

THE
FUTURE
OF
AMERICA'S
NATIONAL
PARKS

First Annual
Centennial Strategy for

Voyageurs National Park

August 2007

CENTENNIAL INITIATIVE



Site: VOYA

Year: 2007

Vision Statement

In 2016, Voyageurs National Park will celebrate the 45th anniversary of its authorization as a national park - Minnesota's only national park. Located on the Minnesota-Ontario border, Voyageurs was established to preserve the outstanding scenery, geological conditions, and historic waterway system of the voyageurs. This water-based park encourages visitors to leave their cars behind and get in a boat to truly experience the park.

As the National Park Service's centennial approaches, Voyageurs National Park is embarking on a new era of cooperation and partnership. Over the next ten years, Voyageurs National Park plans to partner with the City of International Falls to design and operate a Voyageurs Heritage Center in this gateway community. This Centennial Challenge project will complement the park's existing visitor centers and will provide a multi-media visitor experience based on the globally important northern fur trade.

Voyageurs National Park has four gateway communities with mainland entrances. Three of the four gateways have a visitor center. Voyageurs wants to complete the vision for the park and develop a modest visitor center complex in the gateway community of Crane Lake. This complex could be a multi-agency facility because Crane Lake is a gateway for the park and Superior National Forest.

The park will strive to maintain a high level of visitor satisfaction by seeking funding for the construction of additional visitor use and destination sites. In addition, the park will continue to request funding for a large tour boat for Rainy Lake to expand visitor services. Voyageurs will continue to build its relationships with partner organizations like Voyageurs National Park Association and the emerging Destination Voyageurs National Park as a means to protect and promote the park. The park will also seek to expand its volunteer program in innovative ways.

Voyageurs hopes to establish a multi-partner research institute near the park for the study of aquatic and watershed ecosystems in Voyageurs National Park and the surrounding region.

As the centennial approaches, the park hopes to fill core positions that will restore its education and trail programs, expand the interpretation program, and establish an aquatics resources program. With core operations restored, the park can reach out to youth, provide needed recreational opportunities, and maintain the assets and natural and cultural resources that make Voyageurs National Park a national treasure.

Park/ Superintendent/ Program Manager

Kate L. Miller

Site: VOYA

STEWARDSHIP

Provide inspiring, safe, and accessible places for people to enjoy - the standard to which all other park systems aspire.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

To meet the needs of day and overnight users, Voyageurs has proposed a line-item construction project that would allow the park to build the remaining sites planned for development. This project proposal also calls for the development of fifteen visitor destinations with day use facilities and interpretive media. These visitor destinations highlight the park's natural and cultural resources and provide safe and accessible places for visitors to enjoy and learn about the park. In ten years, the park would also seek to develop a full-service recreational vehicle (RV) campground on the waterfront with docking. The park does not have a RV campground.

60% of the park's visitors come in the summer. Up to 40% of these visitors arrive without a boat, which greatly limits their park experience. By 2016 the park hopes to have a 49-passenger tour boat on Rainy Lake. Plans and specifications for the boat are ready. The park will pursue funding through the Alternative Transportation for Parks and Public Lands program. This tour boat would accommodate group tours and school groups. The park's gateway community of International Falls and Koochiching County support the tour boat initiative.

The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS

Site: VOYA

STEWARDSHIP

Improve the condition of park resources and assets.

Rehabilitate high-priority historic buildings to good condition, and help communities to preserve their history through programs like Preserve America.

The park hopes to have all high-priority historic buildings in maintainable condition and a routine maintenance program for these structures in place by 2016. In addition, the park wants to develop some of these historic sites as visitor destinations with interpretive media and visitor facilities (e.g., dock access, picnic table). These destinations will help tell the area's significant story.

The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS

Restore native habitats by controlling invasive species and reintroducing key plant and animal species.

Voyageurs National Park will strive to reduce the existing invasive populations of Canada thistle, common tansy, and wild parsnip to a level that can be maintained with annual or biennial treatment. The park will also strive to treat new infestations of exotic species before they get out of control.

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Improve high-priority assets to acceptable condition, as measured by the Facility Condition Index.

Starting in October 2008, Voyageurs National Park will begin implementing its new Park Asset Management Plan. Based on this plan, the park will seek project funding to improve high-priority assets to acceptable condition.

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Improve the natural resources in parks, as measured by the vital signs developed under the Natural Resource Challenge.

