



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: July 15, 2016

Project Title: Yellowstone Backcountry Hikers Perceptions and Experiences

Abstract (not to exceed 150 words)

Backcountry hikers in YELL will be surveyed summer, 2016. The survey will be administered through Qualtrics survey software. Questions are related to hikers' demographics, knowledge, preparedness, visitation history, planning, behaviors, trails and backcountry use, trip characteristics, recreation preferences, and crowding. Potential adult participants will be solicited at the nine permit offices July 15 to August 31. Three weeks after providing contact information, participants will receive a survey-related email including the purpose, instructions, risks, contact information, and a link to the survey. This will also update the survey conducted sixteen years ago (1999).

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

Yellowstone National Park

Sampling Period**Start Date: July 31, 2016****End Date: September 30, 2016****Type of Information Collection Instrument (Check ALL that Apply)** Mail-Back Questionnaire Face-to-Face Interview Focus Groups On-Site Questionnaire Telephone Survey On-line Questionnaire Other (list)-electronic survey using Qualtrics**Will an electronic device be used to collect information?**

No

 Yes - type of device Computer/server employing Qualtrics survey software**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.

Prior to Find Your Park and Centennial campaigns, managers/researchers in Yellowstone National Park (YELL) have observed changes in visitation patterns and experiences. Second to day-use visitors, many of the visitors are backcountry hikers. This information collection was requested by Yellowstone managers because they need up-to-date information about backcountry visitor behavior as they are in the process of adjusting backcountry management practices related to visitor experience and visitor safety. The questions in the proposed survey are those that managers have requested in order to understand more about hiker's perceptions and opinions concerning: safety, preparedness, level of expertise and expectation while in the backcountry.

This justification for this collection is that it will be used to:

- Provide data on visitor characteristics, activities, and satisfaction with backcountry experience.
- Provide data on visitor opinions, perceptions, and use of backcountry.
- Evaluate the programmatic impact of backcountry preparedness of the visitor and visitor services.
- Write recommendations for park managers on backcountry preparedness and experiences in order to provide positive, safe experiences for visitors, park personnel, and park resources.

Survey Methodology

Respondent Universe: All adult backcountry hikers (age 18 or older) in Yellowstone National Park during summer 2016 sampling period (July 31-September 30). According to the NPS 20145 Visitor Statistics profiles approximately 3,337 permits were issued by Yellowstone National Park between May 1 and August 15; and during July and August, 2015, approximately 27,228 backcountry recreational visitors were recorded in the backcountry (<https://irma.nps.gov/Stats/>).

Sampling Plan/Procedures: Given the numbers listed above, this study will attempt to survey approximately 3,000 backcountry permit seekers during the sampling period. These potential respondents will be seeking permits at the nine permit offices located in the park. All backcountry hikers are required to obtain a backcountry trip permit. Adults will be solicited at each of the nine backcountry permit offices Table 1 below) between July 31 and September 30, 2016.

Sampling Location	Targeted Number of visitors approached per day	Number of visitor approached per hour	Total Number of Visitors Approached during sample Period	Expected on-site Acceptance Rate	Expected number of People Agreeing to Participate
Bechler Ranger Station	7	1	315	60%	189
Bridge Bay Ranger Station	7	1	315	60%	189
Canyon Visitor Center	8	1	360	60%	216
Grant Village Visitor Center	7	1	315	60%	189
Mammoth Visitor Center	8	1	360	60%	216
Old Faithful Ranger Station	7	1	315	60%	189
South Entrance Ranger Station	8	1	360	60%	216
Tower Backcountry Office	7	1	315	60%	189
West Yellowstone Visitor Information Center	8	1	360	60%	216
Approximate: TOTAL	0		0		0

Solicitation to participate in the survey will take place at the time they request their permit. This will be a complete census survey – all visitors requesting permit during the sampling period will be asked to participate in the study. Once the permit holder has completed the application process and before the exit the station, they will be asked to participate in the study by the ranger at the station. At this time the permit holder will only be asked to participate in the study. If they agree, they will only be asked to provide their name and email address. They will be told that their name and email address will only be used to send them a link to an electronic version of the survey that they should complete only at the end of their trip or backcountry

experience at Yellowstone.

Below is a sample script that will be used during the initial contact with the permit holder:

Hi, my name is _____. Today we are asking permit holders to participate in a study that we are conducting to better understand the perception of visitors that backcountry hike here in Yellowstone. We have stopped you today because you are one of a small sample of visitors we are asking to participate in this survey. Would you be willing to participate in 10 minute survey that you would complete electronically at the end of your trip after you have returned home?" Your participation is completely voluntary and all responses will be anonymous.

⇒ If **YES** - then ask, "have you 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 complete the survey once you receive it at home. Thanks again and have a great day."

If "**NO**" (have not previously agreed to participate) then,

"Thank you for agreeing to participate. Although this will be a survey that you will complete once you return home, I do have two questions I need to ask you now." [The surveyor will start the process by asking them to answer the non-response bias questions].

1. Did you watch the video on backcountry safety before beginning your trip?
2. Before you were issued your backcountry permit, did you know where you wanted to camp?

