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National Park Service

Management Series


Cost-Cutting Strategies for the Park and Recreation Agency

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Management Series

Cost-Cutting Strategies for the Park and Recreation Agency

| | |
|--|----|
| Introduction | 2 |
| The Strategies | 4 |
| Gear Up to Cut Costs. Where Can We Install or Improve Methods for Making Sound Decisions? | 6 |
| Rethink "Who Provides What." Where Should We Consider Other Potential Service Providers and Alternative Roles for Our Own Agency? | 9 |
| Reconsider Staff Functions. Where Can We Use Low Cost or No Cost Labor? | 15 |
| Attain New Efficiencies. Where Can We Increase Our Own Staff Productivity? | 19 |
| Rethink All Recurring Costs. Where Can We Better Manage Key Resource Supplies? | 26 |
| Revive the Interagency Connection. Where Can We Share Resources or Pool Needs to Lower Internal "Housekeeping" Expenses? | 33 |
| Plan Ahead. Can We Design Facilities or Plan Recreation Programs Which Will Require Minimal Budget Support? | 35 |
| Find New Dollars. Where Can We Find New or Additional Dollars for Ongoing Agency Operations? | 39 |
| Change the Rules. Where Can Policy Tools Hold Down Service Costs or Lessen the Need for Service? | 44 |
| SHARE Case Studies | 46 |
| Appendix: Further Resources | 52 |
| References to Find Out More | 53 |
| Newsletters to Keep You Up-to-Date | 55 |
| Organizations to Contact | 56 |

Introduction



Looking beyond traditional approaches . . .

Many park and recreation agencies are simply unable to meet the rising cost of operations. As a result, we are seeing facilities deteriorate, programming cut, hours reduced and even doors closed. Less evident to the public, but no less serious to an agency's long-term health, are such impacts as slashing budgets for training, "borrowing" from funds intended to replace worn equipment, and a pervading spirit of retrenchment.

The problem is multi-dimensional. Funding deficiencies compounded by inflation and specific cost increases have all cut into agency resources. The problem is also nationwide. In Oakland, California, playgrounds have closed. In New York City, park maintenance cycles have lapsed so that it will take an estimated 900 years to accomplish what needs to be done in the next 25.

Well maintained and operated park systems assure continuing recreation experiences. These same park systems also represent a taxpayer investment no less legitimate than the investment in streets and sewers. To both preserve recreation opportunities and to protect park investment, today's practitioner must develop a keen sense of fiscal responsibility. Agencies can no longer afford to live "on credit," adding parkland and building new facilities, while failing to fully assume or plan ahead for the cost of operation and maintenance.

This handbook is about what practitioners nationwide are doing now to live within their means, to become more efficient, more effective, more resource conscious. As practitioners respond to complex management issues and the challenge of curtailed resources, a full arsenal of solutions is emerging. The trends include:

- A more systematic and thorough search for efficiencies and economies
- A new focus on long-term costs and impacts
- A willingness to innovate
- A realization of the tremendous potential for tapping community resources to meet day-to-day park agency needs

The handbook brings together the cost-cutting ideas of numerous park and recreation practitioners. Most of the strategies were gathered through telephone interviews, and were selected for their focus on basic and continuing park agency functions. The strategies were also selected to accentuate the range of steps being taken to cut costs or more efficiently redirect limited agency resources:

- From the particularly exciting innovations to the seemingly simple economies
- From those steps requiring a large initial investment to those easily implemented
- From the immediate or transitional to the more long-term solutions

Our primary objective in writing this handbook is to promote the *sharing* of practical, dollar-saving information. Should you or your agency have additional cost-cutting ideas to share, we would like to hear from you.

We also have a secondary objective in writing this handbook—to document the constructive and creative response to budget cuts, which we have seen among practitioners. Few among the general public connect government with efficiency or innovation, a perception that has worked to the disadvantage of public agencies. By getting the word out on innovation in action and park agency responsiveness to the public mandate to cut expenditures, we can all help rebuild citizen support.

The Strategies



Many agencies are rethinking their entire management strategy.

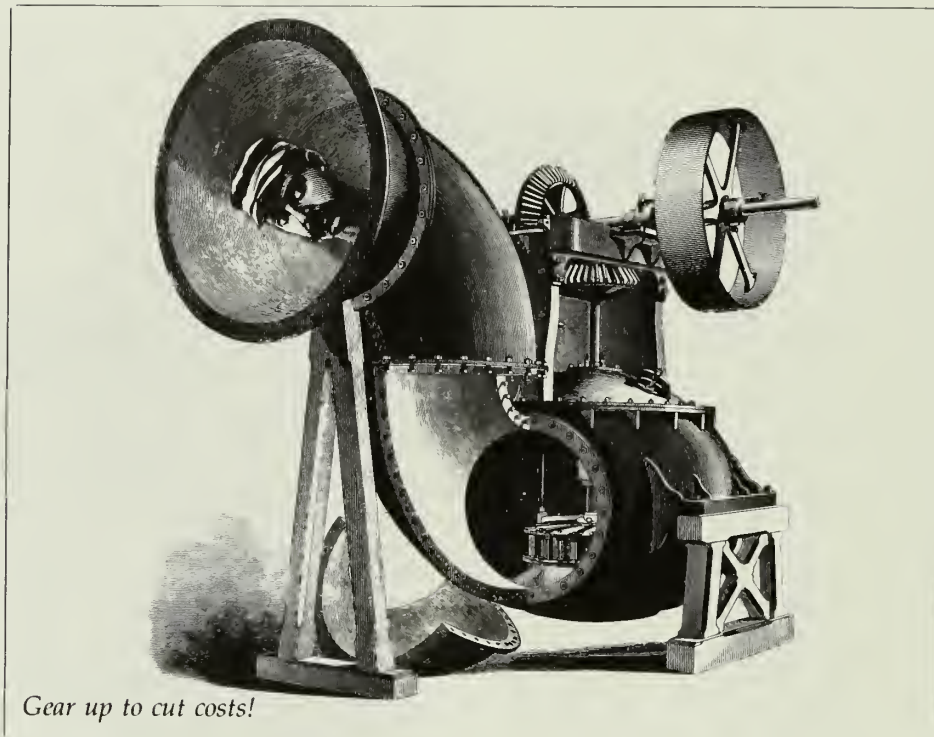
The cost-cutting strategies in this handbook are expressed as *questions* and are illustrated with case studies supplied by practitioners. Throughout this handbook we have relied on real-life examples to: 1) demonstrate the practicality of new ideas, 2) motivate managers to try a different approach, and 3) encourage further and more in-depth sharing of information.

This handbook is thus a compendium of case studies that can serve as an idea source. The series of questions that *frames* those case studies can also be used in these ways:

- 1) As a *checklist* to encourage a more systematic and thorough search for cost-cutting opportunities in any agency.
- 2) To *expand the agency's perspective* on any single problem area in order to find the most appropriate solution for a particular agency and community.
- 3) To *focus discussion* on specific cost-cutting strategies, their immediate and long-term impacts and implications for the agency and how it operates.

This handbook encourages agencies to ask hard questions about the way they operate internally and how they provide services to the public. It does not, however, advocate any single or specific solution. This handbook provides a range of ideas, each requiring careful evaluation by the agency prior to its adoption.

Gear Up To Cut Costs



Where Can We Install or Improve Methods for Making Sound Decisions?

Park management has become increasingly complex, with managers and administrators required to make countless decisions each day. Today's agency must manage information in addition to managing its staff, dollars, and other resources. Today's agency must be able to:

- Allocate limited resources for greatest public benefit at least cost
- Gauge agency overall effectiveness
- Document needs for staff, services and supplies (and account for past expenditures of public dollars)
- Judge the merit and cost-saving potential of new ideas (eliminating from consideration those short-term measures which compromise long-term agency health)
- Show exactly where dollar cuts will

impact internal operations and the public.

This first section covers decisionmaking tools that by *themselves* don't cut costs. Their value is this: They lead to more informed decisionmaking. Without the analytical framework and support that these tools provide, the agency will be less able to evaluate the benefits, dollar costs, and long-term impacts of management decisions. The agency will be less able to manage information.

Information is no substitute for action, but it is a basis for action. One recent study of 10 well-managed companies in the private sector found that in each of these companies the management attitude was to "get some data, do it, then adjust it." These companies did not wait for a perfect overall plan, but continuously took small steps toward progress,

soliciting and testing new ideas regularly, quickly, and without complicated procedures.¹

This section is both about *getting* information and *using* that information to support cost-cutting decisions and actions.

Examine Existing Capabilities

Do we have the tools to allocate resources based on results/performance? Are policy and budget decisions fully integrated?

- Park agencies nationwide are focusing on performance and perfecting their measures of agency output. Honolulu, Hawaii, uses trained observers to evaluate maintenance work according to predetermined standards of quality. Sunnyvale, California, uses citizen-client surveys to gauge service effectiveness. Phoenix, Arizona, has inventoried all routine park maintenance tasks, setting standard times to serve as a measure of efficiency.
- Using management-by-objectives (MBO), the Recreation and Parks Department with the City of Richmond, California, has cut operating costs by 14 percent during the last 9 years. During the same period, facilities were expanded by 25 percent. MBO assists Richmond to reach its goals through a detailed plan of action for every objective formulated (specifying service levels, time standards, scheduling of on-site and roving employees). A review system then identifies deficiencies. To implement MBO, the department began using its own program budget alongside a citywide line item budget.
- During the East Bay Regional Park District's (California) first year with a modified zero-base budget (ZBB),

\$400,000 in operational costs were saved. Fifty-six employees at all levels were involved in submitting 1,000 different decision packages. Although fewer decision packages are submitted today, ZBB continues to assist the district to make difficult decisions through encouraging creative cost-cutting and good working relationships during budgeting.

- The Pennsylvania Bureau of State Parks routinely considers the operational costs of alternative plans for expansion, and evaluates the budget support that various activities require against user-days generated. The bureau's computer-based Financial Management Study weighs costs against benefits and is used to determine which facilities (based on number of recreation opportunities generated) need expansion or more maintenance support. The information generated can also be used to set user fees that reflect activity costs and to identify maintenance problems through allowing operations and maintenance (O & M) cost comparisons between facilities.
- In the city of Walnut Creek, California, the city council reviews a maintenance impact statement on all proposed projects necessitating additional maintenance support. The maintenance impact statement lays out information on projected maintenance costs in a form understandable to decisionmakers and the taxpayer and suggests lower cost alternatives.
- In Anaheim, California, the park agency has a new tool for assessing maintenance priorities. The agency combines the priority levels set for facility maintenance with community recreation priorities.

The "conceptual matrix" created allows the agency to make across-the-board but efficient decisions as to where maintenance dollars and staff hours get spent (or cut).

Seek Out New Ideas

Where can we systematically increase the number and quality of cost-saving ideas? Where can we get low cost organizational analysis?

- In Scottsdale, Arizona, an employee suggestion program (ESP) provides the park department with numerous dollar saving ideas each year. The program is centrally administered and serves all city departments. (For additional information, see "SHARE Case Studies.")
- In nearby Phoenix, Arizona, a monthly newsletter shares productivity improvement ideas between departments and highlights citywide efforts.
- In Claremont, California, park staff in a particular job classification are sent to work with their counterparts in neighboring cities. In this way, the agency is continually exposed to new (and perhaps better) maintenance procedures.
- In Hartford, Connecticut, local industries paid for a year-long cost effectiveness study of local government. Some of the industry experts analyzed parks and recreation operations and resource allocation. Several recommendations were immediately adopted; to insure continued progress, the city plans to incorporate an operations office into the park and recreation agency.

1. Peters, Thomas J., "Putting Excellence into Management," *Business Week* (July 21, 1980), p. 196.

Get Information to the Frontlines

Where can we give our “frontline cost cutters” the information and the incentive to attain new efficiencies?

- In Monterey County, California, budgets are developed by the field manager rather than the superintendent. Individual field managers are responsible for program effectiveness and for setting program goals. Field managers understand the budget process, are aware of program costs, and make every effort to stay within their budget.
- In the city of Santa Barbara, California, each department head has a resource conservation goal, expressed as a percentage reduction in current usage of gasoline, electricity, natural gas, and water. This goal becomes part of a performance contract between the department head and the city. Since salary increases are tied to resource conservation, the system creates an incentive to innovate. Quarterly reports keep the manager informed of progress.
- In Walnut Creek, California, the city determines monthly equipment use charges from maintenance records showing fuel consumption and repairs. The city uses a program budget. Equipment use is charged against individual program areas, giving program managers an incentive to cut costs. (The city transfers the dollars charged into an equipment replacement fund.)

Tap Information Technology

Where can technology save decisionmaking time or make new information available?

- The Indianapolis, Indiana, Park and Recreation Department expects to save recordkeeping time and get a

better handle on overall agency operations through “computerizing” all of the following: personnel and financial records; facility maintenance schedules; mailing lists; energy cost and use records; vandalism records; accident data reports; facility/program scheduling; registration and reservation; continuous manpower analysis.

The department is also developing a workbook for decisionmakers and the general public, explaining both how the system works and its potentials.

- In the city of San Diego, California, a computer is utilized to monitor water usage. Through examining a printout which shows any variance in use pattern from the previous year, the park agency can pinpoint leaks and unauthorized usage.
- Ann Arbor, Michigan; Ontario and Sacramento, California; are among the cities utilizing computerized street tree inventories. Generally, trees are coded individually for age, location, and species. A record is kept of all maintenance each tree receives. The inventory assists in scheduling work and serves to document that timely maintenance has occurred.
- In Tempe, Arizona, the Parks and Recreation Department uses the city’s computer to track its work force. Maintenance staff activities are coded according to location and 10 separate tasks. The resulting “Time Job Analysis” provides quick access to time estimates for carrying out any particular task during any particular season at any specific facility.

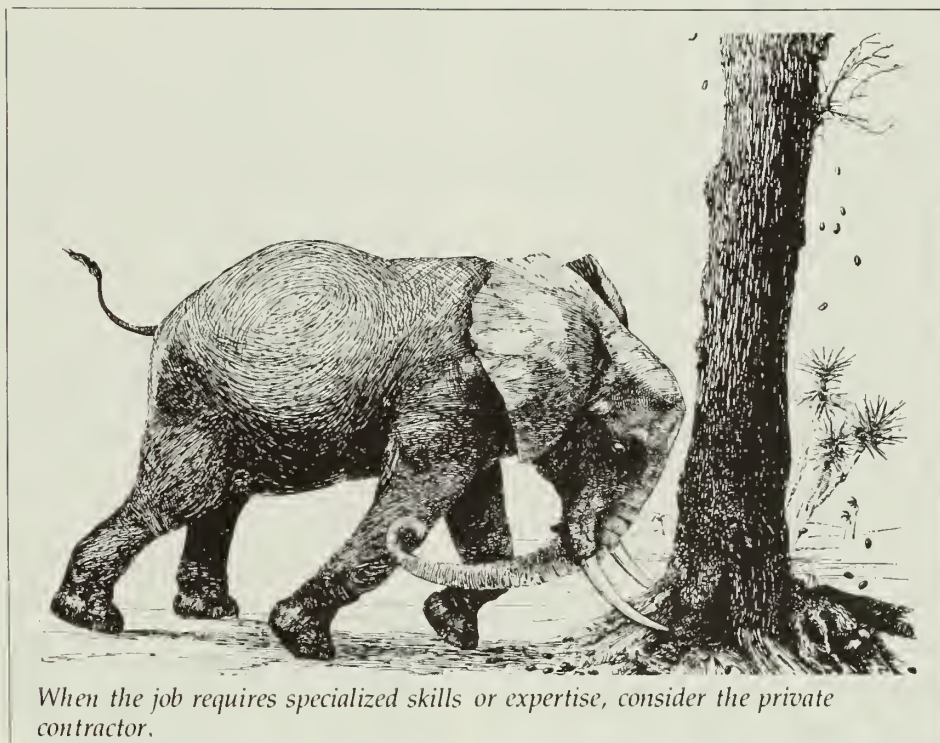
The computerized system also keeps track of recreation staff activities, and greatly eases the paperwork burden associated with



Today's agency must manage information.

Tempe’s large and predominantly part-time recreation staff. Recreation staff activities have been more difficult to define, but today include five separate functions: leadership, instruction, safety, planning, and supervision.

