These were the questions for small groups to discuss on the first day of the workshop. The questions came from comments during the presentations.

1. How do (should?) we link archeological with ecological monitoring?

Discussion: (a) We need to improve communication between the various monitoring programs in the park, such as cross-training or G’s and O’s (?), or a calendar of activities that is shared among units related to cultural and ecological monitoring. (b) There needs for more inter-divisional trips in the backcountry to assess impacts. (c) The databases need to cross-reference each other and be compatible with one another. (d) There is currently no formal information across units. We should develop a comprehensive system that includes a time frame, variables identified, database organization, and coding scheme.

2. Where (who?) should provide guidance on trail maintenance?

Discussion: (a) Every unit in the park has some interest in trail maintenance issues, and should be involved in decisions about trails. (b) There should be a working group that mediates between small-scale projects and the vision of the park’s trail system. The vision for trail maintenance should set guidelines, and be part of the upcoming backcountry plan. (c) We need a cyclical
maintenance schedule with objectives and schedule identified.

3. How do we make the backcountry work?

Discussion: (a) The backcountry is not visible “problem” within park leadership. Issues related to river management, tribal relations, to name a couple, overshadow issues connected to the backcountry. (b) Start with small things that are do-able, and with these manageable tasks we need to incrementally make backcountry management and planning work. (c) The lack of attention from park leadership provides opportunities for backcountry-related staff to carve their own niche, and through communication avenues with park leadership, build a vision for the backcountry.

4. To what extent do site impacts affect a larger scale? What management options are available to address uncertainty?

Discussion: (a) What is the acceptable level of impacts? This is a question that has dogged the park for a long time. (b) Although we may know a lot about current conditions of campsite impacts, these impacts (as far as we’ve documented) affect a very small percentage of the park’s backcountry. We do not know the implications of campsite impacts to the larger context of the ecosystem. This uncertainty makes management difficult, and also it makes the articulation of ecological impacts problematic. (c) With the uncertainty of the scale of campsite ecological
impacts, the experiences of visitors may be more important to assess. To what extent are visitors bothered by campsite impacts? This type of question may be more important to understand compared to questions about ecological degradation. (d) Because of the uncertainty, the tradeoffs between ecological impacts and visitor use are not clear. Decreasing use may not lead to fewer impacts. (e) The size of the plant community around the campsite influences the implications of campsite impacts. The larger the plant community, the more acceptable any given impact. (f) Non-native species may have impacts that could drastically change a site and spread quickly to the surrounding area.

5. How do (should?) we integrate cave management within backcountry management?

Discussion: (a) There is a big data gap regarding cave resources. A significant number of caves in the park are unknown to park management, yet many of these are known by recreational cavers. (b) Park caves are valuable resources yet there is low awareness in the park about caves. (c) The park needs to develop some strategic partnerships with local and national caving societies. (d) The cave plan is a resource management plan. The backcountry plan is a use management plan. These two plans head in different directions. The scope of the backcountry plan does not cover cave management.
6. What are information needs in backcountry management? To what extent has research covered these needs? What research is further needed?

Discussion: (a) A data management team at Grand Canyon has already addressed questions of information needs. The recommendations were directed at development of a GIS model that integrated a broad set of ecological, cultural, and recreational variables. The results of the model will identify high priority areas of concern. This model has not yet been specified. (b) The park has not identified problem areas and/or prioritized places that need management attention. (c) The new backcountry plan should be a “resource” plan rather than a “recreational use” plan. (d) Will the backcountry plan address issues of wilderness? If so, the scope of the plan will be bigger than simply a recreational use plan.