

Note to the Reviewer: The text in the shaded boxes below will not be included in the survey (the visitors will not read this as a part of the survey process). This text is used to annotate the questions in response to Part A question 2 of the PRA Supporting Statement. The text boxes will be removed and will not be printed on the final version of the approved questionnaire.

NPS Study of Value of Natural Sounds: A Pilot Study

Visitor Focus Group

Moderator Guide

OMB Control Number 1024-0XXX
Expiration Date: XX/XX/XXXX

Participants will be directed to sit around a single large table. Placed in front of each seat on the table will be the packet of exercises and a pen for each participant. The moderator will also be seated at the table. Note takers will be on periphery of room.

The 90 minutes will breakdown as follows:

Introduction and instructions - 5 min

Feedback on Introductory Text - 10 min

Feedback on Instructions and the text only method of describing sound conditions (Exercise #1) - 30 min

Feedback on Contingent Valuation (CV) question (Exercise #2) - 15 min

Feedback on Audio Clip methods for describing sound conditions (Exercises #3 and #4) - 30 min.

The purpose of the focus groups is to receive feedback on the valuation questions in the survey. Specifically, one purpose of the focus group is to determine if the respondents understand and accept the various methods for describing sound conditions. The visitor focus groups will test 3 methods for describing sound. One method uses text only; the other two methods use a combination of audio clips and text.

Introductions and Instructions (5 minutes)

The questions in this section are used to explain the process and to encourage the participants to contribute to the discussion.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this focus group. We are asking for your help to improve this version of a survey that we will use in the future to measure visitor perception of sounds in National Parks. Your participation will help us to make sure that other visitors like you will be able to complete the questions in our survey. This study has been approved by the Office of Management and Budget and the control number and expiration date is available upon your request. Your participation is voluntary and your responses will be completely anonymous. During the time that we are together, we will ask you to answer a series of questions and then we will ask you to listen to some recorded sounds. After that we would like to spend some time as a group to debrief about your experience taking the survey. In total this should take about 90 minutes to complete. Are you ready to get started?

Before we start, I'd like encourage everyone to share their thoughts. Please remember that each of your opinions and experiences are important and they **may or may not** be similar to the experiences of others.

We have several observers in the room, and they will be taking notes of our discussion, but they will not record names. They will use the findings from this focus group to help inform the development of a survey that will be conducted next summer with park visitors.

Q.1 Does anyone have any questions?

Q.2 Let's quickly go around the room and tell everyone your **first** name. Again, my name is [moderator name].

Feedback on Introductory Text (10 minutes)

This section asks for feedback on the introductory text that explains "sounds of nature," "man-made sound," and the impact of sound on visitors and the natural environment.

Q.3 The packet in front of you contains some questions from the survey we are working on and we would like to get your feedback on these questions. Let's start with the Section "Sounds of Nature at National Parks" on the first page. Please read the text and note anything that is unclear or difficult to understand. We will discuss anything that is unclear when everyone is done.

When everyone has finished: It looks like everyone is done. Did anyone have any questions or was anything unclear in the introductory text? Did you think anything in that section was controversial or biased?

Feedback on Instructions for Exercises and Exercise #1 (30 minutes)

This section will ask the respondents to provide feedback on the instructions for the choice exercises and the text-only method for describing sound conditions.

The instructions for the choice exercise explain the metrics used to describe sound conditions and the costs for each scenario. The instructions also contain a reminder of the respondent's budget constraint and the availability of substitute goods, following standard protocols for stated preference valuation work.

- Q.4** Now, I would like for you to read the section "Instructions for Exercises" and answer **Exercise #1**. If anything is unclear in the instructions or the exercise itself please make a note of it and in the meantime please try to complete the exercise to the best of your ability.

When everyone has finished:

It looks like everyone is done. Did anyone have any questions or was anything unclear in the instructions?

After hearing questions from participants, ask: What was your guess about what [that item] meant?

Provide clarification after you have heard what their guess was. Ask for ideas on how to improve the instructions so that it is clearer.

- Q.5** Was the amount of information in the instructions section appropriate? Was it too long or should it provide more information? What other information should be provided? What information is not necessary?

- Q.6** Did anyone have any questions or was anything unclear in the exercise itself?

Provide clarification. Ask for ideas on how to improve the questionnaire so that it is clearer.

- Q.7** Based on the information given, do you feel you understood the changes in sound conditions that were being described in the exercise?

If not: What questions do you have?

- Q.8** Did you find the map of the park to be useful in explaining front country and back country? Do you think we should include the map or is the text description enough? Could the map be improved?

The responses to Question 9 will be used to develop a range of values for the cost component of the choice exercises.

