

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

First Annual  
Centennial Strategy for

# Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail

August 2007

CENTENNIAL INITIATIVE



Site: SEMO

Year: 2007

**Vision Statement**

The 54 miles of the Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail represent a journey for justice - a triumph for African Americans who endured and prevailed in a struggle to secure one of the most fundamental yet treasured of American freedoms - the right to vote. The trail and its historical resources from the churches of Selma, Alabama through the farmlands of Lowndes County, to the state capitol in Montgomery, commemorate the voting rights marches in March of 1965 that were organized and led by renowned Civil Rights leaders and grassroots activists. Their example of non-violent protest directly influenced the passing of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and remains a climactic event in the modern Civil Rights movement. Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail preserves an enduring legacy to the indomitable spirit of people uniting for the cause of freedom, and a story which inspires present and future generations.

The Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail presently includes one Interpretive Center in Lowndes County, which opened in August, 2006, and is the first of three planned interpretive centers.

The Centennial vision for Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail is to open the Selma Interpretive Center. A location has already been secured at a city block across from the Edmund Pettus bridge in Selma, the site of "Bloody Sunday" where Voting Rights marchers were confronted and attacked by the county sheriff's posse and Alabama State troopers on March 7, 1965. The event brought national attention to the struggle and galvanized the ultimately successful Voting Rights movement. The plan includes developing state of the art exhibits, and promoting the center through events when it opens (projected in 2010), and to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Voting Rights march in 2015 through special events and teacher's workshops, in addition to several other partnership driven programs along the trail which highlight the significance of the Voting Rights March of 1965. The vision fits perfectly with the Centennial goals for fostering stewardship, promoting recreation, developing model partnerships and connecting present and future generations through education, as addressed in this plan.

Selma to Montgomery NHT enjoys a fruitful partnership with the City of Selma, the Alabama Department of Travel and Tourism, ACRES and several other partners. We have firm commitments from our partners to raise the funds and accomplish the work, and again fix the eyes of the nation upon the Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail.

**Park/ Superintendent/ Program Manager**

Catherine Light, Superintendent/James Heaney, Program Manager

Site: SEMO

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)

By 2016 SEMO will restore, develop and open the Selma Interpretive Center. The adaptation of the proposed buildings will be done to ensure the highest standards for visitor safety and accessibility. The center will include provocative and inspiring state of the art exhibits with an eye towards educating youth, and universal accessibility for visitors with disabilities or limitations. Special attention will be placed upon the profound role that the African American community played in organizing and initiating the Voting Rights protest, and how a small town became the focus of a movement that changed the American political landscape. The Selma Interpretive Center furthermore will become the focus of local tourism, essentially a launching pad for an inspiring Civil Rights experience for thousands of visitors to central Alabama. Increased programming along the entire trail will include the development of the "Ribbon of History" and "The Hallmark of Democracy" programs for students and educators as described in this plan. SEMO also proposes other inspiring and enlightening programs, including presentations by and interviews with the surviving foot soldiers and supporters of the March.

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

Site: SEMO

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 projects surrounding the restoration of the proposed buildings for the Selma Interpretive Center and the subsequent exhibit development will connect visitors to the inspiring story of the struggles and triumphs of the 1965 Voting Rights March in a contextually complete and holistic manner in a way that it has not been done yet by any historic site or museum in Selma. The exhibits will explore this compelling event through multiple perspectives of those who participated or supported the Selma to Montgomery march as well those who opposed it , allowing visitors to be fully immersed in the climate of the times. This will also provide a necessary background for visitors touring the other sites in the Selma and Montgomery area that are associated with the Civil rights movement. In fact SEMO will partner with Alabama Travel and Tourism to be included in "A Ribbon of History" a summer program for youths to explore and document visits to over a dozen Civil Rights museums and historic sites in Alabama, including the Birmingham Civil Rights museum, and the the Rosa Parks Museum.

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

Site: SEMO

STEWARDSHIP

Encourage children to be future conservationists.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

The opportunities to engage children through curriculum based education programs and Junior Ranger activities are limitless at the Selma Interpretive Center. The exhibits will be designed for a hands on approach that captures the imagination of younger visitors, and inspires them to be future conservationists and preservationists. A proposed "Ribbon of History" summer program which includes SEMO and a dozen other Civil Rights museums and historic sites will allow summer students to intimately connect with several compelling stories and capture that experience in film. Additional special events and programs will be planned to celebrate the 20th anniversary of Selma To Montgomery National Historic Trail and the National Park Service in 2016, in addition to a region wide celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Voting Rights March in 2015.

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

Site: SEMO

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.

As determined in the General Management Plan for the Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail, volunteers from Selma will play an integral role in the daily operations of the Selma Interpretive Center. There are more than thirty active volunteers in the Selma Friends group who will be staffing the Interpretive Center and presenting programs both on and off-site. The plan also includes office space for the volunteers. Additional VIPs will be recruited and hours will easily increase by 100 percent when there is a vibrant and active National Park Service presence in Selma. Also with the proposed increases in interpretive and educational programming and events, it is certain that there will be a marked increase in volunteerism throughout the trail.

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

Site: SEMO

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)

SEMO will further seek to increase visitation with local and regional children organizations, schools, community centers, and camps to broaden its Junior Ranger and other youth programs. The park has PMIS projects submitted to offer transportation to area schools for field trips and other programs. The park will partner extensively with the cities of Selma and Montgomery, and the Alabama Center for Rural Enterprise to reach out to regional youth and connect them to the compelling SEMO story, and its relevance to their lives today.

