

*Outdoor Recreation*  
**PLANNING**



John Baas • Robert C. Burns  
*Editors*

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**SAGAMORE**  
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## DEDICATION

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*This book is dedicated to Emilie M. Baas (John Baas' mother) and  
Dick and Janice Tokarsky (Robert C. Burns' parents).*



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# PROLOGUE

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The late Yogi Berra once said, “If you don’t know where you are going, you’ll end up someplace else.” Good point. Does anybody in the natural resources and outdoor recreation fields want to leave to chance their place in a rapidly unfolding and uncertain future? This book, its chapters, and its chapter authors provide guidance for defining where outdoor recreation resource planning should and could be going forward and offer sound advice, principles, and approaches for identifying pathways for getting there, rather than someplace else.

The 2010 Census gave an estimate of almost 309 million people in the United States, which was up 9.7% from the 2000 population of just over 281 million. That is 28 million more people in just 10 years. The recently published assessment of outdoor recreation trends (in the United States prepared by staff at the USDA Forest Southeast Research Station) showed that this population growth stimulated an increase during that decade of 16 million general outdoor recreation participants, rising from an estimated 208 million to 224 million. For nature-based outdoor recreation, the total number of people who participated grew by an estimated 7%. Yet the land, water, and generally the public resources for outdoor recreation, and more specifically for nature-based recreation, have remained roughly the same. Demand growth of this magnitude makes it obvious that planning to manage our limited outdoor recreation resources effectively is increasingly important.

In fact, I believe that professional, responsive, and carefully considered planning is not only important, but also essential and critical to success in developing, managing, and making accessible outdoor recreation resources. Following professional planning principles will lead to defining what success would look like in the eyes of all who have a stake in recreation resources. Responsive planning will actively and interactively engage, early and often, the stakeholders, citizens, and others the planning organization is working to serve. Considered planning will look carefully and comprehensively at the opportunities and constraints for achieving success.

This book is timely and helps fill a void. A book covering outdoor recreation resource planning has not been published in well over 30 years. Examples of early works include Bev Driver’s proceedings book in 1974 and Alan Jubenville’s book in 1976. The field of recreation resource planning, the tools available (now relative to then), and the data (ah yes, the data) are well beyond what was available in the 1960s, in the 1970s, or even as late as the 1990s. For example, Chapter 4 of this book covers the “new” and rapidly advancing technology of geographic information system (GIS) applications. Multivariate spatial relationships were difficult to tease out of the spotty, coarse data of previous decades. Advances and finer resolution spatial data now offer amazing possibilities.

This book is unique because it has been prepared by academics and planning practitioners working together to provide a teaching guide as well as a planning applications resource. The authors have practical experience in advising and helping to develop recreation resource planning rules and procedures and in developing master plans for public properties. The focus of this book is on the general or master plan and the resource management plan level. It does not focus on site, landscaping, or facility levels (e.g., specifically where to place a particular facility or how to design grounds and features). There are other works that cover site and facility planning.

Those who have been engaged in various elements of recreation resource planning cannot stress enough the critical importance of up-front, early, and continued engagement of citizen owners, partners, other resource managers, and anyone else who has an interest in or who may be affected by recreation resource management. I have witnessed and been involved with both closed and open, fully participatory planning styles. The closed, nonparticipatory, special-interest-driven style is, in my opinion, not appropriate in the public recreation resource planning arena. I was pleased to observe and participate in a small way in the process my agency, the USDA Forest Service, followed in developing its new planning rule. I felt I was observing a process that was wide open with lots of sunshine allowed in. Federal agencies have not always engaged in this sort of open, participatory style.

As you work through the chapters that follow, think broadly of the importance and inclusiveness of the phrase, *the public*. In the public sector, when the resource is publicly owned, think broadly enough to consider opinions, values, and needs beyond, but including visitors. Whether visitors or not, all citizens own public land and its associated resources. On-site, off-site, and use and nonuse values and benefits should all be considered. As you work through the chapters, keep in mind that planning should be comprehensive and integrated, not piecemeal and segmented. As you work through these chapters, keep in mind the comment by Peter Drucker (1909–2005), “Unless commitment is made, there are only promises and hopes; but no plans.” Enjoy!

## **H. Ken Cordell**

Scientist, USDA Forest Service

## CHAPTER ONE

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# INTRODUCTION

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Prepared by John Baas and Glenn E. Haas



For those with patience and focus, recreation resource planning has its rewards. In the San Francisco Bay area, a small land trust has cause to celebrate. It reached its goals for the year. At its annual board meeting in December, key members of the land trust expressed their aspirations for the upcoming year. One board member wanted to see the trust properties more publicly accessible, with more opportunities for hiking. Another member wanted to develop an environmental education program focused on getting local children onto trust lands. Another trust member wanted to restore wetlands. The discussion continued a little longer and then was deferred until the first planning meeting in January. At the start of the next year, the trust's stewardship coordinator called the meeting to order. She had drawn up an agenda and invited key partners, including representatives from the trust's board of directors, an adjacent park and recreation district, and the National Park Service, and several graduate students from a local university. A budget was presented to the group, along with several upcoming grant and donation opportunities that sounded promising. One representative from the board articulated the desires of the other board members by recalling the key portions of conversations from the December board meeting. A tentative plan was drawn up with prioritized projects based on the known budget. A list of alternative projects was identified in the event that upcoming funding opportunities should come to fruition in the upcoming year. The next day, the stewardship coordinator gathered her thoughts and put together the annual plan. Several weeks later, the board unanimously approved the plan, and by the end of the year, a 2-mile loop trail had been constructed on one trust property, a day use area concept plan had been completed for another, and a contract had been awarded to a local environmental engineering firm to

restore 4 miles of a highly degraded stream channel on yet another property. It was a good year for this Bay Area land trust, and the outcomes were the result of good recreation resource planning.

That the trust was in a good position to undertake the projects was the result of long-range strategic planning, which had started 3 years earlier. The strategic plan identified a geographic region where lands were to be acquired. It identified a goal of connecting lands along a 12-mile ridgeline known as the Carquinez Strait. It identified another goal to provide “feeder” trails to the Bay Area Ridge Trail and, where possible, contribute to a regional goal of completing the continuous 400-mile Bay Area Ridge Trail that would eventually encircle San Francisco Bay. The trust’s first resource management plan was prepared for the area where the 2-mile trail was constructed. The property for which the day use concept plan was completed was purchased with the idea of providing a more publicly accessible recreation area (another trust goal) compared to what was currently available on the trust’s existing properties. Even the process of hiring an environmental engineering firm to restore the degraded creek was the result of yet another planning process.

