Human Conflicts in Recreation Settings
Illegal Camps…

…Trash
Due to increased pressures by a diversity of recreationists on limited natural resources, conflicts are inevitable in the wilderness;

People come to wilderness with differing expectations about their recreation activities, the wilderness resource, personal involvement in the activity or place, mode of perceiving or experiencing the wilderness, status-consciousness, and tolerance for other lifestyles.
• Understanding conflict becomes very important in the effort to provide quality recreation experiences;
Outdoor recreation in natural settings primarily involves the use of public lands that are open to everyone;

An inevitable consequence is the interaction of persons from varying backgrounds who bring with them differing recreational agendas, and who may not particularly get along with one another;
While this is not a particularly profound revelation, it has substantial implications for recreation resource management and planning;

The more diverse the subcultures that compose this nation, the greater the likelihood that people in public recreation settings will behave in ways that will result in conflict situations;
While diversity in values and preferences among people who use the recreation resource is not a new phenomena, the diversity of public demands for outdoor recreation opportunities has dramatically increased, increasing clashes among groups seeking their own distinctive opportunities.
Managing recreation for optimal use while minimizing conflicts between recreation groups requires:

- the manager understands the needs, goals, desires of those who share that environment; and
- where conflicts occur within and between groups of recreation users.
• Not an easy task with evolving clients and a shrinking resource base.

• But in order to manage for multiple use, managers must first understand the nature of conflict.
**Recreation Conflict**

- A recreation conflict is defined as *goal interference* attributed to another person’s behavior.
- Recreation conflicts can be either direct or indirect:
  - direct between a hiker and a horseback rider meeting on the trail; or
  - indirect when a hiker walks through a wet area that has been widened and deepened by a horse.
Conflict can occur when visitors see evidence of legitimate management activities that contrast with their expectations such as grazing or mining.

Conflict is not merely a function of the fact that some people just can't get along but that they interfere with each others goals to attain a desired experience.
Four Broad Types of Recreation Conflicts

• **Outdoor recreation vs. other resource uses**
  - (fisherman on the Au Sable River and military maneuvers; or
  - private development and adjacent public lands (Ventana Canyon resort)

• **Outdoor recreationists vs. resource managers**
  - blaming the resource managers for anything that does not satisfy visitors (perceived differences between resource managers and visitors)

• **ORV recreationists vs. resource managers**
  - Commercial Outfitters vs resource managers
• Interactivity Conflicts

• conflicts between users in different types of activities (fisherman and canoeists, wilderness users, various types of trail users, humans and wildlife etc.)
• Intra-Activity Conflicts

• persons who participate in the same activity may frequently come into conflict with one another (differences in behaviors and styles of participation within a recreation activity)

• hunters - local vs out of state
• picnickers - families vs large social groups
• campers - loud music lovers vs. no music
• Little is known about the nature of conflict in recreation settings;
• There is still a clear lack of explicit theoretical foundation for understanding conflict in recreational setting;
• The dynamics of conflict in recreation are based primarily on speculation, drawing from literature on conflict in other disciplines.

• Work to date has focused on measuring encounter levels between visitors.

• In actuality, very little is known about these encounters over time.
• There is a need for more systematic inquiry into explaining the nature of conflict in recreation settings so as to protect visitor experiences and the setting they visit;
Conflict Issues for Discussion

• Is it possible to assess all recreation users goals or ideals and use them in planning for their expectations?
• Are Intensity and Duration important attributes of Conflict?
• Is current management of public lands more within private than public decision making?
• How do you feel about publicly driven management strategies or prescriptions?
• Can we prioritize the most perilous of conflicts that are perhaps the most critical to resolve and that effect natural resource management policy nation wide?
• Without expectations there is little potential for conflict. Is this true?