



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: 5/30/2018

PROJECT TITLE: River and landing preferences among St Croix National Scenic Riverway visitors

ABSTRACT: (not to exceed 150 words)

St. Croix National Scenic Riverway (SACN) has experienced increased visitation. Based on these increases, management has concerns about both capacity and safety. Managers have requested this survey to evaluate visitor perceptions of density and safety both on the water and at select landing where users consistently mix and high density situations occur. Following a 2017 observation study, this project proposes to assess visitor perceptions of density and management preferences through questionnaires distributed to visitors at the Osceola boat landing, initially, and then additional landings moving forward (including Earl landing in 2019). Study findings will provide baseline data that managers will use to understand visitor perceptions of crowding, safety, and management and information preferences. This work will inform management and development decisions.

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PROJECT INFORMATION:

Where will the collection take place? St Croix National Scenic Riverway (SACR)

Sampling Period: June 1, 2018 **Sampling Period End Date:** September 30, 2019 (will file for review at this time)

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 – Android tablets & online via personal computer to access

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.

Managers have requested this survey to evaluate visitor experiences at selected sites at St. Croix National Scenic Riverway (SACR) that have a mix of users and where high density situations occur. Management strategies are needed to mitigate potential visitor quality and safety issues. Anecdotal information and observational data indicate that there are a variety of multiple uses and vehicle interactions at the landings that are problematic, particularly during surges in visitor density. By understanding visitor perceptions of their experiences and support for management actions, SACR managers will be able to:

- Understand current conditions of visitor use and expectations,
- Consider management strategies needed to maintain high-quality visitor experiences,
- Protect natural resources with potential use redistribution, site hardening, and infrastructure improvement, and
- Site plan by using data that will inform potential indicators, thresholds, and visitor capacity.

Osceola and Earl Landings were selected because they are frequented by non-commercial visitors and commercial visitor groups. Non-commercial visitors generally use the landing to launch or land boats, fish, etc., while commercial visitors typically pay for tube rentals or canoe trips. For the purpose of this collection, an onsite questionnaire will be used to evaluate the commercial and non-commercial visitor's experiences to understand their perceptions of use, safety and crowding to ensure the SACR visitor use goals are met.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY:

(A) Respondent Universe:

The respondent universe for this collection will be all adult (18 and older) non-commercial visitors and commercial visitors using the river during daylight hours (typically 6 am to 10 pm) throughout the summer season and early fall 2018 (June 1 to Sept 30).

Location	Start Date	End Date
Osceola Landing	July 1, 2018	September 30, 2018
Earl Landing	July 1, 2019	September 30, 2019

(B) Sampling Plan / Procedures:

Based upon NPS Visitor Use Statistics, there were approximately 708, 258 visitors to the SACR visitor center in 2016 (National Park Service, 2017) with visits peaking in the summer months. On the Lower District, where Osceola is located, the number of day-visitors who boat was estimated to be 131,133. Managers estimate that Osceola is one of the highest use landings in the Lower District, however, detailed visitor statistics for each boat landing is not available. In 2017, observational data at Osceola Landing was collected to establish baseline estimate of summer use (Schneider, Carlson, Pflughoeft & O'Connor, 2017). A conservative estimate of 25,000 visitors at Osceola Landing between June and September was determined by comparing multiple calculations with observation data and extrapolated numbers of visitors per four-hour observation shift, overall numbers of visitors, and numbers of visitors per day of week from Schneider, et al (2017).

Visitors will be systematically selected during the designated sampling period (June-September). The sampling period will be varied by time of day and day of the week throughout the summer months. This method will be used to capture a representative sample.

Non-commercial Visitors

A random sample of non-commercial visitor groups will be approached after they exit the river. One member from the group will be invited to participate and the visitor at least 18 years old with the most recent birthday will be asked to complete the electronic version of the questionnaire. Once the survey is completed, personnel will walk towards the end of the landing area and select the next group to participate. Once at the end of the landing area, personnel will turn back and walk towards the start of the landing continuing the sampling process.

Commercial Visitors

Assuming the average group size is three (based on the most recent data available, MnDNR 1996), there would be 4,167 groups over the total summer, or 45 groups per day. A conservative estimate based on visitor observation data leads to an expected a total of 800 commercial visitor group contacts during the sampling period.

All commercial visitors exiting the river at Osceola Landing take commercially-operated shuttle buses back to their cars. As commercial visitors wait for the shuttle bus to arrive, trained interviewers will approach visitor groups starting at one end of the waiting line and area. Each group will be approached and the adult at least 18 years old with the most recent birthday will be asked to complete a contact card.

