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FLORIDA DISTRICT

LONG RANGE INTERPRETIVE PLAN

1996

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**Long Range Interpretive Plan
Gulf Islands National Seashore
Florida District**

DRAFT

INTRODUCTION

Gulf Islands NS was authorized in 1971 to protect and interpret the cultural and natural resources within the boundaries of the park. The Interpretive Prospectus of 1979 included the following mission statement linking the cultural and natural resources with the theme of coastal protection: "The offshore islands of the Gulf Coast shelter lagoons and marshes which are important habitats for a rich variety of marine life. From the earliest settlement by Europeans, these islands were likewise perceived as protection for the major ports and great river systems which empty into the gulf. Forts at a few strategic points easily controlled entry. The barrier islands are thus aptly named; they form a barrier to natural forces and to human endeavors.

Metal ships, airplanes, and finally missiles have largely eliminated the limitations which determined the area's military significance. Man's ability to eliminate natural barriers, often beyond nature's capacity to adjust to such changes, has had enormous impact on the coastal environment, even threatening to destroy resources which attracted settlement. It's our turn to protect the barriers."

In the simplest terms, the role of these barrier islands in natural and cultural spheres is protection from threats from the sea. In both realms, there are many subordinate but integral protective systems. All are linked, to each other,

and to ourselves, whether we will it or not. If our society is to remain viable, we must protect and preserve these things which have allowed us to come this far.

The best strategy for this is to "think globally; act locally." That is, think in terms of the connections to the global human community and the planetary biosphere, then adjust your actions where you have the most impact, which is locally.

A COMPELLING STORY

Time and technological progress have changed our perceptions of barrier islands from forbidding wilderness, at first uninhabitable, then suitable only for fortifications and prisons, to favored places for development and recreation. Now the by-products of our technologies, pollution and overcrowding, threaten the very qualities which attract us to these places. Our technology has changed far more quickly than our behaviors. Old behaviors coupled with new technologies poison the planet, destroy ecosystems, eliminate biological diversity, and in the process undermine our very societies. We are a part of Nature; everything is connected. The indicators are all around us; we ignore them at our peril. Clearly we must change behaviors or prepare for catastrophic change. The changes have already begun; there is no time to lose.

-We continue to rely upon fossil fuels for energy, in spite of the certain knowledge that we will eventually exhaust supplies, and the real possibility that their use contributes to global warming.

-We continue to use nuclear energy, in spite of our inability to adequately deal with nuclear waste.

-Global fish populations are crashing from overfishing with modern technologies and destruction of breeding habitat. Our response is to fight over what is left.

-Toxins in the food chain continue to accumulate because natural processes are incapable of degrading many manmade poisons, yet we continue to produce them, and even dump them into the water supply.

-We are running out of landfill space, yet we resist recycling.

-The world is already overpopulated with Homo sapiens, yet there is tremendous resistance to population control measures, including simple birth control.

-In 1991, the government granted a waiver of the Endangered Species Act to allow the logging of an old growth forest in spite of the spotted owl habitat there, all to keep one lumber mill open for twelve months.

-The National Park Service should use recycled products wherever possible, and should minimize waste. If we cannot even convince our own people, how can we hope to convince anyone else?

-The changes need to come from within each of us, in our own homes, in the workplace, as consumers, and as voters.

-The U.S. has the lowest voter turnout among industrialized countries, and yet people complain that the government is unresponsive and "out of touch." It is the public which is unresponsive and out of touch, because the vast majority cannot even be bothered to make a trip to the polls once every other year. That has got to change. One cannot have rights without responsibilities. We must bring this message to our visitors, not as a tale of impending doom, but as an opportunity which must be embraced. Human technology has become a force effecting the global ecology; we can and must control that technology.

INTERPRETATION IN PLANNING DOCUMENTS

The General Management Plan for Gulf Islands National Seashore gives the following objectives for Interpretation:

- To foster awareness of the coastal network of barrier islands in the U.S., the coastal military defense of the U.S., the rich Gulf Coast history, and water-related recreation activities.
- To provide primary interpretive emphasis on natural and historic systems: barrier islands and coastal defenses.
- To foster public understanding of natural cycles: energy, water, and nutrient.
- To foster public understanding of the rich Gulf Coast history from prehistoric times to the modern missile age.
- To encourage participation in the diverse recreational activities associated with the Seashore.
- To foster public understanding of the need for, and the process of, maintaining a proper balance between resource preservation and visitor use.

THE ROLE OF INTERPRETATION

The Interpretation Division initially operated with separate cultural and natural subdivisions until merged in 1985, with the loss of one position. In 1988 a new facility opened at Naval Live Oaks. There are currently three visitor information facilities staffed on a regular basis in the Florida District, with a permanent staff of six field interpreters. Due to budgetary restraints, no seasonal assistance can be expected for the foreseeable future. This contrasts with staffing in the early 1980s, when nine permanent interpreters were assisted by six seasonals, with only two facilities requiring staffing. (**Parkwide including administration FTE 18.8 in FY80; 10.9 in FY95.**) During this time, park visitation has risen to a level among the top five areas of the NATIONAL PARK SERVICE. (5.2 million in 1994.)

Interpretation has sought a balance between cultural and natural, and offsite and onsite programming. Extensive use is made of wayside exhibits and unattended exhibit areas. Historically, the trends have been towards reduction in staffing and increasing visitation, although both seem to have stabilized. As with many changes, the gradual nature of staffing and visitation trends has led to adaptation of existing behavior rather than to significant reconsideration of behavior; we have been doing less of the same things rather than doing things differently. The time has come for a shift in paradigms; we must restructure what we do.