The land trust example is important because it illustrates a number of important points repeated throughout this book. One point is that it demonstrates one of the benefits of good planning: being able to capitalize on good recreation resource opportunities as they arise. Another important point is that the trust relies heavily on partnerships, which has become increasingly common for many recreation planning entities. A final point is that the trust’s board of directors works in a collaborative fashion, both internally and with external partners. Not all planning efforts are as successful as those of this Bay Area land trust. Compared to this small land trust, public agencies that manage recreation resources are typically subject to more regulations, more public scrutiny, and other challenges, such as budget constraints, staff availability and capability, internal operating procedures, agency politics, and stakeholder interests. But organizations that follow a prescribed planning process and do it well are usually more successful in achieving their goals and objectives than organizations that do not.

## 1.1 The Planning Process Defined



Broadly defined, planning is a means of solving problems. Whittaker, Shelby, Manning, Cole, and Haas (2011) refer to recreation planning as “a systematic decision making process by public agencies” (p. 7). In its description of planning for water resources, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (n.d.) defines planning as a “structured, rational approach to solving problems” (para. 1). It expands on this definition, stating,

“Planning is a creative process requiring unequal measures of experience, analysis, intuition, and inspiration. . . . Planning typically involves very broad knowledge base and operates in a creative, dynamic manner” (para. 3).

The California State Parks (2009) defines the purpose of preparing a general plan:

The general plan is the primary management document for each unit of the California State Park System, establishing its primary purpose and establishing a management direction for its future. By providing a defined purpose and vision, guidance on long and short-term goals, and guidelines, the General Plan defines the broadest management framework possible for a unit’s feasibility and program development, ongoing management, and public use. Thereafter, this framework is intended to guide day-to-day decision-making and serve as the basis for developing focused feasibility and management plans, specific project plans, and other management actions necessary to implement the goals of the General Plan. (p. 27).

The National Park Service (2002) describes the purpose of planning under Director’s Order #2, stating, “The National Park Service will use planning to bring logic, analysis, public involvement, and accountability into the decision-making process” (“2.1.1 Decision-Making,” para. 1)

Planning starts with a problem or issue; involves data analysis, public involvement, and accountability; and ends with a decision or decisions about a particular area. As will be discussed in later chapters, the process of recreation resource planning can become so complex and lengthy that it is sometimes difficult to realize the end result. Like other forms of planning, recreation resource planning is a creative and dynamic process that starts with what is possible and ends with what is practical. Good recreation resource planning results in tangible public recreation benefits.

Although agency resource planning processes vary at federal, state, and local levels (Table 1.1), they all follow the same basic series of steps:

1. Identify issues to be addressed
2. Develop planning criteria (measures of success)
3. Document existing conditions
4. Develop goals and objectives to be achieved
5. Develop alternatives to meet those goals and objectives
6. Analyze alternatives
7. Select an alternative and document the decision-making process
8. Monitoring and evaluation
9. Revise and amend the plan as needed

**Table 1.1**  
*Comparison of Agency Recreation Resource Planning Processes*

Plan component	USDA Forest Service	Bureau of Reclamation	California State Parks	East Bay Regional Parks District
Plan type	Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP)	Resource Management Plan (RMP)	General Management Plan	Master Plan
Planning horizon	15 years	10 years		10 years
Legal basis/ authority	NFMA, FSH 1909.12, Chapter 10	Reclamation Recreation Management Act of 1992, Reclamation Act of 1902	California Public Resources Code 5002.2	None
Length of time to complete	2–5 years	Varies according to NEPA requirements. 1.5 to 3 years	2–5 years	2.5 years
Public outreach	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Environmental analysis required?	Yes	Yes, but no review nationally, just regional review	Yes	No
<p><i>Note:</i> NFMA, FSH = National Forest Management Act, Forest Service Handbook; NEPA = National Environmental Policy Act.  <i>Source:</i> John Baas, 2013.</p>				

Step 1 involves identifying issues associated with plan development and implementation, especially those items for which widespread agreement may be lacking. The issue may be access to a recreation site that involves crossing private property. Stated more simply, issues are often points of controversy to be resolved in the planning process. Planning criteria (Step 2) are measures of success of a plan. Some are obvious, such as an agency must have the financial and personnel resources capable of implementing the plan. Other criteria are legal requirements, such as meeting the intent of the Federal Policy and Land Management Act or the Resource Planning Act or of meeting other laws, such as the Clean Water Act. Some agencies, such as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation (BR), conduct exhaustive studies to determine if plan alternatives will meet planning criteria, which are sometimes referred to as screening criteria. Step 3, documenting existing conditions, involves describing recreation resources in their current state. It may involve describing attributes, such as visitation levels or facility conditions. This becomes an important reference condition for determining if current conditions meet the goals and objectives established in the plan. Step 4 involves setting goals and objectives. Goals are typically broad statements, whereas objectives are

more specific and can be measured or quantified. Once goals and objectives are established, alternatives (Step 5) are developed. As previously mentioned, some agencies have elaborate and formal processes for the development and analysis of alternatives. For other agencies or organizations, the examination of alternatives may be subtle and poorly documented. But in the majority of recreation plans prepared, alternatives are developed, analyzed, and possibly discarded (Step 6), and ultimately, a preferred alternative is identified (Step 7) that eventually becomes the plan. Each alternative is written to respond to issues identified in Step 1 somewhat differently, but has to meet a *de minimus* standard in terms of meeting planning (screening) criteria and goals and objectives. Alternatives are analyzed, demonstrating for each the extent to which goals and objectives are met and issues are resolved. Following the analysis of alternatives, the preferred alternative is selected (Step 7). For federal agencies, a written rationale is typically provided to explain why a particular alternative is selected. Finally, commitments are made to make sure the actions identified as the preferred alternative are indeed implemented, hence the need for monitoring and evaluation (Step 8). This commitment may be a schedule of projects or specific management actions, along with a timeline and budget for achieving each (Table 1.2). Even when plans are completed, they must be recognized as dynamic documents so at some time they are revised to respond to changes in social values, norms, and resource conditions (Step 9). This, in a much abbreviated form, is the recreation resource planning process.