Table 1. Example sampling schedule, days per month

	June		July		August		September		TOTAL
	Week Day	Week end	Week Day	Week end	Week Day	Week end	Week Day	Week end	
Osceola Landing	2	5	2	5	1	6	0	4	25

Table 2. Estimated number of visitor contacts during sampling period

	June		July		August		September		TOTAL
	Week Day	Week end	Week Day	Week end	Week Day	Week end	Week Day	Week end	
Non- Commercial Visitors	50	110	70	140	70	140	0	60	640
Commercial Visitors	75	120	90	150	60	220	0	85	800
Total	125	230	160	290	130	360	0	145	1,440

(C) Instrument Administration:

Non-commercial Visitors

An electronic version of the questionnaire will be self-administered via a handheld tablet and is expected to be completed before the end of the contact. For respondents uncomfortable with using electronic tablets, there will be paper versions of the questionnaires available which will also be completed and returned before the end of the contact.

Researchers will stay nearby to answer any questions when necessary. The following script will be used to initiate the contact and to administer the questionnaire:

“Hello, I am from the University of Minnesota. I am conducting a survey for the National Park Service to learn more about visitor’s experience at St. Croix National Scenic Riverway. Specifically, we’re interested in making your visitor safer and more informative. Your participation is voluntary and all responses will be kept anonymous. Would you be willing to take a 10-minute survey?”

→ If **"YES"** – then ask, "Has any member of your group been asked to participate in this survey before?"

If **"YES"** (already asked to participate) then, *"Thank you for your time. Have a great day."*

If **"NO"** (have not been previously asked to participate) then,
Would you be willing to take a short survey today?

⇒ If Yes - *"Thank you for agreeing to participate. Who in your group is at least 18 years old and had the most recent birthday? "*

To start the questionnaire, simply start entering your responses with this simple keyboard. To move to the next questions, swipe the screen across. If you have any questions, I'll be right here. Let me know when you are finished. *. Hand them the tablet and let them know you will be there if they have any questions.*

IF they express concern with using the tablet,

"We have a paper version available for you to use-it's that easy!" Hand them the questionnaire, pencil, and clipboard. *"When you get to question that requires the photographs, let me know, and I'll hand you a set of photos needed for the questions in that section."*

→ If **"NO"** – (soft refusal) - ask them if they would be willing to answer the non-response bias questions (listed below) and then thank them for their time. The responses to the following non-response bias questions will be recorded:

Following questions will be asked:

- ❖ group size,
- ❖ visitation history (number of times visiting the site last 12 months),
- ❖ perception of number of people on landing and river as a crowding issue,
- ❖ state or country and zip code

→ If **"NO"** – (*hard refusal*) – *ask them question about perceived boat landing and river crowding, zip code, end the contact and thank them for their time. Record group size.*

Commercial Visitors

As commercial visitors wait for the shuttle bus to arrive, each group will be approached and the adult at least 18 years old with the most recent birthday who agrees to participate will be given a tablet to provide their email address to receive an online survey. If a person refuses, we will record group size as well as ask them about perceived crowding at the landing as a non-response bias check. We will have paper versions of the contact card available in case people are not comfortable with the tablet. Online survey methods suggested by Dillman, Smyth and Christensen (2014) will be followed. Within one week all visitors providing emails will receive an electronic invitation containing the URL that will connect them to the survey. Two e-mail reminders will be sent to all non-respondents. The email addresses will only be used to send the initial invitation and reminders; they will be destroyed by deleting the forms at the end of the sampling period. Individual names will not be requested or necessary for the purposes of this study.

(D) Expected Response Rate / Confidence Level:

A combined total of 1,440 visitors will be contacted during the sampling period. The number of refusals will be recorded and will be used to calculate the overall response rate (Tables 3 & 4). We anticipate a margin of error of between +/-4%- 7% at a 95 percent level of confidence.

Based on recent beach research by Schneider et al. (in press) and Whittaker and Shelby (2012), a conservative on-site agreement rate is estimated at 60%. Based upon this, at least 640 on-site contacts are required to reach the goal of 384 completed responses.

Table 3. Non-commercial Visitor Survey: Response rates based upon total estimated number of all on-site visitor contacts

Respondent Type	Initial Contacts	Expected Response Rate (60%)	Total Number of Refusals	Non-response survey 80%	Hard Refusals 20%
Non-Commercial Visitors	640	384	256	205	51

Based upon 2017 observation data of the percent of commercial visitors on the beach (Schneider et al. 2017) and data provided from commercial operators for summer 2017, we anticipate that approximately 800 groups will ride the shuttle buses during the proposed sampling period. Assuming 40% (n=320) of the visitors contacted will agree to provide emails, we anticipate that 25% (n=80) will complete and return the on-line questionnaires (Table 4).

Table 4. Commercial Visitor Survey: Response rates based upon total estimated number visitor contacts

Respondent Type	Shuttle Bus line			On-line Questionnaire		
	Initial Contacts	Completed contact cards (40%)	Total Number of On-site Refusals	Number of Potential respondents	Total Number of returned Responses (25%)	Non-respondents (75%)
Commercial Visitors	800	320	480	320	80	240

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

All visitors (non-commercial and commercial) who refuse to complete the full questionnaire or who are not willing to provide their contact information will be asked the following:

- ❖ group size,
- ❖ visitation history (number of times visiting the site last 12 months),
- ❖ perception of the number of people on the landing and river as a crowding issue, and
- ❖ state or country and zip code.

