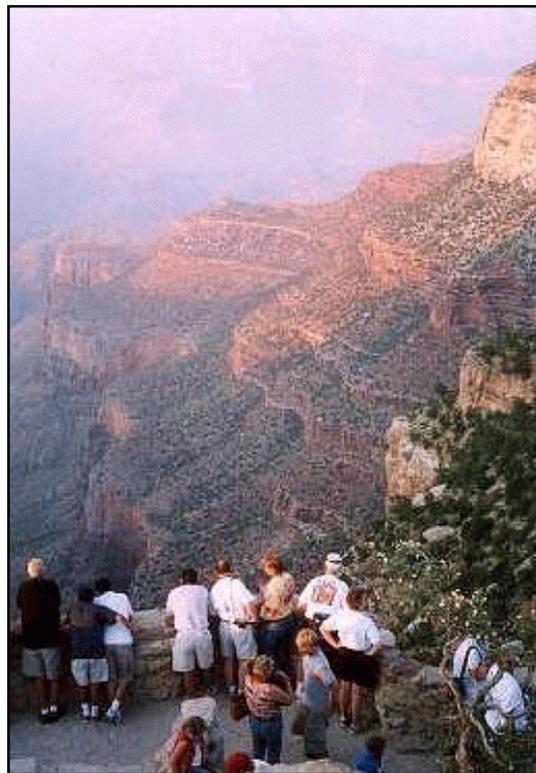


National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



# National Park Service Social Science Program

FY 2003 Annual Report



January 2004

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## FY 2003 Annual Report

Task Order J5040 02 0018, Cooperative Agreement H50000 02 0271  
Gulf Coast Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit

### Introduction

The National Park Service (NPS) Social Science Program is part of the Natural Resource Stewardship and Science Directorate. A Visiting Chief Social Scientist (VCSS), who serves a 3-year renewable term, heads it. The VCSS provides leadership and direction to the social science activities of the NPS and supervises the budget and operations of the NPS Social Science Program.

The objectives of the Social Science Program are to conduct and promote state-of-the-art social science related to the mission of the National Park Service and deliver usable knowledge to NPS managers and the public. The functions of the Social Science Program are to:

- manage the approval process for submitting NPS information-collection requests to the Office of Management and Budget;
- provide supervision and guidance to the Visitor Services Project and other activities of the NPS Social Science Program;
- sponsor and provide direction to social science research related to the national needs of the NPS;
- serve as liaison with other science and related programs of the NPS;
- serve as liaison with the USGS Biological Resources Division, the Department of the Interior, and other federal agencies on social science activities; and
- advise the Secretary of the Interior, the NPS Director, and the National Leadership Council as requested.

This report describes major accomplishments of the Social Science Program in FY 2003.

### Manage the Approval Process for OMB Submissions

(<http://www1.nature.nps.gov/socialscience/survey.htm>)

In FY 2003, 56 surveys, focus groups, and field experiments were approved under the expedited review process for NPS-sponsored public surveys. Approved studies were conducted in or for 44 units of the National Park System. On average, it took 38 calendar days from initial submission to the Social Science Program for an information collection to be reviewed and approved by OMB. Two additional surveys were recommended for submission under the standard Information Collection Review process, which requires more opportunity for public comment on the collection before it can be conducted.

Brian Forist, the Social Science Program research associate who coordinates NPS social science submissions to OMB, received the Secretary of Interior's Excellence in Customer Service Award for his role in creating and managing the expedited approval for NPS-sponsored public surveys.

## **Provide Direction and Guidance to Activities of the NPS Social Science Program** (<http://www.nature.nps.gov/socialscience/index.htm>)

### Washington Office

The Washington Office (WASO) of the Social Science Program is staffed by a full-time research associate and by the VCSS, who is co-located in Washington, DC and at Texas A&M University. A Social Science Program coordinator in Washington, DC assists them. The WASO staff has Program-wide responsibility for budgeting, as well as directing all aspects of the Social Science Program activities that occur at WASO. This includes managing the submission process to OMB for NPS-sponsored public surveys.

