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## SUMMARY

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Two pilot campsite reservation systems were tested by Federal resource agencies during the summer of 1973: The Ticketron system by the Forest Service in the San Bernardino and Inyo National Forests, and the American Express system by the Park Service in Yosemite and five other National Parks.<sup>1</sup> In order to determine public response to these systems, I mailed more than 2000 questionnaires to survey the attitudes and characteristics of campers who had come into contact with the reservation systems during the latter half of that summer.

This study provides the only information available on camper reaction to campsite reservation systems by both agencies, and should prove essential to the design and implementation of future reservation systems. The limitations of the data must be recognized, however: although the sample response was good (1211 questionnaires), it was divided unequally among different types of campers; the sampling period was short (August 13 to September 9); and the sites studied offered very little opportunity to sample opinions of certain segments of the recreation population (boaters, hunters, water-skiers, and users of off-road vehicles).

Respondents are referred to collectively as "campers" (1211); they are divided between Users (855) who camped in a reservation campground, Cancelers (136) who canceled or disregarded their reservations, Potential Users (200) who camped at nearby nonreservation campgrounds, and Turnaways (20) who were unable to get a campsite in a reservation campground.

The responses on the various items covered in the questionnaires were tabulated and analyzed from several points of view, and results (summarized below) are presented in the order considered most useful, rather than in order of importance. Resource

managers will place varying emphasis on the items discussed, according to the varying problems of the areas they manage. Outstanding, however, are findings pointing to the need for one reservation company to serve all agencies (thereby improving public services and reducing confusion) and to the need for more audience-directed information programs on the reservation system.

1. Campers were generally well-educated professionals or managers who were earning high incomes. Most campers were experienced: 44 percent had been camping over 10 years and 62 percent over 5 years.

2. About 75 percent of campers preferred *one* campsite reservation company to sell reservations for all Federally owned campgrounds. Campers could then make reservations at one time and place regardless of the agency operating the campground, and they could be referred to alternate campgrounds if their first choice was not available.

3. The limited public information programs were not as successful as desired. Only 30 percent of respondents were influenced by radio, television, newspapers, or magazines, and newspapers accounted for over half of this group. By contrast, 41 percent of campers had learned about campsite reservations from friends and 21 percent only when they went camping. Results suggest that managers should identify and use the media most likely to reach campers.

4. Seventy-seven percent of all campers had jobs that allowed them to plan trips more than 3 weeks in advance, and 34 percent could plan more than 12 weeks. Seventy-three percent of Users and 82 percent of Cancelers preferred advance planning. In practice, however, 60 percent of all campers usually planned their trips less than 5 weeks in advance.

5. Eighty-one percent of Users and 76 percent of all campers preferred to make advance reservations to get a campsite. In practice, about 75 percent of Users got sites by making reservations, whereas the remaining 25 percent were successful "drop-ins." Forty-seven percent of Cancelers, against only 17 percent of

<sup>1</sup> Trade names and commercial enterprises or products are mentioned solely for necessary information. No endorsement by the U.S. Department of Agriculture is implied.

Users, had made their reservations by telephone. Thus, increases in telephone services may lead to increases in cancellations or no-shows as a consequence of greater ease in making reservations.

6. The first-come-first-served method of campsite selection was preferred by 39 percent of weekday Forest Service Users and 43 percent of Forest Service Users with recreational vehicles. Forty-four percent of weekday Forest Service Users were successful in obtaining a campsite this way. More retirees, sales persons, and blue collar workers in the Forest Service Users group than in the National Park Users group preferred first-come-first-served campsite selection.

7. Seventy-four percent of Users wanted their first choice of campground and would accept more restricted choice of campsite. Eighty-four percent got their first choice of campground but only 40 percent got their choice of campsite. Of the 181 Users who thought first choice of campsite most important and who did not get their first choice, 52 percent were disappointed with their camping trip. But 61 percent had a good trip despite not getting their choice of

campground or campsite. A small number of write-in responses revealed that campers liked being assured a place to camp, and preferred to pick their own campsite, especially in preference to preassignment by computer.

8. Reservation systems should be used at all campgrounds or at not less than three-quarters of them according to 51 percent of Users and 60 percent of Cancelers.

9. Ninety-four percent of the Users stated they enjoyed their vacation. Some Users of Forest Service campgrounds registered disappointment, possibly because they could not pick their campsite. Sixty-one percent of those Users who had stayed at the same campground both before and after reservations were instituted had a more enjoyable experience with reservations. Eighty-seven percent of Users and most Cancelers were willing to make reservations for future camping trips. Campground characteristics also influenced campers' enjoyment and willingness to accept reservation requirements in the future.

Visitation at campgrounds, winter sports centers, wilderness areas, and other outdoor recreation sites has been increasing during the past decade. As a result, many sites are becoming overcrowded, subject to severe deterioration, and less likely to provide quality recreational experiences. Resource managers are looking for ways to disperse use and even limit use of areas under stress. Reservation systems, referral systems, user fees, and outright user limits are the most common approaches either proposed or in use. Currently, reservation systems are being closely examined for guides to design of future systems.

Although reservation systems offer advantages in greater site protection and reduction of crowding, there are also some disadvantages. Historically, the Forest Service and the National Park Service have told the public that the Forests and Parks are "theirs." Slogans and statements such as these have been used: "Protect and Enjoy Your National Forest Heritage," "The National Forests . . . America's Playground," or "As citizens of the United States, you are Heritage," "The National Forests . . . America's Playground," or "As citizens of the United States, you are a part owner of the Yosemite Valley . . ." Some visitors may doubt the "public" nature of the Forests and Parks when faced with reservation requirements, user fees, and access through commercial reservation companies. In addition, any regimentation and mechanization may prove objectionable to some users; who see them as characteristic of the urban life they are trying to escape. Reservation systems may be very restrictive—even oppressive to people who like to roam, free of time schedules. Reservation systems may place other groups at a competitive disadvantage—those who are unable to schedule their vacations well in advance, and those who live in communities not served by a reservation office.

