



Programmatic Review and Clearance Process for NPS-Sponsored Public Surveys

The scope of the Programmatic Review and Clearance Process for NPS-Sponsored Public Surveys is limited and will only include individual surveys of park visitors, potential park visitors, and residents of communities near parks. Use of the programmatic review will be limited to non-controversial surveys of park visitors, potential park visitors, and/or residents of communities near parks that are not likely to include topics of significant interest in the review process. Additionally, this process is limited to non-controversial information collections that do not attract attention to significant, sensitive, or political issues. Examples of significant, sensitive, or political issues include: seeking opinions regarding political figures; obtaining citizen feedback related to high-visibility or high-impact issues like the reintroduction of wolves in Yellowstone National Park, the delisting of specific Endangered Species, or drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Submission Date: 5/20/2015

Project Title: Yosemite National Park Visitor Use Study

Abstract (not to exceed 150 words)

The purpose of this project is to conduct a mail-back survey of visitors in Yosemite National Park (YOSE). A mail-back survey instrument will be used to collect information about visitor use, characteristics, satisfaction with park services/facilities, and spending in gateway communities. The survey will be conducted during the summer of 2015, and will be used to inform park planning and management, and improve interpretive operations to meet visitors' needs and expectations. The survey will also provide information about impacts of visitor spending on local communities and feedback on local commercial services. The results will be shared with park partners and gateway communities to assist in mutual planning efforts.

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Project Information

Where will the collection take place? (Name of NPS Site)

Sampling Period

Start Date: June 1, 2015

End Date: August 31, 2015

Type of Information Collection Instrument (Check ALL that Apply)

- Mail-Back Questionnaire
- Face-to-Face Interview
- Focus Groups
- On-Site Questionnaire
- Telephone Survey
- Other (list)

Will an electronic device be used to collect information?

- No
- Yes - type of device

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 and development.

Management Justification: The last park-wide visitor survey in Yosemite National Park (YOSE) was completed in 2009. Since that time, YOSE has implemented several comprehensive management plans for key areas of the park, including the Merced and Tuolumne River Corridors, and the Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias. The park is now preparing to implement these plans, which will fundamentally change the types of visitor activities, facilities, and services in the park. This collection will provide a critical baseline for documenting and ultimately tracking changes/trends in a number of key measures that are likely to be impacted by implementation of these plans, including visitor characteristics, activities, and satisfaction with services and facilities in the park. The collection is therefore a key component of the park's monitoring efforts associated with implementation of the plans. This collection will also provide the park and its partners with information about economic impacts of visitor spending in the local area, which will help inform mutual planning efforts.. This information is needed to help park staff, park partners, and local communities document and manage the effects of implementing any park plans in local communities.

This survey will collect information that will be used to:

- Provide input about visitor characteristics, activities, and satisfaction with park services and facilities into the park's planning processes (e.g., General Management Plan, Comprehensive Interpretive Plan, Long Range Interpretive Plan, etc.)
- Provide feedback about the visitor facilities and services
- Evaluate visitor behavior for potential impacts on natural and cultural resources
- Provide information about the economic benefits of visitor spending in the local area.

Survey Methodology

(a) Respondent Universe:

The respondent universe for this survey will be all recreational visitors, age 18 and older, visiting YOSE during the sampling period.

(b) Sampling Plan/Procedures:

Visitors will be randomly selected to participate in the survey as they visit the unit during a 7-day study period tentatively scheduled for June 20-26. The start and end dates specified in the Project Information section of this form include a buffer around these dates, in the event of unanticipated delays that are beyond the control of the Principal Investigator. If there are unanticipated delays, contingency plans will be developed with the park to conduct sampling during another 7-day period during the park's peak summer season. Based on YOSE's visitation statistics from the previous year, each interviewer will be instructed to contact every kth visitor group at each of the selected intercept locations.