In FY 2003, substantial work was completed on an expansion and redesign of the Social Science Program Web site. A common format shared by all programs of the Natural Resource Stewardship and Science Directorate was developed. This new format will go online in FY 2004.

Under the direction of the WASO research associate, a Social Science Program intern was hired to assist in the Washington Office. The intern took leadership in developing the NPS Social Science Studies Collection, a new component of the online Digital Library of NPS Focus. In FY 2003, 121 social science technical reports and images were scanned and added to this collection. The intern also produced a flier publicizing the Social Science Studies Collection and redesigned the Social Science Program brochure.

The WASO staff submitted a proposal for continued 20 percent Fee Demonstration support of the Visitor Services Project. This support is critical to the participation of small units in the visitor surveys conducted by the project.

Director's Order 78, "Social Science," became effective on October 7, 2002. It describes the purpose and responsibilities of the Social Science Program.

### Texas A&M University Office

A half-time administrative assistant was hired to staff the Texas A&M University office of the NPS Social Science Program. The primary responsibility of this position is to edit and print reports of the Social Science Program. The position also serves as a coordinator for peer reviews of Social Science Program publications. In FY 2003, the administrative assistant was responsible for formatting, editing, and printing one *Social Science Research Review*, one thematic publication from the 2000 NPS Comprehensive Survey of the American Public, and two focus-group reports. In addition, peer reviews were coordinated for two additional thematic reports from the

Comprehensive Survey. Substantial work was completed on formatting and editing these reports, which will be published in FY 2004.

### Visitor Services Project

(<http://psu.uidaho.edu/vsp.htm>)

The Visitor Services Project (VSP) conducts approximately ten in-depth visitor surveys in NPS units each year. The parks are selected from nominations made by NPS regions to the VSP Advisory Committee. Headquartered at the University of Idaho Park Studies Unit, the activities of the VSP are overseen by a principal investigator who is a faculty member in the College of Natural Resources at the university. The VCSS and the Advisory Committee, which convenes annually, provide additional oversight. For the past three fiscal years, 20 percent Fee Demonstration money has been available to the VSP to contribute up to two-thirds of the cost of VSP surveys to small parks (annual budgets of less than \$1.5 million). Without Fee Demo support, most small parks would be excluded from participation in the Visitor Services Project.

In FY 2003, VSP studies were conducted at ten units: Gateway NRA, Cowpens NB, Grand Canyon NP, C&O Canal NHP, Capulin Volcano NM, Oregon Caves NM, Knife River Indian Villages NHS, Fort Stanwix NM, Arches NP, and Mojave NPRES. Six of these units qualified as small parks, and were awarded funds from the VSP to offset the costs of their visitor surveys.

Reports were completed and closeout sessions held for the units that had surveys conducted in FY 2002, and planning began for 11 FY 2004 surveys. A report analyzing visitors' evaluations of interpretive media, which used data from 23 VSP surveys, was completed for the Harpers Ferry Center. This report will be printed and distributed by the VSP in FY 2004.

### Visitor Survey Card

(<http://psu.uidaho.edu/vsc.htm>)

The Visitor Survey Card (VSC) is a component of the VSP. To assist the NPS in complying with the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA), visitor surveys employing the card are conducted in over 300 units of the National Park System annually. The VSC survey was developed to measure each park unit's performance with respect to NPS GPRA Goals IIa1 (visitor satisfaction) and IIb1 (visitor understanding and appreciation). In 2003, 26,064 responses were received from 304 parks. Ninety-six percent of respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of appropriate services, facilities, and recreational opportunities in the parks they were visiting. This was an increase of one percentage point from 2002.

Jennifer Hoger, the VSC coordinator at the University of Idaho Park Studies Unit, received the Secretary of Interior's Excellence in Customer Service Award for her role in managing the VSC program.

*Serving the Visitor 2002*, a report summarizing the results of VSP and VSC surveys, was published in FY 2003.

