the API PIDX User Group meetings scheduled for October 26, through 30, 1997, a registration fee may apply. Instructors are MMS employees of the Royalty Management Program, Systems Management Division and the Offshore Minerals Management, Information Technology Division.

Agenda

Morning Session: 9:00 a.m.–11:30 a.m.

Subject: MMS EC activities, capabilities, current status, implementation planning and schedules.

Afternoon Session: 1:00 p.m.–4:00 p.m.

Subject: Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) technical issues and mapping walk-throughs for the transmittal of regulatory report data via Accredited Standards Committee (ASC) X12 EDI standards. The mapping walk-throughs will focus on the Report of Sales and Royalty Remittance, Form MMS–2014 and the Semiannual Well Test Report, Form MMS–126.

Attendees of the afternoon session will be provided copies of the new *MMS EDI Handbook for Payors and Reporters* for the following reporting forms and electronic payments:

Report of Sales and Royalty Remittance, Form MMS–2014; Monthly Report of Operations, Form MMS–3160; Oil and Gas Operations Report (OGOR), Form MMS–4054–A, B, and C;

MMS Bill for Collection, Invoice Form DI–1040; Semiannual Well Test Report, Form MMS–126; Well Potential Test Report and Request for MPR, Form MMS–128; and National Automated Clearing House Association (NACHA) Electronic Payments.

If you plan to attend the EC presentation, please leave a message for Tim Allard or Stephen Adams at the telephone and FAX numbers or the e-mail address in the information contact section of this notice no later than October 24, 1997.

Dated: September 23, 1997.

Lucy Querques Denett,

Associate Director for Royalty Management.

[FR Doc. 97–25848 Filed 9–29–97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310–MR–P

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

National Park Service

Sixty-day Notice of Intention To Request Clearance of Collection of Information—Opportunity for Public Comment

AGENCY: Department of the Interior, National Park Service.

ACTION: Notice and request for comments.

SUMMARY: The National Park Service (NPS) Social Science Program is considering submitting to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) a request for clearance of a three year program of collections of information that would conduct surveys of the public regarding park visitors and visitor services. The NPS is publishing this notice to inform the public of this proposed three year program and to request comments on the program and the proposed approach.

Under provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 and 5 CFR Part 1320, Reporting and Record Keeping Requirements, the National Park Service is soliciting comments on: (a) Whether the collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the NPS, including whether the information will have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the NPS estimate of the burden of the collection of information, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used; (c) the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) how to minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, including the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other forms of information technology.

DATES: Public comments will be accepted on or before December 1, 1997.

SEND COMMENTS TO: Dr. John G. Dennis, NPS Washington Office Social Science Program Coordinator, Natural Resources (3223 MIB), National Park Service, 1849 C Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20240.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. John G. Dennis. Voice: 202–208–5193, Fax: 202–208–4620, Email: < john__dennis@nps.gov >.

Proposed Request for Clearance of a Three Year Program of Collections of Information: A Proposed Process for OMB Approval of NPS-Sponsored Public Surveys.

1.0 Introduction

The National Park System preserves the nation's natural and cultural heritage and provides for its enjoyment by citizens and visitors from throughout the world. The management of park resources is necessarily the management of people. Visitors, employees, concessioners, nearby communities, interest groups, local governments—all affect and are affected by units of the National Park System. An accurate understanding of the relationship between people and parks is critical to achieving the dual mission of the National Park System: protecting resources unimpaired and providing for public enjoyment. Such understanding requires a sound scientific basis. Hence, social science research is a necessary and important function of the National Park Service (NPS).

NPS managers face unprecedented needs to better understand the public's values, attitudes and behaviors with respect to parks. Park visitation for recreation and other purposes is expected to rise 34% by the year 2000. Indirect use of parks via print, audio-visual, and electronic media also is expected to increase. Management of these uses of parks and of services provided by NPS and park concessioners will require state-of-the-art techniques. Interactions between park managers and government or private managers and owners of lands surrounding the parks will increase in frequency and intensity as differing management goals meet at common boundaries. The people who live and work in communities near the parks are affected by the ways park uses grow and the ways managers of park and adjacent lands interact. The increased emphasis on securing public participation in NPS decision-making requires greater knowledge about these many different publics and their needs. New laws and initiatives, such as the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA), have created additional needs for the information that NPS social science research can provide.

The NPS has established a new social science program and is implementing a strategic program plan (Usable Knowledge: A Plan for Furthering Social Science and the National Parks, 1996). The plan calls for increased social science research related to the NPS mission. This research in turn will increase the need for efficient and effective data collection from the many different publics who may be affected by NPS efforts to carry out the mission.

This notice describes a proposed 3-year trial effort to ''reinvent'' the Paperwork Reduction Act process by which NPS secures Office of Management and Budget (OMB) approval for NPS-sponsored surveys to

collect data from one specific segment of these publics—the park visitors. The benefits of this experiment in reinvention will be significant to the NPS, Department of the Interior (DOI), OMB, NPS cooperators, and the public. In addition, such a program, if it proves fully successful, could be adopted by other federal agencies that routinely conduct studies of visitors to the nation's public lands.

1.1 Definitions

Collection of Information—obtaining information or causing information to be obtained by or for an agency by means of identical questions posed to ten or more persons.

Data—material serving as a basis for discussion, inference, or determination of policy, for example, individual numbers or short phrases that provide bits of information about a subject.

DOI—Department of the Interior.

GPRA—Government Performance and Results Act, enacted in 1993 to increase the quality and responsiveness to the American people of the federal government.

Information—facts or figures ready for use, for example, all forms of data, written analyses, and graphical presentations that together provide a body of knowledge about a subject

Information Collection Burden—the effort that a person must make to respond to a request for information, usually measured in minutes or hours.

Information Collection Survey—a generic, written or orally presented format for a collection of information that asks a person to answer a pre-established set of questions.

Metadata—information about information or about how to access information, such as information about the characteristics of a set of data, or a description of data collection categories, or coding instructions used to store information.

OMB—Office of Management and Budget.

NPS—National Park Service.

National Park System—all 375 units, totaling approximately 83 million acres, of federal land that have been assigned to the National Park Service to manage, including among other designations, parks, monuments, recreation areas, lakeshores, seashores, preserves, historic sites, and battlefields.

