

L O N G - R A N G E I N T E R P R E T I V E P L A N



Y E L L O W S T O N E N A T I O N A L P A R K

Executive Summary of Major Recommendations

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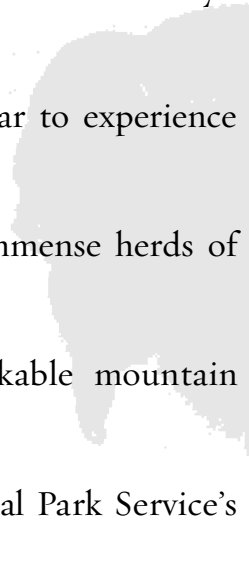
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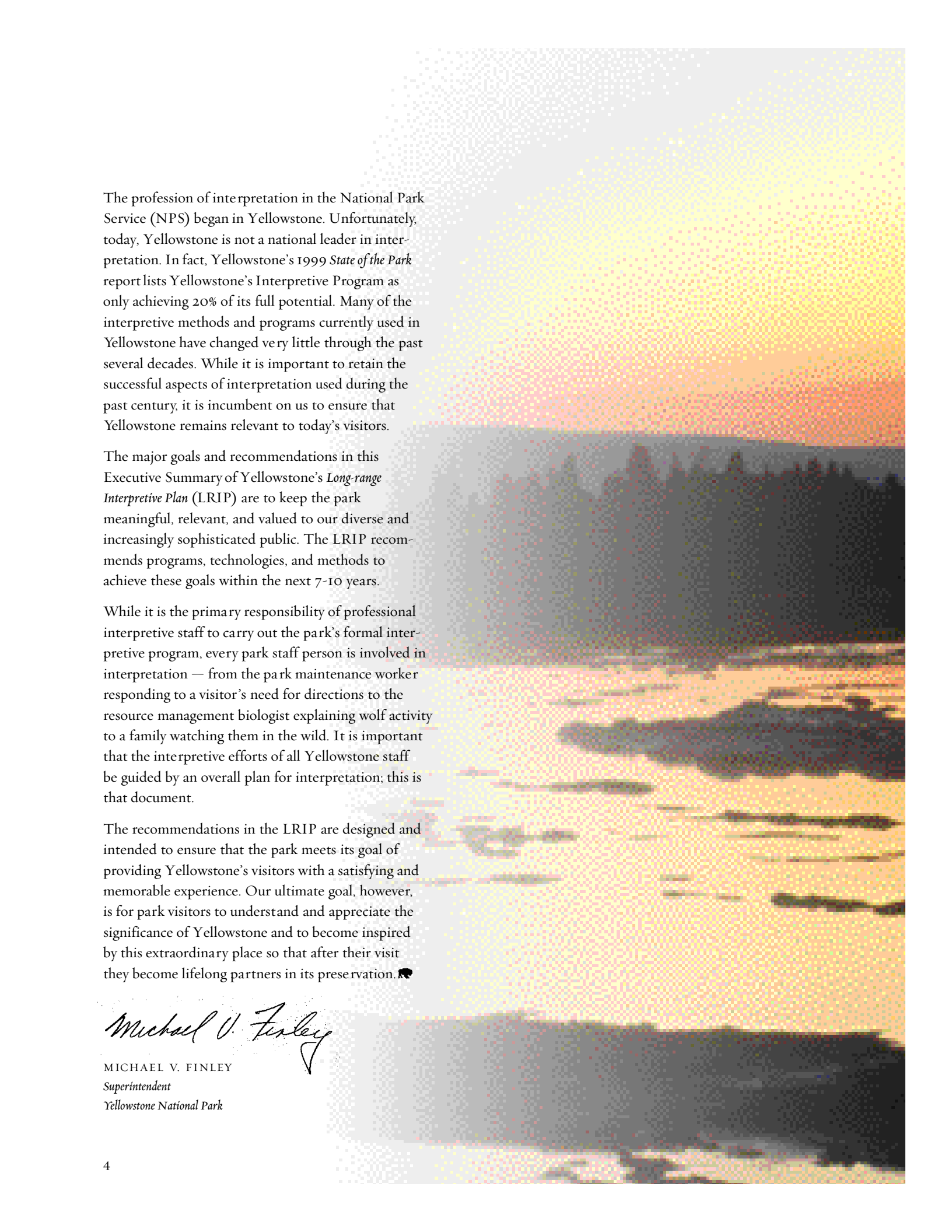




MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK represents the finest of our country's treasures. People from around the world come here each year to experience the wonders of Yellowstone's unique geothermal features, immense herds of free-roaming wildlife, pristine air and water, and remarkable mountain scenery. As the steward of this special place, it is the National Park Service's responsibility to protect its priceless resources. The challenge for Yellowstone's Division of Interpretation in this task is exceptional. Through the message we present in our programs, facilities, exhibits, and publications, we give the visitor more than just information. The art of interpretation is to provide the meaning behind the message — to connect the tangible resources visitors see with the multitude of intangible ideas that weave the web that is Yellowstone. 



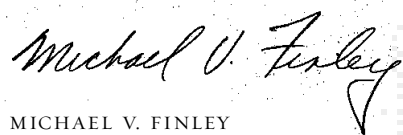


The profession of interpretation in the National Park Service (NPS) began in Yellowstone. Unfortunately, today, Yellowstone is not a national leader in interpretation. In fact, Yellowstone's 1999 *State of the Park* report lists Yellowstone's Interpretive Program as only achieving 20% of its full potential. Many of the interpretive methods and programs currently used in Yellowstone have changed very little through the past several decades. While it is important to retain the successful aspects of interpretation used during the past century, it is incumbent on us to ensure that Yellowstone remains relevant to today's visitors.

The major goals and recommendations in this Executive Summary of Yellowstone's *Long-range Interpretive Plan* (LRIP) are to keep the park meaningful, relevant, and valued to our diverse and increasingly sophisticated public. The LRIP recommends programs, technologies, and methods to achieve these goals within the next 7-10 years.

While it is the primary responsibility of professional interpretive staff to carry out the park's formal interpretive program, every park staff person is involved in interpretation — from the park maintenance worker responding to a visitor's need for directions to the resource management biologist explaining wolf activity to a family watching them in the wild. It is important that the interpretive efforts of all Yellowstone staff be guided by an overall plan for interpretation; this is that document.

The recommendations in the LRIP are designed and intended to ensure that the park meets its goal of providing Yellowstone's visitors with a satisfying and memorable experience. Our ultimate goal, however, is for park visitors to understand and appreciate the significance of Yellowstone and to become inspired by this extraordinary place so that after their visit they become lifelong partners in its preservation. 🐾



MICHAEL V. FINLEY
Superintendent
Yellowstone National Park

THE PLANNING PROCESS

Yellowstone's Division of Interpretation began the LRIP planning process in October 1998.

While National Park Service LRIPs are conceptual plans and do not require public participation, the park recognized that the success of this plan would be dependent on the participation of Yellowstone's long-established partners in education and interpretation. To this end, four workshops were held in 1999, and 70 park staff and partners attended one or more of the workshops. Partners participating included the Yellowstone Association, Yellowstone Park Foundation, Museum of the Rockies, Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Amfac Parks and Resorts, area schools (Cody, West Yellowstone, Gardiner, and Mammoth), Teton Science School, National Parks and Conservation Association, U.S. Forest Service, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

While this plan proposes a number of new initiatives, facilities, and services (some of which will require additional compliance and public participation prior to undertaking), all are in keeping with the vision of previous planning efforts in Yellowstone. Certain specifics of those plans will be developed more fully in the LRIP. For example, the park's *Master Plan* proposed that "hospitality centers" be developed throughout the region in cooperation with other agencies and partners in order to better orient visitors to the area and that an audio interpretive system be installed throughout the park to supplement traditional interpretive media. The LRIP expands on these ideas and suggests ways the park can accomplish these objectives in the next few years.

Numerous specific park planning efforts, from development concept plans to more general planning documents like the *Wildland Fire Management Plan* (1992) and the *Resources Management Plan* (1995), all address the need for increased interpretation as a means of providing the public with a better understanding of park resources and issues. Few specific recommendations (beyond themes) are made in any of these plans. The LRIP addresses how these recommendations will be implemented. All programs, facilities, and media developed as a result of this plan will comply with federal accessibility standards.

