



PROGRAMMATIC REVIEW AND CLEARANCE PROCESS FOR NPS-SPONSORED PUBLIC SURVEYS



FOR QUESTIONS/FOLLOW-UP ON PROGRAMMATIC SUBMISSIONS,
PLEASE CONTACT: NPS Information Collection Review Coordinator,
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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: 10-9-2023

PROJECT TITLE: Examining Visitor Use on Blue Mesa Reservoir and the Adjacent Gunnison River at Curecanti National Recreation Area

ABSTRACT: (not to exceed 150 words)

This project focuses on water-based recreation on Blue Mesa Reservoir and the adjacent section of the Gunnison River at Curecanti National Recreation Area (CURE). CURE has an interest in understanding any differences that may exist between commercial and noncommercial visitors. Through this work, CURE intends to achieve: 1) a baseline understanding of visitor use patterns, types, and amounts; 2) seasonal differences in visitor use patterns, types, and amounts; 3) information about visitor experience, experience quality, and other visitor use aspects – including information to inform development of experience quality thresholds; and 4) a visitor use management tool for future scenario planning. The study adopts a data collection methodology consisting of an on-site visitor survey throughout front country areas at four boat ramps in the park: Elk Creek, Lola, Lake Fork, and Stevens Creek. This collection is intended to inform important decisions about park visitor use management.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR CONTACT INFORMATION:

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PARK OR PROGRAM LIAISON CONTACT INFORMATION:

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PROJECT INFORMATION:

Where will the collection take place? Curecanti National Recreation Area (CURE)

Sampling Period Start Date: 5/15/2024

Sampling Period End Date: 8/31/2024

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 – Type of Device: **iPad 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.

Blue Mesa Reservoir is the largest of three lakes at Curecanti National Recreation Area (CURE) that were created by the damming of the Gunnison River between Morrison and Gunnison, CO. Blue Mesa Reservoir is the largest body of water in Colorado and is well-known for salmon and trout fishing. Immediately east of Blue Mesa Reservoir is a flowing section of the Gunnison River, which also offers outstanding opportunities for fishing, including wading and boat fishing. In 2021, CURE saw over 1 million visits. In addition to this high level of visitor use, CURE is also experiencing a change in types of visitor use. In 2007, the state record for Lake trout was set at CURE. Since then, commercially guided fishing increased in popularity.

This project seeks to develop descriptive information about visitor use types, amounts, and patterns, as well as perceptions of visitor experience on Blue Mesa Reservoir and the adjacent Gunnison River at CURE. Limited data about visitor use and experience exist for Blue Mesa Reservoir and the adjacent Gunnison River. Understanding current conditions, experiences, and associated relationships regarding visitor use on Blue Mesa Reservoir and the adjacent Gunnison River is essential for park planning.

This project will focus on water-based recreation on Blue Mesa Reservoir and the adjacent section of the Gunnison River at CURE. Access points, like launch ramps, to the lake and river will also be within the project scope. CURE also needs a more comprehensive understanding of any differences that may exist between commercial and non-commercial visitors. Through this work, CURE intends to achieve: 1) a baseline understanding of visitor use patterns (spatial and temporal), types, and amounts; 2) seasonal differences, if any, in visitor use patterns, types, and amounts; 3) information about visitor experience, experience quality, and other visitor use aspects – including information to inform development of experience quality thresholds – from on-site visitors; and 4) a visitor use management tool that merges the descriptive and evaluative components of the research together for future scenario planning. This information is vital for park managers in park planning, communication and messaging, and management to enhance visitor experience and access in an era of changing visitor use and environmental conditions at CURE.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

(A) Respondent Universe:

Based on the 2022 NPS Visitor Use Statistics Report, CURE recorded 992,749 visits. The respondent universe for the on-site intercepts will be all adult visitors (18 years old and older) in the park at the Elk Creek, Iola, Lake Fork, and Stevens Creek boat ramps during the sampling period.

