

THE  
**FUTURE**  
OF  
**AMERICA'S**  
**NATIONAL**  
**PARKS**

First Annual  
Centennial Strategy for

# Mississippi National River & Recreation Area

August 2007

CENTENNIAL INITIATIVE



**Site:** MISS

**Year:** 2007

**Vision Statement**

MISS protects, conserves and interprets the natural and cultural resources along 72-miles of the most ecologically and historically complex segments of the Mississippi River. MISS is the convener of various river partners, stakeholders and special interests drawn together to collaborate on innovative and sustainable strategies to ensure the river is a vibrant and healthy resource. MISS leads the region in getting people to and on the river. Increased public awareness of water resource issues leads to improved water quality and additional support for conservation and land use that further protects the river. MISS provides global leadership on river stewardship exchange among national parks and protected areas with significant river resources.

**Park/ Superintendent/ Program Manager**

Paul Labovitz / Denise St. Marie

Site: MISS

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.**

1. Restore and adaptively reuse the Upper Post buildings at the Fort Snelling National Historic Landmark.

2. Assist the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul in restoring and interpreting the ruins of the lockmaster's house and other structures at the Meeker Island Lock and Dam site (the first dam ever built on the Mississippi River).

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.**

1. Assist local governments in eradicating European buckthorn from wooded parklands along the river.

2. Reintroduce the federally endangered Winged maple leaf mussel in the Mississippi River, and assist state efforts to reintroduce state-listed mussel species.

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.**

Eradicate invasive exotic plant species from NPS-owned islands and restore full ecological function.

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

**Complete all cultural resource inventories for designated priority resources.**

Complete a detailed cultural resource analysis of the mill site at the Banfill-Locke historic site.

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Site: MISS

STEWARDSHIP

Set the standard of excellence in urban park landscape design and maintenance.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Assist the City of St. Paul in completing the National Great River Park along the river, including trail connections.

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

Site: MISS

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)

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Site: MISS

**STEWARDSHIP**

Encourage children to be future conservationists.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Particularly through the park's Junior Ranger and education programs, the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area will continue to develop and promote strong messages that connect youth to the science and heritage of the river that will lead to an increased sense of responsibility for caring for river resources. Since the river drains 41% of the continental United States, the park will take advantage of opportunities to carry these messages to partners well outside the park boundary.

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Site: MISS

**ENVIRONMENT**

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

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

The changing exhibits, brochures, and programs at the park's Mississippi River Visitor Center regularly feature best practices for dealing with invasive species, restoring prairie, treating shorelines and especially reducing the impacts of non-point source pollution on watersheds and their rivers. Expanded involvement at partner locations will allow more of these messages to be presented there and from field rangers. Inserting these messages into communication with Junior Rangers, volunteers and other target audiences will help children educate parents. Focused park efforts to address the degrading river water quality in the upstream section of the park will target landowners, municipalities and responsible regulatory agencies with the message that the poor practices there are having an impact on nationally significant resources. Working with partners such as the Mississippi River Fund and the Friends of the Mississippi River, municipal officials and other key players in determining zoning and land and water management decisions will be educated about better alternatives for development and management.

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

Site: MISS

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.

Complete the 72-mile continuous trail on both sides of the Mississippi River through the full length of the park.

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Site: MISS

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 park will grow its VIP corps in many areas including stewardship projects, education and interpretive programming and staffing the Visitor Center. Partnerships with corporations and local businesses will better connect current volunteer efforts with park programs and stewardship needs. New VIP-dependent programs such as the NPS Rails to Trails/Amtrak Partnership and Trail Guide program will increase the number of visitors and Twin Cities residents exposed to park themes at new and varying locations, as well as offer a variety of new VIP opportunities to the already increasing number of people and businesses interested in working with the NPS.

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Site: MISS

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)

The expansion of partnerships to serve Twin Cities youth will include connecting youth organizations to the Junior Ranger Program, closer work with the Minneapolis and St. Paul Park and Recreation Departments to encourage greater use the park within walking distance of neighborhood recreation centers, work with organizations serving special populations such as immigrant communities, outreach to home school organizations, promotion of the park's activity filled backpacks to all of these groups, and coordination with partner efforts to work with these groups for their related programming.

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Site: MISS

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.

The Mississippi River Visitor Center will provide exhibits and information about all of the units of the NPS to its 120,000 annual visitors and will encourage them to consider visiting some of the lesser-known parks by helping visitors with trip planning, providing their brochures, guides and other information, and offering park movies and other programs from a wide range of NPS parks. Encouraging engagement with the local park resources and providing a robust MISS web site also encourages the residents of the Twin Cities to consider the NPS for vacations, visit the nps.gov site, and otherwise become supportive of the national system.

