

**Final Report**

**A Survey of Day and Overnight Backcountry/Wilderness Visitors  
in Rocky Mountain National Park**

**Sponsored by the National Park Service and conducted by**

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## Executive Summary

**Background.** In 2001, Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP or the Park) managers, having just completed a Backcountry/Wilderness Management Plan, expressed a need to have improved information about those who visit the Park's Backcountry/Wilderness areas. Among other things, they wished to better understand (1) the socio-demographic characteristics of visitors, (2) their trip characteristics, (3) motives for visiting, (4) activities pursued, (5) things adding or detracting from their experience, (6) their perceptions about future wilderness designation in the Park and a variety of current and potential Backcountry/Wilderness management actions. A team from Colorado State University (CSU) conducted a survey of visitors to RMNP Backcountry/Wilderness<sup>1</sup> during the summer of 2002. The survey was developed with park staff and was informed by findings from a preliminary study (Brooks & Titre, 2003) conducted the previous summer. The survey contained both quantitative scales and open-ended items. It was distributed at trailheads to visitors leaving Backcountry/Wilderness and at the Backcountry Office from late July to mid-September. The response rate was 67% with 682 usable surveys obtained out of distribution of 1015.

**Key findings.** Visitors to Backcountry/Wilderness were 56% male and 44% female with a mean age of 43, highly educated, and a majority (67%) had household incomes from \$50,000 - \$100,000 annually. Over one half were raised in small and medium-sized cities and currently reside in Colorado (60%), the Midwest (22%) or the South (10%). Of those from Colorado, 94% were from the Front Range.

Many study participants were experienced visitors at RMNP, and 43% had visited the Park's Backcountry/Wilderness six or more times, and almost 28% had visited more than ten times. This trip to RMNP Backcountry/Wilderness was the first visit for 22% and the first visit to any Backcountry/Wilderness for about 9%. More than one half of the visitors sampled during summer 2002 were visiting in groups of two and the majority (85%) came in groups of one to four. These visitors came with family members (58%), friends (30%), or both (6%). Slightly less than one quarter (24%) stayed overnight in Backcountry/Wilderness and the rest were day visitors. Overnight visitors spent an average of 1.9 nights but 49% spent only one night in Backcountry/Wilderness. Day visitors spent anywhere from one to fifty hours in the backcountry with the average time being 7.8 hours. This includes day visitors who made more than one trip to the Backcountry/Wilderness.

Overnight visitors hiked 18 miles on average with 72% hiking less than 20 miles and 28% hiking greater than 20 miles. Day visitors hiked an average distance of nine miles, but this includes 32 people who may have made multiple day trips into the Backcountry/Wilderness but did not spend the night camping in backcountry. Visitors reported coming to RMNP because they enjoy the Backcountry/Wilderness (61%) itself. Others visited to do specific activities (22%), to be with family or companions (9%), and some specified that they were seeking quiet and solitude (8%). Hiking, photography, and nature study topped the list of

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<sup>1</sup> The study is part of a suite of related visitor studies conducted between 2001 and 2003 by CSU and the US Geological Survey.

activities pursued by visitors. Slightly more than 20% of those sampled reported that they had hiked off designated trails during their visit to Backcountry/Wilderness and more than half of those visitors hiked cross-country more than once. They sought destinations without trails, pursued activities like fishing or climbing while off trail, wanted to get better views, explore, to be alone. Many described their best discoveries while off trail. In a separate measure of place attachment, more than 71% reported being highly attached to the Park. Nearly 40% of these visitors reported being highly familiar with RMNP. These visitors were neutral regarding their social identity with the place.

Almost 41% of the visitors surveyed met either a park ranger or other staff member during their visit, and 85% of these encounters were evaluated positively. Interestingly, 254 respondents described the encounters and a content analysis of these revealed among other things that 64% based their evaluation on the qualities of the individual such as, being friendly, knowledgeable, and 21% made comments related to the importance of staff “presence” (e.g., patrolling, monitoring, enforcing) and feelings of increased security.

A number of items probed conditions that added to or detracted from the Backcountry/Wilderness experience. Almost 25% of respondents said they saw too many people and over 30% said they felt crowded and 202 specified the location. Some of these were where trails to the backcountry pass near well-known attraction sites. When asked to rate the degree of acceptability of a variety of impacts, visitors found litter near water bodies, feces and toilet paper, harassment of wildlife, graffiti, campsite and social trail proliferation, noise from cell phones, pagers, and radios, and the collection of natural resources as the most (highly to moderately) unacceptable. Visitors wrote open-ended comments to express dislike for an array of behaviors on the part of other visitors. These annoyances related to vehicle congestion and parking, over development within and adjacent to the Park, and other things not included in the scaled survey items.

The priorities that visitors assigned to management actions largely mirrored their desire to mitigate conditions that they found to be unacceptable. Visitors would have managers address: littering, evidence of human waste, illegal camps, unplanned trails, approaching and feeding wildlife, and resource collection as priorities. While visitors considered the use of cell phones, pagers, and radios to be unacceptable in the Backcountry/Wilderness, they were divided on the importance of taking action to mitigate noise impacts. Almost 40% supported limiting group size, and most of these suggested that the limit be between 6-10 people.

When asked if they considered themselves to be in Wilderness in RMNP nearly 70% answered that it depends on where they were in the Park. Although this response category represents the way most managers define wilderness, the purpose of this question was to probe how visitors view wilderness at RMNP. Additional wilderness designation in RMNP was seen as moderately to extremely important by 72%. In spite of this support, results revealed a limited understanding of the National Wilderness Preservation System or the management direction given to managers by the Wilderness Act of 1964. This was also evident in the range of visitor comments about changes that they expected to see following wilderness designation. Many visitors (37%) expected restrictions like no fishing and severe restrictions on hiking, which are not likely to occur with additional wilderness designation.

Throughout the study, few statistical differences were found between day visitors and overnight visitors. However, day visitors were significantly more attached to the place and experienced with Backcountry/Wilderness than overnight visitors. The report discusses a variety of issues for managers to consider regarding, visitor management and education, impact mitigation, and the public's understanding of wilderness and wilderness designation.

Humans need wilderness and they need to be in touch the natural world. The further removed we become from these things, the more problems we develop. Groomed parks and golf courses do not count. Highways with occasional pullouts do not count. People who crave the absolute wilderness. Also, our world will lose so much with the repercussions that occur when we begin to lose the natural systems of our world. We somehow need to maintain these pure natural systems for the well being of humans and all wildlife and all life at whatever cost to our comfort. Thanks for making the effort.

*Survey respondent describing the relationship between people and wilderness.*

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# INTRODUCTION

## **Background**

The number of people who visit Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP, or the Park) annually is large and increasing. Currently, total visitation at RMNP approaches that of Yellowstone National Park, although RMNP is considerably smaller than Yellowstone. The Park draws many of its visitors from Colorado's rapidly expanding Front Range population. It also receives a steady flow of regional, national, and international visitors. Many visitors drive through the Park on Trail Ridge Road, stopping occasionally at scenic overlooks and other attraction sites. Wildlife is often seen from the road. In addition to driving through the Park, many visitors stop at the visitor centers, camp in designated campgrounds, take in short day hikes and attend informational programs as part of their itineraries. As might be expected, these activities and the highest levels of visitation occur where roads and other front country infrastructure have been developed to handle visitors.

However, most of the Park is not developed or accessible by road or highly maintained trails and is referred to as "backcountry or wilderness" (Backcountry/Wilderness). The Park contains a small amount of officially designated wilderness, which was acquired from the USDA Forest Service during a boundary adjustment and land trade. A significant amount of the Park's non-wilderness backcountry has for some time, been under consideration for wilderness designation and has been managed in a fashion similar to designated wilderness. It is the NPS stated policy to manage designated Wilderness, recommended wilderness, and potential wilderness as wilderness (USDI, NPS, 2001). That is, the Park will take no action, which would diminish wilderness values or suitability as designated Wilderness. Accordingly, a Backcountry/Wilderness Management Plan and Environmental Assessment (BC/WMP) was adopted in 2002, which: (1) defines wilderness management policies and actions, (2) identifies a wilderness vision, long range management goals, intermediate objectives, and management actions, and (3) serves as a working guide for Backcountry/Wilderness staff. In a sense, the BC/WMP formalizes many of the management actions and policies that currently exist at RMNP.

Managers wish to continue to improve the BC/WMP and their confidence in the proposed management actions contained in the plan. However, public involvement was limited during preliminary processes such as formulation of the Environmental Impact Statement for the BC/WMP. In addition, the Park had limited data regarding (1) levels of visitation in backcountry, (2) visitor characteristics, (3) visitor experiences, (4) experience preferences, and (5) visitor perceptions about current or proposed Backcountry/Wilderness management actions. Staff also wished to know more about visitors' perceptions of wilderness designation, and what changes in management visitors might expect if the majority of the Park is designated official wilderness. Basic records for overnight stays in Backcountry/Wilderness are good given that most overnight visitors pass through the Backcountry Office. In 2002, for example, the Park recorded 39,498 overnight stays in the Backcountry/Wilderness. Information about Backcountry/Wilderness day visitors and detailed information about both overnight and day visitors is lacking. For these and other reasons, the Park sought a study of visitors and visitation patterns in Backcountry/Wilderness as part of its research program.

The team of Colorado State University (CSU) and U.S. Geological Service researchers chosen to conduct these studies used a variety of methods to gather information. This suite of studies has been produced to provide substantial insight into answering the set of questions posed by managers at the Park. The suite includes:

- A. *A Multi-method Assessment of Recreation Impacts at Rocky Mountain National Park.* This study gathered interview and observational data from the field using cluster sampling with park visitors and purposive interviews with key park staff to probe and identify salient behaviors, impacts, perceptions, and to inform the development of the comprehensive Backcountry/Wilderness visitor survey reported here (Brooks & Titre, 2003).
- B. *Visitor Use Estimation in Rocky Mountain National Park.* This multi-stage study (currently in progress) employs active infrared trail counters and statistical methods to estimate visitor use in the Park, about which there is little information. This study is designed to collect use information over the course of three seasons, one data collection season for each of three large regions of the Park. Data collection has been completed for two of these regions (Bates & Gumina, 2002 ongoing).
- C. *Visitor Employed Photography Study.* Visitors in this study took pictures, kept a qualitative log about the places in their photos, and answered questions on a follow-up survey to provide information on valued setting attributes and the nature of the visitor experiences. This study focused on positive, negative, and neutral sights as well as sounds experienced at RMNP (Schuster, Johnson, & Taylor, 2004).
- D. A Ph. D. dissertation entitled: *Claimed Identities, Personal Projects, and Relationship to Place: A Hermeneutic Interpretation of the Backcountry/Wilderness Experience at Rocky Mountain National Park.* This study utilized in-depth qualitative interviews and interpretive analyses to assess how visitors construct and assign meaning at the Park and specific places within, how their experiences in RMNP relate to their broader life situations and aspirations, and to explore the implications of the results for managers at the Park (Brooks, 2003).

And finally the study reported herein:

- E. *A Survey of Day and Overnight Backcountry/Wilderness Visitors in Rocky Mountain National Park.* This is a comprehensive quantitative survey that employs a probability cluster sample of 682 visitors. The survey uses several kinds of questions (e.g., Likert-type scales and short answer open-ended) to provide insight to a wide variety of questions posed by managers and researchers at CSU. These research questions can be summarized by the following study objectives:

## **Study Objectives**

For visitors to RMNP Backcountry/Wilderness this report intends to:

1. Describe the socio-demographic characteristics, experience, and history of visitation,
2. Describe the primary purpose for visiting and the activities pursued by visitors,
3. Describe the influence of a range of current conditions and potential impacts on the experience of visitors, especially things adding or detracting from their visits,
4. Describe the preferences and priorities that visitors assign to a variety of current and potential management actions,
5. Probe the importance of official designation of wilderness for these visitors and the expectations they have about how designation would affect management actions, and
6. Describe attitudes about the appropriateness of current or potential management actions in designated wilderness.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Survey Design**

Survey design was based on information from three sources. First, results from the 2001 assessment study of recreation impacts conducted by CSU provided the elicitation of salient issues and background required to build survey items for this study (Brooks & Titre, 2003). In addition, meetings with park personnel provided direct insight into specific management issues at RMNP. Additionally, the Park's BC/WMP document was consulted to inform partial design of this instrument. The complete survey questionnaire appears in Appendix A.

### **Sampling and Survey Administration**

During late July, August, and through mid September we drew a random sample of week-days and weekend days from a frame of all allowable sampling days. This frame was provided by park administration to prevent overlap with concurrent survey research during summer 2002. This was necessary to decrease burden on visitors. Surveys were distributed during a total of 25 days during this period. Typically, a survey of the summer visitation season should include late June and the entire month of July, given that this was not the case for this study, results reported here should be interpreted as representing visitors who come to the Park later in the season.

Distribution of the surveys was guided by a cluster sampling procedure (Scheaffer, Mendenhall, & Ott, 1996) where the goal was to achieve a representation, proportional to visitation levels, of trails in the western, eastern, and northern regions of RMNP (Table 1). When sampling in each of these regions, trailheads and time of day (i.e., morning, mid-day,

evening) were randomly selected. At the selected location during the selected time period, attempts were made to contact all visitors. This flexible sampling strategy accommodated logistical constraints and maintained efficiency. The proportion of surveys and location of distribution closely followed the proportion of camera surveys distributed during the U.S. Geological Service Visitor Employed Photography study (Schuster et al., 2004). The specific survey distribution locations throughout the Park are listed in Appendix B.

National Park Service volunteers and CSU research technicians distributed surveys at the trailheads. After a brief greeting and introduction, visitors were asked if they would participate in the survey. Those who agreed were given a survey with a postage paid envelope, and were asked if they would write their names and addresses on a separate data sheet to be used for a reminder mailing if the survey was not returned within one month. Participants were given the option of completing the survey during their trip and returning it to the technician, leaving it in one of several drop boxes placed at different locations in the Park, or completing it after their trip and mailing the survey directly to CSU.

Reminders were mailed in October of 2002 to survey participants who had not yet returned a survey. These mailings included a new survey, a postage paid return envelope, and a letter asking if participants would be interested in receiving an executive summary upon completion of the final report as an incentive to return the survey.

**Table 1. Areas within RMNP where the visitor survey was distributed during summer 2002.**

Park Area	Frequency	Percent of Surveys <sup>1</sup>
Northern	35	3.5
Fern Lake	58	6.0
Wild Basin	167	16.5
Bear Lake	363	36.0
Grand Lake	162	16.0
Other park areas <sup>2</sup>	104	10.0
Location not recorded	126	12.0
Column totals	1015	100

<sup>1</sup> Percent of surveys distributed.

<sup>2</sup> Other park areas were listed in Appendix B.



### **Response Rate**

During 2002, 1015 surveys were distributed and 682 usable surveys were returned after a final reminder mailing in October 2002. Although the probability sample was occasionally constrained by the logistics involved with field administration, the sample size provides confidence that the population estimates, based on the entire sample, are within approximately a 5% margin of error at the 95% confidence level.

The overall response rate was 67%, which is considered to be good for a drop off/mail back survey. We collected addresses from 790 visitors at the time of selection including non-respondents. Sixty percent (n = 471) of these were Colorado residents, primarily from the Front Range (94%). Of the known Colorado residents, 290 returned the survey, and 181 did not. Prior to the mail back, 49% of the respondents were Colorado residents, and 41% of the non-respondents also lived in Colorado.

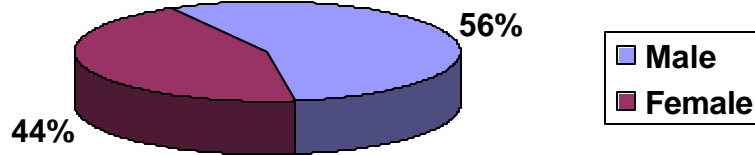
### **Data Analyses**

The survey questionnaire consisted of both closed and open-ended items. The questions that used a closed response format were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows version 11. These items produced categorical data that were coded numerically and continuous scale data, which also used numeric values. The open-ended items generated brief hand written texts, which were transcribed into MS Word documents, edited, and content analyzed by the CSU research team. The open-ended responses to these items appear in their entirety in the appendices. Frequencies and percentages of respondents, and in some cases responses, are reported for all items in the results section. Additional statistical tests (i.e., independent samples t-test, cross-tabulations, and correlation coefficients) were used to compare overnight and day visitors and interrelationships among selected variables.

## **RESULTS and DISCUSSION**

### **Visitor Characteristics**

**Gender.** The participants in this sample were 56% male and 44% female (Figure 1). This is more gender balanced than the typical wilderness area where males often comprise more than 70% of the visitors. Cole (1996) reported that although it is typical to find fewer female wilderness visitors, there is a national trend toward an increase in female visitors, especially in areas where it is possible to make trips of shorter duration and where there is less dependence on the use of pack animals. Females tend to visit wilderness areas for one day with a smaller proportion of women staying overnight (Cole, 2001). Nearly 80% of the women surveyed at RMNP in 2002 were day visitors, which may account for the more balanced proportion of men and women, overall.



**Figure 1. Gender of visitors to Backcountry/Wilderness in RMNP, summer 2002.**

**Age.** The mean age of participants was 43. The youngest visitor was 12 and the oldest visitor was 84 years of age. Watson, Cole, and Roggenbuck (1995) reported that the average age of visitors to wilderness has been increasing, which indicates that there may be a cadre of repeat visitors. This raises the issue of recruitment of younger visitors to wilderness. Table 2 shows that the number of visitors in RMNP Backcountry/Wilderness in summer 2002 was distributed somewhat evenly among visitors in the 26-35, 36-45, 46-55, and >55 age group categories. Notably, nearly 68% of all visitors surveyed are over the age of 36 again raising the question of recruitment among younger visitors.

**Table 2. Ages of visitors to Backcountry/Wilderness in RMNP, summer 2002.**

Age in years	Frequency	Percent of Sample <sup>1</sup>
<16	3	.5
16-25	66	10.7
26-35	130	21.1
36-45	144	23.4
46-55	146	23.7
>55	126	20.5

<sup>1</sup>n = 615 respondents.

Note: Mean age = 43.0 (s.d. = 14 years); Median age = 43.0; Mode = 52.0 years.

**Current residence.** Table 3 shows the regions of the United States where these participants currently reside. When volunteers distributed surveys, visitors were asked to report their addresses for the purpose of a mail back reminder survey. Of the 1015 distributed surveys, we collected 790 usable addresses. Some addresses were missed, were incorrect or were only partially recorded by volunteers in the field.

The majority of the visitors with a valid zip code were from the Intermountain West region of the United States representing almost 62% of the sample. Within the Intermountain West region, the largest number of visitors reported living in Colorado (60% of the total sample) with the majority of Colorado residents 93.8% originating from Colorado's Front Range.

International travelers visited the Park from nine countries, and accounted for 12 visitors. These visitors came from the British Isles, representing Ireland and Scotland and from north western Europe, representing Norway, Holland, Germany, Denmark, and Belgium. Israel and Taiwan also were represented in 2002. These visitors were not included in Table 3, but five of the 12 international visitors returned the visitor survey.

**Table 3. Origins of visitors to Backcountry/Wilderness in RMNP based on reported zip codes for summer 2002.**

Region	Frequency	Percent of Sample <sup>1</sup>
Colorado	471	59.6
Midwest	175	22.3
South	77	9.8
West Coast	28	3.5
Northeast	20	2.5
Other Intermountain West	17	2.3

<sup>1</sup> N = 790 total usable addresses for both respondents and non-respondents

Note: Other Intermountain West = AZ, ID, MT, NM and WY.

Note: Midwest = IA, IL, IN, KS, MI, MN, MO, NE, OH and WI.

Note: South = AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, NC, OK, SC, TN, TX and VA.

Note: West Coast = CA, OR, and WA.

Note: Northeast = MD, NY, PA, and District of Columbia.

**Where participants lived while growing up.** The majority of visitors, 54.8%, stated that, until the age of 18, they had lived in a small to medium sized city, with only 19.6% growing up in a metropolitan area. The remainder of these participants, 14.8%, reported growing up in a small town or farm area (Table 4).

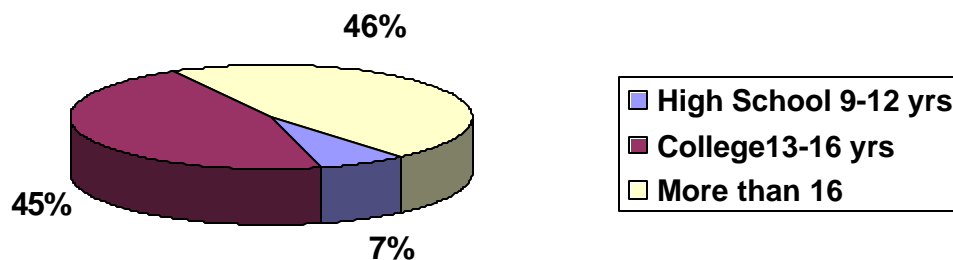
**Table 4. Places where summer 2002 visitors to RMNP spent the most time while growing up.**

Type of Area <sup>1</sup>	Frequency	Percent of Sample <sup>2</sup>
Farm or ranch	55	8.3
Rural or small town	44	6.6
Town	71	10.6
Small city	181	27.2
Medium city	185	27.7
Metropolitan area	131	19.6

<sup>1</sup>For this survey a rural or small town was considered to have a population <1000, a town had 1000-5000, a small city 5000-50,000, a medium city 50,000-1,000,000, a metropolitan area >1,000,000.

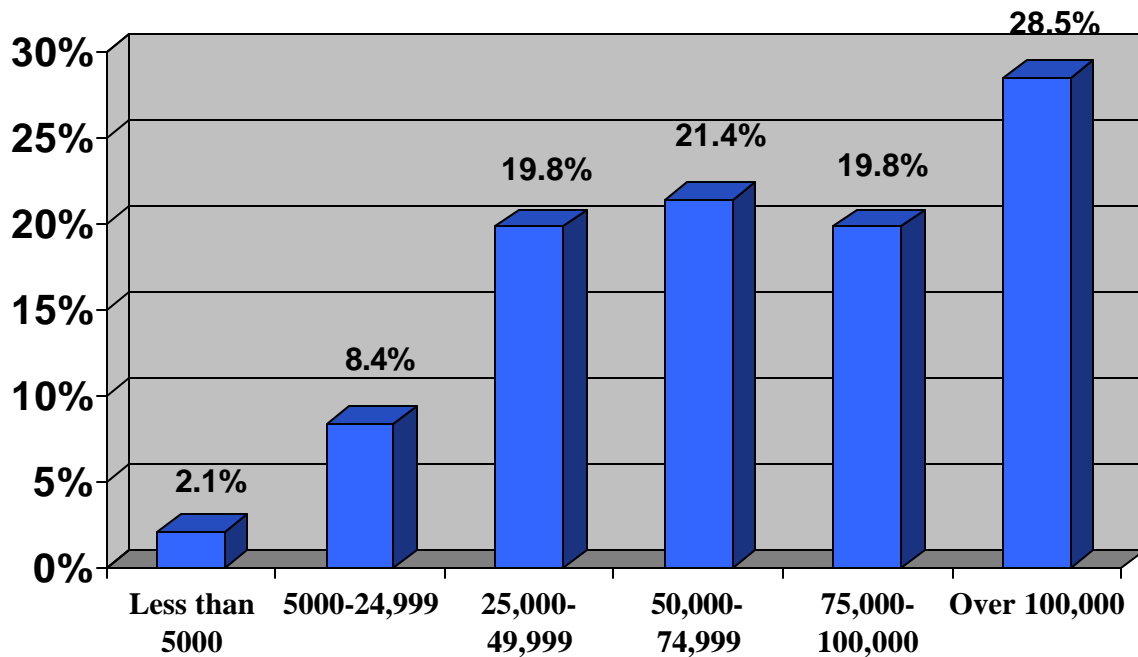
<sup>2</sup> n = 667 respondents.

**Level of education.** Survey participants were asked to report how much education they had completed (Figure 2). Education level was measured as a continuous variable on a scale that ranged from less than 8 years to greater than 16 years of formal education. Responses were grouped into categories for 8th grade, high school, college, and more than 16 years formal education (i.e., graduate school). Only a small proportion of visitors, 0.7%, reported having less than 8 years of education, 7% reported 9 – 12 years of school, 45% reported 13 – 16 years of education, and 46% reported more than 16 years of education. Nine participants (1.3%) chose not to report their education. In sum, the majority of this sample (91%) reported having gone to college and almost half had some graduate education. It is rare to find more than 10% of a sample have attended graduate school in surveys of the general population (Cole, 2001). Previous studies corroborate these findings and have shown that a high level of education tends to be a common characteristic of both day and overnight visitors to wilderness (Cole, 2001; Hendee & Dawson, 2002).



**Figure 2. Education level of visitors during summer 2002 at RMNP.**

**Income.** Visitors were asked for their annual household income prior to taxes (Figure 3). Income levels were reported in one of 10 response categories. Categories were collapsed for this report based on the distribution of participants' responses. The majority of respondents (69.7%) reported having an income greater than \$50,000 and a notable number of these (28.5%) earned more than \$100,000 annually. A sizable percentage, 19.8%, reported annual incomes that ranged from \$25,000-\$49,000, while 10.5% reported annual incomes of less than \$24,999.



**Figure 3. Annual household income before taxes reported by visitors to RMNP during summer 2002.**

### **Trip Characteristics**

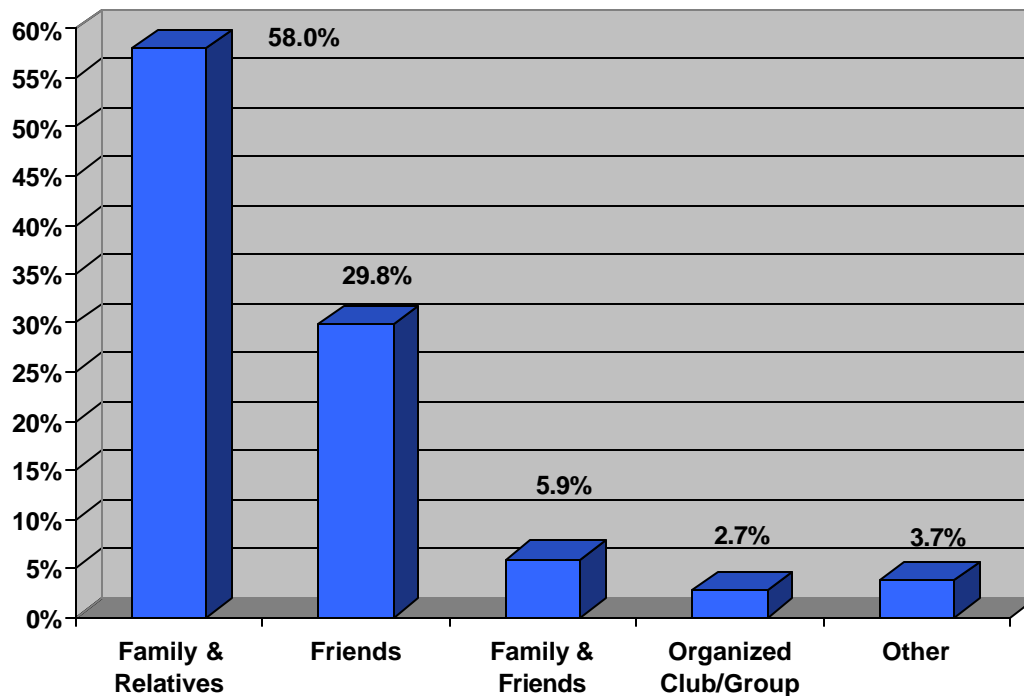
**Group Size.** More than one half of the visitors sampled during summer 2002 were visiting in groups of two and the majority (85%) came in groups of one to four. Table 5 summarizes results for group size. Previous wilderness studies (Cole, 2001; Hendee & Dawson, 2002) tend to support these findings. Overnight visitors to wilderness areas tend to travel in larger groups than day visitors (Cole, 2001), and the majority of this sample was day visitors (Figure 5).

**Table 5. Group size for RMNP Backcountry/Wilderness visitors during summer 2002.**

Group size	Frequency	Percent of sample <sup>1</sup>
2	349	51.5
3	84	12.4
4	78	11.5
1	70	10.3
5	35	5.2
6	32	4.7
7	10	1.5
10	6	0.9
15	4	0.6
8	3	0.4
16 or more	4	0.6

<sup>1</sup> n = 678 respondents.

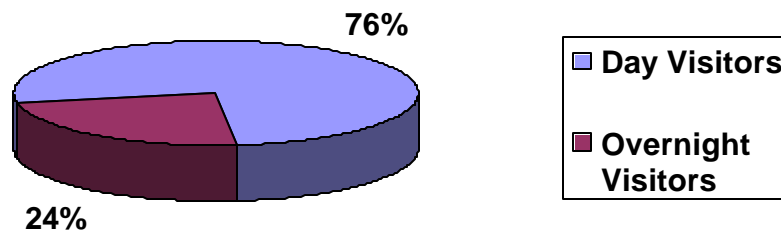
**Type of group or visiting unit.** The majority of the visitors (58%) were comprised of family groups, and nearly 30% of the participants reported that they were visiting with a group of friends. Figure 4 displays the sample breakdown for type of group. Hendee and Dawson (2002) and Watson, Cole, & Roggenbuck (1995) summarize studies that yielded similar findings regarding type of groups visiting wilderness.



**Figure 4. Distribution for type of group at RMNP during summer 2002.**



**Day visits versus overnight stays.** Slightly less than one quarter (24%) of the visitors sampled during summer 2002 reported that they stayed overnight in Backcountry/Wilderness at the Park (Figure 5).



**Figure 5. Day visits and overnight stays for Backcountry/Wilderness visitors in RMNP during summer 2002.**

**Length of overnight stays.** Of the overnight visitors who answered this question ( $n = 155$ ), 49% reported that they had spent only one night in the Park with 27.1% spending two nights, and 14.8% spending three nights (Table 6). The average length of stay was 1.9 (s.d. = 1.1) nights. This is less than the 3.3 day average length of stay that is cited in the 2001 RMNP BC/WMP. In a comparison of seven wilderness areas, Cole (2001) reported a median range from 1 to 5 nights in wilderness. The median length of stay in this study was two nights.

**Table 6. Number of nights spent in Backcountry/Wilderness during summer 2002.**

Number of Nights	Frequency	Percent of Sample <sup>1</sup>
1	76	49.0
2	42	27.1
3	23	14.8
4-6	14	9.0

<sup>1</sup>  $n = 155$ ; 7 visitors did not answer this item.

Note: Mean = 1.9 (s.d.= 1.1); Median = 2.0; Mode = 1.0

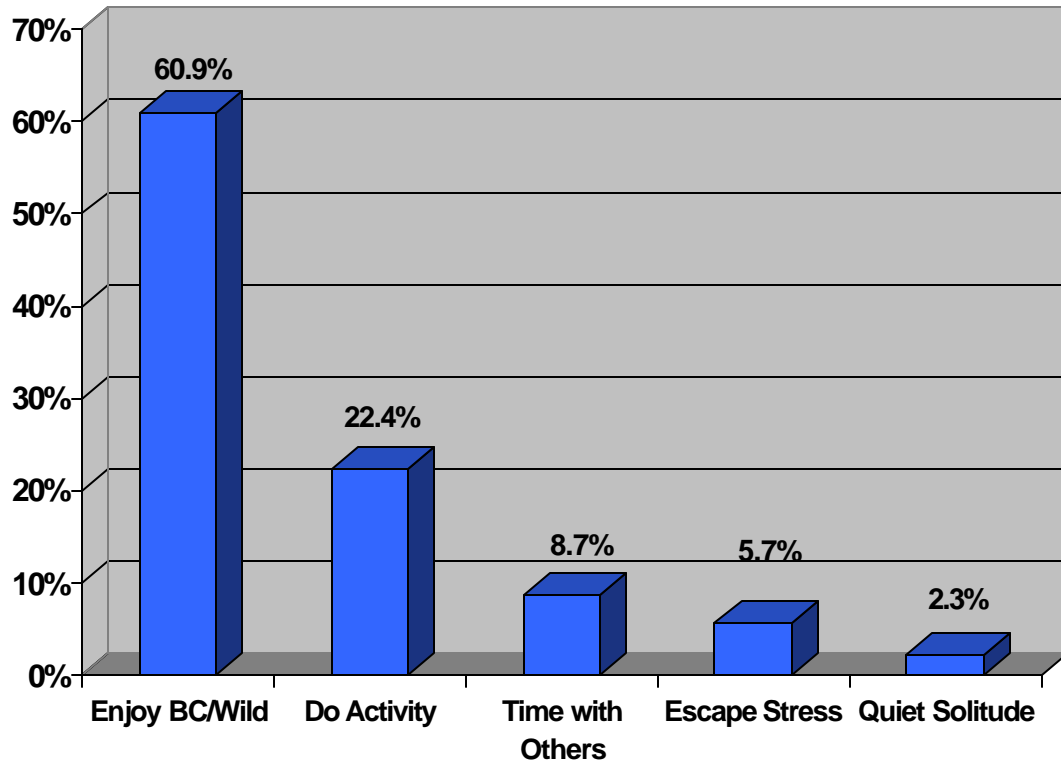
**Hours spent in Backcountry/Wilderness by day visitors.** The time spent in the backcountry by day visitors ranged from 1 – 50 hours. The average time spent was 7.8 (s.d. = 7.8) hours, but this is skewed somewhat by those staying for long periods. Table 6 can be interpreted as showing that some day visitors spent more than one day hiking in the Park (approximately 23%) even though they did not report camping in the backcountry. Most of those spending less than 8 hours may be considered as single day visitors. The average length of stay for those staying 8 hours or less is 4.6 (s.d. = 1.9) hours. This represents a substantial increase in the length of stay over the 2.75 hours reported in the 2001 RMNP BC/WMP.

**Table 7. Total number of hours spent in Backcountry/Wilderness for day visitors in RMNP during summer 2002.**

Number of hours in BC/Wild	Frequency	Percent of sample <sup>1</sup>
>8 (multiple days but with no overnight stay in BC/Wild.)	93	23.4
4	62	15.6
6	50	12.6
3	47	11.8
5	46	11.6
8	38	9.6
2	32	8.1
7	16	4.0
1	13	3.0

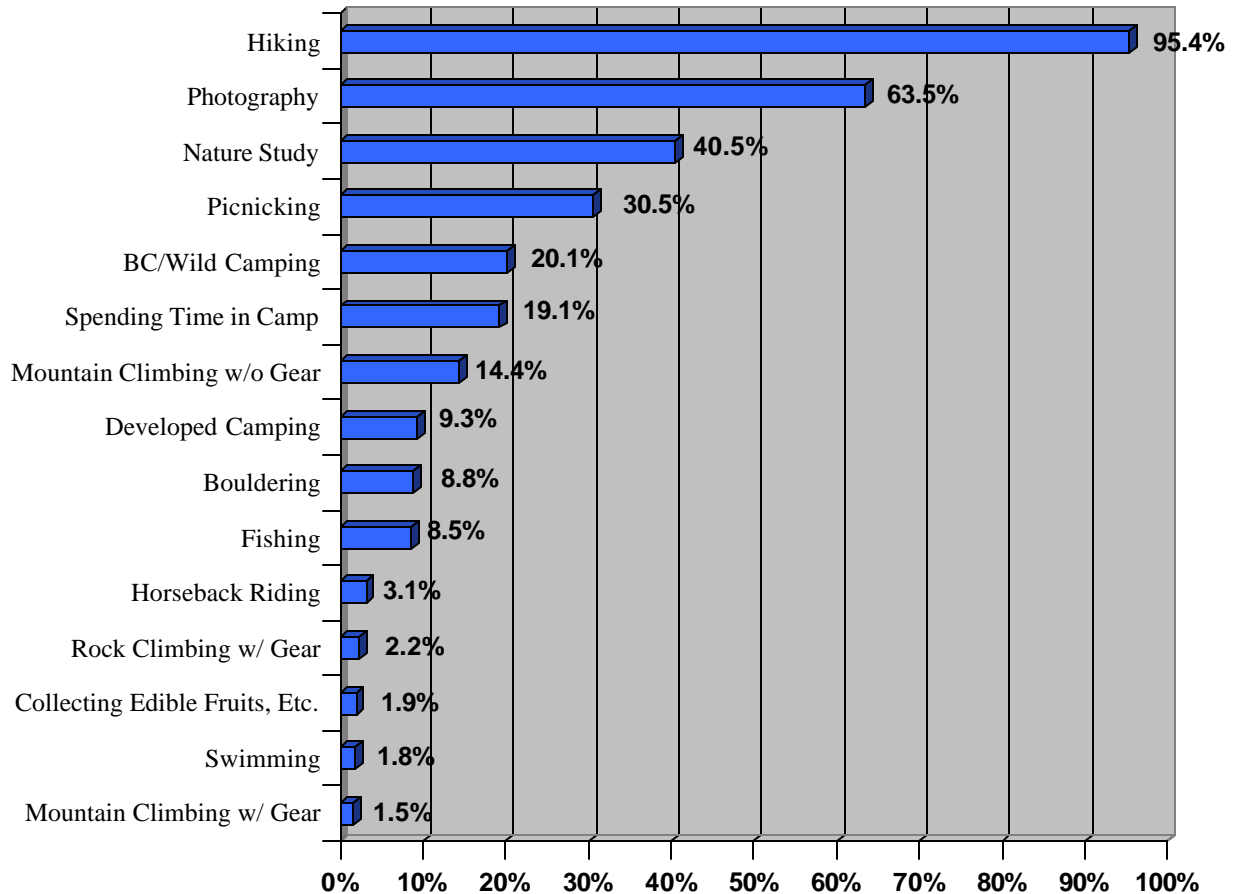
<sup>1</sup>n = 397 respondents; 119 day visitors did not answer this item.

