

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



# National Park Service Social Science Program

**FY 2006 ANNUAL  
REPORT**

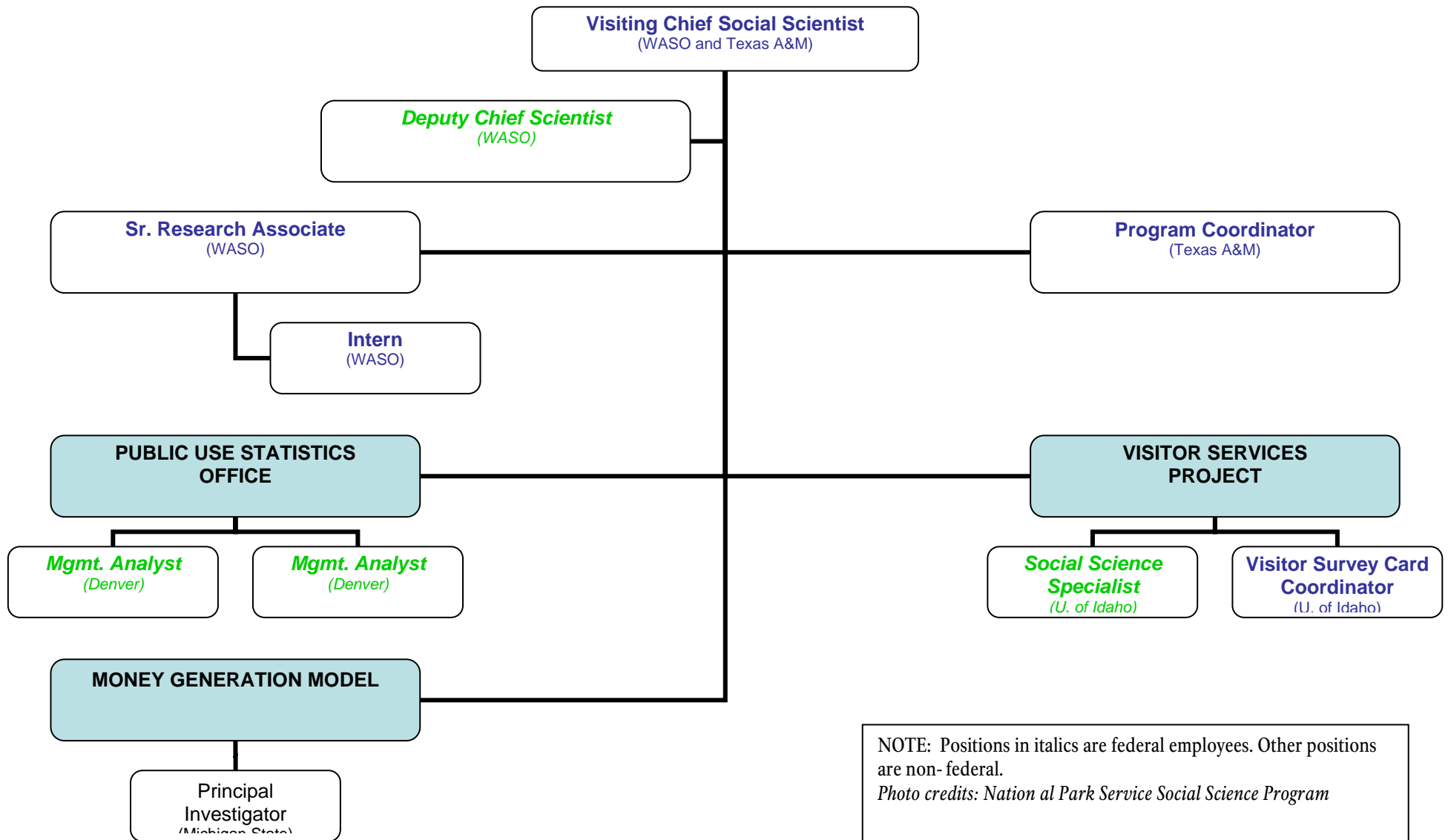


Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone

November 2006



# NPS Social Science Program Organizational Chart





# National Park Service Social Science Program

## FY 2006 Annual Report

Task Order J5040 02 0018, Cooperative Agreement H50000 02 0271  
Gulf Coast Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit

### Introduction

The National Park Service (NPS) Social Science Program is located in the Natural Resource Stewardship and Science directorate. A Visiting Chief Social Scientist (VCSS), who serves a three-year renewable term and is co-located in Washington, D.C. and at Texas A&M University, heads the program. The VCSS is a faculty member at Texas A&M working in partnership with the NPS.