Rethink “Who Provides What”



Where Should We Consider Other Potential Service Providers and Alternative Roles for Our Own Agency?

Most park and recreation agencies already know that they do not need to directly provide every service the community demands and the public funds. Many agencies are saving dollars by being increasingly flexible and discriminating in the role they choose to take on. Today's cost-conscious agency will vary its role from service to service, sometimes serving as direct provider, advocate, or coordinator; other times as resource allocator, planner, or evaluator. Only the result—the cost-effective and assured delivery of services—need be the same.

The last point is critical. To rethink the agency's role is to focus on results, and how the full spectrum of other public agencies, private firms, and nonprofit organizations can assist in attaining those results. As an example, local governments are increasingly transferring to the private sector at least some services traditionally provided by public agency staff. This trend has been called *privatization* and may take the form of a single contract with a private firm, allowing a private firm the exclusive right to operate, or simply stepping aside and allowing several firms to operate without government involvement. Most often when a service is *privatized*, the public agency's role changes to that of contract overseer and administrator, its job being to hold the direct provider to a specific result at a specific price.

Going outside the agency does not always save dollars. The agency will need to weigh the costs and benefits of alternative service delivery on a case-by-case basis. But local agency experience strongly suggests that the best delivery system is a mixed one. A mixed delivery system leaves the agency flexible to find opportunities to save start-up costs, avoid duplicating effort, and achieve economies of scale. In a mixed system, tax dollars go further, the user sees a greater variety of services, and the agency can divert in-house resources to where needs are greatest.

This section is about restructuring service delivery to save dollars. With only a few exceptions, we focus on those services that have traditionally put agency staff in direct contact with users. (More attention to restructuring internal agency functions is given later in this handbook.) Use the following strategies to find alternative ways to provide services to your community while carving out new roles for your agency.

Buy from the Private Service Provider

Are private sector firms already geared up to do the job more efficiently and effectively? Can we systematically seek out contract opportunities? Can we perfect our skills as contract administrators and managers?

- Contracting for building maintenance has been a real cost saver for the Hayward Area Recreation and Parks District (California). The district saves at least \$60,000 a year in salaries alone (over the cost to provide comparable services by agency staff); in addition, the agency is saved the costs of cleaning supplies

and owning equipment.

The Hayward District also contracts for a 16-hour per-day answering service to insure round-the-clock phone coverage. The answering service takes security related calls and provides program information after 5:00 p.m. on weekdays and on weekends and holidays. For less than \$100 per month (far less than the cost of equivalent phone coverage by agency staff), security problems are immediately referred to appropriate personnel and the district's responsiveness to the community is improved.

- In La Mirada, California, all recreation and human services are managed by People Helpers Inc., a private contractor with permanent personnel assigned in city parks and facilities. (Maintenance is still performed by city employees.) To maximize citizen input into recreation programs, the city created a Leisuretime Commission to advise and monitor the contractor. La Mirada's unique service arrangement began in 1978 when, as a means of tightening the human services budget, the city began privately contracting for services with its own Human Services Coordinator.
- In Los Angeles County, California, each department is required to submit a minimum of three contracting proposals as part of their annual budget request. This requirement is part of a countywide contract development program to identify services with contracting potential. If contracts result in savings, these savings are retained in the departments to finance other priorities. Some of the criteria used to evaluate potential contracts include: cost effectiveness, impact

on county's capability to respond to emergencies, whether contractor performance level can be assured, appropriate county role, and whether the county can avoid absolute reliance on a single vendor.²

- The city of Scottsdale, Arizona, has this suggestion to offer: Inventory all current agency contracts. Does each contract have a designated "contract administrator" (an individual responsible to keep files, monitor performance, and so forth)? When agencies lose track of contract agreements, they may fail to receive the services to which they are entitled.
- Lease agreements can be written to save operations and maintenance costs. For example, a private developer in Detroit, Michigan, requested permission to build and operate year-round tennis facilities on parkland. The Recreation Department assented but asked that the developer renovate and operate existing courts as well, with a percentage of gross income to be paid to the city. A company in Dallas, Texas, buys, donates, and then leases back land from the city. The company pays the cost of all golf course improvements and operations. In return, it is provided free use of water, assured a clientele, and pays no property taxes. A private firm built a tennis complex on land leased from the city in Anaheim, California. Today the firm handles all maintenance, utility, supervision, insurance and reservation responsibilities. Beginning in the fourth year of the contract, the city receives rent from the firm. After 20 years, the complex reverts back to the city at no cost.

2. County Personnel Administrator's Association of California (CPAAC), *Managing Cities and Counties in an Era of Limited Funding* (Santa Cruz, Calif.: CPAAC 1980), p. 15.

Shifting Services to the Private Sector: Contracting in California

Following the passage of Proposition 13, many park and recreation agencies in California began to seriously examine the contract option. In 1979, California State University, Hayward, surveyed local agencies on their experience with contracting. This chart is based on that survey and highlights where and why agencies have saved dollars.

| The Place | The Service Contracted | The Savings |
|---|--|--|
| Weaverville-Douglas City Recreation District | Accounting and bookkeeping services | Small agency is saved fringe benefits on a less than full-time position |
| Rancho Palos Verdes Dept. of Parks and Recreation | Park landscape maintenance | Contractor costs are \$1,400 per acre per year (vs. \$3,400 using city forces) |
| Fair Oaks Recreation and Park District | Management, administration, direct provision of all fee recreation | Contractor paid but \$1,500 per month (way under previous cost to district) |
| Richmond Dept. of Parks and Recreation | Tree trimming | \$22,000 per year saved |
| East Bay Regional Park District | Garbage collection | \$50,000 per year saved (plus an initial \$60,000 in equipment costs) |
| (The city of) Alameda Dept. of Recreation and Parks | Golf starter operations | \$39,000 per year saved |
| Santa Maria Dept. of Recreation and Parks | Newsletter editing | City is saved fringe benefit costs |
| Hawaiian Gardens Dept. of Recreation | Building maintenance | Contractor costs are \$12,000 per year (vs. \$26,000 using city forces) |

Savings Are Most Likely . . .

- When the job requires less than a full-time person
- When work is needed one time or infrequently
- When work flow is seasonal or otherwise fluctuates cyclically
- When travel time and costs are saved to outlying facilities
- When new technology is tested
- When highly specialized skills and expertise are needed
- When rules and regulations limit agency flexibility
- When work is routine, easy to define and check
- When work conditions are rapidly changing
- When work involves an activity where agency has no previous management experience

Cooperate with Other Public Agencies

Where can we avoid duplicating effort in the direct delivery of services through buying from another agency or entering into a joint management contract?

- In the city of San Jose, California, the Police Department and Parks and Recreation Department participate in a cooperative police/ranger patrolling program. After attending 120 hours of basic training at the police department, park rangers are tied into the police communications system and are authorized to carry mace, club, and flashlight. The cooperative program provides more cost-effective park security and has curbed vandalism. In nearby Hayward, park district rangers actually ride with sworn officers in the county sheriff's department, giving direct assistance in a paraprofessional capacity.
- The East Bay Regional Park District (California), supplies security services to the neighboring township of Moraga. The district is paid \$60,000 to share the services of its security chief, and to provide communications and administrative services. The township supplies its own staff. This agreement assures full utilization of district resources, while providing better coverage at certain district sites.

Negotiate with the Capable Nonprofit

Can we buy or otherwise bargain for quality service from the established nonprofit organization?

- When Proposition 13 reduced the Hesperia Recreation and Park District (California) budget by 37



The agency might take a leadership role, assisting community based efforts get underway..

percent, the district entered into a unique contract with the local YMCA. The YMCA agreed to provide recreation services in district facilities to all Hesperian residents. A written contract (renewed this year) specifies that the district provide office space, pay most utility bills and perform regular maintenance and repair. YMCA responsibilities include providing, promoting, and obtaining liability coverage for all recreation programs. All programs are designed to be self-supporting and are billed as cosponsored. Benefits to the district include: 1) administrative services valued at \$60,000, 2) more types of programs offered to more people than previously, and 3) stronger justification for continued maintenance funding.

- In Massachusetts, the Division of Forests and Parks of the Department of Environmental Management has contracted with the nonprofit Massachusetts Audubon Society to recruit and supervise manager/interpreter interns for five islands in the Boston Harbor Island State Park. Through this arrangement, highly qualified individuals can be attracted and the program run at about one-third its normal costs. The work done by the interns has included rules enforcement, administration, programming, and interpretation.

Create a Provider

Where do we need a new organizational structure to deliver services? Can we encourage and support fledgling community based efforts?

- In San Ramon Valley, California, four existing organizations including one nonprofit corporation, joined together when a lack of funding compounded by jurisdictional confusion threatened to close recreation and other community facilities. The multiple and flexible service delivery options now possible mean that some recreation facilities can be operated at less than their "mothball costs." (For additional information, see "SHARE Case Studies.")
- In Garden Grove, California, city policy dictates that before a new service is started, the public agency ask itself whether the service might be bought from or shared with another entity. Should there be no existing public or private provider, the city may create one. The city takes a leadership role, structuring nonprofit corporations in the community, and assisting them to get established and to find outside funding. Sometimes, the created



Sometimes it pays to do more for yourself.

nonprofit group writes into its bylaws that the city may select its board.

- In Hartford, Connecticut, the park and recreation agency has taken on the role of "energizer," cooperating with the Chamber of Commerce to pick up, store, repair and allocate recreation equipment collected from businesses, individuals and schools. Neighborhood groups help staff the program. Eventually the program will also loan "people specialists."

Do It Yourself

Where are there payoffs in producing additional services in-house?

- The Jefferson County, Colorado, Open Space District formerly contracted out for surfacing of trails. After comparing contract costs to in-house costs (\$2.50 and \$1.50 per linear foot, respectively), the district

purchased the contractor's equipment—a \$10,000 trail blazer—and began doing the work itself. The machine will be paid off in 3½ years, and can be expected to last twice that long.

- An agency may also save by bringing in-house more of those functions that support service delivery. The Dayton-Montgomery County Park and Recreation District (Ohio) purchased its own phone system when figures showed that the resulting savings would pay off the initial investment within 5 years. The district purchased its own security system for an even better 3-year payback period.

Saving Dollars with a Little Help from Your Friends

A Checklist of Ideas to Consider

- 1) Encourage the Friends of Recreation and Parks to set up an employee suggestion or productivity incentive program, and offer cash awards. The nonprofit organization may be able to avoid the red tape that slows in-house development of such programs. (under consideration in San Francisco, California) ☐
- 2) Encourage the nonprofit user group to buy and agree to replace the costly and specialized equipment that benefits the nonprofit's activities. A lawn bowling team can, for example, bypass the low-bid requirements to which the public agency is subject, and buy and donate to the agency better quality mowing equipment. (Oakland, California) ☐
- 3) Award concession rights to the nonprofit corporation, allowing it to manage and staff concession operations (for example, bike rentals). Add to the agreement that all profits are agency assets, to be used for facility improvements or in support of programs within that park. (Wisconsin State Parks) ☐
- 4) Allow the nonprofit organization to take over a costly to operate facility, charging users a membership fee, renting out space to nonmembers and setting aside free community time. (Detroit, Michigan) ☐
- 5) Establish a nonprofit public information corporation which can save dollars by using nonprofit mailing rates and by selling advertising space. (Anaheim, California) ☐
- 6) Encourage the nonprofit group to hold a post workday "bash" to acquaint the community with a newly improved facility, while earning dollars to set aside as an endowment. (Knoxville, Tennessee) ☐
- 7) When recreation program expenses exceed revenues, and no efficiencies can cut losses, call on the nonprofit(s) to pull the worthwhile program out of the red. With this kind of assistance, the public agency can operate in a more business-like fashion. (Southgate Recreation and Park District, California) ☐
- 8) Encourage the nonprofit sports leagues to host tournaments to raise funds—to be matched by the city—for improving the facilities they use. The sports leagues might also hold a "work-a-thon" for installation of the improvements. (Chandler, Arizona) ☐

Reconsider Staff Functions



Agencies need to support and direct their volunteer forces.

Where Can We Use Low Cost or No Cost Labor?

Personnel costs are the single greatest category of expenses in the park and recreation agency budget. Staff salaries and fringe benefits comprise 70 –80 percent of operational expenses, whether we're speaking of the agency's programming, administrative, or maintenance functions. Budget cuts almost certainly mean fewer staff.

Playground closures, program cancellations, and unacceptable groundskeeping are all indicators of too few employees to get the job done. Sometimes, no matter how efficiently deployed, in-house resources cannot be stretched far enough.

By taking a long, hard look at just what they do and who benefits, agencies are finding new and better ways to meet staff shortages. Many agencies have identified new friends

and allies by simply asking "Who will care if we no longer provide this service?"

This section focuses on strategies for supplementing the agency's own in-house staff. Today's challenge is to 1) expand, stabilize, and redirect voluntary assistance to meet the agency's critical but continuing needs; 2) find new ways to use all types of short-term, low cost resources to achieve long-term economies and accomplish long-term goals; and 3) use outside assistance in ways that will free up agency staff for other needed work.

The following strategies may be used to spot untapped opportunities for your agency.

Involve the Interested Citizen

Where do citizens have a special interest in seeing a particular service continued? Where can individual assistance be supported, coordinated, and stabilized?

- In Orinda, California, mothers regularly alternate in maintaining totlots for their pre-school children. The totlots were originally constructed with the help of local parents, who now feel a commitment to the facilities. Only maintenance supplies and materials are paid with city funds. In nearby Moraga, California, homemakers pick up paperwork and phone assignments to complete during free hours at home.
- Hartford, Connecticut, recruits nearby residents to serve in its successful "Neighborhood Park Inspector Program." The city park and recreation agency has found that irate park neighbors often make the best watchdogs; they dutifully report all irregularities to the agency to catch problems.
- The Livermore Area Recreation and Park District in California looks to neighborhood volunteers to supplement agency staff. Residents are willing to support with their labor the additional plantings, improved walkways and increased security that the district's budget no longer fully covers. Neighborhood residents have even collected money to keep the water turned on!
- Insufficient funding and lack of adequate equipment led the New York City Park and Recreation Department to turn to interested citizens for assistance with maintaining street trees. To avoid down-the-road costs of improper tree care, the Street Tree Consortium (a group of 4 botanical

gardens and 12 other organizations) offers a "citizen care" teaching, testing, and certification program. Since 1978, over 100 citizens have been certified.

- The Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation records thousands of volunteer hours each month. Volunteers are recruited citywide to assist with all park agency functions. Seattle's success grows out of an organized and systematic approach. A central office formulates policy, keeps records, handles insurance, and recruits volunteers to fill citywide park and recreation needs.
- In Marin County, California, volunteer placement and follow-up has been integrated into the functions of the County Personnel Office. Volunteers for the Park and Recreation and all other county departments are interviewed there. Jobs are creatively tailored with written contracts drawn to specify duties and term of service. Performance evaluations are also written.

Tap Organized Groups

Where do user groups, service clubs and other existing organizations share agency goals? Can we institutionalize agency support and coordination of such groups?

- In Tulsa, Oklahoma, there are golf associations which, alongside their social functions, help maintain the public golf courses. Youth soccer groups in Hayward, California, save the recreation district \$5,000 a season by delivering brochures house-to-house in exchange for soccer field rights.
- In Livermore, California, the soccer club has taken on year-round maintenance responsibility for labor intensive soccer fields. Club

members pick up litter and monitor irrigation repairs, and in addition, monthly reimburse the park district for all other needed work. In much the same way, the swim club assumes operation and maintenance responsibility for the city swimming pool between September and June. This arrangement keeps the pool open year-round.

- In 1963, the city of Santa Maria, California, purchased and remodeled several dilapidated structures. Subsequently, 6,000 square feet of activity space was turned over to a senior citizen's club. The club has assumed all maintenance and custodial duties, even providing janitorial supplies. While the cost to the club is \$2,200 a year, the city saves \$8,000 each year in labor costs. The senior citizens are also scheduled to take over maintenance of a recently completed lawn bowling green; including mowing, fertilizing, and acirfying.
- Since 1974, the city of Seattle, Washington, has contracted with neighborhood associations and other established community groups for partial maintenance of vest pocket parks. At any one time, the Department of Parks and Recreation contracts with about 7 groups maintaining 15 parks. The groups themselves negotiate with neighborhood residents for performance of specific tasks; dollars budgeted to this program buy more hours of maintenance than if performed by city staff. The Park Department is careful to select community groups already set up to supervise and handle paperwork.
- The city of Portsmouth, Virginia, through its Community Maintenance Program, selects park

sites for community group maintenance, writes detailed contracts, inspects work, and will soon provide access to agency equipment on weekends. Most of the participation groups are garden clubs who have exacting standards for the work they do. Contracts are written for the peak April through September months and cover mowing, raking, and picking up litter. This arrangement frees park staff for other needed work. And, since the groups work for one-half the normal cost under agency staffing, the arrangement saves money.

