

## SUGGESTED POLICY ON VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

*This statement is the second of three (see also GUIDELINE, Policy & Plng. 21 and 23) presented by the Committee on Standards, National Conference on State Parks, adopted by the Board of Directors on September 20, 1959, and published in the December issue of PLANNING AND CIVIC COMMENT.*

The vegetation in state parks is an integral part of the park scene. In many it is the dominant feature of the area. In many it provides the framework or setting for those significant values that give purpose and meaning to the park.

A reasoned and sound policy of vegetation management is of primary concern in state park administration. Such a policy should include the entire flora and should not be restricted to generally recognized forestry or forest practices. The term vegetation management, as used here, is broadly defined as the manner in which the vegetation within the areas is protected, maintained, developed or used to provide suitable environments in keeping with the purpose for which the areas were established. It would logically include treatment of the entire floral community from lesser plants to shrubs and tree species. It would involve determination as to the extent to which plant life should be preserved in a natural condition and also what growth should be encouraged or developed and what should be restricted or removed and under what circumstances or for what purposes. It would recognize that true primeval characteristics are found in relatively few of the parks and that management of the vegetation should be directed generally to fostering a return to a natural character to the degree required under the basic purpose for which the areas are established.

Suggested policies here are, of necessity, broad in concept and some modification in application must be expected to cover the variety of areas and circumstances found within the state park system. These are intended rather as guide lines for the development of specific practices within the areas.

However, uncontrolled or wild fire is the greatest menace to the significant values in all state park areas. It seriously damages the beauty of the parks and may destroy valuable property and endanger human life. There can be no compromise in the basic policy of positive prevention and immediate suppression of all wild fires whenever and wherever they occur.

The state park system logically falls into two broad classes or types of areas in regard to vegetation and its significance within the areas. The natural areas of scenic or scientific interest in most cases include vegetation of great importance. These areas were set aside primarily to preserve them in a natural condition for public enjoyment and education. Developments are restrained and visitor use controlled to prevent de-

struction of the values to be preserved.

It would seem logical here to adopt a broad policy of preservation of the natural state insofar as this is reasonable and practical and still permit use and enjoyment. Some defined exceptions will be necessary and desirable. The developed or use areas within these parks will require vegetation management somewhat parallel to that applied generally within the second broad group, but exceptions to the broad policy should be rigidly restrained in the natural areas of the scenic type parks.

In the second class of areas, including the historical parks, developed type recreation areas, waysides and some beach parks, vegetation is of importance but may be of less significance. Here the vegetation must be managed and maintained in such manner as to furnish a suitable and safe environment in keeping with their fundamental purpose. Undisturbed naturalness is not necessarily prerequisite, in fact may detract from the basic purpose.

All of the state parks, regardless of the reason for their establishment contain one or both of the following vegetation zones:

**1. The Highly Developed or Use Area Zone.** This zone includes the land area immediately occupied by or influenced by the roads, trails, buildings or facilities provided for administration, maintenance, use and enjoyment of the area. This zone should be reasonably well defined and the vegetation here should be recognized as supplement but subordinate to the facilities-managed in such a way that a maximum of protection to the facilities and people and efficiency in use is provided without damaging the quasi-natural or the desired appearance of the vegetation. Such management will require protection and maintenance, replacement or removal of vegetation in accordance with the needs and purposes of the development or use area yet in keeping with the fundamental purpose of the park itself.

Some of the historical parks and highly developed type recreation areas may in fact include only this zone of vegetation. In contrast, scenic or natural areas contain a minimum of this type of zonal vegetation and particular care should be exercised to maintain a pleasing transition from the use area zone to the zone of natural vegetation. This fringe growth, properly part of the use area zone since it results from the development, should be handled in such a way that the transition is not too unnatural in appearance—a gradual blending of the maintained into the essentially undisturbed.

