



Stronger Together

*A Manual on the Principles and Practices
of Civic Engagement*





This report is the sixteenth in the Conservation and Stewardship Publication Series produced by the Conservation Study Institute. This series includes a variety of publications designed to provide information on conservation history and current practice for professionals and the public. The series editor is Nora J. Mitchell, director of the Institute. This volume was prepared in cooperation with the Quebec-Labrador Foundation/Atlantic Center for the Environment and Shelburne Farms National Historical Landmark.

The Conservation Study Institute was established by the National Park Service in 1998 to help the agency and its partners stay in touch with the evolving field of conservation, and to develop more sophisticated partnerships, new tools for community engagement, and new strategies for the twenty-first century. A partnership with academic, government, and nonprofit organizations, the Institute is dedicated to assisting the National Park Service and its partners in becoming increasingly effective and creative in meeting new challenges, and more open and responsive leaders in building collaboration and commitment for the stewardship of our national system of parks and special places. The Institute is based at Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park in the Northeast Region of the National Park Service.

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No. 11
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On the cover: Students learn the intricacies of weaving on a handloom at the Tsongas Industrial History Center, located in Boott Mill in Lowell National Historical Park. More than 50,000 students annually are engaged in programs at the Center, a partnership of Lowell National Historical Park and University of Massachusetts Lowell Graduate School of Education. Photo by James Higgins.

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A Manual on the Principles and Practices of Civic Engagement

Prepared by

National Park Service Conservation Study Institute
and
National Park Service Northeast Region Office of Interpretation and Education

In cooperation with

Quebec-Labrador Foundation/Atlantic Center for the Environment
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Introduction and Background

Civic engagement builds and sustains the relationships that are necessary for the National Park Service (NPS) and its partners to collectively accomplish conservation stewardship over the long term. Often used interchangeably with “community engagement,” civic engagement encompasses a set of diverse techniques that can be used to connect with the American public and develop effective, lasting, and mutually beneficial relationships. In recent years, the NPS and its partners have undertaken various activities that have led to a deeper reflection on the importance of civic engagement in helping the public participate in dialogue and reflect on the value of American places and their resources and stories.¹ The cumulative learning from these activities has informed this manual.

Many national parks and their partners are already applying civic engagement in various ways—creating opportunities for classroom teachers to develop curricula using park and community resources, inviting a diverse array of people to collectively redefine and tell disputed stories of place and history, engaging communities of interest across the country, developing friends groups and cooperating associations, working collaboratively and building partnerships with a variety of stakeholders, involving residents of neighboring communities in park planning activities, and seeking to attract new audiences to parks and other special places. Considering the breadth of this field, one can understand how civic engagement—practiced in a thoughtful, deliberate, and inclusive manner—can play a transformative role in American society as the NPS and many partners seek to build a collective capacity for and commitment to conservation stewardship across the country.

This manual has been developed jointly by the NPS Conservation Study Institute and the Northeast Region (NER) Office of Interpretation and Education, in partnership with the Quebec-Labrador Foundation/Atlantic Center for the Environment and Shelburne Farms, to provide an overview of the principles and practices of civic engagement. Informed by workshops with practitioners and analyses of case studies, it is a practical guide to the strategic application of civic engagement.

Objectives

The manual's objectives are to:

- create a common understanding of civic engagement;
- clarify the connections between civic engagement, partnership-building, and efforts to enhance relevancy;
- discuss the benefits that civic engagement brings to the NPS and partners;
- strengthen understanding of its many applications;
- share promising practices and lessons learned;
- encourage more civic engagement in interpretation and education, resource management, and planning;
- stimulate broader strategic application of civic engagement throughout the NPS Northeast Region and across the country.

Intended Audience

The manual's primary intended audience is educators and interpreters who are engaging and developing programs with parks, schools, and neighboring communities and interacting with the public. The manual is also intended to be useful to managers and other program staff who are interested in integrating civic engagement into their organizational programs. For some readers of this manual, civic engagement may be new territory; others may want to expand what they are doing or apply civic engagement more strategically. The manual is intended to support practitioners at all levels of experience.

About the Manual

Section II of the manual discusses civic engagement in greater depth, examining what it is, the current context, the benefits that come from its application, and the role it plays in making conservation programs relevant. Section III reviews the more common situations and audiences addressed by civic engagement initiatives. Section IV describes guiding principles and promising practices, and section V offers closing thoughts. Appendix A provides information on additional resources and further reading, appendix B contains a timeline of civic engagement activities within the NPS, and appendix C lists techniques for facilitating meetings.



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A Closer Look at Civic Engagement

The process of learning about civic engagement is iterative. As practitioners within the NPS and partner organizations have come to understand the benefits of interacting with stakeholders and communities in a deeper, more meaningful way, the practice of civic engagement has evolved as a more deliberate and sustained approach to building relationships.

Defining Civic Engagement

There are various understandings of the term “civic engagement.” A common definition is simply a commitment to helping improve one’s neighborhood or community. Robert Putnam, author of *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, speaks of building social capital at the community level, with elements of social trust and reciprocity.² The Pew Charitable Trusts has described civic engagement as “individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern.”³ The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation characterizes it as an ongoing process of public conversation that allows people to collect information, share common values, and wrestle together with tough issues where values may be in conflict. This ongoing engagement process builds public knowledge and leads to better, more widely accepted decisions, more public confidence in an agency or organization’s decision making, and a deep knowledge of the community that doesn’t go away with staff turnover.⁴

Another definition is provided in NPS Director’s Order #75A on Civic Engagement and Public Involvement (first issued in 2003 and reissued in 2007):

“Civic engagement is a continuous, dynamic conversation with the public on many levels that reinforces public commitment to the preservation of heritage resources, both cultural and natural, and strengthens public understanding of the full meaning and contemporary relevance of these resources. The foundation of

civic engagement is a commitment to building and sustaining relationships with neighbors and communities of interest.”⁵

The Director’s Order, which also describes a broad continuum for public involvement, emphasizes that civic engagement goes far beyond simply meeting the minimum legal requirements for public participation. It is a discipline, a practice, and a philosophical direction that represents “an institutional commitment to actively involve communities in [the NPS] mission through the public planning process, in interpretive and educational programming, and directly in preserving significant resources.”

