



Expedited Approval for NPS-Sponsored Public Surveys

1. **Project Title** | Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore (SLBE) Visitor Study (VSP) | **Submission Date:** May 6, 2008

2. **Abstract:** The park was established in 1979 and a VSP visitor study has never been conducted. The park is currently working on a General Management Plan, Wilderness Study, and Comprehensive Interpretive Plan. The information collected would be invaluable as the park approaches its 40th anniversary. Visitor data are needed for park planning efforts, including interpretive operations and working with concessionaires and local communities.

The mail-back questionnaire in this visitor study is designed to systematically collect data from winter 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 study as they visit the park at selected locations during a 7-day period from July 22-28, 2008.

3. **Principal Investigator Contact Information**

**First Name:** Margaret | **Last Name:** Littlejohn

**Title:** NPS Visitor Services Project (VSP) Director

**Affiliation:** NPS Visitor Services Project, PSU,  
College of Natural Resources,  
University of Idaho

**Street Address:** 6th & Line Streets, Room 17B

**City:** Moscow | **State:** ID | **Zip code:** 83844-1139

**Phone:** 208-885-7863 | **Fax:** 208-885-4261

**Email:** littlej@uidaho.edu

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

**First Name:** Lisa | **Last Name:** Myers

**Title:** Chief of Interpretation

**Park:** Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore

**Park Office/Division:** Interpretation

**Street Address:** 9922 Front St.

**City:** Empire | **State:** MI | **Zip code:** 49630

**Phone:** 231-326-5134 ext 300 | **Fax:** 231-326-5382

**Email:** Lisa\_myers@nps.gov

**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: 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.

•The park was established in 1979 and a VSP visitor study has never been conducted. The park is currently working on a General Management Plan, Wilderness Study, and Comprehensive Interpretive Plan. The information collected would be invaluable as the park approaches its 40th anniversary.

The study results will be used as follows:

- For planning documents (e.g., GMP, CIP, backcountry management plan).
- To plan and design visitor facilities in future Line Item Construction and fee projects at Glen Haven, Port Oneida, and South Manitou Island.
- To design interpretive and educational programs to match visitor interests and needs. Interpretive media is outdated, waysides need to be replaced and added in many areas.
- To determine whether concession services are meeting visitor needs.
- For local businesses and governments to use to determine how visitors are contributing economically to the area.

The mail-back questionnaire in this visitor study is 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 study as they visit the park at selected locations during a 7-day period from July 22-28, 2008.

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 recreational visitors, age 16 and older, who visit the park during the study period. A systematic sample of visitors will be contacted by VSP-trained interviewers from July 22-28, 2009 at selected locations in the park.

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

The survey design and sampling plan for the SLBE visitor study are 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. This methodology and survey instrument design has been used in 188 previous surveys conducted by the Visitor Services Project (VSP). The majority of questions in the Sleeping Bear Dunes questionnaire appear in the Social Science Program's known pool of

questions and have been used in other VSP questionnaires, or are very similar to other questions. A systematic sampling procedure, based on the park's visitation statistics from the previous year, will require asking every 71st visitor to participate in the study. Each interviewer will use a tally counter to count visitors. Approximately 1,268 visitor groups will be contacted during the planned sampling period, with heavier sampling on weekends, matching the visitation statistics. Visitor groups will be intercepted at ten park locations, with one survey supervisor overseeing all of the interviewers.

**(c) 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. The number of visitor groups who refuse are recorded and used in calculating response rates. 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 return.

Participants will be mailed a thank you/reminder post card 11 working days after the completion of the survey. If the thank you/reminder post card proves unsuccessful, a reminder letter with a stamped, addressed replacement questionnaire will be sent 21 working days after the completion of the survey. A second reminder letter will be mailed after 35 working days with a stamped, addressed questionnaire.

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

Based on the park's visitation data and the number of days of surveying, approximately 1,268 groups will be contacted over the sampling period. It is expected that approximately 1,173 of these will accept the questionnaires, and 938 will return them. This produces an overall response rate of 74%. This expected response rate is based upon similar VSP study response rates (New River Gorge NR 2004–66%, Apostle Islands NL 2004–75%).

Estimates from the survey will be accurate to within +/-3.2 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:**

During the front-end interview, questions are asked of the respondents to check for non-response bias. 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.

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

The questionnaire format and many of the questions have been used in over 188 previous VSP survey instruments. Most of the questions appear in the Social Science Program's know pool of questions. Questionnaires are peer reviewed by NPS managers and university professors.

10.

**Total Number of Initial Contacts Accept Instrument | Expected Respondents:**

1,268	1,173	938
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**11. Estimated Time (mins.) to Complete Initial Contact | (refusals only) Accept Instrument Return Instrument:**

1	1	20
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**12. Total Burden Hours:**

353
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13. **Reporting Plan:** Responses will be tabulated and frequencies, means, or medians for each question will be reported, as appropriate. The results of this information collection activity will be presented in an internal agency report for park managers and NPS managers at the regional and national level. The report will be archived with the NPS Social Science Program for inclusion in the Social Science Studies Collection. It 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 a special report for the NPS covering overall use estimates and local economic impacts.