(B) Sampling Plan / Procedures:

This collection will use an on-site intercept survey to capture a representative sample of visitor information, characteristics, perceptions of crowding, hassles, place dependence, and other related factors to inform the creation of visitor experience indicators and thresholds. During a 2 one-month sampling periods ranging from May 15, 2024 to August 31, 2024 (no sampling will occur in July 2024), sampling days will range Monday through Sunday, with oversampling on weekends due to increased visitor use on Saturdays and Sundays, between 5AM to 2 PM.

For this study, we will distribute up to 21 GPS units per day. In a 2014 study at Grand Teton National Park (GRTE), 90-100% of GPS units were recovered from respondents each day (OMB #: 1024-0224; expiration: 08/31/2014, *Grand Teton National Park Visitor Use Survey*). We will plan to administer, at most, 21 GPS units per day because this is the maximum our team can handle in one day for sampling. The collection is more constrained by available respondents and personnel than by the number of available GPS units.

On-site Intercept Survey

A random sampling of visitors will be intercepted while visiting CURE across four boat ramps: Elk Creek, Iola, Lake Fork, and Stevens Creek (Table 1). Intercept effort and the number of target intercepts by site will generally be three times as frequent at Elk Creek and Lake Fork given their higher volume of use, but the respective number of sampling days and initial visitor contacts will depend on boat ramp availability and high enough visitor use. At each ramp, target intercept efforts will be applied in proportion to historic traffic/visitor volume at each location. Visitors will be randomly intercepted at designated areas upon arrival. Surveyors will be instructed to attempt to intercept every Nth group arriving. N will be determined based on anticipated volume and number of intercepts required at each location.

Table 1. Example Schedule During a Sampling Period.

Survey Locations	Sampling Days	Number of Initial Visitor Contacts	Post-Surveys Completed
Elk Creek	15	371	268
Iola	5	123	89
Lake Fork	15	371	268
Stevens Creek	5	123	89
Total	40	988	714

Two surveyors will be on site collecting surveys each day, rotating together between boat ramps.

All visitors who agree to participate will be asked to complete a pre-experience survey and will be given a pre-programmed GPS unit. At the end of the visit, participants returning the GPS unit will be asked to complete a post-experience survey (Table 2).

Table 2. Estimated Number of Visitor Contacts during Sampling Period

Locations	Estimated Number of Visitor Contacts				
	May 2024	June 2024	July 2024	August 2024	Total
Elk Creek	93	93	No sampling	185	371
Iola	31	31		61	123
Lake Fork	93	93		185	371
Stevens Creek	31	31		61	123
Total	248	248		492	988

(C) Instrument Administration:

The pre- and post-experience surveys will be administered by trained research assistants using tablet computers to facilitate skip patterns and eliminate data entry errors. During the initial contact all participants will be read the instructions, asked to complete the pre-experience survey, and handed a GPS unit. The visitor will be instructed that the GPS unit is to be kept by the primary respondent and that it can only be used to monitor movement during their visit within the area. At the end of their visit, the surveyors will be available to retrieve the GPS units and administer the post-experience survey. (Note: the GPS units will be pre-programmed, and the respondents will not have to do anything with these units other than carry them.) This process will continue throughout the sampling period.

If visitors return after researchers have left the sampling area, instructions will be attached to the GPS unit with options for returning the device (i.e., drop boxes at all exits, visitor centers, or fee booths). We will work with the park to recover late returns every day. If a visitor accidentally leaves the park with a GPS unit, an email address and phone number will be listed to arrange return. During the 2014 GRTE Visitor Use Survey, about 2,000 GPS units were passed and five were not returned.

