



Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site Long-Range Interpretive Plan

October 2010



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Prepared by
Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site
Midwest Region
Harpers Ferry Center
Interpretive Planning

Plan Highlights

During the next seven to ten years Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site interpretive services will provide visitors with opportunities to increase their understanding and appreciation for the park and its resources; to engage in local educational opportunities; and to participate in nationally significant events.

To provide an active, engaging interpretive program, park staff and partners will work together focused on the following goals:

- Emphasize the fort experience.
- Improve personal services.
- Host special events.
- Strengthen tribal relations and interpretive connections.
- Increase community outreach.
- Improve the park website.
- Develop and provide curriculum-based education programs.
- Increase the volunteer program.
- Facilitate the development and growth of existing and future partnerships.
- Contact a variety of visitors.
- Upgrade and improve site-specific interpretation.

The Planning Process

This Long-Range Interpretive Plan outlines recommendations for future interpretive services, facilities, and media. Park staff, historians, partners, and stakeholders worked together to develop a comprehensive tool that will outline educational and recreational opportunities for visitors to develop intellectual and emotional connections to the natural and cultural resources found within Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site. Our goal is to promote Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site's resource values through specially planned visitor experiences and excellence in interpretation.

This Long-Range Interpretive Plan (LRIP) recommends actions that should occur over the next seven to ten years. It identifies park themes, describes visitor experience goals, and recommends a wide variety of personal and non-personal interpretive services and outreach activities that will best communicate the park purpose, significance and themes. Developed in concert with the park Annual Implementation Plan and Interpretive Database, it completes the Comprehensive Interpretive Plan for the park, as established in Director's Orders 6. In addition, this planning process has been customized to meet the needs of Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, as well as the conditions and special circumstances that exist there. The ultimate product is a cost-effective, tightly focused, high quality park interpretive program that achieves management goals, provides appropriate visitor opportunities, and facilitates desired visitor experiences.

The Project Agreement was signed February 16, 2010. A series of Foundation workshops were held December 15, 2009, with over 37 participants representing park staff, partners, neighbors, and local community agencies. A Recommendations workshop was held March 30, 2010 with 20 participants representing park staff, local community members, local tribal members, school and university teachers, park partners, and North Dakota Group NPS staff. On March 31, 2010 an implementation strategy session was held with park staff.

Barring legislative changes or major new revelations, the foundational elements expressed in this LRIP – purpose, significance, themes, and visitor experience goals – will remain constant over the life of the plan. Specific recommendations about media and programs may need to be updated as staffing, funding, technology, or resource conditions change. Further design documents must be produced to implement some of the goals and recommendations in this plan.

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Foundation for Planning



Site Background

From 1828 through 1867, Fort Union Trading Post was the largest and one of the most important fur-trading posts in the upper Missouri River region. Located on the northern Great Plains near the confluence of the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers, Fort Union was established in 1828 by John Jacob Astor’s American Fur Company. Fort Union was an important focal point for the Assiniboine, Cree, Crow, Hidatsa, Ojibwa, and Blackfeet Confederacy tribes as well as the Métis who came to trade bison hides and other animal pelts for Euro-American goods. For 39 years Fort Union trading post was a center of peaceful economic and social exchange between Plains Indians and Euro-American culture.

Enabling Legislation

Each unit of the National Park System is created by Congress and the President of the United States. All park planning flows from the mission articulated in the park’s enabling legislation. The enabling legislation is the specific piece of legislation through which Congress created the park and declared its intent for the park. Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site’s interpretive services and program must support this mission and help the public understand the significance of the park.

Public Law 89-458 (80 Stat. 211), dated June 20, 1966, authorized the establishment of Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site “. . .to commemorate the significant role played by Fort Union as a fur trading post on the upper Missouri River.”



From 1828 through 1867, Fort Union Trading Post was a focal point for trade with northern Plains Indian tribes.

Mission, Purpose and Significance

National Park Service Mission

A mission statement is a vision for the future and articulates, in broad terms, the ideas that the NPS strives to achieve.

The National Park Service mission is to preserve unimpaired natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The National Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world.

Park Purpose

Park purpose statements describe why an area was set aside and what specific purposes exist for a park, and are derived from legislation, legislative history, public participation, and public rule making.

During the March 2010 Critical Operations workshop, park staff developed the following purpose statement:

The purpose of Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site is to preserve the resources, and to commemorate and interpret the significant role of Fort Union as a fur trading post on the Upper Missouri River.



Fort Union Trading Post as seen from Bodmer Overlook

Park Significance

Statements of significance describe a National Park System unit's distinctive natural, cultural, and recreational resources and values that are the factual rationale for national recognition of the site.

According to the draft 2003 Resource Management Plan, Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site is significant for the following reasons:

- Fort Union is the best representation of the establishment and maintenance of a permanent post on the upper Missouri River that capitalized on a long-established American Indian trade networks.
- Fort Union is significant for its contributions to the history, exploration, transportation, economics, and culture of the American frontier on the upper Missouri River during the early and middle nineteenth century.
- Fort Union's archeological, archival, and documentary resources offer a comprehensive record of the physical site, providing abundant interpretive and educational opportunities.
- Fort Union epitomizes the mutually advantageous interaction of American Indian and Euro-American cultures associated with the fur-trading empire on the upper Missouri River region of the American frontier.
- Fort Union's landscape retains a moderate degree of visual integrity and provides a sense of place for understanding the interaction of American Indians within the natural ecosystem and the subsequent industrial development of the American West.



Bone china plate fragments of British manufacture, found on-site, reveal the type of dinnerware used at Fort Union.

Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes capture the essence of Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site's significance. They include the most important stories and represent core messages that every visitor should have the opportunity to experience.

While interpretation of any site could touch upon many stories, focused themes increase effectiveness. When well-conceived, themes explore the meanings behind the facts. They open minds to new ideas and perhaps to multiple points of view. When linked to commonly held emotions or universal human experiences, themes encourage visitors to see themselves in Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site's stories and discover personal relevance.

During the December 2009 Foundation workshop participants identified the stories and discussion topics associated with the four primary interpretive topics listed in the 1978 General Management Plan. Four primary themes were drafted and used during the March 2010 Recommendations workshop.

A. Located at the heart of the upper Missouri fur trade network, Fort Union Trading Post influenced culture and economics on this continent and abroad.

- The significance of the fur trade in the history of exploration, transportation, settlement, and frontier economics
- Why here? Missouri and Yellowstone – major water routes; confluence; the rivers are connected to St. Louis and provided transportation to the Rocky Mountains
- Dominance of the American Fur Company

- Catlin, Bodmer, Kurz, Prince Maximilian, Audubon, Sitting Bull - why did they come to Fort Union?
- First steamboat comes in 1832
- Why fur trade? Influence of economics on this continent and abroad
- Who were the traders? How did they live?
- French British fur trade
- Prehistoric trading network
- Westward Expansion, Doctrine of Discovery, and Manifest Destiny
- Louisiana Purchase and Jefferson's vision of northwest passage
- Growth, development, and decline of a major international industry
- Small pox epidemic in 1837
- Military presence at Fort Union, 1864-1865
- Transition from Fort Union to Fort Buford
- Mondak town site
- Europeans of today know more about the American West because of Euro-American explorers/ artists/naturalists who visited

B. Daily life at Fort Union Trading Post reflects the social and economic relationship between and within American Indian and Euro-American cultures associated with the 19th century fur-trading empire.

- McKenzie-Culbertson-Denig: The 3 Managers of Fort Union
- Larpenteur
- Competing fur trade companies

- Trade value
 - Perception – American Indian versus Euro-American traders
 - Uniform – trade
 - Value sense
 - Various lifestyles and the social hierarchy within the Post: Bourgeois, clerks, traders, craftsmen, hunters, interpreters, and workmen
 - Craftsmen: blacksmith, gunsmith, tinsmith, carpenter, boat builder, plus a variety of other crafts
 - Louis Lettelier - example
 - Their importance
 - Background
 - Commodity exchange
 - Volume of fur trade
 - Languages spoken at Fort Union
 - 4 different Euro-American (English, Spanish, French, German)
 - 9 different American Indian
 - Trade operation: exchange of goods and the handling of furs
 - Sustenance and survival – hunting, gathering, trading, importing, diet, grooming, recreation
 - Whiskey trade
 - Family and employees at Fort Union and those left “back East”
 - American Indian and European inter-marriage
 - Why were there so many French Canadians?
 - The impact of disease
 - Medicine – American Indian and Euro-American
 - Who kept law and order?
 - Religious and burial customs
 - Archeological discoveries
 - Reconstruction of Fort Union
 - Deschamps Massacre of 1836
 - Fort Union provided a perception of a safe haven with facilities and amenities that encouraged both American Indians and Europeans to come
 - Fort Union was adaptable as conditions changed – e.g. beaver to buffalo, alcohol, keelboats to steamboats, and changes in weaponry.
 - River navigation caused opportunities for inter-relationships that brought cultures together – intermarriages and treaties.
- C. The northern Plains Indian tribes were affected materially, socially, and ecologically as a result of the fur trade.**
- Everyday life of American Indian people in the area before Fort Union and after Fort Union closed
 - How did the American Indians contribute to Fort Union’s commercial success?
 - 1807-1865 when both Euro-American and American Indian cultures were in balance on the Upper Missouri and when Fort Union began in 1828
 - Distinct and diverse American Indian cultures developed on the northern Plains from prehistoric through modern time. Each of these cultures was impacted economically, socially, and physically by the fur trade in and around Fort Union.
 - Transition from Fort Union to Fort Buford

