

require a permit at this time. Permits are required for recreation use of trails on Cedar Mesa and the Grand Gulch Primitive area at all times. Currently, advanced reservations are available from March 1 to June 15, and September 15 to November 1. From June 16 to Aug. 31 no advance reservations are available, but limits and permits are still enforced and fees charged.

Day use of the canyons is not currently limited but does require fees for a day use pass, a multi-day use pass (seven days), or an annual pass.

Dispersed camping is also popular. Some dispersed camping comes from users that just want to day hike, or those that are camping the night before a multiple day trip. These visitors use the area near the ranger station as a base camp or staging area.

There are some campers that camp near NBNM eleven miles away because Natural Bridge's campground is full. These visitors are generally car campers and not going hiking in Grand Gulch or other canyons. They camp on an old paved gravel storage site next to the highway and near NBNM. These users are common between Mid April and Mid October.

3.2.2 Trends of Recreation on Cedar Mesa

In 1995, when development of the Visitor Center was first considered in EA-UT-069-95-051 there appeared to be an ever increasing number of visitors to the area. This increased visitation was perceived by many as a negative trend. When the decision was appealed, IBLA 97-43, page 166, pointed out that BLM had not made a convincing case "on the central question of whether permanent facilities would attract more visitors to the Grand Gulch Plateau".

BLM has conducted monitoring with trail counters which has shown a drop in visitation since 1999. BLM use figures for Cedar Mesa show a pattern of visitation peaking between in the last half of the 1990s and then declining (Attachment 2 and Figures 15). For instance, monitoring with trail counters at Moon House Ruin, a popular site has also shown a drop in visitation since 1999.

The use pattern BLM has observed on Cedar Mesa is not unique and is also shown by summary data presented in Figure 16-18 for surrounding destination type parks. For example, at Natural Bridges National Monument, eleven miles from Kane Gulch Ranger Station, use had almost tripled from 1975 to 1995. There were 47,800 visitors during to 1975 and 147,436 visitors in 1995. Since 1995 Natural Bridges visitation has decreased significantly despite a "destination visitors center". In 2001 visitation at the National Monument was down to 97,971 a decrease of approximately 34 % (Attachment 3) from 1995.

Other destination sites have also shown declines. These declines are documented in Attachment 3 for Canyon Lands National Park, Needles District Canyon Lands National Park, Arches National Park, Natural Bridges National Monument, Hovenweep National Monument, Natural Bridges National Monument and Dead Horse State Park (Figures 16-18).

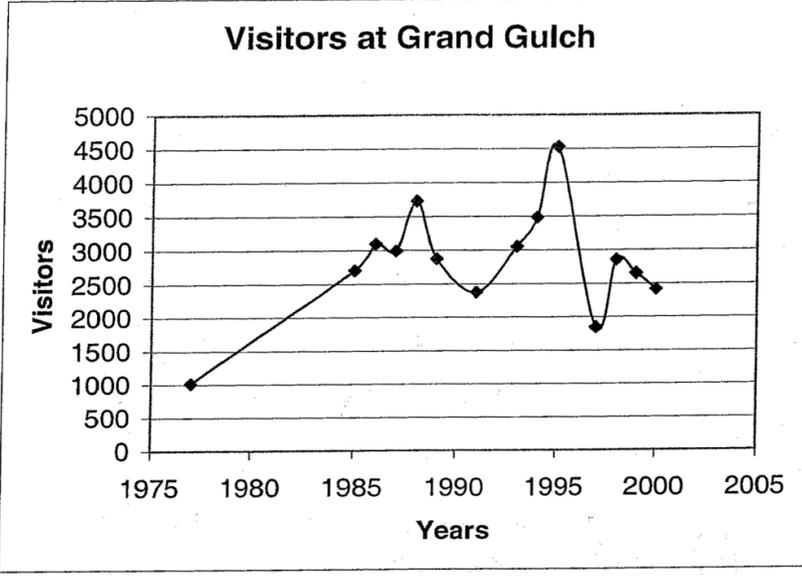


Figure 15. Visitation at Grand Gulch shows a peak use in 1995 and lower levels of use than since that time. There is a downward trend from 1998 to 2001.

