

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



Social Science Program

OMB Control Number 1024-0224
Current Expiration Date:8-31-2014

Programmatic Approval for NPS-Sponsored Public Surveys

1. Project Title: Visitor Services Project (VSP) Survey for Yellowstone National Park (YELL)	Submission Date 1-10-2012
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2. **Abstract:** A mail back questionnaire will be used to collect information from winter visitors at Yellowstone National Park. The park is in the process of developing a long-term business plan which involves concessionaires, partners and local communities. The proposed collection will be used to gather information concerning visitor satisfaction with the concession services and facilities and find out their expectations regarding commercial services. The data will assist park managers in evaluating the commercial services needs for upcoming concession contracts. The questionnaires will be designed to systematically collect data that will include information on visitor demographics, 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

First Name: Margaret **Last Name:** Littlejohn
Title: NPS Visitor Services Project (VSP) Director
Affiliation: NPS Visitor Services Project, PSU, College of Natural Resources, University of Idaho
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Phone: 208-885-7863 **Fax:** 208-885-4261
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4. Park or Program Liaison Contact Information

First Name: George **Last Name:** Helfrich
Title: Chief, Concession Management
Park: Yellowstone National Park
Park: Business and Contract
Office/Division:
Street Address: P.O. Box 168
City: Yellowstone NP **State:** WY **Zip code:** 82190
Phone: 307-344-2270 **Fax:** 307-344-2279
Email: George_helfrich@nps.gov

Project Information

5. **Park(s) For Which Research is to be Conducted:** Yellowstone National Park

6. **Survey Dates:** Winter 2/15/2012 TO 2/21/2012

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
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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.*

A visitor study completed in 2006 has been used as a great guide for determining necessary and appropriate commercial service needs for upcoming concession contracts. The park has three major contracts coming up in 2013, so an updated survey is needed to provide background data for prospectus development. In addition to the VSP survey conducted during the 2011 summer season, this winter survey will provide the Park Management Team with complete information from visitors who use commercial services. Specifically the survey findings will be used as follow:

- As inputs into planning documents(e.g., General Management Plan, Long Range Interpretive Plan, and Visitor Experience and Resource Protection (VERP))
- To design interpretive and educational programs to match visitor interests and needs.
- For the design of future visitor facilities or renovations of 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.
- To help local businesses and governments better understand how visitors are contributing economically to the area.

The mail-back questionnaire used in this study is designed to collect data that will include

- 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 study as they visit selected park locations during a 7 day period during the winter and summer visitation periods.

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 all recreational visitors, ages 16 and older, who visit the park during the study period. A systematic sample of visitors will be contacted by VSP-trained interviewers at the North, West and South entrances, and the concession areas for snowmobile and ski rental, and the snow coach tour.

(b) Sampling Plan/Procedures:

The survey design and sampling plan for this collection of information is based upon Dillman's Tailored Design Method (TDM). The TDM has been shown to increase response rates, improve accuracy, reduce cost, and respondent burden. The methodology has been used in 245 previous surveys conducted by the NPS Visitor Services Project (VSP). Most questions have been included in other VSP questionnaires or appear in the current NPS Known Pool of Questions. A systematic sampling procedure will be based on the park's visitation statistics from the previous year and will require intercepting every *n*th 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.

Park visitors will be intercepted at North, West and South entrances, and the concession areas for snowmobile and ski rental, and the snow coach tour (from 2/15 to 2/21 in 2012) as they enter these locations. The number of questionnaires distributed at each location will be stratified according to visitation statistics in February 2011. No surveys will be distributed at East and Northeast entrances due to seasonal closure.

(c) Instrument Administration:

The initial contact with visitors will be used to explain the study and determine if visitors are interested in participating. 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 four 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 or 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.

All participants will be mailed a thank you/reminder post card within 11 working days after they received the questionnaire in the park. A reminder letter with a stamped, addressed replacement questionnaire will be sent to all non-respondents 21 working days after they received the questionnaire in the park. 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 598 visitors will be contacted during the sampling period. Based on previous and nearly identical studies conducted by the VSP 550 (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. Among which 374 visitors (68%) are expected to complete and return the survey by mail. This response rate was estimated based on a previous survey in July 2011 at the park. Based on the survey sample size, there will be 95% confidence that the survey findings will be accurate to within 4 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..