- Pre-Fort Union trade interactions
- Pros and cons of the influences of fur trade on the life ways of tribes
- How do American Indian tribes perceive the historic fur trade now in retrospect?
- Inter-tribal dynamics: how did tribal relations evolve?
- The Light
- What were the American Indians' personal feelings, experiences, perceptions, and reactions to rapid cultural change?
- How did the fur trade and the goods of the fur trade affect the lives of American Indian women?
- How did the American Indians perceive, feel about, the changes occurring to their native environment?
- Crow-Flies-High Village
- Archeological discoveries
- Fort Union brought an awareness of this place and area to Eastern U.S. and Europe sparking later settlement and expanding the frontier
- Destination and source for steamboats; designed for shallow draft of Missouri, the "Yellow Stone" was the first steamboat up the river to Fort Union in 1832
- Deforestation of river bottoms to power steamboats; Missouri was seasonal river – trade was influenced by season
- Created stability and starting point for explorers
- Beaver and bison in abundance
- Mature cottonwood forest as habitat, building materials, and winter refuge for tribal bands
- Grassland range
- Wide open spaces as cultural draw then and now
- Migratory corridor for birds and mammals
- Wetlands as 'waterfowl breeding factory'
- Hunting as recreation and sustenance
- Some vertebrate species, historically present, are now extirpated, threatened, endangered, or extinct
- The landscape and habitat of the Missouri River and its surrounding environs has undergone major changes, yet retains a moderate amount of visual integrity that provides visitors with an experience of "stepping back in time."
- Overharvesting played a key role in the decline of the buffalo

D. The natural resources including navigable rivers, mature cottonwood forests, open grasslands, and abundant fur-bearing mammals helped make Fort Union one of the most successful trading posts on the upper Missouri River.

- Confluence of Missouri/ Yellowstone had a major role in American Indian trade in the area; Lewis and Clark story – identified location as strategic point to build a fort
- European and American explorers, artists, and adventurers documented the area for scientific/historic reasons while others came for the fur trade, economic reasons, and military reconnaissance

Management Goals

2008-2012 Strategic Plans:

In accordance with the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) of 1993, Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site developed a strategic plan and management goals through 2012. The following goals address recreation, interpretation, and visitor experiences.

The outcomes, or how well the park is achieving its visitor-related goals, are measured annually at every unit of the National Park System through survey forms that are distributed to visitors at each NPS unit. Visitors send their completed survey forms to the University of Idaho where the data is collected and compiled for each NPS unit. The survey results reflect visitor opinion about each park's facilities, services and recreational opportunities, as well as measures visitor understanding and appreciation of each NPS unit's significance.

Mission Goal IIa1:

By September 30, 2012, 95% of visitors to Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site are satisfied with appropriate park facilities, services, and recreational opportunities.

The actual percentages for visitor satisfaction (2008- 95% and 2009 – 100%) reflect a consistency of service and satisfaction.

Mission Goal IIb1:

By September 30, 2012, 80% of Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site visitors understand the significance of the park.

Park staff members believe the percentages (2008 – 73% and 2009 – 60%) for visitor understanding are

low because visitors do not seem to understand the question when asked what the significance of the site is. The park significance list used to determine visitor understanding was last updated in 2004. The statements are similar to, yet not the same as, the significance statements used to develop this Long-Range Interpretive Plan. One statement out of five relates to the fur trade. The other statements emphasize the complementary relationship between American Indians and Euro-Americans, the development of the west, and the preservation of history. To effectively evaluate if interpretive services are affecting visitor understanding of the resource, the visitor survey significance statements should better align with the park significance statements.



Flint knapped stone arrowheads were common on the northern plains before trading posts, such as Fort Union, made metal manufactured items available.

Desired Visitor Experiences

Desired visitor experiences describe what physical, intellectual, and emotional experiences should be available for visitors to Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site. These experiences will be available to the degree possible to visitors of all abilities, including those with visual, auditory, mobility, or cognitive impairments.

Visitors will have the opportunity to engage in hands-on learning opportunities such as raising a tipi and blacksmithing.

- Visitors to Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site will have opportunities to:



- Speak with someone in period dress to learn about life at Fort Union.
- Explore the trading post to learn about the history of the area and the significance and meanings associated with the fort.
- Purchase quality merchandise including books and replicas of historic trade goods.
- Discover the landscape – views, wildlife, fort, and river – the same way and in the same condition to the extent possible that Lewis and Clark, Catlin, and Bodmer did.
- Experience the sounds (or quiet) and open spaces surrounding the Fort, as it would have been experienced historically.
- Experience the sights, sounds, smells, and atmosphere of a working trading post at the height of its importance.
- Hike to the Bodmer Overlook.
- Engage in hands-on learning opportunities related to trading post activities such as blacksmithing, cooking, tanning hides, making arrowheads, and constructing tipis.
- Have an opportunity to interact with upper Missouri tribes.
- Listen to storytellers.
- See the migration of huge flocks of birds and imagine the sights and sounds of buffalo herds running across the prairie.
- Experience the fur trade era fort from the river.
- Experience the sights of the night sky as it would have been experienced historically, unimpaired by light pollution.

Park Visitors

This is a broad description of park visitors and their needs – including current and potential visitors. “Visitor” describes anyone who uses a park’s interpretation and education services whether in person or “virtually” through digital technologies.

Various visitor surveys—including annual surveys and one in-depth survey—have been completed for Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site. These surveys help the park judge the effectiveness of their interpretive programs as well as track visitor statistics. Two types of visitor profiles are presented here: annual visitation figures and results from a 2007 Visitor Survey Project survey.

Approximately 14,000 visitors come to Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site annually. This figure is based on a five-year average of monthly public use data taken during calendar years 2005-2009. There was a 29% increase in visitation from 2008 (12,077) to 2009 (15,632).

June is the peak visitation month, because many people come for the annual Rendezvous. More than twice as many people come in June than July or August. December, January, and February report the lowest visitation. Ninety-five percent of the visitation occurs between May and September.

A comprehensive visitor survey was conducted at Fort Union from June 15 – July 13, 2007 by the Park Studies Unit of the University of Idaho. Survey questions helped determine the demographic make-up of park visitors, as well as what they did or did not like about their experience. The survey also addressed economic impacts to the region from park visitation. The survey was taken during the peak visitor season which



also included the annual Rendezvous special event. The results were divided to indicate responses from the general public and those attending the special event. Of the 629 questionnaires distributed to visitors, 475 were returned for a 75.4% response rate. Some results noted in the survey’s summary concluded that:

- 68% of the general visitor groups were family groups
- The majority of United States visitors were from North Dakota and Montana
- International visitors were less than 1% of the total visitation
- 51% of the general visitors were ages 51-70 years
- 14% of the general visitors were 15 years or younger
- Most general visitors (80%) were visiting the park for the first time
- Most Rendezvous visitors (59%) had visited two or more times
- Most used interpretive services by general visitors were museum exhibits (91%), park brochure (77%), and Trade House (77%)

During the next ten years park staff will focus on education and youth outreach.

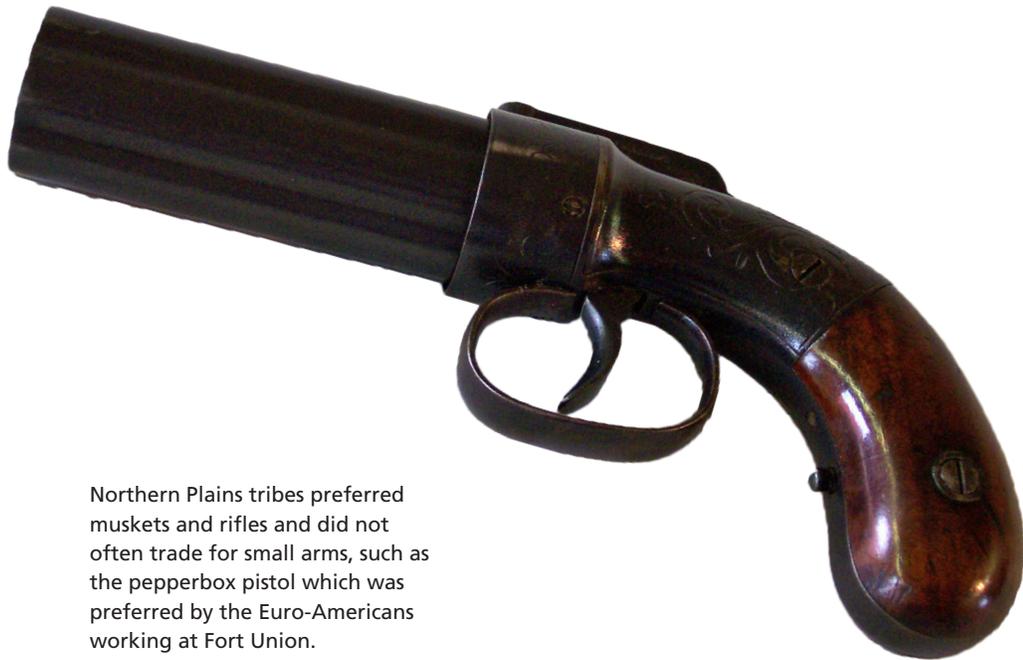
- Most used interpretive services by Rendezvous visitors were restrooms (71%), Trade House (64%), and museum exhibits (60%)
- Most important services for general visitors were restrooms (88%), Trade House (85%), and museum exhibits (85%)
- Most important services for Rendezvous visitors were restrooms (87%), living history interpretation (83%), and information desk assistance (81%)

During the December 2009 Foundation workshop the following groups were identified as currently visiting Fort Union based on particular interests and needs.

Visitor Groups

- Recreation visitors
- Education
- First-time visitors
- Returning visitors
- Organized groups and tours
- Researchers/media
- Off-site visits
- Partners
- Accidental tourists

During the lifetime of this Long-Range Interpretive Plan, park staff will focus on providing increased interpretive opportunities for first-time and returning visitors, as well as education groups and park partners.



