



Niobrara National Scenic River Interpretation & Education FY 2012 Strategic Plan



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Mission Statement

We seek to preserve the Outstandingly Remarkable Values of the Niobrara National Scenic River (NSR) through effective interpretation and education services that reveal meanings, foster connections to river resources and inspire people to protect the Niobrara for this and future generations. Our work reflects professional excellence and is accomplished through initiative, integrity, open communication, thoughtful consideration and interdependence with scenic river partners and landowners.

Support for NPS Mission and Niobrara NSR Goals

This work plan is based upon the mission statement of the National Park Service (NPS) that guides all NPS sites.

"...to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein, and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."

The Organic Act of 1916

On a national, regional and local level, the NPS is accountable for attaining agency and site goals under the Government Results and Performance Act (GPRA). The GPRA goals for which the Interpretation & Education program is directly responsible include:

Niobrara NSR GPRA Goal IIa: By September 30, 2012, 87% of park visitors at Niobrara NSR safely enjoy and are satisfied with the availability, accessibility, diversity, and quality of park facilities, services, and appropriate recreational opportunities. (As measured by the annual Visitor Score Card survey)

Niobrara NSR GPRA Goal IIb: By September 30, 2012, 83% of park visitors and the general public understand and appreciate the preservation of Niobrara NSR and its resources for this and future generations. (As measured by the annual Visitor Score Card survey) *As of Fy12, this goal will no longer be tracked at the national level.*

Niobrara NSR GPRA Goal IIb2: By September 30, 2012, 90% of park visitors will be satisfied with Facilitated Programs (As measured by the annual Visitor Score Card survey)

Niobrara NSR GPRA Goal IVb: By September 30, 2012, attendance at facilitated programs will rise to 10,601 (up from 583 in 2006). Park visitors and the general public have the opportunity to come to value their national parks by attending a variety of interpretive programs. (As measured by annual attendance figures)

Each NPS site along with stakeholders prepares its own management plans that are laid out in a General Management Plan (GMP). The GMP lists the Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs) that are nationally significant for the Niobrara National Scenic River (NSR) and need to be protected. These values and other GMP information provided the over-arching mission for the individual divisions carrying out the work of the park service site.

National Interpretation & Education Reporting Goals (GPRA)

Goal	2008		2009		2010		2011		2012		Current
	Plan	Actual	Plan	Actual	Plan	Actual	Plan	Actual	Plan	Actual	Rolling Average
Ila1A % of visitors to NIOB are satisfied w/appropriate park facilities, services and recreational opportunities	83	89	84	94	85	85	86	96	86		90
Ilb1 % of NIOB visitors understand the significance of the park	85	83	83	85	84	79	84	93	86*		84
Ilb2 % of park visitors satisfied with park facilitated programs	No reporting prior to 2010				80	98	81	93	85		96
IVb2 Attendance at NIOB facilitated programs will increase to X from 583 in 2006	750	755	800	10076	10176	10405	10510	12906	10610**		7000

*As of FY12, DOI-NPS GPRA requires only tracking and reporting, but not goal-setting for this goal.

**As of FY12 DOI-NPS no longer tracks this goal. NIOB will continue to track for program management purposes.

Support for Niobrara NSR Management Goals

The following goals are set forth in the 2009 Niobrara NSR General Management Plan.

Park management seeks:

- To preserve or restore where reasonable the Niobrara River in its **free-flowing condition**;
- To preserve the river's **outstandingly remarkable values** (scenic, recreational, geologic, wildlife, paleontological);
- To **work cooperatively** with landowners, agencies, and others to manage the private and public lands within the Niobrara River Valley;
- To provide for **safe public enjoyment** of the river by offering a variety of recreational opportunities that do not unfavorably affect the river's resources;
- To **interpret** the natural and cultural resources and values of the Niobrara River Valley.

The potential impact of interpretative services on visitor experiences and visitor safety can be easily imagined. How does Interpretation and Education support park management goals of resource preservation & restoration? How can a ranger-led talk lead to preservation of park resources?

Consider the following quote:

“In the end, we will only conserve that which we love. We love only what we understand. We will only understand what we are taught.”

Baba Dioum, Senegalese Poet

Interpretation is defined by the NPS and The National Association for Interpretation as providing opportunities for an audience to form their own intellectual and emotional connections to the meanings inherent in a site. To put it simply, interpretation does not preach resource preservation, but rather it inspires audiences to consider what they individually might value about a specific site, resource or experience and provokes them to action on behalf of that resource.

Interpretation helps visitors to understand and to care about park resources so they can then learn to care for them.

This leads to enhanced resource protection and stewardship of park resources by the public for whom we manage national parks and is the primary purpose of Niobrara NSR.



Outdoor Family Fun Day Activities

Support for NPS “A Call to Action” (C2A)

2016 marks the 100th anniversary of the NPS – a defining moment that offers an opportunity to reflect on and celebrate our accomplishments as we prepare for a new century of stewardship and engagement. Several reports over the past decade have provided a vision for the Service’s second century. C2A draws from three major initiatives – *America’s Great Outdoors: A Promise to Future Generations (2011)*; the National Parks Second Century Commission Report, *Advancing the National Park Idea (2009)*; and *The future of America’s National Parks (the Centennial Report, 2007)*.

The most relevant C2A to include in the FY2012 Niobrara NSR I&E program include:

- **#2 Step By Step** – *Creating a deep park connection between a younger generation and parks through a series of diverse experiences.*
- **#7 Next Generation Stewards** - *Create a new generation of citizen scientists and future stewards by conducting fun, engaging and educational biodiversity activities.*
- **#16 Live and Learn** – *Provide multiple ways for children to learn about national parks and what they reveal about nature, the nation’s history and issues affecting our civic life.*
- **#17 Go Digital** – *Reach new audiences...offer rich, interactive, up-to-date (web) content*
- **#19 Out with the Old** – *Engage national park visitors with Interpretive media that offers interactive experiences.*
- **#30 Tools of the Trade** – *Provide employees the tools, training and development opportunities needed to reach their full career potential.*
- **#31 Destination Innovation** – *Accelerate the spread of ideas, encourage innovation, and inspire peer-to-peer collaboration across the Service.*
- **#32 Play It Safe** – *Daily risk management decisions and encourage employees to embrace safety as part of their professional identity.*
- **#35 Welcome Aboard** – *Inclusive workplace that implements orientation and mentoring for all new NPS employees.*

Desired Future Conditions

The Division of Interpretation and Education is committed to working with partners and stakeholders to accomplish this shared vision described in our Long Range Interpretive Plan. It should be recognized, however, that some of the desired future conditions are beyond the scope of the NPS to accomplish alone.

The Division of Interpretation and Education goals were created at a Long Range Interpretive Plan (LRIP) workshop held in September 2009 with a variety of stakeholders.

I. By 2019, the river will be widely recognized as a national treasure, cared for and respected by the local community and visitors alike.

Goal 1: Visitors and other stakeholders will understand and appreciate the outstandingly remarkable values of the National Scenic River, and the river's place in the Wild and Scenic River and National Park systems. (GPRA Goal IIb Increased Visitor Understanding, NPS Emphasis Increased Relevance)

Goal 2: Visitors and other stakeholders will recognize the dependence of the Niobrara River's health on its "host" partners. (GPRA Goal IIb Increased Visitor Understanding, NPS Emphasis - Increased Relevance)

Goal 3: Visitors and other stakeholders will demonstrate stewardship by respecting the park's natural resources, agency regulations, and landowners' property rights. (NPS Emphasis - Increased Relevance)

II. By 2019, the river will be a premier destination for outdoor recreation, meeting the spectrum of needs and expectations of diverse stakeholders.

Goal 4: Visitors will use the river safely and responsibly to ensure safety and a sense of security for themselves, their family, landowners, and other visitors. (GPRA Visitor Safety Goal, GPRA IIA Visitor Satisfaction, GPRA Goal IIb Visitor Understanding)

Goal 5: Visitors will have the opportunity to enjoy a variety of recreational activities, regardless of ability level, that do not interfere with other people and do not adversely impact the river resources. (GPRA IIA Visitor Satisfaction, GPRA Goal IIb Visitor Understanding)

Goal 6: Visitors will be provided with opportunities to experience solitude and discover nature in the company of friends and family. (GPRA IIA Visitor Satisfaction, GPRA Goal IIb Visitor Understanding)

Goal 7: Visitors will experience the natural landscapes of the Niobrara River valley through sight (scenery, clear night skies, wildlife), smells (campfires, nature), hearing (friends, water, wind, night sounds), touch (water in falls vs. river, heat of sun), and taste (campfire cooking, local produce). (GPRA IIA Visitor Satisfaction, GPRA Goal IIb Visitor Understanding)

Goal 8: Visitors will easily obtain accurate information about way-finding, resources, river access points, accommodations, and other basic needs. (GPRA IIA Visitor Satisfaction, GPRA Goal IIb Visitor Understanding)

III. By 2019, there will be a wide range of learning opportunities available to the public throughout the year.

Goal 9: Visitors will have the opportunity to purchase publications, maps, and other educational materials that will enhance their river experience*. (GPRA IIa Visitor Satisfaction, GPRA Goal IIb Visitor Understanding)

**Due to ethics concerns, federal employee time and equipment cannot be used to develop copyrighted materials other than for the NPS public domain. We cannot design and produce materials for sale by private vendors. However, we can provide some planning and project review assistance on publications and materials developed for sale by others.*

Goal 10: Through effective personal and non-personal interpretation, visitors will discover personal meaning in the Niobrara resources. (GPRA IIa Visitor Satisfaction, GPRA Goal IIb Visitor Understanding, GPRA Goal IIb2 Visitor Satisfaction with Facilitated Programs, GPRA Goal IVb Attendance at Facilitated Programs, NPS Emphasis – Increased Relevance)

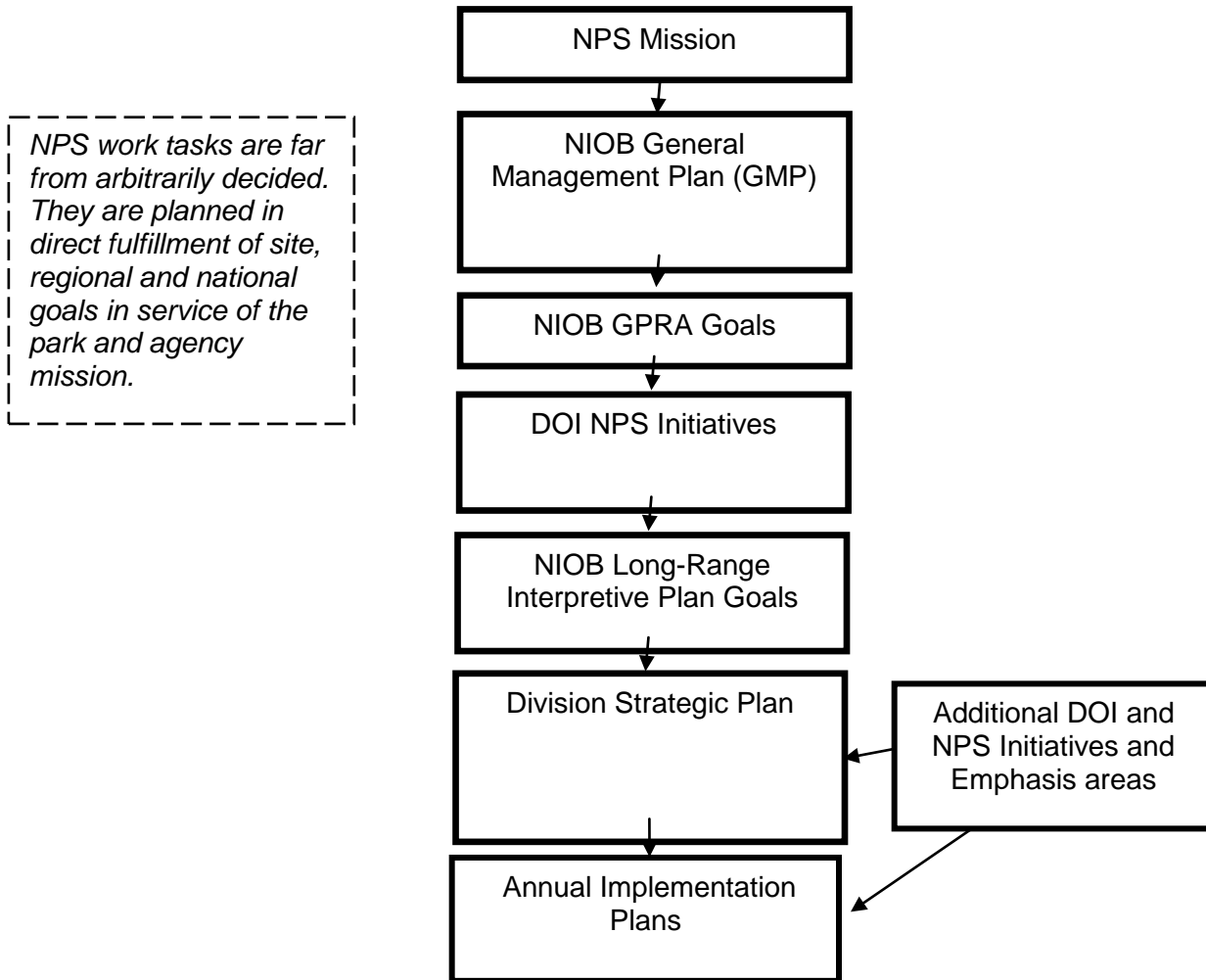
Goal 11: Through outreach efforts and educational programs, the public will have opportunities to learn about the mission and resources of Niobrara National Scenic River. (GPRA IIa Visitor Satisfaction, GPRA Goal IIb Visitor Understanding, GPRA Goal IIb2 Visitor Satisfaction with Facilitated Programs, GPRA Goal IVb Attendance at Facilitated Programs, NPS Emphasis – Increased Relevance)



Visitors enjoy a guided hike by park ranger interpreter, Bill Stahl.

