

Spring 1990
Partnerships in Interpretation

Interpretation



Warren Bielenberg
Annie Brittin
Douglas L Caldwell
Gary Candelaria
Bruce Craig
Linda Finn
Patricia Gillespie
Robert Huggins
Marti Leicester
Dolores Mescher
Gary W Mullins
George E Price, Jr
James M Ridenour
John W Tyler
Mary Vavra
Michael D Watson
Al Werking

I was pleased to learn that the spring issue of *Interpretation* would deal with partnerships. As I'm sure most of you know I'm all for such efforts! We need to reach out to those who are interested in helping us; both because we can use the help and because it strengthens the support and commitment of those who get involved. We need to appreciate that good partnerships are never one-sided; they are cooperative alliances with benefits, both tangible and intangible, for all those involved.

The assistance that comes from partnerships will likely take many forms—some will be “old” and very familiar; others “new” and we’ll want to try them out. Some of the kinds of partnerships we are or will be involved with include volunteerism, cooperative research and resource management activities, educational and interpretative efforts, and fundraising. While this list may seem somewhat “routine,” I am continually impressed with the creativity and diversity of individual projects.

I am aware that there are those who have wondered what business it is of the National Park Service, or any Federal agency, to encourage assistance from others outside the Federal government. They ask, “Why don't we, or why shouldn't we, get all the funds we need from the appropriations process?” The practical answer to that is, “we never have and probably never will.” I don't know of any agency that has ever gotten all the funding it would like. I would also suggest that we may not really even want to. As we all know, throughout the Service's history, the private sector has long and, I believe, *appropriately* played an enormous role. Over the years, we've received gifts of lands, materials, services, historic objects, and, of course, funds. The list is almost endless, and its value in helping us to carry out the mission of the Service is immeasurable.

I think the question is not “*whether we should be involved in partnerships,*” but rather, “*where do we go from here.*” Basically, to borrow a line from President Bush, we're going to “stay the course” and then some. We're going to continue to facilitate and assist those interested in helping us; frankly, I really don't see how we could do otherwise. And, as far as I'm concerned, we're also going to increase partnerships when and where possible.

Obviously, we need to see that these partnerships are handled in an “above board” manner. That means we need to be sure that these activities are consistent with Park Service, and all other relevant policy and regulations. I can't stress enough how important it is that we “dot all the i's and cross all the t's.” In those situations where you may have doubts as to what should be done, seek appropriate counsel.

The role that the private sector has played in assisting the Service is an essential one. It's a role I want to see us continue and continue to expand.

James M Ridenour
Director, National Park Service

Regional Information Survey

Alaska

We have an ongoing interagency agreement to operate two major interpretive centers in Alaska. The policy committee consists of eight separate agencies—three state and five Federal. We are the operating agency for two of the three Alaska Public Land Information Centers.

We have a cooperative agreement with the Alaska Native Brotherhood Camp #1 to operate a Southeast Alaska Indian Cultural Center. The purpose of the Center is to "provide an understanding and appreciation for the rich cultural heritage of the Tlingit people and other Indians of Southeast Alaska."

We signed a cooperative agreement with the SeAlaska Heritage Foundation to produce a ceremonial Tlingit canoe at Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve. This agreement included interpretive services by Tlingit elders.

I hope these examples will be useful to you. Call Glenn Clark if you have questions.

Western

The Western Regional Office is planning a course entitled "Managing For Biological Diversity." It will be held in San Francisco, September 10-14, 1990. This course is intended to provide field area staff with the most current information on conservation biology and the managing of biological diversity of National Parks areas. Various aspects of management, research, resource management, and public interpretation/education will be covered. Potential topics will include: basic biogeochemical cycles, speciation and evolution, management of threatened and endangered species, the impacts of alien species, global climate, monitoring, restoration ecology, the role of natural corridors, urban wildlife, migratory birds, island biogeography, the role of interpretation/education. For further information please contact Regional Chief of Interpretation Dick Cunningham, (415) 556-3184.

Pacific Northwest

Regional Director Charles H Odegaard announced the new Chief of Interpretation and Visitor Services at the Regional Superintendent's Conference in Spokane, WA, April 24-26, 1990. Charles W Mayo from Jefferson National Expansion Memorial will fill the vacant position arriving in Seattle in June. "Corky" has directed the interpretive program at the Gateway Arch in St Louis for the past two years.

In other news, Interpretive Management Trainee Scott Shane is completing his training program with an assignment to Klondike Gold Rush NHP. Scott will be available for GS-9 interpretive positions at the end of this program. This two-year training opportunity will again be available. At Fort Clatsop, the Fort Clatsop Historical Association has raised \$600,000 towards the construction of the park visitor center. In Tacoma, WA, Mount Rainier NP, the US Forest Service, and several other organizations combined their efforts to observe Earth Day.

