

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Social Science Division



Expedited Review for NPS-Sponsored Public Surveys (OMB # 1024-0224) Fiscal Year 2009 Annual Report



Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone, Yellowstone National Park

July 2010

Background on Expedited Review for NPS-Sponsored Public Surveys

The National Park Service (NPS) preserves the nation's natural and cultural heritage and provides for its enjoyment by citizens and visitors from throughout the world. An accurate understanding of the relationship between people and parks is critical to achieving the mission of the National Park System: protecting resources unimpaired and providing for public enjoyment, education, and inspiration. Such understanding requires a sound scientific basis. Hence, social science research is a necessary and important function of the National Park Service.

As part of its social science research, the NPS sponsors surveys of the public to provide park managers with information for improving the quality and utility of NPS programs. All information collection activities funded or sponsored by the NPS must be conducted in compliance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (P.L. 104-13) and implementing rules (5 CFR 1320) overseen by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

Because many of the NPS surveys are similar in terms of the populations being surveyed, the types of questions being asked, and research methodologies, the NPS, in cooperation with the Department of the Interior (DOI), proposed to OMB and received clearance for a program of approval for NPS visitor surveys (OMB# 1024-0224, expiration 8/31/2001). The program presented an alternative approach to complying with the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) and was designed to provide several specific benefits. First, it would improve the opportunity for meaningful public comment by offering one public review period for the entire program of similar surveys. Second, it would increase federal government efficiency by reducing the personnel time and funding necessary to prepare and review the proposed collections of information. Third, it would assist researchers by simplifying the review process for social science research. Fourth, it would improve the timely delivery of usable knowledge to NPS managers.

In 2001, the NPS Social Science Program submitted an extension request for the program

of expedited review. That extension request expanded the program to include surveys of park visitors, potential park visitors, and residents of communities near parks. OMB clearance was granted in September 2001. Clearance of a second three-year extension was granted in January 2005 (OMB# 1024-0224, expiration 1/31/08). In Fiscal Year (FY) 2008, the expedited review program was renewed for another three-year period (OMB #1024-0224, expiration 6/30/2011).

The positive result is more savings in time and cost to the federal government (NPS and DOI) and principal investigators, and a further reduction in burden on the public.

Annual reports are required as a component of the review. This is the ninth annual report, summarizing activities in FY09. In this report, the program is referred to as the Expedited Review for NPS-Sponsored Public Surveys.

Management and Oversight

Separate management, oversight, and approval responsibilities are held by the NPS Social Science Division, DOI, and OMB.

The NPS Visiting Chief Social Scientist, Dr. James Gramann, provided guidance for submissions and reviewed all proposals for compliance with technical standards and program guidelines. For FY09, the staff responsibility for the expedited review for NPS-Sponsored Public Surveys was assigned to Megan McBride, Senior Research Associate. This position became vacant in June 2009, and responsibilities shifted to the Visiting Chief Social Scientist.

For submissions that complied with program requirements, the Visiting Chief Social Scientist determined the appropriate number of burden hours, certified that the survey instrument and research methodology were technically acceptable and in compliance with the PRA, and transmitted the individual survey packages to OMB for final approval. If the NPS received approval from OMB, the NPS assigned the OMB control number and an NPS tracking number, survey expiration date, and designated burden hours, and authorized the principal investigator to use the approved instrument.

The DOI office responsible for oversight of information collection activities (the Office of Policy Analysis) monitors NPS activities within the program, provides policy guidance, and reviews annual reports.

The NPS Social Science Division developed guidelines describing the authorities, scope, and submission process for the program. The current document, *Guidelines and Approval Form for Expedited Review for NPS-Sponsored Public Surveys, Focus Groups, and Field Experiments*, was published and widely disseminated in January 2005 and revised in June 2006. The guidelines and associated forms are available on the NPS Social Science Division Web site at: <http://www.nature.nps.gov/socialscience/expedited.cfm>

Fiscal Year 2009 Activities

FY09 activities under the Expedited Review for NPS-Sponsored Public Surveys are summarized in Table 1. In FY09, 27 surveys were received, and 22 were approved. Two of the approved surveys were postponed until the next fiscal year because clearance was received too late to field the study as planned. This reflects a continued decline in approvals, from 57 per year in FY02-FY07 and 32 in FY08. Twenty surveys approved and conducted in FY09 were done in 18 units of the National Park System. In addition, seven surveys delayed

from FY08 were conducted in FY09 in 9 units. The total estimated burden on the public for all surveys approved in FY09 was 3,082 hours. The average survey approved in FY09 placed a burden on the public of 140 hours.