Creating a Ten-Year Strategic Plan

The following diagram indicates how implementation plans are created that flow from the mission of the National Park Service right down to the tasks planned for each fiscal year.



In addition to long-range interpretive plans, a variety of factors influence the work that is necessary at each site. There may be Department of the Interior, National Park Service or Regional Office initiatives or emphasis areas. Some of these recent initiatives include: NPS “A Call to Action: Preparing for a Second Century of Stewardship and Engagement” (C2A), “The Interpretation & Education Renaissance of the NPS”, emphasis on Climate Change Education and Research from the Department of the Interior, as well as the continuing service-wide efforts to increase the relevance of parks and to engage underrepresented audiences in light of demographic and societal changes in America.

Part One: The Ten-Year Strategic Plan

For the purposes of this plan, work tasks will be divided into the goal areas stated in the 2010 Long Range Interpretive Plan (LRIP). Each of these site goals have a notation as to which GPRA goals are affected. Where applicable, other national emphasis areas will be addressed under specific Niobrara LRIP goal areas.

Each Interpretation & Education Division permanent employee will then have a personalized annual implementation plan that details the tasks to be accomplished by the individual. These will also capture any collateral duties for which the employee is responsible. Seasonal employees, Interns and Teacher-Ranger-Teacher positions will have more generic goals in the plan, as their employment seasons are 120 days or less.

- I. **By 2019, the river will be widely recognized as a national treasure, cared for and respected by the local community and visitors alike.**

Goal 1: Visitors and other stakeholders will understand and appreciate the outstandingly remarkable values of the National Scenic River, and the river's place in the Wild and Scenic River and National Park systems. GPRA

Goal 2: Visitors and other stakeholders will recognize the dependence of the Niobrara River's health on its "host" partners.

Goal 3: Visitors and other stakeholders will demonstrate stewardship by respecting the park's natural resources, agency regulations, and landowners' property rights.

Goals 1-3 Division Objectives:

- A. Develop and implement a Comprehensive Interpretive Plan (LRIP, AIP, Interpretive Database) and implement other park, regional and national strategies to establish and improve the park's interpretive services. *Completed*

2011 Accomplishments: Annual Implementation Plan (AIP) prepared and distributed via park website.

2010 Accomplishments: Long Range Interpretive Plan (LRIP) published April 2010, distributed to stakeholders and available on park web site.

- B. Secure funding for Interpretation & Education division staff and programming through base as well as project and grant fund sources.

2011 Accomplishments: Secured NPS base funding to support 2 GS-5 Seasonal Park Ranger Interpreters, and 1 Student Conservation Association Intern. 1 Teacher-Ranger-Teacher paid through successful Youth Partnership in Parks project request.

2010 Accomplishments: Secured funds to support 2 GS-5 Seasonal Park Ranger Interpreters, 1 Teacher-Ranger-Teacher and 1 Student Conservation Association Intern.

Goals 1-3 Division Objectives continued:

- C. Manage staff and division resources to meet or exceed Visitor Understanding of 83% (through FY11 only), Visitor Satisfaction of 85% and Visitor Attendance at Facilitated Programs of 10,610 as measured through the Visitor Score Card Process.

2011 Accomplishments: Visitor Understanding = 93%, Visitor Satisfaction with Programs = 93%, Visitor Attendance at Programs = 12,906

2010 Accomplishments: Visitor Understanding = 79%, Visitor Satisfaction with Programs = 95%, Visitor Attendance at Programs = 10,268.

- D. Plan and implement formal and informal interpretation personal services program

2011 Accomplishments: Formal interpretive programs continued at 2010 levels and served 2,154 visitors, informal interpretation at river landings and on water served 7,882 visitors (10,408 including Visitor & Resource Protection contacts). Staff exemplified under-represented groups in the GS-025 job series and were rated “Minimally” to “Fully Successful” in their work. Education programs served 1,122 students in 16 schools in 7 districts from 2 states.

2010 Accomplishments: Formal programs scheduled Fri/Sat @ Smith Falls Campground, and Guided Walks at Ft. Niobrara Refuge Sun. served 1,323 visitors, informal interpretation at river landings and on water served 5,992 visitors (8,372 including Visitor & Resource Protection contacts). Staff exemplified under-represented groups in the GS-025 job series and were rated “Fully Successful” in their work.

- E. Create opportunities to develop more formal community-based programs with local partners such as the Valentine Public Library, Rotary, and Scout groups.

2011 Accomplishments: Library summer reading series 1 program each at Rock County and Valentine, 1 Girl Scout Program, 1 Rotary Club program, 1 Sand Hills Discovery Conference program, volunteer, and partner 1st Aid/CPR instruction, Awarded Spirit of Girl Scouting Community Benefactor Award by Girl Scouts – Spirit of Nebraska.

2010 Accomplishments: Library summer reading series (1 program only due to library closure), 2 Girl Scout Programs, Boy Scout 1st Aid/CPR instruction, Guided Hike for National Trails Day.

- F. Continue to support Niobrara Council Day Camp efforts with NPS personnel and equipment.

2011 Accomplishments: 8 Day Camp, 9 Pre-school, and 1 After-School Nature Club education sessions presented.

2010 Accomplishments: 9 Day Camp education sessions presented.

Goals 1-3 Division Objectives continued:

- G. Require all interpreters to present the complex land ownership/stewardship relationship in their roving and formal interpretation.

2011 Accomplishments: *Interpreters included private land messages in programs and as relevant during informal interpretation contacts to stress partnership and respect for private lands. For example, both interpreters included complex land ownership messages in their evening programs and guided walks.*

2010 Accomplishments: *Interpreters included private land messages in programs and as relevant during informal interpretation contacts to stress partnership and respect for private lands. Just one example: "Stones & Bones" paleontology program stressed respect for private lands by not trespassing or collecting specimens.*

- H. Clarify land ownership/stewardship messages on park website.

2011 Accomplishments: *Plan Your Trip page now includes private land and private business information and a message to encourage respect for private lands.*

2010 Accomplishments: *Introductory paragraph on home page includes land ownership information ("lands are mostly privately owned").*

- I. Seek ways to evaluate progress towards the goal of increase awareness of complex land ownership/stewardship of river lands.

