

THE  
**FUTURE**  
OF  
**AMERICA'S**  
**NATIONAL**  
**PARKS**

First Annual  
Centennial Strategy for

# Yellowstone National Park

August 2007

CENTENNIAL INITIATIVE



Site: YELL

Year: 2007

**Vision Statement**

Yellowstone---the world's oldest national park is an international symbol of preservation, a cultural icon, and a place of pilgrimage for generations of visitors. People from around the world come to Yellowstone National Park each year to experience the wonders of its unique geothermal features, herds of free-roaming wildlife, pristine waters, and remarkable mountain scenery. Yellowstone's value is not just in its tangible resources, but also in the intangible ideas it represents---ideas that formed the basis for the creation of the other 390 NPS units. A fitting flagship for the Centennial Challenge, Yellowstone National Park is both steeped in the traditions and history of what is best about the national park idea, yet it has and will continue to break new ground in realizing a vision of the National Park Service for its second century.

By 2016, Yellowstone National Park will be known as the preeminent example of NPS environmental leadership in the construction and operation of its facilities, in the use of renewable energy, waste and water management, transportation, and in the innovative ways it educates the public about these values. The Gold-level LEED certified Old Faithful Visitor Education Center will be a shining example of the spirit of the 21st Century NPS, inspiring an environmental conscience in the nearly 3 million Americans who visit each year. The Yellowstone Park Foundation, a model of professional excellence, will continue to play a significant role in helping the park accomplish its Centennial Challenge goals. Through a major privately-supported "Trails Fund" Yellowstone's recreation opportunities will be increased, visitor safety enhanced, and natural resources protected. A wide-sweeping umbrella of education programs will be supported by a major private "Leave No Child Inside" initiative, and will include in-park, strategic outreach, and community/park based summer camps that will attract more youth to national parks. Yellowstone will cultivate 10% of all new national park Junior Rangers, service-wide. Gateway community residents, park visitors, and "virtual visitors" will be actively engaged in the preservation of Yellowstone through involvement in a much-expanded volunteer program. Ultimately, Yellowstone National Park will achieve its resource Stewardship goals by keeping the park meaningful, relevant, and valued to our diverse and increasingly sophisticated public.

**Park/ Superintendent/ Program Manager**

Suzanne Lewis

Site: YELL

**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)

Yellowstone National Park is one of the Nation's premier natural and scenic wonders. Its stories, features, and natural beauty can inspire all visitors. The park will provide this opportunity for inspiration to all who choose to visit. We will ensure that each new facility built within the park meets the standards set forth in the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Architectural Barriers Act. We will continue efforts to make existing facilities and programs accessible as well. We will strive to create experiences for visitors that are universally accessible to all, and in a manner that appears seamless, where amenities created specifically to improve accessibility go unnoticed. Park staff will seek out opportunities to increase public awareness of programs and facilities that are universally accessible so that public expectations that there will be no barriers for them in visiting here are met. We will search for opportunities to learn from other similar recreation areas, and share examples of good universal design practices. No visitor to Yellowstone will ever go away feeling they were not able to experience the park in a way that positively benefited them personally.

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

Site: YELL

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.

By the 100th anniversary of the NPS, Yellowstone, the system's flagship park, will have the oldest infrastructure in the NPS-- a 1,500 building inventory including 956 historic structures. Our vision for 2016 is that we will have implemented a comprehensive preventative maintenance program for 80 visitor use buildings, assuring an effective asset management program that directs funds to high priority buildings. A programmatic approach to a preventive maintenance program will avoid expensive rehabilitation and replacement projects. Nearly 3 million annual visitors will form their impressions of Yellowstone and the National Park Service based on their cumulative experiences with staff, programs, superlative natural features, and importantly, the facilities that they use and experience. The stories of the US Cavalry, early tourism, park rangers, and other evidence of the early NPS are preserved in the army barracks, patrol cabins, trailside museums and hotels of Yellowstone. The future of Yellowstone is one of the protection of historic resources and visitor facilities which are essential to visitors' enjoyment and understanding of the birthplace of the National Park System.