NPS Visiting Chief Social Scientist—the individual who, on a rotating basis, heads the National Park Service Social Science Program.

Paperwork Reduction Act—the 1995 statute that directs the Federal government to reduce the information collection burden it imposes on the public.

Peer Review—quality assurance review of data, documents, projects, or programs conducted by reviewers who have equal or greater levels of technical training and experience than do the preparers of the data, documents, projects, or programs being reviewed

PI (Principal Investigator)—the person or persons responsible for conducting a research project.

Survey Topic—a specific type of information needed for planning, management, operations, and evaluation of performance related to the NPS mission and responsibilities. Any given survey topic area may include several variables of interest.

Variables of Interest—characteristics that can be measured, including the specific kinds of information within a survey topic that would be sought through questions.

Visitor Survey—a structured, written or oral method for obtaining from park visitors information that is used to educate park managers and others about the views of visitors regarding park programs and resources

83-I Package—a form and attached statements that federal agencies must submit to OMB to request permission to present a collection of information to more than 9 members of the public.

2.0 Overview of This Notice

2.1 Summary of Need for Change

NPS needs to sponsor information collection surveys of the public to provide to park managers information for improving the quality and utility to the public of park programs. NPS finds the current process by which it secures OMB approval of proposed collections of information can be improved with respect to securing public comment and can be made more efficient for the federal government through reducing current levels of personnel and funding necessary for preparing and reviewing the proposed collections of information. NPS believes it has developed an alternative approach for processing proposed collections of information that will be both more effective and more efficient. The proposal presented in this notice is designed to test the alternative approach using one subset of NPS information collection surveys for a 3-year test period.

2.2 Summary of this Proposal

NPS is considering submitting to OMB this proposal to request that OMB approve an alternative set of practices and procedures by which OMB determines whether or not to approve proposed NPS information collection surveys of the public regarding topic areas relating to visitors and visitor services. Under this proposal, NPS would request that OMB review NPS procedures for these surveys as a program, rather than reviewing each and every individual survey of the public related to visitors and visitor services that NPS seeks to conduct. Under the procedures proposed here, NPS and DOI would conduct the necessary quality control through requiring peer review of appropriate program elements, maintaining an ongoing process for improving the scientific quality and efficiency of survey instruments related to visitors and visitor services, and proactively soliciting public review of this proposed alternative set of practices and procedures. NPS also would maintain an information base of public surveys conducted in parks on all topic areas to be used to increase the efficiency of future surveys. Under this proposal, NPS would request that OMB assign an OMB number, expiration date, and total number of information collection burden hours to NPS for the topic areas relating to visitors and visitor services. NPS would then allocate this OMB number, expiration date, and appropriate number of burden hours to each survey within these topic areas that NPS recommends and DOI approves. NPS would request that management oversight of its actions be maintained by having DOI be responsible for the final decision on all individual surveys that NPS proposes within the topic areas and by having OMB monitor NPS actions through its review and decision regarding this proposed NPS request, its review of NPS annual reports of actions taken under the OMB number and expiration date that NPS would request be assigned, and comments that OMB receives directly from the public.

2.3 Summary of Benefits of this Proposal

Adoption of the proposed program presented in this notice would benefit NPS management of its public survey process by increasing the efficiency of NPS personnel time and funding allocations, by improving NPS receipt of effective public and peer comments, and by improving NPS access to usable information while minimizing the burden on the public. DOI and OMB would benefit through greater efficiencies of their review and oversight functions and through the testing of alternative procedures for managing the information collection process. The public would benefit directly through a more effective and

less burdensome process for obtaining its review of NPS proposed information collection activities, the more efficient expenditure of NPS federal funds used to develop and approve surveys and manage their application, and a more efficient use of burden hours. The scientific community would benefit through a more efficient management review process, greater focus on use of peer review to improve the scientific quality of information collection, increased attention to methodological improvements, and better administration and wider sharing of data and information obtained from surveys of the public.

3.0 Details of the Elements of this Proposed Process

The following paragraphs discuss each of the elements of this proposal that NPS is considering presenting to OMB. The discussion includes: topic areas to be covered by the proposed process, techniques for ensuring appropriate and effective public involvement in the review of proposed survey purposes and activities, the approach for obtaining peer review of proposed survey methodologies, procedures for involving parks and the NPS in the administration of public surveys, the procedure by which OMB would assign and NPS would allocate OMB numbers and related expiration dates and burden hours, responsibilities and procedures for reporting results of surveys and the use of allotted OMB numbers and related expiration dates and burden hours, procedures by which DOI and OMB would maintain effective program oversight, designation of responsibilities and responsible officials, and relationship to other NPS initiatives.

3.10 Topic Areas

Topic areas are specific types of information needed for planning, management, operations, and evaluation of performance related to the NPS mission and responsibilities. Each topic area may include several variables of interest. This proposal would focus on topic areas related to visitors and visitor services. The topic areas and variables of interest covered in this proposal are identified in detail in Section 4.0.

3.20 Public Involvement

The OMB regulations regarding information collections require sponsors of such collections to seek adequate, widespread, and useful public review of proposed information collection activities. The regulations specifically require publication in the **Federal Register** of a notice of opportunity for the public to review a proposed survey at two different stages during development of the survey instrument. NPS experience to date suggests that this process does not achieve the desired public review and comment for NPS sponsored surveys.

The Visitor Services Project, for example, has conducted 100 very similar studies, has published its survey methodology in peer-reviewed scientific papers, has solicited peer review of its questionnaires and questions as they have been revised or new questions added, and has obtained individual OMB approvals study by study. Despite its following of established procedures for securing widespread review, the Visitor Services Project has received very few public and a handful of governmental inquiries, and no substantive comments, in response to the opportunities for public review. Similarly, based on limited reports from practitioners who recently have conducted other types of surveys in parks, of about 15 surveys that went through the old or new **Federal Register** review process, only 3 received any public inquiry, with the inquiries leading to no specific feedback to NPS. Beyond this required process, all of these surveys received review by the affected managers and most received peer review as well.