At the federal government level, planning for recreation resources is often carried out through broader, interdisciplinary processes. For example, the BR does not have a programmatic planning process solely focused on recreation resources. It has a process to address recreation resources in concert with biological, cultural, and physical resources and other water uses, such as agricultural, municipal/industrial, and power generation. In California, the BR's process is often carried out in coordination with the California State Parks, frequently the agency with the responsibility for managing areas owned by the BR. The USDA Forest Service (USFS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) also have planning processes focused on resource management planning, including recreation resources. The USFS employs specific analytical approaches focused on inventorying supply and demand for recreation resources (the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum, or ROS) and the scenery visitors can expect (the Scenery Management System). Similarly, the BLM uses the ROS and the Visual Management System as part of the resource management plan (RMP) process. Agencies with a more parks-centered mission, such as the East Bay Regional Parks District (EBRPD), use a planning process wholly focused on park and recreation resources. The process the EBRPD uses is focused heavily on land acquisition, with capital improvements such as plans for constructing a new picnic area or trailhead being only a small portion of the overall planning effort. The EBRPD process is different from those identified above in that it does not have a federally or state-mandated environmental compliance requirement, nor does it have enabling legislation

that requires planning. For East Bay Parks, master planning is one of the many “best management practices” that the agency uses, rather than simply ensuring that a legal requirement is met.

There are commonalities among the above planning processes. All require at least 2 years for completion, and sometimes longer for particularly controversial topics. The Yosemite Valley Plan required about 20 years to complete and remains the subject of ongoing litigation. All of the above agencies’ planning processes involve interacting with the public, and all have a planning horizon of at least 10 years. Most have specific policies or laws requiring that planning be completed. All of the above planning processes require public outreach (more on this in Chapter 6), a process that has grown more complex and drawn out in the last 30 years.

## 1.2 History of Recreation Resource Planning

The previous discussion demonstrates that there is not a single recreation resource planning process, law, or agency. However, all planning processes can trace their origins to a number of key, historic events. Recreation resource planning began as a simple process. In 1921, Arthur Carhart prepared a recreation plan for water-based recreation on the Superior National Forest in northern Minnesota. The plan totaled just eight pages. The need to develop recreation plans that were more complex and comprehensive evolved as the United States became more affluent and demands for recreation on public lands increased. Real income in the United States more than doubled from 1959 to 1989 (*1999 Economic Report of the President*, 1999). During this same general time, participation in outdoor recreation activities increased dramatically (Cordell et al., 1999). For example, growth in the number of participants in all forms of camping increased 250% and participants in hiking/backpacking increased 200%.

### Open Space Planning and Preservation in the San Francisco Bay Area

During the same time that state and federal efforts made huge strides in land acquisition for parks and recreation, local efforts were also successful. In 1958, a small group of environmentally minded individuals in the San Francisco Bay Area founded the Citizens for Regional Recreation and Parks (CRRP). The CRRP was created to protect parks and recreation areas in the Bay Area. The group was later renamed the People for Open Space and in 1984 established a parallel group, the Greenbelt Congress, which focused on grassroots organizing to preserve open space areas. In 1987, People for Open Space merged with the Greenbelt Congress and was renamed the Greenbelt Alliance (GBA).

The GBA has been hugely successful in its efforts. It has secured 21 urban growth boundaries throughout the nine-county Bay Area and has established the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District and the Santa Clara County Open Space Authority; both organizations are heavily involved in planning for and managing recreation resources in the San Francisco Bay Area. Currently, the GBA has 20 paid staff and a board of directors. It promotes outdoor recreation through its outings program. The GBA also represents an important resource for public agency recreation planners in the Bay Area, helping mobilize financial, personnel, and political resources for preserving open space areas that provide local recreation opportunities for a large urban population. The group's work has allowed residents of the Bay Area to enjoy recreation opportunities in proximity to their homes for half a century, resulting in major environmental and outdoor recreation benefits.

In the 1950s and 1960s, initial recreation resource planning efforts were focused on land acquisition and infrastructure development. The Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission (ORRRC) was formed in 1960 to meet growing demand for outdoor recreation and served as a catalyst for establishing the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), allowing money derived from a tax on offshore mineral leasing receipts (and two other sources: motorboat fuel taxes and fees for use of federal lands for recreation) to be used in recreation planning. The Land and Water Conservation Act, signed into law in 1964, established a funding source for federal acquisition of park and recreation lands and for matching grants to state and local governments for recreation planning, acquisition, and development. It set requirements for state planning and provided a formula for allocating annual LWCF appropriations to the states and territories. This funding serves as the basis for statewide recreation planning and the preparation of statewide comprehensive outdoor recreation plans (SCORP) throughout the United States and provides local funding for the development of urban parks.

The National Park Service (NPS) launched Mission 66 in 1956, which was an effort to develop national parks in response to a surge in visitation and deteriorating resources. Mission 66 construction involved roads, camping and picnic areas, employee housing, and visitor centers, and every park in the NPS system had one or more construction projects.

USFS efforts to plan for recreation resources began well before the first ORRRC was established. The recreation residences program developed in the 1920s was implemented to encourage public recreation on national forests.

In California, early recreation planning efforts occurred after the State Water Project (SWP) was constructed, with initial work completed in 1957. The Davis-Dolwig Act, enacted in 1961 together with the Burns-Porter Act, provided financing for SWP recreation facilities and for fish and wildlife enhancement projects. The acts declared that these recreation facilities were among the benefits of state water projects, benefit all people of California, and should be paid by them via appropriations from the state's General Fund.