More specifically management policy here would include:

a. Trimming, pruning, removal of trees and vegetation for authorized rights-of-way, building or development sites, vistas for proper clearance, safe sight distance, protection of property and people and to restrict encroaching fringe growth.

b. Plantings, mowings, prunings for appearance and pleasing foregrounds; vegetation replacement programs to develop and maintain overhead cover or screen plantings in campgrounds, picnic areas and the like; plantings and similar treatments in erosion control work.

c. Special arboricultural work to protect and preserve valuable

specimen or shade trees.

d. Insect and disease control to keep the area reasonably free of these pests and prevent serious epidemics which threaten or destroy vegetation here and outside the zone. Normally this would involve a maintenance control program to maintain endemic conditions throughout the zone.

e. Fire hazards reduction treatments with periodic removal of accumulation of flammable litter, or standing or down dead material within or immediately adjacent to the use area.

f. Securing wood products for construction, operation or sale should be limited to designated legitimate sources. These sources would include only authorized clearances as or similar to those outlined. Commercial forestry practices for the sole purpose of harvesting wood products should not be permitted anywhere within the zone or the park.

g. Suppression of exotic or undesirable plants to keep the areas reasonably free of such vegetation. Aggressive exotics frequently secure a foothold here and threaten widespread invasion of the natural area unless periodically suppressed. Certain exotics may have become so naturalized, and in fact may be required to complete the scene in historical areas, that retention is both desirable and necessary. These plants should be treated and managed as native vegetation. Undesirable plants such as poison ivy, should be eradicated in heavily used areas as a protection to park users.

h. Grazing by domestic stock should not be permitted and wildlife grazing should be restrained because of adverse effects on vegetation and sanitation in human use.

**2. The Natural Area Zone.** The territory beyond the use areas and environs, particularly as applied to the scenic and scientific type state parks, should be managed in such a way as to foster and maintain an essentially natural character in so far as this is possible and still permit safe use and provide for the protection of the features of the area.

Roads, trails and other fire control physical improvements may be required for adequate protection of the vegetation from fire. These improvements should be held to the minimum needed to meet the basic use and protection requirements for the area. Once authorized and constructed, vegetation within or adjacent to these facilities and influenced by them would be considered as within the use area zone and would be managed accordingly with some modification particularly in the application of disease and insect control treatments in isolated areas.

Other details of management policy including limited exceptions to the basic policy here would be:

a. Commercial forestry practices, as commonly understood and applied, are contrary to the basic purposes of the areas and should not be permitted.

b. Erosion control should be applied where it is clearly indicated that corrective treatment is necessary to prevent continuing or accelerating damage to natural values.

c. No attempt should be made to keep this zone entirely free of insects or diseases. Control measures should be initiated when these pests threaten destruction of park vegetation. This

would include controls of introduced or native pests in or threatening epidemic proportions.

d. Living vegetation should not be disturbed except in essential insect, disease or erosion control projects or in fire suppression work.

e. Some fire hazard reduction treatment may be required following severe burns or as the result of widespread disease or insect kills to reduce fuel fire hazards within a short period of time and permit more efficient suppression of fires which might occur. This work should be limited in scope to meet clearly justified needs.

f. Wood products that are needed and cannot be secured incidental to authorized pest control or fire hazard reduction treatments here or from designated and authorized sources in the use zone should be secured from outside the park. The very rare exception might be these instances where inaccessibility precludes transporting material to the site, such as logs needed for foot bridges in extremely isolated locations.

g. Control of undesirable plants should be limited to suppression of exotics where and to the extent that it is practical to do so.

h. Grazing by domestic stock destroys the natural character of the area and should not be permitted.

Basically it should be recognized that the only natural and essentially undisturbed vegetation will be found within the natural zone. All vegetation within or immediately adjacent to and influenced by the use zone is not and cannot be "natural and undisturbed" and must be managed to fulfill the purpose of these areas and in turn the park itself. However, all treatments under vegetation management within the entire park should be applied only as a means to this end purpose and not as an end in themselves.

