

Q&A – Will visitation numbers be provided on a monthly basis?

Visitation numbers (monthly) will not be available in the new system like the previous version. With the VERS Modernization, several new methods for obtaining visitation were included along with the flexibility in the system to account for unusual setups (embedded PSAs and multisite PSAs) of our recreation areas. Because the visitation methods rely on other databases identified below and information in those databases are not available until after the fiscal year,

- R1S – transaction data to include visitor counts, average number of campers, average length of stay, and occupancy rates (overnight visitation)
- CEFMs – revenues (overnight visitation)
- NRM ASSESSMENT – PSAs, Facility Counts, and Shoreline Management Info (both overnight and day use visitation)

visitation will be posted to the NRM Gateway VERS Page on an annual basis during the first quarter of the following fiscal year. It will eventually be uploaded into OMBIL and will be available for RecAssessment in January.

For the many methods for obtaining visitation (overnight – R1S, CEFMS, Free Camping, Outgrant Overnight and day use – meters, estimated method, tally counts for VCs, provided by 3rd parties, and dispersed use), the only one which was considered to be presented monthly was the physical meter method. But even providing those does not provide the whole picture for the recreation area or project depending on its setup. The VERS Team discussed in length with the VERS CATT about providing a tool for the field to use to take their meter reading to the visitation number. The decision was not to provide the tool because of overwhelming concern with the field and other offices using the tool inappropriately, not understanding the whole picture, and providing incorrect and incomplete information for reports, etc.

Process and timeline for calculating visitation:

1. All meter readings including tallies and provided by 3rd party must be entered into the VERS online tool by October 15.
2. During October, data is collected from other systems for utilization into the fiscal year visitation. Once complete, visitation is calculated for that fiscal year.
3. Fiscal year visitation is provided to the VERS CATT in November for quality control and assurance. VERS CATT members review and reach out to the field for questions on data entered.
4. Issues identified by the VERS CATT are processed and then visitation is reran for the fiscal year in entirety.
5. Our goal is to provide visitation reports before the December holidays and these will be posted on the NRM Gateway – VERS – Visitation. This will allow Corps managed visitation to be available for the budget development/RecAssessment in January.

Since the beginning of the VERS Modernization, numerous issues have been encountered from not having all PSAs setup with methods, not utilizing the correct methods for the areas, not entering meter readings in a timely manner, system not being ready for entries due to numerous corrections each year, constant changing of information, R1S data report issues, CEFMs report issues, etc. But with each year, these issues become less and less and we now have a more stable system with the latest load factors.