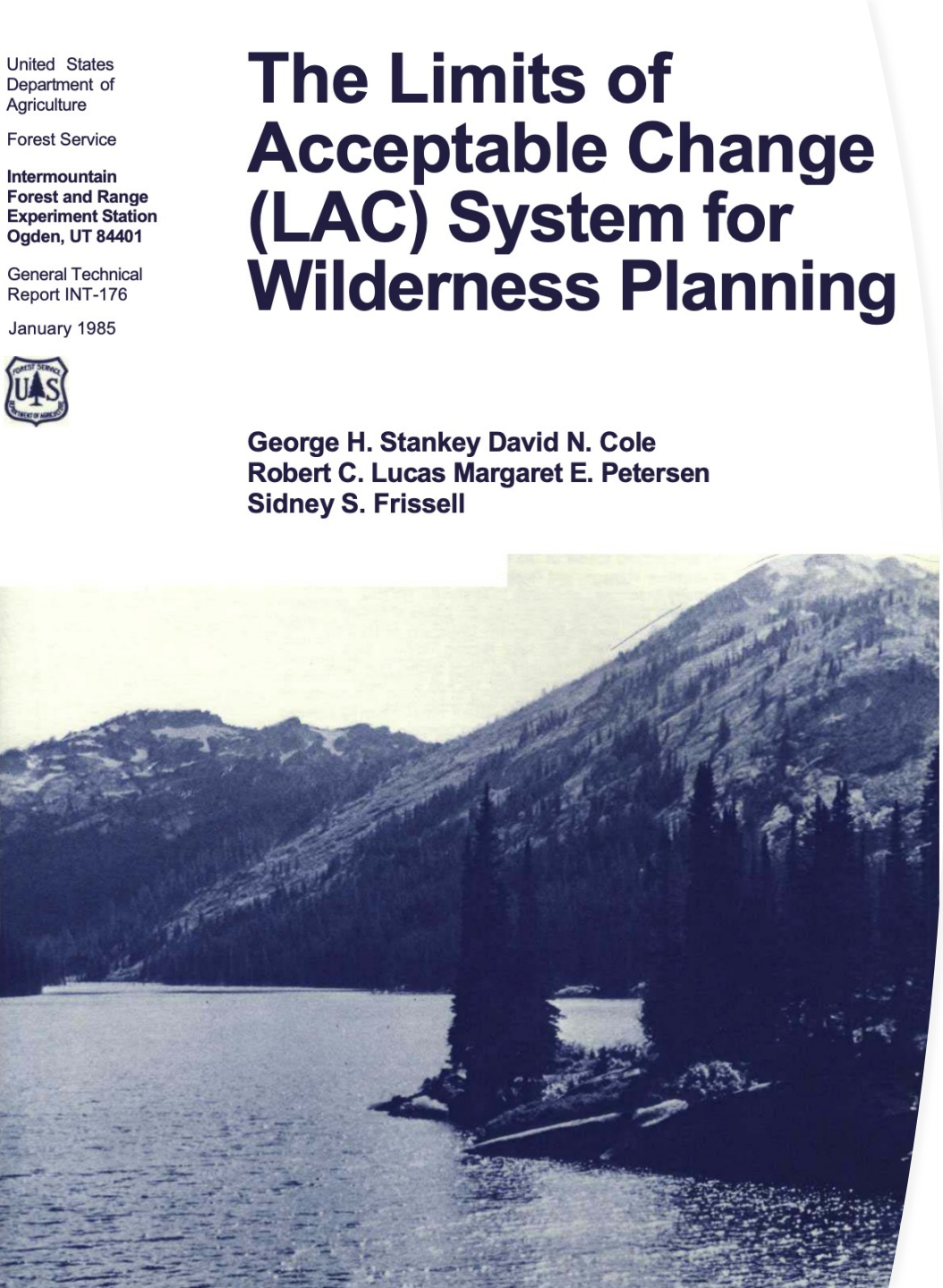
What kind of information is used to consider and decide upon acceptable social conditions?

Wayne Freimund, Utah State University



United States Department of Agriculture

Forest Service

Intermountain Forest and Range Experiment Station Ogden, UT 84401

General Technical Report INT-176

January 1985

The Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) System for Wilderness Planning

George H. Stankey David N. Cole
Robert C. Lucas Margaret E. Petersen
Sidney S. Frissell

Where did the notion of **Acceptability** come from?

