

Justification for Submission under Federal Lands Transportation Generic Clearance (OMB Control Number 0596-0236)

U.S. Department of Agriculture-Forest Service Office of Regulatory and Management Services	Forest Service Tracking Number: (for internal use only)
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		Date Submitted to Forest Service/USDA:	2/29/16	
1.	IC Title:	Visitor Use Monitoring to Inform Outdoor Recreation Planning and Management on the Green Mountain National Forest		
2.	Bureau/Office:	USDA Forest Service		
3.	<p>Abstract: (not to exceed 150 words)</p> <p>The overall purpose of this proposed program of work is to gather information that will help support recreation planning, visitor management, and carrying capacity decisions for the Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF), specifically in areas utilized by outfitters and guides, on trails, at shelters and camping areas, at attraction sites, and in designated wilderness areas. Specifically, the areas around Bourn and Branch ponds in or near the Lye Brook Wilderness are heavily used and an important site for anglers. The proposed survey will gather baseline data on the extent and type of use at Bourn and Branch ponds to allow managers to better plan for and manage use in these areas.</p>			
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6.	Lead Agency IC Clearance Officer Reviewing the IC:				
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7.	Description of Population/Potential Respondents	Surveys will be conducted with recreational visitors (18 years of age and older) who visit the study areas (Bourne and nearby Branch ponds) during the study Period.			
8.	IC Dates	06/15/2016	To	10/31/2016	
9.	Type of Information Collection Instrument (Check ALL that Apply)				
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Intercept	<input type="checkbox"/> Telephone	<input type="checkbox"/> Mail	<input type="checkbox"/> Web-based	<input type="checkbox"/> Focus Groups
	<input type="checkbox"/> Other	Explain:			
10. Instrument Development:					
(Who assisted in content development? Statistics? Was the instrument pretested? How were improvements integrated?)					
<p>The survey methods and instruments for this study were reviewed by Project Managers at the GMNF and by University Faculty and Scientists at the University of Vermont. Further, the questions in this survey are similar to those used in previous studies at several other National Forest recreation areas and National Parks that were reviewed and approved by the Office of Management and Budget as part of the Federal Land Management Agencies Compendium of Questions (OMB Control No. 0596-0236).</p> <p>Moreover, pre-testing and consultation were conducted with 5 volunteer participants identified by the USFS contractor and with no specific background or training in survey research methods or analysis (i.e., representative of the general public, rather than survey experts). In particular, the individuals were asked to complete the questionnaire, and asked a series of debriefing questions after to elicit their feedback on the practical utility of the study, questionnaire/respondent burden, quality and clarity of the questionnaires and instructions, and ways to minimize respondent burden.</p>					

11. Which of the five areas from the Compendium of Questions will be addressed in your IC? (Check all that apply). .

- X Topic Area #1: Respondent characteristics
 - Topic Area #2: Traveler Information
- X Topic Area #3: Trip behaviors
- X Topic Area #4: Assessment of Visitor Experiences and Transportation-Related Facilities, Conditions, and Services
 - Topic Area #5: Economic Impact and Visitor Spending/Costs

In addition, for each question in your survey instrument (or discussion guide, comment card, etc.), please indicate the Compendium Topic Area and the unique question identifier from the Compendium. If the question is not taken from the Compendium, indicate "NEW".

Survey Question Number	Compendium Topic Area	Compendium Question Identifier
Q1	#1- Respondent characteristics	GROUP5
Q2	#1- Respondent characteristics	GROUP1
Q2a	#1- Respondent characteristics	GROUP2
Q3	#1- Respondent characteristics	VHIS4
Q4	#3- Trip behaviors	TDEST2
Q5	#3- Trip behaviors	TDUR10
Q6	#3- Trip behaviors	TDUR3
Q7	#3- Trip behaviors	TACT2
Q7a	#3- Trip behaviors	TACT2
Q8	#3 – Trip behaviors	New question (fishing)
Q9	#3 – Trip behaviors	TDUR10 (modified)
Q10	#3- Trip behaviors	TDUR3 (modified)
Q11	#3- Trip behaviors	VHIS5 (modified)
Q12	#4 – Assessment of visitor experiences	EVAL33
Q13	#4 – Assessment of visitor experiences	EVAL19
Q14	#1- Respondent characteristics	RES3
Q15	#1- Respondent characteristics	AGE5
Q16	#1- Respondent characteristics	GEN1
Q17	#1- Respondent characteristics	EDU1
Q18	#1- Respondent characteristics	ETHNIC1
Q19	#1- Respondent characteristics	RACE1

12. Methodology:

(Use as much space as needed; if necessary include additional explanation on separate page).

