



Expedited Review for NPS-Sponsored Public Surveys (OMB # 1024-0224) Fiscal Year 2008 Annual Report



Timucuan Ecological & Historic Preserve (photo courtesy of the Visitor Services Project)

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Background on Expedited Review for NPS-Sponsored Public Surveys

The National Park Service (NPS) preserves the nation's natural and cultural heritage and provides for its enjoyment by citizens and visitors from throughout the world. An accurate understanding of the relationship between people and parks is critical to achieving the mission of the National Park System: protecting resources unimpaired and providing for public enjoyment, education, and inspiration. Such understanding requires a sound scientific basis. Hence, social science research is a necessary and important function of the National Park Service.

As part of its social science research, the NPS sponsors surveys of the public to provide park managers with information for improving the quality and utility of NPS programs. All information collection activities funded or sponsored by the NPS must be conducted in compliance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (P.L. 104-13) and implementing rules (5 CFR 1320) overseen by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

Because many of the NPS surveys are similar in terms of the populations being surveyed, the types of questions being asked, and research methodologies, the NPS, in cooperation with the Department of the Interior (DOI), proposed to OMB and received clearance for a program of approval for NPS visitor surveys (OMB# 1024-0224, expiration 8/31/2001). The program presented an alternative approach to complying with the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) and was designed to provide several specific benefits. First, it would improve the opportunity for meaningful public comment by offering one public review period for the entire program of similar surveys. Second, it would increase federal government efficiency by reducing the personnel time and funding necessary to prepare and review the proposed collections of information. Third, it would assist researchers by simplifying the review process for social science research. Fourth, it would improve the timely delivery of usable knowledge to NPS managers.

In 2001, the NPS Social Science Program submitted an extension request for the program of expedited review. That extension request expanded the program to include surveys of park visitors, potential park visitors, and residents of communities near parks. OMB clearance was granted in September 2001. Clearance of a second three-year extension was granted in January 2005 (OMB# 1024-0224, expiration 1/31/08). In Fiscal Year (FY) 2008, the expedited review program was renewed for another three-year period (OMB #1024-0224, expiration 6/30/2011).

The positive result is more savings in time and cost to the federal government (NPS and DOI) and principal investigators, and a further reduction in burden on the public.

Annual reports are required as a component of the review. This is the eighth annual report, summarizing activities in FY08. In this report, the program is referred to as the Expedited Review for NPS-Sponsored Public Surveys.

Management and Oversight

Separate management, oversight, and approval responsibilities are held by the NPS Social Science Program, DOI, and OMB.

The NPS Visiting Chief Social Scientist, Dr. James Gramann, provided guidance for submissions and reviewed all proposals for compliance with technical standards and program guidelines. For FY08, the staff responsibility for the expedited review was assigned to Megan McBride, Senior Research Associate.

For submissions that complied with program requirements, the Visiting Chief Social Scientist determined the appropriate number of burden hours, certified that the survey instrument and research methodology were technically acceptable and in compliance with the PRA, and transmitted the individual survey packages to OMB for final approval. If the NPS received approval from OMB, the NPS assigned the OMB control number and an NPS tracking number, survey expiration date, and designated burden hours, and authorized the principal investigator to use the approved instrument.

The DOI office responsible for oversight of information collection activities (the Office of Policy Analysis) monitors NPS activities within the program, provides policy guidance, and reviews annual reports.

The NPS Social Science Program developed guidelines describing the authorities, scope, and submission process for the program. The current document, *Guidelines and Approval Form for Expedited Review for NPS-Sponsored Public Surveys, Focus Groups, and Field Experiments*, was published and widely disseminated in January 2005 and revised in June 2006. The guidelines and associated forms are available on the NPS Social Science Program Web site at: <http://www.nature.nps.gov/socialscience/expedited.cfm>

Fiscal Year 2008 Activities

FY08 activities under the Expedited Review for NPS-Sponsored Public Surveys are summarized in Table 1. In FY08, 51 surveys were received and 32 were approved. This represented a 44% decline in approvals, from 57 per year over the previous five years to 32 in FY08. Approved surveys were conducted in or for 27 units of the National Park System. The total estimated burden

on the public for all surveys approved in FY08 was 7,259 hours. The average survey in FY08 placed a burden on the public of 227 hours.

