



## 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:** January 2024

**PROJECT TITLE:** George Washington Memorial Parkway and Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park  
Climbing Thresholds Survey

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

Great Falls Park (managed by the George Washington Memorial Parkway) and Carderock Recreation Area (managed by the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park) are home to some of the few urban proximate outdoor climbing resources near Washington, D.C. As a result, they are popular resources for local rock climbers. This project will utilize onsite intercept surveys to learn more about these parks as a climbing resource from the perspective of the rock climbers that visit them. This survey seeks to identify acceptable limits of crowding from other rock climbers and begin the process of identifying climbers' preferred management options.

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## PROJECT INFORMATION:

**Where will the collection take place?** Great Falls Park and Carderock Recreation Area

**Sampling Period Start Date:** 5/1/2024

**Sampling Period End Date:** 11/30/2024

**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 - Electronic 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.*

Outdoor climbing resources near Washington, D.C. such as those provided at Carderock and Great Falls Park, are a scarce recreational resource for an increasingly popular activity. While rock climbing at Carderock and Great Falls Park predates the establishment of the parks, park managers have only recently identified a need for the development of climbing management plans due to the increasing popularity of the sport. Additionally, climbers have proven to be a highly invested and organized visitor group on public lands, and as a result the development of climbing management plans without careful consideration of climbers' perspectives and strong scientific basis are unlikely to build trust with this critical base of visitors. This project will provide information to understand visitors' perspectives to guide future climbing management at the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historic Park (Carderock) and George Washington Memorial Parkway (Great Falls Park). Ultimately, outcomes from this work will inform potential management options and engagement with current and future visitors. This project follows the Interagency Visitor Use Management Council's Framework for developing indicators and thresholds as described in the Monitoring Guidebook (IVUMC, 2019) <sup>1</sup>.

The proposed research aligns with the Secretary of the Interior priorities and strategic plan for 2022-2026. The outcomes of this project will provide information that will directly align with two key strategic goals: 1) Conserve, Protect, Manage, and Restore Natural and Cultural Resources in the Face of Climate Change and Other Stressors and 2) Serve and Honor the Public Trust (U.S. Department of the Interior, 2022)<sup>2</sup>. These two mission areas will be fulfilled by a) providing park management with the data required to inform the development of climbing management plans that balance stewardship and use of public lands, and b) enhancing public engagement at the parks. Through the use of an

<sup>1</sup> IVUMC (Interagency Visitor Use Management Council). (2019). *Monitoring Guidebook: Evaluating Effectiveness of Visitor Use Management*. Edition One. Denver, CO.

<sup>2</sup> U.S Department of the Interior. (2022). *FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan*. Washington, D.C.

intercept survey of park visitors who rock climb at Carderock and Great Falls Park, visitors will be able to provide their feedback on a) crowding thresholds as an indicator of the quality of the visitor experience, b) volunteering history with the parks and perceived efficacy of engaging with park officials, and c) potential management options to protect resources and provide for visitor enjoyment. The proposed research will inform strategies to manage impacts while still maintaining high quality visitor experiences. These strategies will additionally bolster the National Park Service (NPS) in its efforts to stay relevant to a diverse and critical base of visitors in a unique urban-proximate setting.

## **SURVEY METHODOLOGY**

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

The respondent universe for this collection will be adult park visitors (age 18 and older) who are visiting Carderock or Great Falls Park in order to rock climb during one of the onsite sampling periods. Rock climbers will be intercepted near the parking lots used to access the climbing areas at each park as they are returning to their vehicles. As rock climbing at these sites necessitates visitors bringing their own ropes and protective equipment to safely use the climbing resources of these parks, they are easily identified and the parking lots adjacent to the climbing areas are ideal for intercepting these specialized visitors.

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

The method for sampling visitors will be to intercept them near the parking lots at Great Falls Park and Carderock as visitors that have climbed during their visit return to the parking lots. At Great Falls Park, the intersection of the Old Carriage Road trail and the lower parking lot (commonly referred to as the "Climber Lot") was identified by park management as the ideal location to intercept the majority of climbers visiting the park. Due to the relatively small size of the climbing population at the parks, compared to the total number of visitors, a sampling approach will be taken where one member, that is at least 18 years old, of every group that has rock climbed during their visit will be asked to participate in the study. If they accept, they will be handed a tablet that they can use to fill out the survey and the surveyors will be available to answer any questions.

All interactions will be recorded by the research team members on a contact log. Individuals that do not wish to participate will be asked if they would answer the non-response bias questions which will be recorded by the research team member. Refusal to respond to the non-response bias questions will be recorded as a hard refusal, and the interaction will be recorded on the contact log.

In order to capture as diverse of a group of visitors as possible, several collections will take place over the course of the sampling period. Each collection will include both weekends and weekdays. An example sampling schedule can be seen below (Table 1).

