

The "limits of acceptable change" article on page 9 of this issue is *Park Science's* initial response to a Winter 1985 letter to the editor from Carl Shipley of the C&O Canal National Historical Park Commission. Shipley was concerned primarily with the C&O Canal and what he perceived as signs of "overuse."

"There is always the problem of balance," Shipley wrote. "When does it become important to the public interest to deny some people use of these publicly-supported facilities in order to maintain the resource for future generations, as well as permit enjoyment for the luckier portion of the public who manage to use the facilities within the use limitations?"

The Marion/Cole/Reynolds article describes a scientifically controlled attempt to establish parameters for that elusive idea – "use limitations." Beyond this slippery and troublesome task, other hurdles challenge the manager. What are the political and social bases for *handling* "overuse," once it has been determined? Are society's values so strong and sharply defined as to enable management to make full use of the scientific information and techniques we already possess? If so, why don't we move, and if not, how can we most effectively work to overcome this gap?

NPS Director Mott spoke to this overall problem at his recent Yellowstone meeting with the NPS Regional Directors. He called for carrying capacity studies and for park interpretation that goes a country mile beyond "show and tell". . . interpretation that tackles the tough management questions of how to perpetuate park resources in the face of mounting threats from without and within park boundaries.

The National Park Service has come a long way in the years since the crisis-reaction stance it had to assume at Yosemite in the late '70s. It has adopted stringent restrictions to visitor freedom to protect especially fragile treasures at Canyon de Chelly. It is moving with determination on several fronts to define and deal with the threatened Yellowstone ecosystem and its precious, irreplaceable components. It is conducting other carrying capacity and interpretation initiatives elsewhere in the system, and they will be the subject of other articles in the near future.

With strong, sensitive direction from the top, the NPS troops at the park level can begin to work toward solutions to the essentially System-wide problems that add up to System stress. And perhaps just as importantly, they can begin at the park level to enlighten the public and enlist its support for management actions designed to ensure enduring park quality.