Surveyors will ask visitors who are unwilling or unable to participate in the study the non-response bias questions (see below), and will also capture additional observational information (e.g., time of contact and potential language barrier). This information will be combined to determine any non-response bias. This process will continue throughout the sampling period at each of the study locations. The following is an example of the script will be used:

Pre-experience survey

"Hello, I am conducting a study for Curecanti National Recreation Area to better understand visitor experiences while recreating within the Blue Mesa Reservoir. Before we begin, I would like to let you know that this survey has been approved by the Office of Management and Budget. It is important to note that a Federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and you are not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it has a valid OMB control number. The control number for this collection is XXXX-XXXX and this number is valid through XX/XX/XXXX. Secondly, your participation is voluntary and your name will never be connected with your individual responses. As a part of the study, we ask if you are willing to take a 1-minute pre-survey and a 6-minute post-survey and if you would be willing to carry this GPS unit with you during your trip. The unit will only be used to track the patterns of your movements on the reservoir. The unit will have no additional value to the participant outside the park or this study. Tracking your movement will help park managers understand how visitors move through and navigate certain areas on the reservoir during a typical

visit. We ask that you return the GPS to our research colleagues at the end of your visit as you exit the area. Would you be willing to take this survey and carry a GPS with you during your visit?

- *If NO: "Can I ask you three quick questions instead? [Ask non-response questions listed in section E below.]*
- *If YES "Thank you for your willingness to assist with this study. Who in your group (who is at least 18 years old) has the next birthday?*
 - *To respondent: "Would you mind completing the pre-experience survey?*

Post Trip Survey

At the end of their visit and upon exiting the sampling locations, respondents will be asked to return the GPS unit and to complete the post-experience survey. At this time, the research assistant will use the following post-experience script:

"Thank you for assisting us with this study and returning the GPS unit. Are you willing to take about 6 minutes to complete post survey we mentioned at the beginning of your trip?"

- *If YES: "Thank you. [administer post-experience survey]"*
- *If NO: "Thank you for your time and consideration. I hope you enjoyed your visit."*

For both the pre- and post-trip surveys, three potential outcomes are expected following the request to participate:

1. Complete refusal;
2. Partial refusal, answering non-response questions but nothing further;
3. Partial Refusal, answering pre-experience survey and carrying GPS, declining post-experience survey
4. Complete pre-experience and post experience survey and carrying GPS unit

(D) Expected Response Rate / Confidence Level:

Based on previous research experience with this intercept method and as indicated above, relative to a maximum of 988 initial contacts, we estimate that at least 85% (n=840) of visitors contacted during the sampling period will agree to participate in the pre-experience survey and take a GPS unit with them for the day. Of those who do not agree to participate in the pre-experience survey (n=148), we expect 85% to answer the non-response bias questions (n=126) with again roughly 15% (n=22) visitors completely refusing to participate in the study. Using the same general response estimate of 85% for the post-experience survey, we estimate that 714 visitors will complete both surveys, with an additional n=144 lost to refusals. Based on a confidence level of 95% (z=1.96) the margin of error in estimates from the on-site survey is estimated at +/- 4%, assuming an overall worst-case 50/50 proportion split on any question (Table 3).

Table 3. Pre-Experience Survey Response Rates

Pre-Experience Survey	Potential Number of Respondents	Expected Number of Responses (85%)	Non-respondents (soft refusals) (15%)	Completed Non-Response Surveys	Hard Refusals
Elk Creek	371	315	56	48	8
Iola	123	105	18	15	3
Lake Fork	371	315	56	48	8
Stevens Creek	123	105	18	15	3
Total	988	840	148	126	22

Table 4. Post-Experience Survey Response Rates

Post Experience Survey	Potential Number of Respondents	Expected Number of Responses (85%)	Non-respondents (soft refusals) (15%)
Elk Creek	315	268	47
Iola	105	89	16
Lake Fork	315	268	47
Stevens Creek	105	89	16
Subtotal	840	714	126
TOTAL	1828	1554	274

*Note: University of Montana conducts frequent on-site surveys across the U.S. and these percentages are based upon the average refusals obtained during 2022 National Park visitor surveys.

