



## Expedited Approval for NPS-Sponsored Public Surveys

1. **Project Title |** National Mall & Memorial Parks Visitor Study June 16, 2008  
**Submission Date:**

2. **Abstract:** Little systematic attempt has been made to document the influence of the National Mall & Memorial Parks (National Mall) as a motivating factor for visitation separate from other area attractions and facilities in the Washington, DC area. The purpose of this study is to enhance the park's understanding of visitor characteristics by assessing trip behavior and socioeconomic impacts of the National Mall on the greater Washington, DC metropolitan area and by investigating the role of the National Mall within the scope of the many visitor destinations in the nation's capital. A mail-back questionnaire will be used to collect information regarding trip characteristics, perceptions of park experiences, activities, uses of park resources and expenditures. Visitors at eight park locations will be randomly selected to participate in the study during 12 days that span a four-week period from July 7, 2008 to August 10, 2008.  
(not to exceed 150 words)

3. **Principal Investigator Contact Information**

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## Project Information

5. **Park(s) For Which Research is to be Conducted:** National Mall & Memorial Parks
6. **Survey Dates:** 07/07/2008 (mm/dd/yyyy) to 08/10/2008 (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:** Legal Justification:  
(Use as much space as needed; if necessary include additional explanation on a separate page.) 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.

Management Justification:

The National Mall is an enduring symbol of our country that provides an inspiring setting for national memorials and a backdrop for the legislative and executive branches of our government. Enjoyed by millions of visitors each year, the National Mall is a primary location for public gatherings such as demonstrations, rallies, and festivals.

Although Washington, DC is consistently rated a top destination for domestic and international travelers, and the National Mall & Memorial Parks (National Mall) is one of the most visited national parks in the country, little systematic attempt has been made to document the influence of the National Mall as a motivating factor for visitation to Washington, DC separate from the many other attractions and facilities in the metropolitan area.

Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to assess visitor behaviors and the socioeconomic impacts of visitor spending on the greater Washington, DC metropolitan area. The study will address the National Mall as a separate entity from the museums and attractions in the area that are not managed by the National Park Service. The findings of this study will be used for park operations, management, education, and interpretive activities.

A mailback questionnaire will be used to systematically collect information regarding trip/visit characteristics, perceptions of park experiences, activities, uses of park resources and expenditures. Park visitors will be randomly selected to participate in the study as they visit the park at selected locations during 12 days that span a four-week period from July 7, 2008 to August 10, 2008.

Literature Review:

Audience development is described by Kotler and Kotler (1998) as a primary objective of cultural attractions, especially given a recent pattern in countries such as the United States of stagnant or declining visitation to culturally-based sites and a parallel pattern of increasing reliance on visitor-based revenues (Mylonakis & Kendristakis, 2006). This stagnation is affecting cultural attractions across the board, and even those of national prestige and international recognition are apt to struggle.

Heritage cities are particularly sensitive to being negatively impacted by visitation below carrying capacity and/or economic downturns. Of particular concern is when visitors seek lodging and other consumer services in hinterland areas to reduce travel expenditures, yet day-trip into the heritage site, causing natural resource wear and tear without associated economic benefits to the area (Derudder & Witlox, 2004; Fujita, Krugman, & Venables, 1999; Russo, 2002; Van der Borg, 2001).

The National Mall, while more resilient than most heritage sites due to the international appeal of the attractions and robust business performance in the face of a recession (Downtown DC Business Improvement District, 2008), has seen little growth in visitation in the recent past. Visitation numbers have remained steady, according to yearly visitor counts taken at primary memorials and monuments.

The most recent comprehensive study conducted on the National Mall was a 2003 transportation study (National Park Service, 2003). While this survey resulted in valuable information for transportation planning, it did not assess motivations or expenditures patterns and it did not attempt to separate the influence of the National Mall from that of other area attractions and facilities.

