



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: 7/21/2015

Project Title: Gateway National Recreation Area Visitor Use Study

Abstract (not to exceed 150 words)

The purpose of this project is to conduct a mail-back survey of visitors in Gateway National Recreation Area (GATE). The survey instrument is designed to collect information about visitor use and user characteristics, visitor satisfaction with park services and facilities, and visitor 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 and in-park commercial services. Results from the project will be shared with park partners and gateway communities to assist in mutual planning efforts. Results will be analyzed at the park-wide level and for each of the three units within GATE (Jamaica Bay, Sandy Hook, and Staten Island).

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Project Information

Where will the collection take place? (Name of NPS Site) Gateway National Recreation Area (GATE)

Sampling Period **Start Date:** August 19, 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: Gateway National Recreation Area (GATE) last completed a park-wide visitor study in 1990. Since that time, several changes have occurred in the park and among park visitors and potential park visitors that warrant a new visitor study. These changes include shifts in the demographic profile of New York City residents, and the US population at-large, resulting in a changing profile of GATE visitors; adoption and implementation of a new General Management Plan; recovery and adaptation following the impacts of Hurricane Sandy in 2012; and the introduction and use of new facilities, services, and programs. In light of these diverse changes, up-to-date information is needed to assess trends in visitor characteristics, activities, and satisfaction with services and facilities in the park. 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 with park partners and local communities.

Results for this information collection will assist park managers in informing, evaluating and/or improving the following:

- park planning, specifically ongoing efforts to maintain and enhance the parks relevance and service to young and diverse visitors, by collecting information about visitor characteristics, activities, needs, and evaluations of facilities and services.
- interpretive, wayfinding, and informational signage and programs based on visitors reported needs and desires for such facilities and services.
- new or revised concessions and services in the park, particularly with respect to those damaged or interrupted by Hurricane Sandy.
- management of natural, cultural, and historic resources and park experiences, especially resource and experiential quality.

Survey Methodology

(a) Respondent Universe:

This study addresses three respondent universes, one for each of the park's three units (Jamaica Bay, Sandy Hook, and Staten Island).

- 1) Jamaica Bay: all recreational visitors, age 18 and older, visiting the Jamaica Bay unit of GATE during the sampling period
- 2) Sandy Hook: all recreational visitors, age 18 and older, visiting the Sandy Hook unit of GATE during the sampling period
- 3) Staten Island: all recreational visitors, age 18 and older, visiting the Staten Island unit of GATE during the sampling period

Survey responses from these three sampling universes will be combined to create a park-wide sampling universe for park-wide analyses.

(b) Sampling Plan/Procedures:

Visitors will be randomly selected to participate in the survey as they visit GATE during a 7-day study period. A "first after last completed" sampling approach will be used to generate a representative sample. At the beginning of each sampling period, the first visitor entering a sampling location will be contacted and asked to participate in the study. Upon completion of that contact (whether the contacted visitor agrees to participate or not) the next visitor entering the sampling location will be contacted and asked to participate. The "first after last completed" process will be continued until the sampling period concludes. Each interviewer will be trained on every aspect of on-site surveying including: administering the questionnaires, avoiding sampling bias, and handling 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.

Sampling will occur at approximately 20 sites that are representative of the range of uses and users in GATE, and cover all three units of the park (Jamaica Bay, Sandy Hook, Staten Island). Sampling will occur during the week and weekend of the sampling period 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.

(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 per selected group. When a group is encountered, the survey interviewer will approach an adult in the group to request participation. 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 below, 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 the visitor agrees 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 response rate for the collection at each park unit and overall.

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. That individual will then be given a mail-back 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 non-respondents who

accept a survey packet but have not returned the completed questionnaire (Dillman, Smyth, and Christian, 2010). 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 14 working days after the end of the survey sampling period. A reminder letter, replacement questionnaire, and postage-paid return envelope will be sent to non-respondents 21 working days after completion of on-site contacts.

Visitors who are 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 the 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 be sure our sample is reliable?"* [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 2,188 visitors will be contacted during the sampling period. Based on the results of the 1990 GATE and 2003 Floyd Bennett Field VSP and similar surveys, we anticipate 1,750 (80%) visitors will agree on-site to participate in the survey and 1,050 (60%) will complete and return the survey by mail. The number of refusals will be recorded and reported and will be used in calculating the response rate.

Three hundred and fifty (350) responses are expected from each of the park's three units (Jamaica Bay, Sandy Hook, Staten Island). The responses from these three units will be combined to create a park-wide sample of 1,050 responses. Based on the expected number of responses ($n=350/\text{unit}$), there will be 95% confidence that the survey findings will be accurate to within 5 percentage points (Fowler, 1993) for each of the three unit level analyses. When unit level responses are combined for park-wide analysis, the 1,050 expected responses will yield a 95% confidence interval of 3%. 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 populations (all recreational visitors, age 18 and older, visiting each of the three park units individually and GATE as a whole 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 that will be used in a non-response bias analysis.

1)	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	Children (<18)	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	Adults (≥18)	Including yourself, how many people are in your personal group on this trip to Gateway NRR?	
2)	Alone	Family	Friends	Friends & Family	Other	On this trip to Gateway NRR, what type of group are you with?		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other specify:		
3)	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	Hours	or	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	Days	
							On this trip, how much time do you plan to spend within Gateway NRR?	
4)			<input type="checkbox"/>	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO	Does anyone in your group have a physical condition that would make it difficult to access or participate in park activities or services, on this trip to Gateway NRR?	

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):

The survey questions are taken from the currently approved list of questions in NPS Pool of Known Questions (OMB 1024-0224; Current Expiration Date: 10-31-2015). The questionnaire format and many of the questions are similar to those used in more than 250 previous NPS VSP survey instruments, including the 1990 GATE and 2003 Floyd Bennett Field VSP survey instruments. Variations of the questions have been reviewed by NPS managers and PhD-level NPS survey research consultants at RSG.

Burden Estimates

Overall, it is expected that a total of approximately 2,188 individuals will be contacted during the sampling period and 1,750 individuals will verbally agree to participate in the survey. Based on the estimated response rates noted, it is expected a total of 1,050 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 (2,188 x 3 minutes = 109 hours). It is expected that 219 (10%) visitors will completely refuse to participate; for those individuals, the surveyor will record their reason for refusal, if given.

For those visitors who agree to participate (n=1,750), it is expected that 1,050 will complete and return the survey. We have estimated that it will take 20 minutes to complete and return the questionnaire (1,200 x 20 minutes = 350 hours).

The total annual burden for this collection is estimated to be 459 hours.

Estimated Total Number		Estimation of Time (minutes)		Estimation of Burden (hours)	
Initial Contacts	2,188	Initial Contact and non-response bias check	3	Initial Contact	109
Responses	1,050	To complete response	20	To complete response	350
				Total	459

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.