With that, the proposed sample size should be adequate, but will not be used to produce results that will be generalizable beyond the scope of this collection. The sample will suffice for bivariate comparisons and more sophisticated multivariate analysis. 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.

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

To account for potential intercept non-response bias, surveyors will attempt to ask non-responding visitors the following questions:

- *How many people are in your [personal, organized, tour] group, including you?*
_____ Number of People
- *Which one of the following best describes the group you are traveling with?*
 - ☐ Myself (alone)
 - ☐ Myself with family (including spouse/partner/ and/or other family members/relatives)
 - ☐ Myself with family and friends
 - ☐ Myself with friends
 - ☐ Commercial guided tour group
 - ☐ I am an outfitter/guide
 - ☐ I am the client of an outfitter/guide
 - ☐ Other organized group (such as business group, scout group, etc.)
 - ☐ Other
- *Including this visit, how many times have you visited Curecanti National Recreation Area in the last five years?*
_____ Times

The non-response and pre-experience surveys are identical which will allow the researchers to compare responses between pre-experience respondents only, pre- and post-experience respondents, and non-respondents (soft refusals) to identify if any non-response bias exists.

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

The survey questions are pulled from the NPS Pool of Known (OMB Control Number 1024-0224). The pre- and post-experience survey instruments were pre-tested in the format in which it will be delivered (i.e., tablet or online) to determine question understanding and length. The pre-tests were conducted by Social Scientists working on the

project at the University of Montana. These Social Scientists identified students and staff (4 in total) who were placed in a mock situation in which they found themselves at CURE. Based upon the pretest, we were able to assess and correct skip patterns within the survey and gauge readability of the posed questions. We have estimated from these pre-tests that it will take approximately 1 minute to introduce the survey, 1 minute for the pre-experience survey and an additional 6 minutes to complete the post-experience survey. For the visitors refusing to complete the survey, it will take 1 minute to ask nonresponse questions if the respondent does not want to participate in the full survey.

BURDEN ESTIMATES

The total estimated annual burden for this collection, including the initial contact time, time to complete the questionnaires, and time to complete non-response questions is 104 hours. The estimates for the Pre- and Post-experience surveys are based upon the time it will take to make the initial contact, introduce the study, complete the surveys (or non-response survey), and to return the GPS unit.

Pre-experience Survey:

We expect to intercept 988 visitors on-site. Of those, we expect that 85% (n=840) will agree to take 2 minutes to listen to the initial intercept script (1 minute) and complete the pre-experience survey and take a GPS unit (an additional minute), resulting in a total burden of 28 hours.

Non-Response Survey:

We anticipate that out of the approximately 15% (n=148) of the initial contacts who refused to participate in the pre-experience survey, 85% (n=126) will agree to answer the non-response questions. The non-response bias check will take 2 minutes per respondent, one minute for the intercept and an additional minute to answer the non-response questions, resulting in a burden of 4 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.

Post-experience Survey:

At the end of their visit, the GPS units will be collected and the visitors who participated in the pre-experience survey will be asked if they would be willing to complete the post-experience survey. We expect that approximately 85% (n=714) will agree to complete the post-experience survey. The time to complete the survey will take approximately 6 minutes, resulting in a total burden of 72 hours.

Table 5: Burden Estimates

	# of Respondents	Maximum Completed Responses	Completion Time *(minutes)	Burden Hours (rounded up)
On-site Surveys	840			
Pre-Experience Survey and Introduction		840	2	28
Post Experience Survey and Introduction		714	6	72
Non-Response Survey	126	126	2	4
TOTAL	966	1,680		104

REPORTING PLAN:

The study results will be presented in a comprehensive report that will be shared with NPS staff at CURE. Questionnaire results will be presented in tables or figures with descriptive text. Results will include frequencies, measures of central tendency (e.g., mean, median, and standard deviation), cross-tabulations from chi-square tests and ANOVAs will be conducted where appropriate. All data will also be shared with CURE staff.

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.