

THE
FUTURE
OF
AMERICA'S
NATIONAL
PARKS

First Annual
Centennial Strategy for

Gates of the Arctic National Park & Preserve

August 2007

CENTENNIAL INITIATIVE



Site: GAAR

Year: 2007

Vision Statement

Since the establishment of Gates of the Arctic National Park and preserve, the park has focused on the establishment of visitor services, resource protection and inventories, and an understanding of the natural and cultural values of this large wilderness park.

Between now and the NPS Centennial, the park will build on its reputation as a highly desirable destination for adventure travelers from around the world. We will continue to work with private visitor services to make this remote park accessible to users.

Additionally, the park will expand its cooperation with the many local villages around park, provide basic visitor services to protect the well being of visitors, and engage the support of partners in the efforts to preserve the values of the park.

Gates of the Arctic carries an additional responsibility of working with living cultures that continue to carry on many traditional activities. Through the Centennial and beyond, we will add to long-term relationships by working collaboratively on the management and conservation of resources and the protection of the traditional land use practices. Large tracks of land within the park boundary are in private ownership so these relationships will become even more critical as land private land use decisions are made.

Over the next 10 years, goals for the park include:

1. Better understand the park's natural and cultural resources and values by completing basic inventories of resources and monitoring of natural systems.
 - Decision making is guided by well-designed and planned research.
 - Natural ecosystems are preserved with wildlife populations intact.
 - Climate change affects are better understood and actions are taken to reduce impacts.
 - Manage subsistence activities as a natural component of ecosystem processes, involving local users with management decisions and research.
2. Demonstrate sustainable design, and environmental leadership in park facilities.
3. Develop visitor services that will help establish this "lesser known park" as a safe and welcoming place to visit, served by a professional staff that includes local residents with a diverse background of experiences and skills.
 - Develop the "Resident Stewards Program" which will allow local residents and private landowners to assist and enhance in the visitors experience.
 - Provide public education on safe and appropriate recreational opportunities.

Park/ Superintendent/ Program Manager

David D. Mills

Site: GAAR

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)

A new field operational center for the park will be constructed in Bettles in order to better serve visitors as well as the staff living there and who travel to work at the site. This new center will provide critical information and education for visitors prior to their travel to the backcountry of the park. Backcountry Orientations and education have been found to be very effective at reducing visitor accidents, protecting the natural and cultural resources as well as greatly enhancing the visitor's appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of the park. Basic visitor and resource protection services will be improved by acquiring appropriate aircraft and flight time in order to better monitor and provide services throughout this 8.5 million acre park. Better collaboration with the 50 commercial operators providing visitor access will happen as a result of a slight increase in the very small staff currently providing the wide spectrum of visitor resource protection services.

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

Improve the condition of park resources and assets.

Rehabilitate high-priority historic buildings to good condition, and help communities to preserve their history through programs like Preserve America.

We will continue to work with the gateway community of Bettles and their interest in preserving the historical structures around the community and nearby areas. We will encourage private funding sources to partner with this effort and when appropriate encourage adaptive reuse of buildings in order to help preserve them.

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

Invasive plant species from the adjacent Dalton Highway are potentially a threat to native species of the park and monitoring of their movement and eradication are an important priority. This work can be done in cooperation with adjacent land owners and volunteers from the public.

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

This is a very high need for the park. The park has very limited staff with the ability manage this program and the many facilities of the park. A facility management position that would be shared with other parks in northern Alaska is proposed in an effort to professionalize our efforts in this area.

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.

This is a huge task for this large and young park, but critical to successful long-term management. While some initial inventories have been accomplished, there are many critical areas that need work that have immediate direct importance for managing natural and healthy wildlife and fisheries populations as well as naturally functioning ecosystems. Population and density estimates as well as harvest studies are needed for grizzly bear, wolves, moose and musk ox. All of these animals are legally hunted within and around the park and are thought to be declining in populations in some areas. Associated studies of subsistence hunting, fishing and gathering activities are also critical to meet management responsibilities.

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

Site: GAAR

STEWARDSHIP

Improve the condition of park resources and assets.

Complete all cultural resource inventories for designated priority resources.

A new approach to studying living cultures that still exist in and around the park will be conducted to better understand the changing role of "traditionally associated peoples" in and around the parklands. Using these living resident cultural experts to help discover and inventory the vast areas of the park for archeological sites will greatly enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of archaeological inventories and help monitor condition assessments. A very small percentage of the park has actually been studied to date.

