

## **Request for Proposals**

### **Visitor Use Research at Fort Sumter and Fort Moultrie National Historical Park**

Deadline: June 7, 2022

#### **Project Description**

The National Park Service seeks to enter into a partnership with a university through an agreement to complete a visitor use study at Fort Sumter and Fort Moultrie National Historical Park (FOSU) in South Carolina. Scientific research sampling of the public will be conducted at various locations within the park to help shape future planning strategies for visitor use.

The National Park Service “preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the National Park System for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations.” A key consideration for fulfilling this mission at FOSU is to provide quality visitor experience by facilitating opportunities to engage with the park’s unique and significant cultural and historic resources. The National Park Service facilitates visitor education and interpretation of Fort Sumter on the mainland via the Fort Sumter Visitor Center at Liberty Square. However, the study identified in this Notice of Funding Opportunity focuses on visitor use specifically at Fort Sumter. Due to timing constraints, this study will not be able to go through Office of Management and Budget (OMB) approval, and therefore cannot include methods that require collection of information from the public (i.e., anything governed by the Paperwork Reduction Act). There is potential that additional funding could become available for a second phase of this study to include a visitor use and experience survey.

The Fort is accessible only by boat. To enter the fort the public must use the park’s concessioner ferry boats, which depart from two locations, Liberty Square Visitor Center in downtown Charleston and Patriots Point Naval and Maritime Museum in Mt. Pleasant. Per the concession’s agreement with the park, each ferry has a current visitor capacity of 385 people. In 1985, a limited study with a small sample of visitors was conducted to inform the ferry capacity. At that time, visitation was much lower than it is now: from 1980-1989 the average annual visitation was around 252,000 people, whereas visitation from 2015-2019 averaged about 870,000 per year (note that the visitation numbers from 2020 and 2021 were not included in this analysis due to impacts on visitation from the Covid-19 Pandemic). Additionally, the configuration of the museum at the fort has changed since the analysis in the 1980s.

When visitors arrive on the island, they can participate in a 10-minute ranger program, tour the interior of the fort and the Fort Sumter Museum exhibits, and shop at the small park store. Visitors have one hour at the fort before they must depart on the same ferry on which they arrived. The limited time period potentially constrains opportunity as visitors might not be able to do everything for the duration they wish, thus potentially impacting their experience. Additionally, there are concerns about additional constrictions when the ferry is closer to capacity as crowded conditions can occur in the Fort Sumter Museum. Park staff have also observed physical evidence of erosion, possibly caused by human use, on the historic landscape.

#### **Public Purpose Statement**

The project will provide visitors with a richer experience in the park by better understanding who comes to the park, where they go, what they do and see, and what they think about the park. Public awareness of this history and significance of Fort Sumter will be increased, and the quality of the visitor experience to the fort will be improved. This project will strengthen support for public land resources and for visitor experiences. Through this research and results dissemination, the scientific community and researchers external to the NPS will gain new knowledge about the visitor experience and the corresponding impacts to the cultural and/or historical resources.

## **Goals**

The proposed project is intended to provide FOSU management with a greater understanding about visitor use on Fort Sumter, thus allowing for science-based, well-informed decisions and for the development of appropriate visitor use management strategies for engagement and education. Outcomes of this study will inform future planning for the fort, including the identification of visitor capacities.

## **Objectives**

This project will better understand visitors who come to FOSU via collection of a visitor use observational data and potentially, if further funding becomes available, through visitor use surveys. Observational data collection would seek to understand a variety of topics ranging from:

- Understanding how visitors experience Fort Sumter, including:
  - How they choose to spend their 1-hour at the Fort before reboarding the ferry,
  - What activities/experiences they are able to engage with or not,
  - How they move throughout the fort (e.g., what routes they take during their visit or the order in which they visit the sites),
  - How visitor use varies when there are different user groups (e.g., school groups)
- Understanding the amounts and types of visitor use that the Fort can accommodate, including:
  - If visitors congregate and/or concentrate in certain areas,
  - How visitor use impact fort resources—both natural and cultural,
  - How visitor use patterns change when there are more visitors (closer to the ferry's capacity)
  - How visitor engagement with and learning about fort resources is affected when there are more visitors
- Identify current and desired spatial and temporal distributions of visitors at the fort
- Identify priority improvement areas that may mitigate impacts and facilitate desired conditions.

If additional resources become available, a second phase of the study, a visitor use and experience survey could be added to the agreement. Data collection objectives for this phase would include:

- Respondent characteristics
- Respondent expenditures
- Trip planning and intent of visit
- Trip characteristics
- Visitor use (in what activities did the visitor participate)
- Visitor experience and perceptions
- Visitor preferences for potential management actions

- Evaluation of programming and opportunities and value to visitors (e.g., what were they able to learn)

The outcomes of this project will assist park management to make informed decisions regarding visitor use and park operations, especially in the park's process for developing the prospectus for the next concession contract in 2025/26.

Proposals should focus on the development of an observational study to accomplish the project objectives.

