

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

First Annual  
Centennial Strategy for

# Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historic Site

August 2007

CENTENNIAL INITIATIVE



Site: ABLI

Year: 2007

**Vision Statement**

The park was created in 1916 to preserve, commemorate, and interpret the cultural and natural resources associated with the birth and early years of Abraham Lincoln. In 2001, the 228 acre Boyhood Home site at Knob Creek (KC) was donated to the park. The park's primary interests are preservation and appropriate development of KC cultural resources; management of the park's complex natural systems; assure public understanding of the park's historical purpose and present relevance. The park's vision is to resolve those issues and enter the Service's second century equipped to meet future challenges.

A 2006 Historic Structures Report and the GMP recommends restoring the exterior and interior of the cabin and tavern to their 1930s appearance with some interior tavern modifications to accommodate operational support areas. Following those recommendations would allow interpretation of the buildings as cultural resources and enhance the delivery of visitor services.

A Resource Stewardship Strategy (RSS) and revisions to the Fire Management Plan are required to establish acceptable science based resource management policy. The park has submitted a PMIS statement for RSS funding. The GMP identifies trail improvements and an interpretive garden configured to historic proportions and planted with crops common to Lincoln's time. The control of exotic species and the restoration of the appropriate native species are of special interest to the park.

Demographic diversity, population increases, and technological innovations are changing the face and expectations of the visiting public. Interpretive and educational methods, based on scholarship and research, must be developed to adapt to these changes and establish a connection between the park's resources, the values they represent, and the people. The innovative use of technology is an intriguing and effective means of reaching the public and the park is exploring those opportunities.

Civic engagement, partnerships, and professional staff development are assets and methods used by the park to address present and future challenges. These assets and methods support the park's effort to identify, understand, and respond to the public's expectation for education, recreation, and to derive meaning from their park experience. The Park Service Organic Act is as relevant today as it was in 1916; we are tasked to ensure that the Nation agrees.

**Park/ Superintendent/ Program Manager**

Keith Pruitt

Site: ABLI

**STEWARDSHIP**

Provide inspiring, safe, and accessible places for people to enjoy - the standard to which all other park systems aspire.

Provide

The Lincolns left Sinking Spring Farm in 1811 when their property title was challenged. They moved to the Knob Creek Farm until leaving for Indiana in 1816. The Knob Creek site, recently acquired by the NPS is one of the most inspiring areas along route 31E between Hodgenville and Bardstown Kentucky - a scenic by-way. Besides the historic tavern and cabin listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the site remains unchanged from the Lincoln period. During the summer season when the site is staffed visitation averages 160 people daily with that number rising to 250 on weekends. The parking lot where cars enter from the highway is the only place for staff to greet visitors since the buildings are closed awaiting funds for repair. This limited parking/visitor interaction zone presents an unsafe area. Families with children must avoid cars, buses and RVs while engaging with park staff. Providing a safe area for visitors to view the site is the park's first priority. A redesign of the parking/visitor interaction zone has been developed and PMIS statements to correct the safety inadequacies have been submitted.

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

Site: ABLI

STEWARDSHIP

Improve the condition of park resources and assets.

Rehabilitate high-priority historic buildings to good condition, and help communities to preserve their history through programs like Preserve America.

The NPS acquired the Lincoln Boyhood property at Knob Creek (KC) in 2001. The property was purchased from the owner by the local community and donated to the NPS. The KC property is 228 acres and contains a historic road side tavern, a replica frontier cabin, agricultural fields, and forested areas evocative of when the Lincolns lived there. Due to safety concerns and general poor structural conditions the tavern and cabin are not open to the public. PMIS statements have been submitted to rehabilitate and develop both structures to NPS standards. As stated in the GMP, the park intends to reestablish the fields and garden to their historic size and configuration; maintenance to be accomplished through an agricultural lease. When rehabilitation is complete, the tavern structure will also function as an interpretive center for the park. Funding requirements to rehabilitate and develop KC approach \$2,500,000 and will probably not be forthcoming in the near future. Potentially, a friends group or partnership could be formed to obtain the funding necessary to rehabilitate and develop KC or as a match for the Centennial Challenge initiative.

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Restore native habitats by controlling invasive species and reintroducing key plant and animal species.

Multi-flora rose and Japanese honeysuckle are problems at the Knob Creek site. The original fields that the Lincoln family planted in corn and pumpkins are crowded by these invasive plants. Visitor satisfaction and understanding would be improved by the removal of these plants. The native plants, especially the spring wildflowers that draw both local and out-of-state visitors would be greatly improved. The park has submitted a PMIS statement requesting a Resource Stewardship Strategy to ensure proper resources management and has/will continue to use SCA work crews to remove invasive species and restore the natural habitat.

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Site: ABLI

**STEWARDSHIP**

**Improve the condition of park resources and assets.**

**Improve the natural resources in parks, as measured by the vital signs developed under the Natural Resource Challenge.**

Specific high priority vital signs developed for the park includes water resource management. Currently the septic system at the Knob Creek Farm has failed and contaminates are leaching into a near-by well. This well used for watering the historic garden during drought periods makes all items grown unusable and are discarded. As part of the overall development of this area a new septic system will be installed. A PMIS statement covering this project has been submitted and there is Congressional interest in Knob Creek site development.

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

The Knob Creek Farm Cultural Landscape Report is not yet complete and this landscape is presently not included in the NPS cultural landscape inventory. A professional assessment of the landscape and recommendations for improvements would assist with planning and management of this site. A PMIS statement has been submitted by the park for this project.

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Site: ABLI

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 Nancy Lincoln Inn (NLI) and four one-room cabins are privately owned log structures located adjacent to the park boundary and were constructed by the current owner's grandfather in 1928. The NLI and the four cabins are on the National Register of Historic Places. There is also a modern era house located on the property. Presently, the NLI is operated as a gift shop and museum displaying Lincoln artifacts, historical documents, and memorabilia. Visitor parking and entry to NLI is from ABLI property and most visitors consider the NLI as part of ABLI. As identified in the park's General Management Plan (GMP), if available from a willing seller, and if funds are obtainable the NPS would seek to acquire the adjacent NLI property. Purchase of the property would ensure the integrity of the historic structures, provide adequate space for the park's bookstore (Eastern National), improve the viewshed, and the modern house could be removed or adapted for NPS use. Potentially, a friend's group or partnership could be formed to obtain the funding necessary to purchase the property or as a match for the Centennial Challenge initiative.

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Site: ABLI

STEWARDSHIP

Serve as the Preeminent resource laboratory by applying excellence in science and scholarship to understand and respond to environmental changes.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Challenging and complex issues surround the effort to improve management of the park's natural resources. Monitoring, inventorying, integrating, and understanding of a complex ecosystem are required prior to implementation of a comprehensive resource management strategy. ABLI is developing/developed/ongoing the following resource study and planning documents: Park Mammal Study, Digital Vegetation Database and Maps, Water Quality Monitoring Program, Cumulative Ozone Exposure Monitoring, and Bird, Fish, and Herpetological Inventories. In addition, ABLI has applied for Resource Stewardship Strategy (RSS) development funding. The RSS will provide the analytical information and strategy recommendations required to implement the recently completed GMP and to revise the Fire Management Plan to include prescribe burn as a management tool. The control of exotic species and the restoration of the appropriate native species are of special interest to the park. Lessons learned from applied research and restoration strategies can be communicated and utilized by other land management agencies and the local community.

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Site: ABLI

STEWARDSHIP

Encourage children to be future conservationists.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

The restoration of the historic tavern at Knob Creek would provide a large work space for park staff and teachers to conduct workshops and hands-on natural resource activities. This large area could house a visitor contact station, exhibits, and a teacher/education site. Through educational programming local and out-of-state children would interact with materials developed to encourage conservation. The park has submitted PMIS statements to restore and develop the historic tavern into a learning center for educational outreach.

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Site: ABLI

RECREATION

- Encourage collaboration among and assist park and recreation systems at every level—federal, regional, state, local—to help build an outdoor recreation network accessible to all Americans.
- Rehabilitate over 2,000 miles of trails within or connected to national parks, including trails accessible to those with disabilities.

The park's new GMP identifies an enhanced opportunity for visitors to interact with the natural resources and provide accessible paths to the open fields that the Lincoln family used for crops and gardens. The historic Boy Scout trail would be repaired and other trails improved for self-guided or ranger led walks to the fields and creek. The current road would be converted to trails and maintained where needed for NPS maintenance, visitor activities, or revegetated. Public input for planning purposes would be requested and, as feasible, incorporated into the final design.

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Site: ABLI

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.

To increase the number of volunteer hours, the park needs to install two trailer sites to provide volunteer housing; one trailer site for each unit of the park. The Knob Creek site would especially benefit from a volunteer presence as currently there is no year round staff to oversee resources. During the past year there was a small wildfire that went unnoticed for several days. Volunteers living on site would protect park resources and provide services for visitors when park staff is not available. Retirees traveling in RVs have the specific skills needed to preserve and protect our resources and developing trailer sites for RVs would enhance the parks ability to attract volunteers. The park will develop a comprehensive plan to attract volunteers and submit the required PMIS statements by the end of calendar year 2007.

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Site: ABLI

RECREATION

Focus national, regional, and local tourism efforts to reach diverse audiences and young people and to attract visitors to lesser-known parks.

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

With the approach of the bicentennial of Lincoln's birth in 2009, ABLI began working with the state, tri-state, and national bicentennial commissions to plan for a major kick-off event to be held in the park on February 12, 2008. The program and attendance for this event will involve multi-cultural communities. ABLI hired a 4-year temporary education specialist to expand on/off site education programming, offer daily guided tours, and costumed interpretive programs. Programs such as Martin Luther King, Jr. birthday celebration brought diverse inner-city classrooms to the park. Partnering with the Kentucky Historical Society; Kentucky, Indiana, and Illinois tourism departments; and all related Lincoln sites within the tri-state area, the park has greatly increased attendance of ranger programs. The park will continue to plan and promote programming through electronic media and work with its partners to increase attendance for all programs.

