

THE
FUTURE
OF
AMERICA'S
NATIONAL
PARKS

First Annual
Centennial Strategy for

Big Bend National Park

August 2007

CENTENNIAL INITIATIVE



Site: BIBE

Year: 2007

Vision Statement

Big Bend National Park is one of the most remote and wild places in America. Sitting ecologically at the crossroads of the eastern, western, northern and southern US, it is a meeting place of the continent's species and habitats. This overlap is unique and offers tremendous biodiversity. The park boasts more species of birds, cactus, reptiles, butterflies, bats and scorpions than any other national park! Paleontologically, the park has the greatest diversity of cretaceous era dinosaurs.

Geographically, the park is situated on the Rio Grande, the international border with Mexico, offering unique cultural opportunities. The park's history boasts early ranching and mining and also includes the Texas Rangers, and U.S. Cavalry, expansive Native American history and 1930's aviation.

Big Bend is a recreation oriented park with abundant almost limitless hiking, camping, back packing, river running, and back road driving opportunities. A great attraction for many visitors is the remoteness of the park - 100 miles to the nearest small town, 4 hours to an airport. This remoteness places an extra burden on the park to provide adequate visitor services and information.

The Centennial vision for the park and its partners is to develop our education capacity through exciting new interpretive displays, to draw in new audiences through a visually enticing Dinosaur exhibit complex and to provide more effective orientation and safety information for park visitors through a park auditorium and film. New recreation opportunities include Activets - a Veteran readjustment and recreation opportunity, and a multi-use bike/hiking trail partnership with IMBA. Other new facilities include a long distance trail and a picnic area. Future resource management efforts will include ecological restoration of the Rio Grande through removal of exotic plant species.

Big Bend has a growing list of supporters including an active and energized partner in the Friends of Big Bend National Park and our long standing partnership with Big Bend Natural History Association. The Friends of Big Bend Board of Directors turned out in numbers for the Listening Session in San Antonio as a demonstration of their willingness to raise Centennial matching funds and to be an active partner.

Resource Management partners such as World Wildlife Fund and Rio Grande Institute are already hard at work restoring the Rio Grande.

Park management and its partners stand ready for opportunities of the Centennial Challenge.

Park/ Superintendent/ Program Manager

William E. Wellman

Site: BIBE

STEWARDSHIP

Provide inspiring, safe, and accessible places for people to enjoy - the standard to which all other park systems aspire.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Big Bend will engage its partners to provide two big picture, inspiring visitor experiences: a first time auditorium with park film to highlight the park's superlatives and to provide for safe and inspired visits. Second, a new Dinosaur complex will be created to show off our world class paleontology to new audiences.

Additionally, restoration of the Rio Grande will allow safer, more enjoyable river use through greater beach and shoreline access for scouting rapids, camping and boat landings by removal of the exotic plant species which now choke the riverbank.

The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS

Site: BIBE

STEWARDSHIP

Encourage children to be future conservationists.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Big Bend National Park has the greatest species diversity of Cretaceous Dinosaurs of any national park. The park contains the complete fossil record from the age of dinosaurs through the age of mammals at the point where dinosaurs become extinct (the KT Boundary) and mammals begin to dominate. This is only a highlight of the Big Bend's world class paleontology, yet these stories and the giant fossils associated with them are largely now unavailable to visitors due to a lack of exhibits.

Big Bend and its partners propose to collaborate with the museums of Texas to create a world class paleontological exhibit with life sized replicas of Big Bend's past life. These new exhibits will be made available at the location where the fossils were discovered and will be largely outdoors so the visitor, families and especially children will visually and physically connect to the site. The museums of Texas have already cast and created many of the needed replicas for their own use and can therefore help Big Bend to obtain these replicas at a reduced cost. Artists can render the scenes in which these animals once thrived here in Big Bend effectively contrasting past and present conditions.

The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS

Site: BIBE

ENVIRONMENT

Engage partners, communities, and visitors in shared environmental stewardship.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Big Bend National Park proposes to engage our communities and partners through a combined effort to restore the Rio Grande by removing exotic species, re-establishing native plant communities and restoring natural sediment transport. This effort will not only be a hands-on restoration project, but a long term visitor education effort through park films, exhibits and interpretive programming designed to reach park visitors, partners and communities regarding this story and its processes.

The benefits of Rio Grande restoration efforts will also go far beyond the park's borders benefiting the many landowners downstream of the park through greater flows and improved water quality as a result of this project.

The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS

Site: BIBE

RECREATION

Encourage collaboration among and assist park and recreation systems at every level—federal, regional, state, local—to help build an outdoor recreation network accessible to all Americans.

Rehabilitate over 2,000 miles of trails within or connected to national parks, including trails accessible to those with disabilities.

Big Bend and its partners propose to create a trail linking the Big Bend Ranch State Park to our west with Big Bend National Park having the goal of a long distance, multi-park trail with a length of over 100 miles. The vast majority of the land is currently owned between the two partners with some small in holdings under negotiation for acquirement by the state park to allow the connection. This is a future 2014 project.

Big Bend Ranch State Park is our western neighbor offering a variety of well maintained trails as does Big Bend National Park. With the addition of approximately 20 miles of new trail in Big Bend National Park and completion of a trail connector in Big Bend Ranch State Park, which is now underway, a major long distance trail linking the two parks could be created. The resulting inter-park trail would be the only major long distance trail on the southern border.

The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS

Site: BIBE

RECREATION

Focus national, regional, and local tourism efforts to reach diverse audiences and young people and to attract visitors to lesser-known parks.

Increase visitation by 25 percent at lesser-known parks through a national tourism effort aimed at helping people to discover the breadth of parks and experiences.

Big Bend and its partner the Friends of Big Bend National Park propose a new multi-experience complex called "Remember the Alamosaurus". It will link Big Bend to the major natural history museums of Texas and to national museums as far away as the New York Museum of Natural History - all of which contain dinosaur specimens from Big Bend National Park.

By linking through the Internet via a webcam of the Big Bend environs with museums throughout the country we can draw in new and widely varied urban visitors who might never have heard of Big Bend or considered visiting. A twenty five percent increase over time is realistic. The visit the park link is to see the actual place where the world-class specimens were discovered. The visitor experience will be enhanced through a major exhibit complex for them to visit and learn about this unique paleontological resource.

The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS

Site: BIBE

EDUCATION

Introduce young people and their families to national parks by using exciting media and technology.

Increase the number of web hits through the introduction of advanced, interactive features that attract young people to national parks.

Big Bend and its partner the Friends of Big Bend National Park propose a new multi-experience complex called "Remember the Alamosaurus". It will link Big Bend via Internet webcam with the major natural history museums of Texas and to national museums as far away as the New York Museum of Natural History - all of which contain dinosaur specimens from Big Bend National Park. A bilingual link is planned for this Internet opportunity.

By linking with museums throughout the country we can draw in new and widely varied visitors who might never have heard of Big Bend or considered visiting. The park link is to see the actual place where the world-class specimens were discovered. The visitor experience will be enhanced through a major exhibit complex for them to visit and experience about this unique paleontological resource.

The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS

Site: BIBE

EDUCATION

Promote life-long learning to connect generations through park experiences.

Enroll an additional two million children in the Junior Ranger program.

Big Bend National Park is a large and truly diverse national park currently without an auditorium or park film. This is a need identified in the 2004 GMP. This facility will be used to educate and excite park visitors to the wonders of Big Bend and its numerous recreational and educational activities such as the park's high quality Junior Ranger program. The Junior Ranger program is currently an extensive activity-based learning experience that will be referenced via the film as available for children to be a part of. The activities that the Junior Ranger program reference are available in a bilingual format.

This service, a park film, has been shown by research to be one the most effective means of reaching visitors and is one that visitors expect and often request when entering the park.

The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS

Site: BIBE

PROFESSIONALISM

Promote a safety and health culture for all employees and visitors.

Reduce the number of employee lost-time incidents and serious visitor injuries by 20 percent.

Big Bend National Park is a large and truly diverse national park with a wide variety of terrain. With over 80% of park visitors traveling off of paved roads - by foot, boat and 4WD vehicles - effective orientation and safety information is essential to a safe enjoyable visit. Unlike most NPS areas, Big Bend has neither an auditorium nor a park film to provide basic information for our visitors.

The addition of these facilities will be a increase first time visitor safety by an enhanced safety message and be a significant step in reducing visitor accidents and injuries overall since a park film has been shown by research to be one the most effective means of reaching visitors and is a service that visitors expect, request and will use when entering the park. This will be a bilingual service.

The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS

Site: BIBE

PROFESSIONALISM

Model what it means to work in partnership.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Big Bend has a number of very active and very involved partners who give to the park in many forms including volunteer time, monetary help and advocacy of park issues. These partners include the Friends of Big Bend National Park, a number of non governmental organizations such as the World Wildlife Fund and many individuals and groups.

The Friends of Big Bend are ready and willing to be model partners and are able to raise funds for a new auditorium and film for Big Bend - a facility which the park badly needs.

The World Wildlife Fund and the Rio Grande Institute are working in partnership to restore the Rio Grande by removing exotic plants and replanting native vegetation. This partnership will continue throughout the Centennial Initiative years. The International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA) is raising money for the study of a multi-use hiking and biking trail in the park which they propose to build and maintain in partnership with the National Park Service. Each of these is a model of partnership at Big Bend.

The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS