

Site: JELA

Year: 2007

Vision Statement

Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve was established to preserve significant examples of the rich natural and cultural resources of Louisiana's Mississippi Delta region, and to illustrate the influence of environment and history on the development of this unique regional culture.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, Jean Lafitte NHP faced many challenges in its recovery, and those challenges continue nearly two years later. But there are also many opportunities to create something very special, if we establish bold and energetic visions for the future.

The Centennial vision for the park is grounded in our legislation, and driven primarily by the seven anniversary dates we will be commemorating between 2008 and 2018. They are:

- 2008 - 30th Anniversary of Jean Lafitte NHP
- 2011 - 150th Anniversary of the Civil War
- 2012 - 200th Anniversary of the War of 1812
- 2015 - 200th Anniversary of the Battle of New Orleans
- 2016 - 100th Anniversary of the National Park Service
- 2018 - 40th Anniversary of Jean Lafitte NHP
- 2018 - 300th Anniversary of the founding of the City of New Orleans

The park, working together with our partners, will link these dates with specific goals, tasks for accomplishing those goals, and a realistic timeline to complete those tasks. These goals are to:

Restore the Louisiana Coast and its wetlands through advocating environmentally responsible actions, participating in the development of proposed actions, and supporting and influencing those authorities accountable wherever possible;

Promote the natural, cultural, and historical resources of Jean Lafitte NHP through Centennial and other events and initiatives, and to educate the public on same;

Develop exhibits at all six sites using contemporary and interactive media to expound the park stories and themes in an exciting and effective way;

Expand the borders of the park where practical, desired, and supported by the Agency, local constituency, and state and local officials, and driven by Congressional engagement;

Foster a safe, accessible, and sustainable environment within the park that every visitor and staff member has a right to expect and benefit from; and to

Educate the youth of the Region through curriculum-based subject-specific programs and a complimentary and aggressive program of outreach, with a goal of no child graduating the 6th grade in Southeastern and Central Louisiana without having visited Jean Lafitte NHP.

Park/ Superintendent/ Program Manager

Park Superintendent David Luchsinger

Site: JELA

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)

The park has several planned projects that will provide safe, accessible, sustainable, and inspiring experience to the visitor. The Palmetto Trail at the Barataria Unit, destroyed by Hurricane Katrina, will be replaced with a state-of-the-art design that will provide for handicapped accessibility, substantial reduction in environmental impact to the resource, sustainability in maintaining the walk, and provide an unmatched experience through three distinct natural environments. The historic Carriage House at the Chalmette Cemetery is being rehabilitated to provide for a static exhibit outlining the history of the cemetery, its significance, and providing an accessible information center and restroom facility in a remote area of the site. The new Visitor Center project at the Chalmette Battlefield calls for the design and construction of a facility that is handicapped accessible, sustainable to storm damage, and provides a world-class exhibit area on the Battle of New Orleans and its impact on World History.

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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 park is in the final phases of completion of the restoration of the historic Beauregard House at the Chalmette site. Once completed, it will house exhibits telling the cultural stories of life pre and post Battle of New Orleans, that will include Plantation life, the African-American community of Fazendeville, and the growth of St. Bernard Parish. The park will work closely with the Parish in developing these stories. The park is also about to begin final design and rehabilitation of the Superintendent's Lodge as well as the Carriage House in the Chalmette National Historic Cemetery. Both buildings will provide for interpretive display and education of the Cemetery and its importance. The park also plans on refurbishing the "storefront" of the Visitor Center/Headquarters in the Historic French Quarter of New Orleans, and rehabilitating the exhibits and exhibit area to provide a higher quality experience to the visitor.

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

The park has been a charter member of the Exotic Plant Management Team since its inception, and has actively and financially been its biggest supporter to date. The park will continue this support and has offered to be a host park for a satellite program staging office for the eastern portion of the region that the Team covers. The park also has plans of doing a planting of several hundred new Bald Cypress trees in cooperation with the Louisiana Bayou Keepers. The project hopefully will be accomplished this coming year.

