



# Keeping National Parks Relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

*A Report on a Conference Convened  
by the National Park Service Northeast Region  
and the National Parks Mid-Atlantic Council*





This report is the eighth 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.

The Conservation Study Institute was established by the National Park Service in 1998 to enhance leadership in the field of conservation. A partnership with academic, government, and nonprofit organizations, the institute helps the National Park Service 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 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Institute is based at Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park within the Northeast Region of the National Park Service.

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For additional copies, contact:  
Conservation Study Institute  
54 Elm Street  
Woodstock, VT 05091  
Tel: (802) 457-3368 / Fax: (802) 457-3405  
[www.nps.gov/csi](http://www.nps.gov/csi)

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# Keeping National Parks Relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

A Report on a Conference Convened  
by the National Park Service Northeast Region  
and the National Parks Mid-Atlantic Council

*at*

*Independence National Historical Park  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania  
October 14–15, 2005*



National Park Service Northeast Region

Report edited by Nora Mitchell, Virginia Farley, Tara Morrison, and Chrysandra Walter

Compiled from meeting notes by facilitators Tammy Bormann and David Campt



## 21<sup>ST</sup>-CENTURY RELEVANCY:



THE NPS MISSION WILL BE RELEVANT TO -  
CONTEMPORARY AMERICA THROUGH  
ENGAGING THE PUBLIC, DEVELOPING  
A SEAMLESS NETWORK OF PARKS, AND  
PROTECTING AMERICA'S CULTURAL HERITAGE. -

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## Sharing ideas

*is critical for us to be an effective, efficient, learning organization. Times have changed in the National Park Service's almost 90 years, and we must change the way we work to keep us flexible, relevant, and successful. As you work with partners and seek new relationships, please reinforce these goals both in the ways you work together and the projects on which you embark. These broad goals will also be helpful in guiding your public message—so the communities of which we are a part know where we are headed and feel invited and encouraged to join us.*

– Fran P. Mainella, Director  
National Park Service

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### **National Park Service Legacy Initiative “Doing Business in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”**

#### **Management Excellence**

The National Park Service promotes management excellence and will epitomize government accountability. We will be a highly transparent organization whose productive, safe workforce reflects the diversity of our country and uses effective business practices to fulfill our core work.

#### **Sustainability**

The National Park Service will pursue sustainable facilities, operations, business practices, and resources through conservation, design, fiscal responsibility, information technology, partnerships, philanthropic support, and positive relationships with Congress.

#### **Conservation**

The National Park Service will continue to be a leader in natural and cultural resource conservation, protection, restoration, and stewardship. We will accomplish our work through partnerships with educational

institutions, intergovernmental organizations at the local, state, and federal levels, and interest groups.

#### **Outdoor Recreation**

People's enjoyment of and appreciation for the National Park System are essential to its conservation. The National Park Service embraces its critical responsibility to provide appropriate outdoor recreation and to contribute to the physical and mental well-being of all Americans. We will provide these opportunities both through the National Park System itself, and through our role in a seamless network of parks.

#### **21<sup>st</sup>-Century Relevancy**

The mission will be relevant to contemporary America through engaging the public, developing a seamless network of parks, and protecting America's cultural heritage.

Source: <http://inside.nps.gov/blankReports/Legacy4YearGoalsJULY2005.pdf>

*FACING PAGE: (center) Mary Bomar, NPS Northeast Regional Director; (right) Robert G. Stanton, Senior Fellow, Texas A & M University, Former Director, NPS; and (left) Jeffrey Leath, Pastor, Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church.*

## FOREWORD

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*Northeast Regional Director Mary Bomar*

**A**s the National Park Service approaches its 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we look ahead to a new legacy for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. “Relevancy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century” is a cornerstone of the National Park Service Legacy Initiative, “Doing Business in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” (see box on facing page). This initiative creates a common national framework and encourages us to share our successes and learn from one another. In pursuing these goals, our agency will create enduring connections with the American people; become increasingly effective, innovative, and entrepreneurial; and expand our partnerships with others in order to fulfill the National Park Service purpose and mission (see below).

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### **National Park Service Purpose (from the Organic Act of 1916)**

*To conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.*

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### **National Park Service Mission Statement**

*The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the National Park System for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world.*

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NPS Director Fran Mainella has asked the Northeast Region to provide national leadership on 21<sup>st</sup>-century relevancy. Accepting this challenge, we need to think carefully about ways to reach diverse communities more effectively both here in the region and across the United States. We must think not only about the stories we tell through our parks and programs but also about the faces we present to our visitors and neighbors, the ways we respond to changing demographics, and how we forge new partnerships. Being relevant requires exceptional skills—listening, understanding, and meeting the evolving needs of the American public—and engaging people who do not yet have a relationship with their National Park System or for whom visiting national parks is a distant dream. “Doing Business in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” will demand exceptional creativity—seeking out new ways to communicate and new ways to build commitment from the next generation of stewards.

In a recent message to all NPS employees, Director Mainella reminded us that parks are “places that affirm cherished ideas, ideals, and stories, and that also provoke questions and expose visitors to unfamiliar perspectives” and that the National Park Service is “an institution with a unique and vital role to play in telling America’s story and nurturing an informed citizenry—a mission of high national purpose.”

With this high purpose in mind, the Northeast Region and the National Parks Mid-Atlantic Council convened a conference, “Making National Parks Relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” to bring people together to have a serious conversation on relevancy and engaging an increasingly



diverse population. *This conference was clearly the beginning of a much longer conversation.* While this meeting emphasized African American life and culture, I foresee further conversations with other populations that can be better served by the National Park Service—through our parks, our programs, and our partnerships. To build the National Park Service of the 21<sup>st</sup> century we must strive to make these conversations as inclusive as we possibly can. This meeting was an important milestone along this road—the journey will take time and will require us to sustain a steadfast commitment to change.

This is, of course, not the first time that individuals have worked to increase the relevancy of the National Park Service. The past, it is said, is the key to the future. In 1991, the National Park Service’s 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Symposium looked at ways to diversify our workforce of 20,000, to broaden our stories, and to reach new groups of visitors, at a time when nearly 350 million people were visiting America’s national parks. Looking to the not-too-distant future, the symposium predicted:

*Everyone will belong to a minority group. Whites will no longer be a majority group in several states (such as California); Asian and Hispanic populations will dramatically increase, with Hispanics outnumbering African Americans by 2010. Politics will be altered; by 2000, most mayors in the nation’s big cities will be people of color; racial-crossover voting will be common.*

The symposium’s report recommended that the National Park Service review its thematic framework and undertake studies for new additions that would better reflect the heritage, stories, and cultures of an increasingly diverse population.

During NPS Director Bob Stanton’s tenure, I had the privilege of working with him on a national committee on institutionalizing diversity and had the opportunity to better understand the agency’s challenges. Many of the issues I saw then are still with us today. Our workforce diversity is not all that it could be and there is still an imbalance between the NPS workforce today and the “face of America.”

In 2001, the National Park System Advisory Board’s report, *Rethinking the National Parks for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, also focused on this growing challenge. The advisory board was then chaired by historian John Hope Franklin—a great thinker and a most humble man despite his many accomplishments. And while the report was the work of many, I like to think that it was he who penned these words:

*The public looks upon national parks almost as a metaphor for America itself. But there is another image emerging here, a picture of the National Park Service as a sleeping giant—beloved and respected, yes; but perhaps too cautious, too resistant to change, too reluctant to engage the challenges that must be addressed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Park Service must ensure that the American story is told faithfully, completely, and accurately. The story is often noble, but sometimes shameful and sad. In an age of growing cultural diversity, the Service must continually ask whether the way in which it tells these stories has meaning for all our citizens.*

I want to thank our conference co-sponsor, the National Parks Mid-Atlantic Council, and its members for their leadership and hard work in convening this dialogue. This conference would never have been planned nor organized the way it was without their guidance. For the fruition of this effort, credit is due to a number of people, including Patricia Conway, Luranett Lee, and Bill Withuhn of the Mid-Atlantic Council, and NPS Northeast Deputy Regional Director Sandy Walter and Superintendents Edie Shean-Hammond, Cynthia MacLeod, and Gay Vietzke.