#### References

- Derudder, B., & Witlox, F. (2004). Assessing central places in a global age: On the networked localization strategies of advanced producer services. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 11, 171-180.
- Downtown DC Business Improvement District (2008). 2007 State of Downtown Report. Available at [http://www.downtowndc.org/\\_files/docs/sod2007.pdf](http://www.downtowndc.org/_files/docs/sod2007.pdf)
- Fujita, M., P. Krugman, P., & Venables, A. (1999). *The spatial economy: Cities, regions and international trade*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.
- Kotler, N., & Kotler, P. (1998). *Museum strategy and marketing: Designing missions, building audiences, generating revenue and resources*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mylonakis, J., & Kendristakis, E. (2006). Evaluation of museums service quality: A research study of museums and galleries visitors' satisfaction. *Tourism and Hospitality Management*, 12(2), 37-54.
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- Russo, A. (2002). The "vicious circle" of tourism development in heritage cities. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 29, 165-182
- Van der Borg, J. (2001). Tourism management and carrying capacity in heritage cities and sites. In: Coccossis, H. & Mexa, A. (eds.), *The Challenge of Tourism Carrying Capacity Assessment: Theory and Practice*, Ashgate, Burlington, VT/USA. pp. 163-179.

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 adult visitors 18 years of age and older visiting the National Mall during the study period. A systematic sample of visitors will be contacted by trained interviewers between the dates of July 7, 2008 and August 10, 2008.

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

The survey design and sampling plan for the study are based on Dillman’s Tailored Design Method, which has been shown to increase response rates, decrease error, reduce cost, and minimize burden hours. A systematic sampling procedure, based on visitation statistics specific to various sites in the park, will result in asking every 12<sup>th</sup> group to participate in the study. Because of the expected volume of visitation, two trained researchers will be positioned at each site so that tallying and intercepts can be completed in an uninterrupted fashion.

Intercepts will be conducted for four weeks, for a total of 12 data collection days. Visitors will be intercepted at eight sites within the National Mall. In order to account for the expected fluctuation in visitor demographics on weekends and weekdays, the following data collection schedule will be used, where researchers will be situated at each site three times over the four week data collection period:

<b>Week/Date</b>	<b>Data Collection Days</b>	<b>Data Collection Location</b>
#1: July 7 - 13	Monday Thursday Saturday	Monday: Capitol Reflecting Pool & Thomas Jefferson Memorial Thursday: Washington Monument & Lincoln Memorial Saturday: Vietnam Veterans Memorial & Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial
#2: July 14 - 20	Tuesday Friday Sunday	Tuesday: World War II Memorial & The Mall at 6 <sup>th</sup> and Jefferson Friday: Capitol Reflecting Pool & Thomas Jefferson Memorial Sunday: Washington Monument & Lincoln Memorial
#3: July 21 - 27	Wednesday Thursday Saturday	Wednesday: Vietnam Veterans Memorial & Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial Thursday: World War II Memorial & The Mall at 6 <sup>th</sup> and Jefferson Saturday: Capitol Reflecting Pool & Thomas Jefferson Memorial
#4: July 28 – August 3	Tuesday Friday Sunday	Tuesday: Washington Monument & Lincoln Memorial Friday: Vietnam Veterans Memorial & Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial Sunday: World War II Memorial & The Mall at 6 <sup>th</sup> and Jefferson

Using the above sampling frame, approximately 1,641 visitor groups will be contacted during the planned sampling period.

**(c) Instrument administration:**

Researchers will be positioned at eight locations in the National Mall. During data collection weeks 1 and 3, researchers will be located at the Capitol Reflecting Pool, the Washington Monument, the Lincoln Memorial, and the Thomas Jefferson Memorial. During weeks 2 and 4, researchers will be located at

the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial, World War II Memorial and The Mall at 6<sup>th</sup> and Jefferson.

