

## Information Provided by the Pennsylvania Campground Owners Association

### BEING A CAMPGROUND OPERATOR

OPERATING A FAMILY CAMPGROUND IS A PRIVILEGE AND A RESPONSIBILITY. IT CAN BE BOTH PLEASURABLE AND PROFITABLE – BUT, BEFORE YOU INVEST YOURSELF, YOUR TIME AND YOUR MONEY, YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO ANSWER HONESTLY THE FOLLOWING SEVEN QUESTIONS. IT MAY SAVE YOU FROM FINANCIAL DISAPPOINTMENT AND HEARTACHE.

1. **DO YOU HAVE THE RIGHT SITE TO DEVELOP A CAMPGROUND?** AN ABANDONED COW PASTURE, A CUT OVER WOODED LOT, OR JUST ANY PIECE OF VACANT PROPERTY ISN'T NECESSARILY A POTENTIALLY GOOD CAMPING AREA. A GOOD CAMPING AREA MUST BE WELL DRAINED, EASILY ACCESSIBLE BY VEHICLE, HAVE UTILITIES AND SERVICES NEARBY, OFFER RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES, BE REASONABLY NEAR AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST, BE FREE OF NATURAL HAZARDS, AND OFFER CAMPERS THE OPPORTUNITY TO ENJOY AND APPRECIATE OUTDOOR LIVING.
2. **ARE YOU LOOKING FOR A 'FAST BUCK'?** IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR A FAST BUCK, CAMPGROUND OPERATION IS NOT FOR YOU. IT COULD BE AS LONG AS FIVE YEARS BEFORE YOU START TO TURN A PROFIT AND YOUR PROFITS WILL BE DIRECTLY RELATED TO YOUR LOCATION, YOUR FACILITIES, AND THE SERVICE YOU GIVE YOUR PATRONS.

POORLY DESIGNED, POORLY EQUIPPED, AND POORLY OPERATED CAMPGROUNDS SOON GET AN UNFAVORABLE REPUTATION AND REPEAT CAMPERS NOT ONLY AVOID THEM, BUT PASS DISPARAGING REMARKS TO OTHER CAMPERS YOU MIGHT HAVE AS CUSTOMERS.

3. **ARE YOU A CAMPER YOURSELF?** IF YOU ARE, YOU WILL KNOW WHAT CAMPERS WANT, NEED AND EXPECT IN A GOOD CAMPGROUND. IF YOU'RE NOT A CAMPER, IT IS WELL-ADVISED FOR YOU TO EXPERIENCE THIS OUTDOOR ACTIVITY BEFORE PLUNGING BLINDLY INTO THE BUSINESS. EXPERIENCE PAYS BIG DIVIDENDS!
4. **DO YOU HAVE THE KIND OF PERSONALITY THAT WOULD APPEAL TO CAMPERS?** IN OTHER WORDS, DO YOU LIKE NATURE AND NATURE ENTHUSIASTS? ARE YOU WILLING TO MEET AND TALK WITH CAMPERS ABOUT THEIR COMMON INTERESTS; HELP THEM WITH THEIR CAMPING PROBLEMS; SERVE THEM LONG HOURS, SOMETIMES UNDER ADVERSE CONDITIONS? IF NOT, CAMPGROUND OPERATIONS MAY NOT BE THE RIGHT BUSINESS FOR YOU. WHILE YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE A NATURALIST, THE MORE YOU KNOW ABOUT THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH YOUR CAMPGROUND IS LOCATED THE BETTER.
5. **DO YOU HAVE FUNDS AVAILABLE FOR CAMPGROUND DEVELOPMENT AND OPERATION UNTIL IT STARTS TO PAY OFF?** IT IS ESTIMATED THAT CAMPGROUNDS CAN COST \$200 PER CAMPSITE OR MORE, DEPENDING ON LOCATION, DISTANCE FROM MAIN ROADS, TYPE OF SOIL, EXTENT OF UTILITIES, AND SERVICE FACILITIES, COMFORT STATIONS AND OTHER TYPES OF BUILDINGS.

