

Project Summary

Rocky Mountains Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit

Project Title: Social Science Research for Wilderness Planning in Yosemite National Park, phase 1-3

Discipline: Social Science
Type of Project: Research
Funding Agency: National Park Service
Other Partners/Cooperators: University of Idaho
Effective Dates: 1/3/2012 - 12/31/2014
Funding Amount: \$117,444 [FY13: \$47,537; FY12: \$69,907]

Investigators and Agency Representative:

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Project Abstract: Yosemite National Park has initiated a wilderness management plan. A major component of wilderness management is effectively managing recreational use, and the development of effective and publicly acceptable policies depends on having representative and thorough data on public experiences in wilderness and levels of support for alternative policies and practices. It is also important to understand any potential differences among managerially relevant subgroups of visitors, such as day users vs. overnight users or hikers vs. stock users. This study proposes to use on-site structured questionnaires, along with a small mail survey component, during the summer of 2013 to collect data from Yosemite wilderness visitors to inform wilderness management planning. Survey development was covered in Phase I of the agreement in which the Office of Management and Budget package was submitted and approved. This scope outlines the following tasks to provide the full implementation of the study, analysis, and reporting (document and presentation).

Methods:

Sampling: There are several subgroups of interest in the study, and adequate sample sizes need to be obtained for each of them. These groups include day users, overnight visitors, visitors to high use destinations, visitors to low use destinations, hikers, stock users, and John Muir Trail long-distance hikers. All wilderness portal trails will be categorized by use level (low, moderate, high), and a stratified random sample will be selected (with low use trails sampled at a higher rate than other trails, to ensure adequate sample sizes). Surveys will be administered two ways. On-site trail intercepts will be deployed with visitors at high and medium use trails as they exit the wilderness. For low use trails, visitor contacts will be made in wilderness centers where permits are obtained. We assume that the response rate will be 70%, based on similar recent studies. We seek to obtain 400 completed surveys for each stratum (Table 1). To reach this target, we estimate that we will need 127 days of sampling (with a researcher present on site for 6 hours during each sample day). Assuming that there will be two SCA research assistants, each will be expected to survey for 42 days during the summer season. SCA interns will work with the University of Idaho graduate student in collaboration with YOSE staff.

Analysis: Survey data will be analyzed with SPSS. Where appropriate, data will be subject to factor analysis to reduce sets of related items to reliable indices. Descriptive statistics will be generated. Regression analysis will be used to determine which trip and individual characteristics relate to support for different management actions.

Outcomes with Completion Dates:

Milestone	Date	Task Phase
Questionnaire finalized & submitted to OMB	12/15/2011	Phase I
Study plan - sampling protocol	4/2012	Phase I
Spatial Data Collection	6/2012 - 9/2012	Phase II
Spatial Data Analysis	Fall & winter 2012-13	Phase II
Survey Data collection	5/25/2013 - 9/1/2013	Phase III
Survey Data analysis	Fall 2013	Phase III
Presentation to Yosemite staff	Fall 2013	Phase III
Final report	3/1/2014	Phase III

Keywords: social science, research, recreation use, visitor survey, wilderness management plan, Yosemite National Park, University of Idaho