



# LEADING IN A COLLABORATIVE ENVIRONMENT

## Six Case Studies Involving Collaboration and Civic Engagement



CONSERVATION AND STEWARDSHIP PUBLICATION NO. 17

National Park Service Conservation Study Institute  
Woodstock, Vermont

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This report is the seventeenth in the Conservation and Stewardship Publication Series produced by the Conservation Study Institute. This series includes a variety of publications designed to provide information on conservation history and current practice for professionals and the public. The series editor is Nora J. Mitchell, director of the Institute. This volume was prepared in cooperation with the Quebec-Labrador Foundation (QLF) / Atlantic Center for the Environment and was supported, in part, by a National Park Foundation Leadership Grant.

The Conservation Study Institute was established by the National Park Service in 1998 to advance innovation in collaborative conservation. The Institute helps the agency and its partners stay in touch with the evolving field of conservation, and to develop more sophisticated partnerships, new tools for community engagement, and new strategies for the twenty-first century.

A partnership with academic, government, and nonprofit organizations, the Institute is dedicated to assisting the National Park Service and its partners in becoming increasingly effective and creative in meeting new challenges, and more open and responsive leaders in building collaboration and commitment for the stewardship of our national system of parks and special places. The Institute is based at Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park in the Northeast Region of the National Park Service.

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# **LEADING IN A COLLABORATIVE ENVIRONMENT**

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### **Prepared by**

National Park Service Conservation Study Institute

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### **In partnership with**

African Burial Ground National Monument  
Big Cypress National Preserve  
Lowell National Historical Park  
Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park  
Saguaro National Park  
Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area

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### **In cooperation with**

Quebec-Labrador Foundation /Atlantic Center for the Environment

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Edited by Jacquelyn L. Tuxill and Nora J. Mitchell  
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# INTRODUCTION

Over the course of this project, the NPS Conservation Study Institute (Institute), QLF/Atlantic Center for the Environment, and the National Park Foundation (NPF) worked in partnership to examine effective leadership practice in collaboration and civic engagement in order to share best practices within and outside of the National Park Service (NPS).<sup>1</sup>

The goals for this project were to:

- develop six case studies, in a standard written format, appropriate for training and education purposes;
- identify best leadership practices in partnerships and civic engagement for each of the six case studies;
- distill the leadership strategies and practices that are common to the case studies;
- distribute the case studies and cross-cutting leadership strategies and practices to NPS and other public land managers and other conservation practitioners.

Working with six national park superintendents, the Institute and QLF developed six written case studies, following the same case study format for each.<sup>2</sup> The case studies were analyzed to identify cross-cutting leadership strategies and practices, which were further refined through a group dialogue process with the superintendents and other staff involved in the case studies (see “Strategies for Leading in a Collaborative Environment,” beginning next page).

The common leadership strategies identified through this process – each with an associated set of practices – can be summarized as follows:

- **Be an effective collaborative leader** by building a leadership approach for successfully collaborating with others and engaging with the public;
- **Build NPS team capacity for engagement and collaboration** through practices that enable successful relationships;
- **Prepare in advance before launching an engagement process** by investing the time in due diligence to understand the local context and history of park-community relationships;
- **Build and maintain relationships** through the application of proven practices of collaboration and civic engagement;
- **Sustain the effort over time** through practices that cultivate successful collaboration and partnerships.

The case studies address some of the most challenging situations facing NPS superintendents today. In addition to being useful to managers at various levels within the NPS, the case studies and the common leadership strategies and practices are also relevant to conservation practitioners outside of the NPS working in similar situations. For further reading on civic engagement and collaboration, a list of resources and publications is included.

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<sup>1</sup> A grant from the NPF Leadership Grant Program to the Institute provided support for this case study project.

<sup>2</sup> Five of the six case studies were adapted from presentations to the NPS New Superintendent Academy in a webinar series on partnerships and civic engagement. The webinars were convened by the NPS Learning and Development Program in partnership with the Institute, the NPS Office of Partnerships and Philanthropic Stewardship, and in cooperation with QLF.

# STRATEGIES FOR LEADING IN A COLLABORATIVE ENVIRONMENT

## Observations from Six National Park Service Case Studies

### Introduction

The leadership strategies and practices that follow were developed from case studies at six national parks, all examples of leadership in collaboration and civic engagement in various challenging situations: African Burial Ground National Monument, Big Cypress National Preserve, Lowell National Historical Park, Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park, Saguaro National Park, and Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area.<sup>3</sup> These leadership strategies and practices were developed through a two-step process: (1) identification of common leadership practices across the case studies, grouped into five general strategies, and (2) refinement of the draft leadership practices and strategies through a group dialogue process with the superintendents involved in the case studies. By grouping the practices into a strategic and sequential framework, they are readily accessible and can be used, together with the case studies, to inform and guide superintendents and others (both within the NPS and in partner organizations) who are undertaking similar initiatives involving collaboration and civic engagement.

### Leadership Strategies and Practices

#### 1. Be an effective, collaborative leader

The practices in this section help build a leadership approach for effectively collaborating with others and engaging with the public.<sup>4</sup>

- a. ***Understand the authorities available for working with others (i.e., what you can and cannot do) and manage staff and partner expectations properly.*** Knowing the applicable authorities and how to use them provides clarity in discussing possible collaboration with potential partners and allows you to act in a timely manner when opportunities arise.
- b. ***Listen carefully to the interests and needs of potential partners and the public when engaging in conversations.*** Approach such conversations with a willingness to learn and without preconceptions about outcomes. Allow time to process what you hear. Ask probing questions to gain insights on positions or perspectives expressed or to understand underlying values, and look for opportunities to collaborate. Establish relationships before asking for favors.
- c. ***Personally commit to the process of engagement/collaboration and solicit the same commitment from others.*** Understand that building relationships is an art that takes time and energy. Commit the necessary time and resources to make the process work.
- d. ***Always be honest and transparent in working with others; show humility and respect.*** Stay positive and appeal to people's better natures. Always try to find areas of agreement amidst disagreement and work to build trust. Maintain your perspective on thorny issues so you can help others keep theirs, and seek to maintain your personal resiliency as well. Be diligent in ensuring progress.
- e. ***Articulate a clear and compelling vision that speaks to shared values and hopes for the future in order to build buy-in and bring people on board.*** Creating a shared vision together is a powerful way to build relationships and a platform for working together. The process of creating

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<sup>3</sup> The case studies were prepared by the NPS Conservation Study Institute in partnership with the six national parks and the Quebec-Labrador Foundation/Atlantic Center for the Environment.

<sup>4</sup> For more on collaborative leadership, see the reading list included in this report, especially Tuxill, et al, *Stronger Together: A Manual on the Principles and Practices of Civic Engagement*, page 31' [www.nps.gov/csi/pdf/CE%20Manual.pdf](http://www.nps.gov/csi/pdf/CE%20Manual.pdf).



the vision requires good listening skills; outside facilitation can often be helpful in this process.

## 2. Build NPS team capacity for engagement and collaboration

A park often relies upon a team for ongoing civic engagement or a collaborative initiative. The following practices can help the superintendent and the team to be effective in building successful relationships.

- a. ***Assemble a team that “works.”*** Having the right people and team configuration is important. Enlist individuals who have “people skills” and understand the process of collaboration; consider having diverse perspectives and multi-disciplinary representation. Provide training or team-building as appropriate. Monitor the situation and adjust the team if necessary.<sup>5</sup>
- b. ***Understand that building relationships is a process and an art that takes time, energy, and resources.*** Commit the resources, stick with the process, and be patient.
- c. ***Promise only what you can deliver and be clear with partners regarding constraints and challenges.*** This requires understanding your scope of authority and managing partner expectations (see 1.a and 1.b above). Anticipate roadblocks and plan appropriately.
- d. ***Remember that it’s not all about “you” or “us.”*** Successful collaboration and engagement addresses the needs and interests of others as well as the NPS, and provides mutual benefits. Guard against a park-centric approach when working with communities and partners.

## 3. Prepare in advance before launching an engagement process

Investing the time in due diligence to learn the “lay of the land” prior to engaging the public or beginning a collaborative initiative will help to ensure success.

- a. ***Gather the necessary information to understand the background, issues, and history of relationships that have shaped the current situation.*** This understanding can minimize surprises, and can allow the team to get off on the right foot and also help to address or acknowledge past difficulties. (See also 1.a about understanding your authorities.)
- b. ***Look for potential partners and collaborative opportunities with mutual benefit.*** Understanding the mission and motivation of potential partners, as well as the needs and interests of organizations and local communities, helps in identifying common values and recognizing opportunities for partnering and collaboration. (See also 2.c and 2.d.)
- c. ***Recognize your own and others’ strengths, characteristics, and weaknesses.*** Any good collaborative relationship capitalizes on what each partner has to offer. Understanding this information up front can help in identifying and acting upon the most promising collaborative relationships.
- d. ***Seek advice and/or support from others who have dealt with similar issues or situations.*** Getting advice early on can provide insights or offer alternative approaches to consider.

## 4. Build and maintain relationships

The ongoing process of building and cultivating effective relationships is at the core of successful collaboration and engagement and involves the ongoing application of certain practices.

- a. ***Commit to and invest the necessary time and resources to engage/collaborate successfully.*** As a leader, make clear that building relationships with adjacent communities and the public is a priority for the park and provide the resources to achieve mutual goals. (See also 1.c.)
- b. ***Be patient and allow the relationship-building process to develop; manage expectations properly throughout the process.*** Allow time to process what you hear and see and be aware of blind spots. Don’t react too quickly or jump to conclusions. Be clear, candid, and consistent about what you can deliver and what you can’t, as this is important to building trust (see also 1.a, 1.b,

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<sup>5</sup> For more, see Peter M. Senge, et al, *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook* in the reading list .

and 2.c). Look for shared values and identify common ground as early as possible and reinforce these (see also 2.d). Seek to understand and recognize the different perspectives, histories, and values of others, and constantly look for opportunities to engage positively. Be a good neighbor; stay aware of what's happening in the community and find ways to show support for community concerns while working to meet the park's objectives. Get together with people – meet face to face in the community and not just during business hours (see also 5.c and 5.d below).

- c. ***Recognize that engagement is a two-way street; keep communication open to all parties and engage people at all organizational levels.*** Model the communication (vocabulary and tone) that will lead to civil dialogue. Listen well, and find ways to demonstrate that you are listening. Keep park staff, others within the NPS, partners, and the community up to date on progress.
- d. ***Work together to leverage each others' strengths and navigate the weaknesses.*** Recognize the value that each partner brings to the joint effort and maximize each others' strengths to more efficiently attain your mutual goals. Be honest about constraints and challenges and work to navigate these together. Steer clear of unilateral action; consider letting partners take the lead.

## **5. Sustain the effort**

The practices described above all contribute to maintaining relationships. There are also additional practices that can help to sustain a collaborative initiative over time.

- a. ***Create momentum in the short term by focusing on achievable first steps.*** This builds confidence in what you can accomplish together, contributes to trust, and provides an opportunity to celebrate successes – all of which positively reinforce the relationships. In moving forward, build on what has been done.
- b. ***Periodically evaluate the effort and modify as necessary.*** Revisiting the vision and goals over time can help to stay focused and on track with what you're trying to achieve. Over time, such reflection allows you to fine-tune the effort to respond to new opportunities or to changes – external or internal – in the situation. This process of reflection and adaptation can be done internally within your team as well as jointly with partners, and is especially important with initiatives that are complex, long-term, or ongoing.
- c. ***Never forget the fun.*** Finding (or making) opportunities to have fun is important to maintaining spirits and momentum. Having fun together strengthens relationships.
- d. ***Celebrate and promote successes together.*** Celebration can take many forms – an official public event, a press release, a social get-together. Recognize all partners equally, regardless of the roles played, as a minor player today may play a key role in the future.
- e. ***Anticipate and plan for transitions.*** Staff come and go and organizational priorities can shift. Planning for such transitions or shifts (e.g., keeping partners, community leaders, and key staff apprised of pending changes; conducting exit interviews with outgoing leaders and staff; briefing partners and/or incoming leaders and staff) can minimize the impact on relationships and provide important continuity to a collaborative effort.

## CASE STUDY ABSTRACTS

### **African Burial Ground National Monument (New York City)**

In 2003, at the request of the General Services Administration (GSA), a team from the NPS Northeast Region assumed responsibility for managing the public involvement process for determining the management, memorialization, and interpretation of the African Burial Ground, then a national historic landmark in lower Manhattan. Prior to this there had been ten years of complicated and heated debate surrounding GSA's handling of the situation. Over a year's time, the NPS team was able to conduct a careful public process of engagement, listening, and reaching out – especially to the African descendant community, who felt their concerns had been left out in the previous ten years. By 2005 the NPS had completed a draft management plan and finalized selection of an outdoor memorial design. The following year, the African Burial Ground was designated a national monument and the NPS assumed management. Needing to develop a general management plan (GMP) for the monument, the NPS began another round of civic engagement, building on the learning and the relationships from the year-long involvement process carried out for GSA. Rebuilding trust takes time, but there are signs that this is happening. The volunteer corps is more willing to be out in front in the community. At a recent GMP workshop, a community member who had volunteered pre-monument but not since (many African Americans did not want federal management of the site) indicated that she would consider returning as a volunteer. The outdoor memorial is now in place and draws visitors, including school groups.

