



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: 5-19-2022

PROJECT TITLE: Onsite Survey of Visitor Experience and Preferences at Great Sand Dunes National Park

ABSTRACT: (not to exceed 150 words)

Great Sand Dunes National Park (GRSA) managers have identified visitor use management as a primary planning need in the park. The purpose of this study is to assist GRSA managers in forming accurate visitor capacities based on visitor experiences and preferences. This study is one of three data collection methods in a larger Visitor Use and Preference Study to Inform Park Planning. In addition to this site-specific survey, there will be a park-wide visitor survey, and collection of visitor travel and movement patterns. This site-specific survey is intended to collect visitor self-reported information on their experience related to congestion, transportation, and access.

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PROJECT INFORMATION:

Where will the collection take place? Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve (GRSA)

Sampling Period Start Date: 05/26/2022

Sampling Period End Date: 06/05/2022

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)

Will an electronic device be used to collect information? ☐ No ☒ Yes – Type of Device: **iPad tablet**

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.

Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve (GRSA) includes a portion of the rugged Sangre de Cristo Mountains as well as the dune field on the eastern edge of the San Luis Valley. The dune field and Medano Creek, a seasonal creek that flows along the southern edge of the dunes, is the most highly visited area of the park. Main road access is provided by State Highway 150/Entrance Road, which is a two-lane paved road that visitors utilize a majority of the time to access the Park. GRSA has experienced an unprecedented increase in visitation recently. While the historical trend has demonstrated a steady uptick in annual visitation, there was a 94% increase between 2014 and 2019 compared to the previous 10-year average. GRSA is currently considering various visitor use management strategies, and updated visitor data is necessary to facilitate communication and decision processes. In particular, park administrators are interested to learn more about park visitors and their visitation behavior. To initiate a visitor management planning process, in September of 2021 GRSA managers with assistance from the Intermountain Region, completed a document entitled "Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve Frontcountry Visitor Use Management Evaluation". This document identified the need for indicators and thresholds regarding visitor experience. One of the identified indicators was People Per Viewscape (PPV) at key locations and destinations. To acquire the data called for in that evaluation, this survey of visitor experience and preferences will help define visitors' perceptions of social conditions in situ to inform park managers about the effects of use levels on expectations, recreation opportunities, and ability to access the park. The following indicators from the Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve Frontcountry Visitor Use Management Evaluation will be used to evaluate visitor experience and preferences: parking availability, queuing to access Medano creek and the dunes, People Per Viewscape (PPV) along the Medano creek shoreline, and visitor encounters in the nearby and outer dunes. Managers at GRSA have identified the need for information and worked with the investigators to ensure the data will feed directly into their planning efforts.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

(A) Respondent Universe:

The respondent universe will be all adult visitors (18 years old and older) in the park during the sampling period (May 26 –June 5, 2022).

(B) Sampling Plan / Procedures:

This collection will use a site-specific intercept survey to capture a representative sample of visitor information, characteristics, and behavior.

A random sampling of visitors will be intercepted when exiting the dunes/Medano creek area and returning to the parking lot. This location will allow for visitors traveling to the dunes play area, the Medano creek shoreline, and the outer dunes to be intercepted.

Two dedicated surveyors plus one social scientist will be on site collecting surveys. Survey collection periods will be 7 hours a day during the peak visitation hours (10:00am-4:00pm), this time will be informed by park staff and visitor flow during the time of data collection (Table 1). Historic traffic/visitor use volume data was developed by GRSA staff, the NPS Social Science team, and Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve Front country Visitor Use Management Evaluation. Visitors will be intercepted on foot in the dunes parking area during their experience. Visitors will be randomly approached. Surveyors will be instructed to attempt to intercept every Nth group passing. N will be determined based on anticipated volume and number of intercepts (Table 1).

Table 1. Example On-site intercept survey schedule

Survey Locations	Sampling Days	Number of visitors contacted	Anticipated Completed On-site Surveys
Dunes parking area	10	600	400

Table 2. Day of the week intercept survey schedule

Location	Week 1		Week 2		Total
	Weekday	Weekend	Weekday	Weekend	
Dunes parking area	1	2	5	2	10

(C) Instrument Administration:

The survey will be implemented using a tablet-based questionnaire to collect responses. This method will allow responses to be made available within two weeks of data collection.

Site Specific Intercept Survey

The site-specific survey will be administered to visitors at a designated intercept location selected to intercept all visitors going to Medano creek and the dunes.

Following a brief introduction of the purpose of the survey, the potential respondent (adult group member with the most recent birth date) will be asked if they are willing to take part in the 8-minute survey administered by the surveyor. If the visitor agrees to participate in the study, the surveyor will provide the recruited individual with an iPad Tablet

that has the Qualtrics survey uploaded on it. If the visitor does not agree, surveyors will thank them for their time, and ask if they would be willing to answer the three non-response bias questions.

Sample Script for Survey:

"Hello, I am working with Great Sand Dunes National Park conducting an 8-minute survey to improve visitor experiences in the park. May I ask you questions about your Great Sand Dunes experience?"

➔If **NO** – The surveyor will thank the visitor and ask them to answer the three questions that will serve as a non-response bias check (in Section E below)

➔If **YES** – The surveyor will begin the on-site visitor survey with the recruited individual after reading the Paperwork Reduction and Privacy Act below. The surveyor will hand the survey on an iPad tablet to the recruited individual. Upon completion of the on-site survey, the respondent will be thanked for their time.

