

[Hiking Survey]

# New River Gorge National River



## **A survey of visitors: Your opinion matters!**

*Conducted by:*

Dr. Dave Smaldone

Recreation, Parks & Tourism Program  
Division of Forestry & Natural Resources  
West Virginia University

In cooperation with the New River Gorge National River

### Survey Directions:

*Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. The results of this study will help resource managers better understand visitors like you, as well as develop education and interpretive programs for park visitors. This survey is only being given to a select number of visitors, so your participation is very important. Your participation is voluntary, and your responses will be kept confidential and anonymous. This survey should take about 15 minutes of your time. Please read the instructions for each question and answer to the best of your ability.*

First, we would like to find out a little about *your current visit* to the New River Gorge National River.

#### **Topic Area 1 – Trip/Visit Characteristics (Questions 1-2)**

1. Is this your first trip to the New River Gorge (NRG)? *(please check one)*

Yes       No

2. How long is your current trip to the NRG? *(please check one, and write in number)*

Less than one day. → If so, how many hours? \_\_\_\_\_  
 More than a day. → If so, how many days? \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Topic Area 3 – Individual Activities and Uses of Park Resources**

3. What activities are you doing today while on the trail? *(check all that apply)*

<input type="checkbox"/> hiking/walking	<input type="checkbox"/> rock climbing
<input type="checkbox"/> bird watching	<input type="checkbox"/> photography
<input type="checkbox"/> viewing wildlife (other than birds)	<input type="checkbox"/> viewing the scenery
<input type="checkbox"/> visiting historic sites	<input type="checkbox"/> picnicking
<input type="checkbox"/> other: _____	

→ Now, from the activities that you checked **above**, please **write in the one** that was most important to you: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Topic Area 5 – Individual Perceptions of their Park Experiences (4 and 5)**

4. How did the number of people you saw during your visit compare with what you expected?

A lot less than what you expected  
 A little less than what you expected  
 About what you expected  
 A little more than what you expected  
 A lot more than what you expected  
 You did not have any expectations

5. How crowded did you feel on your visit to the New River Gorge today? (*circle one number*)  
 1            2            3            4            5            6            7            8            9

*Not crowded at all                      Slightly Crowded                      Moderately Crowded                      Extremely Crowded*

**Topic Area 6 – Individual Evaluation of Park Services (6 and 7)**

6. How important to you are the following features at NRG hiking areas? (*please circle one response for each question*)

	Not important				Very Important		
Restrooms at trailheads.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Parking Areas.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Signage at Trail Access Points .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Trail Quality.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Visitor Center.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Ranger presence on trails .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Suitable campsites in park .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

7. How would you rate your satisfaction with the quality of these features at NRG hiking areas? (*circle one response for each question*)

	Very Dissatisfied		Neutral			Very Satisfied	
Restrooms at trailheads.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Parking Areas.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Signage at Trail Access Points.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Trail Quality.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Visitor Center.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Ranger presence on trails .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Suitable campsites in park .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**Now, we'd like you to tell us about your background: (*circle or fill in as appropriate*):**

**Topic Area 1 – Individual Characteristics (Questions 8-13)**

8. How many years have you been hiking? (*please write in number*) \_\_\_\_\_

9. How many years have you been hiking at the New River Gorge? (*write in number*) \_\_\_\_\_

10. When was your first visit to New River Gorge? (*write in the month and year*)

Month: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_  Don't know/can't remember

11. Approximately how many times a year do you participate in hiking? (*check one*)

<10 days/year                       31-40 days/year

- 11-20 days/year
- 21-30 days/year

- 41-50 days/year
- >50 days/year

12. Approximately how many times a year do you participate in hiking at the New River Gorge? (*check one*)

- <10 days/year
- 11-20 days/year
- 21-30 days/year
- 31-40 days/year
- 41-50 days/year
- >50 days/year

13. What category best describes your overall ability as a hiker? (*check one*)

- Novice
- Intermediate
- Advanced
- Expert

**Topic Area 2 – Trip Planning (14 and 15)**

14. From your home, how many hours did you travel to reach the New River Gorge? (*please check one box*)

- Less than 1
- 1 to 2
- 3 to 4
- 5 to 6
- 7 to 8
- more than 8

15. What would you be most interested in learning about, in regards to the cliffs and their ecosystems at the NRG? (*please write in your answer*)

---



---



---

**Topic Area 6 – Preferences, Motives and Attitudes - variation (Questions 16-20)**

**The following questions deal with the cliffs at the NRG and your opinion of their importance. Please place a check under the column that best describes how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (*check one box for each question*)**

16.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
a. The cliffs in the NRG are the same as cliffs anywhere else.						
b. Cliffs are a fundamental resource to the NRG National River, and essential to its national significance.						
c. The cliffs in the NRG provide habitat for rare plants.						
d. The cliffs in the NRG provide habitat for rare animals.						
e. The cliffs in the NRG support unique habitats and ecosystems.						

f. The views of natural landscape from the cliffs in the NRG are worth protecting from human development.						
g. The views from the cliffs in the NRG are one of the Park's most important and unique resources.						

