

THE
FUTURE
OF
AMERICA'S
NATIONAL
PARKS

First Annual
Centennial Strategy for

El Malpais National Monument

August 2007

CENTENNIAL INITIATIVE



Site: ELMA

Year: 2007

Vision Statement

"Is this where we get a wood-cutting permit?" In the first decade after the 1987 establishment of El Malpais National Monument, that visitor question bothered us as NPS employees. We would patiently explain they needed to get that type of permit from the Forest Service office as wood-cutting was not allowed on national park lands. The National Park Service was the last federal land management agency to come to the area - the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management had been managing lands here for decades prior to the monument's creation. Neither visitors nor local residents immediately differentiated our grey and green uniforms from the greens and khakis of the other agencies. It also took folks awhile to get used to changes in authorized uses on the new park lands - no hunting, no rock collecting, phase-out of grazing rights.

Twenty years later, we still get the question about wood permits at our multi-agency Northwest New Mexico Visitor Center, but it is neither asked out of ignorance nor answered with a referral to another federal office in town. We can say "yes," and then show them where on USFS lands they can go to cut wood. At this visitor facility, we work in total partnership with the BLM and the USFS. This is a small model of our larger vision for El Malpais at the Centennial of the NPS - that we are linked with many different types of partners in ways that de-emphasize the importance of who does what work and wears which uniform. The focus of our partnerships will be to provide excellent stewardship of monument resources, based on outstanding research, and to engage visitors in new ways to help them experience and learn about this dramatic, volcanic landscape and its inhabitants. Another focus will be to ensure our own professional excellence - our NPS workforce will feel empowered and recognized for good work, over short and long term timeframes.

At the Centennial of the NPS, El Malpais will be a magnet for research - ceramic sourcing studies will reveal where ancient potters collected their materials. Climate research will tell us more about what is happening to the ice in our "ice caves," why more in some caves and less in others? Potentially hundreds of "new" species will belong on our list following an all-taxa survey. Our NPS stewardship will be shared by many volunteers and other cooperators - monitoring cave and lava tube systems, checking on fragile archeological sites, attacking invasive weeds along backcountry roads, etc. Our connections with visitors and neighbors will be forged through web visits, school visits, traditional touring patterns, community events, voluntourism projects and more. The Continental Divide Trail will beckon to hikers and students will enjoy learning about volcanoes and cave slime.

In 2016, if we've done things well, the family who comes into the multiagency visitor center will participate in a Junior Ranger activity, sign up for a volunteer work project and then remember that they also wanted to ask about wood permits.

Park/ Superintendent/ Program Manager

Kayci Cook Collins, 4th Generation NPS Employee and 3rd Generation NPS Superintendent

Site: ELMA

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.

El Malpais has several historic homestead structures that we treat as "Vanishing Treasures." By the Centennial, these will all have received treatment, including detailed documentation and preservation actions to stabilize them and make them available for interpretation.

As partners in preservation, we will help other nearby communities and tribes preserve their important structures, such as the mission churches at Sky City (Pueblo of Acoma) and Zuni Pueblo. The NPS at El Malpais is in a great geographic location to maintain the NPS tradition of assisting others in their work to care for resources.

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.

We will work to bring invasive plant species such as cheat grass, mullein, Russian knapweed, and others under control. Part of our strategy will be to encourage our neighbors to control or eradicate invasive plants from lands adjacent to the monument. Weed-pulling will make great projects for scouting groups and other organizations seeking service projects. Our local cable TV channel is a likely partner for sharing information on the threats posed by invasives and importance of staying on top of control actions. County agricultural extension office can also help us spread the word.

Fire management activities will show real progress toward restoration of natural processes and their results in our vegetated areas of El Malpais. Prescribed burns, wildland fire use fires, and other treatments will improve forest health, checking encroachment of juniper and pinon pines, enhancing growth of native grasses, and reducing spread of exotic plants.

At one time, bighorn sheep ranged throughout the El Malpais region, as depicted in ancient petroglyphs and evidenced in archeological sites. We will review the possibility of reintroducing bighorn sheep.

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.