This Executive Summary is part of a complete LRIP that will be printed as a separate document and will provide additional information including background, summaries of past and current programs, a work plan, and appendices.

PRIMARY GOALS AND THEMES

VISITOR EXPERIENCE GOALS

Visitor experience goals describe the cognitive, affective, sensory, and behavioral experiences that the park would like to be available to visitors. Like interpretive themes (which are largely the cognitive elements of visitor experience goals), they provide direction to designers, planners, managers, park staff, and partners.

Visitors will have opportunities to:

- Experience the essence of the park's wild nature — from wildlife, waterfalls, geysers, and scenery to wonder, quiet, solitude, and personal inspiration
- Develop a sense of appreciation and responsibility that will result in actions to protect, support, and promote the park and the National Park System (e.g., politically, financially, through volunteer activities)
- Successfully plan their visits and orient themselves to facilities, attractions, features, and experiences
- Behave in ways that do not hurt themselves or park resources
- Enjoy themselves, have memorable experiences, and go home feeling enriched
- Understand the park's significance and its primary interpretive themes
- Experience programs, media, and facilities that enhance their educational experiences
- Learn about the fragility of the park and threats to its resources

PRIMARY INTERPRETIVE THEMES

Interpretive themes are the most important ideas, stories, and concepts that should be presented to park visitors. They portray the significance of the park. The interpretive themes provide direction to designers, planners, managers, park staff, and partners.

GEOLOGY

Yellowstone lies on a restless part of the earth; physical evidence of the park's geologic history spans at least 2.7 billion years, and geologic forces continue to shape the land and the patterns of life on the landscape today.

Yellowstone is positioned on top of a "hot spot" where the earth's crust is unusually thin, and molten magma rises relatively close to the surface. Past volcanic eruptions were among the strongest that have ever occurred on earth, and they have shaped the present landscape.

GEOTHERMAL FEATURES

Yellowstone has more active geothermal features (geysers, hot springs, mudpots, and fumaroles) than the rest of the world combined; they are a product of underlying geological activity, and their heated waters are habitat for diverse thermophilic life forms that we are only beginning to understand.



ECOSYSTEM

The greater Yellowstone area is one of the largest and most intact temperate ecosystems in North America; it supports an exceptional concentration and diversity of terrestrial and aquatic life.

The Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem extends well beyond the park's boundary. It encompasses unique thermal features, the headwaters for many rivers, diverse habitats and life forms, research benchmarks, sustainable recreational and economic opportunities, and wilderness. It is conceptualized and viewed by the public in the contexts of contemporary issues, values, and personal meanings.

WILDLIFE

Yellowstone is home to abundant, diverse, and free-ranging wildlife in a largely undisturbed setting; their survival depends on sufficient and healthy habitats, the preservation of biological diversity, and minimal human interference and impact. These wildlife provide outstanding opportunities to experience and appreciate the diversity of life.

MANAGEMENT

Effective park management requires the protection of resources, promotion of sustainable public use, involvement by and cooperation among interested individuals and groups, and the support of the American people for their National Park System.

Issues such as management of elk and bison herds, endangered species protection, non-native species management, fire management, and visitor-use management must be addressed through good science, effective public involvement, and affirmation of park values.

FIRST NATIONAL PARK

Yellowstone is the world's first national park, and it continues to be a model for the preservation and enjoyment of park resources.

Designation as a World Heritage Site and an International Biosphere Reserve recognizes the international significance of Yellowstone National Park. From the history of the park's founding to the variety of today's management challenges, we celebrate an extraordinary idea — the preservation and enjoyment of our natural and cultural heritage.



NATURAL RESOURCE PRESERVATION

The Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem preserves a world-renowned biological reserve with a gene pool that includes rare and endangered species.

Yellowstone preserves biological processes and ecosystems as well as living things and their surroundings. Threats to resources are not limited by park boundaries. For example, migratory species require healthy habitats and protection as far away as Central America and the Arctic tundra; exotic species from around the world have invaded the park and now compete with native species; global warming could alter climate and shift habitats.

PRIMARY GOALS AND THEMES

PRIMARY INTERPRETIVE THEMES (CONT.)



HUMAN HISTORY

Yellowstone preserves resources associated with some 11,000 years of human history, which provide insights into varieties of cultures, values, and perceptions, including those of Native Americans, trappers, explorers, miners, U.S. Army personnel, National Park Service and private-sector concession staffs, neighboring communities, and more than 125 years of park visitors.

Resources have physical, cultural, and spiritual dimensions. Diverse perceptions and values characterize human experiences of any one place at any one time; the continuum of these experiences helps shape our present identities and our future possibilities.

WILDNESS

Yellowstone is an extraordinary place where visitors can experience wildness.

The Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem preserves a vital part of America's wilderness system. Experiences of wildness range from scenic driving and day hiking to backcountry hiking and camping to off-site experiences through media, outreach programs, the Internet, and personal photographs, stories, and recollections.

LABORATORY

Yellowstone's diverse resources, ecological processes, and cultural history provide important opportunities for research and education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

INTERPRETIVE FACILITIES

VISITOR CENTERS

Visitor centers serve three primary functions: providing interpretation, orientation and information, and visitor services. This is done through personal contacts, exhibits, audiovisual presentations, and interpretive sales. Visitors are best served when they are also able to obtain all necessary park permits (*e.g.*, backcountry, fishing, boating) in one location. To this end, visitor centers will be designed to accommodate the staffing and offices necessary to facilitate “one-stop shopping.” New or rehabilitated visitor centers will incorporate sustainable designs, construction techniques, and long-term maintenance features.

Yellowstone visitor centers can be divided into three groups: satellite centers, which are located in communities within a short drive of the park; gateway centers, which are located at the entrances to the park; and in-park centers, which are located within the park. These three centers are like concentric circles and provide a layered system of information, orientation, and interpretation. Satellite centers and most gateway centers focus on providing information and orientation while most in-park centers emphasize interpretation as well as providing information and orientation.

SATELLITE VISITOR CENTERS

- Work with partners (*e.g.*, U.S. Forest Service, Yellowstone Association, and Chamber of Commerce) to establish a satellite center in Livingston, Montana. This center would provide information, orientation, other visitor services, and, possibly, a sales area.
- Work with partners (*e.g.*, state highway and tourism departments, airport authorities) to design and install information kiosks that provide orientation and area information at interstate highway rest stops, chambers of commerce, welcome centers (*i.e.*, the new facility in Bozeman at 19th Avenue and I-90), and airports within a 3-hour drive of the park. ➤➤➤➤➤

RECOMMENDATIONS

SATELLITE VISITOR CENTERS (CONT.)

Airports could include Jackson and Cody, Wyoming; Idaho Falls, Idaho; Billings and Bozeman, Montana; and Salt Lake City, Utah (farther away but a major trip-starting point for many park visitors). Kiosks would include interactive computer stations that would be phased in as technology evolves and would be easily updated and reliable with little maintenance required.

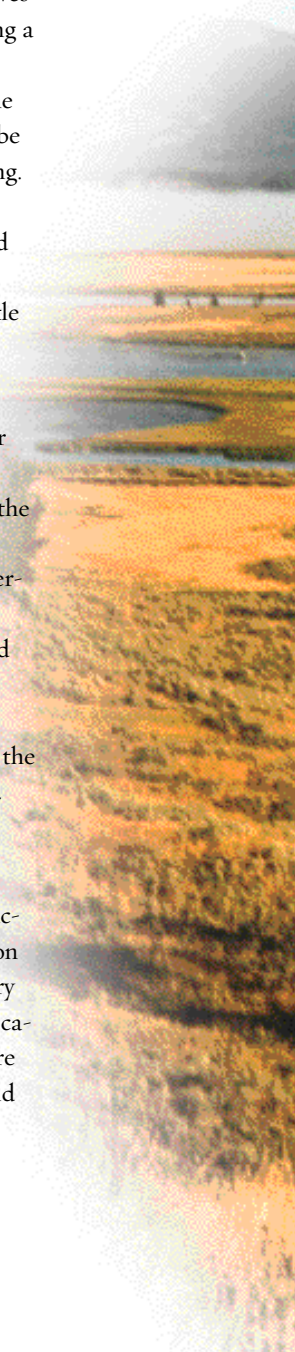
- Augment Grand Teton National Park seasonal staffing of the information services desk at the Jackson Hole/Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center.