## Public Use Statistics Office

(<http://www2.nature.nps.gov/stats/>)

The Public Use Statistics Office (PUSO) was moved to the Natural Resource Stewardship and Science Directorate and the Social Science Program in FY 2003 under a reorganization of the NPS. Located in Denver, CO, the PUSO coordinates visitor counting in all units of the National Park System that report visits. It also does short-term forecasts of visitation for the NPS Budget Office, consults with individual parks on changes in counting methods, writes and distributes a monthly executive summary of public use, and publishes the annual *National Park Service Statistical Abstract*.

In FY 2003, the PUSO updated its Web site to include graphing capabilities and to allow downloading of visitation data into Excel spreadsheets. The Web site also includes all park acreage data for the Lands Resources Division. In addition, seven surveys were started or completed for parks to update their person-per-vehicle multipliers, and 100 traffic counters were given to 65 parks at a cost of \$25,000. Counting procedures were audited at more than 90 units.

PUSO staff wrote and distributed 12 monthly executive summaries of public use and continued to maintain a historical database of events affecting national park visitation. In 2003, 240 entries were made into this database. Technical assistance was provided to Utah State Parks to develop a visitor counting and reporting system.

A draft Director's Order (DO-82) was prepared which describes the functions and responsibilities of the Public Use Statistics Office. This Director's Order is currently in the review process.

## Money Generation Model (Version 2)

(<http://www.prr.msu.edu/mgm2/>)

The Money Generation Model (MGM2) is the tool used by the NPS to estimate the economic impact of visitor expenditures in local regions around parks. It is managed through a cooperative agreement with Michigan State University. In FY2003, Service-wide visitor spending and economic impacts were estimated using the MGM2 model based on recreation visits in CY 2001. Visitor spending within 30- 60 miles of National Park System units was estimated at \$10.6 billion in 2001.

In addition to the calculation of Service-wide impacts, detailed reports were completed for six parks using visitor-expenditure profiles developed from VSP surveys in those units. These six parks were Crater Lake NP, Valley Forge NHP, Pictured Rocks NL, Biscayne NP, Colonial NHP, and Sequoia/Kings Canyon national parks. Assistance was also provided to the National Parks Conservation Association to produce a report on the economic impact of visitor spending in selected California national parks.

A guidebook was produced to assist national heritage areas in gathering data for use with MGM2. Technical assistance was provided to seven national heritage areas conducting visitor surveys in 2003: Augusta Canal, Cane River, Essex, Lackawanna Valley, Motor Cities Automobile, Ohio and Erie Canal, and Silos and Smokestacks.

### Social Science Research Review

(<http://www1.nature.nps.gov/socialscience/products.htm> - SSRR)

The *Social Science Research Review* is a serial publication of the Social Science Program. The purpose of each review is to provide the basis for scientific understanding of a social science issue critical to the NPS. Experts are commissioned to write the review papers, and each paper is peer-reviewed. In FY 2003 one new review was published, *Wildlife- Human Interactions in National Parks in Canada and the USA*. A second review was commissioned dealing the economic impacts of national parks and other public lands.

### Sabbatical in the Parks Program

(<http://www1.nature.nps.gov/Sabbaticals/>)

The Social Science Program serves as a matchmaker between university faculty desiring sabbatical experiences in the National Park System and park units having specific research or technical assistance needs that can be met with sabbaticals. Four sabbatical placements were made in FY 2003 in Yellowstone, Zion, and Theodore Roosevelt national parks, and in a combination of parks and monuments in the southwestern US, including Mesa Verde NP, Aztec Ruins NM, and Hovenweep NM. In addition, significant progress was made on eight potential placements for FY 2004. Sabbatical in the Parks Program materials were distributed at the National Association for Interpretation conference in November 2002, and a poster presentation about the program was given at the George Wright Society conference in April 2003. In addition, the program's Web site was revised in 2003.