### **Big Cypress National Preserve (Florida)**

In settling a lawsuit over the use of preserve lands by off-road vehicles (ORVs), Big Cypress National Preserve was required to develop and implement a management plan for ORVs with the assistance of an advisory committee of concerned citizens, in accordance with the requirements of the 1972 Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). The preserve sought individuals for the committee who were respected by and could represent their stakeholder communities (ORV users/sportsmen, environmental community, landowners, academia, state government, and Tribal communities) and could also work collaboratively to help implement the plan. Establishing a FACA committee is time-consuming, but the preserve was successful in creating a committee that is able to work together productively and model a civil and respectful public dialogue process. As a result, the committee and preserve are moving forward in implementing the management plan, designating ORV trails and trailheads as well as closing more sensitive areas to ORV use. Advisory committee meetings are open to the public; although the comment periods can still be contentious, some stakeholders outside of the committee have made attempts to improve relationships. The park sought support and advice from others in the NPS regarding the FACA process, including the Washington Policy Office, the Southeast Region's solicitor, and another park that had used a FACA committee.

## **Lowell National Historical Park (Massachusetts)**

Lowell National Historical Park has built an integrated suite of youth programs that offer opportunities for elementary through college-age youth to learn about Lowell's cultural heritage and resources and develop increasingly meaningful connections with the park. The park was established as a partnership with local and state governments and the private sector, and is physically integrated into the heart of the city of Lowell. Because of this the park has ready access to students, especially of high school and college ages. With a solid foundation of K-12 programs, the park began developing a "pyramid" of opportunities for older youth that enable the park to maintain relationships over time and offer opportunities for seasonal employment. Through these seasonal work programs, the park has increased the diversity of its seasonal workforce, and has recently begun a pilot to create an avenue for youth to consider full-time careers in the NPS. The park has many partners in its youth programs and begins planning for programs three to five years out to ensure diverse project funding.

## **Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park (Vermont)**

The regional landscape around Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park is facing economic and developmental pressures that could change the quintessential character of this rural working landscape. The park's wildlife values and rural setting along with its message of conservation stewardship are all at risk, which led the park to commit to a proactive role in an initiative to engage the community in dialogue over the course of two years. The park and its partners began conversations around what community residents valued about where they lived and what they hoped to pass on to the next generation. Through community meetings and a publication, the dialogue was expanded to include consideration of ways to increase the sustainability of the area. The initiative prompted teachers to create their own student projects, farmers to organize a farmers market and a discussion group, and the local trails community to form an organization to promote trails development and use. Several partners remain active in working to acquire conservation easements on key land parcels. Although the ultimate success in maintaining the integrity of this landscape will rest with the networks established through this initiative, the park continues to cultivate its relationships with the community.

## **Saguaro National Park (Arizona)**

The population of Tucson, adjacent to Saguaro National Park, is 40 percent Hispanic yet this community sector rarely visits or participates in park programs. The park embarked on a strategy to reach out to Hispanics and to increase the relevancy of the park to this community. The strategy includes research into the early Hispanic history of the parklands and a variety of engagement efforts targeted at reaching Hispanics, especially youth. The park has focused its youth programs in a school district that serves primarily Hispanics. In 2009 it hired six Teacher-Ranger-Teachers who were Hispanic and/or spoke Hispanic, which not only takes the park into the schools but also changes the "face" of the park during the summer. The park is also updating its exhibits using results from the research, and plans to expand picnicking opportunities for large groups. Transportation to the park remains a hurdle. Changing cultural habits is long-term work but the park is beginning to see results.

## **Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (California)**

Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area was established in 1978 with a model of collaborative governance involving federal, state, and local government and the private sector. The park encompasses 153,000 acres woven into the city of Los Angeles, the largest urban park in the national park system. There are a variety of land uses and landownerships, and 300,000 people live within the park boundary. A strong foundation for co-managing the park has been established through sound planning, management documents that apply to all four key managing partners, and various agreements at the state and local levels and with nonprofit organizations. But the success of Santa Monica rests upon the steady, active dialogue of civic engagement that crosses park boundaries and has led to a collaborative maturity at all levels of the park. Today the park is visited annually by 35 million people, most of whom come from the surrounding metropolitan areas, and education programs provided each year by the park and its partners reach 70,000 inner-city youth. A primary concern in doing collaboration is that the traditional perspective of working more unilaterally still exists within the NPS, which can constrain efforts to build collaborative relationships.



# **NPF Leadership Grant Program Case Study<sup>6</sup>**

## **BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN A POLARIZED ENVIRONMENT THROUGH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**

**Prepared by the NPS Conservation Study Institute  
in partnership with  
African Burial Ground National Monument and  
QLF/Atlantic Center for the Environment**

### **1. Brief Summary of the Challenge or Opportunity Addressed**

In 2003 the NPS was asked to design and implement a public involvement strategy to address long-standing issues related to management and memorialization of the African Burial Ground in New York City, which was rediscovered in 1991 during construction of a new federal office building. After the 2006 designation of the site as a national monument, the NPS applied its learning to engagement during general management planning.

### **2. The Leadership Challenge(s) and/or Opportunities**

#### **a. Long-term goal/vision for the situation**

To create a space through civic engagement where all stakeholders are encouraged to be involved and participate in planning activities and in the long-term management of the park.

#### **b. The setting**

African Burial Ground National Monument is located in New York City and commemorates the 6.6-acre burial site of an estimated 15,000 free and enslaved Africans between 1690 and 1790. At that time the site was outside the city, but today is in lower Manhattan in the vicinity of City Hall Park. As the city grew, the site was filled to accommodate construction of buildings; with the burial ground overlain – and preserved – by 20 feet of fill, the memory of its existence dimmed.

#### **c. Pertinent park history**

In 1987, the General Services Administration (GSA) initiated planning for a new federal office building at 290 Broadway. In site studies conducted to comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, the African Burial Ground came to light and in 1989 GSA signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the federal Advisory Council on Historic Preservation that laid out a research design to comply with federal preservation law. Archeological site testing in 2001 uncovered skeletal remains, which led to a long, complicated, and heated public process that revolved around issues of the handling of the remains and how to manage and memorialize the African Burial Ground. In late 1991 the MOA was amended, and the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission was added as a signatory. As 1992 proceeded, GSA continued to remove remains.

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<sup>6</sup> This case study is based on a presentation to the New Superintendent Academy on July 15, 2009, as part of webinar IV of the Partnerships and Civic Engagement Track, which was convened by NPS Learning and Development in partnership with the NPS Conservation Study Institute and the NPS Office of Partnerships and Philanthropic Stewardship.

Community outcry led to a Congressional field hearing, then a halt in construction and creation of the Federal Steering Committee for the African Burial Ground. In 1993, this committee produced a report that recommended seven guiding principles for the site and addressed the key concern of reintering the excavated remains. Also that year, the site received national historic landmark designation; a Howard University team began archeological, historical, and physical anthropological research; and planning began for future management and interpretation of the site. Ten years of contentious debate over what to do with the site ensued between the federal government and the African descendant community.

GSA approached the NPS late in 2002 and requested assistance in completing their requirements at the burial ground site, and in 2003 the two signed a three-year interagency agreement (renewable for an additional three years) for the NPS to provide technical assistance related to “planning, design, programming, and operations” of the interpretive facilities and to designing and implementing a public involvement process related to future management of the site. Also in 2003, the excavated remains were reinterred with honor at the site, and in 2006 the African Burial Ground was designated a national monument. GSA completed construction of the federal office building in 1995 on a portion of the site.

#### **d. Key stakeholders and partners**

Coming into a situation characterized by more than ten years of heated debate, the NPS team had to engage with numerous stakeholders:

- GSA, partner in the interagency agreement and the lead federal agency;
- The general public, especially the local African descendant community (essentially all local people of African descent – e.g. African Americans, Caribbean Americans, African immigrants), either as individuals or as members of local organizations;
- The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture (part of the New York Public Library), which had worked with GSA on reinterment ceremonies and managed the on-site Office of Public Education and Interpretation set up by GSA in 1993;
- Organizations involved in the public process following the Burial Ground’s rediscovery, including the Professional Archeologists of New York City and the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission;
- Other smaller groups formed in response to the rediscovery, including the Committee of the Descendants of the Ancestral Afrikan Burial Ground.

The overwhelming perspective of the local African descendant community and many others was that GSA mishandled the entire situation, beginning with excavation of the remains and continuing through the long public process that followed, especially the public outreach associated with that process. This sector also felt it was critical that those involved with the site be scholars of African descent. The Professional Archeologists of NYC wanted to ensure that the archeological work and research was conducted in a professional manner.

#### **e. Special considerations**

The NPS had one year in which to conduct the public outreach process carried out under the agreement with GSA.

#### **f. Potential roadblocks that contributed to the challenging nature of the situation**

- Because the project had already been delayed, GSA was feeling pressure to get the job done. The NPS team could not pursue all aspects of its proposed strategy (e.g., conduct outreach outside of New York City) due to the constraints of GSA’s schedule and requirements.
- A continuing distrust of the federal government stemming in large part from the protracted GSA process affected the community’s response to the NPS outreach (e.g., a common comment was “Why are you asking us these questions – you already know what you’re going to do...”).
- Staff capacity is a constraining factor in the current general management planning engagement.

### 3. The Strategy Applied and the Outcome

#### a. The approach used and actions taken and why

There are two phases to the NPS's civic engagement at the African Burial Ground, prior to designation as a national monument when the NPS was bound by the agreement with GSA and after designation.

**Civic engagement under the agreement with GSA.** The first steps for the NPS Northeast Region were to *assemble a team* – a project manager, representatives from planning and interpretation, the associate regional director for cultural and natural resources, an archeologist and a representative from the NPS Washington, D.C., Office – and *articulate clear goals* for the work specified in the agreement. The team then *conducted research of the recent history*, taking the time to understand what had taken place, and carefully *crafted a civic engagement strategy*, knowing they were entering an arena filled with controversy and disagreement. The process was stalled and in disarray; the parties were not talking to one another, and everyone wanted the process to be over.

To get all the issues on the table prior to the public meetings, the team *held listening sessions with key stakeholders*, including the Committee of the Descendants, members of the 150-strong African American volunteer corps (who assisted in the on-site Office of Public Education and Interpretation that the GSA had been operating for 13 years), site employees, the New York Landmarks Commission, and others. At these sessions the NPS introduced its role and planning strategies, listened to concerns, and identified other interested parties to engage. Participants noted the NPS's involvement in the early 1990s and asked why the NPS was involved again. Some viewed this as another delay tactic. There was overwhelming public sentiment that communication from GSA was lacking and the African American community felt it had been left out of the process. The team revised its strategy to reflect what it learned in the listening sessions and to address the public's concern over how they had been treated.

Following the listening sessions, the NPS *organized a series of public meetings*, working with key partners to plan the sessions and identify interested members of the public. These sessions included two meetings to explore the significance and meanings of the African Burial Ground; five Memorial Forums where the public reviewed and commented on the five finalist designs for the memorial; two Visitor Experience Workshops to solicit advice from those already interpreting the site; and a Research Roundtable, at which scholars discussed historical themes and how best to represent the stories associated with the Burial Ground.

The team also recognized that to truly engage the community and build relationships they had to *get outside of the NPS agenda*. Team members attended community and cultural events that were organized by people they needed to engage to show the NPS's desire to move beyond the contentiousness. They even attended the services of people who passed away during these years as a way to acknowledge their contributions to the Burial Ground.

**Civic engagement after the 2006 designation of AFBG.** Under the terms of the agreement, GSA funded operations through 2009 fiscal year (including construction of the memorial and the visitor center), but once the monument was designated the NPS was in charge of implementing management and operations of the new monument and the ongoing civic engagement. Following dedication of the monument in 2007, the NPS began the groundwork for general management planning. Building on what was learned in the earlier public involvement work conducted for GSA, the NPS put together a team that included an experienced civic engagement consultant to help devise an engagement strategy for the general management plan (GMP), taking the necessary time to plan the strategy in order to get off on the right foot with the public. The team looked at how to structure the process so that people would participate, realizing that some of the issues likely to arise in the GMP would appear duplicative of what went on in the GSA process. The team also thought creatively about ways to communicate with the public, including posting information and updates in communities and identifying people who could act as “ambassadors” to the public.



Prior to the public scoping, the park engaged a key partner, the Schomburg Center, in assisting with the civic engagement and the visitor experience component of the GMP; met with or held phone discussions with key stakeholders; and held a one-day training on civic engagement for NPS staff and site volunteers. The first public scoping activities took the form of open houses held in several places around the city in June 2009. The public was encouraged to offer comments and advice through a variety of means, including recording videos at the open houses and submitting written comments by mail, fax, and on line.