**Primary purpose of visit.** Visitors were asked to identify their primary reason for visiting RMNP Backcountry/Wilderness on this trip. Participants were instructed to choose one categorical reason from a list of five commonly cited motivations for park visitors. Results in Figure 6 show that almost 61% of the visitors sampled reported that they came to the Park because they enjoy the Backcountry/Wilderness itself while 22% came for a specific activity, nearly 9% to spend time with others, and combined 8% wanted to escape stress or find quiet and solitude. Overall, no statistical differences ( $\chi^2 = 1.7$ ,  $p = .78$ ) were evident between day and overnight visitors regarding their primary purpose for coming to RMNP.



**Figure 6. Primary purpose of visits to RMNP Backcountry/Wilderness reported by visitors during summer 2002.**

**Recreational activities pursued.** The majority of Backcountry/Wilderness visitors reported hiking (95.4%) to be their primary recreational activity during their visit. Second to hiking, 63.5 % of the sample reported that they participated in photography, 40.5 % engaged in nature study, and 30.5 % reported having picnics during their visits. Figure 7 summarizes results for participation in recreation activities.



**Figure 7. Participation in recreation activities by Backcountry/Wilderness visitors during their trips to RMNP during summer 2002.**

**Distance hiked by day visitors in Backcountry/Wilderness.** Table 8 shows the number of miles that day visitors reported hiking during their visit to RMNP. The minimum distance reported was zero, while the maximum distance reported was 80 miles. Once again this can be interpreted as a day visitor who spent several days hiking in the Park without camping overnight in the backcountry. The average distance hiked was nine miles (s.d. = 8.6), but was affected by those who reported hiking long distances. The majority of the sample (77.4%) reported hiking 10 miles or less, and the most common distance hiked was five miles.

Table 8. Miles hiked in the Backcountry/Wilderness by day visitors, summer 2002.

Number of Miles	Frequency	Percent of Sample <sup>1</sup>
1-5	195	38.9
6-10	193	38.5
11-20	81	16.2
>21	32	6.4

<sup>1</sup> n = 501 respondents.

Note: Mean = 9.0 (s.d. = 8.6 miles); Median = 6.0 and Mode = 5.0

**Distance hiked by overnight visitors in backcountry.** Table 9 shows the results of overnight visitors' responses for the number of miles hiked while in RMNP. The average distance hiked was 18 (s.d. = 12) miles. Almost 72% of the visitors hiked less than 20 miles, but 28% reported hiking farther than 20 miles. These results are similar to the 15 – 17 miles covered by wilderness overnight visitors as reported by Watson and others (1995) and Cole (2001) who looked at trends for wilderness visitors and areas.

Table 9. Miles hiked in the Backcountry/Wilderness by overnight visitors in RMNP, summer 2002.

Miles Hiked	Frequency	Percent of Sample <sup>1</sup>
2-10	49	30.6
11-20	66	41.3
21-30	33	20.6
>30	12	7.5

<sup>1</sup> n = 160 respondents.

Note: Mean = 18.0 (s.d. = 12 miles); Median = 15.0; Mode = 20.0

**Hiking off trail at the Park.** Moving beyond basic trip characteristics, the study probed many aspects of the visitors' Backcountry/Wilderness experiences. Visitors were asked if they hiked cross-country without following a trail and if so, what were their reasons. (It was explained in the questionnaire that, except for a few restricted areas in the park that hiking off trail is permissible). Slightly more than 20% (n = 141) of this sample reported that they had hiked off designated trails during this visit to the Park. More than half of these visitors hiked cross-country more than once. Table 10 summarizes how many times these visitors actually reported hiking in places without trails.

**Table 10. Number of times that Backcountry/Wilderness visitors hiked off trail at RMNP during summer 2002.**

Number of times off trail	Frequency	Percent of Sample <sup>1</sup>
1	60	46.9
2	39	30.5
3	15	11.7
5	5	3.9
4	4	3.1
6	3	2.3
>6	2	1.6

<sup>1</sup> n = 128 respondents.

Note: 13 participants who claimed to have hiked off-trail did not answer this item.

**Reasons for hiking off trail or cross-country.** Visitors gave a variety of open-ended responses for why they had hiked cross-country. Some gave more than one reason. All of the reasons given were content analyzed and grouped into the categories that are given below. A full reporting of these visitor reasons can be found in Appendix C.

- 1) ***There was no trail to the person's destination (total = 66 responses).*** This can be further broken down into sub-categories including: a route taken en-route to a climb (26), route taken to get to a certain lake (17), route taken to get to a historic site (2), other destinations (21).
- 2) ***The activity pursued by the visitor took them off trail (total = 33 responses).*** These activities included: fishing (9), photography (8), wildlife viewing (7), plant identification (2), birding (1), and other (6).
- 3) ***To get a better view of something (total = 22 responses).***

- 4) ***Because it was a logical route (total = 18 responses).*** Some visitors said it was a logical shortcut to their destination (11), and others said they were following the landscape rather than the trail (7).
- 5) ***Curiosity and the desire to explore (total = 15 responses).*** Two of these said that it was in order to give their kids a chance to explore.
- 6) ***To get away from others or be alone (total = 12 responses).***
- 7) ***Adventure/Excitement/Challenge (total = 8 responses).***
- 8) ***To find a more natural environment (total = 8 responses).***
- 9) ***We lost the trail (total = 7 responses).***
- 10) ***Other (total = 5 responses).***

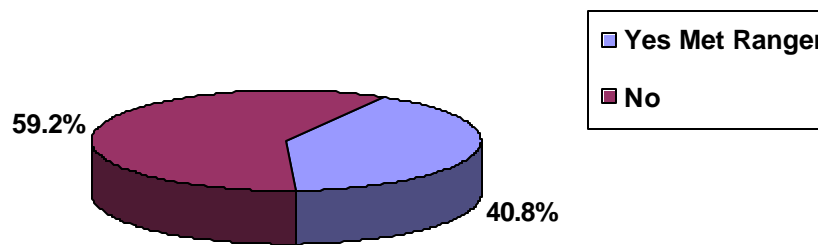
**Best discovery/experience while hiking off trail.** When visitors were asked if they had hiked off-trail during this visit, they were also asked to describe the best discovery or experience they had while hiking off trail or cross country. The complete list of responses to this open-ended item (Appendix C) was content analyzed for themes to categorize and to synthesize the information garnered from this question. These categories and the frequencies for each type of response within categories are given below. Surprisingly, about 130 visitors took the time to answer these questions. These off-trail forays appear to have produced many high quality and unique experiences and may be an important part of what RMNP has to offer. Exploring behaviors and a sense of adventure may be part of the process in which visitors develop a relationship with the Park (Brooks, 2003; Brooks & Titre, 2003).

- 1) ***Observing some special phenomenon (total = 96 responses).*** Most often cited were scenic views and natural beauty (35), many people were more specific and described encountering special plants and animals including, columbines, elk, ptarmigan, raspberries, and antler velvet, (33), as well as special landscape features like waterfalls, old burn sites, swimming holes, geologic (27), or historical features (1).
- 2) ***Experiencing more challenge or adventure (total = 24 responses).*** This included being able to practice outdoor skills like land navigation or estimating distances (9), as well as reaching a higher level of physical exertion (4), self reliance (3), or other related challenges or adventures such as dealing with severe weather or reaching a summit (8).
- 3) ***Finding solitude, peace or escaping others (total = 14 responses).***
- 4) ***Being in a less managed and more natural area (total = 10 responses).*** A number of visitors spoke of having a real wilderness experience, seeing “true conditions” or unspoiled nature.
- 5) ***Having a unique or uncommon experience (total = 7 responses).***

- 6) *Sharing a Special Place with Family or Friends (total = 4 responses).*
- 7) *Disappointed (total = 4 responses).*
- 8) *Found Spiritual Fulfillment (total = 3 responses).*

### **Encounters with Park Staff or Rangers**

Park administrators and personnel should be interested in visitor perceptions related to encounters that visitors to the Backcountry/Wilderness report having with rangers and other park staff like trail crews or volunteers. We included a question that asked whether visitors had “*encountered a ranger or park staff while in the Backcountry/Wilderness during this trip*” and if yes, “*how did you feel about it*”. Almost 41% of the visitors surveyed said that they had met either a park ranger or other staff member during their visit (Figure 8).



**Figure 8. Proportion of visitors that met a ranger or staff in Backcountry/Wilderness during summer 2002.**

**How Backcountry/Wilderness visitors felt about meeting rangers or staff.** The open-ended comments about these encounters were content analyzed and grouped into categories and subcategories below. Appendix D lists the complete set of comments about the encounters with park rangers or staff. For those 272 individuals who encountered a ranger or staff, 254 took the time to write comments. The first bold-faced number after the category name indicates the total number of visitors who wrote something that fell into that category. Many visitors mentioned several reasons for how they felt about the encounter (i.e., “the ranger was pleasant and provided us with good information”). Then, frequencies are given that show how many times a particular type of response belonging to a category was made. Words and phrases reported in quotation marks are those used frequently by visitors in their description. This analysis provides insight about what specific ranger qualities or factors related to the encounters influenced the opinions of visitors.

- 1) ***General comments of a positive nature were recorded by 162 visitors (64%).*** These visitors gave several main reasons. Foremost were comments (78) that the rangers



they met were “kind, friendly, courteous, helpful, pleasant, personable or cordial”. A number of visitors simply used terms (63 responses) like “great, excellent, good, fine or OK” while many (60 responses) answered that rangers were “knowledgeable, gave good information or advice, answered our questions, or were interesting or fun to talk to”. Some visitors gave responses (10), which indicated that the staff members that they had encountered were “professional or dedicated”.

- 2) ***Positive comments that indicated staff presence or stewardship were recorded by 53 visitors (21%).*** A noticeable number of other visitors based their positive evaluations and comments (44) on the fact that they “appreciated” or were “reassured” knowing that rangers were “present, patrolling, monitoring, enforcing the rules, taking care of the resource, out of the office, and in the field”. A number of other responses (14) indicated that ranger or staff presence increased their feelings of security or safety. Finally, three responses specifically implied enjoyment on the part of the visitor over hearing about the management issues and projects that staff members were working on to address issues in the Park.
- 3) ***Comments that were both positive and negative were recorded by 7 visitors (3%).*** These visitors said things like, “it’s good to see rangers” (in general) but the one they met was “uninformed (3), unfriendly, intrusive, not helpful, or had odd behavior”.
- 4) ***Neutral comments were recorded by 23 visitors (9%).*** These visitors made matter of fact comments (14) about the presence of rangers (i.e., “we saw them hiking up the trail”) that were non-evaluative. Others (10 responses) expressed indifference (i.e., “no big deal, didn’t bother me”).
- 5) ***Comments that were negative were recorded by 9 visitors (4%).*** Even though these visitors only comprise a small percentage of those giving comments, it is important to list all the reasons that people gave for negative encounters. Five people described encounters with rangers who were “unfriendly, rude, loud, overbearing, insistent, or authoritarian”. Two visitors felt that the person encountered was “ill prepared or uninformed”, one person simply wrote “guns”, and one pointed out that the ranger was breaking a park rule by shortcutting through an area marked as sensitive.

In sum, 85% of the visitors making comments had a positive evaluation of the encounter with rangers or staff, with the majority of these (64%) describing why it was positive, (e.g. “she was friendly” or “he answered our questions”). Interestingly, a notable number of those making a positive evaluation (21%) responded from a more resource stewardship oriented perspective or because they appreciated staff “presence” in the field (e.g., “It was good to see them out monitoring.” “We enjoyed knowing they were in the back country.” “It makes me feel safer.”). It is reassuring that only 4% of the visitors surveyed had a negative or partially negative encounter, but this observation indicates that there is room for improvement. Some of the qualities that make encounters with rangers or other staff successful, or not successful, have been more clearly described in this study. Findings emphasize that for some visitors it is important that rangers maintain a presence in the Park.

**Encounters with volunteers.** It is also interesting to note that of these encounters, 15 were specified as being with volunteers (8 regular volunteers and 7 administering surveys). Of those, 12 encounters were evaluated as positive; one was a volunteer described as nice but uninformed, and two were neutral comments. This may be useful information for those managing volunteers and researchers in the Park.

### **Past Experience at RMNP**

Understanding visitors' past experience in RMNP is useful to managers for a variety of reasons. How many people are first time visitors, repeat visitors, and how many have long-term relationships with the Park as a place? The survey items designed to measure past experience consisted of a series of four questions discussing (1) previous visits to front country and backcountry areas in RMNP, (2) how many years ago participants first visited the Park, (3) RMNP front country and backcountry visits in the past 12 months, and (4) number of other backcountry areas visited in the past besides RMNP. Responses were recorded into continuous variables that ranged from zero to 1000 on most questions. To summarize these continuous variables, results regarding amount of experience for these visitors were collapsed into categories for each question.

**Previous visits to RMNP Backcountry/Wilderness.** The first part of this questionnaire item asked how many times participants visited RMNP backcountry on previous trips (Table 11). Nearly 35% of the sample reported they had visited from one to five times. The most common answer, however (i.e., the modal response), was zero, that is to say that 22.0% of the visitors in this study were first time visitors to RMNP Backcountry/Wilderness, but over 16% had visited more than 20 times. In sum, RMNP Backcountry/Wilderness receives a balanced mixture of first time visitors, those who are somewhat experienced, and highly experienced visitors as indicated by the number of repeat visits.

**Table 11. Number of reported previous visits to RMNP Backcountry/Wilderness prior to being surveyed in the summer of 2002.**

# of Visits	Frequency	Percent of Sample <sup>1</sup>
0	135	22.0
1	62	10.1
2	50	8.2
3	41	6.7
4	35	5.7
5	26	4.2
6-10	93	15.3
11-20	70	11.4
>20	101	16.4

<sup>1</sup> n = 613 respondents; 69 visitors did not answer this survey item.

Note: Median = 4 visits; Mode = 0 previous visits.

**Front country visits.** The second part of this question asked about the number of previous visits to the developed front country areas in RMNP (Table 12). Results were similar to the results from the question that asked about previous visits to backcountry suggesting that the Backcountry/Wilderness may be visited as frequently as the front country at RMNP. There may have been some confusion as to what was implied by “front country” as indicated by a large number of visitors (140) who left this item unanswered.

**Table 12. Number of reported previous visits to RMNP developed front country prior to being surveyed in the summer of 2002.**

# of Visits	Frequency	Percent of Sample <sup>1</sup>
0	100	18.5
1	56	10.3
2	51	9.4
3	28	5.2
4	26	4.8
5	27	5.0
6-10	80	14.8
11-20	57	10.5
>20	117	21.5

<sup>1</sup> n = 542 respondents; 140 visitors did not answer this survey item.  
Note: Median = 5 visits; Mode = 0 previous visits.

**When did visitors make their first visit to RMNP?** This question asked participants how many years ago they made their first visit to the Park (Table 13). Almost 61% of those surveyed had been coming to RMNP for more than 10 years, and about 40% of the sample began coming 21, or more, years ago, and almost 17% of the sample began coming more than 30 years ago. The range was zero to 84 years and there was a bimodal distribution for this item. That is, the two most common answers were zero and 30 with 56 responses each. This bimodal distribution indicates that the Park has a notable group of long-time visitors along side a group of newer visitors. Jacob and Schreyer (1980) and others have pointed out that this can create the potential for conflict among visitors where behavioral norms may differ. However, such intermingling of visitors with varying levels of experience may encourage social comparisons between these groups. Such social behavior has been hypothesized to be a component of the process of forming a meaningful relationship to a protected place. Comparing one's level of skill and experience to others in the same setting may also help to establish one's overall relationship with the natural world (Brooks, 2003).

**Table 13. The number of years ago that visitors had made their first visit to RMNP for the summer 2002 sample.**

# of Years	Frequency	Percent of Sample <sup>1</sup>
0-5	174	28.8
6-10	63	10.4
11-20	125	20.6
21-30	141	23.3
31-50	95	15.7
>50	7	1.2

<sup>1</sup> n = 605 respondents; 77 visitors did not answer this survey item.

**Number of visits made in the past year to Backcountry/Wilderness.** This question asked for the number of times a person visited RMNP backcountry in the last 12 months (Table 14). Responses ranged from zero to 100, but the most common answer was 1 (43.5%).

**Table 14. Number of times visitors had visited RMNP backcountry in the past 12 months for summer 2002.**

# of Visits in Past 12 Months	Frequency	Percent of Sample <sup>1</sup>
0	59	9.4
1	272	43.5
2	94	15.0
3	49	7.8
4	34	5.4
5	30	4.8
6-10	51	8.1
>10	36	5.8

<sup>1</sup> n = 625 respondents; 57 visitors did not answer this survey item.

**Number of visits made in the past year to developed front country.** The second part of this question asked for the number of times a person had visited RMNP developed front country in the last 12 months (Table 15). Responses ranged from zero to 100 with a mode of one, which represented 39.5% of the sample.

**Table 15. Number of times visitors had visited developed front country in the past 12 months for summer 2002.**

# of Visits in Past 12 Months	Frequency	Percent of Sample <sup>1</sup>
0	65	12.4
1	207	39.5
2	92	17.6
3	39	7.4
4	21	4.0
5	21	4.0
6-10	46	8.8
>10	33	6.3

<sup>1</sup> n = 524 respondents; 158 visitors did not answer this survey item.

**Other Backcountry/Wilderness areas visited in the past.** The final question in this section used to assess the experience level of visitors, asked participants to state the number of other Backcountry/Wilderness areas they had visited in the past (Table 16). Responses ranged from zero to 200 with the most common response being 10 (12.3% of the sample). About half of those surveyed could be considered experienced Backcountry/Wilderness visitors having visited 6 or more such areas. Again, RMNP provided a first Backcountry/Wilderness experience for about 9% of the visitors surveyed and about one fourth (25.8%) had only visited two or fewer such areas in the past.

**Table 16. Number of other Backcountry/Wilderness areas visited in the past by visitors surveyed in summer 2002.**

# of Other Areas	Frequency	Percent of Sample <sup>1</sup>
0-5	313	50.0
6-10	145	23.2
11-20	98	15.6
>20	69	11.2

<sup>1</sup> n = 625 respondents; 57 visitors did not answer this survey item.

### **Place Attachment, Familiarity, and Social Identity**

Related to visitor experience is the concept of place attachment that people may have for the Park. The 2001 assessment study and dissertation interviewed visitors (Brooks, 2003) and provided managers with an in-depth look at emotional bonds and relationships to the Park and the way visitors construct meaning and identity as they experience the place. The current study added two quantitative items related to place (i.e., attachment and familiarity) and whether people identified RMNP with friends, family, and special people in their lives (i.e., social identity).

**Attachment and familiarity.** These items were measured on separate, single item 9-point scales (Table 17). Overall, 71.5% of visitors reported being highly attached to RMNP as a place. Average attachment (mean = 7.2, s.d. = 1.8) was slightly higher ( $t = 1.96$ ,  $p = .05$ ) for day visitors than for overnight visitors (mean = 6.8, s.d. = 1.8). Nearly 40.0% of participants reported that they were highly familiar with the Park. There were no statistical differences between day and overnight visitors regarding familiarity. These high levels of attachment and familiarity corroborate the strong emotional bonds to places at RMNP described by visitors in the qualitative study (Brooks, 2003). The strength of association between attachment and familiarity is of moderate strength ( $r = .55$ ,  $p = .01$ ), and it appears that attachment to RMNP exists for many visitors in this sample that reported being only moderately familiar with the Park, as well as for those who are highly familiar with the Park.

**Table 17. Levels of attachment and familiarity reported by visitors to RMNP during summer 2002.**

Item <sup>1</sup>	Not at All %	Slightly %	Moderately %	Highly %	Mode	Mean	S. D.
Attachment <sup>2</sup>	0.7	5.8	22.0	71.5	9	7.1	1.8
Familiarity <sup>3</sup>	1.8	16.0	42.3	39.9	7	5.7	2.0

<sup>1</sup> Each variable was measured using a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (not at all attached/familiar) to 9 (extremely attached/familiar). To summarize, these scales were collapsed into the four categories shown in the table (i.e., 1 = none, 2-3 = slightly, 4-6 = moderately, and 7-9 = highly).

<sup>2</sup> n = 674 respondents.

<sup>3</sup> n = 675 respondents.

**Social identity.** For this sample social identity was measured using three variables (Table 18). This is an exploratory scale with adequate internal reliability ( $\alpha = .66$ ). That is, the three items in Table 18 adequately hang together as an exploratory measure of social identity, so it is appropriate to combine these into a single composite of social identity for this sample at RMNP. The mean for this composite variable of social identity was 3.1 (s.d. = 1.0), which represents the neutral point of the scale. These visitors tended to report stronger feelings of attachment and familiarity, at RMNP, than they did for social identity. There was a significant correlation between social identity and attachment and between social identity and familiarity, but these were weaker than the correlation between familiarity and attachment (Table 19). Day and overnight visitors did not differ statistically on mean level of social identity.

**Table 18. Levels of social identity reported by visitors to RMNP during summer 2002.**

Item <sup>1</sup>	Disagree %	Neutral %	Agree %	Mean	S. D.	Item-total $r^2$
Being in RMNP BC/W brings back memories of time spent with friends.	17.7	26.7	55.6	3.5	1.2	.58
I associate special people in my life with being in RMNP BC/W.	17.4	22.7	60.0	3.6	1.2	.54
My family and I regularly visited RMNP when I was growing up.	63.8	16.3	19.9	2.2	1.4	.28
Composite measure of social identity <sup>3</sup>	--	--	--	3.1	1.0	--

<sup>1</sup> Each item was measured using a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). To summarize, these scales were collapsed into the three categories shown in the table (i.e., 1-2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, and 4-5 = agree).

<sup>2</sup> Correlation between item and composite variable; generally  $r = .40$  or above is adequate.

<sup>3</sup> Alpha = .66 (scale reliability).

**Table 19. Degree of association (Pearson's r) among attachment, familiarity, and social identity at RMNP during summer 2002.**

	Attachment	Familiarity
Familiarity	.55	
Social Identity	.37	.31

Note: All correlations significant at  $p = .01$ .

**Association between experience and attachment.** The number of visits made to a place (e.g., backcountry) within a year (Table 14) is a common indicator of visitor experience that has been associated with place attachment (Williams & Vaske, 2003). This study provided validity evidence for concepts of place by collapsing this experience variable into low (0-1 visits) and high (2 or more visits) levels to make mean comparisons with the place variables measured in 2002. Visitors who had made two or more trips to the Park in the past year (i.e., high experience) were, on average, statistically more attached and familiar with the Park than first time visitors, and those who had made only one previous trip that year. The same difference existed regarding mean levels of social identity for these two groups (Table 20).

**Table 20. Mean comparisons of place concepts for visitors with high and low levels of previous experience at RMNP for summer 2002.**

Place Construct <sup>1</sup>	Experience <sup>2</sup>	Mean	S. D.	t-value	p-value
Attachment	Low	6.6	1.9	9.8	<.001
	High	7.8	1.3		
Familiarity	Low	5.0	1.9	11.7	<.001
	High	6.7	1.7		
Social Identity	Low	3.0	1.0	3.7	<.001
	High	3.3	1.0		

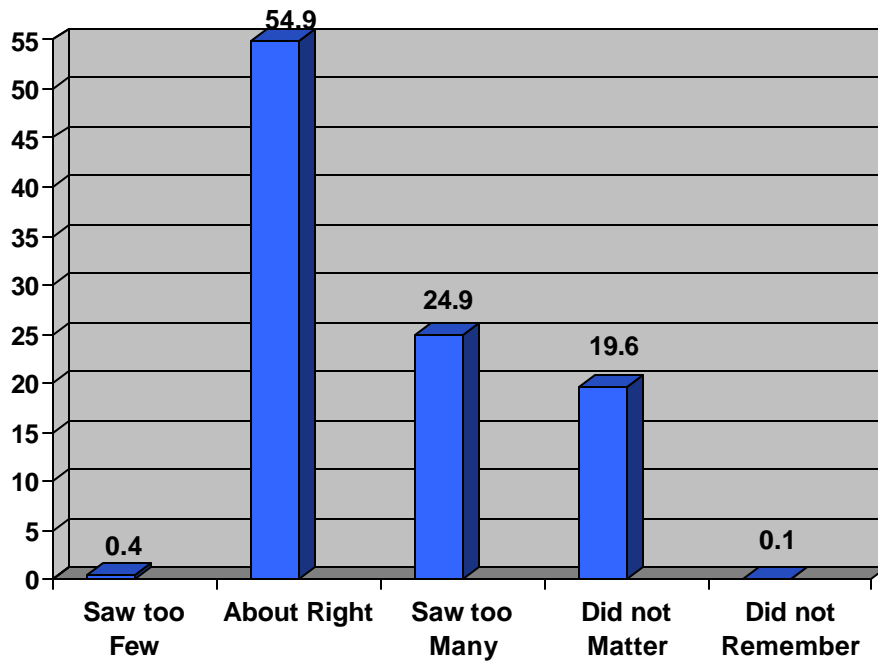
<sup>1</sup> Attachment and familiarity were measured using a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (not at all attached/familiar) to 9 (extremely attached/familiar). Social identity is a composite of a 3-item scale (Table 18).

<sup>2</sup> Visitors who reported making 0-1 previous trips to RMNP backcountry within the past year were classified as low experience, while those who made 2 or more previous visits in the past 12 months were classified as having high experience.



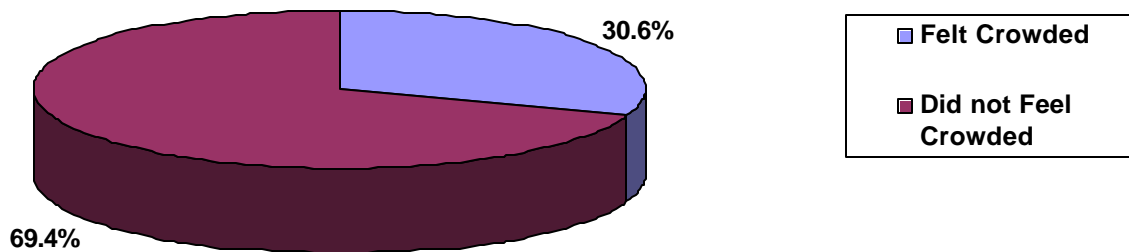
### **Perceptions of Crowding and Limits on Group Size**

**Number of people encountered.** Over half of the sample of visitors (55%) thought that the number of other visitors that they had encountered during this trip was about right. However, 25% of this sample reported seeing too many other people during their visits. Figure 9 summarizes these results. A comparison of day and overnight visitors showed no statistical differences regarding encounters ( $\chi^2 = 5.63$ ,  $p = .23$ ).



**Figure 9. How visitors to Backcountry/Wilderness felt about the number of people that they saw during their visit to RMNP during summer of 2002.**

**Feeling crowded.** This survey asked visitors' perceptions about crowding in RMNP. Visitors were asked a simple "yes" or "no" question concerning crowding. Crowding is not always a product of the number of encounters (Manning, 1999). This study, therefore, asked whether or not visitors felt crowded in addition to the encounter question. More people (30.6%) did in fact feel crowded during their visit (Figure 10) than those who felt they encountered too many people (24.9%). The type, location of encounters, or the behavior of others encountered, and other factors can influence feelings of crowding and may account for the difference in responses. Day and overnight visitors did not differ in their responses to this crowding item ( $\chi^2 = 1.22$ ,  $p = .27$ ).



**Figure 10.** The percentage of visitors that felt crowded in RMNP during summer of 2002.

**Places visitors felt crowded.** If visitors answered yes, they had felt crowded, they were directed to the second part of the question that asked them to specify the places they felt crowded. Many visitors (n = 202) chose to answer the second part of the question and their responses were tabulated and categorized by specific Backcountry/Wilderness locations (Tables 21, 22, and 23).

Other responses indicated that visitors felt crowded in the backcountry at four locations in the Fern Lake area totaling (3.7%) and at four locations in the Grand Lake area totaling (2.9%). Visitors surveyed also mentioned some of the front country areas they had to pass through and which they may have linked to the Backcountry/Wilderness experience itself. Included were Trail Ridge Road and the scenic overlooks along the road (5.7%), the Alpine Visitor Center (2.5%), and Moraine Park (2.0%). Visitors also listed parking lots and trailheads throughout the park (18.9%) as being crowded, and a small percentage (3.7%) of responses indicated that certain park facilities and services such as the restrooms, shuttle buses, campgrounds, and the Beaver Meadows Visitor Center were crowded. The entire list of open-ended responses was presented in Appendix E.

**Table 21. Specific places in the Bear Lake Area where visitors reported feeling crowded during summer 2002.**

Location	Frequency	Percent of Responses <sup>1</sup>
Bear Lake	44	18.0
Alberta Falls	17	7.0
Emerald Lake	13	5.3
Mills Lake	12	4.9
Dream Lake	6	2.5
Flattop	6	2.5
Other locations near Bear Lake	4	1.6

<sup>1</sup> n = 244 responses.

**Table 22. Specific places in the Wild Basin Area where visitors reported feeling crowded during summer 2002.**

Location	Frequency	Percent of Responses <sup>1</sup>
Calypso Cascades	13	5.3
Ouzel Falls	8	3.3
Copeland Falls	2	0.8
Thunder Lake	2	0.8
Pear Lake	1	0.4
On trail between parking and Ouzel Falls	5	2.0

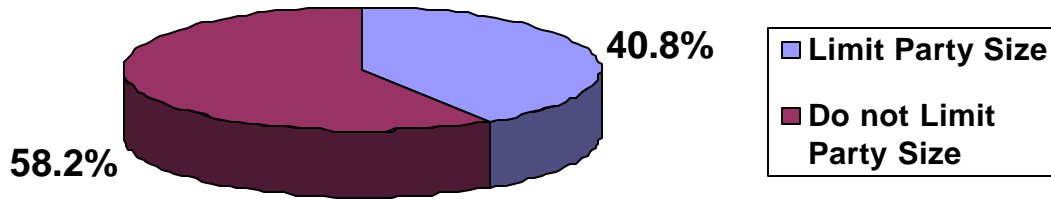
<sup>1</sup> n = 244 responses.

**Table 23. Specific places in the Longs Peak Area where visitors reported feeling crowded during summer 2002.**

Location	Frequency	Percent of Responses <sup>1</sup>
Longs Peak	9	3.7
Chasm Lake	4	1.6
Boulderfield	2	0.8
Estes Cone	1	0.4

<sup>1</sup> n = 244 responses.

**Limits on party size.** Visitors were asked if they felt that there should be limits placed on group size. Over 40% of the research participants felt that there should be limits placed on the number of visitors in a party (Figure 11). Only 17 visitors did not answer this item.



**Figure 11. The percentage of visitors to Backcountry/Wilderness who did or did not feel that party size should be limited at RMNP.**

**Maximum party size.** Visitors that wished to see limits on party size were also asked about the maximum number of people that should be permitted in any one party. Of those, nearly 82.5% preferred groups with a maximum of four to 10 people, with 25.7% stating that the maximum should be six, which was also the modal response, and 21.4% thought the maximum party size should be ten people (Table 24).

These preferences are lower than the actual party size limits set for backcountry sites in RMNP, so managers may wish to discuss the current standard, or at least clarify it for visitors, to adjust their expectations.

**Table 24. Maximum number of visitors per party preferred by those visitors who favored party size limits at RMNP during summer 2002.**

Maximum Party Size	Frequency	Percent of Sample <sup>1</sup>
6	66	25.7
10	55	21.4
8	35	13.6
4	24	9.3
12	21	8.2
5	20	7.8
15	13	5.1
7	9	3.5
20	6	2.3
>20	3	1.2
2	1	.4

<sup>1</sup> n = 257 respondents; 14 visitors who approved of group size limits did not answer this item.

### **Acceptability of Impacts**

The survey presented visitors with a series of scenarios that they might encounter at RMNP. In each scenario the situation surrounding the impact condition was varied (Noe, Hammit, & Bixler, 1997). Participants were asked how these things affected their experience and how they would rate the acceptability of each scenario. Closed-ended responses were recorded on a 7-point Likert-type scale, which ranged from highly unacceptable (1) to highly acceptable (7). Table 25 displays the complete distribution of responses for this survey item.

Conditions that the majority of participants found to be highly to moderately unacceptable were as follows. Overall, **litter** was rated as an unacceptable condition in all scenarios where 81% of respondents felt that litter at campsites was either highly or moderately unacceptable, 88% felt that litter along trails was highly or moderately unacceptable, and likewise, 90% of this sample rated litter along streams/lakes as a condition that is not acceptable at the Park.

Another condition visitors felt strongly about was the unacceptability of **seeing human waste or toilet paper**; 97% of participants felt that seeing evidence of human feces was not acceptable at RMNP, while only 52% of this sample felt that seeing waste from domestic animals was unacceptable. Ninety one percent felt that **carving on trees** or seeing **graffiti** was highly to moderately unacceptable.

**Seeing people make new trails** (84%), and seeing **illegal campsites** (80%) were also rated as highly or moderately unacceptable impacts.

Participants felt strongly about **human-wildlife interactions** in the Park. Seeing people approach or harass animals was rated unacceptable (highly or moderately) by 94% while 75% percent felt that seeing people feed wildlife was highly or moderately unacceptable.

**Noise** also tended to be unacceptable (highly, moderately or somewhat) for this group of park visitors. Hearing radios, pagers, and cell phones in particular, was not acceptable to 89%. Hearing people shouting or talking loudly was not acceptable to 77% of the sample and 69% found noise from roads and parking areas to be unacceptable. People were somewhat more tolerant of airplane noise with only 43% of the visitors sampled finding it unacceptable (13% were uncertain about this issue however). Seeing **the collection of natural resources** was unacceptable to 83% of the visitors sampled.

Three scenarios addressed **visible erosion** at RMNP: (1) seeing erosion along stream and lake banks, (2) seeing erosion along trails, and (3) seeing erosion at campsites. While the majority of participants (53%-65%) rated these as unacceptable, these majorities were smaller than those for many other impacts. More visitors felt uncertain about the acceptability of seeing erosion and it was rated as slightly unacceptable or acceptable more often than litter. The acceptability of erosion was also less polarized than the issues of litter and human-wildlife interactions. Since erosion is generally considered to be a more severe ecological impact than litter or many of the others in this table, managers may wish to help the public understand the relative severity of these different impacts.

**Table 25. The acceptability of impacts as rated by visitors at RMNP during summer 2002.**

Impact	% Unacceptable			% Uncertain	% Acceptable		
	Highly	Moderately	Slightly		Slightly	Moderately	Highly
Seeing litter at campsites	58	23	11	1	5	1	1
Seeing erosion on stream/lake banks	8	24	21	18	12	12	5
Seeing litter on trails	69	19	7	1	2	1	1
Seeing erosion on trails	8	30	27	10	16	6	2
Seeing litter along streams/lakes	80	13	4	1	1	1	1
Seeing erosion at campsites	6	27	31	11	17	7	1
Hearing people yell/talk loudly	20	30	27	8	9	4	2
Hearing radio, cell phone, pager	54	22	13	5	4	2	1
Hearing an airplane	10	11	22	13	17	16	11
Seeing human waste/toilet paper	79	12	6	1	1	1	1
Seeing an airplane	5	9	17	12	19	21	18
Seeing tree carvings or graffiti	70	21	6	2	1	0	1
Seeing domestic animal waste	12	18	22	7	17	16	8
Seeing people feed wild animals	52	23	12	7	3	1	1
Seeing people approach/harrass wild animals	81	13	3	2	1	1	1

Note: Table entries are valid percentages of visitors, which accounts for missing responses.



**Table 25 (continued). The acceptability of impacts as rated by visitors at RMNP during summer 2002.**

Impact	% Unacceptable			% Uncertain	% Acceptable		
	Highly	Moderately	Slightly		Slightly	Moderately	Highly
Seeing illegal campsites	58	22	9	7	2	1	1
Seeing people make new trails	62	22	7	5	3	1	1
Hearing noise from roads/parking lots	12	27	30	10	14	6	2
Seeing someone collect natural resources	39	28	16	11	4	1	1
Seeing lights that originate from outside BC/Wild	8	19	22	20	14	12	5

Note: Table entries are valid percentages of visitors, which accounts for missing responses.

**Other things that detracted from the visitors' experience.** In addition to rating the level of acceptability of impact conditions, we asked park visitors to describe other things that detracted from their experience in an open-ended survey item. In some cases participants listed new things like vehicle congestion and over development that were not included in the 12 ratings of acceptability described above, and in some cases they expounded in greater detail on things that were included in Table 25 above. The complete list of comments (Appendix F) was content analyzed by a team of four researchers and the following categories emerged and are listed in order of the frequency of their occurrence.

**1. Negative Visitor Behavior, total = 31.** Feeding, approaching, harassing wildlife (11), Inexperienced/uneducated tourists (4), people going off trail, off trail in tundra (4), illegal hikers/campers, rule breakers, (2) illegal fires (2), lack of enforcement, people playing, wading, swimming in streams, people with weapons, fireworks, no hiking etiquette, runners on trail, rock throwing.

**2. Vehicle Congestion/Parking/Roads, Total = 26** traffic jams, too many cars, tailgating, not enough shuttles (4), poor traffic flow, exhaust pollution (5), poor driving, especially from sightseers (4), too many RVs, limited parking (4), buses, pickups on limited roadways (2), need more pullovers, lack of enforcement of traffic laws, car was towed but no shoulder to park on or lines to indicate; bike riders on road – hazard; speeding, speeding in campground.

**3. Noise, total = 14.** Engine/road noise (3), car alarms, strange noise, hearing others in backcountry (3), noise from large groups (2), generators in developed campground (3), whistles.

**4. Horse Impacts, total = 12.** Horses, manure, urine, trail damage from horses.

**5. Dogs/Pets, total = 10.** Objections to the presence of both leashed and loose pets.

**6. Over-Development within or near the Park, total = 9.** Scale or amount of infrastructure (roads parking) - urban feeling, wider roads means more speeding, paving roads and campgrounds, backcountry trails overly groomed, unnatural materials used on trails, bridges, too much lighting, illumination, too much development near park, commercial interests have too much power in/near park, opposition to commercial tours/over flights.

**7. Crowding/Encounters, total = 8.** Crowds, backcountry crowding (4), campsites too close together (3) and too close to trail, crowded trails.

**8. Complaints about Regulations/Authority, total = 8.** Too many restrictions, required permits, permit checks too frequent, steep fees, rangers that know less than I do, radar used by rangers, opposition to length of campsite stay restriction, to climbing (restrictions on power drills), lack of climber committees for approval of new routes, routes unsafe.

**9. Facilities, total = 8.** Lack of portable toilets (2); drinking water at trailheads; stinky toilets (2); squeaky toilet doors; no bear wires; need bear lockers (car was broken into).

**10. Behavior of Children, total = 6.** Loud, uncontrolled children.

**11. Resource Management Issues, total = 5.** Too many elk, unnatural elk population; smoke, dead and downed trees from wildfires; people allowed to keep fish; fishing with bait.

**12. Others Mentioned,** Impacts to vegetation (3), tree carving, peeling bark; picking wildflowers (3); aircraft, airplanes; aircraft noise (2).

Visitors considered several things to detract from their experience that were not included in the scaled questions. These included: vehicular congestion and related impacts, negative visitor behaviors, horse impacts, over development within or near the Park, and complaints about regulations. Although this survey primarily dealt with experiences in the backcountry, visitors discussed at length problems with vehicular congestion. The number of follow-up comments about negative visitor behavior reinforces the need to address the impacts in Table 25, and highlights the need for the presence of rangers in the backcountry who can use an “Authority of the Resource” approach when confronting visitors about undesirable behavior (Wallace & Gaudry, 2002). Some visitors also mentioned illegal pets in the Park.

### **Prioritizing Management Actions**

We asked RMNP Backcountry/Wilderness visitors to assist Park managers in prioritizing the management actions that would address the impacts discussed above. Visitors were asked to rate the importance of taking action on 14 different impacts. “Taking action” was described as things like education, law enforcement, monitoring etc.) Closed-ended responses were recorded on a 4-point Likert-type scale, which ranged from not at all important for action (1) to extremely important for action (4). Table 26 displays the complete distribution of responses for this survey item.

For eight of the 14 issues addressed in Table 26 a majority of research participants felt that action should be taken because addressing these conditions was moderately to extremely important. This is true for **littering, evidence of human waste, illegal camps, unplanned trails, approaching and feeding wildlife, and resource collection**. Erosion continues to be a lower priority for visitors than it is for managers, perhaps due to its insidious and on-going nature. In general, priorities mirrored ratings of impact acceptability. For example, over 90% of this sample rated littering in the Park as moderately or extremely important for management action, which closely corresponds with ratings of unacceptability for the scenarios that dealt with litter (see Table 25 above). Likewise, the importance of mitigating erosion in RMNP was less polarized than the importance of taking action on littering. Impacts emanating from outside the Park such as aircraft over flights and light pollution emerged as lower priorities which may be accounted for in part by the Park’s publicized efforts to mitigate these impacts via bans on low-level over flights and the Related Lands Program which has worked to moderate the impacts from night lighting close to the Park.

**Table 26. How Backcountry/Wilderness visitors prioritized the importance of taking management actions to deal with impacting conditions at RMNP, summer 2002.**

Impact Condition	Not at all Important %	Somewhat Important %	Moderately Important %	Extremely Important %
Erosion at campsites	10	46	36	8
Feeding wild animals	6	25	28	41
Littering in the park	1	7	20	72
Collection of natural resources	7	30	34	29
Approaching wild animals	6	24	29	41
Visible human waste/toilet tissue	4	12	20	64

Note : Table entries are valid percentages of visitors, which accounts for missing responses.

**Table 26 (continued). How Backcountry/Wilderness visitors prioritized the importance of taking management actions to deal with impacting conditions at RMNP, summer 2002.**

Noise from roads/parking lots	34	45	16	5
Trail erosion	7	40	38	15
Use of cell phones/pagers	30	27	19	24
Aircraft flying over the park	58	26	9	7
Lights visible from BC/Wild	53	33	11	3
Noise from yelling/talking loudly	19	37	30	14
People making illegal camps	6	23	30	41
Elimination of unplanned trails	6	24	41	29

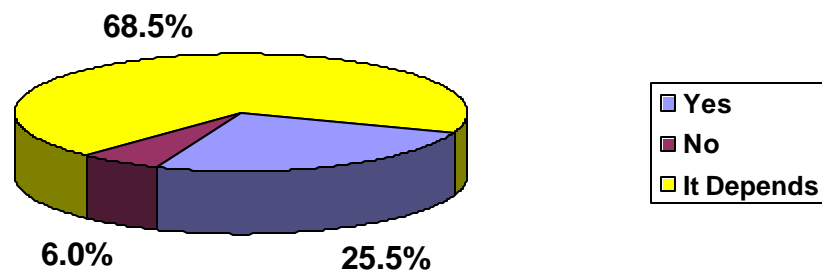
Note : Table entries are valid percentages of visitors, which accounts for missing responses.

I was pleasantly surprised by the quality of the park. While I visited in September, I expected the trails, picnic areas, and campsites to show signs of the larger numbers of people who visit through June to August. Overall, I found the trails well maintained and the campsites in good shape and clean! I only found a few small pieces of litter in campsites during my stay. The noisy generators in the developed camping area and the noise of planes that persist even in the backcountry areas were most disturbing. Carvings on aspen tree trunks were sad. These trees are so beautiful; the carvings are ghastly wounds.

*Visitor describing impacts and management issues at Rocky Mountain National Park.*

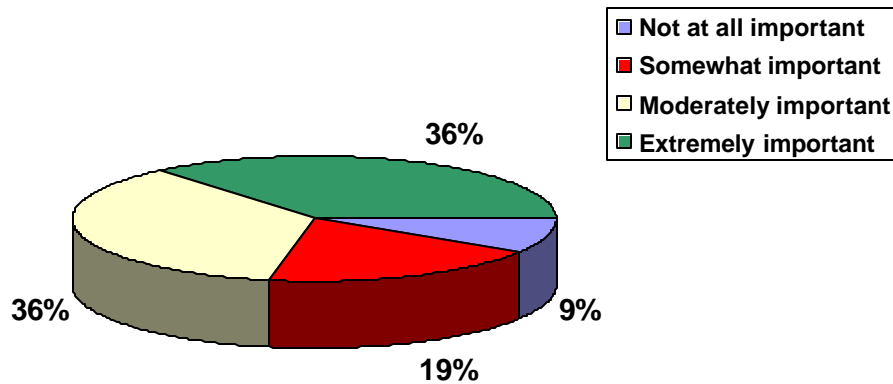
### **Perceptions of Wilderness Designation and Management**

**Do visitors consider themselves to be in wilderness while at RMNP?** Wilderness is a social construction, and, as Roderick Nash (1967) pointed out, the term “wilderness” means many things to many people. For example a study conducted in New Zealand asked the public to name a wilderness area and 55% listed undesignated national parks or specific places in them (Shultis, 1999). For this study visitors were asked if they considered themselves to be in the wilderness when they visited RMNP. They could answer “yes”, “no” or “it depends where I am in the Park”. The majority of visitors surveyed reported that it depends on where they are in the park (68.5%), however over a quarter of these visitors (25.5%) perceived themselves to be in wilderness at RMNP (Figure 12). This may indicate that many visitors know that wilderness areas have particular characteristics, but the majority of these visitors recognize that certain parts of RMNP may not have these wilderness characteristics. Some of these visitors may be aware of the distinction between federally designated wilderness as defined by the Wilderness Act of 1964 and other protected areas such as national parks, but we can’t be sure. The 25.5% who reported being in wilderness while at RMNP may perceive no difference between the Park and designated wilderness, or may not understand that there is an official designation different from their perception. These visitors may benefit from information that elaborates on the wilderness concept and distinguishes between designated wilderness and wild backcountry.



**Figure 12. Visitors’ perceptions of being in wilderness in RMNP during summer 2002.**

**Wilderness designation.** Visitors were later asked about the importance of designating more of Park's backcountry as wilderness under the Wilderness Act. Visitors were asked how they personally felt about such a designation in the Park. Figure 13 shows the majority (72%) of visitors felt that wilderness designation was moderately to extremely important for the Park. A small percentage (9 %) felt that wilderness designation was not at all important to them personally. There was no significant difference ( $\chi^2 = 2.31$ ,  $p = .51$ ) between day visitors and overnight visitors regarding the personal importance of official designation at RMNP.



**Figure 13. Importance of the designation of additional RMNP backcountry as official wilderness for visitors during summer 2002.**

### **Expected Changes in Management if more Wilderness is Designated**

Managers are interested in the perceptions that visitors might have regarding the differences in management that they would expect if more of the Park became officially designated as wilderness. It was explained that the Park has a small amount of wilderness designated under the Wilderness Act but that a larger percentage of the Park could be designated as wilderness in the future. Visitors were asked to write open-ended comments about what management changes they would expect to see if this were to happen. Specifically, visitors were asked:

**“The Park has some designated Wilderness, and a large percentage of the Park could be designated as Wilderness. The Wilderness Act calls for very limited use or elimination of certain activities in wilderness areas. If backcountry areas in the Park are officially designated as wilderness, what changes, if any, would you expect to see regarding how the area is managed?”**

The responses to this item were content analyzed by two investigators and grouped into five general categories reported below. The entire list of open-ended comments can be found in Appendix G. A total of 392 research participants listed approximately 407 relevant responses for this survey item. Many responses were complex and contained several ideas, so we summarized this item based on responses rather than actual respondents. During the content analysis, responses were read several times and then placed in one of the categories, or sub-categories, as these emerged. Typical words used by visitors are reported verbatim in quotes.

***1) Comments that Indicated Perceptions of Management Changes (that are in fact) Likely to Occur with Wilderness Designation – occurred 45 times*** (11% of total responses). Park visitors who seemed to understand the implications of official wilderness designation fell into this category, but represented the minority. These people provided expected management changes that were in line with concepts found in the Wilderness Act. Typical responses (31) in this sub-category included, “activities limited to Wilderness Act,” “less managed,” “less improvements,” “more wild,” and “limited signage.” A second sub-category, comprised of 14 responses, emerged that indicated that there should be no motorized use and that restrictions on the use of mechanical equipment would be necessary in designated wilderness areas.

***2) Comments that Indicated Perceptions of Management Changes that are Not Likely to Occur with Wilderness Designation – occurred 150 times*** (37% of total responses). This category of visitors speculated on what might occur should more of the Park become designated as wilderness. As a group, their reported expectations indicated less awareness of actual changes associated with the Wilderness Act. A sub-sample of these responses fell into four sub-categories including, the elimination of pets and stock animals such as horses and llamas (27 responses), severe restrictions on hiking, camping, and fishing (21), generally more limits on visitation/more restrictions, more enforcement of rules, and more education for those who go to the wilderness (47), and finally, 20 responses represented visitors who do not understand the concept of official wilderness.

***3) Editorial Comments That Did Not Directly Answer the Question – occurred 108 times*** (26% of total responses). The third category represented editorial comments and opinions that did not answer the survey item and which were not necessarily linked to wilderness

designation at RMNP. A sub-sample of these responses fell into four sub-categories including, management recommendations such as providing more education to visitors (25), general concern that official designation would limit access to the Park, or reduce the overall enjoyment of the experience (20), for example, “I am very concerned that blanket wilderness designation will restrict some peoples ability to enjoy the wilderness experience currently available ... RMNP should concentrate on backcountry preservation/conservation, not restrictions.” Six comments clearly stated that there was no need for more wilderness, and four comments indicated that the person did not understand the question asked of them, or that the item was vague and poorly worded.

**4) Comments that Indicated No Changes – occurred 59 times** (15% of total responses). Most of these responses were written by visitors as “no changes” or “none” indicating satisfaction with current park management.

**5) No Opinion and Don’t Know – occurred 45 times** (11% of total responses). The final category of responses indicated visitors that were uncertain, did not know, or who had no opinion regarding management changes at RMNP in light of wilderness designation. Interestingly, some people (14 responses) indicated that they did not possess enough information or experience to give a response to this survey question.

Clearly, wilderness management is a topic that is poorly understood by the public as evidenced by the broad spectrum of responses to this question. Only, 11% of the responses indicated expectations and perceptions that were in line with the Wilderness Act of 1964. Thirty-seven percent of these comments indicated erroneous expectations. That is, some visitors would expect many restrictions (e.g., no fishing) that are not likely to happen as a result of wilderness designation. Moreover, many comments represent visitors who could not answer the question, who did not understand the question, or who wanted more information before forming an opinion. This indicates that many visitors are not aware of the differences, in formal definition, between the concepts of backcountry and wilderness in terms of their management. Wilderness is a social construction (Williams, 2002) representing various definitions (Nash, 1967; Shultis, 1999), and these responses provide evidence that one size does not fit all when it comes to park visitor perceptions of wilderness management.

### **Attitudes toward Management Actions in Designated Wilderness**

After writing open-ended observations about the possible changes in management actions that wilderness designation might initiate, visitors were given a list of activities and management actions and asked: “***Please rate how much you personally approve or disapprove of each activity inside designated Wilderness areas.***” Respondents indicated their attitudes toward each possible management activity by selecting a response on a scale ranging from “strongly disapprove” to “strongly approve”. Table 27 summarizes the results.

Most visitors approved (combining strong, moderate, slight approval) of the use of aircraft for emergencies (95%), the installation of trail signs (88%), the installation of signs to protect resources (87%), the use of footbridges over water (85%), and the use of ranger patrol cabins (80%) in wilderness areas. They were moderately supportive of the mandatory use of wildlife



proof containers (77%), the installation of educational signs (69%), and the use of hitching rails for horses (63%)

Results were more polarized for the use of wood fires at some campsites, the use of flagging and markers by scientists, and the use of motorized tools by park staff. The majority was not in favor of the use of commercially guided groups in wilderness, or the use of motorized tools or vehicles by scientists. There was a notable lack of consensus and wide variation in approval for a number of items. The substantial percentages of visitors indicating that they neither approved nor disapproved for six of the items may point to their need for more information before they would be able to decide. These results point out the need for some caution both when selecting management actions or permitting specific research activities and the need for communication with the public about the reasons behind the choices. This is especially true for issues where attitudes are polarized and may become more of an issue if additional wilderness is designated in the Park. Issues like commercial visitor guides and other legal but non-conforming practices in wilderness will require particular care. There are a number of Backcountry/Wilderness issues such as water storage and conveyance structures, in-holdings, and other non-conforming or adjacent land uses that were not probed by this study but will be of equal interest to managers at some point.

**Table 27. Attitudes toward different management activities in designated Wilderness held by visitors to RMNP in the summer of 2002.**

Management Action/Use	% Disapprove			% Neither		% Approve	
	Strongly	Moderately	Slightly		Slightly	Moderately	Strongly
Motorized tools staff	7	10	13	20	12	21	18
Commercially guided groups	13	18	18	18	18	12	3
Motorized vehicles staff	8	13	16	18	16	17	13
Installation of trail signs	1	2	4	5	13	24	51
Motorized vehicles scientists	14	14	17	14	21	15	6
Ranger patrol cabins/camps	2	2	4	13	19	30	31
Flagging/markers scientists	4	7	15	23	22	22	8
Installation of educational signs	5	6	10	11	23	23	23
Motorized tools scientists	10	12	20	19	20	15	5

**Table 27 (continued). Attitudes toward different management activities in designated Wilderness held by visitors to RMNP in the summer of 2002.**

Management Action/Use	% Disapprove			% Neither		% Approve	
	Strongly	Moderately	Slightly		Slightly	Moderately	Strongly
Wood fires at some campsites	13	11	10	10	21	20	15
Aircraft for emergencies	1	1	1	4	7	23	65
Hitching rails	7	7	6	17	20	23	20
Foot bridges over water	2	3	4	6	14	33	38
Mandatory wildlife proof containers	4	3	5	10	14	20	43
Installation of signs to protect resources	1	2	4	5	18	24	45

Note: Table entries are valid percentages, which account for missing responses.

I frankly don't know how you better use resources and personnel. Fortunately most of the people I see in the Park treat it with respect and follow good rules of care. It is way too crowded on the major routes, but I do not believe entrance should be limited; it is a magnificent place and magnificent experience that should not be denied any American or visitor. But certainly those who use the "wilderness" areas should respect that privilege and be held firmly accountable for how they behave in unimproved or improved areas. Motorized vehicles and motorized tools should be useable to park employees and/or research personnel, but only when absolutely necessary and the same for emergency rescue aircraft or vehicles. Research should not be more destructive to the Park than wilderness users. My recent visit was my first time on the trail to Nymph Lake. I was surprised at the improvement to the trail, expected it to be much more natural. If such improvements PROTECTS from greater damage to the environment I think it is fine. If it is just for convenience of users I believe it should not be done. My first hike in RMNP was in mid 70's with my wife and five kids to Fern Lake. It was not improved, was pretty rugged in spots and tough for small children, but it is something we have stored among our personal memory. TREASURES. We come to RMNP at least twice a year. It is our favorite spot to visit.

*Visitor describing wilderness management issues, personal attachment, and social identity at the Park.*

## **Content Analysis of Additional Comments**

At the end of the survey, visitors were given an opportunity to write any additional open-ended comments, and 162 people took the time to do so. Most comments contained more than one topic. The following quote is an example of a comment that includes statements about overall management, increasing revenue, wilderness designation, commercialization, and backcountry management actions.

*“I believe RMNP staff has done a very good job in managing the park over the last 20 years, considering the limited funding and the substantial increase in visitations. I believe more funding is necessary. Frankly, I think additional funds should come from three sources: Federal taxes (but limited in increases); higher fees for use (entrance fees, camping fees, both campgrounds and backcountry); and contributions and donating. I strongly feel that the wilderness designation for RMNP should be strictly enforced and increased. Without this, RMNP will become just another commercial venture, and what made it so wonderful (pristine wilderness) will be lost. This will be a great challenge to RMNP staff due to increased pressure of increased visitations. Please resist commercialization of the park, such as airplane or helicopter flyovers, and commercially organized trips into the backcountry. (Other than horse and llama liveries that already exist.) As noted earlier, rather than requiring animal proof containers in the backcountry, bear wires should be installed at all backcountry sites and their use should be required.”*

As a result of this richness, 462 comments were extracted from the visitor entries and then grouped into nine categories during the content analysis. Comments addressed a wide variety of topics. The largest numbers of comments have been put into the category called “Suggested Management Actions” which has 12 sub-categories (e.g., transportation, law enforcement, trails). Appendix H1 was developed from the analysis and the complete list of appeared in Appendix H2. Appendix H1 enables managers to easily locate the specific comments for any category. One value of this type of open-ended question is that it provides direct input in the words of the visitors that represents and clarifies issues of interest to managers. A number of comments may be useful to staff who work on outreach materials.

*“Two movie tickets and popcorn cost more than an entrance fee ... \$15 per car for a week is an incredible bargain.”*

- 1) General Comments about the Experience (total = 25).** These were accolades for the Park reporting that they had a good, (e.g., beautiful, wonderful, fantastic) experience.
- 2) Compliments made of Staff (total = 41).** Most of these (27) commented that staff was doing a good job and encouraged them to keep up the good work. Some were more specific (14) noting that staff was helpful, knowledgeable or friendly.
- 3) Things Adding to the Experience (total = 23).** Most often mentioned were good trails (7), and cleanliness (5) and the quality of the backcountry experience (4).

- 4) **Things Detracting from the Experience (total = 59).** Comments here reiterated concerns about crowding (9), trail and trailhead condition/management (9), impacts caused by visitors (9), fees and permits (7), traffic and congestion (7), noise (6), and litter (4).
- 5) **Suggested Management Actions (total = 155).** The following sub-categories regarding managerial concerns are listed starting with those most frequently mentioned.

*Transportation and vehicle management (total = 24).* The shuttle system was addressed by a number of visitors (10), both for and against. A diversity of other comments related to transportation.

*Fees, permits, revenue (total = 22).* The largest number of comments supported increases in fees (10), some people suggested other sources of revenue (7). Others commented on the fee structure.

*General comments (total = 21).* Most comments here were divided between those who would strengthen protection in one way or another (14) and those who desired less regulation and new opportunities (7).

*Backcountry regulations (total = 5).* Ways to improve the “bear proofing” of campsites drew several comments (5) as did comments about improving the backcountry permitting and site designation process (5) as well as standards for behaviors in the backcountry (3).

*Infrastructure (total = 15).* Most of these comments had to do with the use of signage (10), especially as it relates to visitor management, or related to bathroom facilities (4).

*Information and education (total = 14).* All 14 of these suggestions were unique and dealt with topics ranging from providing information on water sources, recent wildlife sightings, or on improving the use of websites.

*Crowding/carrying capacity (total = 13).* Visitors’ comments were evenly divided in their support (7) or opposition (7) to limits on visitation.

*Appropriate technology and Equipment (total = 10).* Comments covered a range of topics from cell phones and radios (3) to fixed anchors, mountain bikes, horses, and motors.

*Trails (total = 9).* These comments suggested better trail markers with distances (5). Others commented that trail improvements should be done for resource protection rather than visitor convenience and that more unimproved trails were needed. Unlike most protected area surveys, and to the Park’s credit, only one person suggested a need for better trail maintenance.

*Enforcement (total = 9).* Visitors in this group commented on the need for better or more active enforcement of backcountry/wilderness regulations.

*Wildlife (total = 4).* Two people suggested wolf reintroduction, one favored the culling of elk, and one favored seasonal closures to reduce stress.

*Research (total = 2).* One person thought scientists should be allowed to do their work and another that they should not be allowed to cause more impact than other park visitors.

Comments about management often reveal a need for information and interpretation. They can reveal knowledge gaps between managers and the public (Brooks & Titre, 2003) or the general lack of understanding among visitors about the role of natural disturbance, nutrient cycles, and fire, for example.

*“Our second concern has developed over years of observation along miles and miles of trails where dead trees are allowed to accumulate on the ground in increasing numbers. An example of this (out of many) is a stretch along either side of the Fern Lake trail toward its lower end, perhaps about a mile from the Fern Lake trailhead. While we appreciate the values and environmental reasoning supporting a totally “natural” environment, this type of management seems both wasteful, and more importantly, would seem to pose an increasing fire risk. This summer of extreme dryness and fires has surely brought this to the fore. As we hike past area after area with so much deadwood laying on the ground (and no fire breaks in the Park to our knowledge) we sometimes see the whole of RMNP as one big tinder box that could be absolutely devastated by a disastrous fire. We don’t understand the policies that have led to this.”*

- 6) Personal Meanings and Sense of Place (total = 92).** An important finding from this last survey question is that many people took the time to write—often at length—about what the Park means to them, or why they are attached to the place. This reinforces that there is much to be learned from the qualitative narratives that people write and tell about their experiences in a place like RMNP (Brooks, 2003). These stories are often intergenerational in nature and suggest that the Park should find ways to nurture the development of special relationships.

*“I love RMNP. It was a special place that my family would always visit every year from the time I was 6 months old. Every year I continue to visit as much as possible. Anything that can be done to preserve this area would just be great, so that I can bring my children to visit. I hope to carry on my family tradition in this way and have my children love and respect the Park as much as my parents have taught me to do so.”*

*“In closing, I want to say again how much I love this park, not only because it is beautiful but because I have been raised in it and spent many of my happiest days in this park. My great grandparents built a cabin in Meeker Park just before the 1929 crash, and my grandparents still have it. I do not know how much longer we will be able to keep it, but it is a very special place for me.”*

Many of these comments (21) are based on high levels of experience and long-term relationships with RMNP. These relationships tend to create high levels of support, and

appropriate behavior concomitant with place attachment. Many include an affirmation that they will return. Some of these comments were directly related to the wilderness experience (16) and revealed that there is a group of backcountry visitors who are passionate about the type of experiences they seek at RMNP.

*“Humans need wilderness and they need to be in touch with the natural world. The further removed we become from these things, the more problems we develop. Groomed parks and golf courses do not count. Highways with occasional pullouts do not count. [There are] people who crave the absolute wilderness. Also, our world will lose so much with the repercussions that occur when we begin to lose the natural systems of our world. We somehow need to maintain these pure natural systems for the well being of humans and all wildlife and all life at whatever cost to our comfort. Thanks for making the effort.”*

By the same token, there are others that appreciate how the Park maintains a diversity of experiences and setting types that accommodate a wide range of visitors.

*“I think RMNP is a place all people should be able to come and enjoy. Please do not make it like other parks, which require a reservation years in advance to see. Right now it is available for the youngest hiker to the most experienced technical climber and that’s what makes it special. Let’s not regulate it to death! Thanks, a park lover”*

- 7) **Comments about Wilderness/Wilderness Designation (total = 13).** Some visitors chose to support designated wilderness or designation in the Park (7). Some commented on how wilderness should be managed, and two people explained why they opposed designation.
- 8) **General Policy and Philosophical Views (total = 33).** These visitors took this opportunity to expound on their generalized views about conservation, protected areas management, government, and land use that were not specific to RMNP.
- 9) **Comments on the Survey Itself (total = 32).** About half of these comments were compliments on the survey (15). Others (13) made suggestions for improving the survey or were critical (e.g., too long, unfamiliar terms). One finding is that even though the Park employs the terms front country and backcountry/wilderness, and the survey used them as well, six people said they were confused.

*“I realized when I got to question #18 that I don't know the definition of Backcountry/Wilderness as opposed to developed front country I assumed Backcountry/Wilderness meant anywhere I can't drive a car, and that developed front country, meant where I can drive a car. Accordingly, my answers in this survey relating to Backcountry/Wilderness refer mostly to hiking trails, and occasional scrambling near trails.*

This seems to indicate that it may be important to clarify these terms in park literature and interpretive activities and that future visitor surveys may need to clarify these terms better as well.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR MANAGEMENT

### **Baseline Data**

This study sampled 682 park visitors as they were coming out at trailheads serving the backcountry (Table 1). We also contacted visitors as they left the backcountry office after purchasing a permit. A visitor survey conducted by the NPS, in 1994, sampled visitors as they left the Park at main exits (USDI, NPS, 1995). This 2002 survey therefore can be thought of as providing the Park with its most current baseline data on Backcountry/Wilderness. It does so to a greater extent than the 1994 study, which did not specifically target Backcountry/Wilderness visitors. The data herein can be used to track changes and trends for a variety of visitor characteristics, attitudes, and preferences. For example, does the fact that nearly 70% of those responding were over 36 years of age represent a long-term trend or will recruitment of younger visitors increase in the future? Will the number of first-time visitors change over time? Will support for wilderness designation or management practices change? National Park Service policy directs managers to manage designated wilderness, recommended wilderness, or potential wilderness in a similar way (USDI, NPS, 2001) to maintain wilderness character and integrity, so understanding how well visitors understand wilderness policies is important. A variety of these survey items assessed the quality of the Backcountry/Wilderness experience and conditions that visitors perceive as adding to or detracting from that experience. The monitoring of these selected baseline variables can in turn provide managers with information about the effectiveness of management actions.

### **Visitor Characteristics**

**Where did this sample of visitors originate?** Over one half of this sample reported that, until the age of 18, they had lived in a small to medium sized city. Based on addresses reported by these visitors, over half of this sample now resides in Colorado's urban Front Range. While this result may have been less striking had we started sampling earlier in the summer to better represent out-of-state families on summer vacation, the number of Front Range residents in this sample is impressive. Alternatively, vacation patterns may have changed with financial constraints inherent in a weaker national economy. Nonetheless, Coloradoans comprised 60% of the Park's Backcountry/Wilderness visitors during our sampling period, and over 90% of these were from the Front Range. While this seems intuitive, it can be put into context when one notes that, in the 1994-1995 study, only 36% of all visitors (front country and backcountry) to the Park were from the Front Range. Front Range representation almost doubled in 2002, reminding us that press releases and communication with Denver TV and radio stations and newspapers can be efficiently used to target many of the Park's Backcountry/Wilderness visitors. This could be important to remember when planning outreach on special issues like wilderness designation hearings, elk management, or changes in fees or regulations.

The remainder of the respondents in this study came from the Midwest and southern regions of the United States. Low numbers of visitors came from other mountain states, the west coast, and

the Northeast where people have more choices of parks and protected areas and mountains to visit.

**Experience diversity.** Results showed that the Park's Backcountry/Wilderness visitors are a balance of (1) first-time or visitors with very little backcountry experience, (2) visitors who are somewhat experienced and (3) a notable group of highly experienced visitors. A range of opportunities is possible in the Backcountry/Wilderness at RMNP and should be sustained in order to provide appropriate experience opportunities for a diversity of visitors. Unlike many Forest Service Wilderness areas where more visitors are experienced or repeat visitors, RMNP seems to be providing a first exposure to BC/W for a number of people who might not otherwise visit wilderness. A number of open-ended comments by people who acknowledged this observation anticipated that the standards and restrictions that might come with more wilderness designation could discourage, or even deter, less experienced visitors who enjoy front country.

**Education.** The fact that Backcountry/Wilderness visitors are highly educated, come in small groups of family or friends, and are supportive of protecting the wilderness resource would suggest that most education and interpretation aimed at backcountry visitors will be well received (Wallace & Gaudry, 2002). Several suggestions regarding visitor education will be included in this section.

**Past experience and place attachment in RMNP.** The association between emotional attachment to the Park and familiarity with the Park was moderately strong (Table 19). In addition, levels of attachment, familiarity, and social identity at RMNP were higher for visitors who had made more previous trips to Backcountry/Wilderness during the past year than for first time visitors (Table 20). In the qualitative study (Brooks, 2003), strong emotional attachment among those with a lot of experience at RMNP was frequently accompanied by support stewardship activities, respect for the Park, and a desire to enjoy the place. Because of their emotional bond with and protective attitude toward Park resources, managers might take more care to identify and reward those with longer histories of visiting. Experienced visitors might merit small privileges such as the option for an increased length of stay at designated camping areas, lower fees paid at the Backcountry Office, or discounted season passes. These types of incentives may increase levels of experience for visitors to Backcountry/Wilderness, which could foster stronger emotional bonds and personal/family relationships to the place.

### **Trip Characteristics**

**The primary purpose for visiting.** For many of these visitors the focus is on natural phenomenon or enjoying the Backcountry/Wilderness itself more than on specific recreation activities or socializing with family and companions. Visitors interact with the resource setting in the Backcountry/Wilderness at RMNP largely by hiking, taking pictures, studying or observing nature, and picnicking rather than concentrating on activities like camping, fishing, climbing, or horseback riding. This finding can inform a variety of planning and management decisions regarding the Park's natural resource settings, interpretive programs, concessionaire contracts, and other related decisions. The finding also reinforces this that overall place attachment and familiarity with the place itself was stronger for these visitors than their memorable social interactions at the Park.



**Group sizes.** Results showing that Backcountry/Wilderness group sizes are typically from one to four people indicate that specifying a maximum group size for day visitors may not be necessary for the time being (i.e., current policy). On the other hand, should staff decide to specify maximum group size for some areas, we know that about 41% of those surveyed, said there should be limits on group size, and the great majority of these favored group sizes between four and ten with six people per group as the most common response. This is supported by the result that visitors indicated weak support for the presence of commercially guided groups.

**Length of overnight stays.** Study findings show that the overnight visitors surveyed stayed an average of 1.9 nights, which is down somewhat from the 1994 study, which reported a 3.3 day (2 plus nights) length of stay. Again, other wilderness studies revealed a trend where visitors are taking shorter, but more frequent, trips (Hendee & Dawson, 2002; Watson et al., 1995). A trend toward shorter overnight stays in wilderness does not constitute fewer visits, less recreation, or less administrative responsibility if indeed these visitors are coming more frequently. This trend may even add to permit administration and trail, or facility, maintenance responsibilities.

**Hours spent in the Backcountry/Wilderness.** Likewise, results show that day visitors are spending considerably more time in the Backcountry/Wilderness (7.8 hours/day for multiple day visitors and 4.6 hours/day for 1 day visitors) than was reported in the 1994 exit survey (2.7 hours) (USDI, NPS, 2001). Moreover, we found that about 23% of day visitors enter the backcountry on multiple occasions. That is, they are staying in the area for more than one day to visit the backcountry without camping overnight in RMNP. One might begin to ask if this means that the intensity of visitation is slowly extending deeper into the Backcountry/Wilderness at RMNP.

**Distance traveled.** Figures for the distances that both day and overnight visitors traveled while in the backcountry are similar to the distances recorded in a number of other wilderness studies (Watson et al., 1995). Data on sampling locations and distance traveled can be used to create GIS models that describe the spatial distribution and intensity of visitation from a different perspective (Theobald, 2002). These models in turn, can inform decisions about the location of management zones, patrolling, trail maintenance, and the mitigation of potential conflicts.

**Hiking off trail.** Parks like RMNP have cross-country travel zones as well as Research Natural Areas that also require cross-country travel to access. Though we did not have visitors locate their off trail travels on a map, we do know that one in five visitors hike off trail in the Backcountry/Wilderness during this trip. In the 2001 assessment study (Brooks & Titre, 2003), we observed substantial rates of going off designated trails as well. Given this tendency for off trail travel, specifying the techniques used for dispersing rather than concentrating impacts while traveling off trail may be warranted. While the tendency may be for staff to discourage going off trail, the descriptions of what visitors experienced off trail indicate that off trail travel is producing high quality and unique discoveries for many visitors. It would be interesting to see if providing more information about “leave no trace” techniques when traveling off trail would actually increase off trail travel.

## **Encounters with Park Staff or Rangers**

Despite guidelines for “managerial presence” in wilderness especially in RMNP Management Zones 1 and 2—that typically advise that contacts with visitors are to be infrequent and unobtrusive, results suggest that perhaps this may be less important in Parks like RMNP. Though results of this study are not specific to management zones, staff presence was seen as a positive thing for the 41% (indicating that encounters were not infrequent) of visitors who encountered a ranger, or other staff, while in the Backcountry/Wilderness. These results appear to apply to volunteers as well as to paid staff. Along with professionalism and friendliness, there appears to be a growing appreciation of “stewardship activities” where visitors perceive staff to be involved in maintenance, monitoring, enforcement, and other custodial duties. Some training in visitor outreach and interpretation for maintenance crews may be a good investment. Contacts with visitors seem to be primarily positive, but improvements can still be made, since a total of 16% of those responding made comments that were positive and negative (3%), neutral (9%), or negative (4%).

## **Crowding**

Theory predicts that when encounters exceed a visitor’s encounter norm for seeing others, perceptions of crowding will increase (Vaske, Shelby, Graefe, & Heberlein, 1986). While we did not probe the encounter norms of visitors (i.e., what they felt was an acceptable number of encounters in different parts of the backcountry), we did ask generally; “How people felt about the number of other people they saw while in the Backcountry/Wilderness.” One quarter of those responding reported that they saw too many people. Since crowding is not always a product of numbers (Manning, 1999), we also asked visitors if they “felt crowded” and over 30% said yes. Is crowding a problem then? While the 25% who saw too many people or the 30% who felt crowded are not a majority of Backcountry/Wilderness visitors, if managers were setting standards for encounters as they often do in backcountry zones, would they be at this level? It seems likely that the standard for management classes one, two, and three (USDI, NPS, 2001) would be higher than “no more than 25% of all visitors should feel they saw too many people.” Many wilderness areas might choose 10%, or 15%, as an acceptable standard. While the current BC/WMP and Environmental Assessment does not set such standards, it may be a good idea to test specific encounter norms for each management zone and—after considering both visitor norms and resource protection needs—set standards for perceptions of crowding and numbers of encounters to maintain wilderness qualities and values.

Open-ended questions seemed to indicate that passing through crowded front country areas in route to backcountry areas might affect overall perceptions of crowding for visitors in the Park’s Backcountry/Wilderness. When visitors were asked to list the places where they felt crowded, they listed some front country locations such as Bear Lake. For some of these participants, Bear Lake may have been their destination that day, but others presumably passed through Bear Lake on their way to the Backcountry/Wilderness. The Park might consider re-routing short segments of trail routes into the Backcountry/Wilderness to provide opportunities for hikers and backpackers to circumvent places with intensively high levels of visitation if they so choose.

## **Impacts Affecting the Visitor Experience**

**Human caused disturbances.** As reported, visitors find litter near water bodies, feces and toilet paper (that can affect water quality and visual appeal), harassment of wildlife, graffiti, campsite and social trail proliferation, noise from cell phones, pagers, and radios, and the collection of natural resources as highly to moderately unacceptable. Human waste, feeding and harassing wild animals, collecting resources, and trail impacts were identified as salient problems at the Park using three independent research methods during Phase I (Brooks & Titre, 2003).

