

**Note to the Reviewer:** The text in the shaded boxes below will not be included in the survey (the visitors will not read this as a part of the survey process). This text is used to annotate the questions in response to Part A question 2 of the PRA Supporting Statement. The text boxes will be removed and will not be printed on the final version of the approved questionnaire.

## NPS Study of Value of Natural Sounds: A Pilot Study

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### General Population Survey Focus Group Moderator Guide

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OMB Control Number 1024-0XXX  
Expiration Date: XX/XX/XXXX

Participants will be directed to sit around a single large table. Placed in front of each seat on the table will be the packet of exercises and a pen for each participant. The moderator will also be seated at the table. Note takers will be on periphery of room. The purpose of the focus groups is to get feedback on the valuation questions in the survey.

The 90 minutes will breakdown as follows:

Introduction/Instructions- 5 min

Feedback on Introductory Text – 25 min

Feedback on Instructions and Choice Exercises – 45 min

Feedback on Contingent Valuation (CV) question (Exercise #2) – 15 min

### Introductions/Instructions (5 minutes)

**The questions in this section will be used to get participants engaged in the proceedings and encourage them to contribute to the discussion.**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this focus group. We are asking for your help to improve this version of a survey that we will use in the future to measure visitor perception of sounds in National Parks. Your participation will help us to make sure that other visitors like you will be able to complete the questions in our survey. This study has been approved by the Office of Management and Budget and the control number and expiration date is available upon your request. Your participation is voluntary and your responses will be completely anonymous. During the time that we are together, we will ask you to answer a series of questions and then we will ask you to listen to some recorded sounds. After that we would like to spend some time as a group to debrief about your experience taking the survey. In total this should take about 90 minutes to complete. Are you ready to get started?

Q.1 Does anyone have any questions?

Q.2 Let's quickly go around the room and tell everyone your **first** name. Again, my name is [moderator name].

### Feedback on Introductory Text (25 minutes)

This section will be used to gather feedback on the introductory text that describes the features of the park (e.g. location, size, natural habitat and visitation) and will explain the terms "sounds of nature," "man-made sound," and the impact of sound on visitors and the natural environment.

The information will be taken from brochures or websites developed by the park's interpretive staff.

Q.3 The packet in front of you contains some questions from the survey we are working on and we would like to get your feedback on these questions. Please read the description of [insert park name] on the first page of the survey booklet. When you are done I'll ask you some questions about what you have read.

Did this description give you a good sense of what the park is like? If not, what else would like to know about it?

Q.4 Is the map of the park clear? Is there anything that could be improved about the map?

Q.5 Now let's continue to page 2 of the packet. Please read the section "Sounds of Nature at [insert park name]."

*When everyone has finished*

It looks like everyone is done. Did anyone have any questions or was anything unclear in that section?  
Did you think anything in that section was controversial or biased?

### Feedback on Instructions and Choice Exercises (45 minutes)

This section will ask the respondents to provide feedback on the instructions for the choice exercises and the text-only method for describing sound conditions.

Q.6 The instructions for this exercise will explain the methods used to describe sound conditions and the costs for each scenario. Now, I would like for you to read the section "Instructions for Exercises" and answer **Exercise #1**. If anything is unclear in the instructions or the exercise itself please make a note of it and in the meantime please try to complete the exercise to the best of your ability.

*When everyone has finished:*

It looks like everyone is done. Does anyone have any questions or was anything unclear in the instructions?

*After hearing questions from participants, ask:* What was your guess about what [that item] meant?

*Provide clarification after you have heard what their guess was. Ask for ideas on how to improve the instructions so that it is clearer.*

**Q.7** Was the amount of information in the instructions section appropriate? Was it too long or should it provide more information? What other information should be provided? What information is not necessary?

**Q.8** Did anyone have any questions or was anything unclear in the exercise itself?

*Provide clarification. Ask for ideas on how to improve the questionnaire so that it is clearer.*

**Q.9** Based on the information given, do you feel you understood the changes in sound conditions that were being described in the exercise?

*If not: What questions do you have?*

**Q.10** Was it clear that these questions were asked about [insert park name] only?

**Q.11** Did you find the map on page 4 useful in explaining front country and back country? Do you think we should include the map or is the text description enough? Could the map be improved?