**b. The outcome(s) and any additional or ongoing follow-up**

Stepping into a situation of high mistrust of the federal government, the NPS team had huge barriers to overcome in its efforts to engage the community. Many in the African American community wanted no building at all on what they considered sacred ground and felt that African American organizations should be managing the site. Still, despite these and other constraints, over the year of engagement activities the NPS made inroads and gained enough trust that many people were comfortable with the NPS operating the site. By 2005 the team had completed a draft management plan for the site and finalized the selection of an outdoor memorial. Following the 2009 volunteer training in civic engagement, the volunteers offered to staff the open houses – a setting much different from the more protected environment of the memorial. In so doing they were putting themselves out front more in the community. There is some lingering resentment, but the civic engagement work is ongoing. Some people are in a “wait and see” mode, monitoring what is happening to make sure the NPS is living up to what was promised. One recent example shows a possible shift in this perspective. Invitations to the volunteer training session were extended to people who had volunteered in earlier, pre-monument years. One woman who attended had volunteered only in that earlier period and not at all since designation. When asked how she felt the NPS was doing, she responded that she had not wanted the NPS to manage the site so had stopped as a volunteer, but indicated that she now would be open to participating.

**c. Other options considered**

- Based on the background research done in 2003, the NPS team had wanted to conduct public meetings outside of New York City because of national and international interest in the African Burial Ground. The team also had felt that one year’s time was insufficient to rebuild public relations, and had requested more time. GSA constraints prevented these steps.
- The park would like to make better use of the media (to address feedback from staff and stakeholders that the monument is not visible), but staff capacity, especially in a new park, is an issue. The park has established a Twitter account, so is making progress.)

## **4. What Was Learned**

**a. What worked well?**

- *Having a well-rounded, committed team.*
- *Involving a facilitator.* You cannot represent the NPS and also be the facilitator, especially in a contentious situation. Also, having a facilitator involved in planning the civic engagement strategy for the GMP process helped the team to be more creative and think outside the box.
- *Conducting groundwork prior to launching the civic engagement strategy.* Taking the time to understand the history and using this knowledge in crafting the strategy, and identifying and reaching out early to key stakeholders in the listening sessions paid off in the initial work for GSA; the park did the same careful groundwork prior to launching the GMP outreach.
- *Stepping outside of park boundaries.* Making the extra effort to attend community events not directly related to the Burial Ground signaled a desire to change community relationships. This was uncomfortable at times but a necessary part of building trust.
- *Providing training for staff and volunteers.* The training helped staff and volunteers better understand the GMP process and what the NPS goals and values were.

**b. What didn't?**

- The inflexibility of the GSA schedule constrained the engagement and the relationship building that could be done during the pre-designation period.
- The NPS team tried to facilitate several of the early engagement activities under the agreement with GSA but then hired an outside facilitator to handle the rest of the meetings.

**c. What were the key factors that influenced the outcome?**

- *The commitment of the team.* When it was clear that the GSA would not allow additional time or changes to the civic engagement strategy, the NPS team committed to doing the best they could within the time they had, and they gave their all.
- *GSA's commitment to monument designation.* GSA advocated strongly for designation, which resolved the issue of management.
- *The groundwork and careful planning of the civic engagement strategy.*
- *Making an effort to involve those who were disengaged.* This step has taken place primarily as part of the GMP engagement strategy, so the full impact is not yet known, but it is an important, both in learning why people became/remained disengaged and in demonstrating a change in communication.
- *Time.* Time was a negative factor in the instance of the constraints imposed by GSA. In another sense, time is a necessary factor in building relationships. "You don't build trust overnight – you have to continually work at it."
- *Continuity of NPS leadership.* Having the project leader selected as the first superintendent of the new monument retained continuity in the relationship building, which is especially important given the history of federal-public interaction around the African Burial Ground.

**d. What would you do differently if you could replay your leadership approach?**

There were several instances when a lack of understanding by local community members impacted their ability to effectively participate in the decision-making process; both of the following could have been addressed in a workshop:

- Many African Americans favored a museum on site, which was outside the authority of what could be considered in the draft management plan.
- Many in the community were unaware that comments on the draft management plan needed to be in writing to be considered, and were inexperienced in participating in a planning process.

**e. What did you learn about best leadership practices?**

- Conduct the necessary groundwork before launching a project.
- Recognize that engagement is a two-way street and an ongoing process.
- Commit to the time and effort required.
- Promise only what you can deliver.
- Don't be afraid to mix it up and step outside of park boundaries.
- Always be honest.
- Separate your individual self from your professional self.
- Always try to find areas of agreement amidst disagreement

**f. What are the leadership skills and competencies involved?**

Good communication skills, an awareness of your audience(s), vision, strategic thinking, the ability to reflect on what you've learned and to adapt based on that learning, ability to problem solve and think on your feet, ability to collaborate, flexibility.

**g. What role did partners or stakeholders play, and were there any shifts in their perspectives or their relationships with the park?**

Several critical stakeholders provided entrée for the NPS into the various communities, including the African descendant community in New York and the scientific community that had been involved in researching the site. These individuals continued to be committed to the African Burial Ground and

decided that they would work with NPS to ensure that the African Burial Ground is appropriately commemorated and managed.

**h. What additional observations would you offer?**

Remember that it's not just about us and the NPS requirements. To build trust and engagement, work collaboratively and especially listen.

**5. Additional References and Resources**

To learn more about the African Burial Ground itself and the events surrounding its discovery and commemoration, see [www.africanburialground.gov](http://www.africanburialground.gov) and [www.nps.gov/afbg](http://www.nps.gov/afbg).

For more information on leadership, partnerships, and civic engagement, go to the Conservation Study Institute's website at [www.nps.gov/csi](http://www.nps.gov/csi).

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# NPF Leadership Grant Program Case Study<sup>7</sup>

## DEVELOPING PARTNERSHIPS AT BIG CYPRESS NATIONAL PRESERVE THROUGH THE FACA COMMITTEE PROCESS

Prepared by the NPS Conservation Study Institute  
in partnership with  
Big Cypress National Preserve and  
QLF/Atlantic Center for the Environment

### 1. Brief Summary of the Challenge or Opportunity

Based on the settlement of a 1995 lawsuit, Big Cypress National Preserve developed an off-road vehicle (ORV) management plan that called for creation of a federal advisory committee to help implement the plan. In getting the advisory committee up and running, the park was able to build positive stakeholder relationships and achieve a smoothly functioning committee, thus turning around what had been a highly contentious situation.

### 2. The Leadership Challenge(s) and/or Opportunities

#### a. Long-term goal/vision for the situation

Create an effective federal advisory committee to assist the NPS in implementing the ORV management plan

#### b. The setting

Big Cypress National Preserve protects the watershed for South Florida's threatened ecosystem and provides habitat for endangered species, including the Florida panther. The 729,000-acre preserve was established in 1974, incorporating 24,000 acres that had been targeted for a new airport to serve Miami. The preserve's establishment had widespread local support from the environmental community as well as ORV users and sportsmen, as the area had long been used for hunting and contains 200 privately owned hunting camps. (National preserves allow uses, such as oil and gas development and off-road vehicle use, that are not usually found in other national park system designations.) Access to the park's backcountry has always been difficult because of the swampy terrain. A handful of park roads provide for "front country" camping and hiking access, and only a few state highways on the edges of the park allow access to the average vehicle. Interstate 5 bisects the park and provides hiking access only. U.S. Highway 41 bisects the southern portion of the park and other all weather roads depart from that highway. Most visitors to the park, including those using the hunting camps within the boundary, use swamp buggies – large vehicles with big tires that "trundle" slowly through the woods (swamp buggies were created to go through this terrain).

#### c. Pertinent park history

The park's 1991 GMP recognized that a plan was needed to manage ORV use within the park. In 1994 the Florida Biodiversity Project and three other environmental groups filed a lawsuit against the NPS and other federal agencies alleging that allowing dispersed ORV use was causing unacceptable

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<sup>7</sup> This case study is based on a presentation to the New Superintendent Academy on May 13, 2009, as part of webinar III of the Partnerships and Civic Engagement Track, which was convened by NPS Learning and Development in partnership with the NPS Conservation Study Institute and the NPS Office of Partnerships and Philanthropic Stewardship.

natural resource impacts. In 1995, the NPS agreed to a settlement that directed them to prepare an ORV management plan and supplemental environmental impact statement in consultation with the EPA and other appropriate state and federal agencies. This plan, finalized in 2000, has an overall goal to protect resources by eliminating dispersed ORV use and developing a system of designated primary and secondary trails for ORVs. The plan also includes a permit system, vehicle specifications and rules governing use, designated access points, identification of areas closed to ORVs, and requirements for monitoring and adaptive management. In addition, the plan required the NPS to “establish an advisory committee of concerned citizens to examine issues and make recommendations regarding the management of ORVs in the preserve” in accordance with the legal requirements of the 1972 Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). A second lawsuit was filed in 2001, this time by sportsmen and ORV users, alleging that the NPS did not follow proper NEPA procedures; the court ruled in the NPS’s favor.

**d. Key stakeholders and partners**

Historically, the public has fallen into several camps:

- those who feel that the NPS has taken away traditional uses of the land
- those who feel that ORV use has caused extreme degradation to the resources
- those who have an opinion, often based on misunderstanding (e.g., equating ORVs with dirt bikes), but who aren’t necessarily knowledgeable about the issues

Because of the polarization associated with the two lawsuits, the lines were drawn primarily between environmental groups and ORV users/sportsmen. The Big Cypress Advisory Committee includes these interests as well as landowners, academia, state government, and Tribal communities.

**e. Special considerations**

The NPS had committed to establishing a citizen advisory committee as part of the ORV management plan, so it was necessary to follow the requirements of FACA.

**f. Potential roadblocks that contributed to the challenging nature of the situation**

- With the contentious nature of the situation, it was critical to have people on the committee who could work productively with those representing other sectors and focus on the task at hand.
- The process for creating a FACA committee is lengthy and multi-layered (e.g., appointments need both agency and White House approval), and typically takes 12 to 18 months to complete. This can present a barrier of sorts that requires a commitment of time and energy to overcome.
- The later addition of two more committee members representing environmental perspectives had the potential to affect the productive working dynamic established by the committee. Careful attention to selection and open discussion within the committee maintained the positive dynamic.

### **3. The Strategy Applied and the Outcome**

**a. The approach used and actions taken and why**

Within the extremely contentious context of ORV use and management, the federal advisory committee approach provided a structured, objective process for engaging stakeholders and sorting through the issues of implementation of the plan. The success of this approach, however, depended on having the right people on the committee, building effective relationships, and providing a meeting setting and tone that encouraged civil dialogue and allowed committee members to work productively to find agreement on the issues.

When a federal agency creates an advisory committee with citizens who are nonfederal employees, FACA requires a charter to be filed with the agency that specifies such things as the objectives and scope of activity, designation procedures and guidelines, and the committee’s duties and duration. The Big Cypress charter was filed in 2006. When a new superintendent arrived in 2005, the committee was not yet in place, although there had been several aborted attempts to get it going. The new superintendent gave considerable effort and time to dealing with the contentiousness and finding the right people for the committee. She sought people who were well respected and could put their personal feelings aside. She personally vetted the 16 original committee members to represent the

community sectors identified in the committee's charter (see 2d above), using the charter's criteria: (1) the ability to collaborate, (2) the ability to understand NPS management and policy (especially related to ORVs), (3) connection with the preserve, and (4) the ability to represent one or more of the community sectors.

The process of identifying prospective committee members, submitting their names (done all at the same time), and shepherding the names through the approval process took 18 months. The preserve then did several things that were important to getting the committee off on the right footing:

- hired an outside facilitator who has been involved from the very beginning and has provided guidance on how to function as a group;
- consulted with another park that had recently established a FACA committee for general informational purposes;
- organized two day-long training sessions (with site visits) for committee members prior to their first meeting to foster a common understanding of the history, the committee process, and the issues;
- used the first two committee meetings to get the appropriate protocols in place – i.e., defined the parameters and scope of activity for the committee, and defined ground rules for how committee members would govern themselves.

FACA also specifies how the committee will operate including: committee meetings are open to the public and the public may speak, minutes are available, a federal employee must attend, and the NPS must call the meeting and approve the agenda. The Big Cypress committee was approved in August 2007 and held its first meeting in November 2007. Implementation of the ORV management plan is a lengthy, multi-year process, and the committee will continue as long as its guidance is needed.

Park staff support has been important to a smoothly functioning committee. Having been through the “lawsuit wars” has made this a hard issue for the staff, but they have all done their part. It was also important to keep others in the agency briefed on what was happening, including the regional office, the Washington, D.C., office, and the NPS director. The regional policy office and solicitor have been especially helpful at various times in the FACA process.