Due to the need for documentation prior to stabilization and restoration work on the historic structures in the park, early research efforts were directed into the cultural area, resulting in an enviable collection of historic structure reports on the major structures. This has, in turn, allowed greater latitude in cultural interpretation, and has been in part responsible for an emphasis on that. The efforts in documentation of the natural resources have largely been concentrated in the Mississippi District to this point. It follows that the current needs in the Florida District are in natural resource interpretation. Similarly, early efforts in onsite programming have left a need for programming beyond the park boundaries. It is notable in this respect that many of the park's neighbors are not aware that Fort Pickens is no longer a state park, and that the Santa Rosa Island Authority recently requested transfer of the "vacant land" at the entrance to the Fort Pickens Area for additional parking at the adjacent county picnic area.

Interpretation at Gulf Islands has historically operated under various impediments. At first there was little information on cultural resources and confusion about how to interpret a "recreation area." Then interpretation grew as information about and access to historic structures

increased. But recreational facilities grew even faster, with little thought to personal interpretation. Staff positions were not obtained for Perdido Key or Santa Rosa, nor were both positions filled for the visitor center at Naval Live Oaks. In fact, staffing began a precipitous decline. The result has been a reliance on non-personal interpretation for most areas, and a reduction in the number and quality of personal programming.

The speed and severity of these changes in interpretation, new facilities coinciding with staff transfers, filled with long term seasonals who were not replaced, has placed great strains on the remaining staff. The addition of more resource management responsibilities has only exacerbated the situation. The response has been aptly characterized as "circling the wagons." **The VIP program was expanded rapidly to fill visitor centers and thereby release rangers for other duties, and to tackle resource management tasks that the staff was unavailable to accomplish.** So far the VIP program has been a tremendous success, but it will require more attention. One position should be largely devoted to it, for that position manages what is in effect over half of the interpretive staff.

The need for such position realignment is at the core of the crisis affecting this division. The situation today is so radically different from where we started that it requires a radical reshaping of our priorities, and our methods; we need a new organization, based on a hard look on our needs, priorities, and responsibilities. We simply cannot do everything. We have been trying for quite a while, and what has been missing is the critical research and planning time for the staff which renews and insures quality interpretation. We have been covering for this lack of planning and research by relying on the skills of a veteran professional staff averaging ten years' experience at this park. A

quality interpretive program requires thought, planning, the latest research, and contacts with the community. Innovation does not come from exhausted minds. A way must be found to operate within the guidelines of NPS-6. We did it once, we can do it again. VIPs are not the only solution. We must cut back on what we do, and do it more cleverly.

VISITOR INFORMATION

A visitor use survey for GULF ISLANDS NATIONAL SEASHORE was conducted in 1993. Notable findings were that most visitors came from surrounding states, many were repeat visitors (45.1% reported at least one visit per year), and an average stay was three days.

74.8% earn less than \$50,000 per year, with 26.7% earning less than \$25,000; 52.6% reported post-graduate work, 44.8% reported less than a college degree.

Although visitors' comments were generally favorable, there were eight areas in which at least 1/4 of respondents reported expecting more than they found:

- 1) information and brochures (32.9%)*
- 2) fountains, showers, toilets (31.6%)
- 3) changing rooms (28.2%)
- 4) direction signs (28.2%)
- 5) exhibits (28.0%)*
- 6) restrooms (27.4%)
- 7) trash cans (27.3%)
- 8) "Park Service people to assist and interpret" (25.9%)*

* Interpretive responsibilities

GULF ISLANDS NATIONAL SEASHORE consistently ranks among the most heavily visited parks in the National Park System, with over five million visits, and yet many of our neighbors do not recognize the name "Gulf Islands National Seashore", AAA still labels "Fort Pickens State Park" on their state maps, and not too long ago the state DOT put up signs on the interstate directing people to the same mythical location.

This park has a tremendous impact on the local economy. Visitors alone account for at least \$500 million in spending annually. This is not appreciated locally. This is a failure of communication, and therefore, of interpretation.

GETTING BACK TO BASICS

Stephen Mather recognized the need to court our constituency. This means at one level, our current visitors and the local community. Our other obvious constituency is the young citizenry, who will become future voters. They are now in schools, and we should be courting them.

The National Park System has been called "the largest outdoor university in the world" and we should emphasize this aspect of the park. People do not need interpreters for most recreational activities, although they need to know the regulations; most people need help to understand historic structures and events; most are similarly ignorant of natural processes. A primary target group should be the local schools. Our school programs have not been significantly updated in a decade. This should be top priority. Teacher workshops, video mail-outs, and onsite as well as offsite programs should be primary goals. Current figures show there are more self-guided groups coming to the park than guided. It is therefore possible to double the amount of ranger-led school programs. Onsite programs should emphasize active learning in small groups, with active participation of park-trained teachers, involving activities and opportunities unique to the park. Perhaps the Junior Ranger program could be tied in, or Adopt-a-Shore. Offsite programs, to be cost-effective, must be targeted at large audiences. Offsites might be limited to assemblies of grades 1st-3rd, with onsites keyed on grades 4th-6th. Critical to this strategy is the addition of Teacher Workshops to the current program.

THE PLAN

OVERALL VISITOR EXPERIENCE

At Gulf Islands National Seashore visitors can spend either a short or long stay within our park boundaries. In both instances the message that the site needs to deliver needs to be immediate. Attention spans are short. Basic themes must be discovered and objectives reached in a short time.

