

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

First Annual  
Centennial Strategy for

# Great Sand Dunes National Park & Preserve

August 2007

CENTENNIAL INITIATIVE



**Site:** GRSA

**Year:** 2007

**Vision Statement**

As the newest National Park in the system, we are building on the 75-yr history of the Great Sand Dunes as a National Monument and our goal is to become one of the best national parks for working and for visiting. The park will increase quality research/science by engaging researchers from a variety of sources. We will provide adequate, appropriate, educational and safe visitor experiences. The park will be a positive and proactive partner with neighbors. Park management will be transparent and accountable. The centennial decade presents the Sand Dunes with a unique opportunity for this park and its many public and private partners to protect a truly world-class and very unique ecosystem. All partners will cooperate in a way that allows the flora and fauna to exist without artificial barriers. The park will work with others in the San Luis Valley region to ensure that this special area is seen as a positive part of the overall economy and contributes to the vitality and "sense of place" in this unique area of the state. The park will be proactive in contributing to the overall tourism aspect of the valley's economy. In particular it will focus on increasing visitation from a wider geographic and even international arena. We will work with partners to encourage longer visitor stays by facilitating more high quality experiences leading to lasting memories of this place through education, outstanding customer service and modern convenient facilities.

**Park/ Superintendent/ Program Manager**

Art Hutchinson, Superintendent Great Sand Dunes National Park and Great Sand Dunes National Preserve

STEWARDSHIP

Site: GRSA

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)

The park is providing over 300,000 visitors per year with a very safe, educational and enjoyable experience. Park exhibits and programs exceed visitor expectations. Many visitors comment that this park is one of the best they have visited with respect to facilities and educational programs. Park staff is committed to continuing to improve.

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

Site: GRSA

**STEWARDSHIP**

**Improve the condition of park resources and assets.**

**Rehabilitate high-priority historic buildings to good condition, and help communities to preserve their history through programs like Preserve America.**

The park's two historic buildings are in good condition and will be maintained in that condition.

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

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

The park has a number of invasive species and has an active program to control invasives. Native trout reintroduction is planned when funding is available for some stream segments.

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

**Improve high-priority assets to acceptable condition, as measured by the Facility Condition Index.**

FCI in this park has improved dramatically in the past two years and we will continue to make improvements to the Index.

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.**

Vital signs are developed and we are working to determine if the park has key indicator species for monitoring global climate change.

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

**Complete all cultural resource inventories for designated priority resources.**

The park is working with its Friends group to secure funding for additional cultural resource surveys so that the new lands are inventoried and resources are documented. Two more years is needed to complete the process.

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

Site: GRSA

STEWARDSHIP

Serve as the Preeminent resource laboratory by applying excellence in science and scholarship to understand and respond to environmental changes. Great Sand Dunes will be known as a park focused on quality and focused research. It will utilize its unique environmental setting to be a setting for global climate change research.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

The park has a very unique environmental setting that lends itself to climate change monitoring. For example, the high tundra snows melt and flow directly to the park's sand ecosystems. Researchers from many disciplines are looking at the adaptability of the flora and fauna in such a narrow corridor.

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

Site: GRSA

STEWARDSHIP

Encourage children to be future conservationists. Great Sand Dunes is a children's playground and one that brings families back for generations. The park will continue to play a major role in children's education by providing quality programming for all concerned.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

The park has a very active educational program for many levels and age groups. All programs carry a message regarding conservation and preservation of resources. We also provide many programs to area wide school groups.

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

Site: GRSA

ENVIRONMENT

Reduce environmental impacts of park operations. The park will work to be seen as a model park for green operations and will work with valley wide partners to make this region more self-sustainable.

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

The park staff will find products and utilize green practices in all aspects of park operations. The park has now obtained waters of outstanding quality designations for 15 of its water sources and will seek to increase the numbers of waters with this designation.

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

Site: GRSA

**ENVIRONMENT**

Inspire an environmental conscience in Americans. All park programs will be structured to ensure that this message reaches all visitors.

