



## 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: 3/28/2024

**PROJECT TITLE:** Visitor Experience Thresholds on Bryce Canyon National Park Trails

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

This project seeks to collect information about visitor preferences for services and experiences at Bryce Canyon National Park (BRCA), as well as inform the trail and outdoor recreation planning at the park. There is very limited data about trail-related visitor use and experiences for BRCA. Data from this study will be used for trail planning and to inform horseback riding concession contract renewal. The project will focus specifically on using onsite, visitor intercept surveys of recreationists at BRCA.

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## PROJECT INFORMATION:

Where will the collection take place? Bryce Canyon National Park

Sampling Period Start Date: 07/1/2024

Sampling Period End Date: 8/30/2025

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.*

The information collected from this survey will assess current visitor use and needs at Bryce Canyon National Park (BRCA) with particular focus on interactions between hikers, private horseback riders, and horseback riders on concessionaire horseback riding trips. There has been some recent conflict among these user groups. The information collected will inform park managers prior to renewing the horseback riding concessionaire contract. The NPS requires valid and reliable data from visitors on some of the high-use trails for effective planning and management.

With increasing numbers of visitors engaged in a variety of outdoor recreation activities, user conflicts are becoming more common. This study will identify the source and extent of hiker-horseback rider experiences on four heavily used park trails. Park managers need this data to better understand current visitors as a means to manage conflict and to inform renewal of the horseback riding concession. This study will allow park managers to gain a profile of visitors using trails to BRCA and their recreation experiences and perceptions of trail impacts and conflicts. The study findings will be used to:

- create a basic demographic profile of high season visitors who use trails within the park;
- obtain information regarding high season visitors' general experience and recreation characteristics;
- document the nature of visitors' trail experiences;
- measure perceptions of trail crowding;
- identify visitors' preferences for selected trail management actions;
- use photo elicitation to determine visitors' opinions regarding levels of trail use.

## SURVEY METHODOLOGY

### (A) Respondent Universe:

The respondent universe for the survey consists of all adults (aged 18 and older) using four high-use trails in Bryce Canyon National Park (BRCA) during the study period from May through October which represents the high-use period for this park (data collection will be split between 2024 and 2025, depending on actual start date).

### Sampling Plan / Procedures:

Sampling will occur during the high-use period at BRCA (May through October) over weekday and weekend days to reflect typical visitation patterns proportional to NPS visitation statistics. To determine monthly sampling proportions, visitation numbers in 2021-2023 were averaged. Table 1 and 2 contain a list of high-season visitation estimates for 2021-2023 and a plan for visitor intercept numbers.

Table 1: Bryce Canyon Visitation \*

Year	Visitation							% of annual visitation
	May	June	July	August	September	October	Total	
2021	294,862	369,184	284,523	191,404	287,185	183,461	1612640	77%
2022	299,919	330,108	318,861	308,545	336,588	233,647	1829690	78%
2023	315,097	356,652	343,627	310,367	367,425	284,766	1979957	80%
<b>Avg.</b>	<b>303,293</b>	<b>351,981</b>	<b>315,670</b>	<b>270,105</b>	<b>330,399</b>	<b>233,958</b>	<b>180,7429</b>	
<b>% of total</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>100%</b>	

\* Retrieved from <https://irma.nps.gov/Stats/> (9/19/2024)

Table 2: Visitor Contacts During Sample Period

	Number of Visitor Contacts/Completed Questionnaires						
	May	June	July	August	September	October	Total
Contacts	168	195	175	149	183	129	1000
Completed	101	117	105	90	110	78	600

Visitor groups will be randomly intercepted at trailheads or at horse wrangling areas (adjacent to trailheads) during blocks of five days twice a month. The individual with the closest birthday to the survey day will be selected as the respondent. An average of 17 contacts with an estimated 10 questionnaires completed will be done on each day. Survey days will be distributed among survey sites. Thus, a total of 60 sample days are planned across the sampling period. After the first visitor is selected, additional visitors will be selected to participate in the survey at intervals during the sampling period based on the target number of questionnaires and visitor volumes throughout the day.

**(B) Instrument Administration:**

The study will utilize a self-administered, on-site electronic questionnaire developed by Arizona State University and the NPS. The questionnaire will be administered using Qualtrics survey software installed on electronic tablets. A potential respondent for the questionnaire will be identified on-site using the introductory statement and screening questions outlined at the end of this document. Once the respondent has answered the screening question and has been found to be eligible for the study, the survey administrator will provide a brief description of the study and request the visitor’s participation.

If the visitor refuses, the survey administrator will ask if they would be willing to complete four short non-response questions and will record observable demographic and travel party information. If the answer is again no, the administrator will record observable demographic and travel party information and, if possible, note the reason for refusal.

Visitors who accept the invitation to participate in the survey will be provided an electronic tablet to complete the questionnaire, and the survey administrator will be available to answer questions. Survey administrators will have several electronic tablets so that multiple people can complete questionnaires at the same time. The survey administrator will collect the electronic tablet once the visitor has completed the questionnaire. Based on the visitation rate at BRCA, as well as the target number of completed questionnaires for the day, an estimate of time intervals for contacts will be determined for each day.

