

Case Study: Environmental Programs at Apostle Islands



Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, an archipelago national park on Lake Superior, is committed to environmental stewardship and sustainability. The park participates in numerous programs to help manage their environmental efforts and mitigate their contribution to climate change. Not only does the park have an EMS, an environmental auditing program, a sustainability policy, documented sustainability best management practices and Superintendent's Orders which direct environmental practices, but the park participates in additional environmental initiatives at the community, regional, state, and national levels. These programs include the state

of Wisconsin's Travel Green Wisconsin and the CFP program.

While the park is fully invested in these programs, managing the logistics of so many separate initiatives became complicated and time-intensive. Park staff were finding that the administrative aspects of their environmental programs were taking away from time spent actually improving their park's environmental performance. The park was caught in a paradox—with so many environmental commitments, they were making some progress, but were at risk of losing a clear sense of their long-term objectives.

To combat this problem, the park teamed with outside consultants who helped them develop an integrated system, known as an Integrated Environmental Plan (IEP) that combines and simplifies environmental management and reporting of environmental and sustainability efforts. An IEP, is considered by some to be a "Super EMS," performs many of the same functions as an EMS, yet an IEP takes into account environmental programs and initiatives that a traditional EMS does not, further consolidating environmental management.



"I was really trying to figure out a way to use the EMS as an umbrella tool, to put under one framework everything we were doing for the environment," explains Park Superintendent Bob Krumenaker. "My goal was to bring everything under a single framework, to make it as user-friendly as possible, to ensure we comply with all regulations, and to bring all of the important commitments of our environmental programs into one plan."

To create this single, integrated plan, EMS elements, sustainability initiatives, environmental compliance responsibilities, and environmental reporting responsibilities were integrated into a single matrix using web-based and other electronic resources. Any "action item" or environmental goal, identified from an environmental program the park had committed to (e.g. EMS, CFP, EO) was entered into the matrix and then sorted and categorized to generate a unifying set of goals for the park.

The matrix was designed to help the park identify the highest priority environmental management initiatives. These high priorities will be outlined in a yearly management workbook that will contain their annual environmental goals, objectives and targets and track current responsibilities, training requirements and related documents and records. This process will help ensure that over time, progress toward achieving the environmental initiatives is made.



“What will be really valuable about the matrix is that we will not only lay out the goals for the year, but we will lay them out in context of long-term goals. It will show us that our journey is not in vain, and it will show us where we are going,” says Krumenaker.

The team of park staff and consultants also worked together to update positive and negative environmental impacts associated with park activities and to describe the desired future conditions that park staff will strive to attain. To assist with all of these processes, they identified key metrics so that long term progress toward achieving desired future conditions can be monitored, and created spreadsheets that will assist in tracking these efforts and recording accomplishments. Furthermore, the team created an annual calendar that tracks all IEP-related activities as well as another workbook that provides an inventory of laws, regulations, and other requirements that are applicable to Apostle Islands.

As FY09 came to a close, the final IEP template for Apostle Islands was nearly complete. Expected benefits from the integrated plan will include less time spent on administration of environmental activities and more time spent accomplishing them, and more effective data collection and reporting. Apostle Island’s IEP has been submitted for presentation at the April 2010 DOI Environmental Conference in Portland, Oregon. Apostle Islands believes that the IEP will create and sustain more enthusiasm around environmental management in the park and hopes their template IEP will be a model that can be expanded and implemented at all national parks.

**Increase Commitment to Sustainability
and then Lead By Example**

**Apostle Islands National Lakeshore
Superintendent's Order # 31
Safety and Sustainability**
Effective Date of that Order: February 12, 2007

**Apostle Islands National Lakeshore
Sustainability Best Management Practices
July, 2007**

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