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

Site: SEMO

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.

Visitation to the Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail will increase by at least 25% when the Selma Interpretive Center is completed with compelling exhibits. Selma, Alabama was at the center of the voting rights struggle and is the city most identified with the key events of the historical event. It is reasonable to conclude that the visitation to Selma, a larger city and already a popular tourist destination, will be far greater than the present interpretive center in rural Lowndes County, Alabama.

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.

Education programs along the Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail will increase dramatically with the opening of the Selma Interpretive Center. Over 2500 students enjoyed the exhibits at the smaller and remote Lowndes County Interpretive Center this year, and Selma's center will be much larger and the exhibits more accessible to school groups. Furthermore the center is located within easy walking distance of many historic sites associated with the event, which will increase the opportunities for walking tours, bike tours, outdoor education programs and collaborative programming with other Selma museums, historic sites, the Selma Convention and Visitors Bureau and other partner organizations in the tourism community. This collaborative programming will include special events and conferences to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Voting Rights March in 2015, and the 20th anniversary of Selma To Montgomery National Historic Trail in 2016.

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

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

IIb1 - Visitor Understanding and Appreciation  
IIa1 - Visitor Satisfaction  
IVb1A - NPS units have community partnerships to enhance recreational activities  
IVb2- Increased attendance at facilitated programs

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

Site: SEMO

**EDUCATION**

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

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

The opening of the Selma Interpretive Center provides schools and universities at all grade levels an opportunity for on-site education programs, utilizing state of the art exhibits and digital media. The center will be an ideal location for teacher's conferences, scholarly seminars and workshops, and many of these will be planned in preparation for the site's opening (projected for 2010) and for the 50th anniversary of the Selma to Montgomery Voting Rights March in 2015. SEMO will also include educators' input in planning the development of exhibits and other interpretive programs. SEMO will also host several Teacher's Institutes entitled "Voting: The Hallmark of Democracy" in collaboration with the Alabama Center for Rural Enterprise in which educator's will enjoy stipends, curriculum materials and trips to several trail sites during the one week conferences. The trail will also embark on a partnership event called "A Ribbon of History" with several other Civil Rights museums and organizations to host a summer student program and film project.

IVb2 Increased attendance at facilitated programs  
IIb1 Visitor Understanding and appreciation  
IIa1 Visitor Satisfaction

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

Site: SEMO

**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.

Selma To Montgomery National Historic Trail has already introduced a website that includes an interactive curriculum site called "Never Lose Sight of Freedom." Future media development for the Selma Interpretive Center will also be made available on the SEMO web page to further share this powerful story with a potential audience of millions. Additional improvements will also include lesson plans and interpretive media that are produced as a result of the "Voting: The Hallmark of Democracy" and "Ribbon of History" educational events. SEMO will also develop a new web based Junior Ranger program as well.

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

Site: SEMO

**EDUCATION**

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

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

The Selma Interpretive Center will be an ideal place for launching an area wide Junior Ranger program so that future generations of children can understand and appreciate the significance of the Voting Rights March of 1965 and the relevance of the event on their own lives. The park has traditionally hosted Junior Ranger Day events, and there are very dedicated Friends organizations along the trail who be active participants for this effort. The Junior Ranger program will also be available on-line and will be brought into regional classrooms. SEMO will further explore the possibilities of an on-going Summer Junior Ranger program with participants from empowerment areas in the region in the form of an educational day camp.

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

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

IIb1 Visitor Understanding  
IIa1 Visitor Appreciation and Understanding

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

Site: SEMO

**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 restoration, adaptation and opening of the Selma Interpretive Center, complete with state of the art interpretive exhibits and media, and exciting new ranger or volunteer led programs and events along the 54 mile trail, will steer the NPS decidedly trail towards meeting its goals for visitor satisfaction (96%), and understanding and appreciation (87%). The trail will continue to enhance these goals by designing, fabricating and installing over fifty wayside exhibits at key points of interest and visitor contact along the trail corridor. SEMO will also work with ALDOT to provide new and improved directional and interpretive signage.

IIb1 - Increased visitor understanding and appreciation

IIa1 - Increased visitor satisfaction

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

Site: SEMO

**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.**

Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail will seek new and effective ways of providing training to park staff and managers to create a shared vision of fiscal responsibility and leadership. This will be done through formal NPS training in the class-room and on the web, but also through professional seminars and courses offered by outside management firms.

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

Site: SEMO

**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.

Selma To Montgomery National Historic Trail will continue to maintain its proud safety record and assure that the number of serious visitor injuries remains at no higher than 2. The continuance of formal NPS and OSHA training with oversight by the Safety Committee will keep the trail as a safe place to visit and work.

Visitor Accidents - IIa2A  
Employee Accidents - IVa6A

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

Site: SEMO

**PROFESSIONALISM**

Model what it means to work in partnership.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Selma To Montgomery National Historic Trail boasts a tradition of strong partnerships with ALDOT, the FHA, the Alabama Department of Travel and Tourism, ACRES and the City of Selma, in addition to three Friends organizations and a dynamic National Advisory Council. The projects attached to the Centennial Initiative can only further strengthen these relationships. The SEMO partners will be actively engaged in all phases of the projects.

1b4C NPS administers Historic and Scenic Trails  
IVb1A Community Partnerships

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

Site: SEMO

**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.**

Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail will work cooperatively with partners to promote the trail, and its many opportunities for recreation and education. The trail will host and promote Teacher's workshops and Civil Rights seminars in the area to increase exposure to, and interest in, the trail and its compelling story.

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