During the 1970s, several legislative acts passed requiring programmatic planning for federal land management agencies. These landmark pieces

of legislation established a basis for integrated resource planning, of which recreation was a major component. In 1974, passage of the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act (RPA) resulted in establishing a process for assessing the condition of forest and range resources, including resources used for outdoor recreation. The RPA directed the Secretary of Agriculture to assess the demand, supply, and condition of forest and range resources in the United States. The first assessment was required to be submitted by 1975, followed by a 5-year update. Thereafter, the national RPA assessment was to be updated every 10 years. This process resulted in the preparation of Land and Resource Management Plans (LRMPs) for most national forests, and these are the documents in which recreation resources are planned for and evaluated. In 1976, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act was passed, providing the BLM with a multiple use planning mandate. This legislation enabled the BLM resource management planning process, serving as the basis for preparing plans that influence how recreation resources are managed and protected on BLM lands. The ROS system was created in the 1970s as a recreation planning tool and was formally implemented by the BLM and USFS in 1979 (Buist & Hoots, 1982). In essence, the 1970s marked a decade of great advances for recreation planning at the federal level.

The 1980s experienced an onslaught of visitor studies, some of which were used to support and further refine concepts in developing the ROS. Another large body of research was focused on recreation carrying capacity (summarized in Manning, 2010). These studies were focused on limiting the effects of growing recreation use on recreation and other natural resources and visitor experiences. One of the first highly visible attempts at defining visitor carrying capacity was conducted for the Grand Canyon Plan, completed in 1978. During the same time, numerous plans were produced for wilderness areas and primitive areas, again focused on limiting the effects of growing visitation on natural resources. For example, the Arizona State Office of BLM completed approximately 20 wilderness management plans from 1988 to 2007.

The decade of the 1990s represented a period of budget shortfalls for parks and recreation programs for many federal agencies. This shortfall was in part replaced by the acquisition of lands through private organizations. During this decade, nonprofit land organizations emerged as a new advocate in recreation resource planning through their actions to protect open space areas (Endicott, 1993). At the national level, entities such as The Trust for Public Land and The Nature Conservancy emerged as major players in recreation resource planning, and at the local level, numerous land trusts and open space agencies were formed.

Finally, from the 1990s to the present, numerous recreation management plans were initiated as part of the hydropower relicensing process, following requirements set by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). Among other needs, these plans responded to a growing need to provide boating recreation opportunities, both motorized and nonmotorized, within the boundaries of FERC hydropower project areas, many of which are adjacent

to USFS, BLM, or NPS lands. Since 1990, the FERC has issued 575 licenses for hydropower projects, and the majority of these have approved recreation management plans (U.S. Department of Energy, 2015).

Over 60 years, planning for recreation resources evolved from a single discipline process, based largely on professional judgment, to an interdisciplinary, research-based, and collaborative process. The best practices of the recreation resource planning process are the subjects in subsequent chapters of this book.

### **1.3 The Inertia of Recreation Resource Planning**

Despite a wealth of benefits described in the next section, many natural resource practitioners are reluctant to engage in recreation resource planning. The reasons for this are several. A primary reason is that resource managers prefer to maintain options. Resource managers want to be able to remain flexible as resource, budget, and political forces change over time. Why write a plan when the next national- or state-level administration may force you to change direction? Why write a plan and make a decision when you are likely to end up in court, only to have your decisions reversed? And why bother with a plan if funding is going to be taken away to address more pressing needs? These are items that weigh heavily on a manager's mind. In a rapidly changing environment, it can be difficult to focus on the future.

Fear of public backlash and litigation sometimes creates planning inertia. During the last several years, the USFS and the BLM have engaged in long-term planning to designate routes for off-highway vehicle (OHV) use. OHV use has been controversial on public lands for many years, but spikes in sales of OHVs in the last decade have elevated manager concerns about OHV use. To many non-OHV enthusiasts, OHV recreation use is often perceived as loud, obnoxious, and damaging to soils and wildlife habitat. An associated problem has been the proliferation of OHV routes that were not planned, constructed, or approved by federal land managers. Since 2004, managers in both agencies have sought to address this long-standing problem through a process of route designation, with a major implication being that some routes have been designated as "closed." In the Pacific Northwest, a popular OHV area has been undergoing a planning process to resolve conflicts between users and local private landowners. BLM managers have been working on a resource management plan amendment for the John's Peak area that would formally designate OHV routes. Many local landowners who purchased property near OHV routes are opposed to OHV use. On the other hand, OHV users find this particular area to be a great place to ride. Clearly, there is controversy about how much OHV use should be allowed in the area. The plan amendment process began in 2005 and requires the completion of an environmental impact statement (EIS). Alternatives for the EIS were initially developed in 2005. In 2009, a draft EIS was completed. However, as of December 2014, a final EIS has not been completed. As a result, decisions about the appropriate level of OHV use continue to be delayed, and the associated problems continue.

Litigation has delayed great strides in recreation resource planning from being made in Yosemite National Park. The Yosemite Valley Plan was more than 15 years in the making; an EIS was prepared with the plan, and a record of decision (ROD) was signed in 2000. It was hailed as an excellent piece of work, and the initial lawsuit ruled in favor of the defendants. However, local environmental groups challenged the plan because it did not go far enough with environmental restoration and resource protection, particularly as it would affect outstandingly remarkable values associated with the Wild and Scenic Merced River. In 2009, the NPS and the plaintiffs signed a Settlement Agreement to address resource protection issues in yet another plan, the Merced River Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP). Following more litigation on the CMP, a final Merced River Comprehensive Plan and EIS were completed in March 2014 (U.S. Department of the Interior, 2014). For 14 years, the issues that both plans intended to address on a large scale were only being addressed incrementally (U.S. Department of the Interior, 2014).

Another reason that natural resource professionals sometimes avoid planning is a belief that it interferes with day-to-day management. Some would say that recreation resource management and those who practice it are crisis oriented. Day-to-day problems (e.g., conducting a search and rescue operation, repairing an unsafe bridge, or suppressing a wildfire) require immediate responses. Many individuals who work in the national or state park planning systems advance to decision-maker positions from law enforcement positions. These individuals are trained in making rapid decisions that involve the health and safety of park visitors.

At the park manager or superintendent level, the same person once required to make split-second decisions in a law enforcement position is now in a position that requires a great deal of patience. Planning, in contrast to day-to-day management, involves setting aside the time to think about issues that are perhaps small but growing problems today. Why focus on the small problems when so many large ones are looming?