**b. The outcome(s) and any additional or ongoing follow-up**

The careful selection of committee members paid off in terms of getting people on the committee who could work together in a positive and productive manner. The training provided to committee members eliminated potential barriers and helped the group to gel quickly. From the beginning they were able to work without the contentiousness that characterized the situation prior to the committee's existence. Because it took considerable time to complete the appointment process, once the group was constituted they were eager to get going. Instead of meeting two to four times a year as originally anticipated, they elected to meet six times annually and began tackling ORV management on a zone by zone basis, identifying primary and secondary trails. Both the more frequent meetings and working by zones allowed them to see progress. Interwoven throughout this process has been an agency emphasis on encouraging and facilitating development of trust and respect amongst the committee members. Past differences have been openly discussed and recognized. This has freed the committee to move beyond past differences and work together productively, and over time they have developed trust and a genuine respect for each others' values. The committee process has provided an open, public platform for issues relating to ORV use to be discussed – and, importantly, the committee provides a model of respectful, civil dialogue. Attendance by the public at committee meetings ranges from 10 to 35 people; the comment periods can still be quite contentious, so the committee's modeling of civil dialogue has not yet taken hold in the general public discussion. Overall, however, the committee process has helped to leverage the pressure that the NPS continues to receive into progress on implementing the ORV plan.

### c. Other options considered

Use of a citizen advisory committee was part of the ORV plan so the focus was on making this option work effectively rather than looking at other possible options.

## 4. What Was Learned

### a. What worked well?

- *Taking the time to find committee members who were respected by and could represent their user sector but put their feelings aside and work toward the greater public goal.* The superintendent asked each prospective committee member directly if he or she could put the history and emotion of this issue aside and move forward. She took the time to find people who were even-keeled, could respect the various perspectives, and understand the bigger picture. The fact that the members were representing perspectives and groups of people but not a specific organization lessened the attachment and attention to labels and groups. “If the committee members were too biased toward one perspective, they wouldn’t be able to garner the respect of the group.”
- *Providing thorough training and orientation to the issue, so that everyone on the committee received the same information in a consistent manner.*
- *Responding in a positive manner but making no promises when people expressed an interest in being on the committee.* The superintendent’s response to people who wanted to be on the committee but who were not the “short list” (e.g., “the committee members all have terms... thanks for your interest, there may be opportunities in the future... we’ll keep your resumé on file...”) enabled her to maintain positive community relationships.
- *Asking advice on how to proceed from another park that had used a FACA committee to resolve a heated issue.*
- *Organizing the committee’s work in a way that they could see progress fairly quickly.* The decision to designate primary and secondary trails zone by zone rather than the preserve as a whole helped to build a sense of accomplishment.

### b. What didn’t?

The initial committee member appointments were for 1, 2, and 3 years. Because of the time involved in the appointment process, some members were nearing the end of their terms before the committee got underway and those names had to be resubmitted. It would have been better to have the initial terms for 2, 3, or 4 years.

### c. What were the key factors that influenced the outcome?

- *The trainings for committee members prior to their first official meeting.* Everyone came to the table with previous factual information, misunderstandings, and misperceptions regarding ORVs. It was important that they understand the agency’s position on the ORV issue, and understand the correct facts. The trainings created a level playing field in terms of knowledge, and also allowed members to get to know one another and begin bonding as a group. This was especially helpful in integrating the academic members who brought important and helpful expertise to the table.
- *Having an outside facilitator.* The same person has been involved from the beginning, attending early planning discussions and one of the pre-meeting trainings. She has provided continuity to the process and a neutral, knowledgeable presence, and also guidance on how to function as a group. She herself has bonded with the committee and there is mutual trust and respect.
- *The commitment of the superintendent to establishing the committee and shepherding the committee process.* Getting the committee up and running was a major time commitment (40 percent of her time overall), but her personal attention provided continuity and follow-through to the FACA process.
- *The commitment of every committee member to the goal of helping the NPS implement the ORV management plan and to work in a civil manner.*
- *Having a good knowledge of FACA.* This helped in understanding the superintendent’s authority and where there was flexibility in FACA.

- *Seeking advice and support from others in the agency.* The Superintendent relied heavily on the Washington policy office for assistance in moving all of the paperwork through the member approval process. Maintaining close contact with the regional solicitor was essential in getting the committee up and running. The solicitor was well versed in FACA regulations and it was imperative that the process be done properly.

**d. What would you do differently if you could replay your leadership approach?**

- Provided more team building up front for preserve staff, which might have eased the transition from the polarization that surrounded the “lawsuit wars.”
- Budgeted at least 50 percent more time than originally estimated.

**e. What did you learn about best leadership practices?**

- Commit personally to the issue and solicit that same commitment from others.
- Invest the time and energy necessary to build good relationships and shepherd the process.
- Keep your eye on the vision and don’t get side-tracked.
- Maintain your perspective on thorny issues so you can help others keep theirs.
- Interface with people at all levels, and understand both your journey and others’ journeys so you can help them stay focused.
- Identify and reinforce common ground (while recognizing different perspectives, histories, and values).
- Stay positive, and be clear and transparent.
- Assemble a team that works.
- Keep people up to date on progress.

**f. What are the leadership skills and competencies involved?**

- Good communication skills.
- Personal commitment (of the time and energy to needed to build relationships).
- Interpersonal skills (caring about people and able to put yourself out there).
- Vision and the ability to clearly articulate it.
- Persistence and the ability to stay focused.
- Positive outlook.

**g. What role did partners or stakeholders play, and were there any shifts in their perspectives or their relationships with the park?**

Committee members have gone out of their way to build relationships and trust through scheduled backcountry outings and picnics, and everyone has contributed within the committee to success moving forward. The only shift in perspective has come from the sportsmen, who understand that politically, for the resource to be preserved, there has to be a trail system. “They truly understand the value of the system.” The environmental representatives have been able to work productively within the committee, but their perspectives on the issue of ORV use have not shifted. The non-committee stakeholders (i.e., general public) have similarly tried to improve relationships, but have been unable to do so to date. Perhaps over time, with the committee modeling a different approach, this will change.

**h. What additional observations would you offer?**

Try to have fun with the process, and enjoy celebrating the successes with your staff and with stakeholders!

## **5. Additional References and Resources**

For more information about the FACA process, see “National Park Service Guide to the Federal Advisory Committee Act (2005),” available at [www.nps.gov/policy/DOrders/facaguide.html](http://www.nps.gov/policy/DOrders/facaguide.html).

For more information on leadership, partnerships, and civic engagement, go to the Conservation Study Institute’s website at [www.nps.gov/csi](http://www.nps.gov/csi).

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# **NPF Leadership Grant Program Case Study**

## **ENGAGING YOUTH AT LOWELL NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK A PROGRESSIVE APPROACH**

**Prepared by the NPS Conservation Study Institute  
in partnership with  
Lowell National Historical Park and  
QLF/Atlantic Center for the Environment**

### **1. Brief Summary of the Opportunity or Challenge Addressed**

Over the past two decades, Lowell National Historical Park has developed an integrated suite of youth programs that offer youth in elementary school through college multiple opportunities to develop increasingly meaningful connections with the park and enable the park to maintain relevancy with and provide benefits to the community.

### **2. The Leadership Challenge(s) and/or Opportunities**

#### **a. Long-term goal/vision for the situation**

Through diverse programs that engage youth, the park educates and employs young people exposing them to the history and relevancy of the park and the city, resulting in a more diverse workforce and providing benefits to the youth and the community of Lowell.

#### **b. The setting**

Lowell National Historical Park is located in the heart of Lowell, Massachusetts (population over 105,000), amid the canals and historic mill buildings that helped Lowell play a significant role in America's rise to a worldwide industrial power. Spanning 141 acres spread throughout the city's downtown, the park's integrated relationship to the city has prompted the phrase "The Park is the City and the City is the Park." (An example of this is the location of Lowell High School directly across the street from the park headquarters.) The park was established in 1978 as a partnership between local, state, and federal governments and the private sector, with a mission to preserve the historic buildings and tell the story of Lowell's rise to industrial prominence and its immigrant labor force. Over the park's 30-year lifetime, the presence and partnerships of the park have transformed the urban dynamic and increased the local sense of pride, as nearly 200 old buildings and textile mills have been rehabilitated and put to new uses. Today, the park welcomes more than 700,000 visitors annually and provides approximately 4,000 programs.

#### **c. Pertinent park history**

The city of Lowell has long been populated by immigrants, dating back to the mill owners' recruitment of Irish laborers in the early 1800s to build the canals, mills, and boardinghouses. The Irish were followed by French Canadians, Greeks, Polish, Portuguese, and other immigrant groups until, by 1910, nearly three quarters of Lowell's residents were foreign born. The years that followed brought economic decline, which turned around only in the 1980s with the rebirth of the city, achieved through the partnerships associated with the park. In the latter half of the twentieth century, the city's population shifted again with the arrival of new immigrant groups, including those fleeing

war-torn homelands in Africa, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. Today the population of Lowell is 38 percent immigrant, of which the primary group is Southeast Asian.

**d. Key stakeholders and partners**

The key stakeholders in the park's youth programs are the youth themselves and the city of Lowell. The park works with many partners in its youth programs, with the two main longstanding partners being Community Teamwork, Inc. (CTI), and the University of Massachusetts Lowell (UMass Lowell). CTI's mission is to alleviate local poverty and help low-income people become self-sufficient through life skills and job training programs. UMass Lowell, through its Graduate School of Education, works in partnership with the park to cooperatively manage and operate the Tsongas Industrial History Center to provide curriculum-based education programs for students. Both CTI and UMass Lowell work with the park on multiple projects. Other partners include other nonprofit organizations (e.g., Appalachian Mountain Club, Lowell Parks and Conservation Trust, Student Conservation Association), civic groups (e.g., Greater Lowell Workforce Investment Board), other academic institutions (e.g., Middlesex Community College), other national parks and their youth programs, and more.

**e. Special considerations**

N/A

**f. Potential roadblocks that contribute to the challenging nature of the situation**

- The funding for the park's youth programs is primarily project-based. If project funds dry up, it could be difficult to find funding to sustain these programs.
- With a suite of programs aimed at multiple age and developmental levels, it is challenging to keep them integrated and keep staff and partners updated on what's happening with all the programs.
- There is an ongoing challenge to develop and manage programs that succeed in increasing the diversity of park visitors and the park workforce.
- The ever increasing complexity of cooperative agreements is a constraint, and the timing of the required paperwork often does not coincide with the awarding of funds or the beginning of seasonal and school year programming.
- Changing requirements within SCEP (Student Career Experience Program) make it difficult for parks to recruit and train candidates for these specialized opportunities.

### **3. The Strategy Applied and the Outcome**

**a. The approach used and actions taken and why**

The park's youth programs have developed and evolved over the past two decades. The initial goal was to reach out to youth and engage them in the park and its activities in a variety of ways. Early on, the park focused on improving and expanding its K-12 curriculum-based education programs by partnering with UMass Lowell to create the Tsongas Industrial History Center. The Center's programs employed new techniques in hands-on, experiential education to make learning fun. The success of the Center and its programs led the Lowell Public School system to commit funding for all students in grades 4, 6, 8, and 11 to attend at least one program at the Center each year. The sequence of programs offered in each grade was tiered to allow for progressive understanding of the park and its history and resources, and each program built upon the knowledge gained through previous visits. The program content was tied to curriculum standards for each grade as follows: 4th grade (immigration), 6th and 8th grades (water power, technology and science), and 11th grade (labor history). The Center has continued to evolve and expand its programs, now also offering after-school enrichment programs in science and engineering to assist students with careers and college placement, and week-long summer camp programs that expose students to park resources, staff, and programs.

Early on, the park recognized the potential for connecting with older youth due to its proximity to the high school, university, and local community college. As students progressed through their education

and visited the park multiple times, the park developed various programs to offer these older students job and leadership opportunities in the park, including:

- leadership and job training experiences for middle school and high school students as junior camp counselors at the Tsongas Center’s summer camp;
- community service and education for high school students as part of an after-school enrichment program focused on environmental sciences and sustainability, offered in partnership with the River Ambassador Program (RAP);
- summer employment with the Spindle City Corps (SCC) for students 15 to 21 years of age, aimed at addressing the park’s backlog maintenance projects while providing job skills and team building experiences; this program was funded through the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) and Public Lands Corps.

As these programs matured, park staff began to develop relationships with the youth as they returned to the park again and again to participate in the programs. Based on experiences with the curriculum-based programs, the park realized that it needed to maintain these relationships over time and keep the students engaged throughout the school year and beyond to achieve maximum success. To accomplish this, the park integrated the programs as a “pyramid” of opportunities for youth to connect with the park over their years of school. As they advanced through the school field trips offered through the Tsongas Industrial History Center, some students went on to participate in summer camps, RAP, or SCC. Working closely with the youth, the park identified “leaders” among them who were good candidates for summer employment as part of the park’s seasonal workforce. Realizing that the ethnic diversity of the local community was not reflected in its workforce, the park saw an opportunity to address this concern and also recruit and train the next generation of park stewards and employees, and began developing a “career track” to encourage students with leadership potential to consider the NPS as a career.

