Visitor Services Project
Great Falls Park, Virginia
Report Summary

- This report describes part of the results of a visitor study at Great Falls Park, Virginia during April 28 - May 4, 1996. A total of 585 questionnaires were distributed. Visitors returned 443 questionnaires for a 76% response rate.

- This report profiles Great Falls Park, Virginia visitors. A separate appendix has visitors' comments about their visit; this report and the appendix contain a comment summary.

- Thirty-four percent of the visitors were in groups with friends; 31% were with families. Thirty-eight percent of Great Falls Park, Virginia visitors were in groups of two. Over half of the visitors (51%) were aged 21-40 and 11% were aged 15 years or younger.

- Among Great Falls Park, Virginia visitors, 6% were international visitors. Over one-third of those visitors (38%) were from England and 16% were from Germany. United States visitors were from Virginia (60%), Maryland (12%), Washington, D.C. (10%) and 33 other states.

- On this visit, visitors' most common activities viewing the falls (73%), walking/hiking (56%) and viewing wildlife (41%). On past visits, visitors' most common activities were viewing the falls (88%), walking/hiking (75%), visiting Patowmack Canal (56%) and viewing wildlife (50%).

- About one-third of the visitors were visiting Great Falls Park, Virginia for the first time (34%). Another one-third of the visitors (33%) had visited ten or more times. Seventy-four percent of visitors stayed for two to four hours in the park on this visit.

- The primary reason which brought visitors to the park was to view the falls (29%). Other visitors identified walking/hiking (20%), bicycling (12%) and white water boating (8%) as their primary reason for visiting.

- When asked what information sources they used to learn about river safety hazards, 96% of the visitors said park signs. Fifty-one percent of visitors said they used park bulletin boards. The least used source to learn about river safety was radio (19%). The information sources which received the highest "very effective" to "extremely effective" ratings were park signs, park bulletin boards, park personnel and park brochures.

- The most used visitor services were the park brochure/map (64%), trail map (52%) and visitor center exhibits (42%). According to visitors, the most important services were the trail map (73%), park brochure/map (67%) and park staff assistance (61%). The best quality services were park staff assistance (87%), visitor center information desk (87%), park brochure/map (86%) and visitor center exhibits (85%). The services with the highest "very poor" quality rating was the trail map (2%)

- The most used visitor facilities were parking (79%), trails (69%), overlooks (66%) and restrooms (65%). According to visitors, the most important services were parking (96%), trails (93%) and restrooms (90%). The service receiving the highest proportion of "not important" ratings was the snack bar (8%). The best quality services were parking (87%), trails (82%) and picnic area (80%). The services with the highest "very poor" quality rating was the snack bar (6%)

- Most visitors (93%) rated the overall quality of services in Great Falls Park, Virginia as "good" or "very good." Visitors made many additional comments.

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