

Executive Summary

This visitor study report profiles a systematic random sample of Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area (NRRA) visitors during September 4-10 and 20-23, 2012. A total of 751 questionnaires were distributed to visitor groups. Of those, 474 questionnaires were returned, resulting in a 63.1% response rate.

Group size and type	Forty-four percent of visitor groups consisted of two people and 32% were in groups of four or more. Fifty-two percent of visitor groups consisted of family groups.
State of residence	United States visitors were from 21 states and comprised 99.6% of total visitation during the survey period, with 57% from Tennessee. Forty-four percent of visitor groups were residents of the area (within 50 miles of the park).
Year of first visit and frequency of visits	Sixty-five percent of visitors first visited the park in 2001-2012. Forty-four percent had visited five or more times in their lifetime, and for 36%, this was their first visit.
Age, gender, ethnicity, race, and educational level	Forty-eight percent of visitors were ages 46-65 years, 17% were 31-45 years old, 13% were 66 years or older, and 12% were ages 15 years or younger. Fifty-four percent of visitors were female. One percent were Hispanic or Latino. Ninety-six percent of visitors were White.
Awareness of park prior to visit	Prior to their visit, 69% of visitor groups were aware of food storage regulations in bear country at Big South Fork NRAA. During their visit, 66% of visitor groups learned about bear country food storage regulations from rangers, brochures, exhibits, or by other means.
Information sources	Most visitor groups (83%) obtained information about the park prior to their visit through friends/relatives/word of mouth (52%), previous visits (43%), and the park website (34%). Most visitors (92%) received the information they needed. Fifty-six percent of visitor groups would prefer to use the park website to obtain information for a future visit.
Park as destination	During the on-site interview, 75% of visitor groups said the park was their primary destination and 13% said the park was one of several destinations.
Primary reason for visiting the area	The most common primary reasons for visiting Big South Fork NRRA area among non-resident visitor groups were to visit the park (55%) and visit friends/relatives in the area (9%).
Reason why Big South Fork NRRA was chosen as destination	Sixty-two percent of visitor groups chose to visit the park because of the scenery and 37% visited because the park was the area that was closest to home.
Adequacy of directional signs to and within the park	Visitor groups rated directional signs in the following locations as "adequate": in the park (81%), on state highways (72%), in local communities (68%), and on interstates (57%).

Executive Summary (continued)

Transportation	Seventy-six percent of visitor groups used one vehicle to arrive at the park, while 14% used two vehicles.
Overnight stays	Forty-seven percent of visitor groups stayed overnight inside Big South Fork NRRRA or in the area (within 50 miles of the park). Of the visitor groups that stayed inside the park, 58% stayed one or two nights, and 52% RV/trailer/ tent camped in a developed campground. Of the visitor groups that stayed in the area, 62% stayed one or two nights, and 62% stayed in a lodge, hotel, rented condo/come, cabin, or B&B.
Length of visit	Of the visitor groups that spent less than 24 hours in the park, the average length of stay was 4 hours. Of the visitor groups that spent 24 hours or more, the average length of stay was 3.2 days. The average length of stay for all visitor groups was 30.1 hours, or 1.3 days.
Local attractions visited	Forty-five percent of visitor groups visited other local attractions on this visit. The local attractions most often visited included: Historic Stearns, KY (45%), Pickett State Rustic Park and Forest (34%), and Cumberland Falls State Resort Park (32%).
Sites visited	The most common places visited in the park were Bandy Creek Area (51%), Leatherwood Ford (32%), and East Rim Overlook (28%).
Activities on this visit and future visits	The most common activities on this visit were hiking/walking (54%), stopping at scenic overlooks (50%), horseback riding/wagon riding (25%), and picnicking (25%). The most common activities in which visitor groups would prefer to participate on future visits were stopping at scenic overlooks (69%), hiking/walking (67%), and picnicking (48%).
Information services and facilities	The information services and facilities most often used by visitor groups were trails (58%), assistance from park staff (49%), and park brochure/map (48%).
Protecting park attributes, resources, and experiences	The highest combined proportions of “extremely important” and “very important” ratings of protecting park attributes, resources, and experiences included clean water (95%), scenic views (94%), and natural features (93%).
Expenditures	The average visitor group expenditure (inside and outside the park within 50 miles of the park) was \$204. The median group expenditure (50% of groups spent more and 50% of groups spent less) was \$71. The average total expenditure per person (per capita) was \$88.
Methods of learning about the park	Most visitor groups (92%) were interested in learning about the park through self-guided methods with printed materials (64%), the park website (49%), outdoor exhibits (45%) and ranger-led programs (45%).
Overall quality	Most visitor groups (90%) rated the overall quality of facilities, services, and recreational opportunities at Big South Fork NRRRA as “very good” or “good.” One percent rated the quality as “poor.” No visitor groups rated the quality as “very poor.”

For more information about the Visitor Services Project, please contact the Park Studies Unit at the University of Idaho at (208) 885-2585 or the following website <http://www.psu.uidaho.edu>.