Recruit Students

Where might student abilities and enthusiasm be more fully utilized? Where can students help the agency to move toward long-term goals?

- Students in the Park Management Program of West Valley Community College (Santa Clara County, California) assist in the operation and maintenance of the adjoining Sanborne and Skyline parks. In exchange for the opportunity to use the two parks as practicum outdoor laboratories (in which college credits are received), the students offer manpower for the maintenance, interpretive and patrol functions necessary to keep the 1,600 acres of parkland open. An added benefit is that the presence of students 7 days a week discourages vandalism at the sites.
- College students can also serve as "live-in" interns. Whenever possible, the Dayton-Montgomery County Park and Recreation District in Dayton, Ohio, builds one-room apartments into public buildings to house its interns. These interns are then available to handle off-hour situations, and the agency is saved both security and travel costs.



In every community there are untapped human resources

- Students at California State University in Chico provide planning and design assistance to financially troubled communities in Northern California. Since 1976, enrollees in the Recreation Administration Department at CSU have provided consultant services to various cities, counties, and recreation districts. Over 30 projects have been completed ranging from area-wide city, school and river master plans to site specific preservation/feasibility studies. Here is just one example of how these students have made a difference: Working in cooperation with a citizens' advisory council in Chester, California, the students developed a master plan and presented it to a major landowner. Needed lands were donated and the project is now under construction.

The Chester community saved \$15,000 in planning and design costs.

Mobilize the Business Sector

Where can we utilize the special skills and experience of the business sector?

- A local advertising and public relations firm has worked with the East Bay Regional Park District (California) as a public service. During a recent year, the district valued the firm's expertise in the design and printing of brochures and production of TV spots at \$20,000. Similarly, volunteer realtors have negotiated land options for the district at little or no cost while tax experts have searched for alternative sources of revenue.

Enlist the “Less than Voluntary”

Where might we cooperate with the courts or utilize the unemployed?

- For the past 3 years, the county of Los Angeles, California, Park and Recreation Department has participated in a court referral program, with unpaid wards of the court doing cleanup and other support work during major festivities. One year, the department saved an estimated \$275,000 in maintenance costs.
- Seattle, Washington, court referrals are allowed to suggest “volunteer” placements that best reflect their skills and interests. Some have volunteered as instructors; others as coaches and program assistants. Many have performed such maintenance functions as litter pick up, trail cleaning, and care of mini-parks. In 1978, over \$40,000 was saved in grounds maintenance costs alone.
- In New York State, a program initially designed as a transitional step to bring the unemployed back to work has benefitted public agencies as well. Under a 1971 New York State law, any single and employable person on home relief is required to donate 26 hours in labor every 2 weeks. The New York City program, which is the largest in the state, currently includes 12,000 people; 3,000 provide basic maintenance to the park and recreation department. The success of the program is clear. In addition to assisting public agencies to meet staff shortages, some participants have realized full-time jobs. Last year alone, 150 project employees were offered Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) Park Service worker positions.

Cover All Bases

Where can we save dollars through hiring short-term resources to supplement our staff? Can we make better use of federal and state manpower programs?

- In Hayward, California, the park and recreation agency looks to commercial temporary employment agencies to meet staff shortages. When recent budget cutbacks reduced agency full-time permanent maintenance staff from 45 to 22 people, the agency turned to a private service company to provide temporary maintenance support during heavy-use periods. Benefits have been tremendous! Workers’ schedules are flexible (providing 24-hour service, 7 days a week); past service levels continue to be maintained but at lower costs; and administrative time devoted to the temporary help is minimal—the private company handles all paperwork, including sick leave, vacation time, and replacements.

Temporary employment agencies can also be used to fill high turnover areas; to put the highly desired applicant on the temporary service payroll while awaiting approval; and to temporarily take over routine tasks so that in-house staff can turn their attention to specialized tasks. In all cases the agency has relief from the responsibility of advertising, recruiting, and paying unemployment benefits, while being guaranteed satisfactory work.

- In northern California, any governmental unit will be able to contact the nonprofit Public Service Skills, Inc. (PSSI) in order to hire experienced individuals who are retired from public service. PSSI

will operate as a bank of professionals, providing short-term relief where unanticipated needs occur or to supplement existing agency staff on a specific assignment. Just a few of the specialties that will be offered are general management, finance, public works, parks and recreations, and systems analysis. The public agency will save on all fringe benefit costs.

- The new CETA regulations strain many park agencies. In Allentown, Pennsylvania, the Community Neighborhood Organization (CNO) has come to the aid of the agency and deteriorating city parks. This nonprofit corporation, rather than the city, now sponsors 15 CETA workers in the parks system. Under the agreement with the local manpower office, CETA funds also pay one hired supervisor. The city’s involvement is limited to as-needed technical assistance and to payment for those expendable supplies which the manpower office cannot cover.

Attain New Efficiencies



Where Can We Increase Our Own Staff Productivity?

Productivity is simply the ratio between the human resources that go into a task (input) and the work actually accomplished (output). Increased productivity lessens the impact of budget cuts by better using fewer staff. (Increased productivity is also one of the best justifications for maintaining current budget levels.)

Becoming *more productive* does not necessarily mean working faster or harder. Increased productivity can also be achieved through:

- A task better planned, scheduled, and focused
- An employee better trained and motivated
- An employee using better, more up-to-date equipment

According to some estimates, up to 40 percent of maintenance employees' time is lost time, with management responsible for about half that loss. By simply scheduling work, experts estimate that up to 70 percent of such lost time can be put to good use. In the words of an experienced Ohio practitioner, "Don't add *staff* to solve *problems*." Often, a little strategizing behind the desk can mean far less work and new efficiencies in the field. The following ideas can help.

Know Your Labor Costs

Do we have the information we need to understand our human resources? Do we have a baseline for measuring improvements?

- In April 1980 the Elmhurst, Illinois, Park District completed a detailed analysis of its Park Maintenance Management System. The study revealed that the district had

underbudgeted for routine maintenance, diverting staff to major improvement projects. To avoid down-the-road costs, the district has begun shifting human resources to recurring maintenance tasks.

- The San Joaquin County, California, Department of Parks and Recreation recently completed a Time and Motion study for each park site. The department defined and developed time standards for all tasks. When these standards were used to develop staffing requirements, the department realized it was overstaffed. Today the Time and Motion study is the basis of an ongoing analysis of staff productivity.
- The East Bay Regional Park District (California), recently inventoried park superintendent responsibilities, assigning point values to parks based upon their complexity. Intended as a tool for adjusting salaries to better reflect workload, the point system has had much broader utility. The agency now has a way to quickly compare parks, equalize field staff assignments, and spot other resource allocation problems.

Systematically Plan and Schedule Tasks

Do we have standard operating procedures? Are work schedules rationally based? Can we purchase or develop a better maintenance control or management system?

- In Portland, Oregon, the Department of Parks and Recreation has found that by spelling out clearly all jobs to be done, efficiency increases. The agency has developed 38 job functions that describe how and

with what frequency specific tasks are to be done, and that detail the quality standards to be attained.

- The city of Pomona, California, Department of Parks was able to absorb seven positions cut from its budget through a rational scheduling system, which divides tasks into "high priority" and "discretionary." A few of the criteria used to determine high-priority tasks include safety, cleanliness, and noninterference with other needed work.
- The city of Wilmington, Delaware, Department of Parks and Recreation applied industrial engineering techniques successful in the private sector to the scheduling and control of park maintenance operations. Based on productivity problems revealed when field observations were recorded in a "Time Diary," simple scheduling and control procedures were instituted. The 1974 productivity improvement project resulted in a 27 percent reduction in required staff time, \$115,000 annual savings, and higher quality maintenance.

Strive for Optimal Deployment Arrangements

At any given time and place, does the workforce match the job? How might staff capabilities be better utilized?

- San Jose, California, now has a Central Services Section headquartered near the geographical center of the city. This section specializes in "demand work" including such tasks as turf renovation, irrigation repair, trash pick up and playground equipment repair. Since a special crew can be called in to respond to problems, "regular" field staff stay on schedule and all work gets done.

- In New York City, park maintenance staff work on a staggered 7-day workweek to allow preventive maintenance during nonpeak hours. In East Baton Rouge, Louisiana, a 4-day workweek cuts truck loading and travel time.
- By assigning a maintenance crew to work directly for the recreation division during the hectic summer months, Northglenn, Colorado, saves coordination time while providing prompt service to the public. This seasonally hired crew has basic responsibility for lining fields, picking up balls, policing grounds, and other light maintenance tasks (raking, hoeing, clipping). By synchronizing maintenance staff with the times and places recreation occurs, maintenance dollars are better spent.

Examine Methods and Procedures

Where can we streamline and simplify tasks without jeopardizing service? Can we learn new and better methods?

- Portland, Oregon, has unclogged its work order system by reinstating the practice of hitting every facility every second week for minor repairs and scheduling of major work. The new procedure requires a Preventative Maintenance Team as well as a Routine Maintenance Service. Because of fewer emergencies and breakdowns, the agency is saved valuable staff hours. Service has also improved, since no requests now go unanswered.
- Claremont, California, knows that vehicle down time is also employee down time. To save on the time needed to change flat tires, vehicles carry tires that have been premounted on wheels.

Is Your Productivity Being Drained?

A Quick Check for Inefficiencies in the Field

According to the U.S. Department of Personnel Management (OPM), a 10 percent productivity improvement for a person whose salary and fringe benefits total \$9 per hour would yield over \$11,000 in savings over a 5-year period, assuming a 5 percent per year wage increase. Use the following questions to help determine if your agency dollars are being needlessly drained.

Are staff waiting for orders in the morning or at noon?

Are staff uncertain about task requirements and looking for supervisors to find out what job to perform next?

Is unnecessary travel time due to haphazard or poorly planned crew routing?

Are staff making return trips to the shop or city yards for tools or additional supplies?

Is there a lack of available parts to repair minor breakdowns immediately at the work site or park?

Are you dispatching three men or women to perform a task that could easily be performed by two in the same amount of time?

Are staff waiting for other employees to complete tasks before they can begin their tasks (lack of time-motion consideration in work planning)?

Are there interruptions in task operations and/or countermanded orders?

Are staff performing a single operation on an incremental basis instead of performing it in total during a single time span (thereby creating more equipment and materials set-up and take-down time)?

Are staff waiting unnecessarily for people to vacate a recreational area before a job can be performed (lack of program coordination)?

Are staff using proper and efficient methods to perform a task?

(adapted from) Teal, Michael L., "Ontario Park Maintenance Summary Report and Recommendation," (City of Ontario, Calif.: Internal document 1974), pp. 50-51. For information concerning this checklist, contact Division of Parks, HCRS.

Take Steps to Involve and Motivate Employees

Where can we tap staff expertise?
How can we increase both monetary and nonmonetary incentives?

- Several years ago, the city of San Jose, California, Parks Division instituted participative management. All job categories are now represented at steering committee meetings. Participants relay the concerns of their peer groups and suggest ways to alleviate problems in the field. With steering committee support and involvement, San Jose's maintenance management system is a success.
- In Rockville, Maryland, the unionized Public Works and Park and Recreation staffs share cost savings (resulting from improved productivity) on a 50/50 basis with the city. The shared savings are only one part of a comprehensive employee relations program. First-year savings to the city realized from new efficiencies totaled \$27,000.³
- For the first time, Piedmont, California, will institute step pay increases for park maintenance staff. Salary increments will be based upon increased responsibility. In this way, productive employees are recognized and rewarded.
- The city of Claremont, California, regularly involves entry level staff in small scale improvements. Variety in work boosts morale, and staff "buy into" projects they will later maintain.

- Albuquerque, New Mexico, encourages friendly competition among maintenance staff. The Park and Recreation Department has divided service delivery into four quadrants, with each quadrant assigned "teams" of personnel. With quality of work and employee morale up among team members and travel time down (since each quadrant has its own reporting station), the agency has been better able to absorb a reduction in staff.

Invest in Staff Training

Where can staff training be made more cost-effective?

- Budget cuts led California's East Bay Regional Park District to refocus its training for a more in-house, hands-on emphasis. The program now has uniformity of operations as a goal. Six 1-week sessions cover such topics as vehicle operation and safety, public contact, and first aid. Staff receives manuals several weeks ahead of time. The new training program costs less than half of the previous program, and as a spinoff benefit, the agency already has been able to measure a reduced accident rate.
- Initiating a cost-effective training idea, park agencies in several Southern California cities, including Pomona, La Verne and Claremont, have joined together into an "inter-city training program." Together the agencies are able to contract for an in-depth series of classes. A second aspect to the program involves sending specific job classifications to work with their counterparts in other agencies. Staff learn new—and perhaps better—approaches to their jobs.

Substitute Capital for Labor

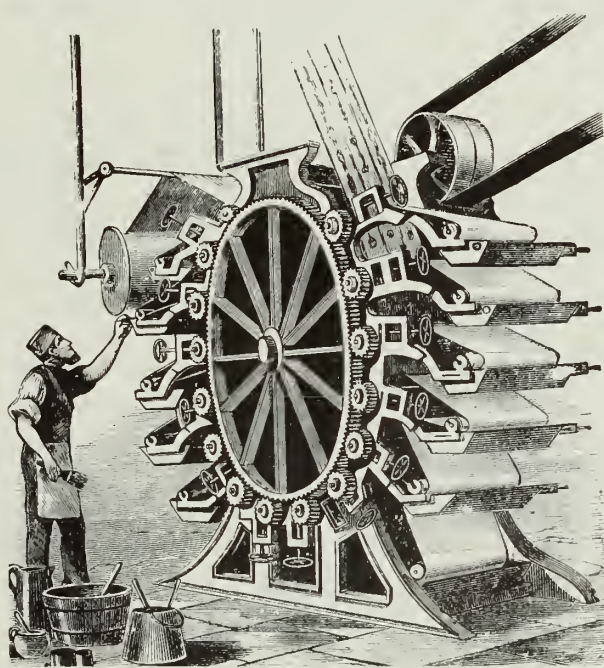
Where will the purchase of laborsaving equipment pay off?

- Through purchasing a different type of mowing equipment, Claremont, California, has been able to cope with the reduced mowing schedule imposed by budget and staff cutbacks. Claremont's park agency replaced its seven-gang reel mower with a newer, three-gang mower that cuts using a cyclic motion. The new mower can easily cut a 2-week growth, permitting the agency to mow less frequently (every other week instead of weekly). The new mower can also be used on overgrown, undeveloped areas.
- In Allentown, Pennsylvania, the park agency substituted two large garbage trucks for the three small dump trucks previously used to pick up garbage. The city now saves 30 percent on garbage pick up in the parks. The third dump truck operator is now free to do other needed work.
- On close examination of its maintenance standards for palm tree trimming, the city of Phoenix, Arizona, found it could double productivity by switching from hatched to chain saws and by purchasing larger trucks to carry away the additional palm leaves. The changeover also resulted in an unexpected benefit—improved safety.

Strengthen the Organization and Its Management

Where can communication lines be clarified and greater teamwork instilled? Can performance incentives for management be increased?

3. Productivity, (Washington D.C., United States Office of Personnel Management, Office of Intergovernmental Personnel Programs, 1979).



By simply scheduling work, 70 percent of lost time can be put to good use.

- As part of a comprehensive organizational development program, the city of Boston, Massachusetts, instituted a management reporting system within the maintenance division. The reporting system was designed to restructure the organization and reinforce chains of command. Performance information is now provided weekly to both the maintenance division and the park and recreation commissioner. All levels of management are further strengthened through management development seminars. Today, foremen have respect and control, morale is improved and union/management relationships are good.
- In Santa Barbara, California, public agency managers receive full cost-of-living salary adjustments only if they fully meet their performance targets. These

performance targets constitute a "contract" between the city and its management staff. The city manager retains 1 percent of all management salaries to give as bonuses for exemplary work. The results of the program? Better and more responsive service.