El Malpais is largely a backcountry/wilderness monument. Even so, we have facilities that require attention. Our Northwest New Mexico Visitor Center will be nearly 20 years old at the NPS Centennial - we will attend to its needs, as well as those of our other facilities - roads, trails, vault toilets, administrative facilities and information center, water and

Site: ELMA

STEWARDSHIP

Improve the condition of park resources and assets.

wastewater systems.

In places, erosion is starting to claim edges of archeological sites. We will treat a number of threatened or damaged archeological sites through limited excavation and then erosion control, plus treat sites to reduce damage by burrowing badgers, etc.

Our wilderness and cave resources will be in better condition as they will be managed according to new planning documents - wilderness and backcountry management plan completion is a high priority for El Malpais and will stitch together a more cohesive approach to caring for the array of resources.

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 establishment for monitoring natural resources health in our network of parks is not yet complete, however, we will continue to use a variety of methods to establish baselines and monitor conditions, and undertake actions to improve conditions and then maintain those improvements.

High priority natural resources to monitor and improve if needed include paleontological specimens (tree molds formed by lava flowing around living trees), cave mineral formations, and populations of state listed species of concern (Pecos Sunflower, Townsends big-eared bat).

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

Complete all cultural resource inventories for designated priority resources.

We will conduct and complete a Cultural Landscape Inventory for the entire monument, collaborate with Zuni and Acoma on a ceramic sourcing study, and conduct a Traditional Use Study. Additionally, we will develop a lithic type collection and a ceramic type collection. Partnerships for most of these projects are already lining up - by the NPS Centennial, we should have much of this accomplished!

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

Site: ELMA

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)

Engage the scientific community in climate studies related to ice formation in El Malpais lava tubes and caves. This could involve hydrology, palynology, tree ring and C-14 dating, among other methods. Some of our area caves have more ice than they did 15 years ago - others have less. Why is this happening and how does it relate to global climate change.

Other exciting ways to study environmental change will focus on bat populations and cave slime. Now that is science that will thrill academicians and 4th-graders!

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

Site: ELMA

STEWARDSHIP

Encourage children to be future conservationists.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Several of our other Centennial Strategy objectives relate to our plans to get kids more connected to El Malpais, whether it is through education programs, the Junior Ranger program, or partnerships with local tribes. Children will be exposed to messages about the importance of caring for important resources (caves and lava tubes, native languages, medicinal plant populations, colonies of bats) - those at El Malpais, and those where they live.

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

Site: ELMA

ENVIRONMENT

Reduce environmental impacts of park operations.

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

We will broaden our environmental management program by implementing a recycling program, reducing our solid waste generation, seeking and using bio-friendly materials in park operations and construction projects, and reducing our energy use for heating, cooling and vehicular travel. We're currently working on strategies that will help us achieve our environmental leadership goals.

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

Site: ELMA

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.

At El Malpais, we can showcase our use of native plants in landscaping around our public buildings to show visitors alternatives to exotics that may use more water and outcompete desirable native species. We can look into capturing some of the rainwater that falls on our park buildings to use in watering landscaping around park buildings.

When we rehabilitate our trails, we can construct simple exhibits that describe the benefits of using natural materials that do not pose a hazard to delicate soils, plants, and other biota instead of petroleum based asphalt trail tread.

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.

We will look at integrating solar energy into our operations for heating and lighting our public spaces. We will continue to consider alternative fuel vehicles for rental and purchase, and push for those alternative fuels to be sold in our local communities.

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

Site: ELMA

ENVIRONMENT

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

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

We will spearhead an effort to get other agencies (federal, state, local) interested in partnering on a recycling program. Options include developing a local recycling program or partnering to transport recyclables to existing recycling centers (70 miles away).

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

Site: ELMA

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.

Complete the El Malpais segment of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail by the NPS Centennial. Work closely with USFS, BLM, Continental Divide Trail Alliance, the State of NM, city of Grants, Cibola County, Pueblo of Acoma, and others to improve the location of the trail beyond the monument towards Grants.

We will also improve the 3-mile El Calderon Trail to improve accessibility and safety.

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

Site: ELMA

RECREATION

Establish "volun-tourism" excursions to national parks for volunteers to help achieve natural and cultural resource protection goals.

Increase annual volunteer hours by 100 percent, from 5.2 million hours to 10.4 million hours.