We also thank our partner, Eastern National, for its continuing support and for assistance with preparation of this conference report. All of the conference participants are grateful for the excellent guidance in planning the meeting and the skill in facilitating the dialogue provided by Tammy Bormann and David Campt. I offer sincere gratitude to all of our speakers who contributed so much wisdom and advice to enhance our collective understanding. In particular, I want to express my deep appreciation and admiration for former NPS Director Robert Stanton, John Franklin of the Smithsonian Institution, and Reverend Jeffrey Leath of Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church for their personal and professional commitment. I also recognize the commitment of the participants and look forward to working with them as we follow up on the ideas generated by this conference. Finally, I want to thank the Conservation Study Institute and the editors of this report who successfully summarized this meeting so that we may build our future conversations and actions upon this dialogue.

This is an exciting time in the National Park Service and we look ahead to enormous opportunities as we help shape the NPS of the future. The park superintendents and our partners who participated in this conference have created a vision for the National Park Service in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. To make this vision a reality will require all of us to lead change not only at our parks and in our communities, but with our peers in the region and the nation. We must all work together so that all Americans can experience their heritage.



## Section I.

# Designing the Conference and Preparing This Report



*Conference participants at "Making National Parks Relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," October 14-15, 2005 in Philadelphia.*

### A. Meeting Goals

If a journey begins with a single step, this quest for 21<sup>st</sup>-century relevancy began with a conversation. The conference, “Making National Parks Relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” was designed to be a “foundational conversation” for an ongoing dialogue on the relevancy of national parks and programs in the Northeast Region. Developed in cooperation with the National Parks Mid-Atlantic Council, the two-day gathering provided a forum to reflect on and discuss issues of relevancy and diversity, from demographics to first-person accounts of affecting change (see conference agenda in appendix A).

In her opening remarks, Northeast Regional Director Mary Bomar described this forum as an opportunity for leaders from the Northeast Region of the National Park Service and their many partners to work together to create a road map toward relevancy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Conference participants included NPS managers, nonprofit partners, scholars, museum professionals, and others (see participant list in appendix B). This conversation intentionally surveyed

the contemporary American landscape, with a particular emphasis on African American life and culture. The meeting was designed to create and sustain a commitment to change through individual and collective actions, future conversations, and the monitoring of progress over time. The outcomes described in this report express a collective vision for the National Park Service in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, an understanding of the current opportunities and challenges, and a strategic framework to guide actions that will enhance the connections between NPS and an increasingly diverse American public.

### B. A Guide to This Report

To accomplish the meeting goals, facilitators Tammy Bormann and David Campt led participants through a series of sessions that included personal reflection, small group and plenary discussions, and presentations (see the meeting agenda in appendix A). The table on the facing page describes the flow of the meeting and the corresponding sections in this report.



*Conference participants at “Making National Parks Relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” October 14-15, 2005.*

The voices in this report are primarily those of conference participants. The meeting facilitators recorded some direct quotes and short phrases of key ideas and provided summaries of the discussions throughout the meeting, and this report draws from those notes. The editors have strived to reflect and summarize the dialogue, insights, and “group wisdom” with minimal alteration.

emerged in the discussion and are retained in this report. Many participants expressed the belief that a commitment to continuing this conversation will ultimately produce a realistic road map to guide the quest for relevancy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century by the National Park Service and its partners in the Northeast Region.

Since this was an open and honest dialogue, the reader will find both optimism and pessimism, and laudatory praise and harsh criticism. These contrasting perspectives

**Table 1**

<b>Agenda Topic</b>	<b>Presentation or Question Posed by Facilitators</b>	<b>Report Section</b>
Overarching questions of the conference	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>What are the key strategic priorities that the NPS in the Northeast Region must address in order to achieve its vision of organizational relevance in the 21st century, particularly to communities of color?</i></li> <li>2. <i>What are the key priorities for action that NPS sites in the Northeast Region must embrace in order to become more relevant to diverse communities in the 21st century?</i></li> <li>3. <i>What are the key priorities for professional and individual growth of NPS leaders and employees in the Northeast Region that must be addressed in order to build capacity to achieve the organization’s vision of 21st-century relevancy?</i></li> </ol>	All
Setting the stage	Remarks of Northeast Regional Director Mary Bomar	Foreword
	Remarks by Bill Withuhn and Laurant Lee	All
Articulating the vision	<i>When the NPS achieves its vision of 21st-century relevancy, how will the general public describe the NPS? What will the NPS be known for?</i>	Section II
	Panel Presentation: John W. Franklin, Robert Stanton, Reverend Jeffrey Leath, and Cynthia MacLeod	All
Lessons learned: experience from the field	Harvey Bakari and Larry Earl, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Panel Discussion: Gay Vietzke, Tara Morrison, Vidal Martinez Panel Discussion: Dennis Reidenbach, Gillian Bowser, Alan Spears, George Price	All
Leading change: identifying opportunities and barriers	<p><i>What are ways the NPS organizational culture supports our progress on 21st-century relevancy? What are ways the NPS organizational culture inhibits our progress?</i></p> <p><i>What can my organization and I do to support the NPS as it seeks to move through an organizational change process to achieve 21st-century relevancy? What do we need from NPS leadership at regional and national levels to support our personal growth in order to become more effective NPS leaders in the 21st century?</i></p>	Section III  Section IV, Epilogue
Charting a way forward	Identifying strategic areas for action and next steps in the Northeast Region	Section IV, Epilogue

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*A. Conference participant at “Making National Parks Relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” October 14-15, 2005, in Philadelphia.*

*B. Preserving Memory Seminar participants at Richmond National Battlefield Park discussing race and civic dialogue with Paige L. Chargois from Hope in the City.*

*C. NPS Northeast Regional Director Mary Bomar addresses a dedication ceremony for a permanent exhibit at the National Constitution Center providing an introduction to the diverse mix of people who lived and worked on the site around the time of the American Revolution.*

*D. Community expressions of loss at the Oklahoma City National Memorial.*

*E. Former World War II Tuskegee Airman pilot cadet Ernest Haywood (on right) at his home in Detroit, Michigan during an oral history interview by NPS historian Worth Long (Bill Mansfield, NPS photograph).*

## Section II.

# Articulating a Vision for the National Park Service in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century



*When the NPS achieves its vision of 21<sup>st</sup>-century relevancy, how will the general public describe the NPS? What will the NPS be known for?*

A vision for the National Park Service in the 21<sup>st</sup> century was created by conference participants when asked the above questions.

In this description of the 21<sup>st</sup> century vision, present tense is used to directly state future intentions and to provide encouragement to achieve them.

### **In the 21st century, the National Park Service:**

- *works in partnership with others to tell inclusive stories relevant to all members of society and encourages others to tell their own stories;*
- *engages in ongoing dialogue with openness, sensitivity, and honesty;*
- *sustains community relationships; and*
- *creates a workforce reflective of society.*



---

**In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the National Park Service works in partnership with others to tell inclusive stories relevant to all members of society and encourages others to tell their own stories.**

A relevant NPS includes all the stories of heritage that define this country. These stories are interwoven—not isolated from each other—to create a bold, truthful narrative, and many people and many cultural groups tell their own stories.

The NPS creates an atmosphere of trust so that complex and challenging stories can be shared and understood. Many communities that did not find meaning in the national parks during 2006 are now actively engaged as a result of new avenues of communication created by the NPS. The message and meaning of national parks is transformed, as is the workforce.

The National Park System encompasses many places that reflect the country's diversity. Alan Spears of the National Parks Conservation Association noted that “the NPS is one of the largest ‘custodians’ of African American history in the country.” Parks serve as venues for articulating many more narratives, and create a variety of opportunities for people to forge meaningful connections. By developing knowledge and awareness that span racial and cultural boundaries, new stories are created, forgotten ones rediscovered, and society strengthened. Bob Stanton observed, “The future of the organization is fully dependent on the National Park Service’s validity and relevance to all people and its ability to articulate the entire story.” Reverend Jeffrey Leath added, “There is a difference between information and interpretation. Relevancy does not alter information (facts); but it may inform interpretation (the meaning we give facts). ... Re-interpreting to *cater* to a changing demographic or political environment will destroy credibility. ... Relevancy cannot replace truth as the primary core value.”