GATEWAY VISITOR CENTERS

Visitors need access to interpretation, orientation, and information before they enter the park. Most visitors currently receive the park newspaper at fee booths; during busy seasons, long lines of cars hinder rangers' abilities to answer visitor questions, and many visitors fail to stop at pullouts inside the park boundary to read the information they are handed. Along with efforts to provide these services at home prior to a visit (via the Internet, mail, and telephone) and at satellite centers, visitor contact points are needed at each park entrance. These centers could be just outside or immediately inside the park boundary. The centers at the north, west, and south entrances should be attended year-round. Gateway centers should offer orientation and information along with introductions to the park's significance, primary themes, and resource preservation issues. Entrance permits, fishing permits, campground reservations, theme-related sales, and trip planning should also be available.

- Provide a new information center at the South Entrance. Two alternatives include expanding the current ranger station just inside the park boundary into a T-shaped building and staffing an information desk with interpretive personnel or developing the gateway center at Flagg Ranch in cooperation with Grand Teton National Park.

- Locate an information center for the East Entrance in Cody, Wyoming. Explore a partnership with Buffalo Bill Historical Center, the Cody Chamber of Commerce, and others for the development of a gateway center in Cody, which is a stop for nearly all East Entrance Yellowstone visitors. A cooperative center would reduce costs and increase benefits to all partners. An alternative would be to construct a seasonally attended contact station at the East Entrance.
- Provide a small, seasonally attended contact station at the Northeast Entrance. Alternatives include expanding the ranger station, locating a center in Silver Gate or Cooke City, or constructing a new contact station just inside the boundary. This contact station could either be seasonally staffed or function without staffing. The contact station would have appropriate exhibits and, as technology advances, it could include an interactive computer station that could be easily updated and reliable with little maintenance required.
- Construct a new visitor center in the North Entrance area to replace the Albright Visitor Center facility currently at Mammoth. One alternative location for this visitor center is the "triangle" just south of Gardiner and between the fee station and entrance arch. Themes interpreted would include the northern range, the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, wildlife, and human history of the park. Park staff would work with resource specialists and affiliated tribes to develop appropriate exhibits about the history of Native Americans in Yellowstone.
- Convert the Albright Visitor Center in Mammoth to an administrative use, such as offices or housing (similar to its original functions), for NPS and/or Yellowstone Association staff. The artwork in the Moran/Jackson gallery could be transferred to a number of other locations as appropriate and where conditions are suitable. A small visitor contact station would be located in Mammoth near the terraces in the vicinity of the new restroom building.



- Construct a new visitor center outside the West Entrance in West Yellowstone to incorporate the functions of the present information center that is operated by the local Chamber of Commerce, U.S. Forest Service, and NPS. The new center would provide expanded interpretation and information/orientation as well as backcountry, fee, and other permitting functions. Additionally, partnerships with existing non-government visitor facilities in the West Yellowstone area would be explored. »»→

RECOMMENDATIONS

IN-PARK VISITOR CENTERS

- Continue to develop plans for the new Old Faithful Visitor Education Center. The new state-of-the-art visitor center will focus on interpreting the park's geothermal resources. The completion date for this facility is contingent on private fundraising.
- Continue to develop plans for the rehabilitation of the Canyon Visitor Education Center. The new visitor center will focus on interpreting the park's geological history, including plate tectonics, the Yellowstone hot spot, earthquakes, glacial history, and the geocosystem. The new center is scheduled for completion in 2004.
- Major park visitor centers (Gardiner/North Entrance, Canyon, Old Faithful) will each have space for travelling and changeable exhibits. Additionally, within each visitor center, there will be distinct areas dedicated to exhibits and interpretation specifically designed for children.
- Major park visitor centers (Gardiner/North Entrance, Canyon, Old Faithful) will each have classroom space for public lectures and training functions.
- Convert Albright Visitor Center to administrative use for offices or housing (see "Gateway Visitor Centers" section).
- Develop a winter warming hut/contact station at Tower/Roosevelt. Either convert an existing structure or construct a new building to function as an information/interpretation center in temperate months and a warming hut in winter. Consider demolition of the current gas station and construction of a new building appropriately designed for the area that would serve as a gas station and snack bar with an area for information and audiovisual programs. Consider moving the ranger station permitting functions into this new facility. Construct an outdoor plaza to provide supplementary interpretation and orientation that would be available 24 hours a day, year-round. Interpret wildlife (especially wolves, bears, and ungulates) in the context of the Northern Range and human history (especially Yancey's Hole and the Wylie tent camps).
- Rehabilitate Norris Geyser Basin Museum exhibits. Consider a design approach that is compatible with the historic, rustic style of the building, which is a National Historic Landmark. The building's historic significance could be interpreted with a small wayside exhibit. The interior exhibits should concentrate on the unique geothermal features in the Norris area and on geothermal research.
- Broaden the focus of the Norris Ranger Museum to include NPS career information. Provide information on career progressions in a multitude of NPS professions. Develop exhibits on NPS careers. Staff the Museum with uniformed personnel. Add an information/orientation kiosk outside that includes an interactive computer station (as technology permits) that could easily be updated and would be reliable with little maintenance required. Provide better signing on the road to direct visitors to this museum.



- Construct a visitor contact station at Lake. The new contact station could be strategically located in either the previously identified disturbed site along the entrance road into the development and near the spur road to the hospital and Lake Hotel or behind the Lake Hotel in the area between the Lake Hotel cabins and the Post Office where adequate parking exists. Consider moving the former Lake gas station to one of these locations and rehabilitating it to serve as the visitor facility. As an alternative, consider locating the contact station along the lakefront. This new visitor contact facility could possibly include a sales area.
- Retain original Fishing Bridge museum exhibits, with minor rehabilitation as needed, and focus the interpretive message on the building and media as an example of early national park museum exhibits and architecture. Restore one or both wings to the original appearance (windows along both sides of the wing). Convert one wing of the museum into an information and visitor services center (possibly with a walk-around horizontal relief map of the lake bottom) and retain the other as a Yellowstone Association sales area. As another option, consider moving the interpretive office function to Lake and using the current office for affiliated visitor services.
- Rehabilitate the Grant Visitor Center. In order to restore the original function of the lobby, expand and enclose the rear porch or an adjacent area to provide space for the Yellowstone Association bookstore and offices. Do selective vista clearing of the young trees in back of the visitor center in order to restore the original unobstructed view to the lake from the lobby. Move the backcountry office into the visitor center, possibly into the existing exhibit area. Develop interpretive displays for the remaining exhibit area on the themes of wilderness, backcountry ethics, and wildness. Improve the theater acoustics, seating, and projection/sound systems. Consider switching the theater and exhibit spaces. ➤➤➤➤➤