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Site: YELL

STEWARDSHIP

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

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Much of the landscape in Yellowstone National Park is historic including the Grand Loop Road system that accesses many developed areas containing historic districts and landmark structures. The Park has implemented Context Sensitive Design processes for nationally recognized landscapes. Many road reconstruction projects including those on the historic Grand Loop Road have been nationally recognized for excellence in design. Park wide night lighting design has also been nationally recognized with five-night sky sensitive fixtures meeting the International Dark Sky criterion for design. Only approximately 2% of the park is developed; most of the park landscapes reside in fragile, wild areas where design directs the use and can determine the impacts. Future park comprehensive planning and design for developed areas and park roads will utilize the Context Sensitive Design process, LEED design criteria where feasible and promote resource sensitivity in fragile environments. Future landscape design will reduce impacts and provide for a quality visitor experience through sensitive design. Partnerships will provide an opportunity to apply design expertise to park processes.

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Site: YELL

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)

Yellowstone National Park and the surrounding 20M acre Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem comprise the largest intact wild ecosystem in the lower 48 states. All native vertebrates are present. Natural disturbances, native species, and ecological processes interact with relatively little human intervention. YELL serves as a critical ecological benchmark for comparison with more impacted systems. Land use around the park is in transition from small farming, timber, and mining communities to thriving small cities and surrounding sprawl. The long history of research at YELL provides an excellent base for applying science and scholarship to understand and respond to environmental changes. Based upon its preeminence as a natural laboratory, YELL was selected in 2007 to serve as the northern Rocky Mountains core site for the U.S. National Earth Observatory Network (NEON). Achieving this vision will be dependent on developing the capacity of the park's consortium of intimate science/scholarship partnerships (e.g. NEON, Yellowstone Volcano Observatory, USGS National Wildlife Health Center, Inter-agency Grizzly Bear Study Team, Northern Rockies Cooperative Ecosystems Studies Unit).

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STEWARDSHIP

Encourage children to be future conservationists.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

The Old Faithful Visitor Education Center's educational approach draws upon biological, geological, and visitor evaluation-based social science to present exhibits and programs that help visitors understand the international significance of Yellowstone as a living scientific laboratory. The work of scientists who explore the relationships between the park's geysers, hot springs, and the life that exists in Yellowstone will be highlighted through exhibits and programs. The OFVEC will have a special emphasis on targeted opportunities for youth involvement. Children will be encouraged to become "Young Scientists" through onsite and field-based activities that provide guided opportunities to explore Yellowstone's thermal features, promote awareness of the work of scientists as a possible career path, and develop a stewardship ethic. Through their participation, students will come to view science in national parks as an exciting process of ongoing discovery - a discipline with a proud history, a vibrant present, and a future which might even include them.

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Site: YELL

**ENVIRONMENT**

Reduce environmental impacts of park operations.

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

Yellowstone Park Foundation is working with the park to develop an expansive and visionary plan for the greening and sustainable future of Yellowstone National Park including in the construction and operation of its facilities, in the use of renewable energy, waste and water management, and transportation. Full implementation of the plan by the NPS Centennial will include an innovative and high profile approach to educating the public about these values. The Gold-level LEED certified Old Faithful Visitor Education Center will be a shining example of the spirit of the 21st Century NPS, inspiring an environmental conscience in the nearly 3 million Americans who visit each year in person, and the tens of millions who visit annually on the Old Faithful Virtual Visitor Center.

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Site: YELL

**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.

By 2016, Yellowstone National Park will be known as the preeminent example of environmental leadership in the NPS. Yellowstone Park Foundation is working with the park to develop an expansive and visionary plan for the greening and sustainable future of Yellowstone National Park including in the construction and operation of its facilities, in the use of renewable energy, waste and water management, and transportation. Full implementation of the plan by the NPS Centennial will include an innovative and high profile approach to educating the public about these values. The Gold-level LEED certified Old Faithful Visitor Education Center will be a shining example of the spirit of the 21st Century NPS, inspiring an environmental conscience in the nearly 3 million Americans who visit each year in person, and the tens of millions who visit annually on the Old Faithful Virtual Visitor Center. Formal evaluations and surveys will document impacts of the program.

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**ENVIRONMENT**

Engage partners, communities, and visitors in shared environmental stewardship.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

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Site: YELL

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.