During the summer of 1973, the Forest Service and the National Park Service tested two different campsite reservation systems in two National Forests and six National Parks. The Forest Service contracted with Ticketron, Incorporated, a company experienced in sports and entertainment reservations and in campsite reservations for the California State Park System, to sell reservations for selected campgrounds

in the Inyo and San Bernardino National Forests. The Park Service contracted with the American Express Company, experienced in hotel and motel reservations, to serve Yosemite and five other National Parks across the country. This paper reports the results of a survey I made by questionnaire to determine campers' response to these reservations systems in California that summer. Data developed by the survey should be useful to the Forest Service and National Park Service in identifying the need for a coordinated reservation system, improving the effectiveness of public information programs, and possibly reducing the number of "no-shows" and cancellations. By assessing preferences for reservations vs. "first-come-first-served" systems, and identifying difficulties users encounter trying to make reservations, the survey may help managers to eliminate sources of discrimination.

The future of campground reservation systems is not easy to predict. American Express ceased to operate its campground reservation system when its contract with the Park Service ended—fortunately after completion of this survey. In 1974, the Park Service contracted with another company, but operational difficulties led to termination of the contract. In 1975, the Service had not contracted with any reservation company, although a few parks were operating noncomputerized reservation systems. In late summer of 1973, Congress enacted Public Law 93-81, which eliminated camping fees for most Federal campgrounds. An increase in no-shows occurred because only the reservation fee was forfeited if the reservation was not used. Consequently, the Forest Service did not renew its contract with Ticketron during the 1974 season. The law was amended by Public Law 93-303 in 1974, but this action came too late for the Forest Service to start its system that year. Ticketron again operated a reservation system for the Service in 1975. Though still a pilot program restricted to 25 campgrounds, it extended to six National Forests. In the further steps that are yet to be taken, in system development, the information gained in this study should be useful to system planners.

## METHODS

### *Reservation Systems*

Both Ticketron and American Express reservations were available directly from ticket offices or by mail from company reservation centers upon payment of the campground fee plus a \$1.50 reservation fee. Offices were linked to a computer center which kept track of reservations and available space so the operator at the ticket office could quickly determine availability and register reservations. American Express took orders by phone as well, but charged \$3.00 for such reservations. Payment had to be received before phone or mail orders were final. For cancellations before the reservation period had started, both companies would refund the campground fee but deduct the reservation fee as well as a \$1.50 cancellation fee.

Though similar, the Ticketron and American Express systems differed in ways that affected the results of this survey. The differences were in the advance reservation procedures and in the deadline imposed. Both companies could have made reservations for more than 90 days in advance, but the Forest Service imposed a 30-day limit on its reservations and the Park Service imposed a 90-day limit. Another limitation in practice was that Ticketron did not accept reservations by mail until late in the season, and even then it received very few.

From the campers' point of view, the major difference in the two systems was the deadline for making reservations. Ticketron orders for any Friday-through-Thursday period had to be placed by the previous Monday. This meant, for example, that a campsite for a trip scheduled to begin on Friday, the 12th, had to be reserved by Monday, the 8th. But if the trip were to begin on Thursday, the 11th, the order had to be placed by Monday, the 1st. This allowed time for the reservations to be mailed to each campground by Thursday and allowed campground personnel to know exactly how much space remained for campers who might drop in without reservations during the following week.

American Express took orders for any day up to midnight of the previous day, sending them electronically to the park headquarters as they were made. This was, of course, more convenient for the camper planning a last-minute trip, but it was a nightmare for campground personnel, who did not know until early morning what the final disposition of their campsites would be for that day. It also meant that the drop-in camper, who had no reservation and could not make

one from the campground itself, would not know from one day to the next how long he could keep his campsite.

### *Questionnaire Sampling*

The questionnaire was designed to elicit a wide variety of information, including campers' opinions about the reservation systems, details of their use of the systems, and characteristics of the campers themselves. Four distinct groups of campers were identified for the purposes of this study:

*Users*—Persons who obtained a campsite at a reservation campground either through the reservation system or as "drop-ins" getting an unreserved campsite.

*Turnaways*—Persons who could not gain entrance to a campground because they had no reservation.

*Cancelers and No-Shows*—Persons who canceled their reservations and persons who neither canceled nor used their reservations.

*Potential Users*—Persons who did not use reservation campgrounds, but who camped in nearby campgrounds.

Because some questions did not apply to all groups, and because responses often differed notably according to group, the results are generally tabulated here for each group separately. "Cancelers" stands for both no-shows and cancelers in the text, and "Users" are identified as Forest Service (FS) or National Park-Yosemite only-(NP) wherever that distinction is important. "Campers" includes all respondents to questionnaires except Turnaways.

Questionnaires were mailed to the registered individual or licensee of more than 2000 camper units. Names had been obtained from American Express terminal print-outs, Ticketron applicant records, cancellation records, or automobile license numbers collected by campground attendants. Two reminders at 3-week intervals produced an eventual 72 percent response, but many of these responses were unusable because their control numbers had been removed or they were for trips taken outside the study period. Fifty-nine percent, or 1211 questionnaires, were usable.

Midway through the summer, Congress passed Public Law 93-81 eliminating camping fees from August 1 through the end of the camping season on most Federal campgrounds including those used for this study. This distorted the reservation picture, because many campers then made a number of reservations, only intending to use one or two. Then, a failure of communications with some company personnel meant that names of National Forest Users were not collected until August 13. To obtain comparable samples from both systems, therefore, I constricted the sampling period from August 13 to September 9. The resulting sample was smaller than that hoped for, but still usable. An additional sample was taken from Yosemite for a 15-day period before August 1 to assess the impact of the camping fee removal.

The sample of Turnaways was smaller than anticipated, perhaps because the shortage of gasoline had decreased the demand for campsites. Although the sample was small and therefore unreliable, the response was similar in pattern to those established for other types of respondents. Decreased demand also necessitated a 100 percent sample of Forest Service campgrounds, whereas at Yosemite, where demand remained high, a random sample of 22 campers per day was taken. Because Ticketron did not keep the names of Cancelers, that category is represented solely by a random sample of seven per day from Yosemite. The Park Service had the only record of Potential Users. They were randomly sampled from

unreserved campgrounds near Yosemite at the rate of five per day. The numbers of respondents for each category were: NP Users—463, FS Users—392, Cancelers—136, Potential Users—200, Turnaways—20.

## ***Data Analysis***

Replies to the questionnaires were analyzed from several points of view. The "Statistical Package for the Social Sciences," (Nie and others 1970) was the computer program used to obtain the cross tabulations for the study. The responses to the questionnaire items were analyzed by categories of users, camping location, and day of the week. In addition, cross tabulations were used to relate the influences of preferences, experiences, or visitor characteristics.