Sampling will occur at 5 sites that are representative of the range of uses and users in YOSE, and cover all of the roadways entering the park. On each sampling day, one interviewer will be stationed at each of the three busiest entrance locations (Big Oak Flat, South Entrance, and Arch Rock Entrance), and one interviewer will be stationed at either Tioga Pass Entrance (5 days) or Hetch Hetchy (2 days); this staffing plan is proportional to the amount of use at these locations, based on park visitation data. Sampling will occur on weekend days and weekdays, with sampling proportional to weekend and weekday visitor use, based on park visitation data. On each sampling day, survey sampling will be conducted 8 hours per day, spanning morning, afternoon, and early evening hours, including the peak hours of the day (late morning to early afternoon). The number of contacts and questionnaires administered to visitors will be tracked on a daily basis; if tracking information indicates that sampling goals are not being met for an intercept location, contingency plans will be developed with the park to conduct more intensive sampling at the location. This could include increasing the sampling interval, sampling staff, and/or sampling days to the location.

Each interviewer will be trained on every aspect of on-site surveying including: using sampling intervals, avoiding sampling bias, and how to handle all types of interviewing situations, especially 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 survey day.

(c) Instrument Administration:

The initial contact with all visitors will be used to explain the purpose of the study and determine if visitors are interested in participating. This should take approximately 1 minute per selected group. When a group is encountered, the survey interviewer will approach an adult in the group to request participation. If there is more than one adult, the interviewers will alternate the initial contact between males and females. Groups that agree to participate in the survey will be asked to identify the adult in the group who will have the next birthday to serve as the respondent. All contacted visitors, including those who refuse to participate in the survey upon this initial contact, will then be asked to respond to a set of non-response bias questions (listed in item 9e below). The interviewers will record observable information (i.e., current time, group size) on the survey log and non-response bias form, whether or not they agree to participate or even to answer the non-response bias questions. Visitors that decline to participate in the study will be thanked for their consideration. The number of refusals will be recorded and used to calculate the overall response rate for the collection.

The individual selected in participating groups for the survey will be given a mailback survey packet and

asked to provide or personally record his or her name, address, phone number, and email address on the survey tracking sheet – this information will only be used to follow-up with all visitor accepting a survey packet but do not return the completed questionnaire. The individual will also be given instructions on site as to when, how, and where to return the survey. All visitors accepting a survey packet on-site will be mailed a thank you/reminder postcard within 11 working days after the end of the survey sampling period. A reminder letter, replacement questionnaire, and postage-paid return envelope will be sent to all non-respondents 21 working days after completion of on-site contacts.

Visitors contacted on-site will be read the following script:

“Hello, my name is _____. I am conducting a survey for the National Park Service to better understand your opinions about the programs and services offered here. Your participation is voluntary and all responses will be kept anonymous. Would you be willing to take a questionnaire and mail it back to us using a postage-paid envelope?”

→If **YES** – then ask, *“have you or any member of your group already been asked to participate in this survey?”*

If **“YES”** (previously agreed to participate) then, *“Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study, we hope that you will return the questionnaire soon, if you have not already. Have a great day.”*

If **“NO”** (have not previously agreed to participate) then,
“Thank you for agreeing to participate. Most of our questions are in the mail-back survey, but I do have a few questions I need to ask you now.” [The surveyor will ask them to start the process by answering the non-response bias questions (listed in item 9e). The responses will be recorded in spaces provided on the survey log and non-response bias form. The surveyor will hand them a survey packet including the questionnaire and a self-addressed stamped envelope].

→If **NO-** (soft refusal) then, *“That’s fine; we won’t bother you with the mail-back survey. But would you be willing to take just one minute and answer a couple of questions for me now, to help us learn a little something about YOSE visitors?”* [The surveyor will record responses in spaces provided on the tracking sheet and then thank them for their time].

→If **NO-** (hard refusal) – *“Thank you for your time. Have a great day.”*

(d) Expected Response Rate/Confidence Levels:

A total of 1,263 visitors will be contacted during the sampling period. Based on the results of the 2009 VSP study at YOSE, we anticipate that 90% of the visitors (n= 1,137) will agree on-site to participate in the survey and that 56% of the visitors (n=636) will complete and return the survey by mail.

