



## 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:** February 15, 2019

**PROJECT TITLE:** Visual Resources Visitor Study Focus Groups

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

This proposed study will consist of up to eight focus group sessions with visitors at Big Bend National Park (BIBE) and New River Gorge National River (NERI). Four groups will be conducted at each location and consist of 8 to 10 participants each. The purpose is to conduct qualitative testing of draft language, concepts and materials to develop a survey that will be used to collect information on visitor preferences and values for protection and management of scenic resources (e.g., vistas, landscapes, landforms, and other features of visual significance).

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR CONTACT INFORMATION:**

Name: Robert Paterson (Chip) Title: Principal  
Affiliation: Industrial Economics, Inc. (IEc) Phone: (617) 354-0074  
Address: 2067 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge, MA 02140  
Email: rwp@indecon.com

**PARK OR PROGRAM LIAISON CONTACT INFORMATION:**

Name: Todd Lanning Title: Restoration Project Manager  
Affiliation: Resource Protection Branch Phone: (970) 225-3523  
Address: 1201 Oakridge Drive, Fort Collins, CO 80525  
Email: todd\_lanning@nps.gov

**PROJECT INFORMATION:**

Where will the collection take place? BIBE and NERI

Sampling Period Start Date: May 1, 2019 Sampling Period End Date: September 30, 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 (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.*

The System Unit Resource Protection Act (SURPA) provides the authorities allowing NPS to recover damages from responsible parties for injuries to park system resources. Activities such as illegal off-road vehicle (ORV) use and tree/vegetation removal cause physical and ecological impacts, but also alter views, vistas and landscapes. This reduces visitors' ability to enjoy these visual resources, thereby diminishing their experience. NPS has sought damages for actions including illegal ORV use and encroachment /trespasses; however, there is little information that can be applied to the public's value for associated visual impacts. Therefore NPS has not been able to seek damages that fully compensate the public. The Resource Protection Branch (RPB) is responsible for managing the NPS Damage Assessment and Restoration program and has requested a study to develop information on visitors' values for avoiding or restoring visual resource impacts.

As a first step, focus groups will be conducted to follow established best practices in the design of valuation studies. Qualitative pretesting will investigate survey language, concepts, questions and materials to ensure proper functioning prior to any field data collection.

**SURVEY METHODOLOGY:**

**(A) Respondent Universe:**

The respondent universe will be all adult visitors (age 18 and older) to NERI and BIBE visitor centers during a six-day recruiting window at each unit.

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

NPS statistics indicate that in 2018 the NERI Canyon Rim Visitor Center received an average of 1,785 visitors per day between the months of May and September. Specific estimates for the Panther Junction Visitor Center at BIBE are not available, but overall recreational visitation averaged 747 visitors per day during the same time period. If approximately 20 percent of visitors are under the age of 18, and six days of recruiting are completed at each unit, this implies an estimated respondent universe of 12,154 individuals.

Sampling will occur at NERI for a six-day period in June and at BIBE for a six-day period in September.

- o Two recruiters will be stationed outside the park visitor center beginning at 9:00 each day.
- o Recruiters will randomly select individuals or groups (i.e., every n<sup>th</sup> individual/group that approach entrance).
- o Once identified, the recruiter will approach an adult in the group and read a script (included in (C) below) to request participation.
- o Only one adult (18 years or older) per group will be asked to participate.
- o Names and cell phone numbers will be collected from all individual agreeing to participate during the initial contact. The contact information will be recorded and used only for a reminder call prior to the session.
- o Recruiters will continue to intercept individuals/groups until 12 participants have been confirmed (with the goal of 8 to 10 to show, accounting for contingencies).
- o Sampling rates may be adjusted on a periodic (hourly) basis depending on the pace of recruitment.
- o Note that an incentive [TBD, equivalent cash value of \$80] will be offered to offset the focus group time burden. A 90-minute focus group is a non-negligible amount of time for participation, particularly in the context of a recreational visit/vacation. The use of incentives to compensate for time and travel expenses is a standard practice to encourage focus group participation over a wide range of population demographics, and may help reduce selection bias.
- o Table 1 provides a summary of estimated contacts and participation.

**Table 1. Recruitment Days, Estimated Number of Visitor Contacts, and Estimated Number of FG Participants**

Location	Sampling Days	Number of Visitor Contacts	Estimated Cooperation Rate*	Total Number of Participants
NERI	6	~1,300	3%	40
BIBE	6	~1,300	3%	40

\*Conservative estimate based on groups conducted for the Natural Sounds and Night Skies Division by other researchers.