#### **Conference Participant Quotes:**

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*The NPS presents a diverse continuum of the nation’s story in landscape, heritage, and culture and serves as a partner and facilitator to engage people in telling their own stories.*

---

*The NPS engages in dialogue about the complete story of American history.*

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*A tension between the “big story” and the supporting stories remains. The challenge is how to get the big message across and to be prepared to share the supporting nuances which will be of most interest to diverse audiences.*

---

*Visitors see park stories and park events through the eyes of all who were a part of history.*

---

*The NPS is a living encyclopedia of America’s heritage. The NPS is known for its depth of knowledge and its ability to talk about controversial parts of our history and our compelling stories.*

---

*The NPS is known for its sound, reasonable scholarship and acknowledges the “power of place” by providing hands-on, multi-sensory, learning opportunities.*

---

*Our national park system is for all, forever.*

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### **In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the National Park Service engages in ongoing dialogue with openness, sensitivity, and honesty.**

A National Park Service relevant to diverse groups of people is trusted to tell stories faithfully, completely, and accurately. Credibility and flexibility are part of achieving this vision. Recognizing that many challenging topics may still cause discomfort and that this is part of the process of openness and honesty, it is critical to create safe environments for dialogue. Richmond National Battlefield Park Superintendent Cynthia MacLeod noted that “...the fear that kept the slave system in place is similar to the fear that keeps us from talking about race and its impacts today.”

#### **Conference Participant Quotes:**

*NPS is a welcoming and trustworthy guardian of national treasures and a storyteller that is inspiring to all people.*

---

*Americans look to the NPS to tell the story of heritage and know that the NPS will be honest about that heritage.*

---

*NPS is both comfortable—everyone feels welcome—and uncomfortable, as many stories are challenging to discuss.*

---

*NPS is seen as an agency that does not buckle under political pressure but remains truthful to the facts and open to reinterpretation of those facts.*

---

*NPS is known for facilitating and provoking thoughtful discussions on sensitive issues.*

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*NPS units are sought out and recognized by all as safe, relevant places to visit for recreation and inspiration.*

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*NPS provides creative and innovative approaches for engaging all.*

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### **In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the National Park Service sustains community relationships.**

The NPS mission itself as well as many resources under NPS stewardship transcend political and ownership boundaries, creating opportunities for close relationships with many communities nearby and across the country. Many natural and cultural resources and related stories are inextricably linked with neighboring communities and the vitality of storytelling depends on sustaining these connections. In addition, there are communities across the country that are invested in the narratives and the natural and cultural history of national parks, and that derive knowledge and enjoyment from and feel close connections to these parks—even some they may never visit.

For genuine relationship-building to occur, community engagement requires the investment of intellectual as well as emotional energy. The result of these investments leads to many intended and unintended positive outcomes.

#### **Conference Participant Quotes:**

*The NPS is a catalyst for involvement, community engagement, and stewardship.*

---

*The NPS is known for celebrating stories of all citizens and being a welcoming presence in the community.*

---

*The NPS is known to be an integral part of the community, particularly in urban settings.*

---

*NPS staff facilitates a broad community dialogue about values without clouding the process with their own values.*

---

*NPS programs and staff are visible in many communities, and this visibility includes our own interwoven stories.*

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*Members of the general public feel accepted, acknowledged, connected, respected, and valued when they visit NPS sites.*

---

*The NPS functions as a dynamic, interconnected whole rather than as a series of disconnected sites.*

---

*The NPS has moved beyond the narrow path of the agency and has partnerships with other organizations whose missions are similar and aligned, and also have complementary expertise.*

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## **In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the National Park Service creates a workforce reflective of society.**

As demographics change, the NPS workforce changes, and the agency continually strives to attract the best and brightest of each generation. There are, of course, challenges to achieving workforce diversity. As John W. Franklin noted, “Changing the NPS institution will require direct engagement with others to fuel personal learning....The resistance the NPS experiences from ‘within’ will be as significant as the resistance it experiences from ‘without.’” Bob Stanton agreed: “Without the will, the change is not possible.” To create the will and overcome the fear and discomfort that are necessary for real change to occur, the NPS provides professional development opportunities, offering individuals the knowledge and support to make change. The NPS is a learning organization that is consistently evaluating programs and adapting to changing needs in society.

### **Conference Participant Quotes:**

*The NPS workforce is welcoming and representative of the population of the U.S.*

---

*Young people see NPS as a career goal and a place that welcomes all faces.*

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*The NPS is an employer-of-choice for diverse, high-caliber individuals.*

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*NPS serves as a caretaker and a learning organization for all people by being inclusive, open to change, accurate, truthful, responsive, respectful, and innovative.*

*A. Visitors to Independence National Historical Park at the archeological site of the home of James Dexter, an 18<sup>th</sup> century African American leader, discussing his role as a prominent member of the Free African Society and a founding officer of St. Thomas’ African Episcopal Church, two of the first black organizations in 18<sup>th</sup> century Philadelphia.*

*B. Community members participate in a dialogue on “Without Sanctuary,” a powerful exhibit on lynching in America hosted by Martin Luther King National Historic Site.*

*C. Historic photograph of Japanese brides walking across a bridge at Angel Island (now a California state park) when it served as an 19<sup>th</sup> century immigration center.*

*D. Fort Wadsworth—part of Gateway National Recreation Area and National Parks of New York Harbor—at the base of the Verrizano Narrows Bridge was the starting point of the New York City Marathon, creating an opportunity to build community connections to the NPS.*

*E. Freedom songs by Reanae McNeal that reveal bridges to the past during the “African Americans and the Civil War” conference convened by Petersburg National Battlefield in May 2005.*



### Section III.

## Leading Change: Identifying Opportunities and Barriers in National Park Service Organizational Culture



*What are ways the NPS organizational culture supports our progress on 21<sup>st</sup>-century relevancy? Where are the opportunities for change?*

*What are ways the NPS organizational culture inhibits our progress? Where are the barriers to change?*

The primary themes for opportunities and barriers identified within NPS culture are closely related to the key elements of the vision for the National Park Service in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These themes are as follows:

- **Agency Traditions**
- **Workforce Diversity**
- **Community Connections and Partnerships**
- **Leadership and Professionalism**

For each of these themes, the discussion below explores both opportunities and barriers. These two categories are juxtaposed since, in most cases, progress that has been accomplished to date by capitalizing on opportunities is balanced by progress that is still needed to overcome barriers. For example, community engagement and workforce diversity are areas in which the NPS has made great strides in recent years, but additional work is still needed to achieve the vision.

---

### Agency Traditions

*“There is no risk to becoming relevant.  
Our risk is not becoming relevant.”*

Opportunities are created by positive perceptions of the agency and its traditional roles:

The NPS is a mission-driven organization with a commitment to public service. Employees are generally dedicated and intent on doing the right thing. NPS stewardship of a diversity of places and resources across the country speaks to many people and cultures, and provides opportunities for engagement. Interpretation and the sharing of stories are integral to preservation and enjoyment of the resources entrusted to the NPS. The NPS is committed to seeking, interpreting, and sharing authentic and inclusive stories.

The organization is committed to continually integrating current scholarship, exploring innovation in interpretation, and recognizing additional places of heritage. The NPS fosters mutually beneficial relationships with universities and professional societies and stays current on research. Congress continues to identify new sites associated with nationally important stories that reflect the diversity of the public, and addition of these sites continually renews and enhances the relevance of the National Park System.

### Conference Participant Quotes:

*Leadership supports relevance and the organization is making clear steps—education, new sites, and expanded interpretation—to embrace new ways of operating.*

---

*Our culture is to preserve and protect our “sacred” places for future generations to enjoy unimpaired.*

Even so, **perceived barriers** inhibit progress:

The NPS and its professional rangers generally present a positive image for people, but some people have a negative perception associated with uniformed personnel and can be intimidated.

The NPS adheres to agency traditions, sometimes excluding or appearing to exclude new interpretations, meanings, programs, and scholarship. At other times the emphasis is on telling “special” new stories rather than telling a more complete story. There can be a perception of elitism in conservation and in the work of the National Park Service.