By 2008, Voyageurs National Park will have started or finished gathering baseline data sets for all identified park vital signs. Through 2016, Voyageurs will continue monitoring the park's vital signs according to established protocols.

Voyageurs will develop and implement a Natural Resources Stewardship Plan that defines desired future conditions for the park and guides management through 2016.

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Site: VOYA

STEWARDSHIP

Improve the condition of park resources and assets.

Complete all cultural resource inventories for designated priority resources.

By 2016, Voyageurs National Park will complete all cultural landscape inventories and continue progress on inventorying ethnographic resources. The park will strive to keep condition assessments for archeological resources up to date and hopes to have no collections backlog. Voyageurs will continue to seek funding for cultural landscape reports.

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Site: VOYA

STEWARDSHIP

Set the standard of excellence in urban park landscape design and maintenance.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

The proposed Voyageurs Heritage Center Centennial Challenge project would use the natural features of the planned development area to create an urban park setting that immerses visitors in the water and woods landscape that exemplifies Voyageurs National Park. This project would set a standard of excellence in landscape design and maintenance for the park's gateway communities. This project would focus on sustainable development and maintaining the character of the natural landscape.

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Site: VOYA

STEWARDSHIP

Assure that no compelling chapter in the American heritage experience remains untold and that strategically important landscapes are acquired, as authorized by Congress.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

By the centennial, Voyageurs National Park hopes to have new exhibits in the Rainy Lake Visitor Center. The existing exhibits lack interactive components and current design technology. The new exhibits would focus on the compelling stories about the park's people, wildlife and plants, and geology.

The development of fifteen visitor destinations with day use facilities and interpretive media is an important goal for Voyageurs by 2016. As the interests of park visitors expand beyond fishing, the need to develop destinations throughout the park has grown. These visitor destinations highlight the park's compelling natural and cultural resources and offer an alternative to visitors who want to learn more about the park. The locations of the visitor destinations will allow visitors to plan an extended trip in order to go to all of the sites or it will give them a reason to return for further exploration.

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Site: VOYA

STEWARDSHIP

Serve as the Preeminent resource laboratory by applying excellence in science and scholarship to understand and respond to environmental changes.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

In cooperation with partners, Voyageurs National Park hopes to establish a Northern Waters Science and Education Center. This multi-partner project would fulfill a long-time dream and need for a center for the study of aquatic and watershed ecosystems in Voyageurs National Park and the surrounding region. The special strengths of Federal and State resources programs and academic institutions would combine to answer critical resources management questions and provide on- and off-site education for the general public, school groups, and park visitors. Area specific data are important to aid decision-makers in managing park, state, and other federal resources.

Research projects would be selected for their contributions to critical park and regional resources management issues and the quality of academic and field experience provided to train young scientists.

A new building or a renovated lakeside property would house the Institute on one of the park's large lakes. Facilities would include laboratory, classrooms, multi-purpose areas, offices, docks, and year-around residential units for researchers and students. An appropriate vessel could become a floating research station.

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Site: VOYA

ENVIRONMENT

Reduce environmental impacts of park operations.

Reduce the environmental impacts of park operations on air and water quality.

The park will continue to use the most fuel efficient and low emission boat motors and snowmobiles for operations. As new technology is developed and funding becomes available, the park will convert its fleet to reduce the environmental impacts of park operations on air and water quality to the greatest degree possible. The park uses biodiesel as an alternative fuel that burns cleaner.

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Site: VOYA

ENVIRONMENT

Inspire an environmental conscience in Americans.

Establish programs to showcase exemplary environmental practices and increase visitor awareness of how the practices apply to their daily lives, as measured by surveys.

The proposed Voyageurs Heritage Center's sustainable design would demonstrate earth-friendly alternatives and give visitors the opportunity to understand the environmental impact of the choices we make. A brochure and/or exhibit that highlights the building's sustainable features would allow visitors to evaluate their own choices once back home.

The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS

Demonstrate environmental excellence through increased use of alternative energy and fuels at every park.

Voyageurs National Park uses biodiesel fuel in all its diesel-operated boats and equipment and E85 (an ethanol-based fuel) fuel in some vehicles. The park has used alternative fuels for many years and will continue to follow this practice as long as the fuel sources are available.

The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS

Serve as a model for energy efficiency, under Executive Order 13423, by ensuring Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards.

A LEED rating of silver or higher for the proposed Voyageurs Heritage Center and adjacent park headquarters is a formal goal of the project. The National Park Service wants the Voyageurs Heritage Center to be a model for energy efficiency and sustainable design for the area and the national park system.

