

THE
FUTURE
OF
AMERICA'S
NATIONAL
PARKS

First Annual
Centennial Strategy for

El Morro National Monument

August 2007

CENTENNIAL INITIATIVE



Site: ELMO

Year: 2007

Vision Statement

On a cold December night in 2006, a group of people gathered at El Morro to celebrate its centennial as the second national monument created by presidential proclamation. With cups of hot chocolate clutched in mittened hands, people greeted each other and shared delight that El Morro's fantastic collection of petroglyphs, inscriptions, and Ancestral Puebloan sites was beginning a second century as a treasured and protected part of the American landscape. Old timers told stories and archeologists discussed using lasers to monitor inscription conditions. Families recalled bringing children to wonder at the carvings in the stone and to sniff the candy scent of ponderosa pines. We thanked President Theodore Roosevelt for creating the perpetual gift of El Morro, one that each generation presents to the next. In the glow of starlight and New Mexican luminarias, a community of people renewed their promise to preserve and protect El Morro for the enjoyment of future generations.

Our vision for El Morro upon the centennial of the National Park Service is a simple extension of our vision for El Morro at its own 100-year mark. We want the future to have many ingredients from the past - a broad community of stewards (employees, volunteers, neighbors, visitors, tribal peoples, scholars, artists, children and seniors) to study, to share, to question, to challenge, to fix, to honor, to innovate. El Morro exists because it has something rare and precious - qualities relevant to people in 1906. To keep El Morro's resources, we must act quickly but carefully to preserve the most threatened inscriptions and archeological sites. We will look hard at natural and cultural landscape restoration possibilities. To remain relevant, we will connect with a broader public. We will rehabilitate our trails for safe access. The curious will learn through greatly expanded web pages and other media. School children will see the diversity of their own classrooms reflected in the employees and volunteers who greet their fieldtrips. Our own NPS workforce will feel empowered and recognized for good work, whether for a season, a year, or an entire career.

In 2016 we imagine another gathering at El Morro. We hope the old timers can still come. We also hope for new faces - boys and girls clubs members, students, hiking clubs from nearby tribes, and perhaps members of a new "friends organization." Our wish is that the group, though different from that of 2006, renews the old promise, for a new generation and many more to come.

Park/ Superintendent/ Program Manager

Kayci Cook Collins, 4th Generation NPS Employee and 3rd Generation NPS Superintendent

Site: ELMO

STEWARDSHIP

Improve the condition of park resources and assets.

Rehabilitate high-priority historic buildings to good condition, and help communities to preserve their history

We will continue to improve the condition of El Morro's historic Visitor Center/Administrative Building complex. These structures date variously from the 1930s and the Mission-66 era. We have recently reroofed the buildings and conducted preservation treatments to the stone masonry. A Centennial Strategy goal for further improvement will be to install a sprinkler system to protect the structures and their contents against structural fire.

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

Restore native habitats by controlling invasive species and reintroducing key plant and animal species.

We will work to bring invasive plant species such as cheat grass, mullein, and others under control at El Morro National Monument. Part of our strategy will be to encourage our neighbors to control or eradicate invasive plants from lands adjacent to the monument. Weed-pulling would make great projects for scouting groups and other organizations seeking service projects. Our local cable TV channel is a likely partner for sharing information on the threats posed by invasives and importance of staying on top of control actions. County agricultural extension office can also help us spread the word.

El Morro is within the historic range of the black-footed ferret - we will continue to look for signs that the ferret has become reestablished in its historic habitat.

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

Improve high-priority assets to acceptable condition, as measured by the Facility Condition Index.

Rehabilitate the trails at El Morro National Monument. The Inscription Loop Trail provides access (most of it wheelchair and stroller-accessible) to the most famous inscriptions and is open all year long. The trail to the top of El Morro and Atsinna Pueblo has many historic elements that must be carefully repaired (carved stone steps, stacked stone retaining walls) and has become very difficult to keep open after snowstorms. These trails form the primary visitor access system to the most significant resources at El Morro and have the highest Asset Priority Index ratings of our facilities. By the NPS Centennial, both trails should be in much better condition.

We will treat the most threatened historical inscriptions to reduce the likelihood of loss and irreversible weathering. Existing and new partnerships will help us accomplish this important work.

Site: ELMO

STEWARDSHIP

Improve the condition of park resources and assets.

We will continue our commitment to the Vanishing Treasures program of the NPS as it relates to El Morro through regular preservation treatments of masonry walls at Atsinna Pueblo. For other archeological sites threatened by the digging of animals such as badgers, we will implement recommendations from a recent bioturbation study.

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

Improve the natural resources in parks, as measured by the vital signs developed under the Natural Resource Challenge.

Vital signs establishment for monitoring natural resources health in our network of parks is not yet complete, however, we will continue to use a variety of methods to establish baselines and monitor conditions, and undertake actions to improve conditions and then maintain those improvements.

When we begin El Morro's General Management Plan, we will consider actions that might change the nature of the pool of water that lies at the base of El Morro. Hydrology studies show that the water level, raised in the last century by construction of a dam, threatens a number of inscriptions. The GMP process will allow us to analyze alternatives to reduce the infiltration of water into the soft sandstone into which El Morro's famous petroglyphs and inscriptions are carved.

Chief among our current and future activities will be landscape treatments done to implement El Morro's Fire Management Plan. More than a century of fire suppression has contributed to forest encroachment in much of the monument. We will continue to reduce fuels and move toward a more historically appropriate natural and cultural landscape using mechanical thinning and other means.

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

Complete all cultural resource inventories for designated priority resources.

We will seek to complete a Historic Structure Report for our Cecil Doty designed Visitor Center (Mission 66) and the earlier visitor contact/admin building complex (1930s). This document will help propel us toward a number of other priorities - replacing the outdated exhibitry in the Visitor Center, and installing a sprinkler system for fire suppression.

We are already partnering to produce a Cultural Landscape Report for El Morro - this should be done well before the centennial of the NPS.

Site: ELMO

STEWARDSHIP

Improve the condition of park resources and assets.

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

Site: ELMO

STEWARDSHIP

Encourage children to be future conservationists.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Several of our other Centennial Strategy objectives relate to our plans to get kids more connected to El Morro, whether it is through education programs, the Junior Ranger program, or partnerships with local tribes. Children will be exposed to messages about the importance of caring for important resources (native languages, medicinal plant populations, inscriptions and petroglyphs, nesting peregrine falcons) - those at El Morro, and those where they live.

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

Site: ELMO

ENVIRONMENT

Reduce environmental impacts of park operations.

Reduce the environmental impacts of park operations on air and water quality.

We will broaden our environmental management program by implementing a recycling program, reducing our solid waste generation, seeking and using bio-friendly materials in park operations and construction projects, and reducing our energy use for heating, cooling and vehicular travel. We're currently working on strategies that will help us achieve our environmental leadership goals.

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

Site: ELMO

ENVIRONMENT

Inspire an environmental conscience in Americans.

Establish programs to showcase exemplary environmental practices and increase visitor awareness of how the practices apply to their daily lives, as measured by surveys.

At El Morro, we can showcase our use of native plants in landscaping around our public buildings to show visitors alternatives to exotics that may use more water and outcompete desirable native species. We can look into capturing some of the rainwater that falls on our park buildings to use in watering landscaping both in the housing area and around the administrative buildings.

When we rehabilitate our trails, we can construct simple exhibits that describe the benefits of replacing petroleum-based asphalt trail tread with more natural materials that do not pose a hazard to delicate soils, plants, and other biota.

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

Demonstrate environmental excellence through increased use of alternative energy and fuels at every park.

We will look at integrating solar energy into our operations for heating and lighting our public spaces and housing units. We will continue to consider alternative fuel vehicles for rental and purchase, and push for those alternative fuels to be sold in our local communities.

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

Site: ELMO

ENVIRONMENT

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

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

We will spearhead an effort to get other agencies (federal, state, local) interested in partnering on a recycling program. Options include developing a local recycling program or partnering to transport recyclables to existing recycling centers (70 miles away).

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

Site: ELMO

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.

Rehabilitate both the Inscription Loop Trail and trail to the top of El Morro as the primary means of experiencing the stories and resources of El Morro and to improve their value as recreational trails (for health and exercise).

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

Site: ELMO

RECREATION

Establish "volun-tourism" excursions to national parks for volunteers to help achieve natural and cultural resource protection goals.

Increase annual volunteer hours by 100 percent, from 5.2 million hours to 10.4 million hours.

El Morro will, at the time of the Centennial, have increased capacity to host more volunteers to work with us on all types of projects and regular park operations. We have some housing, but that is limited, so we will need to focus our volunteer program on communities withing communting distance of El Morro. These communities, including town on tribal lands, will offer much in the way of cultural diversity.

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

Site: ELMO

RECREATION

Expand partnerships with schools and boys and girls associations to show how national park experiences can improve children's lives.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Our nearby communities have a number of children's clubs and associations that we can work with. We will seek to create relationships with these organizations that will focus on how much fun it can be to come to national parks - to hike and get exercise, to help with work projects, to learn about the park's stories, to see the different kinds of cool jobs that national parks can offer.

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

Site: ELMO

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.

El Morro has ample room for greater visitation and we will be part of statewide and national tourism projects to publicize the undiscovered nature of this enchanting place. Web pages will also help us catch more visitors.

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

Increase the number of visitors that attend ranger-facilitated programs such as campfire talks, hikes, and school programs.

Beginning in FY08, if the seasonal funding initiative becomes a reality, we will be able to increase the on-site and off-site educational programs we can do. We will also enthusiastically reinstate the campfire programs and do more guided hikes to help visitors explore more fully the stories and resources that make El Morro such a wonderful place.

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

Site: ELMO

EDUCATION

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

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Like many parks, El Morro echoes each spring with the sound of school children on field trips. We want to expand our support to teachers, helping them prepare students for their trip, with materials that reinforce the trip as a learning experience first and foremost. Funding for seasonal positions in the FY08 budget request will help us get started on that.

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

Site: ELMO

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.

We will develop El Morro's web pages to make them more interesting, informative and engaging. We have access to digital animations that can tell the story of inscription weathering and preservation. We have databases that can be reworked to achieve a more interactive format.

Podcasts are an exciting idea that we want to explore as possibilities for El Morro.

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

Site: ELMO

EDUCATION

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

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

Armed with a new El Morro Junior Ranger activity booklet, we will have a better tool to increase enrollment in our program. We also plan to produce a separate booklet for younger kids to engage them too. We will expand our web pages to have a virtual Junior Ranger component for kids across the U.S.

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

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Partner with local tribes looking to teach children native language and cultural affiliation/history - El Morro can provide a great venue for many lessons on place names, discussions about migration patterns, and other topics. We want to increase the educational connections that trips to El Morro can inspire, for culturally affiliated groups and anyone wishing to learn more about the site's history, archeology, ethnology, etc.

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

Site: ELMO

EDUCATION

Impart to every American a sense of their citizen ownership of their national parks.

Increase visitors' satisfaction, understanding, and appreciation of the parks they visit.

We won't rest on our laurels with respect to El Morro's high visitor satisfaction and understanding rates! We will continue to help visitors enjoy and make connections with El Morro. We will complete a visitor composition study ahead of our General Management Plan to learn more about our visitors. We will work to broaden the context of their understanding by emphasizing links with other park units that share some part of El Morro's larger story. This can be done through expanded web pages, cooperating association sales items, special interpretive programs and activities, travelling exhibits, etc.

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

Site: ELMO

PROFESSIONALISM

Be one of the top 10 places to work in America.

Meet 100 percent of diversity recruitment goals by employing people who reflect the face of America.

Continue recruitment activities that involve the many local tribes. Expand our use of the Diversity Database. With the potential additional funding for seasonals in upcoming NPS budgets, we'll have more opportunity to make real headway on our diversity goals and renew stale recruiting relationships.

Expand relationships with area colleges and universities - we will work to develop a certificate program for historic preservation that would develop skills for NPS, tribal, other government agencies, and expose students to the variety of work in the historic preservation arena.

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

Attain the highest employee satisfaction rate of all federal agencies, as measured by Office of Personnel Management surveys.

Interview current employees to develop a plan to improve the satisfaction and morale of El Morro's staff and volunteers. What makes us feel good about our jobs - acknowledgement in front of our peers? More private forms of recognition? How can we foster a creative, learning environment that still meets accountability standards? Are we extracting the right lessons from our successes and failures so we can learn and grow?

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

Site: ELMO

PROFESSIONALISM

Use strategic planning to promote management excellence.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

If El Morro's request to undertake a General Management Plan is funded in FY09 or 10 (a distinct possibility), we will have a great opportunity to expose El Morro/El Malpais' shared management team and the rest of El Morro's employees to the strategic planning process. The team will get to brainstorm and then winnow ideas so that a cohesive approach to managing results. In the process, all will have chances to demonstrate leadership, advocacy, collaboration and practice the art of persuasion and compromise.

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

Site: ELMO

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.

We will continue our current focus on visitor and employee safety. We have very few serious employee and visitor accidents, but we can always improve our programs. We will develop a broader collection of job hazard analyses reviews so that we're always ready to do our work safely, with full consideration and maximum reduction of the risks involved. We will continue to recognize and reward employees for outstanding safety attitudes and behaviours. Our visitor contacts will continue to stress safety and encourage visitors to take all precautions as they enjoy El Morro.

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

Site: ELMO

PROFESSIONALISM

Model what it means to work in partnership.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

El Morro has enjoyed a variety of partnerships in its 100-year-history as a national monument. We will keep and continue to grow the relationships we have and add more so that citizen stewardship of El Morro's resources is even more evident.

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

Site: ELMO

PROFESSIONALISM

Make national parks the first choice in philanthropic giving among those concerned about environmental, cultural, and recreational values.

Improve communications and marketing capacity to increase public understanding of our mission, opportunities, and benefits.

Use statewide and regional tourism organizations, glossy publications, newspapers and blogs to highlight El Morro and its relationship to other sites in the state and area. Support creation of the Little Colorado River Valley National Heritage Area.

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

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

We hope to generate enthusiasm for and interest in creation of a friends group to help support both El Morro and El Malpais National Monuments. There are many energetic people in our area that could come together with the NPS and create a non-profit support organization. We would very much like to say we have a friends group by the time of the NPS Centennial.

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