

Project Summary

Rocky Mountains Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit

Project Title: Public Attitudes and Actions toward Wild Animal Viewing in Yellowstone National Park

Discipline: Social Science
Type of Project: Research
Funding Agency: National Park Service
Other Partners/Cooperators: University of Wyoming
Effective Dates: 6/15/2012 - 12/31/2014
Funding Amount: \$9,964

Investigators and Agency Representative:

NPS Contact: Kerry Gunther, Title: Bear Management Biologist, Address: Bear Management Office, P.O. Box 424, Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190, Phone: 307-344-2162, kerry_gunther@nps.gov

Investigator: Patricia A. Taylor, Ph.D. (Professor, Department of Sociology, and WYSAC Faculty Affiliate) - University of Wyoming, Department of Sociology/Dept. 3293, 1000 E. University Ave., Laramie, Wyoming 82071; gaia@uwo.edu

Project Abstract: A questionnaire will be administered to randomly selected Yellowstone park visitors, both at bear jam sites and a smaller group in campgrounds and parking areas for lodges. No visitor center parking areas will be solicited. The target population will be adults visiting Yellowstone during June and July 2013, with a sample of approximately 625 respondents. Photographs will also be taken to document some of the results, as well as measurements of extensions into the roadways of parked or stopped cars. The questionnaire was pretested on a group of 8 park visitors, at three different bear jam sites on three separate days during July 2012. These sites were located near the following areas (see Appendix 1 on Questionnaire): just north of #35 Yellowstone River; at #34 Dunraven Road; and between Tower Fall and Tower-Roosevelt.

The results of this research should help managers evaluate the information that is being received and retained by park visitors, and whether that information is used by park visitors to self-monitor their behavior near wildlife, especially bears. Specifically, information will be collected on distances to be maintained to different wildlife species; human behavior at roadside stops for animal viewing; and information from various sources about animal behavior around humans at roadside stops.

Outcomes with Completion Dates: Final Report - March 15, 2014

Keywords: wildlife viewing, public safety, public information, evaluation, Yellowstone National Park, University of Wyoming