Respondent Universe	The respondent universe for the on-site questionnaire will be all summer and fall visitors (age 18 and over) to Bourn and Branch ponds in the GMNF between June 15, 2016, and October 31, 2016. This time frame will represent the entire summer and fall visitor season.
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<p>Sampling Plan/Procedure</p>	<p>The sampling period includes the area's peak use periods, during the season and during the day (between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. - the time of day when the majority of visitation occurs). Sampling will be conducted at the trails leading to Bourn and Branch ponds as visitors complete their hike to the ponds. There will be seven sampling days in each summer and fall month (June, July, August, September and October) for a total of 35 sampling days, with both weekday periods and weekend periods represented proportional to use. This will ensure that a sufficient number of questionnaires will be completed to make inferences to the visitor populations with an acceptable degree of precision.</p> <p>During each sampling period, trained surveyors will be stationed at the trails leading to Bourn and Branch ponds. When the sampling period begins, the surveyor will approach groups as they approach the ponds and ask them to participate in the survey. If members of the visitor groups agree to participate, the eligible person in the group whose birthday is closest to the sampling day will be asked to complete the questionnaire. After he/she completes the questionnaire, he/she will return it to the survey attendant. When the surveyor has completed his/her contact with the group, the surveyor will ask the next available group to participate in the survey. This process will continue throughout the sampling period. Visitors will be asked to complete the on-site questionnaire in the presence of the survey attendant, who will answer any questions that arise and collect the questionnaires upon completion.</p>
<p>Instrument Administration</p>	<p>Visitors at the study sites will be read the following script:</p> <p><i>"Excuse me, sir/ma'am. We're conducting a study for the Green Mountain National Forest to better understand visitor experiences during their visit. Your participation is voluntary and all responses are anonymous. Would you be willing to take 10 minutes to help?"</i></p> <p>If YES: "Thank you. Who in your personal group (who is at least 18 years of age) has the next birthday? Would you be willing to complete this questionnaire?"</p> <p>Visitors will then be given a paper questionnaire to complete.</p> <p>If NO: "I understand. I hope you enjoy your visit."</p>
<p>Expected Response Rate and Confidence Levels</p>	<p>The overall survey sample size is expected to be approximately 400 visitors. Based on previous experience in conducting similar surveys, it is expected that about 70% of visitors (about 280 individuals) will be willing to participate. In a similar study in Acadia National Park in 2012 that used similar sampling methods, a response rate of 70% was attained. Study findings are estimated to be accurate within 6 percentage points, based on a sample size of approximately 280 using a 95% confidence level. This will be sufficient for planning purposes. The number of people in each visitor party and date and time of refusals will be recorded and reported on a refusal log.</p>