2011 Accomplishments: *Researched information regarding evaluation tools that don't require Office of Management & Budget (OMB) approval (which can take up to 9 months).*

2010 Accomplishments: *None*

- J. Brainstorm ways to encourage demonstration of stewardship through volunteer and visitor activities.

2011 Accomplishments: *Volunteers contributed 896 hours to the park from 34 volunteers representing \$18,368 in value. Reduction in full-time volunteers from 2010 accounts for some of the observed decrease. One person volunteered full time in Interpretation for 12 weeks. Former Resource Management volunteer position was converted to a GS-2 Biologic Aide position to enable recruitment local students which resulted in a drop in volunteer hours from 2010.*

2010 Accomplishments: *Volunteer hours contributed to the park increased to 1,509 from 47 volunteers representing \$30,934 in value. They included: two full-time volunteers (1 Resource Management, 1 Interpretation) as well as numerous community volunteers assisting with Outdoor Family Fun Day, National Trails Day, National Public Lands Day and river cleanup.*

- K. Seek method for evaluating stewardship demonstration.

2011 Accomplishments: *None*

2010 Accomplishments: *Consider annual Volunteer-In-Parks program participation as a measure of stewardship demonstration. This indicates individuals and groups who value the Niobrara enough to give of their time to help the park service in its management.*

Goals 1-3 Division Objectives continued:

- L. Maintain and improve park partnerships with outfitters, local chambers of commerce, local landowners, area interest groups and the Niobrara Council.

***2011 Accomplishments:** New relationships with Todd County, SD Schools for spring Enviro-Fair, Sand Hills Discovery Foundation for annual conference and continued relationships with existing informal partners: Niobrara Council; NVOEP; Valentine, Ainsworth, Bassett, Springview, Cody-Kilgore, St. Francis, and West Boyd schools; USFWS, The Nature Conservancy, Nebraska Forest Service, and Girls Scouts – Spirit of Nebraska Council. Worked with Valentine Chamber of Commerce to produce and distribute press release to counter misperception of Niobrara NSR flooding.*

***2010 Accomplishments:** Achieved deeper relationship with Niobrara Council and other Niobrara Valley Outdoor Education Partnership members for education, gained new community contacts for advertising programs, increased informal contacts with outfitter businesses weekly with distribution of program advertisements.*

- II. **By 2019, the river will be a premier destination for outdoor recreation, meeting the spectrum of needs and expectations of diverse stakeholders. GPRA Goal IIa and lib NIOB Mission goals: Preserve Outstanding Resource Values, Work Cooperatively, Public Enjoyment and Interpret Resources**

Goal 4: Visitors will use the river safely and responsibly to ensure safety and a sense of security for themselves, their family, landowners, and other visitors.

Goal 5: Visitors will have the opportunity to enjoy a variety of recreational activities, regardless of ability level, that do not interfere with other people and do not adversely impact the river resources.

Goal 6: Visitors will be provided with opportunities to experience solitude and discover nature in the company of friends and family.

Goal 7: Visitors will experience the natural landscapes of the Niobrara River valley through sight (scenery, clear night skies, wildlife), smells (campfires, nature), hearing (friends, water, wind, night sounds), touch (water in falls vs. river, heat of sun), and taste (campfire cooking, local produce).

Goal 8: Visitors will easily obtain accurate information about way-finding, resources, river access points, accommodations, and other basic needs.

Goals 4-8 Division Objectives:

- A. Create/Provide Camping Adventure with My Parents (CAMP) Program

2011 Accomplishments: Two overnight adventures served 22 individuals (5 families) with overwhelmingly positive feedback evaluations from participants and volunteers. Third scheduled program scratched due to last minute cancellations (health and transportation issues) by all three families.

2010 Accomplishments: Three overnight adventures served 39 individuals (7 families) with overwhelmingly positive feedback evaluations from participants and volunteers.

- B. Collaborate with Niobrara Council to revise & publish “ethics” rack card. Completed

2010 Accomplishments: Assisted council staff with text and design revision input.

- C. Create and distribute to outfitters and partners a map with precise mileages and approximate times to standardize information. Completed

2011 Accomplishments: Designed, evaluated with outfitters, produced and distributed 24x 36 poster size and 11 x 17 counter size standardized maps and provided PDF files to outfitter businesses for use on their web sites.

2010 Accomplishments: Surveyed outfitters to determine demand and information desired for product. Lack of GIS files limited progress towards drafting a map.

- D. Maintain and improve park web site for ease of trip planning information and to manage visitor expectations of visit.

2011 Accomplishments: Added Schedule of Events calendar and emergency notice that river was NOT flooded (due to confusion with the town of Niobrara, NE which was), and updated List of Outfitters to reflect new business in 2011. Facebook page updates with over 1,010 fans by end of fiscal year. Program posts are “tweeted” via Twitter and re-posted by NGPC, local outfitters and Omaha/Lincoln family activity groups on their Facebook pages.

2010 Accomplishments: Updated List of Outfitters to reflect ownership changes for 2010. Established Facebook fan page with over 600 fans by end of fiscal year.

- E. Develop and print revised rack card for distribution to area businesses, Interstate Rest stops and other partners that will encourage web site use. Completed

2011 Accomplishments: Distributed the Niobrara NSR rack card to local business and Nebraska Tourism I-80 rest area outlets.

2010 Accomplishments: Redesigned, printed and distributed the Niobrara NSR rack card.

- F. Support Smith Falls State Park as distribution outlet for existing supply of Junior Ranger booklets and badges.

2011 Accomplishments: Approximately 180 booklets were distributed at Smith Falls State Park.

2010 Accomplishments: Approximately 350 booklets were distributed at Smith Falls State Park.

Goals 4-8 Division Objectives continued:

- G. Seek funding for a Comprehensive Wayside Plan, equipment and bases to produce in-house waysides with plotter printer and self-adhesive vinyl.

2011 Accomplishments: Acquired two 3-sided kiosks for installation at Smith Falls SP and Brewer Bridge Landing to provide Niobrara NSR orientation, information, and interpretation.

2010 Accomplishments: Acquired two portable wayside bases, a large format printer, self-adhesive vinyl and sign press to produce temporary wayside exhibits in the future.

- H. Encourage strategic sign planning for orientation and information signage along the river.

2011 Accomplishments: No accomplishments to report.

2010 Accomplishments: No accomplishments to report.

- I. Collaborate with Niobrara River Outfitters Association for learning and presenting issues to visiting public.