Rocky Mountain

Trumpeting our emphasis on "partnerships" brings back memories for some of us of the "Year of the Visitor." The titles suggest that last year, we cared little for visitors, and whew, next year, we'll not be bothered by partners! The theme-of-the-year approach is a healthy reminder mechanism, nonetheless. Though at times underused, "partnerships" are a permanent tool in our managerial kit.

Very pleasant experiences early in the history of Rocky Mountain Region Skills Courses taught us the value of inviting our "partners" from concessions, cooperating associations, the Forest Service, and various states to attend. The Skills Team now has a policy of reserving at least ten percent of the seats in each course for **non-NPS** participants. The result is a term which has been much overused for the last decade—"synergism." Overused, perhaps, but try finding another world which means the same thing ... unless, perhaps, it's "partnerships."

Midwest

This column has often reported updates on the challenges of designing, writing, field testing, printing, and distributing the Biological Diversity Curriculum. There were delays but we did not want to sacrifice quality for a speedy completion date. Now the project is finished. Every permanent NPS Interpreter should have received their personal copy of the book. At the Region V NAI Workshop, the Curriculum was presented to 45 Field Interpreters who eagerly embraced the concepts and approach. Workshops to introduce school teachers to the Curriculum have been conducted at Voyageurs NP and other areas.

Many groups contributed to turning this educational idea into reality: the Minnesota Environmental Education Board, the National Parks and Conservation Association, Eastern National Parks and Monuments Association, the Parks Passport Fund, Voyageurs NP, Indiana Dunes NL, the Midwest Regional Office, and others. The end product was well-worth the wait, but not if it gathers dust on a shelf.

Southwest

Wapatki-Sunset Crater was recently blessed with research directed by Dr Robert T Trotter II, professor of anthropology at Northern Arizona University. Aided by a grant from the university, Dr Trotter conducted an ethnological study of visitor behavior. The project involved several students, in addition to Dr Trotter, who unobtrusively observed and recorded visitor behavior and conducted visitor interviews. This was complemented by photograph of visitor use, which revealed distinctive patterns of behavior—how visitors responded to (or failed to respond) to regulatory signs, and patterns of use regarding interpretive signs and publications.

The result was a revelation to the park staff, and a realization that there were "services" provided that did not get used and patterns of abuse to the archeological resources that could be reduced by changing schedules of patrols and changing the nature of the non-personal interpretive materials provided. It is an approach with application many parks.

Service Center Report

North Atlantic

Three interpretive partnerships involving parks in this region in which Interpretation readers may be interested.

Lowell NHP and Lowell Heritage State Park, a unit of Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management, share responsibility for interpreting one of America's first planned industrial cities.

Boston NHP helps preserve and interpret numerous sites on Boston's famed Freedom Trail through cooperative agreements with the owners of these sites. NPS partners include the City of Boston, the United States Navy, the Old South Association, the Paul Revere Memorial Association, and the Freedom Trail Foundation.

The Division of Interpretation has provided basic interpretive skills training through the Interpretive Training Institute. This is a collaboration of our office, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management, Metropolitan District Commission, and the Appalachian Mountain Club.

Southeast

Never underestimate the potential of small towns in the Southeast Region, especially Kosciusko, Mississippi! Under the direction of the Kosciusko Heritage Foundation, this community of 8000 raised more than \$250,000 for the construction of a welcome center on the Natchez Trace Parkway. One of many fund drives collected better than 99% of dollars pledged, a remarkable feat by any fund-raising standard. Then they secured 400 volunteers to staff it every day except Christmas. Soon the foundation will raise thousands more for a permanent exhibit.

Since opening in November 1984, the center has served the needs of almost 250,000 visitors and built a strong, long-term bond between the parkway and its neighbors. All of this at virtually no cost to the National Park Service. What a partnership!

Mid-Atlantic

Several unique partnerships exist at MAR parks: ALPO with Amtrak where rangers interpret an historic train tour; and with Bethlehem Steel Corporation where rangers conduct tours through an historic iron works; COLO with Eastern National's funding of glasshouse demonstrations; DEWA with Pocono Environmental Education Center where participants partake of education and recreation programs; FRHI with Bureau of Mines to mitigate acid mine drainage at the park; INDE with the University of the Arts' Communication Workshop offering free design assistance for publications projects; NERI with Neighbors Program where weekly discussions of history of the area, from personal experiences, take place; and VAFO with Duportail House donated to the park, providing an important interpretive link in park's history and activities.