- All use causes change.
- How much change is Acceptable?
- Who should define acceptability?
- Once you have defined it, you should monitor and mange toward it.

DISPLAY COPY

VISITOR EXPERIENCE AND RESOURCE PROTECTION IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

ARCHES

NATIONAL PARK

VERP

The Visitor Experience and Resource Protection (VERP) Framework
A Handbook for Planners and Managers

U.S. Department
of the Interior

National Park Service

Sources of Acceptably Measures

- Defining desired conditions or Zone descriptions
- Assessments by visitors and/or managers
- Professional managerial judgment within a social/political context

Desired Conditions

Table 5. Example of a product from steps 5 and 6—a historical park's desired conditions and appropriate activities and facilities for multiple zones

	BACK COUNTRY ZONE	DEVELOPED ZONE
Overall Natural Resource Desired Condition	Natural and physical resources are intact, and natural ecological processes sustain the integrity of these resources.	Natural and physical resources are relatively intact but may be highly modified and manipulated to accommodate and withstand high levels of visitor use. Natural ecological processes may be controlled to protect human life and infrastructure.
Overall Visitor Experience Desired Condition	Visitors have opportunities to be immersed in a primitive and wild environment and experience natural sounds, a sense of remoteness, self-reliance, and self-discovery. Encounters with other visitors are low.	Visitors have a structured, educational experience. Amenities and services are available to welcome and orient visitors to the park and support day-use activities. Social interaction with other visitors may be high but does not interfere with learning about the park.
Activities	Walking, hiking, and viewing cultural and natural resources are appropriate activities.	Appropriate visitor activities include walking, natural and cultural resource observation, educational programs, informal learning, picnicking, and photography. Special events are allowed with a permit.
Facilities	Only the minimal facilities necessary to protect resource values, including native surface trails and cairned routes, are appropriate.	Visitor support facilities, such as contact stations, exhibits, demonstration areas, parking areas, comfort stations, benches, sidewalks, and walking trails, are appropriate in this zone. Most facilities are accessible to visitors with disabilities.

A range of Zones in Arches

- Developed Zone
- Motorized Sightseeing Zone
- Semi-primitive Motorized Zone
- Primitive Motorized Zone
- Pedestrian Zone
- Hiker Zone
- Backcountry Zone
- Sensitive Resource Zone