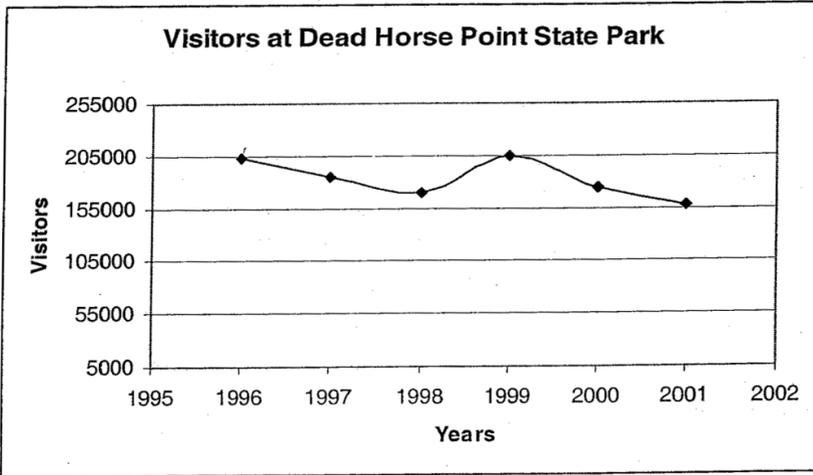


Figure 16. Visitation at Dead Horse Point State Park shows a downward trend from 1996 to 2001.

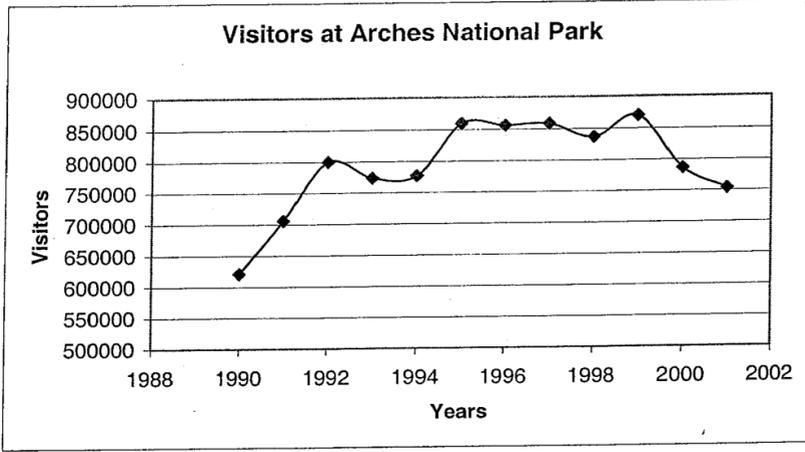


Figure 17. Visitation at Arches National Park shows a leveling off from 1995 to 1999 and a downward trend from 1999 to 2001.

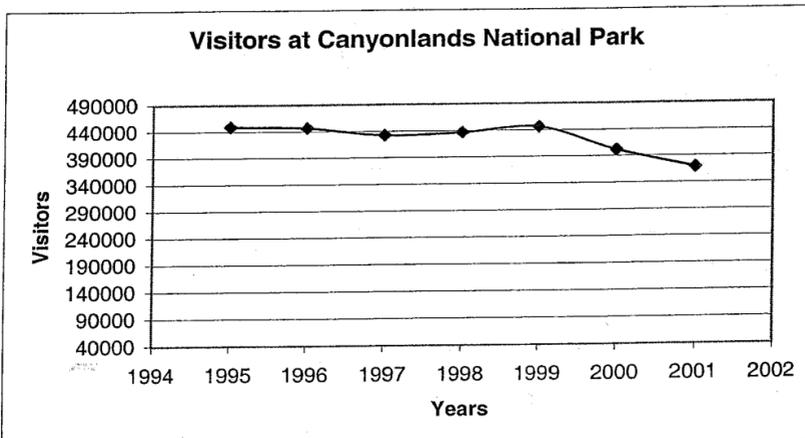


Figure 18. Visitation at Canyonlands National Park shows a downward trend from 1995 to 2001.