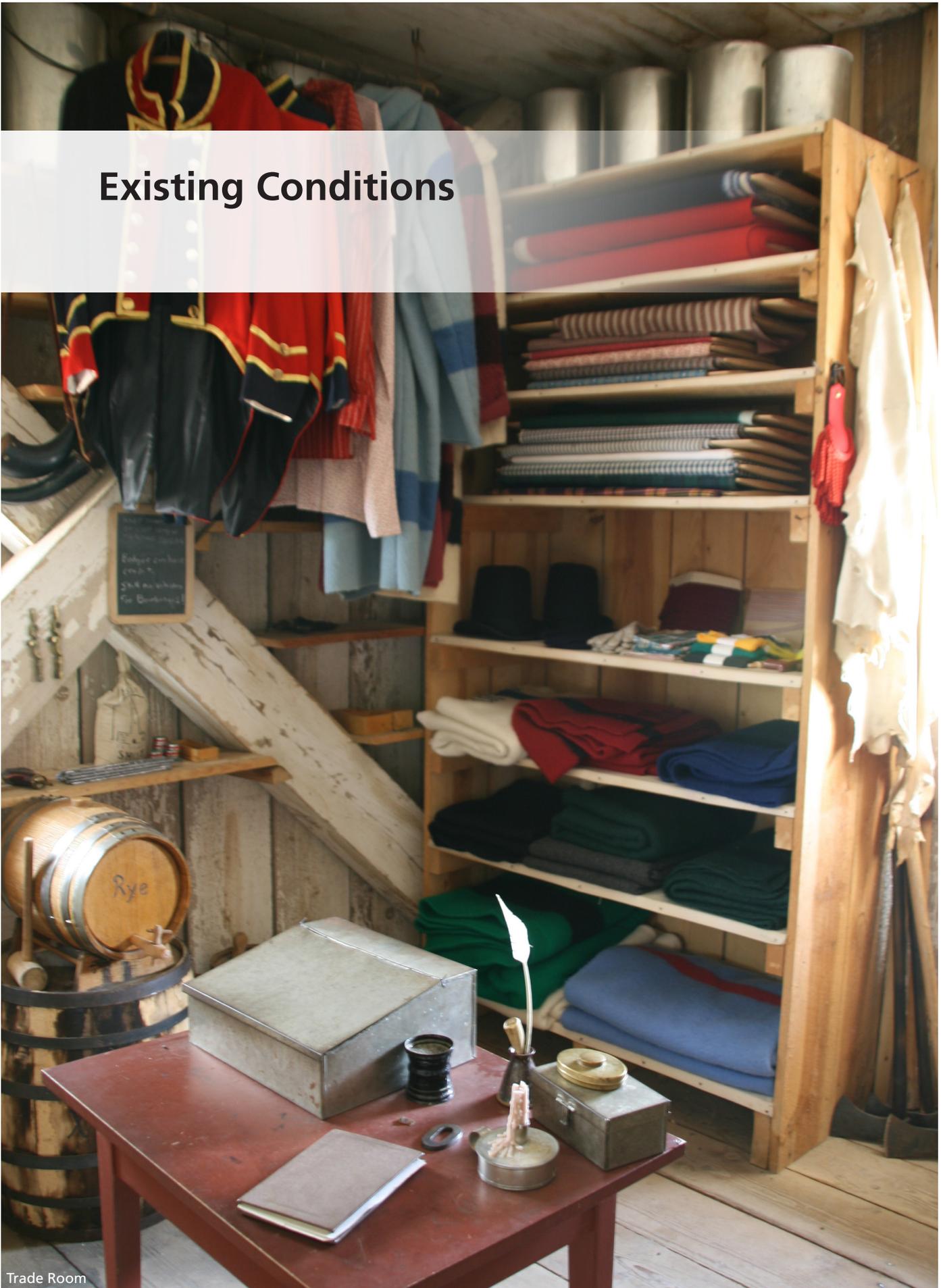
Northern Plains tribes preferred muskets and rifles and did not often trade for small arms, such as the pepperbox pistol which was preferred by the Euro-Americans working at Fort Union.

Issues and Challenges Affecting Interpretation

Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site has many assets upon which to build an effective interpretive program, including evocative and compelling stories, outstanding natural and cultural resources, ongoing research, and dedicated staff and supporters. It also faces a number of challenges. Well-designed programs can build on interpretive strengths to help overcome these challenges.

- Technology has opened many new avenues to communicate with the public about the park. Challenges include keeping information fresh, current, and relevant.
- Responsible energy extraction is vital to our nation's growth.
- Oil drilling rigs and production facilities have a physical presence on the landscape that does not complement the historic scenery. With good communication between the park and the oil industry some negative impacts can be minimized.
- Since rivers naturally meander it is normal for the Missouri River to meander away from the front gate of the fort where it once flowed. River flows are further impacted by Fort Peck Dam, upstream from the park. The river was the high-way system while the fort was active and is a key piece of the park story. As it meanders away from the fort it complicates telling that part of the park story to visitors.
- No major new archeological discoveries are expected, but small artifacts continue to be exposed at the surface of the ground.
- The community desires additional reconstruction of buildings to better tell the park story, to offer living history interpretation, and to provide more working space for park staff and visitors. Additional reconstructions would provide additional space to display artifacts and indoor space for interpretive programs during inclement weather.
- Additional reconstructions would yield significant numbers of archeological artifacts, but would destroy insitu archeological resources.
- Accessibility inside and outside of the park presents a challenge. The walk from the parking area to the fort can be a challenge for those who are mobility impaired. The area around the fort remains a dirt trail which may be difficult for some people to traverse. Better communication between parking lot and visitor center is needed to assist those who are mobility impaired.
- The Rendezvous re-enactors are vital to the park's special event activities. Currently there is a loyal and aging group that supports park activities. Recruitment of new re-enactors would be beneficial to broaden the telling of our park story to more people.
- Food and accommodations are 10-25 miles from the park. Some people might stay longer, if there was a nearby place to purchase a meal.
- Social networking is a new phenomenon which the park has yet to take full advantage of. Whether it would increase visitation remains to be seen but it is a functional way to tell the park story and draw interest to the site.

Existing Conditions



Trade Room

The following is a brief and generalized description of visitor experiences and interpretive services that existed in FY2009. The purpose of this section is to provide a baseline assessment.

Information, Orientation, and Marketing

Marketing

The park informs the public of upcoming events and special programs through news releases sent to area newspapers, radio stations, and television stations as well as public service announcements.

The park receives information requests on a daily basis via letters, phone calls and e-mail messages. Most requests are for basic information about the park and/or directions to the park. Brochure requests are decreasing, as the park website becomes more popular. A park rack card is distributed to area motels.

Park partners, including the Williston Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Fort Union Cooperating Association, and the Friends of Fort Union, promote the park through publications, paid advertising in magazines, and television ads. The local newspapers, television and radio media outlets, and cable TV provider promote the park through Public Service Announcements, and coverage of park events. This coverage serves both to promote the event and cover them as local news items.

The national parks in North Dakota are an important attraction for the state. The state of Montana and North Dakota do a high quality job of promoting tourism for Fort Union and Fort Union also promotes their sites.

Signs

The park does not have a master sign plan. There is a need for a sign on ND Highway 2 just north of the park, for travelers coming from the east. The North Dakota Highway Department has resisted placing a sign in this location.

Website

Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site's website (<http://www.nps.gov/fous>) is linked to the NPS website. The website takes on particular importance for Fort Union due to its rather remote geographic location. It creates interpretive opportunities for people who will never have an opportunity for a tangible visit to the park.

Virtual visitors access the website to learn about park history, interpretive programs, operating hours, and to find directions to the park. Four different QuickTime movies are available on the park website and in the visitor center. The programs include the overview video, Music of Fort Union, a trade house scene, and a buffalo robe tanning demonstration. There is a link to five different videocasts that are available to download for no cost from the iTunes website. The programs include the Music of Fort Union, the confluence, historic firearms, a trade house scene, and the overview video.

The park recognizes the importance of the website as a tool to reach "armchair" visitors, long distance researchers, and as a pre-visit information opportunity. Interpretive staff members work continually to upgrade this medium and plan to develop additional programs.

Facilities

According to the FY2009 Servicewide Interpretive Report, 43,648 visitors were contacted at four different locations within the park: Bourgeois House, Trade House, Blacksmith Shop and the Carpenter Shack.

Bourgeois House/Visitor Center

The Bourgeois House is the park's visitor center. There is a museum featuring exhibits with artifacts that describe life at Fort Union from 1828 to 1867; a selection of three video programs that are closed-captioned; a hands-on fur exhibit; a bookstore; a three-dimensional model of the fort; restrooms; and an information desk.

The visitor center, park grounds, and the fort are open daily Memorial Day through Labor Day from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Central Time and from 9:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Central Time during the rest of the year. The park is closed on Thanksgiving, December 25, January 1, Martin Luther King Day, and Presidents Day.

Trade House

The reconstructed trade house is staffed seasonally by a park ranger dressed as a fur trader of the 1850s. The reception room is furnished to reflect the 1850s era and the trade room is stocked with historic replicas of the goods sold during the post's operation. Visitors may purchase certain replica items. During special



Located inside the Fort walls, the Bourgeois House is the park's visitor center.



events the clerk's office is used for interpretive programs.

The trade house is open Memorial Day through Labor Day 9:45 a.m. to 5:45 p.m. Central Time and in May and September as staffing allows.