**This next section has questions about your behaviors and opinions regarding hiking practices. Please place a check under the column that best describes how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (check one box for each question)**

17.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
a. I always pack out waste.						
b. I always use official trails.						
c. I respect revegetation efforts.						
d. I avoid trails that have been closed.						
e. I practice Leave No Trace when I hike.						
f. I try to keep my noise level down.						
g. I park my vehicle in designated areas.						
h. Soils & plants along the Park trails are hardy and not easily damaged.						
i. I respect seasonal closures at certain trails for wildlife needs.						
j. The park provides clear indications about which trails should not be used.						
k. Compared to other people I saw on this visit, I am causing less damage to the soils & vegetation.						
l. I feel a responsibility to help protect the plants and ecosystems in the Park.						
m. The continued use of unofficial visitor created trails is a serious threat to plants and soils along the Park trails.						
n. It is OK to walk off the official trails, if I stay on unofficial trails already created by visitors.						

**The next question deals with potential resource impacts at hiking areas in the New River Gorge, and if you perceive them to be a problem. Please place a check under the column that best describes to what extent each of the following is a problem for you when hiking at the New River Gorge. (check one box for each question)**

18.	Not a problem	Minor problem	Neutral	Moderate problem	Serious problem	Don't know
a. Bare soil at the top or base of cliffs.						
b. Trampled vegetation at the top or base of the cliff.						
c. Dead or damaged trees at the top or base of the cliff due to use as a climbing anchor, or rappel site.						
d. Erosion at/near the cliffs due to multiple trails.						
e. Vegetation damaged or being removed from cliff face.						
f. Pieces of litter/trash at the cliff.						
g. Human waste visible along cliff lines or trails.						
h. Chalk tick marks on routes.						
i. Vandalism at NRG.						
j. People that do not control their dogs adequately.						

**Climbing is another popular activity in the NRG. This series of questions ask you to think about your opinions about management preferences, as well as how hiking and climbing is currently managed at the New River Gorge. Please place a check under the column that best describes how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (check one box for each question)**

**Definitions:**

\***Fixed Anchor:** Presence of fixed bolts/webbing/pitons on cliff, used for anchor/rappel stations.

\***Bolts:** Permanent bolts used on sport routes, and as anchor points.

19.	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't know
a. The impact of bolts & anchors on the natural resource is minimal.						
b. There should be official regulations concerning where, when, and how bolts and fixed anchors should be used.						
c. The presence of numerous bolts & anchors negatively affects my climbing experience.						
d. The National Park Service managers at the NRG share my values.						

e. All climbing guide services should be required to be certified or accredited.						
f. I am familiar with the climbing regulations at the NRG.						
g. Climbing is not treated fairly in the management process when compared to other recreation activities at the NRG.						
h. Climbing group sizes should be limited at NRG.						
i. I was not offended by seeing climbing bolts or anchors.						
j. I trust that the National Park Service managers at the NRG will do what is right for the Park.						
k. Climbers need to be educated concerning their role in the management process.						
l. Large groups of climbers detracted from my experience at NRG.						
m. Most climbing areas need an official management plan in order to provide sustained use.						
n. The National Park Service managers at the NRG have the same goals as me.						
o. Park managers do not have adequate knowledge of climbing to properly manage it at the NRG.						
p. Climber's practice of land stewardship is not adequate.						
q. Poor communication of rules & regulations is a problem at NRG.						
r. Climbers have a negative attitude toward management at the NRG.						