2011 Accomplishments: Presented information on division efforts at Outfitter Orientation meeting.

2010 Accomplishments: Attended two association meetings.

III. By 2019, there will be a wide range of learning opportunities available to the public throughout the year. GPRA Goal IIa, IIb and IVb Park Mission Goals: Work Cooperatively and Interpret Resources

Goal 9: Visitors will have the opportunity to purchase publications, maps, and other educational materials that will enhance their river experience.

Goal 10: Through effective personal and non-personal interpretation, visitors will discover personal meaning in the Niobrara resources.

Goal 11: Through outreach efforts and educational programs, the public will have opportunities to learn about the mission and resources of Niobrara National Scenic River.

Goals 9-11 Division Objectives:

- A. Plan for future Junior Ranger program development.

2011 Accomplishments: Submitted, but was not selected for, a fully-funded 2011 Junior Ranger SCA Ambassador to re-design the Junior Ranger book.

2010 Accomplishments: Revised PMIS project to be input in 2012 Added 2011 request for CAMP program intern funding

Goals 9-11 Objectives, continued:

- B. Explore publication capabilities with Sandhills Prairie Refuge Association

2011 Accomplishments: No accomplishments to report. Due to capacity issues, this effort is a lower priority early in the Ten-Year Plan.

2010 Accomplishments: No accomplishments to report.

- C. All interpretive services provided by the division meet national standards for successful interpretation and are evaluated against those standards.

2011 Accomplishments: Permanent interpreter met standards. Seasonal interpreters partially met standards even with much coaching and developmental feedback throughout the summer.

2010 Accomplishments: Achieved (measured through supervisory program evaluations).

- D. Interpreters will develop mini-programs on all park themes and formal programs and outreach programs throughout the year will touch on all topics in the range of primary themes.

2011 Accomplishments: Permanent Interpreter was fully successful. Seasonal staff informal and formal programs were directly tied to some park themes and national significances, but did not represent all themes (i.e. paleontological and geological topics were well represented despite coaching).

2010 Accomplishments: Staff informal and formal programs were directly tied to park themes and national significance.

- E. Web based video programs will be developed and posted to the park web site with the 2016 goal of representing each park primary theme through a 2-3 minute video.

2011 Accomplishments: Draft Climate change podcast storyboard updated during "Earth-to-Sky" training. Capacity constraints prohibited further progress.

2010 Accomplishments: Draft Climate Change Impacts pod cast storyboard completed by seasonal ranger

- F. Chief of Interpretation will continue to serve as IDP certifier and Regional Lead coach for national interpretation standards certification.

2011 Accomplishments: Served as Subject-Matter-Expert for workshop developing curriculum goals for NPS Division Leadership Development Program (aka "Chief's Academy"), Peer-reviewed & 10 national interpretive products, coaching three students towards Advanced Certification in Eppley/NPS web-based courses, advised Chiefs at Theodore Roosevelt NP, Organ Pipe Cactus NM, and superintendent at Agate Fossil Beds NM on interpretive standards and staff development.

2010 Accomplishments: Peer-reviewed & provided developmental feedback for 11 products, advised Nicodemus National Historic Site in drafting historic walking tour publication and mentored GS5 Park Ranger there in professional development. Instructed 1-week Regional Web Coach Training at St. Croix National Scenic River, WI

Goals 9-11 Objectives, continued:

- G. Staff will be encouraged to complete Basic and Advanced certificate training in professional interpretation.

2011 Accomplishments: *One additional member being coached towards Informal Interpretation Advanced Certification, one dropped out, and continued coaching another in two courses. Seasonal staff completed Basic certification in Informal visitor contacts and Interpretive Talk, Permanent Park Ranger obtained "Earth-to-Sky" Certification in communicating climate change and attended 4 other Climate Change issue webinars.*

2010 Accomplishments: *Two staff began courses in three advanced certification programs (1 Informal Visitor Contacts, 2 Formal Visitor Contacts)*

- H. Permanent park ranger will complete NPS Fundamentals training during initial two years of employment.

2011 Accomplishments: *Fundamentals I, II, III, and IV completed February 2011*

2010 Accomplishments: *Fundamentals II 2-week course at Grand Canyon scheduled for December 2010.*

- I. Chief of Interpretation will facilitate NPS Midwest Regional Workgroup on Professional Standards, coordinate regional discussion group on Rivers and participate in workgroups on Interpreting Climate Change and Youth Programs. Serve as an administrator for MWR Interpretation & Education SharePoint Site.

2011 Accomplishments: *Continued to contribute to MWR Sharepoint site and advised MWR Regional Chief of Interpretation in its use.*

2010 Accomplishments: *Established and contributed to MWR interpretation & Education Sharepoint site. Post documents and training announcements for all regional interpreters to access.*

- J. Maintain park membership in the following professional groups: National Association for Interpretation (NAI); North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE).

2011 Accomplishments: *Permanent Interpreter provided a session on working with partners for the NAI workshop in Las Vegas, NV in November 2010 and submitted article for publication in "Legacy" magazine, a publication of NAI. Permanent Park Interpreter manages website and Facebook page for Interpretive naturalist Section of NAI. Membership in both organizations maintained.*

2010 Accomplishments: *Both the Chief and the Permanent Park Ranger attended the NAI workshop in Hartford, CT in November 2009. The permanent Park Ranger became trained in "Growing Up Wild" a Project Wild curriculum for K-3 graders.*

- K. Maintain park participation in the following local groups: Niobrara Valley Education Partners; Outlaw Scenic Byway (Hwy 12), Bridges to Buttes Scenic Byway (Hwy 20), Nebraska Natural Landmarks Program (NNLP).

L.

2011 Accomplishments: *Led planned and presentation of 3rd annual Nature Fest for area 5th graders using NVOEP partners serving 120 children from 5 local schools. Participated in Todd County Enviro-Fair (286 4th Graders) and Springview Resource Day (55 K-6th Graders).*

2010 Accomplishments: Led planned and presentation of 2nd annual Nature Fest for area 5th graders using NVOEP partners. Served 103 children from 5 schools. Participated in NVOEP coordinated Springview Resource Day presenting 6 programs to over 80 children at Springview Elementary school.

Part Two: Annual Implementation Plan

Summary FY2012 Plan

In the coming year, the Division of Interpretation and Education will continue to work at FY 2010 levels toward our goal of preserving the natural and cultural resources of Niobrara National Scenic River through effective interpretation and education services. We will support and incorporate new initiatives from the NPS “*A Call to Action: Preparing for a Second Century of Stewardship Engagement*” (C2A). These are noted parenthetically for appropriate work plan items.

We will continue to provide formal interpretive programs at Smith Falls State Park Campground on summer weekends between Memorial Day and Labor Day as staffing permits. We will continue to work with NVOEP and other partners to provide environmental education such as Nature Fest, Springview Resource Day and Todd County Enviro-Fair. We will reach out to underrepresented families through the CAMP program as well as the Outdoor Family Fun Day Special Event in spring. We will continue to reach out to local teachers through the Teacher-Ranger-Teacher program to develop lesson plans based upon Niobrara resources that meet state education standards. We will facilitate civic engagement during the River Management Planning process.