The Fort

Between 1985 and 1991, elements of the fort were reconstructed with an emphasis on, but not exclusively to reflect the 1851 time period. In addition to the Trade House, a blacksmith shop, carpenter shack, hunter shed, employee quarters, and a storage range would have been historically located within the fort. The storage range housed a company store, storage room, meat locker, and a fur room. These and other fort buildings are represented by wooden timbers that indicate their location. At certain times tipis may have been set up inside the fort.

The Official Park Map and Guide, a self-guided tour publication (Map and Guide to Fort Union Trading Post), and wayside exhibit panels describe

the reconstructed structures and infrastructure that supported fort life from 1828 to 1867. During special events and some summer weekends, the blacksmith shop, carpenter shack, hunter shack, and a tipi may be set up and staffed.

Trails

Missouri River Overlook Trail is a partially paved spur of the proposed Lewis and Clark Legacy Trail. Visitors can walk a few hundred feet from the fort and cross the flood plain to access the Missouri River. The Legacy Trail was intended to go from the confluence to Fort Union, but never was fully established.

Bodmer Overlook Trail is located north of the fort across the highway and the railroad tracks. The approximately one-mile, one-way walk goes through the ghost town of Mondak, across the mixed grass prairie to the location near where Karl Bodmer painted "Assiniboine at Fort Union" in 1833.

Both trails are great for birdwatching.

Fort Union Trading
Post National
Historic Site



The location of the monitor limits the number of visitors who can watch the overview video.

Interpretive Media

Audiovisual Presentation

A three-minute overview video is available in the Bourgeois House. The video was produced in 1987 by Harpers Ferry Center. The content is shallow and does not capture the site's greater meanings. In FY2009, over 14,000 visitors watched the video. The program has closed captioning. The audio script has been written, but it has not been made available to visitors. The park does have assisted listening devices. Due to the location of the video monitor only five or six visitors may watch the program at a time. Because visitation is modest at any one time, most small groups (families and individuals) have the opportunity to see it.

Five different videocasts/QuickTime movies are available to download for free on iTunes and on the park website. The programs include the Music of Fort Union, the confluence, historic firearms, a trade house scene, a buffalo robe tanning demonstration, and the overview video.

From 2007-2009, Russell Larson from KXMD-TV, David Swenson of

Makoche Recording, and the park staff produced the videocasts. The park is working to get the programs closed captioned. The programs are not audio-described.

Publications

Official Park Map and Guide (2007)
– full color brochure produced by the NPS

Site Bulletins

Fort Union Social Life (2004)
Fort Union's Artists (2008)
The Métis (2008)
The Assiniboine (2004)
Fort Union's Trade House (2004)
River Transportation (2004)
The Bourgeois (2010)

Booklet

Bodmer Overlook Trail Guide (2005)
– Four brief descriptions of what may currently be seen along the trail and at the overlook. There is also a pencil drawing indicating the route from the trailhead to the overlook.

Buffalo Hide Tipi (2003) – Informational booklet describing what life was like in a buffalo hide tipi. The booklet is a companion piece to a historically furnished tipi.

Map and Guide to Fort Union Trading Post (2004) – Numbered guide, produced by the Fort Union Association, that describes the structures at the trading post. There are no corresponding numbers on the buildings or in the area to indicate which sites are being referenced in the guide.

Bulletin Boards

The park does not have any bulletin boards. A lettered board is located behind the visitor center desk to list special events and daily activities offered during Rendezvous.

Wayside Exhibits

Fourteen wayside exhibit panels are located around Fort Union. Originally installed in 1988, the exhibit panels were replaced in 2004. Most of the panels describe an historic setting or structure. Two exhibit panels are located at Bodmer Overlook. One of the panels describes the prairie and the natural setting.

The content and images of the wayside exhibit panels are current and accurate. When the panels have faded due to exposure to sunlight and weather conditions, they are replaced.

Exhibits

Two rooms on the first floor of the Bourgeois House contain a series of exhibits describing life at Fort Union from 1828 to 1867. The exhibits were produced by Harpers Ferry Center in 1988 and installed in 1989. The exhibits feature artifacts, maps, hands-on displays, and historic photos. One exhibit inside has developed a crack and the panels have started to show wear. A few of the exhibits have been replaced twice since 1995. The date of the beginning of the post on the timeline exhibit needs to be corrected.

There is a rotating exhibit that changes bi-annually in the Bourgeois House that features resources from the park archeology collection, and interprets the relationship between what was found archeologically and what is recorded in written history. The exhibit displays items and tells stories from the museum collection, and is designed by the curator. There is also a rotating exhibit in the Bourgeois House exhibit room that currently interprets the Deschamps Family and their demise at Fort Union.

Historic Furnishings

In 1993, a Historic Furnishings Plan

(HFP) for the trade house was completed by Harpers Ferry Center. The plan recommended that the trade house clerk's office be furnished based on the 1851 Rudolf Kurz drawings of the meeting between Edward Denig and Cree chief le Tout Piqué. The reception room is based on descriptions in Kurz's Journal.

Based on the direction of the HFP, the furnishings in the trade house were purchased by the Friends of Fort Union and the Fort Union Association and installed in 2000 by park staff using various vendors to construct furniture and provide animal mounts.

Junior Ranger/Junior Trader

Fort Union Trading Post created a "Junior Trader" Junior Ranger program. Children are invited to complete the Junior Trader booklet designed for ages 8-12. The child goes through the museum, reads the courtyard wayside exhibit panels, and goes to the Trade House. A badge is presented upon successful completion of the booklet activities. In FY2009, 47 children participated in the Junior Trader program. The low participation rate is attributed to inconsistency among the staff to encourage participation.



Exhibits feature artifacts, maps, and historic photos.

Interpretive Media Assets

Media assets include other park resources available to interpretation that support the design of personal services programs or interpretive media.

Artifact Collection

The history and archeology collections contain items representing many aspects of human activity and plant/animal communities at Fort Union from prehistoric times through the turn-of-the century. Archeological objects representing the fur trade include beads and many other trade goods, tools, food and beverage containers, recreational and other personal objects, animal bone, and building materials.

Examples of artifacts with particular interpretive potential include:

- Projectile points of stone, bone and metal
- Trade beads of glass, shell, bone and metal
- Complete or partial bottles once containing bitters, wine, ale, toiletries or food
- Inkwells
- Ceramic gorgets
- Bones of animals, now extinct or extirpated
- Blacksmith's tools and products
- Dominoes, dice, and other game pieces
- Pipes of clay common to Euro-American cultures and pipes of stone common to Plains Indian tribes
- Ceramic dinnerware
- Children's toys (marbles, doll pieces)
- Artifacts for grooming and hygiene

For commemorations of the local history of Fort Union Trading Post NHS and national celebrations of the NPS,

a small collection of administrative history artifacts and documents is also available in the collection.

Archives

Fifty linear feet of archives and manuscripts are available as research reference materials for all aspects of interpretation. All original field records associated with the archeological excavations are included in this collection. Of particular interest are the archeologist's field logs, which often reveal insights related to the discoveries, as well as comments and humorous anecdotes of life during the excavations. Photographs of various stages of excavation and uncovering of significant objects also have interpretive value. For example, the discovery of the floorboards in the Indian/Artisan's House, and the uncovering of the Blacksmith Shop, whose location in the historic journals did not provide a precise location for the structure.

The archives/manuscript collections contain no original documents associated with the fur trade.

Art Work

The collections contain a few original prints of paintings by artists who visited Fort Union between 1832 and 1853, specifically George Catlin, Karl Bodmer, John James Audubon, and John Mix Stanley.

Park Library

The park library contains microfilms of original fur trade documents including 93 reels of Fur Trade Documents and 22 reels of Ft. Buford documents. The park has between 3500 and 4000 books, both modern and historic, which document the fur trade era.



Found in on-site archeological digs, these artifacts shed light on different aspects of life at Fort Union.

Personal Services

Education

From mid-March through April 2009 and 2010, one seasonal interpreter presented 25 off-site programs to 1,252 kindergarteners through sixth grade students at schools located in nine different communities within a 150-mile radius of the park. Fourth grade was targeted because North Dakota and Montana history is taught at that grade level. The programs were not curriculum-based.

Fur Trade Life Program: 50 grade school students from Sidney, Montana or Williston, North Dakota, are bused to the park the last Saturday in April. Students are separated into six groups of 8-10 each and rotate through six hands-on stations including: buffalo robe preparation, a trade transaction, domestic arts, blacksmithing, tipi set-up and Indian games. Each station lasts 30 minutes before rotating to the next. After participation the students are fed a 'traditional meal' that has been prepared off-site. They then travel by bus to the Confluence Center for a tour of the Center and Fort Buford. The program has been offered since 2006, and it has not proven as successful with the Williston schools as with the schools in Sidney. While presented to elementary school students, the programs are not curriculum-based.

Special Events and Community Programs

Fort Union Rendezvous in June – a 19th century fur trade fair includes up to 120 re-enactors in period dress, a dozen traders of period items and furs, and approximately 20 demonstrators of period crafts and music. American Indian participation in this event is limited. The park's most popular event averaged 5,000 visitors

through 2003. There was a decline in attendance from 2004-2008 before rebounding in 2009 to over 4,000 visitors. The addition of children's activities on Thursday and new flag pole raising contributed to the increased visitation.

Rendezvous Run in June – a local area bank sponsors the 11K and 5K runs, a 5K walk, and 1 mile fur traders run/walk.

Indian Arts Showcase in August – commemorates Northern Plains Indian history and culture, through music, traditional crafts, and lectures by tribal historians and elders from Upper Missouri tribes. In 2008 and 2009 a panel discussion was presented at Williston State College focused on the 19th century Plains Indians. Attendance was higher in 2008 than 2009 due to the notoriety of panel members.