Another reason to avoid planning is that some decision makers lack visionary thinking. People are promoted into managerial positions for various reasons, only one of which is vision. Planning requires an ability to conceptualize a “desired future condition,” which may look different than the conditions that exist now. Many resource managers cannot see a landscape that appears radically different than it does today. Many individuals in the natural resources profession in general have been taught to “stay close to the data,” to avoid speculation, and to avoid relying on hunches and intuition. Visionary thinking is also constrained by values, which are highly resistant to change. Many of the senior planners and managers within the recreation resource planning profession began their careers with a highly developed conservation ethic. This ethic guides and perhaps limits professionals’ abilities to envision a different future for recreation resources than what has been the norm during the past 30 years. Recently within California State Parks, there have been conflicting views about the level of commercial services that should be provided within state

park units (P. Smith, personal communication, June 15, 2010). Some planners within the agency view growing commercialization as a threat to what state parks represent (an area where natural and cultural resources are to be protected first and enjoyed second), whereas others see it as an opportunity to meet the needs of a more sophisticated recreation visitor. As will be discussed in later chapters, it is difficult to carry out good recreation planning efforts without a broader vision.

Finally, recreation resource planning can take a long time. Many plans require 2–5 years under the most optimistic conditions and much longer for controversial projects. Planning usually involves multiple iterations of a particular idea or concept. The idea is vetted through the hands of other resource planners, ecologists, archaeologists, engineers, and decision makers. It is shaped by public concerns and desires. It is then transformed by harsh political or budgetary realities. By the time a planning idea or concept becomes reality, it may no longer resemble the original idea generated by the recreation planner. For those interested in immediate gratification, diligently staying the course of action to prepare and implement a plan can be uncertain and frustrating.

## **1.4 Benefits of Recreation Resource Planning**

There are good reasons to face and overcome the challenges and objections cited above and to plan for recreation resources.

### **1.4.1 Protect Natural and Cultural Resources**

Outdoor recreation is dependent on the natural and cultural resources that provide the opportunities. Yet unplanned or poor planning for outdoor recreation resources can affect those natural and cultural resources. Entire textbooks (e.g., Hammitt, Cole, & Monz, 2015) are focused on the effects of recreation on natural resources. Within academic programs on outdoor recreation, there is a separate field of study entitled recreation ecology to analyze the effects of outdoor recreation on natural resources. Indeed, the rationale behind integrated resource planning that defines the recreation planning process is specifically based on the protection of natural and cultural resources.

Plans that consider the sensitivity of natural and cultural resources avoid potential problems, such as inconsistencies with other established plans (e.g., multispecies habitat conservation plans) as well as with national laws, such as the Endangered Species Act and the National Historic Preservation Act. Recreation resource planning done site by site cannot ensure that habitat for a particular species is protected at the population level. Similarly, recreation resource planning done piecemeal cannot ensure that cultural landscapes are protected. Unanticipated consequences of piecemeal recreation planning can result in site and area closures, as evidenced on several national forests in California. One benefit of a program-level approach to recreation resource planning is to ensure that areas important to recreation will continue to remain accessible to the public who use those areas.

### **1.4.2 Build Public Support**

Another benefit of recreation resource planning is to build public support. Recreation users have a stake in where recreation facilities and trails are constructed. Users form strong attachments to recreation resources and will become active to protect them. In addition to effects on users of recreation resources, planners must consider the effects of their efforts on landowners with property near or adjacent to recreation resources. Involving users and stakeholders in the planning process gives them a say in how the resources are planned for and managed. This by itself can build trust and goodwill toward the agency or organization doing the planning. Ultimately, good-faith efforts to involve the public in planning for recreation resources helps avoid lawsuits, which has already been discussed in this chapter.

### **1.4.3 Increase Opportunities for Successful Implementation**

Having a completed general plan allows recreation planners to focus on implementing projects that have been screened for feasibility at a general level. This allows planners to have a greater level of success in implementing projects that meet visitor needs and are sensitive to environmental constraints.

During the 1980s and 1990s, managers of national forests in Southern California noticed a shift in the type of visitor. Greater numbers of ethnically diverse visitors, in particular Latinos, were visiting national forests. These individuals brought with them different expectations and recreation behaviors than did their Anglo counterparts. Following a series of research projects conducted by the USFS Pacific Southwest (PSW) Research Station, managers began considering the preferences and behaviors of Latino visitors in their planning efforts. One such planning effort was for the Applewhite Picnic Area in the San Bernardino National Forest. The site had been subject to safety problems, with too many people parking on the side of the road near the site. In addition, the riparian corridor along Lytle Creek was suffering serious resource degradation during peak use times. The USFS considered the preferences of Latino groups to be close to the water and to conduct their recreation in larger groups relative to their Anglo counterparts. The site was redesigned to move cars off the shoulder of the road and to keep people from damaging the riparian corridor. Shade structures with cooking facilities for large groups were added to the site. Finally, the USFS limited how many people could use the site at one time. When the parking lot is full, the day use area is closed (USFS, 2015). This project was successfully implemented, the result of successful planning based on 10 years of data collection by the PSW Research Station.

Implementation can also be exemplified by the opposite outcome: a failed project. A state agency and federal agency collaborated on the need for an OHV park in the Pacific Northwest on national forest lands. They developed a proposal for the park, sought funding, received funding, and eventually constructed the park, but the resulting use levels were consistently low. Why? The agencies failed to consider adequately the recreation demand for the facility

in the particular location where it was constructed. As a result, the OHV park was created but not well utilized.

#### 1.4.4 Create Predictable Work Flows and Stabilize Management

One product of programmatic planning is often a list of projects that needs to be implemented in the future. This is a typical output of recreation plans prepared for the FERC. These plans typically contain a list of projects, their estimated implementation costs, and a schedule for implementation. For example, the recreation plan for the California Department of Water Resources' Oroville hydropower project in Northern California contains more than 100 individual projects (Table 1.2). Once projects have been scheduled and funds allocated, predictable work flows can be developed. For the Oroville project, employees and consulting staff were added to the list to ensure that project implementation occurred as planned over the next 5 years. Predictable work flows are important to managers in that it becomes easier to staff at appropriate levels and to complete the projects of greatest importance. A predictable work flow is an effective planning tool that allows a manager to match staff and financial resources with projects. Equally important, it allows a manager to provide employees with a sense of stability.