**Conference Participant Quotes:**

*NPS often insists on a level and type of scholarship that’s biased toward telling the stories of the dominant culture. For example, we think we can’t interpret the slave quarters if we don’t know the exact dimensions of the building.*

---

*We don’t meet minorities on their ground—we expect them to meet us on ours. We need to understand their cultures better.*

---

*Often the interpretation of a park’s enabling legislation or the “core mission” is so specific that parks don’t or can’t think outside of the box to talk about other topics related to the park.*

---

*Unfortunately, the Park Service has an image problem because it places too much focus on the “crown jewels” rather than on the many historic sites.*

---

*Principal interpretive themes rarely address cross-cultural events or issues.*

---

## **Workforce Diversity**

*“We need to open the dialogue on other levels and be inclusive of all aspects of our workforce and the communities where they live.”*

**Opportunities** are created by pursuing workforce change through partnerships and through NPS personnel initiatives:

Positive changes in recruiting, hiring, training, mentoring, and promoting have taken place in recent years. Successful partnerships with organizations such as the Student Conservation Association, and personnel programs such as the Student Temporary Employment Program and the Student Career Experience Program, are bringing diversity and youth into the workforce.

**Conference Participant Quotes:**

*The organization does provide training opportunities throughout our careers that, if managed better, could help to prepare employees to change our messages and our diversity.*

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*At least there is a critical mass of good people trying to do the right thing.*

Even so, **perceived barriers** inhibit progress:

Although workforce diversity has increased in recent years, there are still opportunities for improvement. A lack of funding for new staff and for professional development is a hindrance to diversifying the workforce. While workforce diversity is a critical step, it does not automatically create relevancy of places and programs. As Reverend Jeffrey Leath reminds us, “Don’t assume that putting an ethnic face at your door makes your message relevant.”

The NPS can more actively engage the younger generation and encourage intergenerational dialogue and mentoring so that people who have important institutional knowledge have opportunities to share it.

**Conference Participant Quotes:**

*Traditionally we have not been diverse enough—we have certain park areas that do not have a diverse staff and are not located near diverse communities; consequently, NPS employees of color may feel isolated and choose to leave the NPS.*

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*We tend to promote from within and so there aren’t many opportunities for people of color to enter management positions. Also, with budget limitations, we’re not hiring many new people and therefore our organization is slow to change its own demographics.*

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*Intergenerational dialogue is important since we need to understand where we came from if we’re going to understand where we are going—or we’re doomed to repeat the same mistakes.*

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*We need to overcome the fear of leaving “comfort zones.”*

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## Community Connections and Partnerships

*“The National Park Service has begun listening to groups who are connected to the resource—this allows the parks to become more inclusive.”*

**Opportunities** are created by increased outreach and partnerships:

In recent years the NPS has increased outreach to communities and initiated partnerships with other organizations and academia. A variety of new approaches such as “kitchen table conversations” are being used to assist in solving problems. Some parks are seen as venues for public forums. There is dialogue on public planning issues and some funding to support research, civic engagement, educational programming, and heritage celebrations.

Many partners are willing to assist with community education, volunteerism, bridge-building with local communities, and fundraising.

The term “community” is used to include the public in all its diversity, as visitors to and students at NPS sites; the pool of potential employees of the NPS; and the present NPS employees.

### Conference Participant Quotes:

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*New community outreach techniques and attitudes are emerging.*

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*The NPS has the opportunity—some say an obligation—to involve youth in natural and cultural resource management—and find ways to train young people for employment.*

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*There is new [emphasis] on inclusive public involvement.*

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Even so, perceived barriers inhibit progress:

There is a sense that authentic community engagement is not yet a consistent approach throughout the National Park System.

Communities of interest, stakeholders, and neighbors are not always included to the extent possible in decision-making processes.

There can be a sense of separateness from the community—that the NPS is “us” and the surrounding community is “them.”

### Conference Participant Quotes:

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*The community often doesn’t see the NPS as an integral part of their sense of place, not like they do with the public library and other public institutions. Our standoffishness helps perpetuate that.*

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*NPS speaks a lot about partnerships but at too many parks it doesn’t happen—it’s a closed shop.*

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*Most of the time, it is an inadvertent, unintended action that is offensive or misses the point with communities of color. This occurs since the communities of color are not the ones traditionally writing or reviewing the “script.”*

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*We have a lack of vision beyond park boundaries. We evaluate success by visitation, not by how we are relevant to all people—not just visitors.*

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## Leadership and Professionalism

*“We need to make these conversations a priority.”*

**Opportunities** are created by leadership and the agency’s openness to change:

There is support within NPS leadership for increasing relevancy. The NPS is focused on diversity as a key to remaining relevant and playing an important role in the social fabric of American society.

The NPS has the capacity to be self-critical and to open doors to new ways of doing things. As expressed by one participant, “At least we are having the conversation!” The decentralized nature of the organization provides flexibility and enhances the agency’s ability to change.

**Conference Participant Quotes:**

*When we set on a course and commit to a cause, things get done.*

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*There is a genuine desire to do better.*

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*The NPS has recognized there is still a problem and is willing to ask the question and try for solutions.*

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*This learning work is part of our jobs, not apart from our jobs—for example, listening sessions with community leaders, and asking questions that help departing employees discuss tough issues in exit interviews.*

**Even so, perceived barriers inhibit progress:**

The NPS needs additional dialogue and professional and personal development to support organizational change related to diversity. There is a need for training on cultural competency, including cross-cultural perspectives, demographics, and methodologies to effectively engage new audiences. Because of existing staff responsibilities, there is a tendency to rely on standard behaviors and strategies rather than to explore new ways of doing business. With additional professional development, staff can learn to assess projects through a richer framework and to create innovations.

To strategically address the barriers to change, the NPS needs additional opportunities for reviewing and assessing effectiveness of experience to date, reaching consensus on priorities for next steps, and sustaining the effort to change over time. There is a current concern with lack of follow-through on dialogue. Certainly, some lack of focus over time can be attributed to factors such as limits on funding and shifts of emphasis to other initiatives. There is often a lack of awareness of the time and commitment required to build a collective sense of strategic direction as well as the relationships and trust that are needed for successful implementation.

There is also a lack of agreement on meaningful benchmarks and systematic evaluation of impacts. Development of good indicators is needed—for example, developing measures of success that relate to the impacts on visitors to national parks, not just on the numbers of visitors.

**Conference Participant Quotes:**

*We want desperately to be relevant and diverse—we just don't have the tools and rewards.*

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*We need a mechanism to share resources (for example, the documentary *Race: The Power of an Illusion*) for learning and training.*

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*We don't encourage an environment of risk at any level—either superintendent or interpreter—in fact, it's just the opposite. We see criticism as bad, not as the starting point for a conversation on the issue.*

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*There is a growing atmosphere of negative consequences for new, innovative, and sometimes opposing thoughts and points of view.*

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*We have not had the organizational stamina to maintain effective efforts. There's always another initiative to undertake.*

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*We hold workshops such as this one, but we rarely follow through and don't evaluate how we actually change what we do....There are limited examples of good indicators of progress.*

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*We don't seem to have the ability to prioritize a short list of actions and remain focused on their achievement over time.*

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*We rush to action plans—rather than nurture the conversation and confront the barriers realistically and constructively.*

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*We need accountability from the leadership to follow through with the strategies and the learning.*

FACING PAGE:

*A. Observance at the African American Patriots' Monument at Valley Forge National Historical Park sponsored by the Delta Sigma Theta sorority every year in June.*

*B. Gift of baleen being presented to the mayor of Barrow, Alaska by the director of Inupiat Heritage Center, a partner of New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park commemorating the more than 2,000 whaling voyages from New Bedford (Massachusetts) to the Western Arctic.*

*C. Interpretive program at Independence National Historical Park.*

*D. Madeiran Portuguese dance group performing at New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park, celebrating the international connections of 19<sup>th</sup> century whaling.*

## Section IV.

# Charting a Way Forward: A Strategic Framework for Keeping National Parks Relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century



*“Diversity work takes time. It’s long-term work, so be prepared for the long haul. It’s not about the destination, but the journey that matters.”*

Guided by the vision, informed by the existing barriers to progress, and motivated by the opportunities, a strategic framework for action emerged from working sessions at the conference.

### Creating a Strategic Framework for Action

The framework that emerged from the conference can serve as a guide for identifying actions that will help realize the vision of making national parks relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In addition to this framework for collective action, there was an emphasis on individual commitment and action.

