

Recreation Research Update

The Sequoia National Forest and Giant Sequoia National Monument recognize that good visitor data is needed for management. Although National Visitor Use Monitoring (NVUM) yields some useful information, it is only valid at the forest level and cannot be used for a particular site, a district, or even the monument. Consequently, we are having additional recreation research conducted by the Pacific Southwest Research Station.

Public surveys require OMB (Office of Management and Budget) approval, which can take a couple of years. In order to begin to collect some information more quickly to be useful in preparing the monument management plan, the Forest Service will use some survey forms that already have OMB approval. Through our collaborative process for development of the monument management plan, the public, particularly the Sequoia Monument Recreation Council (SMRC), has helped us determine which surveys to conduct and where.

Some of these survey forms are approved for use at specific day use sites. We have chosen to use three of those forms. One survey form deals with desired development (Form E), one gets at people's values (Form A), and one deals with safety (Form B). Surveys are administered in person. The approved languages are English and Spanish. The sites will be sampled year-round, with the sample size proportionate to the amount of use occurring during each season. Although winter use would be sampled (provided the site is open in the winter), the public noted that none of the initial list of sites proposed would capture winter (snow) activities. As a result, we added Big Meadows Winter Trailhead (which also gets some summer use) to the list of surveyed sites. So, the list of sites and forms to be used are:

Hume Lake District:

- Sandy Cove;
- Powder Can Picnic Area;
- Big Meadows Winter Trailhead;
Forms E (development) and A (values—manage for ecosystem services) for all three sites.

Western Divide District:

- Trail of 100 Giants Trailhead—Forms A (values) and E (development);
- Lower Coffee Camp—Forms B (safety), E (development), and A (values);
- The Stairs—Forms B (safety), E (development), and A (values).

In order to gather some information from the general public, including both forest users and non-users, a telephone survey that was conducted in the L.A. area will be replicated with central valley residents. This research focuses on “Getting the Forest Service’s Message to All the People,” looking at the most effective ways of communicating with a diverse public.

A literature review of existing recreation research is also being conducted, as some of that research may also provide some useful information that can be applied to the Sequoia.

In the longer term, the Forest Service plans to conduct additional research that targets other types of use or locations, for example. SMRC is involved in determining what additional information would be desired, although the actual survey instrument(s) will be developed by Research, in order to be sure that the questions asked will yield valid results.