Fort Buford Encampment in August – Fort Union Trading Post and Fort Buford staff support the event held at Fort Buford State Historic Site.

Tipi talks reveal what daily life was like for northern Plains Indians trading at Fort Union.



The encampment commemorates frontier military post that was active from 1866 to 1895. The 6th Infantry area re-enactors present a military encampment over the August weekend which includes drill and black powder firing demonstrations. Initially a tent camp, more recently the reenactors have been housed in the newly re-constructed (2004) infantry barracks. The barracks is now fully furnished and provides an excellent stage for interpreting 19th century military life. In 2009, a dutch oven cook-off competition and an evening western swing band were added to the encampment.



Special events, such as Living History Weekend, bring the trading post to life.

Fort Union Living History Weekend in September – re-enactors portray American Fur Company employees and American Indians of Fort Union Trading Post. Primarily this is a work weekend and encampment for the Fort Union Muzzle Loaders. The Muzzle Loaders construct an item to be used in interpretation by fort personnel. Projects have included the two sheds on the interior of the walls, a buffalo robe press, a smaller screw press, a small scale Mackinaw Boat, and a number of furnishings.

Last Bell tours – Staff and re-enactors stage a 19th century event through a candle light tour. The tour stops at 4-5 stations where a small portion of the story is told.

Fort Buford Cemetery Walk in October – A ghost tour brings “to life” some of the dead to tell their stories. Research indicates that some people originally buried at Fort Union may have been re-interred at Fort Buford.

Engages Christmas in December – The Muzzle Loaders (re-enactor group) live and interpret life at a fur trading post during the winter the first weekend in December. Coffee, cider, pemmican, and biscuits are offered to visitors who attend the weekend event. Currently the event has become a recreational experience for the re-enactors with little visitation.

American Indian Youth Partnership Program – 30 representatives from the Hidatsa, Mandan, Assiniboine, and Arikara tribes gave language and cultural interpretive presentations to more than 150 visitors. Three separate two-day sessions were held during the summers of 2009 and 2010.

According to the FY2009 Service-wide Interpretive Report, 114 off-site speaking engagements were presented to 17,926 visitors including service organizations, businesses, church groups, and scout groups.

Personal Services Programs

The park’s interpretive program emphasizes informal interpretation through the use of period dress in the Trade House and NPS uniform at the Bourgeois House. Park staff found this to be a more effective method to contact visitors rather than offering formal programs at a set time. From May through September period dress interpretation is offered

daily in the Trade House. Blacksmith demonstrations are offered on Saturdays, holidays, and during special events. As staffing allows, a hunter, carpenter, and clerk may also be portrayed. Demonstrations feature blacksmithing and historic weapons firing. During Rendezvous and Indian Arts Showcase historic crafts are demonstrated.

Trails and Rails Program –

Approximately 15 volunteers staffed traveling exhibits, gave programs, and answered questions to people riding the Amtrak “Empire Builder” train through northwestern North Dakota and northeastern Montana. In 2009, 54 programs were delivered to 16,080 train riders.

Summer Series Ranger Talks – Park staff present a six program series of one-hour programs at the James Memorial Arts Center in Williston, North Dakota or the Mondak Heritage Center in Sidney, Montana.

Fort Union Symposium – Conducted at Fort Union in 1990 and again in 2000. This conference of fur trade enthusi-

asts consists of formal presentations by fur trade scholars, living history portrayals, tours of area historic sites, and vendors of material culture items, books, and art.

Elderhostel Program – A multiple day program conducted for seniors (55+) highlighting area attractions with programs presented at several historic sites including the Fort Union and Fort Buford sites and the Fort Berthold and Fort Peck Indian Reservations. The program was only offered in 2001 and 2002 because the Elderhostel organizers changed the focus of the program.

Historic Weapons Program

Historic weapons demonstrations such as musket firing demonstrations, cannon firing demonstrations, and military living history programs are primarily offered as part of special event programs. They are conducted by park staff and volunteers under the supervision of NPS certified historic weapons certified personnel according to NPS policies and guidelines.



All historic weapons programs, including musket firing demonstrations, must follow NPS policies and guidelines.

Staffing:

Chief Ranger, GS-025-11 – History Interpretation 95%, Law Enforcement 5%

Park Ranger, GS-025- 9 – History Interpretation 90%, Safety 10%

4-5 Seasonal Park Rangers, GS-025-5 – History Interpretation 100%

Curator, GS-1015-9 – Collections 90%, Interpretation 10%

1-2 Seasonal Museum Technicians, GS-1016-4/5 – Collections 95%, Interpretation 5%

A subject-to-furlough GS-025-9 Park Ranger position was not filled when the incumbent left the position at the conclusion of the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial commemoration.



Buffalo hide moccasins, decorated in a Northern Plains geometric style, currently on display in the Bourgeois House.

Partnerships

Partners

The Friends of Fort Union/Fort Buford (The Friends) – A non-profit organization that supports the management of Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site and Fort Buford State Historic Site. The Friends provide an average of \$12,000 annually for guest speakers, materials, books, and projects that assist with the interpretation, development, and reconstruction of the historic site. The Friends were a catalyst for the partial reconstruction of Fort Union Trading Post.

The Friends of Fort Union are the sponsors of the Fort Union Fellowship. \$1000 is awarded annually to a qualified researcher to produce an article or monograph related to Fort Union.

Fort Buford State Historic Site and Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence Interpretive Center works cooperatively with Fort Union staff in educational programs and special events; as requested in the development of archeological and historical research proposals; presentation of the Fur Trade Life program; and conducts orientation and training for employees.

Fort Union Association

The Fort Union Association is the cooperating association for Fort Union Trading Post NHS. Sales items, including books, trade items, music, prints, and postcards, address two primary subjects: Fur Trade of the American West and Upper Missouri Indian Tribes; as well as three secondary subjects: Lewis and Clark Expedition, 19th century military history of the area, and natural history and regional studies.

Two sales outlets are located within the fort. The Bourgeois House outlet is open year-round, and the Trade House is open seasonally. Trade items must replicate those identified in the clerk's ledger lists of 1848-1851.

In FY2009 annual sales totaled \$45,422. Sales have averaged \$49,203 over the past 5 years. The park receives 14% of the sales in percentage donation funding. The donations provide a Student Conservation Association intern to support interpretive services, funds the Fur Trade Life program, supports Kid's Day during Rendezvous, prints two site bulletins, indexes microfilm, purchases books for the park library, purchases living history clothing, and provides refreshments for Trails and Rails training. Donations have also contributed to the conservation treatment of artifacts in the museum collection.

Volunteer Program

According to the FY2009 Volunteer Report, 201 volunteers provided 6,156 hours of service for interpretation.

Over 120 volunteers provided living history interpretation during the Rendezvous. From mid-May through mid-September, 15 volunteers provided 58 Trails to Rails programs on the Amtrak Empire Building train. Volunteers support special events such as the Indian Arts Showcase and Living History Weekend and run the cart from the parking lot providing access during special events. A volunteer has helped with special event set-up and library organization the past three years.

One volunteer assists the curator with collections management by identifying invertebrates captured in the collections integrated pest management program. This volunteer also assists by photographing animal species to document species occurrence within the park. One to two Student Conservation Association interns typically assist with collections management activities such as performing the annual inventory.



Located just inside the Bourgeois House, the Fort Union Association bookstore offers many different sales items.

Recommendations



Interpretive planning assesses current conditions and formulates recommendations that will provide direction and focus to achieve the desired future interpretive program. A long-range interpretive plan analyzes all needs and recommends a wide array of interpretive services, facilities, programs, and opportunities for partnerships to communicate the park's purpose and significance in the most efficient and effective way.

The Goals for Interpretive Programming are designed to realize the vision, objectives, themes, and visitor experiences described in the Foundation for Planning section. The following principles will apply to all interpretation at Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site:

- All interpretation will address physical and programmatic accessibility.
- Where possible, interpretation will use reproduction objects, documented personal stories, and other interpretive methods to bring the story alive for visitors.
- Where possible, the park will partner with neighboring institutions to develop programs, media, and share research.
- The park will follow the standards of the National Park Service Graphic Identity Program as signs and interpretive media are upgraded.
- Interpretation will include examples and perspectives from diverse points of view. It will respond to diverse audiences, varying levels of interest, and different visit lengths.
- Where possible, "virtual visitors" will have opportunities to view key park vistas and access to new research, studies, management plans, and historical information.

Goals for Interpretive Programming

Workshop participants identified goals to enhance the effectiveness of the interpretive services within Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site. These goals and associated actions are representative of many ideas generated during the workshop. Action items are listed below each goal, and were used to create the Implementation Plan located in the next section of this document. Over the next seven to ten years Fort Union Trading Post NHS will focus on the following goals:

Increase Community Outreach

Informing the local and surrounding communities about park activities and special events is an opportunity to create goodwill with local residents. This can be inexpensively done through continued use of the local media.

Other community outreach options include:

- Develop "Visit Fort Union" kits and distribute to the northern Plains Indian tribes with historic connections to Fort Union, schools, and civic organizations.
- Host annual community meetings.
- Continue to participate in community events.
- Expand 30-second public service announcements presented on cable television and in theaters.
- Continue roadside billboards (paid for by Fort Union Association) in Williston, Sidney, and Watford City.
- Cultivate press contacts and increase number of press releases submitted.
- Send announcements into NPS ParkTips.

- Write and submit articles to local media.

Improve Park Website

Since Fort Union was established in 1966, significant changes in digital technology, in DOI/NPS web standards, and in social media have occurred. During the life of this plan, park staff will need to continually increase and improve their skills with the technology, monitor and update all web-based content to meet the current standard, and remain vigilant about what is posted via social media sites.

