

# Mission Area Three

## Recreation

**T**wo Outcome Goals state the core intent of the Recreation Mission Area:

- ◆ Improve the quality and diversity of recreation experiences and visitor enjoyment on DOI lands
- ◆ Expand seamless recreation opportunities with partners

### Benefits

Recreation is a vitally important part of Interior's mission. More than 22 million people live within 25 miles of Interior lands. Accessible and nearby, public land is quickly becoming America's backyard. The land we manage contains multiple recreational opportunities for individual enrichment through interaction with nature. Recreation activities are diverse—from off-road vehicles to contemplative wilderness experiences; from "edutainment" to work/play volunteerism.

Interior maintains and manages thousands of recreation areas. Close to 500 million people from around the world spend time in recreational activities on land managed by DOI. To the greatest extent possible, Interior works among its own Bureaus and with our partners to provide a seamless and enjoyable experience. Recreation opportunities can vary substantially depending on the impact on the resources, land management legal authorities, and the mission of the Bureau.

Interior's stewardship activities devoted to recreation are shared by the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service and Bureau of Reclamation. They oversee our national parks, wildlife refuges, water recreation areas and public land recreation sites. Opportunities to visit and enjoy these natural resources are a benefit enjoyed by the public through the work in this Mission Area.

**Discussion**

The representative Strategic Plan measure chosen for the Recreation Mission Area is visitor satisfaction, which is measured through surveys. Surveys are typically distributed when visitors enter land or parks managed by NPS, FWS, or BLM. Questions are site-specific, so visitors might be asked about their various experiences, the ease in navigating through different sites or exhibits, if maps or permits were readily available, if park rangers were helpful, whether they gained a greater appreciation or understanding about the park, and the degree of overall satisfaction with their visit. Answers to the survey questions help identify and target areas where the Department can improve.

**GOAL: Improve the quality and diversity of recreation experiences and visitor enjoyment on DOI lands**

**Representative Strategic Plan Measure: Percent of visitors satisfied with the quality of their experience**

FIGURE 1-41

**Performance vs. Cost**

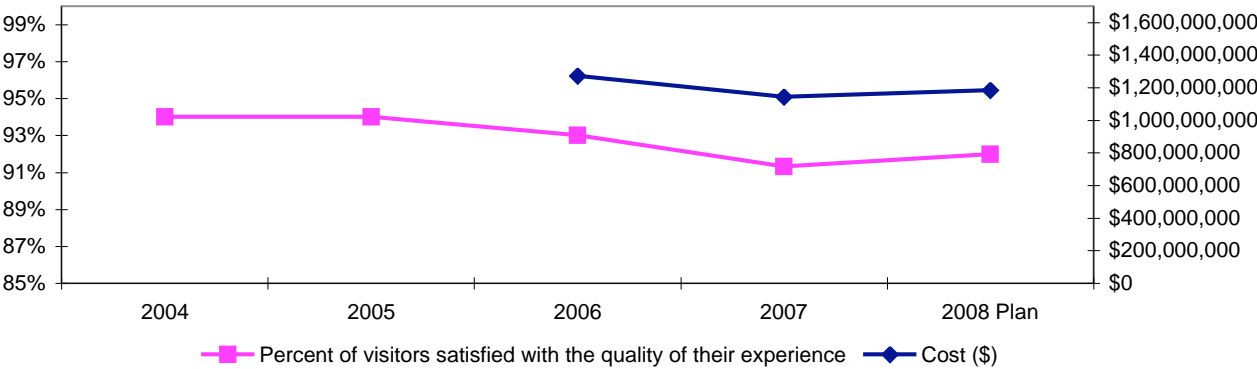


FIGURE 1-42

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008 Plan
Percent of visitors satisfied with the quality of their experience	94%	94%	93%	91%	92%
Cost (\$)	Not Available	Not Available	1,273,925,343	1,144,335,910	1,183,143,898

Visitor satisfaction is measured through surveys handed out to visitors by three different Bureaus with slightly different objectives. At the Department level there was a decline of 2 percent in measured visitor satisfaction this past year, although performance remains in the 90th percentile.

Fish and Wildlife Service has maintained a constant visitor satisfaction rate of 85 percent from 2005 through 2007, which is considered adequate for refuges where the primary purpose is to protect wildlife and habitat.

The National Park Service views the public as their customers. For NPS, visitor satisfaction maintains record levels. From 2004 to 2006, nearly 96 percent of park visitors rated the overall quality of services as good or very good. In 2007, satisfaction decreased only slightly to 95 percent, which is not considered significant. With the upcoming centennial of the establishment of the National Park Service, the President has called for the further enhancement of the national parks to prepare them for another century of conservation and enjoyment. Through a Centennial Initiative, the President's FY 2008

## National Park Centennial Initiative

In August 2006, President Bush launched his National Park Centennial Initiative. To shape the initiative, the NPS asked people, through a series of listening sessions and online, to share their hopes for national parks; considered 6,000 comments; wrote centennial and performance goals to meet the needs of parks and future generations; set criteria for centennial proposals; and worked with Congress to introduce centennial legislation.