The individual visitor studies sponsored by the NPS thus have received little benefit from individually conducting the standard review process established in response to the Paperwork Reduction Act. They instead have experienced delays associated with the additional time periods involved in the review process. They have experienced **Federal Register** publication costs which, under the current requirement for two notices per study, will amount to approximately $500.00 per study with no return of comments from the public for this cost to the taxpayers. They have imposed potential additional burdens on the public by requesting that the public separately review each and every one of the individual study plans and questionnaires, despite the similarities in purpose, topic areas, methodology, and planned uses of results.

Using the knowledge gained from this past experience, NPS is initiating a different approach to achieving public review of its survey process that it believes will be both more comprehensive and more effective. NPS is publishing this 60 day notice of intent to submit to OMB for approval a proposed collection of information to conduct all surveys prepared under this proposed process. In publishing this notice, NPS specifically requests public, scientific, and management comments on the appropriateness, suitability, and effectiveness of each element of the proposed process. NPS asks that respondents offer specific comments on the proposed topic areas. NPS asks for reactions to the proposal's discussion of benefits for program management, for involving the public with the minimum amount of burden, and for improving the methodologies for conducting surveys in and about parks. After addressing all public, scientific, and management comments received in response to this notice, NPS proposes to submit a revised version of this proposal to OMB and to publish a 30 day **Federal Register** notice to announce to the public that it has submitted a formal collection of information proposal to OMB to seek approval for all surveys that would be conducted during the 3 year test of the revised proposal.

NPS thus in this notice is soliciting public review and comment on a proposed public survey process that would deal with a group of selected, common topic areas related to visitors and visitor services, not on individual survey instruments. NPS believes this proposed approach will reduce the burden to the public for reviewing documents and will increase the level of public participation in development of useful topics and survey approaches.

As part of this broad public review process, NPS also will directly inform public interest organizations that have a clear interest in parks, park management, and visitor uses of parks about the opportunity to comment on this **Federal Register** notice. Such organizations to be contacted directly as representatives of large segments of the public will include: National Recreation and Park Association, National Parks and Conservation Association, Conference of National Park Cooperating Associations, National Association of State Park Directors, National Association of Interpreters, National Inholders Association, National Association of Counties, National Association of Conservation Districts, National Governors Association, Appalachian Trail Conference, American Hiking Society, Partners in Parks, National Tour Foundation, and National Association of Park Concessioners. By means of this notice, NPS requests other interested organizations to identify their interest and to provide NPS with comments regarding this proposed process for NPS to use in seeking OMB approval of NPS-sponsored public surveys.

3.30 Peer Involvement

In accordance with standard scientific practice, peer review occurs throughout the research process for developing objectives, methods, sampling design, questionnaire design, target populations, and data analysis strategies for prospective research. This peer involvement contributes significantly to improving the quality of research and its potential to address applied problems of the national parks. Each Principal Investigator (PI) or program manager, as appropriate, would be responsible for managing the process of obtaining, documenting, responding to, and summarizing the results of peer review on the PI's or program manager's research activities. NPS proposes to monitor the peer review that is obtained during four stages in the visitor survey process: (1) determination of appropriate topic area variables, (2) problem identification for each research project, (3) development and pre-testing of research instruments, and (4) preparation of reports for individual research projects and for this test of a program of collections of information.

3.31 Program Topic Area Variables

As part of publication of this notice, NPS will solicit peer review of the scientific appropriateness of the topic area variables included in this proposal. Peer reviewers will be asked to comment on the appropriateness, inclusiveness, and description of the variables proposed for each identified topic area.

3.32 Research Project Problem Identification

Under terms of this proposal, for each proposed, NPS-sponsored public survey, the principal investigators (PIs) intending to conduct the survey would work with park staff to identify and develop the objectives, scope, and target audience for research to address the management problem identified by the park manager. For new or significantly modified existing surveys, the PIs also would be expected to consult with peer researchers to ensure that the selected objectives, scope, and target audience are scientifically valid and have a high probability of yielding results useful for addressing the identified management problem.

3.33 Development and Pre-testing of Research Instruments

Whenever they are developing sampling strategies, questions to ask, layout of questionnaires, or statistical techniques to be used for analyzing results for new or significantly modified surveys, the PIs would consult, as appropriate, with their research peers. In these cases, the PIs also may test drafts of their proposed survey instruments on small samples of students or colleagues, as appropriate. The PIs would use such peer review comments and test results to provide insight on probable park visitor perspectives about the research instruments. They also would use the information to identify any trouble-spots in the proposed questionnaires regarding syntax, layout, and design to guide their revising the questionnaires in ways that will minimize the burden to the public that will be asked to respond to the questionnaires. The PIs also would request comments on the planned research design and proposed questionnaires from key individuals in the park or parks under study. Following this consultation, testing, and review by peers and managers, the PIs would complete their improvements to the proposed research and questionnaire designs and prepare final versions of their research plans and questionnaires.

3.34 Research Project and Program Report Preparation

As they prepare their project reports, the PIs would submit a draft of each proposed report for review by NPS staff and by research scientists where appropriate. The PIs would use the review comments they receive to help them prepare final reports that are clearly articulated, scientifically sound, and have maximum applicability for addressing the identified management problem. Similarly, the NPS Social Science Program would solicit and use appropriate peer review as part of its preparation of technical reports about NPS Social Science Program findings.

3.35 NPS Documentation of Peer Review

NPS would document peer review in four ways. First, NPS would provide in the required 30-day **Federal Register** notice that is part of the OMB collection of information decision process an analysis of the peer review it received on the topic area variables in response to this 60-day **Federal Register** notice. Second, NPS would require, at the time each NPS sponsored PI submits a final report, that the PI either describe the nature of the peer review the PI obtained or explain why the PI did not obtain peer review. Third, NPS would encourage PIs to publish their NPS sponsored surveys in peer reviewed publications. Fourth, NPS would provide in each NPS annual report to DOI and OMB that would be required by this proposed process a summary of all the peer review activities conducted during the year being reported.