Results will be included in the report with any necessary cautions of data interpretation due any non-response bias.

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

All questions are taken from the NPS 2016 Pool of Known Questions. The questionnaire was reviewed by an NPS Denver Service Center staff member. A pre-test among UMN faculty and graduate students familiar with survey research was conducted to assure questions were understandable and reasonable. Based on the pre-test, two questions were clarified: 1) “ranger on call” was changed to “call-in interpretive program” and 2) an ‘other’ option was added for type of ‘boat’ launched/landed.

BURDEN ESTIMATES:

The total estimated annual respondent burden for this collection is 109 hours (non-commercial survey = 73 hours and commercial survey = 36 hours). All estimates are rounded to nearest whole number (Tables 5 & 6).

Non-commercial Visitors

Overall we expect to approach a total of 640 individuals during the sampling period. We expect that 60% (n=384) of all those contacted will agree to complete the on-site questionnaire. It is estimated that it will take no more than one-minute to complete the initial contact to determine participation and at least 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire (384 respondents x 11 minutes = 70 hours). Of the remaining 40% (n=256) that refuse to participate during this initial we estimate that 80% (n=205) will agree to take one minute to answer the non-response bias questions (205 respondents x 1 minute = 3 hours). For those refusing to participate in any part of the study (n=51), we will attempt to record their reason for refusal, group size, and zip code. We estimate their completion time will be less than 30 seconds and will not be counted towards the overall burden.

Table 5. Non-commercial visitor: Combined estimated respondent burden

	Responses	Completion Time * (minutes)	Burden Hours
Completed questionnaire	384	11	70
Non-response survey	205	1	3
TOTAL	0		73

Commercial Visitors

The total annual respondent burden to complete the commercial visitor’s survey is estimated at 36 hours for the initial contact and to complete the on-line survey (Table 6). We plan to contact 800 commercial visitors while waiting for their shuttle near the landing. For the 40% (n=320) who agree to participate, we expect the initial contact will take about 1 minute per person and 2 minutes to provide their contact information for the follow-up survey (320 respondents x 3 minutes = 16 hours). We expect 60% (n=480) will refuse to participate during the initial contact and for all who refuse we will conduct the non-response bias check which is estimated to take 1 minute (480 respondents x 1 minute = 8 hours). The total annual respondent burden to complete the on-site contact with commercial visitors is estimated at least 24 hours (Table 6).

On-line survey:

Of the 320 visitor that provide their emails, we expect that 25% (n=80) will complete and return the on-line questionnaire. We've estimated that it takes an average of 9 minutes to complete the questionnaire online (80 respondents x 9 minutes = 12 hours).

Table 6. Commercial visitors: Combined respondent burden for the on-line survey

	Responses	Completion Time * (minutes)	Burden Hours
On-site Contact			
Initial contact and returned contact	320	3	16
Non-response survey	480	1	8
On-line			
Returned surveys	80	9	12
TOTAL	880		36

REPORTING PLAN:

The data from this collection will be analyzed using descriptive statistics, as well as comparative analysis for differences in acceptability levels among groups of interest (types of users, first-time vs. repeat visitors, etc.). Managers and planners will use this work to understand potential interpretive programming, educational efforts to improve safety and design considerations. A technical report will be provided to SACR and NPS Social Science Branch. A presentation for interested audiences will be developed and shared. Conference presentations and refereed journal publications will be considered.

REFERENCES

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NOTICES

Privacy Act Statement

General: This information is provided pursuant to Public Law 93-579 (Privacy Act of 1974), December 21, 1984, for individuals completing this form.

Authority: National Park Service Research mandate (54 USC 100702)

Purpose and Uses: This information will be used by The NPS Information Collections Coordinator to ensure appropriate documentation of information collections conducted in areas managed by or that are sponsored by the National Park Service.

Effects of Nondisclosure: Providing information is mandatory to submit Information Collection Requests to Programmatic Review Process.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement

We are collecting this information subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act (44 U.S.C. 3501) and is authorized by the National Park Service Research mandate (54 USC 100702). This information will be used by The NPS Information Collections Coordinator to ensure appropriate documentation of information collections conducted in areas managed by or that are sponsored by the National Park Service. All parts of the form must be completed in order for your request to be considered. We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to, this or any other Federal agency-sponsored information collection unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. OMB has reviewed and approved The National Park Service Programmatic Review Process and assigned OMB Control Number 1024-0224.

Estimated Burden Statement

Public Reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 60 minutes per collection, including the time it takes for reviewing instructions, gathering information and completing and reviewing the form. This time does not include the editorial time required to finalize the submission. Comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form should be sent to the Information Collection Clearance Coordinator, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Dr., Fort Collins, CO 80525.