Managers can be confident that when citing these findings and when dealing with undesirable behavior that is producing such impacts. Management is empowered to say; “A good number of visitors have recently expressed concern about the poor handling of human waste in the Park,” for example. A neutral, non-accusatory expression of social norms is part of the “Authority of the Resource” technique that can be used in protected areas (Wallace & Gaudry, 2002).

When asked to write comments about other conditions that detracted from their experience, visitors added categories that we as researchers had not identified including, management of traffic, congestion and parking, and several negative behaviors that they witnessed on the part of other visitors. Some additional categories of impacts defined by visitors like “over development within or near the Park” are likely to increase and warrant regular monitoring. They also confirm the importance of RMNP’s Related Lands Initiative. Managers can use these data to help support management actions aimed at reducing these impacts and increasing cross-boundary collaboration. Some impacts that are in many ways more profound such as erosion, or habituation of wildlife (e.g., feeding) are still not viewed by visitors at the same level of severity that managers view them. In these cases, educational efforts could be undertaken to explain to visitors why such ecosystem impacts are indeed severe and often irreversible when compared to littering or harassment of wildlife that can be modified over time more easily.

**Management priorities.** The priorities that visitors assigned to management actions largely mirrored their desire to mitigate conditions that they found to be unacceptable. Visitors would have managers address the issues of littering, evidence of human waste, illegal camps, unplanned trails, approaching and feeding wildlife, and resource collection as priorities. There are some exceptions. While visitors considered the use of cell phones, pagers, and radios to be unacceptable in the Backcountry/Wilderness, they were divided on the importance of taking action to mitigate the noise associated with them. Managers will have to weigh how to tactfully raise this issue with the public in a way that acknowledges visitor perceptions of noise impacts in the backcountry while respecting individual freedoms and special circumstances.

**Explaining the role of natural disturbances.** The qualitative interviews conducted by Brooks (2003) and the content analysis of open-ended questions about “things that detracted from the visitor experience,” each revealed that some people—even experienced visitors—may not understand the role of disturbance in naturally functioning ecosystems in the same way as ecologists and park managers. These visitors perceived areas that had been burned, downed timber, disease, and wind throw as impacts to Park resources. The knowledge that natural disturbance creates vegetative diversity, which in turn accommodates increased faunal diversity, is not well understood and might be the subject of more interpretation and education at the Park.

## **Perceptions of Wilderness, Official Designation, and Management**

**Clarification of the terms related to wilderness.** Study results—especially open-ended comments—made it clear that the Park could do a better job of clarifying the way it uses the terms “backcountry,” “front country,” and “wilderness” and helping visitors understand the concept of wilderness. National Park Service policy is to treat designated, nominated, and potential wilderness in a similar fashion to maintain wilderness characteristics and values (as defined in the 1964 Wilderness Act) until decisions about more designation are final. Responses from a variety of open-ended comments indicated that most visitors do not understand the terms or the policy. Given that they had many different views of what wilderness and backcountry meant, it may be useful to clarify these terms and policy issues more carefully for the public. This lack of understanding is not particular to RMNP. In other parks, such as Arches National Park, “backcountry” is a term used for a singular management zone along with zones designated as “primitive” or “semi-primitive non motorized” (USDI, NPS, 1995)—these three would be called “backcountry” in RMNP. A greater consistency in the use of such terms system-wide may eliminate confusion.

**The wilderness concept and wilderness designation.** Nearly three fourths of those sampled said that the designation of more wildernesses in the Park was moderately or extremely important. Nonetheless, there seems to be limited understanding of the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS) or the management direction given to managers by the Wilderness Act of 1964. This also was evident in the range of visitor comments regarding what changes they expected designation to bring. This may be common among NPS Backcountry/Wilderness visitors in other parks. Hockett and Hall (2000) conducted a related study in Shenandoah National Park that looked at visitor knowledge about federal wilderness. They found that more than 90% of hikers assessed themselves as having little or no knowledge about federally designated wilderness. They also found that those with higher levels of knowledge held more “purist views” about management. For example, they were less supportive of things like cell phones, chainsaws, or improved campsites.

Wilderness education that includes the wilderness concept, the evolution of the NWPS, and the history of wilderness designation at RMNP may increase support for a variety of management actions aimed at protecting wilderness values in the Park. The current BC/WMP (USDI, NPS, 2001) contains a section on “Wilderness Interpretation and Education” that has a comprehensive list of activities for doing this. Perhaps study results can provide added justification for its full implementation. Specific interpretive and educational messages that described how RMNP might be affected by future designation of official wilderness may help to overcome misperceptions about wilderness management found in the Wilderness Act of 1964 such as those identified and described in this study. For example, many visitors surveyed thought that official designation would eliminate horses, fishing, place limits on hiking and camping, and bring more restrictions and rules to Backcountry/Wilderness in general.

Why do studies of wilderness and wilderness experience show divergent definitions of the wilderness concept, and are these different conceptions simply a lack of understanding or do they provide new information about the public’s views on wilderness and protected areas? The results of this study remind us of the socially constructed nature of the wilderness concept (Brooks, 2003; Shultis, 1999; Williams, 2002). The way that park visitors define wilderness in

their own minds is, in part, the source of these different perceptions and understandings. This study provides information to managers about how visitors to RMNP see the issue, which is an important first step to effective visitor education and management in Backcountry/Wilderness.

### **Are Day Visitors Different from Overnight Visitors?**

Comparative statistical tests revealed few differences between day visitors and overnight visitors. For example, when asked if they felt crowded at RMNP, 32% of the day visitors said yes and 27% of the overnight visitors said yes. For the item that asked visitors how they felt about the number of other people that they had encountered during this trip, 25% of both day and overnight visitors answered that they had seen too many. No significant differences were found between day and overnight visitors regarding the importance of wilderness designation. These findings, and others showing little difference, are consistent with studies of wilderness visitors elsewhere (Cole, 2001; Papenfuse, Roggenbuck & Hall, 2000). Day and overnight visitors may ultimately be the same people in many wilderness areas.

Day visitors in RMNP did show slight differences on some study variables. The day visitors had slightly higher levels of overall experience at RMNP based on previous visits in the past 12 months and the number of years ago that they first came to the Park. These day visitors also were about ten years older on average than the overnight visitors, which may explain, in part, higher levels of experience. Emotional attachment to the Park as a place was slightly higher for day visitors as well.

**A double standard.** While day and overnight visitors are similar, overnight visitors are the ones that tend to be more regulated. Overnight visitors are required to check into the Backcountry Office. They are exposed to a variety of educational material, receive an orientation, are usually assigned designated campsites, are given tags to attach to their packs and expected to file an itinerary with the Backcountry Office. Day visitors should be held to similar standards, but little contact is made and few expectations are established for them at present. The first year study done by CSU (Brooks & Titre, 2003) did report numerous observations of undesirable behavior on the part of day visitors—often those in family groups. We also reported that 22% of the day visitors in this study were first time visitors and likely in need of some type of venue where they are exposed to Backcountry/Wilderness values and standards before they enter. The Park might consider how best to do this. Perhaps it would be possible to have a self administered trailhead check-in procedure suggested for first-time visitors or once a season for all day visitors.

### **A Suggested Context for Visitor Studies**

**Rationalization** Visitor perceptions revealed in this study are useful to understand, but should be interpreted in the proper context. People sometimes cope with conditions in the backcountry that are less acceptable to them by making cognitive adjustments that adapt to changed conditions rather than by not coming any longer (i.e., displacement). Hoss and Brunson (2000) found that visitors to urban-proximate wilderness areas such as RMNP were more likely to say they would continue to visit the area despite sub-optimal conditions and were more likely to

express unconditional acceptance of the conditions they encountered. Documented examples of rationalization— adjusting one’s attitudes, perceptions, and norms rather than abandoning a favorite place should serve as a warning to managers that desired resource and social conditions can decline without visitors indicating alarm. Some visitors are displaced and replaced by those with lower standards creating a “floating baseline”.

The information on visitor perceptions and preferences found in visitor studies are insightful and useful for informing planning and management, but should be used in conjunction with information about natural resource constraints, a protected area’s mission and other institutional directives, and the financial and human resources available to managers. If these multiple dimensions can be worked into an interactive planning framework such as The Visitor Experience and Resource Protection framework or the Limits of Acceptable Change model, it may become possible to develop standards of quality to guard against a floating baseline and a loss of wildness, solitude, and naturalness, and other characteristics and experiences that make places like RMNP special for so many people.

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## **Visitor Use in Wilderness Study Phase II**

### **Data Appendices A – H2**



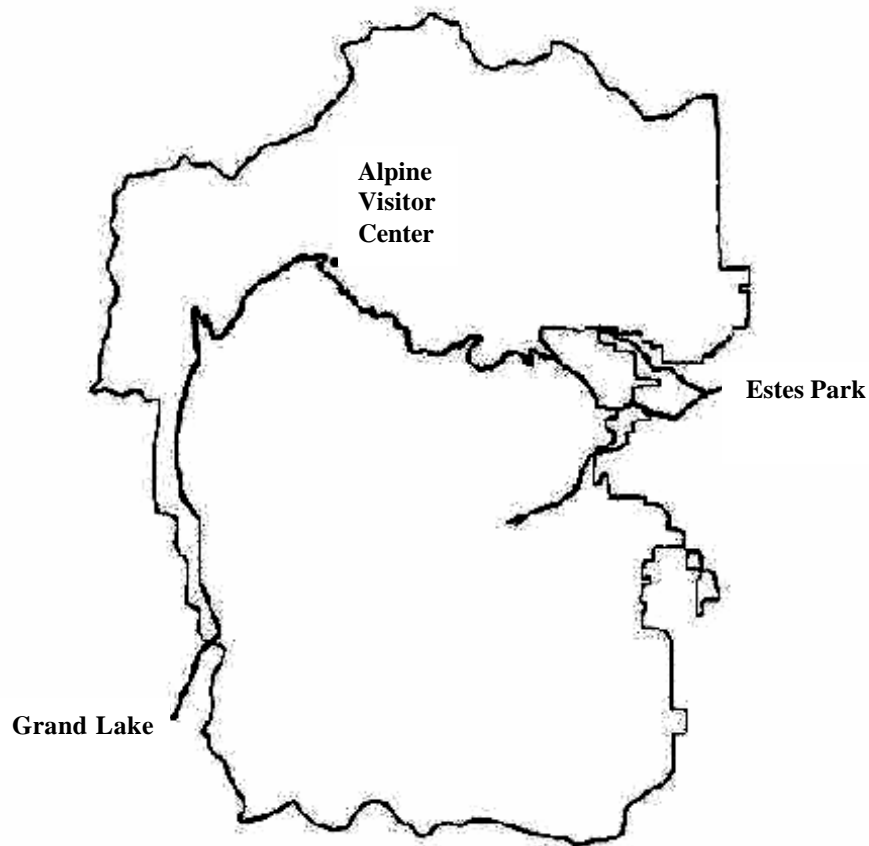
Photo: Fern Lake by Matthew L. Bates

**College of Natural Resources  
Department of Natural Resource Recreation and Tourism**



Appendix A. Survey instrument used at RMNP during summer 2002.

## **A Survey of Overnight and Day Visitors in Backcountry/Wilderness at Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado**



*Colorado State University*  
*Department of Natural Resources Recreation and Tourism*

*The National Park Service*

## ***ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK VISITOR USE SURVEY***

**Dear Visitor,**

**In order to implement and improve the Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP) Backcountry/Wilderness Management Plan, managers would like to know more about how you use the non-developed portions of the park and your opinions about certain issues and management actions.**

**This is the first comprehensive study of Backcountry/Wilderness and wilderness users and will provide valuable information that can help to protect the park's natural resources and provide quality experiences for visitors. Your participation is voluntary, your answers will be kept in strict confidence, and your cooperation is greatly appreciated. The survey takes about 15-20 minutes. In the survey we use the acronym RMNP to save space. This always means Rocky Mountain National Park.**

**Please drop this survey into the USGS camera boxes at the trailheads. In the event that you cannot do so, a stamped self-addressed envelope has been included so that you could mail back the survey. Please answer all questions in relation to today's visit, or your most recent visit to RMNP. If you have any questions regarding this study, please feel free to contact us at (970) 491-5978.**

**Thank you for your cooperation with this important study!**

**Sincerely,**

**George N. Wallace**

Co-Principal Investigator

**John P. Titre**

Co-Principle Investigator

**Jeffrey J. Brooks**

Graduate Research Assistant

**The following questions ask you about this visit, or your most recent visit, to Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP). Instructions follow the questions where necessary.**

1. How many people were in your group in the Backcountry/Wilderness on this trip including yourself?

#\_\_\_\_ People

If more than one person, how would you describe your group?

\_\_\_\_ Family (immediate and/or relatives)

\_\_\_\_ Friends

\_\_\_\_ Family and friends

\_\_\_\_ Organized club or group

\_\_\_\_ Other Please describe \_\_\_\_\_

2. On this visit to RMNP, did you or your group stay overnight in the Backcountry/Wilderness?

\_\_\_\_ No ☐ Total number of hours you were in the Backcountry/Wilderness \_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_ Yes ☐ Total number of nights in the Backcountry/Wilderness \_\_\_\_.

The National Park Service may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, this collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB number. OMB #: 0596-0108. Expires: 12/31/2003.

3. Please indicate which of the following activities you participated in while on this visit to RMNP Backcountry/Wilderness. ***Please check all those that apply.***

- ☐ Fishing
- ☐ Hiking
- ☐ Mountain climbing without using ropes and gear
- ☐ Mountain climbing with ropes and gear
- ☐ Bouldering
- ☐ Rock climbing with ropes and gear
- ☐ Photography
- ☐ Nature study (bird watching, wildlife viewing, identifying wild flowers, rock study)
- ☐ Swimming
- ☐ Backcountry/Wilderness camping
- ☐ Developed camping
- ☐ Picnicking
- ☐ Collecting edible fruits, berries, or mushrooms
- ☐ Spending time in camp (relaxing, doing camp chores)
- ☐ Horseback riding

4. What was your **primary** reason for visiting RMNP Backcountry/Wilderness on this trip? ***Please mark only one answer.***

- ☐ I came here because I enjoy the Backcountry/Wilderness itself.
- ☐ I came here because it is a good place to do some of the activities that I enjoy.
- ☐ I came here because I wanted to spend more time with my family/companions.
- ☐ I came here to get away from the stress of everyday life.
- ☐ I came here to spend time alone for quiet solitude.

5. About how many total miles did you hike while in RMNP Backcountry/Wilderness this trip? # \_\_\_\_\_ Miles

6. Except for a few restricted areas, it is permissible to hike off trail in Backcountry/Wilderness areas. On this trip, did you hike cross-country through places without trails?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes; If yes, about how many times did you hike cross-country through places without trails \_\_\_\_\_ Times

If yes, what were your reasons for traveling cross-country (off trail)? ***Please list these in the space below.***

If yes, please describe your best discovery or experience while hiking cross-country (off trail). ***Please write in the space below.***

7. Did you meet a ranger or other park staff in the Backcountry/Wilderness during this trip?

\_\_\_\_ Yes    \_\_\_\_ No

If yes, how did you feel about that? *Please write in the space below.*

8. How did you feel about the number of people you saw while in the Backcountry/Wilderness on this visit to RMNP? *Please check one.*

\_\_\_\_ Saw too few  
\_\_\_\_ About right  
\_\_\_\_ Saw too many  
\_\_\_\_ Did not matter to me one way or the other  
\_\_\_\_ Do not remember

9. Did you feel crowding was a problem at any of the specific places you visited on this trip?

\_\_\_\_ No    \_\_\_\_ Yes    If yes, please note the places you felt were crowded. (A very simple description of the place will be enough – something like “around Thunder Lake,” or “on the trail between Ouzel Falls and Ouzel Lake.”)

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10. Do you feel that there should be a limit to the size of parties visiting the Backcountry/Wilderness at RMNP? *Please check one.*

\_\_\_\_ No    \_\_\_\_ Yes    If yes, what is the maximum number of people that should be permitted in any one party? #\_\_\_\_\_ People

11. When you visit RMNP, do you consider yourself to be in the wilderness? *Please check only one.*

\_\_\_\_ Yes    \_\_\_\_ No    \_\_\_\_ It depends where I am in the park.

**The following questions ask you about this visit, or your most recent visit, to Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP). These items ask about things that may or may not affect your experience at the park. Instructions follow the questions where necessary.**

12. Different people expect different things from Backcountry/Wilderness and managers need to know how certain things affect your experience. This will help them know where to focus limited resources and management efforts. How acceptable is it for you personally to see or hear the following evidence of humans while in the Backcountry/Wilderness at RMNP? *Please circle the number that best represents your response.*

	Highly Unacceptable	Moderately Unacceptable	Slightly Unacceptable	Uncertain	Slightly Acceptable	Moderately Acceptable	Highly Acceptable
Seeing a few pieces of litter at campsites or where visitors gather	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Seeing bare ground or erosion on stream/lake banks	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Seeing a few pieces of litter in the vegetation along trails	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Seeing the widening or erosion of hiking trails	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Seeing a few pieces of litter in streams/lakes/rivers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Seeing erosion or increasing bare ground at campsites or where visitors gather	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Hearing people yell/talk loudly on trails	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Hearing someone's radio, cell phone, or pager	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Hearing an airplane fly over head	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Seeing human waste/toilet tissue on the ground	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Seeing an airplane or its exhaust trail over head	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Seeing tree carvings or graffiti	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Seeing domestic animal (horses, llamas) waste on the trail	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Seeing people feed wild animals	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Seeing people approach/harass wild animals	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Highly Unacceptable	Moderately Unacceptable	Slightly Unacceptable	Uncertain	Slightly Acceptable	Moderately Acceptable	Highly Acceptable
Seeing illegal campsites	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Seeing people make new trails where none should be	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Hearing noise from roads or parking lots	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Seeing someone collect natural resources	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Seeing lights that originate from outside Backcountry/Wilderness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

13. Are there other things that you have seen or heard that detract from your experience in the Backcountry/Wilderness at RMNP? If so, please tell us what they are. ***Please write in the space below.***

14. Given the park's limited resources, please help park managers to prioritize their efforts by rating the importance of taking action on some of the above issues in Backcountry/Wilderness at RMNP. (Taking action might include education, field work, law enforcement, or closer monitoring of people's behavior.) ***Please circle the number that best represents your response.***

	Not at all Important for Action	Somewhat Important for Action	Moderately Important for Action	Extremely Important for Action
Erosion or increasing bare ground at campsites or where visitors gather	1	2	3	4
Feeding wild animals	1	2	3	4
Littering in the park	1	2	3	4
Collection of natural resources	1	2	3	4
Approaching too close to wild animals	1	2	3	4
Visible human waste/toilet tissue	1	2	3	4
Noise from yelling/talking loudly	1	2	3	4
Trail widening/erosion from heavy traffic	1	2	3	4
Use of cell phones/pagers	1	2	3	4



	Not at all Important for Action	Somewhat Important for Action	Moderately Important for Action	Extremely Important for Action
Aircraft flying over the park	1	2	3	4
Lights visible from Backcountry/Wilderness	1	2	3	4
Noise from roads/parking lots	1	2	3	4
People making illegal camps	1	2	3	4
Elimination/restoration of unplanned trails	1	2	3	4

**The following questions ask you about Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP) in general. These items ask about your personal opinions regarding wilderness designation and management at RMNP. Instructions follow the questions where necessary.**

15. The Park has some designated Wilderness, and a large percentage of the Park could be designated as Wilderness. The Wilderness Act calls for very limited use or elimination of certain activities in wilderness areas. If backcountry areas in the Park are officially designated as Wilderness, what changes, if any, would you expect to see regarding how the area is managed? *Please write your answer in the space provided below.*

16. Listed below are activities that often create a discussion about their appropriateness in Backcountry/Wilderness settings. Please rate how much you personally approve or disapprove of each activity inside designated Wilderness areas. *Please circle the number that best represents your opinion.*

	Strongly Disapprove	Moderately Disapprove	Slightly Disapprove	Neither	Slightly Approve	Moderately Approve	Strongly Approve
Use of motorized tools (chainsaws, etc.) by park staff	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Commercially guided groups	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Use of motorized vehicles by park staff	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Installation of signs to guide hikers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Use of motorized vehicles by scientists	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Ranger patrol cabins or camps	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Strongly Disapprove	Moderately Disapprove	Slightly Disapprove	Neither	Slightly Approve	Moderately Approve	Strongly Approve
Use of flagging or markers by scientists	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Installation of educational signs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Use of motorized tools/equipment by scientists	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Allowing wood fires at some campsites	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Use of aircraft for emergency operations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Use of hitching rails for horses or llamas	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Use of foot bridges to guide hikers over water in wilderness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mandatory use of wildlife proof food containers for overnight trips	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Installation of signs to protect resources	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

17. How important to you personally is the designation of RMNP backcountry as Wilderness within the National Wilderness Preservation System?

- ☐ Extremely important  
☐ Moderately important  
☐ Somewhat important  
☐ Not at all important

**Finally, we would like to ask you to tell us a bit about your previous experience in Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP) and your background. Again, this information will remain confidential. Please follow the instructions given for each question.**

18. How many times have you visited RMNP before this trip? #\_\_\_\_ Visits to Backcountry/Wilderness

#\_\_\_\_ Visits to developed front country

19. How many years ago did you first visit RMNP? #\_\_\_\_ Years

20. Including this current visit, how many times did you visit RMNP in the past 12 months?

#\_\_\_\_ Visits to Backcountry/Wilderness

#\_\_\_\_ Visits to developed front country

21. Approximately how many other Backcountry/Wilderness areas have you visited in the past? #\_\_\_\_

22. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements? *Circle one for each statement.*

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Being in RMNP Backcountry/Wilderness brings back memories of time spent here with friends.	1	2	3	4	5
I associate special people in my life with being in RMNP Backcountry/Wilderness.	1	2	3	4	5
My family and I regularly visited RMNP when I was growing up.	1	2	3	4	5

23. On the scale below, please indicate how attached you are to RMNP? *Please circle one.*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not at all attached						Extremely attached		

24. On the scale below, please indicate how familiar you are with RMNP? *Please circle one.*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not at all familiar						Extremely familiar		

25. Do you belong to any organizations that are primarily concerned with conservation or outdoor recreation?

\_\_\_\_ No

\_\_\_\_ Yes If so, please list them \_\_\_\_\_

26. Are you: \_\_\_\_ Male \_\_\_\_ Female Your age please? \_\_\_\_ Years

27. In which of the following kinds of places did you spend the most time while growing up (to age 18)? *Please mark only one answer.*

- |                                                   |                                                     |
|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| ____ On a farm or ranch                           | ____ Small city (5,000 to 50,000 population)        |
| ____ Rural or small town (under 1,000 population) | ____ Medium city (50,000 to 1 million population)   |
| ____ Town (1,000 to 5,000 population)             | ____ In a metropolitan area (over 1 million people) |

28. What is the highest level of education you have attained? ***Please circle one.***

Elementary School		High School				College				
Less than 8	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	More than 16

29. Are you still a student? \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

30. Which of the following categories best describes your annual household income, before taxes?

- |                         |                          |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| ____ Less than \$5,000  | ____ \$25,000 to 34,999  |
| ____ \$5,000 to 9,999   | ____ \$35,000 to 49,999  |
| ____ \$10,000 to 14,999 | ____ \$50,000 to 74,999  |
| ____ \$15,000 to 19,999 | ____ \$75,000 to 100,000 |
| ____ \$20,000 to 24,999 | ____ Over \$100,000      |

**The National Park Service and Colorado State University thank you for your time. You have helped us to learn more about the people who use and visit Rocky Mountain National Park. We welcome any additional input or comments from you about how park staff can improve the management of Backcountry/Wilderness at RMNP. Please feel free to write any additional comments below:**

***Thank you for your participation in this important study!***

The National Park Service may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, this collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB number. OMB #: 0596-0108. Expires: 12/31/2003.

## Appendix B

### Survey Distribution by Location



Photo: Agnes Vaille Memorial Shelter and Keyhole by Matthew L. Bates

## Appendix B. Sampling Distribution by Area

The following tables give the percentage, frequency and distribution of surveys throughout the Park. Of the 1015 surveys distributed, 126 did not have a trailhead designation recorded with it at the time of distribution. These unrecorded trailheads accounted for 12.3% of the sampling distribution.

Table B1. Northern Area Survey Distribution.

Trailhead	Frequency	Valid Percent
Corral Creek	2	.2
Cow Creek	7	.7
Dunraven	2	.2
Lawn Lake	15	1.5
Twin Owls	9	.9
Column Totals	35	3.5

Table B2. Fern Lake Survey Distribution.

Trailhead	Frequency	Valid Percent
Fern Lake	33	3.3
Cub Lake	24	2.4
Odessa	1	.1
Column Totals	58	5.8

Table B3. Wild Basin Area Survey Distribution.

Trailhead	Frequency	Valid Percent
Wild Basin	159	15.7
Allenspark	1	.1
Sandbeach	7	.7
Column Totals	167	16.5

Table B4. Bear Lake Area Survey Distribution.

Trailhead	Frequency	Valid Percent
Nymph Lake	97	9.6
Glacier Gorge	159	15.7
Bierstadt	38	3.7
Bear Lake	68	6.7
East Portal	1	.1
Column Totals	363	35.8

Table B5. Grand Lake Area Survey Distribution.

Trailhead	Frequency	Valid Percent
East Inlet	36	3.5
Green Mountain	32	3.2
Onahu	1	.1
North Inlet	28	2.8
Tonahutu	3	.3
Timber Lake	18	1.8
Colorado River	44	4.3
Column Totals	162	16

Table B6. Other Park Areas Survey Distribution

Trailhead	Frequency	Valid Percent
Milner Pass	2	.2
Longs Peak	88	8.7
Twin Sisters	6	.6
Backcountry Office	8	.8
Column Totals	104	10.3

# **Appendix C**

## **Why people go off trail at RMNP and what they discover there**



Photo: Flower near Cub Lake by Matthew L. Bates



## Appendix C. Why people go off trail at RMNP and what they discover there.

Question 6C: Reasons for traveling cross-country	Question 6D: Best discovery or experience hiking cross-country
❖ Hiking in Glacier Gorge. The main trail ends just above Black Lake. We hiked to additional lakes, green blue frozen lakes following rock cairns. Additional hikes went to ridges and to explore the forest/tree line.	❖ Seeing wildlife in their natural environment. We saw a big horn sheep standing upon a ridge-rock outcrop a short distance from us (75+yards). A beautiful animal that we viewed without disturbing him by using binoculars & a telephoto lens.
❖ No designated trail to summit	❖ Nothing superior to on trail hiking
❖ Get away from people	❖ No response
❖ There are no trails in Glacier Gorge. The approach to our climb was trail less as well	❖ No response
❖ Descending the Camel Couloirs back to bivy site, summiting Mount Lady Washington	❖ Peace and quiet, no people around
❖ Frankly, the trails are too "managed" taking away from the natural "challenges"	❖ Tinge of excitement associated with being 100% self sufficient, or reliant, navigating w/o a trail
❖ Look for wildflowers	❖ Beautiful scenery & various flowers but not the orchids I was looking for.
❖ See something interesting and explore for a closer look. To get a better view for a photograph.	❖ Being able to get a perfect view of the park from high altitude.
❖ No trail to the alpine lakes we visited	❖ Melting snow/ice pack with a cave under it source of stream
❖ Went off trail a little ways to get a better view and to find a lunch spot	❖ Even going off the trail a little way can give one a small sense of exploration and adventure
❖ Climbing approach	❖ The climb itself!
❖ To get a better view of the lakes and mountains	❖ Awesome views.
❖ When we went bouldering next to the falls	❖ No response
❖ Wanted to reach lake that was past the trails end	❖ Solitude

Appendix C. continued

Question 6C: Reasons for traveling cross-country	Question 6D: Best discovery or experience hiking cross-country
❖ Above tree line, high mountains, often there are no trails. Because I like walking through woods	❖ You see "true condition" of BC especially in the woods.
❖ Because we were looking for birds-we often walked off the "official" trail in order to follow them	❖ At Rock Cut we went beyond the "rock monument" in order to find a white Ptarmigan
❖ Fishing	❖ Fish in small creeks that are not fished much
❖ Approaches to summits often have no trails, i.e. Mt. Chiquita & Halletts Peak	❖ Hiking at altitude for first time. Reaching 13,000ft for first time was a highlight.
❖ Visit lakes/falls beyond maintained trails	❖ Great views at lakes; small falls just above Spruce Lake.
❖ Around Fern Lake and attempted a peak hike	❖ Exquisite beauty
❖ Got lost looking for Camel Route on Longs Peak. Got lost looking for link up between Longs Summit and the Loft.	❖ The rock formations on the west side of the Notch
❖ Climbed up river.	❖ Many waterfalls
❖ Summit Longs and Meeker via the Loft	❖ Meeker is farther than it looks!
❖ Curiosity	❖ Felt cool
❖ To get a better view from Deer Mountain	❖ No response
❖ Fun, adventure, view, see wildlife	❖ Waterfall
❖ See different sites	❖ Elk; streams
❖ Hiking in Glacier Gorge.	❖ Seeing wildlife in their natural environment.
❖ Mountain climbing above tree line (Mt. Ypsilon)	❖ Hiking above tree line on the Continental Divide (National Cont. Div. Scenic trail)
❖ To get to a lake without a trail	❖ Finding a view that is spectacular
❖ To get to a high mountain lake	❖ Best experience was seeing a new unspoiled place

Appendix C. continued

Question 6C: Reasons for traveling cross-country	Question 6D: Best discovery or experience hiking cross-country
❖ I was hiking above tree line on the Comanche Peak Trail. There was no discernible trail between the rock cairns, so I just hiked the shortest way between them as I could.	❖ It was fun trying to spot the next cairn among the natural rock piles.
❖ Summit Andrews Peak	❖ Saw bear shit, view from the peak, pelted w/sleet, new found respect for deer intelligence
❖ Get away from people, see a lake off trail	❖ Enjoyed lunch at a lake without other people
❖ Take the road less traveled...	❖ Discovered herds of deer and elk. Did some climbing
❖ Get to stream	❖ No response
❖ We saw someplace we wanted to go and there was not a marked trail.	❖ We found a place for drinking water
❖ Avoid crowds	❖ Isolation
❖ Get water, take pictures, reach Spectacle Lakes	❖ I got light-headed in the forest and felt like I was tripping in a fairy wonderland.
❖ To hike up a mountain	❖ Beautiful solitude
❖ To sit alone, quietly, in natural surroundings - watch wildlife	❖ Sat and watched while an elk passed through.
❖ To traverse from North Fork drainage to Lawn Lake to traverse from Gore Range to Mt. Ida	❖ Wilderness experience family time camaraderie
❖ No response	❖ We hiked to Lion Lakes using a compass
❖ We went off trail to Sky Pond to a different view about 1/4 mile on the south side of lake.	❖ There was a different pinnacle to see and we could watch a pair of climbers.
❖ Our RMNP guidebook suggested hiking around the side of the lake to get a better view of the Craggs by Sky Pond.	❖ We got out of the wind and away from the people.
❖ From Thunder Lake we hiked to Snow Bank Lake and other lakes under Mt. Alice	❖ Beautiful vistas of the Lion Lakes

Appendix C. continued

Question 6C: Reasons for traveling cross-country	Question 6D: Best discovery or experience hiking cross-country
❖ I prefer to get away from people. I am very careful about how and where I hike to minimize my impact.	❖ We found some incredible rocks for bouldering.
❖ Descending from summit to base after a climb	❖ Cool (literally) corridor framed with steep rock walls interlaced with cracks behind the Pear.
❖ To approach and descend from a climb of Notch top Spire. To descend from a climb of the Book.	❖ Relatively untrammed space, utilitarian route.
❖ On top of grand Boulder Pass-no trails to follow	❖ Tanima Point!!!
❖ To see effect of drought on local "glaciers"	❖ To see Tyndall Glacier with bergschrunds exposed.
❖ Get closer to a stream and waterfall that was located along the trail	❖ A lake in the middle of nowhere
❖ Smoking & taking the road less traveled	❖ My friend Pat got hot and decided to go skinny-dipping in a mountain lake. While swimming a group of co-ed hikers came into view of this lake. Feeling no shame, Pat stood up buck naked, waved at the hikers and preceded to dry off.
❖ Day1 Attempted to climb Isolation Peak from Pippit Lake, Day2 Summited Copeland Mountain from Ouzel Lake	❖ Antler velvet (new experience) lots of ripe raspberries
❖ To get to a cross country zone campsite and to climb a peak and see a lake	❖ Scenery and solitude
❖ Trail above Black Lake and to Black Lake was not well marked	❖ No response
❖ It looked very inviting and was easy to do	❖ Alberta Falls-Beautiful!!
❖ For convenience and for more exciting hiking	❖ Speed
❖ The trail didn't go as high & as far as we wanted to go	❖ The beauty of Lion Lakes #2 & above, the view from the ridge down to Falcon Lake, Lion etc.

Appendix C. continued

Question 6C: Reasons for traveling cross-country	Question 6D: Best discovery or experience hiking cross-country
❖ More scenic	❖ Scenery
❖ To explore, to play a compass reading game with children	❖ Beauty of color
❖ Looking for animals.	❖ Found elk and mule deer droppings and footprints.
❖ Summit a mountain	❖ Learning about glaciers from an expert
❖ Got off trail	❖ Area much drier than usual-hope its just a spasm
❖ To access climbing areas	❖ Bivy caves, great views, marmots, pikas, ravens
❖ Someone we met on the trail told us about a valley filled with waterfalls.	❖ A valley filled with waterfalls.
❖ Chasm Lake overlook from the Boulder field	❖ No response
❖ Hike around Chasm Lake. See the Lamb's Slide	❖ Saw pikas and marmots, watched rocks fall down Lamb's Slide, watched climbers on Diamond
❖ To explore area around Eugenia Mine to look for any remnants of mine, or equipment/buildings.	❖ Discovered a nice stream with lots of vegetation around it.
❖ Exploring, observing wildlife	❖ Observe wildlife and plant life in natural habitat.
❖ To take different route on 2nd day, to get away from Crowds on Longs Peak trail	❖ Route finding through tree line scrub
❖ To reach summit via rock face	❖ Excitement
❖ To go all the way around a lake	❖ Different views and perspectives on the lake
❖ To see Lyric Falls (actually, there's a "trail leading up Hunter's Creek, but I wouldn't call it that.	❖ Saw a bull elk grazing from about thirty yards
❖ To explore other lakes above timber line	❖ Experiencing the openness & beauty of tundra, lakes and glacier

Appendix C. continued

Question 6C: Reasons for traveling cross-country	Question 6D: Best discovery or experience hiking cross-country
❖ To get to and return from the peak I was climbing.	❖ The views from places most people will never see, and finding the gully that led to the summit.
❖ More interesting route	❖ Wildlife, waterfalls, fishing areas
❖ Depends on what a trail is?	❖ No response
❖ Access to climb and down climb had no trail	❖ No response
❖ I was fishing and worked in the streams and hiked along the streams themselves.	❖ I think that the entire experience is magnificent.
❖ I was hoping for a trail from Ypsilon Lake to Fall River.	❖ A good view that many will never see.
❖ We took an un-maintained trail up to the Divide from our high camp.	❖ Views from top.
❖ Wanted to get to the continental divide.	❖ The adrenalin of trying something on my own and relying on my skills followed by the reward of another amazing view.
❖ Less people encountered	❖ No response
❖ Visiting "less-used" places, solitude, fun, route finding.	❖ This trip, not anything special. But best ever-bear tracks and other bear signs.
❖ No response	❖ Great feeling of solitude & experiencing absolute quiet (Except wind & critters)
❖ To get to unmarked ponds; better views/vistas; adventure tried to no do it too much	❖ Saw a coyote!
❖ Better views, photography	❖ Hiked on rocks by Alberta Falls for better views.
❖ We wanted to view a pond up close	❖ We could see an old log-jam and a large tree that had been stuck by lightning
❖ I went to the Boulderfield at Lake Haiyaha to the pass, I wanted to enjoy the bouldering and altitude	❖ That would have to be the wild raspberry bushes.
❖ Missed trail turn off, hiking to lake	❖ Close encounters with elk

Appendix C. continued

Question 6C: Reasons for traveling cross-country	Question 6D: Best discovery or experience hiking cross-country
❖ I followed a tortuous creek upstream for fishing 3 miles, and then made a 1/2-mile x-country beeline back to the trailside pt. where I started. Left trail to travel up the flank/talus field of a 13er	❖ Saw 2 white tail Ptarmigan in autumn plumage at elevation of about 12,200
❖ It's more scenic	❖ No response
❖ To get access to Colorado River for fishing.	❖ Able to wade river.
❖ To see more than what the trail offered more challenging	❖ Beautiful views-more seclusion/rewarding
❖ I was fishing. Thankfully there were no trails along the stream.	❖ A deer joined me at one point along the stream.
❖ To be at a secluded spot alone and enjoy scenery	❖ A spot in the alpine tundra where I sat with my binoculars and spotted eight people in different areas backpacking.
❖ To get better fishing places/different viewing area	❖ No response
❖ Find fishing spots, quicker way down the mountain	❖ A few fishing holes
❖ For the view from the Continental Divide, to view wildlife	❖ The view
❖ Summits, views, solitude	❖ Solitude, less spoiled
❖ To check out some high alpine lakes-Wild Basin, Lion Lake etc	❖ Unique feeling to be on the map somewhere off trail
❖ Fishing	❖ No response
❖ To get to, and to climb mountain peaks	❖ Climbing the ridge tops and reaching the summit of Mt. Richthofen.
❖ Climbing to Rabbit Ears rock formation from camp	❖ No response
❖ To access lakes for fishing	❖ Fishing
❖ Reach some upper lakes for photography	❖ Saw some deer

Appendix C. continued

Question 6C: Reasons for traveling cross-country	Question 6D: Best discovery or experience hiking cross-country
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ We camped in 2m to climb Snowdrift, Ptarmigan Pt. Tabletop &amp; Knob top the next day. We traversed from N Inlet trail to Tonahutu trail back to TH.</li> <li>❖ Shortcut to a peak within sight</li> <li>❖ Just to see new views.</li> <li>❖ Climb higher for a view.</li> <li>❖ To get a better photograph.</li> <li>❖ Look at area on top of and behind Ouzel Falls.</li> <li>❖ Off trail was much shorter than the established trail. Traveled an un-maintained trail from Thunder Lake, over the Boulder Grand Pass to Lake Verna.</li> <li>❖ Trail not maintained could not find trail. Ended up on animal trails. Scrambling to a peak rocks only.</li> <li>❖ To short cut from Bridal Veil Falls to Black Canyon saved about 2 miles. Climbed rock outcropping to enjoy the view neither time did I follow any sort of trail created by people.</li> <li>❖ Get to views, explore!</li> <li>❖ Hike above tree line to get to a saddle/see views</li> <li>❖ A short off trail to get to our car</li> <li>❖ Photos, videotaping, and pic nicking.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ I am climbing Glen Ponzack's list of Top 100 named peaks in RMNP, so I do a lot of cross-country travel to reach remote peaks. Each trip is memorable. Dropping down from Rock Cut into Forest Canyon to climb Terra Tomah with elk bugling &amp; fall colors.</li> <li>❖ Mining roads</li> <li>❖ We saw a great view of Ypsilon Lake and Ypsilon Peak</li> <li>❖ Nice view.</li> <li>❖ No response</li> <li>❖ Didn't realize the burn area went so far to the west</li> <li>❖ Physical challenge. Navigational challenge.</li> <li>❖ Terrific views back over to Longs from the west side of the park.</li> <li>❖ Swimming holes in a number of different creeks and lakes.</li> <li>❖ 360 degree views from our vantage point, Spectacular!</li> <li>❖ No response</li> <li>❖ Saw 3 deer and was able to photograph them.</li> <li>❖ Breathtaking views of RMNP; solitude of being off trail.</li> </ul>



Appendix C. continued

Question 6C: Reasons for traveling cross-country	Question 6D: Best discovery or experience hiking cross-country
❖ To get away from the crowd of people on the trails; See other types of wildlife/plant life, etc.	❖ It was so quiet and peaceful - just got to listen to the wind blowing through the aspens and smell the woods. I even got to see some deer eating vegetation.
❖ There was no visible trail around Lake Haiyaha.	❖ Felt like I was doing something others hadn't.
❖ A better way from Chasm Lake to the trailhead	❖ ??? It's all nice. Less crowds that way.
❖ The trail faded out	❖ It was pretty
❖ Like to be off trails (when permissible) & get away from people	❖ No response
❖ Access to climb	❖ Always enjoy route finding and following the natural weakness in the terrain. No crowds
❖ Climbing on rocks and exploring with children	❖ Helping my children explore the beauty of the wilderness and look at the details
❖ Looking for the remains of an old cabin at the far end of the first meadow past Adams Falls.	❖ Did not find the cabin remains but found lots of evidence of animals having been in the area
❖ To get better camera shots	❖ Seeing elk and macro camera shots
❖ Visit meadow not on trail-look at unusual site not accessible	❖ No response
❖ Need to urinate	❖ No response
❖ I followed the Tonahutu Creek across big meadows	❖ The amount of brook trout in the Tonahutu Creek.
❖ To photograph the Calypso Cascades. To look upstream at the Colorado River.	❖ No response
❖ These were very short excursions to observe wildlife.	❖ Observed elk for quite some time.