Effects of the Expedited Review Process

There are several immediate effects derived from this program. These include time savings, cost savings, reduction in burden on the public, and increased peer review. The standard PRA survey review process takes approximately eight months once the first *Federal Register* notice is published. Through FY07 under the expedited review program, this review time was reduced to 60 days or less. However, changes in FY08, including a significant slowdown in review times by OMB and a new requirement to use an electronic submission system that limited the number of proposals that OMB would accept at any one time, significantly increased review times and reduced the submissions that NPS transmitted to OMB. As a result, some studies received by NPS in FY08 could not be cleared by OMB in time to meet their proposed field dates. These studies were either withdrawn by the principal investigators or not reviewed and approved by OMB until FY09 or FY10 (see Table 1).

Table 1 – Fiscal Year 2008 Activities

NPS Survey #	Survey Title	Start Date	End Date	Expiration	Burden Hours
08-E-001	Juan Bautista de Anza Historic Trail Exhibit	WITHDRAWN BY PI; APPROVED AS 08-E-026			
08-E-002	Haleakala National Park Backcountry Use and User Survey	1/15/2008	3/15/2008	5/31/2008	108
08-E-003	Point Reyes National Seashore Transit Access Study	1/12/2008	1/13/2008	12/31/2008	42
08-E-004	Horseshoe Bend National Military Park Visitor Study	3/22/2008	4/4/2008	4/30/2008	120
08-E-005	Perceptions of Recreation experiences for Winter Visitors to Acadia	2/1/2008	4/30/2008	4/30/2008	65
08-E-006	Yosemite National Park Visitor Study	2/2/2008	2/10/2008	3/31/2008	280
08-E-007	Gulf Islands National Seashore "Front-end" Research	2/22/2008	3/22/2008	4/30/2008	96
08-E-008	National Heritage Area Visitor Survey	WITHDRAWN BY PI			
08-E-009	El Morro National Monument Visitor Survey	3/2/2008	3/28/2008	9/30/2009	267
08-E-010	Everglades National Park Visitor Survey	2/26/2008	5/5/2008	3/31/2008	826
08-E-011	National Park Visitor Survey Card	REGULAR PRA REVIEW REQUIRED			
08-E-012	Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site Visitor Study	4/19/2008	4/27/2008	5/31/2008	103

