

Assateague Island National Seashore

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Long Range Interpretive Plan



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Introduction

Comprehensive Interpretive Planning in the National Park Service

In 1995, the National Park Service adopted a unified planning approach for interpretation and education. That approach took proven elements of interpretive planning and, for the first time, combined them as an integrated whole. At the same time, responsibility for interpretive planning shifted to the parks.

In the Fall of 2000, the National Park Service prepared and distributed a short document titled “Comprehensive Interpretive Planning: Interpretation and Education Guideline.” The plan prepared for Assateague Island National Seashore follows that guideline and the contents of this Introduction are drawn primarily from the guideline’s narrative.

The chief aim of Interpretation is not instruction, but provocation.

- Freeman Tilden

What is a Comprehensive Interpretive Plan?

The CIP is a tool designed to help parks make choices, and is written with park staff in mind. It helps them decide what their objectives are, who their audiences are, and what mix of media and personal services to use. Although the CIP as defined in DO#6 is composed of specific elements, it should be clearly stated that any good planning is customized to meet the individual park’s needs, conditions, and situations. The CIP is not a recipe; rather it is a guideline for efficient, effective, goal-driven planning. The product is not the plan, but an effective and efficient interpretive program that achieves management goals, provides appropriate services, and promotes appropriate audience experiences. While it considers past interpretive programming, it is primarily a forward-looking document that concentrates on actions needed to create or sustain a vigorous and effective interpretive program for the future.

Responsibility for procuring interpretive planning rests with park superintendents and each park should update the CIP as frequently as circumstances require. It can and should evolve to address new challenges and maintain relevance to park management efforts.

The Long Range Interpretive Plan (LRIP) is the primary component of the CIP. The process that defines the LRIP encourages development of targeted, realistic strategies and actions that work toward achievement of the goals set for a 5-7 year period.

Actions in the LRIP are divided into annual, achievable steps and are reproduced in the Annual Implementation Plan (AIP), the second component of the CIP. Creating annual plans via this “stepping-down” of the LRIP simplifies much of a park’s annual planning process.

The third component of the CIP is the Interpretive Database (ID), a compilation of information including interpretive media inventories, the park’s strategic plan, enabling legislation, audience surveys, interpretive reports and a bibliography.

Summary of Assateague’s Plan

Assateague’s LRIP focuses on actions in several areas of concern.

To better interpret the park’s themes, the plan identifies actions in a wide range of interpretive media. The park’s “unigrid” brochure needs to be updated and new thematic sales publications developed. With a new visitor center in the works, the park needs to plan for a new audiovisual program and exhibits. The park’s collection of images needs to be digitized to remain useful and a new tracking system should be developed to ensure that valuable materials are not lost. Existing visitor center and wayside exhibits need to be evaluated. Existing trail booklets need to be more readily available. Finally, park staff need a mechanism that they can use to ensure that audiences get a balanced program of personal services, i.e., a mix of themes, information, and recreation/skills.

In order to provide audiences with an enhanced park experience, the plan focuses on actions that improve orientation, information, and wayfinding, including a new comprehensive sign plan, continual attention to the park’s website, an

improved radio message, heightened cooperation with interpretive partners and concessions, more information about park conditions, and installation of additional spotting scopes.

The plan recognizes that partners will continue to play an important role in providing interpretation at Assateague. It also recognizes the need for better data on park users. Several actions seek to open or expand dialogue with targeted audiences including neighboring communities and schools, Hispanic community, African Americans and Native Americans. In most cases, new programming will be developed in consultation with user groups. A proposed oral history project recognizes the importance of personalizing the past, while a planned annual event at Toms Cove will focus on the human history of Assateague and seek to celebrate the traditions of place.

Resource issues, like the island itself, are continually changing. The plan includes several actions that mainstream interpretation of resource management and ensures that a variety of audiences, not just those who come to a visitor center, are introduced to topics of importance.

Finally, the park needs to adjust staffing to live up to its interpretive potential. More staff time will be needed to upgrade and sustain an effective website. Non-personal services need attention to meet the demands of visitation, but no staff are currently dedicated specifically to accomplishing these identified projects. Educational programming is largely reactive. More staffing is needed to meet the goals that the NPS has for educating the next generation and for implementing a diverse curriculum based education program that meets the current and ongoing demand from educational institutions. Book store operations must be discussed and adjusted. Training needs to be adjusted to ensure that staff time is converted to effective personal service.

Part 1

Foundation



Park Purpose, 2002

A park purpose statement summarizes the reasons a park is included in the National Park System. It is derived from the legislation that created both the National Park Service and a specific site.

Assateague Island National Seashore was established to protect and preserve Assateague Island and its surrounding waters, to give the public opportunities to enjoy outdoor recreation, and to appreciate and learn about associated natural and cultural resources.

Park Significance

Statements of significance describe a park's distinctive natural, cultural, and/or recreational resources and values.

Assateague Island National Seashore is nationally significant because it...

- is part of a natural system with a geologic process unique to barrier islands, characterized by constant change both seasonally and daily, subtle and dramatic.
- is one of the last surviving undeveloped shorelines along the east coast of the United States. Assateague's 37 miles of barrier beach and bay are a remnant of a natural continuum of islands that once stretched from Cape Cod to Mexico.
- is characteristic of the ecological habitats normally associated with barrier island systems including ocean, beach, dunes, maritime forest, inlets, salt marshes and bays.

- is a permanent and temporary home to a great diversity of land and aquatic life, including several threatened and endangered species that depend on the fragile and special island habitats that result from the overlap of northern and southern habitat zones and the confluence of healthy, unpolluted marsh estuaries and ocean waters.

- is a critical natural landform in the path of the Atlantic Flyway serving as a major stopover for migratory birds.

- contains submerged and above ground cultural resources that provide clues to maritime livelihoods and activities including Native American life, an 18th century plantation, 19th century hotel resorts, hunting preserves, self-sufficient and isolated island communities, fish factories, Assateague lighthouse, U.S. Life Saving Service, U.S.Coast Guard operations, World War II emplacements, and the sites associated with a failed real estate development on the island.

- is one of the few publicly accessible places along the developed East Coast where audiences can experience unimpaired seashore values such as clean ocean water and beach, undeveloped bay and marshlands, natural sounds, quiet, solitude, seashore views-heds and night skies.

- is a premier outdoor recreational and educational resource offering outstanding opportunities for hiking, camping, nature study, beach combing, fishing, hunting, shellfishing, swimming, birding, biking, picnicking, recreational ORV use, as well as many other leisure and educational activities.



Parkwide Interpretive Themes

Do not try to satisfy your vanity by teaching a great many things. Awaken people's curiosity. It is enough to open minds; do not overload them. Put there just a spark. If there is some good inflammable stuff, it will catch fire.

- Anatole France

In the National Park Service, interpretive themes are key ideas that capture the meanings of nationally significant resources associated with park sites. They help focus the park's entire interpretive program.

Interpretive themes set the political, economic, social, and intellectual context for the park story, connecting park resources to the larger processes, systems, ideas and values of which they are a part.

The following primary interpretive themes were developed during a series of workshops involving a cross-section of park staff, constituents and partners.

Barrier Island Dynamics

Assateague Island is on the move, ever changing, constantly being reshaped. The transitional nature of the island is what makes the dynamics of life on Assateague so vibrant.

This theme focuses on the natural processes that contribute to the distinctive character of barrier islands, including barrier island formation, storms and island rollovers, plant and animal succession, and species migration. It interprets the natural forces that continually shape and reshape barrier islands—the sculpting forces of wind, waves, and coastal currents—making them seem a “work-in-progress.” It provides an opportunity to interpret the different zones or habitats on the island (the beach, dunes, forest, bay, and marsh) including the species of plants and animals that live there and those that migrate through. It promotes discussion of how each zone contributes to the island environment, the ocean, and the estuary. Finally, this theme provides an ideal way to compare barrier islands and to discuss the impact of human manipulation, or interference with, natural processes.



The Ocean and the Coastal Bays of Assateague

The waters of the bay and ocean mix around Assateague, creating a virtual soup of life. This confluence rejuvenates life daily, both above and beneath the waters.

This theme focuses on aquatic life such as: the significance of the unseen world of plankton; the plants of the bay and ocean; the birds of the salt marsh, bay, and ocean; the life cycles of fish, crustaceans and shellfish; and human and animal dependence on the ocean and bays. It provides opportunities to explore the state of the ocean, both locally and globally: the positive and negative impacts of human use of the ocean, bays, and watersheds; the potential of the ocean as an under-explored resource; the impacts of the loss of species and habitat; the dangers of water pollution; and the role of recreation and water-based activity in modern society.



The Human History of Assateague

People have been a part of the natural systems of Assateague for centuries, sometimes for survival, sometimes for enjoyment. Those who have spent time on and around the island have changed it and have been changed by it.

This theme focuses on the human history of the island from native peoples to the present. It interprets diverse human activities, occupations, and folkways associated with Assateague. It explores the impact that these activities have had on the natural world of the island, as well as the ways the island has influenced and inspired human residents and visitors. This theme provides opportunities to explore the constructed environment, from lighthouses to duck blinds, from shipwrecks to vacation homes. It facilitates discussion of development and conservation as applied to Assateague.



