



Expedited Approval for NPS-Sponsored Public Surveys

1. Project Titles Submission Date:	Visitor Services Project (VSP) Bundle for Summer 2010: New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park (NHP) Wind Cave National Park (NP) Niobrara National Scenic River (NSR) Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area (NRA) Fossil Butte National Monument (NM)	February 8, 2010
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2. Abstract:	The above 5 parks need to conduct studies to obtain data on visitors, including opinions about park services and facilities. The data will be used to prepare or update planning documents, such as General Management Plans, Resource Management Plans, Wilderness Plans, and Long-Range and Comprehensive Interpretive Plans. The information from these visitor studies will inform decisions about park operations. In addition to being used by park managers, the information is shared with park partners and gateway communities to assist in mutual planning efforts. The mail-back questionnaires are designed to systematically collect data from visitors, including individual characteristics, trip/visit characteristics, individual activities, individual evaluation of park services/facilities, individual perceptions of their park experiences, and individual opinions on park management.
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3. **Principal Investigator Contact Information**

First Name:	Margaret	Last Name:	Littlejohn		
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Affiliation:	NPS Visitor Services Project, PSU, College of Natural Resources, University of Idaho				
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4. **Park or Program Liaison Contact Information**

First Name:	See attached list	Last Name:	
Title:			
Park:			
Park Office/Division:			

Street Address:

City:

State:

Zip code:

Phone:

Fax:

Email:

Project Information

5. **Park Where Research is to be Conducted:**

6. **Survey Dates:** (mm/dd/yyyy) to (mm/dd/yyyy)

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: Social science research in support of park planning and management is mandated in the *NPS Management Policies 2006* (Section 8.11.1, "Social Science Studies"). The NPS pursues a policy that facilitates social science studies in support of the NPS mission to protect resources and enhance the enjoyment of present and future generations (National Park Service Act of 1916, 38 Stat 535, 16 USC 1, et seq.). NPS policy mandates that social science research will be used to provide an understanding of park visitors, the non-visiting public, gateway communities and regions, and human interactions with park resources. Such studies are needed to provide a scientific basis for park planning, development, operations, management, education, and interpretive activities.

Managerial Justification.

Study findings will be used as follows, depending upon the specific park:

- As input into planning (e.g., General Management Plan, Comprehensive Interpretive Plan, Long Range Interpretive, Plan, Wilderness Plan, Resource Management Plan, Backcountry Management Plan).

- To design interpretive and educational programs to match visitor interests and needs.

Interpretive media at some parks are outdated, and wayside exhibits need to be replaced or added in many areas.

- For designing future visitor facilities or renovating existing facilities.

- To evaluate visitor behavior for potential impacts on natural and cultural resources.

- To determine whether concession services in parks are meeting visitor needs.

- For local businesses and governments to use to better understand how visitors are contributing economically to the area.

The mail-back questionnaires used in these visitor studies are designed to systematically collect data from visitors, including individual characteristics, trip/visit characteristics, individual activities, individual evaluation of park services/facilities, individual perceptions of their park experiences and individual opinions on park management. Park visitors will be randomly selected to participate in the studies as they visit selected park locations during a 7- to 14-day period.

Background.

Parks that participate in the VSP program are selected by a national committee made up of park, regional office, and Washington office members. Selections are made from a slate of nominations put forward by each of the 7 administrative regions of the NPS. The VSP committee selects parks from this slate based on 3 criteria. These are: 1) Need--has the park ever had a visitor study done and/or is it preparing a plan for which such information is needed; 2) Funding ability--does the park have a demonstrated ability to pay for the visitor survey; and 3) Balance--by park size, type, and administrative region. Parks that are not selected may be added to a list of alternates and could receive a VSP survey if any of the parks first selected must withdraw.

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

(a) Respondent universe:

At all 5 parks, the respondent universe will be all recreational visitors, age 16 and older, who visit the parks during the study period. A systematic sample of visitors to each park will be contacted by VSP-trained interviewers at selected park locations in each park.

(b) Sampling plan/procedures:

(c) The survey design and sampling plan for each of these visitor studies is based upon Dillman's Tailored Design Method (TDM). The TDM has been shown to increase response rates, improve accuracy, and reduce cost and burden hours. The methodology has been used in 214 previous surveys conducted by the VSP. Most questions have been included in other VSP questionnaires or appear in the NPS Pool of Known Questions. A systematic sampling procedure, based on the park's visitation statistics from the previous year, will require intercepting every *nth* visitor group to participate in the study. Each interviewer will be trained in the interview procedure. A supervisor will be on-site during the survey to ensure that interview procedures are followed.

(d) Instrument administration:

The initial contact with visitors to explain the study and determine if visitors are interested in participating (see attached script) takes approximately 1 minute. Visitors who voluntarily agree to participate in the study are verbally given a short front-end interview (1 additional minute) to collect information used in a non-response bias check. They are also asked to record their name, address, and phone number/email address. If a group agrees to participate, the researcher will give the survey to the individual within the group who has the next birthday. Participants will be given a stamped, addressed questionnaire to complete and mail back to the Visitor Services Project from any U.S. mailing location.

On-site visitors will be intercepted at locations shown on the accompanying spreadsheet. Existing data cannot be used as a sampling frame for mail-back surveys in these parks; visitors must be intercepted on-site.

In all parks, participants will be mailed a thank you/reminder post card 11 working days after completion of the survey. A reminder letter with a stamped, addressed replacement questionnaire will be sent to nonrespondents 21 working days after completion of on-site contacts. A second reminder letter will be mailed after 35 working days with a stamped, addressed replacement questionnaire.

(e) Expected response rate/confidence levels:

The number of questionnaires to be distributed is based on each park's visitation data and the number of days of surveying. See the attached list of the expected sample sizes, response rates, and associated confidence intervals for each park.

For dichotomous response variables, estimates will be accurate within the margins of error and levels of confidence described in the attached list. The confidence intervals will be

somewhat larger for questions with more than two response categories.

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

During the front-end interview, questions are asked for use in a non-response bias analysis. Answers are recorded on a log of every survey contact. Results of the non-response bias check are described in the report and the implications for park planning and management are discussed.

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

The great majority of questions are drawn from the NPS Pool of Known Questions have been used in 214 previous VSP survey instruments. Questionnaires are peer reviewed by NPS managers and university professors.

10.	Total Number of Initial Contacts Accept Instrument Expected Respondents:	See attached list		11. Estimated Time (mins.) to Complete Initial Contact (refusals only) Accept Instrument Return Instrument:	1	1	20	12. Total Burden Hours:	See attached list
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13.	Reporting Plan:	The results of the studies will be presented in internal agency reports for NPS managers. Response frequencies will be tabulated and measures of central tendency computed (e.g., mean, median, mode, as appropriate). The reports will be archived with the NPS Social Science Division for inclusion in the Social Science Studies Collection. They will also be posted on the Park Studies Unit VSP website at: http://psu.uidaho.edu/vsp.reports.htm . Hard copies will be available upon request. The economic data will be used to produce special reports for the NPS covering overall use estimates and local economic impacts.
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