

Rocky Mountains Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit
Project Summary

Project Title: Visitor use monitoring for Glacier National Park

Task Agreement #: P16AC00970 **Modification(s):** 4
Type of Project: Technical Assistance
Discipline: Social
Funding Agency: National Park Service
Other Partners/Cooperators: University of Montana
Student Participation: Yes
Effective Dates: 6/15/2016 – 12/31/2022
Funding Amount: \$245,315.73

Investigators and Agency Representative:

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Project Abstract: Since 1980, visitation to Glacier National Park (GNP) has increased 60% and the number of vehicles traveling the Going to the Sun Road has increased from approximately 475,670 in 1980 to approximately 806,390 in 2014. Most visitors spend some part of their visit driving the Going-to-the-Sun Road and/or hiking the trails found within the corridor. Between the end of June and mid-August, the corridor experiences significant and increased crowding and congestion at pullouts, in parking areas and on many of the more popular trails. For many visitors, their experience has been negatively impacted by this congestion. Others are accustomed to these types of conditions in national parks, or choose to visit at a less popular time of year. Regardless, resource impacts on vegetation and wildlife have also increased. Numerous actions under consideration within the current planning process for the Going to the Sun Road could redistribute use to other parts of the park and have implications for backcountry experience as well as those areas close to the road.

This project has a clear public purpose and benefit. By establishing a baseline understanding of use levels on selected trails throughout the park, the impacts of adaptive management actions can be clearly understood and separated from the random variation in use patterns that is known to exist within the park. The project also supports methodological and analytical skill development at the University of Montana.