For the youth programs, this resulted in several new initiatives:

- The Spindle City Corps was expanded to a year-round program, providing job training, life skills, and leadership development opportunities for a select group of students. SCC also employs work leaders, aged 23 years or older, who began the program at a younger age and moved up through the system to a leadership position.
- The SCC summer employment program was also expanded to include job opportunities beyond maintenance projects:
  - A Youth Theatre Program employs up to 10 youth each summer in part-time jobs to serve as costumed interpreters in the park. Students learn the history of their character, are trained in presenting first and third person historical interpretation and are then outfitted in historical dress and rove the streets of Lowell to provide formal and informal interpretation for park visitors.
  - Artship Enterprise employs 4-5 youth in the summer to work with CTI staff in a mobile arts classroom. The “Artship Enterprise” bus sets up on site during the park’s children’s concert series in Boardinghouse Park and engages young visitors in hands-on activities and programs that make connections to park resources and history. The bus is also used during other special event activities in the park and the surrounding community.
  - A Historic Preservation Skills Training Program employs up to 5 youth from local schools interested in pursuing careers in various maintenance and trade skills such as carpentry, electrical, plumbing, painting, etc. Students are employed part-time during the school year and full-time in the summer. They are assigned a mentor from the park’s maintenance staff and work alongside that individual to learn new job skills and apply that knowledge to real-life situations and on-the-job training experiences.

- Working with the Student Conservation Association (SCA), the park offers several paid internships during the summer in the field of interpretation and visitor services for graduating high school seniors and/or freshman and sophomore college students. Based on their internship work experiences, these students are able to qualify the next year for regular summer seasonal employment within the NPS as GS-4 Park Rangers.
- The park created GS-1and -2 introductory level Park Aid positions within its summer seasonal employment program as a bridge between the Spindle City Corps program and seasonal GS-4 Park Ranger positions. The park actively recruits youth from the SCC as summer seasonal employees with the goal to develop their skills and work experience so they can qualify and compete for higher graded positions.
- The park works closely with youth employees to identify and nurture the most talented for recruitment into SCEP positions. Whenever possible, the park looks to fill permanent GS-5/7/9 Park Ranger and other positions with SCEP participants.

Over the years, the NPS has come to recognize the value of youth programs not only for their ability to connect with young people but also to provide an avenue for the development and recruitment of a more diversified and experienced workforce. As a result of new funding through the NPS Youth Partnership Program and the Youth Intake Program (YIP), the park has continued to expand its own youth programs to address these goals. In 2009, Lowell National Historical Park and Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area, together with other national parks in Massachusetts, developed the Mass Area Parks “Student Career Intake Program” (SCIP) to identify the most promising students from the youth programs throughout the state and train them for careers in the NPS. A pilot program was launched in 2009 through YIP funding to employ four students and provide them with training experiences during which they could explore career opportunities in various professional fields, such as administration, resource management, law enforcement, maintenance, interpretation, and education and visitor services. The students work full-time during the summer and part-time during the school year with support from their sponsor park. Parks can nominate candidates for the program and must commit to support their students during their tenure in the program. Each year, four more students will be selected and trained, with a goal of having up to 16 students participating in the program at any one time. Students will progress through the program on a schedule designed to meet their career goals and development potential, with the goal of transitioning into a SCEP appointment and eventually a full-time, permanent position.

In all of these programs, the park staff is mindful of the need to maintain the many park relationships – with their partners and with the community – as this maintains the vibrant park-community dynamic. In looking for opportunities to connect with youth, park staff seek to meet park goals as well as the goals of partner organizations and to bring benefits to the community as well as the park. Similarly, the park seeks to celebrate the culture and the rich ethnic mix that is the Lowell community today. An example of how these considerations intersect with youth programs involves the Angkor Dance Troupe, which was formed in 1986 by Cambodian refugees who settled in Lowell and who perform as a professional dance company at events throughout New England. The park has been working with the group for over twenty years as a way to celebrate local culture and connect with the Southeast Asians in the community. The Dance Troupe’s program for youth meets at the park’s Mogan Cultural Center, which helps introduce them to the park.

**b. The outcome(s) and any additional or ongoing follow-up**

Over the years, park programs have reached hundreds of youth. Through recruitment efforts and integrated programs, one of the best indicators of success may be the progression of students through the successive levels of the tiered approach, which involves repeat participation over multiple years. It is not uncommon for students in RAP or Spindle City Corps to participate over several seasons, or for an intern or GS-1 seasonal employee to have first visited the park as part of a school field trip or participated in a summer camp program or helped clean up trash along a canal. These programs can provide life-changing experiences for the students, not only in growing personally and gaining

leadership skills but also in understanding their city, knowing its stories, and gaining a sense of pride in their community. Because of the community service component of the youth programs, participants learn about stewardship and good citizenship, which ultimately benefits the greater Lowell community. Southeast Asian youth who have worked as interns, volunteers, or seasonal rangers have enabled park staff to learn firsthand about this important community, and they have also introduced their families to the park. The youth who participate are the best recruiters for the programs as they tell their friends.

With Spindle City Corps transitioning more and more young adults into the park's temporary workforce and with the GS-1 and -2 positions, the park's seasonal workforce has become more diverse. With youth candidates participating in SCIP and the expectation that they will progress to SCEP appointments, the park's permanent workforce will continue to become more diverse as well.

**c. Other options considered**

N/A

## **4. What Was Learned**

**a. What worked well?**

- *Providing many avenues for youth participation, whether in programming or in hiring.* Offering a wide diversity of experiences expands the opportunities to engage youth in the park and enhances their understanding of what a national park is and does.
- *Providing a meaningful experience for youth.* The definition of “meaningful” obviously changes as a youth matures, ranging from learning more about the history and stories of their community, to community service that helps reinforce to youth that they can make a difference, to leadership training and career opportunities, and to just having fun.
- *Working with a wide range of partners to enrich participant experience.* Partnerships are essential to the park's youth programs; different partners bring different strengths and youth opportunities to the table. For example, the success and growth of the park's Spindle City Corps is based on the direct involvement of park partner Community Teamwork, Inc. Without CTI's knowledge and connections within the local community, the program would not be as successful in reaching such a diverse pool of applicants. The Appalachian Mountain Club offers free use of camping equipment to all SCC participants once team leaders and program coordinators complete the AMC's Youth Opportunities Program Outdoor Leadership training. SCC participated in a trail stewardship work project in Vermont at Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park along with youths from the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps, Boston African American National Historic Site Trailblazers, the SCA, and AmeriCorps.
- *Staying open to what is going on with youth beyond the park.* By maintaining connections to schools through the education programs, the park opens itself to understanding how it is perceived through the eyes of youth. By employing youth, the park establishes deeper connections and begins to understand the issues and concerns that affect these young people in their everyday lives. Through special event programming, the park connects with youth and their families as they visit the park and participate in activities.
- *Being sensitive to the needs of older youth.* Many of the youth come from low income families and when they reach the age of 15 or 16 they are required to work and earn an income. To address this need, many of the park's youth programs are designed to provide a stipend, and most youth bring this income home. Though the park aims to incorporate parental involvement in its programs, to the older youth this is a job. So the desire to involve parents must be weighed against the youth's need to be independent.
- *Planning three to five years in advance in order to line up project funding.* This planning timeframe has allowed the park to successfully fund its programs.
- *Provide developmental learning and cultural competency training to staff to orient them to working with youth.*

- *Constantly evaluate and modify the programs with active involvement of all major partners.* This helps to ensure that problems are addressed before they get too large, and that programs stay focused on achieving their goals and run as effectively and efficiently as possible. It also enables adaptation as situations evolve or new opportunities arise.

**b. What didn't?**

The size of the SCC maintenance teams proved to be too large for effective utilization. The park has proposed to reduce the size of individual teams from 10-12 members down to a more manageable 6 members. It was determined that this allows for greater attention and mentoring to the individual students by the team leader and was a more practical size for moving the team around (6 youths plus a team leader fit into a 7-passenger van). The total number of students in the program will remain steady as the overall group will be divided into three working teams rather than two, and another work leader will be added.

**c. What were the key factors that influenced the outcome?**

- *Developing programs that benefit youth, the community, and the park.* This requires being mindful of the needs of the community and the organizations that you plan to partner with. Partners need to see value in the project and how collaboration will benefit their goals, as well as the park's. Clearly defined goals and task objectives that capitalize on the strengths of each partner will lead to successful development and implementation of the program, so that the program is recognized as theirs as much as it is the park's.
- *Creating the pyramid of integrated youth programs that enables the youth to grow with the park.* The suite of park programs creates multiple opportunities for youth to participate in stewardship, community service, and leadership projects. As they get older, they can spend more time and gain more in-depth experiences with the park. They not only learn and gain new skills, but also have increasing opportunities for employment with the park, which meets park needs as well.
- *Having the range of partners involved.* This has enabled the park to leverage its resources and take better advantage of opportunities that arise with a successful, evolving program – which has resulted in benefits to the youth of Lowell, the community, and the park.
- *Having staff that engage with the breadth of the programs.* Having staff who are familiar with the entirety of the programs helps to maintain continuity and connections between the programs and ensures their integration. Students who return to the park through multiple programs will encounter the same staff members and feel more at home in their surroundings and activities, encouraging greater experimentation and growth.
- *Inviting youth to help design, develop, and evaluate programs.* In addition to ensuring that the programs meet the interests and needs of youth, this step provides valuable experience that they can apply in their personal lives as well as in their careers.

**d. What would you do differently if you could replay your leadership approach?**

The program has been able to move forward and evolve relatively smoothly, thanks to an ongoing process of evaluation and modification that has enabled the staff to address any potential problems early on. However, having an advisory committee that meets regularly and involves members from all partners in the youth programs would be beneficial in maintaining continuity and dealing with issues as they arise.

**e. What did you learn about best leadership practices?**

- Commit to developing the program and making it work, then stick with it.
- Be patient to allow the program to grow and be diligent in ensuring progress.
- Keep communication open to all parties.
- Look for new partners with whom you can communicate and collaborate.
- Build on what has been done.
- Combine your strengths with your partners' strengths to more efficiently and effectively attain your mutual goals. One park or one organization does not know it all or need to do it all.

**f. What are the leadership skills and competencies involved?**

- Vision
- Ability to communicate
- External awareness (of community and partners)
- Strategic thinking
- Interpersonal skills
- Ability to collaborate and leverage partnerships
- Knowledge and understanding of developmental learning and maturation of youth

**g. What role did partners or stakeholders play, and were there any shifts in their perspectives or their relationships with the park?**

Partners are absolutely essential to the park's youth engagement efforts, and in some cases play the lead role. As the programs have matured, so have the relationships between the park and its partners, opening up opportunities for programs to expand and evolve. When the mission or goals of a partner change, the pursuit of what were mutual goals must be reviewed and adjusted as well.

**h. What additional observations would you offer?**

The specifics of this suite of youth programs represent an evolution in the setting of Lowell at a certain time. The general approach to identifying needs, seeking out partners, finding mutual goals that can be met through collaborative efforts, and building trusting relationships are inherent in this approach and are applicable in numerous other situations. Recognizing that this is an evolving process and not static allows partners to constantly question the status quo and challenge themselves to keep their programs relevant.

## **5. Additional References and Resources**

- 2006 Ford Interpreter Program Annual Report (see page 3).
- For more information on leadership, partnerships, and civic engagement, see the Conservation Study Institute's website at [www.nps.gov/csi](http://www.nps.gov/csi).

1/17/10



# **NPF Leadership Grant Program Case Study<sup>8</sup>**

## **THE PROSPER VALLEY INITIATIVE: CONSERVING LANDSCAPE INTEGRITY OUTSIDE PARK BOUNDARIES THROUGH COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND DIALOGUE**

**Prepared by the NPS Conservation Study Institute  
in partnership with  
Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park and  
QLF/Atlantic Center for the Environment**

### **1. Brief Summary of the Challenge or Opportunity**

The landscape surrounding Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park in Woodstock, Vermont, is facing economic and developmental pressures that could change forever the quintessential character and economy of this rural working landscape. The NPS initiated a collaborative, multi-pronged strategy to engage its neighbors in a dialogue to discover a common sense of place, discuss threats, and consider how to maintain the integrity and viability of the landscape.

### **2. The Leadership Challenge(s) and/or Opportunities**

#### **a. Long-term goal/vision for the situation**

To engage neighbors in protecting the integrity and viability of the regional working landscape in ways that also protect the values of the park and the conserved lands within that landscape.

