



Forest Service

George Washington &
Jefferson National Forests
5162 Valleypointe Pkwy.
Roanoke, VA 24019
(540) 265-5100
www.fs.fed.us/r8/gwj



News Release

Media Contact: Ginny Williams (540) 265-5166
gwilliams03@fs.fed.us

FOREST SERVICE BEGINS SURVEYS ON VISITOR USE

(September 25, 2015) Roanoke, VA - Through a partnership with the USDA Forest Service, West Virginia University (WVU) will conduct voluntary surveys of visitors recreating on the George Washington & Jefferson National Forests. Beginning October 1, 2015, WVU students, and employees will host survey stations at developed recreation areas, trailheads, and along Forest Service roads. People who agree to participate in the survey will not be asked their names, and all responses are confidential. The basic interview lasts about eight minutes, and every other visitor is asked additional questions related either to economics or satisfaction, which may take an additional five minutes.

The information gained from the survey will aid the Forest Service in analyzing recreation needs and trends and assist state and local governments with tourism strategies and planning. In addition, the survey will provide National Forest managers, partners, and Congress with an estimate of how many people recreate on federal lands and what activities they enjoy while there. Other important information includes how satisfied people are with their visit to the national forest and the economic benefits on the local economy. The data gathered by this program is also used, along with other factors, in determining how funds for recreation management are allocated to the national forests.

Forest Supervisor, Tom Speaks, encourages the public to stop for an interview. “The more we know about our visitors and their specific interests and satisfaction level, the better we can manage national forest lands to meet their desires.” Although the survey is entirely voluntary, the Forest Service

-MORE-



Forest Service



Forest Service Begins Surveys on Visitor Use – page 2

hopes as many people as possible will stop to answer survey questions. It is important that the Forest Service gather information from both the local and out-of-area national forest users so that all types of visitors are accurately represented in the study. There are about 300 survey dates scheduled beginning October 1 and continuing through September 30, 2016. Tom Speaks went on to say, “Even if you answered the survey questions once already, please stop again if you see a survey in progress. Determining the number of repeat visitors engaging in various recreational pursuits versus first time visitors is also very useful information.”

This will be the fourth survey for the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests, with prior surveys conducted in 2001, 2006, and 2011. The ongoing National Visitor Use Monitoring surveys are conducted once every five years on each National Forest in the country so that in any given year, approximately 20% of the National Forests are conducting these surveys. This ongoing program updates information previously gathered to look at recreation trends over time.

WVU has worked with multiple national forests on this program and are just completing a year of survey work on the White Mountain National Forest in New Hampshire. They are recognized as a leader in training future managers in recreation, park, and tourism by supplementing classroom education with real world experience in recreation data analysis and research. This will be the first time that the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests and West Virginia University have partnered on this program. “This is an important program and it’s imperative that it’s done right, so we are very fortunate to work with a university of this caliber,” said Speaks.

For additional information about the national visitor use monitoring program, visit <http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/programs/nvum/> or call 1-888-265-0019.

-USFS-