**Table 1. Example on-site intercept survey schedule with expected completed surveys**

Location	Day	May Collection			August Collection			October Collection		
		8:00-12:00	12:00-4:00	4:00-8:00	8:00-12:00	12:00-4:00	4:00-8:00	8:00-12:00	12:00-4:00	4:00-8:00
Carderock	Wednesday	-	4	10	-	3	8	-	5	10
	Thursday	-	3	4	-	2	4	-	4	6
	Friday	5	5	7	4	4	6	6	6	8
	Saturday	6	8	6	6	8	6	8	11	8
	Sunday	5	6	4	6	8	6	8	11	8
Great Falls Park	Wednesday	-	3	5	-	2	4	-	4	6
	Thursday	-	3	5	-	2	4	-	4	6
	Friday	5	5	7	4	4	6	6	6	8
	Saturday	6	8	6	6	8	6	8	11	8
	Sunday	4	6	4	6	8	6	8	11	8
Total		31	51	58	32	49	56	44	73	76
Total per Collection		140			137			193		

**(C) Instrument Administration:**

Participants will be intercepted on site at the parking lots adjacent to climbing areas. The initial contact will be used to explain the study and determine if visitors are interested in participating (see below). If the group agrees, an individual within the group will be selected (using the method specified below). That individual will then be handed a tablet that they can use to respond to the survey. Individuals that decline to participate by taking the full survey will be asked if they would be willing to answer 3 non-response bias questions which will be recorded directly by the team member and will be counted as a soft-refusal on the contact log. Individuals who decline to answer the non-response bias questions will be recorded as a hard-refusal on the contact log. All contacts with park visitors eligible to participate in the survey and their group size will be recorded on the contact log.

While on site, research team members will identify rock climbers, approach them and say:

*“Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am conducting a survey for the National Park Service to better understand your opinions related to climbing resources in the park. Your participation is voluntary, and all responses will be kept anonymous. Would you be willing to take a 10-minute survey?”*

- If yes – the research team member will make sure no one in the group has already been asked to take the survey - then say, "Thank you for agreeing to participate. Who in your group that is at least 18 years old has the next birthday?" The team member will then provide that individual with a tablet in order to take the survey.
- If no (soft refusal) - thank them for their time and ask if they would be willing to answer the non-response survey questions.

Those who do not participate in the non-response bias questions will be recorded as a hard refusal. The number of participants and refusals will be recorded and used to calculate the overall response rate for the collection.

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

Based on previous onsite surveys of this population, the expected response rate for this study is 85%. As the target for this survey is a specialize group of users, the expected response rate is higher than the general population (Vaske, 2008)<sup>3</sup> where a response rate for similar survey methods is near 50%. In order to reach a 95% confidence interval with a 3-5% sampling error, it is necessary to collect n~400 completed surveys. In order to collect 400 completed surveys with an expected response rate of 85%, 470 visitors will need to be contacted between the two parks (Table 1). We anticipate that of the 15% (n=70) who do not wish to complete the survey, 50% (n=35) will complete the non-response survey.

**Table 2. Anticipated Onsite Survey Response Rates**

Total Number of Visitor Contacts	Completed Surveys (85% of contacts)	Refusals (15% of contacts)	Completed Non-Response Surveys (50% of refusals)	Hard Refusals (50% of refusals)
470	400	70	35	35

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

Non-response bias questions contain two demographic questions from the questionnaire and one climbing specific question. Non-response bias questions will be recorded by the research team.

The following questions will serve as the non-response bias check for these collections:

1. Please rate your current experience level as a climber? – beginner, novice, intermediate, advanced, expert

<sup>3</sup> Vaske, J.J. (2008). *Survey Research and Analysis: Applications in Parks, Recreation and Human Dimensions*. Venture Publishing, Inc. State College, PA.

2. What is your year of birth?

3. What is your zip-code?

The responses to the non-response bias check questions by the soft-refusal group will be compared to the sample collected from participants that completed the full questionnaire and. Any implications of non-response bias will be reported in the final report and discussed with park managers.

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

The demographic questions are from the currently approved NPS Pool of Known Questions (OMB #:1024-0224 exp. 8/31/2026). The climbing focused questions come from the NPS Pool of Known Questions or are modified versions of those questions and have been reviewed by CHOH and GWMP managers and faculty at Kansas State University, University of Tennessee, and University of Idaho. The questions were tested on 8 members of the general public to estimate respondent burden and clarity of questions.

**BURDEN ESTIMATES**

We plan to intercept 470 total visitors to reach our sampling goal of 400 completed surveys. From the 85% of intercepted visitors who agree to participate (n=400), we expect the survey to be completed in 11 minutes (1 minute for the initial contact and 10 minutes to complete the survey), resulting in a total burden of 73 hours. For the 15% of visitors who decline to participate (n=70), we expect 50% (n=35) to complete the non-response bias survey. The non-response bias survey will take a total of 2 minutes to complete (including the 1 minute for the initial contact and an additional minute to answer the three questions), resulting in a non-response survey burden of 2 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. The total respondent burden for this collection is 75 hours (Table 5).

**Table 3. Burden Estimates for Survey**

	<b>Completed Responses</b>	<b>Completion Time * (minutes)</b>	<b>Burden Hours (rounded up)</b>
Onsite Survey	400	11	73 hours
Non-response survey	35	2	1 hours
<b>Total burden requested under this ICR:</b>			<b>75 hours</b>

\* 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 within the network. Response frequencies for the survey will be tabulated, and measures of central tendency (e.g., mean, median, mode) will be reported as appropriate. The reports will be archived with the NPS Social Science Program for inclusion in the NPS Social Science Studies Collection as required by the NPS Programmatic Approval process. Hard copies will be available upon request.

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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.

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