#### **b. The setting**

Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park, established in 1992, encompasses approximately 700 acres on the northwest edge of Woodstock, Vermont, including a historic working forest on the slopes of Mount Tom and the birthplace of George Perkins Marsh, arguably the father of the conservation movement. Prosper Valley winds around Mount Tom and stretches to the northwest of the park for approximately seven miles along Gulf Stream and its tributaries – a rural, quintessentially Vermont landscape of farms, forests, scattered homes, and several small business establishments. It is a main gateway to the park and the village of Woodstock. Prosper Valley was settled more than 250 years ago, and there are families today who have lived there for generations. Because of this long history and the generational connections to the land, there is a strong sense of place in the valley and a sense of heritage. The valley is anchored at its southern end by the park and bisected about two miles north of the park by the Appalachian National Scenic Trail (AT).

The valley contains prime agricultural land and at one time supported 50 farms, but now only 6 remain. The valley is also an essential wildlife corridor for the region and the park. Moose and black

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<sup>8</sup> This case study is based on a presentation to the New Superintendent Academy on May 13, 2009, as part of webinar III of the Partnerships and Civic Engagement Track, which was convened by NPS Learning and Development in partnership with the NPS Conservation Study Institute and the NPS Office of Partnerships and Philanthropic Stewardship.



bear are not resident species in the park but do pass through via the valley corridor. Each new house, fence, or road, however, affects the movement of these large mammals and diminishes the valley's ecological function as a corridor for wildlife. The incremental, but steady, development along the valley's roads is slowly eroding this connectivity and the ecological integrity of the area. These challenges are happening outside the park boundary, where the park has no authority. Yet much is at risk for the park, too: its wildlife values, its esthetic setting within the regional landscape, and the subtle reinforcement that this setting provides to the park's story and message of conservation stewardship. Because of this, the park has a strong stake in the valley's challenges, which has led the park to commit to a proactive role in addressing the situation.

**c. Pertinent park history**

This area has little history with federal agencies, particularly around land use issues. The process of completing the corridor for the AT, however, left behind some residual anxiety about the federal government. Although the superintendent has put considerable effort into engaging the community of Woodstock, with good success, the Prosper Valley project began with few established relationships of good will in the valley itself.

**d. Key stakeholders and partners**

The main stakeholders are the residents of Prosper Valley. The primary partners in the initiative include The Conservation Fund (a national conservation organization that works with communities across the country to achieve a healthy environment and healthy local economies), the University of Vermont, PLACE (a community education program for Vermont towns), the AT, and schools and teachers within the Prosper Valley region. Numerous other organizations and individuals participated in aspects of the initiative, including the Woodstock Foundation, Vermont Land Trust, Shelburne Farms, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, the four towns that make up Prosper Valley, the regional planning commission, and numerous town bodies.

**e. Special considerations**

N/A

**f. Potential roadblocks that contribute to the challenging nature of the situation**

- The residual distrust of the federal government mentioned above.
- The economic pressure on family farms today, especially dairy operations.
- The incremental nature of the development that is occurring.
- The lack of NPS authority outside the park boundary, and of dedicated funding for such work.
- The challenges of maintaining momentum and focus in a project with many moving parts.

### **3. The Strategy Applied and the Outcome**

**a. The approach used and actions taken and why**

The park, The Conservation Fund (Fund), and key leaders in the Woodstock area jointly developed the strategy for the Prosper Valley initiative, which was carried out from 2005 through 2007. Their thinking was influenced in part by the park staff's experience with national heritage areas, which have little or no federal land and involve working collaboratively with communities to educate about and protect heritage resources. It was decided that the Fund and other partners should be the public face of the project work, not the park, although park staff were very involved in the planning and in all aspects of the initiative as it moved forward. The strategy developed by the park and its partners had multiple, interconnected elements aimed at (1) telling the shared heritage stories of the valley, (2) engaging with the people who lived in Prosper Valley, (3) connecting the AT and the park, and (4) building interest in larger conservation goals and eventually acquiring conservation easements on key parcels.

The first step was to *establish and build relationships* with the valley's residents. The Fund's lead staffer spent many hours talking at kitchen tables over coffee, getting to know people and building trust. The conversation did not initially focus on conservation but instead focused on what residents

valued about the valley and what was most important to them to pass on to the next generation. In this way the conversation focused on residents' strong sense of place and heritage and also encouraged them to think about the future. Using a similar approach, park sponsored the PLACE program, a joint effort of the University of Vermont and Shelburne Farms, which brought two graduate students to the valley to *gather personal oral histories* from valley residents. The results from the information-gathering of these two projects were presented and discussed at *community dialogue meetings* several times over the course of a summer to standing-room-only audiences.

The partners *produced a publication* in 2007 that captured the dialogue from the meetings and the many personal stories shared during the kitchen table conversations and the oral history project. This booklet, *Where Our Four Towns Meet: The Prosper Valley...A Place "Too Important to be Left to Chance,"* also discusses the trends that could change the landscape of Prosper Valley and poses questions aimed at encouraging valley residents to work together to sustain the fabric of the valley. Altogether, the booklet is a strong statement of what people value about the valley and their deep and treasured connections to the land and the landscape, and is a tool for further engagement.

Another important element of the initiative was to *involve the teachers* in the valley. The park brought together a team of seventh-grade teachers, many of whom had worked with the park previously, and encouraged them to develop a year's curriculum around Prosper Valley. Most of the teachers were either born in the valley or knew people living there; they are well networked in the community and offer intergenerational connections. The teachers took the initiative to heart and carried out their own related student projects, one of which was a calendar of the valley. The proceeds from selling the calendars paid for repairs to the Prosper Community House, a central gathering place in the valley and the location of the community meetings.

Other elements in the initial strategy are ongoing. A project to *develop a trail* connecting the park with the AT has engaged the very active trails community in the area. The Fund continues to work in the valley to *acquire conservation easements on key parcels* (e.g., the valley's remaining farms, lands adjacent to the AT corridor). Ultimately, the success of the initiative will rest with the residents and the long-term sustainability of the networking efforts to protect the valley's heritage.

**b. The outcome(s) and any additional or ongoing follow-up**

Tangible outcomes include the publication, *Where Our Four Towns Meet*, and the standing-room-only attendance at the community dialogue meetings (an indication of interest generated). Less tangible are the many genuine relationships that were built through the kitchen table conversations and the PLACE project, without which the personal stories would never have been told. In addition, the initiative-generated conversations and dialogue got people talking and doing things on their own. The farmers in the valley, who had never previously organized, set up a second farmers market and created a group to talk about the issues raised in the initiative; the teachers organized their own projects; and the trails community formed an organization, the Woodstock Trails Partnership. The park will maintain some appropriate ongoing involvement in these efforts as a neighbor in the larger regional community.

**c. Other options considered**

None

## **4. What Was Learned**

**a. What worked well?**

- *Thinking "like a heritage area."* Many aspects of the initiative, such as the central focus on building relationships, emphasizing the connections to shared heritage and common values, and a reliance on partnerships and collaboration draw directly from the management approach that national heritage areas use.
- *Involving the teachers.* In rural Vermont communities, teachers are an important part of community life. They are well known in the community, are considered to be impartial and

objective, and have instant credibility. Having them as part of the initiative’s public “face” also lent a certain credibility to the initiative, and they brought intergenerational connections in the area as well. The projects they organized added an outcome unplanned by the park and its partners.

- *Finding the right vocabulary and tone for the community dialogue.* The core partners put a lot of effort into thinking about how to talk about the initiative – in the kitchen table and PLACE conversations, the community meetings, and the publication. The approach taken in the end was to emphasize residents’ sense of heritage and connections to the land within the valley and their values and concerns for the future, and to have conservation emerge later in the community meetings as part of the actions or solutions considered. Also important in this regard was to have the park take a very low profile in the initiative.
- *Having multiple elements to the strategy.* With multiple projects, whenever one effort would flag another would come to the fore so that overall the initiative was able to maintain momentum.
- *Making an effort to support neighbors in ways not directly connected to the initiative.* As an example, the superintendent went to the farmers market regularly during the summer and made a point of buying something from every farmer there. It was an opportunity to personally invest in their businesses and a chance to chat. While he came home with things not on his shopping list, he demonstrated that he was not insensitive to their situation in the valley and he built good will with the farmers who are key stakeholders in the valley.

**b. What was difficult?**

The flip side of having multiple elements in the strategy was that from time to time it was difficult to maintain momentum on specific projects because the conservation partners had many other responsibilities. It required constant effort, which fell to the park, to keep them focused on Prosper Valley.

**c. What were the key factors that influenced the outcome?**

- *The park’s low public profile.* Especially in the early stages of the project, the efforts to build relationships could move forward without raising any latent anxiety or distrust of the federal government.
- *The commitment of the NPS to the initiative.* The superintendent and other park staff were involved in every aspect of the initiative, even though the park was not out front publically. This level of commitment and support were critical in many ways – in advising on tactics, keeping partners on track and focused, and generally keeping the initiative moving forward.
- *The time spent in building personal relationships with valley residents.* The kitchen table conversations, the efforts of the PLACE graduate students gathering oral histories, the park’s previous involvement with teachers – all of this careful groundwork established the trust that allowed residents to share their personal stories and concerns and hopes for the future (as well as the family photos in their attics) for use in the publication. It also was essential for the open and honest community dialogue that took place as the initiative proceeded.
- *The initial focus on shared community values and landscape changes taking place in the valley.* The decision to allow the topic of conservation to emerge later in the dialogue rather than having it be the initial focus enabled the relationship building to proceed without suspicion of a hidden agenda. After trust was established, the dialogue proceeded in such a way that the agenda regarding the future became a shared agenda between the community and the park.

**d. What would you do differently if you could replay your leadership approach?**

In hindsight, it would have been helpful to plan more for follow up in order to have the capacity for the opportunities that appear over the course of a collaborative initiative like this. Also, more community members could have been involved in the beginning, and the initiative could have been connected better with other activities and projects that were going on in the community at the time.

**e. What did you learn about best leadership practices?**

- In any collaboration with neighbors and/or partners, it is critical to do the groundwork.

- When building relationships, commit the necessary time and resources.
- In a collaborative effort, consider letting partners take the lead.
- Never forget the fun and find ways to celebrate.
- Be a good neighbor and find ways to show support for community concerns while you are working to meet the park's objectives.
- Appeal to people's better natures.

**f. What are the leadership skills and competencies involved?**

- Ability to collaborate
- Interpersonal skills
- Good communication skills
- Ability to think strategically
- Vision
- External awareness (of partners, neighbors, the community situation)
- Creativity
- Flexibility
- Persistence and resilience
- Leveraging ability

**g. What role did partners or stakeholders play, and were there any shifts in their perspectives or their relationships with the park?**

Project partners were key to the initiative as they took the lead in carrying out the different elements. Valley residents, the key stakeholders, did take on responsibility in certain aspects, such as the farmers and the trails community organizing themselves, and the teachers doing their own projects related to the initiative. The project undoubtedly built good will between the residents of Prosper Valley and the park.

**h. What additional observations would you offer?**

- Efforts like the Prosper Valley initiative represent a long-term investment and must be viewed through that lens. Such work cannot be started and completed in a year's time.
- With outside-the-park projects, identify (with partners) a range of discrete projects, each of which can contribute, and look for possible ways to support the projects.
- Constantly be aware of the opportunities that arise in collaborative projects and adapt your strategy to take advantage of them.

## **5. Additional References and Resources**

To obtain a copy of *Where Our Four Towns Meet*, contact [stewardship@nps.gov](mailto:stewardship@nps.gov).

For more information on leadership, partnerships, and civic engagement, see the Conservation Study Institute's website at [www.nps.gov/csi](http://www.nps.gov/csi).

1/22/10



# **NPF Leadership Grant Program Case Study<sup>9</sup>**

## **ENGAGING THE LOCAL HISPANIC COMMUNITY AND INCREASING THE RELEVANCY OF SAGUARO NATIONAL PARK**

**Prepared by the NPS Conservation Study Institute  
in partnership with  
Saguaro National Park and  
QLF/Atlantic Center for the Environment**

### **1. Brief Summary of the Challenge or Opportunity Addressed**

Although Hispanics represent 40 percent of the local population surrounding Saguaro National Park, they rarely visit the park or participate in park programs.

### **2. The Leadership Challenge(s) and/or Opportunities**

#### **a. Long-term goal/vision for the situation**

To engage the local Hispanic community and increase their participation in the park, and enhance the relevancy of the park to this important community sector

#### **b. The setting**

Saguaro National Park lies adjacent to Tucson, Arizona, a city of 542,000 (1 million in the greater metro area), of which 40 percent is Hispanic. Although the park has existed for 75 years, the local Hispanic community rarely visits the park or participates in park programs. Transportation is a primary issue, as Saguaro lies outside the main metropolitan area and visitor use of the park requires a vehicle. Tucson city parks are more accessible and have grassy areas that accommodate large gatherings, and Hispanics use them regularly in large family groups. The national park is desert country and hasn't been developed for group use.