Pope Island Lifesaving Station

Interpretation in Planning Documents

Legislation

Public Law 89-195, September 21, 1965, provided for the establishment of Assateague Island National Seashore for the “purpose of protecting and developing Assateague Island...and certain adjacent waters and small marsh islands for public outdoor recreation use and enjoyment.” After a decade of additional discussion and controversy over the amount of development that would be permitted on the island, in 1976 Congress amended the original legislation by directing the Secretary of the Interior to prepare a comprehensive plan for the “protection, management, and use of the seashore,” including the following considerations:

- Measures for the full protection and management of the natural resources and natural ecosystems of the seashore;
- Present and proposed uses of the seashore and the lands and waters adjacent or related thereto, the uses of which would reasonably be expected to influence the administration, use, and environmental quality of the seashore;
- Plans for the development of facilities necessary and appropriate for visitor use and enjoyment of the seashore, with identification of resource and user carrying capacities;
- Plans for visitor transportation systems integrated and coordinated with lands and facilities adjacent to, but outside of, the seashore; and
- Plans for fostering the development of cooperative agreements and land and resource use patterns outside the seashore which would be compatible with the protection and management of the seashore.

The mission of Interpretation is to increase visitor understanding and appreciation of the significances of park resources.

- NPS Strategic Plan Goal

General Management Plan

The discussion of interpretation contained in the General Management Plan (GMP) that the NPS completed in 1982 is outdated. Most development proposed by the plan (new roads, campgrounds and nature trail upgrading) was completed in FY89. The GMP, however, did detail the critical need for a new Maryland Visitor Center. Visitor Center facilities are now aging and continue to be inadequate and substandard.

Interpretive Prospectus

The original interpretive prospectus, based on a mid-1960s master plan, was rendered obsolete by decisions that abandoned the concept of massive development on the island.

Historic Site Interpretive Prospectus, 1990

The park's interpretive staff prepared several proposals focused on interpretation of island history, including:

- Presentation of a lifesaving drill
- Informal costumed interpretation at the boat house in Maryland
- Exhibits at the Maryland boat house

Statement for Interpretation and Visitor Services

A Statement for Interpretation was completed in 1995. It identified themes (now revised), management concerns, park users and use patterns, as well as goals and objectives for the interpretive division. Most of the areas identified as needing improvement have been addressed and are no longer of concern. Technologies and data referenced in the 1995 SFI are now outdated.

“The Road Ahead: A Strategy for Achieving Excellence in Interpretation & Education”

Released in 1997 by the Northeast Region of the National Park Service, “The Road Ahead” identified six goals designed to improve the quality of both interpretive and educational programming. Each park in the region should...

- Discover the Untold Stories, i.e., interpretive and educational programs are inclusive and present diverse perspectives and multiple points of view where appropriate and are related to park themes.
- Open New Doors to Learning, i.e., school systems, academic institutions, organizations, diverse audiences and lifelong learners recognize and use parks to enhance learning.
- Invest in Children, i.e., every park will have a curriculum-based education program so that children have a quality educational “park experience” during their elementary and high school years.
- Develop America’s Best Workforce, i.e., the profile of our workforce reflects the rich diversity of the United States population. All employees demonstrate the necessary competencies and approach their responsibilities with the highest degree of professionalism and innovation in order to provide outstanding customer service, to maintain subject matter credibility, and to be accountable in all aspects of the operation.
- Make Connections, i.e., every park will connect its story to the entire National Park System and will seek opportunities to link themes and build bridges with parks and partners locally, nationally and globally.
- Get Wired to the World, i.e., every park capitalizes on new and emerging technologies in order to enhance resource protection, improve customer service, and educate all audiences.

The most basic principle of lateral thinking is that any particular way of looking at things is only one from among many other possible ways.

- Edward de Bono

Strategic Management Plan (GPRA), 2001

The following goals, prepared as part of the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) process, are included in the park's Strategic Plan. Future annual plans will establish similar benchmarks for audience satisfaction, audience understanding and partner participation and should be consulted during the annual review of this CIP:

- Mission Goal IIa: Visitors safely enjoy and are satisfied with the availability, accessibility, diversity, and quality of park facilities, services and appropriate recreational opportunities.
- Mission Goal IIb: Park audiences and the general public understand and appreciate the preservation of parks and their resources for this and future generations.

National Park System Advisory Board Recommendations, 2002

In its report to the National Park Service, the NPS Advisory Board recommended that the Service place more emphasis on education and interpretation. More specifically it said the NPS should...

- Embrace its mission, as educator, to become a more significant part of America's educational system by providing formal and informal programs for students and learners of all ages inside and outside park boundaries.
- Encourage the study of the American past, developing programs based on current scholarship, linking specific places to the narratives of our history, and encourage a public exploration and discussion of the American experience.
- Adopt the conservation of biodiversity as a core principle in carrying out its preservation mandate and participate in efforts to protect marine, as well as terrestrial resources.

- Advance the principles of sustainability, while first practicing what is preached.
- Actively acknowledge the connections between native cultures and the parks, and assure that no relevant chapter of the American heritage experience remains unopened.
- Encourage collaborations among park and recreation systems at every level—federal, regional, state, and local—in order to help build an outdoor recreation network accessible to all Americans.
- Improve the Service’s institutional capacity by developing new organizational talents and abilities and a workforce that reflects America’s diversity.

Existing Interpretive Program (2002)

Overview



Assateague Island National Seashore is located within a day's drive of over 30 million people. The park receives over 2 million visitors annually. They come from all walks of life and are drawn to the island for a variety of recreational and educational reasons. Park users come to Assateague to make personal connections. It is the mission of park interpretive staff to facilitate those connections. By addressing the greater meanings associated with park resources, interpreters and their products offer visitors opportunities to forge powerful and lasting emotional and intellectual connections to the park - ones that have the potential to inspire people to be better stewards of park resources.

Approximately 60 percent of Assateague's visitors come May to August. Nearly a quarter of total visitation takes advantage of educational opportunities offered by visitor centers, exhibits and park programs. The park's visitor profile consists largely of family groups arriving by private vehicle, although a growing number of motor coaches (currently well over 100 annually) bring senior citizens. Another 9,000 students arrive in school buses for scheduled education programs, while approximately 2,000 students are presently turned away each year due to lack of facilities. Lack of indoor staging areas for students during difficult weather, a common circumstance during fall, winter and early spring, insures that many educators who might otherwise make use of park facilities, are forced to seek alternatives. Environmental education staff have identified an increasing demand for education services. Currently the park provides curriculum based education materials and kits to schools, on and off-site programs, as well as teacher workshops. In addition to education programs in 2002, park staff presented 975 formal demonstrations and talks reaching 25,358 people.

The 2 visitor centers in the park remain very popular. Until the early 1990s, the annual visitor center visitation at the Maryland end of the park remained well below 200,000. The Virginia visitor center counts were a fraction of that. Since that time visitation has increased dramatically at both sites, peaking at about 260,000 in Maryland, with parking and facility space acting as limiting factors.

The smaller Virginia visitor center at Toms Cove was recently relocated and upgraded and now is receiving well over 130,000 annually. Visitors who are unable to find a parking space bypass the centers and some shorten their stay when they are unable to get to staff and exhibits due to crowding.

Demands on park resources continue to increase. General visitation to the park increased by 12% in 2002, with access to the park having been severely limited during peak summer months. To address this visitation increase and to augment strained staff workloads, volunteers are extensively utilized. Volunteers work with paid resource management staff monitoring threatened piping plovers, monitoring and providing assistance with rare plants like the Seabeach Amaranth, collecting data on water quality, educating visitors and protecting wild horses from human contact, and monitoring the Foster Horse program. Volunteers in interpretation participate in interpretive and education programming, informal visitor contacts and clerical work. Volunteers also provide labor to maintenance, and some serve as campground hosts for the park's campground.

The park is located in areas that are becoming overwhelmed with the ramifications of twenty years of explosive growth. For example, the residential population of Worcester County, Maryland has increased by approximately 44% since 1970 and the trend is expected to continue to increase exponentially as retirement communities expand. With residential development, and current and projected population increases, come threats to park resources. Educated residents within the park's watershed and park visitors can only make informed decisions about how to use resources wisely when they have accurate and up-to-date information. The most effective means to get this information to the public are those that are routinely utilized by the interpretive division - public programs, exhibits, electronic media and publications such as site bulletins, brochures and the park newspaper,

Division responsibilities have increased not only because of visitor needs and demands, but also because of an increase in administrative, supervisory, and management duties. (A synopsis of current interpretive operational responsibilities can be viewed in Appendix 1.) In short, the division has many new challenges, and additional time and resources will be required to meet them.



In 2002, the park offered the following types of interpretive programming:

Non-personal Services

Website
Newspaper (once a year)
Site bulletins for resource management issues
AM radio message
Trail guides
Traveling exhibits
Aquarium and visitor center exhibits
Informational displays, wayside exhibits and kiosks
Eastern National sales

Personal Services

VC information desk
On-site interpretive programs, including the following:

- Walks
- Talks
- Illustrated Programs
- Resource recreation/stewardship programs – surffishing, shellfishing, canoeing, biking
- Campfire programs
- Crafts programs

Roving interpretation

Daily correspondence and telecommunications

Life Saving Service museum contacts (VIPs)

“Naturalist Shack” at Ferry Landing contacts (VIPs)

Environmental Education

On-site and off-site curriculum based programs (pre-K to 12)

Elderhostel, college and scout programs

Pre- and post-site materials and traveling trunk programs

Others - Ruritans, Homemakers



Interpretive Partnerships

Assateague Coastal Trust
Assateague Federation of Mobile Sports Fishermen
Assateague Mobile Sports Fishermen Association
Baltimore Aquarium
Chincoteague Chamber of Commerce
Delmarva Low Impact Tourism Experiences (DELITE)
Department of Defense Falconers
Eastern National
Eastern Shore Environmental Education Council
Eastern Shore Soil and Water Conservation District
Marine Science Consortium
Maryland Coastal Bays Program
Maryland Department of Natural Resources
National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Oyster and Maritime Museum
Salisbury State University
Salisbury Zoo
Student Conservation Association
The Nature Conservancy
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
University of Maryland Eastern Shore
Virginia Marine Resources Commission

Desired Audience Experiences

The overall desired audience experience describes the nature of the “visit” itself and considers how audiences will experience the site no matter where they are located, whether in the park itself or viewing a web page. The audience experience encompasses the opportunities audiences will have to learn, think, feel, and do during their “visit” to Assateague Island National Seashore.