08-E-013	Half Dome Cables Visitor Use Study	6/1/2008	9/30/2008	10/31/2009	50
08-E-014	Assessing the Interpretive Effectiveness of the EcoHelpers Program	8/15/2008	6/13/2008	6/30/2009	105
08-E-015	Frederick Douglass National Historic Site Visitor Survey	5/20/2008	5/30/2008	11/30/2008	102
08-E-016	Capitol Reef National Park Visitor Study	5/24/2008	6/1/2008	11/30/2008	172
08-E-017	Socioeconomic Impact Analysis of the National Mall and Memorial Parks	6/2/2008	8/3/2008	10/31/2009	315
08-E-018	Partnership Competencies Needs Assessment	REGULAR PRA REVIEW REQUIRED			
08-E-019	Herbert Hoover National Historic Site Visitor Survey	7/24/2008	8/2/2008	2/28/2009	100
08-E-020	Understanding Stakeholder Perceptions of Fire Ecology and Smoke Management in Yosemite National Park	REGULAR PRA REVIEW REQUIRED			
08-E-021	Visitor Use Survey in rocky Mountain National Park	6/1/2008	9/30/2008	10/31/2009	67
08-E-022	Isle Royale Inland Lakes Creel Survey	5/1/2008	10/20/2008	12/31/2009	39
08-E-023	Fire Island National Seashore Resident Study	5/9/2008	5/9/2008	6/30/2008	134
08-E-024	Monitoring Indicators in Denali National Park and Preserve	CLEARANCE DECLINED BY OMB; APPROVED AND CONDUCTED IN FY10			
08-E-025	Great Smoky Mountains Visitor Study	6/22/2008	10/11/2008	12/31/2008	694
08-E-026	Formative Evaluation: Juan Bautista de Anza Historic Trail Exhibit	5/12/2008	5/19/2008	6/30/2008	30
08-E-027	Interpreting the Alaska National Park Experience	CLEARANCE DECLINED BY OMB			
08-E-028	Rocky Mountain National Park Use and User Survey: Crowding	6/25/2008	8/15/2008	12/31/2008	138
08-E-029	Understanding and Managing Soundscapes in Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Parks	APPROVED AND CONDUCTED IN FY09			
08-E-030	Understanding the Visitor Experiences on Half Dome Cables: Yosemite National Park	WITHDRAWN BY PI			
08-E-031	Grand Teton National Park Visitor Study	7/13/08	7/19/2008	2/28/2008	317
08-E-032	GPS Visitor Survey in Rocky Mountain National Park	6/1/2008	9/30/2008	10/31/2009	72
08-E-033	Assessing the Visitor Experience and Value Based Management at Chaco Culture National Historical Park	APPROVED AND CONDUCTED IN FY09			
08-E-034	Social Research in Support of Impact Mitigation on Restoration of the Going to the Sun Road in Glacier National Park	APPROVED AND CONDUCTED IN FY09			
08-E-035	Blue Ridge Parkway Visitor Study	6/17/2008	6/23/2008	12/31/2008	348
08-E-036	Bryce Canyon National Park Visitor Study	7/27/2008	8/2/2008	2/28/2010	256
08-E-037	Visitor Use Survey of Golden Gate National Recreation Area Parklands	6/1/2008	7/26/2008	2/28/2008	1109
08-E-038	Colonial National Historical Park Shuttle Service Visitor Survey	APPROVED AND CONDUCTED IN FY09			
08-E-039	Grand Teton National Park, Laurance S. Rockefeller Preserve Visitor Use Survey	WITHDRAWN BY PI			
08-E-040	Blue Ridge Parkway: Rocky Knob Area Visitor Survey	7/1/2008	8/30/2008	12/31/2008	100
08-E-041	Fire Island National Seashore Visitor Study	7/19/2008	7/26/2008	2/28/2008	394

08-E-042	Research to Support Visitor Transportation System in Rocky Mountain National Park	WITHDRAWN BY PI			
08-E-043	Point Reyes National Seashore Summer Transit Access Study	WITHDRAWN BY PI			
08-E-044	Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore Visitor Study	7/22/2008	7/28/2008	12/31/2009	353
08-E-045	Research to Support Visitor Use Management at the Acadia Gateway Center Transportation Hub	WITHDRAWN BY PI			
08-E-046	Visitor Voices: Testing Interpretive Theory, Assessing Interpretive Outcomes & Improving Interpretive Practice in the Intermountain Region of the NPS (Year 4)	CLEARANCE DECLINED BY OMB			
08-E-047	Tusayan Pilot Shuttle Transportation System Evaluation	8/18/2008	8/24/2008	10/31/2009	86
08-E-048	Identifying Non-traditional Park Visitor Needs at Bandelier	8/1/2008	8/30/2008	12/31/2008	246
08-E-049	City of Rocks National Reserve Visitor Study	8/8/2008	8/17/2008	2/28/2009	125
08-E-050	Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites: Roosevelt Ride Passenger Survey	APPROVED AND CONDUCTED IN FY09			
08-E-051	Preliminary Study of the Tread Lightly! Off-highway Vehicle Visitor Education Efforts on NPS Lands	APPROVED AND CONDUCTED IN FY09			
08-E-052	Petrified Forest National Park and Nez Perce National Historical Park VSP Formative Studies	APPROVED AND CONDUCTED IN FY09			
TOTAL					7,259

For those surveys that were reviewed and approved in FY08, a conservative estimate nets a time savings of approximately six months per survey. In FY08, 32 surveys were approved under the program with an estimated time savings of 198 months. On average, it took 77 calendar days from initial submission for a survey to be reviewed by the NPS Social Science Program staff, revised by the principal investigator as needed, certified by the NPS Visiting Chief Social Scientist, and approved by OMB. This was 16 days longer than the previous year. (This figure does not include studies submitted to NPS in FY08 whose approval was delayed until FY09 or FY10.)