### A. Personal Commitment and Action Plan

Although the framework is focused on collective action, individual commitment and action are also critical. Former NPS director Bob Stanton emphasized that “the responsibility for achieving this vision rests solely with the individual commitment.” Consequently, cultivating individual reflection is encouraged, and several ideas were shared by participants based on their own experiences (see box below). As part of this strategy, an outline for developing a personal action plan is offered (appendix C).

#### Shared reflections on experience

- *We all have a racial identity;*
- *We need to acknowledge that issues of race permeate our society;*
- *We need to deepen our understanding about the role of race in contemporary society;*
- *We need to engage in active learning about race as it affects us, our communities, and our workplace; and*
- *It is our collective personal and professional responsibility to understand the nuances of these issues.*



*John W. Franklin and Superintendent Cynthia MacLeod in conversation at “Making National Parks Relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.”*



## B. Identifying Strategic Investments and Next Steps

The framework has two primary strategic areas for action that emerged from reviewing the ideas that were generated and reflecting on the dialogue. This framework was also informed by several related and parallel efforts currently underway, as described in *Northeast Regional Office Business Plan, Doing Business in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (2006), *Connecting People to Parks: A Visitor Services Strategy for the Northeast Region, National Park Service* (December 2004), *National Park Service Diversity Initiatives: A Report to Congress* (October 2005), and *Renewing Our Education Mission* (June 2004) a service-wide strategy being carried out by the NPS Education Council (see appendix D for additional information).

Over time, this framework will evolve as the Northeast Region evaluates progress, learns from experience, and further refines a strategy. Future discussions are anticipated which will also improve the framework.

Conference participants indicated the importance of creating a realistic strategy coupled with a system for tracking progress. In her epilogue to this report, Regional Director Mary Bomar establishes two task groups, one for each of the primary strategic areas: (1) *identify and engage new audiences and communities*, and (2) *support change in the workforce*. These task groups will gather additional information and identify top priorities for action drawing on the ideas generated at the conference (recorded in appendix E). The creation of these groups is a response to the participants' desire to keep the vision in focus over time, build upon existing accomplishments and successes, deliberately and collaboratively choose critical next steps for investment, and evaluate new initiatives to learn from collective experience.

### Strategic Framework for Action

1. Identify and engage new audiences and communities; and
2. Support change in the workforce (such as providing professional development for existing staff and recruiting diversity into the NPS).

***In addition, three ways to accomplish these actions:***

- Cultivate existing and develop new strategic partnerships to reach diverse populations;
- Apply knowledge of current demographic trends near parks and within the region; and
- Sustain the conversation, evaluate progress, and continually renew the strategy.

### **Working Together to Lead Change through Accomplishing Actions, Assessing Progress, and Continually Renewing Our Strategy**

*Northeast Regional Director Mary Bomar*

*“The process is not linear—it’s more like a waltz—forward, sideways, backward, forward. Continue dancing toward the end objective!”*

This foundational conversation made significant progress in charting a strategy and identifying the next steps on the road to 21<sup>st</sup>-century relevancy. The key priorities were identified and many ideas were generated at our October meeting (as described in section IV and appendix E of this report). However, to be effective and strategic, we must select our next steps carefully. We are beginning a journey and, as we will be on this road for awhile, we want to plan carefully to make the best investments of our time and resources. In making these choices, we need to consider the most immediate actions to take, but we also need to create an approach that allows us to chart progress toward our goals.

#### **Designing a Collaborative, Adaptive Approach**

The design of our approach is particularly important, since I heard conference participants express their will to change and to lead change but I also heard their concern that this will be another discussion without adequate follow-through. We all agree that this work will take time and we need to make a collective commitment to stay the course this year and over the coming years. For both of these reasons, designing a collaborative and adaptive management approach makes sense. Together we can set goals, identify actions and related benchmarks, measure our accomplishments, and celebrate our success.

#### **Leveraging Other Investments and Initiatives**

There are tremendous opportunities to take full advantage of related programs and initiatives (see appendix D), for example:

##### **Within the Northeast Region:**

- The recently published *Northeast Regional Office Business Plan, Doing Business in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* identifies several priorities and strategies for future investment that advance 21<sup>st</sup> Century Relevancy including increasing diversity of regional office staff and encouraging a more diverse user base.
- The Northeast Region interpretation and education programs have a strategic plan, *Connecting People to Parks: A Visitor Services Strategy for the Northeast Region*, and each year they track accomplishments related to this plan.
- The Northeast Region’s Civic Engagement Program (now housed in the Operations Directorate) continues to share case studies and provide training for staff.
- The Northeast Region provides national leadership for the Legacy Initiative goal on 21<sup>st</sup>-century relevancy through active participation on the NPS Education Council as well as by chairing a national task force on civic engagement under the Legacy Initiative goal on sustainability.

##### **At the national level:**

- The NPS Washington Office prepared a report, *NPS Diversity Initiatives: A Report to Congress*, summarizing progress and identifying opportunities for additional change.
- The National Park System Advisory Board’s Education Committee and the NPS Education Council recently hosted a “Scholars Forum” on the future role of the NPS in civil society; the Board’s Education Committee is also actively working with the NPS Education Council on a Servicewide Education Evaluation Strategy.
- The NPS Washington Office is leading a task force related to the 2016 NPS centennial under the Legacy Initiative goal on 21<sup>st</sup>-century relevancy.

## Making the Right Investments

*“It’s not about how much we do—  
but what we accomplish.”*

At the October gathering, I heard a sincere interest in change—and I also heard and understand the challenges and barriers we face. We must candidly confront these challenges. I agree with Former Director Stanton when he notes, “that one of the major challenges facing the NPS is to identify the means to engage everyone—employees, volunteers, and partners—to further the concept of relevancy in daily work.” I also acknowledge that certain effective programs are already in place, while other approaches have been tried, and that some have worked well and others have not. To move forward, it is important that we learn from both positive and negative experiences, gather new information, and build on our successes.

At the conference, we began an exploration of the barriers and opportunities and generated a number of actions we could take (see Section III and appendix E). Even so, there was not adequate time to thoroughly identify our current work or to assess past experiences.

**To take the next step, I have decided to establish two task groups to focus on the primary strategic areas for action identified at the conference:**

- **Engaging new audiences and communities, and**
- **Supporting change in the workforce**

Both of these areas will be informed by demographic information, enhanced by partnerships, and improved by evaluation and additional dialogue.

I have asked the associate regional director for operations, Linda Canzanelli, and a superintendent (to be named) to co-chair the group on audiences and communities, and the incoming associate regional director for administration and a superintendent (to be named) to co-chair the workforce group.



*Northeast Regional Director Mary Bomar and  
Northeast Deputy Regional Director Sandy Walter.*

I ask these task groups to:

1. re-examine the barriers, opportunities, and action items identified in this report,
2. look at our accomplishments, what is already in place, what we have tried, and assess what has worked well and what has not,
3. review the *Northeast Regional Office Business Plan* and other regional and national strategies and initiatives and identify how to leverage those investments,
4. engage our partners and other participants from relevant communities to incorporate their ideas and explore their future roles; and
5. based on this work,
  - a. identify next steps and where the opportunities are to integrate these changes into our core operations, and
  - b. assess the resources required from the NPS and from other organizations.

I pledge to work with these two groups, review their recommendations for specific actions, and work together to make progress toward our collective vision. In one year, we will assess how far we have come, share our experiences so we can learn together, renew our strategy, and commit ourselves to another specific set of actions.

Today, it is more important than ever before to leverage our actions—to collectively work on a strategy toward a common purpose. Therefore, I ask parks, the regional office, and our partners to work in concert. Together, we can raise the bar and provide the leadership for change.

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### Other Useful Websites and Online Publications

<http://www.nps.gov/civic/>

The National Park Service is committed to using the principles and practices of civic engagement as its foundation for doing business. Creating and implementing a strong training program that reaches all park and program staff has been a key to ensuring that civic engagement is well understood and embraced by all staff across all functions of the organization.

<http://www.citylore.org/>

City Lore was founded in 1986 to produce programs and publications that convey the richness of New York City's cultural heritage. The staff includes folklorists, historians, anthropologists, and ethnomusicologists, all of whom specialize in the creation of programs and materials for public education and enjoyment. City Lore staff can provide valuable information on reaching out to various communities through programming.

