

THE
FUTURE
OF
AMERICA'S
NATIONAL
PARKS

First Annual
Centennial Strategy for

Ninety Six National Historic Site

August 2007

CENTENNIAL INITIATIVE



Site: NISI

Year: 2007

Vision Statement

Ninety Six National Historic Site

Ninety Six National Historic Site is one of the great Revolutionary War sites in the United States. The original earthen Star Fort and tunnel (engineered by the Polish patriot Thaddeus Kosciuszko) are known to aficionados of the American Revolution as one of the treasures of Revolutionary War parks. The great NPS historian Ed Bearss has described Ninety Six NHS as the best example to understand siege warfare within the National Park system. The 1,000 acre park presents a wonderful opportunity to experience not only a Revolutionary War site, but also an understanding of life in the Carolina backcountry in the raw, unsettled frontier during the country's formative years. The park also has several miles of hiking and equestrian trails, a 30 acre lake and remote corners of the park to experience solitude and nature activities.

Established in 1976, Ninety Six NHS has never been funded to the standards of what the American public has come to expect of a National Park. Temporary structures were built in the early 1980's to house the park administration and visitor center. The visitor center and museum are totally inadequate to accommodate more than a handful of visitors at any one time. The museum exhibits were developed in the late 1970's and are woefully outdated. Quite simply stated, the Centennial Initiative holds more potential to realize a real national park experience at Ninety Six NHS than possibly any other unit in the system.

The Centennial vision for the park is to realize the unfulfilled potential of this extraordinary Revolutionary War site. Bringing a first rate visitor center to the park is the hallmark project. Completing archeological surveys of the entire park will provide the basic understanding of the important historical events that took place at this important crossroads for Native Americans, early settlers, the strategic stronghold of the Carolinas and the scene of two battles of the American Revolution. Restoration of the historic scene circa 1781 will allow visitors and scholars to understand the dynamics of the battle which at present is impossible. Development of a new park movie will provide a nexus for visitors to understand the site and engage children to explore the history of the park.

Park/ Superintendent/ Program Manager

Timothy Stone

Site: NISI

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)

The park currently has a temporary visitor center constructed in the early 1980's. This structure has limited visitor capacity (25 visitors), an outdated museum exhibit and inadequate auditorium. A new state of the art visitor center would fulfill the promises made to the local public when the park was established in 1976.

The park would work with the Palmetto Conservation Foundation to raise funds to build the visitor center. The park would work in partnership with the local and state governments to support the visitor center.

This would bring Ninety Six NHS up to the standards that are expected from a National Park unit and provide for a desirable park experience and destination.

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

Site: NISI

STEWARDSHIP

Improve the condition of park resources and assets.

Complete all cultural resource inventories for designated priority resources.

Knowledge of the park's primary historical resources is unknown outside of the immediate siege area of the 1781 battle. Extensive archeological surveys will allow park staff and historians to fully understand the park resources and interpret and educate to the visiting public with accurate information. A recently donated tract of 30 acres probably holds Lighthouse Harry Lee's siege trenches, but archeological investigations are needed to confirm this.

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Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

The current vegetative scene doesn't allow for an understanding of the 1781 Siege of Ninety Six, the park's primary story. At the time of the battle the area was cleared for one mile around the Star Fort. At present, the siege scene is a mowed setting that doesn't reflect how the battle would have taken place. A restoration of the battlefield would open up the setting and provide for the opportunity to interpret the battle, unlike the current limited, manicured setting.

Opportunities exist for the park to partner with youth organizations such as the Student Conservation Association undertake the restoration. The park would partner with the Palmetto Conservation Foundation to develop a restoration strategy and seek partners to partially fund the project.

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Site: NISI

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.

By providing a state of the art visitor center the park would generate increased visitation and improve the quality of its interpretive and educational programs. This is long overdue and would fulfill the potential of this overlooked gem of the American Revolution. This would have the support of state and Federal elected officials and provide the impetus to put Ninety Six NHS on the tourism map.

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

A new high quality park film will bring new visitors and repeat visitors to the park. The film will facilitate and inspire visitors and school children to understand the park story. This will bring new visitors to the park through word of mouth and as a springboard to a greater interest in the American Revolution and associated activities.

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Site: NISI

EDUCATION

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

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Developing a quality, new park movie will provide an important dynamic for the park. This has the opportunity to tell the story in a way to engage young people and inspire visitors to learn more about the park and the American Revolution. Partnering with local historians and educators will allow the park to reach out to the community to tell the story of the early days of Ninety Six, which few people in the region know.

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Site: NISI

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.

Increase visitor satisfaction, understanding and appreciation of the parks they visit.
Simply stated, the restoration of the historic scene is critical to understanding the primary resources of the park. Without the restoration, it is impossible to get a sense of what happened at Ninety Six. This important Revolutionary War site needs the dynamic of the setting to gain an understanding of siege warfare and how the armies were situated.
With the restoration of the battlefield, ranger led walks and educational field trips would increase and improve the experience. Partnerships with local colleges will bring classes to the park to learn about the battle. The park will become one of the leading examples of Revolutionary War battlefield restoration site.

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Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Without primary archeological investigation, much of the story of Ninety Six NHS remains unknown. This diminishes both the opportunity and experience of visitors and scholars to fully understand the story. The park's potential for educating young people is limited. By having archeologists working at the park, it will present a stirring story and opportunity to learn about archeology and what it may "unearth". Opportunities will exist to have school children take part in the archeology and create a "little university" on site at the park that will go on for years. This has great potential to bring new visitors to the park and form a bond with local citizens, schools and universities.

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