Even with the FY08 delays, the expedited review process provided substantial cost savings for the federal government by reducing staff time required to review submissions. Table 2 shows that the review process saved approximately \$1,611 per study.

This tenth year of the program yielded a direct cost savings to the federal government of approximately \$51,552 (32 studies X \$1,611 per study). In addition to these direct cost savings, principal investigators also benefit by a significant

reduction in labor required to prepare review packages.

The project manager for the NPS-sponsored Visitor Services Project (VSP) estimates a savings of 15 hours at an estimated cost of \$446 per study. The VSP conducted 15 studies in FY08 for a total cost savings of approximately \$6,690.

Estimating similar time savings to principal investigators for the 18 remaining studies conducted in FY08, an additional cost savings of approximately \$8,028 was realized. The total cost savings to principal investigators is estimated to be \$14,718. Hence, the total amount of dollars saved by the federal government and principal investigators in FY08 is estimated to be at least \$66,270.

In ten years, a total of 454 studies have been approved, providing the federal government and principal investigators a time and cost savings estimated to be at least \$892,018.

Burden on the public has been reduced by eliminating the repetitive *Federal Register* publications for substantially similar survey

research. Extensive public review of the program as a whole resulted in effective and efficient public comment. Those comments were incorporated into the final submission to OMB.

instruments peer-reviewed prior to submission. This has resulted in higher quality studies that reduce burden on the public and ensure more accurate data.

Finally, the expedited review process encourages principal investigators to have their survey



Visitor survey at Mount Rushmore National Monument (courtesy of NPS Visitor Services Project)

Table 2 – Fiscal Year 2008 Costs and Savings

Activity	Approx. Salary	Regular Review		Expedited Review		
		Average Review Time Per Study	Cost Per Study	Average Review Time Per Study	Cost Per Study	Cost Savings
Review and handling by Social Science Program staff (GS-11 Step 6)	\$32.54/hr*	12.5 hours	\$406.75	6 hours	\$195.24	\$211.51
Review by Chief Social Scientist (GS-14 Step 6)	\$54.80/hr*	7.5 hours	\$411.00	3 hours	\$164.40	\$246.60
Review by NPS Information Collection Clearance Officer (GS-13 Step 5)	\$45.05/hr*	3 hours	\$135.15	None	None	\$135.15
Review by DOI Information Collection Clearance Officer (GS-15 Step 10)	\$71.39/hr*	2 hours	\$142.78	None	None	\$142.78
Review by OMB OIRA Desk Officer for DOI (GS-15 Step 5)	\$62.62/hr*	3 hours	\$187.86	1 hour	\$62.62	\$125.24
<i>Federal Register</i> Notice Publication	\$75 per page (~5 pages)	2 per study	\$750.00	None	None	\$750.00
Total Cost Savings Per Study						\$1,611.28

* Salary estimates based on 2008 OPM Salary Tables for Washington, DC Area

Progress on NPS Initiatives

The NPS Social Science Program has undertaken several initiatives as part of this review program. The major initiative undertaken in FY08 included continued development of an archive of survey results.

The NPS Social Science Program has established a social science data and information archival system in consultation with scientists conducting NPS-sponsored public surveys and NPS library programs. The Social Science Studies Collection has been established with hard copies of reports housed in libraries in the NPS Social Science Program Washington, DC office and the Harpers Ferry Center (HFC) in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia. To date, 331 reports have been digitized

and made available on the NPS Focus Digital Library and Research Station. In FY06, NPS Focus (including the Social Science Studies Collection) became available to the public at <http://npsfocus.nps.gov/>

The NPS Visitor Services Project (VSP) based at the University of Idaho Park Studies Unit has developed an archival portion of their Web site, providing access to survey instruments, executive summaries, and full reports. The VSP Web site is located at <http://www.psu.uidaho.edu>.

The NPS Social Science Program Web site at <http://www.nature.nps.gov/socialscience/activities.cfm> includes links to the Social Science Studies Collection on NPS Focus and the VSP website.



For Additional Information

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