

THE
FUTURE
OF
AMERICA'S
NATIONAL
PARKS

First Annual
Centennial Strategy for

Mesa Verde National Park

August 2007

CENTENNIAL INITIATIVE



Site: MEVE

Year: 2007

Vision Statement

As the first Cultural National Park and World Cultural Heritage Site, we have an obligation to remain on the cutting edge of new science, education, non-invasive access and to share these opportunities on a National and International basis. In 2006 Mesa Verde celebrated its first 100 years as a National Park. For the 10 years prior we used the mantra "Preparing for the next 100 years." For 10 years we repaired old facilities and infrastructure, provided new planning and construction to support the vision of the future. We established new partnerships with communities, corporations, universities, foundations and reengaged our sister parks in Belize, Mexico and Machu Pichu. We're ready to welcome the world to rediscover Mesa Verde.

The centennial vision is one of sharing and learning, safety and engagement, protecting, access and responsibility. Following are examples of our visions.

"Beam me up Scotty" conjures up visions of science and exploration. Our pilot programs in 3D imaging, computer gaming and learning, and computer access to resources would please Scotty. Using our Digital Parks Project, globally recognized teams of experts, cutting edge learning technologies, 3D imaging, cultural experts and advanced gaming technology, we are creating opportunities for teachers, students and parents to learn and explore together. Using the computer, participants will be able to teleport to Mesa Verde or our sister parks, interact with staff, other students and teachers in real time, complete exercises and vary the environment to understand change. This project can easily be expanded to every park on the planet. Think of the ability of kids to access parks they may never see and learn about cultures and personal linkages to these places. With this same material we have established the 1st International Jr. Ranger program. Children earn Jr. Ranger badges by studying and testing on all 4 parks but must visit at least one to receive the badge, thus getting children and families back into parks.

Our Conservation Technology Center will offer an alternative method to document and study standing architecture. Using Laser Scanning, GPS, high resolution photography, digital modeling and spatial technologies we allow anyone virtual access to sites with detailed analysis of site conditions.

Our future Tribal Cultures Center will provide visitors the opportunity to interact with our 24 affiliated tribes and learn more about the people that created these amazing sites.

Park/ Superintendent/ Program Manager

Larry T. Wiese, Superintendent

Site: MEVE

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)

In-depth educational opportunities are offered through the Mesa Verde Institute, which allows people of all ages safe and inspiring access to the park - opportunities that are not otherwise currently available through basic park programs.

Researchers and visitors can access archeological sites through 3D imaging.

Relationships and partnerships with researchers are actively supported and encouraged. Collaborations with researchers, universities, and like parks are firmly established.

ASCP is supported by providing sufficient resources to proactively preserve MEVE's archeological and historical sites. It is no longer necessary to respond to emergencies when they happen, but a proactive preservation approach is taken with regular, cyclic maintenance.

Interpretive rangers and educational specialists are encouraged and expected to develop interpretive themes and media on the park's natural resource values and issues supported by a diversified cooperating association, foundation, and educational institute. The park's website has a fully developed, up to date, and accurate natural resource section. The park promotes natural resources as a major element of the visitor experience.

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

Site: MEVE

STEWARDSHIP

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.

The Historic Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum will be refurbished in its original style, with exhibits added and/or updated to better tell the stories of:

- the CCC's role in the building of Mesa Verde National Park.
- the connection between the ancestral and modern pueblo people.

These upgrades will be done using modern and interactive technology, while honoring and preserving the historic, thematic, and architectural integrity of the museum building.

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

Significant progress has been made in restoring the vast areas of the park's disturbed landscapes. Priority weeds are contained, shrunk, or eradicated. A nursery maintains a stock of native plants. Up to date weed inventories and GIS maps are maintained. Conditions improve for pinyon-juniper health and vigor. Wetlands, springs, and riparian areas are rejuvenated. Douglas-fir and ponderosa pine seedlings establish a new generation in the understory. Native plant communities begin to recover, showing healthful signs of natural succession. Rare plant populations are systematically monitored and populations reestablished. Wildlife populations stabilize into a new sustainable equilibrium. Rare and declining species recover including T&E species. Bighorn sheep have been reestablished. Conflicts between bears and people are rare and resolved without adverse results for bears. Virtually all feral horses and cattle have been removed from the park. Strategic placement of boundary fencing is completed with a funded maintenance program. Wildlife is professionally monitored & managed by staff dedicated to this work. Partnerships with the CO Division of Wildlife, BLM, and Ute Tribe are in place.

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.

All 600 sites with standing architecture will be assessed by 2016. Priorities for architectural documentation and stabilization needs, ongoing documentation, preservation will be set, and a monitoring program fully supported.

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

Site: MEVE

STEWARDSHIP

Improve the condition of park resources and assets.

