

THE
FUTURE
OF
AMERICA'S
NATIONAL
PARKS

First Annual
Centennial Strategy for

Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site

August 2007

CENTENNIAL INITIATIVE



Site: BEOL

Year: 2007

Vision Statement

The purpose of Bent's Old Fort NHS is to commemorate the historic role played by this trading post in the opening of the West. Additionally, the NPS seeks to develop, maintain, protect and preserve the historic site for visitors. Finally, the Service will interpret the significance of the Santa Fe Trail and the impact it had on the U.S., Mexico and American Indian people.

The park has identified priorities: 1) to restore, protect and preserve the historic view shed; 2) to carry out a consistent Integrated Pest Management program; 3) to document, preserve, research and monitor BEOL cultural sites and the museum collection; 4) to research, develop, provide and promote effective interpretation through living history demonstrations, tours, and other interpretive services; 5) to maintain and improve park property/infrastructure to provide safe and efficient conditions for staff and visitors through awareness, training, maintenance and safe behavior; 6) to provide all staff with basic training and knowledge for NPS-based computer software and hardware.

Over the course of the next ten years, the park will continue to expend its efforts working on these priorities. With existing staffing, the park will have difficulty even keeping up with those duties. With additional staffing or funding, the site will be able to attain real progress in these areas.

Provided assistance through the Centennial Challenge, the park in 2016 will ideally be much more than it is today. An interpretive entrance plaza, new hiking trail and regional visitor center along U.S. Highway 50 will greatly increase visitor understanding and satisfaction with the site. Restoration efforts will have restored most of the landscape seen from the fort to its 19th Century appearance. Actual artifacts from the post will be on display for visitors, while other artifacts are properly housed in a multi-park storage building located on site. With the construction of a visitor center, most of the modern intrusions at the fort will be gone, and park staff will continue a vibrant living history program at the post. A new access route from U.S. Highway 50 crossing a bridge just a mile east of the fort will increase visitation back to the levels of the early 1990s. Maintenance of the site will continue with regular restoration work on the fort as part of the park's base budget. Administration of the site will be more effective and efficient as part of the Southern Colorado Administrative group.

Park/ Superintendent/ Program Manager

Christopher Moos, Acting Superintendent

Site: BEOL

STEWARDSHIP

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

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

As an historic site the park attempts to maintain a high standard of preservation. Funding to keep the fort, a non-historic, inspiring, and accurately reconstructed building, in good condition is primarily received through PMIS. The park would like to be able to fund the extensive annual upkeep through base funding.

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

Site: BEOL

STEWARDSHIP

Improve the condition of park resources and assets.

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

Continue to work with the I&M network to complete the protocols for vital sign monitoring. Continue to work to restore native habitats by controlling invasive species. Expand the parks support for removing tamarisk from the watershed and expanding the network involved to include actions to control other noxious weeds by establishing a Weed Management Area which would include the entire lower Arkansas River watershed in Colorado.

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Complete all cultural resource inventories for designated priority resources.

All cultural resource inventories are completed and the park intends to monitor each at an appropriate period based on site condition and potential for loss due to access.

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

Site: BEOB

ENVIRONMENT

Reduce environmental impacts of park operations.

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

Bent's Old Fort NHS has already developed a strong foundation for environmental conservation, in the areas of transportation, recycling waste, and utilizing "Green" cleaning products. To further build on our current practices, our goals will be to utilize only electric powered vehicles in the park. We will strive to reduce solid waste by 50% and reduce any hazard materials or cleaners by 90%. We will continue to use Integrated Pest Management practices to minimize the use of herbicides and pesticides in the park. Since Colorado receives over 300 days of sunshine per year, the use of solar power will be explored for both the administrative and maintenance facilities, potentially reducing electric use by 50%. The park currently does not have sufficient staff to showcase our environmental practices.

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Site: BEOL

ENVIRONMENT

Inspire an environmental conscience in Americans.

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

Maintenance will put up bulletin boards in the restrooms to showcase the park's use of green cleaning products, electric carts, passive solar design of the admin building and the cost savings from these practices.

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

The park will strive to increase it's use of biofuels. With the support of a volunteer coordinator, the park could partner with high school science classes to collect data on costs and energy saving during the year and issue press releases or produce radio spots twice a year on the use of electric carts and the passive solar admin building, recycling, etc. The park has recently purchased a Flex Fuel vehicle which can run on ethanol.

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

The park will continue to look for ways to increase fuel efficiency. Our goal is to reduce fuel and electric use by 50%. To do that we will continue to use electric shuttle carts for visitors needing assistance to and from the fort. The park will pursue funding to purchase green energy credits to support the wind farm east of the park in Prowers County. The park will issue press releases on its use of wind and solar energy. The park will use ethanol in its Flex Fuel vehicle whenever it can.

