

**GUIDELINES FOR
REPORTING RECREATION VISITATION
Bureau of Land Management
May 29, 2001**

I. NEW EMPHASIS ON REPORTING VISITOR USE

Bureau recreation specialists should make every attempt to provide reasonable and consistent “recreational visits” estimates in the Recreation Management Information System. While it is not reasonable, nor feasible to accurately “count” the millions of public land visitors, these guidelines are intended to provide field offices with a common set of principles to follow when exercising their best professional judgement on visitation. Guidelines will be established on which BLM visitors should be counted as “recreation visits” and will provide guidelines to help specialist avoid duplicate reporting of visits to public lands.

A. Recreation Visits

“Recreation visits” are those visits which include the entry of persons onto lands or waters administered by the BLM for pursuit of recreational experiences. The applicable rule is that one entrance per individual per day to public lands is reportable as a visit. However, a visitor going from BLM area to BLM area *may* be reported as separate visits as long as the areas visited are independently managed units of the BLM, and not separate parts of the same management area.

The complexity of the BLM managed areas and the diversity of their surrounding environments may easily result in conditions that could involve the inappropriate duplicate counts of recreational visits. There are various situations that can lead to duplicate or inappropriate reporting of visits:

1. Recreation visitors going **to and from outside locations** (campers in need of additional supplies or in search of goods and services outside the management area).
2. Recreation visitors going to **different recreation sites within the same management area** that may involve crossing non-BLM lands.
3. Recreation visitors staying outside the management unit and making **multiple daily visits**.

GUIDELINES TO REPORTING RECREATION VISITATION
Bureau of Land Management
May 18, 2001

B. Visits Not Reportable in RMIS as Recreational

There has been inconsistent reporting of “visits” in RMIS, which has included both “non-reportable” visitors on public lands and “visitors” we contact located “off-public lands.” These people should not be counted as “recreational visitors.”

1. Public Land Visits, but not recreational in nature.

- a. **Commuter or regular highway traffic** traveling through the public lands on Interstate, State, or County highways and roads.

Example: Traffic on Interstate 15 through the Virgin River Gorge between St. George, Utah and Las Vegas.

- b. **Brief incidental entries** into a public lands by passing traffic (vehicular or pedestrian) using BLM administered land, roads, or walkways, if not otherwise visiting public lands.

Example: A quick stop to stretch legs at a highway turnout without facilities on public lands.

- c. Persons going **to and from in-holdings** across significant parts of public lands.

Example: A rancher who must travel on public lands between his base property and town across public lands.

- d. Any civilian activity as part of or incidental **to the pursuit of a gainful occupation.**

Example: Permitted vendors engaged in the sale of goods and services on BLM lands.

- e. **Employees or volunteers** of the BLM who are performing their duty assignments.

Example: Wilderness Rangers patrolling their areas.

- f. **Government personnel** (other than BLM employees) with business on public lands

GUIDELINES TO REPORTING RECREATION VISITATION
Bureau of Land Management
May 18, 2001

Example: State Game and Fish Department conducting game surveys or checking hunting and fishing licences.

- g. **BLM contractors, concessioners, cooperating associations** and their employees, and volunteers.

Example: Concessioners living and along the Colorado River. Contractors working on a BLM projects and residing on public lands as part of their employment.

- h. **BLM leasees or mining claimants** on extended stays on public lands.
Example: Cabin leases which are more “residential” than “recreational” and mining claimants which occupied BLM lands under other than recreational regulations should be excluded from recreational visits.

- i. **Research activities** conducted on public lands.

Example: Scientists or universities under contract to BLM to conduct baseline studies.

- j. Temporary or permanent **members in households of personnel** otherwise included in this definition whose residence is on public lands.

Example: Family members of employee living at a remote station on public lands.

- k. **Citizens using BLM buildings or sites**, located on public lands, for civic or local government business, or attending public hearings

Example: Public hearing at BLM conference room.

2. Visits occurring off public land areas.

- a. **General public visiting BLM buildings** which are not located on public land.

Example: Visitors stopping at the State Office and requesting any information for future public land use.

- b. General public contacting BLM at **events not located** on public land.

Example: Visitors stopping at the BLM booth at the State Fairgrounds.

GUIDELINES TO REPORTING RECREATION VISITATION
Bureau of Land Management
May 18, 2001

II. DEFINITIONS

The following should be used to determine the appropriate categories of data to collect, estimate, and report:

- A. "Visitor"** is an individual who generates one or more "visits" over a given time period to public land or BLM offices or contact stations.

Discussion: Though "visitor" and "visit" are often used interchangeably, they are slightly different in use in the profession. A specific person may come to a specific site several times during the year and just be considered one specific "visitor." For example, some economic studies, especially related to fish and wildlife related recreation activities, provide a total "per visitor expenditure" for "all visits during a calendar year."

In terms of collecting data for RMIS, BLM does not attempt to account for use of public lands by specific "visitors."

- B. "Visit"** is the entry of any person onto lands or related waters administered by the BLM. for any time period. A same day reentry, negligible transit, and entry to another recreation site, or detached portion of the management area on the same day are considered a single "visit."

Discussion: "Visits" are one of the required reporting elements of the BLM and other federal land management agencies. Every effort must be made to analyze visitation, based on knowledge of visitor trends, for your major agency land units and make adjustments in the counting of visits, as appropriate and practical. However, in conformance with other federal agencies, visits to separate, but contiguous NLCS or Recreation Management Areas (RMA) may be counted as separate visits.

"Visits" are entered into RMIS as a basic unit of measure. They may be entered to a specific site, a designated area or corridor, or in association with a special recreation permit. Every attempt should be made to make sure that the visit is enter only into one of those choices within a single RMA.

- C. "Visitor hour"** is the presence of one or more persons in an area for continuous intermittent, or simultaneous periods of time aggregating one hour (i.e.; one person for one hour; two persons for 30 minutes each; or 10 persons for 6 minutes each).

Discussion: "Visitor Hour" is the other basic unit of measure to be entered into RMIS. It is accomplished by developing and applying a specific field generated formulas which establishes the "average visitor hours" for that visit and aggregates "total visitor hours"

GUIDELINES TO REPORTING RECREATION VISITATION
Bureau of Land Management
May 18, 2001

for the “visits” which are being recorded.

D. "Visitor day" is equivalent to twelve visitor hours.

Discussion: “Visitor day” is a basic unit of measure between federal agencies. It is calculated in RMIS by dividing recorded visitor hours by 12. Field Specialist do not enter “visitor days,” but they are calculated and reported in the Standard Reports.

E. “Participant” is a visitor on a single visit who engages in one or several recreational activities on public land.

Discussion: “Participants” are determined by the formula established in RMIS by the field specialist in RMIS. For the visits reported in any one RMIS journal entry, the field specialist selects a formula which expresses the percentage of those visits which participate in one or more activities. Only one activity is required to be entered, and *the rule of thumb is to keep the number of activities selected down to the major or unique activities which occur for those recorded visits.*

In developing formulas for RMIS, *professionals should be careful to make sure that formulas not get so complicated, that they lose track of the amount of time they are attributing to those visits.* It is possible to construct a formula for a day use area, which includes a variety of activities, each with a different average time, that aggregated far exceeds the amount of time the site is available to the public to use the site.

There is no federal reporting requirement to identify all of the recreational activities which occur on public lands, but use of participants is valuable when tracking specific user groups, activities, or when communicating with constituency groups about where or how much of their favorite activity occurs on public lands.