The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS

Site: VOYA

RECREATION

Encourage collaboration among and assist park and recreation systems at every level—federal, regional, state, local—to help build an outdoor recreation network accessible to all Americans.

Rehabilitate over 2,000 miles of trails within or connected to national parks, including trails accessible to those with disabilities.

Working in cooperation with its partners, Voyageurs National Park will develop a self-sustaining volunteer trail maintenance program. This program would allow the park to maintain its primary trails on an annual basis. As funding allows, the park will restore its core trail program positions.

The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

The City of International Falls and Koochiching County maintain a bicycle trail that begins in town and ends at the entrance road to the nearest park visitor center, Rainy Lake Visitor Center. The park is working in cooperation with Koochiching County to extend the bike trail to the visitor center entrance. The development plans will be completed over the next two years. The proposed Voyageurs Heritage Center plans include a connection with this bicycle trail and provide for additional walking trails to the river front.

The acquisition of a 49-passenger tour boat for Rainy Lake would expand the outdoor recreation network accessible to visitors. The tour boat is a critical piece of the water-based trail system available to visitors. The park will continue to pursue funding for the tour boat.

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Site: VOYA

RECREATION

Establish "volun-tourism" excursions to national parks for volunteers to help achieve natural and cultural resource protection goals.

Increase annual volunteer hours by 100 percent, from 5.2 million hours to 10.4 million hours.

The park will continue to build its partnerships with volunteer groups. The park's award-winning volunteer group - Association of Certified Hazardous Materials Managers - has completed annual projects in Voyageurs that have helped the park achieve resource management goals. This group has set the standard for what volunteer organizations can help a park achieve. Voyageurs will extend this program through an agreement with St. Cloud State University to accomplish important aquatic research.

To protect historic structures and provide visitor services at select visitor destination sites, the park plans to establish a volunteer caretaker program. These caretakers would stay on-site to monitor and interpret the historic structures and provide park information.

The park plans to extend its volunteer trail maintenance program to other areas, including an Adopt-A-Campsite program and exotic species control.

Voyageurs is also considering an innovative Volunteers on Houseboats program. Using donated houseboats, volunteers would travel specified service routes through the park and assist with park projects, such as treating exotic species and building day and overnight use sites.

The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Voyageurs National Park will rebuild its Artists-in-Residence program as a volunteer managed program through the local arts organization.

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Site: VOYA

RECREATION

Focus national, regional, and local tourism efforts to reach diverse audiences and young people and to attract visitors to lesser-known parks.

Increase visitation by 25 percent at lesser-known parks through a national tourism effort aimed at helping people to discover the breadth of parks and experiences.

Voyageurs National Park is one of the lesser-known parks in the system. A non-profit group called Destination Voyageurs National Park is emerging from the need for the park's gateway communities to better promote the park to increase tourism. The park will be an active partner in this group.

The proposed Voyageurs Heritage Center would provide a focus for local and regional tourism efforts to attract visitors to Voyageurs National Park. When people go to the Heritage Center, they would be directed to the park's visitor centers and programs, thus increasing visitation to the park.

The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS

Increase the number of visitors that attend ranger-facilitated programs such as campfire talks, hikes, and school programs.

The proposed Voyageurs Heritage Center would increase attendance at ranger-led programs because the people who stop at the center would learn about the programs offered at the park's visitor centers. Visitors would be able to plan their visit around the program schedule.

The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS

Site: VOYA

EDUCATION

Cooperate with educators to provide curriculum materials, high-quality programs, and park-based and online learning.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

The proposed Voyageurs Heritage Center would provide educators the opportunity to work with staff at the Center to develop educational materials for use in their classrooms. The Center would also support other National Park Service fur trade-related areas and provide a venue for curriculum development, educator workshops, and program development.

The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS

Site: VOYA

EDUCATION

Introduce young people and their families to national parks by using exciting media and technology.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

The exhibits in the proposed Voyageurs Heritage Center would use modern media and technology to attract young people and their families. The existing exhibits in the area range from five to twenty years old. These exhibits lack features that attract today's technologically savvy youth. The Voyageurs Heritage Center exhibits and media would connect young people to the historic story of the voyageurs, their encounter with the people and resources of the region, and the meaning of these events to today's visitors.

By the centennial celebration, the park will also strive to acquire funding to redo the twenty-year old exhibits in the park's year-round visitor center at Rainy Lake. These exhibits would focus on the voyageur story and related resources within the park and complement the broader regional story told in the Voyageurs Heritage Center.