<http://www.cultureshapescommunity.org>

"Shifting Sand Communities: Art, Culture, and Neighborhood Change," is a Ford Foundation-sponsored initiative with a focus on economically disadvantaged neighborhoods where changing demographics and market forces are affecting long-time residents. Within these settings, neighborhood-based arts and cultural institutions are developing programs for new and long-time residents. These projects demonstrate the vital role that arts and culture can play in community development, including addressing the tensions that arise between different racial, ethnic, and income groups in transitioning communities.

<http://www.placematters.net/flash/home.htm>

Place Matters is a New York City project founded by City Lore and the Municipal Art Society that works with diverse communities to identify the historic and cultural sites that are important to them.

## Conference Agenda: Making National Parks Relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

### Friday, October 14

- 8:00 Welcome: A foundational conversation starts with more than just “Hello”**  
*Bill Withuhn, Conference Co-chair for National Parks Mid-Atlantic Council and Curator, Work and Industry, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution*  
*Lauranett Lee, Conference Co-chair for National Parks Mid-Atlantic Council and Virginia Historical Society*
- A shared vision of 21<sup>st</sup>-century parks**  
*Mary Bomar, Conference Co-chair for NPS and Northeast Regional Director*
- 8:30 Changing visitors, changing stories: Past, present, and future**  
*Mary Bomar, Moderator and NPS Northeast Regional Director*  
*John W. Franklin, Special Assistant to the Director, National Museum of African American History and Culture, Smithsonian Institution*  
*Robert Stanton, Senior Fellow, Texas A&M University and Former Director, National Park Service*  
*Reverend Jeffrey N. Leath, Pastor, Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church*  
*Cynthia MacLeod, Superintendent, Richmond National Battlefield Park and Maggie L. Walker National Historical Site*
- 10:45 Leading change**  
*Tammy Bormann and David Campt, Facilitators*
- 1:15 Changing an institution at Williamsburg: The little 18<sup>th</sup>-century town that could (and did)**  
*Bill Withuhn, Moderator*  
*Harvey Bakari, Manager of African American History Interpretation, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation*  
*Larry Earl, Manager of Planning and Administration, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation*
- 3:15 Panel: Challenges, opportunities, and pitfalls: Learning from experience**  
*Gay Vietzke, Moderator and Superintendent, Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine and Hampton National Historic Site*  
*Tara Morrison Acting Assistant Superintendent, Sandy Hook Unit, Gateway National Recreation Area*  
*Vidal Martinez, Superintendent, George Washington Birthplace National Monument and Thomas Stone National Historic Site*

### Saturday, October 15

- 8:30 Panel: A little change is good for the soul**  
*George Price, Moderator and Superintendent, Cape Cod National Seashore*  
 “Relevancy by the numbers: you don’t need a weatherman to tell you which way the wind blows”  
*Gillian Bowser, Coordinator, Gulf Coast Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit, Texas A&M University*  
 “From research to results: the NPCA plan”  
*Alan Spears, Associate Director, Diversity, National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA)*  
 “From protest to interpretation: meaning for African Americans at Independence National Historical Park”  
*Dennis Reidenbach, Superintendent, Independence National Historical Park*  
 “On the beach: What if all the people were gone?”  
*George Price, Superintendent, Cape Cod National Seashore*
- 10:30 Can we develop an action plan for change?**  
*Breakout groups*
- 12:00 What are the next steps?**  
*Sandy Walter, NPS Northeast Deputy Regional Director*
- 1:00 Conference Tour: Dexter site archeology: the worm’s eye view**  
*Dennis Reidenbach, Superintendent, Independence National Historical Park*

## Conference Participants

### National Park Service Co-Sponsors

MARY BOMAR  
*Conference Co-Chair*  
Northeast Regional Director  
NPS Northeast Region  
200 Chestnut Street, Fifth Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19106  
215-597-7013  
mary\_bomar@nps.gov

EDIE SHEAN-HAMMOND  
Superintendent  
Hopewell Furnace  
National Historic Site  
2 Mark Bird Lane  
Elverson, PA 19520  
610-582-8773  
edie\_sheanhammond@nps.gov

GAY VIETZKE  
*Mason-Dixon Subcluster Chair*  
Superintendent, Fort McHenry  
National Monument and  
Historic Shrine and Hampton  
National Historic Site  
2400 East Fort Avenue  
Baltimore, MD 21230-5393  
410-962-4290 x 223  
gay\_vietzke@nps.gov

CHRYSANDRA WALTER  
Northeast Deputy  
Regional Director  
NPS Northeast Region  
200 Chestnut Street, Fifth Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19106  
215 597-7059  
chrysandra\_walter@nps.gov

### National Parks Mid-Atlantic Council Co-Sponsors

LAURANETT LEE  
*Conference Co-Chair*  
Virginia Historical Society  
2533 Blenheim Drive  
Richmond, VA 23224  
804-342-9698  
llee@vahistorical.org

BILL WITHUHN  
*Conference Co-Chair*  
Curator, Work and Industry  
National Museum of  
American History  
Mailcode 628  
Smithsonian Institution  
P.O. Box 37012  
Washington, DC 20013  
202-633-1919  
withuhn@si.edu

PATRICIA CONWAY  
Chair, National Parks  
Mid-Atlantic Council  
8015 Navajo Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19118  
215-248-1721  
pconway@design.upenn.edu

ELLEN DAYHOFF  
Member, National Parks  
Mid-Atlantic Council  
670 Old Harrisburg Road  
Suite 100  
Gettysburg, PA 17325  
717-334-0378  
edayhoff@adamscounty.us

NELLIE LONGSWORTH  
Member, National Parks  
Mid-Atlantic Council  
5202 Carlton Street  
Bethesda, MD 20816  
301-320-4824  
nellbabe@aol.com

JANE YERKES  
Member, National Parks  
Mid-Atlantic Council  
116 Berkeley Lane  
Williamsburg, VA 23185  
757-220-1046  
c.j.yerkes@verizon.net

### Participants

ONNTERNOR BLOUNT  
Equal Employment Specialist  
NPS Northeast Region  
200 Chestnut Street, Fifth Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19106  
215-597-3946  
onnternor\_blount@nps.gov

DEBORAH BURNETT  
Employee Development Specialist  
NPS Northeast Region  
200 Chestnut Street, Fifth Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19106  
215-597-9153  
deborah\_bumett@nps.gov

LINDA CANZANELLI  
Associate Regional Director  
Park Operations and Education  
NPS Northeast Region  
200 Chestnut Street, Fifth Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19106  
215-597-1788  
linda\_canzanelli@nps.gov

SANDY CORBETT  
Deputy Superintendent, Boston  
National Historical Park  
Charlestown Navy Yard  
Boston, MA 02129-4543  
617-242-5642  
sandy\_corbett@nps.gov

MICHAEL CREASEY  
*Granite Subcluster Chair*  
Superintendent, Lowell  
National Historical Park  
67 Kirk Street  
Lowell, MA 01852  
978-275-1700  
Michael\_Creasy@nps.gov

DAN DATTILIO  
*Upstate New York  
Subcluster Chair*  
Superintendent, Martin Van Buren  
National Historic Site  
1013 Old Post Road  
Kinderhook, NY 12106  
518-758-9689  
dan\_dattilio@nps.gov

FRANK DEAN  
*New England Cluster Chair*  
Executive Director  
Erie Canalway National  
Historic Corridor and  
Superintendent, Saratoga  
National Historical Park

P.O. Box 219  
Waterford, NY 12188  
518-237-7000x201  
frank\_dean@nps.gov

KATHY DILONARDO  
Interpretation  
NPS Northeast Region  
200 Chestnut Street, Fifth Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19106

KEITH EVERETT  
Associate Regional Director  
Resource Stewardship and Science  
NPS Northeast Region  
200 Chestnut Street, Fifth Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19106  
215-597-0625  
keith\_everett@nps.gov

JOEL FRANK  
Program Specialist, Tourism  
NPS Northeast Region  
200 Chestnut Street, Third Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19106

KIP HAGEN  
*Delaware Valley Subcluster Chair*  
Superintendent, Steamtown  
National Historic Site  
150 South Washington Avenue  
Scranton, PA 18503-2018  
570-340-5183  
kip\_hagen@nps.gov

BONNIE HALDA  
Manager, Preservation  
Assistance Programs  
NPS Northeast Region  
200 Chestnut Street, Third Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19106  
Tel:215-597-5028  
bonnie\_halda@nps.gov

CAROL HARVELL  
Management Assistant  
NPS Northeast Region  
200 Chestnut Street, Fifth Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19106  
215 597-4939  
carol\_harvell@nps.gov

DAVID HOLLENBERG  
Associate Regional Director  
National Heritage Partnerships  
NPS Northeast Region  
200 Chestnut Street, Fifth Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19106  
215-597-1788  
david\_hollenberg@nps.gov

CYNTHIA MACLEOD  
*Chesapeake Cluster Chair*  
Superintendent, Richmond  
National Battlefield Park and  
Maggie L. Walker National  
Historical Site  
3215 East Broad Street  
Richmond, VA 23223  
804-226-1981 x 25  
cynthia\_macleod@nps.gov

JOHN MAOUNIS  
Director, Chesapeake Bay  
Program Office  
410 Severn Avenue  
Annapolis, MD 21403  
410-267-5778  
john\_maounis@nps.gov

VIDAL MARTINEZ  
*Virginia Subcluster Chair*  
Superintendent, George  
Washington Birthplace National  
Monument and Thomas Stone  
National Historic Site  
1732 Popes Creek Road  
Colonial Beach, VA 22443-5115  
804-224-1732x221  
vidal\_martinez@nps.gov

BOB MCINTOSH  
Associate Regional Director-  
Planning and Partnerships  
NPS Northeast Region  
15 State Street  
Boston, MA 02109  
617-223-5122  
bob\_mcintosh@nps.gov

NORA MITCHELL  
Assistant Regional Director  
for Conservation Studies and  
Director, Conservation  
Study Institute  
NPS Northeast Region  
54 Elm Street  
Woodstock, VT 05091  
802-457-3368x17  
nora\_mitchell@nps.gov

TARA MORRISON  
Acting Assistant Superintendent  
Sandy Hook Unit Gateway  
National Recreation Area  
P.O. Box 530  
Fort Hancock, NJ 07732  
732- 872-5970  
tara\_morrison@nps.gov

KEITH NEWLIN  
*Allegheny Subcluster Chair*  
Superintendent, Allegheny  
Portage Railroad National  
Historic Site and Johnstown  
Flood National Memorial  
110 Federal Park Road  
Gallitzin, PA 16641  
814-886-6121  
keith\_newlin@nps.gov

MARIANNE PEAK  
*Granite Subcluster Co-Chair*  
Superintendent, Adams  
National Historical Park  
135 Adams Street  
Quincy, MA 02169-1749  
617-773-1177  
marianne\_peak@nps.gov

GEORGE PRICE  
Superintendent, Cape Cod  
National Seashore  
99 Marconi Station Site Road  
South Wellfleet, MA 02667  
508-349-3785  
george\_price@nps.gov

DENNIS REIDENBACH  
Superintendent, Independence  
National Historical Park  
143 South Third Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19106  
215-597-7114  
dennis\_reidenbach@nps.gov

PATTI REILLY  
Director, Northeast Center  
for Education Services  
NPS Northeast Region  
210 New York Avenue  
Staten Island, NY 10305  
718-354-4534  
patti\_reilly@nps.gov

MICHAEL REYNOLDS  
*Mountains to the Sea  
Subcluster Chair*  
Superintendent, Fire Island  
National Seashore  
120 Laurel Street  
Patchogue, NY 11772  
631-687-4752  
michael\_reynolds@nps.gov

ANNETTE SASSO  
FOIA Coordinator  
NPS Northeast Region  
200 Chestnut Street, Fifth Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19106  
215-597-7384  
annette\_sasso@nps.gov

PHIL SHERIDAN  
Assistant Regional Director  
for Communications  
NPS Northeast Region  
200 Chestnut Street, Fifth Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19106  
215-597-0865  
phil\_sheridan@nps.gov

BARRY SULLIVAN  
*Representing New York Harbor  
Subcluster Chair*  
Superintendent, Gateway  
National Recreation Area  
210 New York Avenue  
Staten Island, NY 10305  
718-354-4665  
barry\_sullivan@nps.gov

CATHERINE TURTON  
Architectural Historian  
NPS Northeast Region  
200 Chestnut Street, Third Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19106  
215-597-1726  
catherine\_turton@nps.gov

EILEEN WOODFORD  
Civic Engagement Coordinator  
NPS Northeast Region  
15 State Street  
Boston, MA 02109  
617-223-5149  
eileen\_woodford@nps.gov

## Speakers

HARVEY BAKARI  
Manager of African American  
History Interpretation  
Colonial Williamsburg Foundation  
P.O. Box 1776  
Williamsburg, VA 23187-1776  
757-565-8471  
hbakari@cwf.org

GILLIAN BOWSER  
Coordinator, Gulf Coast  
Cooperative Ecosystem Studies  
Unit, NPS  
Department of Recreation,  
Park, and Tourism Sciences  
Texas A&M University  
2261 TAMU  
College Station, TX 77843-2261  
979-845-9787  
gbowser@tamu.edu

LARRY EARL, JR.  
Manager of Planning and  
Administration  
Colonial Williamsburg Foundation  
P.O. Box 1776  
Williamsburg, VA 23187-1776  
757-220-7212  
learl@cwf.org

JOHN W. FRANKLIN  
Special Assistant to the Director  
National Museum of African  
American History and Culture  
Smithsonian Institution  
Victor Building, Mailcode 953  
P.O. Box 37012  
Washington, DC 20013-7012  
202-633-4752  
franklinj@si.edu

JEFFREY N. LEATH  
Pastor, Mother Bethel  
A.M.E. Church  
419 South Sixth Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19147  
215-925-0616  
motherbethel@aol.com

ALAN SPEARS  
Associate Director, Diversity  
National Parks Conservation  
Association  
1300 19th Street, NW, Suite 300  
Washington, DC 20036  
202-223-6722  
aspears@npca.org

ROBERT G. STANTON  
Senior Fellow  
Texas A&M University  
Former Director,  
National Park Service  
5608 Dogue Run Drive  
Fairfax Station, VA 22039  
rgs617@aol.com

## Facilitators

DAVID CAMPT  
Campt Consulting  
1238 Irving Street, NE  
Washington, DC 20017  
202-777-6040  
theracedoctor@yahoo.com

TAMMY BORMANN  
Tammy Bormann Consultants  
114 Middle Valley Road  
Long Valley, NJ 07853  
908-832-9781  
tlbormann@comcast.net

## Personal Commitment and Action Plan

— to encourage personal reflection, commitment, and action

This outline for developing a personal action plan is offered as part of the strategic framework for action developed at the conference.

*“The responsibility for achieving this vision rests solely with individual commitment.”*

—former NPS Director Robert Stanton

**What can I do as an individual basis to make the National Park Service relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?**

**What can I do with the assistance of my park, program, or office?**

**How I can support NPS and, in particular, the Northeast Region, in becoming relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?**

## Reports and Programs with Related Strategies and Action Plans

***Northeast Regional Office Business Plan, Doing Business in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (2006) identifies several investment and strategies that advance 21st Century Relevancy including:***

- increase diversity of Northeast Regional Office staff,
- expand regional and national civic engagement efforts, and
- encourage a more diverse user base of parks in the Northeast Region.

***Primary Goals from Connecting People to Parks: A Visitor Services Strategy for the Northeast Region, National Park Service (December 2004)***

- Goal 1: Connect people to America’s stories
- Goal 2: Use a business approach to enhance financial means and capacity
- Goal 3: Evaluate and identify best practices
- Goal 4: Collaborate with others
- Goal 5: Connect people to places through technology
- Goal 6: Open new doors to learning
- Goal 7: Invest in students and educators
- Goal 8: Foster America’s best interpreters and educators

***Framework from National Park Service Diversity Initiatives: A Report to Congress (October 2005)***

1. Diversify visitor base
  - new park units that tell stories previously overlooked
  - new education programs that relate to previously underserved communities
  - civic engagement
  - tourism initiatives
  - National Park Foundation African American Experience Fund
2. Develop NPS expertise in diversity programs and initiatives
  - share with other agencies
3. Diversify workforce

### National Park Service’s Education Council

The NPS Education Council, created by the NPS Director, to carry out the strategy in *Renewing Our Education Mission*. The Council is currently developing a business plan and related action plan for NPS interpretation and education programs. The Education Council’s work group on civic engagement recently supported a Scholars Forum convened by the National Park System Advisory Board for the purpose of exploring the role of national parks in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Education Council’s work group on evaluation is developing a service-wide strategy.



