



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: 8/25/2023

PROJECT TITLE: Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore Visitor Use Management Study

ABSTRACT: (not to exceed 150 words)

Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore (SLBE) is a 71,199-acre unit within the National Parks system. The 2009 General Management Plan identified areas of importance and issues that included congestion at certain visitor areas and the preservation of designated wilderness areas. Data from a 2012-2013 visitor survey suggested that while social conditions were acceptable, encounters at different sites could increase and negatively affect both social and resource conditions. Therefore, continued monitoring and evaluation are necessary to maintain the quality of the visitor experience and better understand visitor expectations. The purpose of this study is to re-examine visitor use and user characteristics on the Platte River, Crystal River, and North Manitou Island and provide managers with updated data on current conditions at those locations and additional management priority sites. It also aims to investigate visitor use patterns that have emerged following federal wilderness designation, rapidly increasing annual visitation, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

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PROJECT INFORMATION:

Where will the collection take place? Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore (SLBE)

Sampling Period Start Date: 5-15-24

Sampling Period End Date: 9-15-24

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 – tablet computer onsite (e.g., iPad)

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 proposed research aligns with the Secretary of the Interior's priorities and strategic plan for 2018-2022. The outcomes of this project will provide information that will directly align with three key mission areas: (1) conserving land and water, (2) expanding outdoor recreation and access, and (3) modernizing organization and infrastructure for the next 100 years. These three mission areas will be fulfilled by a) informing land use planning processes for public use and access, b) fostering partnerships to achieve balanced stewardship and use of public lands, c) enhancing public satisfaction at SLBE, and d) prioritizing infrastructure needs (Interior FY 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, 2018). This work is furthermore guided by the steps and principles of the Interagency Visitor Use Management Framework, which identifies the interdependent relationship among resource conditions, visitor experiences, and management actions as a strategic area of focus (IVUMC, 2016).

The proposed collection is needed to inform management decisions about potential changes in visitor services and visitor use at SLBE. It has been 10 years since the last visitor survey at SLBE (*Examining Visitor Use and User Characteristics at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore*, OMB Control #1024-0224, exp. 10/31/2014) and conditions at the park have changed since then. Visitation has increased by over 25% and potential user capacity issues have been identified in additional areas of the park, including popular beaches, trails, and the Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive. In addition, 32,550 acres of the park is now federally designated wilderness. Park managers are seeking data on social and resource conditions in these areas to guide decisions to maintain and enhance visitor experiences. Outcomes of the proposed work will be used to inform potential management options and engagement of current and future visitors.

The three expected outcomes of this study are: 1) to provide updated information on visitor use patterns, motivations, and preferences across previously studied sites and new areas of interest at SLBE, 2) to examine visitor attitudes toward management strategies and actions implemented to address visitor use, and 3) to provide information for utilization in future potential planning efforts (e.g., river use plans, management plan updates, wilderness character monitoring). The resulting work will be used by park managers in park strategic planning efforts to identify efficient paths towards infrastructure improvements, visitor services, amenities, and appropriate staffing.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

(A) Respondent Universe:

The respondent universe for this collection will be a systematic sample of all adult recreation users (age 18 and older) at the (1) Crystal River of SLBE, (2) Platte River of SLBE, (3) North Manitou Island, (4) Glen Haven Beach, and the (5) Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive. These locations will be sampled during the proposed study period (May 15, 2024 – Sept 15, 2024). These locations represent a replication of previous locations from the 2012-2013 study (Crystal River, Platte River, and North Manitou Island) and the introduction of key areas of interest requested by park staff, thus making them ideal locations for intercept. According to NPS Visitor Use Statistics, approximately 1,501,117 people visited SLBE in 2022 and annual visitation numbers have been increasing since 2008.

(B) Sampling Plan / Procedures:

A systematic sampling approach will be employed to intercept visitors at specific locations within the park. Field staff will consist of undergraduate students, university faculty researchers, and SLBE staff. Sampling is proposed for May through September of 2024. Intercept locations from the 2012-13 survey will be used, including on the Platte River, Crystal River, and North Manitou Island, along with new locations along the Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive (e.g., Empire Bluff, Pyramid Point) and Glen Haven Beach. All sites were chosen based on conversations with park staff, planners, and researchers, and are a representative sample of all locations within the park.