Scrutinize Labor Intensive Tasks

Can we identify and eliminate those services that won't be missed? Can we "rehabilitate" the recurring maintenance problem?

- San Diego County, California, found (through matching up a Work Time Study with a user survey) that aesthetic oiling of campstoves was not important to park visitors. Since this labor intensive task extends stove life by only 5 percent, it is no longer done.

- In San Jose, California, Parks Division staff have made this suggestion: Why not use fewer cans during the off season? Since the cans do not fill up as quickly, emptying time can be saved without negative impact on staff or visitors.
- Aurora, Colorado's park agency now uses swing joint irrigation that won't break if run over by equipment. Valuable repair time is saved. On traffic islands, irrigation repairs are avoided by protecting breakable parts with concrete "doughnut heads." Aurora knows that it doesn't pay to "live with" maintenance problems.

Examine Organizational Alternatives

By combining forces, can we add to our flexibility or achieve economies of scale?

- In 1978, the park maintenance staff of Piedmont, California, was cut from 13 to 5, and the public works staff from 12 to 5. By combining forces, the new "public services" staff can better handle emergencies and seasonal loads. For example, in the fall and winter, both staffs can work on leaves and storm drains, while in the summer they can attend to park visitor needs. In addition, the city is saved the cost of one administrative position. The transition was not without problems: An equitable pay scale needed to be worked out for the combined staffs.
- When Claremont, California, combined its park maintenance and public works functions several years ago, the city achieved the expected (and substantial) savings in personnel and equipment costs. As an unexpected benefit, less time was lost to interdepartmental budget battles.

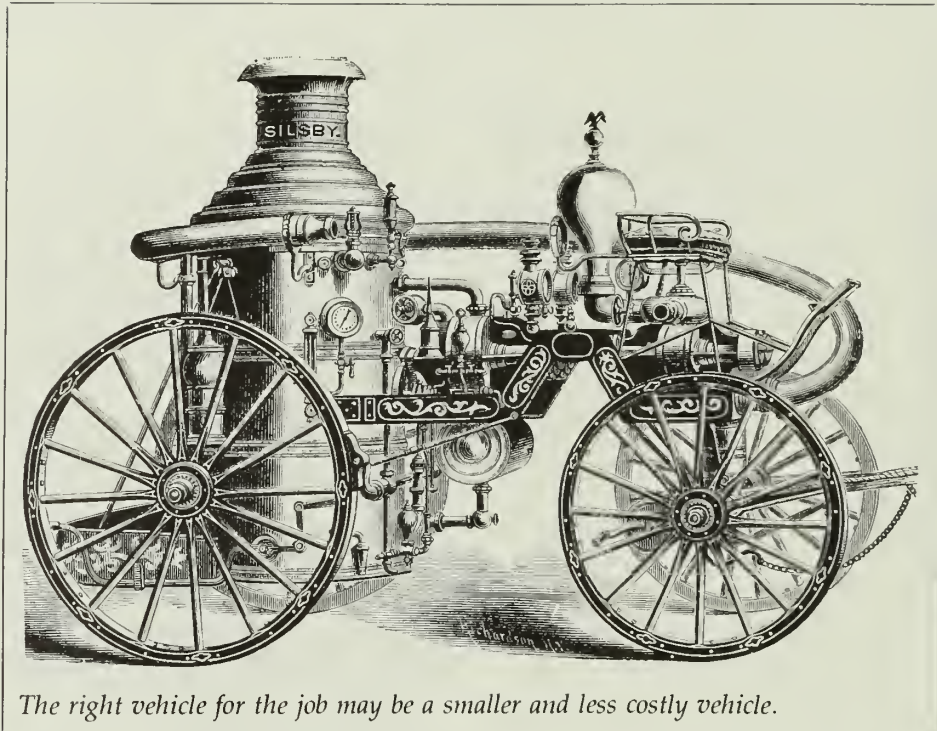
Toward a Wiser Use of Human Resources

Additional Practitioner Suggestions

| | The Idea | Where Used |
|--|---|--|
| Know and Understand Your Labor Costs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do systematic, continuous monitoring of unit cost performance for all work, weighted for inflation | Sunnyvale, California (all city agencies) |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use monthly performance reports for park maintenance to compare standard task times against actual time and obtain a performance rate | Phoenix, Arizona |
| Schedule and Utilize Staff Effectively | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change from stationary to mobile playground service crews to increase output per person per-day | New York, New York |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convert some positions from full to part time (park patrols, golf course starters, recreation specialists) | Los Angeles, California |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handle peak load staff requirements through intra-agency transfers | Provo, Utah |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rely on core staff supplemented by "Kelly Services" maintenance personnel who work at 2/3 the staff cost | Livermore, California |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decrease the number of core staff but increase salaries; supplement core staff with part-time staff | Champaign, Illinois |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage job sharing to get two kinds of expertise for the price of one (example: secretary and layout artist) | Orinda, California |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centralize special functions allowing skilled staff to serve as rovers | King County, Washington |

| | The Idea | Where Used |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|
| Involve, Motivate and Train Staff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negotiate productivity with unionized staff (write into incentive contracts) | Phoenix, Arizona (all city agencies) |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a more open transfer policy across the city as a nonmonetary incentive; cross-train parks and public works staff for greater response and flexibility under staff cuts | Piedmont, California |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold productivity workshops to develop specific problem solving skills and simplify tasks | Phoenix, Arizona (all city agencies) |
| Improve Agency Management | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Base recreation supervisor's salary in part upon program revenues brought in | Hesperia, California |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Base top department manager salary increases upon meeting both personal and organizational performance targets | Dayton, Ohio (all city agencies) |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simplify chain of command to improve communications | Las Cruces, New Mexico |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No longer reward managers for increasing the number they supervise | Garden Grove, California (all city agencies) |
| Scrutinize How and Why Work Is Done | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use smaller equipment so that one person can do the job (example: pickup with hoist bed substitutes for full-size truck); give maintenance "problems" highest priority when making facility improvements | Piedmont, California |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminate shrub bed maintenance | Anaheim, California |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop priority list of maintenance problems and rehabilitation needs | Berkeley, California |
| Reorganize | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combine street and park maintenance for substantial cost savings | El Cerrito, California |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centralize all park maintenance under one facility for greater control and to capture economies of scale | Omaha, Nebraska |

Rethink All Recurring Costs



The right vehicle for the job may be a smaller and less costly vehicle.

Where Can We Better Manage Key Resource Supplies?

The same good planning and foresight that cuts "people costs" will also cut other "nonpeople" costs. Efficient management of *all* agency resources begins with the same questions. What constitutes an appropriate level of service? How can that level be attained with a minimum overall expenditure of resources?

Practitioners are taking a hard look at the recurring costs associated with park management, and are challenging the notion that any of these costs should be accepted as "fixed." Many practitioners are finding that even small changes in the way they operate and do business can cut substantially the costs of energy, water, and chemicals. Particularly for the park and recreation agency with vast groundskeeping responsibilities,

conserving these critical supplies pays off.

The cost-cutting strategies in this section fall roughly into three levels, depending on the capital investment and agency commitment each requires to implement. By keeping all three levels in mind, your agency can build a comprehensive strategy for conserving resources. The levels are:

- Operational changes that require no capital investment; examples include reduced use of equipment and changed irrigation schedules.
- Changes to existing facilities and grounds that require only a small investment; examples include installation of automatic timers or tensiometers.

- Major changes with long-term payoff but that require a large front-end investment; examples include retrofitting a swimming pool and installing a wind energy system.

The following questions and case studies can be used to help spot opportunities for saving resources in your own agency.

Examine Heating and Lighting Costs

Where can we change the way we operate to eliminate waste? Where will a relatively modest investment assist the agency and park visitors to conserve?

- Preventative maintenance has been a key part of the Great Smokey Mountains National Park's (Tennessee) comprehensive and successful energy conservation program. For one example, staff service the park's thermostat-controlled hot water system more often to keep it at peak efficiency. (For additional information, see "SHARE Case Studies.")
- The Santa Cruz Parks and Recreation Department, Santa Cruz, California, has cut heating costs by 50 percent at the Harvey West Pool by simply purchasing a solar blanket. The blanket cost the agency about 43¢ per square foot. (Solar blankets trap absorbed heat to raise the temperature of the water and at the same time prevent chemical evaporation.)
- Simply by auditing public buildings for their energy consumption, the city of Greensboro, North Carolina, identified a malfunction at one recreation center that resulted in a 100 percent heat waste. As a result of the audit a second recreation center was able to cut energy use by 42 percent.⁴
- By simply installing automatic timers, Columbia, Missouri, cuts the energy used to heat buildings. For example, buildings that are frequently reserved for use by community groups have *two* thermostats in operation. One is set permanently at 55 degrees and prevents pipes from freezing; the other can be adjusted upward, but for only an hour at a time. This system eliminates the often forgotten task of lowering the thermostat in a building before leaving. Automatic timers are also used to cut tennis court lighting costs.



To save dollars, use plant materials better adapted to the local climate.

- In November of 1979, an electronic energy "watchdog" was installed at the Pleasant Hill, California, Community Center at a cost of \$6,950. Initial figures indicate that within 2-3 years, the system will save enough gas and electricity at the two-story 22,500-square-foot center to pay for itself.

The system requires little maintenance and the energy savings have been dramatic. For example, created demand was 76 kilowatt hours in January 1980, compared to 100 in January 1978, when no controls were used. Even with increased rates, January's electric bill was \$657 less than 2 years ago. Therm usage (natural gas used for heating) has fallen from a January 1978 figure of 2,900 to last January's 1,392, for a savings of \$160. At today's utility rates, the device saves \$3,400 each year.

4. *City Hall Digest*, (Seabrook, Md.: City Hall Communications, 1979), p. 8.

Each day, the center's director programs the power requirements for each of the center's rooms. The system then supplies power and heat or cooling when areas are scheduled to be occupied. The program can be changed at any time to accommodate special functions or demands, and to insure that peak load usage is kept down.

Save Tomorrow's Heating and Lighting Costs

Where will a major investment pay off? Where can we build so as to more fully utilize the sun's energy? Where can we tap our own local sources of energy?

- The Carlsbad Unified School District in Carlsbad, California, reduced nightly lighting cost from \$50 to \$18 by retrofitting a football stadium with a 1,000-watt high-pressure sodium lighting system. The original 1,500-watt quartz lighting system was old, constantly in need of maintenance, and very expensive to operate. The new system, which cost \$20,900 to install, reduced 96 quartz lamps to 48 high-sodium lamps. And, the high-sodium lamps are expected to last 24,000 hours compared to the 2,000-hour lamp life of quartz.
- At Tumalo State Park, Oregon, solar collectors provide 100 percent of the energy needed to heat water for the shower building, saving the state park system about 2,500 gallons of propane a year. Some electricity for lighting and operation of the circulation pump is still needed. The solar system has worked so well that the showers are open 24 hours a day and the planned back-up propane system has never been installed. Within 18 years, the savings in propane costs will pay for both the solar components and the building itself.



- Richmond Hill, Ontario, Canada, has the first public pool in Canada heated with solar energy. The pool saves \$8,000 in natural gas costs per year for a 9-year payback period. The pool requires no additional pumps or electrical controls.
- The Gualala Point Park in northern Sonoma County, California, saved \$23,000 in initial costs by electrifying their new visitor center with a wind power system. The windmill, complete with a back-up 2-kilowatt generator, tower, and storage batteries, cost a total \$6,500 to install in 1974. Had the park chosen to tie in with the local public utility system, the cost would have been \$14,000, plus an additional \$25,000 to run the equipment underground. The Gualala system is 100 percent reliable on the windy Sonoma County coast and is almost maintenance free. And, the visitor

center has no monthly utility bills although electricity demands include lights, restroom exhaust fans, and operation of a few power tools.

Examine Vehicle Fuel Costs

Where can we conserve fuel supplies by rethinking the task at hand? Can we provide staff with new incentives to save? When is the right vehicle for the job a smaller or less costly vehicle?

- Hartford County, Maryland, implemented a 4-day 10-hour-a-day maintenance workweek in order to save on the gasoline used to drive vehicles to job sites. For a county that sprawls 405 square miles, the results were impressive. Over a 2-month experimental period, the park agency used 1944.9 fewer gallons of gasoline than in the preceding year!

- The city of Columbia, Missouri, took a fresh look at an old job. Until recently the city used two trucks; one to collect garbage, and the other to collect heavy materials. Today, instead of having the trucks trace each other's paths, each truck combines both activities and covers half the city.
- In Great Smokey Mountains National Park, all vehicles are tagged with a maximum allowed mileage (set at 10 percent less than last year's recorded mileage). Persons assigned to vehicles have an incentive to cut nonessential travel, join in vehicle pools, and rethink routing efficiency.
- Claremont, California, takes a hard look at vehicles with high operational costs and, where it will save, converts them to propane. Not to be caught off guard during gasoline shortages, the city strives for a cost-effective and mixed fleet of gas, propane, and diesel units. Claremont also installed a "key-lock" system that automatically reports gas consumption on every major vehicle and smaller class of vehicles. Sixty separate keys operate the city's fuel pumps. Turning the key automatically logs in the amount of gas used. In addition, the system prevents unauthorized use of fuel as well as prevents pumping in the wrong fuel.
- For routine park maintenance, Northglenn, Colorado, uses mopeds with trailer attachments. In addition to their initial low cost, the gasoline savings, and the small storage requirements, the mopeds encourage staff to think in energy saving and cost-cutting terms. The drawback is some discomfort in the rain, snow and cold weather. While not a clear cost saver, Harriman

State Park, New York, uses electric vehicles to patrol park facilities. The vehicles are quiet, are excellent for emergency use in hard-to-maneuver areas, and can reduce agency dependence on oil supplies.

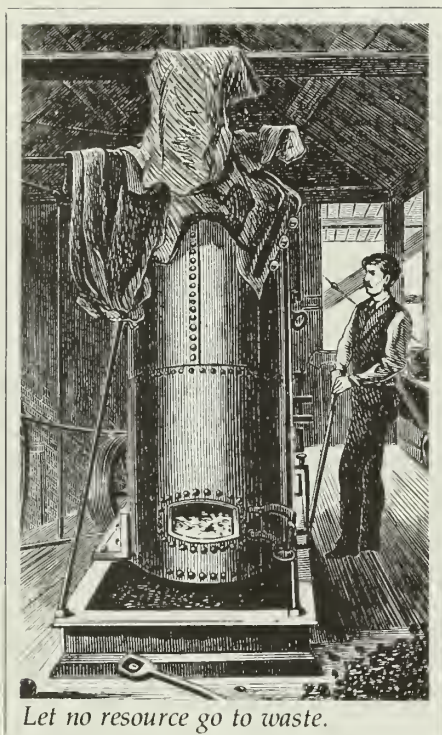
Tackle Escalating Water and Chemical Costs

Where can we avoid overuse through better management? Where can technology do the job better and cheaper?

- In Modesto, California, an Urban Integrated Pest Management Program cut pest management costs by 41 percent during a period when per-hour labor costs were actually rising. The program was developed by the John Muir Institute of Berkeley, California, and is directed primarily at shade trees. The program focuses on a 3-year management strategy for each key pest, based on local life cycles, natural enemies, habitat preferences and seasonal population peaks. The program resulted in a 99 percent reduction of trees treated, from 4,539 trees in 1976 to 59 in 1978.
- In an effort to reduce overall pool operating costs, Chula Vista, California, installed an automated chemical treatment system in its swimming pools. The system works by an automatic controller, which constantly samples the water quality and cycles the chemical feeders. The \$10,000 installation charge was returned within 13 months through savings in chemicals and work hours.
- In Scottsdale, Arizona, pool purification costs have been cut through the purchase of an activated oxygen system. The new system cuts chemical cost by 40 percent while sanitizing and

clarifying the water. Estimated payback period for the initial investment is 2 years. (For additional information, see "SHARE Case Studies.")

