



## 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:** 2/2/2021

**PROJECT TITLE:** *Research to Inform Climbing Site Management and Planning at Harper's Ferry National Historic Park*

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

*This survey effort is designed to scope potential management-oriented actions to assist Harper's Ferry National Historic Park (HAFE) select next steps for drafting a climbing management plan. Additionally, this survey will assist in understanding a specific population of users that utilize HAFE, rock climbers.*

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

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### **PARK OR PROGRAM LIAISON CONTACT INFORMATION:**

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**PROJECT INFORMATION:**

Where will the collection take place? **Online**

Sampling Period Start Date: 4/1/2021

Sampling Period End Date: 10/21/2021

Type of Information Collection Instrument: (Check ALL that Apply)

Mail-Back Questionnaire

On-Site Questionnaire

Telephone Survey

Face-to-Face Interview

Focus Groups

Other (List) Online Survey

Will an electronic device be used to collect information?  No  Yes – Type of Device: computers

**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 proposed research aligns with Secretary of the Interior priorities and strategic plan for 2018-2022. The outcomes of this project will provide information that will directly align with three key mission areas: conserving land and water, expanding outdoor recreation and access, and modernizing organization and infrastructure for the next 100 years. These three mission areas will be fulfilled by a) informing land use planning processes for public use and access, b) fostering partnerships to achieve balanced stewardship and use of public lands, c) enhancing public satisfaction at HAFE, and d) prioritizing infrastructure needs (Interior FY 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, 2018). The research contributes to urban proximate park initiatives by increasing access for urban and rural populations to nearby national park units.

HAFE has been working with local stakeholders to develop research to understand rock climber perceptions of climbing management within the park. HAFE manages potential sites for rock climbing in Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia. Several management concerns previously generated rock-climbing closures throughout the Park. The park is currently attempting to enforce existing closures covering all rock-climbing areas in Virginia and West Virginia areas of the Park. There are also seasonal closures in the Maryland Heights area for Peregrine Falcon nesting, and a landslide in 2018 led to a year-long closure of the Maryland Heights area. These closures intended to protect sensitive cultural and natural resources, are often misinterpreted by the public in general and by the rock-climbing community specifically. The managers at HAFE do not currently have the needed information about rock climbers who utilize this area, such as their perceptions of use of HAFE and their perceptions of current or potential management actions related to rock climbing in the park. The results of this study will aid in the creation of a rock-climbing management plan that the park is in the beginning stages of developing.

This work is guided by the steps and principles of the Interagency Visitor Use Management Framework, which identifies the interdependent relationship between resource conditions, visitor experiences, and management actions as a strategic area of focus (VUM, 2016). The outcomes of this project will provide information that will assist HAFE managers to a) understand who is visiting rock climbing sites (e.g., demographics), including how and when they visit the sites, b) identify visitors' climbing preferences, desires and motivations, c) understand climbers' needs and desires for activities, services, facilities and potential future

opportunities, and d) perceptions towards possible and current management actions related to rock climbing. The resulting work will have high capacity to be used in park strategic planning efforts to identify efficient paths towards infrastructure improvements, visitor services, amenities and appropriate staffing for rock climbing in the park.

## **SURVEY METHODOLOGY:**

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### **(A) Respondent Universe:**

The respondent universe for this collection will be a sample of adult rock-climbing users (age 18 or older) at HAFE. We will be utilizing HAFE partner organization emails and list-serves to reach those who have rock climbed at the park. The Access Fund, and the Mid-Atlantic Climbers Association will be the primary organization for this study. The number of climbers to this area is currently unknown, and thus an appropriate sample size for this group is not known. However, we do know the membership numbers of the specific organizations, which can provide a broad sense of the number of possible participants (Access Fund – ~20,000 members and Mid-Atlantic Climbers Association – ~3,000)

All partner organizations were chosen based on conversations with park staff, planners and researchers, and are considered to be a representative of those who rock climb in the park. These partner organizations will be asked to assist in the distribution of this survey during the study period (April 1, 2021 - October 21, 2021)

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

We will work with NPS identified partner organizations to collect organization member emails for distribution of the survey. The emails will be inserted in Qualtrics (a survey management platform), and each email will receive a unique survey identifier for that participant. This will begin on April 1, 2021 and continue through October 21, 2021 with 2 additional emails being sent out on October 8, 2021 and October 15, 2021.

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### **(C) Instrument Administration:**

An online survey will be administered via email using Qualtrics survey software. The initial email and two reminders will ensure that we receive the maximum response possible and is standard online survey protocol (Dillman, Smith, & Christian, 2014). The initial contact will introduce the survey purpose and intent and request responded participation.

