

Recreational User Conflict Resolution Principles

Increasing recreational use on state forests is having a greater impact on the forest's resources and ecosystems. With the influx of more individuals and groups in pursuit of their recreational activities, it becomes vital for the bureau to develop and implement management strategies to provide a quality outdoor experience, minimize user conflicts, and maintain the natural ecology.

Conflicts occur among different user groups, among users within the same group, and as a result of factors not related to the trail user activities at all. Conflict has been found to relate to **activity style, focus of trip, expectations, attitudes toward and perceptions of the environment, level of tolerance for others, and different norms held by different users**. Other conflicts include conflicts between trail users and animals or managers and trail proponents versus private landowners. Conflict in outdoor recreation settings can best be defined as **“goal interference attributed to another’s behavior”**.

The following 12 principles for minimizing recreational user conflicts should be followed:

1. **Recognize conflict as goal interference**
 - a. Respect for other users
 - b. Attributed to another’s behavior
 - c. Share the trail - universal yield symbol
2. **Provide adequate trail opportunities**
 - a. Opportunities for a variety of uses & experiences
 - b. Management for controlling use – access at designated areas
 - c. Retain environmentally sensitive areas
 - d. Common markings
3. **Involve users as early as possible**
 - a. Identify existing and future users
 - b. Engage users early in the planning process for existing & proposed activities
 - c. Involve users in the education, maintenance, and stewardship
4. **Minimize the number of contacts in problem areas**
 - a. Design & manage the facility with trail/road networks by forming linkages to outdoor recreational pursuits and natural features, as a sustainable trail system meeting all needs
 - b. Plan for the uses early in the design phase & process; design with maintenance in mind
 - c. Develop loop trails to link people to key areas
5. **Understand user needs**
 - a. Provide adequate customer information; keep users informed of closures, maintenance projects, hazards, events, workshops
 - b. Use conflict as an opportunity to build and strengthen constituencies
6. **Identify the actual source of the conflict**
 - a. Identify where the problem exists – get to the root of the problem
 - b. Higher demand for recreation opportunities, requires consistent management and monitoring
7. **Work with affected users**
 - a. Work with users to reach agreeable solutions
 - b. Involve affected users early if conflict arises for specific issues

8. Promote trail etiquette

- a. Sponsor responsible trail behavior using educational materials, signage, and workshops
- b. Disperse etiquette brochures and literature to outfitters, retailers, user groups – a good marketing tool; shared stewards

9. Encourage positive interaction among different users

- a. All user groups come together to host joint meetings, workshops, and clinics
- b. Build and strengthen an understanding and cooperative effort among user groups

10. Monitor progress and get feedback

- a. Monitor effectiveness of decisions made and see if conflicts are reduced
- b. Have a clear understanding of agreed upon objectives
- c. Receive feedback from users, rangers, and others

11. Respect for the natural resources and the environment

- a. Instill a high quality land ethic & sense of stewardship
- b. Practice a Carry-in, Carry-out policy – users are responsible to pack everything out especially cigarette butts, shotgun shells, anything that impacts the environment
- c. Follow Leave No Trace ethics – especially for camping

12. Consistent management of Bureau of Forestry Lands

- a. Balance the recreational needs with the environmental needs; is this the appropriate use for the land
- b. Design with maintenance and conflicts in mind
- c. Each district should have consistent trail etiquette, markings, conflict resolution strategies, and educational literature
- d. Work with adjacent landowners on shared use of rules and etiquette

Keys to Success

- Communication of events & activities – calendar of events posted on the website; information dispersed especially at trailheads, retailers, local shops and stores
- Educational sessions and presentations on standardized user etiquette; also includes specific user groups commercial outfitters, volunteers, users groups. On-the-trail demonstrations of how trail users interact with one another, understand each other's expectations and behaviors

