

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



Social Science Program

**Expedited Approval for NPS-Sponsored Public Surveys**

1. <b>Project Title</b>	Petrified Forest National Park (PEFO) & Nez Perce National Historical	February 28, 2009
<b>Submission Date:</b>	Park (NEPE) VSP Formative Studies	

2. <b>Abstract:</b>	The Visitor Services Project (VSP) is planning to conduct studies of interpretive exhibits at the Petrified Forest National Park (PEFO) Rainbow Forest Museum and the Nez Perce National Historical Park (NEPE) Visitor Center, using focus groups. At PEFO, the VSP will conduct three to five focus groups during each of the following visitation periods: winter, spring, summer, and fall. At NEPE, the VSP will conduct three to five focus groups during the summer season only.	
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3. **Principal Investigator Contact Information**

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4. **Park or Program Liaison Contact Information, PEFO**

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4. **Park or Program Liaison Contact Information, NEPE**

**First Name:** Terry **Last Name:** O'Halloran

**Title:** Chief of Interpretation

**Park:** Nez Perce National Historical Park

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**Project Information**

5. **Park Where Research is to be Conducted:** Petrified Forest National Park  
Nez Perce National Historical Park

6. **Survey Dates:** PEFO June 30, 2009 - April 30, 2010 NEPE June 30 - August 31, 2009

7. **Type of Information Collection Instrument (Check ALL that Apply)**

Mail-Back Questionnaire  On-Site Questionnaire  Face-to-Face Interview  Telephone Survey  Focus Groups

Other (explain)

8. **Survey Justification: (Use as much space as needed; if necessary include additional explanation on a separate page.)**

Legal Justification: The National Park Service Act of 1916, 38 Stat 535, 16 USC 1, et seq., requires that the National Park Service (NPS) preserve the national parks for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. At the field level, this means resource preservation, public education, facility maintenance and operation, and physical developments that are necessary for public use, health, and safety. Allocation of funding is to be roughly in proportion to the seasonally adjusted volume of use (P. L. 88-578, Sect. 6) and in consideration of visitor characteristics and activities for determining carrying capacity (92 Stat. 3467; P. L. 95-625, Sect. 604 11/10/78). Other federal rules (National Environmental Policy Act, 1969 and NPS guidelines) require visitor use data in impact assessment of development on users and resources as part of each park's general management plan.

Managerial Justification.  
PEFO and NEPE are planning to design new exhibits at the museum and visitor center, respectively. The VSP will conduct a formative study of their existing temporary exhibits using focus groups. As visitor types vary from season to season, focus groups will be conducted in all four seasons at PEFO, in order to gather information that reflects the park's various audiences. Focus groups will be conducted during the summer months for NEPE, as that will generate the necessary information for their needs.

The results will be used to find out how visitors learn about park themes and to what extent the temporary exhibits are effective in communicating interpretive themes and key concepts to park visitors. The results will be used as input into the design of permanent exhibits.

The research objectives are to:

- Gauge the interest of audiences in the exhibits under development
- Understand the effectiveness of exhibits in communicating the intended messages
- Identify potential problems with the temporary exhibits

9. Survey

**Methodology:**  
**(Use as much space as needed; if necessary include additional explanation on a separate page.)**

**(a) Respondent universe:**

The respondent universe will be all visitors, aged 16 and older, who have experienced the exhibits, been recruited by VSP and/or park staff, and agree to take part in the study.

**(b) Sampling plan/procedures:**

To recruit participants for the focus groups, a sign asking visitors to participate in the focus groups will be posted in prominent and well-trafficked locations in the museum (PEFO) and visitor center (NEPE). VSP personnel will train park personnel to answer questions and sign up participants. In addition, VSP staff will personally invite participants, once they have viewed the exhibits.

PEFO:

During each season, it is estimated that 90 potential participants will be approached in order to obtain 40 - 50 participants (5 focus groups, 8 - 10 participants per group). Each focus group will be held at the park's Rainbow Forest Museum. This process will be repeated four times (once per season), resulting in an estimated total of 360 potential participants and a maximum of 160 – 200 actual participants.

NEPE:

It is estimated that 90 potential participants will be approached in order to obtain a total of 40 - 50 actual participants (5 focus groups, 8 - 10 participants per group). Each of the focus groups will be held at Nez National Historical Park during the summer season.

**(c) Instrument administration:**

Focus groups will be administered by Nancy Holmes, research assistant with the Visitor Services Project. The contact and focus group scripts are included with this submission. Focus groups will be recorded and transcribed in order to code and analyze the data. Individuals will be asked if they want to participate in the recorded focus groups. Thus, individuals who do not feel comfortable being recorded will be able to opt out of the focus group session. The recruiter will thank these individuals for their time and move on to other visitors.

**(d) Expected response rate/confidence levels:**

It is expected that each focus group will include approximately 8 – 10 participants. Because this study design is qualitative and uses purposive samples selected from targeted groups, there is no statistical basis for generalizing the findings to all visitors. Therefore, response rates and confidence levels/intervals do not present the same concerns as they do in quantitative studies based on probability samples and employing inferential statistical analysis. Findings will provide the exhibit development team with guidance on issues informing the design process.

**(e) Strategies for dealing with potential non-response bias:**

Since this is focus group research (as opposed to a representative survey), non-response bias is not an issue.

**(f) Description of any pre-testing and peer review of the methods and/or instrument (recommended):**

The instrument was developed by evaluation professionals at VSP based on the goals of the exhibit design team and is similar to other formative studies conducted at NPS units. It was by an experienced focus group facilitator at Washington State University.

10	Total Number of Initial Contacts   Accept Instrument   Expected Respondents:	<u>PEFO</u>	<u>PEFO</u>	11. Estimated Time (mins.) to Complete Initial Contact   (refusals only)   Accept Instrument   Return Instrument:	<u>PEFO</u>	<u>PEFO</u>	12. Total Burden Hours:	<u>PEFO</u>
		360	200		1	45		156
		<u>NEPE</u>	<u>NEPE</u>		<u>NEPE</u>	<u>NEPE</u>		<u>NEPE</u>
		100	50		1	45		39
								Total: 195

13. **Reporting Plan:** Once the focus groups have been completed, the VSP will create full transcripts and submit them as an appendix in the final report. The reports, which will be submitted by VSP to PEFO and NEPE and NPS, will describe the methodology used and present the VSP's findings. The analysis will include raw data, such as direct statements from participants; descriptive statements, comments, and examples from participants that build on the raw data; and interpretation of the data, including trends and patterns, consistency of responses, and recommendations to inform the exhibit development process. A copy of the report will be archived by the NPS Social Science Program.