Respondents will receive the following message:

*“Old Dominion University and Kansas State University is conducting a survey for the Harpers Ferry National Historic Park to better understand opinion and perceptions related to your rock-climbing experience in the park. Your participation is voluntary, and all responses will be kept anonymous. By clicking on “continue” below, you are consenting to completing the survey. Thank you for your assistance and helping the park!*

*If they click “**continue**” – the first survey question will be presented*

*If they click “**do not wish to participate**” – take them to a page that says: “would you be willing to answer a few non-response bias questions to help us with our research? This should only 1 minute.*

***Yes** – go to non-response bias questions (listed below).*

***No** – hard refusal – thank you for your time.*

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

The number of climbers that utilize the routes in HAFE is currently not known. Park managers have suggested that partners, The Access Fund and Mid-Atlantic Climbers Association, would be reliable organizations to get a valid number of responses. Our population for this study is rock climbers who participate in rock climbing in HAFE. In a similar study as proposed here, in a similar context, a population estimate of 7,500 unique individual climbers were found (Maples et al., 2017), and based on this estimate size and using a confidence level of 95% (a statistical level of certainty that the population mean is found within the sample) and a confidence interval of 5% (a margin of error in which the population mean is not found within the sample), our study requires 357 responses. We will utilize the Access Fund and the Mid-Atlantic Climbers Association email lists to contact our population as it is the best possible means of doing so. At this time, these lists are projected by both organizations to include approximately 23,000 email accounts of persons who are members of these organization and have climbed at HAFE. The email lists include climbers from around the United States, including HAFE rock climbers. As we cannot determine how many persons on the lists have actually climbed at HAFE, we project 6,000 email addresses of contacts fitting the desired sample. We will include a question to ensure we filter respondents down to only persons climbed at HAFE. Because not all of the people on the email lists have climbed at HAFE, the expected response rate is difficult to calculate. Of the 23,000 emails we send out, it is likely that the number of people who climbed in this area (n = 6,000), will be a small percentage of these lists. In a study by Sharp et al. (2019) using a similar methodology for finding rock climbers to a specific area, and using a similar sample of emails, 13% of 6,000 emails yielded responses from those who rock climbed in the area of interest. Thus we will be using this number (780) as our target number of participants (Table 1).

**Table 1. Anticipated Response Rates**

Location	Initial Contacts	Max Expected Acceptance 13%	Non-respondents (Soft refusals) 87%	Non-response survey 1%	Hard Refusals 80%
Online	6,000	780	5,220	100	5,120

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

When a respondent chooses not to take the survey, they will be sent to a screen that asks them to answer non-response bias questions. The following questions will be the non-response bias check for this collection:

- 1) *How many years have you climbed at HAFE?*
- 2) *How many years have you been a climber?*
- 3) *What is your gender? (select one):* \_\_\_ male \_\_\_ female \_\_\_

**(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 (e.g., Buffalo National River, Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area). The questions are from the currently approved list of questions in NPS Pool of Known Questions. Variations of the questions have been reviewed by HAFE managers and faculty at Old Dominion University and Kansas State University. The questionnaire was tested on six members of the general public for burden length and clarity of questions.

**BURDEN ESTIMATES:**

Overall, we plan to contact 6,000 member of the Access Fund and the Mid-Atlantic Climbers Association who have climbed at HAFE. Based on previous, similar studies, we anticipate that 13% (n=780) of the individuals contacted will agree to participate and complete the 10 minute on-line survey (780 respondents x 10 minutes = 130 hours). We expect that 5,220 (87%) visitors will refuse to participate because they have never climbed at HAFE.

Of all the visitors refusing to accept the invitation (n=5,220) 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 1% of refusals will agree to answer the non-response bias questions. We anticipate that the time to complete the non-response bias check will take about one minute, resulting in 1 hours and 40 minutes respondent burden for the non-response survey (100 respondents x 1 minutes = 1 hours and 40 minutes).

The remaining 5,200 visitors refusing to accept any part of the invitation to participate will not incur a respondent burden and for those individuals and we will not know their reason for refusal at all because they did not open the invitation link.

The overall respondent burden for this collection is 132 hours, this includes the time it takes to complete the on-line questionnaire (including initial contact) plus the non-response survey (Table 4).

**Table 4. Burden Estimates**

	Responses	Completion Time * (minutes)	Burden Hours (rounded up)
Completed questionnaire*	780	10	130
Non-response survey	100	1	2

Total burden requested under this ICR: 132

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

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**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 NPS Social Sciences Studies Collection as required by the NPS Programmatic Approval Process. Hard copies will be available upon request.

**COVID-19 Statement:**

This study is crucial for understanding rock climbing use at HAFE and online administration is the safest way to gain this information. The park wishes to not wait until pandemic condition improve to implement on-site administration to try and collect this data.

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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.