3.40 Park or NPS Program Involvement

To ensure that NPS-sponsored public surveys provide information of use to management decision-making, NPS park and central office managers would maintain appropriate levels of involvement throughout the survey process. NPS park or central office managers would initiate the process when they identify needs for information about visitors to parks and request that a survey be conducted. NPS social science cooperators would respond to the request by proposing specific visitor survey projects. The requesting NPS manager then would work with the cooperators to ensure that the proposed projects can be accommodated within existing park management or NPS policy constraints and that the projected results of the proposed research will provide the information and levels of precision the requesting manager needs for decision-making. Park managers would provide in-park logistic and public relations support to the research cooperators as appropriate. The requesting managers would receive the project reports from the social scientists who conduct the surveys and would apply the findings to their management decision-making as appropriate. Park and central office managers also would monitor the public's response to the survey process and report to the NPS Visiting Chief Social Scientist any concerns or suggestions about the process that warrant consideration or follow-up action.

The NPS Social Science Program would serve as the program manager for the proposed process. Its specific proposed responsibilities are described later in this proposal.

3.50 Assignment of OMB Number, Expiration Date, and Allowed Information Collection Budget

Under terms of this proposed collection of information that NPS is considering submitting to OMB, NPS would propose that OMB assign a single number and three year expiration date to NPS for NPS to allocate without further review from OMB to all surveys that NPS might sponsor within the topic variables and limits regarding visitors and visitor services identified in this proposal. NPS further would propose that OMB assign NPS an annual Information Collection Budget from which NPS would distribute burden hours to the approved surveys according to need. NPS would not allocate the assigned number, an expiration date,

and a specific number of burden hours to any proposed questionnaire until NPS had secured approval of the questionnaire from DOI. Once it had received that approval, NPS would allocate to the approved survey the number, a date that does not exceed three years, and an appropriate number of burden hours, and would notify the applicant that the survey is approved. NPS also would assign a unique NPS identification number to each survey NPS approves to ensure that each survey receiving the common OMB number is identifiable. Once NPS had distributed the total number of OMB authorized annual burden hours for any given year, NPS would stop using this pilot process for approving requests for surveys in these topical areas and would process all additional such requests in that year through the existing review system. Alternatively, NPS might request OMB to approve additional burden hours under terms of this proposed process.

3.60 Annual Information Collection Budget

NPS in recent years has used a total of between 4,000 and 7,000 burden hours per year for conducting public surveys related to visitors and visitor surveys. Under the terms of this proposal, and given that NPS expects to add some new public surveys to meet its GPRA responsibilities, NPS would propose to request that OMB approve a total annual information collection budget for the surveys that NPS would process under the terms of this proposal of 8,000 burden hours. This annual burden would be approximately 2.7% of the total burden hours NPS reported for Fiscal Year 1997 and 0.2% of the total that DOI reported for the same year.

3.70 NPS Reporting Responsibilities

NPS would submit annually to DOI and OMB a report that would describe for the past year: (a) NPS survey activities undertaken, (b) improvements achieved in data collection activities (including savings in NPS full time equivalent personnel (FTE) and funds), (c) results of peer evaluation of NPS planned surveys and reports of completed surveys, (d) public comments about NPS surveys and public responses to the opportunity to review this proposal provided through the two **Federal Register** Notice publications, and (e) plans for the next year. Toward the end of the three year period identified in this proposal, NPS would submit a triennial report that would summarize the entire experience of the authorized activities and make recommendations for futher action.

3.80 DOI and OMB Oversight

Under this proposed process, DOI would meet its statutory responsibilities by reviewing and approving or rejecting each individual NPS proposal to allocate the OMB number to an NPS sponsored survey instrument that is elligible within the terms of this proposal. DOI would review the NPS annual and triennial reports and, based on its review, forward the reports to OMB or return them to NPS for further work. DOI would review all individual survey instruments that NPS submits separately from this proposed process and would act on them in accordance with existing procedures.

OMB would review this NPS request for a 3 year pilot test to conduct public surveys and approve or reject the proposal. Should OMB approve this proposal, OMB would use the NPS annual reports to monitor NPS decisions and actions regarding the allocation of the OMB number to NPS-sponsored survey instruments. OMB would review all NPS survey instruments that do not qualify for this proposed process and act on them in accordance with existing procedures.

3.90 Program Responsibilities and Responsible Officials

3.91 National Park Service

The NPS Visiting Chief Social Scientist, working through the NPS Social Science Program, will secure public review of this program proposal through the two step **Federal Register** notification process, will obtain other forms of public review of this proposal, and will solicit peer review of the proposal prior to preparing the final proposal package that would be submitted for OMB decision.

The NPS Visiting Chief Social Scientist, working through the NPS Social Science Program, would provide guidance for and, as requested, assist the preparation, public review, and technical review as appropriate of all NPS-sponsored individual survey instruments. For those survey instruments submitted under this proposed program and for which, therefore, individual public review would not be conducted, the Visiting Chief Social Scientist would review the instruments for compliance with technical standards and programmatic guidelines. The Visiting Chief Social Scientist would reject survey instruments that do not comply with the minimum requirements, would determine appropriate burden hours and expiration dates for those that do comply, and would recommend to DOI for approval those instruments that meet the requirements. Once the Visiting Chief Social Scientist had received approval from DOI, the Visiting Chief Social Scientist would allocate the OMB number and an expiration date and number of burden hours to, and authorize the PI to use, the approved instrument. Should a PI question a decision by the Visiting Chief Social Scientist, the PI would submit an appeal to the Associate Director, Natural Resource Stewardship and Science, for a decision.

For those information collection activities that would fall outside the OMB-approved topic areas included in this proposal, the responsible park or other NPS manager would prepare and submit through the NPS Visiting Chief Social Scientist to DOI and through DOI to OMB individual standard Paperwork Reduction Act submissions. This process would include the associated two-fold opportunities for individual public review in keeping with the existing public notification and timing requirements.

3.92 Department of the Interior

The DOI Office responsible for oversight of DOI information collection activities, currently the Office of Policy Analysis, would provide oversight of NPS within-approved-limits activities. The DOI Office of Policy Analysis also would review, accept, and forward to OMB the NPS annual reports of information collection activities. In addition, the DOI Office of Policy Analysis would review and submit to OMB those NPS applications for proposed survey activities that would fall outside whatever topic areas would be approved by OMB should OMB approve this proposal.

3.93 Office of Management and Budget

The OMB Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs would review and act on DOI recommended NPS requests for approvals of information collection topic areas, requests for approvals of information collection activities that are outside existing approved limits, and NPS annual reports.

