours and

costs. In addition experimentation was conducted with direct visitor information access programs.

Blue Ridge Parkway is exploring several applications in resources management. RM Spec. Larry Freeman is working on a database file to store information from the Parkway's 400-plus special use permits and letters of agreement related to agricultural use, including names of landowners, fence lines, acreage in pasture, hay, crops, etc. The program will automatically compute any fees involved.

The agricultural use file is just one example of a database application which is essentially an electronic file system with a surprising degree of sophistication. Other applications the Parkway intends to explore include an endangered plants inventory, acid rain observation file, stream analysis, vista burning program, bear management, forest disease data, fisheries, exotic plant control, hunter parking permits, etc. The Parkway's incident file (a database consisting of information from Case Incident Records, Form 10-343) is being modified by developing a series of incident codes specific to resource management activities.

One application useful in all functional areas is word processing. Recently the Parkway re-wrote its Resource Management Plan and accomplished the task in a third of the time it would have taken to manually draft and edit. Corrections, additions, and revisions can be inserted easily into the original to reflect future program changes.

Frequently, the Parkway staff finds computerized data useful in ways not originally anticipated. For example, a recent resources management project on the Parkway was interested in data related to motor vehicle accidents involving whitetail deer. The computerized motor vehicle accident file was examined and valuable information quickly retrieved. Two examples of this type of information are illustrated in Figures 1 and 2. Figure 1 is a bar graph showing the number of deer-related motor vehicle accidents by District. Figure 2 shows the percentage of deer re-

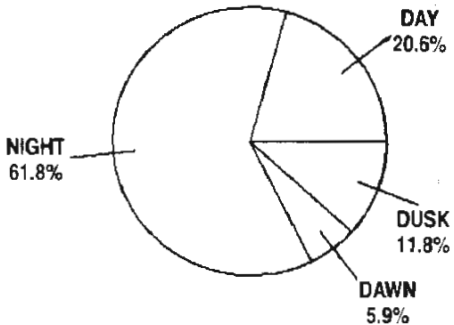


**Figure 2**  
**Deer Caused Motor Vehicle Accidents**  
**Light Conditions—1983**

lated accidents occurring during different light conditions. These examples were generated in a matter of minutes using the Vector Graphic's plotting routines automatically accessed by the database program.

Another example of micro-computer applications is the use of telecommunications software and a modem to access scientific databases over telephone lines. The potential related to literature searches, abstracts, etc. is just beginning to be realized by park personnel. Some of these databases are surprisingly cheap compared to alternative acquisition methods.

Much of the Park's work in 1984 is evaluating the feasibility of microcomputer applications in resources management. The staff has learned that although certain types of data and information can be kept on a microcomputer, it is sometimes easier and more efficient to continue the task manually. Whether it is practical to computerize depends to a large extent on the volume of data and the need for selective or sorted retrieval.

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FIGURE 1

Deer Related Motor Vehicle Accidents By District—1983