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STEWARDSHIP

Set the standard of excellence in urban park landscape design and maintenance.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

The park has two projects underway to restore the cultural landscape of the Chalmette National Cemetery. The first is the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the historic cemetery walls to restore the historic vistas and ambiance surrounding the site. The second is the repair and re-setting of the grave markers and monuments within the cemetery. These projects are supported by OFS and PMIS, and have been funded. Within the Chalmette Battlefield area, the park plans on submitting a project to elevate and expand the present ramparts to more accurately reflect the historical size and magnitude of the fortifications. The park is also developing a mowing plan for the site that will assist in creating that sense of "presence" needed when a visitor enters this hallowed place

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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 historical significance of the Battle of New Orleans January 8, 1815 has been overlooked since the outbreak of the Civil War. Prior to that, January 8 was a national holiday celebrated like July 4. The park plans to create state-of-the-art exhibits for the new visitor center at Chalmette. Other significant stories in the Delta Region need to be addressed as well. The park has been approached by Congressional staff about the possible acquisition of an historic plantation, and the acquisition of two forts near the mouth of the Mississippi River. The Fleming Plantation contains several significant structures and ruins of plantation life (including plantation house, overseers house, sugar mill ruins, historic cemetery, and pre-historic Indian mound). It also contains over 4000 acres of significant natural habitats including swamps, bayous, and marshes. The historic forts at the entrance to the Mississippi are Fort St. Phillip (privately owned and directly connected to the Battle of New Orleans) and Fort Jackson (owned by the local parish and site of a Civil War battle decisively won by Admiral Farragut). The park is in favor of examining the acquisition of these properties.

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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)

The park works very closely with the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program, Nichols State University, and other federal, state, and local agencies in researching and providing scientific data and support the restoration of the coastal wetlands of Louisiana. We will continue with our partners to consult with the State and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as they formulate their plans for this endeavor.

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STEWARDSHIP

Encourage children to be future conservationists.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

The park has an Environmental Education Center located at the Barataria Unit. Through this facility, the park hold annual summer camps (one-week sessions) focusing on environmental education of grade school children. While this activity is highly successful and will continue, it is woefully insufficient to the need. In order to address this inadequacy, the park will be filling the position of Site Supervisor for this coming year as well as seeking an Education Specialist position. This coming year will also see the park focusing on delivering outreach programs to local schools, and commencing a dialog with the schools seeking guidance in developing a teacher workshop and a curriculum-based education program that the park can provide. It is anticipated that by Fiscal Year 2010, these programs will be developed and up-and-running.

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ENVIRONMENT

Reduce environmental impacts of park operations.

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

As previously stated, one of the ways the park is addressing environmental impacts on park operations is through the sustainable design of future projects such as the Palmetto Trail and the Chalmette Visitor Center. Another way is by addressing the problem of exotic species of plants and animals that inhabit the Barataria and Chalmette sites specifically. The hosting of the Exotic Plant Management Team's "satellite" group will certainly help in this cause. The park has also identified two new positions in an OFS request to assist in our efforts. And the park has (and will continue to) solicited, promoted, and supported several volunteer groups to assist us as well.

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Site: JELA

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.

The devastation caused by Katrina has left many residual affects, even in the face of the continuing recovery of New Orleans. One of these is the lack of recycling or even the lack of recycling opportunities. There is, however, a group based in New Orleans that has taken up the recycling mantle and does accept certain items that it will recycle. The park is committed to working with the organization known as the Green Project for this coming year in hopes of developing a recycling program for the park, and promoting the practice in the City of New Orleans as a whole.

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ENVIRONMENT

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

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

The park, as previously stated, is working very closely with the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program, the Audubon Society, the Audubon Council, the State of Louisiana Environmental Department, and other federal and state environmental agencies in developing a joint vision to share with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the State of Louisiana as it relates to the restoration and protection of the wetlands and coastline of the State. Another initiative that the park is engaged in is the development of a partnership with the Atchafalaya National Heritage Corridor Area, their local communities, and the State of Louisiana Office of Tourism. The park has submitted a centennial project for the development, fabrication, and installation of waysides and signage to identify the heritage area and the significant sites and features it represents. The park has two sites that fall within the National Heritage Corridor.

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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, as previously stated, is in the process of final design and construction of the Palmetto Trail, a mile long trek through three distinct natural environments at our Barataria Preserve. Two other trails exist there that the park will be looking to rehabilitate over the next five years. Another potential project would involve the rehabilitation of the dock at the Chalmette Battlefield, currently owned and managed by the St. Bernard Port Authority. This dock historically has serviced nearly 80% of the parks visitation (by boat). The park would seek a partnership with the Port Authority that would rehabilitate the dock and design and fabricate an accessible walkway system to the Battlefield and Visitor Center.

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Site: JELA

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.

