



Expedited Approval for NPS-Sponsored Public Surveys

1. Project Titles	Visitor Services Project (VSP) Bundle for Fall/Winter 2009/2010: Death Valley National Park (NP) (DEVA) Visitor Study (Fall and Spring) Virgin Islands NP (VIIS) Visitor Study San Juan National Historic Site (NHS) (SAJU) Visitor Study	October 13, 2009
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2. Abstract:	The above three parks need to conduct visitor studies to obtain data on backcountry/wilderness visitors and to gather visitor 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 Interpretive Plans. The information from these visitor surveys also 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**

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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:** Death Valley National Park, Virgin Islands National Park, San Juan National Historic Site.

6. **Survey Dates:** See attached list (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.
Study findings will be used as follows, depending upon the specific park:
• As input into planning (e.g., General Management Plan, Comprehensive 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-day period.

9. **Survey Methodology: (Use as much space as needed; if necessary include additional explanation on a separate page.)** **(a) Respondent universe:**
At San Juan NHS and Virgin Islands NP, the respondent universe will be all recreational visitors, age 16 and older, who visit the parks during the study period. At Death Valley NP the respondent universe will consist of all recreational visitors to wilderness or backcountry units of the park who are at least 16 years of age or older. A systematic sample of visitors will be contacted by VSP-trained interviewers at selected locations in the parks.

(b) Sampling plan/procedures:
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 198 previous surveys conducted by the VSP. Most questions have been included in other VSP questionnaires or appear in the NPS Known Pool of Questions. A systematic sampling procedure, based on the park's visitation statistics from the previous year, will require intercepting every *n*th 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.

(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 mail back to the Visitor Services Project.

On-site visitors will be intercepted at locations shown on the accompanying spreadsheet. The two surveys at Death Valley (fall and spring seasons) are of visitors to backcountry and wilderness zones within the park. Unlike many other NPS units, at Death Valley backcountry and wilderness visitors are not required to obtain a permit to enter the zones, even for overnight camping. Therefore, permit data cannot be used as a sampling frame for mail-back surveys in this park. Visitors must be intercepted on-site.

San Juan NHS's questionnaire will also be translated into Spanish and distributed by Spanish-speaking interviewers.

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.

(d) 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 and confidence levels 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.

(e) 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.

(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 198 previous VSP survey instruments. Questionnaires are peer reviewed by NPS managers and university professors.

10.	Total Number of Initial Contacts Accept Instrument Expected Respondents:	3,079 (See attached list)	2,805	1,937	11. Estimated Time (mins.) to Complete Initial Contact (refusals only) Accept Instrument Return Instrument:	1	1	20	12. Total Burden Hours:	1,033 (See attached list)
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13. **Reporting Plan:**

The results of the studies will be presented in an 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 Program 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.