

CRP Survey Takes Systems Approach To Park Problems

A Critical Resource Problems (CRP) Workshop, conducted by the University of Idaho NPS/CPSU on May 16, 1983 in Glacier NP, provided the initial testing ground for a questionnaire to identify problems in the various natural, cultural, and management systems of NPS units, using the Nominal Group Technique (NGT) as the principal workshop process.

The questionnaire, developed by the UI/CPSU, had as a second goal the identification of critical relationships among the various subsystems of Glacier NP and between the park and its surrounding region. The entire area was examined as a system (i.e. as "a grouping of parts, termed components, operating together for a common purpose." This definition comes from J.W. Forrester's 1968 book, *Principles of Systems*.)

As the workshop began, the 10 Glacier NP employees who participated were introduced to the NGT process — a group decision-making technique that has been used extensively in business, industry, and government. As adapted for the Glacier workshop, NGT involved specific identification by the workshop participants of five critical relationships between components of the Glacier NP system (eight components were given at the start). Eventually, the participants were allotted 20 minutes to designate their individual judgments of the 10 most important component relationships that had been identified by the group, and to distribute 100 points among them according to the weight of their importance.

The questionnaire and the NGT functioned in a complementary manner. The questionnaire produced a list of the CRPs, and the workshop produced a ranked listing of critical component relationships that paralleled the findings of the questionnaire.

Support infrastructure, which includes park management and administration, emerged in the workshop as the most important system component. Most of the critical relationships identified between the support infrastructure and other components specifically involved management actions or policies. Recommendations found "a need for improved communication between the administration and the staff managers within the park, and a better understanding of park policies and actions."

A report on the workshop, including an assessment of its strengths and weaknesses, is available from the University of Idaho NPS/CPSU, (College of Forestry), Moscow, ID 83843. The Report, CPSU/UI SB 83-3, is authored by Jonathan P. Kusel (CPSU research assistant), R. Gerald Wright, and Gary E. Machlis, unit leaders.

The questionnaire, revised on the basis of the workshop trial, has been distributed to all NPS areas within the Pacific Northwest Region as the last step in the "pretest" stage. The finalized questionnaire will be submitted to WASO, which provided a portion of the funds for its development.