Nonrespondees were not sampled to determine if their failure to respond introduced bias. I examined nonresponse by looking for differences between response waves. The assumption is that if there were no differences between respondents of the first wave and the respondents of follow-up mailings, who were nonrespondents to the first mailing, then there would be no difference between respondents and nonrespondents; that is, second and third wave respondents may be expected to behave like nonrespondents. The wave analysis showed no apparent differences.

Comparison of preferences of Yosemite Users before and after removal of camping fees did not reveal any differences.

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CAMPERS SAMPLED**

The information gathered from the questionnaires gave a general view of camper characteristics. Place of residence, age, occupation, income, and education were recorded for each respondent. No information on other members of each camping party was requested.

A preponderance of Users (95 percent) were Californians—not surprising for campgrounds within a State whose neighbors have low populations and considerable opportunities for wildland recreation. (In contrast, a survey of Indiana campers [Taylor and Knudson 1972] found that out-of-state visitors were 35 percent of the campers, probably because nearby States were densely populated.) Even more lopsided in proportion of Californians were the data from the San Bernardino National Forest, where only one

camper out of 386 surveyed was from out of State, as compared to 41 out of 456 National Park campers (*table 1*). Because most National Forest Users surveyed had camped on the San Bernardino, the distribution of residence within the State was predictable: the great majority (80 percent) were from southern California, only two were from the Bay Area, and the remainder were from widely scattered localities. Yosemite, on the other hand, remote but widely known, drew more equally from both population centers—46 percent from southern California and 32 percent from the Bay Area.

Most respondents were between 25 and 44 years old. Few age differences were found between categories of campers, except that more people under 25 were National Park Users and more people 45 and

Table 1—Residence of campground Users sampled, camping at National Park (NP) or National Forest (FS)

| Residence                                                 | NP Users       | FS Users | All Users |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|----------------|----------|-----------|
|                                                           | <i>Percent</i> |          |           |
| By State:                                                 | (n=456)        | (n=386)  | (n=842)   |
| California                                                | 91.0           | 99.7     | 95.0      |
| Other States                                              | 9.0            | 0.3      | 5.0       |
| Within California:                                        | (n=409)        | (n=379)  | (n=788)   |
| Rural areas and towns less than 10,000                    | 12.2           | 15.8     | 14.0      |
| Cities of 10,000 to 50,000                                | 4.9            | 2.9      | 3.9       |
| Urban areas (over 50,000)                                 |                |          |           |
| Great Valley cities—Sacramento, Fresno, Bakersfield, etc. | 5.1            | 0.5      | 2.9       |
| Los Angeles and Southern California                       | 45.5           | 80.2     | 62.2      |
| San Francisco Bay area                                    | 32.3           | 0.5      | 17.0      |

over were National Forest Users, and that more people in the Potential Users group were under 25 than in the other categories.

The occupation, education, and income data for respondents revealed important differences from the general population. Sixty-two percent of all Users had white-collar occupations: 46 percent as professionals, educators, or technicians; another 15 percent as managers and proprietors. Education and income were in line with occupation: 71 percent of all Users had attended college and 83 percent reported incomes over \$10,000. These levels are obviously well above those recorded in 1972 for Californians generally, and they are even above those reported for Pacific Northwest wilderness users in 1968 (table 2).

The levels of occupation, income, and education of NP Users were notably higher than those of FS Users. Of NP Users, 79 percent had attended college; 36 percent had done graduate work; 53 percent were professionals, educators, or technicians; and 19 percent made more than \$25,000 a year, whereas the corresponding figures for FS Users were only 62 percent (college); 21 percent (graduate work); 39 percent (professionals); and 10 percent (high incomes).

Most of those surveyed had considerable experience camping. Forty-five percent of Users had been camping for more than 10 years, and 61 percent had been camping for more than 5 years, whereas 52 percent had camped at the same campground in

previous years. Potential Users were slightly more experienced (71 percent over 5 years) and Cancelers were slightly less experienced (53 percent over 5 years).

In general, FS Users, Turnaways, and Potential Users took frequent trips of short duration and NP Users and Cancelers took fewer trips of long duration. Similarly, most NP Users made reservations only once, while most FS Users made reservations more than once and a considerable number did so from four to six times:

Table 2—Education and income levels of campground Users sampled, compared with levels reported for other groups (NP, National Park; FS, National Forest)

| Item                    | NP Users       | FS Users | Wilderness Users <sup>1</sup> | California        | U.S.              |
|-------------------------|----------------|----------|-------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
|                         | <i>Percent</i> |          |                               |                   |                   |
| Education:              |                |          |                               |                   |                   |
| College, 4 yr or more   |                |          |                               | <sup>2</sup> 13.4 | <sup>2</sup> 11.0 |
| College, 4 yr or less   | 43.0           | 40.9     | 35.6                          |                   |                   |
| College, more than 4 yr | 36.2           | 20.8     | 28.2                          |                   |                   |
| Income:                 |                |          |                               |                   |                   |
| Less than \$10,000      | 15.2           | 18.7     | —                             | <sup>3</sup> 45.3 | <sup>3</sup> 52.8 |
| \$10,000-25,000         | 66.1           | 71.5     | —                             | 48.6              | 42.6              |
| More than \$25,000      | 18.8           | 9.9      | —                             | 6.1               | 4.6               |

<sup>1</sup>Hendee and others 1968; data for 1965.

<sup>2</sup>U.S. Dep. Commerce 1972; data for 1970.

<sup>3</sup>U.S. Dep. Commerce 1972; data for 1969.

|                 | NP Users       | FS Users | All Users |
|-----------------|----------------|----------|-----------|
|                 | <i>Percent</i> |          |           |
| Times reserved: | (n=458)        | (n=303)  | (n=761)   |
| 1               | 61.8           | 40.9     | 53.5      |
| 2 to 3          | 32.3           | 38.6     | 34.8      |
| 4 to 6          | 5.5            | 16.8     | 10.0      |
| 7 to 12         | 0.4            | 3.3      | 1.6       |
| More than 13    | 0              | 0.3      | 0.1       |

It seems probable that a major reason for this tendency was the distance that NP Users had to travel from major population centers to Yosemite, usually 200 miles or more; most FS Users traveled less than 100 miles.

Nearly two-thirds of all Users camped in groups of three to seven people; there were very few parties of

more than eighteen or less than two people. There was a slight tendency toward large groups among FS Users. Single families comprised 57 percent of Users generally and 64 percent of NP Users. Again, FS Users tended slightly toward multiple-family groups: 42 percent as compared to 24 percent of NP Users.