## **Appendix D**

### **Open-ended comments about meeting rangers or staff during this visit to RMNP**



Photo: Researcher doing work in the Home Stretch of Longs Peak

#### **Appendix D. Open-ended comments about meeting park staff during this visit to RMNP during summer 2002.**

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Question 7: How did you feel about meeting park staff?

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- ❖ Great. He was very friendly. We exchanged information about wildlife near trail.
- ❖ The staff member I saw seemed somewhat ill prepared for day hike and seemed more shy than personable.
- ❖ Fine
- ❖ A little surprised to see a ranger 3 miles from a trailhead hiking alone.
- ❖ It was great; she answered some of our questions!
- ❖ Great. Very helpful
- ❖ Friendly, professional, fun to talk to
- ❖ Good. They were very polite. Did check fishing license, but was very nice. Gave us some useful information.
- ❖ They were helpful.
- ❖ Good source of information on area, nice to see staff monitoring area
- ❖ The Park staff is always helpful about sightings of the flowers I'm looking for. The Park staff had interesting information about the Green Back trout in the area.
- ❖ All park Rangers we met were helpful and friendly.
- ❖ Glad to see them on the trail good current information.
- ❖ Very helpful, directed us to a very enjoyable day.
- ❖ Good. We just said hello as he was coming down the trail as I was going up.
- ❖ Comfortable
- ❖ Fine-it is their job
- ❖ Fine it's their job.
- ❖ Ranger helping another hiker/interaction to us ambivalent
- ❖ The individual I met was a volunteer ranger. He answered questions I had and enhanced my experience
- ❖ I would prefer not to, but it's not a big problem
- ❖ A pleasant encounter, both times, we participated in a moving birding trip on Twin Owls

Appendix D. continued.

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Question 7: How did you feel about meeting park staff?

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- ❖ I didn't really think about it I am always glad to see rangers
- ❖ It did not bother me
- ❖ Very helpful, knowledgeable
- ❖ Very helpful and courteous
- ❖ No problem with it. It's reassuring, most times, that they're there to help people
- ❖ Always a pleasure to meet a park official
- ❖ It was good to see a ranger in the backcountry
- ❖ They were there to let everyone know the rules are enforced
- ❖ Very professional/very personable
- ❖ I thought it was very positive. They were very friendly, helpful, and reassuring.
- ❖ Those we saw were participating in the hike experience as we were.
- ❖ Fine
- ❖ He was distrusting and made me go out of my way to show my backcountry pass. Not rude, but insistent.
- ❖ Ok, she wanted to see my permit
- ❖ It was informative!
- ❖ Fine
- ❖ Good
- ❖ Pleased that they are monitoring/checking the trails.
- ❖ She was outgoing and said hello and answered some questions, It was a nice interchange
- ❖ It was nice to see the Rangers making themselves available on the trail.
- ❖ We met the ranger several times and enjoyed talking to her.
- ❖ Nice to know they are out there. Park is very well maintained! No trash, no dogs
- ❖ Nice people to be around

Appendix D. continued.

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Question 7: How did you feel about meeting park staff?

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- ❖ Comfortable
- ❖ Very helpful, professional, courteous, patient, and informative.
- ❖ Excellent ranger guide on our elk rut viewing bus tour.
- ❖ Good, enjoyed visiting.
- ❖ I appreciate knowing and seeing rangers in the park.
- ❖ We only saw the two rangers that were handing out this survey. It was nice to see them
- ❖ Very polite & helpful
- ❖ Volunteer with this survey he was nice!
- ❖ Guns?!
- ❖ Good
- ❖ Good, they are a great presence on the trail offering information.
- ❖ Volunteer was at trailhead at end of hike and asked if we would fill out this questionnaire.
- ❖ Interesting talking with them about what they were doing.
- ❖ He was very helpful and informative.
- ❖ Fine
- ❖ Very helpful
- ❖ We were happy to meet the ranger and had a nice discussion about trail maintenance in the backcountry.
- ❖ It was a good experience. Our group did a day on the trail.
- ❖ Fine.
- ❖ I thought it was fine. They gave us advice, talked to us about our hike and where we planned to camp.
- ❖ We had a very pleasant conversation.
- ❖ Fine. Friendly, informative, and necessary.
- ❖ I was ok. Nice person. Part of the package of camping in RMNP

Appendix D. continued.

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Question 7: How did you feel about meeting park staff?

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- ❖ Experience was pleasant
- ❖ I find meeting rangers in the park reassuring with regard to safety issues.
- ❖ Great, good to know where we can go for information.
- ❖ They were always pleasant & helpful, answered questions.
- ❖ They were talking loudly (woman) and did not say hello or acknowledge us. No interaction, somewhat disturbing.
- ❖ Didn't like it
- ❖ All our encounters were with friendly, knowledgeable and assertive rangers
- ❖ If I remember correctly, his name was John & was very nice, sociable, professional, real
- ❖ Fine
- ❖ It was nice to see him.
- ❖ They were very friendly.
- ❖ He was friendly-answered a few questions for us.
- ❖ Ok
- ❖ Very helpful
- ❖ He was friendly and helpful
- ❖ Great, good bunch of dedicated folks who love what they do as much as I love being there.
- ❖ At the time didn't think twice about it. In retrospect, glad there was a presence of regulation, source of info.
- ❖ Kind, friendly and helpful
- ❖ She was great! Friendly and informative. She seemed happy to share her knowledge.
- ❖ Very nice, professional courteous
- ❖ Very personable, informative
- ❖ Good to know they are hiking/patrolling the area, especially with so many people back there.
- ❖ Cordial reception

Appendix D. continued.

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Question 7: How did you feel about meeting park staff?

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- ❖ Ok
- ❖ Good
- ❖ No problem-person very congenial
- ❖ The ranger was well informed personable and friendly.
- ❖ The individual who took our money for the day was unfriendly and uninformed about the area.
- ❖ They were very friendly. The two we talked to most though were young and didn't give the best advice on backcountry camping sites.
- ❖ Learned additional information from the ranger and staff. They were very friendly and helpful
- ❖ We met several, and they were very friendly, helpful and knowledgeable
- ❖ Was nice to visit with them, not very informed about entire RMNP. Gave BAD ADVICE on hiking trail with a 6 yr old & 9 yr old, who had hiked very little. Told us to hike "Crater Trail"
- ❖ Very friendly
- ❖ No problem. She was informing people about extreme fire hazard.
- ❖ Good because you learn new things.
- ❖ I feel good about meeting rangers. I feel they are enhancing the wilderness.
- ❖ Very friendly, knowledgeable and helpful.
- ❖ Very polite and helpful
- ❖ Person who gave me the survey and several others, very pleasant and helpful
- ❖ Ranger at trailhead/water station rude, survey volunteer quite nice
- ❖ Nice, informative person
- ❖ Super
- ❖ Very friendly, very helpful
- ❖ I think they need to be meeting the public in the backcountry. It was good to see him there.
- ❖ Kind, knowledgeable, attractive people. They are kind of strict though.
- ❖ Happy to see rangers in the backcountry though he behaved very oddly and wasn't very friendly.

Appendix D. continued.

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Question 7: How did you feel about meeting park staff?

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- ❖ Nice to see them out of the office, also good to see trail crew
- ❖ Very courteous
- ❖ Ok
- ❖ Glad they're out there!
- ❖ Great they were all quite friendly and helpful.
- ❖ Very helpful and friendly
- ❖ It was nice to see a ranger.
- ❖ Glad to see their presence!
- ❖ It was fine-he checked our permit and then left.
- ❖ I am a Ranger.
- ❖ He went by on his horse while my husband and I were fishing. Also spoke with a couple of rangers at the entrance of Bear Lake-very helpful & knowledgeable.
- ❖ I enjoy seeing rangers on the trail
- ❖ Good, I felt that this particular rangers presence was helpful to me for I was worried about the weather and how much more to the top I had to go. He was both polite and quite helpful.
- ❖ The questions I asked were answered thoroughly
- ❖ Very personable, helpful, and friendly
- ❖ She thought we were packing in rather late in the day. We agreed.
- ❖ Fine, I quite enjoyed it.
- ❖ Dandy
- ❖ They were helpful to show us where we lost the trail we'll be able to reach our goal next time, thanks to their directions.
- ❖ 1st encounter-10: 45pm Longs Peak ranger station parking lot a complete jerk, the man thinks he is Wyatt Earp with the mustache and all. We drove up to him in his truck, said hello, and he immediately shined his flashlight in our eyes. We tried to be friendly but the ridiculousness of him, his flashlight and his authoritative attitude really bothered us, I don't like him now. 2<sup>nd</sup> encounter -3:30 pm next day, spoke with a very nice gentleman ranger in the parking lot, no consistency.



Appendix D. continued.

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Question 7: How did you feel about meeting park staff?

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- ❖ Reassuring to know they're around on the hikes in case something goes wrong.
- ❖ Really didn't think anything of it guess it was good to see them get a chance to get onto trails
- ❖ Ok just said hi as we passed on the trail.
- ❖ Very informative, as we had questions
- ❖ Simply passed ranger on way down (he was on way up) only said "Hi" as passed.
- ❖ Excellent. Very informative-pointed out wildlife (blue grouse) for us to see down the trail.
- ❖ They are helpful and concerned, pleasant and answer questions in a matter of fact manner. I respect them.
- ❖ Excellent
- ❖ It made me feel good just knowing they were around even if it was just at the trailhead that we saw them.
- ❖ Some were knowledgeable about the area. Saw one on the trail Sunday and one on the trail Monday. That was nice! Ranger at Longs Peak very friendly.
- ❖ The ranger was short cutting through an area that was posted saying that it creates severe erosion
- ❖ We did not feel bad because park staff provided excellent advice and suggestions prior to going hiking.
- ❖ I felt secure because I could ask questions about weather conditions, hike conditions
- ❖ I found Kim to be helpful and friendly. She was the only one I ran into.
- ❖ They were friendly and helpful.
- ❖ She was nice/helpful and said she would check on our car throughout the night
- ❖ Good
- ❖ It's nice to see rangers out because it gives me a sense of security.
- ❖ At first that I was being checked up on, but after talking to them glad they stopped by.
- ❖ Glad to see the backcountry is somewhat monitored.
- ❖ Fine. A little intrusive.
- ❖ Rangers and park staff have always been kind and understanding individuals

Appendix D. continued.

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Question 7: How did you feel about meeting park staff?

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- ❖ No big deal
- ❖ Ok. These folks do work here. Why would one not see park staff?
- ❖ He gave me this survey, ok.
- ❖ Felt comforted knowing that they were coming, helpful, knowledgeable people around, knowing we could consult with them if needed and felt reassured that we were selecting hikes that were within our ability level.
- ❖ We are always happy to visit with the rangers.
- ❖ Good
- ❖ Good, we love to gain knowledge from the rangers. They are friendly, knowledgeable and always full of good advice.
- ❖ I met a retired, volunteer ranger who answered questions I had about some of the things I saw and experienced in the park. Encountering a knowledgeable park employee enhanced my trip.
- ❖ Overall, very positive. Ranger was helpful in providing information and seemed to be checking permits for backpackers (checked ours and another group). Got the impression that ranger was "patrolling" the area both for monitoring and education purposes.
- ❖ We like to see park staff and appreciate their help and information.
- ❖ It was fine
- ❖ Very polite and friendly and helpful.
- ❖ Very informative
- ❖ The ranger was very helpful and courteous
- ❖ Nice to see them on the trail. Gave a sense of security
- ❖ Ranger at trailhead (Bear Lake) thought it was a good idea
- ❖ It was great. They explained why the elk were fighting and about their horns
- ❖ Just saw a ranger; glad he was around looking after things
- ❖ He was friendly, knowledgeable, helpful
- ❖ Rangers are always friendly and helpful
- ❖ Just the lady who gave me this questionnaire at the trailhead upon our return

Appendix D. continued.

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Question 7: How did you feel about meeting park staff?

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- ❖ We met two and they were very informative and nice
- ❖ Good
- ❖ The girl who gave us this survey at the trailhead
- ❖ Helpful
- ❖ I always appreciate the presence of people I can assume are caring for the park as well as my safety
- ❖ Always friendly and helpful
- ❖ It's good they are working the area.
- ❖ Elderly volunteer dressed in RMNP uniform. At first I was delighted, however the volunteer was unable to answer correctly the questions I asked. I looked up the information when I got home and found out he had given me incorrect information, which was also overheard by others standing by!
- ❖ She was friendly and helpful
- ❖ Reassured that there is a ranger presence visible in the park.
- ❖ Nice, he answered some questions about the fish in the lakes
- ❖ They were always friendly and helpful. Somehow knowing they were there gave you a sense of security and they would be available as a resource to resolve any problems.
- ❖ Very positive!
- ❖ Good
- ❖ Very pleasant volunteer couple. Very nice to see them.
- ❖ Met only those 2 giving out this survey. Positive experience very nice people. Seemed to care.
- ❖ Ok
- ❖ Good experience-first time in 3 years I've been asked for my fishing license.
- ❖ Fine
- ❖ Indifferent
- ❖ Protected.
- ❖ Comforted by their presence, enjoyed speaking to them, knowledgeable about the trail ahead

Appendix D. continued.

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Question 7: How did you feel about meeting park staff?

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- ❖ Fine.
- ❖ No thoughts
- ❖ It makes no difference
- ❖ When I see rangers on the trails, it makes me feel safer.
- ❖ Fine
- ❖ Feel safe
- ❖ Excellent interaction.
- ❖ Very positive about any interaction with rangers or park staff.
- ❖ Fine
- ❖ It was good to know they were out.
- ❖ He was very nice, I enjoyed our short talk and found it educational.
- ❖ Fine. Gave good information on bears.
- ❖ We didn't speak much! Just said hi! I don't have a feeling either way, other than assurances that the trails are being patrolled at some degree.
- ❖ Wasn't very friendly
- ❖ We saw 2 rangers & 4 people.
- ❖ Glad to see ranger on trail to Mills Lake. He had a radio, so if someone needed help, it would get there faster then hiking back to trailhead.
- ❖ It exhibits a sense of interest in the park and its visitors. It provides a sense of security to its visitors. It provides a source of information to the parks visitors. Hopefully, problems in the park are being noted.
- ❖ I like it.
- ❖ Very friendly rangers at Thunder Lake at ranger cabin
- ❖ Reassured, I like to know that for security and safety there are official people present in the park. I also like to have an information source.
- ❖ It was nice to know they were around at times.

Appendix D. continued.

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Question 7: How did you feel about meeting park staff?

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- ❖ Safer
- ❖ No reaction. They were surveying trail conditions.
- ❖ Very nice, able to answer question, pleasant person
- ❖ At the trailhead to do this survey. No one on trail. I don't require a ranger to be on the trail
- ❖ They were courteous, knowledgeable, friendly, well-informed, very helpful, good sense of humor.
- ❖ Polite and informative.
- ❖ Fine
- ❖ We met several on trips
- ❖ Fine, they asked about conditions and number of people on Longs Peak seemed like they were looking out for people's safety.
- ❖ We thought it was good to see rangers and park staff and volunteers at the trailhead
- ❖ Good. It was nice to get a report on trail conditions on Longs Peak
- ❖ I really liked it because they gave me some good information.
- ❖ Ok he gave me this survey
- ❖ Great!
- ❖ Very friendly.
- ❖ Very nice and helpful.
- ❖ It was fine.
- ❖ No problem.
- ❖ Good
- ❖ Good to see them in the backcountry, there should be more
- ❖ It is good to know for safety and enjoying reasons a ranger is fairly easily accessible
- ❖ They were knowledgeable and helpful. We like having them there.
- ❖ Just fine. He was friendly and informative

Appendix D. continued.

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Question 7: How did you feel about meeting park staff?

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- ❖ Very helpful and friendly
- ❖ I was driving along and pulled over to let the many cars behind me pass. And the ranger stopped me and severely reprimanded me for this action. Other rangers at visitor center were nice.
- ❖ Glad to see a staff member.
- ❖ I felt fine.
- ❖ The ranger was very helpful and friendly.
- ❖ Everyone at Visitors Centers and gates was very courteous and helpful
- ❖ Ok very nice brief encounter
- ❖ Safer
- ❖ He was very nice. Very positive experience
- ❖ I hike the trails in RMNP frequently and seldom see a park ranger.
- ❖ Comfortable.
- ❖ A professional representative of the park. (They're cool)
- ❖ Very kind people
- ❖ I was curious as to what he was carrying, but didn't have a chance to ask.

## **Appendix E**

### **Visitor comments on about where they felt crowded**



Photo: Visitors exiting the shuttle at Bear Lake by Matthew L. Bates

## Appendix E. Question 9: Places Respondents Felt Crowded

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Question 9: Did you feel crowding was a problem at any of the specific places you visited on this trip? If yes, please note the places you felt were crowded

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- ❖ Traffic on the trail was reasonable but parking lots were crowded.
- ❖ Bear Lake
- ❖ Around Alberta Falls
- ❖ Cub Lake
- ❖ Between North Inlet trailhead & Cascade Falls
- ❖ From the North Inlet trailhead to Cascade Falls, there were large groups of day-hikers and people on horse
- ❖ Gem & Emerald Lake
- ❖ Bear Lake
- ❖ Mills Lake; Bear Lake
- ❖ Funny! My trip was to Thunder Lake via Ouzel Falls! TOO MANY PEOPLE.
- ❖ From Wild Basin lot to Ouzel Falls
- ❖ I think its a problem that will not go away
- ❖ Ouzel Falls early on in the hike so not too bad
- ❖ Bear Lake, parking lot and trail to Flattop
- ❖ On Cub Lake road-not wide enough for people to travel thru while everyone is parked looking at wildlife in the meadow
- ❖ Fern Lake, Spruce Lake, Longs Peak, Flattop, Chapin, Taylor Peak
- ❖ Parking at some trailheads was very limited
- ❖ On this trip (in which I hiked from Bear Lake to Flattop Mountain and then out the Fern Lake Trailhead) it was very crowded from Fern Lake down to the Fern Lake Trailhead, especially from The Pool down.
- ❖ Parking lot near Fern Lake trailhead and trails
- ❖ All of the less difficult trails
- ❖ The Pool
- ❖ The Pool
- ❖ Bear Lake region, trails to Sky Pond, Emerald Lake
- ❖ Bear Lake area
- ❖ Flattop Mountain-it has been for years
- ❖ Between Fern Lake trailhead and the Pool
- ❖ North Inlet trailhead



Appendix E. continued

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Question 9: Did you feel crowding was a problem at any of the specific places you visited on this trip? If yes, please note the places you felt were crowded

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- ❖ Bear Lake area
- ❖ Around the Bear Lake area
- ❖ Meadows around Moraine Park where people crowd to see the elk.
- ❖ Campgrounds were filled to capacity. It was difficult to find a campsite where we wanted to stay. We came off season to enjoy the colors and the facilities were overloaded
- ❖ Parking lot Longs Peak trailhead
- ❖ The campground felt very crowded. The sights are way too close together. There is not enough seclusion
- ❖ It was during the color change-so to be expected
- ❖ Bear Lake
- ❖ Trail Ridge Road- "nature" trail at top a school group walked on the tundra, blocked walkway & took over an area for a class.
- ❖ The buses, the bathrooms - add one more port-a-potty please!!
- ❖ Parking Lots
- ❖ Bear Lake
- ❖ Bear Lake
- ❖ Bear Lake area. Alpine Visitors Center, Fern Lake trailhead (especially parking situation)
- ❖ Bear Lake seemed pretty crowded. It wasn't too bad though.
- ❖ Parking at Glacier Gorge trailhead. NIGHTMARE! We used to be able to park along the street. Now you have to spend time waiting for a shuttle. Parking alongside the road cost us \$160 in fines & tow. Bear Lake parking was full very frustrating.
- ❖ Everywhere
- ❖ Around Bear Lake
- ❖ Alberta Falls
- ❖ All around the Bear Lake area.
- ❖ Bear Lake, Glacier Gorge Trail
- ❖ Alberta Falls area
- ❖ Bear Lake
- ❖ Trailheads and areas near the paved roads are always crowded.
- ❖ Glacier Gorge, Bear Lake, any place with elk.

Appendix E. continued

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Question 9: Did you feel crowding was a problem at any of the specific places you visited on this trip? If yes, please note the places you felt were crowded

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- ❖ Bear Lake was way too crowded
- ❖ Bear Lake trailhead
- ❖ Bear Lake area
- ❖ Around Bear Lake
- ❖ Dream Lake to Emerald Lake
- ❖ Not on this hike, but some of the popular trails were a little crowded.
- ❖ One waterfall area, close to trailhead
- ❖ Bear Lake
- ❖ Alberta Falls on Sat. Sept 28
- ❖ Trail to Flattop Mountain
- ❖ Deer Mountain trailhead, Moraine Park for elk
- ❖ Inadequate parking below Alberta Falls. So went to Wild Basin and got last space at trailhead.
- ❖ From the trailhead at the ranger station to Calypso Cascade is like Pearl Street
- ❖ Bear Lake Parking
- ❖ The Lawn Lake trailhead-no available parking
- ❖ Trail to Chasm Lake turnoff-crowded but expected. People shortcutting switchbacks & using closed trails above Jim's Grove.
- ❖ Ouzel Falls
- ❖ Bear Lake!!! Parking is way stressful
- ❖ The entire trip was too crowded. Hiked from Bear Lake to Glacier Gorge-Alberta Falls-Mills Lake-Lake Haiyaha-Dream Lake-Nymph Lake
- ❖ Bear Lake parking lot
- ❖ At Bear Lake parking lot at Alberta Falls parking
- ❖ Bear Lake is ridiculous, however a trailhead for 20 many good trails, most people have to pass the lake
- ❖ Bear Lake trail to Emerald Lake
- ❖ Around Mills Lake & Alberta Falls
- ❖ Bear Lake
- ❖ Adams Falls, Bear Lake/Alberta Falls
- ❖ Bear Lake hiking trails
- ❖ Alberta Falls, Horseshoe Park during rut

Appendix E. continued

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Question 9: Did you feel crowding was a problem at any of the specific places you visited on this trip? If yes, please note the places you felt were crowded

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- ❖ Around Timber Lake
- ❖ Don't recall exact place name now, but it was between a waterfall & lake so am tempted to say Ouzel Falls. At trailhead it was approximately 2 mi to falls and 1/2 mile to lake.
- ❖ Bear Lake, Nymph, Dream
- ❖ Around Bear Lake
- ❖ It was hard to keep a decent pace for the first and last mile, tons of people stopping in the trail
- ❖ Huge and busy parking lots to Jewel Lake.
- ❖ The first part of the trail
- ❖ Calypso Cascades, Mills Lake
- ❖ Lumpy Ridge parking lot
- ❖ Main road through park!
- ❖ Bear Lake
- ❖ Longs Peak Trail
- ❖ Ouzel Falls-really liked the trail but there were too many people
- ❖ On the bridge at Ouzel Falls
- ❖ Alpine Visitor Center, pretty big elk jam at Poudre Lake
- ❖ On the trail to Thunder Lake
- ❖ Too many at Bear Lake parking area, but shuttle solves problem. It was 11am Saturday.
- ❖ At and near Bear Lake
- ❖ Bear Lake to Emerald Lake in the Afternoon.
- ❖ Mills Lake, Calypso Cascade, Bear Lake
- ❖ Trail to Loch and Mills Lake
- ❖ Bear Lake trails
- ❖ Bear Lake! Emerald Lake, etc.
- ❖ Emerald Lake
- ❖ Pear Lake/creek
- ❖ Can't remember exact location names
- ❖ Mills Lake, the whole Bear Lake Trail System
- ❖ Longs Peak trail

Appendix E. continued

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Question 9: Did you feel crowding was a problem at any of the specific places you visited on this trip? If yes, please note the places you felt were crowded

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- ❖ But only in high use areas like Bear Lake area.
- ❖ Parking lot at Bear Lake was full.
- ❖ Most trails were good, but Bear Lake was busy
- ❖ Bear Lake
- ❖ Bear Lake/Ouzel Falls
- ❖ But, sorry I forgot the name and the location
- ❖ Trail between Ouzel Falls and Ouzel Lake but Cub Lake trail was great!
- ❖ Bear Lake area, Park Headquarters
- ❖ Majority of the Bear Lake trailheads (Nymph, Dream, Emerald Lake esp.)
- ❖ At the Pool lots of children with little supervision
- ❖ Between Calypso Falls and Ouzel Falls
- ❖ Longs Peak up to 200 people
- ❖ The Longs Peak trailhead/picnic area was crowded.
- ❖ Long Lake Trail
- ❖ Couldn't get 1st choice campsite (Goblins Forest), Boulderfield on Longs and the trail nearby
- ❖ Hike up Longs-I like to hike away from a lot of people but Longs is one of the most popular. Too crowded for me, but not really a problem.
- ❖ Overcrowded cars (not people) at Ouzel Falls trailhead parking lot
- ❖ Bear Lake, Emerald Lake, Dream Lake, Alberta Falls (Popular and easy to reach)
- ❖ Trail below junction to Longs Peak/Chasm Lake
- ❖ Trail
- ❖ Parking lot, Lawn Lake trailhead. It was terribly frustrating to have a permit to camp overnight from that trailhead and to not be able to find a parking spot. Walking a long distance with an overnight pack was not a feasible option.
- ❖ We know to expect crowding on certain trails and portions of trails around Bear Lake in July (Dream & Emerald Lake for instance)
- ❖ Parking lot
- ❖ Walk to Emerald Lake
- ❖ Copeland Falls-Cascades
- ❖ Bear Lake parking lot, on top of Flattop Mountain.

Appendix E. continued

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Question 9: Did you feel crowding was a problem at any of the specific places you visited on this trip? If yes, please note the places you felt were crowded

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- ❖ On the trail below Ouzel Falls
- ❖ Wild Basin trailhead parking lot.
- ❖ Bathrooms at Trail Ridge Rd Visitors Center
- ❖ Sprague Lake, Bear Lake
- ❖ Bear Lake parking lot!
- ❖ At Bear Lake trailhead- Alberta Falls
- ❖ Dream Lake. Alluvial fan with too many kids going off trail.
- ❖ Bear Lake so many cars parked on the roadside watching elk
- ❖ Alberta Falls
- ❖ Between trailhead and Alberta Falls
- ❖ Along the Mills Lake Trail
- ❖ Bear Lake of course. Alberta Falls and Fern Lake trailhead area. Moraine Park anywhere the elk were.
- ❖ Moraine Park
- ❖ Along the road it's elk mating season!
- ❖ Around Bear Lake
- ❖ Bear Lake
- ❖ Bear Lake
- ❖ On the trails around Bear Lake especially around Dream & Emerald Lakes
- ❖ On trail between Nymph Lake and Emerald Lake
- ❖ Along trail to Emerald Lake
- ❖ Bear Lake parking area-Bear Lake
- ❖ We did a day hike into Summerland Park. By dusk 3 groups of 1-3 persons had set camps at the S. end of the park. I feel "walk-in" overnigheters may be degrading the near trailhead areas.
- ❖ Flattop
- ❖ Between the Colorado River trailhead and Lulu City
- ❖ Longs Peak parking lot and trail, Alpine Visitor Center
- ❖ Around and especially above Timber Lake
- ❖ The cars on the Bear Lake Road
- ❖ Trail to Ouzel Falls and a little beyond

Appendix E. continued

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Question 9: Did you feel crowding was a problem at any of the specific places you visited on this trip? If yes, please note the places you felt were crowded

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- ❖ Cannot find a parking spot at Longs Peak Ranger station
- ❖ On the way to Ouzel Falls
- ❖ Longs Peak trail was heavily used and eroded.
- ❖ By Ouzel Falls. Can't blame anyone though it's beautiful
- ❖ Alpine Visitor Center
- ❖ For a cool rainy day in September was surprised at the number at Ouzel Falls
- ❖ Emerald Lake
- ❖ On the trail between Cub Lake and the trailhead
- ❖ The Trough was pretty busy for safety purposes and the Boulderfield is like a small city.
- ❖ Around the elk viewing area "Moraine Park" evening time
- ❖ Bear Lake road and parking areas full
- ❖ At the parking lot for Bear Lake.
- ❖ Bear Lake was full; Did not want to take bus with 7 people in the group; hiked Bierstadt Lake Trail instead.
- ❖ On the trail to Alberta Falls and Mills Lake it's always busy.
- ❖ Around Bear Lake to Nymph Lake.
- ❖ Parking lot
- ❖ At the beginning, just at the falls located 1.8 mi. in at Wild Basin or cascades?
- ❖ Bear lake trailhead
- ❖ Longs Peak
- ❖ Parking lot-trails
- ❖ Both Bear Lake and Alberta Falls parking lots were full (had to use shuttle)
- ❖ Around Alberta Falls and Mills Lake
- ❖ Bear Lake area
- ❖ All the Emerald Lake trail
- ❖ Entire hike to Emerald Lake and surrounding area.
- ❖ Someone was in our camp we had a permit for.
- ❖ At Ouzel Falls
- ❖ Bear Lake parking lot

Appendix E. continued

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Question 9: Did you feel crowding was a problem at any of the specific places you visited on this trip? If yes, please note the places you felt were crowded

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- ❖ Parking at Bear Lake
- ❖ Trail to Mills Lake
- ❖ Too many cars parked along Hwy 34 to view elk.
- ❖ On the road near Colorado River Trail.
- ❖ Forest Canyon-a busload of people, ignoring signs to stay on the trail.
- ❖ Not while hiking but while driving Trail Ridge Road.
- ❖ Forest Canyon
- ❖ Around Sheep Lake and the overlook before Sheep Lake.
- ❖ East side of park: Moraine Park, look outs on Trail Ridge Road
- ❖ Never Summer Ranch (elk rut)
- ❖ On trails, on side of roads
- ❖ Estes Cone had about 2 groups of 20 people each.
- ❖ Alberta Falls

## **Appendix F**

### **Comments about conditions that detracted from the visitor experience**



Photo: Broken sign for the Cub Lake/Fern Lake trail junction



## Appendix F. Question 13: Other Things That Detracted From Visitor Experience.

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Question 13: Are there other things that you have seen or heard that detract from your experience in the Backcountry/Wilderness at RMNP? If so, please tell us what they are.

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- ❖ I wish the roads would not be enlarged-or the parking lot at visitors center- looks like a subdivision
- ❖ Dogs not on leashes!
- ❖ No I think this is a very well-kept park
- ❖ People picking wildflowers
- ❖ People stopping in the road to look at wildlife and causing traffic to back up. It's dangerous and the animals can't enjoy be bothered.
- ❖ It's really a pain to have to watch every step to avoid stepping in horse poop.
- ❖ Inexperienced hikers & campers
- ❖ I think the line of questioning is targeting the most obvious issues.
- ❖ The number of people is distracting. It is not the number in any one party but the steady flow of one party after another.
- ❖ Dogs on trails around the Endovalley Picnic Areas
- ❖ Pets in campground, speeding in campground, people feeding wild animals
- ❖ Pets in camping areas, speeding in campgrounds abundant chipmunk population that are being fed in campgrounds.
- ❖ Lack of portable bathroom facilities. We had to leave to find one at another campsite where it would have been nice to have one at the trailhead.
- ❖ Horse manure on trails! This is the worst. The horse folks should be required to pick up this poop.
- ❖ It would be excellent if next years bus-only parking were extended
- ❖ No
- ❖ Too crowded in Moraine Park-too many chasing after wildlife
- ❖ Visitors smoking
- ❖ Too much vehicle traffic on limited roadways. Buses, RV's and large pickups create extensive air and noise pollution, which carries into areas not far from roads.
- ❖ Too many horses/manure. Illegal backcountry users.
- ❖ Cutting tree branches, carving names/initials/ in trees

Appendix F. continued

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Question 13: Are there other things that you have seen or heard that detract from your experience in the Backcountry/Wilderness at RMNP? If so, please tell us what they are.

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- ❖ Female says-stinky privy
- ❖ Car was towed from road by trailhead. Road shoulder was too degraded to park on; white line is difficult to see at 4:00, no signage indication risk of being towed.
- ❖ No.
- ❖ I'm concerned about smoking in the dry forest.
- ❖ Too much commercial development on park boundary. Commercial interests have too much power in/near park
- ❖ No
- ❖ No
- ❖ No
- ❖ Smoking
- ❖ At times too many people which leads to exhaust smells and unpleasant noises in certain areas
- ❖ Access is highly congested (unacceptable). There are too many people trying to use the available space. I'll probably not come back because of overloading. I'll have to find some other less desirable location in which to indulge my recreational interests.
- ❖ Smoking on trails is highly unacceptable
- ❖ The stupidity of people while trying to film wildlife
- ❖ People that stop & back up their car in the road to view wildlife.
- ❖ This may be too picky, but the door on the women's restroom squeaked & sounded just like the elk bugling, so if we heard a thump on the end of the sound, we knew it was the bathroom door & not the elk. We were in space 164 of Moraine Park campground.
- ❖ No
- ❖ The sprawl from Estes Park has spread far too close to the edge of the park. There need to be a buffer zone such that buildings and signs can't be seen within a mile or so of the park
- ❖ No
- ❖ The traffic. The shuttle buses are great. Like to see that system built upon.

Appendix F. continued

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Question 13: Are there other things that you have seen or heard that detract from your experience in the Backcountry/Wilderness at RMNP? If so, please tell us what they are.