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

A total of 1,000 visitors will be contacted during the sampling period. We estimate 600 visitors (60%) will agree to participate in the survey. This estimate is based on previous literature as well as the response rates from other similar surveys recently conducted by the investigators. The number of refusals will be recorded and reported in a survey log and will be used in calculating the response rate. Based on the survey sample size, there will be 95% confidence that the survey findings will be accurate to within 5 percentage points.

**Table 1a. Anticipated Onsite Survey Response Rates**

Total Number of Visitor Contacts	Completed Onsite Surveys (60% of contacts)	Soft Refusals (30% of contacts)	Completed Non-Response Surveys (50% of soft refusals)	Hard Refusals (50% of soft refusals)
1000	600	300	150	150

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

To assess potential non-response bias, visitors will be asked the following questions which will be recorded on the onsite visitor contact log:

- if they have visited Bryce Canyon before,
- state or country of residence,
- how long they spent at the park that day,
- and a rating of their overall experience from very poor to excellent (1-5).

Observable information (i.e., apparent gender, group size, children in the group, and comments regarding reason for refusal) will be noted by the survey administrator on the on-site contact log if this information is evident. If visitors refuse to answer the non-response questions, surveyors will simply record the observable variables in the onsite contact log. Subsequently, a non-response bias analysis will be conducted, and implications of non-response bias, if any, will be discussed with NPS managers and in the final report.

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

The survey methods and instrument have undergone review by the BRCA Outdoor Recreation Planner and other NPS staff, and four faculty members from the ASU Center for Sustainable Tourism. Eight undergraduate students in the ASU School of Community Resource and Development, and one person who has visited BRCA in the past, pre-tested the questionnaire. One outcome of the review and pre-test was to shorten the length of the draft questionnaire and to modify some questions to be appropriate for the context of the survey (e.g., a focus on trail conflicts including with horseback riders). The average completion time based on the pre-test indicates the estimated burden for this survey is 14 minutes.

## BURDEN ESTIMATES

The total estimated burden for this data collection is 158 hours. Overall, we anticipate that a total of 1,000 individuals will be approached during the sample period. Of the 1,000 individuals, we expect 600 (60%) will agree to participate and complete the survey. We expect the initial on-site contact time will be 1 minute per person, and the questionnaire will take an additional 14 minutes to complete, resulting in a burden of 150 hours. During the initial contact, each person who declines to participate will be asked to answer the four non-response questions listed above in section (E), which will take about 3 minutes, resulting in a total non-response burden of 8 hours. The burden for the remaining visitors completely refusing to participate (n=150) will not be estimated due to the de minimis nature of their participation.

**Table 4. Burden Estimates**

	Completed Responses	Completion Time (minutes)	Burden Hours (rounded up)
Onsite Survey*	600	15	150
Onsite non-response survey	150	3	8
<b>Total burden requested under this ICR:</b>	<b>750</b>		<b>1580</b>

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

## REPORTING PLAN:

The final technical report, with data analysis, conclusions and recommendations will be prepared and distributed to the following: an electronic version (in PDF file format) and two hard copies for the NPS CPCEU Research Coordinator at Northern Arizona University; one electronic version and two hard copies of the final report will be provided to the Outdoor Recreation Planner of BRCA; one electronic version and two hard copies of the final report will be provided to the NPS Social Science Program for inclusion in the Social Science Studies Collection. If requested, investigators are willing to prepare a presentation of results for park staff and their partners about implications of results for trail planning. Investigators are also willing to work with BRCA on a continuing basis on best ways to use research for planning and management. At least two papers will be submitted as conference presentations (several possible conferences are appropriate), and at least two peer-reviewed papers will be submitted to a journal as yet to be identified.

**Introductory statement and screening question to invite visitors to participate in the on-site survey:**

**Introductory Statement**

“Hello! I hope you are enjoying your visit to Bryce Canyon National Park. My name is [...]. I am a student from Arizona State University conducting a survey about visitors to the Park. This survey is a joint research project between Arizona State University and the National Park Service; the purpose is to learn visitors’ opinions about their experience on the trail today.

**[Screening Question]**

What is the purpose of your visit to the park today?

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Visit the Park           | <input type="checkbox"/> Research, Commercial Services (Guides, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Park/Concession Employee | <input type="checkbox"/> Park Business                                |

“Visit the Park” is a recreation visit-continue with survey (note on log sheet). “Research, Commercial Services (Guides, etc.)” will also continue with the survey (note on log sheet).

In the case of “Park/Concession Employee” or “Park Business”-no need to continue the survey - no need to note on log sheet.

**Continuation of invitation**

We are only talking with a small number of visitors, so your participation would be greatly appreciated. The questions I would like to ask will take about 15 minutes. All of your answers are voluntary.

Would you be willing to participate in the survey?

*If no, ask the visitor if he/she would be willing to answer four short questions. If yes, ask if they have visited the park before, what their state (or country) of residence is, how long they stayed, and how they would rate their overall experience (1=very poor to 5=excellent). Observational information (i.e group size and composition, comments regarding reason for refusal) noted by research technicians on log sheet. If no to the four questions, thank the visitor; stop the interview, and record observational information on log sheet.*

*If yes, confirm that visitor is at least 18 years old, record observational information on log sheet, and continue with the interview.*

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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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