3.100 Additional, Related NPS Initiatives

The NPS would engage in three initiatives related to this proposed request to OMB. One is preparing a strategic plan for visitor surveys. The second is sponsoring research on survey methods. The third is developing an archive of NPS survey results. Each is briefly described below.

3.101 A Strategic Plan for Visitor Surveys

Currently, NPS surveys respond to park-specific requests for data to meet individual park management needs. While this approach successfully supports those parks that are able to provide funds and attract researchers, it does not necessarily also contribute to needs of other parks or of the NPS as a whole. The exception is the Visitor Services Project, which uses a common survey format for all parks surveyed and relies on an Advisory Committee that meets annually to recommend to the NPS Associate Director, Natural Resource Stewardship and Science, for final decision the approximately 10 parks that will receive visitor studies during the year. The Advisory Committee develops its decisions using an established set of criteria and a formal nomination process.

Within 12 months following approval of this proposal, NPS would develop a strategic plan for determining where, why, and when to conduct visitor surveys in units of the National Park System. The plan would be developed in consultation with park managers, social scientists, NPS and DOI officials, and OMB. While focusing on ensuring that visitor surveys meet the needs of the specific parks requesting them, the plan also would develop an approach for strategically aggregating the results from the parks selected for study. It also would explore how to identify a set of possible ''indicator parks'' and how best to use those parks to represent the National Park System. In addition, it would determine other actions that would make NPS data collection at individual parks more cost-effective, more representative of large classes of visitors, and thus more useful for both park and national levels of analysis and decision-making. The experience gained from this strategic analysis of visitor surveys would form the basis of future strategic analyses of other classes of information collection activities.

3.102 Research on Survey Methods

Studies conducted by NPS within the topics of visitors and visitor services offer opportunities to conduct methodological research useful to both the NPS and other agencies with similar user populations and data collection needs. Research on improving response rates, reducing non-response bias, improving survey and interview design, reducing sampling error, increasing validity of measures, and improving public review of survey instruments are all important and possible. As an integral part of this proposal, NPS would initiate a modest program of research on these and other questions regarding survey methods. At least one project would be completed in the fiscal year following OMB approval of this proposal, submitted to a scientific journal for publication, and shared with OMB and other agencies.

3.103 Archive of NPS Survey Results

To support its research on survey methods and to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of its use of past information surveys, NPS would build a social science data and information archival system that would incorporate the existing Visitor Services Project (VSP) data base, which currently includes all visitor surveys conducted by the VSP. This archive ultimately would include survey metadata, survey data, and written reports for all NPS sponsored surveys. This archive would be available to the public under existing guidelines.

4.0 Topic Areas

This proposal focuses on the general subject of visitors and visitor services. It covers the specific kinds of information needed by NPS for planning, management, operations, and evaluation of performance related to meeting needs of visitors. The specific topic areas included in this proposal are: visitor characteristics, trip/visit characteristics, visitor activities and uses of park resources, visitor expenditures, visitor evaluations of park services, visitor perceptions of their park experiences, and visitor opinions on park management. For each topic area, this proposal provides definition, scope, justification for data collection, and a few examples of typical questions that could be asked and variables that could be expected as answers. The specific questions to be prepared for any individual survey would have to relate to one or more of the approved topic areas and would have to be approved by NPS and DOI as part of the review and approval process requested in this proposal.

4.10 Topic Area on Visitor Characteristics

4.11 Definition

Visitor characteristics are attributes of individual park visitors or visitor groups. Some examples include: age, zip code or country of residence, group type, ethnicity, disabilities/impairments, language abilities, socio-economic status, and visit frequency.

4.12 Scope

Visitor characteristics relevant to the mission, management, and/or operations of National Park System units are included.

4.13 Justification for Data Collection

The diverse units of the National Park System cater to the total diversity of the U.S. population and a cross section of international visitors. Qualitative and quantitative data about the nature and breadth of this diversity of park users provide NPS managers with information they need to ensure that park visitor services, education programs, facilities, and management operations respond appropriately to the capabilities, needs, and concerns of park visitors.

4.14 Examples of Typical Questions and Variables Expected as Answers

A. For you and your group on this visit, please indicate:

	Current age	U.S. Zip Code or name of foreign country	Number of visits made to this park (including this visit)
Yourself			
Member #2			
Member #3			
Member #4			
Member #5			
Member #6			
Member #7			

B. On this visit, what kind of group were you with? Please check only one.

Alone
Family
Friends
Family and Friends
Other (Please describe: ____)

C. What languages do you or members of your group regularly speak at home? Please check all that apply.

(Answer choices should reflect the languages most frequently spoken by visitors to the park)

D. Does anyone in your group have any physical disabilities which limited their ability to visit (park)? yes/no

If yes, what kind of disability? Please check all that apply.

Hearing
Visual
Mobility
Learning
Mental

4.20 Topic Area on Trip/Visit Characteristics

4.21 Definition

Trip/visit characteristics include travel factors which affect a trip or decisions which visitors make prior to, during, or following their trip to a park.

Examples include use of overnight accommodations, transportation, trip route, trip origin, trip destination(s), entrance/user fees, ability to obtain tickets, and length of trip.

4.22 Scope

Trip characteristics relevant to the mission, management, and/or operations of National Park System units are included.

4.23 Justification for Data Collection

Information about how visitors plan their trips, about features of their trips, and about their visits in the parks support park managers' efforts to provide park-access and park-specific information to visitors before they arrive at the parks; to work with local and regional planners dealing with transportation alternatives, facilities, and services that support visitors traveling to and from parks; to assist park concession managers in providing appropriate trip planning information to prospective visitors; and to more effectively handle visitors' trip-related needs (such as fees, tickets, permits, facilities, and services) once the visitors have arrived in the parks.

4.24 Examples of Typical Questions and Variables Expected as Answers

A. On this trip, how much time did you and your group spend in (park)?

If less than 24 hours:
Number of Hours: ____
If 24 hours or more:
Number of Days: ____ (Please list partial days as ¼, ½, etc.)

B. On this visit, what forms of transportation did you and your group use to get to (park)? Please check all that apply.

(Choices of answer should be appropriate for the park situation.)

C. On this visit, what were your reasons for visiting (park)? Please check all that apply.

(Choices of answer should be appropriate for the park situation.)

