

THE
FUTURE
OF
AMERICA'S
NATIONAL
PARKS

First Annual
Centennial Strategy for

Big Thicket National Preserve

August 2007

CENTENNIAL INITIATIVE



Site: BITH

Year: 2007

Vision Statement

When Congress established Big Thicket National Preserve, they created a new National Park System category. The committee chose to call the category a preserve rather than a reserve to distinguish their desire to keep the area protected and perpetuated. We will carry out Congress' expressed intent that all management activities be directed toward maintaining the natural and scientific values of the Big Thicket. To this end, our top priority is to protect the Big Thicket from encroachment resulting from wide-spread sale of timber company lands that surround the Preserve. We will use land acquisition, conservation easements, and conservation based economic development to buffer the Preserve. We hope our All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory will expand and evolve the Preserve into a premiere science and research center. Finally, we need to better connect the Preserve to people through interpretation, recreation, education, and partnerships.

Park/ Superintendent/ Program Manager

Todd W. Brindle

Site: BITH

STEWARDSHIP

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

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Big Thicket will clean up decades-old debris, including abandoned structures, that litter the Preserve. Priorities for clean up will start with waterways.

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

Site: BITH

STEWARDSHIP

Improve the condition of park resources and assets.

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

We will continue to work with the Gulf Coast Exotic Plant Management Team to help control exotic plant species and use fire to help control native invasive species to natural levels.

We will continue to reintroduce and monitor populations of federally endangered Texas Trailing Phlox, through partnerships with The Nature Conservancy and other government and private entities.

The Preserve will complete a feral hog management plan and start taking concerted efforts toward eradication of this destructive non-native species.

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

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

We will work in partnership with the Gulf Coast Inventory and Monitoring Network to implement vital signs monitoring. Vital signs identified thus far include water quality, amphibians, vegetative resources, and land use/land cover.

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

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)W

We will work with partners to protect the Preserve from encroachment resulting from the large-scale selling of timber company lands that are critical to the survival of the Big Thicket.

Site: BITH

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)

We hope to restore the historic Staley Cabin homestead to begin telling the rich cultural history of the region.

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

Site: BITH

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)W

With partner support, we will expand the All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory (ATBI) to perform a complete inventory of biotic resources within the Preserve. This project will engage preeminent scientists in their respective fields working alongside citizen scientists to promote a greater understanding of the park and the natural world.

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

Site: BITH

ENVIRONMENT

Reduce environmental impacts of park operations.

Reduce the environmental impacts of park operations on air and water quality.

The Preserve will remove the shooting range, including all lead contaminated soils, within the Preserve. Employees will use a facility outside the park for firearms training and qualifications. This will eliminate future soil and water impacts from park operations, and should mitigate past impacts.

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

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

The Preserve will inventory all known locations of non-federal oil and gas well-drilling activity within its boundaries to set priorities for the reclamation and remediation of these sites. We will generate a database containing priority ranking information as well as other basic data about the sites (location, identifying names and numbers, completion and plugging dates, current conditions, etc), and will map the sites. This data is expected to be useful in a variety of management contexts. It will not only be used to make decisions regarding soil, water and vegetation reclamation, but also in the management of future non-federal oil and gas operations, exotic vegetation and cultural resources at the Preserve.

The Preserve will replace 20 percent of our trail boardwalks/bridges that are currently wooden structures with recycled plastic lumber; install fluorescent light bulbs; install programmable thermostats in all buildings; use four stroke engines on all boats; and purchase more efficient and environmental friendly equipment, vehicles, and supplies.

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Site: BITH

ENVIRONMENT

Inspire an environmental conscience in Americans.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Big Thicket National Preserve will work with EPA to join the Climate Friendly Parks Program.

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Site: BITH

ENVIRONMENT

Engage partners, communities, and visitors in shared environmental stewardship.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Big Thicket National Preserve will lead a culture change to develop and perpetuate pride in our public lands. In an effort to reduce dumping, we will work with local governments and private landfill companies in search of ways to lower landfill fees for all users.

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

Site: BITH

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.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

We will work with Texas Department of Transportation and Hardin County officials to develop a community recreation trail that connects the city of Kountze to Big Thicket National Preserve.

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

Site: BITH

RECREATION

Expand partnerships with schools and boys and girls associations to show how national park experiences can improve children's lives.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

We hope to initiate residential camping program for children to increase National Park experiences for children.

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Site: BITH

RECREATION

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

Increase visitation by 25 percent at lesser-known parks through a national tourism effort aimed at helping people to discover the breadth of parks and experiences.

We will work with the Texas Pineywoods Experience and regional tourism organizations, such as the Ben J. Rogers Regional Visitors Center on Interstate 10 in Beaumont, to bring nature tourism to Southeast Texas.

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

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Big Thicket National Preserve is using a very outdated visitation count methodology. We will work with Denver Service Center to revise our methodology to more accurately reflect our visitation, as well as incorporate our newly acquired lands.

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Site: BITH

EDUCATION

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

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

We will continue to deliver high quality and relevant education programs that inspire and engage students and teachers. We will also continue to offer high quality teacher workshops several times a year. Working with the NPS Teacher to Ranger to Teacher Program, we will continue to augment our staff with Teacher

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Site: BITH

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.

We will develop web-based programs that introduce the Big Thicket to our virtual park visitors.

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

Site: BITH

EDUCATION

- Promote life-long learning to connect generations through park experiences.
- Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

We will engage diverse individuals and communities through our own efforts (programs, publications and outreach) as well as with Preserve partners such as Stephen F. Austin State University and Lamar University's Environmental Learning and Research Center.

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Site: BITH

EDUCATION

- Impart to every American a sense of their citizen ownership of their national parks.
- Increase visitors' satisfaction, understanding, and appreciation of the parks they visit.

95% of Preserve visitors will understand the significance of the Preserve, and 95% of Preserve visitors will be satisfied with the facilities, services, and recreational opportunities.

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Site: BITH

PROFESSIONALISM

Be one of the top 10 places to work in America.

Meet 100 percent of diversity recruitment goals by employing people who reflect the face of America.

We will recruit, develop and retain a diverse workforce that represents the demographics of Southeast Texas.

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

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Big Thicket National Preserve will work to attract the best and brightest employees in the National Park Service. We will aggressively recruit for the best employees by accentuating the enormous potential of the Preserve along with the great sense of community that exists in Southeast Texas.

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Site: BITH

PROFESSIONALISM

Promote a safety and health culture for all employees and visitors.

Reduce the number of employee lost-time incidents and serious visitor injuries by 20 percent.

We will ensure employee safety and wellness. Employee lost time injuries will be maintained at 0.

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Site: BITH

PROFESSIONALISM

Model what it means to work in partnership.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

We will foster an organizational culture that embraces collaboration to achieve mutual goals. Big Thicket National Preserve will promote a transparent operation that embraces civic engagement.

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Site: BITH

PROFESSIONALISM

Make national parks the first choice in philanthropic giving among those concerned about environmental, cultural, and recreational values.

Improve communications and marketing capacity to increase public understanding of our mission, opportunities, and benefits.

Big Thicket will continue to work with conservation organizations to protect the Preserve from encroachment by acquiring high-priority timber company lands now up for sale, as development of these lands directly threatens the survival of the Big Thicket.

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