

THE
FUTURE
OF
AMERICA'S
NATIONAL
PARKS

First Annual
Centennial Strategy for

Sitka National Historical Park

August 2007

CENTENNIAL INITIATIVE



Centennial Vision Statement 2007

Approaching its 100th year as a National Park Service site, Sitka National Historical Park has a longstanding legacy as a place that people turn to for recreation, inspiration, and to connect with history, culture, and nature. In the 21st century, Sitka National Historical Park will strengthen this legacy, becoming a model of National Park Service stewardship with a commitment to active partnerships, careful planning, solid resource management practices, and professional excellence across all fields and divisions. To realize this vision, Sitka National Historical Park will:

Use innovation, collaboration, and professionalism to monitor, protect, and maintain its natural and cultural resources and collections according to the highest possible professional standards;

Sustain the unique, living cultural connections with partners that keep the park meaningful and relevant in a changing world, including the Tlingit clans, the Russian Orthodox Church, and the Southeast Alaska Indian Cultural Center;

Serve the surrounding community, the public, our partners, and colleagues by acting as a resource and sharing our experience and expertise in preservation, education, interpretation;

Develop and offer education and interpretation programs that 1) serve all Americans, 2) encourage and adopt innovation in appropriate technologies, 3) reflect “best practices” in interpretation, including methods of evaluation that encourage continual improvement, and 4) encourage partnerships within and outside the community of Sitka;

Ensure the efficiency of our workforce by completing a business plan in 2008 that includes new performance goals to optimize our human resources and evaluate our effectiveness. New skills training in the areas of technology, partnership development, and cultural competence will ensure that the park's professionals are ready to serve the public.

By protecting and sharing the values that attracted people here even before its establishment in 1910 and creating a workforce that understands and reflects today's America, Sitka NHP will rise capably to the NPS Centennial celebration and continue to forge relevance and meaning between citizens and the park during its own second century.

STEWARDSHIP

Year: 2007

Site: SITK Year: 2007

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

Acquire and Restore "Building 29"

"Building 29" is one of only four structures remaining in the western hemisphere from the Russian American period. Sitka National Historical Park is the only National Park Service unit that protects and interprets the resources and themes of the Russian America chapter in American history. The park proposes to acquire "Building 29" from a willing seller in order to restore the structure to its original condition. The building – now designated as a National Historic Landmark – will help reflect the scale and character of the Russia American period and offer visitors an opportunity to learn about 126 years of Russian culture and Russian economic enterprise in what is now the United States.

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

Manage Castle Hill Historical Site

Castle Hill - located in downtown Sitka - is a nationally significant cultural and historical site currently in the stewardship of the Alaska State Parks system. Once the location of a large Tlingit village prior to western contact, Castle Hill became headquarters for the Russian American Company after Alexander Baranof defeated the Tlingit in the Battle of 1804 for Sitka. Sixty-three years later, Castle Hill was the site where Russian and American dignitaries conducted the signing ceremony transferring ownership of Alaska to the United States. Castle Hill remains an important stop for visitors to Sitka today, though Alaska State Park's limited local resources are challenged to keep the Hill staffed and maintained. The park proposes to establish management of Castle Hill and utilize NPS interpretation, protection, maintenance, and other NPS resources and services for visitors to the site. Visitors will benefit from increased educational and recreational opportunities, and the park will protect and interpret a nationally significant location for the American people.

Assure that no compelling chapter in the American heritage experience remains untold and that strategically important landscapes are acquired, as authorized by Congress.

Record, Digitize, and Archive Traditional Tlingit Oral Histories

Many of the Tlingit people for whom English is a second language are elderly. Tlingit culture – like the language – is part of the tapestry that is our national

heritage. The park proposes to partner with the Southeast Alaska Indian Cultural Center and the Sitka Tribe of Alaska to record, translate, digitize, and archive oral histories, traditional knowledge, and clan stories of Tlingit elders to add to existing collections. The resulting archives will be a revered trove of cultural information and history for this and future generations of visitors to Sitka National Historical Park.

ENVIRONMENTAL

Year: 2007

Site: SITK Year: 2007

Inspire an environmental conscience in Americans.

Protect The Park's Natural Soundscapes

Sitka National Historical Park is bordered by neighborhoods, roadways, and community development. It is the only national park in Alaska located fully within a city. In spite of the surrounding infrastructure, today's park visitors enjoy the natural sounds of the temperate rainforest, including the splash of salmon in a free flowing river and the calls of eagles and ravens from the forest canopy. Anticipated development and increasing motor vehicle traffic threatens this important component to the park experience. We propose to become a pilot park where physical and social science collaborates to develop and implement cutting edge methods for protecting the park's natural sounds for tomorrow's visitors.

