

Executive Summary

This report describes the results of two studies conducted at Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area, (also referred to as Boston Harbor Islands national park area) during July 22 – September 19, 2012. These studies represent the first phase of a comprehensive study of visitors to the park.

The objectives of the first study, a counting methods study, were 1) to investigate different methods that would provide accurate estimates of Boston Harbor Islands national park area visitation statistics; 2) to investigate and provide the park with multipliers for different counting methods and establish visitation baselines; and 3) to make recommendations on counting methods for the park. Table 1 summarizes the findings of the counting methods study. (This table is also presented as Table 12 on page 24).

Total visitation to Boston Harbor Islands national park area is equal to the sum of visitation to all sites. The unit of analysis is number of visits. This is not the same as the number of visitors, as one person may visit multiple sites on one day or camp overnight for multiple days.

The park used electronic pedestrian counters and pneumatic vehicle counters to estimate visitation at sites throughout the park. Counters may miss some visitors or count them more than once due to technical or environmental factors. Observational studies were conducted to confirm the accuracy of counters. For each counter, a multiplier was computed to adjust the counter number so that it accurately reflected the observed number of visitors. Table 1 shows the multiplier for each site. (See page 5 for a discussion of multipliers and how to account for error margins).

The objectives of the second study, a self-reporting customer satisfaction survey, were 1) to provide a profile of visitors to Boston Harbor Islands national park area; and 2) to evaluate their perceptions of current recreation opportunities, quality of information provided, and satisfaction with customer services. Table 2 summarizes the visitor characteristics collected during the customer satisfaction study.

Table 1. Multiplier for daily visitation to each park site

Site	Multiplier
Webb Memorial State Park	Number on pedestrian counter x 1.3
Nut Island	Number on vehicle counter x 2.8
Long Island	Number of tour participants
Deer Island	Number of visitors to Webb Memorial State Park x 1.25
Spectacle Island	Number on pedestrian counter x 1.9 - 10
Georges Island	Number on pedestrian counter x 0.87 + charter boat pier counter
Peddocks Island	<i>More observations needed to estimate multiplier</i>
Grape Island	Number on pedestrian counter
Lovells Island	Number on pedestrian counter
Bumpkin Island	Number of visitors to Grape Island
Thompson Island	Number as recorded by cooperating partner
Outer Islands (Green, Calf, Little Calf, Little Brewster, Outer Brewster, Middle Brewster, Graves, Shag Rocks, Great Brewster)	<i>No count obtained</i>
Hingham Harbor Islands (Langlee, Ragged, Sarah, Button, and Slate)	<i>Logbook installed at Langlee. Observational study needed to compute proportion of visitors using logbook (multiplier)</i>
Other islands (Raccoon, Rainsford, Sheep, Snake)	<i>No count obtained</i>
Pavilion	Number of visitors counted by rangers (8am to 6pm) x 10.2
Worlds End	<i>No count obtained</i>

Table 2. Summary of visitor characteristics

Group size and type	Forty percent of visitors were in groups of two, and 32% were in groups of three or four. Forty-four percent of visitor groups consisted of family groups. Fifty-nine percent of groups did not include children.
State or country of residence	United States visitors were from 40 states and comprised 92% of total visitation during the survey period, with 79% from Massachusetts. International visitors were from 25 countries and comprised 8% of total visitation, with 28% from Canada.
Frequency of visits	Sixty-four percent of visitors were visiting for the first time.
Gender, age, education	Fifty-seven percent of visitors were female. Less than one percent of visitors were ages 15 years or younger, 40% were 31-50 years old, 13% were 66 or older. Forty-nine percent of visitors had a graduate degree.
Race, ethnicity	Five percent of visitors were Hispanic/Latino. Ninety-three percent were White. Three percent were Black or African American, and 3% were Asian.
Awareness of park prior to visit	Thirty-nine percent of visitors were aware that Boston Harbor Islands is part of the national park system; 22% were aware that Boston Harbor Islands national park area consists of 34 islands and peninsulas.
Information prior to visit	Sixty-one percent of visitors obtained information about the park prior to their visit; for 51% the source of information was living in the local area. Sixty-two percent would use the park website prior to a future visit.
Sites visited	The most visited site in the park was Georges Island with 81% of visitors, followed by Spectacle Island with 51% of visitors.
Activities	The most common activities were walking/hiking trails and beaches (72%), sightseeing (55%), and touring historical/natural sites (55%). On a future visit, thirty-two percent of visitors were interested in walking/hiking trails and beaches, and 23% were interested in touring historical/natural sites.
Information received during visit	The information most commonly received by visitors was about the ferry and other means to access Boston Harbor Islands (28%), and visitor opportunities and activities (27%).
Overall quality	Most visitor groups (95%) rated the overall quality of facilities, services, and recreational opportunities at Boston Harbor Islands national park area as “very good” or “good”. One percent of groups rated the overall quality as “poor.”