	Number of Initial Contacts	Expected Response Rate	Expected Number of Responses	Margin of Error +/- %
On-site Contact	598	92%	550	4%
Mail back	550	68%	406	5%

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

During the initial contact, the interviewer will ask all 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) *(If with an organized group-tours, school, etc.) How many people are in your group?*
- 3) *How did this visit to Lassen Volcanic NP fit into your travel plans? (Was this your primary destination, one of several destinations, not a planned destination?)*
- 4) *How old is the person who will complete the questionnaire?*

Responses will be recorded on a log for every visitor contacted and agree to answer the questions. 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 245 previous VSP survey instruments. The questions in this survey are taken from the currently approved list of questions in NPS Pool of Known Questions (OMB 1024-0224; Current Expirations Date: 8-31-2014). All questions were reviewed by NPS managers and university professors. Any variations of the questions were reviewed and approved by NPS Information Collection Review Coordinator.

10 Burden Estimates: We plan to approach at least 598 individuals during the sampling period. The initial contact is to obtain verbal confirmation that the individuals are willing to participate in the survey and will take 1 minute per person (598x1 minute= 10 hours). We expect that of those, 48 individuals (8%) will decline to participate in the survey.

For those who agree to participate, we will ask 4 questions that will be used for the non-response check and the answers will be recorded on the survey log. We expect that the contact time to obtain non-response information will be no more than two minutes per person (550x2 minutes= 18 hours).

With 68% expected response rate, we estimate that 406 will complete and return the survey. With that, an additional 20 minutes will be required to complete the questionnaire (406 response x 20 minutes = 135 hours). The burden for this collection is estimated to be 163 hours

Estimated Number of Contacts		Estimation of Time		Estimation of Respondent Burden	
Total Number of Initial Contacts	598	Estimated Time (mins.) to Complete Initial Contact	1	Estimated Burden Hours	10
Estimated number of contacts for non-response bias check	550	On-site Refusal/ nonresponse	2	Estimated Burden Hours	18
Total Number of Responses	406	Time to complete and return surveys	20	Estimated Burden Hours	135
				Total Burden	163

11. 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; 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 special reports for the NPS covering overall use estimates and local economic impacts.

**Visitor Services Project
Yellowstone National Park Visitor Study**

Introductory Script and Letters used in contacting visitors

Hello! The National Park Service is conducting a visitor survey at Yellowstone National Park to gather your opinions about the park's programs and services. Participation is voluntary. If you decide to participate we would like to have the survey mailed back. The mail-back questionnaire takes about 20 minutes to complete once you get started. Would you like to participate?

IF NO: Would you be willing to answer a few quick questions? Thank you.

IF YES: Thank you. I have a few quick questions for you. This should only take about two minutes (ask and record responses to the questions below).

Who in your group (at least 16 years old) has the next birthday?

- 1) What type of group are you traveling with today?
- 2) How many people are in your group visiting today?
- 3) How did this visit to [NPS site] fit into your personal groups travel plans?
- 4) How old is the person who will complete the questionnaire?

So we can thank you and remind you to mail back the questionnaire, please write your name, address, and email address/phone number. Thank you. Be sure to mail the questionnaire—your opinions are important!

**1st follow-up printed on a scenic park postcard
(sent to all participants within 11 working days after initial on-site contact)**

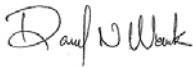
Dear Visitor:

Thank you for participating in the *Yellowstone National Park* visitor study. We are looking forward to hearing from you.

A select number of people were contacted for this study, so your opinions are very important! If you have already returned your questionnaire, thank you. If not, please mail it today.

After eight months, look for the survey results at: www.psu.uidaho.edu/vsp.reports.htm.

Sincerely,



Daniel N. Wenk
Superintendent
Yellowstone National Park

OMB Control Number 1024-0224
Current Expiration Date: 8-31-2014

**2nd follow-up note and letter with replacement questionnaire
(sent to non-respondents 21 working days after initial on-site contact)**

United States Department of the Interior



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Yellowstone National Park
Yellowstone NP, WY 82190



IN REPLY REFER TO:

Month Day, 2012

Dear Visitor:

The National Park Service would like to thank you for participating in the Yellowstone National Park visitor study. Only a select number of visitors were contacted, therefore each visitor's opinions are very important.