D. Prior to this visit, how did you and your group get information about (park)? Please check all that apply.

Received No Information Prior to Visit ____
Go on to Question ____
Friends/Relatives ____
Travel Agency ____

(Answer choices should be appropriate for the park situation.)

4.30 Topic Area on Visitor Activities and Uses of Park Resources

4.31 Definition

Visitors participate in a variety of activities during their visits to parks or related areas. While there are hundreds of activities in which visitors can engage, some important examples include: sightseeing, visiting visitor centers, day hiking, backpacking, picnicking, camping, shopping, observing wildife, attending ranger-led programs, taking photographs, boating, fishing, and many others.

Visitors also use a variety of park or related area resources including natural and cultural resources as well as infrastructure when they visit these areas. Some examples include roads, trails, restrooms, parking lots, drinking water, viewpoints/overlooks, visitor centers, gift shops, stores, lodges/motels, etc. Depending on the site, visitors may harvest berries, fish, game animals, fire wood, or sea shells; travel cross-country in roadless and trailless parts of the park; travel through historic structures or landscapes; or handle historic objects.

4.32 Scope

Visitor activities or uses of resources which are relevant to the mission, management, and/or operations of National Park System units are included.

4.33 Justification for Data Collection

Park and related area managers and planners use knowledge about visitor activities to design and operate interpretation, resource management and preservation, law enforcement, safety, and facility management activities to meet the needs of the visitors. They also use this information to support all aspects of planning, from buildings, roads, and trails, to exhibits. In addition, they must have the collected data available to track visitor use trends and project future demands for visitor uses. In conducting their management, planning, and monitoring activities, managers also use the information to effectively allocate their limited personnel and financial resources to the highest priority elements of their visitor services programs.

4.34 Examples of Typical Questions and Variables Expected as Answers

A. On the list below, please check all of the activities that you and your group participated in during this visit to (park).

(Answer choices should include all appropriate activities and ''other'' for write-in answers)

To gain additional information, the above question can be asked in different ways:

(a) On the list below, please check the activities that you and your group did at (park) on this visit. Please check all that apply.

(b) For your past visits to (park), please check the activities that you and your group have done. Please check all that apply.

B. Please check the services which you or your group used at (park) during this visit.

(Answer choices should include all appropriate services.)

4.40 Topic Area on Visitor Expenditures

4.41 Definition

The visitor expenditures topic area deals with the time and dollar costs that vistors experience in association with visiting parks and surrounding areas.

4.42 Scope

Visitor expenditures data include information related to direct visitor expenditure patterns in the park or surrounding area (direct expenditures) and to visitor expenditures associated with their travels to access the park or surrounding area (indirect expenditures).

4.43 Justification for Data Collection

Park and related area managers and business managers, planners, and other members of communities around the parks use visitor expenditure information to identify relationships between parks and local/regional economic development. Visitor expenditure data also provide insight to government and business managers regarding pricing issues related to entrance and user fees, costs of services in parks and related areas, concession fees, and to estimate the value of parks and park-related attributes for visitor uses.

4.44 Examples of Typical Questions and Variables Expected as Answers

A. We are interested in the expenditures your group made within (name of state). Please indicate the amount of dollars spent by your group in each of the following categories regarding your trip to (name of park).

a. transportation to (name of park) $____
b. equipment and supplies $____
c. lodging $____
d. raft outfitters $____
e. food and beverage $____
f. other, please specify $____

4.50 Topic Area on Visitor Evaluation of Park Services

4.51 Definition

Visitor evaluation data include quality and importance ratings of services which visitors used or

potentially could have used during their park or nearby area visit.

4.52 Scope

Services or facilities provided in parks by NPS, concessioners, or other cooperators that are used by visitors, available to visitors but not used, or potentially available to visitors are included.

4.53 Justification for Data Collection

Planners and managers of parks and related areas use data from visitor evaluations of services and facilities to improve customer service directly onsite; improve the efficiency of other park or related area operations that results in improved customer service; improve agency operations at the local, regional, and national levels to remove institutional barriers that prevent the providing of better services to visitors; develop a long-term data base to permit monitoring any changes in the provision of visitor services over time; and compile information that can satisfy reporting requirements of the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993.

4.54 Examples of Typical Questions and Variables Expected as Answers

Typically an evaluation asks visitors to rate services and facilities such as the courtesy of employees, the cleanliness of facilities, and quality of brochures and maps. Visitors rate these services and facilities on a scale from excellent to poor. For example:

A. Overall, how would you rate the quality of the visitor services provided to you and your group at (park) during this visit?

(a) Please check the visitor facilities or services in (park) which you or your group used during this trip.

(b) Next, for only those facilities or services which you or your group used, please rate their importance to you on a scale from 1–5, with 5 being of great importance and 1 being of no importance.

(c) Finally, for only those facilities or services which you or your group used, please rate their quality from 1–5, with 5 being of high quality and 1 being of low quality.

(a) Use facility/service in (park)

(b) If used, how important

(c) If used, what quality?

[Check If Used]

	Not important			Extremely important		Very poor			Very good	
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Restrooms										
Trails										
Etc.										

(Answer choices should be appropriate to the park)

4.60 Topic Area on Visitor Perceptions of Their Park Experiences

4.61 Definition

Visitor perception data deal with the visitors' awareness of elements of the natural and social environments in the parks they visit, their observations about those elements, and how their awareness and observations influence their overall park experiences.

4.62 Scope

Involves visitor experiences regarding park natural and cultural resources, other visitors to the park, park and other employees, and park infrastructure and services. Also includes visitors' perceptions of their experiences while in the park and surrounding areas.

4.63 Justification for Data Collection

Park managers use visitor perception information to guide decision-making about resource and visitor activity management to ensure that park programs both provide visitors with high quality experiences that meet the visitors' expectations and also protect the integrity of the resources and visitor activities that the visitors come to experience. Managers use visitor perception information to develop specific, measurable indicators and standards of quality for both the visitor experiences and resource conditions. Managers also may use the information to identify what personal and social norms to use for developing these indicators and standards of quality. The indicators of quality show what levels of quality of experience result from the various different levels of management effort. The standards of quality show the levels of quality that visitor experiences must equal or exceed to be considered acceptable outcomes. NPS will need visitor perception data and associated indicators and standards of quality to be able to benchmark the GPRA standards for acceptable outcomes that NPS established in 1996. Meeting these outcomes will ensure that NPS achieves its mission of providing high quality visitor experiences while protecting park natural and cultural resources.