The objectives of the Social Science Program are to conduct and promote state-of-the-art social science research related to the mission of the National Park Service and to deliver usable knowledge to NPS managers and the public. Specific functions of the Office of the VCSS are to:

- Provide supervision and guidance to the Visitor Services Project, Public Use Statistics Office, and other activities of the NPS Social Science Program;
- Manage the approval process for submitting NPS information-collection requests to the Office of Management and Budget;
- Sponsor and provide direction to social science research related to the national needs of the NPS, including the periodic Comprehensive Survey of the American Public and the annual update of the Money Generation Model;
- Serve as liaison with other science and related programs of the NPS;
- Serve as liaison with the USGS Biological Resources Division, the Department of the Interior, and other federal agencies on social science activities; and
- Advise the Secretary of the Interior, the NPS Director, the NPS Advisory Board, and the National Leadership Council as requested.

This report summarizes major accomplishments of the NPS Social Science Program in FY 2006.

### Provide Supervision and Guidance to Activities of the NPS Social Science Program

<http://www.nature.nps.gov/socialscience/index.htm>

### Washington Office

The Washington office of the Social Science Program has responsibility for budgeting and for overseeing program activities that originate in Washington. It also coordinates many social science activities within the Natural Resource Stewardship and Science (NRSS) directorate and other parts of the National Park Service.

A full-time senior research associate staffed the Washington office in FY 2006. A research assistant (usually a graduate student) is employed each semester in the office. In addition, the Deputy Chief

Scientist of the NPS coordinates many inherently federal functions of the Social Science Program, such as contracting and oversight of the three federal employees working in the program.

Important activities of the Washington office in FY 2006 included the following:

- Social Science Studies Collection. The Social Science Studies Collection, an online digital library of social science research in the National Park System, grew to 326 entries under the direction of the Washington office. This archive, part of the NPS Focus library, houses the largest collection of national park social science studies in the U.S. During FY 2006, the Social Science Studies Collection became available on-line to both NPS employees and the public. The NPS Focus Web site, which houses electronic copies of the Social Science Studies Collection, is available at: <http://npsfocus.nps.gov/>.



- Meetings and Planning. The 2007 Comprehensive Survey of the American Public Planning Meeting took place in Washington D.C. this year. The meeting brought together experts from academia, the NPS, and the travel industry to plan the 2007 Comprehensive Survey of the American Public. The Wyoming Survey and Analysis Center (University of Wyoming) was selected to conduct the study.
- Reports. In FY 2006, the Washington Office began and completed updates to pertinent Social Science Program reports and information, including *Guidelines and Approval Form for Expedited Review for NPS- Sponsored Public Surveys, Focus Groups, and Field Experiments* and the Social Science Program Brochure. As of the end of FY 2006, the update to the Expedited Review Guidelines are finalized and available at: [http://www.nature.nps.gov/socialscience/pdf/Expedited\\_Guidelines\\_06-06.pdf](http://www.nature.nps.gov/socialscience/pdf/Expedited_Guidelines_06-06.pdf). The Social Science Program Brochure is in draft form and will be available in FY 2007.
- Social Science Intern Program. Each semester the Social Science Program employs an intern in its Washington office. Interns assist on a variety of daily and special projects. They may also have opportunities to work in parks during visitor surveys. For information on intern application procedures see: <http://nature.nps.gov/socialscience/docs/Internships-2006.pdf>. In FY 2006, there were two graduate interns: Jennifer Sellars (Texas A&M University) and Rebecca Gass (University of Wisconsin—Madison).

## Texas A&M University Office

A Program Coordinator staffs the Texas A&M University (TAMU) office of the NPS Social Science Program. In FY 2006, this position went from a part-time to full-time. The primary responsibility of this position is to oversee the budgetary aspects of the cooperative agreement with TAMU supporting the Social Science Program and to edit and print reports generated by its various activities. The TAMU office manages travel, coordinates peer reviews of publications, manages the Sabbatical in the Parks Clearinghouse, and assists with other tasks as needed.

