

CENTRAL WASATCH COMMISSION STAKEHOLDERS COUNCIL
Visitor Capacity Committee
Propose the 4th Wednesday of Every Month
August 28, 2019, 4:00PM
Location TBA

Members:

Purpose:

The purpose of the CWC Stakeholders Committee on visitor capacity is to provide input and direction on issues facing the Wasatch Front Canyons, related to the scope of information needed:

- a. Current and ideal temporal and spatial distributions of recreational visitor use (geographic region, user types/groups roadway versus backcountry)
- b. Identify and fully describe any issues and/or trends in conditions that are emerging and would influence visitor use management and visitor capacity identification;
 - a. Visitor capacity across specific areas within each canyon; and,
 - b. Pressure areas for addressing conditions - social, ecological, and physical inputs.

The results of this sub-committee will culminate in recommendations surrounding next steps regarding information needs for managers and associated decisions-makers to assist in the management of each Canyon prescriptively for different physical, ecological, and social conditions, and to assist in planning for and to achieve an ideal transportation system, increase recreation quality, appropriately distribution of recreation use, and to plan for increased recreational visitation while preserving ideal conditions.

Definitions Overview:

Basic Guidelines in Addressing Visitor Capacity

1. **Determine the analysis area(s).** (e.g., Is it necessary to identify visitor capacity for an entire canyon corridor—a large area that contains multiple access points and multiple different activities—or a specific feature or destination point?). In certain circumstances, there may be a need to develop an overall visitor capacity that is some combination of the individual analysis areas.
2. **Review existing direction and knowledge.** Review desired conditions and indicators and thresholds, and pay particular attention to conditions and values that must be protected and are most related to use levels. Also, review management strategies and actions from the framework. Are there lessons learned from comparable areas where desired conditions, indicators, thresholds, and management strategies are similar?

3. **Identify the limiting attribute(s).** Identify the attribute(s) that most constrains the analysis area's ability to accommodate visitor use. The limiting or constraining attribute(s) may vary across the analysis area.
4. **Identify capacity.** Use monitoring data, research, lessons learned from comparable areas, and professional judgment to identify a capacity based on desired conditions and the limiting attribute.

Visitor Capacity is a component of visitor use management and is the maximum amounts and types of visitor use that an area can accommodate while achieving and maintaining desired resource conditions and visitor experiences that are consistent with the purposes for which the area was established (Interagency Visitor Use Management Council, 2019, p. 3).

Visitor capacity is....

- A management tool and, in some cases, a legal requirement.
- A number.
- Based on desired conditions.
- A necessary precursor to making allocation decisions.
- Based on a variety of inputs.

Visitor capacity is not...

- An isolated decision.
- Equivalent to visitor use management.

There is no single formula for allocating visitor capacity. Rather, allocations should be based on local conditions, agency guidance, desired conditions, and professional judgment. Allocation decisions are best supported by understanding the desires and use patterns of stakeholders and collecting monitoring data needed to determine how and to what extent different categories of uses can occur while achieving and maintaining desired conditions. This includes considering how certain types of uses best achieve desired conditions. For example, commercial services may help facilitate visitor access for visitors who may not have the skills and abilities to otherwise access an area. Also, certain types of uses may cause particular types of social or resource impacts, which may influence allocation decisions.

When to implement a visitor capacity?

- Managers should identify and implement a visitor capacity when the amounts and types of visitor use directly relate to achieving and maintaining desired conditions.
- Managers must identify and implement a visitor capacity when legally required (i.e., the project involves a wild and scenic river, national trail, or national park system unit, where visitor capacity is legally required).
- Decisions on visitor capacity should be based on the desired conditions of a specific area and should be directed by pertinent laws and agency policies.

- For instance, a desired condition in a high-demand backcountry area may be to protect solitude. However, with increasing use levels, visitors may experience a loss of opportunities for solitude. Identifying a visitor capacity and associated management strategies may help ensure opportunities for solitude are preserved. In this instance, visitor capacity is an important tool for achieving and maintaining the desired condition.

Considering the scope of analysis. In which area(s), geographically, will visitor capacity be implemented, and why?

- What notable developments in planning direction and information have occurred since determining the analysis area? Do any new developments influence the visitor capacity analysis area?
- Do new management tools that can achieve and maintain desired conditions influence the original analysis area?
- Has the limiting attribute(s) become more clearly defined and, therefore, may it affect the scope of the analysis area?

Desired conditions are defined as statements of aspiration that describe resource conditions, visitor experiences and opportunities, and facilities and services that an agency strives to achieve and maintain in a particular area. Desired conditions describe what conditions, outcomes, and opportunities are to be achieved and maintained in the future, not necessarily what exists today. Descriptions of desired conditions paint a picture of what the particular area will look like, feel like, sound like, and function like in the future (IVUMC, 2019, p. 3)

Management strategies are general approaches of addressing visitor use management issues, while actions are specific ways of implementing management strategies (IVUMC, 2019, p. 10)