- The Park Division in San Jose, California, saved \$75,000 (25 percent of its 1976-1977 water bill) by programming a computer to determine optimum water amounts at various facilities. The computer provides facility managers with continuous information on weekly water usage per acre foot, permitting managers to make exacting decisions.
- In Claremont, California, the park agency cut water usage by 25 percent the first year after tensiometers were installed. Tensiometers need only occasional attention and often improve plant health.
- During California's 3-year drought, some public and private landscape managers were forced to accept up to 60 percent cuts in water allocations. Among the steps the affected managers took were 1) developing a "water budget" to rank individual areas according to their need for water; 2) increasing irrigation efficiency through, for example, drip irrigation, modern irrigation controllers, reduced sprinkler orifice sizes; 3) where available, irrigating with reclaimed waste water for up to 50 percent cost savings per unit of water used; 4) providing lawns only for lawn-dependent uses (sports, foot traffic), and in other areas, using plant materials better adapted to local climate and environment.



Recycle Resources

Where can we save dollars through reusing our own resources? Where can we make use of other resources obtained at low cost?

- At Great Mountains National Wildlife Refuge, staff construct wood stoves from such recycled materials as oil drums, furnace doors, and scrap iron. The stoves cost less than \$50 each to construct and are part of an energy conservation program. The wood is free, coming from trees blown down during storms or cut down during trail clearings.
- The Boulder, Colorado, Park and Recreation Department has operated its own sawmill for the past 3 years. The sawmill runs 4 months a year and can cut 4,000

boardfoot a day. The larger lumber is used for park construction. The sawmill operation has a spinoff benefit: it is a moneymaker. In the winter of 1979 some \$10,000 in firewood was sold to the community. All money was used to support forestry operations.

- In Howard County, Maryland, the park agency makes use of Christmas trees collected citywide. The trees are clipped, stockpiled, composted, and used for mulch. Boulder, Colorado's park agency cuts city trees afflicted with Dutch Elm Disease into lumber. The lumber is used to build docking and water ski rafts. In McClean County, Illinois, the park agency uses utility poles, obtained free from utility company "burn piles," to outline parking lots.
- The National Capital Region of the National Park Service uses static pile composting (developed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture) to dispose of organic waste, leaving a peat moss-like material. This compost makes an excellent soil conditioner for repairing soils damaged by construction activities and visitor use. The composed sewage (sludge plus woodchips) is combined with leaf mold and fresh leaves, then applied to the damaged area and covered with topsoil. In 1975 the total cost of modifying one 16.8 hectare area using this method was \$205,584, about one-half the cost of using unamended topsoil alone.⁵

⁵ Short, J.R. and Patterson, J.C., "Utilization of Urban-Produced Wastes for Soil Renovation," *Scientific Research in the National Parks* 2. Edited by Robert M. Linn (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976), p. 1107-1109

Energy Cost Savers Being Used in Today's Business World

Sometimes it pays to look beyond the parks and recreation field for ways to deal with a problem. The private sector is one source of new ideas. As an example, the Dupont Corporation reduced energy use by 4 percent during 1970–1977, even while production increased by 50 percent. Dupont sets energy conservation goals for itself, assigns responsibilities within the organization, and then allows a diversified approach toward realization of its goals. This approach includes: proper maintenance, modification of existing equipment, shifts to more abundant fuels, utilization of more efficient processes, and a search for long-term alternatives. The following are additional ideas contributed by businesses and corporations. What can you adapt?

To Save Vehicle Fuel

- ☐ Salespersons are using motorcycles instead of cars
- ☐ Deliveries are being made by three-wheeled cycles
- ☐ CB radio systems are being used by field personnel to call in needs and avoid repeated trips back to headquarters
- ☐ Van pools are being used by employees instead of private cars; in one case, 12 vans replaced 100 cars, reducing daily total mileage from 5,960 to 715
- ☐ Cars are being equipped with cruise control and radial tires
- ☐ Service routes have been reviewed to make sure they are as fuel efficient as possible
- ☐ Common sense fuel savers are being emphasized, including:
 - not starting the car until ready to go
 - observing the speed limit
 - not using the air conditioner or heater when the car is idle
- ☐ Mobile storehouses at job sites save repeated trips for forgotten materials

To Save on Heating and Air Conditioning

- ☐ Air conditioning levels have been reduced
- ☐ More frequent inspections are being made to monitor heating and compressed air systems
- ☐ Thermostats have been converted so that during weekends, standby systems operate on minimum maintenance heat rather than workday temperatures
- ☐ Tinted energy-efficient solar glass is being used to reduce energy loss
- ☐ Solar controlled window blinds are being used to reflect or deflect the sun's rays
- ☐ Double glazed windows have been installed to retain warm air in the winter and cool air in the summer
- ☐ Office heating and cooling systems are zoned to take advantage of the seasonal angles of the sun

To Reduce Lighting Needs

- ☐ Photo-electric switches have been installed for exterior lights
- ☐ Skylights have been opened to utilize available natural light
- ☐ Light bulb wattage has been reduced
- ☐ Lights have been equipped with additional switches to permit more precise, localized control

15 Ideas for Cutting Equipment Costs

Park agencies are increasingly mechanizing their operations. Mechanization saves staff hours and permits the agency to go from stationary to mobile work crews. (In many cases, mobile crews have allowed agencies to respond more flexibly to budget cuts.) But, with the increased reliance on power equipment have come problems. Fuel costs are high. Agency repair capability is often overextended. And, many agencies are short on replacement funds for old, outmoded equipment. This chart summarizes the high "behind the scenes" cost of owning and operating equipment.

To cut initial purchase or replacement costs

- 1) Aurora, Colorado, converts useless into useful equipment. Old electrically operated golf carts were recycled into park vehicles useful for servicing ballfields by the simple addition of a box to carry supplies and tools.
- 2) Two Michigan cities, Clio and Flushing, each saved \$1,500 per street sweeper and \$500 per dump truck by bidding together.*
- 3) In one recent year, the East Bay Regional Park District (in California) earned \$10,000 from auctioning used equipment.
- 4) In Monterey County, California, the park agency will receive 16 cars and trucks at reduced cost over a 5-year period in exchange for allowing advertising on a park bridge.
- 5) Aurora, Colorado, uses its computer to determine, based on projected hours of use, whether it's more economical to buy or rent a specific piece of equipment.

To cut operating costs

- 6) In Modesto, California, some city vehicles run on methane.
- 7) Las Cruces, New Mexico, uses scooters instead of tractors to drag ballfields and haul equipment.
- 8) In Davis, California, city employees borrow city owned bikes for short trips around town.

To cut down time and repair costs

- 9) The East Bay Regional Park District in California, contracts with service stations for repair of vehicles at outlying parks.
- 10) Falmouth, Maine, uses total cost bidding (life/cycle costing) when buying any city equipment. Bidders guarantee the maximum cost of repairs over some specified period of time.
- 11) The state of Maine Department of Transportation has tested diesel powered trucks. Compared to gas units, diesels average 50 percent less engine repair time. Diesels also require less routine maintenance and 1/3 less fuel, for a 40 percent savings in total fuel, engine oil, and grease costs.**

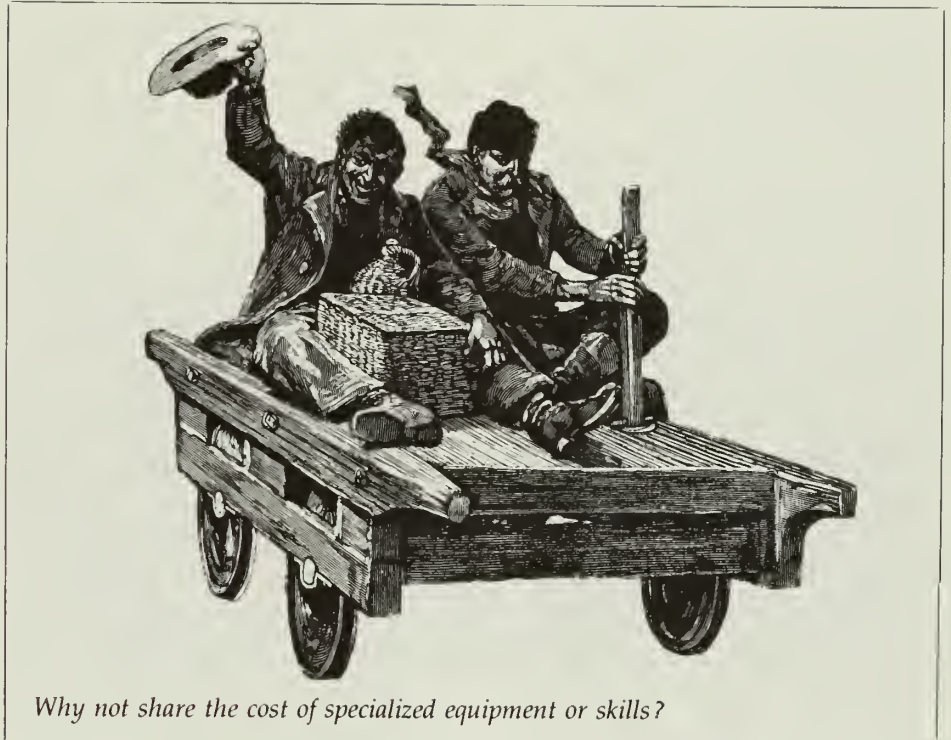
For full utilization of equipment

- 12) San Diego, California, has made sweeper equipment "road worthy" to cut the cost of transporting it.
- 13) Claremont, California, has this suggestion: Join a motor pool with public works or merge with agencies using similar equipment.
- 14) Scottsdale, Arizona, avoids the cost of special purpose vehicles by investing in modular trucks with interchangeable parts. The city now has five such all purpose trucks.
- 15) In Seattle, Washington, lawn mowers have special purpose attachments, such as for cleaning reservoirs.

* Sharing Ideas . . . Saving Dollars (Sacramento, Calif.: League of California Cities, 1980), p 2.

** Bakula, Robert, "Don't Be Afraid to Buy Diesel Equipment," *Park Maintenance* (Appleton, Wisc.: Madisen Publishing Division, 1980), p 12.

Revive the Interagency Connection



Where Can We Share Resources or Pool Needs to Lower Internal "Housekeeping Expenses"?

There are some agency functions the public rarely sees but which support the delivery of public services and keep the governmental agency intact as an organization. By cutting these "housekeeping" costs, governments can attain further economies without altering the services they provide to the public. Some governments are, for example, disposing of underutilized properties or simplifying record keeping procedures. But increasingly, public agencies are turning to other public agencies. They are consolidating support functions with their own jurisdiction and within neighboring cities, counties, and special districts or regional councils. Some examples include:

- Joining together to attract and hire better legal and financial experts
- Sharing top administrative positions
- Centralizing the purchasing function
- Joining self-insurance pools
- Joining motor pools
- Taking part in "circuit rider" programs, providing even very small communities with the regular and intensive professional help they need to modernize.

As a cost-cutting strategy, consolidation of support functions has at least three advantages. First, the public suspects there is duplication "behind the scenes" and is likely to support any improvement here as "cutting fat" and therefore in the spirit of Proposition 13 and other tax cuts. Second, governments can avoid redundancy and realize new economies of scale while not having to

relinquish control over program areas. Finally, citizens will still perceive the frontline service provider as small and close to home.

This section covers a few of the steps park and recreation agencies can take to begin sharing more of the support functions underlying public service delivery.

Buy Supplies Together

Where can we save dollars through cooperative purchasing?

- Most agencies buy at least some commodities in bulk to reduce per unit costs. Provo, Utah's park agency buys fertilizer in 100-ton allotments instead of smaller amounts. Cooperative buying may achieve additional economies. For example, Williamsport, Pennsylvania's park agency saves over \$1,500 a year in pool purification chemicals through, in certain cases, purchasing items separately which would collectively, because they are above a certain dollar amount, require competitive bidding. The park agency still benefits from bulk buying through a cooperative purchasing agreement with the local water authority (which uses much greater amounts of the same chemicals).
- Claremont, California's park agency is expanding its storage facilities to take greater advantage of bulk and cooperative buying. The improved facilities will also have tighter security.
- The McClean County, (Illinois) parks agency bought a specialized machine for cutting signs in cooperation with two nearby park agencies, reducing a \$2,000 expenditure down to \$600 for each. The agency is currently working with a nonprofit park foundation and the State Highway Department on cooperative purchases that will save the agency another \$3,000.⁶
- Many states have a joint purchasing program that enables local governments at a nominal fee to take advantage of volume purchase prices. The big advantage: the state does the processing, accounting, reading, evaluating, testing, and awarding of bids. Many agencies buy all vehicles, from passenger cars to heavy-duty pickups through the state. (In some states, the Office of Procurement also makes available to local agencies free information on product specifications and energy usage.)
- Some agencies obtain otherwise inaccessible equipment through interagency barter, assigning minimal or zero dollar value per hour used. In Walnut Creek, California, such equipment exchanges have involved tree spade, grader, and truck. The already mentioned McClean County, Illinois, has at various times traded heavy equipment with a nearby city, university, and park foundation.

Expand the Interagency Network

Where can we share in-house professional resources or hire out in partnership? Can we find other ways to share overhead and institutionalize cooperation?

- To save master planning costs, the East Bay Regional Park District in California, joins forces with other regional governments to hire consultants. In two cases, the cooperating agencies not only matched the district's seed money, but were able to obtain and contribute additional grant funds to the joint studies.
- Some park agencies are, through multi-service arrangements, minimizing initial facility construction costs, as well as the direct and indirect costs of service delivery. These arrangements have included, for example, a county contributing construction costs to a city-operated facility, or a single agency managing park and recreation facilities for several jurisdictions. Two examples: In Baton Rouge, Louisiana, the Baton Rouge Recreation and Park Commission, the Louisiana State Department of Highways, and the United States Bureau of Roads have divided responsibilities and costs of acquiring, developing, operating, and maintaining two separate tracts of land totaling 125 acres. In Salem, Oregon, an agency was set up to manage park and recreation facilities for three jurisdictions, each contributing proportionately to the costs.⁷
- Park agencies need not limit their search for ideas to other park agencies. Twelve cities in southern California formed a joint powers authority to share the services of a private computing firm. "Intelligent terminals" link each city to the computing firm's central facility, for a minimal investment in hardware, yet maximum flexibility and the latest equipment.⁸

Merge Equipment Needs

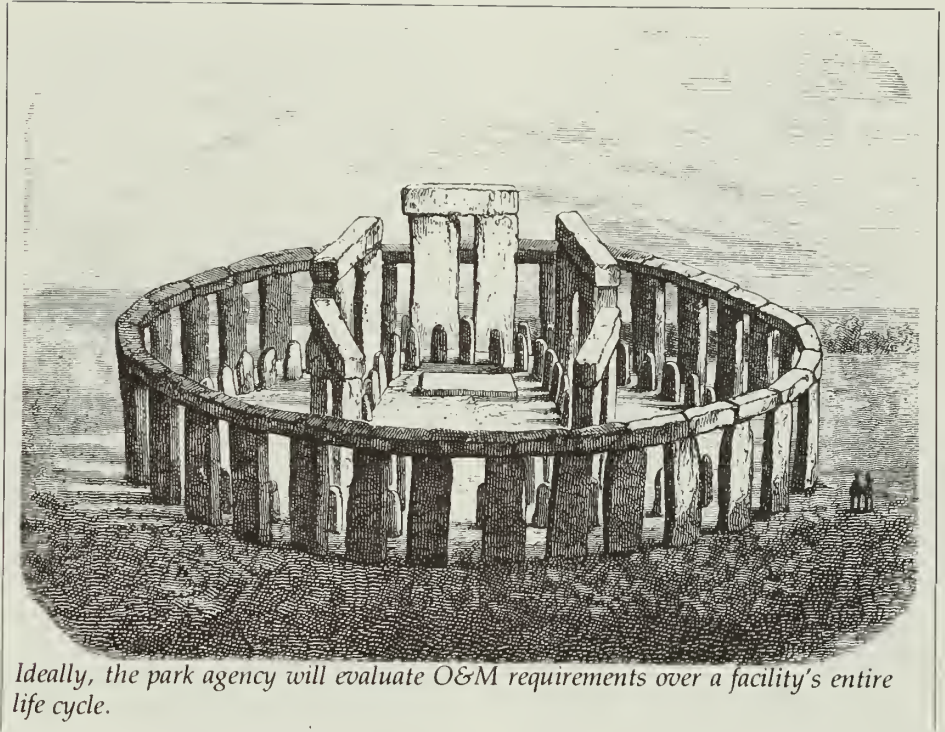
Where can we buy equipment together? Can we, through bartering, reduce our need to own high cost and specialized equipment?

