

A Year of Transition and Increased Visitation for Dunewood Campground



What happens when you transition from a National Lakeshore to the country's 61st National Park?

An exponential increase in visitation.

What happens when you transition from a first-come, first-served process to an online reservation system?

Optimized revenue accompanied with an increase in customer and staff satisfaction.

Dunewood Campground transitioned from not knowing what their daily revenue would be with a first-come, first-served system to watching the revenue growth as inventory was released and reserved through Recreation.gov.



THE CHALLENGE: HIGH DEMAND AND FRUSTRATION DRIVE NEED FOR CHANGE

In February 2019, Indiana Dunes transitioned from a National Lakeshore to a National Park, becoming the 61st National Park and the first National Park in the state of Indiana. This change had an immediate impact on visibility for the park and drove an increase in visitation. The park's current first-come, first-served reservation process was becoming a challenge for the staff and the public.

On Friday mornings, the park would sometimes have lines of 20-30 groups at 9 AM hoping to secure a weekend campsite. And for some, "early" wasn't just a few hours prior to their desired stay; eager visitors frequently arrived days before their anticipated stay. Ryan Koepke, Park Guide, shared that it was not uncommon for visitors to arrive on Tuesday and pay for a stay through Sunday, even though they were only planning on camping during the weekend.

In addition, Dunewood Campground was using an automated fee machine to collect revenue. It was an honor system where a visitor would pay for a campsite at the fee machine and post the receipt on the campsite. At times, visitors might purchase their reservation ahead of time and place their receipt on their campsite, only to return and find the receipt missing and the campsite occupied.

The long lines and imprecise honor system created frustration for the public and park staff. As demand increased, the need for an automated online reservation system became apparent.

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“We have about half of our campsites available for advanced reservations and we are looking into adding the remaining campsites to Recreation.gov.” said Koepke

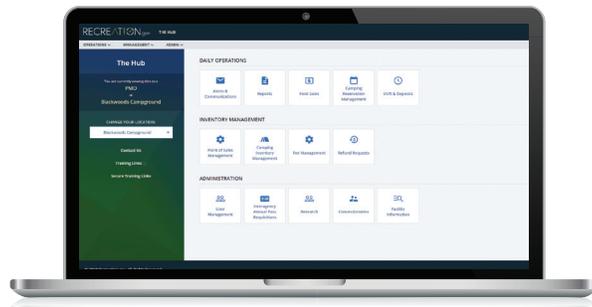
— Ryan Koepke, Park Guide

THE SOLUTION: ONLINE INVENTORY AND TRACKED RESERVATIONS

Given the challenges to both the public and the staff, park management decided to test an online reservation system. Half of Dunewood Campground's inventory was placed on Recreation.gov for the Spring of 2019. Recreation.gov allowed visitors to reserve sites online, and park management to track reservations.

"The Recreation.gov New Implantation Team made our transition seamless" said Koepke. In addition, he shared that the online management tool called "The Hub":

- ▶ Is intuitive and easy to use
- ▶ Empowers the facility to easily make changes and manage their inventory
- ▶ Delivers a variety of useful onsite and financial reports



The Hub: Our easy to use, one-stop administration tool, puts Facility Managers in control.

A WIN FOR PARK STAFF AND VISITORS

Recreation.gov reduced confusion and frustration for the public and staff, allowing for a more enjoyable experience at the park, shared Koepke. The benefits were more than staff imagined he explained:

Increased Revenue through advanced reservations

- ▶ Campground revenue was up \$53K in the first season.
- ▶ For the first time, an entire loop was full for mid-to late October.
- ▶ With an advanced reservation option the campground was full for two months straight.

Additional Benefits

- ▶ Increased revenue will allow the park to hire additional staff, such as seasonal life guards for the lakeshore.
- ▶ Recreation.gov lessened the burden on Visitors Center staff, as they could now direct the public to go online to make their reservations.
- ▶ Campers arrived ready - not only with their reservations, but with specifics about the length of the driveways and the security that their campers would fit.
- ▶ Campground saw a shift in clientele to more families, who prefer to confirm their campgrounds in advance.

Learn how Recreation.gov can streamline your operations. Email NewImplementation@recreation.gov and a member of the New Implementation team will get back to you within two business days.

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“It was like a rock concert watching the campground fill up for Memorial Day weekend.”

– Ryan Koepke, Park Guide

