

Programmatic Approval for NPS-Sponsored Public Surveys

1. **Project Title:** **Submission Date**

Visitor Services Project (VSP) Surveys at the Following Parks:

1. Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area (BISO)
2. Obed Wild and Scenic River (OBED)
3. Mesa Verde National Park (MEVE)
4. Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Park (SEKI)
5. Steamtown National Historic Site (STEA)
6. Canyon de Chelly National Monument (CACH)

2. **Abstract:** *This submission contains 6 separate collections. Mail back questionnaires will be used to collect information from visitors at: Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area (BISO), Obed Wild and Scenic River (OBED), Mesa Verde National Parks (MEVE), Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Park (SEKI), Steamtown National Historic Site (STEA), and Canyon de Chelly (CACH). The individual surveys will be used to gather information concerning visitor satisfaction about the park's services and facilities. The parks are in the process of reviewing their Long Range Interpretive and Management Plans. The data will help refocus interpretive efforts. The data will also assist park managers in developing and providing services and interpretive programs that meet visitors' needs and expectation. The information will 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).*

(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:**
1. Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area (BISO)
 2. Obed Wild and Scenic River (OBED)
 3. Mesa Verde National Park (MEVE)
 4. Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Park (SEKI)
 5. Steamtown National Historic Site (STEA)
 6. Canyon de Chelly National Monument (CACH)

6.	Location	Start Date		End Date
	Big South Fork (BISO)	8/19/2012	to	8/26/2012
	Obed Wild and Scenic River (OBED)	9/01/2012	to	9/08/2012
Survey Dates:	Mesa Verde National Park (MEVE)	9/9/2012	to	9/16/2012
	Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Park (SEKI)	9/9/2012	to	9/16/2012
	Steamtown National Historic Site (STEA)	9/22/2012	to	9/29/2012
	Canyon de Chelly National Monument (CACH)	9/22/2012	to	9/29/2012

7. **Type of Information Collection Instrument (Check ALL that Apply)**

- | | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|---------------------------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mail-Back Questionnaire Other (explain) | <input type="checkbox"/> On-Site Questionnaire | <input type="checkbox"/> Face-to-Face Interview | <input type="checkbox"/> Telephone Survey | <input type="checkbox"/> Focus Groups |
|---|--|---|---|---------------------------------------|

8. **Survey Justification: (Use as much space as needed; if necessary include additional explanation on a separate page.)**
- 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.*

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, operations, management, education, and interpretive activities.

Study findings will be used to:

- provide input into planning (e.g., General Management Plan, Comprehensive Interpretive Plan, Long Range Interpretive Plan)
- provide information that will assist with the conceptual design of interpretive and educational programs to match visitor interests and needs
- provide feedback about the design of future visitor facilities or renovations of existing facilities

- evaluate visitor behavior for potential impacts on natural and cultural resources
- provide basic information about the economic benefits of visitation to local businesses and governments in the area.

Management Justification: Each park has specific reasons for needing a visitor study:

1. Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area (BISO)

Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area is in the process of prioritizing the initiatives laid out in their General Management Plan. BISO managers are interested in having reliable visitor statistics and feedback to needed to address operations and planning issues concerning interpretive and educational programs.

2. Obed Wild and Scenic River (OBED)

The most recent Obed Wild and Scenic River (OBED) visitor use studies were conducted in 2002 (climber study) and 1985 (river study). Both of the studies captured only one type of park user. The park has never had a systematic visitor study of all user groups and their park experiences. A comprehensive visitor study is currently needed to inform the 2012-2013 Comprehensive Interpretive Plan. Without the data from a visitor use survey, managers will not have information needed to properly address their goals to provide visitors with more meaningful and relevant park experiences.

3. Mesa Verde National Park (MEVE)

Mesa Verde National Park has never had a VSP visitor study. The new park managers are interested in learning more about the types of activities and services that visitors are interested in and need this data to inform their 2012-2013 Comprehensive Interpretive Plan. Park Managers have requested survey data to help them with their planning efforts as well as operation of the new visitor center. Questions will be used to provide information on visitor demographics, trip/visit characteristics (e.g. activities, evaluation of park services/facilities, perceptions of park experiences, opinions on park management and visitor spending).

4. Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Park (SEKI)

The most recent visitor use study in Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks (SEKI) was completed in 2002. While it offers some good baseline data, a new study is needed to fill knowledge gaps and provide updated information. SEKI is currently involved in several major planning efforts with critical operations including a Wilderness and Stock Use Management Plan and a concessions prospectus for Kings Canyon National Park. These efforts require accurate, up-to-date information, which will be most useful to park managers in early 2013.

5. Steamtown National Historic Site (STEAM)

Steamtown National Historic Site has never had a comprehensive visitor study. The park is working closely with its partners to develop visitor services and interpretive programming and is in the process of preparing a comprehensive

planning document. In order to better inform partners as well as design services and programs that meet visitors' needs, a thorough study is needed to obtain the most up-to-date and accurate information about visitors experiences, preference of services and opinions on park management.

6. Canyon de Chelly National Monument (CACH)

Canyon de Chelly National Monument has not had a visitor study since 1993 and socioeconomic patterns have changed greatly in the local community and surrounding Navajo Reservation since then. The park and the Navajo Nation are currently working on a Cooperative Management Plan. A survey is important as the park addresses the challenges of their visitation changes, resource issues and changing community and Navajo Reservation populations. International and national visitation to the Four Corners Region has also changed. Because Canyon de Chelly has an indigenous community living within park boundaries, there are complex issues in community demographics. Increased local and visitor populations are greatly affecting park operations and surrounding 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 for this collection will be a systematic sample of all recreational visitors, age 16 and older, visiting the parks during the study periods. The intercept locations for each of the parks are listed in the table below (Table 1).

Table 1: Sample Locations

Park	Intercept Location
Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area (BISO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train depot in Sterns • Blue Heron • Station Camp • Leatherwood Road East and West • Rugby • Divine Road • Burnt Mill Bridge • Bear Creek • Alum Ford, and • Worley
Obed Wild and Scenic River (OBED)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitor Center, • Lily Bridge day use area • Nemo
Mesa Verde National Park (MEVE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park entrance
Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Park (SEKI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main park entrances
Steamtown National Historic Site (STEA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitor center

Canyon de Chelly National Monument (CACH)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Visitor Center• Cottonwood Campground• Thunderbird Lodge• Canyon Kiosk• White House Overlook• Spider Rock Overlook
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(b) Sampling Plan/Procedures:

Mail-back questionnaires will be used at each of the parks to collect the following information from visitors:

- 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 the park during the seven day study periods.

The survey design and sampling plan for each visitor study in this submission will be 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 243 previous surveys conducted by the VSP. Most questions have been included in other VSP questionnaires or appear in the current NPS Known Pool of Questions (1024-0224). 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 on-site contact. The interviewers will be instructed to contact every nth visitor at each of the park locations (listed in Table 1 above). This training will cover every aspect of on-site contact this includes: 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 survey day.

(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 2 minutes. 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, all individuals approached will be asked the non-response bias questions to collect information that will be used in the final analysis (see item 9e below). The visitors that refuse to participate will be asked if they would be willing to take two minutes to respond to non-response bias questions. The number of refusals will be recorded and used to calculate the overall response rate for the collection.

Visitors selected for participation in the survey will be read the following script:

"Hello, my name is _____. I am conducting a survey for the National Park Service to better understand your opinions about this park's programs and services. Your participation is voluntary and all responses will be kept anonymous. Would you be willing to take a survey and mail it back to us using the self-addressed envelope?"

→If **YES** – then ask, "has any member of your group been asked to participate in this survey before?"

If **"YES"** (already asked to participate) then, *"Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study we hope that you will return the questionnaire soon. Have a great day."*

If **"NO"** (have not been previously asked to participate) then, *"Thank you for agreeing to participate. Who in your group is at least 16 years old and has the next birthday? Ask them to start the process by answering the non-response bias questions (listed below). Record responses in spaces provided on the tracking sheet. Hand them a survey packet including the questionnaire and a self-addressed stamp envelope."*

→If **NO-** (soft refusal) - ask them if they would be willing to answer the non-response bias questions (listed below) and then thank them for their time. *Record responses in spaces provided on the tracking sheet.*

→If **NO-** (hard refusal) - *end the contact and thank them for their time.*

Once the visitor has agreed to participate in the study, we will ask them to provide or personally to record their name, address, and phone number or email address on the survey log sheet – this information will be used to follow-up with all non-respondents. At the end of the survey sampling period, all visitors accepting a survey packet on-site 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 to non-respondents after 35 working days with a stamped, addressed replacement questionnaire.