Visitors who can quickly internalize a feeling for Gulf Islands National Seashore can better understand the natural and historical mysteries that it holds. By doing programs and providing exhibits that satisfy their intellectual curiosity, the park will facilitate an understanding of such a special place as GULF ISLANDS NATIONAL SEASHORE. Visitors must encounter the sounds, smells, and visual images that place GULF ISLANDS NATIONAL SEASHORE in its natural and historical context. Every object and activity within the Seashore must add to and not detract from the intended image.

Although these sensory impressions will be powerful and memorable, the history of the site teaches us that they cannot stand alone. Personal interpretation, visitor centers, publications, and wayside exhibits are important supplements. They are needed to explain processes, change, and continuity. Interpretation links the resource to the visitor.

Because many visitors are from all over the country and the world, the interpretive program has to reach a very diverse group.

The interpretive program should be varied enough to invite people from the surrounding area and reward repeated visits from this populace. Special events, exhibits relating to local communities, traditional activities, and park issues should keep the park in the news and interesting.

Teachers and students should be able to turn to the park for multi-disciplinary educational programs that compliment the in-class curriculum. Teachers should be able to use the park to teach writing, history, science, math, and other subjects. A visit to the park itself should provide an experience that is impossible to replicate in a classroom. Pre- and post-visit activities will enhance the most valuable educational tool, the field trip itself.

DESTINATION SIGNS.

Because of the park's many geographic locations, destination signs are very important. It is important that these signs are maintained in good condition during the life of this plan. They are the first mental impression of the park that the visitor receives as well as a frequent reminder to residents that the park is a neighbor. Visitors who arrive without getting lost are visitors ready to have a good on-site experience. Residents who see an attractive, well-maintained sign may have more positive feelings about the park. One major change currently needed concerns the directional sign on Highway 98 East in Gulf Breeze. The sign directs visitors to Park Headquarters. **However, many of our after-hour visitors are campers. There is no information on this sign to direct campers with large motorhomes and trailers to the campgrounds at Fort Pickens.** The camper pulls up to a locked gate and has to maneuver a large trailer back on to the main highway, which is a dangerous and busy one.

A mileage sign needs to be put up at the entrance to the Fort Pickens Area to reassure visitors that there is something of interest at the end of the road, and to tell them how far to expect to go to get there.

PARKING LOT

The parking lot areas adjacent to the visitor centers also send an important message about the care the park receives from the National Park Service. This obviously modern, developed landscape should be well cared for and pleasant. This is particularly important since other historic and natural landscapes might need to be maintained to a standard very different from the 20th century mowed and manicured appearance.

A bulletin board or exhibit at Naval Live Oaks should provide basic orientation to visitors who choose to by-pass the visitor center, and seasonal information to returning visitors.

VISITOR CENTER AND EXHIBITS

The visitor centers perform important functions: restrooms and fountains are available; orientation information dispensed; interpretive overviews provided by audio-visu-als and exhibits; and interpretive items offered for sale. From their various locations the visitor centers should encourage the visitor to take a closer look at the other sites. Exhibits at both Fort Barrancas and Naval Live Oaks need modification for accessibility. Wheelchairs should be available at all sites.

AUDIO-VISUALS

The sound/slide show used in the auditorium of the visitor center of Naval Live Oaks provides the visitor with an accurate narrative of the historical and natural resources of Gulf Islands National Seashore. The program is closed-

captioned for the hearing impaired. However, chronic technical problems with the Hasselblad system may require the eventual replacement with a more reliable system. Improvements need to be undertaken by the park, with Harpers Ferry Center's cooperation, to improve the existing presentation for reliability and variety. The Fort Pickens Auditorium should have an orientation program as well. The "Beaches, Bays, Sounds and Bayous" movie can be used immediately, although a closed-captioned version needs to be produced. Both of these programs utilize outmoded technology and every effort should be made to upgrade to laser disc technology.

VISITOR CENTER VIDEOS

The videos shown in the Fort Pickens visitor center are mainly for the purpose of selling the material in the bookstore. It is possible to use such devices to educate the public about the sites. A good example would be Fort Barrancas on the Naval Air Station. Use of a video to explain the site to visitors may also educate such visitors about the other parts of the park, and at Fort Barrancas will also satisfy ADA requirements. Video equipment should be state-of-the-art. It is recommended to produce a new natural history video, updating the Beaches, Bays, and Bayous 1980's movie.

AUDIO-TAPE TOURS

In many ways, the tip of Santa Rosa island is ideal for a self-guided audio tape. Such a tape would make the best use of the resources out at Santa Rosa Island. The story line could provide background information and develop a theme that would tie the individual park resources together. The sounds of the historical events or natural processes could be recreated while the visitor is surrounded by the resource. This could be an exciting and memorable addition to the park. The use of a cassette tape tour of the tip of

Santa Rosa Island could provide very important information to visitors who could not attend a program. The tour would last about 30 minutes if taken all at once or it could take longer if the visitor wanted to stop and take a look at whatever the tape is talking about at the moment. This could be made available for a deposit at visitor centers, or as a sales item.

RADIO MESSAGES

Upon arrival, visitors can tune in their vehicle radios and find pertinent information about park events, park programs, visitor center hours, campground hours and weather warnings.

PUBLICATIONS

Although the site has adequate brochures for some topics, more should be explored. The visitor survey found that more publications are desired (34.9%). Only three current brochures: the Map and Guide; the Ft. Pickens self-guided tour; and the Advanced Redoubt site bulletin meet current NPS standards. All other existing site bulletins should be revised as they come up for reprinting. The African American contributions are often overlooked; therefore a publication should be published to show their importance in the historical aspects of the park. This publication could be used in conjunction with Black History month and would show the significance of African Americans to our history.