All of these efforts are designed to help us reach incrementally higher service-wide GPRA goals in visitor satisfaction, visitor understanding of national significance and greater attendance at facilitated programs as well as make progress towards the C2A Goals and the interpretive goals in this strategic plan.

Management Issues Currently Affecting Niobrara NSR Budget Uncertainties

Expanding the program beyond 2010 levels is not anticipated. As well, it may even be difficult to achieve 2010 staffing levels without additional project funding above the base budget. Federal agency budgets are anticipated to decline at least 3% as the federal government grapples with reducing debt and budget deficits. The increases in salary associated with permanent employees developing from the entry-level to developmental or journeyman levels of skill and compensation in their job series will result in fewer dollars available to fund seasonal staff and projects.

Headquarters Office Move

The Government Services Agency (GSA) leased new headquarters office space for Niobrara NSR at 214 W. Highway 20 in Valentine. The building is anticipated to be ready for occupancy in mid-December 2011. Tasks associated with the move, including packing and moving office furnishings and supplies, new furniture assembly and arrangement, facilitating computer server, network and telephone planning and installation, and organizing property will detract from time able to be dedicated to Interpretation and Education program goals in 2012.

Barriers to Success in 2012

Lack of Formal Agreements with Partners, Private Landowners & Outfitters

Currently, we have no management mechanism, no formal relationship with private businesses providing visitor services on the Niobrara. As a result, the vast majority of visitors are not very well informed about the river’s national significance, rules & regulations, trip planning, safety hazards, facilities and services, opportunities for stewardship and learning, etc. Their expectations may not be met, or may be in conflict with the purpose of the National Scenic River. Lack of cooperation and consistency hampers effective messaging and information transfer to potential and actual river visitors.

Barriers to Success continued:

Lack of Administrative/Information Technology Support on-site

Currently, Niobrara NSR funds 50% of an Administrative Officer and an Administrative Technician with Missouri National Recreation River. Both positions are duty-stationed in Yankton, SD. On-site administrative and information technology support is being provided by the Chief of Interpretation and reduces the amount of time able to be devoted to program accomplishments. In 2011, they spent approximately 200 hours (almost 10% of their time) working on administrative and computer training and troubleshooting tasks that enabled the park to work more efficiently and effectively as a whole, but at a cost to the Interpretation and Education program capacity. Until another solution for administrative and information technology support can be found, these work capacity impacts limits further I&E program goal accomplishment.

All Niobrara computers must be updated to the Windows 7 operating system by July, 2012. This will take 40 – 80 hours of time, intermittently, as individual employee workloads permit access to workstations for the time needed to execute the operating system changes. It may also result in additional hours for troubleshooting and assisting staff to adapt to the change from the Windows XP environment.

Overly Ambitious Work Plans

The division is known for overly ambitious work plans, and for accomplishing much of what is on them. However, it is clear that FY2012 work plans will need to be scaled back to accommodate the known demands on staff time that are peripheral to accomplishing interpretation & education goals, but are absolutely necessary to achieve park-wide goals and operating efficiencies.

Unique Opportunities in 2012

New Visitor Center Space

In addition to office space, the new office building will provide nearly 900 square feet for use as a visitor center and additional space intended to be utilized as a classroom/meeting space. This opportunity begs a significant time commitment to engaging in an extensive visitor center exhibit planning process, including preparing complex facilities project proposals for entry into PMIS before January 1st, as well as developing and producing initial temporary exhibits and visitor engagement materials.

River Management and Concessions Management Strategy Planning Process

The planning and communications effort for river and concessions management will impact the workload of the program, but also provide a unique opportunity for program staff to demonstrate their skill and resource knowledge. Though contractors will be providing the facilitation and writing services, there will still be many hours involved in information and image gathering, reviewing drafts, assisting with public meetings, and public affairs outreach and information management tasks for the program staff to complete.

3-sided Kiosks

The purchase of two kiosks for installation at Smith Falls State Park and Brewer Bridge Landing with cyclic maintenance funds creates a workload demand of approximately 160 hours on the division to plan, research, design, create, evaluate, produce in-house and install six interpretive panels before late May 2012. While this represents a potential for interpretive success, time spent on this will come at the expense of progress towards other identified goals in the plan.

FY12 Individual Work Plans

Chief of Interpretation & Education

I. By 2019, the river will be widely recognized as a national treasure, cared for and respected by the local community and visitors alike. Goals 1-3 Objectives,

Implement a Comprehensive Interpretive Plan and other park, regional and national strategies to establish and improve the park's interpretive services.

Plan and secure funding for Interpretation & Education division staff and programming

- PMIS project proposals for: Visitor Center Exhibit planning, design, fabrication & installation; projects to fund Teacher-Ranger-Teachers, Junior Ranger program, and intern for the CAMP program. (C2A goals #2, 7, 16, 19)

Recruit, hire, train and manage staff according to EEOC laws, principles and guidelines

- Include certification or training in interpretation skills in seasonal recruitment request assessment factors. (C2A goal #30)

Manage staff and division resources to meet or exceed GPRA Goals of Visitor Satisfaction with Facilities of 86%, Visitor Satisfaction with Facilitated Programs at 85% and Visitor Attendance at Facilitated Programs of 10,610 as measured through the Visitor Score Card Process. (C2A goals #2, 7, 16)

Plan and implement a formal and informal interpretation services program (C2A goals #2, 7, 16)

- Weekend evening programs at Smith Falls Campground Sunday morning guided hike at Fort Falls and improved informal interpretation training across divisions.

Create opportunities to develop formal community-based programs with local partners such as the Public Libraries, Community clubs, and Scout groups. (C2A goals #2, 7, 16)

- Expand library program to at least one other community (e.g. Ainsworth, Springview,)

Continue to support Niobrara Council efforts with personnel and equipment for their education efforts. (C2A goals #2, 7, 16)

- Provide education sessions for Summer Day Camps, pre-school education programs and After-school Nature Club as requested.

Require all interpreters to present the complex land ownership/stewardship relationship in their roving and formal interpretation.

- Continue to emphasize importance, relevance and significance of this message in training and coaching staff and in interactions with the public.

Clarify land ownership/stewardship messages on park website as revisions to site are made. (C2A goals #17)

Seek ways to evaluate progress towards the goal of increase awareness of complex land ownership/stewardship of river lands.