6. Armstrong, Gerard, "Try These Gadgets, Gimmicks, and Ideas," *Park Maintenance* (Appleton, Wisc.: Madisen Publishing Division, 1980), p. 16.

7. Thomas, John S., "How Some Departments Cope with Adversity," *Park Maintenance* (Appleton, Wisc.: Madisen Publishing Division, 1980), p. 11.

8. *Sharing Ideas . . . Saving Dollars* (Sacramento, Calif.: League of California Cities, 1980).

Plan Ahead



Can We Design Facilities or Plan Recreation Programs Which Will Require Minimal Budget Support?

Good design is more than aesthetically pleasing buildings and grounds. Good design, whether of a single park feature or an entire facility, serves as a long-term control on rising O&M costs. Park and recreation practitioners should use the planning and design process to think ahead about maintenance levels, the resources required to reach those levels and other potentially lower cost alternatives for operating and maintaining facilities.

Ideally, the park agency will evaluate the operational costs and maintenance requirements of each facility proposed over that facility's entire life cycle, neglecting neither routine tasks and expenditures nor long-term but less frequently needed work. From the start, design should

not require a higher level of care than the agency can give. However, good design can begin at any time. Many agencies are rethinking existing facilities. These agencies are finding ways to use capital improvement funds to alter facilities so as to eliminate those design flaws and inappropriate uses which drive up maintenance costs. Other agencies have begun to weigh the maintenance support required by different types of recreation programming against the user benefits generated by those activities.

This section focuses on design in a broad sense, taking a quick look at various site and non site related factors that ultimately affect the cost of service delivery. Use these ideas to focus on your agency's future.

Design to Ease Maintenance

Where can we eliminate resource intensive tasks? Have we designed for efficiency of operations?

- Agencies are finding new ways to limit labor intensive turf area to turf dependent uses. For example, simply by designing extended rough areas around tee boxes, the Albuquerque, New Mexico, Department of Parks and Recreation has reduced considerably the staff hours required to mow the city's recently completed golf course. In California the city of Davis has replaced unused turf areas with deeply rooting ground cover, while Los Angeles County relies on soil mulched with woodchips, and the city of Oakland has begun using textured concrete. In Arizona's dry climate, many cities are using desert vegetation in landscaped right-of-ways and water retention basins.
- The California State Department of Transportation (Cal Trans) has in recent years intensified efforts to develop a low-cost program for the long stretches of landscaped areas maintained by the department. Cal Trans does not separate consideration of maintenance tasks and operations from consideration of design, but consciously incorporates less demanding vegetation and labor-saving technology. For Cal Trans, design must permit labor saving maintenance practices. A computerized information base, that includes standard times for all operations, assists the agency to plan ahead. Some of the specific measures Cal Trans has taken include: replacement of present ground cover with mass shrubs; use

of native drought resistant vegetation whenever possible; use of automated sprinklers, saving both water and application time; use of drip irrigation wherever possible; mulching to save on water, and its application; weed control; and more effective use of chemical edging and growth retardants for vegetation and control.

Design to Share

Can facilities be built or modified which take advantage of opportunities to cooperate with other agencies?

- In 1952, joint use of education and recreation facilities became the official policy of Baltimore County, Maryland. The dual-use concept eliminates duplication in land acquisition, construction, and such maintenance and operational costs as custodial care and groundskeeping. And both the school and park boards save on furniture, equipment, and storage. The county estimates that under this arrangement taxpayers get almost twice the value for their tax dollars.

To assure that each "school-recreation center" is functionally designed for dual utility, both school and park board members serve on joint site selection committees and attend joint planning meetings. While the school board pays for construction of traditional school buildings, the Department of Recreation and Parks funds the special add-ons recreation usage requires: activity rooms, recreation offices, and additional square footage in gymnasiums. Recreation and park funds also cover 100 percent of the cost of athletic field and tennis court lighting. Individual joint-use

agreements govern the operation of each school recreation center, but the real key to success has been a cooperative spirit.

Design to Discourage Vandals

How can we design to eliminate the potential for abuse, overuse, misuse?

- Phoenix, Arizona, is keeping vandalism costs down by replacing all broken glass with shatter-resistant material and at only a slightly higher initial cost. Phoenix has also begun using a new type of paint on restrooms and metal which, with a little lacquer thinner, allows graffiti to be removed without marring the paint. (While not more costly than enamel paint, this new paint does require two ingredients to be mixed together.)
- Restroom facilities designed to deter vandalism have been built in Fremont, Nebraska, for a total cost of \$3,500 each. The facility design is a flat-topped square structure with a storage room separating the two restrooms. All piping and valves have been placed so that they are only exposed in the inner storage room. Broken windows are avoided by the use of glass block. The interior walls have been covered with epoxy enamel, reducing the cleaning problem and discouraging graffiti. All the lighting fixtures are recessed into the poured concrete roof and operated by a time clock in the storage room. And, the 4-foot concrete walk that surrounds the building lessens the landscape maintenance burden.
- Fremont, California, has cut the frequency of vandalism by selecting neighborhood park sites that are clearly visible from surrounding streets and buildings. The city has found that highly visible parks

(those open-sided on at least three sides) reduce the incidence of vandalism by about 80 percent.

Be Innovative

Where can unconventional approaches, alternative technologies or new materials reduce operational costs?

- The Dayton-Montgomery Park and Recreation District (Ohio) has found an innovative design solution which saves energy, maintenance, and security costs. The agency's underground interpretive center, now in the final phases of construction, exemplifies comprehensive and cost-conscious design.

The 3 feet of earth covering the building will act as a natural insulator, allowing thermostats to be left at 56 degrees year-round. The building will require no air-conditioning system and a single wood-burning stove should satisfy heating requirements. Nonflushing organically processed latrines are another cost saver.

The center's unusual design means that routine exterior maintenance needs will be limited to window washing. And since the center will be open only during scheduled activities and programs, the district will realize further savings in staffing.

Security problems will be almost nonexistent. Windows will be equipped with heavy-duty, pull-down metal screens, and the center has a "built-in security system" in the form of a one-room apartment. The apartment was constructed to house a college intern, whose presence will both discourage vandals and decrease the need for overtime staffing.

Maximize Public Use

Where can we save dollars by consolidating recreation programs or facilities?

- To continue cooperative park/school programs during these inflationary times, Scottsdale, Arizona, has consolidated summer programming from 10 to 6 sites. These 6 school sites are intensively programmed with classes, clinics, and other activities and are marketed as "fun factories." The most substantial savings to the park agency comes through reduced utility billings.
- In 1974, the budget crunch forced the Everett, Washington, Parks and Recreation Department to eliminate its playground program with a staff of 19. As an alternative, the City Transit System provided three old buses, which have been converted to "Caesar the Roamin' Playground," "Van Go the Artmobile," and "Spirit of '76, the Showmobile." The buses, along with the staff and equipment they transport, are now shared between the various parks through regularly scheduled stops. The program has been a success.

Be Prepared to Adapt

Does maintenance serve current recreational needs? Can we minimize the costs of adapting to new or changing recreational uses?

- The city of Los Angeles (California) Department of Recreation and Parks makes sure that users get the most from each maintenance dollar spent to support recreation activities. The agency has a policy of continually reevaluating maintenance operations and objectives to insure that current needs are being met. Today, maintenance and improvement of



soccer fields is a top priority during resource allocation, while bowling green maintenance is not.

- Winnipeg (Canada) developed the Port-a-Park concept, a system of standard modular components that can be moved easily to any vacant lot and put together quickly to create a park tailor-made to fit the dimensions and requirements of that specific lot. When the site is required for other uses, the components can be dismantled and moved to another vacant lot, where a new park can be set up to fit that site.

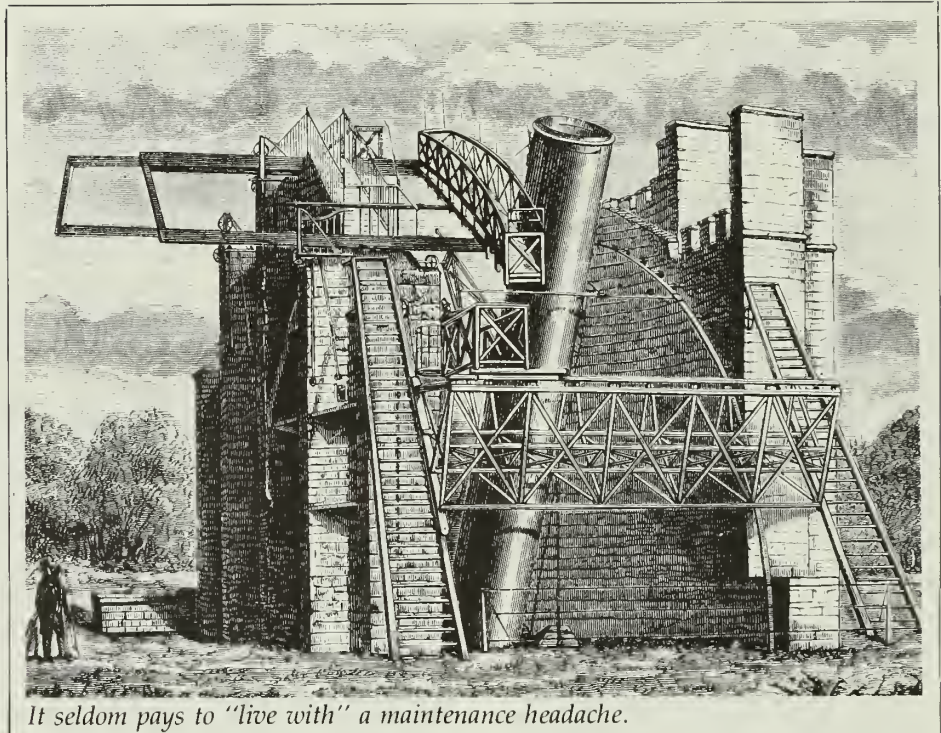
Change the Planning and Design Process

Where can we modify agency policies and procedures so as to produce more cost conscious design?

- The Colorado Springs, Colorado, Park and Recreation Department directly involves maintenance staff in park renovation and the planning of new parks. As the park design concept is drawn up by landscape architects, key staff are asked to critique the plan and suggest changes. Suggestions have ranged from moving trees further apart so as to allow power mowing to building more durable playground equipment that will hold up under intensive use. In addition to the obvious cost savings that occur with fewer maintenance problems, there have been spin-off benefits—improved harmony between the department's divisions and increased respect for maintenance staff.

- The city of Los Angeles, California, Department of Recreation and Parks has established a procedure to insure that past success and inadequacies are incorporated into future design plans. The agency conducts a "Post Occupancy Evaluation" (POE) to determine how well facility designs work. The POE process requires that the agency get several viewpoints, including that of management, maintenance staff, and user. The evaluations are fed back into the design process and result in repeating good design features and eliminating poor ones. When doing a POE, the agency focuses on facility design in relation to these key questions:

How well are user needs being met?
How well can programs be run?



How effective is facility management?

Are there consistent breakdowns and problem areas?

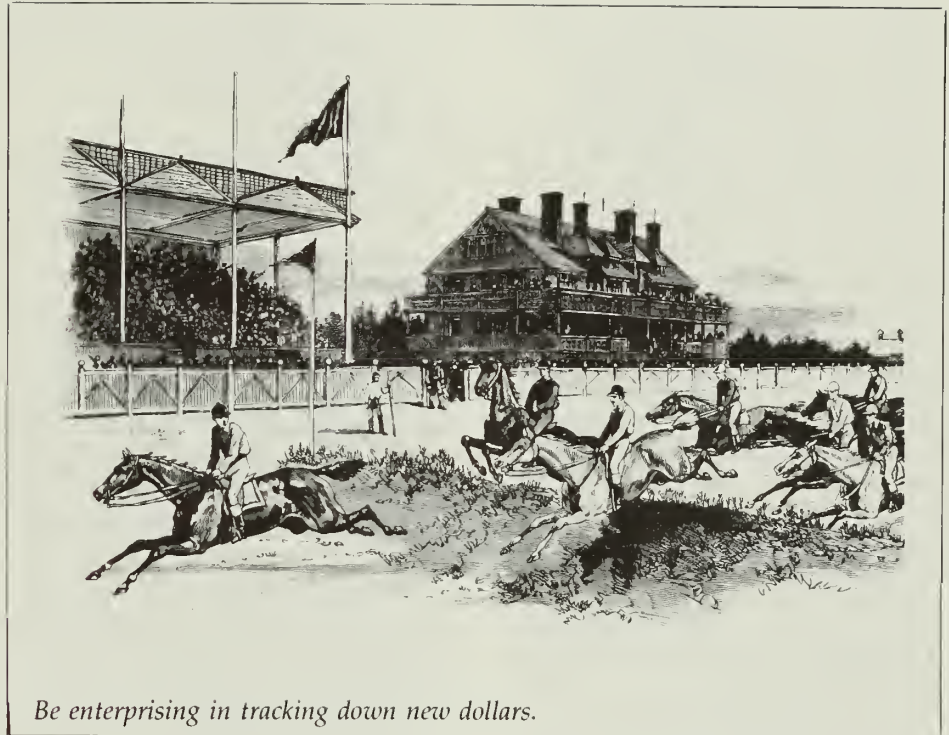
Which facility features are most liked; which are to be avoided in the future?

- Some agencies have modified design criteria to better focus on maintenance costs and considerations. The city of Walnut Creek, California, has, for example, developed special design criteria for sensitive street median vegetation, while the city of Claremont, California, has modified existing criteria for landscape design to accommodate laborsaving equipment.
- When land available for acquisition is diminishing, and yet operational funds are scarce, phased development may be an answer. Property can be graded, covered

with low maintenance vegetation or mulch, and irrigated. As funding solutions are worked out, or other maintenance arrangements made, development proceeds on to the next stage. In San Jose, California, some underdeveloped areas are given only turf, trees, and drinking fountains. These areas cost one-half as much per acre to maintain as the city's more fully developed parkland.

- In California, the East Bay Regional Park District does an "Acquisition Evaluation" prior to acquiring any new property. The evaluation is based upon site characteristics, expectations with regard to use, and past cost records on comparable sites projected over a 5–10-year period. The evaluation assures that the district's board is informed of O&M cost projections while acquisition and development alternatives are still available.

Find New Dollars



Be enterprising in tracking down new dollars.

Where Can We Find New or Additional Dollars for Ongoing Agency Operations?

Sometimes no amount of cost-cutting can make ends meet. The park agency may need also to supplement and redirect its dollar resources if it is to pay its bills and make essential long-term investments.

This section is about what the park agency can do—in an era of tax and spending limits—to track down new and additional dollars. Nationwide, agencies have become more enterprising and are recognizing:

- 1) That the park is a resource base that can be used to generate additional funds while keeping the aesthetic quality of parkland intact.
- 2) That the entire community can be inventoried for potential contributions to the park agency budget.

Even when agency earned dollars end up in general funds, the agency is likely to benefit. Many park agencies have found that increased resourcefulness (and contributions to the general fund) are appreciated at budget time, and can be used to justify continued or increased appropriations. Use this section to begin your own dollar expansion program.

Seek Additional Tax Dollars

Have we exhausted all potential sources of local tax revenue?

- In 1972, Santa Clara County, California, passed a charter amendment to allow 10¢ per \$100 of assessed property value to go into a fund for acquisition and development of parks. In 1978, following Proposition 13, the provision was amended. Today, 50

percent can be used for acquisition, up to 30 percent for park operations and maintenance, and the remaining percentage for park development. This provision, which runs through 1987, yields about \$2 million a year for ongoing operations and maintenance.

- In 1978, San Clemente, California, passed an ordinance to permit the city to acquire land or obtain fees from all newly developed subdivisions in order to develop park and recreation facilities. In June 1980, the ordinance was amended to allow the city to use a portion of the collected park dedication fees for the ongoing maintenance of new and existing facilities. The post-Proposition 13 reduction in revenues, compounded by the maintenance needs of an expanding park system, prompted the change.
- Claremont, California, has established an Open Space Maintenance District (under the state of California's Landscape and Lighting Act of 1972) to cover the cost of maintaining subdivision plantings. On an increased basis the park agency will use the special assessment fees it receives to hire private maintenance contractors. In this way the agency can be sure that the added dollars get translated into additional work.