The park has presently obligated funding through its ONPS base to develop a plan for a Trailer Pad site, located in a previously disturbed and developed area of the Barataria Unit. Once the plan is completed, the park will identify funding to create a two to three pad site that traveling volunteers could come to, hook up their trailers, and then provide volunteer hours to the park. In speaking with folks expressing interest in volunteering, many are transient and in need of trailer facilities in order to stay and assist.

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Site: JELA

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)

The park presently has an active relationship with local boy scout and girl scout groups at nearly all sites, and also several local schools. The park also has a standing relationship with Americorps, which has been instrumental in completing many projects for the park. It is also anticipated that, with the advent of the park outreach program that is planned, the list of schools and related youth groups will expand.

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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.

There is nothing that attracts visitors more than special events. As mentioned in the Vision Statement, the park has seven major anniversaries coming within the next ten years. Each one of those anniversaries comes with opportunities for several events to commemorate, celebrate, stimulate, and ultimately educate park visitors. The park has begun several initiatives to that end. There is a War of 1812/Battle of New Orleans Committee made up of park staff members from all divisions along with local partners, fellow parks, and partners from other states and countries (including Canada and England). This collaborative effort is formulating not only the "celebration" activities surrounding the anniversary, but developing a strategy for educating the American public and the world of how "world-changing" the war and the Battle truly were. The park also is forming a committee made up of staff from all divisions and all sites to develop activities and events for this coming years' 30th Anniversary of the Park celebration.

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

The park will continue its efforts to work with local partners such as the Louisiana State Museum, Louisiana Office of Tourism, and the New Orleans Convention and Visitors Bureau, in promoting the park programs that are offered, and those to be developed.

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Site: JELA

EDUCATION

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

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

As previously stated, the park has an Environmental Education Center located at the Barataria Unit. Through this facility, the park hold annual summer camps (one-week sessions) focusing on environmental education of grade school children. While this activity is highly successful and will continue, it is woefully insufficient to the need. In order to address this inadequacy, the park will be filling the position of Site Supervisor for this coming year as well as seeking an Education Specialist position. This coming year will also see the park focusing on delivering outreach programs to local schools, and commencing a dialog with the schools seeking guidance in developing a teacher workshop and a curriculum-based education program that the park can provide. It is anticipated that by Fiscal Year 2010, these programs will be developed and up-and-running.

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Site: JELA

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.

The park, in developing the exhibits for the new Visitor Center at the Chalmette National Battlefield site, has enlisted the services of Patrick Gallagher and Associates. This award-winning design firm has created the exhibits for the National World War II Museum in New Orleans and the National Archives Experience in Washington, D.C. The park is anticipating a state-of-the-art exhibit with interactive and media based materials designed to both stimulate and educate children "and adults". The park also hopes that, in gaining a better knowledge and understanding of what is "out there" in relation to media through this exercise, it will be able to choose successful and effective devices that will upgrade the other sites as well.

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Site: JELA

EDUCATION

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

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

The park enjoys a very successful Junior Ranger program, and through the implementation of its proposed outreach program, even more children will wish to participate.

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Site: JELA

PROFESSIONALISM

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

Attain the highest employee satisfaction rate of all federal agencies, as measured by Office of Personnel Management surveys.

There are natural resource parks in the system, cultural resource parks, and historical resource parks. There are battlefield parks, parks with national cemeteries, parks with historical buildings and monuments, parks that celebrate a rich and bountiful culture, and parks with incredible natural beauty and splendor. Jean Lafitte is all of this in one park. In fact, it may be the only park in the system that contains all of that. That is the message that the staff has received from management, and that is the message they are embracing. The park is also examining the organizational structure and seeks to develop a career ladder for staff "within" the organization itself. Many parks in the system like Jean Lafitte are staffed by people who have a vested interest in the community, and moving from park to park to seek advancement is problematic if not impossible due to their circumstances. The park will seek to create an organizational structure that does not "dead end" positions, and promote further education of the staff for potential advancement elsewhere as well.

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Site: JELA

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.

The park is presently in the process of developing a Business Plan for the operational future of the park. This plan will provide benchmarks and guidelines for the park and realistic goals as well as visions for "what could be". Among the most important sections of the document will be a communications plan for efficient, timely, and accurate information sharing. In brief, it will outline where the park is, where the park wishes to be, and what it will take to get us there. It will not be a static plan, but a proactive working document that can and will be revised as goals are reached and/or circumstances change.

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