



Expedited Approval for NPS-Sponsored Public Surveys

1. **Project Titles/ Submission Date:** Visitor Services Project (VSP) Survey for Joshua Tree National Park (JOTR) October 6, 2010

2. **Abstract:** A Mail back survey will be used to collect information from visitors at Joshua Tree National Park (JOTR). The survey will be used to gather information concerning visitor satisfaction about the park's services and facilities. The data will be used to prepare National Park Service planning documents, such as: General Management Plans (GMP), Resource Management Plans (RMP), Wilderness Plans, and Long-Range and Comprehensive Interpretive Plans. The information from these visitor studies will be used by park managers to inform decisions about park operations. The information will also be shared with park partners and gateway communities to assist in mutual planning efforts. The questionnaires will be designed to systematically collect data that will include information on trip/visit characteristics (e.g. activities, evaluation of park services/facilities, perceptions of park experiences, and opinions on park management).

3. **Principal Investigator Contact Information**

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

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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.)**

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, 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 questionnaire used in this study is designed to 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**

(a) Respondent universe:
The respondent universe for this collection 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 at selected park locations in

include additional explanation on a separate page.)

each park.

On-site visitors will be intercepted at locations shown in the table below.

Intercept Locations within JOTE

West, North, Black Rock, entrance stations

Indian Cove Entrance Station

Cottonwood Visitor Center

Oasis Visitor Center

Joshua Tree Visitor Centers

(b) Sampling plan/procedures:

The survey design and sampling plan for this collection 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 Known Pool of 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 receive 1-1/2 hours of training on how to conduct interviews. This training will cover every aspect of interviewing, including conducting the interviews using sampling intervals, avoiding sampling bias, and how to handle all types of interviewing situations, including safety of the visitor and the interviewer. Quality control will be ensured by monitoring interviewers in the field, and by checking their paperwork at the end of each day of surveying.

(c) Instrument administration:

The initial contact with visitors will be used to explain the study and determine if visitors are interested in participating (see attached script). This should take approximately 1 minute. If a group is encountered, the survey interviewer will ask the individual within the group who has the next birthday to serve as the respondent for the study. At this point, the survey respondent will be asked 5 questions to collect information that will be used in the non-response bias analysis (see questions below). The respondent will also be asked to record their name, address, and phone number/email address on the survey log. Finally the respondent will be given a stamped, addressed questionnaire to complete and mail back to the Visitor Services Project. The number of visitors refusing to participate will be recorded and used to calculate the overall response rate for the collection.

At the end of the survey sampling period all participants will be mailed a thank you/reminder post card within 11 working days. A reminder letter with a stamped, addressed replacement questionnaire will be sent to non-respondents 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:

A total of 763 visitors will be contacted during the sampling period. 700 (92%) visitors will agree to participate in the survey. The number of refusals will be recorded and reported in a survey log, and will be used in calculating the response rate. Based on previous and nearly identical studies conducted by the VSP 483 (69%) are expected to complete and return the survey by mail. With this sample size, there will be 95% confidence that the day-use survey findings will be accurate

to within 3.7 percentage points. Thus, the proposed sample size will be adequate for bivariate comparisons and will allow for comparisons between study sites and more sophisticated multivariate analysis if deemed necessary. For dichotomous response variables, estimates will be accurate within the margins of error and 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 initial contact, the interviewer will ask each visitor five questions taken from the survey. These questions will be used in a non-response bias analysis.

- 1) What type of group are you traveling with today?
- 2) (If with an organized group-tours, school, etc.) How many people are in your group?
- 3) How many in your party are, 18 years and older?
- 4) How many are in your party are 17 years and younger?
- 5) How old is the person who will complete the questionnaire?

Responses will be recorded on a log for every survey contact. Results of the non-response bias check will be described in a report and the implications for park planning and management 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 questions have been used in 214 previous VSP survey instruments. Questionnaires are regularly peer reviewed by NPS managers and university professors.

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| 10 | Total Number of Initial Contacts | 763 | 11 | Estimated Time (mins.) to Complete Initial Contact | 1 | 12 | Estimated Burden Hours | 13 |
| | Expected Number accepting questionnaire | 700 | | Estimated Time (mins.) to ask non-response bias checking questions | 3 | | Estimated Burden Hours | 35 |
| | Expected Number of Respondents | 483 | | Return Instrument | 20 | | Estimated Burden Hours | 161 |
| Total Burden | | | | | | | | 209 |

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 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.