



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: 03/13/2019

PROJECT TITLE: A Evaluation of Visitor Characteristics Across and Within Seasons at Joshua Tree National Park (JOTR)

ABSTRACT: (not to exceed 150 words)

Joshua Tree National Park has seen a more than 2-fold increase in visitation over the past 6 years. This significant increase in visitation is thought be having an impact on the experiential and environmental conditions at the park. For these reasons, this project is designed to provide managers with information about sustainable and appropriate visitor experiences and visitor uses in the park. Additionally, this study will partially recreate a study from 2010 to understand possible differences in visitor make-up and experiences as a result of the dramatic increase in visitation

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PROJECT INFORMATION:

Where will the collection take place? Shenandoah National Park (SHEN)

Sampling Period Start Date: October 1, 2019 **Sampling Period End Date:** October 31, 2019

Type of Information Collection Instrument: (Check ALL that Apply)

- Mail-Back Questionnaire Face-to-Face Interview Focus Groups
 On-Site Questionnaire Telephone Survey
 Other (On-site Visitor Route Card)

Will an electronic device be used to collect information?

- No Yes - **Type of Device:** Tablet Computer (e.g. iPad)

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.

Joshua Tree National Park (JOTR) was established to protect the scenic and natural resources of a desert environment, while providing opportunities to experience wilderness and recreational related values. JOTR has found it difficult in recent years to maintain these mandates due to a large rise in visitation (and relatively close proximity to major urban centers of Palm Springs and Los Angeles). In the past six years, visitation has risen from 1,383,340 in 2013, to 2,942,382 in 2018, thus doubling the number of visitors in this time frame. For further perspective on these numbers, it took the park 25 years to go from 1 million visitors to 2 million visitors, whereas it has taken only 4 years to go from 2 million to just shy of 3 million visitors. This rapid increase in visitation has left park managers questioning how this dramatic increase has impacted the natural and experiential conditions in the park. This study is critical and timely for two primary reasons:

1. The evaluation of visitor characteristics and preferences across multiple user groups (e.g., campers, day users, climbers, backpackers) and across multiple seasons (e.g., spring, summer, fall) that can be compared to a previous study conduct before the dramatic increase in visitation began (2010).
2. The identification of emergent recreation uses and opposition/support for related specific management actions that may need to be implemented because of the dramatic increase in visitation.

Through this study, park managers will understand how visitation demographics may have changed since the rise in visitation and gain a clear understanding of visitor support for different hypothetical management options (or that they do not have any) specifically related changes in infrastructure, wilderness and various activities that will guide visitor use management at the park for the next 15-20 years.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY:

(A) Respondent Universe:

The respondent universe for this collection will be a systematic sample of all adult recreation users (age 18 and older), at the (1) West Entrance of JOTR, (2) the East Entrance of JOTR, and the (3) Cottonwood Entrance of JOTR. These locations will be sampled during the proposed study period (June 18, 2019 – May 1, 2020). These three locations represent the primary ways of entry and exit to the park, thus making them ideal locations for intercept.

(B) Sampling Plan / Procedures:

According to the NPS visitor use statistics, approximately 2,942,382 people visited JOTR in 2018. Because the park offers exceptional opportunities for recreation during three season, we will be sampling during the spring, summer and fall. The tables below provided estimates for visitor contacts based on previous on-site survey efforts in other similar parks, areas of varying levels of use, and park manager input.

Three sampling periods occur for 21 total days (Table 1). Each period will consist of 5-week days and 2-weekend days (June 18-24, November 18-24 and March 18-24, 2020). During this time, two researchers (six total) will intercept visitors at three sampling locations (East, West and Cottonwood Entrance Stations). Sampling will be evenly split between the East and West entrance and fewer contacts will be expected at the less frequently used Cottonwood entrance, for a combined total of 2,400 visitor contacts at the end of the 21-day sampling period.

Table 1. Estimated number of contacts during sampling period

Location	Summer Week 1			Fall Week 2			Spring Week 3		
	Weekday (5 days)	Weekend (2 days)	Total	Weekday (5 days)	Weekend (2 days)	Total	Weekday (5 days)	Weekend (2 days)	Total
East Entrance	160	160	320	160	160	320	160	160	320
West Entrance	160	160	320	160	160	320	160	160	320
Cottonwood Entrance	80	80	160	80	80	160	80	80	160
TOTAL	400	400	800	400	400	800	400	400	800

In order to accurately gauge experiences, visitors will be approached at 3 entrance stations at the end of their experience as they are exiting the park. These locations are the primary three points of entry and exit to and from the park thus the vast majority of visitors will pass through these three areas. Sampling will occur at each of the locations from 8am to 5pm, and someone will be stationed at each site for one week, each sampling day of spring, summer and fall, for a total of 21 sampling days per site.

A random sample of every 3rd visitor will be approached and asked to participate in the collection as tablet availability allows (the research team has over 100 tablets at their disposal). Based upon our sampling methods we anticipate contacting at least 960 visitors at the East and West entrance and 480 at the Cottonwood entrance during the 21-day sampling period (n=800 each week) (Table 2). During the week (M-F) we expect to contact at least 80 visitors each day

for a total of 400 contacts a week. If the sample quota is not met on a given day, the balance will be evenly distributed, across the remaining days. On the weekend (S-Su) when visitation rates are typically higher, we expect to contact at least 200 people each day for a total of 400 weekend contacts. This sampling plan will be used at all locations.

