

What's in the Air?

Creating an Interactive, Educational Air Quality Display

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The goals...

- Capture and engage an audience in a busy and distracting environment
- Remind park visitors that even “protected” areas can be affected by air pollution.
- Explain how air pollution is often transported far from its source.
- Show how pollution is monitored.
- Create a connection between human actions and pollution prevention.
- Utilize a medium familiar to “tech-savvy” visitors.

Introduction

Acadia National Park visitors expecting to experience pristine environments and unspoiled scenic views are occasionally disappointed to find that even “protected areas” are not immune to pollution impacts and other global environmental problems. Air pollution is particularly problematic, since short of enclosing a national park in a protective bubble, there is no way to insulate park resources and visitors from pollution effects.

Park resource managers and interpreters, air quality specialists from the National Park Service Air Resources Division, and media design experts at Colorado State University created an exhibit that informs visitors about some of the air pollutants that can degrade visibility and threaten human and environmental health. The touch-screen display explains the 4 major pollution types affecting Acadia and their sources, air quality monitoring programs, and suggestions to help reduce air pollution.

This project builds on the over thirty year history of air quality studies at Acadia National Park by creating a connection between the science and park visitors. The only way to truly protect Acadia's scenic views and fragile resources is by understanding how global air quality issues affect the park; and working to improve the problem through monitoring and research, education, and developing sound environmental policies.

The approach...

- *It's all about teamwork:* Developed by NPS Resource Managers, Interpreters, and Air Quality Specialists. Funding from national and local sources.
- *What's this?* Question-based content leads viewers through multiple screens (and concepts!).
- *A picture's worth 1,000 words:* Animated and static graphics capture viewers attention and explain complicated processes.
- *Spare me the gloom & doom:* Provide accurate and realistic explanations of important issues without creating a sense of hopelessness.

The final product...

- The touch screen kiosk will be incorporated into the new exhibit design of the Sieur de Monts Nature Center in 2015.
- Use of current technology enables content to be adapted for use on mobile devices and web-based applications.
- Design concept can be used as a template by other parks and protected areas.