Seek Private Sector Assistance

Can we more effectively tap private resources to cover operations and maintenance costs? Where can we set up new vehicles to target support at specific facilities or critical needs?

- In Tulsa, Oklahoma, a nonprofit foundation was formed to act as a clearinghouse for all donations of funds, labor, and materials to the park system. The foundation

publishes a catalog of giving ideas that includes ongoing needs such as shrubs, trees, lighting, craft equipment, and program sponsorship.

- In San Francisco, California, the nonprofit Friends of Recreation and Parks generates dollars in support of the public agency. As a nongovernmental entity, the organization is freed of certain red tape and can thus expedite park improvements. Recently, the Friends sponsored a 6.1-mile run in Golden Gate Park. The \$6,000 collected in entry fees will be used to repair broken water fountains.
- In Alamogordo, New Mexico, the Friends of Recreation have established a series of separate accounts to enable individuals and businesses to earmark their contributions for specific programs. The same concept of restricted accounts has been used by other agencies to allow contributors to support maintenance efforts at their favorite parks.
- An endowment established through bequests or fundraising is another way to support a specific recreational resource or facility. California fishermen contributed \$250,000 to a fund set up for the McCloud River near Mount Shasta. The interest earned on the principal covers all management costs and operational expenses.
- In Dayton-Montgomery County, Ohio, all gifts of land or facilities must be accompanied by an endowment to cover operations and maintenance costs. To insure adequate consideration of long-term costs, annual O&M cost figures are averaged from 10-year projections. Projections take into account all costs, including staffing requirements, utility costs (based

on square footage), and insurance.

- In 1979, following passage of Proposition 13, the East Bay Regional Park District (California) approached the Kaiser Aluminum and Chemical Corporation for assistance. The corporation agreed to "adopt" an 88-acre recreation area, one of the district's 40 parks. This corporation provided \$15,000 in seed money and made a commitment to provide an additional \$100,000 over the next 3 years. The arrangement is flexible and also involves the donation of expertise and onsite labor. For the corporation, the benefits are increased community support.
- In January 1980, a New York City park department official drew up a revitalization program for the long neglected Madison Square Park. The official also persuaded four corporations located near the park to contribute a total \$32,500 toward the park's maintenance. The money was used to hire a private contractor to supplement the bare-bones housekeeping already provided by park agency staff.
- Corporations may be more easily persuaded to support recreation programming. This type of support takes pressure off of the agency budget while providing the contributor with visibility in the community. In Chandler, Arizona, the Pepsi Cola Company provides the park and recreation agency with a fully equipped "tennis mobile" each summer. The tennis mobile is used to conduct lessons for youth in all parts of the city.

Know Your Assets

Have we made full use of the park as a resource base? Can we market agency skills and services?

- The Recreation and Parks Commission for the Parish of East

Baton Rouge, Louisiana, has increased revenues by leasing parkland for oil drilling. A 640-acre park was leased out for a 3-year period with the agreement that the lessee could drill on 1–2 acres. The Parish obtains 1 million dollars on the 3-year lease and an additional 26 percent if oil or gas is found. This arrangement has proved very profitable for the Parish.

- In California, 29,282 acres of the East Bay Regional Park District's 52,000 acres are used for both recreation and cattle grazing. In 1979, \$136,490 in grazing fees was collected from cattle ranchers. This year the program is expected to supplement park revenues by over \$191,000. Controlled grazing also cuts maintenance costs through removing the understory in forested areas which can cause fires. And, it may create a better balance between brush, forest, and open grassland plant communities.
- Newark, California, uses its underutilized buildings to generate additional revenues. During the past year and a half, the agency has rented out three community center rooms for Sunday morning church services at \$70 a week. The agency also rents out a neighborhood center to a weekday child care program, earning another \$200 a month.
- The Illinois Forest Preserve District plans to raise \$10 million over a 19-year period by allowing solid waste disposal firms, through contract, to deposit waste at prime land fill sites. The district receives 10 percent of gross royalties. An added benefit: the firms are creating lakes and naturally shaped hills at no cost to the district.
- Since 1978, the Southgate Recreation and Park District



You'll need to inventory your moneymaking assets.

(California) has sold landscape maintenance services to a County Library within district territory. This service arrangement is structured through a joint powers agreement with the county of Sacramento. The arrangement has worked so well that the district is today also providing services to the county's Recreation and Parks and Public Works Departments. In addition to realizing a 20–30 percent contingency on each contract (enough to cover personnel, administrative overhead, and other expenses), service expansion has justified retention of district staff and equipment despite severe Proposition 13 cutbacks.

Fill Community Needs

Where can we identify and meet unfilled needs in our community, and in the process earn new dollars?

- In El Cerrito, California, the park and recreation agency spearheads community recycling efforts. The "E.C.ology Recycling Program" presently collects 400 tons of material per month, and expects to be profit-making within the next year when collections reach the 500-ton mark. At that time (1980–1981) the agency's 10 percent volume contingency fee is expected to reach \$6,400. The El Cerrito program employs four CETA staff

persons, and involves five different types of collection systems, collecting 10 different types of recyclables.

Target Grant Monies

Can we target state or federal grant monies to reduce our long-term operational costs?

- Using State Park Bond monies and other grants totaling \$120,000, the city of El Cerrito, California, installed a solar heating system at its swim center. Completed in 1977, the project will save about \$8,000 each year in utility costs.
- The city of Pomona, California, is actively seeking state grant monies to buy permanent, aesthetically pleasing trash receptacles and to print anti-litter signs. In this way, they expect to cut litter control costs.
- Both Ann Arbor, Michigan, and Wilmington, Delaware, obtained funding support from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to develop park maintenance management and scheduling plans. For both agencies, these plans have resulted in a better allocation of limited agency resources.

Learn Cash Management Skills

Can we increase our income by investing dollars not needed for current operations? Can we find new ways to conserve working capital?

- For the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission, cash management has paid off. In 1977, for example, the commission earned \$27,000 through a program that combines retained earnings with idle cash balances, credited with interest on a short-term interest basis.
- The East Bay Regional Park District, (California) invests temporarily idle funds at the highest going rate of interest. During the 1979–1980 fiscal year, the district earned about 2 million dollars from idle tax revenues and grant monies.
- Public agencies are beginning to bill for future service rather than past service. For example, the Southgate Recreation and Park District (California) no longer chases down its swim team members to collect monthly fees. Instead, the agency has invested in a computerized billing system, which makes it easy to send out monthly bills. Parents appreciate the convenience, while the district benefits from a 99 percent return with hardly any staff time expended. As district staff say, “don’t chase old money.”

If this sounds “business-like,” it should. The district actively seeks good ideas from the private sector. Being called business-like is a compliment. Another example: the district analyzes all activities, comparing staff time units and expenses against incoming revenues. Should its “profit and loss statement” show a deficit, two questions are asked: 1) Is there a better way to run the program? 2) Do we need to do it? When fees are



impossible, yet the activity worthwhile, a nonprofit corporation, composed of 13 separate organizations, comes to the rescue.

- The East Bay Regional Park District attracts private dollars for operations by advancing construction monies. For example, the district advanced funds to a nonprofit group for construction of a marksmanship range. The group covers all maintenance costs and pays 50 percent of construction costs back to the district over 25 years.
- Many public agencies have not built up the capital improvement funds they need to purchase more efficient rolling stock or pursue technological innovation. Lease/purchase is one option. Governments can budget yearly lease payments as they do other appropriations, and such payments

will not apply to the debt ceiling. For example, High Point, North Carolina, cut the high personnel costs of refuse collection through lease/purchase of new equipment.

Rethink Fee Policies

Where can we identify the beneficiary and charge a service fee? Where can self-sufficiency goals cover operations and maintenance costs?

- To project a more fiscally responsible image at budgeting time, agencies nationwide are beginning to charge for services previously offered at no cost, for example, class cancellation, field preparation, and use of office copying machines. Agencies are also offering for a fee, services which enhance the recreation experience. Sometimes new “profit centers” can be established by bringing these additional services in-house. A 1979 National Recreation and Park Association Survey of practitioners in the Great Lakes area turned up these ideas: Sell firewood, picture post cards and sports equipment; rent portable barbecues, new games equipment, camp and sports equipment, and picnic shelters; install coin operated showers, tennis courts and lockers.
- Agencies are finding new ways to allocate costs to enterprise funds, both to lighten the load on the general operations and maintenance budget and to insure that any revenues earned stay with a specific facility. Fremont, California, divides all recreation facility operations into two “cost centers.” Through cost-cutting and new or increased fees, each of the cost centers aims to balance revenues with expenditures. The cost centers cover overhead charged by the city, but only a portion of the maintenance, which is provided by public works staff.

Moneymaking Ideas to Evaluate—from Fellow Park Practitioners—

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Ad-a-park | Allow limited advertising in underdeveloped parks in exchange for dollars or advertisers' product |
| Rent-a-tree | Rent maple trees for tapping |
| Hug-a-tree | Begin an active membership program, entitling members to free park entry and special event mailings |
| Photo rights | Set up a pricing scale for professional photographers using parks as background setting |
| Mulch sales | Sell wood chips to the community for garden mulch |
| Grass sales | Charge for opportunity to mow and haul away grass for animal food |
| Wedding rights | Institute a sliding fee for large groups using parks for weddings, company picnics |
| Advertising space | Sell advertising space in mail-out recreation brochures |
| Beer sales | Operate a beer concession within the parks, especially during baseball games |
| Energy sales | Install a wind generator to supply park power needs and sell back excess kilowatt hours to the power company |
| "Wooden nickel" sales | Sell tokens good for a free swim to store owners to give out to customers as promotional tool |
| Mobile concession | Set up a mobile concession (perhaps operated by teen volunteers) to move from one special event to another |

Change the Rules



The rules of the game can be challenged.

Where Can Policy Tools Hold Down Service Costs or Lessen the Need for Service?

Sometimes park and recreation agencies provide services that they should not bear the sole burden to finance and oversee. Other times, spending additional dollars to provide more services fails to solve the problem at hand or to satisfy an apparent need for service.

In this section we adopt a different approach to cost cutting and focus on some basic questions. Among these are: What factors influence the demand for agency services? What institutional barriers contribute to high service delivery costs? Why does the park agency bear the burden to provide this particular service?

Asking such questions adds a new dimension to the cost-cutting strategies already discussed. We have, for example, already discussed contracts with private-for-profit providers and partnerships with community groups. In most cases such arrangements leave the agency with an active management role, whether it be to monitor and pay the contractor or guarantee community group performance. In the end, the agency remains responsible to see that the service is delivered and delivered within the existing legal and institutional framework.

But the “rules of the game” can be changed. One particularly useful concept is *governance*, as defined by Stanford Research Institute.⁹

9. Gollub, James O., and Waldhorn, Steven A., *Rediscovering Governance—Using Nonservice Approaches to Address Neighborhood Problems* (Menlo Park, Calif.: Stanford Research Institute, 1980), p. 1.

Governance emphasizes the use of government's policymaking and regulatory powers over the power of the purse. *Governance* can provide a simple and direct approach to an otherwise expensive problem. An obvious example is one that requires homeowners to purchase smoke alarms, thereby reducing the cost of fire protection services. In other cases, policy changes may 1) permit new efficiencies that lower the cost to provide a service, 2) provide new incentives to the private sector to share a given responsibility, or 3) remove barriers to interagency operation.

As dollars grow tighter, the public sector will continue to see new and creative "nondollar" approaches at all levels of government. While all policy changes have their positive and negative sides, the net impact should be to ease the load on the park agency. Consider these ideas on using policy tools.

Exercise Governance

Where can we use policy tools to 1) shift the burden to provide a service? 2) decrease demand for a service? 3) freshly tackle a persistent expensive problem?

- In Walnut Creek, California, a local ordinance was passed that returned residential tree work and weed abatement to homeowners. In 1975, without homeowner assistance, tree program costs were up to \$60,000; in 1979, these costs were reduced to \$11,000. The drawback was some loss in continuity of quality work.
- In Howard County, Maryland, a ballfield is dressed, graded, and rolled twice a week. Should a league require more frequent service, it is charged according to a preset fee structure. The effect of this kind of fee policy is to ration services.



Exercise your policymaking powers.

- In 1979, the state of Michigan passed its Returnable Bottle Law. For the Oakland County Parks, the result has been less time spent on maintenance, better looking parks, and fewer safety problems. Bottles and cans not picked up by park visitors are picked up by park workers. Some employees, for example, were able to buy a radio with cans they saved.

- In San Jose, California, loitering and vandalism have troubled city parks. Since July 1978, park agency efforts to curb the problem have been aided by a special parks ordinance that closes parks 1 hour after sunset and forbids parking vehicles at park perimeters on weekends. This ordinance requires no complaint to be enforced and carries a stiff \$165 fine. The city's police and park departments worked closely together to pass the ordinance.

Support Governance

Where can we support policy changes that will indirectly result in dollar savings?

- In Lakewood, California, an ordinance was passed to forbid the sale of spray paint to customers under 18 years of age. The law is intended to curb the use of spray paint to deface property.

SHARE Case Studies



Mount a comprehensive cost-cutting effort.

Agencies Taking a Comprehensive Approach to Cost-Cutting

It is seldom enough to put an isolated cost-cutting idea into practice. Effective cost-cutting is based on the understanding that agency costs are interrelated, and that even specific problems must be viewed within their broader context. Each of the agencies profiled here has developed a multifaceted program to deal with a common park agency concern.

Remember, too, that case studies can be an effective tool for selling your cost-cutting program to decisionmakers. Case studies can help you to answer such questions as:

- When is a front-end investment likely to pay for itself in terms of savings realized?
- How can implementation problems be resolved?
- Are there spin-off benefits or unanticipated impacts?

The case studies in this section include:

- A Total Program to Cut Pool Costs
- A Crackdown on Energy Costs
- A Plan for Effective Maintenance
- A New Organizational Structure to Provide Services
- A Stop to Soaring Equipment Costs
- An Effective Use of Staff Suggestions
- A Unique Maintenance Contract Utilizing CETA Staff

A Total Program to Cut Pool Costs

Scottsdale Department of Parks and Recreation, 7384 E. 2nd Street, Scottsdale, AZ 85251, 602/994-2408, Contact: Bob Frost, Recreation Director

Several years ago attendance dropped drastically at Scottsdale, Arizona's Civic Center pool. The 50-meter, 7-lane pool suffered under competition from newer more conveniently located facilities. The city knew that it had to cut expenses if it was to justify keeping the pool open. The park and recreation agency developed a cost-cutting "package" for the Civic Center pool, which considered all costs.

As a first step, the agency supplemented the ordinary pool chemicals used to purify water with activated oxygen. The new system cuts chemical costs by 40 percent while sanitizing and clarifying the water. Estimated pay back period for the initial investment is 2 years. Here is how it works. Light energy raises oxygen to a higher state. This activated oxygen is pumped into the pool after filtration and minimal chlorination (required by law). The bubbling oxygen purifies water. And, the system is energy efficient, noncorrosive to iron pipes and less irritating to swimmers. Monthly operating costs are about \$2 and maintenance is minimal. (Today, all the city's pools are cleaned by activated oxygen, saving substantially on a budget item that previously comprised 10 percent of total pool operating costs.)

But Scottsdale did not stop here. Some staff cutbacks were made, and the agency found that heating costs could be completely eliminated by connecting to a solar demonstration project at a nearby courthouse.

The "package" also called for increased usage. Agency staff carefully considered the possibilities. Since the pool was close to City Hall, other offices, and a hospital (rather than residences), the decision was made to "reprogram" it for special uses, such as adult fitness programs, programs for the handicapped and seniors, and team workouts. During winter months, a portable "bulkhead" divides the pool allowing two teams to practice side by side. Since the bulkhead also serves team interests, a swim team paid its \$4,000 purchase price.

A Crackdown on Energy Costs

Great Smokey Mountains National Park, Maintenance Department, Gatlinburg, TN 37738, 615/436-5615, Contact: Troy Carr, Chief of Maintenance

The Great Smokey Mountains National Park, located near Gatlinburg, Tennessee, has cut overall energy use by 25 percent since 1975. This park is one of the largest unspoiled areas east of the Rockies, and often experiences bitter winters. This savings did not come easily; park staff mounted a comprehensive energy saving program that has impacted all operations.