Table 2. Example of an Expected Weekly Sampling at the East Entrance Station during the Fall

	Estimate Number of visitors approach during the sampling period	Targeted Number of visitor approached per day	Expected on-site Acceptance Rate per day (50%)	Expected number of People Agreeing to Participate (per sampling period)
Mon - Fri	400	80	40	200
Sat - Sun	400	400	200	200
	800			400

(C) Instrument Administration:

The surveys in this collection will follow the same sampling procedures although the locations and settings will differ. The initial contact with visitors will be used to explain the study and determine if visitors are interested in participating (see script below). This should take approximately one minute. If a group is encountered, the survey interviewer will ask the individual within the group with the next birthday to serve as the respondent. At this point, all individuals approached will be asked the non-response bias questions to collect information that will be used in the final analysis (see item E below). The visitors that refuse to participate will be asked if they would be willing to take a minute to respond to non-response bias questions (which will be recorded by the survey administrator). The number of refusals will be recorded and used to calculate the overall response rate for the collection. Surveys will be administered and completed entirely on tablet computers (e.g., iPads) utilizing Qualtrics survey software. The research team will distribute tablets to the researchers at all three locations, with the East and West entrance getting a higher number of tablets due to the increased traffic at these locations.

Visitors selected for participating in the survey 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 related to your overall experience and possible management scenarios at the park. Your participation is voluntary, and all responses will be kept anonymous. Would you be willing to take a 10-minute survey and give it back to the interviewer?”

➔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 agreeing to participate in this study. Have a great day.”

If **“NO”** (have not been previously asked to participate) then,
“Thank you for agreeing to participate. Who in your group is at least 18 years old and has the next birthday?” Ask them to start the process by answering the non-response bias questions (listed below). Record responses in spaces provided on the tracking sheet. Hand them a tablet survey. Participants will then be briefed on how to utilize the tablet to answer the questions in the survey: *“Please use the tablet to answer the questions in the survey, please let me know if you have any questions about the process.”*

➔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. Record responses in spaces provided on the tracking sheet.

➔If NO- (hard refusal) - end the contact and thank them for their time.

(D) Expected Response Rate / Confidence Level:

The response rate for this collection is based on surveys at similar park sites. Based on the survey sample sizes, there will be 95% confidence that the survey findings will be accurate to within 3-5 percentage points. Assuming a 50% response rate, we will need to contact approximately 2,400 visitors (960 at the East and West Entrance and 480 at the Cottonwood Entrance sampling location) (Table 3). The proposed sample sizes will be adequate for bivariate comparisons and will allow for comparisons between study sites. 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. The number of refusals at each location will be recorded and reported in a survey log and will be used in calculating the overall response rate.

Table 3. Anticipated Response Rates

Location	Initial Contacts	Acceptance 50%	Non-respondents (Soft refusals) 50%	Non-response survey 20%	Hard Refusals 80%
East Entrance	960	480	480	96	384
West Entrance	960	480	480	96	384
Cottonwood Entrance	480	240	240	48	192
TOTAL	2,400	1,200	1,200	240	960

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

During the initial contact, the interviewer will ask each visitor to answer three questions taken from the survey. The following questions will be the non-response bias check for this collection:

1) *On this trip, how long did you and your personal group spend visiting Joshua Tree NP? Please list partial hours / days as ¼, ½, ¾.*

_____ *Number of hours, if fewer than 24 hours* or _____ *Number of days, if 24 hours or more*

2) Did you or members of your personal group attempt to make reservations for campsites at Joshua Tree NP for this trip?
 Yes No

3) What is your gender? (select one) Male Female Do not wish to answer

All responses will be recorded on a log for every survey contact. Results of the non-response bias check will be described in a report and any implications for park planning and management will be discussed.

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

The questionnaire format and variations of many of the questions have been used in many survey instruments previously approved by OMB. The questions are from the currently approved list of questions in NPS Pool of Known Questions (OMB 1024-0224; Current Expirations Date: 5-31-2019). Variations of the questions have been reviewed by JOTR managers and faculty from Kansas State University and Clemson University. The questionnaire was tested on eight voluntary members of the general public for burden length and clarity of the questions..

BURDEN ESTIMATES:

Overall, we plan to approach 2,400 individuals at all sites during the sampling periods. We anticipate that 50% (n=1,200) of the individuals contacted will agree to participate and complete the 10 minute on-site survey (1,200 respondents x 10 minutes =200 hours). We expect that 1,200 (50%) visitors will refuse to participate and for those individuals, we record their reason for refusal.

Of all the visitors refusing to accept the invitation (n=1,200) we will ask if they would be willing to answer the three questions that will serve as the non-response bias check for this collection. We expect that 20% (n=240) of the on-site refusals will agree to answer the non-response bias questions. We anticipate that the time to complete the non-response bias check will take about one minute, resulting in 4 hours of respondent burden for the non-response survey (240 respondents x 2 minute = 8 hours).

The remaining 960 visitors refusing to accept any part of the invitation to participate will not incur a respondent burden and for those individuals, we will only attempt to record their reason for refusal.

The overall respondent burden for this collection is 288 annual hours. This includes the time it takes to complete the on-site questionnaire (including the initial contact) plus the non-response survey (Table 4).

Table 4. Burden Estimates

	Responses	Completion Time * (minutes)	Burden Hours (rounded up)
Completed questionnaire*	1,200	11	220
Non-response survey	240	2	8
Total burden requested under this ICR:	1,440		228

REPORTING PLAN:

The study results will be presented in internal agency reports for NPS managers at the park. Response frequencies will be tabulated, and measures of central tendency computed (e.g., mean, median, mode, as appropriate). The reports 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.

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.