

Justification for NVUM survey changes

The NVUM program is starting the next national cycle of data collection in FY2020. A key change to the field data collection protocol is stopping use of paper optically scannable forms to record responses and instead use electronic tablets. We have tested the tablet technology over the last several years and have identified a number of advantages:

- reduced interviewer fatigue from filling out forms and greater acceptance of the tablet technology
- Survey 123 software allows us to incorporate checks for internal consistency in responses. We take advantage of known parent-child relationships on some forms and time sequence responses on some survey items (for example, arrival dates/times must be before departures)
- reduced transcription and recording errors
- faster turnaround from fieldwork to cleaning process to data storage
- reduced agency costs for printing, shipping, and scanning paper forms

The change to tablets affords the opportunity to make clarifying edits to the wording and/or introduction to several questions on the survey. It is important to keep the survey instrument consistent across each national cycle. We polled several dozen NVUM interviewers as to whether any of the wording was confusing to respondents. The proposed changes in wording reflect their answers. Most changes simplify the wording.

The responses to the set of recreational activities had three changes:

- We added 'Christmas trees' to the set of examples for gathering forest products.
- Interviewers that we polled indicated that most respondents did not distinguish between riding off road vehicles on motorized trails or in designated areas without trails, so we combined the two into one activity.
- We added one activity 'recreational shooting' to the list. It represented nearly 40% of the responses obtained to the open-ended 'some other activity - specify' response option.