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

The park is working to partner with the EPA to help raise visitor and resident awareness in the entire San Luis Valley regarding sustainable environmental practices. Surveys have not been attempted at this time.

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

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

Alternative fuels in this area of the state are not widely available. The park currently leases one hybrid vehicle.

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

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

Any new park facilities or modifications will utilize available standards.

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

Site: GRSA

**ENVIRONMENT**

Engage partners, communities, and visitors in shared environmental stewardship. The park staff will continue to build partnerships at all levels and encourage regional environmental stewardship of our limited and fragile resources.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

The park continually works with surrounding communities towards a shared valley wide sustainable plan. For example EPA, with the help of park staff, will be doing a sustainable model for this valley.

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

Site: GRSA

RECREATION

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

Rehabilitate over 2,000 miles of trails within or connected to national parks, including trails accessible to those with disabilities.

Old forest trails in the new park are being rehabilitated with the assistance of youth corp and other cooperative ventures. Current technology does not allow for extensive accessible trails in a very windy and sandy environment.

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

Site: GRSA

RECREATION

Focus national, regional, and local tourism efforts to reach diverse audiences and young people and to attract visitors to lesser-known parks. The park will work with all partners to reach a wider national and international audience.

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 with the local tourism offices and the State of Colorado to let a much wider audience know that Great Sand Dunes is now a National Park and as such has much more than spectacular dunes in its tourism portfolio. This year we have increased visitation by 10%.

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

Increase the number of visitors that attend ranger-facilitated programs such as campfire talks, hikes, and school programs.

If the centennial initiative is a reality we will use seasonal rangers to increase the numbers and types of programs.

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

Site: GRSA

**EDUCATION**

Cooperate with educators to provide curriculum materials, high-quality programs, and park-based and online learning. All programs for youth will be of high quality and will be curriculum based and used by schools.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Park programs at all levels are currently of high quality and curriculum based. This will continue to be improved when staff and funding allows.

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

Site: GRSA

**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.

As funding and area technology allows, the park is adapting programs to be more interactive and that appeal to a youthful audience.

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

Site: GRSA

**EDUCATION**

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

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

The park held a focused Junior Ranger day this year. We utilized our Friends group, volunteers and other educators to reach a much wider audience. We have also added patches for junior ranger awards.

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



Site: GRSA

**EDUCATION**

Impart to every American a sense of their citizen ownership of their national parks.

Increase visitors' satisfaction, understanding, and appreciation of the parks they visit.

Park programs are very targeted to audiences and contain effective messages about our national parks and how they can assist us in preservation of resources, both in parks and outside the boundaries.

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

Site: GRSA

**PROFESSIONALISM**

Be one of the top 10 places to work in America. This park is already seen as one of the top two places to work in this area and we will continue to provide a safe and enjoyable place to work.

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

This park is very proactive in hiring local residents and as a result the park reflects very well the local hispanic population. We are considered one of the top three places to work in this valley.

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

Site: GRSA

**PROFESSIONALISM**

Use strategic planning to promote management excellence. The park will be proactive and innovative in all aspects of management

Establish a structured professional development curriculum to provide park managers with the skills to apply best business practices and superior leadership.

Park staff is encouraged to obtain professional development in their individual jobs.

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

Site: GRSA

**PROFESSIONALISM**

- Promote a safety and health culture for all employees and visitors. Safety is our job one.
- Reduce the number of employee lost-time incidents and serious visitor injuries by 20 percent.

The park has a very active safety program. Safety meetings of all types are held on a regular basis and the management team and representatives from all divisions conduct walk around safety inspections four times per year. Our goal is 0 lost time incidents for employees and continued reduction in visitor injuries.

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

Site: GRSA

**PROFESSIONALISM**

- Model what it means to work in partnership. This park will continue to work with many partners and enhance opportunities for additional ventures.
- Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

This park was envisioned and encouraged by Congress to be a model for 21st century partnerships. The expansion included the USFWS, USFS, BLM, The Nature Conservancy and others. The GMP encourages partnerships at all levels.

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