By 2010, the privately-supported Yellowstone Trails Fund will repair and restore 100% of Yellowstone's most heavily-used recreational trails including accessibility improvements. The Yellowstone Fisheries Fund will restore genetically pure, native westslope cutthroat trout and Yellowstone Cutthroat trout populations, protecting the blue ribbon trout streams that have been destinations for generations of anglers. In-Park programs for youth will provide education about Yellowstone's environmental and cultural resources, as well as opportunities for outdoor recreation including the "Leave No Child Inside" initiative, which will attract more youth to Yellowstone, and provide summer camps and other recreational opportunities for children. Expedition: Yellowstone!, a 4-5 day residential, ranger-led immersion program in Yellowstone, will be expanded to a wider diversity of upper elementary school students with an experiential curriculum focused on geology, wildlife and human history.

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Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Yellowstone National Park is one of the Nation's premier natural and scenic wonders. Its stories, features, and natural beauty can inspire all visitors. The park will provide this opportunity for inspiration to all who choose to visit. We will ensure that each new facility built within the park meets the standards set forth in the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Architectural Barriers Act. We will continue efforts to make existing facilities and programs accessible as well. We will strive to create experiences for visitors that are universally accessible to all, and in a manner that appears seamless, where amenities created specifically to improve accessibility go unnoticed. Park staff will seek out opportunities to increase public awareness of programs and facilities that are universally accessible so that public expectations that there will be no barriers for them in visiting here are met. We will search for opportunities to learn from other similar recreation areas, and share examples of good universal design practices. No visitor to Yellowstone will ever go away feeling they were not able to experience the park in a way that positively benefited them personally.

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Site: YELL

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.

Gateway community residents, park visitors, and "virtual visitors" will be actively engaged in the preservation of Yellowstone through involvement in a much-expanded volunteer program. Organized groups like "Tauck Tours" will continue to provide assistance with preservation maintenance work on park buildings. Through new partnerships with gateway communities, regional Boys and Girls clubs will provide volunteer support in resource data collection, education, and trail work, engendering a conservation ethic among teens from the region. Currently more than 2 million individual visits are recorded on Yellowstone National Park's official website each month. A major, new "Virtual Volunteer" program will allow some of these visitors to help maintain the website by monitoring the more than 9000 HTML pages currently on the site for accuracy and providing updates. Volunteers will also assist in developing transcripts of streaming videos to make them compliant with accessibility standards for NPS websites and assist with the development of online images and graphics.

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Site: YELL

RECREATION

- Expand partnerships with schools and boys and girls associations to show how national park experiences can improve children's lives.
- Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

By 2016, an ambitious partnership will bring together private citizens in one of Yellowstone National Park's gateway communities, business owners, and the Boys and Girls Clubs and Big Brothers/Big Sisters of the greater Yellowstone area to help improve the lives of children and make Yellowstone valued and accessible to underprivileged, underserved, and minority children. A partnership between Yellowstone National Park and other like-minded individuals and organizations will bring children to the wilds of Yellowstone through a residential camp program based in Yellowstone National Park gateway communities. The purpose of the camp will be to provide a park-based education and recreation program that will positively affect young peoples' health, happiness, balanced development, creative potential, and stewardship ethic toward national parks. While the facilities and planning expertise will be donated for this camp, funds will be sought to provide operational support.

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Site: YELL

EDUCATION

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

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Yellowstone NP, in partnership with Yellowstone Park Foundation, has initiated a far reaching program: "Inspiring Future Yellowstone Stewards - A No Child Left Inside" initiative. Specific strategies will diversify Yellowstone's day-use, residential, regional outreach including outreach to Native American tribes, & Junior Ranger programs. Ranger-teachers will provide curriculum-based instruction to K-12 students and their teachers and chaperones. Programs will provide direct experience with multiple park resources in immersive field settings. The program will: expand awareness of how our actions can lead to a more sustainable society; encourage creative problem solving through hands-on experimentation; stimulate ownership and responsibility in students for their personal and everyday actions and inspire them to share and take measures to replicate these actions in their own communities; and empower students to evaluate their actions and work to ensure they are consistent with a conservation ethic. It is anticipated that 10,000 students & teachers will be served annually through in-park day-use classes; 22,000 onsite through the Junior Ranger Program and tens of thousands online.

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Site: YELL

EDUCATION

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

Increase the number of web hits through the introduction of advanced, interactive features that attract young people to national parks.