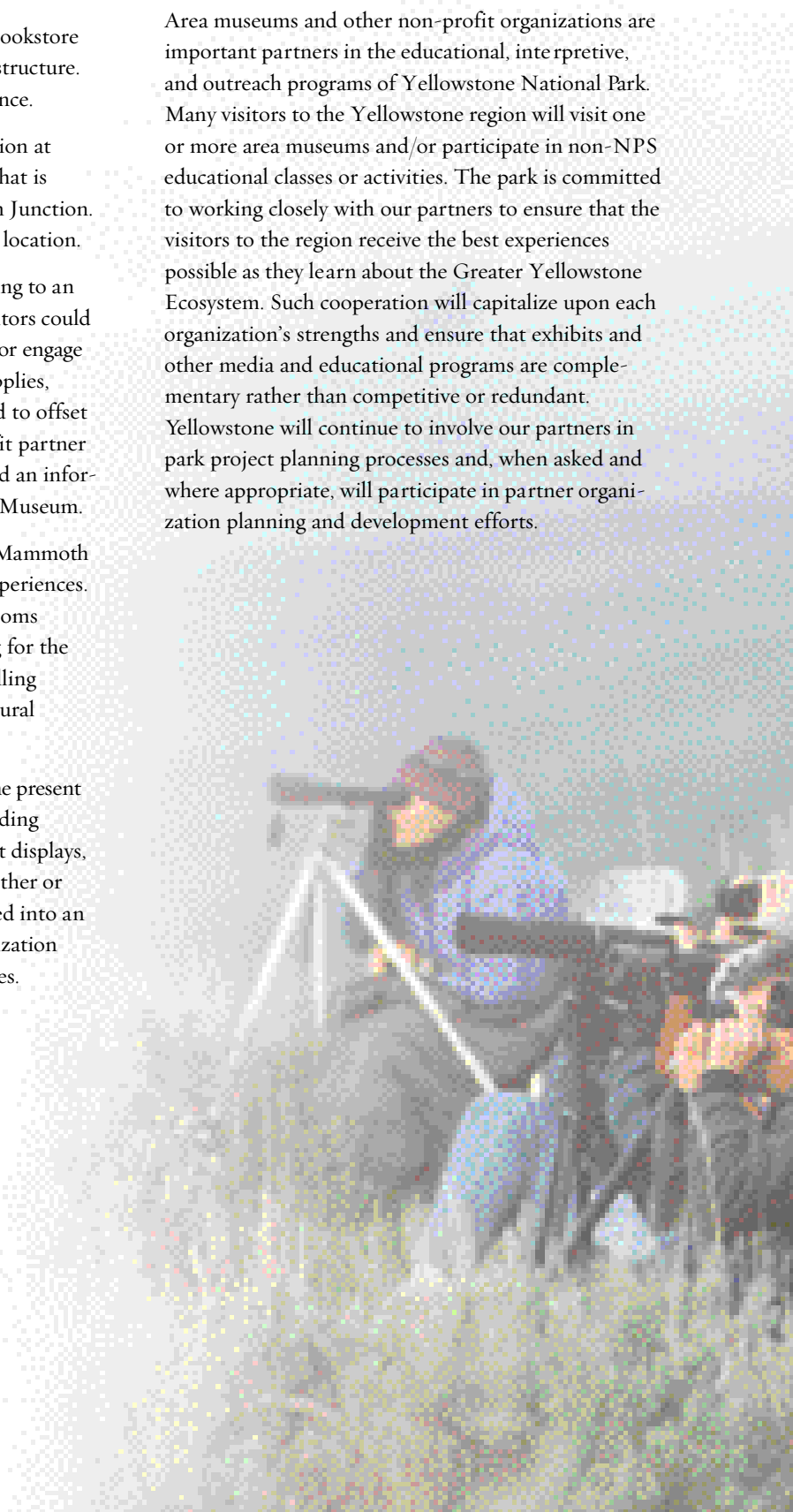
RECOMMENDATIONS

IN-PARK VISITOR CENTERS (CONT.)

- Retain the Yellowstone Association bookstore at West Thumb and rehabilitate the structure. Add daily roving interpretation presence.
- Provide a summer visitor contact station at Madison in the winter warming hut that is proposed for construction at Madison Junction. Develop appropriate exhibits for this location.
- Convert the Madison Museum building to an arts activity center. At this center, visitors could attend resource-related arts programs or engage in self-directed arts activities. Art supplies, publications, and works would be sold to offset program-operating costs. A non-profit partner could manage the sales operation. Add an information/orientation kiosk outside the Museum.
- Convert the present Nature Store in Mammoth to a new facility to enhance visitor experiences. Alternatives include providing classrooms and/or administrative offices/housing for the Yellowstone Association and/or installing exhibits to interpret the pre-1915 cultural history of the park.
- Convert and move to a new location the present Photo Shop at Old Faithful. The building could be used as an art studio with art displays, classes, and activities. Investigate whether or not the upper story could be converted into an artist's residence. A non-profit organization would provide the classes and activities.

PARTNERS AND AREA MUSEUMS

Area museums and other non-profit organizations are important partners in the educational, interpretive, and outreach programs of Yellowstone National Park. Many visitors to the Yellowstone region will visit one or more area museums and/or participate in non-NPS educational classes or activities. The park is committed to working closely with our partners to ensure that the visitors to the region receive the best experiences possible as they learn about the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. Such cooperation will capitalize upon each organization's strengths and ensure that exhibits and other media and educational programs are complementary rather than competitive or redundant. Yellowstone will continue to involve our partners in park project planning processes and, when asked and where appropriate, will participate in partner organization planning and development efforts.





PARTNERSHIPS

Yellowstone's stories are complex, and the National Park Service cannot fully and completely tell those stories by itself. To best serve the park's visitors, Yellowstone must work with its partners to develop complementary programs that capitalize on each partner's strengths and perspectives so that visitors to the Yellowstone region have the best experiences possible.

For instance, Yellowstone has had a successful partnership with its non-profit cooperating association, the Yellowstone Association, since 1933. Originally established to provide a research library for Yellowstone staff and others, the library has grown into one of the finest in the National Park System, and the Association has grown and expanded its educational, interpretive, and research programs. For the last 25 years, the Yellowstone Association Institute has supplemented the educational programs offered by the park with in-depth, multi-day classes for park visitors. Subject matter experts present courses in geology, history, ecology, wildlife observation, photography, and other topics of interest for reasonable fees within the park setting. Class participants experience Yellowstone in ways not available to them on their own or through the necessarily limited programs offered by the park staff.

Another example is the park's partnership with the Museum of the Rockies in Bozeman, Montana, which has a renowned planetarium and staff. A cooperative program allows the Museum to present astronomy programs in the park where the night skies are ideal for viewing the stars. Visitors are enthralled with these personal and professional programs, which few National Park Service staff have the skills to present. The Museum, in turn, introduces park visitors to its nearby facility where opportunities for additional learning experiences are available.

New and expanded partnership opportunities are proposed in the *Long-range Interpretive Plan* that will benefit Yellowstone's and the region's visitors and residents. Private/public partnerships offer visitors more choices, more convenience, and more opportunities to learn, all of which serve to protect, preserve, and promote the resources of the park.



RECOMMENDATIONS

INTERPRETIVE MEDIA

Interpretive media includes films, printed materials, Internet websites, and exhibits. These are the most common means by which visitors and the general public receive information about Yellowstone, its resources, and their safe use of the park.

FILMS

Work with partners to produce new audiovisual programs. The following topics are priorities for new productions. Most new programs would be 10-20 minutes in length, with longer versions produced for sale and/or broadcast. Some material would also be suitable for short segments that could be incorporated into visitor center exhibits. Several productions could be developed for each topic, and many topics are appropriate for specific productions for children. Films will be produced to complement the major theme(s) at each in-park visitor center. Other films developed for or on behalf of the park will be shown, as appropriate, as options to the primary film at each visitor center.

- **Park Orientation**
Produce an overview of park resources, significance, need for preservation, and general visitor experience opportunities. The production should be directed toward a general audience with two seasonal versions developed, one for summer and another for winter. Additional versions narrated in Spanish, French, German, and Japanese should be produced. Standard safety segments will be developed for the orientation programs.
- **Wildlife**
Interpret the “stories” of Yellowstone’s large charismatic species to draw visitor attention and include the smaller and lesser-known species for a more complete picture of the park’s wildlife in a naturally functioning ecosystem. The stories would include adaptations, ecological relationships, habitats, seasonal variations, visitor safety, how people can minimize disturbance of wildlife, and natural resource preservation.

- **The Human History of Yellowstone**
Produce an overview of the various peoples, including Native Americans (prehistoric and historic peoples), early Euro-American explorers, resource exploiters, and early tourists and park administrators, who have visited and lived in Yellowstone. The history of the world's first national park and how it was administered (absentee civilian superintendents followed by the U.S. Army prior to the establishment of the National Park Service in 1916) could also be explored. The question, "What did this area mean to various people in the past and what does it mean to you today?" could be used as a theme. Because of the variety of these and other human-history topics, several individual productions could be developed.