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Site: VOYA

EDUCATION

Promote life-long learning to connect generations through park experiences.

Enroll an additional two million children in the Junior Ranger program.

Voyageurs National Park has redesigned its Junior Ranger program to better serve the park's youngest visitors. In 2007 the park unveiled new Junior Ranger booklets for 6-8 year olds and 9 and up visitors. The last component of the program would be a booklet for 3-5 year old visitors. The park plans to develop this program over the next five years.

The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

The proposed Voyageurs Heritage Center would be the first in a series of attractions that would promote life-long learning about the fur trade era. In combination with the Heritage Center, Voyageurs National Park's visitor centers and interpretive programs would offer a variety of programming - replica north canoe programs to tour boat programs - that would allow different generations to learn about the fur trade.

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Site: VOYA

EDUCATION

Impart to every American a sense of their citizen ownership of their national parks.

Increase visitors' satisfaction, understanding, and appreciation of the parks they visit.

To meet the needs of day and overnight users, Voyageurs has proposed a line-item construction project that would allow the park to build the remaining sites planned for development. This project proposal also calls for the development of fifteen visitor destinations with day use facilities and interpretive media. In ten years, the park would also seek to develop a full-service recreational vehicle (RV) campground on the waterfront with docking. The park does not have a RV campground.

Many visitors to Voyageurs National Park arrive without a boat, which greatly limits their ability to experience the park. By 2016 the park would like to have a 49-passenger tour boat on Rainy Lake. This tour boat would allow the park to accommodate large groups. The park's gateway community of International Falls and Koochiching County support the tour boat initiative.

The park does not have visitor contact facilities in the gateway community of Crane Lake. There are four federal agencies and one state agency that could partner together to create this facility. Hundreds of visitors would be served by the addition of a facility at Crane Lake or nearby Orr, and visitor satisfaction would increase.

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Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

The proposed Voyageurs Heritage Center would introduce visitors to Voyageurs National Park and the broader fur trade story. Through conversation and programs, the Heritage Center and National Park Service staff would impart a sense of citizen ownership of Voyageurs National Park to visitors.

The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS

Site: VOYA

PROFESSIONALISM

Be one of the top 10 places to work in America.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Voyageurs National Park plans to lease a new park headquarters complex located on the Rainy River in International Falls by 2010. This building will be attached to the proposed Voyageurs Heritage Center. The headquarters complex will be an energy efficient, sustainably-designed building that marks the entrance to the gateway of the park.

The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS

Site: VOYA

PROFESSIONALISM

Use strategic planning to promote management excellence.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Over the next ten years, Voyageurs National Park will focus on strategic planning and capacity building with Voyageurs National Park Association (VNPA). VNPA will continue working on the establishment of a park endowment fund and, in cooperation with the park, will set priorities for annual fundraising.

The formation of Destination Voyageurs National Park (DVNP), a new non-profit organization, provides an opportunity for strategic planning with a focus on promoting the park. Voyageurs National Park is a lesser known park with a lot of potential. DVNP will work closely with the park to reach new audiences and develop year around access and opportunities for non-boating/snowmobiling visitors.

Voyageurs will be an active participant in the Heart of the Continent Partnership (HCOP). HCOP is a ground breaking partnership that includes Federal, State, and Provincial governments that manage land and water along the US-Canada border and non-governmental entities that promote the protection of these areas. This partnership promotes management excellence through collaboration and information exchange.

The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS

Site: VOYA

PROFESSIONALISM

Model what it means to work in partnership.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

The proposed Voyageurs Heritage Center would be an exemplary partnership model between federal, county, and city governments. The Voyageurs Heritage Center partnership would be a model for other parks and their gateway communities that have or have had an adversarial relationship.

Voyageurs National Park will continue to be a model for successful partnerships with educational institutions through and beyond the centennial. The park plans to continue working cooperatively with St. Cloud State University to conduct water quality studies and analyze data that will provide information for resource management decisions.

In cooperation with partners, Voyageurs National Park hopes to establish a Northern Waters Science and Education Center. This multi-partner project would fulfill a long-time dream and need for a center for the study of aquatic and watershed ecosystems in Voyageurs National Park and the surrounding region. The special strengths of Federal and State resources programs and academic institutions would combine to answer critical resources management questions and provide on- and off-site education for the general public, school groups, and park visitors.

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