Campers varied widely in their use of camping equipment. Nearly two-thirds of the FS Users used some kind of recreational vehicle as compared to less than half of the NP Users, and most of the remainder of each type of Users used tents:

|              | <i>NP Users</i> | <i>FS Users</i> | <i>Total Users</i> |
|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------|
|              | <i>Percent</i>  |                 |                    |
| Equipment:   | (n=456)         | (n=382)         | (n=838)            |
| No equipment | 3.7             | 3.7             | 3.7                |
| Tent         | 50.2            | 33.8            | 42.7               |
| Tent trailer | 9.6             | 10.2            | 9.9                |
| Camper       | 16.9            | 24.1            | 20.2               |
| Trailer      | 11.0            | 21.7            | 15.9               |
| Motor home   | 6.6             | 5.5             | 6.1                |
| Other        | 2.0             | 1.0             | 1.6                |

## CAMPER APPRAISAL OF RESERVATION SYSTEM

Responses to questionnaire items on the reservation system and the manner in which campers use it suggested several areas where improvement is needed. These include a systematic procedure for referring campers to vacant campsites, and a more effective information program, with dispersal of information through user-specific media. The questionnaire responses also indicated that although most campers can plan vacations far enough in advance to allow time to use a reservation system, they generally tend to wait until the last few weeks before planning trips.

### *Reservation Sales Systems*

A principal problem of the campsite reservation systems was the impossibility of making reservations at one time and place for campgrounds run by different State and Federal agencies. There was no systematic procedure for referring a potential camper from the fully-reserved campground of one agency to the nearby unreserved campground of another. The public lacked knowledge of alternative campgrounds and was confused about which agencies administered them and which companies sold reservations. The problem was reflected in the desire of many of those surveyed to have one reservation company selling reservations to all campgrounds, regardless of the administrative agency: 30 percent wanted a single company for all Federal campgrounds and another 44 percent wanted reservations to be sold by the company that handles State Park reservations (*table 3*). These two responses are interpreted to mean that 74 percent of the respondents wanted reservations to be sold by one reservation company, especially since only 15 percent stated that they wanted different companies to sell for different agencies.

Table 3—*Camper opinions about who should sell campsite reservations*

| Choices                                    | Users          | Cancelers | Potential Users | All campers |
|--------------------------------------------|----------------|-----------|-----------------|-------------|
|                                            | <i>Percent</i> |           |                 |             |
|                                            | (n=768)        | (n=120)   | (n=181)         | (n=1069)    |
| One company for all Federal agencies       | 27.2           | 31.7      | 39.8            | 29.8        |
| Different companies for different agencies | 15.5           | 16.7      | 11.6            | 15.0        |
| Same company that sells for the State      | 47.7           | 43.3      | 30.4            | 44.2        |
| Other                                      | 9.6            | 8.3       | 18.2            | 10.9        |

However convenient it may be to have one company represent all agencies, it may well be legally impracticable. Because Government contracts are made by bid, more than one reservation company might bid successfully for the separate contracts of the different State and Federal agencies. Nevertheless, some measures need to be taken to insure greater coordination between all agencies and all companies concerned with reservation camping. Perhaps one company could make reservations for another through its own computer terminal—the way most airlines do now. At a minimum, there needs to be some sort of referral service between companies and between agencies.

Differences between respondent groups suggest that Potential Users may have been less familiar with the State's system than campers who had made reservations. The "other" response may indicate a preference for not making reservations—getting campsites

on a first-come-first-served basis, as discussed in a later section.

## Public Information Sources

Both the Forest Service and the Park Service conducted public information campaigns in advance of their pilot reservation programs to acquaint the public with the need for reservations and the procedures for obtaining them. But because the pilot programs were restricted in scope and duration, the information campaigns were also limited.

Even allowing for this limitation, effects were disappointing. Only about a third of all campers had learned of the reservation requirement from the mass media, rather than from friends or from actual camping without reservation (*table 4*). For more than half of this group, the "mass media" was the newspapers. The figures show that more NP Users than FS Users had learned about reservations from the media. Furthermore, more FS Users did not know about the system until they went camping, but about half of the NP Users had learned about reservations from their friends.

These results essentially agree with similar studies. Fazio and Gilbert (1974) found that an intensive information program about wilderness permits reached half a million persons in Colorado, but very few of these were wilderness users. Taylor and Knudson (1972) found that 63 percent of the campers in Indiana State campgrounds relied on friends for information rather than on the State's free and easily obtainable brochures. The Park Service survey (1974) showed 40 percent reliance on friends.

When asked which company was nearest their homes, 57 percent of all Users named Ticketron and less than half this many (26 percent) named American Express (*table 4*). Possible explanations are that Ticketron is familiar to users of the California State Park System and its offices are located in major department stores. American Express sold reservations in its own offices or in Ramada Inns, both of which are more likely to do business with the traveler than with the local resident. Sixty-three percent of the Users and progressively smaller percentages of the Cancelers and Potential Users indicated that offices were located within 10 miles of their homes. As might be expected, both questions revealed considerable ignorance about office locations among those who had not used the systems.

These discouraging results indicate that more extensive information programs and more selective targeting are needed to assure that prospective campers have the best possible opportunity to be well-informed about the existence of a reservation system, the operation of reservation systems and the availability of vacant campsites.

## Advance Planning Requirements

It seemed likely that a reservation system might pose a hardship for campers whose jobs allow vacation planning only 2 or 3 weeks in advance. Short lead times might not allow campers to make reservations at the locations of their choice, especially during periods of peak use. Fortunately, many people can plan vacations in advance: more than three-quarters of all campers can plan more than 2 weeks; a

