

WASO SOCIAL SCIENCE PROGRAM

3/20/91

#41

ITEMS OF INTEREST VI

**Dealing with a
national park**

We all need to become 'ecotourists,' leaving a place as pristine as it was when we encountered it.

'In the developing countries, everyone is anxious to develop tourism, but if they don't protect their resources, they could have a very short-lived industry.' — Tabata

**Ins and Outs: Staying in a Job,
Saving, Seen as Trends for the '90s**

**More Surveys,
Fewer Answers**

**Officials worried by crowding
on Mississippi, St. Croix**



United States Department of the Interior



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20013-7127

IN REPLY REFER TO:

March 20, 1991

Memorandum

To: Park Superintendents

From: Assistant to the Director for Science and Technology

Subject: **ITEMS OF INTEREST VI**

COUNTERFEIT VISITORS. A few months ago I wrote about the need for accuracy when counting and reporting visitor use statistics. Since then a real life case has come to light. In going from actual counted data to reported data, 10's became 100's, 100's become 400's, 3s become 30's or 80's, 600's became 1,600's, etc. After an extended period of such manipulation, the apparent rapid growth in visitation at this park was great enough to serve as justification for a proposed new visitor center, new park housing, and new roads. Unfortunately, it can and does happen. Enough said.

SPEAKING OF SURVEYS. As we move toward another visitor season, those Superintendents interested in conducting visitor surveys may be interested in the attached article published by the U. S. Travel Data Center.

ECOTOURISM. This term is more common outside the U. S. than within the country. It is used in the travel industry to refer to tours in which vacationers participate directly in physically active nature-oriented activities that involve the ecological surroundings . . . scuba diving, snorkeling, kayaking, windsurfing, bicycling, hiking, horseback riding, etc. A distinction is made between ecotourism versus conventional touring . . . the latter being typically a passive activity consisting of motorcoach, van or auto excursions without particular emphasis on ecological awareness. Travel agents say that interest in ecotourism is growing rapidly, with the participants being primarily young, sophisticated, activity-oriented persons. Concerns already are being expressed in some quarters that overzealous and profit-driven marketing of ecotourism programs not only will cause irreversible damage to fragile ecosystems, but also will result in significant long-term economic losses within the tourism industry.

TRENDS FOR THE 90'S. Some predictions for the decade of the 90's from the Socio-Economic Research Institute of America, and others:

- Saving and debt reduction, not spending, will be on people's minds during the 90's. Companies will economize; individuals will do likewise.
- Those who continue to spend will look to stretch their dollars. Consumers will want to feel they have gotten a deal when making purchases. Warehouse shopping and auctions will become popular.

- Aging baby boomers will begin to put more money in the bank.
- Travel costs will skyrocket.
- New jobs will be limited; quitting will be out. There will be an upsurge in employee loyalty. Union activity will grow as people band together to protect earlier economic gains.
- Entrepreneurial thinking will expand; resistance to bureaucratic control will grow.
- The young will rebel against the materialism of the 80's and will ridicule, not revere, material gain at all costs. YUPPIE values and lifestyles will be out; 1960's values will be in.

An observation. If the general thrust of these economic projections for the 90's is correct, and carries over to the travel and recreation area, Americans can be expected to place additional emphasis on the kinds of values, recreational opportunities and experiences traditionally offered by the NPS.

MINI-VISITOR-SURVEYS: A NEW INITIATIVE. The Denver-based Socio-Economic Studies Program Office (Ken Hornback et al) currently is field testing a 1-page mini-visitor-survey at Bent's Old Fort NHS (copy attached). This questionnaire is designed to provide a very low cost approach to getting some basic demographic, economic, and visitor stay and visitor activity data. The survey is being administered by park staff as a mail back questionnaire. The information collected from this mini-questionnaire format can be used for various management purposes . . . e.g., to evaluate economic impacts of the park; to provide data for validating visitation statistics; to support interpretive program designs and staffing actions; to assess where visitors come from and how long they stay; etc. One or two park-specific questions of particular interest to a Superintendent also can be accommodated. Visitor comments are solicited on the back-side of the form.

Field testing of other versions of this mini-survey questionnaire will continue over the summer, perhaps at 1 - 3 additional parks. We believe this mini-survey questionnaire will serve a very important need of park managers, particularly where cost is an important factor or where a Superintendent may want data for multiple seasons or on a monthly basis rather than for a single one-week period. The test program looks very promising so far. I will keep you apprised of progress and results.



Richard H. Briceland

Attachments

U. S. Travel Data Center Article
Bent's Old Fort Survey

VISITOR SURVEY CONSIDERATIONS

1 **Interview schedule.** Travel is a very seasonal activity. Interviews conducted during one season generally do not represent travel patterns for the year. Moreover, because a respondent's ability to recall an event diminishes with time, a survey conducted once a year of all trips in the past 12 months will provide less reliable results than a survey conducted monthly.