Another topic to explore is archaeology. This is needed to educate the public that sites are located within the park are protected and penalties can be severe for their destruction. This is a significant problem at Naval Live Oaks.

Trail guides are needed for all trails except at Naval Live Oaks area.

The Reptiles and Amphibians site bulletins should be produced.

SALES

The sales areas of all three visitor centers currently include items related to the NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, natural history, cultural history, and Florida. Both print and non-print items are available.

A scope of sales statement has been developed which will identify whether the sales on a particular subject should be all-inclusive, extensive, or just representative. It should also identify areas that should be expanded, paying specific attention to the age and educational level of the item's audience. Categories of reproductions and non-print items should be justified and direction provided for their approval. Some items that are not specifically related to the site and which do not sell well should be dropped. At the same time, additional items that relate to the site should be identified and reviewed. Increased interest in educational programs and potential increases in group visitation should be accompanied by a search for inexpensive items that children might use to learn more about the park. The park now has an ENP&MA Unit Manager who coordinates this aspect of the interpretive operation.

The Park should coordinate with ENP&MA to produce a book on Fort Barrancas similar to the popular Fort Pickens Story.

WAYSIDE EXHIBITS

Several additions to the wayside exhibit plan are needed. A plan is already in the works for the wayside for the reverse arch at Ft. Pickens. An exhibit has been designed to be placed at Battery 233 on Perdido Key, it is awaiting

funding. Other exhibits are needed at: FP jetties (Underwater world); FP Bike Trail at the bridge (wetlands); and Naval Live Oaks (orientation outside VC). As additional ideas are added to our existing plan, text and design should be developed by the park with Harpers Ferry Center review.

Possible wayside funding strategies include gradual installation using ONPS, donation, or fee monies. Preparation of a funding proposal which could be used by a third party (ENP&MA or the National Park Foundation) to raise money from the private sector should be considered.

PERSONAL SERVICES

Staff are primarily committed to traditional activities: visitor centers and onsite interpretive programs. In addition, staff hours are increasingly needed for Resource Management activities, exhibit design, VIP coordination and training, and even routine maintenance in some areas. Although the visitor survey indicates that over 25% of the visitors expected to find more interpreters in the field, the trends indicate that this will only be accomplished through the use of VIPs. The use of VIPs in the roles formerly occupied by seasonal interpreters appears to be the most viable method for freeing paid employees for more demanding duties.

Currently the Naval Live Oaks visitor center interpretive staff serves as operator for headquarters telephone calls. The volume of calls however, has been found to significantly interfere with primary interpretive duties. A solution is needed for this problem either through use of electronic call forwarding (voice mail), or assignment of phones to headquarters staff.

TRAILS AND ENVIRONMENTAL STUDY AREA

A number of trails at GULF ISLANDS NATIONAL SEASHORE introduce the visitors to natural areas and historic structures. All trails need to be examined for accessibility, including Blackbird Marsh. Trail guides should take advantage of these opportunities to provide interpretation of the area's natural history.

PARTNERS IN INTERPRETATION

The partnership with Eastern National Park and Monument Association (ENP&MA) has as its primary purpose the sale of educational and interpretive items for the benefit of park visitors. Other current partners include SANTA ROSA/ESCAMBIA MARINE TASK FORCE, ESCAMBIA AMATEUR ASTRONOMERS' ASSOCIATION and FLORIDA SCENIC TRAIL ASSOCIATION.

CONSERVATION AGENCIES

Contacts need to be established, and coordination sought, with local Audubon groups, Big Lagoon State Park, Wildlife Rescue, and others.

SPECIAL AUDIENCES

School Groups

Expansion of services to area school groups is an effective way to deal with several of the issues that the park has identified. Specifically there is a need to increase contacts with the surrounding communities and to expand contacts with the educational community.

Both on and off site materials should be developed for an appropriate elementary and secondary school level. Mechanisms will be developed to create and maintain close

coordination with schools. Teacher workshops will be designed to explain the park resources and how they can be used by schools. Teacher certification by means of these workshops will eventually be required for Ranger-led programs, to insure teacher participation.

Special efforts should be made to contact schools with population diversity. If necessary, some educational materials should be written with the interests of urban, African American and Asian children in mind.

Scholars

Efforts to expand contacts with the academic community should include:

- membership in appropriate associations;
- attendance at professional meetings;
- presentation of papers based on research at the park or an explanation of available park resources;
- preparation of brochure describing the park's holdings;
- reinvestigation of park significance and themes with the assistance of prominent historical and natural scholars;
- presentation of programs by visiting scholars;
- use of local experts in development and revision of interpretive materials.

Local Residents

Since local residents account for a high percentage of park visitation, and are the source of significant vandalism, and since development of good community relations is an important management goal, special efforts should be taken with this group in mind.

- News articles in local newspapers, based on information supplied by the park staff, should appear regularly. Personal contacts should be developed.

--Special Events should be scheduled throughout the year and well publicized locally. A calendar of events should be determined at the beginning of each fiscal year.

--Park staff should participate in local events outside the park, particularly Earth Day activities.

--Additional opportunities for volunteer participation should be identified.

--The Junior Ranger program should encourage participation of local youth in park issues. This might be a cooperative effort with scouts, schools, or both.

--As closer ties with the local communities develop, opportunities might exist for a series of workshops or lectures on specific GULF ISLANDS NATIONAL SEASHORE topics.

--It has been recommended by security consultants, and supported by in-park studies, that the FP area be closed at night. This has been resisted by management out of concern for public reaction. Interpretive efforts to explain this situation to the public could solve this problem.