**(C) Instrument Administration:**

Sample recruiting script:

*“Good morning/afternoon, my name is \_\_\_\_\_. I’m working with the National Park Service on an important research study about scenic resources in parks. Today we’re asking a small number of visitors to help us by joining a focus group discussion this afternoon here in the visitor’s center. During the discussion we would ask you your*

*opinions about materials we are developing for a visitor survey. It starts at 3:30 pm and would last for 90 minutes. We are offering [incentive] to thank you for participating.*

IF GROUP: *"Would one person from your group, age 18 or older be willing to help us by participating?"*

IF INDIVIDUAL: *"Would you be willing to help us by participating?"*

⇒IF YES: *"Great, thank you. Can you please tell me your age?"*

RECORD GENDER \_\_\_\_\_  
RECORD AGE \_\_\_\_\_

*"The discussion will start at 3:30pm and be held in the \_\_\_\_\_ room here in the visitor center. May I have a cell phone number so that I can contact you later to remind you about the session?"*

RECORD PHONE # \_\_\_\_\_

⇒IF NO: *"Thank you for your time. Before you go, can I ask your home zip code?"*

RECORD ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

RECORD GROUP SIZE/COMPOSITION \_\_\_\_\_

*"Enjoy your visit."*

Four focus group sessions will be held at each unit. The sessions will be held on consecutive days (Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday) in a meeting room in the park's visitor center. The sessions will begin in the later afternoon (e.g., 3:30 pm) each day and last approximately 90 minutes.

Each focus group will be facilitated by a skilled moderator from the study team. Participants will receive a paper discussion guide consisting of several pages of background information and questions, as well as a set of photographs. Participants will be asked to read and respond to each page of material, and the moderator will lead a discussion to review responses/reactions before moving to the next page. Responses will not be associated with any specific individual in order to protect their identity and privacy. At least one additional member of the study team will be present to take notes; the groups will not otherwise be recorded.

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**(D) Expected Response Rate / Confidence Level:**

It is estimated that 40 individuals will participate in the focus group sessions at each location. Table 2 provides a disposition summary for visitor contacts. The purpose of the study is to use qualitative methods to test and refine survey language, concepts and materials. As such, the results are not intended to be generalized or support statistical inferences about visitor populations. Based on the study team's experience designing similar surveys, it is expected that the two sets of four groups will be adequate to address the essential topics.

**Table 2. Expected Contacts Disposition**

Location	Initial Contacts	Acceptance 3%	Non-respondents (Soft refusals) 72%	Non-response survey 72%	Hard Refusals 25%
NERI	~1,300	40	935	935	325
BIBE	~1,300	40	935	935	325
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,600</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>1,870</b>	<b>1,870</b>	<b>650</b>

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

Recruiters will request the home zip code of intercepted parties, and make note of group size and composition. In this manner, any systematic differences between those that agree to participate and those that decline can be noted. Basic demographic information will be collected at the end of each focus group, permitting comparisons to, for example, information from past visitor surveys at the two units.

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

The discussion guide was developed by the Principal Investigator (Paterson), who has designed focus groups to support survey development for a number of primary valuation studies, including two studies for NPS. Additional input was provided by Dr. Daniel Phaneuf of the University of Wisconsin, and Dr. Kevin Boyle of Virginia Tech, both recognized experts in the field of recreational and natural resource valuation.

**BURDEN ESTIMATES:**

From (B) above, we conservatively estimate that up to ~1,300 visitors will need to be contacted at each unit in order to ensure 10 participants in each of the four focus groups. We assume that the initial contact and participation decision will take an average of less than one minutes per contact (2,600 x .5 minutes = 21 hours). The, respondent burden for this collection takes in to account the recruiting time however, that time is de minimis per respondent compared to the time required to participate in the focus groups. Each focus group session is estimated to last 90 minutes (80 x 90 mminutes = 120 hours).

**Table 3. Burden Estimate**

	Responses	Completion time (minutes)	Burden hours
Focus group session	80	90	120
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>2,600</b>		<b>120</b>



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### REPORTING PLAN:

Results will be summarized in an internal report to the Resource Protection Branch for review. The report will provide recommendations for key survey design features based on focus group responses and feedback. The final report will be delivered in electronic format.

### 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.