

**Visitor Services Project**  
**New River Gorge National River**  
**Report Summary**

- This report describes the results of a visitor study at New River Gorge National River during July 23-29, 1992. A total of 460 questionnaires were distributed and 379 returned, an 82% response rate.
- This report profiles New River Gorge National River visitors. A separate appendix has visitors' comments about their visit; this report and the appendix contain a comment summary.
- Visitors were often in family groups (75%). Forty-four percent of visitors were 36-60 years old; 16% were aged 15 or younger. Most (55%) were first time visitors to New River Gorge National River.
- Visitors from foreign countries comprised 2% of the visitation and all of them were from Canada. Twenty-eight percent of U.S. citizens came from West Virginia, with smaller proportions from many other states.
- Fifty-three percent of the visitors spent two hours or less at New River Gorge. Of the visitors who spent more than one day at New River Gorge National River, 84% spent three days or less.
- Visitors most often used previous visits (43%), advice from friends and relatives (38%) and highway signs (27%) as sources of information about the park. Thirty-nine percent of visitors chose sightseeing and 32% chose seeing the gorge bridge as their primary reason for visiting the park.
- Sightseeing (91%), hiking (28%) and visiting historic sites (26%) were the most common activities visitors mentioned they participated in at New River Gorge National River.
- On the day of their visit, visitors started their trips most often from Beckley, Charleston, and Fayetteville, West Virginia. Beckley, Charleston and Princeton West Virginia were the destinations most often mentioned by visitors.
- Sixty-two percent of visitors did not spend the night in the area during their visit to New River Gorge National River. Sixty percent of the visitors who did spend the night in the area stayed in a motel/hotel.
- The most used visitor services were the visitor center exhibits (68%), park folder/map (37%) and bulletin boards (34%). The park newspaper, park/folder map, visitor center exhibits and ranger led walk/talk received the highest quality ratings.
- White water activities, coal mining and nature study were mentioned by visitors as the brochures they used most. Nature study and coal mining brochures were rated by visitors as the most useful.
- Visitors made many additional comments.

For more information about the Visitor Services Project, please contact  
Dr. Gary E. Machlis, Sociology Project Leader, University of Idaho Cooperative Park Studies Unit,  
College of Forestry, Wildlife and Range Sciences,  
Moscow, Idaho 83843 or call (208)885-7129.