An ever-increasing percentage of park visitors are web users who visit Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site (www.nps.gov/fous) seeking information. Many of these “virtual visitors” never actually come to the park, but have their needs met solely through the website. The website should highlight the opportunities and experiences that are available to both on-site visitors and virtual visitors.

Specific recommendations include:

- Develop a web-based exhibit of important artifacts and stories that is updated quarterly. This exhibit could also be posted on social media sites such as Facebook.
- Post video segments highlighting special events.
- Develop a web-based exhibit based on items in the curatorial collection that demonstrate the variety of distinct and diverse aspects of the fur trade. Photographs of the items and accompanying text describe what the item is and how it is significant.
- Develop a virtual tour that depicts daily life at the Fort (Theme B) and post on the park’s website.

- Develop guidance on how to use social media.
- Develop and maintain social networking sites.
- Provide park staff with the ability to update Fort Union Association items and prices.

Develop and Provide Curriculum-Based Education Programs

During summer FY2009 and FY2010, students representing three northern Plains Indian tribes presented cultural and language demonstrations. In the future, the park will slowly begin to increase the number of tribes presenting demonstrations and also begin to incorporate state, tribal, and national curriculum standards into the program. The ultimate goal is to have nine tribes and three European language (Spanish, French, and German) classes participating in a curriculum-based program. Through the education program students will become fully immersed in the fur trade experience, and during the summer season represent the diverse roles, languages, and skills found at Fort Union Trading Post.

An effective park education program requires adequate staff for planning, development, implementation, and assessment. The resources and themes of Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site offer great potential for the development of dynamic and popular education program in partnership with area schools, neighboring parks, historic sites, and affiliated areas.

A well-designed and well-run park education program generally depends on establishing an Education Coordinator position. This role has been a collateral duty assignment for the GS-025-09 Park Ranger, but to be truly effective it needs to be a full-time position. The primary role of the coordinator will be to secure resources to

facilitate the development and growth of a curriculum-based program based on national, tribal, and state education standards.

Future growth of the park education program is primarily contingent upon hiring the Education Coordinator (see Staffing section). This would allow the park to:

- Prepare an education plan that would provide overall direction for the education program. Target grades and schools will be identified as well as funding sources for transportation and distance learning equipment.
- Create a teacher advisory group to advise the park on the most useful ways to offer educational services to local schools and to develop curriculum-based education programs.
- Conduct teacher workshops to enable teachers to participate in on-site curriculum-based programs. Teachers may also be recruited to participate in the North Dakota-approved peer teacher program.
- Establish a Teacher-Ranger-Teacher program to increase interpretive opportunities on-site and in the classroom. A Teacher-Ranger-Teacher participant could also help develop and implement the education plan.
- Develop history, communication, archeology, library science, and education internships in cooperation with local community colleges.
- For grades K-12, develop distance learning curriculum-based programs and lesson plans, Teaching with Historic Places lesson plans, and Teaching with Museum Collections lesson plans. Special emphasis should be given to the fur trade, northern Indian cultures, and archeology.
- Develop a student workshop on the identification, analysis, and care of archeological artifacts that connects to science and history curricula.
- Develop programs that emphasize math and science curricula including building of the fort; trading and pricing; putting up the tipi; constructing bull boat; plant identification and traditional uses, identifying bones, and archeological mapping.
- Collaborate with the Education Specialist at Knife River Indian Villages to plan and implement an education program with that site.
- Host a video contest for high school students on a specific theme that support curriculum. The best video is posted on the park website and is shown in the visitor center.
- Develop an on-site, live-in interpretive program, similar to one offered at Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site, where the interpreters and teachers role-play figures of the fur trade past to gain academic credit.

Specific recommendations include a focus on how the northern Plains Indian tribes were affected materially, socially, and ecologically as a result of the fur trade (Theme C); developing a curriculum-based traveling trunk; developing a secondary school workshop on quill work and beading to demonstrate change in art forms over time; and develop a video program featuring interviews of northern Plains Indians talking about the changes to their way of life following the fur trade.

With a strong program and ties directly to local, state, tribal, and national curriculum standards, more schools will see the value of using the park to help meet their needs. This can be accomplished by involving educators from area schools directly in the development of both general and specific activities and curriculum guides.

Emphasize the Fort Experience

Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site has four primary interpretive themes. During the planning process participants felt that the “daily life at Fort Union Trading Post reflects the complex social and economic relationship between and within American Indian and Euro-American cultures associated with the 19th century fur-trading empire” theme should be emphasized. Working with the northern Plains Indians tribes, park partners, and local schools to provide visitors with opportunities to discover what daily life was like year-round at Fort Union Trading Post is a priority.

Special events have been the primary ways to reveal daily life at the fort. During the lifetime of this plan, the

park will expand interpretive services to include opportunities for visitors to discover the sights, sounds, and perhaps even smells associated with the fur trade era. Services will be offered inside and outside of the fort. While most personal services will be offered during the peak summer visitor services, a winter experience will be developed to encourage local and repeat visitors to come to the fort.

The experience will build on the period dress interpretation that is currently offered throughout the summer at the Indian Trade House and periodically at the Blacksmith Shop. Future visitors will be able to hear some of the twelve different languages and engage park staff, volunteers, and the students participating in the future curriculum-based education programs, who will be representing the diverse community of Fort Union Trading Post.

Visitors may participate in guided or self-guided experiences. An expanded park film will provide opportunities for visitors to discover daily life during inclement weather and off-peak seasons.

Site-specific recommendations include:

Indian Trade House

- Present program using northern Plains Indian languages.
- Continue to offer informal interpretation in period dress and sell replica trade goods.
- Engage visitors in period-specific bartering when selling replica trade goods.
- Create a display of typical trade goods and prices.
- Reveal the story of the meat and grease bricks that were made by

Building on the success of the Rendezvous and other special events, the park will provide more year-round opportunities for visitors to discover what daily life was like.



the Assiniboine using the Nakoabi Journals so that visitors will better understand the amount of meat and grease consumed by a single person over time.

Main Gate

- Tell why there is a wicket trade window.
- Continue black powder programs and historic weapons programs emphasizing the gun trade.
- Present a guided program or talk that explains how the river was the transportation artery during the fur trade era (Theme A).
- Talk about the alcohol trade.

Outside of the Fort

- Develop a northern Plains Indian display at the tipis. Research the possibility of having live animals on-site to further develop the daily life experience.
- Construct a mock-up steamboat by the river that visitors could walk through to discover life on a steamboat and how it impacted Fort Union.
- Present an ecology walk interpreting the prairie; the restoration of prairie; reintroduction of native wildlife; defining features of the land; the influence of these natural elements on daily life at the fort (link Themes B and D).
- Host a stargazing event with storytelling at a campfire to connect visitors to 19th century stargazing and navigation.
- Identify medicinal plants found outside of the fort. The plants could be dried and posters could be made. The uses of the medicinal plants should be stated.

Examples of teas, tinctures, and poultices could be shown. Consultation with American Indian tribes will be important to ensure that visitors and resources are protected.

- Plant garden and introduce era-appropriate foodways.



Furnishing the bastion will reveal more about daily life at the fort and the fur trade.

Bastion

Furnish the bastion to reveal its purpose and function (Themes A and B).

Storage Range

Reconstruction of the storage range would provide increased opportunities for park staff to develop temporary exhibits and present formal programs as well as offer audiovisual programs year-round. This recommendation would only be adopted with approval provided by a new park General Management Plan and completion of all necessary compliance. A policy waiver and

approval by the WASO Associate for Cultural Resources and the NPS Director would also be required. With a policy waiver and approval, a complete archeological excavation of the site would be required, including space and funding to treat, curate, and store the resulting major accession.

The building historically included a company store, storage room, meat locker, and a fur storage room with press. The company store room and the storage room would be large enough to house an exhibit area and an audiovisual/presentation room. The park does not currently have a dedicated space for temporary exhibits, presentations, or education programs. A fur press could be installed in the fur storage room and visitors could have the opportunity to experience that aspect of the trade.

Inside the Fort

- Use formal and informal talks as well as cultural and historical demonstrations to reveal trading operations and what a typical day may have been like including the story of how the fort was constructed (materials, labor, cost, and maintenance); how the northern Plains Indians contributed to the commercial success of the fort; and how the engages interacted with different tribal groups.
- Provide a guided interpretive walk through the fort discussing the daily life of fort inhabitants as if the visitors were new traders.
- Continue to offer “Last Bell” tours that re-enact an event from Fort Union’s past using drama and luminaries.

Carpenter Shed

- Display more historical replicas of

items built by carpenters and more tools.

Blacksmith Shop

- Continue period dress blacksmithing demonstrations.

Improve Personal Services

Interpreters are the best interactive tool in enabling visitors to experience, understand, appreciate, and make personal connections with the resource. Fort Union’s resources and themes present almost limitless opportunities for both standard and innovative interpretive activities. As staffing levels permit, and in keeping within the parameters of the interpretive themes and visitor experience goals, volunteers, interns, and interpreters should be given a high degree of creative freedom to explore and experiment with new programs. This will help to maintain a creative edge and attract new and returning audiences.

Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site reflects more than an isolated day in history. It represents a continuum of events associated with the fur trade. Interpretive talks, illustrated programs, and demonstrations will be used extensively to emphasize the fort experience. Since personal services and interpretive programs are relatively easy to change, activities should be evaluated on a regular basis to discontinue those that are not effective, modify or improve those that require it, and validate those that are successful.

Specific recommendations include:

- Expand “Ranger Talks” during the day on-site and explore other venues.
- Continue to offer “Ranger Talks” in Sidney and Williston. Explore

the possibility of offering the talks in Minot.

- Offer a tour of the collection.
- Develop a project focus for each season such as creating a dugout canoe.

Host Special Events

All special events must relate to the purpose, significance, and themes and provide interpretive opportunities.

For the 2016 NPS Centennial park staff will also strive to be consistent with national and regional efforts by developing appropriate interpretive exhibits, programs, and events at the park as well as working with park partners to create interpretive opportunities beyond park boundaries.

Facilitate the Development and Growth of Existing and Future Partnerships

Interpretive partnerships play a key role in the delivery of essential programs and can also provide opportunities for enhanced interpretive products and services. Partnerships are most effective when partners share a common goal and can leverage their efforts to accomplish the goal.

Specific recommendations include:

- Improve and increase communication between park and current partners.
- Identify and contact nearby tourism sites including North Dakota Group parks to share brochures and cross promote NPS passport program.
- Hold partner meetings at the park.
- Work with local community and partners to organize bus service to the park.

- Distribute and maintain brochure stock at local hotels and restaurants.
- Participate in state tourism promotions.
- Identify potential new partners including the oil and gas industries documenting areas of mutual interest and/or concern. Determine what is the benefit to park and the partner organization? How will they support each other?



Strengthen Tribal Relations and Interpretive Connections

Park staff members are beginning to develop stronger relationships with the nine northern Plains Indian tribes that have the strongest connection to Fort Union Trading Post. The most successful program to date is a collaboration between three nearby tribes and the park that brings students to

Fort Union has an abundance of artifacts that can be used to reveal the stories of the fur trade era.

present cultural and language demonstrations during the peak summer season.

Specific recommendations to further strengthen tribal relations and interpretive connections include:

- Contact Great Plains Tribal Association and the Bureau of Indian Affairs.
- Continue to offer and expand the northern Plains Indian tribal cultural and language demonstrations to emphasize the diversity of each tribe.



Strengthening tribal relationships will help the park expand the number of northern Plains Indian cultural and language programs offered.

- Develop a program that highlights the culture (language, artifacts, stories, traditions, foods) of one particular tribe each season or month during the season.

- Offer interpretive training opportunities.
- Offer career development training.
- Invite tribal representatives to help develop curricula and plan interpretive programs.
- Establish relationships with local tribal governments and councils.
- Highlight successful programs accomplished in cooperation with each tribe.

Increase Volunteer Program

The Volunteers-In-Parks (VIP) program could be enhanced with more dedicated NPS supervision, providing VIP accommodations, and an increase in VIP funding. Greater outreach to those volunteers interested in the historic time period represented by the park could produce benefits in research and the availability of period dress interpretation. An effort to enhance and expand the participation of local volunteers would be beneficial as well.

The park has an active group of volunteers that provide Trails and Rails programs. The Coordinator role has been a collateral duty assignment for the Chief Ranger in 2010, but the program will be more effective when supervised by another employee or a long-term seasonal position. The primary role of the coordinator will be to facilitate the retention of current volunteers as well as the development and growth of this program.

Specific recommendations include:

- Prepare a volunteer plan to guide the development and enhancement of the volunteer program.
- Develop and implement a retention strategy that will include creating and maintaining a database

of volunteers; updating position descriptions and determining how many volunteers are needed for each task; communicating the length of assignment when recruiting volunteers to minimize turnover; working with partners to reduce competition for volunteers; and working with park staff to ensure that there is adequate oversight and support for volunteers. Recognize volunteer achievements.

- Develop a needs assessment for volunteers. Identifying what tasks park staff need volunteer help with will provide the coordinator with the necessary information to successfully recruit. The assessment also would help identify potential individuals or group skills that might be needed. For example, youth groups may be identified who have an interest and skill in developing web-based services. High school students may get academic credit for volunteering.
- Provide more housing for volunteers perhaps constructing a new trailer pad.
- Create a volunteer pamphlet to recruit new volunteers incorporating appropriate elements from the servicewide volunteer recruiting brochure.
- Establish internships with local colleges.

Contact a Variety of Visitors

Most interpretive services are developed for a general audience. Most visitors to Fort Union are coming with no specific needs or for any specific reasons. Recommendations were developed to best meet the needs and opportunities for the following visitor groups to discover the significance of park resources:

Returning Visitors

Offer programs unique to a particular trade or aspect of daily life including snowshoeing, winter fur trapping skills, and tracking skills.

Encourage local families to contribute to an oral history project and share their stories at the end of summer.

First-time Visitors

- Establish online and on-site trail logs supported with visitor observations and experiences. Assess visual intrusion potential before installing logs on-site.
- Develop virtual geocaching sites.

Recreation

- Offer guided hikes to Bodmer Overlook.
- Develop a river-based activity.
- Offer bird and wildlife viewing programs.
- Host a summer bird count focused on diversity and relative abundance of birds
- Offer photography classes and photo contest with yearly categories including landscapes, fort, fur trade life, wildlife, weather, night, and winter.
- Offer art workshops emphasizing the work of Bodmer, Catlin, and Kurz.
- Enlist visitors to become engaged and have them participate in park projects.
- Host a series of workshops including many uses of the bison, medicinal plants, and traditional food preparation.

Organized Groups and Tours

- Develop Exploritas (Elderhostel) and Friend group service projects.
- Unite all three North Dakota parks via thematic programs (archeology, village life, wildlife, rivers).

Youth

- Develop a youth program where the participants make traditional snowshoes, snowshoe on the prairie in the winter; return in summer; and sketch and reflect on changes observed between summer and winter visits.
- Develop Boy Scout and Girl Scout badge projects and activities.
- Encourage a local scout troop to “adopt-the-park.”



Offering more family-oriented programs will provide opportunities for local children to discover what life was like for northern Plains Indian children during the fur trade era.

- Expand Fur Trade Life program to include more towns; more stations; more programs; and multiple age groups.
- Encourage local boy and girl clubs to visit and then to present their version of the early fur trade.

- Increase the number of family-oriented programs in the daily schedule including a Junior Trader program.

Upgrade and Improve Site-Specific Interpretation

Crow Flies High Village Site

An archeology project recently uncovered the area where Crow Flies High Village was located. Seeking protection from the Lakota, the Hidatsa camped close to Fort Buford. Hidatsa descendants and elders live on the Fort Berthold Reservation. The site offers an interpretive opportunity for them to share their family stories about Crow Flies High Village and Fort Buford. A self-guided program to the area could be developed using these recorded stories and history.

Missouri River Overlook

The connection of the upper Missouri River to the fur trade and Fort Union is told primarily within the fort. It is equally important to tell the story at or on the river.

Specific recommendations include:

- Tell the story of Fort Buford and the Confluence Center.
- Use maps or a digital media-guided program to explore changes to river and how these changes occurred.
- Conduct plant studies to include historic recording of naturalists and northern Plains Indian interpretation.
- Conduct a canoe tour and walk interpreting various perspectives on the river and the fort.
- Use the map from Hidatsa Resource Guide to indicate how the Missouri River connected the

tribes and this area as a global trading center.

- Conduct morning river bird walk during spring/fall migration.
- Develop a discovery walk using tools of period naturalist to document sights and experiences.

Bodmer Overlook

Located across the highway from Fort Union, Bodmer Overlook is reached by walking approximately one mile across the prairie. The town of Mondak is located along the trail. Due to the remote location and limited staff available interpretive media may

provide the strongest interpretive opportunities for visitors to discover what inspired Karl Bodmer's painting.

Specific recommendations include:

- Adding an audio component to the existing wayside exhibits.
- Developing a digital media-guided program.
- Revising the self-guided brochure.
- Developing a discovery walk using tools of period naturalist to document sights and experiences.
- Continue and expand the number of ranger-guided walks.



The upper Missouri River is an important part of the Fort Union and fur trade story.

Research and Evaluation Needs

All interpretive programs and services must be solidly grounded in research. In order to fully accomplish the actions included in this plan and support the interpretive themes, the park needs research on the following topics:

- Discerning the relative importance and trade activity of the six primary tribes that traded at Fort Union: Arikara, Cree, Crow, Hidatsa, Ojibway, and Blackfeet.

One of the pillars of the Interpretation and Education Renaissance is the “Culture of Evaluation.” Evaluation also is important in the development of specific media and programs and will be planned as part of all substantial media projects and special programming. Front-end evaluation will inform the project team about what visitors already know about the site before they come, what understandings they may have about the significance of the site, or how to fulfill the visitor’s interest in visiting the site. This type of evaluative study is targeted so that practical use can be made of the results. Formative evaluations allow the team to get feedback on project content before it is fabricated. Knowing how potential visitors react to stories and information or even how the message is displayed can inform and enhance the media product and the overall visitor experience. Summative evaluations are valuable in helping to determine the effectiveness of final media, facilities, and programs – i.e. whether the intended themes are being communicated, if people are actually making use of the information, or if visitor behavior is affected. Summative evaluation may even be a necessary follow-up for certain sources of funding such as foundation grants.

- To improve programs and services, conduct informal types of evaluation such as asking individual visitors why they came to the park and what they expect from their visit.

Staffing and Training Needs

In order to fulfill the vision of this plan, additional funding will be required. Increase funds will enable the park to hire additional interpretive staff. Staff needed include an education specialist who will also serve as the Trails and Rails coordinator. These additional positions will allow the Chief Ranger to focus on other management responsibilities and the Park Ranger to provide more in-depth interpretive services. Operations Formulation System (OFS) and Project Management Information System (PMIS) funding requests will need to be submitted to acquire these additional positions.

The following table shows the current and projected staffing plan required for full implementation of the recommendations in this Long-Range Interpretive Plan.

Title	Grade	Type	Funded	FTE	Unfunded
Chief Ranger	11	PFT	ONPS	1.0	
Park Ranger	9	PFT	ONPS	1.0	
Park Ranger	5	Seasonal 1040 hours	ONPS	2.5	
Education Specialist / Trails and Rails Coordinator	9	PFT	ONPS		1.0

Training

A trained and motivated workforce is necessary for any successful park operation. Emphasis should be placed on accountability for interpretive standards to be applied or adhered to when any park employees or volunteers present interpretive programs, design publications, media, and exhibits, or present curriculum-based educational programs. Ensure that all staff members who provide interpretive services are held to the appropriate NPS standards as defined in the Interpretive Development Program and be trained accordingly.

Because volunteers are an important part of the workforce, interpretive staff members require an appropriate level of volunteer supervisory training.

Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site interpretive staff (paid and volunteer) will benefit from the following:

- Increased interpretive training opportunities
- Coaching and training provided by the NPS Interpretive Development Program registered park coach
- General skills training and expanded training opportunities to focus on specific skill sets needed
- Black powder training
- Training to determine and develop a structure for the interpretive program
- Cultural awareness and sensitivity training

Implementation Plan

The measure of success of any plan is the extent to which it is implemented. Initial implementation of strategies needs to be both realistic and flexible. Because funding opportunities and priorities often change, park management may need to adjust the implementation strategies to adapt to changing conditions. The park interpretive staff and key park partners should meet each year to draft an Annual Implementation Plan for each new fiscal year based on funding opportunities and coordination with other projects. Flexibility is extremely important to allow park staff and partners the opportunity to try new and different interpretive ideas and make adjustments as necessary.

During the 2010 Recommendations workshop, the participants agreed to divide the actions necessary to implement the recommendations into short-term (1-3 years), mid-term (4-6 years), and long-term (7-10 years) goals. Most of the recommended actions for curriculum-based education programs and personal services are dependent on the hiring of new staff. Other action items can be implemented immediately, within existing funding and staffing levels.

Emphasize the Fort Experience

Short-term

- Present skills demonstrations.
- Present historic weapons demonstrations.
- Explore and research how to include animals in Fort Experience including Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site example.
- Put ammo boxes and mock rifles in bastions to begin furnishings program.
- Continue to work with three northern Plains Indian tribes to offer cultural and language demonstrations.

Mid-term

- Offer a summer project that visitors can participate in.
- Plant garden and include foodways in interpretive program.
- Increase bastion furnishings program.
- Extend the amount of time that the buffalo hide tipi is displayed
- Expand to four the number of tribes offering cultural and language demonstrations.

Long-term

- Develop winter fort experience.
- Expand to nine the number of tribes and for the first time include French, German, and Spanish high school classes offering cultural and language demonstrations.

Strengthen Tribal Relations and Interpretive Connections

Short-term

- Continue to work with five northern Plains Indian tribes to offer cultural and language demonstrations.
- Offer interpretive training opportunities.

Mid-term

- Expand to four the number of tribes offering cultural and language demonstrations.
- Offer career development opportunities training.
- Invite tribal representatives to help develop curricula and plan interpretive programs.
- Increase interpretive training opportunities.
- Develop internships in cooperation with local community colleges.
- Establish relationships with local tribal governments and councils. A result of these relationships may be the establishment of a council of American Indians that would advise the park on interpretive services related to American Indian history and culture.
- Highlight successful programs accomplished in cooperation with all northern Plains Indians tribes.

Long-term

- Expand to nine the number of tribes offering cultural and language demonstrations.

Increase Training Opportunities

Short-term

- Offer interpretive training opportunities.
- Offer skills training.
- Offer black powder training.
- Get training in framework development.
- Offer cultural awareness training.
- Build a structure for developing interpretive programs.
- Coaching and training by the NPS Interpretive Development Program registered park coach.

Mid-term

- Offer career development opportunities training.
- Expand training opportunities to focus on specific skill sets needed.

Improve Personal Services

Short-term

- Offer skills demonstrations.
- Offer historic weapons programs.
- Expand “Ranger Talks” during the day on-site and explore other venues.
- Continue to offer “Ranger Talks” in Sidney.
- Offer natural history walks and tours at the river and Bodmer Overlook.
- Offer a tour of the collection.
- Continue to work with three northern Plains Indian tribes to offer cultural and language demonstrations.

Mid-term

- Develop project focus for each season such as creating a dugout canoe.
- Create an archeology object of the month program.
- Expand to six the number of tribes offering cultural and language demonstrations.

Long-term

- Expand to nine the number of tribes and for the first time include French, German, and Spanish high school classes offering cultural and language demonstrations.

Develop and Provide Curriculum-Based Education Programs

Short-term

- Create a stronger curriculum-based program with the cultural and language demonstrations.
- Develop an education plan.
- Request funding for an education specialist position.
- Identify target grades and schools.
- Seek distance learning funding.
- Create a teacher advisory group.
- Use a Teacher-Ranger-Teacher program to achieve short-term recommendations.

Mid-term

- Develop internships in cooperation with local community colleges.

- Recruit and hire an education specialist.
- Develop partnerships within the local education community.
- Develop lesson plans.
- Host teacher workshops.
- Seek transportation funding.

Long-term

- Utilize peer teacher program.

Contact a Variety of Visitors

On-going

- Continue Trails and Rails program.
- Continue relationship with Williston Convention and Visitors Bureau and North Dakota State Tourism Office.
- Continue 30-second public service announcements on cable television.

Short-term

- Continue roadside billboards (paid for by Fort Union Association) in Williston, Sidney, and Watford City.
- Cultivate press contacts and increase number of press releases submitted.
- Send announcements into NPS ParkTips.
- Write and submit quarterly articles to local media.

Mid-term

- Write and submit monthly articles to local media.
- Develop guidance and expertise on how to use social media.

Appendices



A beaver felt top hat and a stamped clay pipe were common items owned and used by Euro-American employees working at Fort Union Trading Post.

Appendix A: The Planning Team

National Park Service

Fort Union Trading Post NHS

Andy Banta, Superintendent

Audrey Barnhart, Curator

Dennis Borud, Maintenance Worker

Robert O. Guderjohn, Volunteer

Randy Kane, Chief Ranger

Tara Richardson, Intern

Richard Stenberg, Seasonal Interpretive Ranger

Loren Yellow Bird, Park Ranger

Toni Dufficy, Interpretive Planner (Team Captain)

Eileen Andes, Chief of Interpretation, Theodore Roosevelt National Park

Maureen McGee-Ballinger, Chief of Interpretation and Cultural Resources, Knife River Indian Villages, NHS

Valerie Naylor, Superintendent, Theodore Roosevelt National Park

Park Partners

Rebecca Brady, Three Affiliated Tribes Tribal Tourism

Doreen Chaky, Board Member, Fort Union Association

Earle Dodd

Marigene Dodd

Doug Flaten, Board Member, Fort Union Association

Laurie Furusest, Board Member, Fort Union Association

Jason Germundson, former employee; assistant principal
Williston High School

Rolf Gjorven, Farmer

Karla Hauk, Administrative Counsel, Trenton Indian Service
Area

Ken Hegge

Greg W. Hennessy, Chairman, Friends of Fort Union

David Herring, Board Member, Fort Union Association

Erik Holland, Site Supervisor, Fort Buford Historic Site and
Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence Interpretive Center

Kim Holloway

Mark Holter, Board Member, Fort Union Association

Becky Kallevig, Teacher, Sidney, Montana

Frank P. Keogh, Board Member, Friends of Fort Union

Amy Krueger, Director, Williston Convention and Visitors
Bureau

Russell Larson, Video Production, KXMD CBS 11

Rod Lassey, Board Member, Friends of Fort Union

Roxanne Llewellyn, Board Member, Fort Union Association

Robert McGee-Ballinger

Donald B. Miller

Gerald Miller

Tony Moran, Sr., Tribal Operations, Trenton Indian Service Area

Vern Neff, Former Member, Fort Union-Yellowstone Missouri
Conference Commission

Karen Paetz-Sitting Crow, Tribal Tourism Development and
Curriculum Specialist, Three Affiliated Tribes Tribal Tourism

Reyna L. Perez, Teacher, Brockton Schools

Lois Rennerfeldt, Treasurer, Friends of Fort Union

David Richter, Coordinator, Great Northwest Education
Cooperative

Nick Smith, Reporter, Williston Herald

Jan Solem, Vice President for Student Services, Williston State
College

Dean Strinden, Director Emeritus, Friends of Fort Union

Pat Wilson, Chair, Fort Union Association

Dwight E. Vanatta, neighbor (farmer)

Bernadette Wind, Teacher, Brockton Schools

Appendix B: Accessibility Guidelines

Every attempt will be made to provide full access to interpretive media and programs to ensure people with physical and mental disabilities have access to the same information necessary for safe and meaningful visits to national parks. This is in compliance with the National Park Service policy:

“...To provide the highest level of accessibility possible and feasible for persons with visual, hearing, mobility, and mental impairments, consistent with the obligation to conserve park resources and preserve the qualities of the park experience for everyone.”

NPS Special Directive 83-3, Accessibility for Disabled Persons

All interpretation will follow general standards for accessibility as described in the Harpers Ferry Center Programmatic Accessibility Guidelines for Interpretive Media <http://www.nps.gov/hfc/pdf/accessibility/access-guide-aug2009.pdf>.



The Main Gate into Fort Union Trading Post



Both reproductions, these items detail the extensive work and talent a typical Northern Plains Indian possessed. Fletching an arrow or breading an entire knife sheath took practice, diligence, and skill.

All photo credits: National Park Service



Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site

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Williston, ND 58801
701-572-7622

www.nps.gov/fous



1843 Peace Medal