

that NPS preserve park resources and regulate the use of units of the National Park System. The information currently collected identifies: (1) Names and business contact information for people who seek a permit to conduct natural or social science research and collecting activities in individual units of the National Park System, (2) what activities they wish to conduct, (3) where they wish to conduct the activities, (4) whether or not they wish to collect specimens as part of the activities they propose to conduct, and (5) for applicants who have received a permit, annual summaries of the actual results of their permitted activities. NPS uses the collected information for managing the use and preservation of park resources and for reporting the status of permitted research and collecting activities. NPS is considering proposing to change both the Application for a Scientific Research and Collecting Permit and the Investigator's Annual Report to improve their usability by respondents and to improve the focus of the information NPS collects to address specific needs that use of the two forms over the last three years has revealed. Examples of such needs associated with managing the permit include additional information about the project scope and status, such as expected total time span of the project, specific identification of project personnel who will be working in the park, status of processing collected specimens, planned schedules for the field work phases of the project, and expected end date for the project.

More specifically, NPS is considering proposing changes to the Application to improve the use of the Application for both scientific research and collecting and scientific education activities. NPS is considering proposing changes to the Application to improve the clarity of information provided to, and obtained from, respondents who request use of a non-NPS repository regarding the duty the respondents have for securing acceptance by the proposed non-NPS repository of becoming the curator for collections authorized in the permit. NPS is considering proposing changes to the Application to better understand the schedule of field work activities. NPS is considering proposing changes to the Investigator's Annual Report to reduce the complexity of the form by assigning responsibility to NPS, not the respondent, for determining the appropriate activity code for each permitted project.

Automated Data Collection: The information collection and status reporting system for which the renewal of two components of a single collection of information package is being

proposed in this notice currently is available to applicants, permittees, and the public through the NPS Research Permit and Reporting System Web site (<http://science.nature.nps.gov/research>). In addition to considering the modification of the two information collection forms, NPS is developing modification to the Internet site to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of this automation system to facilitate the permit application and progress reporting process.

Description of Respondents: Representatives of academic and other research institutions, Federal, state, or local agencies, research businesses; other scientific parties seeking an NPS research and collecting permit; permittees who submit the annual report of accomplishment that is one of the permit conditions.

Estimated Average Number of Respondents: 3,000 per year.

Estimated Average Number of Responses: 6,000 per year. For each permit cycle, each respondent will respond usually once to prepare and submit the application for a permit and respondents who are successful in being awarded a permit will respond a second time to submit the Investigator's Annual Report. Given the most applicants are successful in being awarded a permit and that permit renewal usually occurs annually, the number of responses will approach a total that is two times the number of respondents.

Estimated Average Burden Hours Per Two-Part Response: 1,625 hours per year total for responding to both parts of the collection information.

Frequency of Response: 2 times per respondent per year—once to submit the application and once to submit the Investigator's Annual Report.

Estimated Annual Reporting Burden: 4,875 hours.

Dated: November 12, 2003.

Leonard E. Stowe,

Acting National Park Service Information Collection Clearance Officer.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

National Park Service

60-Day Notice of Intent To Renew Request for Clearance of Information Collection, Backcountry Use Permit, Opportunity for Public Comment

AGENCY: National Park Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice and request for comments.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Pub. L. 104-13, 44 U.S.C. 3507) the National Park Service (NPS) invites public comment on a request for renewal of the information collection requirements of NPS Standard Form 10-4-4, Backcountry Use Permit. The permit was initially authorized under OMB Control No. 1024-0022. The Backcountry Use Permit is the primary form used to provide access into NPS backcountry areas including those areas that require a reservation to enter or where use limits are imposed in accordance with other NPS regulations. Such permitting enhances hazard warnings, search and rescue efforts and resource protection.

DATES: Public comments will be accepted until February 3, 2004

ADDRESSES: Send comments to Lee Dickinson, National Park Service, 1849 C Street NW., (org. code 2460), Washington, DC 20240 or e-mail at Lee_Dickinson@nps.gov. All responses to this notice will be summarized and included in the request for Office of Management and Budget (OMB) approval. All comments will become a matter of public record. Copies of this form may be obtained from the Internet at <http://www.nps.gov/policy/DOrders/BUP.pdf> or by contacting Lee Dickinson.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Lee Dickinson, National Park Service, 1849 C Street NW., (org. code 2460), Washington, DC 20240 by telephone at 202-513-7092 or by e-mail at Lee_Dickinson@nps.gov

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: In 1976, the NPS initiated a backcountry registration system in accordance with the regulations found at 36 CFR 1.5, 1.6 and 2.10. The objective of the backcountry use permit system is to provide campers access to backcountry areas of national parks with continuing opportunities for solitude, while enhancing resource protection and providing a means of disseminating public safety messages regarding backcountry travel.

NPS backcountry program managers, by designating access routes and overnight camping locations, can redistribute campers in response to user impact, high fire danger, flood or wind hazard, bear activity or other situations that may temporarily close a portion of the backcountry. The NPS may also use the permit system as a means of ensuring that each backcountry user receives up-to-date information on backcountry sanitation procedures, food storage, wildlife activity, trail conditions and weather projections so that concerns for visitor safety are met.