#### **c. Pertinent park history**

The park was created as a national monument in 1933 from federal public lands managed previously by U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, and was redesignated a national park in 1994. Before federal management, much of the park was originally Hispanic homesteads, although the ranchers themselves have been gone for some time. Some of the original homesteading families still live in the Tucson area.

#### **d. Key stakeholders and partners**

The park has sought the advice and involvement of key members of the local Hispanic community (including the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce), a school district that served primarily the Hispanic

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<sup>9</sup> This case study is based on a presentation to the New Superintendent Academy on February 18, 2009, as part of webinar I of the Partnerships and Civic Engagement Track, which was convened by NPS Learning and Development in partnership with the NPS Conservation Study Institute and the NPS Office of Partnerships and Philanthropic Stewardship.

community, and other local educational institutions. In addition, the park staff works with the community recreational centers (run by the city's parks and recreation department) in offering Junior Ranger programs, and beginning with the 2009-2010 school year, with the Tucson Boys and Girls Club.

**e. Special considerations**

This outreach effort is ongoing and evolving.

**f. Potential roadblocks that contributed to the challenging nature of the situation**

- Personal transportation is needed to get to Saguaro, which is an ongoing constraint to park visitation by Hispanics. Finding funding to provide for transportation has been difficult.
- Saguaro's desert environment is not immediately conducive to the ways that the Hispanic community of Tucson has traditionally used parks; so although there are historic Hispanic connections to the park lands, there has been little use by recent generations.
- Staff capacity and funding are ongoing constraints for initiatives, such as outreach to the community, that require considerable staff time. In the beginning, because this was not a crisis situation, not everyone saw it as a priority.

### **3. The Strategy Applied and the Outcome**

**a. The approach used and actions taken and why**

After seeking advice on how best to focus efforts to engage local populations who were not visiting the park, the superintendent and park staff organized a two-day workshop in 2003 to put together a *communication and outreach plan* for engaging minority sectors of the population. They invited representatives of the Hispanic community, the Tohono O'odham Tribe, the city council, and the area community college and university; not all of these attended, but the Hispanic community was represented. The NPS Intermountain Region's public information officer and the associate for diversity also attended, along with Saguaro staff. The group put together a plan for engaging different audiences, distilled from it a one-year action plan, and formed a community outreach committee.

Since the initial plan was developed, the engagement initiative has expanded and now includes multiple elements:

- *Study of early Hispanic homesteads*  
One of the earliest projects in the initiative involved a university graduate student who researched the early Hispanic homesteads that were at one time on lands now within the park and interviewed the families that are still in the area. The aim was to develop materials, including historic photos, that could be provided to schools and used in park exhibits and programs in order to create connections and relevancy between the park and present-day members of the Hispanic community. Subsequently, a slide show in English and Spanish versions has been created from the research and photos.
- *Engagement with Hispanic youth*  
Through multiple programs, the park has developed relationships with teachers and students in a school district that serves primarily the Hispanic community. The park has hired teachers from that district for the **Teacher-Ranger-Teacher program** so they could take information and materials from the park back to their classrooms. The park also revamped the **Junior Ranger day camp program**, targeting families from schools with Teacher-Ranger-Teachers to get students and families into the park. In the park's west district, the summer program that previously relied on families to transport the youth to the park was dropped in favor of a one-day camp during school breaks, with the park providing a bus to transport youth to the park for the day. More recently, the park has been taking the Junior Ranger camp into the community recreation centers that are operated by the city's parks and recreation department. (Many Hispanic youth go to the community centers after school and during the summer.) Most of these camps are two days, with the first day spent at the community center to introduce the park and the ranger, and the second day out in the park, experiencing it first hand. Finally, the park

received a 2009 grant from the National Park Foundation to participate in the **First Bloom program**, which connects 4<sup>th</sup>- to 6<sup>th</sup>-graders to the park through on-site stewardship projects in the park (in partnership with the Tucson Boys' and Girls' Club).

- *Annual Hispanic fiesta*

The park began the annual Fiesta de Saguaro in 2007 to celebrate the Hispanic history and culture of the park and the local area, with traditional music and dancing, piñatas, and presentations.

- *Visitor center exhibits*

The park is currently in the process of totally redoing visitor center exhibits that have been very out of date. The study on early Hispanic history will be used to tell the story of Mexican and Spanish settlement and the early use of the area.

- *Improve picnic facilities*

Currently the park only offers backcountry camping and its picnic facilities are not set up for large groups. The park plans to improve a picnic area to accommodate larger groups.

- *Other outreach*

Other steps to engage Hispanics include (1) dedicating a seasonal ranger to go into the community and talk with people (the park is working to convert this to a permanent position); (2) reaching out to the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce; and (3) having site bulletins translated into Spanish.

The original intent of the community outreach committee, formed as a result of the initial workshop, was to include community members, but in the end the committee has been populated entirely by park staff from the different park disciplines. The committee has functioned well in this capacity, however, and has been important in maintaining momentum in the outreach initiative, especially in 2009 with a transition to a new superintendent.

**b. The outcome(s) and any additional or ongoing follow-up**

Although change is slow in coming, there are signs of progress:

- The programs that engage youth are expanding. During the 2009 summer season, 6 Teacher-Ranger-Teachers worked in the park and the park plans to hire 10-12 in 2010. With the selection of teachers for this program who are Hispanic and/or speak Spanish, the NPS is enhancing the “look” of the park and its relevancy to Hispanic visitors.
- While the park initiated the Junior Ranger programs at the community centers, the centers now are requesting programs from the park, which will increase the opportunities for engagement.
- The first fiesta that was held attracted mostly Anglos, but each year the number of Hispanics increases, although they remain a small component of the several thousand people who attend.
- The overtures to the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce are beginning to bear fruit. At the time of the initial outreach the organization was not responsive to the park. The chamber went through a change in leadership, and park staff continued to reach out, attending the group’s monthly meetings and mixers and getting to know chamber leaders. The chamber is now responding with greater interest in building a relationship.

The park is establishing many new partnerships, and there seems to be an increasing synergy taking place in the programs, due partly to crossover in programs.

**c. Other options considered**

The idea of taking outreach efforts to churches was never carried out because of time and staffing constraints.

## **4. What Was Learned**

**a. What worked well?**

- *Holding an initial workshop to jumpstart the outreach initiative.* The workshop with community members enabled the park to focus on a coordinated engagement approach with the Hispanic community and to identify doable first steps.

- *Researching Hispanic history.* The study of Hispanic homesteads provides information that can be used in many ways to increase the park's relevancy to Hispanics. Producing a slide program from the study, in both English and Spanish versions, improves the usability of the study information.
- *Targeting specific schools.* By targeting schools in Hispanic neighborhoods, the park could employ its limited staff capacity most effectively.
- *Providing overlap in the park's school programs.* Having multiple programs targeting youth in the same schools (e.g., Teacher-Ranger-Teacher, Junior Rangers, community center programs) offers a greater chance of establishing a connection. Also, crossover in programs that engage youth at different ages and in different ways enhances the opportunities to build lasting relationships.
- *Establishing a community outreach committee.* The committee has provided focus and continuity to the staff's outreach efforts, which was especially valuable in the transition period with a new superintendent. It has also enabled the staff to support each other and maintain momentum. The fact that this committee is popular with the staff is an indication that park staff sees the value of and embraces the outreach effort.

**b. What didn't?**

- Staff capacity issues have constrained the efforts to engage specific members of the Hispanic community, including keeping community representation on the outreach committee, building connections early on to the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and taking programs into churches.
- The initial product of the research on early Hispanic homesteads was static and not particularly user-friendly, rather than the more interactive program originally envisioned by the superintendent. However, the staff is creating outreach tools from the research (e.g., the slide programs) that have wider useability.

**c. What were the key factors that influenced the outcome?**

- *The commitment of the superintendent.* The superintendent's leadership was critical to getting the outreach initiative underway, and in building connections with the Hispanic community. Superintendent leadership and commitment to a project like this is especially important in a smaller park with limited staff capacity.
- *The dedication and persistence of the staff.* The persistence and commitment of the staff has been important in maintaining momentum, especially with change being slow in coming.
- *The community outreach committee.* (See above in 4a.)
- *The Teacher-Ranger-Teacher Program.* This program is key in several ways. It engages the teachers and changes their connections to the park. They in turn take the park into the classroom and engage with their students and their school on behalf of the park. At the same time, in the months that they are serving as rangers, they become the face of the park to the visiting public. Their connections to the Hispanic community and the fact that they speak Spanish make them a key link in enhancing the relevancy of the park for that community of people.
- *The partnerships that are being established.* While this outreach initiative has not yet fully engaged the Hispanic community, the park is building relationships that are critical to helping leverage the message and limited staff capacity of the park.
- *Time.* It takes time to change cultural habits and to build trust, which makes the commitment of staff and resources so important.

**d. What would you do differently if you could replay your leadership approach?**

- Try harder to engage Hispanics early in the initiative, especially in the workshop and the planning.
- Commission a study up-front to gather socio-economic information about the park's visitors and underrepresented audiences. The important baseline information from such a study could have informed the outreach strategy and would have made it easier to assess progress.



**e. What did you learn about best leadership practices?**

- Civic engagement is a process and it takes time; you have to be patient and be willing to go through the process.
- You must articulate your vision in a clear and compelling way to get buy-in and bring people on board.
- Commitment of time and energy is essential to successful engagement. “It takes a bigger effort than just attending monthly meetings.”
- Continuity of effort is important with initiatives that are long-term and ongoing; plan for transition in leadership.

**f. What are the leadership skills and competencies involved?**

- Patience
- Commitment
- Vision
- Ability to collaborate
- Interpersonal skills
- Good communication skills
- Creativity
- External awareness
- Strategic thinking

**g. What role did partners or stakeholders play, and were there any shifts in their perspectives or their relationships with the park?**

The park has established new partnerships through this effort and they are being strengthened as the initiative moves forward. The partnerships provide a critical foundation for the park’s engagement efforts and help to leverage the park’s limited staff capacity. In addition, in one case the partner is beginning to respond and see ways that the park can help meet its needs.

**h. What additional observations would you offer?**

Over the long term, will the park sustain the effort? How much of what happens in civic engagement is true culture change and how much is a result of the superintendent’s initiative? Engagement efforts can’t just be tied to the superintendent’s leadership, but must affect the culture of the park and of the Hispanic community.

## **5. Additional References and Resources**

For more on leadership, partnerships, and civic engagement, see the Conservation Study Institute’s website at [www.nps.gov/csi](http://www.nps.gov/csi). 1/22/10



# **NPF Leadership Grant Program Case Study<sup>10</sup>**

## **CREATING EFFECTIVE CO-MANAGEMENT AT SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS NATIONAL RECREATION AREA**

**Prepared by the NPS Conservation Study Institute  
in partnership with  
Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area and  
QLF/Atlantic Center for the Environment**

### **1. Brief Summary of the Challenge or Opportunity Addressed**

Established with a governance model of collaborative management, the park and its state and local partners have created a vibrant, urban national park through cooperative planning, management agreements, and the steady and active dialogue of effective civic engagement. Today, after 30 years, the park has achieved a diverse mosaic of partners that crosses park boundaries and reaches into adjacent communities and neighborhoods.

### **2. The Leadership Challenge(s) and/or Opportunities**

#### **a. Long-term goal/vision for the situation**

To create a seamless set of interlinked, integrated relationships that reach across park boundaries into adjacent communities and neighborhoods, with the ultimate aim of achieving stewardship of the land and associated historic and natural resources, stories, and meanings – on both sides of the park boundary.

#### **b. The setting**

Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area encompasses 153,000 acres woven into the city of Los Angeles, and is the largest urban park in the national park system. Within the park boundary there are a variety of land uses and ownerships along with the federally owned park lands, including local and state park lands and privately owned land (46 percent of the land). There are 300,000 people living within the park boundary.

#### **c. Pertinent park history**

During the 1970s, the Los Angeles metropolitan area was experiencing expansive urban development that was threatening the ecosystems and associated wildlife in the Santa Monica Mountains. Following a citizen lobbying effort, the park was established as a national recreation area in 1978 (P.L. 95-625, section 507) with a model of collaborative governance that involved federal, state, and local government and the private sector (land trust, other NGOs, and property owners). A strong foundation for the park's co-management partnership was laid through a series of planning documents that were co-authored by and apply to all four key managing partners – the NPS, California State Parks, Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and Mountains Recreation and

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<sup>10</sup> This case study is based on a presentation to the New Superintendent Academy on July 15, 2009, as part of webinar IV of the Partnerships and Civic Engagement Track, which was convened by NPS Learning and Development in partnership with the NPS Conservation Study Institute and the NPS Office of Partnerships and Philanthropic Stewardship.

