

Tom Wade

Subject: Executive Summary May 2003 Recreation Visits

Hi PIO & Others,  
Below is a status of public use - recreation visits - to  
the NPS from  
January thru May 2003.  
It is also attached in Word.

I hope it is useful.

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Public Use - Recreation Visits

January to May 2003

The National Park Service received 89.9 million recreation visits from January-May 2003\*. The -7.7% decrease in public use was - 7.0 million fewer visits than in 2002. This decrease was not concentrated in any geographic area but reflect a system wide decrease in visitation. The situation as described in the April report has not changed other than the negative numbers are getting larger.

73% of the units (units) reported a decrease in visitation through the first five months of the year. The East coast had severe weather in February resulting in a system decrease of -2.1 million. The War in Iraq in March distracted Americans from visiting the parks, leading to a one-month decrease of over -1.6 million visits. April continued the downward trend with -1.3 million fewer visits while May had -1.9 million fewer visits.

Blue Ridge PKWY and George Washington Mem PKWY have received a combined

-2.5 million fewer visits thru May. The District of Columbia is off by -1.9 million visits with 14 of the 17 units reporting a decrease in visitation. Virginia had 15 out of 17 units report a decrease (-1.8 million combined). Eleven of the 13 units in Massachusetts reported a decrease (-.4 million combined). Thirteen of the 14 units in Pennsylvania have reported a decrease in visitation (-.3 million combined).

Cape Hatteras NS (+214,000 YTD), Gulf Islands NS (+187,000 YTD) and San Francisco Maritime NHP (+245,000 YTD) are the fastest growing units of the NPS. These three units have only a combined +0.6 million more visits than last year at this time.

The downward trend that began in 2000 is continuing as inclement weather, global warfare, and especially the uncertain economic conditions are resulting in a disturbing future for visitation to the NPS. The NPS has had a total decline of almost 16.8 million recreation visits since January 2000.

Year Visitation Change  
1999 287.1 million  
2000 285.9 -1.2 million  
2001 279.8 -6.1  
2002 277.3 -2.5  
2003 89.9 (thru May) -7.0

\* Preliminary Data: Data are adjusted for delinquent reports and comparisons are made against the same time period in 2002.

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73% of the units (252 units) reported a decrease in visitation through the first five months of the year. The East coast had severe weather in February resulting in a system decrease of -2.1 million. The War in Iraq in March distracted Americans from visiting the parks, leading to a one-month decrease of over -1.6 million visits. April continued the downward trend with -1.3 million fewer visits while May had -1.9 million fewer visits.

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