<p>Strategies for dealing with potential non-response bias</p>	<p>Non-response bias will be examined by comparing selected characteristics of the sample population with characteristics observed and recorded in every group contacted (e.g., group size, gender and group type). Additionally, all visitors approached will be asked to answer three key questions from the survey:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.) Have you visited Bourn or Branch Pond before today? 2.) I am very satisfied with my recreation experience on the Green Mountain National Forest? (using scale ranging from - 2 = "Strongly Disagree" to 2 = "Strongly Agree". 3.) Please use the scale below to rate (from 1 to 5) how crowded you felt by people during this visit to Bourn and/or Branch Pond today. <p>These results and observational data will be recorded and compared to results from the respondents completing and returning the questionnaire to see if non-response bias is present. The results of the check for non-response bias will be reported and implications for data interpretation will be discussed in any reports prepared for the GMNF managers.</p>
<p>Description of any pre-testing and peer review of the methods and/or instrument (recommended)</p>	<p>The survey methods and instruments for this study were reviewed by Project Managers at the GMNF, and by University Faculty and Scientists at the University of Vermont. Further, the questions in this survey are similar to those used in previous studies at several other national forest recreation areas and national parks that were reviewed and approved by the Office of Management and Budget as part of the Federal Land Management Agencies Compendium of Questions (OMB Control No. 0596-0236).</p> <p>Moreover, pre-testing and consultation were conducted with 5 volunteer participants identified by the USFS contractor, and with no specific background or training in survey research methods or analysis (i.e., representative of the general public, rather than survey experts). In particular, the individuals were asked to complete the questionnaire, and asked a series of debriefing questions after to elicit their feedback on the practical utility of the study, questionnaire/respondent burden, quality and clarity of the questionnaires and instructions, and ways to minimize respondent burden. Participants were also asked to indicate if they had any difficulty or confusion with skip patterns, multi-item response scales, and/or instructions for recording responses (e.g., "Check one box" or "Check all that apply").</p> <p>The feedback from the pre-test participants was positive. Participants indicated that the layout of the questionnaires, and question wording were straightforward, which helps to minimize respondent burden. Participants reported no trouble with skip patterns, multi-item response scales, and instructions for recording responses.</p>

<p>Description of any pre-testing and peer review of the methods and/or instrument (recommended) (continued)</p>	<p>The time it took each respondent to complete the questionnaire was recorded by the pre-test administrators: 8-10 minutes was the typical response time. This finding helps to validate the burden estimates reported in the submission, and suggests that participation in the study does not cause undue/excessive respondent burden. Finally, the completed questionnaires were inspected by the pre-test administrators, after the pre-test was concluded. Inspection of the completed questionnaire indicated that respondents followed skip patterns correctly, answered all of the relevant questions, and recorded their answers correctly.</p> <p>Participants in the pre-test offered minor suggestions to improve the wording or format of specific questions in the survey instruments, and revisions to the questionnaires were made accordingly.</p>
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13.	Total Number of Initial Contacts and Expected Number of Respondents	Initial Contacts: 400 Expected Respondents: 280
14.	Estimated Time to Complete Initial Contact and Time to Complete Instrument	Initial contact: 1 minute Instrument completion: 10 minutes
15.	<p>Total Burden Hours</p> <p>Contacts</p> <p>Respondents</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Total</p>	<p>7 hours</p> <p>47 hours</p> <p>-----</p> <p>54 hours</p>

16. Reporting Plan: Presentations will be made to Forest Supervisors, resource managers, transportation planners and engineers, and stakeholder groups to explain the findings and their implications. The results of this information collection activity will be presented in an internal agency report to GMNF. The project results will also be published in a peer-reviewed scientific publication discussing the methods, results, and conclusions, and recognizing the support given by the USFS.

17. Justification, Purpose, and Use:

IC Justification and Purpose

The following laws, regulations, and statutes mandate or authorize the collection of information in this study (copies of the appropriate section of each are contained in Appendix A):

- Forest Service Administration Organic Act of 1897 [16 U.S.C. §§ 473-478, 479-482, and 551] as amended by the Transfer Act of 1905 [16 U.S.C. §§ 472, 524, 554]
- Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act of 1960 [P.L. 86-15, § 3]
- Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources and Planning Act of 1974 [P.L. 93-378 § 3(2,3)] as amended
- National Forest Management Act of 1976 [P.L. 94-588, §§ 2(3), 6(d)], as amended
- Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 [P.L. 103-62] as amended
- Executive Order 12862 of September 11, 1993
- 1997 Revision, Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forest and Pawnee National Grassland Resource Management Plan [Chapter 1, Part 4]
- Executive Order 13571 of April 27, 2011

The GMNF is within a day's drive of nearly 60 million residents of the United States and Canada, including more than 3 million potential recreationists residing within 100 miles of the forest. A range of recreational opportunities are available to GMNF visitors. These include typical forest recreation activities including hiking, camping, nature viewing and dispersed motorized recreation. The GMNF also offers diverse developed recreational opportunities like scenic driving and picnicking. In addition to these typical recreation opportunities, the GMNF also offers characteristic and special recreation opportunities including rock climbing, alpine recreation, and a diversity of motorized, non-motorized, developed, and primitive winter recreation activities.