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Site: ABLI

EDUCATION

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

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Abraham Lincoln lived on the Knob Creek Farm (KC) from the ages of 2 ½ to 7 ½ years before moving to Indiana in 1816. The KC site is located on the Green River Turnpike, currently Hwy 31E. Documentation lists slave-holding families in the locale, slaves may have been transported along the Turnpike, Lincoln stated his parents left Kentucky partially on account of slavery, and evidence points to the possibility the Lincolns belonged to an abolitionist church. For the reasons stated above, this site could be eligible as a registered site on the National Park Service Network to Freedom. Using existing data bases and the assistance of Kentucky's Georgetown College's Underground Railroad Research Institute and the Kentucky Historical Society, ABLI will research and document the evidence supporting this claim and, if verified, make application for KC to be included as a site on the National Park Service Network to Freedom. If ABLI is included in the Network, the park will use a variety of methods to explain the possible influence witnessing slavery may have had on Abraham Lincoln as a child living at KC.

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Site: ABLI

**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.

During June of 2007 ABLI, in cooperation with the Kentucky Historical Society, sponsored a three-day Tri-State Teacher's Workshop (Kentucky, Indiana, Illinois). The workshop theme was to explore the influence of Kentucky upon Lincoln's policies and politics. Attending teachers will create lesson plans that will eventually be available for teachers nationwide via the internet. A contractor will design a website using the lesson plan text and visual and audio media provided by the park. Interactive applications with pre-visit, post-visit, and long-distance learning options will be available to teachers and students and incorporated into the park's official website. Education topics for future development are abundant and technological innovations will increase the effectiveness of this project. Funding for the discussed website contract has been secured. The importance of educational outreach to the success of ABLI's mission cannot be exaggerated and funding and partners for future content development and website expansion will be sought after.

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Site: ABLI

**EDUCATION**

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

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

For many years ABLI sold the park's Junior Ranger booklet through Eastern National. Beginning in 2007 an updated booklet was developed by the park's educational specialist. This booklet, currently being used as a pilot for the finished project, will be expanded to include artwork and stories from children involved in the park's educational programs. This booklet will be used in classrooms by the park's education specialist as well as given freely to children visiting the park. These efforts will increase enrollment of children in the Junior Ranger program. The park will enter a PMIS statement for the 2008 budget cycle to print a large number of the final booklet for mass circulation.

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**Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)**

In FY 2006, park staffing was revised to include an Education Specialist and to develop/initiate an educational outreach program. A variety of forums are used to engage students, link the learning experiences with the park, and provide a context for those experiences.

Several classroom programs are conducted in surrounding school systems. An annual day-long living history reenactment titled "A Walk Through Lincoln's Life" offers insight on frontier life in the early 1800s. An annual speech contest challenges students to develop, organize, and communicate ideas relating to Lincoln's life and times. A Parks as Classrooms Traveling Trunk is available as a study aid. Youth are connected to the park through Special Junior Ranger Day programs. Field-day programs allow students to explore, understand, and appreciate the park's natural resources.

A recent park-sponsored Tri-State Teacher's Workshop that includes development of web-based lesson plans will expand educational outreach. Community based outreach and education will continue and be further developed to encourage a stewardship ethic and broaden public support for preserving park resources.

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Site: ABLI

**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.

Interpretation provides a connection between the visitor and the resource; educational outreach to the community further expands that connection. ABLI will continue to professionalize the park's interpretive staff and provide the skills necessary to deliver effective interpretation and educational services. In addition to NPS sources, the park utilizes the Gilder Lehram Institute of American History and the Bernheim Arboretum and Research Forest for staff training. The park also partnered with other NPS sites and the private sector to provide a traveling workshop to train staff at multiple sites. The FY 2007 workshop curricula included in-depth discussions of the Civil War, slavery, and reconstruction, etc. and were presented by recognized scholars. Continued professional development of park staff is and will remain a top priority of ABLI management and increased emphasis will be placed on understanding the role of technology as an interpretive tool. Funding and partnerships will be sought after to expand training opportunities, assure the professional excellence of ABLI staff, and ensure quality interactions between staff, visitor, and the community.

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Site: ABLI

**PROFESSIONALISM**

Model what it means to work in partnership.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

The park could not effectively function without strong partnerships and ongoing civic engagement. The Lincoln Museum of Hodgenville (LMH) is the park's primary community partner. Examples of joint projects are Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. birthday commemorations, ongoing guest speaker series, and annual Lincoln's birthday observance. Additionally, LMH and ABLI partnered to apply for the 2007 Challenge Cost Share Program grant to develop a Lincoln Library adjacent to the museum. Some of the projects tangible results are: preservation and interpretation of a List of Classified Structures building; venue for visitors, staff, and community to research Lincoln; leveraged marketability due to geographic proximity of multiple Lincoln related sites; modern research capabilities through inclusion of a computer lab; etc. The project was not selected this year and the partnership will reapply in 2008. Community partnerships expand our understanding and ability to respond to the changing demographics of the country and other partnering opportunities will be sought after to realize the community's and park's goal to create a center for Lincoln scholarship and research.

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