Table 4—Campers' source of information on the reservation systems, and knowledge of reservation office nearest home, by camper group (NP, National Park; FS, National Forest)

| Item                 | NP Users       | FS Users | All Users | Cancelers | Potential Users | All campers |
|----------------------|----------------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------------|-------------|
|                      | <i>Percent</i> |          |           |           |                 |             |
| Information source:  | (n=444)        | (n=386)  | (n=830)   | (n=131)   | (n=175)         | (n=1136)    |
| Newspapers           | 18.5           | 17.6     | 18.1      | 19.8      | 19.4            | 18.5        |
| Television           | 3.6            | 1.8      | 2.8       | 5.3       | 4.6             | 3.3         |
| Radio                | 2.5            | 1.3      | 1.9       | 1.5       | 5.7             | 2.5         |
| Magazine             | 8.3            | 2.6      | 5.7       | 9.9       | 4.0             | 5.9         |
| Friend               | 49.5           | 36.0     | 43.3      | 43.5      | 30.3            | 41.3        |
| Reservation company  | 10.0           | 4.7      | 7.6       | 12.2      | 4.0             | 7.6         |
| Went camping         | 7.4            | 36.0     | 20.7      | 7.6       | 32.0            | 21.0        |
| Office nearest home: | (n=453)        | (n=388)  | (n=841)   | (n=135)   | (n=198)         | (n=1174)    |
| American Express     | 47.5           | 0.8      | 25.9      | 43.7      | 8.1             | 25.0        |
| Ticketron            | 32.2           | 86.1     | 57.1      | 35.6      | 41.4            | 52.0        |
| Don't Know           | 20.3           | 13.1     | 17.1      | 20.7      | 50.5            | 23.1        |

Table 5—Planning patterns of different groups of campers as indicated by job conditions and by preference

| Item                             | Users   | Cancelers | Potential Users | All campers |
|----------------------------------|---------|-----------|-----------------|-------------|
|                                  | Percent |           |                 |             |
| Planning time available:         | (n=778) | (n=126)   | (n=184)         | (n=1088)    |
| 1 to 2 weeks                     | 14.3    | 7.9       | 15.8            | 13.8        |
| 3 to 5 weeks                     | 18.4    | 15.1      | 16.3            | 17.6        |
| 6 to 8 weeks                     | 12.1    | 15.1      | 12.0            | 12.4        |
| 9 to 12 weeks                    | 13.9    | 13.5      | 9.2             | 13.1        |
| More than 12 weeks               | 33.0    | 42.1      | 31.0            | 33.7        |
| Unemployed or response not clear | 8.4     | 6.4       | 15.7            | 9.4         |
| Preference:                      | (n=786) | (n=126)   | (n=191)         | (n=1103)    |
| Plan ahead                       | 73.4    | 82.5      | 36.1            | 68.0        |
| Find campsites as needed         | 26.6    | 17.5      | 63.9            | 32.0        |

third can plan more than 12 weeks (table 5). Not only did jobs allow people to plan their vacations in advance, but most Users and Cancelers preferred advance planning. Unfortunately, most Potential Users

and Turnaways preferred getting their campsites as they travel, but that could be expected—these groups are most strongly in favor of the first-come-first-served pattern.

Despite their freedom to plan in advance and their professed willingness to do so, a majority of all campers, representing majorities of both Users who like to plan and those who do not, said that they usually planned their trips 5 weeks or less in advance (table 6). Forty-one percent of the FS Users planned only 1 to 2 weeks ahead, and although there is a weak tendency for some NP Users and Cancelers to plan ahead by 9 weeks or more, the majority are usually short-term planners. Thus, most campers could easily use a reservation system because they have the freedom to plan in advance. However, as competition for campsites increases, the proportion who can get reservations will shrink toward the one-third that have jobs that allow advanced planning of more than 12 weeks.

The 4- to 10-day advance planning requirement imposed by Ticketron thus might not present any real problem for the camper. Also, as the public accepts the reservation method, many campgrounds will be filled far ahead of the deadline.

Table 6—Length of time campers usually plan trips in advance

| Plan-ahead time usually taken | NP Users | FS Users | All Users | Cancelers | Potential Users | All Campers |
|-------------------------------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------------|-------------|
|                               | Percent  |          |           |           |                 |             |
|                               | (n=447)  | (n=352)  | (n=799)   | (n=127)   | (n=185)         | (n=1111)    |
| 1 to 2 weeks                  | 21.5     | 41.2     | 30.2      | 26.8      | 29.7            | 29.7        |
| 3 to 5 weeks                  | 32.9     | 28.1     | 30.8      | 27.6      | 31.9            | 30.6        |
| 6 to 8 weeks                  | 17.9     | 15.9     | 17.0      | 21.3      | 15.7            | 17.3        |
| 9 to 12 weeks                 | 11.9     | 5.7      | 9.1       | 14.2      | 3.8             | 8.8         |
| Over 12 weeks                 | 13.2     | 6.0      | 10.0      | 7.0       | 10.3            | 9.8         |
| Response not clear            | 2.7      | 3.1      | 2.9       | 1.6       | 7.6             | 3.5         |

## PREFERENCES OF CAMPERS ON CHOICES OFFERED

Responses to questionnaire items on campers' basic choices revealed that generally, campers wanted to be able to make reservations, but that a minority had a definite preference for a first-come-first-served plan. Also, most users were more concerned with choice of campground than choice of campsite. Finally, a majority of campers wanted most campgrounds placed on reservation, whereas the advocates

of the first-come-first-served plan did not want any campgrounds reserved.

### Reservation vs. First Come—First Served

Answers to several different questions indicated broad public acceptance of the reservation idea.

Campers were asked how they preferred to obtain campsites, and were offered the traditional first-come-first-served method at the campground, among the choices. Four-fifths of all Users and three-quarters of all campers preferred to make reservations—most by going in person to a ticket office, nearly as many by telephoning, and a few by writing (*table 7*). These preferences for reservations, and for phone reservations in particular, were markedly higher among NP Users and Cancelers and lower among Potential Users and FS Users (particularly mid-week FS Users). Overall, these statistics bear out the Park Service study (1974) which showed 86 percent of its Yosemite respondents in favor of reservations.

Replies to other questions indicated that campers generally acted upon their preferences within the limitations of the existing reservation systems. Three-quarters of all Users made reservations (*table 7*). Just less than two-thirds of all reservations were made in person—but it should be remembered that National Forest reservations could not be made by phone and could be made by mail only late in the season. Nearly

half of the Cancelers had used the phone, in keeping with their heavy preference for phones. Possibly the Cancelers who prefer to make reservations by phone are not as fully committed to taking a trip as the Users who make the effort to go to a ticket office. If so, increased phone service may lead to increased cancellations and unused reservations. On the other hand, it is better to have campers cancel, and thereby free campsites for use by drop-in campers, than to have them hold their reservations and leave the sites unused.