Effects of the Expedited Review Process

There are several immediate effects derived from this program. These include time savings, cost savings, reduction in burden on the public, and increased peer review. The standard PRA survey review process takes approximately eight months once the first *Federal Register* notice is published. Through FY07 under the expedited review program, this review time was reduced to 60 days or less. However, challenges experienced in FY08 continued in FY09. These included a significant slowdown in review times by OMB and the requirement to use an electronic submission system that limited the number of proposals that OMB would accept at any one time. This significantly increased review times and reduced the submissions that NPS transmitted to OMB. As a result, some studies received by NPS in FY09 could not be approved in time to meet their proposed field dates. Many of these studies were postponed and not conducted until FY10 (see Table 1).

Table 1 – Fiscal Year 2009 Activities

NPS Survey #	Survey Title	Start Date	End Date	Expiration	Burden Hours
09-E-001	Reducing Visitor Conflict and Improving Resource Protection During Lehman Caves Tours	APPROVED FY09, CONDUCTED FY10			89
09-E-002	Great Smoky Mountains National Park Backcountry Visitor Survey	5/1/2009	8/31/2009	3/21/2010	55
09-E-003	Monitoring Visitor Behaviors on Acadia National Park Carriage Roads	7/1/2009	8/31/2009	12/31/2010	34
09-E-004	Gulf Islands National Seashore Formative Testing of Audio Interpretation	APPROVED FY09, CONDUCTED FY10			33
09-E-005	Grand Teton National Park Interpretive Study	WITHDRAWN BY PI			
09-E-006	Stakeholders' Perceptions of Fire Ecology and Smoke Management in Yosemite National Park	8/15/2009	8/15/2010	8/15/2010	25
09-E-007	Acadia National Park Cadillac Mountain Visitor Survey	7/1/2009	8/31/2009	1/31/2010	28
09-E-008	Fisheries Harvest Survey in Two Hawaiian National Parks	10/1/2009	12/31/2010	1/31/2011	75
09-E-009	Visitor Management and Transportation System Use at Cumberland Island National Seashore	APPROVED AND CONDUCTED IN FY10			
09-E-010	Assessing Backcountry Campers' Adoption of Leave No Trace Technologies	APPROVED AND CONDUCTED IN FY10			

09-E-011	Monitoring Indicators in Denali National Park and Preserve	5/28/2009	9/5/2010	12/31/2010	285
09-E-012	Fort Larned National Historic Site Visitor Survey	5/25/2009	6/13/2009	6/30/2011	109
09-E-013	Assessing Hispanic Recreational Use Patterns, Attitudes, and Needs in Clark County, NV	POSTPONED TO FY11			
09-E-014	Yosemite Wilderness Visitor Travel Patterns	APPROVED AND CONDUCTED IN FY10			
09-E-015	Denali Stated Choice Visitor Survey	8/17/2009	10/15/2009	12/31/10	177
09-E-016	Homestead National Monument of America Visitor Survey	5/25/2009	6/13/2009	6/30/2011	109
09-E-017	Minuteman Missile National Historic Site Visitor Survey	5/25/2009	6/13/2009	6/30/2011	109
09-E-018	Perry's Victory & International Peace Memorial Visitor Survey	6/24/2009	6/30/2009	6/30/2011	162
09-E-019	Women's Rights National Historical Park Survey	7/1/2009	7/10/2010	6/30/2011	99
09-E-020	Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park-Seattle Survey	7/5/2009	7/25/2009	6/30/2011	94
09-E-021	Yosemite National Park Visitor Survey	7/8/2009	7/14/2009	6/30/2011	337
09-E-022	James A Garfield Historic Site Visitor Survey	7/24/2009	8/1/2009	6/30/2011	104
09-E-023	Boston National Historical Park Visitor Survey	7/26/2009	8/1/2009	6/30/2011	293
09-E-024	Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore Visitor Survey	8/1/2009	8/7/2009	6/30/2011	317
09-E-025	Acadia National Park Visitor Survey	8/2/2009	8/8/2009	6/30/2011	312
09-E-026	Laurance S. Rockefeller Preserve (Grand Teton National Park) Visitor Survey	8/9/2009	8/20/2009	6/30/2011	132
09-E-027	Martin Van Buren National Historic Site Visitor Survey	8/9/2009	8/22/2009	6/30/2011	104
TOTAL					3,082

A conservative estimate nets a time savings of approximately six months per survey. In FY09, 22 surveys were approved under the program with an estimated time savings of 132 months. On average, it took 44 calendar days from initial submission to OMB to receive approval for the studies.

The expedited review process provides substantial cost savings for the federal government by reducing staff time required to review submissions. Table 2 shows that the review process saves approximately \$1,611 per study.