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

Site: GAAR

STEWARDSHIP

Assure that no compelling chapter in the American heritage experience remains untold and that strategically important landscapes are acquired, as authorized by Congress.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Anaktuvuk Pass is one of the few indigenous Native American villages located within the boundaries of a National Park. They were one of the last nomadic people of North America and continue to live a traditional subsistence way of life now as a permanent community within Gates of the Arctic National Park. Residents over the age sixty were born and raised in the nomadic bands that existed prior to 1950. We have the opportunity to capture this important and quickly fading part of America's Native American heritage by working with these elders while they are still alive. This would be accomplished by documenting Nunamiut place names and stories associated with the park landscape. This information could be permanently recorded into a GIS program for future public understanding and management needs.

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Site: GAAR

STEWARDSHIP

Serve as the Preeminent resource laboratory by applying excellence in science and scholarship to understand and respond to environmental changes.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Arctic Environments are now known to have some of the most rapid changes occurring due to global climate change. Gates of the Arctic NPP is an ideal location to study these changes that are occurring on the landscapes and ecosystems. The gateway community of Bettles is eager to assist in scientific efforts to study climate change in the Arctic by making available the Bettles School which could be used as a laboratory and staging area for visiting scientist NPS researchers. This facility has been proposed to become a Remote Science and Learning Center for Gates of the Arctic NPP as a satellite of the Murie Science and Learning Center at Denali National Park. (See write up on Centennial Projects and Programs for details) This program would involve many partners including universities, tribal groups, and non-profit organizations as well as local, state and federal agencies.

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Site: GAAR

STEWARDSHIP

Encourage children to be future conservationists.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

A number of programs based in the three operational centers in and around Gates of the Arctic NPP are interested in expanding their programs to include the entire family in science, learning and experiential centers. The Bettles center mentioned above would serve children and others from villages in the upper Koyukuk River drainage. Similar programs could occur in Coldfoot and Anaktuvuk Pass as well as during field trips into the park.

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Site: GAAR

ENVIRONMENT

Reduce environmental impacts of park operations.

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

Continue to develop alternative clean energy production with NPS facilities using solar and wind power. Solar generated electricity has been determined to be cost effective and successful and will help to reduce air and water pollution at our facilities in Fairbanks, Bettles and Coldfoot (Marion Creek) Local utilities will purchase solar generated power or reimburse the value of that power. In Anaktuvuk Pass and similar arctic environment, wind energy is an effective way to generate power. All of these sites use diesel generators or coal to provide most of the power.

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Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Solar recharged electric vehicles will be used at sites where solar power is generated. This will help to decrease green house gases which are rapidly changing arctic ecosystem due to climate change.

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Site: GAAR

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.

Develop a program that tracks and reduces energy consumption and green house gases emission from NPS operations. Make this information available to the public to the staff and work it into public programs to help create and understanding of innovative measures that can be taken even in Arctic Environments to reduce energy impacts.

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

Require all four field and office locations to begin generating a portion of their energy requirements through solar or wind generators. The price of electrical generations at some remote locations has exceeded \$.90 per kWh, which makes alternative power not only cleaner but more cost effective, than in the past. These projects can be accomplished in coordination with local communities that will also benefit economically even if they are not producing alternative energy, by reducing the demand on their diesel powered generators which will reduce the cost to the residents of the community.

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Site: GAAR

ENVIRONMENT

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

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

The communities of Bettles and Anaktuvuk Pass are interested in working closely with the NPS in testing solar and wind production in their communities. They see this technology as an opportunity for a more sustainable economy where fossil fuel generated power costs are beginning to drive residents and business away to other locations. We plan to develop our facilities and power generation in coordination with nearby community facilities to reduce energy needs and share with each other benefits that are often lost with individually generated power. There are huge potential savings if waste heat can be captured and reused by the community. These communities are the process of seeking grants to capture and reuse energy that is now lost, as well as more efficiently and more cleanly generate power. These environments during the winter months are likely the most difficult to provide heat and power during the long arctic winters. Temperatures often are well below -40 degrees Fahrenheit and occasionally reach 60-70 below. It is relatively dark for 2 months of the year but the remaining ten months have ample sun and long days to make solar power a very effective source.

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Site: GAAR

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.

The use of volunteers will continue to increase by increasing hours received by 5% per year.

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Site: GAAR

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)

Using examples of other countries around the world school programs will not just be an "outreach" program of the NPS but rather we will assist the schools in making the national parks in their area a part of the schools regular curriculum. An Experiential center will be established on private lands within the park as well as learning centers in communities near the park that will provide children the exposure to learn from and experience the park.

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

Site: GAAR

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.

A backcountry plan for the park will be developed that will help to determine acceptable levels of backcountry uses throughout the park. This large park can maintain its mandate to preserve the wilderness opportunities and solitude and allow more people to visit many parts of the park by careful planning and management and dispersing use to areas that are currently seldom used. We will also continue to develop programs that will allow the visiting public to learn, understand and enjoy this remote area without needing to physically visit the site. This will be accomplished by improving our web programs, videos, radio programs and developing, picture files as well as natural sound files that can be easily visited by the public.

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

A new program will be developed where local residents including elders will be an important part of the interpretive programs on Living Alaska Native Cultures, traditional and modern life-ways. The science and learning satellite programs will combine science, education, interpretation with traditional knowledge from local residents.

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

Site: GAAR

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.

The park will greatly enhance it's website by providing sounds as well as imagines from the park. Natural sounds can be linked with still and video images to provide a more realistic and informative high-quality program that will make the website more interesting to a wider audience. This approach will work well for natural, cultural programs. Stories from the people and different cultures living in the area would be made available on the site. A well trained and experienced web master will be hired to focus on this project and coordinate the organization of the site. They will work with subject matter experts from the staff and Universities and communities that will provide material for the programs.

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

Site: GAAR

EDUCATION

- Promote life-long learning to connect generations through park experiences.
- Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

The Takahula Lake Experiential Program a part of the Residents Stewards Program will allow local community members and scholars explore "place based education" through an experiential method. This program will occur at remote location in the heart of the park on private land and could involve families, people of diverse cultural backgrounds, local indigenous people, as well as scientist from different disciplines. The evolution of this program will be documented and disseminated through publications and lectures with the objective of preparing the next generation of conservationists and scientist in their approach to the natural world and communities. (See Centennial Challenge Project)

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Site: GAAR

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.

Remote Science and Learning Center in Bettles Alaska, as a satellite center of the Murie Science and Learning Center in Denali National Park will bring together a wide diversity of scientist, local Alaskan residents, students, park visitors and staff. The now vacant Bettles School would be remodeled and to conduct educational programs and provide work space for visiting scientist, traditional knowledge experts and others. The facility could be used as a base for smaller groups to travel out into remote areas of the park to conduct field based programs and research. Arctic environments and climate change, indigenous traditional knowledge and cultures would be a focus of this center. (See Centennial Challenge Projects for additional details)

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

Site: GAAR

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.

Additional programs will be developed to recruit, train and mentor local high school students and University of Alaska students as well as others to work for the park and the NPS. The organization will be structured to accommodate an intake and career development program especially for Alaska Natives and local residents from communities around the park. The park will fully engage and develop a partnership with the University of Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program, recently established at the Anchorage campus that reaches out to most rural villages. Utilizing the Collateral Duty Special Emphasis Program, encourage employees to act as coordinators and take a leadership role by participate on workgroups.

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

Develop specific Alaska parks training program for all employees that will help promote a common understanding special responsibilities specific to Alaska parks. More specialized training in specific areas can all be provided to employees that require a higher level of understanding or detail in certain areas. This could include the spectrum of skills needed to safely work in various Alaskan environments, cultural training, subsistence, access and a long list of Alaska specific responsibilities. Specialized training could also allow for an aircraft pilot intake program that continually trains pilots for future aviation needs, with mentor pilots located in specific areas of the state to train employees in specific region areas. Backcountry travel and survival training could also become a standard part of the employees training program for both rangers and resource staff that need it. Investing in this type of specific training for employees not only helps provide a healthier workforce but allows for personal growth and over job satisfaction.

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

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Provide basic housing and office needs for employees located at remote duty station where appropriate facilities are not available. This is a basic human need anywhere in the world but in the extremely cold environments of northern Alaska this is a basic need that is essential. We have been able hire some very tough individuals that have been able to endure some extremely difficult living situations but eventually most people tire of the stress and either have emotional problems or leave if they are able to move to another location. As mentioned in the vision statement this part is still a young

Site: GAAR

PROFESSIONALISM

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

park and these basic needs are still a work in progress.

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Site: GAAR

PROFESSIONALISM

Use strategic planning to promote management excellence.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

The current General Management Plan and associated Backcountry Plan are now over 20 years old and out of date. Planning for the future management of the park will become a priority and appropriate staffing expertise will be sought in order to carefully plan and manage this park for the next ten to twenty years.

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

Site: GAAR

PROFESSIONALISM

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

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

In order to strengthen partnerships with groups that are interested in helping, the park will work at introducing more potential donors to this little known part of Alaska. Experience has proven that when people are exposed to the wonders of this remote part of Alaska, they (usually) become the best advocates for the protection and support of the programs. The experiential and learning centers mentioned previously are great venues to allow potential supporters to fully appreciate and support the park and its programs. Devoting more time and energy to this will effort will greatly enhance philanthropic giving. (see Educational sections for additional details)

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