- Planning. Preparations for the 2007 Comprehensive Survey of the American Public were made through the TAMU office. This planning consisted of working with members of academia, the University of Wyoming, the NPS, and the travel industry to begin preparations for the 2007 Comprehensive Survey, which culminated in the planning meeting in Washington D.C.
- Peer Reviews. Peer reviews were completed for the report titled *National Park Spending and Payroll Impacts for FY 2005*, the update of the NPS Money Generation Model 2.
- Alaska Region Social Science Research Plan. In FY 2006, the draft of the *Alaska Region Social Science Research Plan* was delivered to the NPS Alaska Region Office for review. The final plan is expected to be published in FY 2007.
- Money Generation Model- 2 Roll-ups. At the request of the NPS Director, the Texas A&M office produced roll-up tables showing the FY 2005 economic impacts of visitor and payroll expenditures at the park, state, and regional levels. These roll-up tables, prepared specifically for lay audiences, were widely distributed. They generated considerable positive press coverage for the NPS and individual parks.

## Visitor Services Project

<http://psu.uidaho.edu/vsp.htm>

The Visitor Services Project (VSP) conducts at least ten in-depth visitor surveys in National Park System units each year. Park nominations are prioritized by the Regional Offices and submitted to the VSP Advisory Committee. The Associate Director for Natural Resource Stewardship and Science approves the Advisory Committee recommendations. Headquartered at the University of Idaho Park Studies Unit, the activities of the VSP are overseen by a principal investigator who is a faculty member in the College of Natural Resources. Day-to-day operations are supervised by a social science specialist, who is a federal employee. The VCSS and the Advisory Committee provide additional oversight.



Figure 2. 2006 VSP survey, interviewer at Zion National Park, Utah

Since FY 2002, 20% Recreation Enhancement money has been available to the VSP to contribute up to two-thirds of the cost of surveys to small parks (annual budgets of less than \$1.5 million). A total of 26 small parks have taken advantage of this assistance to conduct visitor studies, including five in FY 2006.

- 2006 VSP Surveys. In 2006, VSP surveys were conducted at ten units: Kings Mountain National Military Park, Katmai National Park and Preserve, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Devils Postpile National Monument, Monocacy National Battlefield, Mammoth Cave National Park, Yellowstone National Park, Denali National Park and Preserve, Zion National Park, and Golden Spike National Historic Site.

<b>Park / Supervisor / Affiliation</b>	<b>Study dates / Survey Team</b>	<b>Results to Date***</b>
Kings Mountain NMP* Supv: B. Barrie/Eppley Institute	May 21-27 (VSP)	Sample Size: 343 Response Rate: 66%
Katmai NP & PRES** Supv: M. Littlejohn/NPS VSP	6/16-6/28 (park) 7/11-20 (VSP) 8/6-8/24 (park)	Sample Size: 684 Response Rate: 73% to date
JFK NHS* Supv: S. Hollenhorst/PSU Director & University of Idaho	June 28-July 25 (VSP)	Sample Size: 473 Response Rate: 67% returned to date
Devils Postpile NM* Supv: B. Lackey/University of Wisconsin	July 19-25 (VSP)	Sample Size: 376 Response Rate: 73% returned to date
Monocacy NB* Supv: D. Eury/Retired NPS Superintendent/former VSP Advisory Committee member	July 14-Aug. 3 (VSP)	Sample Size: 340 Response Rate: 76% returned to date
Mammoth Cave NP Supv: M. Morgan/University of Missouri	July 23-29 (VSP)	Sample Size: 808 Response Rate: 67% returned to date
Yellowstone NP** Supv: J. Gramann/Texas A&M University	July 23-29 (VSP)	Sample Size: 1,302 Response Rate: 71% returned to date
Denali NP & PRES Supv: L. Le/VSP	Aug. 1-7 (VSP)	Sample Size: 1,008 Response Rate: 81% returned to date
Zion NP Aug. Supv: G. Vander Stoep/ Michigan State University Nov. Supv: L. Le/VSP	Aug. 2-8 (VSP) Nov. 1-7, 2006 (park)	Sample Size for August: 978 Response Rate: 63% returned to date
Golden Spike NHS* Supv: M. Schuett/Texas A&M University	Aug 10-19 (VSP)	Sample Size: 340 Response Rate: 77% returned to date

\*small park

\*\*included on-line option

\*\*\*Questionnaires are still being returned, as studies and follow-up mailings are on-going; thus, progress to date.