Obtain Information & Orientation

Audiences will have opportunities to...

- find comprehensive information about Assateague Island National Seashore to help make informed decisions about their visit, how much time they should allow for their visit, and how they should spend it.
- find good information on how to prepare for extreme conditions in and around the barrier island, such as volatile weather and safety concerns (wild horses, poison ivy, ticks, mosquitoes, etc.).
- find in-depth information about the national seashore’s cultural and natural resources before, during and after their visit.
- make informed decisions about the best way to travel to the park and how to move around within the park once they arrive, including information on traffic congestion.
- easily find information about the variety of audience opportunities available throughout the barrier island system and immediate geographic area (e.g. Fish & Wildlife Service, NASA, Maryland Coastal Areas).
- learn about ASIS issues, future plans and programs.
- find out more about the National Park System, such as how Assateague fits



into the System, other National Park Service sites of interest and the Service mission.

- understand the relationship of Assateague Island to other geographic points of interest, such as Chincoteague Island, VA, and Fenwick Island, MD.
- find interpretive services tailored for first-time, as well as for return audiences.

Make an Intellectual Connection

Audiences will have opportunities to...

- compare and contrast the different missions and management practices of the National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Assateague State Park.
- understand bay and ocean waters as part of a connected global system.
- consider ASIS's role as part of a global system.
- learn about the importance of preserving natural systems.
- understand threats to the national seashore's natural and cultural resources and relate those threats to their own world.
- compare and contrast developed and undeveloped barrier islands.
- see evidence of and learn about the park's sustainability efforts and find out about future plans.
- find ways and ideas on how to participate in on- and off-site activities associated with ASIS natural and cultural resource preservation and management efforts.
- understand that ASIS belongs to them and contemplate their own role and responsibility in the stewardship of natural and cultural resources.



- see wildlife in natural settings and understand their context in that setting.
- leave wanting to know more about ASIS.

Make an Emotional Connection

Audiences will have opportunities to...

- have a positive, welcoming experience during all contacts with the park.
- enjoy seeing the flora and fauna of ASIS.
- participate in a “hands-on” experience.
- experience peace and quiet.
- experience fresh air, clean water, and litter-free grounds and beaches.
- experience clean, uncluttered facilities.
- enjoy views that are free of human intrusions.
- leave with the idea that it is valuable to preserve the resources of Assateague Island.
- form personal connections to ASIS’s natural and cultural resources.



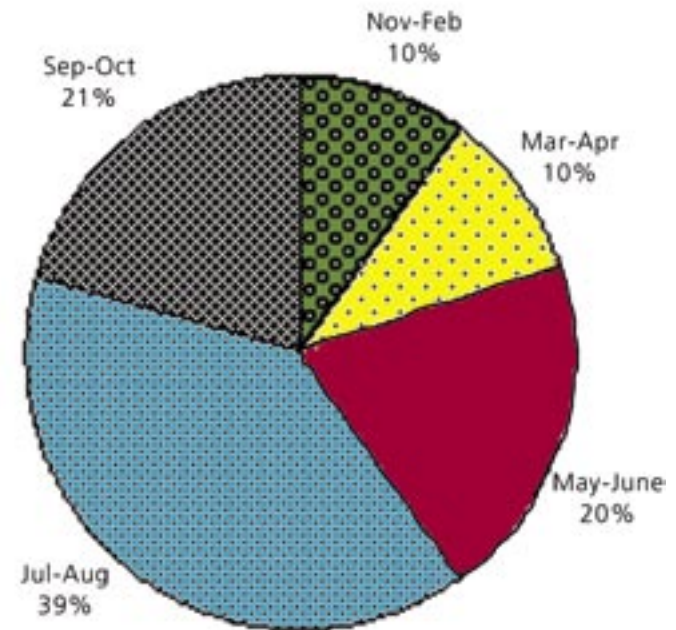
Audience Profiles

Existing Audiences

The park has no recent scientifically collected data on audience demographics. The last studies of visitation date to 1977/78 and 1985. The park's 1995 Statement for Interpretation used these surveys plus staff observations to conclude that...

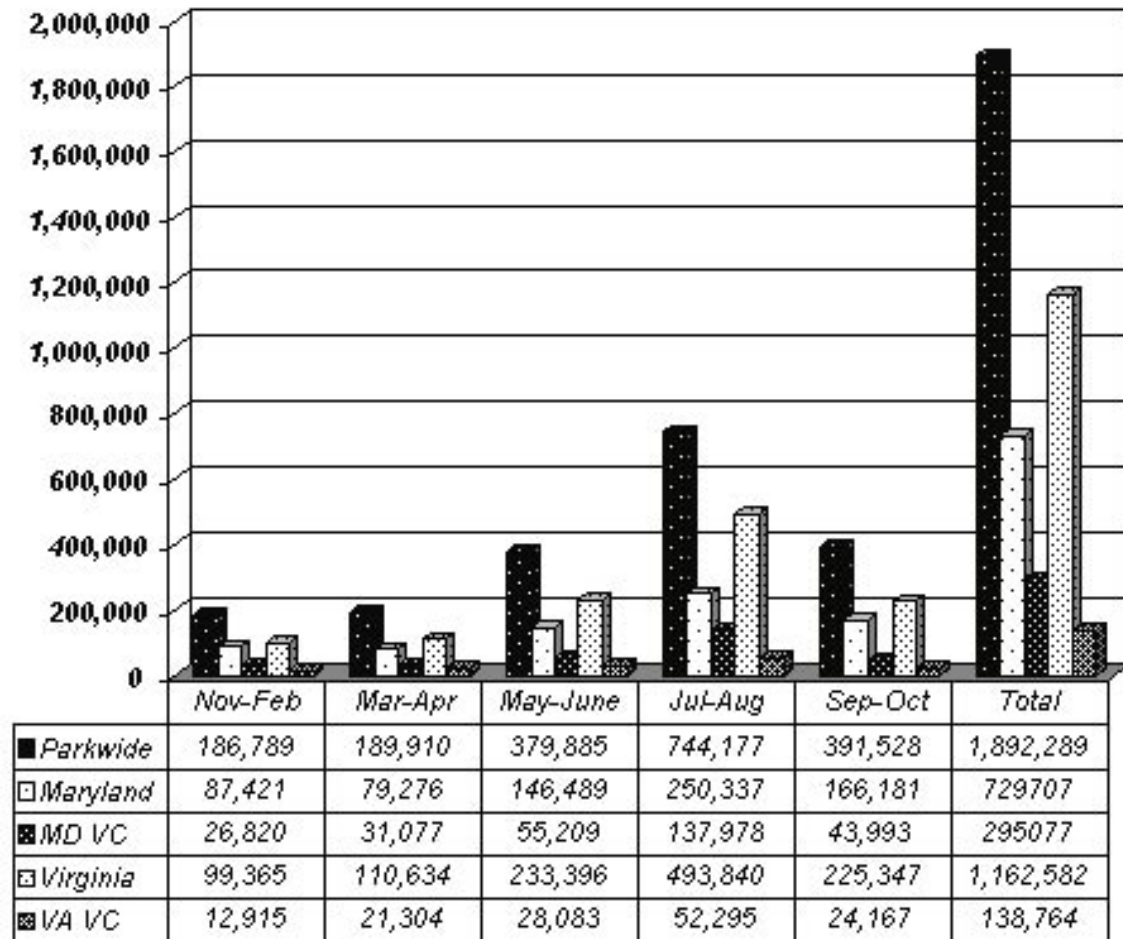
- families visit the park in large numbers and account for a high percentage of park visitation during summer months.
- during the fall, winter and spring most visitors are senior citizens and families that have children who are not yet attending school.
- visitation is heavily regional, i.e., from the Washington, D.C., Annapolis, Baltimore and Philadelphia metropolitan areas. Residents of Norfolk and other southern points tend to go to beaches to the south, not to Assateague.
- visitation remains heavily seasonal, although the off-season is expanding at a faster rate than visitation in general.
- school groups remain heavily local, although more groups are coming from metropolitan areas.

Parkwide Visitation



Visitation to the National Seashore for 2001 (calendar year) indicates that...

- 40% of all park visitors come in two months - July and August.
- roughly 80% of all park visitors come in six months - May-October.
- 61% of all visitors come to the Virginia district and 39% of all park visitors come to Maryland.
- 40% of all visitors to the Maryland district come to the Barrier Island Visitor Center.
- 12% of all visitors to the Virginia district come to the Toms Cove Visitor Center.



Targeted Audiences

While the park intends to continue services to existing audiences, workshop participants felt that the following groups, from **both existing and potential new audiences**, deserve special attention over the life of this plan. These five groups are either inadequately served by existing interpretation or demand additional effort to open and sustain communication.

- The Hispanic community

This is a growing and largely ignored audience.

- Local African Americans

This is an audience that has lived in the region for centuries, yet tend not to visit the island.

- Cyber-audiences who use the Internet

The effectiveness of the park website needs to be enhanced.

- Local communities and park neighbors

The proximity of local communities and the interest of local residents in park management and programs demands a special communication effort.

- Partners

Widespread interest in the park by national and local organizations and community groups creates a network that can help to spread park messages if used effectively.

Accessibility

As interpretive facilities or programs are planned or rehabilitated the park will refer to the programmatic guidelines included in Appendix 2.

