

THE
FUTURE
OF
AMERICA'S
NATIONAL
PARKS

First Annual
Centennial Strategy for

Natchez National Historical Park

August 2007

CENTENNIAL INITIATIVE



Site: NATC

Year: 2007

Vision Statement

Natchez National Historical Park was created to preserve and interpret the history of all the peoples of Natchez, from the earliest times to the modern era, a mission primarily accomplished through management of three park-owned sites: Fort Rosalie where the French first established a post on the bluff overlooking the Mississippi River in 1716; the suburban Melrose estate with its elegant landscape setting, magnificent Greek Revival structures, and major collection of original furnishings; and the newly restored William Johnson House site, home to a slave-owning diarist/entrepreneur and his family of free people of color. The park is also engaged in a boundary study regarding a potential fourth park site: the Forks of the Road slave market location, home to the second largest slave market in the Deep South in the early 19th century. The park's Centennial vision for its sites is to increase the level of excellence in programming, stewardship, awareness, VIP participation, and accessibility; to work with our neighbor parks towards common ends wherever possible; and to provide our staff with the training and inspiration to reach these goals.

Natchez NHP also engages with partner organizations to protect the town's historic resources and to give voice to yet-untold stories. The Centennial Initiative provides a major opportunity to move forward with weaving disparate local storylines into a more cohesive historical narrative for the community and with bringing a new level of professionalism and unity to historical preservation and interpretation in Natchez for the benefit of the visiting public and local residents alike.

During the decade of our Centennial celebration the park will showcase the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, which found white and black Natchezians fighting on opposite sides of the conflict for very different goals. We will celebrate the 175th anniversary of construction of the William Johnson House, with its complex stories about power and race in 19th century America. We will mark the bicentennial of steamboat traffic in America, which threw the Deep South wide open for the effective movement of cotton and enslaved people to market. Finally, in 2016, we will note the tricentennial of the French arrival at Fort Rosalie, which marked the beginnings of permanent European presence on the banks of the Mississippi River and the permanent demise of the native Natchez people.

Park/ Superintendent/ Program Manager

Kathleen McClain Jenkins

Site: NATC

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)

NATC will develop accessible walking paths through the grounds of the antebellum Melrose estate to allow for safe recreation in a lovely and inspiring setting, accompanied by interpretive waysides. These paths will also provide the opportunity for more nature-based programming at the 80-acre estate.

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

Site: NATC

STEWARDSHIP

Improve the condition of park resources and assets.

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

NATC will more accurately interpret the historic cultural landscape at the 80-acre Melrose estate to the visiting public by controlling invasive plant species which have turned the woods surrounding the historic core of the property into an impenetrable jungle.

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

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

NATC will improve the quality of stewardship for its own museum collections and those of at-risk neighbor parks in coastal areas through implementation of the 2006 Southeast Region Museum Collection Curatorial Facility Plan which calls for a multi-park facility established at Natchez, MS.

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

Site: NATC

STEWARDSHIP

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

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

NATC will develop and promote awareness of the 80-acre Melrose landscape as a public park through implementation of the Cultural Landscape Report treatment recommendations for fencing and replanting, through growth of the established VIP program partnership with the local master gardeners, and through development of the recreational fishing potential of the large Melrose pond.

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

Site: NATC

STEWARDSHIP

Encourage children to be future conservationists.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

NATC will develop nature-based programs through future Junior Ranger camps and programming, through curriculum based educational programming, and through rehabilitation of the Melrose Carriage House as an education facility for the park.

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Site: NATC

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.

NATC will work with the City of Natchez in developing new bluff trails on the Mississippi River and rehabilitating city sidewalks to create accessible urban walking trails accompanied by interpretive waysides.

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

Site: NATC

EDUCATION

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

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

NATC will consult with educators to develop curriculum-based historical and nature programming for presentation at the sites and in the local schools.

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

Site: NATC

EDUCATION

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

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

NATC will develop a park education facility in the Melrose Carriage House to facilitate Junior Ranger programming, will refine and expand its Junior Ranger history camps, and will develop off-site programming to familiarize children with all the sites and stories of the community.

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

Site: NATC

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.

A new comprehensive sign plan for NATC, developed in partnership with the City of Natchez and NATR, will enhance the visitor experience throughout the community. NATC will develop new interpretive exhibits for the partnership visitor center shared with the City, the State, and NATR. NATC will also develop new orientation exhibits at the Melrose estate.

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

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

NATC will take advantage of major anniversaries during the decade-long NPS Centennial celebration to create programming that raises awareness of the significance of park/community sites and stories, with an emphasis on the diversity of historical perspectives surrounding each: the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, the 175th anniversary of construction of the William Johnson House, the 200th anniversary of steamboat traffic on the Mississippi River, the 300th anniversary of the first French settlement at Fort Rosalie. Programming will include thematic use of the biennial Historic Natchez Conferences co-sponsored by the park, the nonprofit Historic Natchez Foundation, and the public archives with major holdings of Natchez-related papers.

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Site: NATC

PROFESSIONALISM

Use strategic planning to promote management excellence.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

NATC will not only use strategic planning for park sites and programs but will initiate strategic planning with community partners to develop a holistic community approach to the development of preservation and interpretation plans. One step, in partnership with the AAEF, will be development of a strategic plan in regards to recognition of sites and stories associated with the local African American community.

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Site: NATC

PROFESSIONALISM

Model what it means to work in partnership.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

NATC will use its mandate to preserve and interpret the history of "all the peoples of Natchez" as a unifying and reconciling force in a town whose history and culture has been traditionally very divided along racial lines. The park will model the demonstration of respect for multiple perspectives on controversial topics. The park will reach out in partnership and provide technical assistance to groups whose traditional places have not been valued, recognized, or preserved and whose stories have not yet been communicated effectively to the visiting public. NATC will be innovative in developing new partnerships and leveraging new funding sources to broaden local historical preservation and interpretation.

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