- **Geology**
Produce an overview of park and area geology and geologic history. Yellowstone National Park was set aside as the world's first national park because of its extraordinary geothermal features. Yellowstone remains one of the most geologically dynamic areas on earth, and the active volcano beneath the park's surface continues to influence the area.
- **Aquatic Resources**
Interpret the park's aquatic resources, underwater geology in Yellowstone Lake, and fisheries history including issues such as fish stocking, hatcheries, and the introduction of exotic species.

- **Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem**
Introduce visitors to the idea that the park is not a distinct, separate entity, biologically or geologically. Yellowstone is part of a greater ecosystem that crosses individual management jurisdictions. The health of this ecosystem (as well as others) depends on understanding this concept and on the cooperation of the different management agencies.
- **Safety for Kids and Their Parents**
Produce a park safety video for children from a child's perspective. This could be shown in exhibit areas, on the park website, and at outreach locations.
- **Junior Rangers**
Produce a short orientation to the Junior Ranger program that is intended for children and their parents.
- **Pre-Visit Orientation to *Expedition: Yellowstone!***
Produce an orientation for students and teachers who will be participating in *Expedition: Yellowstone!*, including the subjects of food, lodging, what the area looks like, and what to bring as well as an introduction to the educational activities.
- **Winter Visits to Yellowstone**
Produce a pre-visit overview for those visiting the park on snowcoaches, snowmobiles, skis, and snowshoes. Interpret themes of wildlife, ecosystem, natural resource preservation, and wilderness. Emphasize safety and minimal impacts to wildlife and other resources. This video would be shown in venues outside the park. Details of this production will be contingent on the park's final *Winter Use Plan*.
- **Wilderness Orientation/Awareness**
Produce a general overview for day hikers (and campers) using Yellowstone's backcountry; this video could be shown in backcountry offices.
- **Orientation for New Employees**
Work with partners to produce an orientation film for new NPS employees.

RECOMMENDATIONS

PUBLICATIONS

Work with the Yellowstone Association and other park divisions to develop and implement a parkwide publications plan. A publications plan describes the range of publications and other interpretive products that the park wants to provide for the public, from free items to those for sale. The plan examines what is currently available and what is needed in relation to each of the park's themes. The plan considers the different types of audiences (*e.g.*, children, adult, foreign), different types of publications (*e.g.*, books, pamphlets, posters), price ranges of sales items, and range of complexity of the publications. The publications plan identifies and prioritizes publication needs and identifies potential authors.

INTERPRETIVE SALES AREAS

Interpretive sales areas offer visitors an opportunity to obtain high-quality, in-depth materials that are an important component of a comprehensive interpretive program. Within Yellowstone National Park, the Yellowstone Association is the park's official partner in providing educational materials in NPS-operated facilities.

- Work with the Yellowstone Association to enhance and improve existing sales areas.
- Consider appropriate space needs for sales areas during development planning for all new interpretive facilities.
- Encourage the Yellowstone Association to develop and carry a wide range of additional educational materials (*e.g.*, software, videos, CDs, and other appropriate products) that will enhance and expand upon the themes in newly developed exhibit areas.
- Work with the Yellowstone Association to incorporate interpretive elements (*e.g.*, exhibits and educational and informational services) into the design of their sales areas.

OTHER INDOOR EXHIBITS

- Work with the Resource Management and Visitor Protection Division to develop standardized exhibits for all backcountry offices and trailheads.
- Provide standard orientation and interpretive exhibits in winter warming huts with specific variations as required describing local features and conditions. Inform users of current conditions such as roads, weather, and wildlife. Orientation and safety messages are especially important.

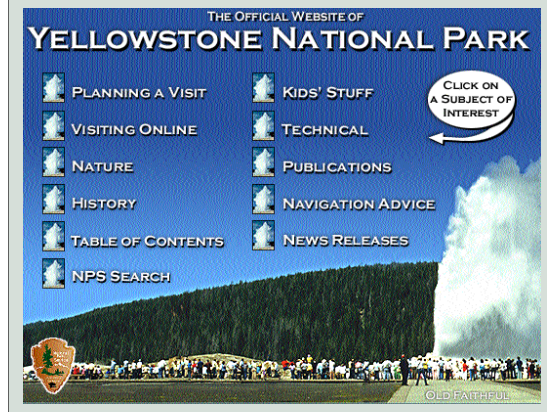
INTERNET

- Develop a procedure for quality control and review of information presented on Yellowstone's website.
- Continue to expand the capabilities and content of the website and keep up with evolving technology. For example, live-streaming video and radio broadcasts are possible if the park obtains the appropriate bandwidth; this offers partnership opportunities.
- Explore providing access on the website to normally inaccessible resources or events. For example, remote broadcasts from sites that visitors seldom see (such as backcountry geysers like Lone Star Geyser) or "virtual tours" of sites or facilities that are inaccessible to the public (such as the historic "Office r's Row" homes in Mammoth or the inside of a park fire tower) will soon be technologically feasible. "Real-time" Web media could also be used to broadcast interpretive programs, special events, and scientific conferences.
- Use the website to provide expanded information and improved connections with the Yellowstone Association and NPS educational programs.
- Develop a new website to provide a one-stop calendar of special events and programs offered by the park and its partners in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.



YELLOWSTONE ONLINE

Yellowstone National Park's unique and diverse resources attract visitors from all around the world. However, not everyone is lucky enough to be able to come to Yellowstone to see its wonders. For an increasing number of people, a visit to Yellowstone National Park means a "virtual visit" online. Yellowstone's official website is the most visited site in the National Park System, providing a critically important educational function. Our main page was viewed by more than 500,000 visitors in 1999. In the near future, visitors to Yellowstone's Web page will surpass those who physically visit the park. The impacts and influence of Yellowstone's website are tremendous. When the Old Faithful WebCam was shut down for several days late in 1999, the park received more than 100 e-mail inquiries into its status each day. Yellowstone's website is an example of the need for the park's interpretive programs and techniques to grow, change, and keep pace with the way people learn and seek information in the 21st Century. Virtual tours, WebCams, and other multi-media content recommended in this plan will offer online experiences that allow more of our public to understand and appreciate Yellowstone and to develop a desire to protect it and its resources.





EXHIBITS TELL STORIES

More than 5,000 exhibits are found in Yellowstone National Park visitor centers and museums, along roads, at overlooks, along self-guiding trails, and at trailheads, kiosks, ranger stations, backcountry offices, lodging facilities, corrals, and marinas. Exhibits work 24 hours a day, communicating a full range of Yellowstone information from orientation (maps) to safety warnings to natural and cultural resource interpretation. Every visitor to Yellowstone encounters at least one type of exhibit during his or her stay in the park. Unfortunately, many of the exhibits in Yellowstone's visitor centers and at other locations are antiquated. Only a fraction of the outdated or damaged exhibits that need to be replaced each year receive attention because of insufficient funds.

Today's visitors to national parks come for more than just a good time and to see their national treasures. They come to learn about the resources and issues they have heard about. Today's visitors are also technically "savvy." The exhibits prescribed in this plan will use innovative and appropriate technology that will be interesting and relevant to these visitors. Resource information is constantly and rapidly changing, and, as additional research data become available, new exhibits will be designed to integrate this "late-breaking" information.

RECOMMENDATIONS

OUTDOOR MEDIA

- Install information kiosks at all appropriate locations and, where feasible, include interactive computer stations to provide area information and orientation and recreational activities reservation services. These interactive computer stations would be phased in as technology evolves and would be easily updated and reliable with little maintenance required.
- Develop standardized information kiosks at all NPS campgrounds with site-specific campground maps and information. Ensure that the information kiosks at concessioner-operated campgrounds are consistent with NPS kiosk information and presentation.
- Prepare a bulletin board plan. Address themes, goals, and objectives for each park bulletin board and develop uniform design elements.
- Develop a system that alerts visitors to major wayside exhibits along the road.
- Construct a sheltered information kiosk in the Norris Geyser Basin parking lot (near the now-closed restrooms on the island between parking areas) that would have wayside exhibits providing general park orientation. An alternative location for this kiosk could be at the proposed warming hut.
- Develop a prototype mobile contact station (van or trailer) to use at community events and fairs, road construction barricade locations, campgrounds, and other areas where visitors congregate in order to interpret resource issues, discuss recreational opportunities, and/or to use for recruiting purposes.
- Develop portable, durable, A-frame-style exhibits that can be used opportunistically to interpret rapidly changing conditions (such as fire, new geothermal features, landslides or other geologic events, and large winter-kill events).