4.64 Examples of Typical Questions and Variables Expected as Answers

Visitor perception questions seek to identify indicators of quality and standards of quality. For example:

A. What have you enjoyed most about your visit to (park) today?

B. Has anything detracted from the quality of your visit to (park) today? If so, what?

C. How much of a problem do you feel the following issues are at (park)? (Visitors are presented a list of potential indicators of quality and asked to judge—using a standardized response scale—the degree to which each issue is a problem.)

D. We are interested in how many people you feel could visit this place at any one time without your feeling too crowded. To help judge this, we have developed a series of photographs that show different numbers of people at this place. Please rate each of the photographs by indicating how acceptable you feel each one is based on the number of people shown. (Visitors are presented a series of photographs and asked to judge—using a standardized response scale—the acceptability of each photograph.)

4.70 Topic Area on Visitor Opinions on Park Management

4.71 Definition

Visitor opinions about park management include the ideas, beliefs, attitudes, preferences, and values that visitors express regarding all aspects of NPS park management.

4.72 Scope

Includes visitor opinions about how the park manages its natural and cultural resources, maintains its physical structures, guides human uses of park resources and facilities, and provides educational and other services to the visitor.

4.73 Justification for Data Collection

NPS manages park resources according to general and specific park plans that interpret general legislation, specific park enabling legislation, and NPS policy. Surveys that include visitor opinions on park management provide an important avenue for securing the public involvement that permits the NPS to understand what visitors know and think about park resource and other management actions. Such surveys will be necessary to evaluate fee and any other demonstration projects directed by the Congress. These surveys also help NPS to determine whether or not park educational efforts about park management actions are addressing the proper avenues of thought, are being presented effectively and in the most productive venues, are being understood by the recipients, and are useful to the recipients. Park managers use this knowledge to improve park planning, resource management, visitor education, maintenance, and visitor services.

4.74 Examples of Typical Questions and Variables Expected as Answers

A. The park's lake naturally contained no fish and the fish that are there now resulted from humans planting fish in the lake. How would your use of the lake area be affected if all the fish were removed from the lake? (Circle a number to indicate your response)

1 Would come to the area more often
2 No change in use of the area
3 Would come to the area less often
4 Would stop coming to the area
5 Would stop visiting the park

5.0 Benefits

NPS expects the procedure proposed in this notice for processing proposed collections of information related to the topic areas involving visitors and visitor services will provide substantial benefits to NPS, DOI, and OMB management of the information collection program, to public review of proposed collections of information, to the public burden related to reviewing proposed collections of information and responding to approved surveys, and to the science of conducting surveys of those members of the public who use parks.

5.10 Benefit to Program Management

5.11 NPS

By managing surveys related to visitors and visitor services as a coherent, single information collection program, NPS would increase the efficiency of its use of personnel and fiscal resources, improve the timing and focus of the public and peer review it obtains about its activities, reduce duplication of survey effort, develop improvements in procedures used to estimate the burden imposed by surveys of visitors to parks, improve the delivery of usable knowledge to park managers, and improve the archiving, use, and availability to the public of the results of past surveys.

5.12 DOI

In overseeing NPS management of the topic areas relating to visitors and visitor services as a coherent, single program, DOI would benefit by receiving more systematic and technically current survey instruments to review, having available to it the information contained in the NPS archive, and having available the NPS annual reports as tools for monitoring the responsiveness of the NPS program. The more efficient, effective, and independent position provided to DOI for overviewing NPS conduct of a program of surveys related to topic areas dealing with visitors and visitor services also would reduce financial costs and administrative burdens experienced by DOI.

5.13 OMB

OMB would benefit by having better public and peer review of a program of surveys, by having the NPS annual report available for efficient program monitoring and oversight, by testing a process for improving agency management of the review of proposed collections of information, by testing alternative procedures for conducting information collections in ways that minimize the burden to the public, and by receiving information from several NPS initiatives, including elements of research methodology and administration (see Section 5.3), related to the topic areas of visitors and visitor services. In addition, OMB would experience a reduction in its administrative burden with respect to reviewing proposed collections of information.

5.20 Benefit to the Public

The OMB approval process proposed in this notice would result in substantial benefits to the public. The public's opportunity and ability to assess the entire program of NPS surveys of visitors would benefit because of the general streamlining of the review process, enhanced coordination of survey research efforts, and more efficient and effective communication with the public. The public also would benefit because better coordination of the information derived from visitor surveys will contribute to more productive use of social science information in the management of the national parks, resulting in better customer service and resource protection. Additionally, both of these sets of benefits would result in more efficient use of public funds, including through reducing expenditures and government personnel time spent on preparing and publishing individual **Federal Register** notices.

5.21 Involvement of the Public

The public would be engaged in meaningful dialogue about the social science survey process through its opportunity to review the program proposal at two stages of proposal development and through the reports that would be provided by the proposed, coordinated annual and triennial reporting process.

This notice in itself benefits the public by providing information in a concise and comprehendable way about the purposes for which NPS conducts surveys of the public, the types of questions NPS asks of the public, and how NPS uses the responses to those questions to meet management needs for information. By focusing public review on the development and administration of a collection of information program rather than on individual, apparently unrelated survey instruments, NPS is encouraging greater public involvement in assessing the program and is making that involvement easier, more encompassing, more intelligible, and more productive.

The annual reports to be prepared as part of the proposed program would summarize the research activities conducted within the topical areas identified in this proposal. The triennial report would provide a synthesis of what has been learned during the three year cycle and, should the program perform as envisioned, describe topical study areas that NPS would propose for a subsequent three year planning cycle. These reports together would inform the public of the underlying purposes of proposed survey research and of the results of already conducted research.

5.22 Burden Efficiency

By shifting the timing and focus of public review of NPS sponsored public

surveys from individual surveys to a program of surveys, the process initiated with this notice is reducing the potential number of public burden hours expended on reviewing proposed public survey questionnaires and is increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of those burden hours that the public does expend. By building methodological research into its overall strategy, the proposed process would stimulate development of improved and more efficient survey questions, survey designs, and sampling approaches, thus reducing the public burden in responding to surveys while at the same time making the application of that burden have broader utility.