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

Increasing the number of visitors receiving ranger-facilitated programs will be accomplished by going to where it is know that people are visiting the park and providing interpretation when we expect to find the most people there. The expansion of seasonal ranger staffing will allow increased informal and formal interpretive experiences to be provided. Increasing the use of volunteers to both supplement the interpretive programming and covering basic visitor services functions so that rangers can be free to do additional programming. In addition to the programs provided by the assigned interpretive staff, resource management staff and others at the park will be encouraged to increase their public programming and to utilize public programs as a means of accomplishing their objectives with strong public engagement. Programs that utilize bikes, canoes and hikes will continue with expanded partner involvement to increase publicity and capacity.

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Site: MISS

EDUCATION

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

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Mississippi National River and Recreation Area will continue to work closely with local school systems, including the two largest in Minneapolis and St. Paul, to ensure that our river education program materials meet state standards for curriculum. Formats for delivery will continue to meet the needs of classroom teachers, and may include hard copy workbooks, downloadable on-line materials, electronic format materials in DVD/CD, podcast and within interactive kiosks. Regular training of teachers through workshops, service learning, and on-river programs will continue and grow through new alliances with homeschool, elderhostel and other formal and informal learning organizations.

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Site: MISS

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 website will continue to attract young people through the development of new technologies such as downloadable podcasts, a MySpace site for the park icon "Freddie the Flathead Catfish" and electronic kiosks at twelve partners sites in the park with dynamic and changing interactive programs about park programs, activities and resources.

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Site: MISS

**EDUCATION**

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

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

Mississippi National River and Recreation Area will increase the number of Junior Rangers by expanding the number of opportunities and park and partner sites for youth to become Junior Rangers. It will also continue to provide the enrolled Junior Rangers opportunities to continue to "explore, learn and protect" with targeted programs, coordination with environmental restoration events, and a regular newsletter. Outreach efforts to other youth-focused organizations within the community will continue to develop partnerships and programs to engage their young audiences with the Junior Ranger program, with special focus on encouraging diversity in the Junior Ranger ranks. Efforts will continue with these organizations to develop a ladder for progressing from engagement with the Junior Ranger Program through the STEP and SCEP programs into NPS careers.

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Site: MISS

**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.

The visitors to the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area include both a large number of local and regional residents and a large number of vacationers and convention attendees. Efforts in this area will focus on both increasing the local understanding and appreciation of the national significance of these resources and on providing an NPS identity within the visitor services and interpretation infrastructure that serves most tourists and convention goers. The park will continue the operation of its Mississippi River Visitor Center to serve about 120,000 people a year with its services and programs and increase signage within the larger site (Science Museum of Minnesota). With seasonal staff and special programs, we will increase the services and interpretation available at partner sites and trails throughout the park. Helping in the training and coordination of partner interpretive programs will ensure that program and site partners understand and appreciate their own resources and are reinforcing the NPS identity, even with rangers are not present.

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Site: MISS

**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.**

Participate in local Job and Career Fairs. Continue to use local hiring authorities to recruit and retain students (from Junior High School through College students). MISS will continue to work in several ways to develop good systems for recruiting applicants for NPS positions across the country from the many different communities that provide the Twin Cities with its strength of diversity. The efforts will not be limited, however, to simply providing information about employment opportunities but will also use a more developed strategy that starts with diversity goals for the Junior Ranger program, moves to close work with community organizations such as the Community Design Center of Minnesota training junior high age kids in environmental sciences through creative paid internships, then targets the most promising of these young people for recruitment into the STEP and SCEP programs. This is already underway at the park and will be elaborated and expanded based on the success and lessons of the first students along this path.

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

Provide positive employee relationships with supervisors and managers, ensuring all supervisors and managers are available for discussions and comments in how to make a better work place for employees. Provide employees the opportunity to expand their abilities through challenging opportunities and training.

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Site: MISS

**PROFESSIONALISM**

**Use strategic planning to promote management excellence.**

**Establish a structured professional development curriculum to provide park managers with the skills to apply best business practices and superior leadership.**

Ensure that all supervisors have the opportunity for training above the required annual training.

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Site: MISS

**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.

Employee lost time and visitor injuries have not exceeded 0 in previous years. We will continue to strive for no lost time or injuries.

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Site: MISS

**PROFESSIONALISM**

Model what it means to work in partnership.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

The park will continue to help train and coordinate partner interpretive programs to ensure that program and site partners understand and appreciate the national significance of their own resources even when rangers are not present. New park publications will be distributed at key partner sites, and a new park film will be shown at the Visitor Center and partner interpretive centers. A partnership web site will list both NPS and partner programs. NPS-branded waymarkers and identity signage will be installed in partner parks and at the four locks and dam sites within the corridor. Efforts to secure NPS signs on the roadways in and approaching the corridor will continue. NPS will participate in interpretive facility planning processes currently underway at several partner parks to help ensure that these are developed as part of the corridor-wide network of river-related visitor facilities and experiences. Efforts will be undertaken to encourage privately owned trolley and tour boat operators to work with NPS staff to improve the accuracy of their scripts and staff knowledge of the significance of the Mississippi River.

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Site: MISS

**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.

Work with our Mississippi River Fund and MISS public relations specialist to increase the public awareness of our area.

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