

## 2008 Envirothon Oral Presentation Problem

Only 75 miles from our nation's capital lies the Shenandoah National Park. In 2006, it had nearly 1 million visitors. This park is best known for the 105 mile Skyline Drive, which can be driven (at park speed) in less than four hours. Many of the recreational activities here are the same as in the Grand Canyon in Arizona. There are over 500 miles of hiking trails within the park including 101 miles of the Appalachian Trail. Old Rag Mountain offers a rock scramble and some of the most spectacular views in Virginia. Other activities include ranger-led programs, camping, backpacking, hiking, fishing, horseback riding, bird watching and even three sites for launching hang gliders. Wildlife flourishes here and you can spot bear, deer, foxes, coyotes, bobcats, and owls in their native habitat. There are over 200 species of birds include grouse, woodcock, woodpeckers, vultures and the red-tailed hawk. You may be lucky enough to see wild turkeys, Bald Eagles and even a Peregrine Falcon. Wildflowers and other plants also abound. Around Big Meadows you will discover many rare plant species. The Park also offers modern lodging facilities at Big Meadows and Skyland.

Human impact is a major concern for this park. The Shenandoah National Park promotes the "Leave no Trace" seven principles. (Plan ahead, travel and camp on durable surfaces, proper waste disposal, leave what you find, banning open campfires, respect wildlife and be considerate of other visitors). There are also many rules enforced to protect the park area. Although helpful, these rules and principles are not enough to prevent the increasing impact of humans.

### Your task:

You have been requested by the Park Service to develop a visitor management and education plan paying close attention to the visitor impacts to sensitive habitats and ecosystems found in the park; in particular the Rock Outcrop Management Project.

### Include:

1. Analysis of park resources (cultural, natural, and modern facilities) and impacts by park visitors.
2. Analysis of the economic impacts of the park visitation on the local economy.
3. Analysis of current fee structure and impact on park visitation.
4. Analysis of current cultural resources within the Park (i.e. Skyline Drive, the Lodges, Camp Hoover Rapidan Camp, etc. and impacts from heavy use and lack of maintenance funding).
5. How does traffic within the park (site seeing) impact park resources (i.e. effects of air pollution on the natural resources).
6. Analysis of invasives brought into this fragile ecosystem by human visitors.
7. Analysis of noise pollution (sources and impacts) and need to control.
8. Identify significant threats to sensitive habitats (such as rock outcrops, high mountain wetlands). Consider impacts from visitor use as well as impacts such as air pollution, water use and pollution, noise pollution, and invasive species. Analysis of how these threats impact park resources.
9. Analysis of how to manage visitor use to prevent/minimize resource damage.
10. Analysis of how to communicate/educate park visitors on visitor use management plan.