Resource area or site	Proposed actions	Responsible entity	Phasing	Approximate cost
Bidwell Canyon Complex (Boat Ramp/Day Use Area/Marina/Campground)	Expand existing parking capacity at the Marina/Boat Ramp/Day Use Area to include approximately 215 new parking spaces (for vehicles with trailers), of which a minimum of 90 parking spaces will be constructed at the existing location of the Big Pine Loop. Other new parking spaces will be provided at Ramp #2 (resurface the existing gravel lot with concrete at 700 feet msl to provide 80 spaces) and at Ramp #3 (45 spaces at the top of the ramp, with other parking along the ramp).	California Department of Boating and Waterways, California Department of Water Resources	Phase 1	\$9,700,000

*Source:* California Department of Water Resources, 2005.

#### 1.4.5 Prepare a Road Map for You and Your Staff

Planning also helps people understand the greater purposes of their agencies and the departments in which they work. Having a long-range plan creates a sense of shared purpose among employees. It allows employees to reflect on

the reasons they are employed and the reasons they entered their profession. When employees or staff can see the end goal, it can clarify why intermediate steps are being taken. Staff work harder when there is a sense of shared purpose and an end goal toward which they can work. The result is often improved productivity and enhanced employee satisfaction and retention.

#### **1.4.6 Position Your Organization for Funding**

Good planning can better position an organization for funding. Agency budget staff and granting agencies do not simply throw money at projects. Rather, they fund projects that are carefully conceived, respond to particular criteria, and show public benefits. In Region 6 of the USFS, the theme for funding capital investment for trails 1 year was creating urban linkages. Regional office staff desired to link communities to national forest lands via trails. Approximately 100 applications were prepared for capital investment and funding for trails. Most of the applicants did not receive funding because most submitted applications for funding to reconstruct or construct new trails in federally designated wilderness areas. From the perspective of the funding evaluation team, most of these applicants failed to respond to the most basic requirement in the funding process: providing urban linkages; therefore, most trail capital investment projects went unfunded that year. One ranger district did exceptionally well that year. One year earlier, they had prepared a long-range plan for trail development that included trails with urban linkages and trails in wilderness and roadless areas. Ranger district recreation staff obtained the most up-to-date cost information on trail construction, and they packaged their trails plan into a larger comprehensive recreation plan for their area of jurisdiction. They involved local interests in the planning process and invited feedback on the trail projects being considered for implementation. When the capital investment program funding process started, all the district recreation planners had to do was fine-tune some of their urban linkage-type projects before submitting them for funding. These planners were successful because they followed directions during the grant cycle process, and more important, they had done a good deal of preliminary planning well in advance of the capital investment program funding cycle.

#### **1.4.7 Meet Regulatory Requirements**

Another reason to plan is because agency policies and enabling legislation require it. As stated above, most federal and state agencies that provide outdoor recreation opportunities have a required planning process. In the case of water project development, it is essential to follow the required steps (water resource standards and guides) to obtain funding for a project. In the last decade, the BLM has allocated millions of dollars into revising resource management plans; in California, the impetus to do so was based in part on lawsuits concerning the protection of sensitive species and compliance with the Endangered Species Act.

## 1.5 Recreation Planning Principles

This section identifies the principles that underlie effective recreation resource planning. Most established professions operate on principles that provide overall guidance. Increasingly, the profession of recreation resource planning finds itself engaged in lawsuits. Having planning principles helps avoid the legal pitfall of being arbitrary and capricious. Professional principles help to clarify institutional values and perspectives and provide a common understanding and nomenclature for professionals and interested stakeholders.

The Administrative Procedure Act (1946) established the legal standard that administrative decisions must be principled and reasoned; that is, arbitrary and capricious decisions are in violation of law. Professional principles can be submitted as demonstrable evidence in a court of law to refute allegations of being arbitrary and capricious.

As part of its work to advance the outdoor recreation profession, the Society of Outdoor Recreation Professionals (SORP) has developed recreation planning principles. SORP is a 501(c)(3) organization charged with providing national leadership to its members, the profession, and all members of the public who enjoy parks and outdoor recreation settings. The following recreation planning principles reflect important concepts and values subscribed to by SORP. They represent the best judgment of recreation resource planners in senior positions in the profession. The principles are also drawn heavily from the principles of natural resource planning that were first articulated in the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. They serve as a platform from which other principles tier, such as those for visitor management, interpretive planning, facility design, monitoring, and visitor capacity. These principles serve as a guide and rule of thumb for making decisions and taking action, and they help stakeholders to understand better the planning process and the recreation planning profession.

Full and deliberate consideration of these principles will contribute to a systematic, reasoned, and legally sufficient recreation planning process and the development of effective and successful recreation plans.

### 1.5.1 Definition of Recreation Resource Planning

Recreation resource planning is the application of analytical tools to a systematic and deliberate process of decision making for the future management of recreation resources and recreation opportunities. Recreation planning is a rational systematic decision-making process, and as such, it is a fundamental tool that deters human tendencies to make decisions based on predisposition, bias, inadequate analysis, groupthink, insular perspective, resistance to change, and excessive self-confidence. It results in decisions that are more effective, efficient, fair, reasoned, and defensible.

