



# Partners and Friends

## Lolo Pass Visitor Center Dedication A Model of Cooperation

On June 27, 2003, the new visitor center and rest area was dedicated at Lolo Pass, Idaho in a three-hour ceremony. Under beautiful blue skies and warm temperatures, the day was spent celebrating this achievement of partners working together toward a common goal.

The discussions to upgrade the U.S. Forest Service facility at Lolo Pass began in 1996 when the Montana and Idaho Departments of Transportation partnered with Clearwater National Forest to develop a new rest area and visitor center. After many years of planning and construction the new center was opened with contingents from all of the parties involved.

The dedication began with a prayer from Nez Perce Tribal Elder Hoarce Axtell and an assembly of the colors. Governor of Idaho, Dirk Kempthorne and a representative from the Governor of Montana Judy Martz's office made some brief remarks. Governor Kempthorne set the tone for the dedication saying that "Today marks the beginning of new opportunities to share information about special places on both sides of the Lolo Pass".

Scott Eckberg, Idaho Unit Manager of Nez Perce National Historical Park, speaking on behalf of the park's Superintendent Douglas Eury, noted that despite the borders between two states and the jurisdictions between agencies, the Lolo project demonstrated that institutional barriers can be surmounted. During the planning process, park staff were included on the team that designed the new exhibit.

Representatives from the Nez Perce Tribe, the Chief Joseph Band of Nez Perce on the Colville Reservation and the Confederated Salish Kootenai Tribe made remarks during the ceremony. For generations, the Nez



Governor Dirk Kempthorne (to the right of the pole) of Idaho assisting officials from the states of Idaho, Montana, the Nez Perce Tribe, and the Salish Kootenai Confederated Tribe join in cutting the ribbon for the new Lolo Pass Visitor Center and Rest Area.

Perce and Salish peoples used the trail systems over Lolo Pass and the Bitterroots to trade and hunt Buffalo in the plains. Their participation in this project was pivotal for its success

After a brief closing ceremony, the second half of the day was devoted to a variety of activities. The Forest Service had an open house for the new visitor center and trail system; the Nez Perce Tribe's Young Horsemen group sponsored a horse ride in Packer Meadows and the Stephenie Ambrose Tubbs helped dedicate a memorial to her father, the late Stephen Ambrose, for his work on the Lewis and Clark expedition. The staff of Nez Perce National Historical Park set up a tipi, provided information on the park and gave short interpretive programs about the Nez Perce.



The new Lolo Pass Visitor and Rest Area. Located at 5,225 feet on the border between Idaho and Montana, the new structure includes restrooms, exhibits, an interpretive trail, a sales area, and a warming hut for winter recreationalists.

The visitor center at Lolo Pass is open Thursday through Monday, 8:30 am to 4:30 pm (Pacific Time). Call (208) 942-1234 for more information or visit them on the web at [www.fs.fed.us/r1/clearwater/](http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/clearwater/)

## Canoe Camp and Weippe Prairie: An Update

In cooperation with the Nez Perce Tribe, the National Park Service completed a three-week archaeological investigation at Canoe Camp near Orofino. About 100 auger holes and four one-by-one meter test units were excavated in July on the adjacent 3.5-acre Riverview Estates property, purchased last year for addition to Canoe Camp.

This work is a prerequisite both to developing visitor facilities on the 1.5-acre parcel we are retaining for Canoe Camp, and to selling the remaining Riverview Estates mobile home park, said integrated resource manager Jason Lyon. The archaeological investigation was conducted in partnership with the Nez Perce Tribe, whose ancestors encamped here long before Lewis and Clark's arrival in 1805.

Tribal archaeologists will now assist the park in compiling the data. The investigation and its findings will be submitted this fall to the Idaho State Historic Preservation Officer, whose concurrence is required before the National Park Service can proceed with site improvements.

Meanwhile, the park has completed its acquisition of the Opresik farm at Weippe Prairie. Located on Larson Road about three miles from Weippe, the 80-acre site is in the vicinity of the meeting between the Corps of Discovery and the Nez Perce people in 1805. Its long occupation by the Nez Perce was also influenced by the abundance of camas plants, a traditional native food source that continues to flourish there.