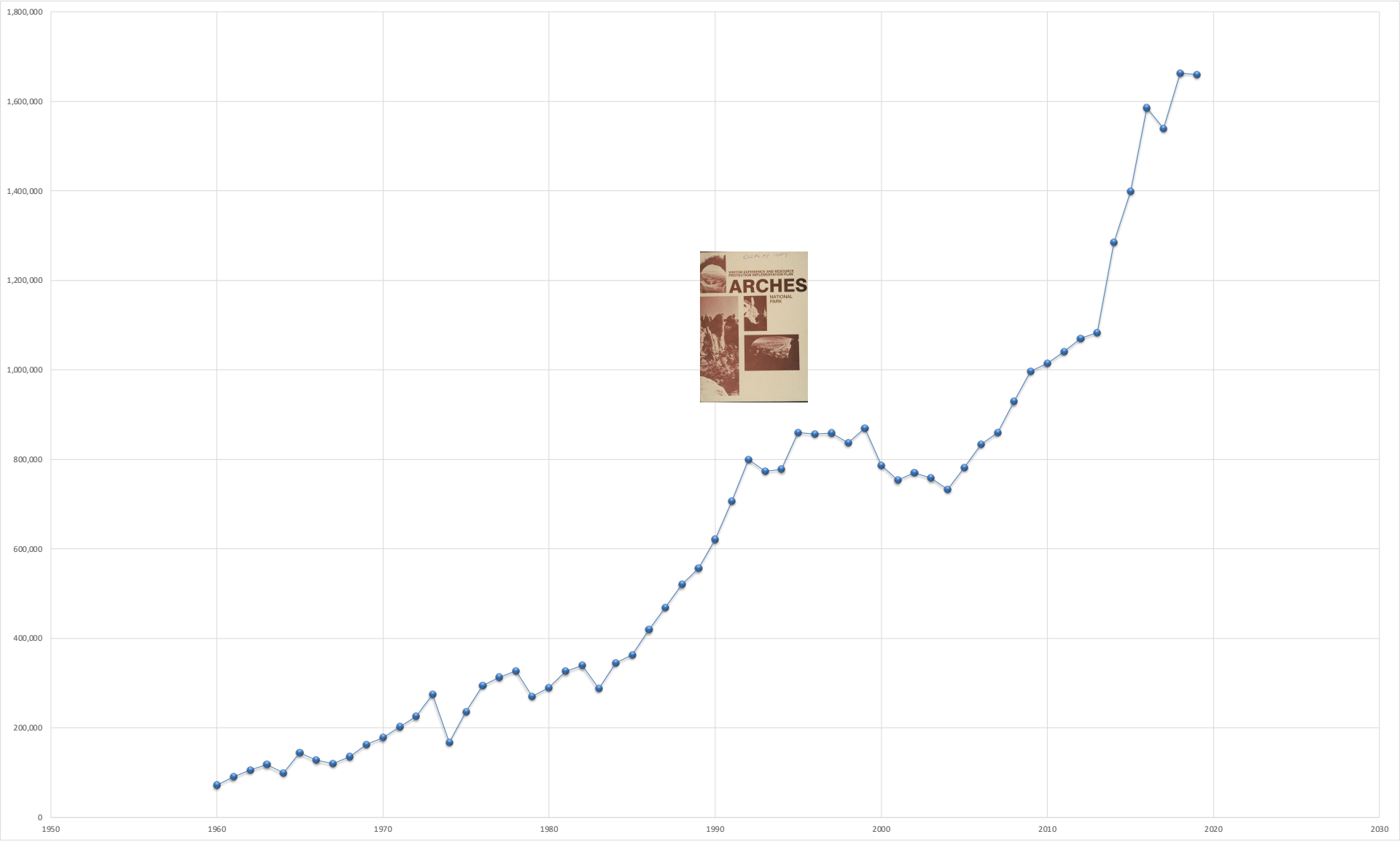
- Something for a broad
- range of interests.

Visitors on the Windows Section Trail

Pedestrian Zone

The pedestrian zone is comprised of high use trail corridors that access prime park features including views of iconic arches. Although there is evidence of people and human-created features, areas in this zone are predominately natural. Visitors have the opportunity to experience natural sights and sounds and make connections to park resources through universally accessible, highly developed, maintained, and marked trails or trail segments. Visitors should expect a relatively facilitated experience within this zone and may encounter park staff, infrastructure, management tools and techniques to ensure both visitor access and resource protection.

Arches Annual Visitation



Visitor Perceptions

If you want to know what people think, ask them in a systematic way.