Encourage demonstration of stewardship through volunteer and visitor activities. (C2A goals #2, 7, 17)

Chief of Interpretation & Education continued:

- Craft volunteer project descriptions and post on volunteer.gov, park web site and in local media
- Encourage and train staff to visitor responsibilities for care of river and respect for other visitors, private lands, etc. in informal interpretive contacts.

Seek method for evaluating stewardship demonstration.

- Track and report volunteer hours as measure of demonstrated stewardship

Maintain and improve park partnerships with outfitters, local chambers of commerce, local landowners, area interest groups and the Niobrara Council. (C2A goals #2, 7, 30)

- Family Fun Pack loan program piloted in FY2012
- Invite outfitters to participate in seasonal training sessions (interpretation & resource)

II. By 2019, the river will be a premier destination for outdoor recreation, meeting the spectrum of needs and expectations of diverse stakeholders. GPR Goal IIa and lib NIOB Mission goals: Preserve Outstanding Resource Values, Work Cooperatively, Public Enjoyment and Interpret Resources. Goals 4- 8 Objectives

Participate in River Management Planning process

- Attend and facilitate group input at public meetings, provide input to draft plan.

Continue Camping Adventure with My Parents (CAMP) Program (C2A goals #2, 7, 16)

- Hold three overnight sessions in 2012

Maintain and improve park web site for ease of trip planning information and to manage visitor expectations of visit. (C2A goals #17)

Support Smith Falls State Park as distribution outlet for existing supply of Junior Ranger booklets and badges. (C2A goals #2, 7, 16)

- As possible with remaining supply of booklets in 2012
- Seek funding for publication of Junior Ranger booklet supply.

Seek funding for a Comprehensive Visitor Center Exhibit Plan and Comprehensive Wayside Plan (C2A goal #19)

- Draft plan for three-sided kiosks at public landings
- Work with FMSS coordinator, Harper's Ferry Design Center and others to create PMIS proposals

Encourage strategic sign planning for orientation and information signage along the river as opportunity arises. (C2A goal #19)

Collaborate with Niobrara River Outfitters Association for learning and presenting issues to visiting public.

Chief of Interpretation & Education continued:

- Seek FY13 funding opportunities for design and production of “tear-off” maps

III. By 2019, there will be a wide range of learning opportunities available to the public throughout the year. GPRA Goal IIa, IIb and IVb Park Mission Goals: Work Cooperatively and Interpret Resources. Goals 9- 11 Objectives

Plan future Junior Ranger program development *(C2A goals #2, 7, 16)*

- Edit & add PMIS project proposals.
- Seek funding for SCA Junior Ranger Ambassador or Intern position in 2012

All interpretive services provided by the division meet national standards for successful interpretation and are evaluated against those standards. *(C2A goal #30)*

- Evaluate formal interpretive programs & provide written developmental feedback according to national professional standards for interpretation

Interpreters will develop mini-programs on all park themes and formal programs and outreach programs throughout the year will touch on all topics in the range of primary themes. *(C2A goal #7)*

- Require outlines to be submitted within 4 weeks of hiring and revised as needed with final version copy to park files

Chief of Interpretation will continue to serve as Interpretive Development Program certifier and Regional Lead coach for national interpretation standards certification *(C2A goals #30 & 31)*

- Complete IDP peer-reviews as assigned
- Provide support and coaching for more recent peer-certifiers

Staff will be encouraged to pursue training and certification in professional interpretation *(C2A goal #30)*

- Coach permanent interpreter to advanced certification in two courses
- Coach at least one seasonal staff towards advanced certification in one course
- Require all seasonal interpretive staff to complete Basic certification in Informal Visitor Contacts, and GS5's to complete Basic Certification in Interpretive Talk

Chief of Interpretation will serve as an administrator for MWR Interpretation & Education SharePoint Site to encourage collaboration and best-practices sharing among NPS staff. *(C2A goal #31)*

- Work with Regional Chief of Interpretation to increase use and relevance of the site

Maintain park membership in the following professional groups: National Association for Interpretation (NAI); North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE). *(C2A goal #30)*

- Provide support for Chief and Permanent Park Ranger to attend National Association for Interpretation workshop in St. Paul, MN November 2011.

Maintain park participation in the following local groups: Niobrara Valley Education Partnerships Group (NVOEP) and coordinate Nature Fest Event; Nebraska Natural Landmarks Program (NNLP, and Nebraska Environmental Literacy Plan (NELP) as needed.

Permanent Park Ranger, Interpreter

By 2019, the river will be widely recognized as a national treasure, cared for and respected by the local community and visitors alike. Goals 1- 3 Objective(s)

Present complex land ownership and stewardship messages in all interpretation (C2A goal #7, 16, 17)

- Develop & post Facebook page messages reflecting land ownership
- Include as possible in revisions to park web site text
- Develop “Family Fun Pack” activities

By 2019, the river will be a premier destination for outdoor recreation, meeting the spectrum of needs and expectations of diverse stakeholders. GPRA Goal IIa and IIb, NIOB Mission goals: Preserve Outstanding Resource Values, Work Cooperatively, Public Enjoyment and Interpret Resources. Goals 4- 8 Objective(s) (C2A goals #7, 16, 30, 35)

- Provide visitor contact and reception duties from Oct 1, 2012 until seasonal administrative staff comes on duty
- Coordinate creation and distribution of park program flyers
- Produce standardized map 24 x 36, 11 x 17 posters and PDF files as requested
- Participate in River Management Planning process
- Supervise annual Visitor Survey Card project in July
- Provide coaching and mentoring to intern for CAMP program implementation

By 2019, there will be a wide range of learning opportunities available to the public throughout the year. GPRA Goal IIa, IIb and IVb, Park Mission Goals: Work Cooperatively and Interpret Resources. Goals 9-11 Objective(s) (C2A goals #2, 7, 16, 17, 19, 30, 32 & 35))

- Assist with planning and provide design services for 3-sided kiosk panel development
- Assist with planning and provide design services for temporary visitor center exhibits
- Assist with planning for Visitor Center Exhibit Project.
- Plan, develop training curriculum and materials, and present seasonal training for interpreters
- Moderate Niobrara NSR Facebook page, eliciting posts from other NPS staff
- Make approved changes to park website and publications to improve visitor service
- Update Local Outfitters List for FY2012

Prepare and present formal and informal interpretive programs, children’s programs and community programs that meet NPS professional standards for interpretation

- Lead planning and coordinate annual spring Outdoor Family Fun Day event.
- Assist with training coaching and mentoring of seasonal interpreters, Teacher-Ranger-Teachers and Student Conservation Association Intern positions.
- Work with local public libraries for NPS rangers to provide programs

Permanent Park Ranger, Interpreter continued:

Provide leadership and supervision to Interpretation & Education Division in the absence of Chief of Interpretation.

Provide CPR/First Aid instruction for seasonal staff and upon request to community and participate with park Safety Committee.