5.30 Benefit to Science

5.31 Peer Review

Currently, individual scientists are responsible by DOI policy to obtain peer review for social science work plans and reports associated with in-house survey research. The extent of this review varies widely by individual scientist and the type of project.

The proposed OMB approval process identified in this notice would result in a comprehensive series of survey and program reports and records that are reflective of the overall NPS program of social science research and its methodologies. Consequently, NPS would be able more easily to solicit peer review that focuses on Servicewide efforts and methodologies. This type of review would represent a significant benefit beyond that received from current individual peer review contributions. In addition, the NPS Social Science Program Office under the proposed plan would monitor individual requests for information collection and would require that requestors document the peer review they already have obtained and explain the absence of peer review where such review is lacking.

Within 12 months following approval by OMB of a proposal of the type contained in this notice, NPS would develop an expanded peer review process to ensure that all social science activities receive appropriate levels of peer review at appropriate stages in the development of the activities. NPS would involve both scientists and managers in this development and would ensure that the resulting process reflects academic, NPS, DOI, and OMB guidance regarding peer review.

5.32 Methodological Development

One of the significant advantages of this proposal is that it clearly establishes an incentive for methodological development and improvement. This would work in two ways. First, there would be stronger incentives for constructive peer review. Second, the proposed process would remove an unintended consequence of any reliance on a question catalog. In the past, NPS projects to conduct public surveys experienced a strong incentive to use an NPS question catalog because its use offered a somewhat reduced time for achieving OMB review. However, an unintended consequence of the use of the question catalog was the emergence of a disincentive to develop more valid and reliable measures for more complex items because of the burden of securing OMB review and approval. Because the application of survey research and social science concepts to park management is still developing, this disincentive is actually counter-productive to stimulating the methodological improvement needed in many research areas.

Under the proposed process, individual projects would receive peer review requested by individual researchers. All survey proposals would be reviewed by the Visiting Chief Social Scientist. Many projects would receive and benefit from additional peer review requested by the NPS social science program. Within this umbrella of increased professional dialogue and oversight, individual researchers would be encouraged to scientifically develop questions and other items that provide better data for NPS managers. Improvements in methodology, because they would be closely monitored by the NPS social science program, would be more quickly transmitted to all parks and researchers who could benefit.

The proposed process would lead to more competent planning and administration of survey research in the National Park System. Research would be more focused on topics which have high research and management priority. Researchers, themselves, would be more efficient because of reduced waiting time for questionnaire approvals. The more centralized research focus and repository of survey research findings would encourage a greater degree of synergy in survey research in the National Park System.

5.33 Data Management

The activities envisioned in this proposal would include an effort to develop and implement protocols for data management, data set documentation, and sampling methodology documentation that would benefit the exchange of data among scientists and the consolidation and assessment of data across individual research projects. The development of a data archive system and a clearly stated requirement that all publicly funded research projects must deposit a complete data set in the archive would increase the availability of data to the broad research community.

5.34 Efficiency of the Proposed Process for Scientists and Science

The proposed review process would increase the focus of scientists on dealing with the scientific effectiveness of their planned surveys. The proposed changes would foster the evolution of methods and questions that must occur for the survey process to become more efficient and effective. The growing availability over time of park data from the proposed archive would support comparative, longitudinal, multi-park, and National Park Systemwide analyses that would increase scientific understanding about visitors in parks. The data archive would provide baseline analyses that can make future scientific surveys and assessments more efficient at a lower overall burden cost to the public.

6.0 Conclusion: An Important Experiment

The approach for review and decision-making proposed in this notice regarding collections of information provides NPS, DOI, and OMB with a voluntary test of an alternative method for improving the productivity, efficiency, and effectiveness of a Federal information collection program. This test may affirm a method by which NPS can reduce the potential future information burden on the public, increase useful public review and comment, reduce duplication and increase collaboration in the information collection and analysis effort, meet shared data needs with shared resources, enhance access to information through use of electronic formats for both researchers and the public, and contribute to meeting NPS information collection and technology needs. It is an important experiment in reinventing government.

7.0 Contributing Authors

John Dennis, Jean Haley, Darryll Johnson, Dave Lime, Margaret Littlejohn, Gary Machlis, Bob Manning, John Peine, and Bill Stewart contributed to preparation of this proposal.

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SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: A Proposed Process for OMB Approval of NPS-Sponsored Public Surveys.

Bureau Form Number: None.

OMB Number: To be requested.

Expiration date: To be requested.

Type of request: Request for new clearance.

Description of need: The National Park Service needs information concerning park visitors and visitor services to provide to park managers information for improving the quality and utility to the public of park programs.

Automated data collection: At the present time, there is no automated way to gather this information, since the information gathering process involves asking visitors to evaluate services and facilities that they used during their park visits. The intrusion on individual visitors is minimized by rigorously designing visitor surveys to maximize the ability of the surveys to use small samples of visitors to represent large populations of visitors and by coordinating a program of surveys to maximize the ability of new surveys to build on the findings of prior surveys.

Description of Respondents: A sample of visitors to parks or of people who have relationships to parks.

Estimated average number of respondents: The proposal does not identify the number of respondents because that number will differ from individual survey to individual survey, depending on the purpose and design of each individual survey.

Estimated average number of responses: The proposal does not identify the average number of responses because that number will differ from individual survey to individual survey, depending on the purpose and design of each individual survey. For most surveys, each respondent will be asked to respond only one time, so in those cases the number of responses will be the same as the number of respondents.

Estimated average burden hours per response: The proposal does not identify the average burden hours per response because that number will differ from individual survey to individual survey, depending on the purpose and design of each individual survey.

Frequency of response: Most individual surveys will request only 1 response per respondent.

Estimated annual reporting burden: The proposal identifies the requested total number of burden hours annually for all of the surveys to be conducted under its auspices to be 8000 burden hours per year. The total annual burden per survey for most surveys conducted under the auspices of this proposal would be within the range of 100 to 300 hours.

Diane M. Cooke,

Information Collection Clearance Officer, WASO Administrative Program Center, National Park Service.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

National Park Service

Notice of Boundary Revision, Gulf Islands National Seashore, FL

AGENCY: Department of the Interior, National Park Service.