Users who preferred first-come-first-served campsite selection were in the minority, but knowledge of some of the characteristics of such campers may prove useful to resource managers. More FS Users, than NP Users (especially weekday campers) preferred this method (*table 7*). Furthermore, 44 percent of the weekday FS Users did obtain campsites without making reservations. On the question of preference for planning campsite locations in advance against finding one each day, FS and NP Users demonstrated occupational differences. Thus, re-

Table 7—Campers' preference for obtaining campsites, and their usual practice in reserving campsites

| Camper category      | Number of respondents |          | First-come-first-served |          | Ticket office reservation |          | Telephone reservation |          | Mail reservation |          | Other (Preference) <sup>1</sup> |
|----------------------|-----------------------|----------|-------------------------|----------|---------------------------|----------|-----------------------|----------|------------------|----------|---------------------------------|
|                      | Preference            | Practice | Preference              | Practice | Preference                | Practice | Preference            | Practice | Preference       | Practice |                                 |
|                      | Percent               |          |                         |          |                           |          |                       |          |                  |          |                                 |
| National Park Users  |                       |          |                         |          |                           |          |                       |          |                  |          |                                 |
| Weekday              | 309                   | 313      | 10.7                    | 16.9     | 36.2                      | 43.8     | 40.5                  | 30.0     | 11.0             | 9.3      | 1.6                             |
| Weekend              | 140                   | 142      | 7.1                     | 18.3     | 38.6                      | 49.3     | 41.4                  | 21.8     | 11.4             | 10.6     | 1.4                             |
| All NP               | 449                   | 455      | 9.6                     | 17.4     | 37.0                      | 45.5     | 40.8                  | 27.5     | 11.1             | 9.7      | 1.5                             |
| Forest Service Users |                       |          |                         |          |                           |          |                       |          |                  |          |                                 |
| Weekday              | 158                   | 151      | 38.6                    | 43.7     | 37.3                      | 47.0     | 18.4                  | 4.0      | 3.8              | 5.3      | 1.9                             |
| Weekend              | 219                   | 218      | 19.6                    | 28.4     | 58.0                      | 63.8     | 20.5                  | 5.5      | 1.8              | 2.3      | 0.0                             |
| All FS               | 377                   | 369      | 27.6                    | 34.7     | 49.3                      | 56.9     | 19.6                  | 4.9      | 2.7              | 3.5      | 0.8                             |
| All Users            | 826                   | 824      | 17.8                    | 25.1     | 42.6                      | 50.6     | 31.1                  | 17.4     | 7.3              | 6.9      | 1.2                             |
| Cancelers            | 131                   | 134      | 13.0                    | 20.1     | 21.4                      | 25.4     | 58.8                  | 47.0     | 4.6              | 7.5      | 2.3                             |
| Potential Users      | 195                   | —        | 49.7                    | —        | 13.3                      | —        | 26.7                  | —        | 7.7              | —        | 2.6                             |
| Users and Cancelers  | —                     | 958      | —                       | 24.4     | —                         | 47.1     | —                     | 21.5     | —                | 7.0      | —                               |
| All campers          | 1152                  | —        | 22.7                    | —        | 35.2                      | —        | 33.5                  | —        | 7.0              | —        | 1.6                             |

<sup>1</sup>No "other" methods were actually available.

Table 8—*Preference of Users for alternate methods of obtaining campsites, according to occupation*

| User group and alternative | Preference by occupation (partial listing) |               |           |            |          |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------|---------------|-----------|------------|----------|
|                            | Retired persons                            | Sales persons | Craftsmen | Operatives | Laborers |
|                            | <i>Percent</i>                             |               |           |            |          |
| National Park Users:       | (n=21)                                     | (n=17)        | (n=46)    | (n= 9)     | (n=18)   |
| Plan in advance            | 86                                         | 82            | 73        | 89         | 89       |
| Find camp enroute          | 14                                         | 18            | 28        | 11         | 11       |
| National Forest Users:     | (n=24)                                     | (n=28)        | (n=57)    | (n=19)     | (n=16)   |
| Plan in advance            | 33                                         | 64            | 54        | 53         | 62       |
| Find camp enroute          | 68                                         | 36            | 46        | 47         | 38       |

tirees, salespeople, and blue-collar workers who preferred “first-served” selections were more likely to be Forest Service Users (table 8). Users whose jobs allowed them to plan only two weeks or less in advance of going on their vacation were not numerous, but 42 percent of such users (n = 123) preferred the “first-served” method, compared to 21 percent (n = 561) who could plan ahead more than two weeks. Among FS Users, 43 percent of those (n = 185) with sophisticated recreational vehicles (camper, trailer, or motor home) preferred getting campsites on a “first-served” basis, in contrast to only 26 percent of those (n = 295) without such equipment. As might have been expected, half of the Potential Users and over three-fifths of the Turnaways preferred the “first-served” campsite selection method, whereas only 18 and 13 percent of the Users and Cancelers preferred this method. Obviously, a segment of the camping public prefers to be independent in obtaining campsites rather than to seek the assurance associated with computerized campsite reservations.

### ***Campground vs. Campsite***

Seventy-four percent of all Users said that getting their first choice of a campground was much more important than getting a particular campsite within a campground. More FS than NP Users did prefer to choose the campsite, however—30 percent against 22 percent. Thirty-nine percent of the FS Users who were “nonplanners” (their jobs did not allow planning more than 5 weeks in advance) preferred to choose the campsite against only 20 percent of the “planners” (their jobs allowed planning of 6 weeks or more).

Eighty-four percent of the Users actually got their choice of campground, whereas only 40 percent got a preferred campsite. The proportion of failure was 67 percent for FS Users against 55 percent for NP Users.

Users varied in their reactions to failure to get their first choice of either campground or campsite. For example, 68 percent of the Users who preferred a choice of campground were not disappointed with their trip just because they did not get their choice. Only a very small percentage of the Users were disappointed with their trip and did not enjoy their stay at the campground as a consequence of not getting their first choice; over 30 percent were disappointed with their trip but still enjoyed their stay; and about twice as many had a good trip and enjoyed their stay.

More of those Users who ranked choice of campsite as most important expressed disappointment than did those who preferred choice of campground; this is understandable because more “campsite” Users than “campground” Users failed to get their choices. However, only 9 percent of the “campground” group and 24 percent of the “campsite” group directly related their disappointment to this cause.

The action taken upon failure to get a choice of campsite or campground was specified by Users, Cancelers, and Turnaways (table 9). Most Users and Cancelers found an alternate campground or another campsite. (An oddity here, probably the result of lack of understanding of the question, is that 63 percent of the Cancelers said they were successful in getting their choice of campsite, even though there was no way they could have determined this if they did not use the reservation.)