### Urban Recreation Research Center

The Urban Recreation Research Center (URRC) at Southern University and A&M College, Baton Rouge, was established under a five-year cooperative agreement in FY 1999. The purposes of the URRC were: 1) to provide research, education, and technical assistance to help managers of urban units of the National Park System better protect park resources and serve visitors; 2) to create a wider diversity of social scientists conducting research on urban recreation, and 3) increase the pool of culturally diverse students interested in NPS careers.

The cooperative agreement with the URRC was not renewed upon its expiration in FY 2003. This decision was based on the emergence of a strong national network of Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Units (CESUs), all of which involved minority institutions, including Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, and tribal colleges. The CESU network did not exist when the URRC was established in 1999, but now provides the NPS with a nationwide pool of expertise needed to address the many complex issues of urban parks.

The principal activity of the URRC in FY 2003 was to conduct a job fair in February that placed several Southern University students in seasonal employment positions with the NPS. This continued a string of successful recruitment activities placing up to 40 students per year in the seasonal workforce. Some of these students subsequently obtained permanent positions with the NPS. Because of the success of the job fair, a dialogue was initiated with the Administration, Business Practices, and Workforce Development Directorate of the NPS to expand the URRC model so that it

would be both multi-cultural and national in scope. To facilitate the transition to the new activity, the Social Science Program agreed to fund an additional URRC job fair in FY 2004.

### Canon National Parks Science Scholars Program

(<http://www.nature.nps.gov/canonscholarships/>)

The Canon National Parks Science Scholars Program is managed by the NPS Visiting Senior Scientist, but is a component of the Social Science Program budget. The program is a partnership between Canon U.S.A., Inc., the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), and the NPS. It awards eight \$78,000 scholarships annually to doctoral candidates who conduct research critical to national park conservation. Funding comes from Canon's toner-cartridge recycling program. The program continued in FY 2003 and expanded to cover all of the Americas. One hundred and fifteen dissertation proposals were submitted to the NPS and reviewed by the AAAS, which selected eight 2003 Canon Scholars. The program Web site was re-designed, and an exhibit (funded by Canon U.S.A., Inc.) was produced and displayed at several meetings. Five Canon Scholars completed their dissertations, received their PhDs, and graduated from the program. The 2004 competition was announced, and 143 proposals were received and delivered to the AAAS. The AAAS selected eight Canon Scholars, and work on transferring scholarship funds was initiated. Substantial planning occurred for the Canon Scholars Retreat scheduled for early FY 2004.

### Socioeconomic Atlas Project

The Socioeconomic Atlas Project is managed by the NPS Visiting Senior Scientist, but is a component of the Social Science Program budget. The atlas project continued in FY 2003 with additional atlases initiated and completed and a restructured production process launched. Data collection and an atlas were completed for the Blue Ridge Parkway and initiated for Saguaro NP, with a first draft completed. Both parks have been conducting General Management Plan revisions, using the atlases in these revisions. A companion CD-ROM version of each atlas was prototyped. The objective is to provide electronic copies of the atlases, along with the data and graphics files used to create them. A tutorial is also included. In FY 2004, the prototype will be converted to specific CD-ROMs for the first four pilot atlases (Harpers Ferry NHP, Joshua Tree NP, Mount Rainier NP, and Wilson's Creek NB) and for Blue Ridge Parkway and Saguaro NP.

The NPS established a cooperative relationship with The Pennsylvania State University Department of Geography to streamline atlas production, enabling atlases to be completed more quickly and efficiently. The selection of additional parks for atlases and CD-ROMs was initiated.

### **Provide Direction to the National Needs Research Program of the NPS**

(<http://www1.nature.nps.gov/socialscience/products.htm> - [Comprehensive\\_Survey](#))

When funding is available, the Social Science Program supports research meeting the national needs of the NPS. The studies supported by the National Needs Research Program are those that are unlikely to be advanced by any single unit, region, or program. In FY 2003, one thematic report from the 2000 NPS Comprehensive Survey of the American Public was published: *National Park Service Fees: An Examination of Public Attitudes*. Two additional thematic reports were peer-

reviewed and revised during FY 2003 and are scheduled for publication in FY 2004. These analyze patterns of race and ethnicity among national park visitors and non-visitors and public attitudes toward the management of invasive species in national parks.