20. These questions ask you to indicate how important the NRG is you. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements about the New River Gorge area. (please check one box for each question)

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
a. This place means a lot to me.						
b. I feel like this place is a part of me.						
c. I feel no commitment to this place.						
d. I get more satisfaction out of climbing at the New River Gorge than anywhere else.						
e. The New River Gorge is the best place for doing the kind of climbing I do.						
f. There is NO substitute for the type and quality of climbing at the New River						

Gorge.						
--------	--	--	--	--	--	--

**Topic Area 2 – Trip Planning**

21. How do you usually obtain information about climbing in the NRG? (*check all sources that you have used*)

- Local guidebook
- Climbing websites
- Friends/word of mouth
- Through personal exploration & discovery
- Outdoor/climbing stores around the NRG
- National Park Service information (website, brochure, etc.)
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Topic Area 1 - Individual Characteristics**

22. Have you ever taken a course on, or been trained in, Leave No Trace (LNT) practices? (*check one*)

- Yes
- No

**Topic Area 2 – Trip Behaviors**

23. Did you encounter any National Park Service rangers on the trails today? (*check one*)

- Yes
- No

**Topic Area 6: Trust in the NPS (variation)**

24. How much do you trust or distrust the following as a source of information about **cliff resource management**? (*please check for each item*)

	Strongly distrust	Somewhat distrust	Somewhat trust	Strongly trust
Family & friends				
Environmental organizations				
Businesses (outdoor related)				
Outdoor related organizations				
Scientists in general				
National Park rangers in general				
National Park rangers at the New River Gorge National River				
Mainstream news media				

**Of the sources listed above, which do you most strongly trust, and WHY?**

List source: \_\_\_\_\_

Why trust?: \_\_\_\_\_



<p><b>Of the sources listed above, which do you most strongly distrust, and WHY?</b>  <i>List source:</i> _____  <i>Why distrust?:</i> _____</p>

**Topic Area 1 - Individual Characteristics**

25. To which of the following organizations affiliated with the outdoors or the environment do you currently belong? *(please check all that apply)*

- Leave No Trace
- Nature Conservancy
- Sierra Club
- Wilderness Society
- National Audubon Society
- National Parks Conservation Association
- Other *(please write in)* \_\_\_\_\_

**Topic Area 6 – Evaluation of Services and Management**

26. Did you know that volunteers undertake trail maintenance projects at NRG? *(check one)*

- Yes       No

**Topic Area 3 – Trip Behaviors – variation (Questions 27 and 28)**

27. Have you ever volunteered for a trail maintenance project at NRG (trail construction, trash clean up, etc.)? *(check one)*

- Yes       No

28. Have you ever volunteered for trail maintenance project anywhere else (trail construction, trash clean up, etc.)? *(check one)*

- Yes       No

**Topic Area 6 – Opinions of Services and Management**

29. Do you think visitors should share responsibility for park resource (trails, etc.) maintenance? *(check one)*

- Yes       No

**Finally, we would like to know a bit more about you.**

**Topic Area 1 - Individual Characteristics (Questions 30-38)**

30. What is your gender? *(please check one)*

- Male                       Female

31. What is the highest grade of school or year of college that you completed? *(check one)*

- Less than high school                       Four year college degree  
 High school graduate or GED                       Masters, doctoral, or professional degree  
 Some college or associate degree

32. Are you Hispanic or Latino? *(check one)*

- Yes                       No

33. Which racial groups do you identify with? *(check one or more)*

- American Indian or Alaska Native  
 Asian  
 Black or African American  
 Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander  
 White

34. What is your age? *(please write in number)* \_\_\_\_\_

35. Are you a permanent resident or citizen of the U.S.? *(check one and fill in)*

No — What is your country of origin? \_\_\_\_\_

Yes — What is your zip code, city and state of residence?

Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

36. How many people (including yourself) are in your party on this visit? *(write in number)* \_\_\_\_\_

Which of the following best describes your personal group you are traveling with?  
*(check one)* Myself alone

Myself with family (including spouse/partner and/or other family members/relatives)

Myself with family and friends

Myself with friends

Outfitter guided                      Specify \_\_\_\_\_

Club/organization/school                      Specify \_\_\_\_\_

Other *(Please specify)*

\_\_\_\_\_

37. Do you consider yourself to be a leader or organizer for your group?

- Yes       No

38. Are there any children under age 18 in your group? (*check one & write in number as needed*)

- No  
 Yes → How many children are in each of these age categories?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Number of children under 5 years old.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Number of children age 5-12  
\_\_\_\_\_ Number of children age 13-17

**Thank you for your help!**

**Privacy Act and Paperwork Reduction Act statement:**

16 U.S.C. 1a-7 authorizes the National Park Service to collect this information to be used by park managers to better serve the public. Response to this request is voluntary. No action may be taken against you for refusing to supply the information requested. The Paperwork Reduction Act states that an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number and expiration date.

**Burden estimate statement:** Public reporting for this form is estimated to average 20 minutes per response. Direct comments regarding the burden estimate or any other aspect of this form to the Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1849 C Street, Washington, D.C. 20240.