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

Monitor Indian River Water Quality and Quantity Collaboratively with Partners

The free flowing Indian River is the heart of Sitka National Historical Park. For nearly a decade now, the park has monitored the river's quality with multiple River stakeholders, including the City and Borough of Sitka, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and Sheldon Jackson College. Shrinking resources resulted in closure of collaborative river monitoring recently. Anticipated development and increasing construction upriver will likely impact the quality of water reaching the park. Sheldon Jackson College removes river water for their salmon hatchery before it enters the park, resulting in potential lower volume and quality, especially at low flow periods of the year. The park proposes to obtain sufficient funding to renew long term, collaborative monitoring to obtain the data future managers will require protecting the Indian River resource.

RECREATION

Year: 2007

Site: SITK Year: 2007

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

Provide “Virtual Tours” of Sitka National Historical Park

Sitka National Historical Park is the oldest – and at 116 acres - the smallest national park area in Alaska. Located on the west coast of Baranof Island in the heart of the Tongass National Forest, the park is accessible only by plane or boat. The park proposes to utilize the best current technology to develop web-based tools enabling visitors from the world over to explore the park and familiarize themselves with its unique resources and themes - without having to leave their homes. Visitors will be able to experience park trails, encountering historic totem poles and Alaskan wildlife along the way; explore the rooms and attic of the Russian Bishop’s House, a National Historic Landmark and one of only four Russian American period structures left in the western hemisphere; and interact with the Alaskan Native artists of the Southeast Alaska Indian Cultural Center as they demonstrate traditional arts and handicraft techniques handed down from generations past.

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

Formalize a Partnership with the Sitka SCORE Program Providing Volunteer and Recreational Opportunities for Local Youth

Sitka community leaders developed the “Sitka Camping and Outdoor Recreation Experience” (SCORE) program for area youth ages 9 -13. SCORE provides opportunities for safe and healthful outdoor recreation and accomplishes important work for local non-profit organizations. The park proposes to establish a formal Memorandum of Understanding with the SCORE organization to provide local children with regularly scheduled recreational and educational activities within the park during summer. SCORE participants will have opportunities to volunteer for living history demonstrations, perform trail work, and serve as Jr. Rangers monitoring and helping to maintain the natural and cultural values of Sitka National Historical Park.

EDUCATION

Year: 2007

Site: SITK Year: 2007

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

Teaching with Museum Collections

The National Park Service “Teaching with Museum Collections” provides lesson plans for teachers to use NPS museum collections in student-centered educational activities. The collections tell the story of America; its peoples, cultures, varied habitats, significant events, and ideas that continue to inspire the world. “Teaching with Museum Collections” emphasizes the links between the “real things”, the collections, and the sites where those collections were found, collected, or used. NPS collections include cultural objects, natural history specimens, archival documents and photographs. Lesson plans are linked to national education standards.

Sitka National Historical Park is developing a “Traveling Trunk” with park-themed objects that will be used for curriculum based learning. The Trunk will be utilized to connect school children grades 6 – 12 throughout Southeast Alaska and the nation with history lessons combining literature, archeology, and geography. The park will partner with Pacific High School, a local alternative high school, to help keep the Trunk’s curriculum and items age-appropriate, relevant, and interesting for students.

Impart to every American their citizen-ownership of their national parks.

Implement the “Marine Ranger” Program

Over 230,000 visitors reach Sitka via cruise ship annually. Since the community does not have a dock facility large enough to serve cruise ships, the ships drop anchor – often just off from Sitka National Historical Park’s beach – and lighter their passengers to small boat harbors in town. A number of cruise ship passengers elect to stay onboard rather than disembark for reasons including inclement weather, mobility concerns, or lack of knowledge about local attractions like the park. Sitka National Historical Park proposes to develop and implement a “Marine Ranger” program where park rangers go aboard cruise ships to provide interpretation about the park and opportunities for healthful recreation in and around the community. The goals of these contacts are to provide park-relevant information that will encourage passengers to disembark the ships to visit park resources and the historic community during their stay.

PROF_EXCELLENCE

Year: 2007

Site: SITK Year: 2007

Use strategic planning to promote park excellence.

Develop a Professional Business Plan for the Park

In order to attain and sustain professional management excellence, Sitka National Historical Park proposes to complete a professional business plan in 2008 to include new performance goals that optimize human capital and evaluate and improve program effectiveness. New skills training in the areas of technology, partnership development, and cultural competence will ensure that the park's professionals are ready to serve a diverse and increasingly urban public as we approach the NPS Centennial.

Model what it means to work in partnership.

Secure Funding to Support An Evolving 40-Year Partnership

Together, Sitka National Historical Park and the non-profit Southeast Alaska Indian Cultural Center (SEAICC) celebrate, demonstrate, and interpret the centuries-old art and handicraft traditions of the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian peoples. This unique partnership, spanning nearly 40 years, perpetuates traditional arts while helping Alaska Natives maintain connections with their cultures and ancestral values. The park proposes to secure additional base funding to help provide for the Cultural Center's evolving year-round operations. This fiscal support would likely help attract additional sustainability partners who in turn will help the SEAICC achieve its mission to "sustain and perpetuate the art and culture of Southeast Alaska Indian Tribes in a manner that honors ancestral values."