Issues of Emphasis, 2003-2008

Workshop participants reviewed the issues raised during discussions of themes, experiences, and audiences and combined those needs with concerns about day-to-day operations to create the following list. During the next 5-7 years, the park will develop interpretive actions designed to address...

Thematic Issues

- Existing personal and non-personal services do not adequately address park themes and are not fully effective in helping audiences grasp the significance of the park.

Experiential Issues

- Most signage and wayfinding in the park is too frequent and prevalent, encroaching on the viewshed and the visitor experience. In addition, signs are often uncoordinated and confusing. In the Virginia section there is inadequate directional signage outside the park. For example, visitors often have trouble finding Toms Cove and the beach.
- Accessing the park by telephone can be complicated, frustrating and unsatisfactory due to phone systems and lack of staff assigned to answer incoming calls.
- Visitors arrive uninformed that food and beverage facilities are not available in the park.
- Visitors are often unprepared for the prevalence of biting insects that inhabit the park.
- Visitors often feel inconvenienced by area closures that protect threatened and endangered species.

Audience Issues

Certain specific audiences require additional attention during the next 5-7 years:

- Eastern National and operation of park sales
 - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and development and operation of the Bateman Center in Virginia. The new Bateman Center will be completed early in the life of this plan. The NPS needs to prepare for the impact of this new facility and adjust programming as necessary.
 - Coordination of NPS and University of Maryland Education Center in Maryland
 - Neighbors and nearby communities
- The park needs to identify new partnership opportunities and experiment with ways to increase support for park programs, activities and services. This can happen through various forms of community outreach. (See Appendix 3 for a preliminary list of potential partnerships.)

Resource Management Issues

Several issues related to the management of the park's cultural, natural and recreational resources need to be addressed via additional interpretive media. In particular, the park should develop strategies to communicate better about:

- Preservation, use and maintenance of the Coast Guard Station in Virginia
 - Threats to water quality
 - Horse and other wildlife interactions with visitors
- The park needs to do more to connect visitors to the values of wildness and what makes the horses of ASIS unique.
- Management and interpretation of invasive species
 - Facility and resource closures and carrying capacities



Assateague Beach Coast Guard Station

- Preservation of, access to, and interpretation of the Rackliffe Plantation
- The role of beach restoration at the national seashore
- Safety and health issues related to resource management
- The effects of significant storm events on park resources and facilities

Policy Issues

Several policy issues have impacts on park user groups. Specifically, the park needs to clarify and perhaps communicate better about:

- Policies related to commercial fishing and shellfishing
- Collecting policies
- Off road vehicle use
- Personal water craft operation and use
- Fees and fee collection
- Area closure issues



Part 2

Future Interpretive Program

Interpretation depends on regular nourishment by well-directed and discerning research. There is no substitute for it.

- Freeman Tilden

Organization

The actions identified in Part 2 of this plan are organized according to the Issues of Emphasis listed at the end of Part 1. During the life of this CIP the Division of Interpretation will devote resources and give special emphasis to the following...

Actions

Actions to Address Parkwide Themes

- Adjust the park's "unigrd" brochure to reflect park themes.
- Design sales publications that comprehensively deal with park themes. One approach might result in three separate but similar-looking publications that address each park theme in depth.
- In Maryland, explore means to distribute the existing trail booklet at trailheads or develop alternative, weather-durable brochures that can be available at trailheads.
- Develop a mechanism that can be used on a regular basis to ensure that the knowledge, skills, and abilities of staff and volunteers are channeled into a balanced program of personal services. A balanced program will be measured in several ways: staff resources will be assigned to different types of personal con-



tact (visitor contact stations, roving, and formal programs); personal services will address all themes, as well as pressing resource issues and appropriate recreational skills; and the allocation of staff resources will reflect the need to reach out to certain targeted audiences identified in Part 1.

- Plan a new audiovisual program. Initial discussions will focus on length, location, format and content.
- Continue planning for a new visitor center in Maryland. Tasks include defining objectives, compiling background information and resource materials, elaborating on the nature of the visitor experience and developing a scope of work for an exhibit designer.
- Continue to invite specialists to the park to assist with training and expand their use for on-site programs or events.
- Assess existing waysides to determine how well they address themes, resource issues, experiences and audiences and identify a strategy for improvement.
- Evaluate existing visitor center exhibits to determine how well they address themes, resource issues, experiences and audiences and identify a strategy for improvement.
- Place special emphasis on the human history theme. Seek grant money to provide research and interpretive support for this area.

Actions to Address Desired Experiences

- Develop a parkwide unified sign plan and, when possible, coordinate with partners (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Virginia and Maryland Department of Natural Resources in Maryland).
- Continue to share information with interpretive partners.

- Add the park's website address to distributed materials and encourage use as an up-to-date source for information.
- Evaluate the park's webpage to determine how effectively it provides wayfinding information, changing information and resource issue information. Also, assess whether Internet users are oriented to themes and can find in-depth information about park resources.
- Shorten and focus the park's radio message. Consider providing more information that will address themes. Make the message easier to change. Develop a series of messages that can be reused when appropriate.
- Continue to distribute the existing newspaper, park map and schedule of events, but convene a focus group to assess the effectiveness of these materials and discuss distribution.
- Develop publications to assist with periodic, predictable closures. Explain why the closures are necessary.
- Continue to use site bulletins, the park's website and public contacts to explain policy issues to audiences. Help prepare media releases that will keep audiences informed of resource and policy issues.
- Experiment with more frequent roving interpretation to reach audiences that are not coming to programs or to the visitor center.
- Evaluate message board signs throughout the park and make recommendations to improve their effectiveness and appearance.
- Locate spotting scopes already purchased and install on interpretive trails to encourage visitors to observe wildlife and more fully appreciate coastal environments.
- Participate in writing contracts for visitor service related concessions (canoe concession, for example) to include mandatory customer service standards and



interpretive training.

Actions to Address Targeted Audiences

- Research and acquire data on seasonal visitor populations to determine their demographics and the meanings and values they associate with park resources.

Partners

- Develop a mutually agreeable operations plan with Eastern National detailing minimal expectations for staffing, administrative support for sales and stock inventory.
- Monitor, evaluate and perhaps expand the new relationship between the park and the Maryland Education Corps environmental education program.
- Offer staff expertise to others planning or offering teacher workshops.
- Develop strategies to interact with the new U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Bateman Center in Virginia and seek ways to integrate interpretive programming.
- Develop strategies to interact with the University of Maryland as it plans its new facilities in Maryland and seek ways to integrate interpretive programming.

Neighbors

- Explore ways to get interpretive messages to local commercial establishments and tourism organizations. This could include business orientation packets and newsletters. Materials should also include general orientation information and how to order publications.
- Identify cooperative ventures for local organizations, specifically for the Assateague Mobile Sports Fishermen's Association and the Assateague Federation of Mobile Sports Fishermen.
- Increase visibility in local media by providing information on park activities and issues.
- Explore an oral history program through a grant and/or a partnership with a college/ university or historical organization.

- Explore an annual event, festival or school event related to Chincoteague's/ Assateague's cultural heritage.

Schools

- Sustain existing educational programming.
- Via workshops and meetings with educators, explore additional opportunities to link park resources to state standards of learning. Based on these discussions, develop future action items that will strengthen the park's education program.
- Add additional educational materials to the park's website.

Hispanic Community

- Open dialogue with local Hispanic community leaders. Discuss ways to deliver the park's interpretive messages, including bilingual programs, materials and media.

African Americans

- Initiate research on African Americans and Assateague, perhaps through a grant and/or a partnership with a college or university.
- Involve African American leaders in developing interpretation of the Rackliffe Plantation and human history interpretation in general.

Native Americans

- Initiate research on Native Americans and Assateague, perhaps in partnership with local Native American affiliated groups.

Disabled Audiences

- Evaluate existing facilities and services for ADA compliance and develop strategies for improvements.
- Follow ADA guidelines when developing new facilities and provide people with disabilities multiple opportunities for interpretation.
- Add information to the website, and perhaps add additional signs that inform visitors of the availability of the beach wheelchair.

Actions to Address Resource Issues

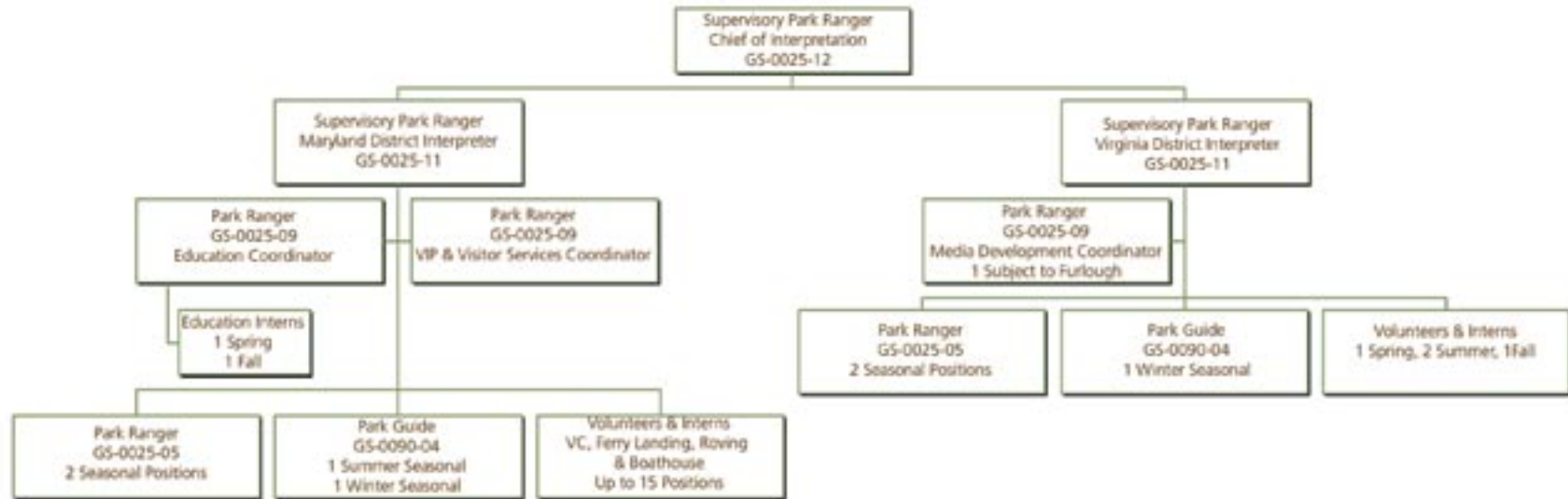
- Continue to use the park newspaper and site bulletins to address resource issues as they arise.
- Add resource issues to the park's webpage.
- Explore the use of mobile exhibits that could be used inside the park and taken to events, schools and communities.
- Integrate resource issues into personal services programs. Provide examples of how this can be accomplished. Add an element to the park's teacher evaluation form that assesses how well this is done.
- Develop interpretive media that showcase the park's green practices.