Some resource managers were concerned because campers had complained about not being able to pick their campsites. At Yosemite, sites were usually as-

Table 9—Action taken when campers did not get their first choice of either campground or campsite<sup>1</sup>

| Action taken                             | Users   |      | Cancelers | Turnaways |
|------------------------------------------|---------|------|-----------|-----------|
|                                          | NP      | FS   |           |           |
|                                          | Percent |      |           |           |
| Changed starting date                    | 9.3     | 9.8  | 12.1      |           |
| Shortened stay                           | 7.9     | 4.7  | 5.2       |           |
| Changed campground                       | 36.4    | 42.0 | 34.5      |           |
| Changed campsite                         | 35.1    | 34.2 | 34.5      |           |
| Other                                    | 11.3    | 9.2  | 13.8      |           |
| Went to commercial campground            |         |      |           | 28        |
| Camped outside of established campground |         |      |           | 17        |
| Went to                                  |         |      |           |           |
| a State park                             |         |      |           | 17        |
| a NF campground                          |         |      |           | 11        |
| a NP campground                          |         |      |           | 11        |
| Other                                    |         |      |           | 17        |

<sup>1</sup> User sample covers National Parks (NP) or National Forests (FS). Cancelers were sampled only for Yosemite National Park. Turnaways sample was very small—n=20.

signed by attendants although the campers had some choice. Campsites on the San Bernardino National Forest were assigned by computer according to type of camping equipment; the least desirable sites were assigned first. Some adjustments could be made at the campground, however, if space was available and campers requested a substitution. Unfortunately, only about 10 percent of the campers volunteered written comments in response to a specific question on what they liked or disliked about the systems or what they saw as advantages or disadvantages, on the basis of previous experiences at nonreservation campgrounds. Thirteen percent of the Users who did respond disliked not being able to pick their campsite and 9 percent said that was a disadvantage of the system. Nevertheless, over three-quarters of this group were quite willing to make future reservations. Nearly two-thirds of the Users who responded liked being assured of a place to stay, almost half regarded it as an advantage, and nine out of ten in these two groups combined were willing to make campground reservations in the future. It seems likely that campsite assignment by computer or other constraints to free choice are sure to raise some complaints, especially if campers see good campsites going vacant.

Additional responses to more structured questions

suggest a slightly different perspective on campsite selection. Despite the fact that a high percentage of Users did not get their first choice of campsite and a small percentage failed to get their choice of campground, 62 percent of them still enjoyed their trip. On the other hand, 46 percent of the FS Users as compared to 29 percent of the NP Users were disappointed with their trip because they did not get their first choice of campsite or campground. This seems to verify that being assigned a campsite upon arrival at the campground may be more desirable than having one preassigned by computer.

### Proportion of Campgrounds to be Reserved

Camper opinions about how many of the Federally-owned campgrounds should be reserved may be useful for guiding management decisions. More than half of the Users and Cancelers believed that three-quarters or more of the total number of campgrounds should be reserved, whereas Potential Users and Turnaways were strongly in favor of reserving half the number or less (*table 10*). Users in the “prefer to plan” group wanted more of the campgrounds placed on a reservation system than did those in the “prefer finding camps as we go” group:

|                                          | Planners | Nonplanners |
|------------------------------------------|----------|-------------|
|                                          | Percent  |             |
| Proportion of campground to be reserved: | (n=558)  | (n=200)     |
| All                                      | 24.6     | 9.0         |
| Three-quarters                           | 36.9     | 15.0        |
| One-half                                 | 32.6     | 34.0        |
| One-quarter                              | 2.2      | 13.0        |
| None                                     | 3.8      | 29.0        |

The difference between National Park and National Forest Users is shown in *table 10*. In keeping with the previously noted preference of FS weekday Users for first-come-first-served campsite selection, 22 percent of this group said none of the campgrounds should be reserved. In another study, (U.S. National Park Service 1974), 74 percent of the Yosemite respondents thought more than six Parks should be included in the reservation system. My results agree—a majority of campers preferred most of the campgrounds to be reserved.

Table 10—Proportion of total number of campgrounds that should be reserved according to camper group

| Proportion of campgrounds to be reserved | NP Users | FS Users | All Users | Cancelers | Potential Users | All campers |
|------------------------------------------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------------|-------------|
|                                          | Percent  |          |           |           |                 |             |
|                                          | (n=440)  | (n=376)  | (n=816)   | (n=134)   | (n=194)         | (n=1144)    |
| All                                      | 21.1     | 19.7     | 20.5      | 16.4      | 5.7             | 17.5        |
| Three-fourths                            | 37.3     | 23.4     | 30.9      | 44.0      | 9.3             | 28.8        |
| One-half                                 | 33.9     | 33.2     | 33.6      | 29.9      | 42.8            | 34.7        |
| One-quarter                              | 3.0      | 7.4      | 5.0       | 3.7       | 19.6            | 7.3         |
| None                                     | 4.8      | 16.2     | 10.0      | 6.0       | 22.7            | 11.7        |

## ENJOYMENT OF CAMPING EXPERIENCE

The vast majority of reservation Users enjoyed themselves: despite problems with both systems, and complaints by some campers, 94 percent said that they had enjoyable stays (*table 11*). This rate of enjoyment did not vary appreciably from one type of camper to another, though Cancelers and Potential Users had stronger positive feelings than Users, and NP Users had more positive feelings than FS Users. It is likely that the lower degree of enjoyment among FS Users reflects dissatisfaction with campsite assignments, as discussed in an earlier section. Even nine out of ten Turnaways said they had enjoyed their stays. They were apparently accustomed to not being able to get into the campground of their choice, and they were generally successful in finding other campgrounds. In general, Turnaways had not camped at the specific campground before and preferred to find campsites as they traveled. Consequently, their enjoyment does not seem to have been affected by the reservation systems.

A helpful response came from 258 campers who had stayed at the *same* campground before and after reservations were instituted: 61 percent said their experience was more enjoyable with reservations than

without; and only 14 percent felt it was less enjoyable (*table 12*). (It should be noted, however, that 21 percent of the FS Users regarded their stay as less enjoyable, against only 6 percent of the NP Users.) Similar results were obtained from those who had stayed at a campground without reservations and then at a different campground with reservations, but the patterns did not vary by agency.