- Upgrade outdated and worn wayside exhibits parkwide and develop a cyclic maintenance schedule for all waysides.
- Amend the Parkwide Wayside Plan to add new waysides in appropriate areas, such as:
 - Construct an outdoor interpretive plaza inside the South Entrance at the first appropriate location where the fires of 1988 are evident. Use wayside panels to interpret the fires, fire ecology, and fire-management policies.
 - Provide interpretive media on underwater geothermal features at the observation deck along the lake in front of the Lake Hotel. Wayside style would be low-profile. Early lake transportation and/or the historic buildings along the lakeshore could also be interpreted.
 - Provide interpretive media on the park's resurgent domes at LeHardy Rapids.
 - Provide interpretive media at Buffalo Ford about the flight of the Nez Perce through Yellowstone in 1877.
 - Provide interpretive media in the Lamar Valley area, focusing on Northern Range wildlife, particularly wolves. Wayside style would be low-profile and unobtrusive in keeping with the topography and openness of the area.
 - Provide interpretive media at an appropriate pullout where visitors can view Specimen Ridge. Provide a viewing scope for visitors to see the petrified trees on the ridge or, alternatively, clearly point out the location of the trees through the exhibit.
- Provide interpretive media that highlights Yellowstone's greening efforts (*e.g.*, the solar panels at Lamar Buffalo Ranch, the fuel cell at Old Faithful, and the recycled plastic boardwalks in the geyser basin areas).
- Shorten the Two Ribbons Trail (into a T-shape) and install wayside exhibits to interpret bison, fire, and riparian ecology.
- Provide additional interpretive media in the Mammoth Terrace area.
- Rehabilitate the Travelers Information Station (TIS), an AM radio repeater system. Install more antennas throughout the park and use the system to provide an audio tour of the park. Use a recording system that can be accessed via telephone lines to allow timely updates on road conditions, wildlife "jams," timing of Old Faithful eruptions, and weather forecasts. Develop a signage system that publicizes the station. Consider incorporating multiple foreign language messages.

RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCESSION FACILITIES

- Install interior exhibits in hotel lobbies, hallways, restaurants, bars, and other appropriate areas that interpret themes such as wildlife, ecosystems, geothermal features, and cultural history (review all available historic structure reports for appropriate ideas). Exhibits might include graphic panels, artifacts, silent video programs, interactive displays, and other appropriate techniques. Specific opportunities include:
 - Mammoth Hotel
Install exhibits in public locations to interpret the history of tourism in the Mammoth area and local transportation history (including railroads and stagecoaches), as space permits.
 - Old Faithful Inn
Place small, appropriate-period photo albums on the tables on the mezzanine level to interpret the history of visitation to that area;

provide a booklet on the second floor balcony to interpret Old Faithful Geyser and other geothermal phenomena.

- Old Faithful Lodge
Install lobby exhibits to interpret local tourism, including the history of lodges and camps in the park.
- Old Faithful Lodge Recreation Hall
Once a new recreation hall is constructed, work with Amfac to develop this space for travelling exhibits that are too large for the new visitor centers' travelling exhibit spaces. Examples of exhibits that could be displayed include the Canyon Visitor Center's current bison exhibit or major national travelling exhibits (such as the Minnesota Science Museum's exhibit on wolves).



- Old Faithful Snow Lodge
Upgrade exhibits presently in the corridor that interpret winter recreation.
- Old Faithful Lower Gas Station
Work with Yellowstone Park Service Stations to convert one repair bay into exhibit space for early tourist conveyances. Explore partnerships with regional antique car clubs to use the space for rotating vehicle displays.
- Grant Village
Install exhibits in common public spaces of the lodging facilities, as appropriate, to interpret local issues such as early lake transportation history.
- Lake Lodge
Install lobby exhibits that interpret the ecology and geology of Yellowstone Lake and area wildlife (especially bears).
- Lake Hotel
Upgrade exhibit frames to match architecture; interpret history of local visitation and lake geothermal features. Place small, appropriate-period photo albums on the tables in the sunroom.
- Bridge Bay Marina
Develop outdoor exhibits in the marina plaza to interpret Yellowstone Lake fisheries and ecology and boating safety.
- Canyon Lodge
Install lobby exhibits to interpret Hayden Valley geology and wildlife. Develop an outdoor kiosk between the registration building and the Lodge on these same themes. Explore the feasibility of installing a small portion of the bison exhibit currently at the Canyon Visitor Center inside the Lodge.
- Roosevelt Lodge
Install lobby exhibits to interpret early history of the area. Consider one or more of the following topics: the route to mining areas around Cooke City, Yancey's Hole, preservation of the bison, and President T.R. Roosevelt's visit to the area.
- Evaluate outdoor orientation panels at all gas stations and upgrade as necessary.
- Install wayside exhibits interpreting history and architecture outside significant historic structures.
- Produce standard exhibits for rest rooms that focus on a greening message, sustainable practices, and safety.
- Develop and upgrade site-specific history wayside exhibits at concessioner horse corrals (Mammoth, Tower/Roosevelt, Canyon) covering the history of horse operations for early tourists in Yellowstone.
- Develop standard exhibits for cross-country ski rental facilities at Mammoth and Old Faithful.

RECOMMENDATIONS

PERSONAL SERVICES INTERPRETATION

Interpretation that involves the presence of park staff during the visitor's participation in an event or activity is called "personal services interpretation." The NPS is committed to providing the public with the highest quality personal services.

Many new and expanded formal and informal personal services programs are proposed in the LRIP. Partner organizations contribute valuable service to this program by providing memorable opportunities for the public that are not possible or necessarily appropriate for the NPS to offer.

OUTREACH

Yellowstone has initiated a formal Community Outreach Program to improve two-way communication with our park neighbors on park activities, developments, and current management issues and their consequences. However, current staffing levels can only accommodate reaching approximately 1,000 individuals in the closest gateway communities annually. (See "Formal Education" section for outreach recommendations related to schools.)

- Expand the Community Outreach Program into all 21 counties in the tri-state region of Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho. The more than 807,000 people living in this area will benefit by receiving timely information about park issues that affect them. This program will also provide an avenue for the public's concerns to be communicated to the park Superintendent for consideration during the decision-making process.
- Assign interpretive staff to specific regional areas in order to enhance the consistency of presence within each community. This approach will facilitate communication for community leaders and others in the public needing information or answers to specific questions.
- Target audiences representing a broad cross-section of each community will be contacted. Chamber of Commerce meetings in the communities will be regularly attended. Staff will also be available to speak at business and civic organization meetings, social club and church group functions, and with Native American groups.

VISITOR CENTER OPERATIONS

- Expand in-park visitor center hours by length of day and length of season to provide information and orientation services when the public is present.
- Provide seasonal staffing for information services at satellite and gateway visitor centers, including the Jackson Hole/Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center, Livingston, Cody, West Yellowstone, South Entrance, and Northeast Entrance (see pages 9-11 for descriptions).

FORMAL INTERPRETIVE PROGRAMS

- Expand the number, variety, and range of the programs offered, topics covered, and locations and audiences served based on the park goals and themes (see pages 6-8). Included might be early morning bird walks; special walks in unique geological areas, historic districts, and architecturally important areas of the park; early evening programs to accommodate families with young children; and walks and hikes targeted at specific age groups (*i.e.*, children, teens, seniors).
- Develop a plan for fee-based interpretation.
- Explore ways to provide more NPS-uniformed interpretive staff to enhance visitor enjoyment of Yellowstone, specifically, seek grants and/or establish an endowment to pay for increased operational field staff.
- Increase involvement of interpretive staff in field activities in order to enhance their first-hand knowledge of park resources.
- Increase involvement of interpretive staff in developing briefing statements on resource- and research-related topics for use in formal interpretive programs.
- Reestablish the Resource Interpreter position.
- Provide Native American cultural demonstrations and programs presented by Native Americans.

