

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

First Annual  
Centennial Strategy for

# Cumberland Gap National Historical Park

August 2007

CENTENNIAL INITIATIVE



**Site:** CUGA

**Year:** 2007

**Vision Statement**

The story of westward expansion is celebrated at Cumberland Gap National Historical Park, located where the borders of Kentucky, Tennessee and Virginia meet. Modern day explorers and travelers stand in awe at this first great gateway and the many miles of trails and scenic features found throughout the park.

It is an exciting time at the park as we have recently completed the final stages of approximately \$282 million in construction projects involving the twin-bore Cumberland Gap Tunnels, relocation of two U.S. Highways, and rehabilitation of the historic Cumberland Gap. We have also acquired new resources including a major cave system that has opened for public tours. A new visitor contact station has opened at the Virginia terminus of the restored Wilderness Road. And we have reached a milestone in protecting 1,850 acres of the 4,500-acre Fern Lake Watershed as part of the national park. The property includes a significant portion of the watershed for the town of Middlesboro, Kentucky and can be readily viewed from the Pinnacle Overlook, one of the park's most popular visitor attractions. We will continue to work with Senator Mitch McConnell, Congressman Hal Rogers and the Trust for Public Lands to secure the remainder of the property.

This same excitement is also captured in the park's soon to be completed General Management Plan. Our management goals parallel the five overarching Centennial Initiative goals of stewardship, environmental leadership, recreational experience, education and professional excellence and will be achieved utilizing expertise and assistance from numerous park partners.

As we approach the National Park Service's Centennial, we are poised well to continue to provide all visitors diverse opportunities to make connections to park resources while at the same time insuring resources remain unimpaired for generations to come.

**Park/ Superintendent/ Program Manager**

Mark H. Woods

Site: CUGA

STEWARDSHIP

Improve the condition of park resources and assets.

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

CUGA will continue to actively control invasive plant and animal species by mechanical and chemical means, utilizing appropriate integrated pest management techniques for each species. These actions will be completed by park employees and the Southeast Exotic Plant Management Team.

In addition the park will aggressively manage the hemlock woolly adelgid that is attacking the hemlock trees. Hemlock stands will be surveyed and identified for treatment. A variety of treatment options will be used to combat this destructive pest to the hemlock forests. (This will be supported in PMIS this year.)

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

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

CUGA will participate fully in the Cumberland Piedmont Network vital signs monitoring.

Water Quality: In addition to the scheduled network water quality monitoring, the park will continue the water quality monitoring in off years in order to produce a larger data set and to monitor the condition of park waters at all times.

Amphibian Monitoring: The park will continue amphibian egg mass monitoring that was started in the 1990's. This will allow the park to monitor any changes that may occur in these species due to environmental changes and create a data set of long term monitoring data.

Air Quality: As time permits, the park will conduct annual assessments of foliar ozone injury on vegetation within the park. This can be compared to other assessments in neighboring parks.

Species that may be identified in an inventory as rare, threatened, or endangered will be protected.

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Site: CUGA

STEWARDSHIP

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

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

CUGA will pursue opportunities to engage scientists in the study of the park environment. The information produced from these studies will greatly assist park managers in effectively protecting and managing park resources.

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Site: CUGA

RECREATION

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

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Cumberland Gap National Historical Park is an active partner in the Wilderness Trail Corridor Alliance which is spearheading a regional initiative to obtain National Historic Trail designation for the Wilderness Trail and the creation of a National Historic Area along the Trail corridor. We are working closely with all partners to develop Virginia's Westward Migration Route from Winchester to Cumberland Gap following the Great Wagon Road/Wilderness Trail.

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Site: CUGA

RECREATION

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

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

We continue to hone our relationship with park partner Tour Southern and Eastern Kentucky, a non-profit organization created in 1987 by Congressman Hal Rogers to promote, expand, develop and market the existing and potential tourism industry throughout Southern and Eastern Kentucky in an effort to contribute to the economic and cultural growth of the region. This partnership includes Cumberland Gap hosting numerous press tours each year; articles written about the park appear throughout the nation and abroad and reach diverse and sometimes untapped audiences.

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Site: CUGA

**EDUCATION**

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

Increase the number of Junior Rangers.

In 2007, we received a grant from the National Park Foundation to secure a Junior Ranger Ambassador to develop a junior ranger workbook. When completed and printed in the late autumn of 2007, the workbook will be chocked-full of exciting activities that will allow youngsters to make their own connections to park resources. Workbook activities will also allow students to utilize life skills (i.e. reading, math, arts, etc).

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Site: CUGA

**PROFESSIONALISM**

Make national parks the first choice in philanthropic giving among those concerned about environmental, cultural, and recreational values.

Improve communications and marketing capacity to increase public understanding of our mission, opportunities, and benefits.

Cumberland Gap National Historical Park will continue to maintain public trust by properly managing park assets, people, and resources. Encourage community involvement through participation in resource stewardship education and action.

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