The recipient agrees to:

- Work collaboratively with the NPS to develop, design, implement, and evaluate study design and outcomes
- Disseminate results through a final report and presentation to the park...
- Involve students in the development, implementation, and evaluation of the project
- Submit quarterly progress and financial reports

The NPS agrees to:

- Provide information about context, approaches, and management concerns associated with visitor use at Fort Sumter
- Assist researchers with on-site data collection. This could include finding park-specific locations for observations, support for access to the fort either thru the ferry concession or park-provided transportation, communication with visitors about the study, and any other support necessary for the completion of the study.
- Provide technical support
- Provide guidance and review products to ensure compatibility with NPS mission, policies, and standards
- Disseminate approach and results

Reference the National Park Service Programmatic Clearance Process at <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/socialscience/programmaticclearance.htm>

Also, reference the NPS Pool of Known Questions at: <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/socialscience/upload/2019-NPS-Pool-of-Known-Questions.docx>

### **Deliverables**

- Initial project (kick-off) meeting
- Work plan and research questions developed
- Observational research methods developed
- Research sampling at FOSU
- Quarterly progress reports
- Outline of final report
- Draft final report (time for review and revisions)
- Presentation of findings at FOSU
- Final report

### **Qualifications of the Principal Investigators and Research Team**

Principal Investigators (PIs) must have a Ph.D. or comparable research experience and a record of applied experience. Expertise in creating observational study methods, conducting

observational studies, analyzing data for practical implications and planning, and producing written reports is highly recommended. The qualifications of additional team members should complement the goals and objectives of this study. Include all qualifications and experience in your proposal.

### Period of Performance

The agreement, including a full scope of work must be signed by August 31, 2022. A kick-off meeting can be hosted, and work can begin as soon as the agreement is in place. The project must be completed within 18 months.

### Budget

There is approximately \$75,000 available for this project from which salaries, travel, consultation fees, transcriptions, materials, and overhead must not exceed. Please use a 17.5% indirect cost rate when developing the proposal budget (\*). A budget template can be provided if preferred. Also, be aware that any single item of \$5,000 worth or more is considered as equipment and will require tracking and a determination of ownership at the end of the project. A detailed budget should be included in your proposal.

(\*) A master agreement is already in place between your university and the National Park Service through the Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit (CESU). The National Park Service will be using this agreement for this project.

### Materials Requested for Proposal

Please prepare a formal proposal of how you would envision and successfully execute this project. Include your name, department, university, or organization, and contact information, as well as information about any relevant experience, past projects, and staff, faculty, or students who would be available to work on the project. See the four proposal evaluation elements below.

### Proposal Evaluation

Proposals will be evaluated for selection according to:

Criterion 1. Experience & Qualifications of the Research Team		Maximum Points: Weight 75%
Elements		
Visitor Use Management Experience ( <i>preferred but not required</i> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide any details about experience working on visitor use data collection and analysis efforts in the region and/or at similar parks or protected areas.</li> <li>Demonstrate familiarity with the Interagency Visitor Use Management Council's <a href="#">Visitor Use Management Framework</a></li> </ul>	
Data Collection Experience and Qualifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demonstrate knowledge and experience collecting observational visitor use data, including but not limited to visitor circulation, visitor density, and visitor impacts on natural and cultural resources.</li> <li>Describe any previous experience collecting and analyzing data of this kind and a description of technical expertise in methods and analysis in the narrative.</li> </ul>	

Research Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include a description of the academic program and the experience of the PI and each member of the research team with emphasis on visitor use management, observational studies, public surveys, and how those qualifications compliment the goals and objectives of this study</li> <li>• Provide a list of potential staff positions, including graduate students and/or interns to be involved in the study.</li> </ul>
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Criterion 2. Methodology		Maximum Points: Weight: 10%
Elements		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project Objectives &amp; Timeline</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe the methodologies you will use to execute this study and achieve the project objectives.</li> <li>• Include details about the proposed process and timeline for data collection and deliverables</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protocols &amp; Process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide rationale for the proposed methodology, including, as appropriate, references to completed studies using the methods.</li> <li>• Identify how the methods can be useful related to visitor use in national parks.</li> <li>• New and innovated methods are welcome. Please provide support and rationale for proposed methods</li> </ul>	

Criterion 3. Budget		Maximum Points: Weight: 10%
Elements		
Completeness, Efficiency, and Detail of the Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a reasonable, accurate budget of costs for this project.</li> <li>• Explain and provide rationale for how money is allocated</li> <li>• Please acknowledge that you would be able to perform the project within the stated financial ceiling.</li> </ul>	

Criterion 4. Locality		Maximum Points: Weight: 5%
Elements		
Locality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How closely located is the university or organization to FOSU?</li> <li>• How much travel time and effort would be needed to deploy researchers to the study area?</li> </ul>	

Send all enquires and submit electronic proposals to Elizabeth Oliphant, Project Specialist by June 7, 2022.

Contact Information:

Elizabeth Oliphant, Project Specialist

[Elizabeth\\_Oliphant@nps.gov](mailto:Elizabeth_Oliphant@nps.gov)

720.576.0331

12795 W. Alameda Parkway

Lakewood, CO 80228