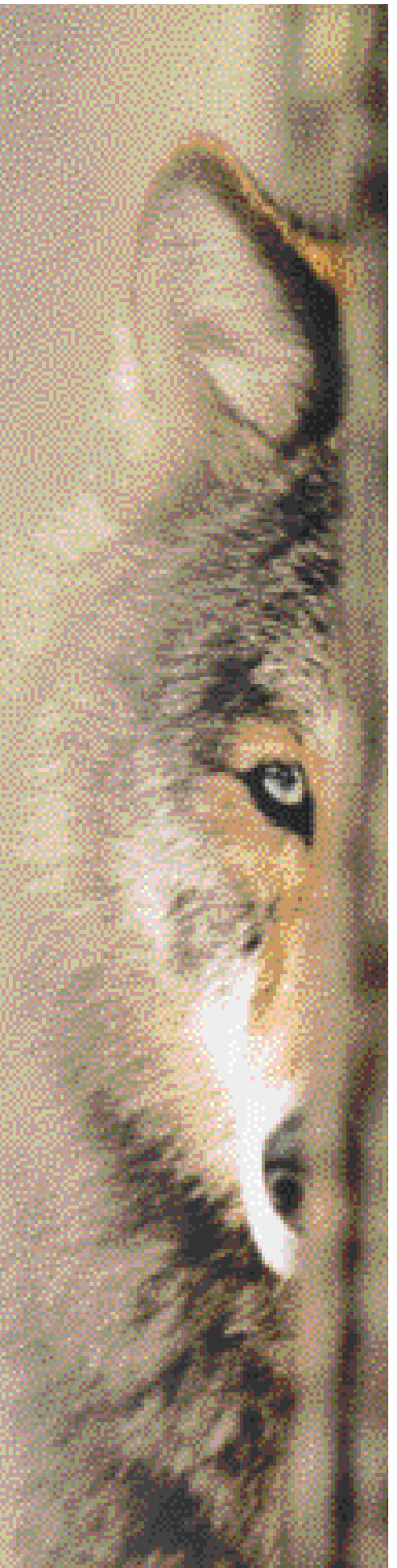
- Afford Native Americans opportunities within the Division of Interpretation by developing a Native American Co-op Program. Work with Yellowstone National Park's affiliated tribes to carry out this program.
- Expand the winter program offerings to include ranger-led interpretive snowshoe and ski excursions at various locations throughout the park.



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Yellowstone National Park is well-known and much loved throughout our nation, but the local “gateway” communities surrounding the park often feel alienated and isolated from the resource that is in their own backyard. Decisions made in Yellowstone to protect the unique and important resources found here are made on behalf of all the people of the nation. Unfortunately, these decisions can often have an economic impact on the gateway communities. The long-term need for protection of park resources in order to ensure quality visitor experiences into the future may not be evident to local residents who depend on tourism for their livelihood. Understanding the reasons for park management decisions and finding ways to lessen the economic or other impacts of those decisions can best occur in an atmosphere of collaboration where finding reasonable solutions to problems is the priority.

An expanded formal program of Community Outreach — with specific goals and outcomes — will open new avenues of communication between the park and its neighbors and, in the long term, build relationships based on understanding. The recommendations in this plan include significantly increasing the size and geographic scope of the Outreach Program. This will promote openness and cooperation with the gateway communities and increase the involvement of those communities in park activities. This goal can only be achieved by a determined and consistent effort. Establishing cooperative relationships with the park's gateway communities is a “win/win” solution for all involved.





THE PARK RANGER

For many visitors to Yellowstone, the experience of seeing and talking with a park ranger is as memorable as seeing Old Faithful Geyser. They seek out those friendly, knowledgeable, and versatile men and women in the gray and green uniforms and the flat hats. They have come to know and expect that the ranger will not only provide answers to their questions but will also provide the deeper meaning — the larger truths — behind the information or facts. This is the art of interpretation — a profession that began in the National Park Service at Yellowstone National Park. While some park visitors take part in formal ranger-led programs, talks, or walks, many others unexpectedly encounter a ranger on the trail in one of the park's geyser basins or along the rim of the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone. These “roving rangers” are an important part of the park's Interpretive Program, and recommendations in this plan will allow expansion of the program. The roving assignment provides an opportunity to answer visitor questions, to monitor the resource, and, most importantly, to be available to interpret the park and its resources on-site. The value for the park in “roving contacts” is immeasurable. A visitor who understands and appreciates the resources of Yellowstone will return home with a stronger sense of ownership and a desire to protect the park.



RECOMMENDATIONS

INFORMAL INTERPRETATION

Informal interpretation includes a program called “roving.” Roving is the assignment of a uniformed interpretive ranger to a specific area in order to assist the many visitors who do not seek out Formal Interpretive Programs. The Roving Interpreter provides educational opportunities, a sense of security for visitors, and protection of the park resources, year-round.

- Expand the daily roving interpretive program (including impromptu programming) to provide a uniformed ranger presence on a routine basis during peak daytime visitor use at West Thumb Geyser Basin, Old Faithful and the

Upper Geyser Basin, Norris Geyser Basin, Mammoth Hot Springs Terraces, Artist Point, all park campgrounds, and at various other high visitor-use locations. These include: Tower Fall, Petrified Tree, Fort Yellowstone, Roosevelt Arch, Boiling River, Obsidian Cliff/Sheepeater Cliff/Willow Park, Elk Park/Gibbon Meadows, Artists’ Paintpots, Gibbon Falls, Seven-Mile Bridge, Firehole Canyon Drive, Fountain Paint Pot, Black Sand and Biscuit basins, Geyser Hill/Observation Point, Lewis River Canyon/Lewis Falls, Lake Village, Fishing Bridge, LeHardy’s Rapids, Mud Volcano, Hayden Valley, the North and South rims of the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone, Lookout Point, Uncle Tom’s Trail, and Mount Washburn.

- Explore non-traditional modes of transportation (*i.e.*, bicycle, horse, ski, snowshoe) as a means to reach the greatest number of people during roving assignments.
- Provide an interpreter in Lamar Valley to accommodate the dramatic increase in wolf-watching activities.
- Implement Wildlife Safety Education Program. Interpretive rangers assigned to rove in campgrounds, picnic sites, parking areas, geyser basins, and other visitor-use sites would be available to immediately respond to wildlife jams and other situations in order to provide resource education and visitor safety interpretation. This function would be done in conjunction with and augmenting the roles of the resource and protection staffs.
- Provide an interpretive park ranger at trails and roads where visitors may encounter active, prescribed or natural fires in order to explain the park’s fire policy and provide for visitor safety.
- Develop a short training program on informal interpretation that would be available to all non-interpretive, uniformed NPS employees. This program would aid all employees in answering visitor questions and understanding where to direct visitors with specific needs.



RECOMMENDATIONS

PARTNER ROLES

Partner organizations provide opportunities and activities for interpretation that complement and enhance park efforts. These interpretive services are guided by NPS policy and monitored for content and accuracy by NPS staff.