Based on the expected number of responses (n=636), there will be 95% confidence that the survey findings will be accurate to within 3 percentage points (Fowler, 1993). Thus, the number of responses will be adequate for bivariate comparisons and more sophisticated multivariate analysis, and results will be generalizable to the target study population (all recreational visitors, age 18 and older, visiting YOSE during the sampling period). 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.

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

During the initial contact, the interviewer will ask all visitors the following four questions to be used in a non-response bias analysis.

1. Overall, how would you rate the quality of the facilities, services, and recreational opportunities in Yosemite National Park?
 Very good Good Average Poor Very Poor

2. On this trip to Yosemite National Park, what type of group were you with?
 Alone Friends Family Family and friends
 Other (Please specify) _____

3. On this trip, how much time did you spend visiting Yosemite National Park?
 _____ Number of hours, if a day trip
 _____ Number of days, if greater than 1 day

4. Did anyone in your group have a physical condition that made it difficult to access or participate in park activities or services, on this trip to Yosemite National Park?
 Yes No

We will record responses for every contact, except “hard refusals” (those who refuse to participate in the study, and refuse to answer the non-response bias questions). Results of the non-response bias check will be reported and any implications for applicability of survey results to generalizations about the study population will be discussed.

(f) Description of any pre-testing and peer review of the methods and/or instrument (recommended):

All of the survey questions are taken from the currently approved list of questions in NPS Pool of Known Questions (OMB 1024-0224; Current Expiration Date: 8-31-2015). Any variation of a question is annotated on the survey instrument. The questionnaire format and many of the questions are similar to that used in more than 250 previous NPS VSP survey instruments, including the 2009 NPS VSP survey instrument administered in YOSE. Variations of the questions have been reviewed by NPS managers, PhD-level NPS survey research consultants at RSG and generally approved by the NPS Information Collection Review Coordinator.

Burden Estimates

Overall, it is expected that a total of approximately 1,263 individuals will be contacted during the sampling period and 1,137 individuals will verbally agree to participate in the survey. Based on the estimated response rates noted above, it is expected a total of 636 surveys will be completed for this collection (Table 1).

The initial contact time is expected to be one minute, with an additional two minutes to ask the four non-response bias check questions. The total initial contact time, therefore, is expected to be approximately three minutes per person (1,137 x 3 minutes = 57 hours). It is expected that 126 (10%) visitors will completely refuse to participate; for those individuals, the surveyor will record their reason for refusal, if given. The burden for refusals is expected to be approximately one minute per person (126 x 1 minute = 2 hours).

For those visitors who agree to participate (n=1,137), it is expected that 636 will complete and return the survey. We have estimated that it will take 20 minutes to complete and return the questionnaire (636 x 20 minutes = 212 hours).

The total annual burden for this collection is estimated to be 271 hours.

Estimated Total Number		Estimation of Time (minutes)		Estimation of Burden (hours)	
All visitors	1263	Initial Contacts	1	Initial Contacts	21
Visitors who agree to participate	1137	non-response bias check	2	Initial Contact	38
Returned surveys	636	To complete response	20	To complete response	212
				Total	271

Reporting Plan

The study results will be presented in an internal agency report for the NPS Social Science Program and park managers. Response frequencies will be tabulated and measures of central tendency computed (e.g., mean, median, mode, as appropriate). The report will be archived with the NPS Social Science Program for inclusion in the Social Science Studies Collection as required by the NSP Programmatic Approval Process. Hard copies will be available upon request.

References:

Dillman, D. A., Smyth, J. D., & Christian, L.M. (2010). *Internet, Mail, and Mixed-mode surveys: The tailored design method*, 3rd Edition, Hoboken NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Fowler, F.J. (1993). *Survey Research Methods*, 2nd Edition, Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications.