



# Foundation Document Overview

## Badlands National Park

South Dakota



### Contact Information

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## Purpose



*The purposes of BADLANDS NATIONAL PARK are based on the various pieces of legislation that resulted in the creation of Badlands National Park and the legislation governing the National Park Service. Badlands National Park is to be managed to accomplish the following:*

- Protect the unique landforms and scenery of the White River Badlands for the benefit, education, and inspiration of the public.*
- Preserve, interpret, and provide for scientific study of the paleontological and geological resources of the White River Badlands.*
- Preserve the flora, fauna, and natural processes of the mixed-grass prairie ecosystem.*
- Preserve the Badlands Wilderness Area and associated wilderness values.*
- Preserve and interpret the history, culture, and heritage of the Sioux Nation and Lakota people.*
- Preserve and interpret the archeological and contemporary history of use and settlement of lands within the park.*

## Significance

Significance statements express why Badlands National Park resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- The park's geological and paleontological resources provide insight into climatic history, biological diversity, evolution, and geological processes particular to the boundary between the Eocene and Oligocene epochs, as well as a unique opportunity to trace the evolution of the prairie ecosystems of the Great Plains.
- The long history of research in the White River Badlands has contributed greatly to the science of vertebrate paleontology in North America.
- The park contains spectacular scenery, predominantly highly eroded landforms that comprise a concentrated collection of rutted ravines, serrated towers, pinnacles, and precipitous gulches.
- The park protects places of spiritual and historical significance to the Lakota people, including the site of one of the last Ghost Dances, which precipitated the 1890 massacre at Wounded Knee.
- The harsh climate and extreme geography of the Badlands region influenced both aboriginal use and contemporary settlement patterns of lands now administered by the National Park Service and contributed to the establishment of the park.
- The North Unit preserves 64,250 acres of designated wilderness comprising badlands and prairie that offer outstanding opportunities for exploration and solitude.
- The park protects a substantial remnant of native prairie and encloses the largest mixed-grass prairie within the national park system.
- The park provides unparalleled opportunities to observe bison, bighorn sheep, swift fox, pronghorn, coyotes, prairie dogs, black-footed ferrets, and other native animals in their natural habitat.

## Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Archeological and Ethnographic Resources**
- **Scenic Views**
- **Paleontological Resources**
- **Geological Resources**
- **Native Wildlife**
- **Wilderness Experience/Values**
- **Mixed-Grass Prairie Ecosystem**

Badlands National Park contains other resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but are important to consider in management and planning decisions. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

- **Cedar Pass Developed Area Cultural Landscape**
- **Highway 240 Loop Road (Badlands Scenic Byway)**
- **Museum Collection**



## Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from—and should reflect—park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

- **Human History**
- **Sacred Landscape**
- **Wilderness**
- **Mixed-Grass Prairie**
- **Wildlife**
- **Fossil and Geologic Record**
- **Vast Landscapes**
- **Science of Paleontology**

The following themes are specific to the South Unit:

- One of the last Ghost Dances occurred on Stronghold Table and precipitated the 1890 Wounded Knee Massacre, the last battle between American Indians and Europeans.
- Families that historically lived on this land sometimes faced difficult choices and made sacrifices when the Bombing Range was created.