Special Populations

The park's accessibility self-evaluation is outdated and simplistic. Past efforts have provided some aids to visitors with disabilities. Most of the park's efforts have gone to mobility improvements, but are all disabled people in wheelchairs? Because of the answer to that question the park should explore other avenues for the disabled.

Additional action is required to:

- Conduct a thorough self-assessment with the aid of local organizations involved with accessibility;

- have at least one staff member trained in basic sign language communication;

- decrease height of at least one section of the information desk at Fort Barrancas;

-consider accessibility for the blind when analyzing the value of a taped tour of GULF ISLANDS NATIONAL SEASHORE;

-list in an obvious location in the visitor center all special aids available.

-install a TTD at Park Headquarters for information services such as Visitor Centers and Campground Registration.

-reprint brochures in large print format.

-assess exhibit labels for appropriate print size and location.

-the accessibility of the higher floors of some structures in GULF ISLANDS NATIONAL SEASHORE must be addressed. Videotaped tours of inaccessible structures and areas would be the best solution, and could be available as sales items as well.

International Visitors

GULF ISLANDS NATIONAL SEASHORE visitation shows that many of our visitors are not native to the United States. The majority appear to be German-speaking. The park has produced German versions of some brochures. Other steps need to be taken to improve this area, particularly by producing brochures for all sites not just a few. The topics should be historical and natural. At minimum, basic brochures should be available in German, French, and Spanish, with Japanese added eventually.

BASE INTERPRETIVE PROGRAM

Chapter 7:2 of "Management Policies" states, "Each park will identify a basic level of interpretation that is core to the mission of the park. Basic level interpretation will be funded before non-basic services."

What follows is an attempt to define what that base level will be. Descriptions of both personal and non-personal

services are included. Essentially, this section becomes an agreement between the Park Superintendent and the Field Director. From the time this "Base Interpretive Program" is approved, it serves as a barometer of the health of the park's interpretive program. Each year, park interpreters will compare actual conditions to this base and explain any variations. Staffing and funding requests will be based on this part of the plan.

ARRIVAL

Well-maintained directional signs along major approaches to the park are crucial to initiating a pleasant visit to GULF ISLANDS NATIONAL SEASHORE. The parking lots must present a well-cared for appearance. Basic information will be readily available to arriving visitors. Distances to various locations will be available.

PUBLICATIONS

In light of monetary projections into the year 2000, it is crucial that publications relay pertinent information on Gulf Islands natural and cultural resources. It has been current practice to slowly weed out the printing of all brochures excluding those that have historical significance. Natural resources deserve the same amount of attention as has been given to historical resources. Therefore it is proposed to produce two site bulletins that interpret flora and fauna in the Seashore, one bulletin entitled Wildlife Guide, the other entitled Critical Resource Issues. These two categories reflect the most commonly asked natural history questions received from the general public. We maintain three historical site bulletins.

To help defray the park cost for printing of site bulletins, we should consider selling the bulletins.

Although the park has numerous brochures available to the public, a few more topics need to be looked into. A brochure on the contributions of African Americans should be investigated, and if approved could be used for African American month or educational activities. The Jr. Ranger booklet should be revised. This revision could allow local youth to learn more about park issues. Publications for the teacher workshop could also be considered.

--A summer newspaper should be reinstated consisting of a minimum of eight pages.

--All park brochures should be systematically revised to meet current NATIONAL PARK SERVICE standards, at the rate of two per year.

--One new brochure should be produced annually to address special issues and topics of special interest to visitors.

VISITOR CENTERS AND EXHIBITS

All visitor centers will open daily, except for Christmas, New Year's, and Thanksgiving. Visitor comfort facilities will be available. Staff will be on hand to answer visitor questions. Exhibits will address each of the major park themes. In two visitor centers a quarterly changing exhibit will address special topics and/or management concerns and allow the park to demonstrate its relevance to today's visitors and neighbors. Sales items covering each of the park themes and items appropriate to each major park audience will be offered. Park orientation program at Naval Live Oaks offered on request. A similar program is needed at Fort Barrancas to meet accessibility guidelines.

The eighteen bulletin boards will be changed quarterly.

AUDIO-VISUALS

Basic park orientation will be available at the Naval Live Oaks auditorium. Additional natural history orientation

will be available at the Ft. Pickens auditorium, both on a daily basis. A video will be available at the Ft. Barrancas visitor center for visitors physically unable to tour the fort.

WAYSIDE EXHIBITS

The upkeep of existing wayside exhibits and the installation of future wayside exhibits is essential to a fully successful interpretive program at GULF ISLANDS NATIONAL SEASHORE.

CULTURAL LANDSCAPES

The lands surrounding the fortifications could be considered cultural landscapes, and efforts to maintain these areas in the proper appearance will continue. An exception is made for the Fort Pickens glaxis, which is not mowed during bird migration periods to allow forage and cover for the migrants.

PERSONAL SERVICES

In addition to the Visitor Center duty stations, the park will offer regularly scheduled tours at Fort Pickens and Barrancas. An audiovisual program will be available at NAVAL LIVE OAKS daily.

Additional programs on natural history will be available in the FP Auditorium at least three times per week, and nature walks offered twice per week. Program topics will be keyed toward natural events and historic anniversaries. Natural history topics will be: severe weather, global climate change, water resources, marine debris, water quality, biodiversity, ecosystems, endangered species, wildlife rehabilitation, barrier island ecology and dynamics, and wetlands. Historical topics will be: civil war, coast artillery, archaeology, Apache imprisonment, weapons technology, colonial history, Coast Guard/lifesaving station, Spanish/American War, black history, and the World Wars.