## **Serve as Liaison with Other Science and Related Programs of the NPS**

### Alaska Support Office

The Social Science Program worked on two projects with the Alaska Support Office in FY 2003. First, the VCSS participated in a workshop in Anchorage attended by stakeholders interested in social science research on the Alagnak Wild River. Second, the Social Science Program developed a Statement of Work to produce a Social Science Research Plan for the Alaska Region of the NPS. Workshops prioritizing research needs will be conducted in Alaska and other areas, leading to a published research plan in FY 2004.

### South Florida National Parks

The four south Florida national parks (Everglades NP, Dry Tortugas NP, Biscayne NP, and Big Cypress NPRES) requested proposals for a south Florida population survey. The Social Science Program coordinated the review of proposals, which resulted in the selection of Clemson University to conduct the survey in FY 2004.

### Park Planning and Special Studies Program

In FY 2003, the Social Science Program organized and conducted two focus groups that were funded by the NPS Park Planning and Special Studies Program. The purpose of the focus groups was to respond to concerns in the House Appropriations Committee Report for FY 2002 about the cost and size of proposed visitor centers in some national parks.

Two reports describing the results of the focus groups were drafted, reviewed, revised, and published in FY 2003: 1) *Visitation Forecasting and Predicting Use of NPS Parks and Visitor Centers*, and 2) *Trends in Demographics and Information Technology Affecting Visitor Center Use*.

### Recruitment Futures Workgroup

The Social Science Program assisted the NPS Recruitment Futures Workgroup in drafting the NPS Strategic Recruitment Plan. The plan includes substantial involvement by the Social Science Program in developing exit interviews for NPS personnel terminating their employment and developing instruments evaluating NPS recruitment activities.

### Conferences, Meetings, and Other Involvement

Social Science Program staff, including VSP staff, made presentations and participated in panels at the following conferences and meetings during FY 2003: Natural Resources Advisory Group meeting, George Wright Society meeting, Planning Leadership Group meeting, National Association for Interpretation workshop, and the Interpretive Leadership Seminar.

The VCSS served on the selection committee for the 2003 national Freeman Tilden Award. The Social Science Program and PUSO staff also responded to several inquiries from the media regarding trends in visitation to National Park System units.

### **Serve as Liaison with the USGS, the Department of the Interior, and Other Federal Agencies**

Social Science Program staff served with representatives of the US Geological Survey, the Bureau of Land Management, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the Bureau of Reclamation on the Department of Interior's (DOI) Customer Forum and on the Recreation Public Demand/Visitor Satisfaction Pilot Team. Templates for four recreation-related outcomes included in the DOI Strategic Plan were completed in FY 2003. The VCSS also served as the DOI representative to the Social, Behavioral, and Economic Subcommittee of the National Science and Technology Council. The terms of reference for the subcommittee focus on applying social science expertise to issues of national and homeland security.

### **Advise the Secretary, Director, and National Leadership Council**

The Social Science Program regularly handles requests for information and analysis from the Office of the Secretary of the Interior, the NPS Director's Office, and other administrative components of the NPS and the DOI. In FY 2003, many of these requests dealt with summarizing and interpreting data from the Money Generation Model describing the economic impact of national parks on surrounding regions. Several one-page summaries were prepared on this and related issues, and a report summarizing total economic impacts by state was produced for the Director's Office. The Social Science Program also responded to several other issues and citizen complaints raised by third party Web and Internet surveys dealing with national parks and the NPS.

## **About the NPS Social Science Program**

The role and functions of the NPS Social Science Program are to: provide leadership and direction to the social science activities of the NPS, coordinate social science activities with other programs of the NPS, act as liaison with the USGS Biological Resources Division and other federal agencies on social science activities, provide technical support to parks, park clusters, support offices, and regional offices, and support a program of applied social science research related to national research needs of the NPS.

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