- On-line response option. Building off work in FY 2005, two parks gave individuals the option to complete the VSP survey on-line. Mail-back questionnaires were distributed to visitor groups as usual, but each contained a card with a Web site and a password to allow the visitor to do the survey online. These parks were Yellowstone National Park and Katmai National Park and Preserve. On-line response rates have been in the range of 10- 12 percent of all responses received.
- Faculty Involvement Program. During FY 2006, VSP continued its successful practice of using university faculty members to supervise VSP surveys during summer months. Most parks request that their visitor surveys be conducted during the summer season. Because the VSP staff is not large enough to oversee all of these surveys, the employment of university faculty as supervisors is critical to the success of the program. Faculty members and staff from Texas A&M University, the University of Idaho, Michigan State University, Eppley Institute (Indiana University), University of Wisconsin, and the University of Missouri participated in the faculty involvement program in 2006.
- Very Small Park Program. Very small parks are defined as those receiving less than 300 visitor groups per week. In the past, these parks were excluded from participation in the VSP survey program because a sufficiently large sample could not be obtained during the time the survey team typically spends in the field. To address the needs of these units, the VSP initiated the Very Small Park Program after a successful pilot test at Nicodemus NHS in FY 2005. While the VSP survey team is on-site, it trains park employees or volunteers to continue the survey after the team has left. This is usually for an additional one or two weeks until a minimum acceptable sample size has been contacted (currently 375). In FY 2006, two parks participated in this program: Monocacy National Battlefield and John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site.
- VSP Publications. Reports were completed and closeout sessions held for the 11 units participating in the VSP Surveys in FY 2005. Copies of VSP reports can be downloaded at: <http://psu.uidaho.edu/vsp.reports.htm>

*Serving the Visitor 2005*, a report summarizing the results of VSP and VSC surveys (see below), was published in FY 2006. *Serving the Visitor 2005* can be downloaded at: <http://www1.nature.nps.gov/socialscience/docs/STV05.pdf>.

## Visitor Survey Card

<http://psu.uidaho.edu/vsc.htm>

The Visitor Survey Card (VSC) is a component of the Visitor Services Project. The VSC is a mail-back customer evaluation card containing questions designed to measure a park's performance with respect to NPS goals IIa1 (visitor satisfaction) and IIb1 (visitor understanding and appreciation) under the Government Performance and Results Act.

- 2006 VSC Surveys. In 2006, visitors to 307 parks returned 30,454 VSC surveys. Ninety- six percent of respondents rated the overall quality of facilities, services, and recreational opportunities in the National Park System as either good or very good. The Systemwide response rate to the VSC, which uses no follow- ups, was 28%. This was up two percent from FY 2005. The VSC program continues to refine its methods and analyses. For example, in FY 2006 custom analyses were performed for subgroups of parks having entrance fees and for parks with commercial (concession) services.

## Public Use Statistics Office

<http://www2.nature.nps.gov/stats/>

Located in Denver, CO, the Public Use Statistics Office (PUSO) coordinates visitation counting in all units of the National Park System that report visits. The PUSO also provides short- term forecasts of visitation for the NPS Budget Office, consults with individual parks on changes in counting methods, writes and distributes a monthly executive summary of public use, and publishes the annual *National Park Service Statistical Abstract*. In addition, the PUSO responds on an almost- daily basis to numerous requests for customized reports of NPS visitation. These requests come from planners, engineers, private corporations, the media, researchers, and various offices and programs of the NPS and the Department of the Interior.