Having staff who are not tied to facilities but are free to go where the visitors are is important. Roving interpreters can provide critical assistance for resource management as well as effective visitor service and interpretation for the 92% of visitors who do not come to formal programs or visitor centers. This "roving for resource management" should include nature trails, beach areas, Santa Rosa, Perdido Key, Fort Pickens, and occasionally Okaloosa.

Additional programs including recreational skills should be offered during the spring, summer, and fall months. The park should promote special events within the park, such as the Coastal Cleanup, Earth Day, and National Park Day, as well as participate in local events. Offsite programs should be advertised and available for community and school groups on a monthly basis.

TRAILS

The existing trails will be maintained to allow visitors to experience the natural resources of the park and in some cases relate them to the historic themes. Accessibility should be addressed at all trails.

PARTNERSHIPS

The NATIONAL PARK SERVICE will continue to coordinate with county and state entities in marine education and clean up efforts. The NATIONAL PARK SERVICE will also pursue partnerships with local schools in efforts to enhance educational benefits that could be obtained at GULF ISLANDS NATIONAL SEASHORE. Partnerships with Big Lagoon State Recreation Area, Wildlife Rescue, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, and the Escambia/Santa Rosa Marine Task Force should be pursued. Partnerships with ENP&MA, Escambia Amateur Astronomer's Association and Florida Scenic Trail Association should continue.

SCHOOL GROUPS

Given the value of today's youth to the future of the parks, every effort should be made to bring the park program up to NATIONAL PARK SERVICE standards. The current school group program is over ten years old. A Teacher Handbook has been produced in the MS District, and distributed throughout the local school systems. This guide needs some modification for FL District use. A Teacher Workshop must be developed to prepare teachers to assist park staff onsite, and to insure proper preparation prior to the visit. At the present, development of curriculum-based educational materials is ongoing. Once this is in place, these materials will be used to offer improved programs to schools. Efforts should be made to establish a partnership with local schools to help develop ideas for software that would be used in either the visitor centers or with the traveling trunks. School programs should command priority of staff resources in October, November, March, April, and May. A minimum of one school program per weekday should be offered during these periods at Ft. Pickens, Ft. Barrancas, and Naval Live Oaks.

OTHER AUDIENCES

Preparation of regular press releases is essential to good communication with local residents. Park staff should participate in at least two special events each year to encourage park/neighbor interaction. Appropriate park use by local groups should be actively encouraged. An accessibility action plan is needed to provide a current assessment of what must be done to improve programming for visitors with disabilities.

RESEARCH AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Time should be allowed for each interpreter to develop general and specialized expertise through research and consultation and to share research with other staff. All employees of all divisions and partners receive basic/continuing orientation to NATIONAL PARK SERVICE mission and GULF ISLANDS NATIONAL SEASHORE goals. All staff will participate in natural and cultural resource management activities/training for 30% of their time. An annual calendar of events will be produced prior to the start of each calendar year based on input from the field staff. Membership in professional historical and interpretive associations will be encouraged, and professional training opportunities including conferences will be made available to staff members. Park staff will develop relationships with appropriate scholarly organizations to promote research on GULF ISLANDS NATIONAL SEASHORE and park resources.

The most immediate need is for computer training for the entire field staff.

Staff meetings will be held on a quarterly basis.

Training in Standard First Aid and CPR should be current.

OPTIMUM INTERPRETIVE PROGRAM

By definition, an optimum interpretive program makes the best use of the resources of the park. It challenges both staff and visitor via exciting programs and presentations. It allows additional interpretation without overextending staff or allowing overuse which could endanger the resource. To achieve the optimum, the "Base Interpretive Program" needs to be supplemented with the following.

ARRIVAL

Signs that lead to GULF ISLANDS NATIONAL SEASHORE seem to hold potential for improving both orientation and interpretation as visitors approach the site after hours. Additional directions to the Fort Pickens campground should be included.

VISITOR CENTERS AND EXHIBITS

All visitor centers will be open seven days a week.

AUDIO-VISUALS

New audio visual programs are needed at all three visitor centers. The goal being an interactive software program that would encompass all sights of GULF ISLANDS NATIONAL SEASHORE. The slides would be replaced by digital photography that is on CD-ROM. The new program will present visitors with a better quality program that will interpret GULF ISLANDS NATIONAL SEASHORE. Natural and cultural history videos will be put on one laser disk.

Visitor center Audio-visual programs will be updated or replaced every five to ten years.

SALES

Both a self guided tape of the western tip of Santa Rosa Island, new historical and natural resource publications, and a new video of GULF ISLANDS NATIONAL SEASHORE would be an important addition to the park's sales inventory. A Compact Disc for Gulf Islands National Seashore will be developed for use in educational programs and offered as a sales item.

CULTURAL LANDSCAPES

Cultural landscapes will be maintained in a manner suitable to the historic period. The following structures will be

open: Fort Pickens, Fort Barrancas, Advanced Redoubt, and all batteries in the Fort Pickens Area.

PERSONAL SERVICES

Interpretive programs will have a balance between natural and cultural history. Daily fort tours, nature walks, and auditorium programs will be offered featuring all aspects of cultural and natural park resources. Attended stations to include Perdido Key and Santa Rosa areas. Offsite programs to schools and community groups will be offered twice monthly and staff will participate in four local special events annually. Roving of nature trails, batteries and beach areas where visitors are most concentrated will occur on a daily basis. Perdido Key and Santa Rosa Areas will be roved weekly during the summer months and monthly the remainder of the year. All facilities will be open daily except for Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day.

Evening campfires, amphitheater programs, and beach walks will be offered spring and fall.

