

The 2014 Supporting Statement B for OMB 0596-0234

Generic Information Collection Clearance for National Forest System Land Management Planning

B. COLLECTION OF INFORMATION EMPLOYING STATISTICAL METHODS

B.1. Respondent Universe and Sampling Methods

The National Forest System (NFS) planning-related survey research universe of respondents is the population in the area of influence of national forest units subject to plan development, revision or amendment. Both purposive and probabilistic samples will be employed for these information collections.

In some cases, purposive samples of respondents will be selected to maximize diversity across demographic subgroups (e.g., age, education level, gender). In other instances, samples will be drawn to include specific characteristics dictated by the nature of hard-to-reach target groups (e.g., residents in very rural areas). For example, when surveying the views of remote communities, it may be important to select the participants based on where they live in relation to the subject national forest unit.

Probabilistic procedures will be used when there is a desire to constitute a representative sample of a population. As an example, a systematic random sample of the 10-county region surrounding a national forest might be contacted to assess their perceptions about the management of that national forest.

B.2. Procedures for the Collection of Information

Due to the diverse nature of the National Forest System's target audiences and wide variety of forest management issues, NFS plans to use both qualitative and quantitative information collection methods. Qualitative methods generally rely upon small samples and collect information in open-ended formats. In these studies, samples will be of sufficient size to usefully inform decisions about the development, refinement, implementation and effectiveness of communication, education, and planning activities. In contrast, quantitative methods maximize the generalizability of findings by employing large randomly-selected samples and collecting information using closed-ended response formats. Sample sizes for such collections are described below.

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Three distinct data collection procedures may be employed under this package. Each proposed research project will submit the tools used for data collection, including screenshots of web-based surveys, in the statement provided to OMB.

Focus Groups

Participants will be identified and recruited in accordance with the specific purpose of the planning activity or project. For example, in some instances individuals will be recruited from a variety of geographic locations in the forest region and in both large and small jurisdictions in order to maximize the diversity of the sample.

Participants will be recruited using professional organizations, commercial focus group companies, and other sources. Eligibility criteria will be established for all focus groups, and potential participants will be screened using a telephone interview or self-administered screening form.

Focus group discussions will occur under the direction of a trained moderator. The verbal discussion that ensues will be partly directed by the moderator and partly by the comments of other participants. Guidelines will be developed for all focus groups. For each proposed activity, NFS will submit an application for review and approval, which will outline the procedure for participant consent and include the proposed focus group guidelines.

In-depth interviews

Participants will be identified and recruited in accordance with the specific purpose of the planning project. For example, in some instances individuals will be recruited based on their profession (such as rancher or state environment department employees).

Similar to the focus groups, participants will be recruited using professional organizations, commercial focus group companies, and other sources. Eligibility criteria will be established for all interview participants, and potential participants will be screened using a telephone interview or self-administered screening form. Each proposed evaluation project will submit an application for NFS review and approval, which will outline their procedure for participant consent.

Interviews will be conducted by trained interviewers, in-person, or over the telephone. The conversation that ensues will be directed by the interviewer, but the content and focus will depend, in part, on the responses of the interviewee.

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Sample surveys

Information collections may employ large-sample self-administered mail surveys, telephone surveys, in-person-interviews, or electronic surveys. Sampling frames will be created by a variety of methods that will include solicitation through the use of commercial survey panels, or other means as appropriate for the target population. Potential participants will be randomly selected from the sampling frame and screened for appropriate demographic or other characteristics as indicated by the research purpose. Each proposed planning project will submit an application for NFS review and approval, which will outline their procedure for participant consent as well as provide the proposed survey instrument.

Estimation procedures

All data analysis will be conducted under the advice of a statistician/data analyst as needed, and will involve estimation of descriptive statistics and regression analysis. Linking collected data to existing data sources by non-personal identifiers (e.g., state, county, city name) may be used to increase the overall utility of a proposed data collection. When required, the planned sample sizes will also permit sub-analyses that may include analyzing knowledge, attitude, and perceptions among different populations. Corrections will be made for over/under sampling, non-response, non-standard distributions, etc.

B.3. Methods to Maximize Response Rates and Deal with Non-response

- Using bilingual and bicultural interviewers and culturally and linguistically appropriate data collection instruments.
- A token of appreciation for a respondent's time and interest may be given to focus group participants.
- Addressing data security and anonymity with respondents.
- Minimizing the time needed for participation in the planning-related project.
- Informing respondents how much time the project will take so that they know what to expect.
- Utilizing deadlines, reminders, and follow-ups to remind respondents and encourage participation.
- Providing easy access to survey instruments, regardless of method being utilized. When appropriate for the audience being studied, research instruments will be designed to be easily accessed by electronic means, from a link in an e-mail or on a website.

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- Potential respondents will be informed about the importance of these evaluation projects and encouraged to participate through a variety of methods, including newsletters from professional associations or community organizations and letters of support from key individuals.
- When appropriate, a dedicated toll-free number and e-mail account will be established at NFS or a contractor's office to allow potential respondents to confirm a research activity's legitimacy, ask questions, and voice concerns.
- Over-sampling if necessary to address potential for non-response.

B.4. Test of Procedures or Methods to be Undertaken

Before each information collection is implemented, instruments and method of data collection will be pilot tested. Lessons from the pilot test will be identified, and changes will be incorporated into the instrument and method, as necessary. All pre-tests will involve no more than nine individuals unless OMB clearance is sought for more than nine participants.

B.5. Individuals Consulted on Statistical Aspects and Individuals Collecting and/or Analyzing Data

The following individuals, including contractors, who may be chosen to pre-test and conduct information collections, will be available to provide advice about the design of statistical and sampling procedures undertaken as part of these data collection activities:

- Pat Reed, National Human Dimensions Program Social Scientist, Ecosystem Management Coordination, National Forest System, USDA Forest Service
- Susan Winter, Economist, Ecosystem Management Coordination, National Forest System, USDA Forest Service
- Annie Eberhart Goode, Planning Specialist, Ecosystem Management Coordination, National Forest System, USDA Forest Service

NFS will determine if additional consultation is required and will report any consultants, as well as any individuals collecting and/or analyzing the data in the individual packages.