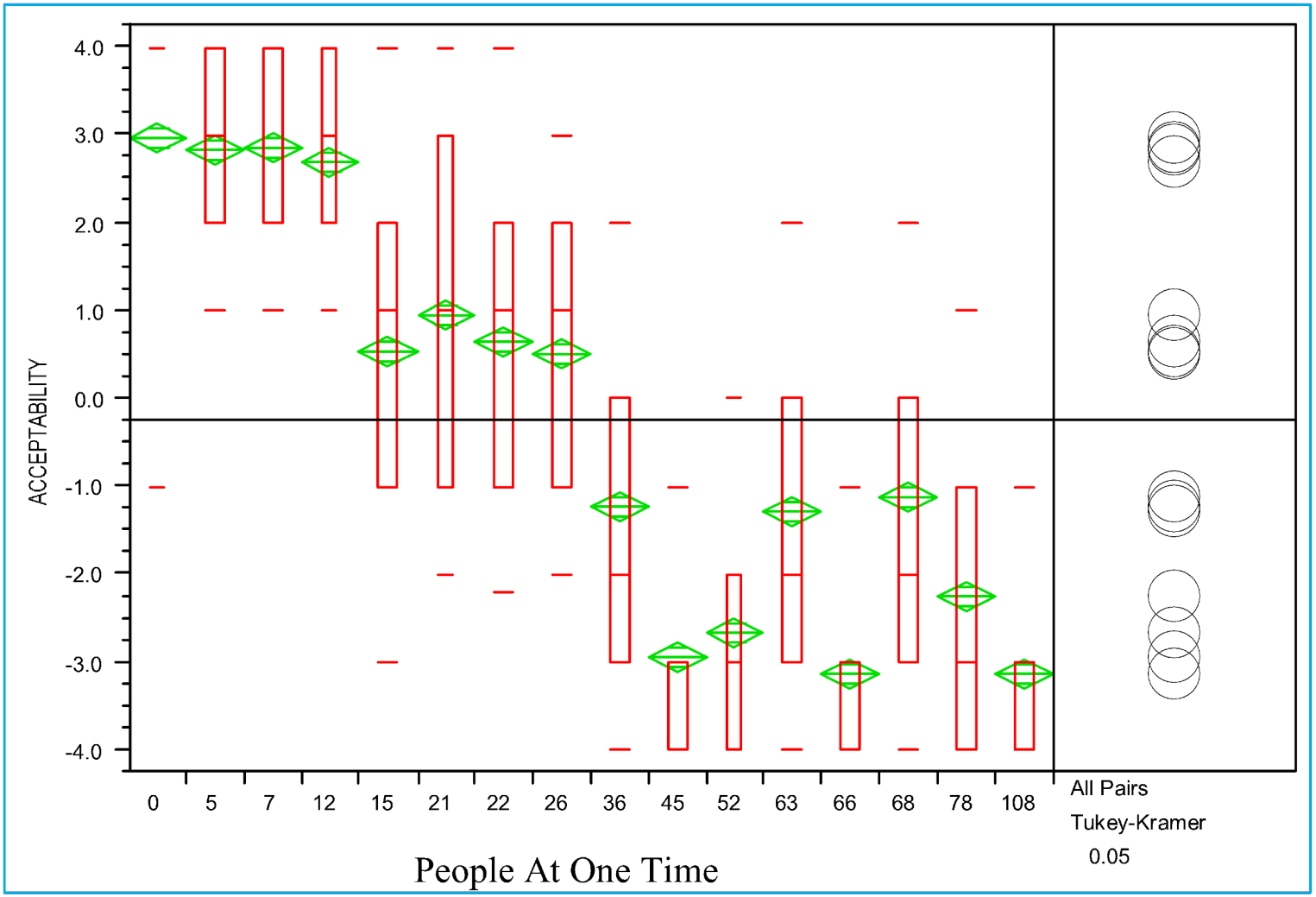
Use a method that helps them let you know what they think.

There is often considerable agreement among what people want.

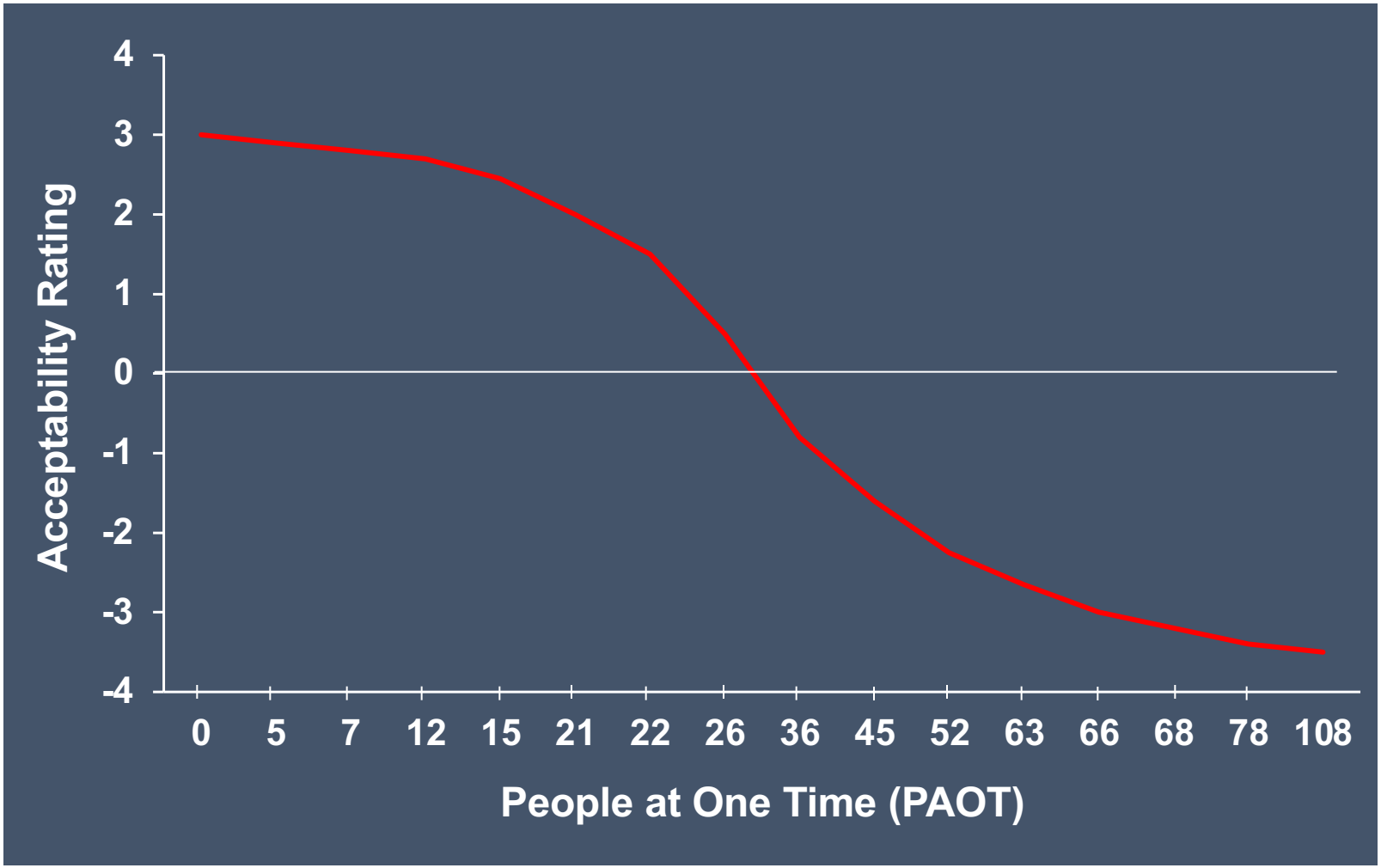
Photos often help for highly complicated social settings.

ARCHES N.P.
VISITOR SURVEY

How do we interpret the data?