Battery Cooper educational center will be available in the spring and fall.

Programs targeted at local youth will be offered during the summer season.

Staff will be available for contact with local media.

Every park nature trail will have an interpretive program offered annually.

TRAILS

Existing trails will be improved and interpreted through annual walks and site bulletins. An environmental study

area could be introduced and new curriculum materials developed (Wetlands at NAVAL LIVE OAKS).

Modify boardwalks to make beach areas accessible to wheelchairs.

Blackbird Marsh Nature Trail should be made accessible by sand stabilization (oyster shell or other suitable material.)

Bicycle trail should be developed for the Pensacola/St. Augustine trail.

PARTNERSHIPS

Ties with local organizations such as scouts will be maintained for park resource management projects.

Other local organizations such as: Big Lagoon State Recreation Area, bicycle clubs, SCUBA clubs, and civic groups for possible partnerships.

The Base Commander of the Pensacola Naval Air Station will be contacted concerning possible partnerships with the Pensacola Forts Area.

To help strengthen ties with the academic community, the park would host a conference on GULF ISLANDS NATIONAL SEASHORE natural and historical significance and current research annually and establish a partnership with the University of West Florida.

SCHOOL GROUPS

As the educational program develops, an on-site meeting place for school groups will be useful. Development of a teaching education center in Battery Cooper at Fort Pickens will make use of an existing structure. Workshops will help

teachers to utilize the teaching lab with only minimal staff assistance.

Pre-visit and post-visit materials will meet current curriculum standards. Offsite programs to introduce students to the park and its resources and the NATIONAL PARK SERVICE mission will be offered. Onsite programs will be offered twice daily spring and fall for all grade levels.

Initiate Adopt-A-School program.

OTHER AUDIENCES

Local interest in the park will be promoted via an annual workshop or lecture series on natural or historical issues. Off-site talks for non-school groups will be scheduled as requested. German, Spanish, and French materials about the park will be available.

User groups (bicyclists, SCUBA divers, surfers, roller bladers, fishermen, etc.) should be addressed to enlist their support for park values.

RESEARCH AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

With the concept of a friends of GULF ISLANDS NATIONAL SEASHORE comes an idea to start a park newsletter for its contributors. With this idea park staff will prepare 1-2 articles per year about GULF ISLANDS NATIONAL SEASHORE (or could be used for magazines or journals).

Park staff will be allowed monthly staff meetings.

Park staff will receive 40 hours out of park, as well as 40 hours within park training.

Interpretive staff will be given the opportunity to develop programs and schedules.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Interpretive staff will participate in community events to enhance public awareness of NATIONAL PARK SERVICE mission and GULF ISLANDS NATIONAL SEASHORE goals.

RESEARCH NEEDS

CULTURAL HISTORY

-The most glaring gap in park research documents is the absence of a finished Historic Structure Report on the Advanced Redoubt of Fort Barrancas. The park currently possesses only an incomplete draft of the report. All other significant historic structures in the park have been adequately documented.

-The Oral History Project needs to be resumed and expanded to include local persons having experience in historic activities within the park, i.e.: CCC, Weapons Salvaging, Coast Guard operations, and State Park operations.

-Research into State Park operations should include documentary searches. The state agency does not have the records, which may have been destroyed. This should be positively determined, and efforts made to exhaust all possible alternatives for obtaining information on the 25-year period of non-federal administration of the Fort Pickens area. This information is of critical importance in management decisions, and will only become more important and more difficult to obtain as time wears on. If oral histories are the only viable alternative, they should begin without delay. Current park staff includes former state employees.

-Archaeological monitoring should be resumed, and the possibility of a Historic Resource Study on park archeological sites considered.

-Scout camps at Naval Live Oaks need to be investigated and formally documented.

-An annual assessment of needs should be conducted.

VISITOR SERVICES

Staff should network with other NATIONAL PARK SERVICE areas to share information on interpretive techniques. Visitor survey should be conducted every 5 to 10 years both within and outside the park. The last survey was done in 1993. Information on comment cards should be documented. Contacts will be maintained with professional interpretive organizations to remain abreast of latest techniques and research.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Several research projects have been identified by our Resource Management Specialist or by the park's interpretive staff. The one thing that is needed for these projects to succeed is an active, functional resource management program. The direction, oversight, and administrative support must be in place and on-going before this arrangement can succeed. The current research needs for GULF ISLANDS NATIONAL SEASHORE follow, however an annual assessment of needs should be conducted:

Inventory

- conduct systematic field surveys for various species of plants and animals
- assist visiting researchers with inventory activities
- GPS/GIS mapping and ground-truthing

Monitoring

--conduct periodic monitoring activities in accordance with established protocols

--identified monitoring programs:

- marine sea turtles
- wintering and nesting shorebirds
- neotropical migratory birds
- nesting eagles and ospreys
- shoreline change
- vegetation communities/habitats
- water quantity(groundwater/wetlands)
- threatened and endangered species
- reptiles and amphibians
- small mammal populations.
- roadkill surveys
- parkwide photographic survey
- various photopoints
- non-native plant and animals
- identified plant and animal pest

Mitigation/restoration

--campground rehabilitation/revegetation

--backcountry campsite rehabilitation/restoration

--sand dune restoration

--artificial light reduction(sea turtle disturbance)

--bird nesting area identification and protection/closure

--identification of existing and potential impacts resulting from external development activities

--exotic plant management (identification, mapping, monitoring, control/removal)

--exotic animal management (red fox, nutria, fire ants)

--pest management

--coordinate/supervise use of volunteers on resource projects

--develop outreach programs for resource projects/needs

--fire management (plot preparation and inventory, fire effects monitoring)