### 1.5.2 Principles for General Precepts

1. **Recreation Resource Planners:** Recreation resource planners should have a university degree in recreation management and planning or in a closely related field, along with competency in facilitation, organizing, leadership, communications, creative problem solving, and critical analysis. The role of a planner is not that of an advocate.
2. **Sound Professional Judgment:** The standard for decision making in recreation planning is sound professional judgment, defined as a reasonable decision for which full and fair consideration has been given to all of the appropriate information, for which the decision is based on principled and reasoned analysis and the best available science and expertise, and for which the decision complies with applicable laws.
3. **A Contract With the Recreating Public:** A recreation plan is a contract with the recreating public and affected stakeholders that transcends any one person or administration and as such should be detailed, be unambiguous, and provide for accountability.
4. **Represent the Public Interest:** Recreation resource planning is a collaborative public process that deters the bias of special interests, political intervention, or incremental unplanned decision making.
5. **Recreation Resources:** Recreation resources are features in a setting that define a person's opportunities, such as the natural and cultural resources, special values attached to an area, facilities, infrastructure, and the management program.
6. **Recreation Opportunities:** Recreation planners plan for recreation opportunities, defined as an occasion for a person to participate in a specific recreation activity in a particular outdoor setting to enjoy a desired recreation experience and gain the healthy benefits that accrue.
7. **Recreation Benefits:** Recreation resource planning should promote the environmental, human, and community wellness benefits that accrue from recreation participation, such as improved physical and mental health, family cohesion, civility, social integration, child development, economic stimulation, work productivity, resource stewardship, and conservation ethic.
8. **Recreation Diversity:** Because there is no "average" recreationist, it is important to plan for and maintain a spectrum of diverse recreation opportunities.
9. **Systems Approach:** Recreation resource planners must consider how their resources fit into a larger regional system, how their potential recreation alternatives may contribute to regional recreation diversity, and how their opportunities can be linked to larger systems.
10. **Recreation Justice:** Recreation resource planning helps to ensure that all people have an opportunity to enjoy the great outdoors without prejudice of race, ethnicity, age, wealth, gender, beliefs, or abilities.

11. Recreation Allocation: Recreation resource planning requires recreation allocation decisions because not all types and amounts of people or activities can be accommodated in a particular setting at one time.
12. Recreation Compatibility: Some recreation uses are not compatible with other uses, and recreation planners have the responsibility to determine what, if any, uses should be permitted and where those activities should be permitted. Strong preferences for specific recreation settings lead to competition for recreation resources among different user types. Conflict is also generated by how each user group perceives the actions and values of others.
13. Recreation Niche: Because not all people can be accommodated in all places, recreation planning helps to focus on the special values and resources of a setting and to define the special niche within the larger spectrum of recreation opportunities.
14. Visitor Capacity: Visitor capacity is the prescribed number, or supply, of available visitor opportunities that will be accommodated at a specific location and specific time.
15. Resource Sustainability: Natural and cultural resources define an outdoor recreation setting, whereas it is fundamental that recreation resource planning and plans address how to integrate recreation use to harmonize with, protect, enhance, and sustain these important resources.
16. Recreation Stewardship: Recreation planning should consider how to best design, manage, and interpret settings to foster public appreciation, understanding, respect, behaviors, and partnerships that contribute to the stewardship of the natural and cultural resources and special values.

### **1.5.3 Principles for the Planning Process**

17. A Process: The specific terms and steps in a recreation planning process often vary across institutions, but all recreation resource planning in some manner includes (a) identification of issues, concerns, opportunities, and threats; (b) establishment of planning and decision criteria; (c) inventory of resources and best available science; (d) formulation of alternatives; (e) evaluation of alternatives; (f) selection of preferred alternative; (g) implementation; and (h) monitoring and adaptation.
18. Legally Sufficient: Recreation resource planning is framed by various local, state, and federal laws and regulations, with the most significant and historic direction provided by the National Environmental Policy Act (1969) and its attendant Council on Environmental Quality regulations.
19. Judicial Doctrine: Good recreation planning is based on the important judicial principles of being principled, reasoned, reasonable, sufficient, full, and fair and on preponderance of the information.
20. Planning Considerations: An adequate recreation resource planning process and plan must address significant public issues, management

concerns, opportunities, and threats identified in the early stages of the planning process.

21. **Planning Inputs:** Recreation resource planning requires the consideration of many inputs, such as an inventory of existing plans and policies, current type and amount of recreation use (supply and demand), recreation trends, public issues, management concerns, regional supply of recreation opportunities, visitor and stakeholder preferences, economic effect of recreation participation, best available science, environmental conditions, and available information from recreation and resource monitoring.
22. **Collaboration:** The meaningful engagement of stakeholders throughout the planning process is essential. Collaboration results in a clearer definition of public values, more-creative alternatives, more-reasoned and reasonable decisions, and a constituency that becomes better informed and committed to the plan and its implementation.
23. **Science-Informed Planning:** It is a legal requirement and a professional imperative to consider duly the best available science and expertise in the planning process and the implementation of the plan.
24. **Comprehensive and Integrated:** Recreation planning should consider other significant natural and cultural resources, uses, demands, and values in an integrated and comprehensive fashion.
25. **Clear Management Alternatives:** Recreation alternatives must be clear, be comprehensive, and provide reasonable choices for public consideration. Each alternative can be contrasted by its proposed objectives, desired future conditions, desired recreation experiences, facilities, management strategies and actions, quality standards, visitor capacities, economic value, and monitoring program.
26. **Rigorous Analysis:** The analytical stage in a planning process is the evaluation of alternatives in which the alternatives are sharply contrasted and the pros and cons are rigorously evaluated so the reasons for and against each alternative become clear.

#### **1.5.4 Principles for the Plan**

27. **The Document:** The effectiveness and utility of a plan are in part functions of its clarity, brevity, layout, and design. Materials used in the planning process should be retained in the administrative record, but the final approved document should be a valuable desktop working document.
28. **Resource Management Prescription:** The output of a recreation resource planning process is a management prescription for an area that includes information such as goals, objectives, desired future conditions, desired recreation experiences, facilities, management strategies and actions, quality standards, visitor capacities, a monitoring program, and budgetary needs.

29. **Budgetary Tool:** An effective recreation plan is a tool to justify budget requests and allocations, guide annual work priorities, and facilitate the scheduling and sequencing of projects.

### 1.5.5 Principles for Implementation

30. **Implementing Partnerships:** The successful implementation of a plan should involve collaboration with stakeholders and government agencies and partnerships and alliances with communities, special interest groups, and the private sector.
31. **Institutional Accountability:** The responsible official charged with implementing the plan should periodically evaluate and report to the public on progress and accomplishments to date, factors affecting the implementation of the plan, and changes pending or made to the approved plan.
32. **Plan Adaptability:** A recreation resource plan should be adaptive to new science, information, uses, technology, trends, conditions, and other circumstances of importance. Proposed changes should be subject to the same level of deliberate analysis and public collaboration as went into the original decision.
33. **Review and Revision:** Given the significant and ongoing changes in society and the recreation industry, it would be reasonable that recreation plans be formally reviewed and updated every 5–10 years.
34. These principles provide a common way of talking about recreation resource planning and are used throughout the remainder of this book. The principles cover a general definition of recreation resource planning, general precepts, the planning process, planning documents, and planning implementation.