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

Air pollution levels are steadily declining and monitoring continues with professional staffing. The local power plants will be decommissioned. Natural gas facilities will be retrofitted. Monitoring indicates Mercury contamination is declining. Water conservation and water rights acquisition for minimum in-stream flows allows the Mancos River to flow all year. The native fishery recovers. Riparian communities expand. Park managers monitor external park threats and are engaged in neighboring planning efforts, which facilitates land and open space conservation. The park's boundaries have already expanded to provide additional protection from encroachment to the park's core and wilderness areas. Mineral rights within the park have been acquired and retired. Towns agree to night sky preservation policies. Park plans rule out "flight seeing" tours over the park. The park has a new General Management and Wilderness/Backcountry plans commensurate with the park's resource conservation mandates and goals. Environmentally sensitive areas remain closed. Maintained backcountry roads and ranger patrolled backcountry areas are controlled to facilitate research & resource conservation purposes.

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Complete all cultural resource inventories for designated priority resources.

The new Mesa Verde Research and Collection Facility will be built and the Museum, Archive and Research Library Collections will be fully accounted for, organized and staffed so that they are accessible to researchers, staff and the public through a variety of methods and media, i.e.,:

- Catalog data, artifact photographs and other scanned images of historic documents, etc., available on the world wide web and at computer workstations available in the new curatorial and research facility and other area locations.
- Some of the park museum collections will be visible through viewing windows in the new facility.

The archeological site inventory for the remaining 10% of park lands is complete.

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

Site: MEVE

STEWARDSHIP

Improve the condition of park resources and assets.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Important collections from Mesa Verde stored at other Federal facilities will be transferred permanently back to the park and made accessible for research, education and exhibit. In particular, the Jesse Fewkes collections from Mesa Verde will be transferred from the Smithsonian back to the park. New natural history specimens are added to the collection. Efforts are made to bring back long-term loan natural history collections from other institutions to consolidate them.

All 600 cliff dwellings are assessed for current condition, key portions of standing architecture have been documented and stabilized, and a monitoring and maintenance plan has been developed and implemented. All databases are accurate, up-to-date, and usable for research.

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Site: MEVE

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)

The park's boundaries have already expanded northward and eastward to provide additional protection from encroachment to the park's core areas, wilderness areas, and other critical resources.

The former BLM lands on the North Escarpment finger ridges, which contain a very dense prehistoric community, are preserved and interpreted as part of the American heritage goal.

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Site: MEVE

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)

Mesa Verde is a leader in scientific research. There has been renewed focus on viewing the Ancestral Puebloan populations within the park in a regional context through the Village Project partnership with Crow Canyon. Mesa Verde will have achieved new status as an open-air laboratory for preservation materials & techniques, both new & old. A fully funded natural resource program fosters a core of natural resource professionals which supports the scientific research & partnerships needed for successful natural resource stewardship, full participation in the Vital Signs I&M program, & numerous All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory projects. The park promotes, encourages & welcomes scientists in the park. New and backlogged information & geospatial databases are managed digitally. Establishment of the Mesa Verde Conservation & Technology Center will provide cutting-edge technology to accurately document irreplaceable prehistoric architecture in this World Heritage Site. Training workshops for other agencies, educational institutions, and preservation organizations will be made available.

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

Site: MEVE

STEWARDSHIP

Encourage children to be future conservationists.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

The park and the Mesa Verde Institute are committed to developing engaging educational workshops for young people. Through these workshops they will learn about the natural world of Mesa Verde, and how it contributed to the development of the Ancestral Puebloan culture. They will have hands-on experience with outdoor skills, learn about the science of archeology, and experience what it may have been like to live in this area when the Ancestral Pueblos were here. The ultimate goal of the Institute is to develop a large constituency of public land stewards, and engaging young people is a great place to begin.

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

Site: MEVE

ENVIRONMENT

Reduce environmental impacts of park operations.

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

The park is using alternative fuel GOV vehicles.

The recycling program is expanded.

Eco-friendly busses & trams are used for transportation.

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

Site: MEVE

ENVIRONMENT

Inspire an environmental conscience in Americans.

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

Park is using alternative fuel GOV vehicles.
Eco-friendly busses and trams are used for transportation.

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

Serve as a model for energy efficiency, under Executive Order 13423, by ensuring Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards.

The park's Research/Collections facility and Visitor Information Center will meet Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED).
"Green" building standards are met for any new construction.
Recyclable and local materials are used whenever possible.

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

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Park construction and development activities cease to cause the extensive disturbances that result in the loss of rare species and that require intensive large-scale restoration. Construction, maintenance, and other impactful projects are designed to minimize adverse resource effects, while sites are consistently surveyed in advance and activities monitored for compliance.

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

Site: MEVE

ENVIRONMENT

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

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Proactive park participation in community planning and discussions with other neighboring agencies and landowners helps to facilitate land and open space conservation policies and decisions that discourage the clustering of subdivisions, industrial activities, deforestation, and other developments near the park boundaries or within migration corridors used by park wildlife. All park wildlife is professionally monitored and managed by staff dedicated to this work. Cooperative partnerships with the Colorado Division of Wildlife, Bureau of Land Management, and the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe are in place. The natural resource program promotes and supports the scientific research and partnerships needed for successful natural resource stewardship including university, government, and other researchers and full participation in the Vital Signs Inventory and Monitoring program and numerous All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory projects.