- New Reporting Units. In FY 2006, one new unit of the National Park System began reporting visitation. Counting was done using methods and equipment provided by the PUSO. The new unit is Salt River Bay NHP in the U.S. Virgin Islands.
- Park Audits. In FY 2006, 59 parks were reviewed or audited for proper counting instructions and procedures, resulting in numerous changes and updates. The following parks received significant audits or reviews that resulted in important numerical changes: Mammoth Cave NP and Statue of Liberty NM.
- Traffic Counter Replacement Program. Over 125 traffic counters were distributed by PUSO to 60 parks during FY 2006. This replacement program is vital to improving the accuracy of NPS visitation statistics.
- Visitation Legacy Files. The purpose of the legacy files maintained by PUSO is to assist analysts in identifying conditions that affect monthly or annual visitation to parks. Examples include road closures, special events, and natural disasters. In FY 2006, 1159 separate entries were made in the visitation legacy files.
- Publications. PUSO produced 12 monthly executive summaries of public use that are distributed to regional directors and key WASO employees. The Public Use Statistics Office



Figure 3. NPS vehicle traffic counter at Hot Springs National Park, Arkansas.

also published the *2005 National Park Service Statistical Abstract*. This authoritative record of visitation to units of the National Park System also contains two-year visitation forecasts and a breakdown of National Park System acreage.

### **Money Generation Model (Version 2)**

<http://www.prr.msu.edu/mgm2/>

The Money Generation Model (MGM2) is the peer-reviewed tool used by the NPS to estimate the economic contribution of units of the National Park System to gateway regions around parks. It is managed through a cooperative agreement with Michigan State University.

- **MGM2 Update and Expansion.** This study, completed in FY 2005, provided updated estimates of NPS visitor spending and extended the analysis to include the impacts of park payrolls on local economies. Economic impact estimates were based on FY 2005 park visits, spending averages from park visitor surveys, payroll data for each park, and local area economic multipliers. Spending by park visitors in FY 2005 totaled \$10.4 billion in the local regions around parks. Local residents accounted for ten percent of this. Applying economic multipliers to this amount yields a total economic effect of \$12.2 billion in sales, \$4.4 billion in personal income, and \$6.9 billion in value added. In addition, visitor spending supported 235,000 jobs in gateway regions.

In FY 2005, the NPS employed almost 24,000 people with a total payroll of \$1.1 billion in wages and salaries and \$290 million in payroll benefits. The local economic impacts of park payrolls were \$1.7 billion in personal income, \$1.9 billion in value added, and 35,000 jobs (including NPS jobs).

The final peer-reviewed FY 2005 report is available for download at:

<http://www.nature.nps.gov/socialscience/activities.cfm#MGM2>

- **Park-Specific Reports.** Parks participating in VSP visitor surveys may include a module of expenditure questions in their questionnaire. Data from these surveys is used to produce park-specific estimates of the economic contribution of visitor spending to local regions. In FY 2006, no park-specific reports were published due to priority given to updating and expanding the Systemwide estimates. Park-specific reports published in previous years are located at: <http://www.nature.nps.gov/socialscience/products.cfm>.

### **Sabbatical in the Parks Clearinghouse**

<http://www.nature.nps.gov/Sabbaticals/>

The Social Science Program serves as a clearinghouse for university faculty members seeking sabbatical experiences in the National Park System. In FY 2006, the Sabbatical in the Parks Program was moved under the direction of the Program Coordinator in the TAMU office. The clearinghouse matches parks having specific research or technical assistance needs in the social and natural sciences with faculty members possessing the desired expertise. In 2006, a research librarian collaborated with Yellowstone NP to write the history of hotels, lodges, and camps operated in the park; a professor of literature authoring a book about Anglo-American women photographers

among North American Indians worked with the archivist at Nez Perce NHP Spalding Site to identify photographs and catalog materials donated to the museum; a professor of health promotion and human performance gathered applied research data and provided program support to adventure activities and visitor programs at Zion NP; and a professor of physics planned a year-long sabbatical in several parks to support the Dark Night Sky program and write stories about astronomy and the parks.

### **Manage the Approval Process for OMB Submissions**

<http://www.nature.nps.gov/socialscience/survey.htm>

In consultation with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the Department of the Interior (DOI), the NPS has developed an expedited review process for NPS-sponsored surveys of the public. The expedited procedure streamlines the standard Paperwork Reduction Act review and approval process for NPS-sponsored surveys that collect data from park visitors, potential visitors, and residents of communities near parks. Survey questions must cover specific, pre-approved topic areas.

In FY 2006, 55 surveys, focus groups, and field experiments were approved under the expedited review process. Approved studies were conducted in or for 44 units of the National Park System. On average, it took 58 calendar days from initial submission to the Social Science Program for an information collection to be reviewed and approved by OMB. Five additional studies were either withdrawn by the principal investigators or sent through the full PRA process. OMB declined clearance for one study.