## Potential Ideas for Actions Identified at the Conference

Many ideas emerged during conference plenary sessions and small group discussions, as well as subsequently during preparation and review of this report. The following list is intended to capture the major ideas, but is not intended to indicate any priorities. Rather, this list serves as a library of ideas for future actions.

### 1. Ideas on identifying and engaging new audiences and communities:

- A. Identify existing and new audiences and communities.
  - Explore and identify opportunities for reaching out to diverse urban populations. Seek assistance from other organizations that specialize in this.
  - Identify an array of techniques to reach and engage new audiences and communities.
  - Provide training in cultural competency for all employees to enhance educational programming, workforce diversity, and the ability of employees to select the appropriate tools for the job.
- B. Re-examine and develop messages to engage new audiences and communities.
  - Introduce new interpretation and education programs that relate to previously underserved communities. Seek assistance from other organizations that specialize in this.
  - Cooperate with tourism and marketing partners to ensure that the NPS image clearly indicates that parks provide diverse stories.
- C. Use technology creatively to reach new audiences and communities.
  - Explore using TV networks as well as foreign language newspapers to reach audiences in their native languages.
  - Create a web-based ranger program that is designed to engage new audiences, and evaluate its impact.

- D. Continue research to reveal unknown or untold stories and share findings.
  - Utilize cooperative agreements to start/continue relationships with universities and other high-caliber research institutions to conduct research from primary sources and to sponsor lectures, dialogues, and graduate work to disseminate information related to NPS resources.
  - Reach out to communities to learn how their stories relate to NPS resources, and help these stories be shared.
  - Continue to cooperate with the Organization of American Historians and other professional organizations to obtain advice on particular issues and encourage additional research.
  - Identify new ways for park and regional office staff to facilitate sharing findings of original research among historians and interpreters.
  - Encourage NPS staff and partners to present at professional conferences and meetings and to publish new research findings.
- E. Obtain demographic data and associated information for units and other areas of interest within the Northeast Region (see Section 3 below). Learn new strategies for using demographic data to improve programming and recruitment.
  - Gather existing demographic and visitor survey data into a useable format (such as maps) that can be applied easily to management strategies.
- F. Coordinate closely with the NPS Education Council and capitalize on initiatives at the regional level.
  - Identify pilot projects for evaluation that use the draft Servicewide Education Evaluation Strategy for guidance, and share what is learned with the NPS Education Council's work group on evaluation. Coordinate with the Northeast Center for Education Services and the Conservation Study Institute.

### 2. Ideas on supporting change in the workforce:

- A. Provide professional development for the existing workforce. This includes supporting employee understanding and practice of civic engagement and developing expertise in diversity programs and initiatives.
  - Support additional discussions similar to this one within the Northeast Region at the regional and park level.
  - Convene at least one civic engagement dialogue each year.
  - Encourage managers to allow for alternate schedules to enable staff to attend community events.
  - Offer specific training courses on human resources strategies and on tools for recruitment and retention of employees.
  - Provide training in cultural competency for all employees to enhance workforce diversity as well as educational programming.
  - Inventory existing training opportunities and identify gaps. Provide quality training for all supervisors that includes current information (i.e., demographic statistics from census data).
  - Offer creative approaches to learning (e.g., brown bag lunches, films, and facilitated discussions).
- B. Recruit diversity into the workforce. This includes providing professional development opportunities (e.g., working with partners, managing diverse work groups) and identifying and creating strategic partnerships that can enhance these efforts.
  - Identify existing barriers to diversifying the Northeast Region workforce and develop strategies to reduce or eliminate them.
  - Develop and implement a mentoring program.
  - Continue to use details for training through vacancy announcements.

- Identify and share transferable models for Northeast Region youth programs (e.g. Boston Environmental Ambassadors to National Parks/ Public Land Corps developed at Boston Harbor Islands National Park).
- Explore recruitment strategies utilized by other federal agencies and organizations such as Environmental Careers.
- Inform managers throughout the Northeast Region about youth and student hiring opportunities.
- Identify organizations that can assist in mentoring, engaging, and recruiting a diverse workforce. Create formal partnerships with organizations that have networks with diverse communities and can help to identify candidates for NPS opportunities (e.g., the Hispanic Environmental Council).
- Work with students and student interns from Historically Black Colleges and Universities as well as community colleges and other institutions that can be a source of diversity through the student hire authority.

### **3. Ideas on applying knowledge of current demographic trends near parks and within the region:**

- A. Obtain demographic data and associated information to create an “atlas” for units and other areas of interest within the Northeast Region.
  - Identify funding for pilot demographic studies to create an “atlas” for two parks to demonstrate applied use of this information and assess applicability for other units.
  - Explore a formal partnership with one or more universities to provide data.
- B. Create a toolbox to support practical use of demographic data.
  - Identify models by studying other organizations’ methods for collection and application of demographic data and the application of this information to more effectively reach out to new audiences.

### **4. Ideas on cultivating existing and developing new strategic partnerships:**

This cross-cutting area can contribute to both primary strategic areas since working with partners provides an opportunity for NPS to learn from and share with others. In addition, there may be opportunities for ways to leverage additional funding for initiatives.

- Explore funding opportunities within and outside the National Park Service; for example, contact the National Park Foundation to discuss its African American Experience Fund.
- Develop partnerships with organizations that already reach out to diverse communities through cultural and educational programming.

### **5. Ideas on sustaining the conversation, evaluating progress, and continually renewing the strategy:**

- Review previous efforts to move the NPS toward 21<sup>st</sup>-century relevancy: assess what has worked, what has not worked, and why.
- Convene additional dialogue to further develop this strategy for 21<sup>st</sup>-century relevancy.
- Review the Scholars Forum findings and share them throughout the region to stimulate dialogue. Create forums for continuing this discussion, document the dialogue, and generate ideas for the lead-up to and commemoration of the NPS centennial in 2016.
- Identify a few parks and/or programs that would like to pilot and evaluate projects that contribute to high-priority areas within the strategy.
- Create an evaluation framework for the strategy including identification of realistic goals and associated actions and benchmarks for progress. Use the application of this evaluation framework to inform periodic review and renewal of the Northeast Region strategy. Obtain expert advice on developing an evaluation framework, such as working with universities.

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### NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, NORTHEAST REGION

proudly carries out the National Park Service's mission in thirteen northeastern states. The Region is composed of complex and varied natural and cultural resources, ranging from the rock-bound shores of Maine to the eastern deciduous forests of the Appalachian Mountains, and from the coastal barrier islands to the subalpine summits. Home to a third of all National Park Service museum collections, a quarter of all historic structures, and almost 50 percent of the country's National Historic Landmarks, the region reflects an extraordinarily rich American heritage. In this highly urbanized and ethnically diverse area, the National Park Service offers experiences to 55 million people at seventy-five park units representing more than 20 percent of the entire National Park System.

### NATIONAL PARKS MID-ATLANTIC COUNCIL (NPMAC)

is a volunteer citizens group established in 1982 in cooperation with the National Park Service. The purpose of the council is to undertake strategic tasks for the National Park Service and to promote the interests of the national parks located in the Mid-Atlantic states of the National Park Service Northeast Region. The council has 17 members and each member works cooperatively with at least one national park superintendent. NPMAC's most recent product is *The Four-Tour Guide: Exploring National Parks in Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia*.

**EASTERN NATIONAL**, chartered in 1948, is an association operating in more than 130 national parks and other public trusts. The mission of Eastern National is to provide quality educational products and services to the visitors to America's national parks and to aid the National Park Service with the income derived from these activities. Since 1947, Eastern National has donated over \$77 million to the National Park Service. Eastern National's policies and programs are guided by an elected board of directors. The board, the members and the staff are dedicated to the preservation and use of the parks for the benefit of all Americans, visitors from all nations, and future generations.

CONSERVATION STUDY INSTITUTE



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

National Park Service *f*

Northeast Region *f*

Conservation Study Institute *f*

54 Elm Street / Woodstock, Vermont 05091 *f*

Tel: (802) 457-3368 / Fax: (802) 457-3405 *f*

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