Collection & Library Needs

In order to implement the actions in this plan, the park needs to...

- Find funding to digitize the photo and slide files.
- Identify additional reference books and acquire.
- Find space for an expanded library.
- Develop a tracking system for visual materials.

2003 Interpretation and Visitor Services Chart



Staffing Needs

Organizational Structure

Currently the Division of Interpretation functions under the following organizational structure (see facing page).

Position Overview

Refer to Appendix 4 for an overview of the role and function of each position.

Current Staffing Levels

In 2002, the park had six permanent positions in interpretation or 5.2 FTE and seven temporary positions or 1.9 FTE. Total positions equaled nine or 7.1 FTE.

Of the 7.1 FTE available, 6.1 (86%) was dedicated to personal services.

- The park's two visitor centers required 3.5 FTE (49%). (Routine duties at the Virginia visitor center also involved issuing permits.)
- Personal services programming required 1.84 FTE (26%).
- Educational programming required .7 FTE (10%).
- Only .08 FTE (1%) was dedicated to outreach and development or maintenance of non-personal media required.

Currently, park rangers tend to provide interpretive programs and staff visitor center desks while volunteers tend to provide informal, roving contacts. Volunteers, interns and SCAs also contributed to the park's interpretive program by contributing 5,685 hours or 2.7 FTE. Roughly one third (.91 FTE) of the volunteer/intern/SCA time was spent providing interpretive programs and two thirds (1.82 FTE) was spent in a visitor center.

Future Needs

Assuming current levels of staffing (including volunteers/interns/SCAs), the park will need the following to accomplish the actions included in this plan...

- An education specialist is needed who can devote *an additional .8 FTE* to expanding the park's educational programming. Current levels of staffing (.7 FTE) support only a minimal program that is primarily reactive in nature.
- Development of non-personal media has been postponed for many years and now requires considerable attention to catch up to audience expectations and demand. Currently only .05 FTE is devoted to webpage development and none to other media development. *An additional .45 FTE* is needed for a position that can split time between media development and program presentation.
- The .01 FTE allotted to community programs is insufficient to involve more neighbors, the Hispanic Community, African Americans and Native Americans. *An additional .2 FTE* is needed.

Strategies to meet anticipated staffing needs include adjusting operating hours of visitor centers, reducing personal services programs, recruiting additional volunteers, realigning job responsibilities, reassigning positions, hiring additional staff, getting a grant for projects, contracting services, or some combination. However, while volunteers often can provide valuable assistance, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service already has a very active program for volunteer recruitment in Virginia that will limit the park's ability to add more volunteer hours to the Toms Cove area. Nontraditional volunteer opportunities may be required on a project-by-project basis.

Training

Several specific training recommendations surfaced during planning discussions. Interpretive staff will...

- Develop examples that will help new staff integrate resource issues into personal services programs.
- Expand the use of interdivisional and outside agency subject matter experts in training.
- Assist with training of fee collection staff to ensure that basic park information is distributed to first time visitors.
- Work with lifeguard staff to make surf rescue demonstrations more interpretive. Interpretive staff will help with lifeguard training to strengthen this interpretive opportunity, connecting a wider audience to the power of the sea, and how historically people have been rescued off of Assateague's shores.
- Continue resource issue training for staff with public contact duties.

Action Plan

Actions that Address Themes

Action	Who	FY03	FY04	FY05	FY06	FY07	Future
Adjust unigrid	Chief of Interpretation		Plan	Do			
Theme publications	Chief of Interpretation		Plan	Do			
Develop mechanism	Supv. Staff	X					
Replace park video	Chief of Interpretation				Plan		
Plan for visitor center	Chief of Interpretation	X	X				
Use specialists	MD District Supervisor	X	X	X	X	X	X
Assess waysides	Chief of Interpretation				X	X	
Evaluate vc exhibits	Chief of Interpretation		X				
Increase availability of 3 trail publications	VIP & Visitor Services Coordinator	X					

Actions that Address Experiences

Action	Who	FY03	FY04	FY05	FY06	FY07	Future
Develop a sign plan	Chief of Interpretation				X		
Evaluate webpage	VA District Supervisor	X					
Share information with partners	All	X	X	X	X	X	X
Re-do radio message	MD District Supervisor	X					
Conduct focus groups	Chief of Interpretation					X	
Stress website address	Web Team	X	X	X	X	X	X
Adjust message boards	District Supervisors				X		
Install spotting scopes	VIP & Visitor Services		X				
Monitor concessions	District Supervisors	X					
Develop publications for closures	District Supervisors			X			

Actions that Address Audiences

Action	Who	FY03	FY04	FY05	FY06	FY07	Future
Discuss operations with EN	Chief of Interpretation	X					
Cooperate with MD Ed. Corps	MD District Supervisor	X					
Cooperate with Bateman Center	VA District Supervisor	X	X				
Acquire visitation data	Chief of Interpretation			X			
Offer expertise	Supervisory Staff	X	X	X	X	X	X
Identify cooperative ventures	Supervisory Staff	X	X	X	X	X	X
Dialogue with Hispanic Community	VA District Supervisor		X				
Involve African Americans	Chief of Interpretation			X			
Research on African Americans	Chief of Interpretation		X				
Research on Native Americans	Chief of Interpretation			X			
Involve Native Americans	Chief of Interpretation				X		
Dialogue with educators	Education Coordinator	X					
Implement ed. dialogue results	Education Coordinator		X				
Enhance ed. on website	Education Coordinator	X					
Increase visibility in media	Chief of Interpretation	X	X	X	X	X	X
Oral history project	Chief of Interpretation		X				
Explore VA cultural event	VA District Supervisor					X	
Provide information to commercial establishments	VIP & Visitor Services Coordinator			X			
Provide information on wheelchairs	VIP & Visitor Services Coordinator			X			

Actions that Address Resource Issues

Action	Who	FY03	FY04	FY05	FY06	FY07	Future
Add resource issues to web	MD District Supervisor	X	X	X	X	X	X
Explore mobile exhibits	Chief of Interpretation			X			
Integrate resource issues in training	District Supervisors	X	X	X	X	X	X
Integrate resource issues in personal services	District Supervisors	X	X	X	X	X	X
Showcase green practices	Chief of Interpretation				X		

Actions that Address Collections/Library

Action	Who	FY03	FY04	FY05	FY06	FY07	Future
Find funding to digitize images	Chief of Interpretation					X	X
Identify reference books	District Supervisors	X	X	X	X	X	X
Find more library space	District Supervisors			X			
Develop tracking system	Supervisory Staff					X	X

Actions that Address Staffing

Action	Who	FY03	FY04	FY05	FY06	FY07	Future
Develop education specialist position	Chief of Interpretation			X			
Develop media specialist position	Chief of Interpretation					X	
Shift duties website maintenance and development	Supervisory Staff		X				
Shift duties to provide more outreach	Supervisory Staff		X				
Establish EN operations plan	Chief of Interpretation	X					
Develop resource issue examples	Supervisory Staff	X					
Assist with fee collection training	District Supervisors			X			
Increase surf rescue interpretation	VA District Supervisor			X			



Participants

Assateague Island National Seashore's Comprehensive Interpretive Plan was developed over a period of 3 years with input from a wide range of core constituents, volunteers and employees. In 2000, after convening a series of meetings, general input for a draft plan was compiled and submitted by Kathy Dilonardo and Pat Gillespie of the NPS Northeast Region Support Office. Shortly after their submission Larry Points, Chief of Interpretation at Assateague, retired. Because of a subsequent realignment of duties, the planning process was put on hold.

Work resumed when the park's Chief of Interpretation vacancy was filled by Robert Fudge in 2002. Two meetings were convened in 2002 with Ron Thomson, a planning consultant contracted through the Northeast Region. Mr. Thomson facilitated the meetings and submitted revised drafts of the document based on input provided. Park staff compiled additional text and put the draft into its final form. Gretchen Knapp, the division's Media Services Coordinator, designed the final document layout.

