

THE
FUTURE
OF
AMERICA'S
NATIONAL
PARKS

First Annual
Centennial Strategy for

De Soto National Memorial

August 2007

CENTENNIAL INITIATIVE



Site: DESO

Year: 2007

Vision Statement

De Soto National Memorial was established in 1948 to commemorate the landing and exploration of Spanish Coquistador Hernando de Soto (1539-1543). De Soto's exploratory forces traveled four thousand miles during its four year mission and had an overwhelming impact on the course of North American history.

The Centennial Initiative provides a wonderful opportunity for De Soto National Memorial to further engage the public with learning opportunities that connect them with our small but very significant resource. We intend to continue to tell the ever evolving story of De Soto and the resources that this park encompasses. New archeological discoveries, new scholarship and new perspectives of the significance of the exploration are shaping how interpretive programs and facilities are being developed. Park staff and park partners are ready and willing to meet the challenges of sharing the rich story of De Soto as we strive to connect children and seniors to our resources. As we share the global importance and significances of De Soto's explorations and impart knowledge of the discovery then and of the archaeological discoveries now, we hope to impart a shared ownership of this resource. We intend to reach out to an increasingly diverse audience and make this resource relevant to them.

We envision increases in educational and interpretive opportunities, improvements and creation of new visitor facilities and exhibits, expansion of existing wayside kiosks throughout the Southeast United States, restoration of shoreline and native vegetations and further integration of Native American stories through interpretive programs and cultural resources.

De Soto National Memorial continues to cultivate partnerships through state and local agencies as well as through local historical societies and non-profit organizations. Currently local residents have come together to create Friends of De Soto National Memorial. We look forward to working with our partners to put our vision of the Centennial Challenge into practice.

Park/ Superintendent/ Program Manager

Scott Pardue

Site: DESO

ENVIRONMENT

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

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

De Soto National Memorial has suffered severe erosion of its coastal shoreline due to several storms in the recent past. The park proposes a restoration project to stabilize the shore, remove exotic species and re-establish native plants. Potential partners include the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program, who bring expertise on creating healthy coastal eco-systems to restoration projects. The project could also serve as a example of environmentally sound resource management practices.

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

Site: DESO

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.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Through a grant from the Florida Department of Transportation De Soto National Memorial has partnered with several state and local entities to begin work on the De Soto trail. When completed in 2009 the trail will be a system of 40 wayside exhibits throughout the state of Florida. The exhibits will re-trace the route of De Soto and his army through "La Florida". Various partners will play host to the kiosks, local and regional parks, state and Federal parks and green spaces in local communities. Different than the explorers before De Soto, the coquistador made his way beyond the coastal lands and was the first European to explore the interior of the Southeast U.S., eventually reaching the Mississippi River. The recorded accounts of these first encounters provides us with a glimpse into the culture of the Native Americans during De Soto's journey. On later expeditions the explorers discovered much more fragemented communities or some that had disappeared altogether. The Centennial intiative would provide the opportunity for the De Soto trail to be completed and bring the story of the journey to a much broader audience.

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Site: DESO

EDUCATION

Cooperate with educators to provide curriculum materials, high-quality programs, and park-based and online learning.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Create curriculum based Parks as Classroom (PAC) program for surrounding area schools. Targetting grades that study Florida history and earth sciences . Currently there is no PAC program at DESO. PAC programs would be designed to study the De Soto expedition and its impacts on the course of North American history. The program would also be designed to study culutres. De Soto is also an excellent location for learning about the natural environment. Sitting on the banks of Tampa Bay and the Manatee River students would have an opportunity to study water ecology, mangrove forests and a diverse wildlife community including the threatened Gopher tortoise.

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Site: DESO

EDUCATION

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

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

In cooperation with NPS Southeast Archeological Center, and with organizations such as the Trail of Florida's Indian Heritage , De Soto National Memorial is interested in expanding its use of cultural resources to tell the story of Native Americans that were here when De Soto arrived. The park is host to several pre -historic shell middens. One initiative would be to construct a raised boardwalk that takes visitors out to observe one of the middens. At the end of the walk visitors would be prevented from stepping off the boardwalk by railings and flanked on either side by informative kiosks. The destination would also be used during guided hikes by Rangers and volunteers.

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Site: DESO

EDUCATION

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

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

De Soto National Memorials Junior Ranger booklet is currently a few black and white photocopied pieces of paper stapled together. It is the parks intention to create a new full color bound booklet . The Junior Rangers would learn about the various features of the park and include historical, cultural and natural elements. The new booklet would be designed to work on its own and also as a workbook for the PAC program.

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