The sampling strategy is random, with every other visitor group being intercepted on-site. Two or three field staff will be present at each site and randomly choose one person in the group who is over 18 to take the survey. One staff member will remain with each visitor group for the entirety of the intercept to be available for questions or provide instruction. Other field staff will independently intercept other groups. Upon completing an intercept, the surveyor will let a group pass the intercept location (e.g., river take-out ramp, scenic drive parking lot, etc.) and then intercept the next group in order to continue the every other group sampling strategy.

The random sampling strategy will be used to ensure that a representative sample of the visiting population is reached. We expect to contact a total of 4,800 visitors over the course of the sampling period. Of these 4,800 contacts, we expect to contact 800 visitors at North Manitou Island and 1,000 visitors at each of the other sites (1,000 x 4 other sites = 4,000).

Using a stratified block sampling method, the sites will be sampled on weekdays and weekends, with a rotation of North sites (Glen Haven Beach and Crystal River), South sites (Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive and Platte River), and North Manitou Island. Sampling at North Manitou Island will be truncated to six weeks, reflecting the visitor use patterns of the site (Table 1). We expect sampling quotas will be met for sampling days and location. However, there is the capacity to add sampling day(s), as needed and in alignment with the systematic sampling plan, should quotas not be met for a particular time period.

Table 1. Sampling block design for the sampling timeframe. North sites are Glen Haven Beach and Crystal River, South sites are Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive and Platte River, and the Island site is North Manitou Island.

Week	Weekdays					Weekend	
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
1			North	South	North	North	South
2	North			North	South	South	North
3	South	South			North	North	South
4	North	North	South			South	North
5	South	South	North				South
6	North	North, Island	South, Island		Island	South, Island	North
7	South, Island	South, Island		Island	North, Island	North	South, Island
8	South, Island		Island	North, Island	South	South, Island	North, Island
9		Island	North, Island		North, Island	North, Island	
10	Island	North, Island		South, Island	South, Island	South	North, Island
11	Island		South, Island	South, Island		North, Island	South, Island
12	North			North	South	South	North

(C) Instrument Administration:

The initial contact with visitors will be used to explain the study and determine if visitors are interested in participating (see script below). If the group agrees, the adult within the group with the next birthday will be selected. That individual will then be handed a tablet to use to respond to the survey. Individuals who decline to participate will be asked if they would be willing to answer 4 non-response bias questions (Section E), which will be recorded directly by the team member and be counted as soft-refusals on the contact log. Individuals who decline to answer the non-response bias questions will be recorded as hard-refusals on the contact log. The number of refusals will be recorded and used to calculate the overall response rate for the collection. Surveys will be administered and completed on tablet computers (e.g., iPads) utilizing Qualtrics survey software.

Visitors selected for participation will be read the following script:

"Hello, my name is _____. I am conducting a survey for Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore to better understand your opinions related to your overall experience at the park. Your participation is voluntary, and all responses will be kept anonymous. Would you be willing to take a 12-minute survey?"

If **YES** – then ask, "has any member of your group been asked to participate in this survey before?"

If **"YES"** (already asked to participate) then, *"Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. Have a great day."*

If **"NO"** (have not been previously asked to participate) then,
"Thank you for agreeing to participate. Who in your group is at least 18 years old and has the next birthday?" Hand them a tablet survey. Participants will then be briefed on how to utilize the tablet to answer the questions in the survey: "Please use the tablet to answer the questions in the survey, please let me know if you have any questions about the process."

If **NO**– (soft refusal) - *"Thank you. Instead, could you answer four quick questions today [listed below]?" (Record responses in spaces provided on the contact log.)*

If **NO**– (hard refusal) - *end the contact and thank them for their time.*

(D) Expected Response Rate / Confidence Level:

The expected response rate for this collection is 50% and is based on the survey administered at SLBE in 2012-2013. Assuming a 50% response rate, we will need to contact approximately 4,800 visitors across five locations (Table 2) in order to receive 2,400 total responses. Of the 50% of individuals who refuse to participate, we expect 20% (n=480) to be soft refusals and agree to participate in the non-response survey and 80% (n=1,920) to be hard refusals and decline participation entirely.

Based on the survey sample sizes, there will be 95% confidence that the survey findings will be accurate to within 3-5 percentage points. The proposed sample sizes will be adequate for bivariate comparisons and will allow for comparisons among study sites. For dichotomous response variables, estimates will be accurate within the margins of error and confidence intervals will be somewhat larger for questions with more than two response categories. The number of refusals at each location will be recorded and reported in a survey log and will be used in calculating the overall response rate.

Table 2. Anticipated Response Rates by Location

Sampling Location	Total Number of Visitor Contacts	Completed Onsite Surveys 50%	Refusals 50%	Completed Non-Response Surveys (20% of refusals)	Hard Refusals (80% of refusals)
Crystal River	1,000	500	500	100	400
Glenn Haven Beach	1,000	500	500	100	400
North Manitou Island	800	400	400	80	320
Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive	1,000	500	500	100	400
Platte River	1,000	500	500	100	400
TOTAL	4,800	2,400	2,400	480	1920

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

During the initial contact, the interviewer will ask each visitor who refused a survey to answer four questions taken from the survey. The following questions will be the non-response bias check for this collection:

- 1) How many people are in your personal group, including you?
- 2) Over the past 12 months, how many visits have you made to the park?
- 3) Are you a Michigan resident?
- 4) What is your age?

All responses to the non-response questions will be recorded on the survey log. Results of the non-response bias check will be described in a report and any implications for park planning and management will be discussed.

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

The survey questions are from the currently approved list of questions in NPS *Pool of Known Questions* (PKQ) (OMB 1024-0224; Ex. 08/31/2026). In a few instances (labeled on the survey instrument), question wording varies from the PKQ in order to match the wording from the 2012-2013 SLBE visitor survey to allow for comparisons (*Examining Visitor Use and User Characteristics at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore*, OMB Control #1024-0224, exp. 10/31/2014). The survey has been reviewed by SLBE managers and faculty from Michigan State University and Central Michigan University. All questions pertain to areas of management interest by SLBE. The survey was pre-tested with nine university students to estimate burden and clarity of the questions.

BURDEN ESTIMATES:

The total estimated burden for this survey is 536 hours (Table 3). We plan to intercept 4,800 visitors during the sampling period. We anticipate that 50% (n=2,400) of those contacted will agree to participate and complete the online survey. Based upon the pretest, we estimate that an average of 13 minutes (1 minute for initial contact and 12 minutes to fill out the survey) will be required to complete and return the on-line survey, resulting in a burden of 520 hours.

Of the 2,400 visitors refusing to complete the survey. We expect 20% (n=480) to be soft refusals and agree to answer the non-response questions. We expect the non-response survey, including initial intercept and answering the 4 non-response questions, to take 2 minutes, resulting in a total burden of 16 hours. The burden for the remaining visitors completely refusing to participate in this collection will not be estimated due to the de minimis nature of their participation.

Table 3. Burden Estimate

	Responses	Completion Time (minutes)	Burden Hours (rounded up)
On-site Survey	2,400	13	520
Non-response survey	480	2	16
Total burden requested under this ICR:	2,880		536

REPORTING PLAN:

The study results will be presented in internal agency reports for NPS managers at the park. Response frequencies will be tabulated and measures of central tendency computed (e.g., mean, median, mode, as appropriate). The reports will be archived with the NPS Social Science Program for inclusion in the Social Science Studies Collection as required by the NSP Programmatic Approval Process. Hard copies will be available upon request.

REFERENCES

Interagency Visitor Use Management Council (IVUMC). 2016. Visitor use management framework: a guide to providing sustainable outdoor recreation. Edition One. July 2016. 130p.

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.