

**National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior**



**Social Science Program**

**Expedited Approval for NPS-Sponsored Public Surveys**

1.	<b>Project Title:</b> Visitor Services Project (VSP): Understanding Black/African American visitation experiences – a Columbia SC focus group study	<b>Submission Date</b>	10/11/2011
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2.      **Abstract:** Congaree National Park (CONG) is committed to the national effort of keeping national parks relevant to the American public. It is especially important for the managers at Congaree to reach underserved populations. CONG has requested the Visitor Services Project’s (VSP) assistance in conducting a series of focus groups to better understand the recreation needs and the visitation barriers of the African American communities in the local area surrounding CONG, especially in Columbia, SC. The results will help the park manager design programs and activities that meet their desires to connect with the local African American communities.

(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:** Congaree National Park (CONG)

6. **Survey Dates:** 11-7-2011 to 1-25-2012

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:** *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. Such studies are needed to provide a scientific basis for park planning, development.*

Managerial Justification.

CONG is committed to outreach efforts to make national parks relevant to American publics. The managers at CONG are interested in knowing more about the recreation behaviors of Black/African Americans in the local communities surrounding the park. According to the 2010 U.S. Census Bureau statistics, 45.9% of the population in Richland County, SC is Black/African American. Current visitation statistics at CONG is not reflective of the diversity of the area's population.

The VSP proposes to conduct 10-12 focus groups sessions with a sample of Black/African Americans within communities in and around Columbia, SC. The information collected will be used to help the NPS determine if additional programs and activities are needed to maximize the park's outreach efforts towards the Black/African American communities

The research objectives are to:

- understand recreational behaviors, preferred recreational activities, and significance of outdoor settings through discussion with Black/African American community members;
- learn about problems or barriers that may prevent Black/African Americans from visiting the park;
- determine the types of programs and the topics that would attract Black/African American visitors from local areas to use the park resources.

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 Black/African American adults at least 18 years of age who are year-round residents of Columbia, or Richland County, SC. According to the U.S. Census Bureau 2010 Census 176,487 individuals self-identified as Black or African American. Discounting those who are under 18, the target population for this study is approximately 90,000 individuals.

**(b) Sampling Plan/Procedures:**

To generate lists of potential focus group participants the VSP will use the following approach:

The VSP will start the process by meeting with the executive board members of the South-East Rural Community Outreach Organization (SERCO), local Pastors of predominately African American Churches, Friends of the Congaree (a non-profit friends group) and a group of Black/African American park volunteers and identified community leaders. After we've described the study, we will ask members from the groups listed above, to provide 10-12 names and contact information of church members or local leaders that would be suited to serve as potential participants in the study. We will use this list of names to initiate the snowball process.

We will contact each person on the initial list, describe the study, and ask them to provide the names of at least 5 people who they think would be suited to serve as potential participants in the study. This will serve as the first wave of contacts.

A goal of the recruiting process would be to have maximum variation in the sample. In order to achieve this we will ask each contact (whenever possible) to provide the names and contact information of individuals within different demographic categories (age, marital status, length of residency, and gender). We will continue the process until we receive a total of approximately 300 names.

People who received 3 more recommendations during the snowball process will be selected first then we will go down the list to people with 2 recommendations and then 1 if necessary. The selected individuals will be contacted by VSP staff by phone (see attached script) to invite them to focus group discussion. A tally will be kept as participants are recruited to ensure that individuals with diverse characteristics (age, gender, length of residency) are included. Those who agree to participate will be divided into 12 different focus group sessions of 6-8 individuals per session. In past focus group studies conducted by the VSP the point of saturation has typically reached been after 5-6 focus groups, however, given the size and diversity of Columbia, it is advisable to increase the number of focus groups. It is estimated that 300 individuals will be contacted to obtain 96 committed participants. For those who declined to participate, age, gender, length and location of residency will be recorded for non-response bias analysis.