⇒ If **NO-** (soft refusal) then, "That's fine; we won't bother you with asking you to complete the electronic survey, however, would you be willing to take one minute and answer a couple of questions for me now? This will help us learn a little something about all of the visitors we approach today? [The surveyor ask them to answer the non-response bias questions and then thank them for their time].

⇒ If **NO-** (hard refusal) - "Thank you for your time. Have a great day."

Three weeks after the initial on-site contact, all visitors that agreed to participate will receive a letter via email reminding them of their willingness to participate in the study. The letter will contain a link to the survey in Qualtrics, brief instructions to complete the survey, assurances of anonymity and additional contact information.

Instrument Administration: Approximately three weeks after on-site participants agree to participate and provide their contact information they will receive survey-related email, which will describe the purpose of the survey and instructions for completion and contain the URL link to the survey. The participants will click on the link to begin their survey. Once the survey has been completed, the data will automatically be stored in Qualtrics and then downloaded by the research team for analysis. A reminder letter will be sent to all non-respondents 10 working days after the initial mailing.

(d) Expected Response Rate/Confidence Levels:

Given the numbers listed above for the 2015 visitor use statistics this study will attempt to contact approximately 3,015 backcountry permit seekers during the sampling period as the population for this study. We expect that 60% will agree to participate in the study (n=1,809), however we anticipate the 50% (n=904)

of those who agree will actually complete and return the survey at the end of their trip. This will be significant enough to provide the information that managers have requested. This information will only be used to generalize the population survey and not beyond the scope of this study.

	Location	Number of agreeing to participate in the study	Expected Response Rate	Expected Number of Responses	Margin of Error +/- %	Confidence Level
	Yellowstone National Park	1,809	50%	904	1.8%	95%

Strategies for dealing with potential non-response bias: During the permitting process the following data will be obtained: (1) date, (2) size of party, (3) gender, (4) age, (5) number of previous trips in Yellowstone’s backcountry, and (6) location of permit station (this information is required by Yellowstone National Park in order to hike into the backcountry). The following two non-response questions will also be added to the demographic information provided to determine any potential for non-response bias:

1. Did you watch the video on backcountry safety before beginning your trip?
2. Before you were issued your backcountry permit, did you know where you wanted to camp?

Description of any pre-testing and peer review of the methods and/or instrument (recommended): The survey instrument has been reviewed by the manager of the backcountry in Yellowstone (Ivan Kowski) as well as by researchers with experience in backcountry recreation and human dimensions research. It is similar to a questionnaire used by Oosterhous, Legg, and Darville during the summer of 1999 with modifications as requested by the park. The survey instrument has been reviewed by appropriate managers in Yellowstone National Park, including the research sponsor, and approved pending OMB approval. A research permit awaits final approval by OMB. Questions were drawn from the NPS Pool of Known Questions (1024-0224). Upon consultation with the NPS Information Collection Coordinator these questions were considered appropriate for the purposes of this survey and were granted provisional NPS approval to be submitted to OIRA/OMB for final review and consideration. The survey instrument was pretested using Qualtrics for demonstration purposes with six volunteers from the general public. Editorial corrections were made based upon the review to improve the flow of the questions.

Burden Estimates

Overall, we plan to approach at least 3,015 individuals during the sampling period. Among which, we plan to obtain verbal agreement to participate in the survey from approximately 1,809(60%) individuals. We expect of those who will agree to participate in the survey, we will receive a total of 904 (50%) completed surveys for this collection.

We expect that the initial contact time will be one minutes per person (3,015 x 1 minute = 503 hours). This includes the initial contact time for all individual contacted at the permit station. Based upon similar on-site studies, it is expected that at least 50% (n=1,809) will agree to participate in the study when approached. With that we anticipate that at least 2 minutes will be needed to complete the initial contact, explain the study, and provide contact information and answer the nonresponse questions (1,809 x 2 minutes=60 hours). Of the all of the visitors contacted, we expect that 1,206 visitors will immediately decline to participate without any interaction with the researcher. For those individuals we have not included their burden.

We expect that of the 1,809 visitor that agree to participate 50% (n=904) will complete and return the on-line survey, with that, an additional 10 minutes will be required to complete and return the questionnaire (904 responses x 10 minutes = 151 hours). The total annual burden for this one-time collection is

estimated to be 1,456 hours.

Total estimated respondent burden for this collection will be 713 hours

Estimated Total Number of Initial Contacts		Estimation of Time (minutes)		Estimation of Burden (hours)	
All visitors	3,015	Initial Contact	1	Initial Contact	503
All Participants	1,809	Non-response questions	2	Non-response questions	60
Responses	904	To complete response	10	Completed responses	151
				Total	713

Reporting Plan

Data will be analyzed in SPSS and results and recommendations will be provided in a final report to the sponsoring administrators. An oral and written report will be provided to appropriate staff at Yellowstone National Park, including the backcountry manager and research sponsor. An initial report will be sent to appropriate Yellowstone staff for their review and intermediate reports will be provided as needed or requested. In addition, the authors may seek other presentation and publication opportunities to disseminate the study to other natural resource professionals.