As might have been expected, campers' willingness to make reservations in the future corresponded to their enjoyment (*table 13*). Most Users and Cancelers, but only about half of the Potential Users and Turnaways were willing to make future reservations. On the other hand, the "unwilling" group (28 percent, Potential Users; 25 percent, Turnaways; 12 percent, FS Users) agrees in proportions with the group who prefer to obtain campsites on a first-come-first-served basis.

But enjoyment and willingness to make future reservations should not be attributed solely to success with the reservation systems. Campground characteristics may also contribute to visitor enjoyment and possibly to future acceptance of the systems. More than nine out of ten Users enjoyed their stay and

Table 11—Enjoyment of camping trip by different groups of campers

| Response to "The trip was enjoyable" | National Park Users | National Forest Users | All Users | Cancelers | Potential Users | All campers |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------------|-------------|
|                                      | Percent             |                       |           |           |                 |             |
|                                      | (n=453)             | (n=361)               | (n=814)   | (n=71)    | (n=192)         | (n=1077)    |
| Strongly agree                       | 58.9                | 49.0                  | 54.5      | 64.8      | 67.2            | 57.5        |
| Agree                                | 36.4                | 42.7                  | 39.2      | 26.8      | 28.6            | 36.5        |
| Neutral                              | 3.3                 | 4.2                   | 3.7       | 4.2       | 1.6             | 3.3         |
| Disagree                             | 0.9                 | 2.2                   | 1.5       | 1.4       | 2.1             | 1.6         |
| Strongly disagree                    | 0.4                 | 1.9                   | 1.1       | 2.8       | 0.5             | 1.1         |

Table 12—User evaluation of enjoyment of camping under reservation system as compared to other camping experience

| Evaluation of reservation camping experience | National Park Users | National Forest Users | All Users |
|----------------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------|
|                                              | Percent             |                       |           |
|                                              | (n=128)             | (n=130)               | (n=258)   |
| Same campground:                             |                     |                       |           |
| More satisfying                              | 67.2                | 55.4                  | 61.2      |
| No difference                                | 26.6                | 23.8                  | 25.2      |
| Less satisfying                              | 6.3                 | 20.8                  | 13.6      |
|                                              | (n=139)             | (n=86)                | (n=255)   |
| Different campground:                        |                     |                       |           |
| More satisfying                              | 66.7                | 67.4                  | 67.1      |
| No difference                                | 23.0                | 24.4                  | 23.6      |
| Less satisfying                              | 10.1                | 8.1                   | 9.3       |

Table 13—Campers' attitudes toward making future reservations

| Attitude toward making future reservations | Users   | Cancelers | Potential Users | All campers |
|--------------------------------------------|---------|-----------|-----------------|-------------|
|                                            | Percent |           |                 |             |
|                                            | (n=828) | (n=134)   | (n=196)         | (n=1158)    |
| Very willing                               | 58.6    | 63.4      | 22.4            | 53.0        |
| Willing                                    | 28.1    | 27.6      | 33.7            | 29.0        |
| Neutral                                    | 5.8     | 3.0       | 15.3            | 7.1         |
| Unwilling                                  | 4.3     | 4.5       | 16.8            | 6.5         |
| Very unwilling                             | 3.1     | 1.5       | 11.7            | 4.4         |

thought campground conditions, programs, and employee attitudes were good, and a large majority of them enjoyed their stay even though they had complaints about campground facilities or programs. Some (13 percent) of those who complained about cleanliness, and some (12 percent) of those who complained about the employees or about the poor quality of naturalist programs also said they had not enjoyed their stay. And, a small number (5 percent or less) also complained about crowding, traffic, facility conditions, and the frequency of naturalist programs. This combination of complaints with lack of enjoyment suggests that campground characteristics may negatively influence visitor satisfaction and willing-

ness to make future reservations.

To resource managers, some differences between NP and FS Users might suggest where programs need to be strengthened with regard to crowding, naturalist program quality and frequency, campground cleanliness, and employee behavior. The difference between FS Users and NP Users as to crowding (*table 14*) is not surprising; crowding has been a problem at Yosemite for some time. The National Park Service's greater experience with naturalist programs was evident from the 71 percent of its Users who thought program quality was high whereas only 47 percent of the FS Users held that view (*table 14*). Furthermore, 43 percent of the FS Users thought more naturalist programs should be offered at Forest Service campgrounds. Campground cleanliness may be a problem on the National Forests, as suggested by a relatively small number of complaints. Nineteen percent of the FS Users who did not enjoy their stay complained about cleanliness; an additional 12 percent complained about cleanliness but not about their stay. Finally, a small number of Users (11 percent NP and 14 percent FS) who did not enjoy their stay complained about the behavior of employees. Although some of the samples were small, the data suggest that managers should explore possible need for improvement in the areas mentioned.

Table 14—Comparison by agency of evaluations of crowding and naturalist program quality and quantity by Users who enjoyed their stay

| Item               | National Park Users | National Forest Users |
|--------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Crowding:          | (n=431)             | (n=328)               |
| Crowded            | 30                  | 24                    |
| Neutral            | 22                  | 14                    |
| Not crowded        | 48                  | 62                    |
| Program quality:   | (n=413)             | (n=280)               |
| Good               | 71                  | 47                    |
| Neutral            | 27                  | 45                    |
| Poor               | 2                   | 8                     |
| Program frequency: | (n=408)             | (n=299)               |
| Enough             | 35                  | 16                    |
| Neutral            | 42                  | 41                    |
| Not enough         | 23                  | 43                    |

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Magill, Arthur W.

1976. *Campsite reservation systems ... the camper's viewpoint*. USDA Forest Serv. Res. Paper PSW-121, 15 p. Pacific Southwest Forest and Range Exp. Stn., Berkeley, Calif.

Attitudes and characteristics of campers reached by two Federal campsite reservation programs in experimental use during the summer of 1973 were surveyed. Most campers strongly favored reservations, but preferred that one company sell reservations to all government campgrounds. Questionnaire responses indicated need for a systematic procedure for referring campers to vacant campsites, along with a more effective program of information on the reservation systems. A majority of campers were satisfied to get their first choice of campground, but a few also wanted freedom to choose their campsite. The typical camper was a well-educated, high-income professional or manager, with considerable camping experience. His job allowed him to plan his camping trips in advance and he preferred to do so, though often he planned less than 5 weeks ahead.

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