

GUIDELINES TO RESEARCHERS FOR STUDY PROPOSALS



United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

Your proposal should include each of the required information items listed below, in enough detail that an educated non-specialist can understand exactly what you plan to do. If you have already prepared a relevant proposal for a funding application, work plan, formal agreement, or similar document, then your original proposal likely will satisfy National Park Service (NPS) proposal requirements. The primary area where new information may be necessary concerns the ability of the park to assess what, if any, impacts your research may have on park resources. You should compare your original proposal to these guidelines to be certain that you have provided all the required information. If additional information is required, you can provide it in a cover letter or supplement to your proposal, as appropriate. If a required topic does not apply to your proposed study, simply list the topic and write “not applicable.”

The length of your proposal depends primarily on the complexity of the work planned. In some cases, a proposal may consist of a couple of pages for a study expected to have no significant impact on park resources or visitor experiences. However, proposals for lengthy or complex research problems, for extensive collecting, and for work with special status species or sensitive cultural resources are typically longer, more detailed, and well-organized. Incomplete, disorganized, or illegible proposals may be returned for revision.

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. **Title**
- B. **Date of proposal**
- C. **Investigators** - Provide the name, title, address, telephone number, FAX number, email address, and institutional affiliation of the principal investigator and the name and affiliation of all additional investigators listed in the proposal.
- D. **Table of contents** - Recommended for long or complicated proposals.
- E. **Abstract** - Provide a brief summary description of the proposed project. Include up to five keywords that can be used by the NPS to quickly identify the proposal subject (for example, microbiology, geology, ecology).

- II. **OVERVIEW** - Summarize the proposed project by describing in general the problem or issue being investigated as well as any previous pertinent research.

- A. **Statement of issue** - Describe the issue to be investigated and its importance and relevance to science and to the park. Provide relevant background information that clarifies the need for the project and why it is valuable for the research and/or collecting to be conducted in the park.
 - B. **Literature summary** - Summarize the relevant literature regarding the issue, problem, or questions that will be investigated.
 - C. **Scope of study** - Describe the overall geographic and scientific scope of the project.
 - D. **Intended use of results** - Describe how the products will be used, including any anticipated commercial use.
- III. **OBJECTIVES/HYPOTHESES TO BE TESTED** - Describe the specific objectives of the proposed project. Where appropriate, the objectives should be stated as specific hypotheses to be tested.
- IV. **METHODS** - Describe how the proposed methods and analytical techniques will achieve the study objectives or test the stated hypothesis/question. Provide pertinent literature citations.
- A. **Description of study area** – Clearly describe the study area in terms of park name(s), geographic location(s), and place names. Provide maps, park names, or geographic coordinates as appropriate. Indicate whether your work will take place in an area designated or managed as “wilderness” by the NPS.
 - B. **Procedures** - Describe the proposed study design that addresses the stated objectives and hypotheses. Explain the methods and protocols to be employed in the field and laboratory.
 - C. **Collections** - Describe the type, size, and quantity of specimens or materials to be collected, sampled, or captured, and your plans to remove them from the collecting site. If you are aware specimens of the proposed types already exist in a repository, explain why additional collecting is necessary. Provide scientific nomenclature where possible. Provide information on all other applicable federal or state permits where required.
 - D. **Analysis** - Explain how the data from the study will be analyzed to meet the stated objectives or test the hypotheses. Include any statistical techniques or mathematical models necessary to the understanding of the analysis.
 - E. **Schedule** - Provide a schedule that includes start of project, approximate dates or seasons of fieldwork, analysis, reporting, and completion dates.

- F. **Budget** - Briefly outline the expenses associated with this project and identify your expected funding source(s). Include the anticipated costs pertaining to the cataloging of collected and permanently retained specimens or materials.

V. **PRODUCTS**

- A. **Publications and reports** - Describe the expected publications or reports that will be generated as part of this study.
- B. **Collections** – Describe the proposed disposition of collected specimens or materials. If you propose that the NPS lend the specimens or samples to a non-NPS institution for long-term storage, identify that institution and give a brief justification for this proposal.
- C. **Data and other materials** - Describe any other products to be generated as part of the project, such as, photographs, maps, models, handouts, exhibits, software presentations, raw data, GIS coverages, or videos, and the proposed disposition of these materials. If data are to be collected from the public as part of this study, provide a copy of the data collection instrument (survey, questionnaire, interview protocol, etc.).

VI. **LITERATURE CITED** - Include full bibliographic citations for all reports and publications referenced in the proposal.

VII. **QUALIFICATIONS** - Provide a background summary or curriculum vitae for the principal investigator and other investigators listed in the proposal. Identify their training and qualifications relevant to the proposed project and their ability to conduct field activities in the environment of the proposed study area. Describe previous research and collecting in NPS areas, including study and permit numbers if available.

VIII. **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION AND SPECIAL CONCERNS** - Provide information on the following topics where applicable. Attach copies of any supporting documentation that will facilitate processing of your application, such as other required federal and state permits, copies of peer reviews, letters of support and funding commitments, and certifications. Collection of information from the public when federal funds are used may require approval from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Upon your request, the NPS Social Science Program will advise you on steps needed to obtain this OMB approval.

- A. **Safety** - Describe any known potentially hazardous activities, such as electrofishing, rock climbing, scuba diving, whitewater boating, aircraft use,

wilderness travel, wildlife capture, handling or immobilization, use of explosives, etc.

- B. **Access to study sites** - Describe the proposed method and frequency of travel to and within the study site(s). Explain any need to enter restricted areas. Describe duration, location, and number of participants for planned backcountry camping.
- C. **Use of mechanized and other equipment** - Describe any field equipment, markers, or supply caches by type, number, and location. You should explain how long they are to be left in the field. Explain the need to use these materials in restricted areas and the alternatives that were considered.
- D. **Chemical use** - Identify any chemicals and hazardous material that you propose using within the park. Indicate the purpose, method of application, and amount to be used. Describe plans for storage, transfer, and disposal of these materials and describe steps to remediate accidental releases into the environment. Attach copies of Material Safety Data Sheets.
- E. **Ground disturbance** - Describe the type, location, area, depth, number, and distribution of expected ground-disturbing activities, such as soil pits, cores, stakes, or latrines. Describe plans for site restoration of significantly affected areas.

Proposals that entail ground disturbance may require an archeological survey and special clearance prior to approval of the study. You can help reduce the extra time that may be required to process such a proposal by including identification of each ground disturbance area on a USGS 7.5-minute topographic map.

- F. **Animal welfare** - For vertebrate species that require review by your Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) according to the Animal Welfare Act, please include a photocopy of the study protocol, and IACUC review form and approval.

For vertebrate species not requiring IACUC review, describe your protocol for any capture, holding, marking, tagging, tissue sampling, or other handling of these animals (including the training and qualifications of personnel relevant to animal handling and care). Please discuss alternative techniques considered and outline any procedures to alleviate pain or distress. Include contingency plans to be implemented in the event of accidental injury to or death of the animal.

- G. **NPS assistance** - Describe any NPS field assistance you would like to receive to complete the proposed study, such as use of equipment or facilities or assistance from staff.
- H. **Wilderness “minimum requirement” protocols** - If some or all of your activities will be conducted within a location administered by the NPS as a

designated, proposed, or potential wilderness area, your proposal should describe how the project adheres to wilderness “minimum requirement” and “minimum tool” concepts. Refer to the park’s wilderness management plan for further information.