The following people participated in planning meetings and contributed to the planning process:

Meeting Facilitators

Kathy Dilonardo, *Program Manager, Interpretation, Northeast Region Support Office*
Pat Gillespie, *Outdoor Recreation Planner, Northeast Region Support Office*

Principal Planning Consultant

Ron Thomson, *Interpretive Consultant*

Park Partners

Dave Wilson, *Public Outreach Coordinator, Maryland Coastal Bays Program*
Phyllis Koenings, *Executive Director, Assateague Coastal Trust*
Martha Hastings, *Membership Secretary, Assateague Mobile Sports Fisherman's Association*
Bruce Woods, *Vice President, Assateague Mobile Sports Fisherman's Association*

Ilia Fehrer, *President, Worchester Environmental Trust*
Nancy Zapotocki, *Worchester County Coastal Zone Planner*
Lisa Challenger, *Worchester County Tourism & Delmarva Low Impact Tourism Experience*
Nancy Howard, *Ocean City Town Council & MD Department of Natural Resources*
Angela Tracy, *Chief Outdoor Recreation Planner, Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge*
Jill Van Scoyoc, *Outdoor Recreation Planner, Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge*
Ray Paterra, *Outdoor Recreation Planner, Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge*
Denise McNamara, *Interpreter, Assateague State Park*
J. C. Barbela, *Assistant Park Manager & Chief of Maintenance Assateague State Park*
Dave Taft, *Supervisory Park Ranger, Gateway National Recreation Area*
Maria Wagenbrenner, *Chief of Interpretation, Fire Island National Seashore*
Donna Leonard, *Chincoteague Chamber of Commerce*

Park Staff

Marc Koenings, *Superintendent*
Michael Hill, *Superintendent*
Larry Points, *Chief of Interpretation*
Robert Fudge, *Chief of Interpretation*
Matt Graves, *Assistant Chief of Interpretation*
John Burns, *Chief Ranger, Protection Division*
Carl Zimmerman, *Chief of Resource Management*
Chris Finlay, *Chief of Maintenance*
Rachelle Daigneault, *Supervisory Park Ranger, Maryland District Interpreter*
Tracy Ammerman, *Supervisory Park Ranger, Virginia District Interpreter*
Liz Davis, *Park Ranger, Education Coordinator*
Chris Seymour, *Park Ranger, VIP and Visitor Services Coordinator*
Gretchen Knapp, *Park Ranger, Media Services Coordinator*
Jack Kumer, *Resource Management Specialist*
Mel Olsen, *South District Ranger, Protection Division*
Will Reynolds, *North District Ranger, Protection Division*
Willie Bowman, *Park Ranger, Protection Division*
Karen Zavanelli, *Lead Visitor Use Assistant*
Chris Lea, *Ecologist*
Mark Duffy, *Natural Resource Specialist*
46 Bill Ingraham, *Engineering Equipment Operator*

Karen Burns, *Human Resource Specialist*
Daryl Hagy, *Supervisor for Fee Collection and Campground Operations*
Scott Allen, *Chief Lifeguard*
Ed Aurand, *Park Volunteer*
Don Wilson, *Park Volunteer*
Bob Stevens, *Park Volunteer*

Appendix 1

Interpretation Annual Master Calendar - Monthly Tasks

October

- Budget proposal to Superintendent & Administrative Officer
- Set up new budget taking into account Step Increases, holidays, furloughs, season length
- Brochure changes (if any) to HFC
- Change TIS radio message on 10/15 to reflect change in NPS campground reservations
- Set up new fiscal year spending logs
- Fall EE season in VA (September & October)
- Bring in, wash and inventory all equipment from summer (canoes & equipment, nets, etc.). Prepare associated list of things to buy for next summer
- Bring in and inventory interpretive program meeting location signs
- Complete and submit Annual Interpretive Program Report (AIPR)
- Complete and submit annual VIP Program Report
- Draft & submit annual Eastern National Report (narrative of operations)
- NAI conference
- MD - half tank water change for big aquarium; full tank water change for touch tank and reserve tanks
- Eastern National grant submissions due

November

- Change TIS radio message with State Park closure
- Clean out and organize interpretive storage spaces and offices
- Review and update Comprehensive Interpretive Plan
- Review and update division guidelines & policies
- Figure out holiday schedules and operational coverage
- Wayside inventory and ordering of replacements
- Fall EE season
- Reconcile and submit Superintendent's EN discretionary fund
- Assist USF&WS with Waterfowl Week Celebration

December

- Change TIS radio message to reflect holiday closures
- Order aquarium supplies for year (MD and VA)
- Recruit for summer interns
- VIP recognition with annual employee holiday gathering
- Winterize boathouse and store sensitive artifacts and exhibits

January

- Traditional New Years Day walk (this should be opened to public and advertised)
- Begin planning for summer season: training, staffing, programming
- Finalize budget, as it becomes available
- Vacancy announcements for summer seasonals
- Hire spring SCAs
- Assist planning for International Migratory Bird Celebration Weekend (VA)
- Poster, art, photo contest information mailed to schools

February

- Continue to work on budget for coming summer
- Purchase aquarium supplies for year for both districts
- Catalogue slides
- Inventory, make corrections and order subject specific brochures
- Begin summer newspaper (subject assignment)
- Rehab surf fishing equipment
- Begin training students for Eastern Shore Envirothon (VA), when involved as Resource Specialist

March

- Hiring paper work to Personnel as hires are completed
- Finalize summer interpretive program schedules
- Semiannual brochure inventory to HFC
- Prep to receive annual brochure shipment (maybe April)
- Submit housing needs/request to Administrative Officer/Housing Coordinator
- Trim vegetation along nature trails
- Confirm ASIS guides and their quarters for Delmarva Birding Weekend (partnering)
- Regional NAI meetings as appropriate
- Assist with Eastern Shore Envirothon competition (VA), when involved as Resource Specialist

April

- Change TIS radio message reflecting State Park opening
- Deadline for poster, art, photo contest entries (1st week)
- Judge poster, art, photo contest entries (2nd week)
- Awards ceremony for poster, art, photo contest during National Park Week
- Reopen boathouse
- Purchase demonstration equipment
- Training for VIPs, tour guides, partner organizations, and others
- Begin limited weekend interpretive programs (as staffing allows)
- Prepare and post interpretive program schedules for spring
- Spring EE season
- Prepare summer newspaper
- Assist with Birds of the World Photo Contest

May

- Change radio message on the 15th to reflect NPS campground reservations (and State Park changes on Memorial Day weekend to all reservations)
- Print summer newspaper (late May/early June)
- Finalize summer seasonal training plans
- Midyear evaluations for permanents
- Complete preseason purchases & major spending
- Weekend interpretive programs (as staffing allows)
- Preseason interpretive staff meeting
- Spring EE season
- Assist USF&WS with International Migratory Bird Celebration

June

- Install summer program meeting location signs
- Take out interpretive equipment
- Prepare and post summer interpretive schedules
- All seasonal employee training (all divisions)
- Seasonal training
- Begin summer interpretive program
- MD - Do half water change in big aquarium and entire water change in touch tank

July

- Program audits, coaching, and supervision
- Mid-season evaluations for seasonals
- Finalize budget and complete spending

August

- Program audits, coaching, and supervision
- Final evaluations for Interns (as they leave)
- Prepare and submit new EN Product Request
- Monitor EN-ASIS agency improvement request

September

- Final evaluations for Interns, Seasonals, and Interp VIPs
- End of season meeting
- Final budget balancing, purchasing...
- Semiannual brochure inventory to HFC
- Year end performance reviews for permanents
- Establish new performance plan for permanents
- Review current year goals and establish next fiscal year goals
- Fall EE season
- Maryland Coast Day activities

Reoccurring Tasks

As Needed

- Record purchases, expenditures and all budget related information
- Personnel action requests to Personnel Officer
- Basic aquarium maintenance
- Change TIS radio message to reflect operational changes
- Submit work requests
- Apply for soft money (grants, onetime projects, etc.)
- Change interpretive program postings on bulletin boards, campground office
- Attend/participate in DLITE, MD Coastal Bays and other relevant meetings as they pertain to interpretation
- Trim vegetation along nature trails

- Clean wayside exhibits
- Remit VC donation box funds

Weekly

- Aquarium cleaning and weekly maintenance
- Record visitor and program stats (daily and monthly)

Semi-Monthly

- Review AFSIII - schedule to Personal Services, Personal Service Comparison for variance, add in expenditures...
- Complete TOD schedules, copy to timekeeper
- Prepare, review and certify time cards

Monthly

- Interpretive staff meetings - 2nd Wednesday of month
- Safety meetings
- Division Chiefs' meetings - 1st Tuesday of month @ 1 p.m.
- Enter purchases, transfers, expenditures on Non-Personal Services on AFSIII
- Run Document Summary on AFSIII and check against spending log
- Review EN donation report for accuracy (October End of EN Fiscal Year in particular)
- VA - Aquarium partial water changes

Quarterly

- Field research and study days for staff

Semi-Annually

- Park map/brochure inventory (March and September)
- Performance reviews for permanents

Annually

- Update and revise CIP
- Annual Interpretive Program Report (AIPR)
- VIP Annual Report
- EN Annual Report
- Review brochure/map for changes

- Review all handouts and make changes as necessary
- Division & park accomplishments & goals
- Interpretive staff retreat and planning (haven't done this yet)
- In-house temporary VC exhibits
- Staff participates in Interpretive Development Program by submitting interpretive products for review. This is ongoing throughout the year.

Others with unknown due dates

- Property inventory - VIP and Visitor Services Coordinator (MD) and Supervisory Park Ranger (VA)
- HFC AV property inventory - VIP and Visitor Services Coordinator (MD)

Appendix 2

Programmatic Accessibility Guidelines for Interpretive Media

All new interpretive programming will be developed according to the “Guidelines for Interpretive Media” finalized in June 1996 by the Accessibility Task Force at the NPS’s Harpers Ferry Center.