At Great Smokey Mountains, energy conservation is taken seriously. Underlying the program are these convictions: small savings do add up; parks should convey a sound conservation message; and energy conservation can tie in with other park goals. The following is a sampling of some of the specific steps the park has taken:

- Vehicles have been reduced to the minimum size to accomplish their purpose. Full-size, high-performance engines have been reduced to mid-size standard engines. Individuals who perform multiple duties have replaced traveling specialists.
- To cut mileage, all vehicles were tagged with a maximum allowed mileage (set at 10 percent less than last year's recorded mileage). Persons assigned to vehicles now have an incentive to cut unessential travel, encouraging pooling, routing efficiency, and use of pack animals.
- To save heat, special funding was obtained for insulation, and trees were planted so as to shade in the summer but not the winter.
- Incandescent overhead lights have been replaced by fluorescent ones, which operate on 1/3 the power. When possible, intensity is held to a minimum by removing lamp tubes.
- Electric golf carts are now used as campground cleanup vehicles.
- A prefab comfort station, operating on the vacuum principle that airplane toilets use, requires but one quart of water per flush.

Cost-cutting takes time and a continual influx of new ideas. To keep these ideas coming, Great Smokey Mountains has set up a committee with broad employee representation.

Plan for Effective Maintenance

Dept. of Parks and Recreation, Ann Arbor City Hall, 100 N. 5th Avenue, Ann Arbor, MI 48107, 313/994-2780, Contact: Tom Raynes, Manager of Park Planning and Development

In Ann Arbor, Michigan, the Department of Parks and Recreation knew that a comprehensive effort was needed to improve the agency's efficiency and effectiveness. In-house staff, in cooperation with outside expertise, developed a park maintenance plan for the city's 100 parks, which cover 3,000 acres. To date, the plan has:

- 1) Improved uniformity and continuity of park maintenance activities
- 2) Improved communications and understanding among department personnel and city officials
- 3) Assisted the training of new employees
- 4) Allowed better costs accounting

The Ann Arbor plan begins by setting an overall goal for all parkland, followed by more specific goals for such park categories as major parks, neighborhood parks, playgrounds, and playlots. The plan then divides all Ann Arbor park facilities into 12 components. These components are common to most parks and include such items as public buildings, walks and trails, fences, and picnic areas. For each of the 12 facility types, the plan describes three to five levels of maintenance. The level of maintenance any particular facility receives depends on such factors as overall objectives for that location and function, intensity of use, and so forth. In this way, Ann Arbor has a rational framework for making systemwide decisions about how dollars and staff are to be allocated and about scheduling maintenance

work at a particular site. (This kind of framework can also serve as a tool for cutting back service levels.)

Other sections of the park maintenance plan contain an annual calendar for planning seasonal work programs, and a complete inventory and map of every Ann Arbor park. With this kind of detail, the plan can double as a preventive maintenance tool, capable of troubleshooting problems at specific parks.

While any comprehensive maintenance plan involves start-up costs, over the long term, such time and money is well spent. For Ann Arbor, the benefits came early. Just 1 year after the plan's adoption, the parks and recreation agency's better justified budget proved that maintenance had been underfunded. The agency received additional dollars.

A New Organizational Structure

San Ramon Valley Community Center Inc., 135 Love Lane, P.O. Box 604, Danville, CA 94526 415/837-8235, Contact: David Stegman, Director of Community Services

Sometimes no single approach will work, but rather an entirely new organizational structure is needed to fit together the pieces of a community puzzle.

In San Ramon Valley, California, four organizations have joined together to deliver community services when a lack of funding threatened to close facilities. The organizations cross county jurisdictional lines and include a community services district, county service area, school district, and community nonprofit corporation.

As a first step, the agencies bought into a single management contract to pull them together for mutual and public benefit. This arrangement multiplies the number of available

options for running any particular program or facility. With this flexibility, public services can better keep up with the demands of the rapidly growing community, despite fiscal constraints and conflicting jurisdictional boundaries.

For example, nearly all recreation programs in the valley are run through the nonprofit corporation. Asking to be paid only the cost of locking up a facility (its "mothball" cost), the corporation took over an olympic-size community pool. As a private, nonprofit agency, the corporation is free of jurisdictional disputes and other red tape. This factor, coupled with aggressive marketing, enables the pool to more than cover expenses through fees, while serving the 70,000 residents of the San Ramon area. Under a similar contract, the corporation also operates a community center and tennis courts. The costs of recreation delivery are kept low through a combination of user fees, active fundraising, and low overhead.

Currently, the four participating agencies are working to consolidate the 14 separate contracts between them into a master contract and plan for San Ramon community services. The plan elements are

- 1) administration, 2) all programs and services, 3) facility operations and 4) grounds maintenance. Under the proposed master contract, grounds maintenance, for example, will be provided by the school district. Currently being resolved are such questions as level of service, personnel needs, and a method of monitoring the work.



Cost-cutting requires taking a new look at past decisions.

The San Ramon approach can work to break down barriers to cooperation. The strategy is to identify the pieces to the puzzle in your community and to assess the politics. Once cooperation is underway, it takes 1) agreement from the top on what is being bought into, 2) adequate staff training, and 3) a balance of control between participant organizations. For San Ramon, the cooperating process has also taken patience and a hard look at legal and union issues and increased risk exposure.

A Stop to Soaring Equipment Costs

City of San Jose Parks and Recreation Department, 151 W. Mission Street, San Jose, CA 95110, 408/277-4661, Contact: Dick Reed, Parks Superintendent

In San Jose, California, the Parks Division (responsible for maintenance of 1,500 developed acres) has developed an overall strategy to harness equipment costs. This strategy is built on the recognition that many equipment costs are really people costs.

A key component of the overall strategy is the "proficiency training" program. The goals of the proficiency training program are to promote a safer and more cost-effective use of power equipment throughout the Parks Division. The concept is similar to licensing automobile drivers; in San Jose, no one operates park equipment without carrying a card showing that he or she is authorized to do so.

To get the training program off the ground, the Parks Division split its equipment inventory into five groupings. This allows the Division to target training at those staff who are most likely to use a particular class of equipment, covering safety considerations and step-by-step operational do's and don't's. Staff who have completed the training are issued equipment use cards that note level of proficiency. Staff are rated as either "trained" or "proficient." Those rated as "trained" need to attend annual review trainings to assure that their skills do not rust away.

Other aspects of San Jose's strategy to cut equipment costs include:

- An Equipment Redline Report, filled out at the immediate scene of equipment damage or breakdown, to describe both the extent and causes of the breakdown. This information is used to speed up repairs, improve the equipment inventory, and schedule needed training.
- The Equipment Cost Rationale, developed from cost records kept on each individual type of equipment. This information determines when a specific piece should be replaced because further upkeep would be uneconomical.

Finally, San Jose took steps to clarify roles between the city's Central Services and Parks Division with respect to equipment use, maintenance, repair, and record keeping. And today, if other city employees want to borrow power equipment from the Parks Division, they, too, must obtain training and authorization.

Effective Use of Staff Suggestions

Scottsdale Department of Parks and Recreation, 7384 E. 2nd Street, Scottsdale, AZ 85251 602/994-2408, Contact: Bob Frost, Recreation Director

In Scottsdale, Arizona, a citywide employee suggestion program (ESP) continually generates new and cost-saving ideas. Here's how it works: Employees submit their ideas to the city's personnel officer where they are logged, numbered, and assigned to an evaluator, someone with appropriate management responsibility. The suggestor's name is withheld from the evaluator. (One part-time staff person with the personnel office handles all logging and paperwork citywide.) If implementation is recommended, the idea moves on to the department head. On implementation, the suggestor is paid 10 percent of first year savings less implementations costs. When savings are unclear, a partial award is made after 3 months.

Ideas are eligible for an award if they 1) eliminate needless work, duplication or hazards; 2) save money, materials or time; and 3) produce improved service, better methods, working conditions, control and communications.

To date, the employee suggestion program has saved thousands of dollars citywide. Here are two of the ideas which the Department of Parks and Recreation implemented.

- Gas powered weed eaters could be equipped with blower assemblies to save valuable sweeping time.

- To save both the initial purchase and the later maintenance cost of vegetation, the agency could plant parks with illegally dug up native desert vegetation which has been confiscated by law enforcement officials.

Scottsdale's program has been effective because suggestions are not just given lip service; a procedure exists to carefully evaluate the merits of each and every idea. In addition to the savings in money when all staff have the incentive to think through problems and offer potential solutions, this program improves employee morale. In Scottsdale, staff know they have a real voice for change in the operations of the Parks and Recreation Department.

A Unique Maintenance Contract Utilizing CETA Staff

City of Lafayette, 251 Lafayette Circle, Lafayette, CA 94549, 415/284-1968, Contact: E.C. Marriner, City Manager

In Lafayette, California, a unique contract between the city and a private maintenance contractor keeps the lid on the costs of public works maintenance. Despite the 12 percent rate of inflation, the 1979 maintenance bill was a full 10 percent less than in 1977, the year the contractor was hired.

Lafayette's contract is designed to organize the public works function. The contract calls for the contractor to develop annual maintenance plans and budgets, schedule work, supervise and perform work in a responsive manner, and provide work performance and cost

information on a regular basis. The public works budget is based on quotations from subcontractors and on lump sum estimates for emergency work and contract management. In 1978-1979, the public works budget totaled \$438,670, for a city of 20,000 population covering 13 square miles.

The contracted firm's engineer/manager prepares bid requests and contract documents. The work itself is performed by several subcontractors and by a CETA crew. The CETA crew is provided by the city but scheduled, supervised, and equipped by the contractor. Records show that under contractor supervision, the CETA staff persons have performed more work than anticipated and have handled a broader range of tasks.

The contract firm's engineer/manager is constantly on the lookout for better work methods and management techniques. For example, the firm gives a subcontractor a cash bonus to increase productivity, with the city sharing the savings. To date Lafayette's contract arrangement has been considered very successful and is widely supported by the community.

Appendix: Further Resources



A world of ideas . . . keep up-to-date!

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Newsletters to Keep You Up to Date

City Hall Digest, monthly; City Hall Communications; highlights innovation in municipal governments nationwide. To obtain, write: City Hall Communications, PO Box 309, Seabrook, MD 20801; \$36/year.

The Energy Consumer, U.S. Department of Energy (DOE); information on federal energy programs. To obtain, write: DOE Office of Consumer Affairs, Room 8G082, Washington, DC 20585; free.

Fiscal Watchdog, monthly; Local Government Center; a column of ideas on cutting the cost of local government. To obtain, write: Local Government Center, 221 W. Carrillo Street, Santa Barbara, CA 93101; \$10/year.

The Guide to Management Improvement Projects in Local Government, quarterly; International City Management Association (ICMA), excellent listing of nationwide case studies. To obtain, write: ICMA, 1140 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20036; \$25/year.

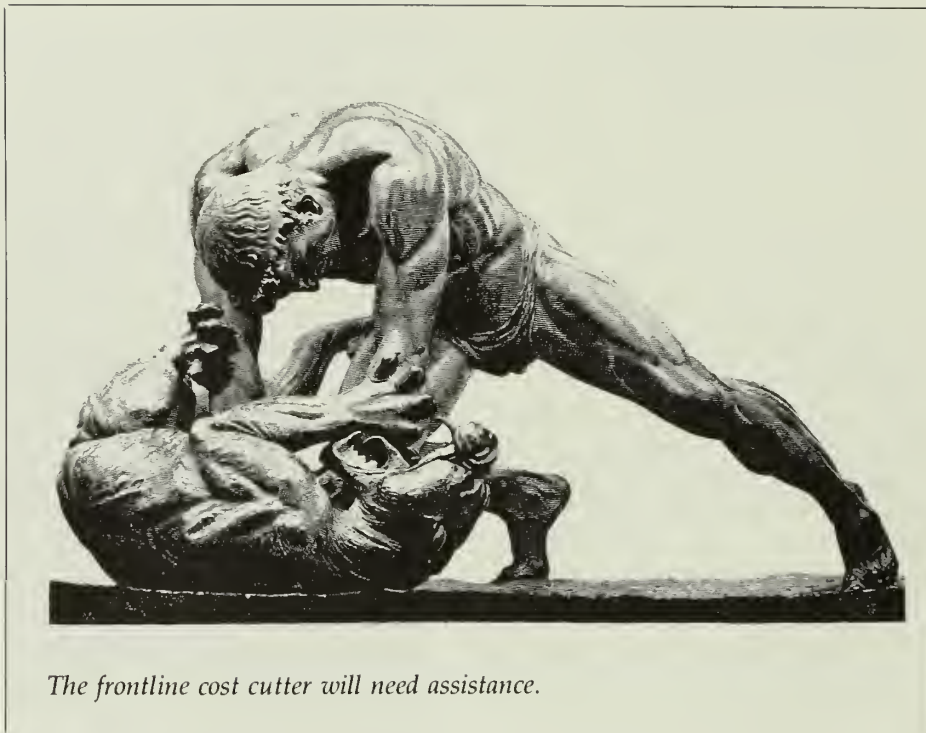
Public Technology News, bimonthly; Public Technology Inc. (PTI); reports on specific applications of science and technology to all major governmental functions. To obtain, write: PTI, 1140 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20036; \$18/year, \$30/every 2 years.

Productivity, published periodically; U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM); provides practical information on productivity improvement to state and local governments. To be put on the mailing list, write or call: Productivity Resource Center, OPM, PO Box 14184, Washington, DC 20044, 202/632-7748; free.

Sharing Ideas . . . Saving Dollars, monthly; League of California Cities; a newsletter of cost-saving ideas implemented by California cities. To obtain, write: Innovation Exchange Program, League of California Cities, 1400 K Street, Sacramento, CA 95814; free.

Urban Innovation Abroad, monthly; The Council for International Urban Liaison (CIUL); A newsletter to assist the international exchange of practical solutions to common urban problems. To obtain, write: CIUL, 818 18th Street, NW, Washington DC, 20006; \$24/year.

Organizations to Contact



The Organization

Services Provided

Interest Areas

Council of State
Community Affairs Agencies
Hall of the State
444 North Capitol St.
Washington, DC 20001

National organization representing state agencies providing local assistance; has compiled and published a state-by-state resource guide to agencies, publications, and trainings.

Financial management, community development, human resources, planning, training, management capacity building.

Educational Facilities
Laboratories
850 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10022
212/397-0044

Researches and publishes information usable to a broad audience: public agencies, nonprofits, architects, and general public.

Constructive change in the design and operation of public buildings, including architectural alternatives and energy considerations.

Resource Center of the Government
Finance Research Center
1750 K Street, NW Suite 650
Washington, DC 20006
202/466-2473

Offers inquiry service, trainings, regular newsletter, and special publications.

Financial management: budgeting, accounting, and performance measurement.

| The Organization | Services Provided | Interest Areas |
|--|--|---|
| National Innovation Network, Bruce Reiss, Program Manager c/o National Science Foundation 1800 G Street, NW Washington, DC 20550 202/357-7560 | Will refer cities to 1 of 10 regional networks that link together member cities for sharing ideas and identifying technological solutions. | Cost-cutting and service improvement in all areas of local government. |
| National Institute for Park and Grounds Management Box 1936 Appleton, WI 54913 | Publishes the monthly <i>Park Maintenance</i> ; holds an annual conference for practitioners. | Maintenance management; "nuts and bolts" maintenance information. |
| National Recreation and Park Association 1601 N. Kent Street Arlington, VA 22207 202/525-0606 | Produces regular and special interest publications and sponsors trainings. | All aspects of park and recreation management. |
| Public Technology, Inc. 1140 Connecticut Ave., NW Washington, DC 20036 202/452-7787 | Produces computer-based "decision support" packages; provides technical assistance directed at problems that technology can remedy. | Cost-cutting and service improvement in all areas of local government. |
| U.S. Office of Personnel Management P.O. Box 14184 Washington, DC 10044 202/632-7748 | Acts as a focal point and synthesizer of information on productivity improvement; operates a Productivity Resource Center for government managers; funds projects through the Intergovernmental Personnel Act. | Productivity improvement: management information systems, staff recruitment and classification, staff training and development, quality of work life, and other related topics. |
| The Urban Institute 2100 M Street, NW Washington, DC 20037 202/223-1950 | Responds to state and local research needs; publishes excellent materials. | Efficiency and effectiveness measures for public service delivery, productivity improvement, and privatization. |