Research

- assist visiting researchers with field activities
- collecting/research permit management
- conduct bibliographic searches
- conduct visitor use surveys
- conduct library research of various legal issues (commercial fishing, protection of wilderness values, submerged land ownership/authorities, military overflights)
- conduct documentary research of existing data on water quality throughout Escambia/Pensacola/East/Perdido Bays

Land Management

- deed searches and ownership investigations
- review boundary surveys
- verify integrity of boundary monument (locate, mark)
- compile property legal descriptions
- determination of retained rights (mineral, access, water)
- right-of-way/easement management and monitoring
- identification of encroachments

Information/Data Management

- Biological Conservation Database (Nature Conservancy)
- GULF ISLANDS NATIONAL SEASHORE wildlife observation database
- 10-21A's (pesticide use request) and pesticide use logs
- investigator's annual report
- develop/maintain photographic library
- develop/maintain resource management library
- natural history collection

Response

- marine mammal stranding network
- marine sea turtle stranding network
- HAZMAT/oil spill

Interpretation

--develop comprehensive interpretive programs, displays, handouts, etc. dealing with:

- preservation of biological diversity
- ecosystem management and function
- global climate change
- sustainable ecosystems and development
- use of prescribed fire
- park visitor responsibilities

Miscellaneous

- assist in the development of various management/action plans
- routine equipment maintenance and repair
- maintain inventory of necessary supplies to support field programs

STAFFING

STAFFING FORMULAS

-For every hour a standard interpretive program is presented, two hours of preparation are needed. This includes research, program preparation and revision as well as travel to the site, pre-talk contacts with visitors and set-up time. Every new program requires forty hours of research and preparation time.

-For every in-park education program, 2 hours of traveling and preparation are required.

-For every hour of roving time or visitor center time, one hour

of staffing is needed. For each day a visitor center is open, one hour of opening and closing time is needed.

- For every offsite program, an additional 2 hours of travel, pre-talk contacts and set-up time are required.
- Each temporary employee will have ten days of interpretive training and two days of Standard First Aid and CPR training each year.
- One article for the media requires six hours of preparation. One standard article requires two hours of revision.
- Production of one eight page issue of Gulf Islands Guide requires twenty-four hours of typesetting, layout and design. An eight page issue has six new articles and nine standard articles or features.
- Production of one revised site bulletin requires eight hours of writing and eight hours of typesetting, layout and design.
- Production of one new site bulletin requires twenty-four hours of writing and sixteen hours of typesetting, layout and design.
- Each permanent employee requires 248 hours of training, research time, and professional development annually.
- Each biannual change of exhibits requires 80 hours of development and 80 hours of design and production.
- Every facility requires eight hours per day.
- VIP program requires 1040 hours annually for administration, including recruiting, training, scheduling, and supervision.
- School group program requires 1040 hours annually for curriculum material development, scheduling, coordination, correspondence, mail-outs and follow-up. This includes teacher workshops.
- Resource management activities require 500 hours annually.
- Mail and phone responses require 550 hours annually.
- Each special event requires 80 hours for planning, coordination, and presentation.

WORK PLAN

See appendices.

COST ESTIMATES

Audiovisual Arts Production and Equipment

Production \$98,000
Equipment \$32,000

Exhibit Planning, Design, and Production . . \$100,000

Wayside Exhibit Production \$20,000

ACCESSIBILITY GUIDELINES

Refer to Interpretation for Disabled Visitors in the National Park System, 1984, copy in FL District Library. A copy of Special Populations: Programmatic Accessibility Guidelines for Interpretive Media is needed.

STAFFING REQUIREMENTS

To accomplish the programs outlined under the Base and Optimum Interpretive Programs, the following staff is is required. Optimum numbers reflect supplemental staff needed.

FTE figures have not been adjusted to account for employee absences because of annual leave or training. FTE figures do not include volunteers or ENP&MA staff.

See chart on the following page.

STAFFING REQUIRED FOR BASE AND OPTIMUM PROGRAM

FRONT LINE STAFF	BASE	OPT	TOTAL
VISITOR CENTERS	4.06	0.51	4.57
PROGRAMS :			
FORT TOURS	1.19		1.19
AUDITORIUM(new)	0.13		0.13
AUDITORIUM(revised)	0.22	0.3	0.52
NATURE WALKS	0.15	0.37	0.52
SCHOOL	0.19	0.19	0.38
EVENING	0.05	0.08	0.13
SUMMER	0.02	0.02	0.04
OFFSITE	0.02	0.02	0.04
VOLUNTEERS	0.5	0.5	1
SCHOOL COOR	0.5	0.5	1
SPECIAL EVENTS	0.07	0.07	0.14
AUDIO-VISUAL	0.01	0.01	0.02
BULLETIN BOARDS	0.27		0.27
WAYSIDES	0.01		0.01
MAIL&PHONE	0.26		0.26
RESOURCE MGMT	0.24	0.24	0.48
EXHIBITS :			
VISITOR CENTERS	0.61		0.61
MUSEUM	0.3		0.3
SANTA ROSA	0.08		0.08
SITE BULLETINS:			
REVISED	0.01		0.01
NEW	0.01		0.01
NEWSPAPER	0.03	0.05	0.08
NEWSLETTER		0.01	0.01
MEDIA ARTICLES	0.03		0.03
GRAND TOTAL	8.96	2.87	11.83

PLANNING TEAM

Florida District Interpretive Staff:

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Beckie A. Breeding

Amanda L. Carrigan Grissom

Ann M. Folker

David P. Ogden

Stephen A. Theus