Statement of Purpose

This document is a guide for promoting full access to interpretive media to ensure that people with physical and mental disabilities have access to the same information necessary for safe and meaningful visits to National Parks. Just as the needs and abilities of individuals cannot be reduced to simple statements, it is impossible to construct guidelines for interpretive media that can apply to every situation in the National Park System.

These guidelines define a high level of programmatic access which can be met in most situations. They articulate key areas of concern and note generally accepted solutions.

Due to the diversity of park resources and the variety of interpretive situations, flexibility and versatility are important.

Each interpretive medium contributes to the total park program. All media have inherent strengths and weaknesses, and it is our intent to capitalize on their strengths and provide alternatives where they are deficient. It should also be understood that any interpretive medium is just one component of the overall park experi-

ence. In some instances, especially with regard to learning disabilities, personal services, that is one-on-one interaction, may be the most appropriate and versatile interpretive approach.

In the final analysis, interpretive design is subjective, and dependent on both aesthetic considerations as well as the particular characteristics and resources available for a specific program. Success or failure should be evaluated by examining all interpretive offerings of a park. Due to the unique characteristics of each situation, parks should be evaluated on a case by case basis. Nonetheless, the goal is to fully comply with NPS policy:

“...To provide the highest level of accessibility possible and feasible for persons with visual, hearing, mobility, and mental impairments, consistent with the obligation to conserve park resources and preserve the quality of the park experience for everyone.”

NPS Special Directive 83-3, Accessibility for Disabled Persons

Audiovisual Programs

Audiovisual programs include motion pictures, sound/slide programs, video programs, and oral history programs. As a matter of policy, all audiovisual programs produced by the Harpers Ferry Center will include some method of captioning. The Approach used will vary according to the conditions of the installation area and the media format used, and will be selected

in consultation with the parks and regions.

The captioning method will be identified as early as possible in the planning process and will be presented in an integrated setting where possible. To the extent possible, visitors will be offered a choice in viewing captioned or uncaptioned versions, but in situations where a choice is not possible or feasible, a captioned version of all programs will be made available. Park management will decide on the most appropriate operational approach for the particular site.

Guidelines Affecting Mobility Impaired Visitors

1. The theater, auditorium, or viewing area should be accessible and free of architectural barriers, or alternative accommodations will be provided. UFAS 4.1.

Wheelchair locations will be provided according to ratios outlined in UFAS 4.1.2(18a).

Viewing heights and angles will be favorable for those in designated wheelchair locations.

In designing video or interactive components, control mechanisms will be placed in accessible location, usually between 9” and 48” from the ground and no more than 24” deep.

Guidelines Affecting Visually Impaired Visitors

Simultaneous audio description will be considered for installations where the equipment can be properly installed and maintained.

Guidelines Affecting Hearing Impaired Visitors

All audiovisual programs will be produced with appropriate captions.

Copies of scripts will be provided to the parks as a standard procedure.

Audio amplification and listening systems will be provided in accordance with UFAS 4.1.2(18b).

Guidelines Affecting Learning Impaired Visitors

Unnecessarily complex and confusing concepts will be avoided.

Graphic elements will be chosen to communicate without reliance on the verbal component.

Narration will be concise and free of unnecessary jargon and technical information.

Exhibits

Numerous factors affect the design of exhibits, reflecting the unique circumstances of the specific space and the nature of the materials to be interpreted. It is clear that thoughtful, sensitive design can go a long way in producing exhibits that can be enjoyed by a broad range of people. Yet, due to the diversity of situations encountered, it is impossible to articulate guidelines that can be applied universally.

In some situations, the exhibit designer has little or no control over the space. Often exhibits are placed in areas ill suited for that purpose, they may incorporate large or unyielding

specimens, may incorporate sensitive artifacts which require special environmental controls, and room decor or architectural features may dictate certain solutions. All in all, exhibit design is an art which defies simple description. However, one central concern is to communicate the message to the largest audience possible. Every reasonable effort will be made to eliminate any factors limiting communication through physical modification or by providing an alternate means of communication.

Guidelines Affecting Mobility Impaired Visitors

Exhibit space will be free of physical barriers or a method of alternate accommodation shall be provided.

All pathways, aisles, and clearances will meet standards set forth in UFAS 4.3. Generally a minimum width of 36" will be provided.

Ramps will be as gradual as possible and will not exceed a slope of 1" rise in 12" run, and otherwise conform with UFAS 4.8.

Important artifacts, labels, and graphics, will be placed at a comfortable viewing level relative to their size. Important text will be viewable to all visitors. Display cases will allow short or seated people to view the contents and the labels. Video monitors associated with exhibits will be positioned to be comfortably viewed by all visitors.

Lighting will be designed to reduce glare or reflections, especially when viewed from a wheelchair.

Ground and floor surfaces near the exhibit area will be stable, level, firm, and slip-resistant. (UFAS 4.5).

Operating controls or objects to be handled by visitors will be located in an area between 9" and 48" from the ground and no more than 24" deep. (UFAS 4.3)

Horizontal exhibits (e.g. terrain model) will be located at a comfortable viewing height.

Information desks and sales counters will be designed for use by visitors and employees using wheelchairs, and will include a section with a desk height no greater than 32 to 34 inches, with at least a 30 inch clearance underneath. The width should be a minimum of 32 inches vertical, with additional space provided for cash registers or other equipment, as applicable.

Accessibility information about the specific park should be available at the information desk and the international symbol of access will be displayed where access information is disseminated.

Railings and barriers will be positioned in such a way as to provide unobstructed viewing by persons in wheelchairs.

Guidelines Affecting Visually Impaired Visitors

Exhibit typography will be selected with readability and legibility in mind.

Characters and symbols shall contrast with their backgrounds, either light characters on a dark background or dark characters on a light background. (UFAS 4.30.3)

Tactile and participatory elements will be included where possible.

Audio description will be provided where applicable.

Signage will be provided to indicate accessible rest rooms, telephones, and rest rooms elevators. (UFAS 4.30)

Guidelines Affecting Hearing Impaired Visitors

Information presented via audio formats will be duplicated in a visual medium, either in the exhibit copy or by printed material.

Amplification systems and volume controls will be incorporated to make programs accessible to the hard of hearing.

Written text of all audio narrations will be provided.

All narrated AV programs will be captioned.

Allowance for Telecommunication Devices for the Deaf (TDD) will be included into information desk designs.

Guidelines Affecting Learning Impaired Visitors

Exhibits will avoid unnecessarily complex and confusing topics.

Graphic elements will be developed to communicate non-verbally.

Unfamiliar expressions and technical terms will be avoided and pronunciation aids will be provided where appropriate.

To the extent possible, information will be provided in a manner suitable to a diversity of abilities and interests.

Where possible, exhibits will be multisensory. Techniques to maximize the number of senses utilized in an exhibit will be encouraged.

Exhibit design will be cognizant of directional handicaps and will utilize color and other creative approaches to facilitate comprehension of maps.

Historic Furnishings

Historically refurbished rooms offer the public a unique interpretive experience by placing visitors within historic spaces. Surrounded by historic artifacts visitors can feel the spaces “come alive” and relate more directly to the historic events or personalities commemorated by the park.

Accessibility is problematical in many NPS furnished sites because of the very nature of historic architecture. Buildings were erected with a functional point of view that is many times at odds with our modern views of accessibility.

The approach used to convey the experience of historically furnished spaces will vary from site to site. The goals, however, will remain the same, to give the public as rich an interpretive experience as possible given the nature of the structure.

Guidelines Affecting Mobility Impaired Visitors

The exhibit space should be free of architectural barriers or a method of alternate accommodation should be provided, such as slide programs, videotaped tours, visual aids, dioramas, etc.

All pathways, aisles, and clearances shall (when possible) meet standards set forth in UFAS 4.3 to provide adequate clearance for wheelchair

routes.

Ramps shall be as gradual as possible and not exceed a 1” rise in 12” run, and conform with UFAS 4.8.

Railings and room barriers will be constructed in such a way as to provide unobstructed viewing by persons in wheelchairs.

In the planning and design process, furnishing inaccessible areas, such as upper floors of historic buildings, will be discouraged unless essential for interpretation.

Lighting will be designed to reduce glare or reflections when viewed from a wheelchair.

Alternative methods of interpretation, such as audiovisual programs, audio description, photo albums, and personal services will be used in areas which present difficulty for the physically impaired.

Guidelines Affecting Visually Impaired Visitors

Exhibit typefaces will be selected for readability and legibility, and conform with good industry practice.

Audio description will be used to describe furnished rooms, where appropriate.

Windows will be treated with film to provide balanced light levels and minimize glare.

Where appropriate, visitor-controlled rheostat-type lighting will be provided to augment general room lighting.

Where appropriate and when proper clearance has been approved, surplus artifacts or repro-

ductions will be utilized as “hands-on” tactile interpretive devices.

Guidelines Affecting Hearing Impaired Visitors

Information about room interiors will be presented in a visual medium such as exhibit copy, text, pamphlets, etc.

Captions will be provided for all AV programs relating to historic furnishings.

Guidelines Affecting the Learning Impaired

Where appropriate, hands-on participatory elements geared to the level of visitor capabilities will be used.

Living history activities and demonstrations which utilize the physical space as a method of providing multisensory experiences will be encouraged.

Publications

A variety of publications are offered to visitors, ranging from park folders which provide an overview and orientation to a park to more comprehensive handbooks. Each park folder should give a brief description of services available to the disabled, list significant barriers, and note the existence of TDD phone numbers, if available.

In addition, informal site bulletins are often produced to provide more specialized information about a specific site or topic. It is recommended that each park produce an easily updatable “Accessibility Site Bulletin” which could include detailed information about the specific programs, services, and opportunities available for the disabled and to describe barriers which are present in the park. These bulletins should be in reasonably large type, 18

points or larger.