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- ❖ Too many RV's- central parking area and shuttle service for persons with RV's.
- ❖ The parking situation at Glacier Gorge. Can't go close to elk at Moraine Park, and the road to Ouzel Falls trailhead is in poor shape. Road construction is also frustrating.
- ❖ Car alarms
- ❖ People bringing dogs on the trail despite its being illegal.
- ❖ After hiking to Emerald Lake and seeing the water I was shocked to see no water in Bierstadt Lake! I know about the drought but why one place has water and another does not? I did enjoy the pine tree trails around the lake anyway!
- ❖ Most of the people that visit the parks' backcountry seem to respect it.
- ❖ Lots of rocks on trail (shuttle parking to Bierstadt Lake)
- ❖ No
- ❖ Dogs on trails. Any campfires! People breaking the rules without any enforcement.
- Planes
- ❖ Poor trail markings, poor signage
- ❖ Bear Lake Rd, your buses were empty the parking lot was full, close the lots i.e. Zion.
- ❖ Domesticated animals (pets) should not be in the backcountry. They detract from the natural experience
- ❖ People walking into elk breeding area and disrupting them.
- ❖ People & cars putting themselves & others in danger to stop along roads to view wild animals.
- ❖ Campsites that are too close to each other, so that you can hear the other sites talking, etc. Examples-Snowbird from Timber Lake-2 sites right on top of each other. You hike to get away and enjoy the quiet and to feel that you are not bothering others.
- ❖ No
- ❖ No
- ❖ Horse feces on narrow trails is the worst!
- ❖ Music, sites too close to trail, cigarette butts, not enough nights for one campsite
- ❖ None, generally visiting RMNP is an exhilarating and refreshing experience.

Appendix F. continued

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Question 13: Are there other things that you have seen or heard that detract from your experience in the Backcountry/Wilderness at RMNP? If so, please tell us what they are.

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- ❖ Upper East Inlet campsite-previous campers had left toilet paper strewn & half buried over a wide area
- ❖ Too many people mean too many restrictions. Unfortunately that is the way it seem to be
- ❖ People throwing rocks into streams or off of cliffs.
- ❖ No
- ❖ People smoking
- ❖ Huge RV's should be made to park & take shuttles. They clog the roads & one was taking 5 spots at the Bear Lake lot
- ❖ Way too many people getting too close to the elk during the rut.
- ❖ I saw people feeding birds & chipmunks & plenty of chipmunks that were eagerly expecting to be fed.
- ❖ No I loved it!
- ❖ No
- ❖ Trail runners. They are very rude & expect hikers to move out of their way.
- ❖ We had a wonderful trip.
- ❖ Yes, The RMNP is here for everybody, but some people insist on being inconsiderate of others.
- ❖ People who play/swim/wade in streams especially families with kids
- ❖ I rarely use the park in summer season, too crowded. In fall, during the rut we are allowing too many people to get too close to the elk, endangering both species. We are also allowing elk population to grow too large. Unnaturally high populations of any species are dangerous to the overall health of the ecology.
- ❖ People killing fish. I think all waters in the park should be catch and release
- ❖ No
- ❖ Big bright lights at other campsites, illuminating much more area than needed. Diesel engines running at any time, especially during evening - morning!!
- ❖ Peeling bark off trees. Bus fumes no diesel. See other notes in survey.

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Question 13: Are there other things that you have seen or heard that detract from your experience in the Backcountry/Wilderness at RMNP? If so, please tell us what they are.

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- ❖ Children should be taught Leave No Trace principles in grade school. Parents need to keep their children in sight at all times for their safety. Add toilet facilities to areas of greatest abuse and need.
- ❖ It would be nice if there were more pull offs to view wildlife without stopping traffic on Trail Ridge Road
- ❖ Horses! In all ways! Also people feeding the animals drives me crazy.
- ❖ Limited parking at key trailheads
- ❖ Repeated overnight permit checks by park personnel and volunteers. On several occasions I have been checked up to three times within minutes of each other, sometimes by personnel traveling together.
- ❖ Nothing
- ❖ Yes, people feeding animals, going off trail
- ❖ Poor traffic flow-rangers need to keep people moving along the road in animal sighting areas.
- ❖ Bolting policy not good. Power drills should be allowed, but all new bolted routes should be approved by committee of RMNP rangers+ reps of climbing community, as in Eldorado Springs. Safety in routes should be required.: e.g. "Birds of Fire is dangerously run out.
- ❖ Nasty exhaust from park shuttle buses
- ❖ While large groups make more noise, I believe it is important for people to enjoy nature together.
- ❖ Getting permits are a pain in the ass
- ❖ Horses & horse shit. Lack of Starbucks concession on top of Longs Peak.
- ❖ Poor trail maintenance!
- ❖ No bear wires.
- ❖ Squirrels were aggressively begging at picnic sight at Lily Lake-we had to chase them off
- ❖ Horse manure and urine, specially fresh stuff on a hot day is very annoying
- ❖ No.
- ❖ None
- ❖ The bike riders, they don't always observe the rules of the road & become hazardous when driving on the winding roads. Maybe a bike lane.

Appendix F. continued

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Question 13: Are there other things that you have seen or heard that detract from your experience in the Backcountry/Wilderness at RMNP? If so, please tell us what they are.

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- ❖ People not following park rules/ speeding on roads. People who seem to ignore signs with park instructions
- ❖ Unfortunately children shrieking due to fear of the sight of an animal
- ❖ Too many people walking off trail especially in the tundra areas
- ❖ Drivers stopping in the road to view wildlife. Overgrazing by elk.
- ❖ A bear destroyed the interior of our car while it was parked at the trailhead. All the food was stored in the trunk. If bears are going to be that aggressive trying to get at food in cars bear lockers will have to be provided at trailhead.
- ❖ Nothing I can think of right now.
- ❖ Children who are out of control (from parents) Dogs off leash, air pollution, road kill, smoking
- ❖ Large groups of children that are not controlled (i.e. doing dangerous things, being loud, being messy)
- ❖ Smokey haze from wildfires, fallen timber & dead trees standing from forest fires.
- ❖ No
- ❖ People with weapons. People with fireworks. Illegal fires. People ill prepared for backcountry travel. Unsupervised children.
- ❖ Since there is no section for general comments...
- ❖ Dogs on trail even leashed.
- ❖ I think there should be a limit on the number of people allowed on trail. It was too crowded after the Keyhole.
- ❖ Smoking & cigarette butts
- ❖ No, all in all we had a great experience in RMNP over the period of one week 9-11-02-9-18-02!
- ❖ Litter pisses me off not at the Park Service, but the idiots that leave it.
- ❖ Missing trail signs/indicators; missing landmark signage
- ❖ Allowing people to operate generators in the campgrounds. Very noisy! Disrupts everyone's experience of RMNP. Consider no generators allowed, generators only in certain sites, increase quiet hours to 6pm to 9am.
- ❖ No unacceptable/detracting events other than those listed above

Appendix F. continued

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Question 13: Are there other things that you have seen or heard that detract from your experience in the Backcountry/Wilderness at RMNP? If so, please tell us what they are.

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- ❖ Too much vehicle traffic! Implement buses throughout the park!
- ❖ No
- ❖ Hearing an occasional plane is ok, but I'm totally opposed to allowing sightseeing planes and/or helicopters tours
- ❖ Helicopters. Rangers from out of the state that know less about the park, than I do.
- ❖ No
- ❖ Children not with parents, running off trail unrestrained. Not a kids playground
- ❖ Crowded trails in general.
- ❖ Too many cars
- ❖ People were using a whistle in a non-emergency situation. Very irresponsible
- ❖ I usually avoid the park on summer weekends because of crowds. I wouldn't mind having the park closed to cars & seeing shuttle buses on the roads.
- ❖ Dogs on trails, horses on trail, Both because they bring foreign seed/bacteria/parasites into park.
- ❖ No "other" things. Just an observation.
- ❖ Litter
- ❖ Smokers-people ignore smoking postings
- ❖ No!
- ❖ We are opposed to the widening of the road to Bear Lake, we feel it will increase speeds on the road.
- ❖ People smoking, people fishing with live bait
- ❖ None
- ❖ Horses! Stable concessions don't pay enough to maintain the extreme trail damage that they produce.
- ❖ No
- ❖ Dogs, your pet is your friend not mine. Leave him at home.
- ❖ No
- ❖ The only disappointing experience I've ever had in RMNP wildernesses are noisy large groups hiking together. Ruins the peace.

Appendix F. continued

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Question 13: Are there other things that you have seen or heard that detract from your experience in the Backcountry/Wilderness at RMNP? If so, please tell us what they are.

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- ❖ I wish everyone were responsible enough so that we could enjoy a natural campfire.
- ❖ No it was a great hike
- ❖ Backcountry campsites that are too close together such that you can see & hear the people in adjacent camps
- ❖ Loud generator noise at Bear Lake parking area, large loud groups of children, traffic!  
Too many cars
- ❖ I find that certain shortcuts made by hikers are as clearly visible as the official trail & this is sometimes confusing when hiking. Also trailhead could be more clearly marked along roads as I have been planning to hike Ute Trail & still have no idea where it is.
- ❖ Horses could be a problem but haven't been. We were uneasy today when 2 horses came along the trail. Horses should be banned on heavily used trails and trails that have been improved at great expense, as well as time.
- ❖ Horses, mules on hiking trail. Bicycles on hiking trails. Motorized vehicles on hiking trails. Snowmobiles especially unwelcome.
- ❖ Horse manure on trails
- ❖ I didn't like the fact that I hiked many miles into the Backcountry/Wilderness and came across a house and a road
- ❖ In the summer I hike at least once and sometimes twice per week in RMNP. Although signs are posted forbidding dogs (or other pets) on RMNP trails I frequently meet people with dogs and find this very annoying.
- ❖ Whining children at the campsite
- ❖ In our few trips there I've never seen anything that offends me or heard anything detracting.
- ❖ My big pet peeve is seeing people disobey the trail signs, i.e. walking on the tundra!
- ❖ Roadwork signs not very pretty!
- ❖ Need more parking at trailheads like Twin Owls & Glacier Gorge.
- ❖ Paving roads and campgrounds where speed limit is already very low
- ❖ In box canyon we heard a repeating sound that reminded me of the sonar on a submarine. What was that???



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Question 13: Are there other things that you have seen or heard that detract from your experience in the Backcountry/Wilderness at RMNP? If so, please tell us what they are.

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- ❖ I highly disapprove of the use of generators in the improved campgrounds after sunset & before sunrise!
- ❖ Horse manure/urine on trails between Moraine Park & Beaver Meadows/Upper Beaver Meadows made trails impassible for humans. Suggest horses have one set of trails in that area and humans have a set of trails. On other trails in park, I would like to see the horse riders clean up after the horses as several other trails were littered with horse manure.
- ❖ I would like to see better markings on trails in the high mountains. Sometimes it is hared to find a trail that is out of the wood. Signs or better markers would be nice.
- ❖ We need spaces in the parking lots just for overnight campers. I have a hard time finding a parking spot and sometimes must walk much farther while wearing a heavy pack.
- ❖ Hikers talking loudly to each other as they pass me by, as if I were not there!
- ❖ Just the general disrespect of the wilderness/animals by uneducated people.
- ❖ Crowds. Uneducated gawking tourists. Following a diesel vehicle down Trail Ridge or to Bear Lake. I realize there is nothing to be done with these-but you asked.
- ❖ The smell of the toilets that are used frequently.
- ❖ Could campsites be moved a few hundred feet every couple years to re-vegetate? Then rotate the sites. The sound of airplanes was the only distracting part of my trip. No people, no car noise, just planes. I don't see how anything other than the location of your trail or site could affect this. If you hike or camp in the valley you will hear cars. If you venture further away you will not. I though I heard vehicles on the Ditch Trail a few times. That was slight unacceptable.
- ❖ Erosion blankets that had been buried in the trail were exposed and blowing around in the wind-I thought that was not good to see. Also, I do not like the extensive grooming of trails so that it is like a stairway up the mountain.
- ❖ See the list above
- ❖ The free shuttle bus produces foul smelling fumes. They should burn cleaner fuel, or ideally become solar powered.
- ❖ Crowd of people hanging around elk on roadsides. It feels like a zoo/safari.
- ❖ Not enough wildlife up high birds are way too tame, biggest pest @ campsite.
- ❖ The \$15 fees for a backcountry permit-for a one-night trip. This was a little steep.

Appendix F. continued

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Question 13: Are there other things that you have seen or heard that detract from your experience in the Backcountry/Wilderness at RMNP? If so, please tell us what they are.

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- ❖ None.
- ❖ Share the trailhead with horses and their waste
- ❖ Use of un-natural materials to build foot paths/bridges, etc.
- ❖ No
- ❖ Sheriff radaring Cars
- ❖ No
- ❖ The high number of automobiles in the park. The shuttle bus could be incorporated into more areas
- ❖ Roads too close/cars annoying but what are the alternatives
- ❖ Lack of hiking etiquette
- ❖ No
- ❖ Cars tailgating
- ❖ The airplane noise is horrible when overnighing in the backcountry
- ❖ It seems that commercial jets are in a flight pattern over RMNP.
- ❖ Not backcountry but again at a stop on Trail Ridge Road.
- ❖ Traffic jams.
- ❖ Drivers not being arrested for breaking all the driving rules of the road!!!
- ❖ Had to get back in the car and leave because no dogs were allowed.
- ❖ Average idiot tourist mentality
- ❖ People getting off the trails, especially on tundra.
- ❖ The point of this survey. Any suggestion to limiting access to the park by the general public. The very fact that this survey is being taken to build a case for limiting access completely goes against the spirit of the national park service.

## **Appendix G**

### **Changes visitors expect if parts of RMNP are officially designated wilderness**

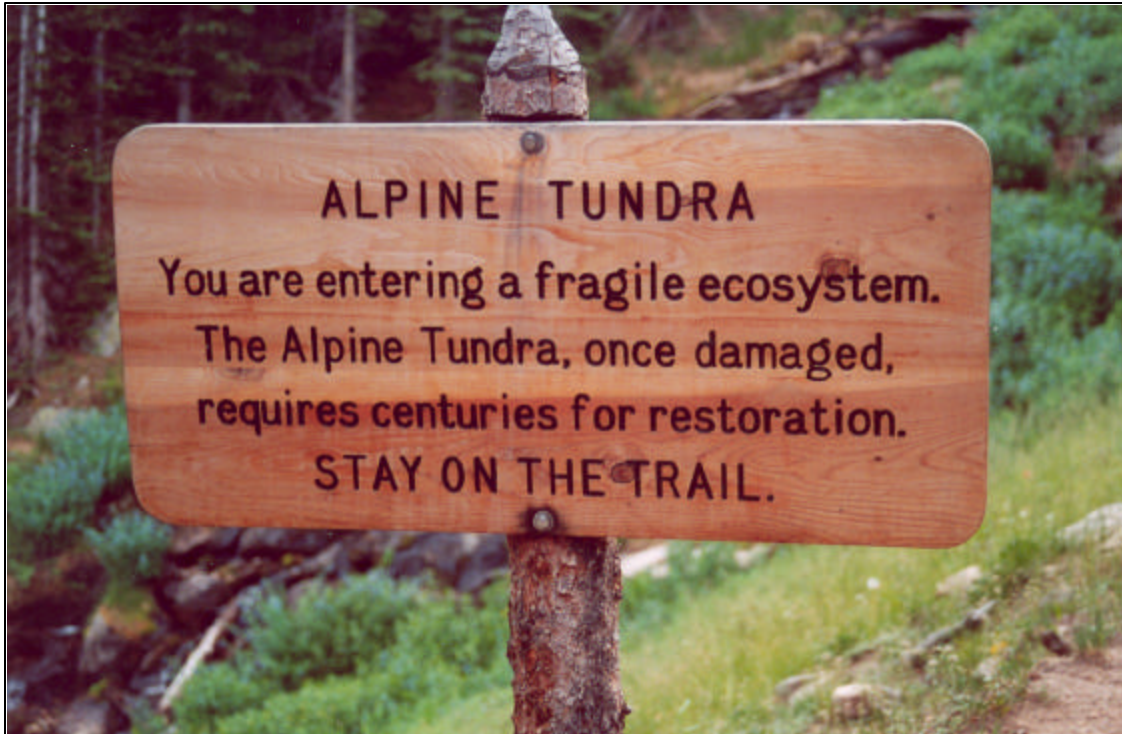


Photo: Sign on Longs Peak trail

**Appendix G. Question # 15: Changes respondents expect if parts of RMNP are officially designated wilderness.**

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Question 15. If backcountry areas in the Park were officially designated wilderness, what changes would you expect to see regarding how the area is managed?

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- ❖ So much of the park is inaccessible to most visitors, I think there would be very little change
- ❖ I think that due to the use of RMNP over the years that a pattern has been established. I feel that this pattern would be difficult to change, but if more wilderness area opens there would have to be some management changes.
- ❖ Reduction in the number of trails; number of visitors allowed at one time; restricted activities camping
- ❖ Depends on activities that are eliminated or very limited.
- ❖ Designated camping carry out what you carry in, no motorized vehicles
- ❖ \*No cell phones or radios (if people really need those, they shouldn't be in the wilderness to begin with). Clean up after pack animals!!!
- ❖ Better monitoring system for offenders
- ❖ No, more needs to be wilderness, Park is fine
- ❖ Limited roads, BACKCOUNTRY sites only (no big group sites etc.)
- ❖ You should not flag parts "wilderness" and prohibit people from their normal activities
- ❖ I expect it would be harder for park personnel to maintain areas, as motorized equipment would not be allowed. A balance of use can be good.
- ❖ I agree to areas that are easily accessed by many people and large areas that are only accessed on a limited basis.
- ❖ No aircraft, outside light, noise pollution at an absolute minimum, all trash removed w/ camper/user
- ❖ I would still like to see designated backcountry camping sites with privies. I would expect no campfires
- ❖ Number of people allowed entering a day or night.
- ❖ 4 Wheelers should be arrested and put in jail
- ❖ Changes in accordance with the "Wilderness Act" not knowing what those are,
- ❖ I am opposed to increasing wilderness areas in the park. Restrictions applied under the wilderness act will limit use by the majority of visitors.

Appendix G. continued

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Question 15. If backcountry areas in the Park were officially designated wilderness, what changes would you expect to see regarding how the area is managed?

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- ❖ I am opposed to increasing the amount of designated wilderness areas in RMNP. This only eliminates individuals of all ages from children t senior citizens form utilizing the park and enjoying the beauty!!
- ❖ Small campsites, 0 domestic animals/horses, minimal trail size
- ❖ No changes are needed. RMNP does a very good job of managing/protecting/patrolling the backcountry
- ❖ No camping there
- ❖ Less camping, less hiking
- ❖ Less hiking/public areas. More wildlife able to enjoy the space
- ❖ No trails, no camping, no fishing
- ❖ Remove trail access
- ❖ Let nature do its thing
- ❖ Have day hiking on trails only
- ❖ Removal of manmade structures is standard practice in the east.
- ❖ None
- ❖ Check in system for day hikers
- ❖ I am in favor of wilderness designation. Restrictions should be made for human foot travel only.
- ❖ I hope we'd still be allowed to hike off-trail i.e. to the top of peaks.
- ❖ No significant changes
- ❖ None
- ❖ In general less sign of human contact. No defined campgrounds or outhouses. LNT policies
- ❖ I have not formed an opinion on this issue
- ❖ Limited access, but not eliminated for access to backcountry campers.
- ❖ Greater care taken to preserve it's beauty

Appendix G. continued

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Question 15. If backcountry areas in the Park were officially designated wilderness, what changes would you expect to see regarding how the area is managed?

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- ❖ What is done now is ok
- ❖ Limited amount of people allowed in designated area!
- ❖ Only very remote areas should be designated wilderness areas.
- ❖ Keep out all vehicles. Limit high impact use.
- ❖ As I don't know what the limitations are, I am unable to answer. I hope the trails won't be closed.
- ❖ Limited number of hikers/campers, strict enforcement of rules by those allowed to visit these areas.
- ❖ Less trail maintenance, fewer people
- ❖ None
- ❖ I don't know.
- ❖ Making sure campers are ok. More afraid of other people than animals!
- ❖ More controlled human usage of these areas
- ❖ No camping/no rock climbing Day use only
- ❖ Clearly defined and posted regulations. Zero tolerance for rules violators.
- ❖ No dogs, no motorized vehicles/tools, no litter, fewer people, no/fewer improved trails
- ❖ No more animals including horses.
- ❖ If more area of the park is actually designated as Wilderness, more people will expect to gain access to those areas. This means more trails, etc. Only park officials know if more controlled access to wilderness is preferable to the random use (or abuse)
- ❖ Less people would be allowed in
- ❖ No wheeled vehicles
- ❖ From our experiences in Wilderness designated areas in MT, we're under the impression Wilderness rules exist by law. Consequently, I don't know how to answer this question except to say areas designated as Wilderness have different legal requirements than non-wilderness, and I support those requirements.
- ❖ Limited camping permits; reservations, less intrusion in animal habitats, less litter and noise

Appendix G. continued

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Question 15. If backcountry areas in the Park were officially designated wilderness, what changes would you expect to see regarding how the area is managed?

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- ❖ Not allowing campsites, fining visitors for littering or not disposing of human waste properly.
- ❖ Well marked with the rules
- ❖ Uncertain what designating these areas as "wilderness" will result in, but we expect less camping, parking areas, etc.
- ❖ I don't have an opinion.
- ❖ Unsure
- ❖ I would expect limited camping and campsites. I would also expect foot traffic only no cars or horses!
- ❖ No motorized vehicles
- ❖ None
- ❖ Don't have enough information to make any recommendations.
- ❖ We have not been in the real backcountry (I don't think). Sometimes it seems like it. Don't really know how to answer this.
- ❖ Too vague a question for meaningful response.
- ❖ Conservation in all use
- ❖ Don't have any idea
- ❖ I would hope for foot traffic only, no pets or firearms
- ❖ I enjoyed my visit to the park so I cannot come up with any changes at this time.
- ❖ Off-trail hiking prohibited. Camping in designated areas only. Limit use of horses
- ❖ Probably more enforcement and signage. People making reservations to use land. Keeping some spaces for last minute hikers/backpackers.
- ❖ Limited camping and group size. Less signs and informational billboards.
- ❖ Closure of access roads and services (bathrooms/trash/etc.)
- ❖ People would not be allowed in those areas so that the wild animals would not be disturbed
- ❖ Fewer campsites, fewer trails for horses, more monitoring of areas by park employees or volunteers, possible to assess fees in addition to normal fees for wilderness areas.

Appendix G. continued

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Question 15. If backcountry areas in the Park were officially designated wilderness, what changes would you expect to see regarding how the area is managed?

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- ❖ None
- ❖ No opinion
- ❖ No motorized vehicles, LNT methods, education on trails and wilderness rules and expectations
- ❖ Seems fine.
- ❖ Less horses
- ❖ No fishing, no horses, restricted size of groups, no off-trail activities.
- ❖ No fires, limited camping/limited person and parties
- ❖ Backcountry areas to me are like Forest Canyon, i.e. devoid of human interference i.e. off limits to everyone except research teams.
- ❖ Limit number of trail users, especially horse traffic. Restrict overnight camping to designated site
- ❖ No designated campsites, no trails, limitation on numbers of people in an area & number of people
- ❖ Would hope it would be more protected and grow more pristine, also to add new land-yet open to us
- ❖ I wouldn't necessarily expect any changes. It seem to me the backcountry in RMNP is already strictly managed
- ❖ No open fires, Catch and release fishing only, no off trail hiking
- ❖ Current rules reviewed/enforced in light of above priorities.
- ❖ None.
- ❖ I don't particularly agree with designating more wildernesses per se. I like access for hikers and campers; I like what the Canadians did in their National Parks for Bear protection at the remote campsites.
- ❖ Currently none
- ❖ Less traveled-restricted use
- ❖ Some limits to visitors to restrict impacts.



Appendix G. continued

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Question 15. If backcountry areas in the Park were officially designated wilderness, what changes would you expect to see regarding how the area is managed?

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- ❖ Reduced
- ❖ Unsure
- ❖ I would expect the information of the above #14 question for all issues, which I marked extremely important. & NO PACK ANIMALS ON TRAILS (erosion & waste are miserable)
- ❖ I don't know.
- ❖ Nothing that hasn't already been addressed in these questions
- ❖ I would expect more limits placed on the number of people who could be in an area.
- ❖ None
- ❖ No collection of natural resources, including fishing & hunting
- ❖ No fees for wilderness!
- ❖ No changes
- ❖ More limited use by horses & llamas. Limit, if not eliminate non-trail use.
- ❖ Closed areas only open to people with permits for backcountry camping (tents).
- ❖ None keep it wild. Allow the animals, trees etc. not to have our fingerprints all over them everywhere.
- ❖ Restriction of group size, reduced access/number of people.
- ❖ No opinion
- ❖ No open fires and fewer people
- ❖ None
- ❖ Probably would see fewer snowmobile use- fewer chainsaw activities, limited access by road
- ❖ No hunting/shooting. No all terrain vehicles. No airplanes/tours over RMNP. No fires.
- ❖ None!
- ❖ Fire control demands proper removal of certain underbrush access to areas some tree removal include insect control in these measures.
- ❖ So far, so good-no changes necessary in management-keep the people out!

Appendix G. continued

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Question 15. If backcountry areas in the Park were officially designated wilderness, what changes would you expect to see regarding how the area is managed?

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- ❖ Not sure how it would be different-horses?
- ❖ No motorized vehicles, including snowmobiles & park staff except in the event of backcountry rescue. Limit to the number of people in the area. Permits required. Restoration of roads, including study and monitoring.
- ❖ I'm against limiting my access to any areas
- ❖ Less cars
- ❖ If areas of the park are designated as wilderness. I would expect no public access roads through them. I would also expect to not see designated camping sites or toilets.
- ❖ Stay out and to look upon with field glasses
- ❖ I believe the biggest backcountry problem in wilderness areas is overuse/poor sanitation by horse packers
- ❖ I would eliminate horses and planes flying overhead
- ❖ More roadless areas, banning mechanized equipment, pet allowance in backcountry
- ❖ Less access-but if the access is controlled so people can still enjoy it (i.e. w/ trails, better posting, fines, etc.)
- ❖ Limiting the number of day users in certain areas, removing permanent structures, open camping a certain distance from established trails and roads. Greater education of day users on Leave No Trace practices.
- ❖ Limit number of people accessing. Moderate/structure areas of access
- ❖ ?
- ❖ We don't need any more wilderness
- ❖ N/A
- ❖ No more wildernesses needed!
- ❖ More roadless areas, Less people (maybe a permit system so there are less people in the area)
- ❖ Become roadless areas (no motorized vehicle s) Pack out all litter and waste, no open fires
- ❖ Less disturbance by humans, including litter, trails, campsites, etc.
- ❖ I think the number one priority of the park mgmt staff should be the preservation of the park

Appendix G. continued

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Question 15. If backcountry areas in the Park were officially designated wilderness, what changes would you expect to see regarding how the area is managed?

---

- ❖ None
- ❖ No change
- ❖ Limited access; no open fires; carry out all trash;(similar to BWCA).
- ❖ Limited number of visitors allowed in the designated Wilderness areas.
- ❖ Not qualified
- ❖ Unclear-not sure what the designation specifically means
- ❖ Better marked trails
- ❖ Like what?
- ❖ Smaller trail widths, nothing unnatural like the bridges I see made over small creeks, etc.
- ❖ The need for a course in protection of nature followed by permits only use.
- ❖ Less people, more freedom as to where to camp.
- ❖ Foot traffic only-no horses
- ❖ I am a frequent user of the park. Unsure? I do like pit toilets at the backcountry sites. It helps to eliminate toilet paper/human waste around campsites. I dislike horses in the backcountry although do see a use for horses when doing trail maintenance. I actually like the wide trails, seem necessary with so many people on the lower trails especially.
- ❖ None-I believe it is already managed as a wilderness area
- ❖ No motorized vehicles, etc.
- ❖ No commercial activities, especially by large groups
- ❖ None
- ❖ None.
- ❖ Fewer people, no maintained trails, no pit toilets. Limit the total number of people allowed in per year.
- ❖ Isn't it already managed as wilderness?
- ❖ Don't know

Appendix G. continued

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Question 15. If backcountry areas in the Park were officially designated wilderness, what changes would you expect to see regarding how the area is managed?

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- ❖ No horses, limited number of people allowed on trail, pack out everything/no toilets, water, etc.
- ❖ No changes in management
- ❖ Since it's already managed as wilderness I wouldn't expect any significant changes.
- ❖ No opinion
- ❖ More areas that are more difficult for people to access
- ❖ Limited access. Limited use. People only no horses, llamas. 1 on 1 training or education time for permission to use these areas
- ❖ No camping. No easy access by car. No public trails.
- ❖ ?
- ❖ No campfires or littering in wilderness
- ❖ Clearly stated guidelines, maps with boundaries. Clearly defined activities & options for other area
- ❖ Less people, less trails, less impact
- ❖ All trails indicated on the current maps should be removed.
- ❖ Heightened awareness of preserving it in its natural state. Heightened awareness of the dangers of approaching wild animals and inappropriateness of feeding them.
- ❖ I don't know enough about how it is currently managed to comment on any changes.
- ❖ I have only been in Wilderness areas of RMNP a few times which doesn't really qualify to make a suggestion, plus I'm really uninformed about present management.
- ❖ Over-management, which is at least as bad as under-management.
- ❖ Any areas added, as wilderness should be managed according to the National Wilderness Preservation system.
- ❖ None
- ❖ For the amount of people who climbed Longs Peak the areas off trail where relatively untouched except in area where trail cutting were present.
- ❖ I would expect it to be managed the way it currently is.

Appendix G. continued

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Question 15. If backcountry areas in the Park were officially designated wilderness, what changes would you expect to see regarding how the area is managed?

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- ❖ Regular visits of rangers. When a group signs up/reserves campground inform them about regulations in the park (food storage, not to walk off the trail, not to feed wild animals, not to litter...) Seems common sense. I know.
- ❖ Limited use
- ❖ Littering subject to fines, limiting the size of parties
- ❖ Limited camping, hiking in the wilderness area. No camping. Research
- ❖ Would hope they would retain rule against pets on trails. Areas allowing undesignated campsites
- ❖ Decrease the space that people use. Then more rangers will be needed to keep people where they should be.
- ❖ Limit the ability/usage for people to hike and camp in the backcountry, which would be undesirable.
- ❖ I wouldn't expect much difference, because in most areas dogs already aren't allowed and there are no roads & no motor vehicles on trails.
- ❖ A national park is a resource for all people & not a limited few.
- ❖ No horses
- ❖ Wilderness areas would be limited to smaller groups and there would be a few spots people could camp.
- ❖ Don't know
- ❖ Limited number of people allowed to enter
- ❖ There's a delicate balance between access and lack of access.
- ❖ I'd imagine you guys would be giving more tickets.
- ❖ I would like to see it managed like most wilderness areas. Typically there is less trail maintenance.
- ❖ Fewer people allowed in area
- ❖ Eliminate horses!!
- ❖ Climbing access should not be limited!

Appendix G. continued

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Question 15. If backcountry areas in the Park were officially designated wilderness, what changes would you expect to see regarding how the area is managed?

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- ❖ For comparison sake, we are not absolutely sure what is presently designated as wilderness and how rules & regulations differ. We would need specifics in order to make an objective observation. Our overall view is influenced by the fact that the taxpayers own the park therefore any limits should be qualified, keeping this in mind.
- ❖ I would expect changes that were expected to be in place at all wildernesses designated areas.
- ❖ I guess I would still like to access them via hiking
- ❖ Less foot & horse traffic
- ❖ "Wilderness" and "management" are mutually exclusive. There is no such thing as a managed wilderness. This question does not make sense, it is illogical.
- ❖ Limited access
- ❖ No roads, TH should be outside the wilderness area, limited # of people going into an area at one time.
- ❖ Don't know.
- ❖ Eliminate horse traffic on hiking trails.
- ❖ No mechanized vehicles! Especially snowmobiles!
- ❖ Don't know
- ❖ Don't have any comments re. Management but I feel if designated wild then more of park will be preserved
- ❖ None
- ❖ Zero domestic animals; zero campsites; limited number of permits; severe punishment for law breakers
- ❖ Limited signage, more primitive trails
- ❖ I don't know enough about NPS's distinction between backcountry and wilderness
- ❖ Do not know. No experience in backcountry
- ❖ Allow all activities. Limit the number of people.
- ❖ No change
- ❖ I would expect to see activities limited as described in the Wilderness Act

Appendix G. continued

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Question 15. If backcountry areas in the Park were officially designated wilderness, what changes would you expect to see regarding how the area is managed?

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- ❖ Barricades of some kind to prevent intrusion into the wilderness. Fines levied against trespassers.
- ❖ Limit camping/trail restrictions
- ❖ I think as long as there are trails to access these areas it makes it accessible
- ❖ Not safe
- ❖ I would assume a more confining set of rules for doing whatever activities are allowed in those areas.
- ❖ I do not have enough info.
- ❖ No motorized vehicles of any kind on or above Wilderness areas
- ❖ Would require more resources to make sure that area is being managed. Signage prohibiting activities
- ❖ Not really sure of difference between Wilderness and Backcountry
- ❖ In the wilderness areas you would limit people hiking and camping so the animals have an area without humans all the time. Limit use and have people stick to trails.
- ❖ Uncertain
- ❖ We need to preserve space and yet be able to enjoy the park.
- ❖ More limited use
- ❖ No snowmobiles! Limiting human traffic. No campfires. No man-made structures.
- ❖ Don't know
- ❖ Maybe permits (day use) to these areas. Unclear of definition of Wilderness Act.
- ❖ None
- ❖ No specific expectations.
- ❖ I'm not sure what activities would be curtailed. I need more info here.
- ❖ Cannot bring in domestic animals. Limited # campsites. No concessions-tours, horseback riding etc.
- ❖ Less management-more wild

Appendix G. continued

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Question 15. If backcountry areas in the Park were officially designated wilderness, what changes would you expect to see regarding how the area is managed?

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- ❖ Limited maintenance of trails
- ❖ I like the way it is now. We should always be able to walk & hike camp
- ❖ No roads for long distances-50miles of depth into the wilderness
- ❖ Unknown
- ❖ Less litter & possibly less usage, which might not be good.
- ❖ Increase in backcountry trails
- ❖ I would expect that increasing the percentage of the park as Wilderness would curtail the public use
- ❖ I think it would mean less people, which is a good thing.
- ❖ Enforcement to preserve area in natural state, with any presence-whether signs, patrol cabins, as natural as possible.
- ❖ I would expect no change. I would expect that use of power tools by trail crews could continue.
- ❖ I do not the definition of wilderness, so I cannot answer this question.
- ❖ Uncertain
- ❖ Eliminate flight patterns over the park of commercial aircraft!
- ❖ Limit the number of visitors at any one time.
- ❖ Stricter enforcement of rules & regulations violators fined & restricted from future use.
- ❖ I would expect stricter enforcement. More rules. Personally, I wouldn't like it. There are other wilderness areas one can go to. As it is, at least people get to experience a taste of the wilderness. At least they are getting out there.
- ❖ I would like to see no difference.
- ❖ Standard design of wilderness stipulations. Also I think stock horses, llamas, etc. can and do degrade the trails to profoundly impact campsites popular w/ those groups. Keep stock out! Reintroduce natural predators (e.g. wolf) to restore ecosystem.
- ❖ None
- ❖ No groups & no horses!



Appendix G. continued

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Question 15. If backcountry areas in the Park were officially designated wilderness, what changes would you expect to see regarding how the area is managed?

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- ❖ Stricter management of trailheads. Fewer trailheads and points of access. More rules and regulations, which I'm opposed to. But I understand that more visitors to RMNP mean more wear and tear on the wilderness.
- ❖ No snowmobiles or any motorized vehicles.
- ❖ None
- ❖ I assume there will be less trails, which is my main concern.
- ❖ Limited campsites, no large gathering spots, no large noisy hiking groups
- ❖ Stricter enforcement of rules.
- ❖ Probably more restrictions on the number of people allowed on the trails.
- ❖ No changes
- ❖ ?
- ❖ Limited use!
- ❖ If you make more "Wilderness" do not make it so the average "day hiker" can not have use of the area
- ❖ No domestic animals allowed, horses, llamas, dogs
- ❖ Camping only with permit at specific areas. Limited number permits issued. Small groups only
- ❖ Education about how to treat wilderness areas.
- ❖ Uncertain
- ❖ Not very many changes as the activities in the park are already restricted as to visitation & equipment.
- ❖ The wilderness shall be protected.
- ❖ Limit # of visitors
- ❖ Uncertain
- ❖ Just a more concentrated attempt to keep it as natural/pristine as possible
- ❖ If a "wilderness" designation were to limit access to a few gung-ho hikers, I would not favor it.

Appendix G. continued

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Question 15. If backcountry areas in the Park were officially designated wilderness, what changes would you expect to see regarding how the area is managed?

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- ❖ Increase wilderness areas w/ current management practices
- ❖ Tighter restrictions on peoples use of wilderness areas.
- ❖ More backcountry rangers
- ❖ No roads, no timbering, mining (not sure.)
- ❖ None
- ❖ I would expect to see the elimination of horse use in the park.
- ❖ No littering, quiet talking while hiking, no cell phones, pagers, etc.
- ❖ No pack animals. Eliminate many log bridges and put stepping-stones in their place; essentially make the wilderness areas more "hard core." Make the closer/more public areas easy to reach, but make it less developed for the rest.
- ❖ Good balance right now-would not change.
- ❖ Do not change any designations.
- ❖ I see no necessary changes. I have been here 2 yr. in a row and understand that there will be other people there also. I saw no litter on trails. This we commented to each other on. It looks to me like everything is well managed already.
- ❖ 0 motorized vehicles unless needed to improve handicap accessibility
- ❖ I do not expect much change, as it seems that most areas are already being managed as wilderness.
- ❖ I would think horses would be eliminated. I believe all backcountry camping would continue.
- ❖ Keep it wild
- ❖ Fewer people=less erosion. Perhaps only ranger-guided tours? Information always enlightens people in the ways of preserving the wilderness (Ranger program participation before wilderness hiking/camping)
- ❖ Wilderness areas should greatly limit access by humans. But this would put greater pressure on parts of park not designated as wilderness, and cause greater damage by wear & tear on all other areas of the park.
- ❖ None
- ❖ No motor vehicles, no large groups. No campfires except for small portable stoves.

