ALASKA REGION SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH PLANNING WORKSHOPS

1) **Purpose of Workshops**
    a) Questions to be addressed by workshop participants.
        i) *"What are the most important social science issues for this part of Alaska and the NPS parks in it that require more research over the next 7-10 years?"*
        ii) *"What are the most important social science issues for the Alaska Region as a whole that require more research over the next 7-10 years?"*
2) **Workshop Process**
    a) Nominal Group Technique (NGT).
        i) NGT provides a way to generate ideas about needed research and to organize these ideas into a prioritized list.
        ii) Useful when the time for a meeting is limited, but when it is important that all ideas of a group be heard.
        iii) Ideal workshop size is 9-10. If over 15 participants, break into smaller working groups with additional facilitators and recorders.
        iv) Workshop duration of not more than 4 hours with time for short breaks.
    b) Steps in Nominal Group workshop.
        i) Introduce agenda, context, and desired outcomes.
        ii) Introduce facilitator, recorder, and participants.
            (1) Facilitator's role.
                (a) Describe and enforce ground rules.
                (b) Ensure that group works together and stays on task so members can participate fairly and efficiently and be committed to the outcome.
                (c) Ensure members listen to other points of view and speak with respect.
            (2) Recorder's role.
                (a) Write down exactly what is said.
                (b) Post all items in clearly written print.
            (3) Participants' role.
                (a) Contribute ideas of substance.
                (b) Listen to others and speak with respect.
                (c) Follow the ground rules and process.
3) **Description of Nominal Group Steps**
    a) Idea generation.
        i) Facilitator poses the first question.
            (1) Consider this part of the state and the NPS parks in it—what are the most important social science issues that require more research over the next 7-10 years?
                (a) Group members silently generate and write down responses.
    b) Idea collection.
        i) Responses recorded round robin, one idea from each participant until all are displayed on flipchart sheets.
    c) Idea clarification and refinement.
        i) Group members ask for clarification of ideas that may not be clear.
            (1) Originator elaborates on idea at request of group.
        ii) Group removes duplicate ideas, combines ideas, or revises ideas.
    d) Idea prioritization.
        i) Supporting stump speeches before voting.
            (1) Short, time-limited discussion, for example 90 seconds.

(2) Subject to time constraints, group size.
ii) Nominal voting process.
   (1) First round: Each member votes for up to 6 items as the most important research topics.
      (a) Done by placing adhesive dots next to items on the flipchart sheets.
   (2) Second round: For the most important first-round items, the group is asked two questions:
      (a) Can this research be done by the NPS alone?
      (b) If not, who should do it?
e) Process repeated for second question.
   i) *"What are the most important social science issues for the Alaska Region <u>as a whole</u> that require more research over the next 7-10 years?"*

PARTIAL LIST OF COMMON SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH ISSUES
"Social science" refers to anthropology, sociology, psychology, economics, geography, and political science. A partial list of common social science research issues in the NPS follows. The importance of these issues may vary between parks and regions.
- What is the economic impact of NPS units in a region?
- What effects do entrance fees have on park visitation?
- Where do park visitors come from and what other destinations are they visiting?
- How can directions and access to NPS units be improved?
- What is the spatial and temporal distribution of visitors to parks?
- What information sources do visitors use in planning trips to parks?
- What indicators should be monitored to protect visitor experiences?
- What is the capacity of parks or areas within parks for recreational use?
- How effective are interpretive programs in reducing damage by visitors to park resources?
- What are the impacts of agency regulations on visitor experiences in parks?
- How do local populations and visitors feel about resource management policies that might restrict some recreational uses of parks?
- What are visitors' attitudes and behavior toward alternative transportation systems in parks?
- What important natural and cultural resource management activities have occurred historically in and around parks?
- What subsistence activities have occurred and are occurring in and around parks?
- Are there conflicts between some recreational uses of parks and some traditional and customary uses?
- What proportion of residents in a region visit parks, and why do they visit?
- What proportion of residents in a region doesn't visit parks, and why don't they visit?
- How can underserved populations in a region become more engaged with NPS units?
- How do age and cultural diversity in a region affect visitation and use of NPS units?
- How do NPS units contribute to healthy lifestyles?
- What tools are available for predicting social trends for long-term park planning?
- What important land use trends are occurring around NPS units?
- How can public participation in NPS decision-making be improved?
- What factors affect NPS employee job satisfaction and retention?
- What factors affect NPS employee safety while on the job?
- How can visitor safety in parks be improved?