

THE
FUTURE
OF
AMERICA'S
NATIONAL
PARKS

First Annual
Centennial Strategy for

Gulf Islands National Seashore

August 2007

CENTENNIAL INITIATIVE



Site: GUIS

Year: 2007

Vision Statement

Gulf Islands National Seashore is the nation's largest seashore stretching 160 miles from Cat Island, Mississippi to Okaloosa, Florida and protects a wide variety of natural and cultural resources shaped by the dynamic coastal processes of a barrier island system within the northern Gulf of Mexico. These publicly accessible natural and scenic islands are in close proximity to rapidly growing coastal communities and major population centers.

Culturally, land and marine archeological resources that represent human occupation over a 5000-year span in a coastal environment are located throughout the Seashore and are important in enhancing the knowledge of the past including interactions between the earliest settlers and original inhabitants of this area of the Gulf Coast. The national seashore contains one of the most complete collections of structures, including four major coastal defense forts, relating to the evolution of seacoast defense from early European exploration and colonization through World War II.

People love to travel to the Seashore for a variety of recreational opportunities including visiting forts, swimming, boating, camping, fishing, hiking, birding, picnicking and site-seeing. Primarily, the sugar-white sands and clear, warm Gulf waters attract visitors from all over the world. Additionally, the remoteness of two federally designated wilderness islands, Horn and Petit Bois, in Mississippi provide rare opportunities for solitude and leisure. The park staff is committed in keeping the Seashore safe and healthy for park visitors.

Protected and undeveloped natural resource areas promote habitat for several threatened and endangered species as well as species of management concern, in diverse ecosystems; stop-over habitat for migratory birds; critical nursery habitat for marine flora and fauna; and serve as an enclave for complex terrestrial and aquatic plant and animal communities that characterize the northern Gulf Coast and fully illustrate the natural processes that shape these unique areas. Historic recognition of these special places is illustrated in the designation of the first federal tree farm located at the Naval Live Oaks Area.

The Centennial vision for the Seashore and its partners is to complete the hurricane recovery projects; provide opportunities for visitor education through interpretive activities including electronic based technologies; protect the historic fortifications; conduct scientific study and foster symposiums to better understand the ecology and sensitivities of the Gulf Coast Region implement the Ocean Action Stewardship Plan; as well as plan and put in operation the Fort Pickens alternative transportation system.

Although many of the members of "The Friends of Gulf Islands" are recovering from the 2004-2005 hurricanes, some are interested in reviving the organization and look to the future operating conditions of the Seashore that will be based on a new general management plan.

The Seashore has many partners and volunteers who cherish the beaches, the water, and the historic forts and will gladly participate in Centennial initiatives and hands-on activities that will showcase this dynamic and ever-changing Seashore.

Park/ Superintendent/ Program Manager

Jerry A. Eubanks

Site: GUIIS

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)

Repair hurricane damaged facilities.
Plan and produce accessible parkwide museum and wayside exhibits.
Provide professionally trained visitor and resource protection staff including lifeguards and to insure the safety of park visitors.

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

Site: GUIIS

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.

Repair fortifications including Fort Massachusetts damaged by 2004-2005 hurricanes.
Relocate maintenance operations from historic buildings at Fort Pickens and rehab structures for interpretation and visitor services. Complete repairs needed at Fort Pickens including the northeast bastion parapet and communication arch. Repair scarp wall of the Advanced Redoubt.

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

Site: GUIIS

ENVIRONMENT

Reduce environmental impacts of park operations.

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

Plan and put in operation the Fort Pickens alternative transportation system.
Replace GSA leased gasoline-operated vehicles with hybrid vehicles.
Replace Fort Pickens Area septic system with sewer system.
Replace 2-stroke engines with 4-stroke ones on park boats.

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Site: GUIIS

ENVIRONMENT

Inspire an environmental conscience in Americans.

Establish programs to showcase exemplary environmental practices and increase visitor awareness of how the practices apply to their daily lives, as measured by surveys.

Develop ranger-led activities and demonstrate through best practices ways to protect natural and cultural resources such as the "Lights Out for Turtles" at beach areas.

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Demonstrate environmental excellence through increased use of alternative energy and fuels at every park.

Demonstrate environmental excellence through increased use of alternative energy and fuels at every park.
Replace GSA leased gasoline-operated vehicles with hybrid vehicles.
Plan and put in operation the Fort Pickens alternative transportation system.
Work with partners to continue hiring summer transportation interpreters who educate the public about alternative transportation programs.
Use biodiesel (vegetable oil, and other oils) for maintenance and law enforcement boat operations.
Utilize solar power at appropriate park locations.

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Site: GUIIS

ENVIRONMENT

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

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Cooperate with partners to increase public participation in hands-on environmental stewardship activities such as "Friends of Gulf Islands", International Beach Cleanup events, turtle nesting watches, trail building and cleaning days and other work.

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Site: GUIIS

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.

Engage the American Hiking Society, Florida National Scenic Trail and other national volunteer groups to build accessible trails and repair hurricane-damaged trails.
Provide leadership for community groups to participate in sea turtle nesting watch and vegetation renourishment (sea oats) programs.

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Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Support the International Beach Cleanups, Mississippi Marine Debris Task Force, River Keepers, and other cleanup groups.

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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.

Engage the American Hiking Society and other national volunteer groups to build accessible trails and repair hurricane-damaged trails.
Engage local communities in hurricane debris removal from islands.
Provide leadership for community groups to participate in resource monitoring programs, sea turtle nesting watch and vegetation renourishment (sea oats) programs.

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Site: GUIIS

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)

Collaborate with boys and girls association to continue participation in the annual volunteer events such as beach cleanups. Continue Youth Conservation Corps. Expand the "Meet A Ranger" and Junior Ranger programs.

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Site: GUIIS

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.

Collaborate with state and national tourism efforts to reach visitors who travel to theme-related parks such as African- American history sites, Civil War history sites, War of 1812 sites and others.

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

Provide special events to highlight the cultural and natural resources plus special upcoming national anniversaries such as the War of 1812, the 450th anniversary of Pensacola, and the birthday of President Abraham Lincoln.

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EDUCATION

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

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Deliver high quality and relevant educational programs that inspire and engage.
Produce and use appropriate evaluation tools and methods to evaluate and improved educational programs.
Produce new museum exhibits and waysides that are based on the appropriate Florida and State currilcula.
Link park's educational webpage to park produced educational activity guides .

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Site: GUIIS

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.

Install and use a web camera for visitors to observe weather and beach conditions at Perdido Key Area in the Florida District.
Develop interactive programs on the "For Children" webpage for the Seashore's homepage.

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Site: GUIIS

EDUCATION

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

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

Publish park-wide Junior Ranger handbook.
Provide outstanding Junior Ranger summer programs and daycamps.
Recognize participants in the Junior Ranger programs.
Establish a mentoring program for former Junior Rangers (middle school students) for upcoming Junior Rangers.

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Site: GUIIS

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.

Produce and publish appropriate and engaging activity guides.

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Site: GUIIS

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.

Utilize student temporary and career employment programs to broaden applicant pools.
Participate at job fairs and recruit at local historically black colleges and universities.

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Site: GUIIS

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.

For employees provide increased safety training and awareness and personal protection equipment appropriate to job duties.
New wayside exhibits will provide safety warnings.
Continue Junior Lifeguard programs to increase youth safety awareness and interest in lifeguarding.
Increase car, boat, and atv patrols throughout the seashore.

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