**The responses to Question 12 will be used to develop a range of values for the cost component of the choice exercises.**

**Q.12** We used the cost amounts of a \$15 increase and \$5 decrease for this example exercise but for the final survey we would use a range of different values for different respondents. So that we can use a realistic range of values in the final survey, what would you consider to be the highest increase in household taxes per year for improved sound conditions at this park?

**The responses to this question will help determine if losses can be effectively studied using this study's methodology.**

**Q.13** Did you accept the idea of a decrease in taxes if sound conditions got worse? Did that seem realistic or believable to you? If not, did that affect how you answered the question?

**The following questions will be used to determine the maximum number of attributes that could vary in an exercise.**

Now please read and answer **Exercise #2 and #3**. You may find these exercises, more challenging because more items change in the options. When everyone is done, we will discuss whether the exercises were understandable.

*When everyone is finished.*

You may have noticed in **Exercise #1**, only 2 of the 4 rows had information that changed across the options. In **Exercise #2**, 3 of the 4 rows had information that changed and in **Exercise #3** all

4 rows had information that changed. Having so much information changing may make answering the exercises more challenging.

How many of you think Exercise #3 might be too complicated for most people to answer with confidence? (record tally)\_\_\_\_\_

How many of you think Exercise #2 might be too complicated for most people to answer with confidence? (record tally)\_\_\_\_\_

And finally, does anyone think Exercise #1 is too complicated for most people to answer with confidence? (record tally)\_\_\_\_\_

*[Evaluate which is highest number Exercise where most people were comfortable].*

**The following questions will be used to determine the maximum number of exercises to include in the survey.**

**Q.14** It looks like most of you think most people would still be confident answering a question like Exercise #. If you received a survey in the mail, what is the most number of exercises like Exercise # that you find acceptable for such a survey? That is, the most you would be willing to answer?

*Go around the room to make sure everyone answers. Record Tally*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12

**Feedback on CV question (15 minutes)**

**This section elicits feedback on the CV question, particularly the range of values used and any protesting or strategic responses. (This method was suggested by a member of the expert review panel in case the more complicated choice exercises do not work out.)**

**Q.15** Please read and answer questions in **Exercise #4**. When you are done, we will discuss it. Did anyone have any difficulties answering the question? Why?

**Q.16** Did you find a dollar value that was close to what you felt was appropriate?

**Q.17** Did anyone choose \$0?

IF NO: *Skip to Wrap-up*

IF YES: What reasons did you list in the follow-up question?

*If responses are not strategic or protest bidding (they don't feel sound is very important or don't have the budget to pay for anything additional): Skip to Wrap-up*

*If any apparent strategic or protest bidding:* The idea of the question is to ask people how they value natural sound conditions so that park managers can assess the benefits of different sound management policies. It seems like you chose \$0 for a reason other than that you don't value sound conditions. How could we word the question so that you would be more inclined to report how much you value natural sound conditions?

**We will use this question to determine if the respondents are "anchoring" their payment card value to the values provided in the choice exercise. If we find significant anchoring, the CV question might not be included in the final survey.**

**Q.18** When you chose the dollar value in **Exercise #4**, did you make any comparison to the dollar values presented in **Exercises #1, #2, or #3**?

### **Wrap-up**

That ends our time together. Thank you for participating in this group today – we really appreciate your participation.

**PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT STATEMENT:** *The National Park Service is authorized by 6 U.S.C. 1a-7 to collect this information. This information will be used by park managers to understand visitor perceptions of sound in [insert park name]. Response to this request is voluntary. No action may be taken against you for refusing to supply the information requested. The permanent data connected with this collection will be anonymous. Please do not put your name or that of any member of your household on the questionnaire. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.*

**BURDEN ESTIMATE:** *The public reporting for this collection is estimated to be 90 minutes per respondent. This includes the time to complete the questionnaire and to participate in the follow-up interview process. Direct comments regarding the burden estimate or any other aspect of this form to: Catherine Taylor, Volpe National Transportation Systems Center, 55 Broadway, Cambridge, MA 02142, [catherine.taylor@dot.gov](mailto:catherine.taylor@dot.gov) (email).*