Two applications were submitted under the standard Information Collection Review process, which requires more opportunity for public comment on the collection before it can be conducted. Final approval of these submissions was not expected until FY 2007.

For a detailed report on FY 2006 expedited review activity, go to the Social Science Program Web site at <http://www.nature.nps.gov/socialscience/survey.htm>.

### **Serve as Liaison with Other Science and Related Programs of the NPS**

Comprehensive Survey Planning. The Social Science Program worked with individuals from the Air Resources Division, the Natural Sounds Program, Partnership directorate, and the Interpretation and Education Division, as well as leisure research and survey experts outside of NPS, to develop a draft of the 2007 Comprehensive Survey of the American Public. The survey is scheduled to begin data collection in FY 2007.

NPS Advisory Board Health and Recreation Initiative. The Social Science Program provided extensive technical assistance and leadership in planning the evaluation component of the NPS Advisory Board's Health and Recreation initiative. Seven pilot parks were selected to test various intervention strategies for increasing visitor involvement in healthful physical activities, either in

parks or in their home environments near parks. Working with the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program, as well as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Social Science Program was instrumental in developing an overall evaluation strategy and selecting principal investigators for several parks, as well as a coordinating principal investigator. In addition, the Program contributed significant funding to the pilot project at Cuyahoga Valley NP, where the VCSS is serving as co- PI for the evaluation component. The program will continue to play a significant role in the Health and Recreation initiative in FY 2007.

NPS Point of Sale System Integrated Project Team. The Social Science Program contributed input into the design of a new Point of Sale System to manage fee transactions and revenue in the NPS. The Program continues to play an advisory role to the Integrated Project Team, defining the types of social science data that could be routinely collected and analyzed using such a system, including persons- per- vehicle and Zip code. Pilot testing is scheduled for summer 2008.

Legislative and Congressional Affairs Office. The Social Science Program authored the testimony presented in April 2006 to a hearing on visitation trends before the Subcommittee on National Parks of the House Committee on Resources. In addition, the VCSS briefed the minority staff of the House Committee on Appropriations on issues related to under- served communities, including visitation rates by African Americans and other peoples of color. The Program also responded to several follow- up questions from members of Congress after the NPS budget hearings in April 2006.

Conferences, Meetings, and Other Involvement. In FY 2006, Social Science Program staff made presentations at the National Park Foundation's African American Experience Fund marketing workshop, the Intermountain Region Superintendents Conference, faculty and classes at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, and the NPS Interpretive Leadership Seminar. The Program participated as an active member of the Education Evaluation Coordination Team, a subcommittee of the Systemwide Education Council. In addition, the Social Science Program responded to several inquiries from the media regarding trends in visitation to National Park System units.

### **Serve as Liaison with the USGS, the Department of the Interior, and Other Federal Agencies**

Parks Canada. The Social Science Program held discussion with Parks Canada about cooperation on issues of common interest, such as visitation counting. A joint workshop on this topic was explored. .

### **Advise the Secretary, Director, and National Leadership Council**

The Social Science Program regularly receives requests for information and analysis from the Office of the Secretary of the Interior, the NPS Director's Office, and other administrative programs of the NPS and the Department of the Interior. In FY 2006, many of these requests dealt with summarizing and interpreting data from the Money Generation Model describing the economic impact of national parks on surrounding regions.



## About the NPS Social Science Program

The role and functions of the NPS Social Science Program are to: provide leadership and direction to the social science activities of the NPS, coordinate social science activities with other programs of the NPS, act as liaison with the USGS Biological Resources Division and other federal agencies on social science activities, provide technical support to parks, park clusters, support offices, and regional offices, and support a program of applied social science research related to national research needs of the NPS.



*For more information, contact:*

Dr. Jim Gramann  
Visiting Chief Social Scientist  
National Park Service  
1849 C Street, NW (2300)  
Washington, DC 20240  
Telephone: (202) 513-7189  
Email: [James\\_Gramann@partner.nps.gov](mailto:James_Gramann@partner.nps.gov)  
Web site: <http://www.nature.nps.gov/socialscience/index.cfm>