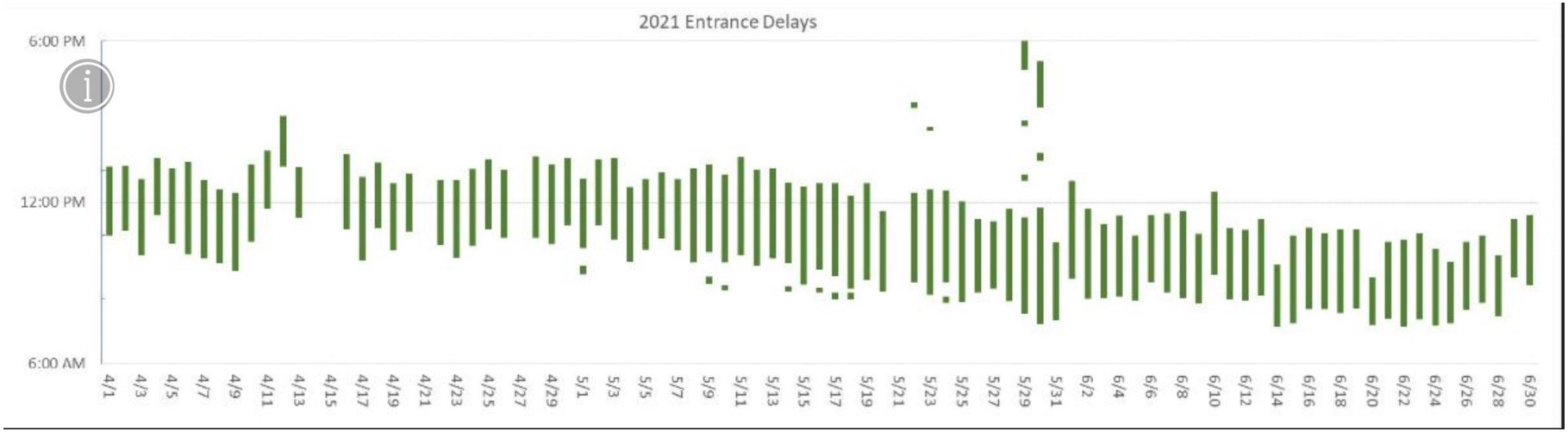


Social Norm Curve for Delicate Arch

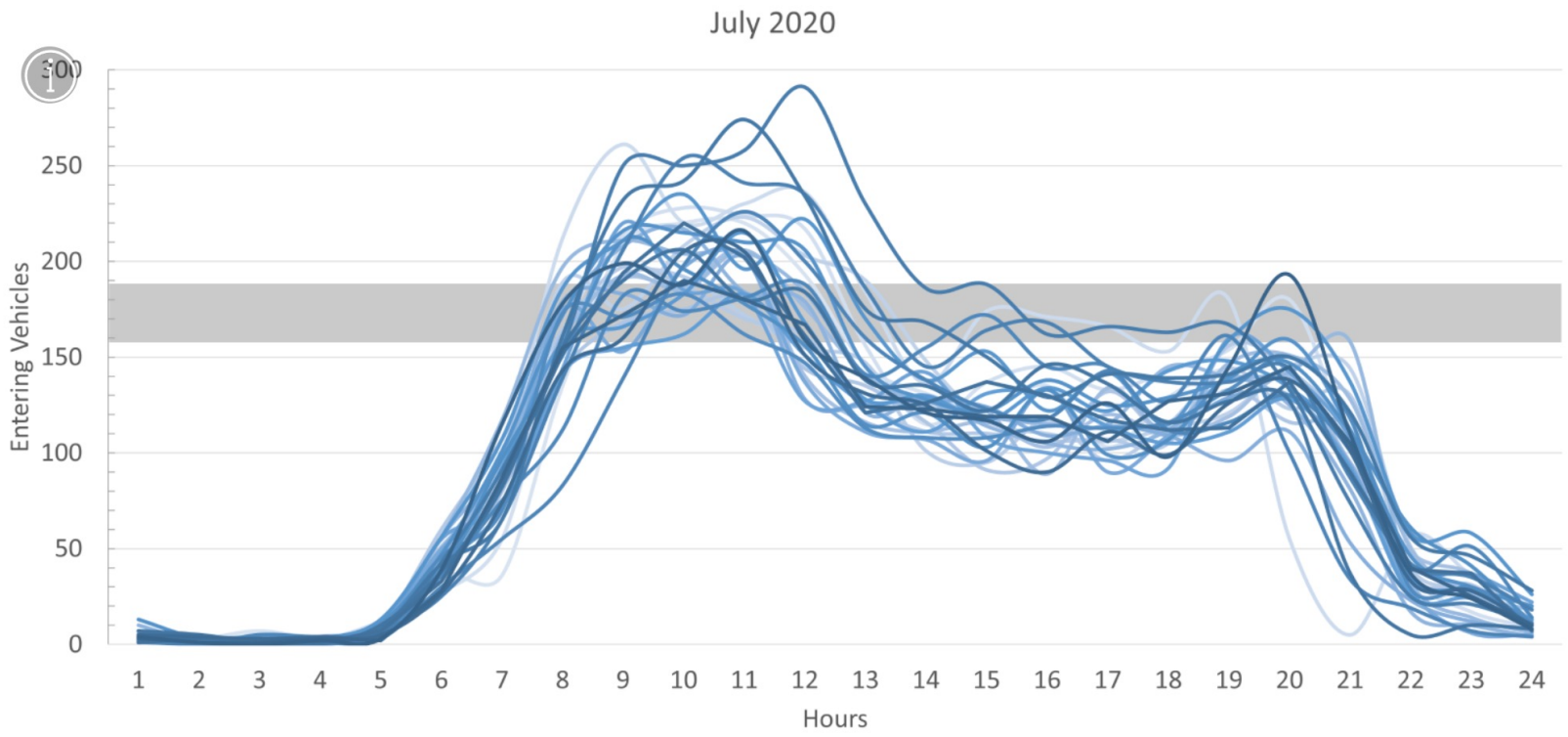


Professional judgment within a social/political context

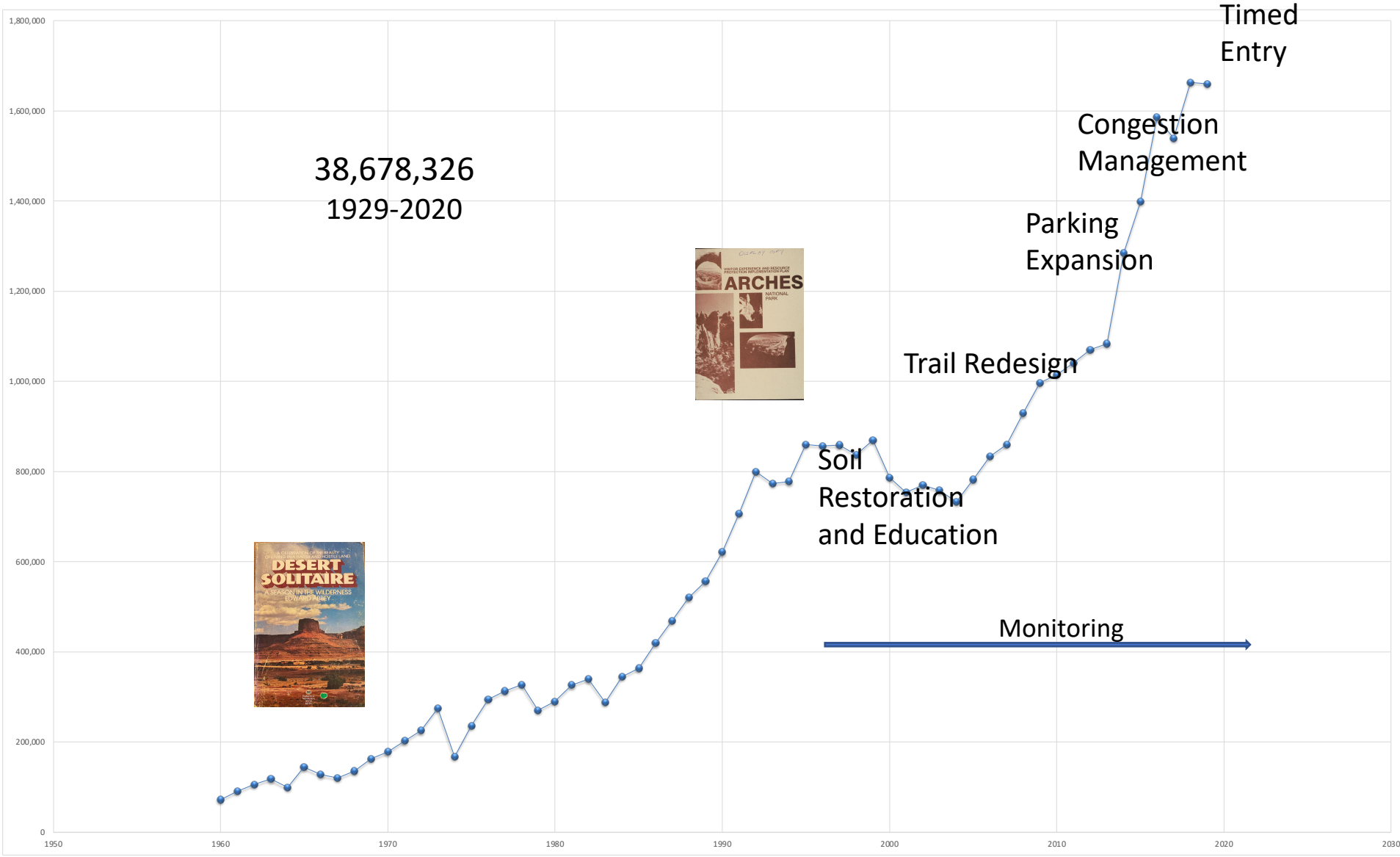
Inaction is an Action



Timed Entry Approach at Arches



Arches Annual Visitation



Conclusions

- Acceptability is a function of law, plans, context, science, visitor perspective and stakeholder relationships
- Visitors are quite capable of expressing what they do and don't find acceptable but they are not voting.
- Experiences are being affected whether managers are acting on the visitation of not.
- Regional plans such as Zion's will hopefully increase capacity to organize and redistribute use in ways that will have a net positive effect on both visitor experiences and local economies.