National Capital

NCR maintains dozens of "pocket parks" scattered throughout the Nation's Capital. Some of these parks may only be a few hundred square feet. Dwindling resources make it increasingly difficult to maintain these parks at standards acceptable to the National Park Service and the local community.

Development of older neighborhoods and commercial areas in Washington, DC, is booming and Jeff Knoedler of the Regional Office of Land Use Coordination has given Adopt-A-Park a new twist. In the course of coordinating land use issues, developers are encouraged to Take Pride In America and adopt pocket parks bordering their projects by establishing an endowment fund to maintain the parks in perpetuity. Funds are managed by the National Park Foundation with 25% of the annual interest being returned to the principal to cover future cost increases. The remainder of the interest goes to maintain the park. To date, two developers have set up pocket park endowments totalling \$85,000.

Denver

The City of Rocks National Reserve lies in south central Idaho within ten miles of the Utah border. A new area to the system, the reserve features spectacular rock formations. A major segment of the historic California Trail passes through the park, and many of the rocks have the names of westward immigrants.

While the NPS owns the reserve, the legislation directs that it eventually be managed by the State of Idaho. The Denver Service Center currently is developing a Comprehensive Management Plan for the park. Planning team members include two representatives from the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, four private citizens from surrounding communities, and Reserve Superintendent Dave Pugh, former Chief of Interpretation of the Pacific Northwest Region. Among the team's charges are the development of interpretive themes and objectives, and the final plan will include elements of an Interpretive Plan.

Harpers Ferry

Director Ridenour said: "In ... an interdependent global environment, sharing ... information before it is too late is one example of why I so strongly advocate international communication and cooperation We have the honor and the obligation to share our expertise with other countries" He was writing about environmental protection, but the words apply equally well to interpretation.

At Harpers Ferry Center there is a constant parade of visitors. They come because of an interest in the NPS's center for interpretive media design, one of the few such installations in the world. A partial list of guests during the past year gives a flavor of the widespread sharing that occurs at this one NPS facility. We hosted a delegation from Poland; the Visitor Services Supervisor from the Ministry of Natural Resources, Toronto, Canada; the Senior Vice President, National Audubon Society; Peace Corps volunteers to Malawi; and a delegation from the Royal Forest Department, National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Divisions, Bangkok, Thailand.

Amy Federman
Historian, National Register
Branch
202/343-9536

The Division of Interpretation has been working with the National Register Branch, Interagency Resources Division, to identify ways to make information available to parks on the National Register of Historic Places and other NPS historic preservation programs. The NPS administers these programs in partnership with federal agencies, state and local governments. One park has already requested such information to incorporate into its interpretive programs. The Interagency Resources Division would like to provide information to other interested park staffs which could be used to encourage visitors to parks to become more appreciative of and interested in preserving historic places both inside and outside of parks.

The National Register staff is currently defining what kinds of information will be useful to parks. Information could run the gamut from brochures on NPS preservation programs including National Register brochures in both English and Spanish for distribution at Visitor Centers to information on National Register listings nationwide or in the vicinity of parks which tourists might like to see. It could include a handbook for interpreters on the NPS's broad historic preservation mission to assist the public in recognizing and preserving historic places in their own communities. We consider this part of the Secretary's Heritage Education initiative. If your park has already begun to develop these kind of programs or you are interested in receiving this material, please contact Amy Federman in the Interagency Resources Division at (202) 343-9536 or our office with your suggestions.

Sandy Weber
Cultural Resources
Interpretive Specialist
202/523-0531

In December 1986, the NPS Regional Directors designated 35 parks as "Spanish Colonial Heritage Sites," intending that these areas would be the primary focus for the Park Service's observance of the Christopher Columbus Quincentenary in 1992. Representatives of 21 of these parks held a week long workshop in February to plan and coordinate their personal services interpretive plans for the Quincentennial. WASO staff and the Quincentennial Regional Coordinators will be using the information included in the parks' plans to help coordinate research and funding requests. The Park Service will be seeking additional funding for Quincentennial activities from Congress, Cooperating Associations, and corporate sponsors.

While it is unlikely that parks not designated as one of the "official" Quincentennial parks will receive much additional funding for special Quincentennial programs, they are encouraged to incorporate Quincentennial themes into their interpretive programs wherever feasible and appropriate. We will be working to provide these areas with material they can use at little or no cost. Possibilities include a general Quincentennial video and brochure, and a packet of interpretive material similar to the "Interpreting Biological Diversity" handbook. We are also working with the Federation of State Humanities Councils to procure multiple copies of a travelling exhibit entitled "Seeds of Change" which is a smaller version of the Smithsonian's primary Quincentennial exhibit of the same name. We will provide more details on these projects through the Regional Chiefs of Interpretation as they become available.