The guiding report, *The Future of America's National Parks* describes five centennial goals:

- ◆ **Stewardship** – Lead America and the world in preserving and restoring treasured resources
- ◆ **Environmental Leadership** – Demonstrate environmental leadership to the nation
- ◆ **Recreational Experience** – National parks are superior recreational destinations where visitors have fun, explore nature and history, find inspiration, and improve health and wellness

- ◆ **Education** – Foster exceptional learning opportunities that connect people to parks
- ◆ **Professional Excellence** – Demonstrate management excellence worthy of the treasures entrusted to our care

In honor of the NPS 91<sup>st</sup> anniversary, Secretary Kempthorne and Director Bomar announced a highly anticipated list of 201 eligible centennial proposals for 2008.

The eligible proposals were evaluated by teams of NPS professionals and represent a total investment of \$369.9 million – \$215.9 million from partners and \$154 million federal. Moving forward on these proposals requires action by Congress on centennial legislation and appropriations.



*The photos show the Secretary with the National Park Centennial Initiative Report, The Future of America's National Parks, and Director Bomar with students from the Class of 2016 who demonstrated the interactive version of the report.*

budget includes augmented annual funding and a special fund to match contributions from individuals, foundations, businesses, and the private sector up to \$100 million per year over the next ten years. With this influx of Centennial Initiative funding, we expect NPS visitor satisfaction to rise over the next few years. Funding will be used to hire 3,000 more seasonal park rangers, guides, and maintenance workers; improve landscapes; repair historic structures; and restore native habitats. With visitor satisfaction already in the mid-90th percentile, the upward potential for improvement is limited. Our expectations are tempered by this diminishing marginal return on investment.

The Bureau of Land Management manages vast acres of multiple-use land. The BLM reports a decrease from their 2006 performance of 97 percent to 93 percent in FY 2007. The decrease may not be significant. Visitor satisfaction is harder to assess on

BLM lands overall, as surveys are given primarily to those visitors who pay an entrance fee.

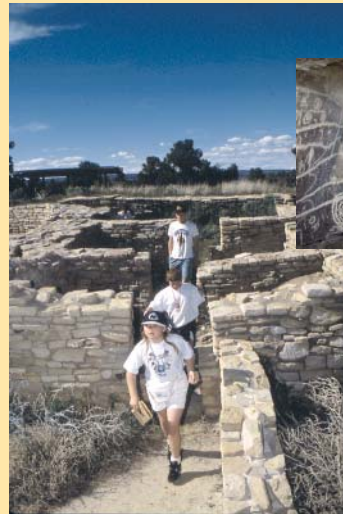
The success of the BLM's recreation and visitor services program is the direct result of developing and maintaining an extensive array of partnerships covering all aspects of the program. These partnerships include cooperative efforts with other governmental entities at all levels, working with interest and user groups, maintaining an active volunteer program, and working with communities and tourism interests. The recreation program has been successful in engaging volunteers, accounting for almost half of the Bureau's volunteer hours and nearly doubling the recreation workforce to serve visitors, maintain facilities, and restore resources. In 2006–2007, the BLM recreation program logged in over 575,000 volunteer hours at a value of \$9.5 million.

### Archeological Site Bonanza

#### Canyon of the Ancients National Monument

Technically, the Monument has no historic structures. However, there are 5,000 documented archaeological sites at the Monument, with 20,000 to 30,000 predicted. Currently, about 60 sites are regularly monitored by volunteer site stewards and BLM staff. Some 3.5 million artifacts are curated at the Anasazi Heritage Center museum.

The 165,000-acre National Monument in southwestern Colorado contains some of the richest, best-preserved evidence of Native American culture in the United States. Volunteers assist in literally every program and aspect of operations at the Monument, including management and monitoring of archaeological sites, as well as preparing artifacts for storage and research at the museum. Serving out on the landscape, volunteer Site Stewards monitor cultural resource site conditions. Volunteers assist in closing user-made routes through sensitive cultural sites, document road conditions, and monitor wilderness study areas. Volunteers also cut and pile brush to



eliminate a serious fire threat to a site containing hundreds of rock art images (petroglyphs).

More than 260 regular volunteers annually contribute an average 10,000–

13,000 hours, effectively doubling BLM staff time with an in-kind value of nearly \$200,000 per year. These volunteer opportunities create the potential for everyone to become an advocate for America's cultural heritage.



*The photos show visitors and volunteers to the Canyon and one of the many historic sites. At bottom right, is Lynn Scarlett, Deputy Secretary, with John Nau, Chairman of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.*

The population growth rate of the West affects management of the BLM recreation and visitor services program. The populations of eight out of the twelve Western States have grown over 50 percent, with the largest growth centered in urban areas, and the demand for outdoor recreation

in the West has increased by 65 percent in the last 30 years. The extraordinary size of the uniquely American public estate, combined with the vast diversity of the BLM outdoor recreation setting, attracts 56 million visitors annually.