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

Site: BEOL

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)

Construct a 1.75 loop hiking trail around the perimeter of the park. This trail will provide an outdoor recreation opportunity for park visitors as well as the local community. The trail will lead from the fort down to the Arkansas River and then through a cottonwood grove and along a wetland to the eastern boundary of the park and back to the visitor parking lot. An inner loop will provide a shorter hike (about 0.5 mile) with the entire outer loop equalling 1.75 miles. Hikes of this sort are in short supply in the region and this will provide a needed outdoor recreational opportunity to attract more visitors to the park. The trail is being developed in partnership with Colorado Preservation, Inc. and Intermountain Region RTCA.

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Site: BEOL

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.

The park is working closely with the Southeast Colorado Regional Tourism (SECORT) Group and the La Junta Tourism Advisory Council to encourage visitation to the region and the site. SECORT has identified Bent's Old Fort NHS as one of six anchor sites for Southeastern Colorado in order to attract more tourists to the area. Park staff have worked with SECORT to produce a regional map of the area, and other marketing and promotion efforts are just now getting underway. The city of La Junta will have a lodging tax initiative on the ballot this Fall to fund tourism promotion for the city. If passed, the park will benefit greatly from the tourism promotion and marketing done by the city.

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Site: BEOL

EDUCATION

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

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Park develops a curriculum-based educational program for schools, including pre-, post-visit and on-site activities which tie in to curriculums at various grade levels, starting with 4th grade and expanding out eventually to K-12. The initial work for this program has begun with the work of a volunteer, but the park has a PMIS project in to fully fund the program development. The park currently has museum records with no images on the NPS Museum Management Program websites Web catalog, and will add additional records and images as possible. Development of a web based exhibit on the NPS Museum Management Program will expose more virtual visitors to the park.

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Site: BEOL

EDUCATION

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

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

Park will place a virtual tour of the fort and living history vignettes onto BEOL website (vignettes will be downloadable for podcasting). The vignettes are currently under development by US Media Services and should be available in 2007. A tour of the fort has been recorded as a volunteer project and attempts are being made to upload it and have it available through the park's website. We are also exploring the possibility of having this tour as a sales DVD in the cooperating association sales outlet.

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Site: BEOL

EDUCATION

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

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

Park implements new Junior Ranger program cooperatively developed with Western National Parks Association (WNPA). WNPA continues to fund program, providing booklets and badges to the park for distribution at no cost to visitors. This new program should be available before the end of Summer 2007. The attractive booklet, available at no cost to visitors, should greatly expand the site's junior ranger enrollment.

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

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

The park provides living history events that engage visitors of all ages in the history of the westward expansion of the nation. Classes that teach children of life in the 1840s, and a week long course to teach educators and reenactors how to educate via living history are held each year. Annual historically accurate events draw visitors from the region and surrounding states. These events allow people to learn about American history through sight, sound, smell, touch and personal immersion in events that bring the past to the present.

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

Site: BEOL

PROFESSIONALISM

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

Meet 100 percent of diversity recruitment goals by employing people who reflect the face of America.

Promote equal opportunity in the park. Provide van service to and from work to create more opportunities for diverse work force. Provide the necessary tools and training for employees to do a good job.

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Site: BEOL

PROFESSIONALISM

Use strategic planning to promote management excellence.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

The Core Operations plan currently underway for the three parks in the Southeast Colorado Group (BEOL, CAVO and SAND) is a great start. Sharing important skills and management knowledge across these areas makes all the parks stronger. This will continue as the Core Ops plan is fully implemented.

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Site: BEOL

PROFESSIONALISM

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

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

The park strives each year for 0 lost time accidents. The park's Safety Committee meets monthly to review dangerous or potentially dangerous situations. The park will continue to promote open safety sessions on a daily basis and make our employees and visitors aware of safety concerns and potential hazards. The park will also promote physical fitness. Staff and their families will be encouraged to stay active, exercise to maintain their optimum weight, and learn to reduce stress.

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Site: BEOL

PROFESSIONALISM

Model what it means to work in partnership.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

The park has a reputation of partnering with local and state agencies and park neighbors to achieve shared goals. To build on our current level of success, the park will hold annual listening sessions with the local communities of La Junta and Las Animas. These could be scheduled during the NPS birthday celebration week. The sessions will give the staff the opportunity to showcase accomplishments, listen to community ideas, and network with potential future partners, staff and/or volunteers. Overall, the park will continue to cultivate and develop working relationships with chambers of commerce, Federal, state and local agencies and governments in order to promote resource conservation and economic development for the good of the local area.

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Site: BEOL

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.

The park will look to reinvigorate the park friend's group, the Bent's Old Fort Historical Association, in order to promote the park and help the park meet its needs. This association, quite active in the past history of the site, has basically suspended operations awaiting an influx of new members or a new goal to rally around. The Centennial Challenge could offer that potential project for the Historical Association to grab on to and fundraise for a high profile project while attracting new members.

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