Conservation Authority. These documents include the first General Management Plan in 1982 (which embedded a 1980 state-produced comprehensive plan for the Santa Monica Mountains) and the park's Land Protection and Resource Management Plans, both finalized in 1984. Collaboration by the NPS and State of California on land purchases throughout the 1980s, concurrent development of visual character guidelines for uniform facility development on parklands, and an memorandum of understanding between the NPS and the state in 1994 were also important to building the partnership. In addition, the cooperative management agreement authority in the National Parks Omnibus Management Act of 1998 (P.L. 105-391) enables the movement of services and goods between cooperating partners, which has led to greater efficiencies and set the stage for the seamless co-management that exists today at the park.

**d. Key stakeholders and partners**

Four primary partners co-manage the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area and are parties to a cooperative management agreement:

- National Park Service;
- California State Parks;
- Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC), a state agency established in 1980 to help secure and develop parkland to form an interlinking system of parks, open space, trails, and wildlife habitats that are accessible to the general public;
- Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA), a local government public entity established by the state legislature in 1985 for the purpose of preserving and managing local open space and parkland; MRCA operates parklands acquired by the state on behalf of SMMC.

In addition, the NPS has 22 agreements with local and state government and 12 agreements with nongovernmental organizations, and works with 300 property owner associations, 65 neighborhood councils, and 12 academic institutions and museums.

**e. Special considerations,**

This case study describes an ongoing collaborative management model.

**f. Potential roadblocks that contribute to the challenging nature of the situation**

- Despite the good working relationships among the four key partners, there is a certain competitiveness related to the need for visibility and credit. Although this has been more an underlying creative tension than a roadblock per se, given the scope and challenges of co-managing this park, partners need to be mindful of channeling it creatively.
- Turnover at the top in the key partner organizations is a potential challenge to the smooth functioning of the park's collaborative management. Attention to transition management and ensuring ready access by incoming leaders to knowledge of partner history and key issues, priorities, and opportunities can prevent this challenge from being a roadblock.
- Despite the recognition within the NPS that parks need to work cooperatively and employ civic engagement, the traditional perspective of working unilaterally is still fairly common and can constrain efforts to build collaborative relationships.
- In a collaborative effort, it is essential to always recognize shared contributions and celebrate successes together in a public way; failure to do this can erode relationships.

### **3. The Strategy Applied and the Outcome**

**a. The approach used and actions taken and why**

As identified in the park's GMP, the NPS and its partners have been addressing five key management issues that relate to ongoing development and require active, thoughtful engagement with communities and landowners:

- loss of habitat and biological diversity to development
- fragmentation of habitat resulting from urban sprawl

- management of invasive plant species that have been introduced by development
- wildfire management at the urban–wildland interface
- protection of scenery and soundscapes

Over the park’s 30-year lifetime, the managing partners have moved steadily to set in place the co-management structure while at all times practicing good civic engagement. Much of the work in the park’s first decade involved *creating a common stewardship framework*. The park’s unique enabling legislation provides a stakehold and role for state and local governments in maintaining and protecting the park’s resources. This was fleshed out more in the plans developed to collectively manage and protect park resources (see section 2c above). Created with extensive community engagement, the plans reflect the park’s multi-agency ownership and values, as well as the need for all parties to work together to accomplish the goals and actions in the plans.

This solid foundation of planning was complemented by efforts to *build formal and informational relationships with key partners and other stakeholders* (see section 2d) following civic engagement best practices (e.g., listening well and without bias; attending to the needs of partners but not over-promising; being open to new approaches; meeting regularly, not just when partner action was needed).

One early project to *build a shared geographic information system* (GIS) has contributed greatly to successful collaborative management. The GIS database, which is accessible to all stakeholders, provides a scientific tool for informing land use policies and decisions at all levels—local, state, and federal. It has proved especially powerful in decision making where there is a shared ownership in the outcome. In essence, the shared database has leveled the playing field and created a common “language” that everyone uses, even private developers.

More recently, a key park focus has involved *building stewardship through education and outreach*. In updating the GMP in 2004, the park began more actively engaging with local communities to integrate their interests, values, and stories into park management. It has developed programs that engage inner city youth (sometimes with their families) in hands-on restoration efforts. At the same time, the state partners began building local “portal” nature parks in downtown Los Angeles with information and transportation links to the national park. These joint efforts have made the park more accessible and are generating a sense of caring and stewardship. They are examples of the park’s efforts to help people understand how to live more sustainably on the land – and it’s as much about maintaining a quality of life as it is about preserving park values and resources.

The park’s legislation, planning documents, and management framework have created the structure and setting for effective collaborative management, but in the end the park’s success rests on the steady, active dialogue of civic engagement. The Park Service’s focus on creating a culture of collaboration that crosses park boundaries has led to a collaborative maturity at all levels of the park. Even at the grassroots, NPS field staff have developed strong relationships with their counterparts, sharing ideas and practices, brainstorming initiatives together, and forming committees and coalitions. It is how they conduct their business and is done at their initiative, without the need for prompting from the superintendent. Over time, this emphasis on collaborative engagement has led to an increasingly broad, integrated, and effective coalition of partner organizations, local governing bodies, stakeholders, and local residents.

**b. The outcome(s)**

The park’s approach to collaborative management and civic engagement has produced the following outcomes and benefits:

- Acquisition of 85,000 acres of local, state, and federal parkland, with the managing partners together leveraging more than \$615 million in public and private funding;
- Creation of open space assessment districts and cooperative planning zones to protect park values;

- Annual visitation by 35 million people for recreation and public health benefits, most of whom come from the surrounding metropolitan area;
- Nature programs provided annually to 70,000 inner-city youth by education partners;
- Immediate accessibility of public parks to 17 million urban residents, most of whom have no other access to nature;
- Use of the GIS database by 67 government agencies to protect environmental quality and regulate land uses within the park;
- Restoration of 46 streams and estuaries to exceed federal clean water standards;
- Permanent protection of habitat critical to 26 threatened and endangered species.

**c. Other options considered**

SAMO’s legislation requires collaborative management; the success of this management model rests on partnerships and sound civic engagement practices.

## **4. What Was Learned**

**a. What worked well?**

- The collaborative approach to park management has meant a leveraged fundraising capacity for acquiring parkland. An example is the recent purchase of Gillette Ranch, the park’s top acquisition priority for 25 years. Located at the intersection of two major highways that provide access to all parklands, the ranch was targeted in the first GMP as the site for a visitor center and park headquarters. All four partners worked over 18 months to put together \$35 million in state, federal, and private funds to purchase the property, a feat that would have been extremely difficult for one partner alone.
- A thorough knowledge of the authorities available and how to use them has enabled the superintendent to talk with partners about what they want, be clear on what is possible, and act on opportunities for collaboration.
- To build the strong relationships necessary for effective co-management (and to make parks welcoming and relevant to potential partners and the public), it has been essential to try to understand the perspectives of partners and stakeholders looking at the park from the outside rather than just considering the NPS perspective from the inside looking out.
- Maintaining a commitment to consensus and steering clear of unilateral action has been essential. It has been important for the four key partners to recognize each other’s needs and requirements and then work together toward consensus, always with an eye on what is best for the public.
- In all successful projects, all partners have brought value to the table. “We have been able to specifically combine our distinct differences – the unique authorities, assets, and operations – in a way to create a mosaic that is rich and empowering.”

**b. What didn’t?**

- “In one instance we celebrated a key land acquisition without including the other core partners – and missed an opportunity to promote the shared work. Everything we’ve accomplished has been a result of what we’ve done together.”
- “Fully understanding what the partner wants from collaboration is so important to setting up success – I should spend two-thirds of my time understanding the partner and one-third in developing our own interest.”

**c. What were the key factors that influenced the outcome?**

- Having the right people in the top jobs in the four co-managing partners – people who understand and are committed to working collaboratively and to applying civic engagement broadly.
- The commitment to civic engagement and relationship-building at all levels of the NPS, especially at the grassroots level.
- Helping the solicitor in the regional office to understand what the park is trying to accomplish and how this aligns with the authorities available to the park (i.e., that you have the authority to do what you’re proposing).

- A partnership setting in which partners understand each other's strengths and weaknesses, are able to define opportunities, and then move forward, leveraging the strengths and navigating the weaknesses.
- d. What would you do differently if you could replay your leadership approach?**
- Put more effort into understanding more thoroughly what the partner's stake is in the collaboration.
  - Reflect together more often with key partners on what has worked and what hasn't, and apply this learning; produce an annual report that celebrates the collaborative accomplishments (currently each co-managing partner does an individual annual report).
- e. What did you learn about best leadership practices?**
- Be honest and up-front; show respect for others.
  - Approach relationships with humility; understand that establishing collaborative relationships is an art that takes time, energy, and resources.
  - Remember that it's not all about us; don't be afraid to step outside the NPS culture.
  - Ask probing questions to understand the perspectives and values of others; don't jump to conclusions.
  - Don't react too quickly; allow time to process what you are hearing and seeing, and be aware of your blind spots.
  - Recognize your own and your partners' strengths and characteristics, understand your weaknesses, and work together to maximize the strengths and opportunities.
  - Be clear on your scope of authority, then look for cooperative opportunities with others.
  - Manage partner expectations appropriately and don't promise more than you can deliver; be clear up front regarding constraints and challenges.
  - Look for shared values and common ground as early as possible.
  - Pick low-hanging fruit first to build momentum from success.
  - Celebrate and promote successes together.
- f. What are the leadership skills and competencies involved?**
- Good communication skills, including being a good listener
  - Knowing the policies, authorities, and frameworks in order to enable progress
  - The ability to collaborate across boundaries, find common ground with neighboring communities and a wide range of stakeholders, and bring people together to accomplish a task that none could accomplish individually
  - Reflecting continuously on what is working or not working and why, and then applying that learning
  - The ability to think strategically with a long-term perspective
- g. What role did partners or stakeholders play, and were there any shifts in their perspectives or their relationships with the park?**
- A partnership spectrum exists (although without distinct delineations) that moves from competition → cooperation → collaboration → integration, with some movement back and forth. The role and function of partners can vary depending upon the situation, where they are along the spectrum, and the equity they bring to the table.
- h. What additional observations would you offer?**
- Share these best practices.

## 5. Additional References and Resources

For additional information on the park's management and its partners, go to the following websites:

- <http://www.nps.gov/samo/parkmgmt/planning.htm>
- <http://smmc.ca.gov/partners.html>
- <http://www.mrca.ca.gov>

For more information on leadership, partnerships, and civic engagement, go to the Conservation Study Institute's website at [www.nps.gov/csi](http://www.nps.gov/csi).

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# FURTHER READING<sup>11</sup>

## A. Resources on Civic Engagement and Collaboration

### Websites, Other Web Resources, and DVDs

#### **Civic Engagement Community Toolbox**

[www.nps.gov/nero/rtcatoolbox/](http://www.nps.gov/nero/rtcatoolbox/)

Developed by the NPS Northeast Region Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program, the toolbox focuses on the nuts and bolts of improving communication and increasing community involvement in projects, and includes advice on cultivating partnerships and working with stakeholder groups.

#### **Director's Order #75A on Civic Engagement and Public Involvement**

[www.nps.gov/policy/dorders/75a.pdf](http://www.nps.gov/policy/dorders/75a.pdf)

First signed in 2003 and renewed in 2007, Director's Order #75A articulates the National Park Service's commitment to civic engagement.

#### **Do We Have All the Pieces? Strengthening the NPS through Civic Engagement**

This national TEL (Technology Enhanced Learning) training course, presented in 2007 by the NPS Office of Equal Employment Opportunity and the NPS Supervision, Leadership, and Management Training Program, is available on DVD by contacting [stewardship@nps.gov](mailto:stewardship@nps.gov).

#### **Evaluation Research to support NPS 21<sup>st</sup> Century Relevancy Initiatives**

Quick links to a PowerPoint presentation and accompanying narrative of this ongoing doctoral research (sponsored by the NPS Conservation Study Institute, the NPS Northeast Region Interpretation and Education Program, and the University of Vermont) are available at [www.nps.gov/csi](http://www.nps.gov/csi).

#### **National Park Service Archeology Program: Public Benefits of Archeology**

[www.nps.gov/archeology/PUBLIC/benefits/com.htm](http://www.nps.gov/archeology/PUBLIC/benefits/com.htm)

This webpage provides information about the ways archeology can involve and benefit communities, educators, historians, and others.

#### **National Park Service Conservation Study Institute**

[www.nps.gov/csi/](http://www.nps.gov/csi/)

This website contains information on the Institute's programs on collaborative conservation, including on community engagement, 21<sup>st</sup>-century relevancy, and leadership; also available are links to Institute publications.

#### **National Park Service Partnerships**

[www.nps.gov/partnerships/](http://www.nps.gov/partnerships/)

This website contains information on partnerships, including how-to's, publications and other resources, and a database of case studies.

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<sup>11</sup> Adapted from *Stronger Together: A Manual on the Principles and Practices of Civic Engagement*, Appendix A; available at [www.nps.gov/csi/pdf/CE%20Manual.pdf](http://www.nps.gov/csi/pdf/CE%20Manual.pdf).



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