Rose Opresik retains a life residency at her home on the property, which she and her late husband, John, acquired in 1944. The park is working with the Clearwater County highway district and the city of Weippe to improve directional signing to the site, which contains a vehicle pullout, visitor guest book, and interpretive sign. The park's other immediate site priority is to control weeds and sustain its camas plant community.

For more information, please call Scott Eckberg, Idaho unit manager, at (208) 843-2261, ext. 151.

# Volunteers Make a Difference

Since 1970, Volunteers in Parks or VIP's have played an increasingly important role in assisting the National Park Service in making parks accessible to the public. From October, 2001 - September 2002 125,000 volunteers for the National Park Service contributed 4.5 million hours of service in over 350 National Park Service sites and offices across the nation.

At Nez Perce National Historical Park, thirty-eight volunteers have contributed over 2,500 hours of service. At Big Hole National Battlefield, twenty volunteers have contributed approximately 2,000 hours of service to the park. Finally, at Bear Paw Battlefield, ten volunteers have contributed 272 hours of service.

With thirty-eight sites in four states, National Park Service personnel cannot be stationed at every site. The park's volunteer coordinator, Alyse Cadez, has been working with members of the community of Whitebird, Idaho to protect the White Bird battlefield. The site is where the 1877 conflict between the U.S. Army and the Nez Perce began on June 17, 1877.

Because of its distance from park headquarters and the importance of the site, fifteen volunteers from the town of White Bird have volunteered to monitor conditions on the battlefield, keep brochure boxes filled at the highway overlook and

the battlefield trailhead, and tell the story of the battle and the Nez Perce people to visitors. The volunteer group also operate the community library and graciously supply a place for the park programs and include articles about the park in the White Bird monthly newsletter.

In exchange for their much-needed eyes and ears, and to give the volunteers background information to answer questions from visitors, the park provided a series of three training programs. Materials from these programs were compiled and added to the library's collection.

At park Headquarters in Spalding, volunteers from the local area and as far away as Chicago, Illinois, have also helped the staff, providing interpretive programs, doing administrative tasks, and providing a pesense at other sites such as Canoe Camp.

The park has a variety of opportunities for volunteers. To find out more about how to volunteer at Nez Perce National Historical Park, call Alyse Cadez at (208) 843-2261, ext. 138 and Tim Fisher for Big Hole and Bear Paw battlefields. Tim can be reached at (406) 689-3155. More information about volunteering for the National Park Service can be found on the NPS web site at [www.nps.gov/volunteer/](http://www.nps.gov/volunteer/)



Volunteers from Whitebird, Idaho ready to go to work.

# News From the Field

## Bear Paw Battlefield

Over the summer Robert West worked as the Park Ranger at Bear Paw. Robert is joining us under the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) from the University of Idaho. As a participant in SCEP, Robert was stationed at the battlefield over the summer and will return in January 2004 as a permanent employee of the NPS.

For the summer, Robert provided interpretive services at the Blaine County Museum in Chinook and gave tours of the battlefield. Many projects are also underway at Bear Paw. With generous assistance from Travel Montana, a program of the Montana Department of Commerce, the battlefield brochure was reprinted. Planning also continues for eight new interpretive signs as part of the parkwide wayside exhibit project.

## Summer Visitation Up

Visitation to Nez Perce National Historical Park and Big Hole National Battlefield rose during the summer months of 2003. In the



**Bear Paw Battlefield**

aftermath of 9/11 and the economic downturn, visitation slipped in 2001 and 2002. In June 2002, 16,517 visited the park. In June of this year, the number rose nearly 12% to 26,990. For Big Hole National Battlefield, they made a modest gain of %4.5 in June, from 11,902 visits in 2002 to 12,442 visits in 2003.

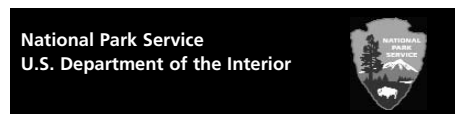
Anecdotal evidence collected by the staff suggests that the up swing in visitation is due to heightened public interest in the bicentennial commemoration of the Lewis and Clark

Expedition, which kicked off in January 2003 at Monticello, the home of President Thomas Jefferson.