In order to address the physical comfort of participants, increase response rate, and to facilitate identification as an NPS-sponsored study, a small table and 8x8 shade tent with accompanying signage stating "National Mall Visitor Study" will be placed at each research location in an NPS-approved space, and researchers will wear National Park Service Volunteer caps during data collection.

The initial contact with visitors to explain the study and determine if they are interested participating (see attached script) will take approximately 1 minute. The visitor groups that refuse will be recorded (see attached front-end log) and used in calculating response rates. Participants must be English-speaking, and language barriers will be noted as a reason for refusal in the front-end log.

Visitors who voluntarily agree to participate in the study will take part in a front-end interview (1 additional minute) to collect information used for follow-up contact and for a non-response bias check. If a group agrees to participate, the researcher will give the postage paid/addressed self-administered questionnaire to the age-eligible individual in the group who has the next birthday. This individual will be asked to complete the front-end interview and record her/his name, mailing address and e-mail address (see attached participant log). The e-mail address will be requested from those who prefer follow-up communication to occur electronically.

Participants will be mailed a thank you/reminder postcard within 10 days of accepting the questionnaire. For those who have not returned the questionnaire within 21 days, a reminder letter with a postage paid, addressed replacement questionnaire will be mailed, followed by a second postcard reminder for those who have not responded within 35 days.

Research shows that there is a systematic tendency for the last categories in questions with long lists to have higher item non-response because they are near the end of the list. A standard way to deal with this is to have two versions of the survey that reverses the order of items in the list. This approach will be used here. Two versions of the survey will be used. These versions will be the same in every respect other than the order of items listed in Question 8a. The order of items appearing in this question will be reversed. The version of the survey distributed will be alternated so that equal number of respondents will receive each version.

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

Based on the National Mall visitation data and the 12 days of instrument administration, approximately 1,641 groups will be contacted during the sampling period. Based on prior, similar, studies, it is expected that 1,230 will agree to participate and approximately 800 will return the questionnaire. A predicted response rate for those who agree to complete the questionnaire is 65% (Yellowstone National Park 2006 – 69.4%, Mount Rushmore National Memorial 2007 – 66.1%).

Estimates from the survey will be accurate to within +/- 3.5 percentage points at the 95% confidence level for questions with dichotomous response scales. The confidence intervals will be somewhat larger for questions with more than two response categories.

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

A front-end survey log will be completed by the researcher after each initial contact in which the respondents indicates a "no" response. The researchers will track date, time, sex of respondent, group characteristics and reason for "no" response. (See attached front-end form). Further, for those who accept a

questionnaire, the front-end interview information will be used in calculating this portion of the non-response bias analysis. This analysis will be included in the final report and the implications for management and interpretation of results will be discussed.

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

The questionnaire format and many of the items have been used in NPS visitor studies around the country. The questionnaire and survey methodology were peer-reviewed by a team of academic professionals from George Mason University representing areas of expertise in research methods, economic assessment and analysis, tourism assessment and analysis, and public park assessment and analysis. Additionally, a team of representatives from the NPS has been actively engaged in the on-going development of the questionnaire and survey methods.

10.	<b>Total Number of Initial Contacts   Expected Respondents:</b>	1641	1230	800	11.	<b>Estimated Time to Complete (mins):</b>	1	1	20	12.	<b>Total Burden Hours:</b>	315
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13. **Reporting Plan:**

Descriptive statistics will be tabulated using SPSS, economic impacts will be estimated using IMPLAN, and qualitative responses will be analyzed using frequencies and constant comparative analysis. The reporting plan will include: 1) a final technical report delivered to the National Park Service; 2) a briefing to National Park Service managers; 3) a minimum of two presentations at national conferences; 4) a minimum of one peer-reviewed journal article; and 5) a survey report that will be archived with the National Park Service Social Science Program for inclusion in the Social Sciences Studies Collection. Results of front-end logs and interviews will be used to examine non-response bias.