- The Yellowstone Association has distinguished itself by providing a variety of educational services, including in-depth specialty courses through the Yellowstone Association Institute.
- Capitalizing on this strength, the Yellowstone Association Institute will continue to provide and expand their offerings of full-day and multi-day, adult-oriented, in-depth programs using subject-matter experts as teachers/facilitators.
- The Yellowstone Association Institute would explore developing multi-day programs for organized adult groups, such as Elde rhostel and service organizations.
- The Yellowstone Association Institute would expand program offerings to include expedition-type tours for small groups (less than ten people) that are no less than six hours in length. (The NPS will continue to offer programs for the public that are generally designed for more than ten people and less than a full day in length. Some of these NPS programs will be fee-based.)
- The Yellowstone Association Institute would explore the development of multi-day family classes and other multi-day educational niches not currently offered.
- As part of its expanded interpretive program, the Yellowstone Association Institute might also develop a training course for commercial guides and others who (by permit) lead tours in the park. The NPS views this as a positive service because it will ensure that tour guides have accurate and current information and, thus, can provide consistent and high-quality service to the public.
- Continued cooperative efforts with Amfac Parks and Resorts and between the Yellowstone Association and Amfac will be promoted and encouraged in order to take advantage of the opportunities and strengths this partnership brings to Yellowstone and its visitors. Because of the nature of their businesses, it is safe to say that employees of the concessioners in Yellowstone probably interact with more park visitors than NPS staff do. Amfac has provided the visiting public with a variety of interpretive services for many years, including walking tours of the Old Faithful Inn, boat tours on Yellowstone Lake, horseback and stagecoach rides, wildlife bus tours, and snowcoach tours. Amfac has a training program for its staff that the NPS contributes to and provides oversight for as directed by NPS policy.
- Provide a uniformed presence on Amfac bus, wildlife, and boat tours during summer and snowcoach tours during winter, as staffing permits.
- Explore partnership opportunities that provide programs for foreign visitors in their languages by seeking employees with foreign language skills, establishing an internship program for foreign language majors, partnering with concessioners, or contracting with outside providers.
- Continue to explore partnership opportunities that increase programs for visitors with varying physical and mental abilities. This includes providing programs for hearing-impaired visitors by employing sign-language proficient staff or interns or having such staff available by partnering with concessioners or contracting with outside providers. Appropriate programs for sight- and mobility-impaired visitors would be provided as well.
- Develop an arts program in Yellowstone in association with a non-profit partner. Yellowstone has a long history and association with the arts and artists. The arts are a means by which the public can come to understand the meaning and significance of the park by forging aesthetic and emotional connections with Yellowstone. The program would include demonstrations, an Artist-in-Residence Program, competitions, exhibits, workshops, and special events.

RECOMMENDATIONS

FORMAL EDUCATION

A formal education program is curriculum-based, includes both pre-site and post-site activities, and serves organized groups. The park's Formal Education Program provides enormous benefits to both the participants and the park. The park is committed to giving priority to the needs of the gateway communities; however, only a small fraction of those schools and other groups wanting educational programs are now served. The park is desperately short of facilities for its Formal Education Program. In order to meet the current demand and expand the program, additional resources, including funding, staffing, and facilities, will be required.

- The Formal Education Program's goal is to contact each greater Yellowstone area school child at least three times and each tri-state school child at least once in their K-12 career. Children in kindergarten through 3rd grade will have the opportunity to attend one day-use program; children in 4th through 8th grades will have the opportunity for a residential experience in the park; and young people in high school will have the opportunity to attend a camp or have a work experience in the park.
- Expand *Expedition: Yellowstone!* (the park's curriculum-based, residential program) to a full school-year program for 4th through 8th grade students. Establish pre-residential-experience, school-based programs for all groups attending *Expedition: Yellowstone!*
- Develop additional residential and day-use educational facilities inside the park to accommodate a variety of programs, including training. Cooperate with the Yellowstone Association, Amfac, and other partners to locate facilities. Explore using existing facilities within the park. Some alternatives include: the Nature Store at Mammoth (for the Yellowstone Association Institute), Mammoth School (in summers), Young Adult Conservation Corps (YACC) camp, and the Tower dormitory (September through May).
- Develop a residential high school field camp program that allows students a unique opportunity for extended learning, research, and career exposure in the areas of geology, microbiology, wildlife management, archeology, and historical restoration, to name just a few.
- Develop facilities outside the park's boundary for additional residential education campuses in order to meet program demands and year-round gateway community access and attendance goals.
- Develop a consistent, coordinated, and workable menu-driven parkwide reservation system to deal with requested educational services, including guest speakers. Consider making this service part of the fee-based interpretive program.
- Explore partnerships with area educational institutions to develop a Greater Yellowstone Geocosystem Learning Center.
- Expand the summer day-use program, *Exploring Yellowstone*, in order to serve more children and to offer more courses, particularly in the nearby communities of Gardiner, Cooke City, and West Yellowstone.
- Expand day-use programming for school groups requesting educational programs, both in the park and at their schools. Day programs will be fee-based, but scholarships would be available for schools in need. Strong park/school partnerships are recommended in the 1995 National Science Education Standards as a means of enhancing school lessons, addressing a variety of learning styles, increasing community and parental involvement, and promoting life-long learning.



- Develop day-use programs for Scout, 4-H, and other such groups designed to meet their program achievement goals, including service-project needs.
- Increase programming for groups that have had little previous access to park experiences and programs (e.g., tribal schools, the economically disadvantaged, ethnic minorities, those who do not speak English as their first language, those with disabilities). Work with students in tribal schools to compile oral histories of their people that document connections to Yellowstone National Park.
- Provide educational programs for seniors (e.g., Elderhostel).
- Increase the use of the arts in the Formal Education Program.
- Expand teacher training through workshops. Workshops would be offered for teacher re-certification (as approved by state Offices of Education) and for graduate credit at participating universities. Workshops would be a minimum of 10 hours and would cover a broad range of curricular material and resource information relevant to Yellowstone's interpretive themes. Workshops will be available to anyone working with youth, including scout leaders, concessioners, guides, and camp staff.
- To enhance staffing, initiate an intern program with graduate students in education.
- Increase partnerships with other agencies and organizations, including affiliated tribes.
- Develop electronic field trips via the Internet to expand outreach capabilities to schools and other groups.
- Expand the Junior Ranger program by providing year-round programming to expanded age groups in order to serve a larger percentage of park visitors. Ensure that at least 90% of those children participating complete the program and receive their patch.

THE JUNIOR RANGER PROGRAM

Each summer, approximately 15,000 visitors' children between the ages of 5 and 12 become Yellowstone National Park "Junior Rangers." The Junior Ranger Program is an important part of Yellowstone's educational efforts and has become institutionalized throughout the National Park System. The program is designed to develop a conservation ethic in youth through a self-guided, activity-based program. A fun and engaging age-appropriate activity paper guides the child and his or her family in learning about the park's major themes and educates them on the need to protect park resources. Upon completion of the series of activities, the child is awarded a patch and publicly recognized by a park ranger in a visitor center. Public support for this program is tremendous. Each year, Yellowstone receives many letters from visitors attesting to the long-lasting impact the program has had on their children's environmental ethics and love for Yellowstone National Park. Parkwide, one child is honored as Yellowstone's newest "Junior Ranger" every six minutes! Recommendations in this plan will enhance and expand the Junior Ranger Program — allowing more children to participate in and benefit from the program.





EXPEDITION: YELLOWSTONE!

Each year, nearly 800 students, teachers, and parents from communities surrounding Yellowstone National Park spend several days and nights at the historic Buffalo Ranch in the Lamar Valley. Here, they are immersed in *Expedition: Yellowstone!*, a curriculum-based program that connects gateway community 4th–6th graders with the national park in their own backyard. *Expedition: Yellowstone!* affects children during their formative years, helping Yellowstone National Park’s future constituents become fully informed citizens, better consumers of environmental information, and better decision makers in their own communities.

Because of staffing and facility limitations, *Expedition: Yellowstone!* is not advertised, and it currently reaches only a small percent of gateway community students. Classes must be selected by lottery — and the program can only accommodate 40% of the annual requests. Recommendations in the *Long-range Interpretive Plan* call for a significantly expanded school-based educational program — one that will reach the majority of gateway community students at least once during their school-age years. The investment in a proactive program of this scope will reap tremendous future benefits by instilling park values and an understanding of Yellowstone’s mission and philosophy in the park’s most critical audiences for education — its neighboring populations.



RECOMMENDATIONS

RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

- Develop an evaluation tool to determine visitors’ expectations related to interpretive services and general park experiences.
- Develop an ongoing program of evaluation and monitoring to determine whether goals are being achieved, the effectiveness of services and facilities, and the efficiency of resource allocation. This program will include front-end, formative, and summative evaluation and monitoring.

CONCLUSION

The *Long-range Interpretive Plan* outlines Yellowstone National Park’s goals for the Division of Interpretation and presents recommendations that will keep the park meaningful, relevant, and valued to our visitors. This plan is a “living document” — it will be reviewed annually and adjusted to respond to changing park issues, visitor expectations, and funding opportunities. Full implementation of this plan will allow Yellowstone to once again become a national leader in resource education and interpretation and will provide our diverse and sophisticated public with the high level of interpretive services that they deserve.