El Malpais will, at the time of the Centennial, have much increased capacity to host more volunteers to work with us on all types of projects and regular park operations. Without park housing, we will need to focus our volunteer program on communities within commuting distance of El Malpais. These communities, including towns on tribal lands, will offer much in the way of cultural diversity.

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

Site: ELMA

RECREATION

Expand partnerships with schools and boys and girls associations to show how national park experiences can improve children's lives.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Our nearby communities have a number of children's clubs and associations that we can work with. We will seek to create relationships with these organizations that will focus on how much fun it can be to come to national parks - to hike and get exercise, to help with work projects, to learn about the park's stories, to see the different kinds of cool jobs that national parks can offer.

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

Site: ELMA

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.

El Malpais is an undiscovered gem, which is often how first-time visitors characterize it. We have room for much more visitor use and will participate in a variety of efforts to reach more people. Things to try: advertise in Chamber of Commerce materials, expanding website pages to entice visitors to come, using the interagency visitor center for more park-focused programs for community audiences. We will also continue working with travel publication editors - whenever we do this, we get a nice "bump" in interest!

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.

We will restore staffing to conduct on-site and off-site programs. We'll also use our interagency visitor center more and restore our Parks as Classrooms program through Centennial funding for seasonals.

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

Site: ELMA

EDUCATION

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

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

El Malpais has curriculum materials - We will update these and reinvigorate our work with schools. We want to expand our support to teachers, helping them prepare students for their trip. We also want to do more in terms of facilitating their visits to El Malpais - Funding for seasonal positions in the FY08 budget request will help us get started on that.

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

Site: ELMA

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.

We will develop El Malpais' web pages to make them more interesting, informational, and engaging. Podcasts are an exciting idea that we would like to explore - we're thrilled to see parks like Yellowstone "breaking trail" for us on some of these fun new fronts of technology.

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

Site: ELMA

EDUCATION

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

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

Soon we will have an El Malpais Junior Ranger program - in partnership with the BLM Conservation Area. We will add a Junior Ranger aspect to our web page for El Malpais - and enjoy racking up lots of new Junior Rangers from our local, national, and global communities!

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

Site: ELMA

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.

Partner with local tribes looking to teach children native language and cultural affiliation/history - El Malpais can provide a great venue for many lessons on place names, discussions about migration patterns, and other topics. We want to increase the educational connections that trips to El Malpais can inspire, for culturally affiliated groups and anyone wishing to learn more about the site's history, archeology, ethnology, etc.

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

Site: ELMA

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.

Continue recruitment activities that involve the many local tribes. Expand our use of the Diversity Database. With the potential additional funding for seasonals in upcoming NPS budgets, we'll have more opportunity to make real headway on our diversity goals and renew stale recruiting relationships.

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.

Interview current employees to develop a plan to improve the satisfaction and morale of El Malpais' staff and volunteers. What makes us feel good about our jobs - acknowledgement in front of our peers? More private forms of recognition? How can we foster a creative, learning environment that still meets accountability standards? Are we extracting the right lessons from our successes and failures so we can learn and grow?

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

Site: ELMA

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.

We will continue our current focus on visitor and employee safety. We have very few serious employee and visitor accidents, but we can always improve our programs. We will develop a broader collection of job hazard analyses reviews so that we're always ready to do our work safely, with full consideration and maximum reduction of the risks involved. We will continue to recognize and reward employees for outstanding safety attitudes and behaviours. Our visitor contacts will continue to stress safety and encourage visitors to take all precautions as they enjoy El Malpais.

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

Site: ELMA

PROFESSIONALISM

Model what it means to work in partnership.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

El Malpais has huge potential for expanding our use of partnerships to benefit the monument, ourselves as employees, and the entities with which we work. We will keep and continue to grow the relationships we have and add more so that citizen stewardship of El Malpais' resources is even more evident.

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

Site: ELMA

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.

Use statewide and regional tourism organizations, glossy publications, newspapers and blogs to highlight El Malpais and its relationship to other sites in the state and area.

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

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

We hope to generate enthusiasm for and interest in creation of a friends group to help support both El Morro and El Malpais National Monuments. There are many energetic people in our area that could come together with the NPS and create a non-profit support organization. We would very much like to say we have a friends group by the time of the NPS Centennial.

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