Yellowstone National Park is a leader in the use of technology to connect people to the parks and reach the largest and most diverse audiences. With the most visited and advanced website in the NPS, research and development into next generation applications are underway. By 2016, current offerings such as iTunes downloadable, "podcasts", online "web videos", live streaming video presentations, and virtual tours will advance to the next level of technological sophistication. Yellowstone will provide interactive satellite television and computer programs that will allow youth to tailor their virtual NPS experience to their own interests, play games, and learn at their individual pace. Instantaneously changeable electronic wayside exhibits will include animations and interactive opportunities that will make learning about the park exciting and fun. A new generation of web cams will provide views of geysers, hots springs and wildlife. Technology will connect people to Yellowstone by allowing users to create their own unique experiences while ensuring that the underlying meaning, significance, and mission of the National Park Service and Yellowstone National Park are communicated.

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Site: YELL

**EDUCATION**

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

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

A proposed Centennial project, the Old Faithful Visitor Education Center (OFVEC) exhibits were designed based on the social learning context. Front-end and formative evaluations of the proposed exhibits were tested with multi-generational family groups to help design an educational approach that allows grandparents and parents to share and pass on visitor experiences in national parks to children. As one surveyed visitor explained, "I went to this place for the first time with my fiancée, and now we're bringing our son back, and I want him to see it. So, it's a place of pilgrimage." The OFVEC will have a special emphasis on targeted opportunities for youth involvement. Children will be encouraged to become "Young Scientists" through onsite and field-based activities that provide guided opportunities to explore Yellowstone's thermal features, promote awareness of the work of scientists as a possible career path, and develop a stewardship ethic. Through their participation, students will come to view science in national parks as an exciting process of ongoing discovery - a discipline with a proud history, a vibrant present, and a future which might even include them.

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Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

See description under Junior Ranger program.

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Site: YELL

**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.

Surveys in Yellowstone National Park indicate that over 90% of park visitors highly value non-personal (media) interpretive services. With the largest interpretive media infrastructure of any NPS unit, Yellowstone's audiovisual presentations in all nine visitor centers, museums, contact stations, amphitheaters, and all 325+ wayside exhibits, and hundreds of unique publications will be updated and maintained to the highest quality standard. This includes assuring content accuracy, acceptable asset condition, and adherence to ADA accessibility standards as described in the park's Long Range Interpretive Plan. Each of Yellowstone's 3 million onsite visitors use these media at least four times during a visit to the park, making them a fundamental and highly visible component of the park's interpretive program. These media are essential to the satisfaction, understanding and appreciation of Yellowstone National Park, and significantly contribute to the development of a stewardship ethic in all park visitors, including those who do not participate in traditional interpretive programs.

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Site: YELL

**PROFESSIONALISM**

Promote a safety and health culture for all employees and visitors.

Reduce the number of employee lost-time incidents and serious visitor injuries by 20 percent.

Yellowstone National Park is implementing a safety and health program that includes a partnership with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and an integration of management leadership, employee involvement, and self evaluations which will return a reduction in injuries and worker's compensation claims. Yellowstone has previously achieved OSHA's Voluntary Protection Program (VPP) status at the Merit level, and will strive to achieve the level of Star, OSHA's and industry's official approval and recognition of the outstanding efforts of employers and employees who have achieved exemplary safety and health programs. In less than ten years, it is the goal of Yellowstone National Park to have the most commendable safety program in the National Park Service (NPS), one in which we set an example for other NPS units to follow.

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Site: YELL

**PROFESSIONALISM**

- Make national parks the first choice in philanthropic giving among those concerned about environmental, cultural, and recreational values.**
- Improve communications and marketing capacity to increase public understanding of our mission, opportunities, and benefits.**

Yellowstone National Park/Yellowstone Park Foundation will make it a priority to reach visitors and non-visitors of all ages with information about the importance of Yellowstone to the preservation of wildlife and other natural resources, outdoor recreational opportunities, and our shared American heritage. This will lead to the idea that the protection of Yellowstone is synonymous with the promotion of environmental, cultural, and recreational values, and inspire them to make a charitable contribution. Over the next ten years, the Yellowstone Park Foundation will double its support base from 9,000 annual donors to 18,000 annual donors, and achieve \$10 million in average annual revenue from contributions. Funding from corporations, which have a larger PR reach, will help raise awareness about this giving opportunity and leverage additional contributions. Challenge grants from corporations will inspire individuals to give for the first time or to increase their gifts. A special "Friends of Yellowstone"-only, password-protected website with exclusive content and features will encourage contributions and foster the feeling of stewardship and community among Yellowstone supporters.

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