(d) Expected Response Rate/Confidence Levels:

The response rate for each of the collections is based on VSP surveys at similar park sites. Based on the survey sample sizes, there will be 95% confidence that the survey findings will be accurate to within 3-5 percentage points (table 1 below). Thus, the proposed sample sizes will be adequate for bivariate comparisons and will allow for comparisons between study sites and more sophisticated multivariate analysis. If the response rate is below what would typically be expected, the VSP may need to call a sample of non-respondents to

try to increase the response rate. 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 (Table 2).

Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area (BISO) – A total of 1,298 visitors will be contacted during the sampling period. Based on previous and nearly identical studies conducted by the VSP, 1,195 (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. An expected 777 visitors (65%) will complete and return the survey by mail.

Obed Wild and Scenic River (OBED) - A total of 565 visitors will be contacted during the sampling period. Based on previous and nearly identical studies conducted by the VSP, 520 (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. An expected 338 visitors (65%) will complete and return the survey by mail.

Mesa Verde National Park (MEVE)

A total of 978 visitors will be contacted during the sampling period. Based on previous and nearly identical studies conducted by the VSP, 900 (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. An expected 612 visitors (68%) will complete and return the survey by mail.

Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Park (SEKI)-

A total of 1200 visitors will be contacted during the sampling period. Based on average refusal rates from 243 VSP studies, we expect that 1,100 (91%) 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. An expected 715 visitors (65%) will complete and return the survey by mail.

Steamtown National Historic Site (STEA)

A total of 367 visitors will be contacted during the sampling period. Based on previous and nearly identical studies conducted by the VSP, 340 (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. An expected 231 visitors (68%) will complete and return the survey by mail.

Canyon de Chelly National Monument (CACH)

A total of 800 visitors will be contacted during the sampling period. Based on previous and nearly identical studies conducted by the VSP, 736 (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. An expected 500 visitors (68%) will complete and return the survey by mail.

Table 2: Expected Response Rate/Confidence Levels

	Number of Initial Contacts	Number Accepting Survey	Expected Response Rate	Expected Number of Responses	Margin of Error +/- %
BISO	1,298	1,195	65%	777	3
OBED	565	520	65%	338	4
MEVE	978	900	68%	612	5
SEKI	1,200	1,000	65%	715	5
STEA	367	340	68%	231	5
CACH	800	736	68%	500	4
TOTAL	0	0		0	

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

During the initial contact, the interviewer will ask each visitor four 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) *How many people are in your group?*
- 3) *How did this visit fit into your travel plans? (i.e., primary destination, one of several destinations, or not a planned destination).*
- 4) *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 243 previous VSP survey instruments. The questions are taken from the currently approved list of questions in NPS Pool of Known Questions (OMB 1024-0224; Current Expirations Date: 8-31-2014). Variations of the questions have been reviewed by NPS managers and university professors.

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Burden Estimates:

Overall, we plan to approach at least **5,208** individuals during the sampling periods. Among which we anticipate that **4,691** individuals will agree to participate in the survey. We expect to receive total of **3,173** completed surveys for this collection (Table 3).

We expect that the initial contact time will be at least two minute per person (5,208 x 2 minute = 174 hours). During the initial on-site contact each person will be asked to answer the four questions that will be used for the non-response check. We expect that 517 (8%) visitors will refuse to participate for those individuals we will record their reason for refusal and they will be asked to answer the four questions that will be used for the non-response check.

For those who agree to participate (n= 4,691) we expect that 3,173 will complete and return the survey, with that, an additional 20 minutes will be required to complete and return the questionnaire (3,173 responses x 20 minutes = 1,058 hours). The burden for this collection is estimated to be 1,087 annual hours.

Table 3: Estimation of Burden

Estimated Number of Contacts		Estimation of Time		Estimation of Respondent Burden	
Total Number of Initial Contacts	5,208	Estimated Time (mins.) to Complete Initial Contact	2	Estimated Burden Hours	174
Total Number of Responses	3,173	Time to complete and return surveys	20	Estimated Burden Hours	1,087
				Total Burden	1,232

11. **Reporting Plan:** The study results will be presented in internal agency reports for NPS managers at each park. 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 as required by the NSP Programmatic Approval Process; and 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.