



## 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: January 20, 2021

**PROJECT TITLE: *Evaluating Visitor's Temporal and Spatial Distribution and Service Level Satisfaction at Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve (TAPR)***

### **ABSTRACT:** (not to exceed 150 words)

Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve was created by Congress in 1996 to protect and interpret the tallgrass ecosystem, and to date, has not had a formal visitor survey conducted at the park. This leaves many questions as to how well the park is meeting its mission, how well the park is meeting the expectation of visitors, and a basic understanding of how visitors move around the park. This research will support current circulation planning efforts by addressing current issues and understanding at TAPR, but the information gathered will also provide a baseline to help managers confidently tackle future issues or opportunities that will inevitably arise. Ultimately, the information gathered through this project aims to assist managers in avoiding pitfalls encountered at other similar areas due in part to a lack of information.

### **PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR CONTACT INFORMATION:**

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**PROJECT INFORMATION:**

Where will the collection take place? Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve (TAPR)

Sampling Period Start Date: August 1, 2019

Sampling Period End Date: July 31, 2020

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: Tablet Computer (e.g. iPad)
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**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.*

Park visitors represent critical stakeholders who may contribute positively or negatively to the management at Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve (TAPR). A fundamental step in managing parks and providing high quality experiences, is to identify peoples' movement and impacts on resources related to management actions. Also, among the primary goals for any park are to provide for public enjoyment and high-quality visitor experiences. Visitors are attracted to parks, and specifically TAPR to enhance their understanding, education, and appreciation of the history of the site. Manager's success can be attributed to their proactive approach to understand what visitors want, what can be accommodated and how to reach new audiences. Although TAPR has been in existence as an NPS unit since 1996, they have yet to complete a comprehensive visitor survey at the park. TAPR managers have personal experience and anecdotal information to inform management actions, but little in the way of empirical data to make decisions based on the best available science. Park managers are in the beginning stages of developing a Circulation Plan for the park, as they have major concerns that visitors tend to be confused during their visit to the park. This study will assist the managers at TAPR by asking specific questions about how people move within the park, what locations they visit, were they confused as to where to go at any times, as well as basic question about their level of satisfaction with park amenities (e.g., bathrooms, trails, etc.). Additionally, visitors will be asked to rate their level of support for possible management actions (e.g., adding trails, adding camping, etc.) that will not only assist with the current planning effort, but with any planning efforts in the near future. Although many of these questions may seem elementary, the answers are of critical importance as

park managers do not have any existing formal survey results from their visitors to base management decisions on. Lastly, the park has seen an almost 60% increase in visitation in the past 5 years (from ~17,000 to ~30,000 visitors), making the need for this information of even greater importance.

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**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 TAPR visitor center parking lot during the proposed study period (August 1 – July 31, 2020). This location is directly adjacent to the only entry and exit to the park, thus making it an ideal location for intercept.

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**(B) Sampling Plan / Procedures:**

According to the NPS visitor use statistics, approximately 27,715 people visited TAPR in 2018. Because the number of visitors fluctuates by season (spring, summer and fall), we will be sampling during these three seasons to capture a representative sample of visitors. The tables below provide estimates for visitor contacts based on, past sampling experience in other similar parks, and with park manager input.

Three sampling periods occur for 21 days (Table 1). Each period will consist of 5-week days and 2-weekend days. During this time, researchers will intercept visitors at the TAPR visitor center parking lot. There will be a total of 600 visitor contacts at the end of the 21-day sampling period.

**Table 1. Estimated number of contacts during sampling period**

	Spring Week 1			Summer Week 2			Fall Week #		
	Weekday (5 days)	Weekend (2 days)	Total	Weekday (5 days)	Weekend (2 days)	Total	Weekday (5 days)	Weekend (2 days)	Total
TAPR VC Parking Lot	100	100	200	100	100	200	100	100	200

In order to accurately gauge experiences, visitors will be approached at the TAPR visitor center parking lot at the end of their experience as they are exiting the park. This location is the only point of entry and exit to and from the park, thus all visitors will pass through this area. Sampling will occur this location from 8am to 5pm, and someone will be stationed at the visitor center parking lot, each sampling day for a total of 21 sampling days.

A random sample of every 3<sup>rd</sup> visitor will be approached and asked to participate in the collection. Dependent upon availability, 2-3 survey administrators will be located in the parking lot to intercept visitors and retrieve iPads after the visitor completes surveys. Based upon our sampling methods we anticipate contacting at least 600 visitors during the 21-day sampling period (n=200 each week) (Table 2). During the week (M-F) we expect to contact at least 20 visitors

each day for a total of 100 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 50 people each day for a total of 100 weekend contacts.

	Estimate Number of visitors approach during the sampling	Targeted Number of visitor approached per day	Expected on-site Acceptance Rate per day	Estimate Number of visitors approach during the sampling
Mon - Fri	100	20	10	50
Sat - Sun	100	100	50	50
Total	200			100

**(C) Instrument Administration:**

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 administrator 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.

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 about your experience in the park today and your thoughts on possible management scenarios. 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 600 visitors (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%
TAPR VC Parking Lot	600	300	300	60	240

**(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. Did you go to the Visitor Center? \_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No
2. How much did not enough staff to assist you detract from your experience (scale - Did not detract at all, Slightly detracted, Moderately detracted, Seriously detracted, Very seriously detracted, Did not experience)
3. What is your gender?  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 TAPR managers and faculty from Kansas State 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 600 individuals at all sites during the sampling periods. We anticipate that 50% (n=300) of the individuals contacted will agree to participate and complete the 10 minute on-site survey (300 respondents x 10 minutes = 50 hours). We expect that 300 (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=300) 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=60) 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 an additional minute, resulting in an hour of respondent burden for the non-response survey (60 respondents x 1 minute = 1-hour).

The remaining 240 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 56 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*	300	11	55
Non-response survey	60	2	2
Total burden requested under this ICR:	<b>360</b>		<b>57 hours</b>

\* Initial contact time of one minute is added to the time to complete the surveys.

**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.

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**REFERENCES:**

Vaske, J. J. (2008). *Survey research and analysis: Applications in parks, recreation and human dimensions*. State College, PA: Venture Publishing.

VUM (2016). Visitor use management framework: A guide to providing sustainable outdoor recreation. Retrieved from [https://visitorusemanagement.nps.gov/Content/documents/lowres\\_VUM%20Framework\\_Edition%201\\_IVUMC.pdf](https://visitorusemanagement.nps.gov/Content/documents/lowres_VUM%20Framework_Edition%201_IVUMC.pdf)

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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.