Q.9 We used the cost amounts of a \$15 increase and \$5 decrease for this example exercise but for the final survey we will randomize the range of values. So that we can use a realistic range of values in the final survey, what would the highest increase in costs (per person per day) you would consider for improved sound conditions at [insert park name]?

The responses to this question will help determine if losses can be effectively studied using this study's methodology.

Q.10 Did you accept the idea of a decrease in trip costs if sound conditions got worse? Did that seem realistic or believable to you? If not, did that affect how you answered the question?

Feedback on CV question (15 minutes)

This section elicits feedback on CV question (which uses the text only method to describe sound conditions), particularly the range of values used and any protesting or strategic responses. (This method was suggested by a member of the expert review panel in case the more complicated choice exercises do not work out.)

Q.11 Please read and answer questions in **Exercise #2**. When you are done, we will discuss it. Did anyone have any difficulties answering the question? Why?

Q.12 Did you find a dollar value that was close to what you felt was appropriate?

Q.13 Did anyone choose \$0? What reasons did you list in the follow-up question?

If any apparent strategic or protest bidding: The idea of the question is to ask people how they value natural sound conditions so that park managers can assess the benefits and costs of different sound management policies. It seems like you chose \$0 for a reason other than that you don't value sound conditions. How could we word the question so that you would be more inclined to report how much you value natural sound conditions?

Q.14 We will use this question to determine if the respondents are "anchoring" their payment card value to the values provided in the choice exercise. If we find significant anchoring, the CV question might not be included in the final survey. When you chose the dollar in value in Exercise #2, did you make any comparison to the dollar values presented in Exercise #1?

Feedback on using Sound Clips to Describe Sound Conditions (30 minutes)

This section gathers feedback on two methods for describing sound conditions using audio clips and ultimately asks the respondents which method provides better information.

- Q.15** Please take a few moments to read **Exercise #3**. This version of the exercise includes the percent of time that sounds of nature are heard as well as sound clips to provide information on the maximum sound level for man-made sounds at the park. I will play the sound clips when everyone has finished reading the exercise.

When everyone has read the exercise

Here is the example for Trip A - current conditions [play clip]

Here is the example for Trip B [play clip]

Here is the example for Trip C [play clip]

I can replay them if you would like. Please make your choice

- Q.16** Do you feel you understood the changes in sound conditions that were being described in the exercise?

If not: What questions do you have?

The goal of the final questions is to develop a general value for changes in sound conditions, one that is not tied to a specific sound source. This question will determine if the respondents understand that the sound clips are examples of sound levels, not actual sounds that a visitor would hear. If this is understood by respondents, we may be able to use just one sound source for the audio clips. If not, we may need to use multiple sound sources which would be varied for different respondents. That is, create a pool of many different sound sources and then randomly chose a sound source for each respondent.

- Q.17** What do you think was the source of the sounds in the clip? Would a different source have affected your answers? For example, what if it sounded like a bus but at that same volume level? What about a lawnmower? Would your answer have changed?
- Q.18** Those clips were labeled as being examples of sound levels. Did you understand that the clips were only examples of the loudness, not that they represented the actual sounds you would hear? If not, how could the survey be improved to make it clear that the clips are examples?
- Q.19** Please take a few moments to read **Exercise #4**. This version of the exercise uses *only* sound clips to provide information on the sound conditions at the park. Both the percent of time that only sounds of nature are heard and the maximum sound level are represented in the sound clip for each trip.

Here is the example for Trip A - current conditions *[play clip]*

Here is the example for Trip B *[play clip]*

Here is the example for Trip C *[play clip]*

I can replay them if you would like. Please make your choice

Q.20 Which exercise (this one, or exercise #3) do you think provided better information on the sound conditions? Why? Would you say you were more confident in your answer when answering exercise #3 or exercise #4?

Wrap-up

That ends our time together. Thank you for participating in this group today – we really appreciate your participation.

The Paperwork Reduction Act statement will be available upon request.

PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT STATEMENT: *The National Park Service is authorized by 6 U.S.C. 1a-7 to collect this information. This information will be used by park managers to understand visitor perceptions of sound in [insert park name]. Response to this request is voluntary. No action may be taken against you for refusing to supply the information requested. The permanent data connected with this collection will be anonymous. Please do not put your name or that of any member of your household on the questionnaire. 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.*

OMB Control Number 1024-0XXX - Expiration Date: XX/XX/XXXX

BURDEN ESTIMATE: *The public reporting for this collection is estimated to be 60 minutes per respondent. This includes the time to complete the questionnaire and to participate in the follow-up interview process. Direct comments regarding the burden estimate or any other aspect of this form to: Catherine Taylor, Volpe National Transportation Systems Center, 55 Broadway, Cambridge, MA 02142, catherine.taylor@dot.gov (email).*