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

Site: MEVE

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.

MEVE's backcountry roads and trails are improved and actively maintained.

New trails are developed from the Far View Visitor Center to Megalithic House, from the Far View Community to the Museum, and to Double House and Ruin 12 overlooks.

Backcountry hikes are available down canyons and historic trails, not into cliff dwelling sites. These are lead by archeologists, biologists, ecologists, and wildlife biologists.

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Site: MEVE

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.

Mesa Verde's 2006 Centennial celebration was a success because of community volunteers. Chuck & Cheryl Carson stepped forward as centennial volunteer coordinators & recruited a highly talented group from the surrounding communities. They were honored with the 2006 George B. Hartzog Individual Volunteer Award. The Centennial Community Volunteers won the national 2006 George B. Hartzog Award for Volunteer Group Program. Volunteer hours nearly doubled during the centennial year.

The Mesa Verde Docent Program will provide more educational programs in the park. The docents will be engaged in a unique & intense learning program during their first year, including in-depth resource knowledge about the natural & cultural resources of the park, especially about the 24 associated tribes, along with communication skills. The docents will present professional programs to park visitors around the Museum and through the park's curatorial facility which houses over 3 million objects.

As the program expands, more program areas can be offered & learning experiences for the visitor & docent will increase. Through this program, we will see an increase in volunteer hours each year.

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

Site: MEVE

RECREATION

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

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

As the park completes a new General Management Plan and Backcountry Plan, new opportunities will be revealed. At this time there are very limited areas that visitors (and staff) can access. Currently only 5 cliff dwellings are available with ranger-led tours. The park's 2006 year-long centennial celebration, opened up new areas to guided hikes and horseback tours - with resounding success and accolades - but it was just for the centennial. As these planning documents are completed, and with public input, more access to Mesa Verde will attract more visitors to the park, and their participation on ranger-facilitated programs.

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

Site: MEVE

EDUCATION

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

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Natural resources are more actively interpreted. The tie between natural and cultural resources is more actively interpreted, and more interpretation on the fire history, fire effected areas, and ecosystem recovery (Chapin V Fire 20 years after!).

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Site: MEVE

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.

Through the Mesa Verde Conservation Technology Center, using high definition documentation (HDD) methodologies to digitally document prehistoric architecture, many innovative interpretive and educational products can be achieved. Educational virtual tours are possible with in-depth resource knowledge gained. Virtual online learning environments will allow students to interact with other students worldwide. These learning environments will begin by connecting Mesa Verde's sister parks in Mexico and Belize - once accomplished, other World Heritage sites can be added. Online learning environments will quickly attract individuals and educational groups worldwide.

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

Site: MEVE

EDUCATION

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

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

The Mesa Verde Institute established in 2006 during the park's 2006 Centennial, as the mission to "share Mesa Verde with the World" through education. The Institute will provide expanded and in-depth experiential opportunities in the park, for people of all ages.

Currently, visitors can attend ranger-led tours in 3 cliff dwellings, ranging from 1 to 1.5 hours in length. There are 2 self-guided cliff dwellings available, and several hiking trails. Otherwise, a visit to Mesa Verde is quite contained, directed, and of short duration. The Institute will allow for longer, in-depth views of the park. Target audiences are youth, young-at-heart, and locals.

Using Mesa Verde as an outdoor classroom and laboratory, people will be immersed in park resources, with the ultimate objective of developing a large constituency of public stewards.

Visitor experience will be further enhanced by one or more living exhibits that allow visitors to interact with professionals conducting active field investigations.

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

Site: MEVE

PROFESSIONALISM

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

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

The park enjoys a new era of interdivisional cohesiveness centered around park preservation. Interpretive rangers and educational specialists are encouraged and expected to develop interpretive themes and media on the park's natural resource values and issues supported by a diversified cooperating association, foundation, and educational institute. Maintenance, fire, and archeology staff and interpretive, fee, and protective rangers periodically and actively participate in natural resource monitoring, mitigation, and research projects as part of a staff integration policy. In exchange, natural resource staff periodically participates and assist with operations directed by the other divisions and programs. On a different level, the natural resource program provides active assistance and, when appropriate, leadership for the other units of the Eastern Four Corners Group.

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

Site: MEVE

PROFESSIONALISM

Use strategic planning to promote management excellence.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Senior management now plays an active and positive support role in natural resource management issues. Senior management promotes natural resource issues and concerns with the park staff, with central offices, among park neighbors, the media, and in fund raising and planning efforts. Senior management appreciates and actively seeks the expertise and information that the natural resource program has to offer.

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

Site: MEVE

PROFESSIONALISM

Model what it means to work in partnership.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

There is a fully integrated workforce within Eastern Four Corners workgroup.
There is a fully integrated Vanishing Treasures Program that shares resources, staff, and ideas.

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