Before we begin, I would like to let you know that this survey has been approved by the Office of Management and Budget. It is important to note that a federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and you are not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it has a valid OMB control number. The control number for this collection is XXX and this number is valid through XXX. Secondly, your participation is voluntary, and your name will never be connected with your individual responses. This survey will only take about eight minutes of your time today.

Photo Simulation Exercise

The purpose of the photo exercise is to understand visitor preferences regarding the number of other people they can see when in a dispersed area of the national park. In this case the photo exercise will identify the number of people per viewscape (PPV) that visitors to the Medano Creek and lower dunes area of GRSA are willing to observe.

The photo exercise will be administered by uploading a series of simulated images into the Qualtrics survey that demonstrate a variety of PPV scenarios in the Medano Creek and lower dunes area. Visitors will be presented with six randomly selected images from a pool of 100 simulated PPV images created by the research team with varying levels of PPV.

The Intercept survey includes questions used in the non-response bias check (e.g., length of stay, parking challenges during visit, and whether the respondent felt crowded at any point during their visit).

Three potential outcomes are expected following the request to participate:

1. Complete refusal
2. Partial refusal, answering non-response questions but nothing further
3. Complete on-site survey

(D) Expected Response Rate / Confidence Level:

Based on previous research experience with this method and as indicated above, we estimate that at least 67% (n=402) of visitors contacted (n=600) during the sampling period will agree to participate in the on-site survey. We expect 90% of those who do not agree to participate in the on-site survey to answer the non-response bias questions (n=180) with

roughly 20 visitors completely refusing to participate in any part of the collection. The completed on-site surveys yield a confidence level of 95% with a margin of error within each period and overall, of +/-5%.

Table 3. Anticipated Survey Response Rates

Sampling Period	Total Number of Visitor Contacts	Completed Onsite Surveys 67%	Refusals 33%	Completed Non-Response Surveys (90% of soft refusals)	Hard Refusals (10% of soft refusals)
Dunes Parking Area	600	402	198	178	20

*Note: Faculty at Utah State University conduct on-site surveys across the U.S. in National Parks. The response rate is based upon the average numbers of refusals.

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

To account for potential on-site non-response bias, surveyors will attempt to ask non-responding visitors the following questions taken from the survey:

- “How long were you in GRSA today?”
- “Did you have trouble finding parking in GRSA today?”
- “On this trip, did you feel crowded at any point in GRSA?”

These questions will be compared to those who complete the survey to identify if any non-response bias exists and strategies to correct for it. Where significant differences are identified, weighting will be applied to the survey results.

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

The questions in the survey come from the NPS Pool of Known (OMB Control Number 1024-0224). The survey instrument was pre-tested in the format in which it will be delivered (i.e., tablet) to determine question understanding and length. The pre-tests were conducted by Social Scientists working on the project at Utah State University and the Institute of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism (IORT). Based upon the pretest we were able to assess and correct skip patterns within the survey and gauge readability of the posed questions. For the on-site survey, we have estimated from these pre-tests that it will take at least 30-seconds to introduce the survey and an additional 8 minutes to complete the on-site survey. For the visitors refusing to complete the survey it will take no more than one minute to ask nonresponse questions if the respondent does not want to participate in the full survey.

These estimates conform to averages from the project team’s combined ongoing field studies across the Western U.S. All concepts for the questionnaire and methods have been shown to be valid and reliable through peer-reviewed academic studies and other NPS projects. A project Social Scientist or Economist will train and supervise the data entry and check entries for accuracy and quality control.

BURDEN ESTIMATES

The total respondent burden for this collection is 66 hours. This was calculated by combining the on-site survey (n= 60 hours) and the non-response bias questions (n= 6 hours).

Intercept Survey

The combined estimated totals for the intercept period in this study are as followed: Number of Responses for Intercept Survey: 400, and Respondent Burden Hours for Intercept Survey: 57 (see Table 4). We expect that contact time will include at least 30 seconds per person to establish participation and to answer any questions the respondent may have and then an additional 8 minutes to complete the on-site survey (400 respondents x 8.5 minutes=57 hours). We expect that in addition to the 30-second initial contact, it will take an additional minute to conduct the non-response bias check for visitors who do not agree to participate in the on-site survey (180 respondents x 1.5 minutes = 4.5 hours). The burden for the remaining visitors completely refusing to participate in the collection will not be estimated due to the de minimis nature of their participation. Respondents who agree to participate will answer the non-response bias questions as part of their on-site survey and will have no extra time added to their burden. Therefore, the total burden for the on-site survey will be 62 hours (rounded up).

Table 4. Burden Estimates for On-site intercept survey

	Completed Responses	Completion Time (minutes)	Burden Hours (rounded up)
On-site Survey*	402	9	60
On-site non-response survey*	180	2	6
Total burden requested under this ICR:	580		66

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

REPORTING PLAN:

The study results will be presented in a comprehensive report that will be shared with NPS staff at Great Sand Dunes National Park, the Denver Service Center, and the Social Science Program. Questionnaire results will be presented in tables or figures with descriptive text. Results will include frequencies, measures of central tendency (e.g., mean, median, and standard deviation), cross-tabulations from chi-square tests and ANOVAs will be conducted where appropriate. Great Sand Dunes National Park will also be provided with an interactive dashboard to review intercept survey data collected within three weeks of the sampling period. The reports will be archived with the NPS Social Science Program for inclusion in the Social Science Studies Collection as required by the NPS Programmatic Approval Process. Hard copies and electronic copies of the final report will be submitted to the park. Finally, results will be presented to NPS staff at two periods: 1) a post sampling reporting period within three weeks of on-site data collection and 2) final reporting period. In addition to a report and data delivery, a 2-hour WebEx based presentation will be delivered to park staff.

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.