Communicate effectively and professionally with supervisor, seasonal employees, other park and partner staff (outfitters, Niobrara Council, Nebraska Game & Parks Commission, The Nature Conservancy, etc.)

Follow all policy and law provisions regarding responsible use and tracking of Travel and Purchase obligations.

Participate in short- and long-term planning for interpretive services

Complete NPS Fundamentals V

Complete Advanced Certifications in Interpretive Talk and Informal Visitor Contacts

Design and execute efficient shared interpretive office work space arrangement.

Participate fully in park safety program using Operational Risk Management Analysis tool to evaluate tasks and mitigate/eliminate any safety concerns.

Seasonal Park Ranger, Interpreter

By 2019, the river will be widely recognized as a national treasure, cared for and respected by the local community and visitors alike. *Goals 1- 3 Objectives (C2A goals 2 & 7)*

Present complex land ownership and stewardship messages in interpretation

By 2019, the river will be a premier destination for outdoor recreation, meeting the spectrum of needs and expectations of diverse stakeholders. GPRA Goal IIa and IIb, NIOB Mission goals: Preserve Outstanding Resource Values, Work Cooperatively, Public Enjoyment and Interpret Resources. *Goals 4-8 Objectives (C2A Goals # 2, 7 & 16)*

Assist with CAMP program delivery as assigned

By 2019, there will be a wide range of learning opportunities available to the public throughout the year. GPRA Goal IIa, IIb and IVb, Park Mission Goals: Work Cooperatively and Interpret Resources. *Goals 9-11 Objectives (C2A Goals # 2, 7, 16, 17 & 32)*

Prepare and present formal and informal interpretive programs, children's programs and community programs that meet professional standards for interpretation.

Communicate effectively and professionally with supervisor, seasonal employees, other park and partner staff (outfitters, Niobrara Council, Nebraska Game & Parks Commission, The Nature Conservancy, etc.)

Provide postings for Facebook page, and propose changes to park website and publications to improve visitor service

Propose improvements to Interpretation & Education division operations, products and services

Participate fully in park safety program using Operational Risk Management Analysis tool to evaluate tasks and mitigate/eliminate any safety concerns.

Complete special projects as assigned.

Teacher-Ranger-Teacher

By 2019, the river will be widely recognized as a national treasure, cared for and respected by the local community and visitors alike. *Goals 1-3 Objectives (C2A goals #2, 7 & 16)*

Present developed curriculum to students beginning the 2012-2013 school year.

Present complex land ownership and stewardship messages in informal interpretation

By 2019, the river will be a premier destination for outdoor recreation, meeting the spectrum of needs and expectations of diverse stakeholders. GPRA Goal IIa and IIb, NIOB Mission goals: Preserve Outstanding Resource Values, Work Cooperatively, Public Enjoyment and Interpret Resources. *Goals 4-8 Objectives (C2A goal #16)*

Develop lesson plans/curriculum based upon the resources of the Niobrara NSR that encourage inquiry-based learning and including a site visit or ranger visit to the classroom as part of the plan.

By 2019, there will be a wide range of learning opportunities available to the public throughout the year. GPRA Goal IIa, IIb and IVb, Park Mission Goals: Work Cooperatively and Interpret Resources. *Goals 9-11 Objectives (C2A Goals # 2, 7, 16, 17 & 32)*

Provide informal interpretation for visitors to the park

Develop and present at least one impromptu activity-based child's or family program.

Communicate effectively and professionally with chief, permanent park ranger, seasonal employees, as well as other park and partner staff (outfitters, Niobrara Council, Nebraska Game & Parks Commission, the Nature Conservancy, etc.)

Provide postings for Facebook page, and propose changes to park website and publications to improve visitor service

Propose improvements to Interpretation & Education division operations, products and services

Participate fully in park safety program using Operational Risk Management Analysis tool to evaluate tasks and mitigate/eliminate any safety concerns.

Complete special projects as assigned.

SCA CAMP Intern

By 2019, the river will be widely recognized as a national treasure, cared for and respected by the local community and visitors alike. Goals 1-3 Objectives

By 2019, the river will be a premier destination for outdoor recreation, meeting the spectrum of needs and expectations of diverse stakeholders. GPRA Goal IIa and IIb, NIOB Mission goals: Preserve Outstanding Resource Values, Work Cooperatively, Public Enjoyment and Interpret Resources. Goals 4-8 Objectives (C2A goals #2, 7 &16)

Plan, facilitate and conduct CAMP program overnight outings

- Three overnight camps to be held in 2012

Coordinate participation in CAMP program by visitors and volunteers to provide learning sessions

- Provide training for all NPS staff and volunteers involved in CAMP program

By 2019, there will be a wide range of learning opportunities available to the public throughout the year. GPRA Goal IIa, IIb and IVb, Park Mission Goals: Work Cooperatively and Interpret Resources. Goals 9-11 Objectives (C2A Goals # 2, 7, 16, 17 & 32)

Communicate effectively and professionally with chief, permanent park ranger, seasonal employees, as well as other park and partner staff

Provide informal interpretation for visitors

Assist with formal interpretive programs as assigned

Provide postings for Facebook page, and propose changes to park website and publications to improve visitor service

Propose improvements to Interpretation & Education division operations, products and services

Participate fully in park safety program using Operational Risk Management Analysis tool to evaluate tasks and mitigate/eliminate any safety concerns.

Complete special projects as assigned.

SCA Junior Ranger Intern* (if funding is available)

By 2019, the river will be widely recognized as a national treasure, cared for and respected by the local community and visitors alike. *Goals 1-3 Objectives*

By 2019, the river will be a premier destination for outdoor recreation, meeting the spectrum of needs and expectations of diverse stakeholders. GPRA Goal IIa and IIb, NIOB Mission goals: Preserve Outstanding Resource Values, Work Cooperatively, Public Enjoyment and Interpret Resources. *Goals 4-8 Objectives (C2A goals #7 & 16)*

Plan, design, produce and evaluate activity pages for new Junior Ranger Activity Booklet

By 2019, there will be a wide range of learning opportunities available to the public throughout the year. GPRA Goal IIa, IIb and IVb, Park Mission Goals: Work Cooperatively and Interpret Resources. *Goals 9-11 Objectives (C2A Goals # 2, 7, 16, 17 & 32)*

Communicate effectively and professionally with chief, permanent park ranger, seasonal employees, as well as other park and partner staff

Provide informal interpretation for visitors

Assist with formal interpretive programs as assigned

Provide postings for Facebook page, and propose changes to park website and publications to improve visitor service

Propose improvements to Interpretation & Education division operations, products and services

Participate fully in park safety program using Operational Risk Management Analysis tool to evaluate tasks and mitigate/eliminate any safety concerns.

Complete special projects as assigned.