

THE
FUTURE
OF
AMERICA'S
NATIONAL
PARKS

First Annual
Centennial Strategy for

Isle Royale National Park

August 2007

CENTENNIAL INITIATIVE



Site: ISRO

Year: 2007

Vision Statement

In 2016 the natural environment of Isle Royale National Park will provide the challenges, peace of mind and opportunities to explore its wilderness that people have been enjoying since its creation. Returning visitors will hardly see any difference between visits in the natural landscape. The natural environment will be unaltered by local human influences and; at least, give the appearance that human influences are subordinate to the natural beauties and succession of flora and fauna in the undeveloped parts of the Island. The visitors can access the intriguing stories about the park's natural and historic world at entry point visitor centers that are silver LEAD certified and set the tone for appreciating the unique natural and historical role of the Island during their visit. Visitors can easily access information that enhances their visit, increases their awareness of safety issues and helps them have a minimal impact on this Wilderness Island.

Park personnel will have understanding of the rare and common species and ecosystem interactions that are the foundation to this natural world. The state of the art information and management of these resources is enhanced by on-going research and adaptive management and monitoring of changes. The work environment is supportive and team oriented with adequate training and systems support to enable employees to be fully productive with high morale, working safely in a hazardous environment. Infrastructure and transportation on and to the Island will be powered by, or integrate the "greenest" technology that will get the job done.

Isle Royale National Park, Michigan, is a wilderness park in Lake Superior 70 miles from park headquarters in Houghton, Michigan. The park was established on March 3, 1931; and under provisions of the Wilderness Act of 1964, the majority of the park's land (approximately 99 percent) was designated wilderness on October 20, 1976. The park was established to protect the natural and cultural resources and to provide for their use and enjoyment by the public in such a manner and by such means that will leave them unimpaired for future generations. Facilitating scientific study and research of the park's resources was also identified in the enabling Act as a necessary and important function of this park. The park was additionally designated an International Biosphere Reserve in November 1980.

Additional Challenges Affecting the Park: The Park faces an increasing regulatory environment because of its marine base operations. Its remoteness increases the cost of doing business exponentially and can make recruitment and retention difficult. The costs of any new construction or repair rehab if done through contracts is two to three times the cost of in-house construction and maintenance. The Park is limited by infrastructure and maintenance in handling multiple projects at one time. The age of the resources with a Park establishment 75 years ago makes this a critical time period for rehab of current structures and replacement of others. Wilderness goals and intermittent wet soils also increase the cost of doing maintenance.

Factors outside the Park have contaminated the lakes with air borne chemicals. The potential for an oil or fuel spill from a carrier could have long lasting effects; the risk is low but the consequences are high. The Park hopes to transfer 3 lighthouse properties that have significant maintenance issues to address before they could be available to the public. Isle Royale sits on the extreme south edge of the boreal ecotone, and therefore may foreshadow the impacts of global climate change in the larger boreal ecosystem context.

Not enough information is available on the fisheries in regards to the genetic bank and the habitat usage of the near shore areas.

Park/ Superintendent/ Program Manager

Phyllis A. Green

Site: ISRO

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)

By 2016, the GMP and Wilderness Plan goals relating to new infrastructure are in place.

- Dock issues are resolved through further NEPA analysis.
- The Preferred Alternative for the Wilderness Plan is 5 years into implementation with an excellent monitoring plan in place.

By 2016, state of the art exhibits are designed and in place at Windigo visitor center and the newly constructed Houghton visitor orientation center/headquarters.

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

Site: ISRO

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.

By 2016, NPS with partners has identified and developed preservation plans for critical cultural resources on the Island.

In particular the park will have stabilized and rehabilitated for adaptive re-use two historic properties on Isle Royale - Crystal Cove and Wright Island for public use. Crystal Cove was built as a summer retreat in the 1920's and in the 1950's to the 1980s it served as a commercial fishery. The Wright Island residence was a commercial fishing base from the 1860's through the 1970s. Both sites are proposed to serve as overnight camping sites for visitors in the park's GMP. The park will engage Isle Royale Boaters Association and the National Park's of Lake Superior Fund as potential partners in this effort.

- A fund and endowment to preserve, interpret, and maintain the historic Great Lakes light stations at API+K3S, ISRO, PIRO, and SLBE has been established

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.

By 2016, the unique role Isle Royale has as a biosphere reserve is contributing to the understanding of global climate change and boreal forest dynamics both natural and human induced. The ecosystems are changing naturally through time and management actions are enhanced by understanding and working with these changes from data and results collected by scientists at the Island.

- Identification and Protection Plan for Unique Park Species - Mussels & Sponges has been developed and implementation begun
- the longest running predator prey study in the world is underway and the complex connections of this association to the broader ecosystem dynamics are being investigated.
- Participation in early response program for exotic species has reduced introduction and damage from exotic pests.

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Site: ISRO

STEWARDSHIP

Improve the condition of park resources and assets.