This eleventh year of the program yielded a direct cost savings to the federal government of approximately \$35,442 (22 studies X \$1,611 per study). In addition to these direct cost savings, principal investigators also benefit by a significant reduction in labor required to prepare review packages.

The project manager for the NPS-sponsored Visitor Services Project (VSP) estimates a savings of 15 hours at an estimated cost of \$446 per study. The VSP conducted 13 studies in FY09 for a total cost savings of approximately \$5,798. Estimating similar time savings to principal investigators for the 9 remaining studies submitted and approved in FY09, an additional cost savings of approximately \$4,014 was realized. The total cost savings to principal investigators is estimated to be \$9,812. Hence, the total amount of dollars saved by the federal government and principal investigators in FY09 is estimated to be at least \$45,254.

In eleven years, a total of 483 studies have been approved, providing the federal government and principal investigators a time and cost saving estimated to be at least \$937,272.

Burden on the public has been reduced by eliminating the repetitive *Federal Register* publications for substantially similar survey

research. Extensive public review of the program as a whole resulted in effective and efficient public comment. Those comments were incorporated into the final submission to OMB.

Finally, the expedited review process encourages principal investigators to have their survey instruments peer-reviewed prior to submission. This has resulted in higher quality studies that reduce burden on the public and ensure more accurate data.



Yosemite National Park Hybrid Shuttle (courtesy of the NPS Visitor Services Project)

Table 2 – Fiscal Year 2009 Costs and Savings

Activity	Approx. Salary	Regular Review		Expedited Review		Cost Savings
		Average Review Time Per Study	Cost Per Study	Average Review Time Per Study	Cost Per Study	
Review and handling by Social Science Program staff (GS-11 Step 6)	\$32.54/hr*	12.5 hours	\$406.75	6 hours	\$195.24	\$211.51
Review by Chief Social Scientist (GS-14 Step 6)	\$54.80/hr*	7.5 hours	\$411.00	3 hours	\$164.40	\$246.60
Review by NPS Information Collection Clearance Officer (GS-13 Step 5)	\$45.05/hr*	3 hours	\$135.15	None	None	\$135.15
Review by DOI Information Collection Clearance Officer (GS-15 Step 10)	\$71.39/hr*	2 hours	\$142.78	None	None	\$142.78
Review by OMB OIRA Desk Officer for DOI (GS-15 Step 5)	\$62.62/hr*	3 hours	\$187.86	1 hour	\$62.62	\$125.24
<i>Federal Register</i> Notice Publication	\$75 per page (~5 pages)	2 per study	\$750.00	None	None	\$750.00
Total Cost Savings Per Study						\$1,611.28

* Salary estimates based on 2008 OPM Salary Tables for Washington, DC Area

Progress on NPS Initiatives

The NPS Social Science Division has undertaken several initiatives as part of this review program. The major initiative undertaken in FY09 included continued development of an archive of survey results.

The NPS Social Science Division has established a social science data and information archival system in consultation with scientists conducting NPS-sponsored public surveys and NPS library programs. The Social Science Studies Collection has been established with hard copies of reports housed in libraries in the NPS Social Science Division Washington, DC office and the Harpers Ferry Center (HFC) in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia. To date, 331 reports have been digitized

Surveys Delayed from FY08

Surveys delayed from FY08 and approved and conducted in FY09 included: 1) Understanding and Managing Soundscapes in Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Parks; 2) Assessing the Visitor Experience and Value Based Management at Chaco Culture National Historical Park; 3) Social Research in Support of Impact Mitigation on Restoration of the Going to the Sun Road in Glacier National

and made available on the NPS Focus Digital Library and Research Station. In FY06, NPS Focus (including the Social Science Studies Collection) became available to the public at <http://npsfocus.nps.gov/>

The NPS Visitor Services Project (VSP) based at the University of Idaho Park Studies Unit has developed an archival portion of their Web site, providing access to survey instruments, executive summaries, and full reports. The VSP Web site is located at <http://www.psu.uidaho.edu>.

The NPS Social Science Division Web site at <http://www.nature.nps.gov/socialscience/activities.cfm> includes links to the Social Science Studies Collection on NPS Focus and the VSP website.

Park; 4) Colonial National Historical Park Shuttle Service Visitor Survey; 5) Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites Roosevelt Ride Passenger Survey; 6) Preliminary Study of the Tread Lightly! Off-Highway Vehicle Visitor Education Efforts on NPS Lands (Big Cypress National Preserve, Canyonlands National Park); 7) Petrified Forest National Park and Nez Perce National Historical Park VSP Formative Studies.



For Additional Information

Dr. James H. Gramann
Visiting Chief Social Scientist
Telephone: (202) 513-7189
Email: james_gramann@partner.nps.gov