## Exchange With Fort Walsh

Over the summer, staff from Nez Perce National Historical Park and Big Hole National Battlefield worked with the staff at Parks Canada's Fort Walsh National Historical Site. After the battle at Bear Paw, some Nez Perce from the White Bird band made it to Canada, staying near Fort Walsh, a Northwest Mounted Police post.

Throughout the summer, park staff went north to the fort. In August, Parks Canada staff, on their own time, participated in the trail ride to the Bear Paw Battlefield. Superintendent of Big Hole, Jon James, noted: "I think their [Parks Canada staff] enthusiasm and willingness to devote their own resources and time to come down and help us reflects the mutual success of our continuing partnership. They added an intriguing aspect to battlefield events that is not interpreted enough at Bear Paw and Big Hole."



Nez Perce National Historical Park offers for all Americans an important perspective about our history as a people. It is not the view from the Mississippi River looking west; it is a view from a homeland looking out, witnessing the march of history and change, yet continuing today and tomorrow to commemorate and celebrate Nez Perce culture and traditions. It is a park about a people for all people.

### Nez Perce National Historical Park

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Spalding, ID 83540  
(208) 843-2261  
[www.nps.gov/nepe](http://www.nps.gov/nepe)

### Big Hole National Battlefield

P.O. Box 237  
Wisdom, MT 59761  
(406) 689-3155  
[www.nps.gov/biho](http://www.nps.gov/biho)

The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

## Living Together Into The Future: A Forum

In June, 2003 at Kamiah High School, the National Park Service, the Nez Perce Tribe, and the Historical Museum at St. Gertrude sponsored a community forum. Following up with last year's forum, for 2003 the discussions revolved around the Nez Perce Indian Treaties, tribal sovereignty and jurisdictional issues. These discussions were a follow up to last years symposium on the land and how it has been transformed over the last 300 years.

The morning opened with an overview of the treaty system by Cathy Wilson of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and its impact on tribal sovereignty. The afternoon discussions were led by Professor Keith Allred of the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. Professor Allred led an effort to create a mechanism that allowed the Nez Perce Tribe and its neighbors to work out problems concerning jurisdiction. The centerpiece of this effort is an agreement or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Nez Perce Tribe and the North Central Idaho Jurisdictional Alliance. Echoing the theme of the conference, both parties acknowledged that they had hopes for working together into the future, but there was a great deal of hard work ahead.

The organizers of the conference were pleased with the outcome of the event. From the evaluations collected, participants recognized the need to work together to solve the problems faced by the tribe and its neighbors and that there are no easy solutions to the jurisdictional challenges that face all of the parties concerned. Communication and education among the tribe, community members, and young people will continue to foster a relationship between native and non-native communities.



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**EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA**

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## Partner Profiles: Cooperating Associations

One of the most visible partners in the National Park Service are cooperating associations. When you visit a National Park Service visitor center, you will often find a bookstore operated by a cooperating association nearby. A percentage of the profits generated by association sales are reinvested in the park, creating products to help visitors understand the resources the National Park Service is charged to protect.

The Northwest Interpretive Association (NWIA) and the Glacier Natural History Association (GNHA) are non-profit organizations dedicated to providing visitors with materials that promote a better understanding of the Nez Perce people, their culture and history. NWIA is the partner for Nez Perce National Historical Park and GNHA supports Big Hole National Battlefield.

Funds raised through the sale of publications are returned to the parks to help support

their interpretive and educational programs. Projects that NWIA and GNHA have supported in the past include the publication of this newspaper, trail guides, curriculum guides, the purchase of books for the park's libraries, and the purchase of digital camera equipment.

Enjoy the benefits of membership and help support your National Parks! There are many categories of membership available to meet your needs. In return for your support, you will receive discounts on merchandise at sales outlets, newsletters so you can stay in touch with what's going on, and the opportunity to attend annual meetings and membership events.

NWIA is on the web at [nwpubliclands.com](http://nwpubliclands.com) or by calling (206) 220-4140. GNHA is available at [www.glacierassociation.org](http://www.glacierassociation.org) or by calling (406) 888-5756.