2. **Population definition.** The larger population that the sample is designed to represent should be explicitly stated. This may be, for example, "all travelers to places 100 miles or more away from home," or "all U.S. households." Be careful to determine that the sample does indeed represent the defined population. A sample of highway information center visitors does not represent all auto travelers, although it is sometimes assumed that it does.

3. **Sample selection method.** Identify how the sample was drawn from the population. This might be every fourth visitor to a highway information center, or any number of approaches. Random or probability samples are judged by statisticians to be superior to non probability samples such as "judgmental" or "quota" samples. Without this information, it cannot be determined whether the sample actually does represent the defined population.

4. **Interview location.** Where an interview is conducted can also help determine if the sample represents the designated population. For example, interviewing selected visitors at a group of attractions does not necessarily typify all travelers visiting the area.

5. **Sample size.** The total sample size should be noted, including both respondents and non-respondents. The larger the sample, the smaller the resulting sampling error (see number 10), all other items being equal. A smaller sampling error means the estimates are statistically more precise, but says nothing about biases introduced by other factors that could render the survey results meaningless.

6. **Interview mode.** Respondents can be contacted for interview in person, by telephone, or by mail. Each interview mode has its own limitations. For example, visuals cannot be used during a phone interview, interviewer bias may arise in the personal mode, and low response rates and reporting lags plague mail surveys.

7. **Response rate.** In general, the higher the response rate, the more representative the survey will be of the defined population. A response rate that falls below 80 percent is cause for concern. Those 20 percent or more who did not respond may differ considerably in behavior and attitudes from those who did, which is exactly what the survey is designed to determine.

8. **Non-response reduction procedures.** It is important to know what procedures were used to reduce the problem of non-response, including monetary and other incentives. Reasonable efforts should be made to obtain completed interviews from all members of the sample drawn.

9. **Interview form or questionnaire.** The actual questionnaire should be included with the presentation of the survey results. This allows better interpretation of responses since there are many ways to ask the same question. Look particularly for "leading" questions that provoke the respondent to answer in a certain way.

10. **Sampling error.** Since a sample is, by definition, only a subset of the population, a measure of how closely the estimates produced by the survey of that sample represent the population is needed. For example, when surveying travelers, there should be an indicator of how accurately the resulting estimates represent the actual number of travelers and their percentage distribution by age, income, and other characteristics. The sampling error of a survey estimate indicates how much a sample's estimates of volume or distribution may differ from the actual value of the population from which it is drawn.

As with any product, certain information should be gathered before deciding whether and how to use survey research results. Few people would purchase a car without knowing its cost, size, efficiency, reliability, model, and past performance record. It would be equally foolish to accept survey results without knowing the sample size, design, methodology, response rate, reliability, questions, and producer.

* Based on an article by Dr. Douglas C. Frechtling, former director of the Data Center.

**BENT'S OLD FORT NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE
TRIP FACT SHEET**



Home Zip Code: _____
Or Country: _____

Number of people in your vehicle visiting the park on this trip:
____ Adults (18 & over) ____ Children

Left Home On: ____/____/____
(Month/Day/Year)



Arrive LaJunta/Las Animas Area: ____/____/____
(Month/Day/Year)

Arrive Park: ____/____/____ ____:____
(Month/Day/Year) (Time AM or PM)



Number of Nights Spent On This Trip In:
Campgrounds Outside Park _____ Nights
Hotel/Motel Outside Park _____ Nights
With Friends Outside Park _____ Nights
Did not spend the night in the area _____



Activities in Park (Check all that apply)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not Visiting | <input type="checkbox"/> Sightseeing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Visited Museum/Exhibit | <input type="checkbox"/> Picnicking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> NPS Guided Tour | <input type="checkbox"/> Nature Trail |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Self Guided Tour/Trail | <input type="checkbox"/> Special Park Event |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take Pictures, Videos | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

Park Entrance By (Check One)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Cash Fee Payment | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 Golden Eagle Pass |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Golden Age Pass | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 No Fee Paid |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3 Golden Access Pass | <input type="checkbox"/> 6 Other |

Daily Expenditures For Your Group:

\$ _____ Lodging \$ _____ Transportation
\$ _____ Meals \$ _____ Miscellaneous

Leave Park for Last Time On: ____/____/____ ____:____
(Month/Day/Year) (Time AM or PM)

Leave LaJunta/Las Animas Area On: ____/____/____
(Month/Day/Year)



Returned Home On: ____/____/____
(Month/Day/Year)

Please give your comments, ideas, or suggestions for Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site on the back of this page. Thank you for taking the time to help us get to know our visitors.

Don Hill, Superintendent
Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site