Bourn and Branch Ponds been identified as a priority for recreation monitoring and evaluations because of significance to forest recreational experiences and their proximity to federally designated wilderness (Bourn Pond resides within the Lye Brook Wilderness and Branch Pond resides just outside the boundary). Relatively intensive recreational use received by this site has potential to impact the quality of forest resources and visitor experiences. These impacts can be diverse, affecting natural, social and administrative elements of the GMNF. Natural resource impacts affect the quality of air, water, soils, vegetation, wildlife, soundscapes, scenery, and night skies, among other resources. Social impacts can include crowding among recreationists, conflict between recreationists, and depreciative behavior that intentionally or unintentionally

<p>IC Justification and Purpose (continued)</p>	<p>The purpose of this project is to collect information that will help the USFS implement, evaluate and improve visitor use and recreation management for the GMNF. In particular, the survey instrument in this study is designed to collect information about visitors' perceptions, experiences, and expectations, with respect to recreation conditions and management, and visitor experience quality. The information collection is also designed to help identify recreation issues experienced by visitors, and assess visitors' opinions about potential forest and recreation management.</p> <p>Thus, the information collection planned for this project is a key tool for the Agency to obtain information in an efficient, timely manner, for the purposes of improving transportation systems, visitor experience quality, and resource management at the recreation site. The survey instrument included in this study is designed to ensure that the results are adequately accurate, reliable, and applicable for their intended purposes - to help the USFS improve recreation and resource management of Bourn and Branch Ponds on the GMNF.</p>
<p>IC Goals</p>	<p>The goal of this project is to collect information that will help the USFS improve the wilderness character of Bourn and Branch Ponds as well as inform upcoming recreation planning efforts on the forest. In particular, the survey instrument in this study is designed to collect information about visitors' perceptions, experiences, and expectations, with respect to recreation opportunities, and visitor experience quality at this site on the GMNF. The information collection is also designed to help identify recreation related issues experienced by visitors at the site, and assess visitors' opinions about recreation planning and</p>
<p>Utility to Managers</p>	<p>Results of the study will be incorporated into future resource management and transportation planning for the GMNF, and used to help develop grant applications for transportation improvements at the recreation areas.</p>
<p>How will the results of the IC be analyzed and used?</p>	<p>Information from the paper questionnaire will be coded using an Excel spreadsheet, and then converted for analysis into IBM SPSS Statistics Version 21, which is a well-known and respected statistical software package. All data will be stored in electronic and hardcopy, and archived according to established data management procedures required by the Federal Government. The project manager will verify the quality of questionnaire electronic data entry. Upon study completion, the survey data collected in this study will be available from the USFS in a suitable electronic format, along with proper documentation.</p>

How will the data be tabulated? What Statistical Techniques will be used to generalize the results to the entire customer population? How will limitations on use of data be handled? If the survey results in a lower than anticipated response rate, how will you address this when reporting the results? (Use as much space as needed; if necessary include additional explanation on separate page).

Based on the projected sample size (280 completed questionnaires), there will be 95% confidence that the findings from each survey will be accurate to within 6 percentage points, and will have a power level greater than 0.80 for the range of statistical tests that will be conducted with the data in this study (two-tailed independent samples t-test, chi-square tests of independence, and simple linear and multivariate regression), at the .05 alpha-level. This level of accuracy and statistical power is generally accepted as sufficient in peer-reviewed social science quantitative study findings. Thus, the proposed sample size will be adequate for bi-variate comparisons. Analysis of the quantitative survey data collected in this study will use standard methods for survey research in parks and recreation settings. Key estimates from the data will be descriptive in nature, primarily measures of central tendency (mean and median), dispersion (standard deviation), and frequency distributions. Some tests for differences in means and proportions by various sub-groups are expected.

Is this survey intended to measure a Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) performance measure? If so, please include an excerpt from the appropriate document. (Use as much space as needed; if necessary include additional explanation on separate page).

This IC is not intended to measure a GPRA performance measure.