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

By 2016, the park will have identified, inventories and developed a protection plan for unique park species - mussels and sponges. Identifying and understanding the resources that flourish on Isle Royale National Park is crucial in determining factors repressing similar resources on the adjacent mainland. One such resource, the freshwater sponge community, develops with an intricacy not commonly seen outside the park's boundaries. This suggests that habitat parameters within the park encourage this unique development and are in need of assessment. By employing a combination of qualitative and quantitative techniques on the inland lakes of Isle Royale, we intend to compile and analyze sponge fauna diversity, distribution and abundance. We will also examine key environmental variables and aquatic community relationships using general and multivariate statistical methods. Results will provide a detailed and geo-referenced description of sponge distribution and abundance, along with an assessment of potential threats to their continuing survival.

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Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

By 2016 the park will have successfully designed and built a new headquarters/visitor orientation center at Houghton to replace substandard temporary facilities. The building will be designed as a model of energy efficiency and sustainability and model best practices in view-shed preservation, shoreline and surface water management, and be design compatible in an historic setting. Facility will serve as a joint orientation facility to direct tourist and park visitors to Isle Royale NP, Keweenaw NHP and other points of interest in the Keweenaw. The project will include the Chamber of Commerce of the city of Houghton, MI as an active partner in its design, development and operation.

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Site: ISRO

STEWARDSHIP

Assure that no compelling chapter in the American heritage experience remains untold and that strategically important landscapes are acquired, as authorized by Congress.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

By 2016 the park will have accepted the transfer of three historic lighthouses to park ownership, Passage island Light, Rock of Ages and Isle Royale Light and perform necessary stabilization work to halt deterioration and preserve them for the future. These facilities played a critical role in Isle Royale's maritime history and will be available for exploration and interpretation for the public.

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Site: ISRO

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)

By 2016, the unique role Isle Royale has as a biosphere reserve is contributing to the understanding of global climate change and boreal forest dynamics both natural and human induced. The ecosystems are changing naturally through time and management actions are enhanced by understanding and working with these changes from data and results collected by scientists at the Island.

- Park participates in bi-national monitoring of Lake Superior and coordinated marine management with Canadian counterparts
- The night sky is free from light pollution

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Site: ISRO

ENVIRONMENT

Reduce environmental impacts of park operations.

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

By 2016 the park will have conducted an alternative energy engineering study to determine identify greener technologies to provide power to park operations. The park would seek partners such as Michigan Technological University, the National Parks of Lake Superior or a partner from the energy industry to fund a study to determine the total amount of electricity produced, the amount of electricity consumed an the amount required to functionally operate as well as implementation of some alternative energy solutions. The project end result will produce alternative energy proposal and design a reasonable alternative energy system or combination of systems that provide the park with the most cost efficient means to produce electricity using the latest technologies available to reudce and or eliminate the use of diesel powered generators on the island at two major visitor use areas and park headquarters and Mott administrative site.

Infrastructure and transportation on and to the Island will be powered by, or integrate the "greenest" technology that will get the job done.

Fuel consumption has been reduced to an absolute minimum and replaced with green alternatives.

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Site: ISRO

ENVIRONMENT

Engage partners, communities, and visitors in shared environmental stewardship.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

By 2016, the public is engaged in the stewardship of the natural resources by participating in citizen monitoring program on the island.

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

Site: ISRO

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

By 2016, visitors to Isle Royale National Park find the park a pristine wilderness experience with well maintained infrastructure to support their visit.

- The entire trails system on Isle Royale is endowed at a level that supports minimum tools usage and the trails are of the highest quality for both resource protection and user safety.

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

- Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

The park's concession services are viable and supporting the diverse park visitor needs, while keeping utility cost low and as green as sustainably possible.

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Site: ISRO

EDUCATION

- Cooperate with educators to provide curriculum materials, high-quality programs, and park-based and online learning.
- Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

By 2016, a program is in place that has curriculum for all 4th grade students in Michigan that will incorporate Isle Royale examples as learning tools.

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

Site: ISRO

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.

By 2016, visitors year-round may gain an understanding of the park themes through dynamic and diverse interpretive opportunities at park-owned facilities, including an interpretive experience at every portal and through an excellent web based learning system.

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

Site: ISRO

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.

By 2016, ISRO employees will reflect the diversity of the region through development of sustained recruitment programs and training opportunities.

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

Attain the highest employee satisfaction rate of all federal agencies, as measured by Office of Personnel Management surveys.

The work environment is supportive and team oriented with adequate training and systems support to enable employees to be fully productive with high morale, working safely in hazardous environments.

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

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

By 2016, ISRO employees will reflect the professional level of training required to meet the many requirements of environmental laws, security, and resource and visitor protection.

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Site: ISRO

PROFESSIONALISM

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

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

By 2016, an organization or network of organizations is well established in raising support for ISRO as demonstrated through annual donations (cash, in-kind, or volunteer) equivalent to at least 1/4 of the Park's ONPS budget.

Development program is established, perhaps with an endowment.

The National Parks of Lake Superior Fund is fully functioning for the benefit of both the Park and its partners, including as a partner in grant applications and administration

Isle Royale Institute is financially independent and its programming supports broadening the diversity of Park visitors and it supports the development and logistics of critical research needs for the Island.

IRNHA continues to demonstrate its ability to develop award winning publications and successfully complete its mission

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