Since each focus group session will be 90 minute long and intensive we will offer refreshment, up to \$20 as reimbursement for traveling expenses, a free

canoe trip led by park volunteers or a gift certificate donated by bookstore association (Eastern National) to recruit enough participants and to encourage retention through the focus group sessions. The incentives will be donated and handled by the Friends of Congaree and Eastern National. The offer of incentive will be clearly stated in recruiting materials.

**(c) Instrument Administration:**

Focus groups will be administered by VSP personnel. The focus group scripts are included as a separate document. Each session will take approximately 90 minutes to complete. The sessions will be voice-recorded and transcribed. The transcripts will be analyzed and used to provide results for the final reports. Contact information and full transcripts will be kept in a locked cabinet. Codes will be used in all analyses and publications to protect participants' identity.

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

It is expected that each focus group will include approximately 6-8 participants. Because this study design is qualitative and uses purposive samples selected from targeted groups, there is no statistical basis for generalizing the findings to all visitors. Therefore, response rates and confidence levels/intervals do not present the same concerns as they do in quantitative studies based on probability samples and employing inferential statistical analysis. The findings will be used to provide CONG staff with information that can be used in the development of their outreach process.

	Number of Initial Contacts	Expected Response Rate	Expected Number of Responses
Snowballing Process	300	30%	90

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

Based on our sampling design, we expect to interview approximately 210 respondents that will be routed through the non-response bias analysis part of the survey. During each initial contact, everyone contacted will be asked the following questions to be used in the non-response bias analysis. One non-response bias pre-measurement screening questions will be asked to determine survey eligibility and conformance with the study universe. These questions will screen non-respondents to ensure they are 18 years of age or older, and that they identify as African American before they are asked the non-response bias analysis questions.

- Age
- Race
- Gender
- Years of residency in the area
- Have you ever visited a National Park?

A non-response bias analysis will be conducted on multiple levels. A post hoc analysis of non-contact records and completed interviews will be conducted based on sample frame characteristics. Additionally, a random subsample of

non-respondents who answered the non-response variables will be compared to completed interviews based on demographic and socioeconomic characteristics in order to identify and assess any significant differences among respondents and non-respondents. Further analysis will be conducted using third party data sources, such as Current Population Survey (CPS) data from the U.S. Census Bureau to determine any differences between the sample of completed interviews and the study universe.

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

The instrument was developed by evaluation professionals at VSP based on the goals of the CONG outreach program. The script had been tested using a group of African American students at University of South Carolina in Columbia (n=5). The questions and the length of focus group session have been verified for clarity and cultural sensitivity.

**10 Burden Estimates:** We plan to approach 300 individuals during the snowballing process. We expect that the initial contact time will be at least five minutes per person (300 x 5 minutes = 25hours). We expect that based on the selection process, 210 people not be eligible to participate in the focus groups. We will record the basic demographic information (age, length of residency, and gender) that will be used for the non-response check this time is included in the initial contact time described above.

For those who are selected to participate in the study (90) we expect that it will take at least 90 minutes to complete the focus group sessions (90 x 90 minutes – 135 hours). The total burden for this collection is estimated to be 160 hours.

Total Number of Initial Contacts	300	Estimated Time (mins.) to Complete Initial Contact	5	Estimated Burden Hours	25
Expected number of focus group participants	90	Time to complete focus group sessions (mins.)	90	Estimated Burden Hours	135
<b>Total Burden</b>				<b>160 Hours</b>	

**11. Reporting Plan:** Once the focus groups have been completed, the VSP will create full transcripts of each focus group and submit them as an appendix to the final report. The report will describe the methodology and provide analyses that will include all raw data and an interpretation of the data that will include themes and patterns, consistency of responses, and recommendations. This information will be provided in a manner that will be used to inform the park’s outreach efforts. The final report will be submitted by the VSP to CONG and NPS and a copy will be archived by the NPS Social Science Division. There will be a potential publication

in peer-reviewed journals. All personal information will be removed from reports and publications to protect participants' identities.