Appendix G. continued

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Question 15. If backcountry areas in the Park were officially designated wilderness, what changes would you expect to see regarding how the area is managed?

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- ❖ Anticipate no changes.
- ❖ Dramatic reduction in the amount of people allowed in backcountry, perhaps by permit only.
- ❖ No real changes from current policy. No creation of new trails-leave existing as non-improved
- ❖ I like the RMNP the way it is now. It has a good balance of easily accessed areas by car and hiking/camping areas.
- ❖ More enforcement of rules.
- ❖ Not sure about wording of question? I would expect to see more primitive backcountry campsites (no pit toilets, for example) I would like to see better education on what it means for an area to be designated wilderness, how we can preserve it etc.
- ❖ Trail environmental maintenance will be more difficult w/o motor vehicle access.
- ❖ I am not clear on the definition of wilderness. My assumptions lead me to believe that it would mean no stock, no camping, and you must stay on trail at all times.
- ❖ No horse entry. No established sites for tent.
- ❖ Less car traffic; more shuttle services
- ❖ I just wish you wouldn't close off so many areas. If it's closed how are we to enjoy it?
- ❖ I would hope fixed anchors and rap bolts would remain and be able to be replaced as required. I'd not like to see any climbing access closures.
- ❖ You don't say what activities would be eliminated. I spend more time in wilderness areas that I do in RMNP and I think the park is more restrictive than the wilderness areas. No dogs, no hunting and so on.
- ❖ I'm not sure about this, but anything that would help to preserve the wilderness area in the best way. I'll leave that up to the experts.
- ❖ Capacity control permits for use/hiking
- ❖ Make the areas restricted, and areas well away from roads, campsites.
- ❖ Eliminate day hikers & fishers, more flexibility in where backcountry campsites can be.
- ❖ No waste!! - Probably no campfires
- ❖ Off limits to visitors unless accompanied by a guide

Appendix G. continued

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Question 15. If backcountry areas in the Park were officially designated wilderness, what changes would you expect to see regarding how the area is managed?

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- ❖ I think that it is okay to designate more land for Wilderness, but it would be nice to be able to explore some of it. I think that if you designate a certain number of permits per year, those interested could hike or camp in the designated wilderness, but probably a lot fewer visitors will come ... I could see that parking areas would be further away - more hiking to get to falls/scenic areas - this would discourage some who are not as fit ... but I think it's OK.
- ❖ I'd expect little to no difference.
- ❖ None
- ❖ Smaller groups of people, minimal trails.
- ❖ Hiking on trails only and limited backcountry camping.
- ❖ No hiking or camping in wilderness areas.
- ❖ I would think that pack animals would be limited and camping would be further limited. However, would disagree with this.
- ❖ Limited access (vehicular); small trails; no established campsites
- ❖ Leave park accessible to all taxpayers do no limit it to a certain few to enjoy. Manage it, don't close it!
- ❖ Restricted areas
- ❖ Only foot traffic allowed-camping only at designated campgrounds-Education of Leave No Trace camping
- ❖ Most of the areas that could be designated wilderness wouldn't have their uses changed much at all. It's already stove camps and foot traffic.
- ❖ Restricted human use and encroachment of human made items. Pre-use education
- ❖ It would restrict where people would go and cause more crowding in the remaining areas.
- ❖ No parking lots or roads
- ❖ Stricter monitoring of camping, wildlife. Fewer people
- ❖ I would expect & hope to see less evidence of humans & their machinery
- ❖ Will need more rangers to police areas and good education programs to let people know what is allowed

Appendix G. continued

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Question 15. If backcountry areas in the Park were officially designated wilderness, what changes would you expect to see regarding how the area is managed?

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- ❖ More clearly separate high-traffic areas from wilderness areas.
- ❖ More signs indicating designated areas
- ❖ No horses
- ❖ Not sure
- ❖ Not educated enough to have an opinion.
- ❖ Overnight camping regulations more like other wilderness areas
- ❖ It should be inaccessible (wilderness parts)
- ❖ I couldn't access it anymore, which would be unfortunate.
- ❖ Uncertain
- ❖ Permits for use
- ❖ ?
- ❖ Not allowing hunting in those areas
- ❖ No mechanical vehicles or tools. Narrower trails.
- ❖ No domestic animals on trails-limited backpack trails-all refuse carried out. No campfires
- ❖ Limiting use of access to trained/schooled individuals while limiting access by others
- ❖ None-don't put in special roads & trails for visitors. Let it remain the way it is.
- ❖ No horses or llamas on trail, more regulation of camping and hiking
- ❖ Cross-country hiking should be limited. Please don't restrict overnight backpacking.
- ❖ ?
- ❖ I would expect my use to be more limited.
- ❖ No snowmobile use
- ❖ Don't know
- ❖ Minimal signs of human action/improvements

Appendix G. continued

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Question 15. If backcountry areas in the Park were officially designated wilderness, what changes would you expect to see regarding how the area is managed?

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- ❖ Cars not permitted in park, buses only.
- ❖ I would encourage wilderness designations in RMNP. I would expect wilderness area compliance, such as reduced trail maintenance, no machines, no mechanized rescues, no fly zone ceiling, etc.
- ❖ No mechanized vehicles or tools. Narrower trails. Likely more person-to-person education needed in exchange for / to replace capital investments such as interpretive signage, latrines, etc.
- ❖ Hiking only (limited animals) away from roads where possible. Possible closure of Bear Lake Road past Sprague (open to shuttle buses only). Possible closure of Old Fall River Road to hiking (& maybe biking) only.
- ❖ A limit to the amount of people that can enter the “wilderness” at same time. For instance limiting the # of permits for backcountry access, climbing Longs Peak, Flattop etc.
- ❖ I feel that you should have access to the parks wilderness areas even if that access is only by foot. Part of the beauty of any park is to be able to experience everything that you can (within reason) and not being prohibited to do so. But still be concerned w/ its natural environment.
- ❖ I think educating people about how to conduct themselves in Wilderness areas is the most efficient use of the parks limited staff & resources. Monitoring of people’s behavior and law enforcement takes too many resources. If an infraction is found those responsible should be prosecuted according to the law.
- ❖ Education of the public is important. Once “most” people learn as to why there are rules or limitations that protect the environment/animals, then they usually are understanding & supportive.
- ❖ Limit access to designated wilderness areas to a maximum number of persons per year. Require special educational programs for persons who apply to enter these areas. Balance wilderness allocations with the peoples’ enjoyment of our park. Wilderness is a designation better suited to National Forest areas than smaller parks.
- ❖ No snowmobiles in any part of the park; they are the most destructive use of the park we have experienced, noise & pollution- blue! The wilderness should be limited to hikers, fishermen & perhaps horses & llamas. Actually, llamas and burros are easier on the trails. Campsites should be limited; the number of people going into the backcountry should be limited. In general, less sign of human contact. No defined campgrounds or outhouses. “Leave no trace” policies in campgrounds, other areas. Any improvements to prevent damage (such as bridges to prevent erosion) should blend in as much as possible with surroundings (simple log bridges rather than complex, minimal use of signs that are discreet, etc.) Foot traffic only, no motorized vehicles or tools by visitors. Typically think of wilderness areas as rugged and untamed.

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Question 15. If backcountry areas in the Park were officially designated wilderness, what changes would you expect to see regarding how the area is managed?

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- ❖ I would expect access to remain open to parties willing to bivy. The current management plan for Bivy sites feels appropriate, closure of climbing areas would be a shame. I think it is in the parks interest to limit the number of weekend warriors in the backcountry. Forcing users to invest in appropriate equipment is one means of conservation.
- ❖ Less motorized vehicles; more crackdowns on rule breakers.
- ❖ I think that would require eliminating campsites within the area. I don't know about horses, but feel that they should not be allowed (or else they should be very restricted) within wilderness areas. High traffic areas seem not to be suitable for wilderness designation. Bridges over streams should be minimized, but trails should not encourage dangerous crossings.
- ❖ I think the only areas of real concern are where the majority of tourists walk around, i.e. Bear Lake. Most of the park is in great shape. If someone wants to escape people, there are tons of other spots in Colorado. RMNP is nice but you have to anticipate people in certain areas. Most of the tourists don't want to walk too far so its only the short trails where you see damage.
- ❖ I don't want to see access limited or the need to make reservations or lots drawn implemented. I'm disappointed America is so big and populated and that so many people now want to use the facilities. I liked it better 20-30yrs ago when a lot fewer people enjoyed it.
- ❖ It should already be motorless and non-mechanical. No roads, no logging, no drilling, no mining (no industry, including subsidized). Responsible climbing should be allowed. No motorized bolting and fixed anchors only for descent (including slings) or as safety requires when no natural protection is available. New route development should be managed by a coalition of climbers, property mangers and others as prescribed by the access fund.
- ❖ Limited maintenance of trails, no leveling or smoothing. If it is to be wilderness it should be available only to those who are willing to invest the time and energy to use it. I think there should be significant fines for people who litter, use illegal campfires, or in other ways corrupt the condition of "natural" areas.
- ❖ Educate visitors, law enforcement of rules already in place.
- ❖ No new trails. No fish stocking in lakes. Some sort of control over the amount of fishing that is done along the stream banks & around lakes. Our high altitude lakes are a maze of beaten down paths from fishermen trying to get at the lake edges. Domestic pack animals shouldn't be allowed in wilderness areas.
- ❖ I am very concerned that a blanket wilderness designation will restrict some peoples ability to enjoy the "wilderness experience" currently available at RMNP (e.g. handicap, elderly, etc.). In effect closing off large portions of park to all except the young & fit. It seems to me the park is being managed well & fairly already. RMNP should concentrate on backcountry preservation/conservation, not restrictions.

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Question 15. If backcountry areas in the Park were officially designated wilderness, what changes would you expect to see regarding how the area is managed?

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- ❖ I'm not sure what the wilderness designation implies officially. I worry that it might result in less trail maintenance, less accessibility of backcountry campsites, allowing more horses & other domesticated animals (e.g. dogs) into the area, similar to Indian Peaks designation & rules.
- ❖ I don't know what terms are used for classifying wilderness/BLM etc. I would like to see roads made available for some motorized vehicles though limited & isolated. I would like to see mountain bike access for trails either with or apart from hiking use. I don't feel people make great choices. Maybe requiring & testing peoples knowledge & skills should be required to allow access to certain "pristine wilderness areas."
- ❖ I would expect rules that minimize human influence (littering, harassing wildlife) to be adopted & enforced. I would also expect hiking trails & popular areas to be well maintained. I visit the park to hike & enjoy nature. However, I still prefer to have some comfort (trails, foot bridges, eve some picnic tables) even in an area designated as wilderness.
- ❖ Heavy restrictions on vehicles and leave roadside picnicking, fishing, rambling, wildlife viewing etc. Stricter permits on backpacking. I would hate to see Trail Ridge Road removed. I am young and in shape; it is not difficult for me to wander through the woods, mountains, along streams, by lakes etc. But my grandparents, who have known and loved this park from the early 1930's, cannot now go hiking. If all of the park were designated wilderness, I am afraid it would drastically curtail those who could easily enjoy the park. If bus access was continued and vehicles very restricted, I would be glad. I would also be glad to have many of the areas of the park designated wilderness but not all.
- ❖ I would prefer no change from present usage of land. I do think you should allow some mountain biking trails for those people that like to do that kind of riding; after all you do allow horses on trails. P.S. I am not a mountain biking person, but I think they should also be included if you allow horses & their droppings on the trails.
- ❖ Limited people in groups limited in size. The real backcountry is never too crowded even yet, so no limits should be put on the desire to be there. We need to be there to get away. Please keep wilderness that way.
- ❖ I would expect to see a greater ranger presence to ensure that specifics of Wilderness Act are carried out? I'm not sure of intent of question, perhaps banning of all motorized equipment elimination of trails (or at least maintenance thereof) perhaps even banning of human intrusion (oh dear!)
- ❖ Don't know; people in wilderness areas should be limited in number and educated on appropriate behavior in the area.



Appendix G. continued

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Question 15. If backcountry areas in the Park were officially designated wilderness, what changes would you expect to see regarding how the area is managed?

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- ❖ Ranger at trailheads. Registration, including vehicle license: length of stay. Information re. Regulations, including education concerning “leave only footsteps”; how litter effects the environment.
- ❖ This question and this survey tell me that the real intention is to limit or eliminate access of the National Park to citizens who pay taxes to have this park. I don't want more wilderness areas. Most of these questions don't exist.

# **Appendix H1**

## **Organizing System for Content Analysis of Additional Comments (Appendix H2) made by Backcountry/Wilderness visitors at RMNP**



Photo: Researcher doing work at Dream Lake

**Appendix H1, Organizing system for content analysis of Additional Comments (Appendix H2) made by Backcountry/Wilderness visitors at RMNP**

CATEGORY / COMMENT	FRQNCY	COMMENT NUMBERS	SELECTED QUOTATIONS AND COMMENT #
<i>General Comments About the Experience</i>			
Beautiful / fantastic / wonderful park / experience	21	7,8,9,11,30,35, 36,40,43,60, 92,93,111,120, 122,128,134, 140,151,156, 157	43. I have been to at least 20 National Parks in the U.S. RMNP holds its own and is definitely worthy of the National Park distinction. I had a fantastic and memorable experience in the park. 92. My significant other and I consider our week hiking in RMNP one of our most precious experiences yet.
Pleasantly surprised by quality of park	1	63	
Wonderful backpacking experience	3	87,88,149	
<b>Things that Added to the Experience</b>			
Coded return date on parking passes a good idea	1	11	
Overnight parking	1	13	
Designated backcountry sites	1	13	
Shuttle system	2	13,127	127. The new buses are great. Thank you tax dollars well spent.
Fewer people than expected, felt in own world	1	31	31. I am new to Colorado and had an absolutely wonderful time at the park over a holiday weekend. There were fewer people than I expected, and we felt very much in our own world.
Good trail maintenance, trail signage	7	38,63,87,113, 121,124,133	38. I recently started hiking and appreciate the maintenance of the trails.
Most visitors treat park with respect	1	41	
Litter not bad	3	42,63,99	
Good information given to backpackers at start of trip	1	44	
Campgrounds clean, well maintained	1	63	
Liked that backcountry camp had only 3 sites	1	87	
Park clean	1	97	

CATEGORY / COMMENT	FRQNCY	COMMENT NUMBERS	SELECTED QUOTATIONS AND COMMENT #
Cheap annual pass	1	102	
Backpacking in wilderness	1	149	
<b>Things that Detracted from the Experience</b>			
Expected more mountain beauty	1	123	
Number of people encountered / crowding	8	3,41,50,56, 111,132,142, 144	144. We had visited 6 National Parks in past two weeks. Surprisingly I think I saw more people in RMNP than any other park.
Cars stopping on roadway and blocking traffic	1	4	
Backcountry sites with ropes hanging in the trees	1	6	
Not able to find water at backcountry	1	9	
Didn't like requirement to use designated backcountry sites	2	11,56	
Parking problems	1	13	
RMNP Jr. Ranger program not as interesting, age appropriate, or hands on as at Mesa Verde or Organ Pipe	1	14	
Entrance fee too high	4	15,16,70,146	
Prices too high	1	103	
Flattop Mtn. trail poorly marked, impossible to follow in winter	1	18	
Poorly marked trails, difficult to find cairns, above tree line mean hikers scatter across tundra	1	98	
Longs Peak trail too hard on knees, makes people go off-trail (widening it)	1	108	
Backcountry permit system inconvenient	1	20	20. a pain
Poor trail conditions	2	32, 57	32. poorly maintained bridges, crumbling trail retaining walls, too many large rocks in the trail, slippery areas of decomposed granite, areas too steep, etc.
High standard improvements to trails, expected more natural	1	41	
Trail damage from horses / manure	2	9,139	

<b>CATEGORY / COMMENT</b>	<b>FRQNCY</b>	<b>COMMENT NUMBERS</b>	<b>SELECTED QUOTATIONS AND COMMENT #</b>
Trail damage from mtn. bikes	1	139	
Litter	5	42,45,51,57, 116	
Litter problem getting worse	1	45	
Backpackers camping in no-camping zone next to a lake	1	44	
Too many vehicles allowed in per day	2	45,111	
Slow traffic	2	49,106	
Speeding	1	51	
Illegal parking	1	51	
Too many people behaving inappropriately (feeding wildlife, walking off trail, etc.)	5	51,57,111,144, 158	111. I work for a company that leads nature/wildlife tours worldwide and we would never allow our travelers to disobey the basic rules of respecting and preserving wildlife by not feeding, not approaching wildlife and listening to the guidelines of a park.
Noise from generators in campground	1	63	
Noise from airplanes	4	63,88,109,142,	
Noise from music in campground	1	117	
Carvings on aspens	1	63	
Congestion at Bear Lake	1	69	
Busload of visitors at Forest Canyon Overlook walking on tundra and rocks	1	99	
Trailhead signs not useful	1	115	
<b>Staff Compliments</b>			
Helpful / knowledgeable / friendly rangers / staff	14	1,3,50,64,66, 87,97,113,121, 123,131,140, 141,153	1. Their great attitudes added to our trip and help all to nurture an even greater appreciation for wilderness areas.
Doing good job / keep up good work	27	8,9,34,41, 43,47,50,53, 57,66,76,77,	41. I frankly don't know how you better use resources and personnel.

CATEGORY / COMMENT	FRQNCY	COMMENT NUMBERS	SELECTED QUOTATIONS AND COMMENT #
		78,86,88,94, 113,114,120, 121,122,124, 130,134,143, 147,155	
Appreciated ranger guidance to less populated areas	2	28,50	50. When I want to hike, I usually stop and get recommendations from park staff. I tell them what I want and I receive wonderful recommendations, usually areas/trails with no people and wonderful vistas.
Jim Detterline, Walter at Longs Peak helpful / knowledgeable / professional	1	66	
Backcountry Office staff very helpful	1	126	
<b>Comments on the Survey</b>			
Thanks for doing survey / glad about survey	10	14,17,24,26, 53,55,90,124, 125,162	
Excellent/good survey	3	17,25,110	
Ques. 12 misleading—plane contrail isn't exhaust (air pollution)	1	17	
Surprised there weren't ques. about services used in past and what I thought	1	22	
Good luck	1	24	
Confusion about frontcountry / backcountry	6	42,96,102,115, 137,157	
Make survey results public	1	54	
Surveying amateurs a waste of time and \$	1	61	
Survey too long	2	118,119	
Survey had too much repetition	2	118,119	
Kyle Collins wonderful / has bright future	1	79	
Keep personal info confidential	1	100	
Ques. 18-21 impossible to answer	1	107	

<b>CATEGORY / COMMENT</b>	<b>FRQNCY</b>	<b>COMMENT NUMBERS</b>	<b>SELECTED QUOTATIONS AND COMMENT #</b>
Survey uses unfamiliar terminology	1	136	
<b>Suggested Management Actions</b>			
<b>General Management Actions</b>			
No new commercial operations in RMNP	1	34	34. Please resist commercialization of the park, such as airplane or helicopter flyovers, and commercially organized trips into the backcountry. (Other than already existing horse and llama liveries.)
Protect park / Keep RMNP pristine / strengthen preservation	8	37,43,62,73,104,112,128,153	
Open more areas to winter tubing	1	49	
Don't over-regulate park	5	55,58,62,80,112	
Focus mgmt. on heavy use areas	1	57	
Allow leashed dogs on a few trails	1	74	
Close areas that show use impacts	1	85	
Reroute planes around RMNP	1	109	
Don't allow drilling	1	131	
Protect meadows from global warming	1	131	
<b>Crowding / Carrying Capacity</b>			
Don't support attempts to limit visitors	6	3,25,29,41,55,73	
Don't support limiting activities	1	25	25. ...an area we all have a right to
Increase prerequisites (training) for participation	1	25	
Regulate number of people using E. Side	1	50	
Limit use	1	147	
Limit crowding by limiting trailhead parking spaces	1	3	
Require one permit to enter / another to hike to	1	69	

<b>CATEGORY / COMMENT</b>	<b>FRQNCY</b>	<b>COMMENT NUMBERS</b>	<b>SELECTED QUOTATIONS AND COMMENT #</b>
control crowding on trails			
Better planning so large groups like Co. Mtn. Club, Co. Mtn. School don't monopolize ice and deny access to individual ice climbers	1	126	
Have Estes Park exercise control of tourist population	1	159	
<b><i>Wildlife</i></b>			
Wolf re-introduction	2	10,27	
Favor elk population management (culling)	1	27	
Close areas seasonally to avoid wildlife stress	1	85	
<b><i>General Infrastructure</i></b>			
Put carved wooden maps on signs at trail junctions to help pinpoint location	1	4	
Put natural wood signs at trail overlooks to name peaks in view	1	4	
Prefer more educational signs to limiting of people	2	5,73	
Push button voice recordings on low impact use at each trailhead	1	32	
Maintain trail signage	1	32	
Use signage to control visitor behavior	4	51,73,144,156	
Keep current accessibility as is	1	72	
Provide showers	1	84	
Provide restrooms at all trailheads and privies at all popular picnic spots	2	113,150	
Rebuild restroom and info booth at Bear Lake with natural materials	1	127	
<b><i>Trails</i></b>			
Better / more trail markers to show distances,	5	18,98,150,154,	



CATEGORY / COMMENT	FRQNCY	COMMENT NUMBERS	SELECTED QUOTATIONS AND COMMENT #
directions, etc		161	
Better trail maintenance	1	32	
Trail improvements are ok for resource protection, but not for visitor convenience	1	41	
Build more trails	1	73	
Build more unimproved trails	1	139	
<b><i>Transportation / Vehicle Management</i></b>			
Vehicle access important for older visitors	1	2	
Enforce rules to keep cars from stopping on roadway	1	4	
Don't want mandatory shuttle service	2	12,148	148. I enjoy driving to the trailheads. We go when we're ready and I don't want to have to rely on taking a bus and waiting for one after my hike when I'm tired!
Close sections of the park to traffic for specific times to allow regeneration	1	12	
Prefer increase in shuttle service to increase in trailhead parking	1	13	
Reduce impact of passenger vehicles	1	13	
Support shuttle service	5	21,71,109,127, 129	
Require slower vehicles to pull over and let others pass	1	49	
Allow sleeping in vehicle for those who arrive during night and plan early departure on trail	1	66	
Provide designated parking spots for backcountry / overnight campers	1	67	
Improve parking at Lumpy Ridge	2	71,82	
Increase parking at shuttle lot	1	71	
Create shuttle service and parking near park entrance	1	71	
Eliminate private vehicles in park	2	75,129	

CATEGORY / COMMENT	FRQNCY	COMMENT NUMBERS	SELECTED QUOTATIONS AND COMMENT #
Reserve Hwy 34 for bikes and shuttles	1	129	
Establish pass-holder express lane at entrance	2	127,158	
<b>Enforcement</b>			
Fine / ban from the park those who abuse it	2	29,51	
More active ranger enforcement if it controls abuses	1	29	
Strictly enforce wilderness designations / proper behavior	3	34,41,51	
Enforce pack it in/pack it out	1	45	
Rangers too lenient on some violations (feeding animals), ignore others (speeding, litter, illegal parking)	1	51	
Rangers should be friendly, not act like cops	1	66	
<b>Fees / Revenue</b>			
Raise fees for all uses (entrance, camping, backcountry)	2	34,52	52. I think entrance fees should be increased significantly \$15 per car for seven days access is and incredible bargain compared to other forms of entertainment and recreation. Two movie tickets and popcorn and sodas are more than \$15. Operating funds would be increased and more of the burden carried by people who use the park.
Fee structure makes distant visitors subsidize local ones	1	114	
More money should come from taxes	2	14,34	
Seek donations for funding	1	34	
Don't mind fees if used for conservation/preservation	2	14,16	
Would pay \$200/year if used for conservation/preservation	1	25	
Don't mind fees if \$ stay in NPS	2	16,64	

<b>CATEGORY / COMMENT</b>	<b>FRQNCY</b>	<b>COMMENT NUMBERS</b>	<b>SELECTED QUOTATIONS AND COMMENT #</b>
Have graduated day/3 day/week entrance fee	2	15,146	
Lower daily fee to generate more \$ in long run for protection, education	1	16	
Raise fees for backpacking in certain areas	1	44	
Need more federal money for rangers patrolling	1	64	
Allow logging in RMNP to raise revenue	1	70	
Raise fees for concessions / groups	1	95	
Horse users should pay more for trail maintenance	1	139	
Sell t-shirts, etc. in gift shops for revenue	1	150	
<b><i>Backcountry Regulations / Management</i></b>			
Put bear boxes at each backcountry site	1	6	
Install bear wires at backcountry sites and require their use	2	34,60	
Provide some bearproof food storage method at backcountry sites	2	105,109	
Mandatory training program to participate in overnight (backcountry) camping or enter certain areas	2	25,32	32. I believe education of the public who use the backcountry/wilderness is very important.
Have more backcountry sites in higher/more remote locations	1	106	
Manage backcountry according to management practices for wilderness	1	56	
Make backcountry permit process more convenient for those who arrive after hours / from long distance	1	81	
Have a backcountry permit office on west side	1	106	
Create email / online system for backcountry permits	2	81,106	
Provide pit toilets at backcountry sites	2	105,109	

<b>CATEGORY / COMMENT</b>	<b>FRQNCY</b>	<b>COMMENT NUMBERS</b>	<b>SELECTED QUOTATIONS AND COMMENT #</b>
<i><b>Appropriate Behavior, Technology, Equipment</b></i>			
Ban horses	1	19	
Allow packstock on defined trails	1	129	
Allow park staff or researchers to use motorized vehicles or tools only when necessary	1	41	
Allow rescue aircraft and vehicles only when necessary	1	41	
Allow 2-way radios, cell phones for simple communication and rescue	1	53	
Limit entertainment use of cell phones, radios to campsites	1	53	
Cell phones don't belong in park	1	116	
Don't want restrictions on guided groups, climbing anchors, rescue techniques	2	58,82	
Open Grand Ditch trail to mtn. bikes	1	101	
<i><b>Information / Education</b></i>			
Need better information on water sources	1	9	
Provide weather updates at ranger stations	1	11	
Improve Junior Ranger program at RMNP	1	14	
Have rangers do env. ed. in the schools in the off-season	1	14	
Ask visitors to pick up litter	1	42	
Have volunteers hike trails to provide env. ed.	1	44	
Need info on proper response to backcountry violations	1	44	
Env. ed. should be more intense at / near trailheads, then taper off	1	65	
Make information available on website	1	83	
On website give links to unofficial sites with information about backcountry	1	102	

<b>CATEGORY / COMMENT</b>	<b>FRQNCY</b>	<b>COMMENT NUMBERS</b>	<b>SELECTED QUOTATIONS AND COMMENT #</b>
On website give better maps, ratings of popularity and difficulty of hikes	1	102	
Remind people at entrance of reasons for not feeding wildlife	1	99	
Trailhead signs should have more useful info (altitude gain, difficulty, etc.)	1	115	
Give information on where wildlife last spotted	1	123	
<b><i>Research</i></b>			
Allow scientists to do their work	1	14	
Research should cause no more impacts than wilderness users	1	41	
<b><i>Wilderness</i></b>			
<b><i>Wilderness - General</i></b>			
More wilderness designation in RMNP will limit the experiences people can have	2	5,58	
Appreciate wilderness	1	5	
Wilderness preservation very important	3	16,72,75	
Favor wilderness designation as long as it doesn't restrict access	1	29	
Favor more wilderness designation for RMNP	2	34,90	
RMNP backcountry already has more restrictions than wilderness	1	56	
Don't limit number of visitors to wilderness unless it's a problem	1	73	
Wilderness should be unregulated, wild, wide open	1	80	
RMNP backcountry enjoyable but it's not wilderness	1	132	
<b><i>Wilderness – Personal Meaning / Sense of</i></b>			

CATEGORY / COMMENT	FRQNCY	COMMENT NUMBERS	SELECTED QUOTATIONS AND COMMENT #
<b>Place</b>			
Enjoy wilderness experience / Always look forward to next visit	3	13,65,149	13. Each time we leave the backcountry we look forward to and plan our next adventure.
Humans need wilderness and connection with nature	2	26,73	26. Humans need wilderness and they need to be in touch the natural world. The further removed we become from these things, the more problems we develop. Groomed parks and golf courses <u>do not count</u> . Highways with occasional pullouts <u>do not count</u> .
Need to preserve wilderness for benefit of humans, wildlife, all life	1	26	
Preserve wilderness for future generations	2	72,90	90. We have been coming here many years our children grew up with the park and we hope to leave a piece of it for our grandchildren. 72. It is important to me, that wilderness be preserved as much as possible for the future of my kids.
Pristine wilderness is what makes RMNP so special	2	34, 40	34. Without this [wilderness designation], RMNP will become just another commercial venture, and what made it so wonderful (pristine wilderness) will be lost.
Love backcountry / wilderness areas of CO	1	39	
Like remoteness, pristine beauty of wilderness	2	40,65	65. Once you are getting “deep” into the park you should be able to forget civilization
Wilderness has personal meaning	2	40,90	40. The experience of the wilderness has no price and I’m always happy when I’m in the backcountry.
Wilderness experience more important than designation	1	56	56. the major draw for me is fewer people, fewer restrictions, and more actual (rather than defined) wilderness
<b>Personal Meaning / Sense of Place</b>			
Love the park / special place (based on repeated experience)	21	5,28,37,41,45, 48,49,55,59, 82,94,113,131, 143,145,147, 148,151,153,	37. it's the most gorgeous hiking country in the world! 41.It is a magnificent place and magnificent experience that should not be denied any American visitor. 162. We have grown to love RMNP and to think of it as “our” park. It has provided wonderful times of refreshment and

CATEGORY / COMMENT	FRQNCY	COMMENT NUMBERS	SELECTED QUOTATIONS AND COMMENT #
		160,162	renewal, and we feel we have that small stake in its future which we're sure so many of its visitors must share.
RMNP is wonderful place for peace and solitude	2	114,120	114. I often realize how fragile this place is and how unique it is to be able to hike and not see anyone at times in this wilderness.
Naturalness of park important	5	41,62,128,129, 135	41. My first hike in RMNP was in mid 70's with my wife and five kids to Fern Lake. It was not improved, was pretty rugged in spots and tough for small children, but it is something we have stored among our personal memory. TREASURES. We come to RMNP at least twice a year. It is our favorite spot to visit.
Enjoy coming to RMNP	6	15,94, 107, 146,151,162	107. I've come to the park 5-10 times per year for 27 years
Have always wanted to visit RMNP	1	23	
Will return	8	23,30,35,41, 65,94,97,151	
RMNP is my favorite NP	3	27,41,145	27. I've stomped around National Parks on 4 continents. I studied ecology in high school and college. RMNP is one of my all time favorites.
RMNP is a wonderful resource for Front Range people	2	28,147	
Important for future generations	5	28,48,72,129, 135	28. I hope my time will help preserve RMNP for future visitors
RMNP has longterm importance for family / since youth	6	46,48,94,131, 138,160	48. It was a special place that my family would always visit every year from the time I was 6 months old. Every year I continue to visit as much as possible. Anything that can be done to preserve this area would just be great, so that I can bring my children to visit. I hope to carry on my family tradition in this way and have my children love and respect the park as much as my parents have taught me to do so. 138. This was a trip with two five-year olds their first backpacking trip. It was terrific. 160. I love this park, not only because it is beautiful but

CATEGORY / COMMENT	FRQNCY	COMMENT NUMBERS	SELECTED QUOTATIONS AND COMMENT #
			because I have been raised in it and spent many of my happiest days in this park. My great grandparents built a cabin in Meeker Park just before the 1929 crash, and my grandparents still have it. I do not know how much longer we will be able to keep it, but it is a very special place for me.
Visit often on west side	1	50	
Visit often to climb	2	58,126	
RMNP allows for diverse interests / abilities	6	47,50,55,94, 120,122	55. Right now it is available for the youngest hiker to the most experienced technical climber and that's what makes it special.
Like that RMNP absorbs tourism pressure from other areas in state	1	57	
Like the park as it is, without further restrictions	1	58	
Moving / moved to / bought property in CO to be near RMNP	3	59,89,131	59. It's a place that first captivated me five years ago and hasn't let me go.
Backcountry experience in RMNP always wonderful	2	88,90	90. My husband climbs many of the peaks every summer and it is a joy to him.
RMNP important for preservation, education, exploration	1	128	
<b>General Policy / Philosophical Views</b>			
(Env.) ed. for children very important	1	14	
Basic research the key to future of the planet	1	14	
Parks are some of the few places without many human impacts	1	14	
Env. Conservation/Preservation very important	5	14,16,114,122, 135	
More funding / personnel necessary	3	34,44,64	34. I believe RMNP staff has done a very good job in managing the park over the last 20 years, considering the limited funding and the substantial increase in visitations. I believe more funding is necessary.
Raise taxes for NPs / open spaces	1	64	



<b>CATEGORY / COMMENT</b>	<b>FRQNCY</b>	<b>COMMENT NUMBERS</b>	<b>SELECTED QUOTATIONS AND COMMENT #</b>
Favor more control of behavior in NPs/Wild.	1	51	
Greater disregard for regulations over past 30 yrs	1	51	
Some people cannot police themselves, show respect for others or planet	3	62,111,116	
More of financial burden should be borne by users	1	52	
Don't worship earth but believe we're custodians	1	53	
Avoid extremes on resource issues	2	53,104	
Rescues should be paid for by the rescued, not by taxes	1	53	
Frustrated by lack of mtn. bike opps. in Boulder	1	53	
Visitation should not be at expense of resources, wildlife, wilderness	2	72,73	72. I want to visit and get away, but not at the expense of the animals or resources there.
Fewer rules, but hold people responsible for effects of actions	1	112	112. e.g. don't ban campfires at backcountry sites, but do thoroughly punish people who burn the forest down; don't stop people from watching the elk at Horseshoe Park, but do jail the people who drive them out of thickets with a stick so as to get a better picture...
Govt. does give high enough priority to preservation	1	135	
Fear that trend is to place wildlife welfare above human safety	1	162	
Allowing downed wood to remain on ground is waste ful and increases fire risk	1	162	
Public land use decisions should be made locally	1	33	
Resource extraction (mining, logging, hunting) should be allowed in some NPs, NMs, wilderness areas	1	33	
Land uses on unprotected land more damaging than extraction would be in NPs	1	33	
<b>General Comments</b>			

<b>CATEGORY / COMMENT</b>	<b>FRQNCY</b>	<b>COMMENT NUMBERS</b>	<b>SELECTED QUOTATIONS AND COMMENT #</b>
Don't mind seeing pack horses	1	56	
Seeing rangers in the backcountry not a problem	1	65	
Sad to hear about congestion on east side	1	28	
Backcountry is available for more adventurous (to avoid crowding)	1	28	
Pop. growth and increased use threaten pristine nature of park	1	37	
Have encountered rangers on trails only twice in 50 years of coming	1	68	
Visited in Sept.	1	91	
NPS mission (preservation with enjoyment) difficult and important	1	114	
Visitors loving park to death	2	147,152	152. When I see what has happened to RMNP in the 44 years since I started hiking in the park, I get depressed.
Good that gift shops, etc. are kept in Estes Park	1	156	

## Appendix H2

### Additional Comments



Photo: Two Columbines along the trail by Jeffrey J. Brooks

## Appendix H2. Additional Comments

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### Additional Comments

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- 1) A special thanks to the extremely helpful rangers at the Estes Park station. Their great attitudes added to our trip and help all to nurture an even greater appreciation for wilderness areas.
- 2) Access for sightseeing by vehicle is important to older citizens.
- 3) Although we were concerned about the number of people we encountered throughout the park, we are also aware that attempts to limit visitors might just shut us out on our next visit! We found park staff to be helpful and friendly. Keeping trailhead parking lots small is a good way to limit crowding. If people really want to be on a specific trail they can get there early! (Or later)
- 4) I have experienced many times, cars stopping on roadways not at approved pull-offs and blocking traffic, is there any way to enforce this better so gridlock does not happen simply because someone wants a picture... specifically BEAR LAKE ROAD and OLD FALL RIVER ROAD. I would be greatly appreciated if at sign posts/junctions on trails to have like a carved wooden map sign to aid in pinpointing your location. It would be nice if an major overlooks on trails, if reference were made to which mountain peaks you are viewing, natural wooden signs only. Thanks
- 5) As a Colorado resident I do appreciate the wilderness areas, but I feel that to designate more of the park to wilderness will limit the number of experiences people can have. RMNP is often a person's first or only trip into the wild. Don't deny them that. This is how people get introduced and involved in preservation. I'd rather see more educational signs than less people. I love the park.
- 6) Bear boxes at each backcountry site. It is hard to find the right tree to hang food bags from; also some of the sites have ropes hanging all around in the trees.
- 7) Beautiful Park!
- 8) Beautiful! Keep up the good work!
- 9) Better information on water sources would be appreciated. We were not able to find water at our backcountry camping site. Although the horse waste on the trails did not bother me, my traveling companion felt there was too much of it on the trail and she often had to step around it. Wonderful Park! You're already doing a fantastic job!
- 10) Consider wolf re-introduction.
- 11) Daily weather updates would be great at Ranger Stations; forced use of designated campsites was disappointing; the "coded" return date on vehicle parking passes is a great idea; This is a fantastic Park!!
- 12) Dislike shuttle service-probably would not use any part of the park where I had to use a shuttle. To help the park regenerate itself, different sections of the park could be closed to traffic for specified periods of time.