Guidelines Affecting Mobility Impaired Visitors

Park folders, site bulletins, and sales literature will be distributed from accessible locations and heights.

Park folders and Accessibility Site Bulletins should endeavor to carry information on the accessibility of buildings, trails, and programs by the disabled.

Guidelines Affecting Visually Impaired Visitors

Publications will be designed with the largest type size appropriate for the format.

Special publications designed for use by the visually impaired should be printed in 18 point type.

The information contained in the park folder should also be available on audio cassette. Handbooks, accessibility guides, and other publications should be similarly recorded where possible.

Guidelines Affecting Hearing Impaired Visitors

Park site bulletins will note the availability of such special services as sign language interpretation and captioned programs.

Guidelines Affecting Learning Impaired Visitors

The park site bulletin should list any special services available to this group.

Wayside Exhibits

Wayside exhibits, which include outdoor interpretive exhibits and signs, orientation

shelter exhibits, trailhead exhibits, and bulletin boards, offer special advantages to disabled visitors. The liberal use of photographs, artwork, diagrams, and maps, combined with highly readable type, make wayside exhibits an excellent medium for visitors with hearing and learning impairments. For visitors with sight impairments, waysides offer large type and high legibility.

Although a limited number of NPS wayside exhibits will always be inaccessible to visitors with mobility impairments, the great majority are placed at accessible pullouts, viewpoints, parking areas, and trailheads.

The NPS accessibility guidelines for wayside exhibits help insure a standard of quality that will be appreciated by all visitors. Nearly everyone benefits from high quality graphics, readable type, comfortable base designs, accessible locations, hard-surfaced exhibit pads, and well-landscaped exhibit sites.

While waysides are valuable on-site “interpreters,” it should be remembered that the park resources themselves are the primary things visitors come to experience. Good waysides focus attention on the features they interpret, and not on themselves. A wayside exhibit is only one of the many interpretive tools which visitors can use to enhance their appreciation of a park.

Guidelines Affecting Mobility Impaired Visitors

Wayside exhibits will be installed at accessible locations whenever possible.

Wayside exhibits will be installed at heights and angles favorable for viewing by most visitors

including those in wheelchairs. For standard NPS low-profile units the recommended height is 30 inches from the bottom edge of the exhibit panel to the finished grade; for vertical exhibits the height of 6-28 inches.

Trailhead exhibits will include an accessibility advisory.

Wayside exhibits sites will have level, hard surfaced exhibit pads.

Exhibit sites will offer clear, unrestricted views of park features described in exhibits.

Guidelines Affecting Visually Impaired Visitors

Exhibit type will be as legible and readable as possible.

Panel colors will be selected to reduce eye strain and glare, and to provide excellent readability under field conditions. White should not be used as a background color.

Selected wayside exhibits may incorporate audio stations or tactile elements such as models, texture blocks, and relief maps.

For all major features interpreted by wayside exhibits, the park should offer nonvisual interpretation covering the same subject matter. Examples include cassette tape tours, radio messages, and ranger talks.

Appropriate tactile cues should be provided to help visually impaired visitors locate exhibits.

Guidelines Affecting Hearing Impaired Visitors

Wayside exhibits will communicate visually, and will rely heavily on graphics to interpret

park resources.

Essential information included in audio station messages will be duplicated in written form, either as part of the exhibit text or with printed material.

Guidelines Affecting Learning Impaired Visitors

Topics for wayside exhibits will be specific and of general interest. Unnecessary complexity will be avoided.

Whenever possible, easy to understand graphics will be used to convey ideas, rather than text alone.

Unfamiliar expressions, technical terms, and jargon will be avoided. Pronunciation aids and definitions will be provided where needed.

Text will be concise and free of long paragraphs and wordy language.

Appendix 3

Potential Partners

American Bird Conservancy
Berlin African-American Heritage Festival Committee
Eastern Shore of Virginia Barrier Island Center
Maryland Sea Grant
National Association for Interpretation
National Parks and Conservation Association
National Park Foundation
National Trust for Historic Preservation
New Bethel Methodist Church
The Assateague Peoples of Delaware, Maryland and Virginia
The Audubon Society
The Chesapeake Bay Foundation
The Mid-Atlantic Marine Educators Association
The National Wildlife Federation
U.S. Department of Education
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
U.S. Geological Survey
Virginia Institute of Marine Science

Appendix 4

Personnel Overview

Supervisory Park Ranger, Chief Interpreter, GS-0025-12

Manages the overall interpretive and education program of the park. Maintains the status of funds and manages division budget. Represents the division in senior management meetings. Represents the park with park partners and with local and national government offices and private organizations. Facilitates long and short -range plans for the park including designing and developing new park facilities, exhibits, programs and services. Directly supervises 2 District Interpreters with supervisory line responsibility for all division staff. Reviews and writes park reports, correspondence, articles, publications and press releases. Conducts personnel management to maximize resource protection and service for visitors.

Virginia District

Supervisory Park Ranger, District Interpreter, GS-0025-11

Plans, organizes, develops and supervises district interpretive and education programs and services. Manages the Toms Cove Visitor Center operations, including the operation of cooperative association sales outlet. Serves as subject matter expert on a variety of Seashore topics and presents formal and informal on-site and off-site programs, workshops and training to better serve park audiences. Participates in the National Park Service Interpretive Development Program as a certifier, trainer and participant. Represents park management at partner meetings and with various community organizations. Develops and supervises the district's volunteer program, including both part-time volunteers and full time interns. Responsible for the maintenance and safeguarding of division property including vehicles, audio visual equipment, the district reference library, program equipment and division computers. Directly supervises a staff of park rangers and volunteers including recruiting, hiring, training, coaching and evaluating to meet division standards and goals.

Park Ranger, Media Development Coordinator, GS-0025-5/7/9

(This is a subject-to-furlough position)

Plans, develops and presents on and off-site interpretive and educational programs and services. Trains and mentors line interpretive staff on interpretive topics and presentation methods. Maintains and operates division equipment including audio visual equipment, aquariums, program equipment and computers. Develops, maintains and updates the park's webpage and plans and designs the park newspaper using desktop publishing software. Serves as a subject matter expert on a variety of topics dealing with natural and cultural history, as well as with interpretive media development. Serves as the Acting Virginia District Interpreter in the incumbent's absence.

Park Ranger, Interpreter, GS-0025-05

(2 seasonal positions, summer)

Plans, develops and presents on and off-site interpretive and educational programs and services. Provides orientation, information and informal interpretation to park visitors at the information desk and through roving contacts. Maintains visitor center and program equipment, and assists with cooperative association bookshop sales.

Park Guide, Interpreter, GS-0090-04

(1 winter position)

Provides orientation and information to park visitors at the information desk. Presents formal and informal topical programs to visiting audiences, maintains visitor center equipment and assists with cooperative association bookshop sales.

Maryland District

Supervisory Park Ranger, District Interpreter, GS-0025-11

Plans, organizes, develops, and supervises district interpretive and education programs and services. Manages the Maryland District Visitor Center operations, including the operation of cooperative association sales outlet. Serves as subject matter expert on a variety of Seashore topics and presents formal and informal on-site and off-site programs, workshops, and training to better serve park

audiences. Participates in the National Park Service Interpretive Development Program as a certifier, trainer and participant. Represents park management at partner meetings and with various community organizations. Develops and supervises the park's volunteer program, including both part-time volunteers and full time interns. Responsible for the maintenance and safeguarding of division property including vehicles, audio visual equipment, the district reference library, program equipment and division computers. Directly supervises a staff of park rangers and volunteers including recruiting, hiring, training, coaching and evaluating to meet division standards and goals. Serves as the Acting Chief of Interpretation in the incumbent's absence.

Park Ranger, Education Coordinator, GS-0025-5/7/9

Plans, develops and presents on and off-site interpretive and educational programs and services. Schedules education programs with teachers and conducts teacher workshops. Conducts community outreach. Trains and mentors line interpretive staff on education topics and presentation methods. Maintains and operates division equipment including audio visual equipment, aquariums, program equipment and computers. Develops, maintains and updates the park's webpage to better serve visitors and to provide appropriate information on the park's education program. Serves as a subject matter expert on a variety of topics dealing with natural and cultural history, as well as with education program development. Supervises education intern positions during the spring and fall months.

Park Ranger, VIP and Visitor Services Coordinator, GS-0025-5/7/9

Plans, develops and presents on and off-site interpretive and educational programs and services. Assists with the management of the park's overall volunteer program, including scheduling, recruiting, training and motivating volunteers. Trains and mentors line interpretive staff on interpretive topics and presentation methods. Maintains and operates division equipment including audio visual equipment, aquariums, program equipment and computers. Develops, maintains and updates the park radio announcements to better serve visitors. Serves as a subject matter expert on a variety of topics dealing with natural and cultural history, as well as with volunteer program development. Serves as the park's liaison for Cooperative Association sales and works to improve the Association sales

inventory for interpretive and educational value.

Park Ranger, Interpreter, GS-0025-05

(2 - 3 seasonal positions, summer)

Plans, develops and presents on and off-site interpretive and educational programs and services. Provides orientation, information and informal interpretation to park visitors at the information desk and through roving contacts. Maintains visitor center and program equipment, and assists with cooperative association bookshop sales.

Park Guide, Interpreter, GS-0090-04

(2 seasonal positions, 1 winter and 1 summer)

Provides orientation and information to park visitors at the information desk. Presents formal and informal topical programs to visiting audiences, maintains visitor center equipment and assists with cooperative association bookshop sales.



In the end, we will conserve only what we love; we will love only what we understand; and we will only understand what we are taught.

- Baba Diuom, Senegalese ecologist