WITHOUT ADEQUATE INITIAL FINANCING YOU MIGHT BEGIN ON A MODEST SCALE, DEVELOPING FURTHER AS BUSINESS WARRANTS AND AS FUNDS BECOME AVAILABLE. BUT WHATEVER IS BUILT SHOULD BE BUILT WITH QUALITY FOREMOST IN MIND – IT PAYS OFF!

6. **ARE YOU FAMILIAR WITH AND PREPARED TO MEET AT LEAST MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR CAMPGROUND HEALTH, SAFETY AND SANITATION?** STATE AND LOCAL LAWS, ORDINANCES AND REGULATIONS IN REGARD TO PUBLIC ACCOMMODATIONS VARY WIDELY. ARE YOU PREPARED TO MEET THESE REQUIREMENTS, ENACTED FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE PUBLIC? CHECKING WITH YOUR STATE HEALTH DEPARTMENT IS A WISE MOVE TO MAKE BEFORE GETTING TOO INVOLVED IN BUILDING A CAMPGROUND.
7. **DO YOU HAVE ENOUGH SPACE AVAILABLE FOR FUTURE EXPANSION?** WHEN DEVELOPED INADEQUATELY, IN TOO CONFINED AN AREA, CAMPGROUNDS HAVE A TENDENCY TOWARD OVER CROWDING AND BECOMING RURAL SLUMS. REMEMBER, THE CAMPER IS COMING BECAUSE THEY WANT TO EXPERIENCE A CHANGE TO THE OUTDOOR LIFE, TO IMMERSE THEIR FAMILY AND THEMSELVES INTO THE ENVIRONMENT. CAN YOU HELP THEM DO THIS OFFERING ROOMY SITES, NATURE TRAILS TO WALK, NEARBY POINTS OF INTEREST TO VISIT, RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES, INCLUDING AN APPROVED SWIMMING FACILITY NEARBY?

IF YOU ARE PREPARED TO FACE UP TO THESE BASIC, ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENTS, FAMILY CAMPGROUND OPERATIONS MIGHT BE FOR YOU. IF NOT, DON'T WASTE YOUR TIME, YOUR EFFORT, AND YOUR MONEY.

NOW IF YOU STILL WANT TO BE A CAMPGROUND OPERATOR, HERE IS A SAMPLE POINTS TO CONSIDER CHECK LIST:

- HOW MANY ADEQUATE CAMPSITES CAN MY CAMPGROUND ACCOMMODATE?
- HOW WILL I PROMOTE MY CAMPGROUND?
- WHAT DAILY OR WEEKLY FEE WILL I CHARGE PER SITE?
- WHAT ESSENTIAL FACILITIES WILL I NEED?
- WHAT, IF ANY, SUPERVISORY STAFF WILL I REQUIRE?
- WHAT SIZE MAINTENANCE STAFF WILL BE NEEDED?
- WHAT TYPE OF INSURANCE WILL I NEED, AND HOW MUCH?
- WHAT KIND OF CAMPING PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES WILL KEEP THE CAMPERS COMING?
- BY WHAT GUIDELINES AND CRITERIA WILL I BE ABLE TO MEASURE THE ADEQUACY AND EFFICIENCY OF ANY CAMPGROUND?
- AM I PREPARED TO COPE WITH HEALTH AND ACCIDENT EMERGENCIES SHOULD THEY ARISE?
- CAN NATURE TRAILS AND PLAY FIELDS BE OPENED WITHIN A REASONABLE DISTANCE OF THE CAMPGROUND?

THESE AND MANY OTHER SIMILAR QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR POTENTIAL CAMPGROUND CAN BE ANSWERED ONLY BY YOU. HOWEVER, YOU WILL FIND THE INFORMATION PROVIDED BY THE PROVEN EXPERIENCES OF ESTABLISHED FAMILY CAMPING LEADERS TO BE INVALUABLE. BY ALL MEANS, CHECK WITH THEM.