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Additional Comments

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- 13) Each time we leave the backcountry we look forward to and plan our next adventure. Due to our limited high altitude capabilities, we lowlanders appreciate the overnight parking and established backcountry sites. We have had some parking issues (Glacier Gorge) but thankfully have enough knowledge of the area to park elsewhere and catch the bus. An increase in transportation to trailhead by bus or other from a common parking area is much preferred by me than any increase in trailhead parking. Reduce the impact of passenger vehicles as much as possible!
- 14) Education of youngsters is greatest asset. I have seen how the Jr. Ranger Program has inspired my children. (The RMNP program needs improvement. Mesa Verde and Organ Pipes are much more interesting, age appropriate, and hands on.) Go to the schools and talk with students. This could be done off-season to continue year round employment. More money should come from taxes. I am happy to cover increasing fees as a park user, but preservation is becoming more important than we ever imagined. Scientists should be allowed to do their work. Our parks are some of the few places that leave human impact (for the most part) out of the equation. Basic research is the key to shaping our planets future. Thank you to!
- 15) Enjoy coming to RMNP, however we felt \$15 was a little steep for one-day visit. Maybe have a price step system, one day, three day, week etc.
- 16) Environmental Conservation/Wilderness preservation are very important issues to me. Although I complained regarding the \$15 fee, I am ok with spending this money as long as it stays within the National Park System and is used for conservation/preservation purposes. With a lower per night fee, more money could be generated in the long run and put to good use tending to the park and educating its' visitors.
- 17) Excellent survey and I'm thankful someone is conducting it, However, question 12's reference is conducting it, HOWEVER, question 12's reference to an aircraft's exhaust observed. The contrails observed by people have nothing to do with exhaust, i.e. pollution.
- 18) For wintertime the Flattop Mountain trail seems impossible to follow from just above the Dream Lake overlook. Better marking of the trail will help protect resources.
- 19) Get rid of the horses.
- 20) Getting backcountry passes is a pain.
- 21) Have shuttle service to ease traffic congestion.
- 22) I'm surprised there aren't questions about which services I have used in the past, and what I thought.
- 23) I have always wanted to come. Now I shall return!
- 24) Glad you're doing the survey and I hope it works out well.

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Additional Comments

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- 25) Good questions. I would vote for a program that did not restrict access and activities to/within an area we all have a right to, but increased the prerequisites for participation. For example, training (mandatory) programs to earn a license/permit to enter certain parts and to participate in certain activities (such as overnight camping). Training program would help education and weed out those that are just too lazy to care! By the way, I would pay \$200 per year for an annual pass if I knew it would help and realize that help!
- 26) Humans need wilderness and they need to be in touch the natural world. The further removed we become from these things, the more problems we develop. Groomed parks and golf courses do not count. Highways with occasional pullouts do not count. People who crave the absolute wilderness. Also, our world will lose so much with the repercussions that occur when we begin to lose the natural systems of our world. We somehow need to maintain these pure natural systems for the well being of humans and all wildlife and all life at whatever cost to our comfort. Thanks for making the effort.
- 27) I've stomped around National Parks on 4 continents. I studied ecology in high school and college. RMNP is one of my all time favorites. Having seen the ecological devastation caused by overpopulation of popular species in other parts of the world, and the apparent damage excess elk population is causing in parts of RMNP, I am in favor of population management (culling), and the reintroduction of top predators (e.g. wolf) who are much better than we are at determining the sick and infirm, and perhaps sowing such rampant ailments of overpopulation as Chronic Wasting Disease.
- 28) I absolutely love RMNP. I very much appreciated ranger guidance to less populated trails. I am sad to hear about the mass congestion on the East side of the park, yet it is a wonderful resource for the Front Range people to have. And, there is the backcountry for those of us who are more adventuresome. I hope my time will help preserve RMNP for future visitors and natural habitats.
- 29) I am in favor of designating RMNP as Wilderness only if it doesn't restrict access to those who respect and protect the park. Most people do respect RMNP and take care of it, but there are some that abuse it. Those people should be fined and even banned from the park if necessary. I do not oppose more active policing of park policies by rangers if it will control the abusers. Please don't restrict the park to those of us that love it and protect it. Thanks
- 30) I had a most satisfactory time in the park this past summer. I plan to visit again in the future very soon.
- 31) I am new to Colorado and had an absolutely wonderful time at the park over a holiday weekend. There were fewer people than I expected, and we felt very much in our own world.

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Additional Comments

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- 32) I believe education of the public who use the backcountry/wilderness is very important. Maybe a push button voice recording at each trailhead instructing hikers/campers how to use and respect our backcountry/wilderness areas. Digital voice recorders are now commonly used in museums etc. I see other important areas such as keeping up the trail signage and repairing areas of trails that are dangerous to the hiker (poorly maintained bridges, crumbling trail retaining walls, too many large rocks in the trail, slippery areas of decomposed granite, areas too steep, etc.)
- 33) I believe public land use can be decided on a very local level. Depending on the specific situation, hunting, mining, logging, etc. can be carried out in areas that often get "categorized" as wilderness, national park, monuments, etc for "handy" or political reasons. On the other hand, areas that are actually more sensitive, or fragile, or environmentally important are often exposed to land uses that are damaging. Urban development, road building, grazing, etc., on "non-protected" land may be more detrimental to the ecosystem of an area than controlled mining in RMNP, for example.
- 34) I believe RMNP staff has done a very good job in managing the park over the last 20 years, considering the limited funding and the substantial increase in visitations. I believe more funding is necessary. Frankly, I think additional funds should come from three sources: Federal taxes (but limited in increases); higher fees for use (entrance fees, camping fees, both campgrounds and backcountry); and contributions and donating. I strongly feel that the wilderness designation for RMNP should be strictly enforced and increased. Without this, RMNP will become just another commercial venture, and what made it so wonderful (pristine wilderness) will be lost. This will be a great challenge to RMNP staff due to increased pressure of increased visitations. Please resist commercialization of the park, such as airplane or helicopter flyovers, and commercially organized trips into the backcountry. (Other than already existing horse and llama liveryes.) As noted earlier, rather than requiring animal proof containers in the backcountry, bear wires should be installed at all backcountry sites and their use should be required.
- 35) I like RMNP & will be going back!
- 36) I love it!! Whooo yeah!!!
- 37) I love the park it's the most gorgeous hiking country in the world! Please try to keep it pristine! I know that it is difficult given population growth and increase in park use.
- 38) I recently started hiking and appreciate the maintenance of the trails.
- 39) I love the backcountry and wilderness areas of Colorado and always learning more!
- 40) I enjoyed RMNP. One aspect that I like about Wild Areas is the feeling of remoteness and pristine beauty. While it's apparent that the park is close to a growing population, it has maintained area of wilderness. The experience of the wilderness has no price and I'm always happy when I'm in the backcountry.

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Additional Comments

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- 41) I frankly don't know how you better use resources and personnel. Fortunately most of the people I see in the park treat it with respect and follow good rules of care. It is way too crowded on the major routes, but I do not believe entrance should be limited; it is a magnificent place and magnificent experience that should not be denied any American of visitor. But certainly those who use the "wilderness" areas should respect that privilege and be held firmly accountable for how they behave in unimproved or improved areas. Motorized vehicles and motorized tools should be useable to park employees and/or research personnel, but only when absolutely necessary and the same for emergency rescue aircraft or vehicles. Research should not be more destructive to the park than wilderness users. My recent visit was my first time on the trail to Nymph Lake. I was surprised at the improvement to the trail, expected it to be much more natural. If such improvements PROTECTS from greater damage to the environment I think it is fine. If it is just for convenience of users I believe it should not be done. My first hike in RMNP was in mid 70's with my wife and five kids to Fern Lake. It was not improved, was pretty rugged in spots and tough for small children, but it is something we have stored among our personal memory. TREASURES. We come to RMNP at least twice a year. It is our favorite spot to visit. My wife and I are educators from North Platte, NE.
- 42) I have been impressed that litter is not a serious problem, though there is some. Maybe in the education material a request could be made for each of us to be a self-designated cleanup "patrol", linking the importance of no litter to maintaining a pristine environment. P.S. What areas do you consider "developed front country"?
- 43) I have been to at least 20 National Parks in the U.S. RMNP holds its own and is definitely worthy of the National Park distinction. I had a fantastic and memorable experience in the park. Thank you for the preservation. May it continue and be strengthened.
- 44) I know there is a shortage of money/personnel to accomplish many projects in RMNP. I would again mention 2 ideas that might help. Increase fees for certain areas for backpacking. More volunteers used to walk trails to help educate hikers and backpackers. Information given to backpackers is good when starting a trip, but what should we do when we see obvious rules being broken (not easy/safe to confront those breaking rules) example: backpacking in and camping next to a lake where there is supposed to be no camping.
- 45) I love this park! I am only afraid that too many vehicles are allowed in, in one day. However, I realize this may not be as easy to monitor and control. I find myself picking up litter on more of the heavily traveled trails each time I come. Although not a whole lot, but for heavens sake people are just plain idiots sometimes. Please help control what is packed into the park trails that must be packed out.
- 46) I went to Chely Camps in Estes Park as a youth.
- 47) I think for the most part the park is well managed and allows for many people of different interest and abilities to enjoy a beautiful natural area.



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Additional Comments

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- 48) I love RMNP. It was a special place that my family would always visit every year from the time I was 6 months old. Every year I continue to visit as much as possible. Anything that can be done to preserve this area would just be great, so that I can bring my children to visit. I hope to carry on my family tradition in this way and have my children love and respect the park as much as my parents have taught me to do so.
- 49) I love the park. One wish that I have is that there would be better/more areas open to winter activities like tubing. Here is my pet peeve I would like the Colorado State Law, regarding allowing traffic of multiple vehicles following to pass, to be posted and enforced. I too often get stuck behind vehicles going about 15 mph and I have no opportunity to pass them.
- 50) I often visit the Grand Lake side of the park. When I want to hike, I usually stop and get recommendations from park staff. I tell them what I want and I receive wonderful recommendations, usually areas/trails with no people and wonderful vistas. When I've hiked trails out of Estes Park side (Bear Lake Area) there are tons of people, probably could/should be regulated. The park seems so large that I feel free to find the trails/conditions that suit me. Kudos to the National Park Service and their staff.
- 51) I strongly favor more control of human behavior in National Parks and Wilderness areas. Signage, fines and enforcement are all equally important improvements to consider. Over a 30-year span, I've observed greater disregard for existing rules by numerous visitors. Rangers have generally been too "nice" to violators (feeding, approaching animals), and ignore some (illegal parking, speeding, littering.)
- 52) I think entrance fees should be increased significantly \$15 per car for seven days access is an incredible bargain compared to other forms of entertainment and recreation. Two movie tickets and popcorn and sodas are more than \$15. Operating funds would be increased and more of the burden carried by people who use the park.
- 53) I think people should be able to use 2 way radios and cell phones for simple communication and rescue. Use for entertainment should be restricted to/in campsites. I think greater cooperation needs to be sought between motorized and non-motorized organizations. Both have extreme views and the attitudes I have heard expressed about the other side is troubling. I don't believe in worshipping "mother earth" but I also believe we are custodians. It's not my specific role and I feel good about how the parks are managed to my inexperienced eye. I think hearing both sides though is critical to this point. I live in Boulder and feel frustrated by the lack of mountain biking trails there. I hope to not experience unnecessary restrictions in other places as well. I think that people who require rescue (we were almost one of them) should be responsible for reimbursement and held responsible for the lives of those they submit to danger. People need to be aware of the dangers and risks and plan better to deal with the unexpected. I don't feel the government and our taxes should have to pay for one's un-preparedness. Thank you for allowing me to express my views.
- 54) I would like to know the results of the survey!

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Additional Comments

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- 55) I think RMNP is a place all people should be able to come and enjoy. Please do not make it like other parks, which require a reservation years in advance to see. Right now it is available for the youngest hiker to the most experienced technical climber and that's what makes it special. Lets not regulate it to death! Thanks a park lover.
- 56) I think the designation of "Wilderness" in RMNP BC is somewhat academic. "Wilderness" designation defines certain restrictions (e.g. on roads, mechanical and motorized machinery, equipment, vehicles). On the other hand RMNP already has restrictions that are not required by "wilderness" designation (e.g. on horses, dogs, camping at large, hunting etc.). It seems RMNP should be managed according to its National Park status and the large number of people the "Park" label draws. The backcountry should largely be managed according to restriction defined by wilderness but another layer of required restriction may not be best. As a comparison we visited the Popo Agie Wilderness in the Wind River Mountains in Wyoming, after visiting RMNP. There we camped at sites we chose (good), saw horse-packers and a couple of dogs (ok) and many fewer people than in RMNP (very good). Overall we liked the Wind Rivers much better but that is mainly because it is much less used. Likewise I spend a lot of time in the Grand Canyon area, but largely in little use area of the park or on reservation lands since again the major draw for me is fewer people, fewer restrictions, and more actual (rather than defined) wilderness.
- 57) I think the Park Service is doing a good job and RMNP is the same as when I visited in '97 for the first time. I think they should focus on the heavy traffic areas for trail damage, trash, and animal feeding. I like the fact that tourists seem to focus on RMNP and not the tons of other areas in the state.
- 58) I visit the park a lot to climb. But I feel the wilderness designation is a little restrictive to resource managers regarding guided groups etc., rescue techniques, climbing anchor placements, which can be very low key visually. I like the park as is I don't think we need more regulation and new rules, just keep it clean and accessible. Cheers.
- 59) I visited Colorado and RMNP for the first time in 1997, and I fell in love with the mountains and the outdoors. In fact, I almost attended CSU as a transfer student. I was accepted into the Department of Natural Resource Recreation and Tourism. Unfortunately, Colorado's an expensive place to go to school if you're not from there. But now I'm in Illinois, about to get a teaching degree, and planning that move to Colorado for fall of next year. It's a place that first captivated me five years ago and hasn't let me go. Who knows... maybe I'll spend a year out there and end up at CSU for that second degree!
- 60) I was very pleased with this, my first, visit to the park. One addition that would be nice is bear wires at sites where the trees offer poor opportunities for counter balance method.
- 61) If resources are limited, the time and money used on surveying amateurs such as myself cannot be good use of them.

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Additional Comments

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- 62) I want the beauty of the park preserved and feel strongly that the natural habitat stays that way. However, I don't want someone to tell me I can't go there or can't experience a certain area of the park. I feel things can get too restricted. But I do feel that individuals should treat the park with respect and not abuse it. However, there are some individuals who cannot "police" themselves and don't maintain a sense of pride when it comes to protecting our natural national treasures. That can create a problem for our natural habitats and those who really do treasure their existence.
- 63) I was pleasantly surprised by the quality of the park. While I visited in Sept., I expected the trails, picnic areas, and campsites to show signs of the larger numbers of people who visit June-Aug. Overall, I found the trails well maintained and the campsites in good shape and clean! I only found a few small pieces of litter in campsites during my stay. The noisy generators in the developed camping area and the noise of planes that persist even in the backcountry areas were most disturbing. Carvings on aspen tree trunks were sad. These trees are so beautiful; the carvings are ghastly wounds.
- 64) I will always vote to raise taxes for National Parks, open spaces, etc. not for anything else. My husband and I would like to see 100% of the fees collected going right back into the parks. More federal money for the rangers who patrol the trails please. They do a great job considering how stingy the government has been in their number and pay.
- 65) I wish I were able to spend more time at RMNP. Long-term plans are to get further into the backcountry. The education efforts should be intense at the trailhead and the first quarter mile and then taper off so that people are exposed to the messages. Once you are getting "deep" into the park you should be able to forget civilization, seeing rangers is just fine with me.
- 66) I wish the park would accommodate late arrivals that plan an early departure. If I show up at 10:00pm and planned on hitting the trail at 2:00 or 3:00am, why is it such an enormous infraction to sleep in my truck in the parking lot? I don't like ranger who act as if they are cops!! Be friendly with me and I'll be friendly back! Otherwise, I think the park seems to be in good shape and the employees and volunteers I've meet i.e. Jim Detterline and Walter at the Longs Peak station are very helpful, extremely knowledgeable and very professional.
- 67) I would like to see designated parking spots for backcountry/overnight campers.
- 68) In 50 years, we remember seeing a park ranger on a trail, but twice; I don't know that that has been a problem, but we make this comment.
- 69) In an ideal National Park there would be one permit to drive through and another to actually hike around. Maybe this would alleviate the congestion at Bear Lake. Drivers and picnickers could use an area designated for just sitting and leave areas for hikers.
- 70) It costs too much, so let in logging for income and let them thin out the forest.

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Additional Comments

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- 71) Increase/improve parking infrastructure at Lumpy Ridge. Create day use/permit system for Longs Peak and Longs Peak trailhead. Increase parking at shuttle parking lot and/or create shuttle service and parking lot near park entrance.
- 72) It is important to me, that wilderness be preserved as much as possible for the future of my kids. I want to visit and get away, but not at the expense of the animals or resources there. I believe the current accessibility of the park is just right.
- 73) It is important to minimize damage in the park. Trail signs do provide help in education, such as a trail sign to discourage taking short cuts. I wouldn't limit the number of people who want to enjoy the wilderness unless it becomes too big a problem, since it is very important for people to experience the wilderness. I would also build more hiking trails. Park staff and volunteers could build hiking trails.
- 74) It seems that a dog on a leash could be allowed on a few of the trails especially where there are a lot of horse droppings anyway. I do realize that not all dogs are nice and many people do not like dogs but it would really be nice to have even two trails open to dogs on leashes.
- 75) Keep the wilderness wild! Get people out of their cars. (No private cars at all in the park?)
- 76) Keep up the efforts; it's well worth it! Thank you!
- 77) Keep up the good work!
- 78) Keep up the good work! We appreciate you!
- 79) Kyle Collins is a wonderful young man with a bright future ahead of him.
- 80) Leave it more "wide open". A Wilderness area should be just that, wild and not regulated.
- 81) Living a great distance from the park (200 miles), we would like it to be easier to obtain a backcountry permit. Via email would be fantastic. A problem for us in the past has been getting to the backcountry office before it closed or having to wait for it to open in the morning. It's been awhile since we've camped backcountry so maybe things have changed.
- 82) Love the park. Would like to see the parking lot at Lumpy Ridge moved or the parking issue settled soon. I hope there is not a ban on fixed rappel anchors in the park.
- 83) Make a lot of information available on the website.
- 84) Make showering possible inside the park.
- 85) More closures to areas that become delicate due to overuse and more closures for animals to relieve stress at important times of year.

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Additional Comments

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- 86) Moved to Colorado this year, planned to spend more time in RMNP it is beautiful, keep up good work preserving area.
- 87) My backpacking experience in RMNP was wonderful. The trails were well maintained and appropriately marked. I appreciated the fact that there were only 3 designated campsites at our location, Mirror Lake. The National Park staff was extremely helpful, friendly, and professional.
- 88) My backcountry experiences in RMNP have always been terrific. I think the National Park Service is doing a great job. I do not honestly expect anyone to be able to address my pet peeve regarding aircraft noise.
- 89) My husband and I moved to Estes Park, Colorado 6 weeks ago to be close to RMNP.
- 90) My husband and I would love to see the park designated as wilderness. We have been coming here many years our children grew up with the park and we hope to leave a piece of it for our grandchildren. My husband climbs many of the peaks every summer and it is a joy to him. Thank you for your help in this project.
- 91) My husband and I came for a visit in September.
- 92) My significant other and I consider our week hiking in RMNP one of our most precious experiences yet. Thank you!
- 93) My stay was fantastic!! Thanks!
- 94) My wife and I first visited RMNP in Sept of '84. I have had the privilege of coming back several times beginning in 1998. Between '84 and '98, I was always dreaming of coming back but did not have opportunity. We took our family vacation to RMNP in Sept of '01 and we just came back again for our Sept family vacation in '02. Everyone in the family loves RMNP and there were activities for everyone. We try to balance day hikes, horseback riding, scenic drives, and watching wildlife. This year, we visited the Wild Basin and Twin Owls areas in addition to Glacier Creek and Fall River Road and Trail Ridge. Usually within a few weeks of returning home, we're itching to go back. Keep up the good work! Our family appreciates it!
- 95) Not to beat a dead horse, personal use is ok to me but groups/concessions do not pay enough to the park to justify their presence. We have contacts in the park that know the percentages. Same with the Alpine Visitor Center on Trail Ridge. Thanks
- 96) Note: I realized when I got to question #18 that I don't know the definition of "Backcountry/wilderness" as opposed to "developed front country." I assumed "Backcountry/wilderness" meant anywhere I can't drive a car, and that "developed front country," meant where I can drive a car. Accordingly, my answers in this survey relating to "Backcountry/wilderness" refer mostly to hiking trails, and occasional scrambling near trails.
- 97) Overall I find the park to be very clean with pleasant & informative employees. My husband and I plan to return frequently.

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Additional Comments

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- 98) One observation is regarding trails at high elevations. After trails reach tundra, they often peter out and are poorly marked. Cairns are often hard to find or nonexistent. Hikers must choose own route, and walk on tundra especially on the descent. On a recent Sunday hike to Mt. Chiquita, dozens of hikers were seen scattered across the tundra. While dispersal of hikers seems to be the strategy, I wonder if growing numbers of hikers will cause damage. In New England, where I do most of my hiking, above tree line trails are clearly marked and confined to footpaths in tundra regions to protect sensitive plant use. Perhaps RMNP should consider this approach to high use areas?
- 99) People should be reminded on entering the park the reasons for not feeding the wildlife. I saw very little trash and was very pleased by that. I observed a busload of people at Forest Canyon walking everywhere on the rocks and tundra taking pictures.
- 100) Please keep all personal information confidential.
- 101) Please open the Grand Ditch trail to mountain biking.
- 102) Presumes shared understanding of "Backcountry/Wilderness" term. I love the cheap annual pass, but the pricing effectively uses distant visitors to subsidize local area visitors. Help provide information to unofficial websites for information about backcountry etc. Official website: useful maps (not as good as Topozone) and ratings of popularity or difficulty of excursions.
- 103) Prices should be lower.
- 104) Protect the park, but please do not allow extremes on either side dictate policy!
- 105) Providing pit toilets and some way to hang or store food in bear proof containers at campsites would probably limit impacts.
- 106) Put in more campsites in higher up/ remote areas i.e. (Sky Pond, Andrews Glacier base, Black Lake, etc.) Put a permit station on the west side of the park or do more on-line reservations for backcountry permits, so we can go right to the campsite, without having to drive all the way to a station. Slow traffic makes for a long trip.
- 107) Questions 18-21 are impossible to answer. I've come to the park 5-10 times per year for 27 years
- 108) Reference widening of trails, my partners and I have noticed many people go off trail to avoid the knee wrenching steps on the trail to Chasm Lake and the Boulderfield area on Longs Peak. When spoken of even college age people complained of the stress to their knees. And in many areas, the sides of this trail look a lot more like trail than the trail itself. Wouldn't volunteers be willing to improve this popular trail?
- 109) Reroute airplane traffic around RMNP. Increase shuttle services. More backcountry toilets. Bear proof food storage at backcountry sites.

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Additional Comments

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- 110) Sorry it took so long for me to complete this. Keep up the good work! THX B.
- 111) RMNP is a beautiful place but there are way too many people/cars on a given weekend and too many people that have no real regard for nature/wildlife as demonstrated by their actions. I don't know how to preserve these areas when people are unwilling to take responsibility for themselves. I work for a company that leads nature/wildlife tours worldwide and we would never allow our travelers to disobey the basic rules of respecting and preserving wildlife by not feeding, not approaching wildlife and listening to the guidelines of a park.
- 112) RMNP is a great place! It's important to protect it, but also important not to micromanage it or its visitors. Teddy Roosevelt's idea of "walk softly, but carry a big stick: is relevant here: e.g. don't ban campfires at backcountry sites, but do thoroughly punish people who burn the forest down; don't stop people from watching the elk at Horseshoe Park, but do jail the people who drive them out of thickets with a stick so as to get a better picture...
- 113) RMNP is a treasure, and so is the National Park Service for keeping it up and guiding visitors along in such a pleasant and helpful manner! Signage on trails is excellent. Restrooms at all trailheads not just the busiest ones, and privies near the popular lunchtime spots (e.g. The Pool) would be helpful. Bear Lake shuttle system, which I used several times this week, is terrific. Keep up the good work!
- 114) RMNP is a wonderful place to find peace and solitude away from everyday life. When in the park, I often realize how fragile this place is and how unique it is to be able to hike and not see anyone at times in this wilderness. Employers have an important and difficult job of preserving, yet allowing the public to enjoy these resources. Please keep up the good work!!
- 115) Signs at the trailhead were all the same, stay on the trail, the weather could change; don't get hit by lightning, etc. These were not really helpful. A little information on the trail itself (altitude gain, difficulty, specific wildlife or features to look for, etc.) would be helpful. This survey was a little ambiguous/difficult in parts. For example: seeing a few pieces of litter in campsites or picnic areas is not what I want to see, but it's "acceptable" in small amounts because its everywhere. I don't think the park service can prevent it. Backcountry/wilderness is not defined. Is this anywhere past a parking lot? Wilderness Act? Thanks for a great 2 weeks visit in the park!
- 116) Some of the things that park ranger must manage are just part of our society's lack of respect for each other and our planet, which is very sad. Trash should be nowhere especially lying on the ground in this park. And I don't even want to get started on cell phones, I use them in my daily life, however, going to the park is an important way to get away "from it all", especially cell phones!
- 117) Sorry for the sloppy writing. I'm filling this out in my tent at Longs Peak campground listening to a live band somewhere that is very annoying!

Appendix H2. continued

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Additional Comments

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- 118) Survey items-there was much repetition could have been shorter.
- 119) Survey was too long and duplicative. Reason questions were not all answered.
- 120) Thank you for all you do to make our visit to RMNP an enjoyable one. Being there is rejuvenating. A welcome retreat from life in the city. It is possible to enjoy time alone and quiet solitude. Those who backpack overnight may have different expectations and experiences than we have during the day. But we have found it possible to meet our expectations and be rewarded during our day adventures to RMNP.
- 121) Thank you for the work that you have done on many of the trails in RMNP. My wife and I have appreciated the cleanly marked trails and the physical labor that the rangers/crew have put into the trails. The rangers we have met in the backcountry have given us useful information and helped us enjoy our stay with minimal impact to the environment. (Hanging of food procedures)
- 122) Thank you for your concern regarding the preservation of God's creation. It is beautiful, majestic, stimulating, etc. and offers so much to do! Hiking, Fishing, Picnicking, exploring etc. I used to live in Durango, Colorado after being raised in Illinois. What an awesome sight...I presently live in California and continue to live in the mountains.
- 123) Thanks to all the nice rangers we met. We had planned to stay for a couple of days, hiking in the wilderness, but unfortunately it was raining a lot. So we decided to head south instead. We had expected more mountain beauty. Snowcapped mountains etc. More information about where wild animals were last spotted.
- 124) Thanks you very much for your work & dedication. Trails are beautifully maintained.
- 125) Thanks! Good Luck
- 126) The backcountry staff under Barry's guidance has been a big help over the years. As an ice climber, RMNP has some classic climbs. However, with more climbers and limited resources, I would like to see better planning between the Colorado Mountain Club and the Colorado Mountain School when bringing large groups to the ice. Please allow access to individuals in private parties.
- 127) The new buses are great. Thank you tax dollars well spent. Spacious and Clean. Please rebuild the restroom at Bear Lake, and please use a rustic, natural type building. Please rebuild the small A-frame information booth at Bear Lake. The current trailer (hopefully temporary) looks terrible. Why not establish one lane at each park entrance as an "express" lane, clearly marked for pass holders. I think it would keep the traffic flowing, rather than backing up as much.
- 128) The National Park at Rocky Mountain is an important place for preservation, education, and exploration. I had a great time.



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Additional Comments

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- 129) The National Park should preserve/represent the place as it was for all of future generations to see. I recommend mandatory shuttle buses in park and pedestrian travel. Allow stock on defined trails and bicycles on Hwy 34. Cars park in Estes Park and Grand Lake. Reintroduction of native predators.
- 130) The park appears to be well managed.
- 131) The park has always been beautifully maintained. Park rangers are always very friendly, easy to talk to and informative. I bought a recreation house in Grand Lake to be near RMNP and I now live in PA! I want the house to be passed down through my family. Please don't let anyone drill here. And find a way to protect our alpine meadows from global warming. Thank you for all you do to make being here a great experience.
- 132) The park is too popular and too over-used to ever have much real wilderness. There are just too many people in Colorado. The only place I have ever experienced true wilderness is in Alaska. I enjoy the backcountry of RMNP but it is not true wilderness.
- 133) The trail to Longs Peak is in very good shape. Considering the primary use in my mind (to get up to Longs Peak) it serves its purpose exceptionally well. The trail is easy to follow, well maintained, well signed and in general low in erosion and widening.
- 134) Things are going great!! Beautiful country.
- 135) This park and its resources are priceless. The Government doesn't give their preservation a high enough priority. Once destroyed, the resources are gone forever, not just for this generation.
- 136) This survey references some acts and uses some terminology that is not familiar to me.
- 137) This survey was hard to answer in parts, because the definition of wilderness areas was not given.
- 138) This was a trip with two five-year olds their first backpacking trip. It was terrific.
- 139) Twice this summer I have had to walk a trail with bicycle tracks on it in RMNP. Bicycles not only ruin the experience they also destroy the trail by leaving a rut straight down the trail when they skid their tires. Horses destroy the trails. The hardest trails to hike are the ones used by lots of horses. They eat the dirt out from around the rocks leaving a trail with protruding rocks. The horse users should pay extra so these trails can be maintained. More unimproved trails in the park would be nice. I would even spend a few days helping "build" some new trails.
- 140) Very impressed by the park and the rangers we met.

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Additional Comments

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- 141) We especially appreciate the cordial and friendly attitudes of RMNP employees!
- 142) We hiked on a beautiful September Sunday. Although I indicated that I saw "too many people" I realize that we were there at a very busy time. I'd come on Mon-Wed if I could! (Can you really do anything about airplanes flying overhead??)
- 143) We love the park and appreciate your efforts to conserve its beauty!
- 144) We had visited 6 National Parks in past two weeks. Surprisingly I think I saw more people in RMNP than any other park. It's probably that everyone wants to visit the park before winter closure. Because I saw more people in RMNP, there are more possibilities for me to see a person doing something that is not very proper to do in the park, such as walk off the trails. I feel uncomfortable when I see people walk off the trails, especially in the tundra area. In some ways, I do think the park needs to put more signs to tell people stay on the trail, (even though I know it's not necessary to have so many interpretation boards along the trail.) The "stay on the trail" sign is frequently see in Arches and Yellowstone, and I don't know if it is a reason why there is not that many people walking off the trails.
- 145) We love "our" park we've been all over the west. Rocky still holds the biggest place in our hearts!
- 146) We love coming to RMNP-but only come for 1 day at a time. We'd come more often if there were a daily fee less than the weekly fee of \$15.
- 147) We love the park! Being for Ft. Collins we consider this area to be a treasure. However, seems as if we are loving it to death. Limited use may be the way to go. Keep up the good work.
- 148) We moved here (Denver) from Philadelphia, PA, 2 years ago. We love (RMNP)! We have been camping at Moraine Park and Aspenglen and enjoy both. We hike during the day. The one concern I have is using the Shuttle Buses. I know it helps to control crowds but I enjoy driving to the trailheads. We go when we're ready and I don't want to have to rely on taking a bus and waiting for one after my hike when I'm tired! We also have all our stuff in our car, water, snacks, clothing, etc. I would not want to have to take all that on the bus! I guess buses are good for the very popular areas such as Bear Lake, but others should be open for us hikers to drive to the trailheads and park our car.
- 149) We thoroughly enjoy the opportunity to backpack in the wilderness.
- 150) What would help cut down on human waste are more pit toilets at the end of each trail, on all not just some of them. Glacier National Park has quite a few. More trail markers are needed so that you can get a sense of how far you've come and how far to go. Enlarge gift shops sell T-shirts etc. People want this stuff and you'll make tons of money even though it's not educational it'll help the park!

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Additional Comments

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- 151) When I visited a few years ago, I fell in love with the park. Now that we live here in CO, I can't wait to see and do everything! Thank you for the wonderful experiences I have had so far.
- 152) With increased visitation the trail system has hiked to death. When I see what has happened to RMNP in the 44 years since I started hiking in the park, I get depressed. As with many National Parks, RMNP is being loved to death. There are too many people visiting all the parks today.
- 153) Wonderful park, wonderful staff. A crown jewel. Don't let it got to waste or deteriorate.
- 154) Would like to see more signs to help navigation for example mile posts trails signs
- 155) You are doing a good job. I know it is difficult to manage such a large park in the summertime
- 156) You have a gorgeous park competing with all the great western Parks and Wilderness areas. (Idaho Sawtooths, Glacier, Yosemite, Yellowstone, Utah's southern area). If you've ever read the signs around Moab, Canyonlands etc., they have a neat way of reminding people to practice "low impact" visiting. The tips are posted all over the place. Campgrounds are limited. Also, certainly you've been watching Yosemite's actions to try to deal with pathetic overcrowding. Good for you that you kept all the restaurants, gift shops over in Estes Park.
- 157) Your survey, although well intended, has a major flaw. You do not define what is the backcountry/wilderness as indicated by question 15. I assumed the entire park as backcountry/wilderness or do you mean only those areas "off the trail". Regardless the park is great!
- 158) If vehicles continue to be allowed, one entrance land should be "passes only." I get very distressed by seeing people tempt the wildlife with food, follow the wildlife, etc., though I don't know how you can convince the determined hordes that they should stay in their cars at a safe distance.
- 159) Perhaps Estes Park might be able to exercise more control on the tourist population, though its economy would be hurt badly, I suppose. But if cooperation is not impossible, it might be useful.
- 160) In closing, I want to say again how much I love this park, not only because it is beautiful but because I have been raised in it and spent many of my happiest days in this park. My great grandparents built a cabin in Meeker Park just before the 1929 crash, and my grandparents still have it. I do not know how much longer we will be able to keep it, but it is a very special place for me.

- 161) Your trail signs could be better placed and not enough of them. I.E. from Fern Lake trailhead at the Pool you use one sign for different directions and I encountered 3 different groups on their way to Cub Lake when they thought they were going to Fern Lake. You need a separate sign pointing towards Fern Lake because the trail is somewhat hidden. Also at Wild Basin there is no sign at Copeland Falls telling you, you are on a loop trail and if you continue on you will rejoin the main trail instead of backtracking to the main trail.
- 162) We have two areas of concern in RMNP based on the past 14 years of hiking an average of 50-70 miles of trails over each of the two weeks we are in the park in July and again in late August. One relates to animal management and the other to fires.

There have been numerous articles in recent years about the increase in numbers of elk in the park, and we tend to speculate that since animals posing some risks to hikers (mountain lions in particular) enjoy the same protection, (and milder winters as well, possibly another factor in increases) that their numbers may also be on the rise. Certainly there are increasing numbers of hikers, and this encroachment does not seem to change the “natural” behavior of wild animals and make at least some of them behave in “unnatural” less predictable, and possibly more dangerous ways. Add to this the pressure in recent years of the animal rights movement, and we are left to wonder at times about park decisions relating to safety on trails. Is there a trend (however gradual) toward taking increasing risks in management decisions that somewhat favor the rights on animals over the protection of humans? At times we are tempted to think that an attitude is increasing among certain groups, that human beings are, after all expendable; whereas certain wild creatures, “endangered” or no, are more precious. We sincerely hope this does not reflect attitudes within any of RMNP administration or staff, but we are really left to wonder about this, and it does at times detract from the “serenity” and that is one of our primary goals in hiking times.

Our second concern has developed over years of observation along miles and miles of trails where dead trees are allowed to accumulate on the ground in increasing numbers. An example of this (out of many) is a stretch along either side of the Fern Lake trail toward its lower end, perhaps about a mile from the Fern Lake trailhead. While we appreciate the values and environmental reasoning supporting a totally “natural” environment, this type of management seems both wasteful, and more importantly, would seem to pose an increasing fire risk. This summer of extreme dryness and fires have surely brought this to the fore. As we hike past area after area with so much deadwood laying on the ground (and no fire breaks in the park to our knowledge) we sometimes see the whole of RMNP as one big tinder box that could be absolutely devastated by a disastrous fire. We don’t understand the policies that have led to this.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to state these concerns. We have grown to love RMNP and to think of it as “our” park. It has provided wonderful times of refreshment and renewal, and we feel we have that small stake in its future which we’re sure so many of its visitors must share.

Jim and Julie DeMoss, 5629 West 84<sup>th</sup> St., Overland Park, KS 66207

**“Oh those marvelous Rocky Mountains,  
the wonderful fresh air, the sunshine!”**

Former hostage Tom Sutherland, upon his return home to Colorado, when asked what he wanted to experience in the next few days.



Photo: Lake Haiyaha by Matthew L. Bates