If you have already returned your questionnaire, thank you. If you have not returned your questionnaire, please mail it today. Unless your questionnaire was mailed in the last few days, we would appreciate you completing the enclosed replacement questionnaire since we have not received yours as of today.

In approximately eight months, the results of the visitor survey will be posted on the Visitor Services Project website at www.psu.uidaho.edu/vsp.reports.htm.

If you have any questions regarding your questionnaire, please contact Margaret Littlejohn, National Park Service Visitor Services Project Director by phone 208-885-7863 or email: littlej@uidaho.edu.

Thank you for sharing your opinions with us.

Sincerely,

Daniel N. Wenk
Superintendent

**3rd follow-up letter with replacement questionnaire
(sent to non-respondents 35 working days after initial on-site contact)**

United States Department of the Interior



IN REPLY REFER TO:

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Visitor Services Project
PSU, College of Natural Resources
University of Idaho
P.O. Box 441139
Moscow, Idaho 83844-1139



Month Day, 2012

Dear Visitor:

I am writing about the visitor study at Yellowstone National Park, in which you agreed to participate. The waiting period for incoming questionnaires is almost over, and as of today we have not yet received yours. I would appreciate you completing another one unless you mailed it within the past few days.

The staff of Yellowstone National Park is anxiously awaiting the survey results. They want to use your ideas and opinions in making decisions about what services and programs to provide for visitors in the future.

I urge you to complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it by Month Day. Your contribution to the success of this study is greatly appreciated.

In approximately eight months, the results of the resident survey will be posted on the Visitor Services Project website at www.psu.uidaho.edu/vsp.reports.htm.

Should you have questions regarding your questionnaire, please contact me by phone: (208)-885-7863 or email: littlej@uidaho.edu.

Sincerely,

Margaret Littlejohn
Director, Visitor Services Project

CONTACT & FRONT-END INTERVIEW FORM

Today's date: _____ Weather: _____ Park: _____ Sampling site: _____

“Hello! The National Park Service is conducting a visitor survey at (Lassen Volcanic Park to get your opinions about this park's programs and services. If you take a mail-back questionnaire, we would like to receive a completed one back within a week if possible. It should take about 20 minutes to complete once you get started. Which person in your group has the next birthday **(at least 16 years old)**? Are you willing to participate?

IF NO: Would you be willing to answer a few quick questions? Thank you.

IF YES: Thank you—ask and record responses to the questions below.

- 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) Was this park your primary destination? One of several destinations on this trip? Or was this park not a planned destination on this trip?
- 4) How old is the person who will complete the questionnaire?

So the superintendent can thank you (and remind you to mail back the questionnaire), please provide your name, address, phone number and email address.

Thank you. Be sure to mail the questionnaire—your opinions are important

[----- -Group type √ one---]														A	B	C			
Inter-viewer initials	Start & stop times, breaks	Interval - every nth person/ car	Time	Already received qnaire √	Refuse √	Qnaire ID number	Alone √	Family √	Friends √	Family & friends √	Personal group size #	Organized group √	Organized group size #	Primary destination	1 of several destinations	Not a planned destination	Respondent age	COMMENTS: Explain reason for refusal, "other" group, etc.	
TOTALS																			

Rev. 11/2011

For “already received” and “refusals” enter an X or √ and draw a line through the row

_____	_____	_____
Sheet	Round	Initial
Office Use Only		

Today's date

Park Name

Sampling site

ID	First name and last name		
Mailing address			
City		State	Zip Code
Phone or email		Country	

ID	First name and last name		
Mailing address			
City		State	Zip Code
Phone or email		Country	

ID	First name and last name		
Mailing address			
City		State	Zip Code
Phone or email		Country	

ID	First name and last name		
Mailing address			
City		State	Zip Code
Phone or email		Country	

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Phone or email		Country	

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Phone or email		Country	

ID	First name and last name		
Mailing address			
City		State	Zip Code
Phone or email		Country	