## 1.6 Overview of This Book

There is another level of planning that is not the focus of this book: site planning. Site planning addresses developing and locating recreation facilities. Its scale is much finer than the scale associated with programmatic planning. The focus of this book is on programmatic, long-term planning for recreation resources. Excellent texts are available on recreation site planning, such as *Planning Parks for People* by Hultsman, Cottrell, and Hultsman (1998) and *Design for Outdoor Recreation* by Bell (2008).

Chapter 1 deals with the question of the relevancy of recreation resource planning as well as its history and principles. Inertia is associated with planning in many organizations, including recreation resource agencies. This chapter examines reasons that recreation resource planning does not occur or is done poorly. In addition to understanding that planning improves recreation resources, a good recreation planner understands that planning has broad organizational benefits. Planning helps give recreation a role within an organization, enhances legitimacy, provides justification for funding, and demonstrates the “niche”

of recreation resources within the larger context of natural resource–related programs. The chapter closes with an enumeration of the benefits associated with planning.

A good recreation planner understands the big picture of managing natural resources for recreation purposes. Chapter 1 has described the key principles of planning that help the planner focus on the big items and not become too bogged down in minute details. To arrive at a location somewhere far away, people need to know where they are now and what their options are. Taking this big-picture perspective a bit further, a good recreation planner realizes that the information available is not perfect, but may help to arrive at a decision with several caveats attached.

Chapter 2 introduces the traditional master planning process, focusing on having a big-picture perspective, developing a vision, and then generating various ways, or alternatives, to achieve the vision. It also links recreation resource planning to the environmental impact analysis process; increasingly, recreation resource planners are challenged because of the effect that recreation activities may have on other natural resources. For federal agencies, recreation-related plans must include an associated environmental impact document, either an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement, to meet the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act. Additionally, many states (e.g., Montana, Washington, and California) have a state-level environmental impact analysis process. In these states, recreation plans have some connection to these federal and state processes. This chapter also introduces valuable recreation master planning tools that have widespread application and support.

A good recreation planner is comfortable with gathering data and subsequent interpretation. Recreation planners need to be able to process a variety of information: recreation demand data, recreation supply data, facility capacity information, parking lot design criteria, trail alignments, and factors that dictate conditions that are suitable for constructing recreation facilities and programming outdoor recreation activities. The criteria mentioned above represent a “coarse-filter” approach to identifying areas suitable for recreation facilities and activities, but this book does not offer design guidelines or site-specific building criteria.

Chapter 3 is an overview of methods to collect data pertinent to the recreation resource planning process. It discusses methods to collect social, biological, and physical resource data. Chapter 4 focuses on collection and uses of spatial data and provides an overview of geographic information system (GIS) applications for recreation resource planning. Chapter 5 focuses on methods of estimating recreation supply and demand. Chapter 6 addresses collaborative planning and public outreach. One major change that has occurred in recreation resource planning over the last 20–30 years is the transparency with which planning must be conducted. In response to this trend, a robust treatment of the collaboration techniques and methods of public outreach currently in practice is presented.

Chapter 7 describes the alternatives development process. Alternatives analysis can be thought of as the heart of a recreation plan and often the heartache of planners. It identifies methods of developing alternatives in response to project objectives, stakeholder desires, budgets, and political realities. It also presents methods of analyzing alternatives using criteria developed by an interdisciplinary planning team and identify mitigation measures that can reduce alternative impacts on other resources.

Chapter 8 covers the management of the planning process. It was written for those already in a position to lead planning efforts, and some instructors may wish to skip or only briefly dwell on this chapter. Its focus is on project management, with an emphasis on keeping the planning process focused, on schedule, and within budget.

Chapters 9 and 10 focus on the last steps in the master recreation resource planning process. Chapter 9 focuses on how decisions are made to select a preferred alternative. It provides principles for how decisions are made, followed by actual planning decisions. Chapter 10 focuses on plan implementation, what happens after a master recreation resource plan is “completed.” It touches on the beginning of the next phase of planning that is site specific. This chapter is intended as an overview, to give the reader perspective on what follows master planning. It is not intended to provide a comprehensive review of site-specific planning.

The remaining chapters of this book provide a broader perspective on mega issues that can affect the master recreation resource planning process that is practiced on local and regional scales. Chapter 11 touches on international perspectives on recreation resource planning. It provides views of recreation planning with examples from Germany and southeastern Asia. Chapter 12 provides yet another view of recreation resource planning at the state level by describing the process of preparing statewide comprehensive outdoor recreation plans. Chapter 13 briefly mentions emerging issues likely to affect the master recreation resource planning process.

## 1.7 Review Questions

1. Define planning within the context of recreation resource management.
2. Summarize the steps involved in the recreation resource planning process.
3. Explain why completed plans must be viewed as dynamic documents.
4. Describe how different federal agencies approach recreation resource planning. What commonalities do agencies share?
5. Draw a timeline that shows key historic events that have shaped recreation resource planning processes.
6. Describe three reasons why managers may be reluctant to engage in recreation planning.

7. Briefly outline the positive outcomes that may result from careful recreation resource planning.
8. How did recreation planning for the Applewhite Picnic Area simultaneously address threats to natural resources and meet the needs of the public?
9. Why is adherence to professional principles important for recreation planning?
10. Define recreation resource planning.
11. Explain the statement, “The role of a planner is not that of an advocate.”
12. In your own words, describe three principles for the planning process.
13. What is a comprehensive and integrated plan? Specify actions that can be taken to achieve this goal.

### 1.8 Discussion Questions

1. Explain how visionary thinking plays a role in recreation resource planning. Why is visionary thinking necessary? In what ways can it limit managers? Describe how your personal values and background could influence your vision as a manager in developing recreation resource plans.
2. This chapter gives examples about how litigation sometimes acts as a driver for recreation planning, but also sometimes limits progress in plan implementation. Research an example of litigation involving recreation planning, and discuss.
3. Think about a park or other public land that you know well. Imagine you are a manager tasked with developing a recreation plan for this area. What factors should you consider? Discuss specific items pertaining to natural resource protection, public needs, applicable legislation or regulations that may apply, and other issues unique to your chosen area.

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