

W&S MEMO

To: Wild & Scenic Stakeholder Group

From: Floatboating AdHoc Committee

Date: January 23, 2020

RE: Recommendation for on “Not Likely to Return” Floatboating ORV Indicator

1. Page 15: Replace provisional ORV Indicator with:

A. “Not Likely To Return” ORV Indicator:

Protect the existing range and quality of the outstanding floatboating opportunities (without implying the mirroring of any specific hydrology), as measured by the *not likely to return* percentage values and frequency described below. Failure to meet the ORV Indicator occurs when divergences exist in any three of the last five consecutive years. Divergences in one or more segments during a given year will be treated as a single year toward the three-out-of-five-year frequency criteria.

Table 1. Percentage Values* for *Not Likely to Return* for each year type.

	Driest**	Dry Typical	Wet Typical**	Wettest
Segment 5	--	6.1%	--	3.1%
Segment 6****	--	2.4%	--	--
Segment 7	4.0%	2.7%	--	3.2%

*Percentage values are based on the upper 95% confidence interval for floatboating survey responses that indicate “will not” or “unlikely” to return.

**There have not been “wet typical” conditions in the years in which surveys have been conducted.

***All percentages will be augmented and updated as more data is collected.

****No data was collected on Segment 6 in 2013. In 2014/2015 (wettest), no single respondent intercepted on Segment 6 indicated “unlikely to return.”

Rationale

Visitor surveys to date have revealed that visitor’s willingness to return is influenced by several factors, including weather, water levels, crowding, scenery, or facilities – not all of which can be controlled or influenced by the SG Plan. The ORV Indicator is measured by criteria based on survey responses indicating that floatboaters are “not likely to return.” To date, this has been

based on visitor intercept survey responses to the question “Based on your experience today, how likely would you be to return to this section of river.” Responses of “0% - will not return” and “25% - unlikely” are combined to determine the percent of people that are *not likely to return*.

The ORV Indicator recognizes that visitors have a huge range of expectations and experiences. Survey response data can provide a scientifically valid evaluation of human responses to recreational experiences, provided that surveys, intercept techniques, and statistical analyses meet scientific standards. Survey response data on *not likely to return* incorporates all of the elements of the floatboating experience that may be subject to influence by the stakeholder group and/or federal agencies, including scenery, facilities, crowding, and water levels.

Percentage Values

The upper 95% confidence level may be interpreted to mean that the likelihood of surpassing the percentage values, when the true number actually falls outside the percentage values, is 5%, or only expected to occur in 5 out of 100 survey records.

Segment 4: Percentage values are not currently recommended for Segment 4, in view of the absence of current data for this segment. This would not foreclose a decision by the SG to develop percentage values for this segment in the future.

Monitoring

Visitor surveys shall be conducted on an annual basis, within allowable budgetary constraints. The annual collection may be guided initially by the Intercept Survey Protocol, however other survey methods could be used as approved by the SG. The Survey Protocol Appendix may be amended, as approved by the GC, which can be adopted by the SG independent of the Plan (see Appendix).

It is possible that other methods may be more cost-effective and expedient in the future. It is recommended that the SG be willing to consider working with other groups, and to use different techniques, to collect data if needed in response to budget limitations. Depending on available funds, the SG could consider data collection at different locations, with different timing, and with different technologies, that would provide comparable statistical reliability. Monitoring would be sensitive to “over-surveying.”

It is also recommended that the SG continue to support annual data collection on the four key factors that may affect likelihood of return (facilities, crowding, water levels, and scenery). In addition, it is recommended that the SG continue to collect data that will allow for differentiation between responses from commercial and private visitors, and between responses from boaters and those who are float-fishing. Even though this data will not be broken out for purposes of the ORV Indicator, it will allow the SG to better understand why likelihood of return responses are changing and to formulate recommendations to address emerging issues that are affecting likelihood to return.

Collection of visitor data on the *not likely to return* indicator can be structured in a manner that avoids potential survey methodology problems with “visitor displacement.” Visitor displacement

occurs when some visitors do not return because they are dissatisfied with the quality and range of the recreation experience, and then those users are replaced by newcomers who have different expectations and are satisfied with the lower quality experience. To avoid “displacement” bias, the SG, at its discretion and subject to budgetary limitations, recommends gathering displacement information to further explain intercept survey findings. Such displacement monitoring should follow procedures similar to those set forth in a Displacement Survey Protocol Appendix, prepared for the SG, which may be amended and adopted by the SG independent of the Plan.

Floatboating Evaluation Tasks

It is recommended that a new or existing committee be tasked with conducting a periodic evaluation of the ORV Indicator percentage values and *not likely to return* survey data, paired with consideration of data on key factors (discussed below), pursuant to a formal scheduled process that includes:

- The committee will calendar an annual meeting for each January to review available survey results and data inputs on other key factors collected during the previous monitoring season;
- The committee will formulate recommendations for consideration by the GC at its annual meeting in March. These recommendations may address follow-up actions (e.g., no action needed; re-prioritization of existing survey efforts recommended; additional data collection warranted on new factors; input needed for Cooperative Measures; additional coordination desired with BLM/USFS; other management recommendations to SG).
- The committee will provide a summary memo on whether there was a percentage value divergence in the subject year, in time for due consideration at the SG’s March meeting.¹ If a percentage value divergence occurred in the subject year, the committee will make a recommendation to the GC as to whether the divergence was due to circumstances that were not under the control of, or influenced by, the SG Plan. The GC can determine by a 5/6 Interest Group vote at its June meeting that a divergence was due to circumstances that were not under the control of, or influenced by, the SG Plan. A determination by the GC that any divergence in the subject year was due to such circumstances would serve to inform, but would not necessarily be dispositive of, any future determination by the GC that the subject year (in which a divergence occurred) should not count toward the three out of five consecutive years ORV Indicator standard.

Frequency criteria are an integral part of the ORV Indicator. Accordingly, any first or second year divergence in any three out of five consecutive years would not be information used to require new standards, restrictions, or action by the SG. First and second year divergences may be used by the SG to inform Cooperative Measures and monitoring plans.

The SG has developed these criteria solely for use under the SG Plan. Notwithstanding the above, nothing in the SG Plan shall preclude or limit the use of any data regardless of whether such data has been used in the negotiation of criteria under the SG Plan. *See* SG

Plan Section III.A.2, at 14; these Floatboating ORV Indicators, like all actions of the SG, are subject to the 2015 Memorandum of Agreement among the Stakeholders.

¹ It is anticipated that year-type determinations for the annual review in March will be based on best available USGS data at the time, which may include provisional or estimated data. The data review group will use provisional year-type classifications to make a preliminary recommendation on whether a divergence within the prior year is due to circumstances under control of the plan. Final evaluation of the ORV Indicator shall be based only on year-types derived from approved USGS data.