In the broadest sense, civic engagement builds and sustains relationships for the purpose of reinforcing a mutual commitment to work together to conserve resources in parks and elsewhere for the benefit of current and future generations. The “continuous, dynamic conversation” described in the Director’s Order implies an ongoing exchange of ideas that benefits all parties involved. The ongoing process of listening, communicating, learning, and then using the knowledge gained helps the NPS and other organizations to build meaningful relationships with communities of both place and interest. To carry out this process effectively, engaging the public should be integral to how an agency or organization works. Moreover, it may take a new way of thinking and acting both internally within the agency or organization and externally in engaging the public.⁶

For those working in interpretation and education, civic engagement encompasses both the content and the processes used to build these relationships. Without effective engagement processes and relevant, informative materials and programs, parks and their partners risk falling short of realizing the transformative benefits that can come with successful civic engagement. Building meaningful relationships requires understanding both the people and the organizations being engaged. Like many relationship skills, it requires adaptability and flexibility, and it takes time, practice, good communication, respectful civic dialogue, and patience. Done well, civic engagement results in better, more relevant programs; cohesive, vibrant, and collaborative local networks; and a broader and better-informed public.

“Involving teachers and community leaders at the very beginning helped the project develop in a direction that was more meaningful to the community. I also learned a lot by going into the community more and listening. Our relationship with the local schools is stronger now, and local teachers attended our annual teachers’ institute for the first time.”⁷

– Sheila Cooke-Kayser, Education Specialist
Salem Maritime and Saugus Iron Works National Historic Sites

Current Context for Practicing Civic Engagement

To practice civic engagement successfully in a conservation setting today, it is important to also consider certain contemporary societal trends. The demographics and the culture of the United States are changing, as reflected in the increasing diversity of the population, continued urbanization, youth who are less connected to nature and the outdoors, and reliance on increasingly sophisticated technology. In addition to these socioeconomic factors (and connected to some of them), there are changes taking place in nature—such as declining biodiversity and changing weather patterns and climate—and changes in the realm of cultural resources as historical literacy declines and historic structures are lost. It is essential for the NPS and its partners to respond to these changes and trends for conservation efforts to be relevant and successful in national parks and elsewhere.

Benefits of Civic Engagement

The benefits of civic engagement are many and occur at different levels of society. Viewed most broadly, effective civic engagement enhances public interest in and connection to national parks, historic sites, and other special places, fostering greater appreciation for what these areas offer for recreation, education about history and nature, and appreciation of natural beauty.

In *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*, author Richard Louv argues that experiencing nature is essential to psychological and physical well-being, yet children today are increasingly indoors-oriented.⁸ And the problem isn't just with children. Today, as urban populations expand and farmland and open spaces are developed, there are fewer opportunities for people of all ages to readily connect with the land and with nature. The result is a diminished understanding of the essential services that nature provides to us—food, clean air and water, and a capacity to renew our spirits. Without that understanding, stewardship becomes more tenuous. Civic engagement that encourages people of all ages, backgrounds, and cultures to learn about and explore national parks and the special places in their communities helps people to connect with and care about nature, and to understand the necessity of conservation.

Similarly, historian David McCullough has recognized the need to address the decline in Americans' understanding of history, saying that “for a free, self-governing people something more than a vague familiarity with history is essential if we are to hold on to and sustain our freedom.”⁹ Engaging the public in parks and historic places provides an important civic benefit by facilitating historical literacy and a deeper awareness of the complexity of history. Thoughtful engagement can help citizens understand not only what events took place but why they are important, and the different yet valid perspectives and connections that people may have regarding these events. Encouraging exploration of the stories and resources associated with historic sites fosters a greater awareness of what it means to live in a multicultural society and the contributions of different cultural groups to our history and growth. Understanding where we've come

from—our history as a nation and the values that underlie our democracy—enables us to be better, more civically engaged citizens.

At the park or program level, the process of civic engagement can help build relationships with stakeholder groups and neighboring communities that lead to ongoing collaboration. Over the long term, such collaboration can create a sense of ownership and common future that benefits the park and the local community. For instance, if a park engages local teachers in learning about park resources, this can enhance local school curricula in a real and meaningful way. Engaging local stakeholders in general management planning can lead to interpretive themes that better reflect community stories or to a better resolution of mutual concerns such as traffic snarls during peak visitation periods.

Collaborative conservation creates sustainable stewardship of parks and other places of natural and cultural heritage through broad-based partnerships, community engagement, and cooperative leadership to build a shared vision for the future.

Relationship-building is an important investment in the future. At some point, problems or differences of opinion that affect a park or community will inevitably arise, even with the best of relationships. An existing, vibrant, working relationship between the park, community leaders, and other local stakeholders provides a platform of trust and common purpose that makes it much easier to address issues as they arise.

Civic engagement in national parks, historic sites, and other special areas—done well and in a relevant manner—leads to citizens who are more historically and ecologically literate and to a more caring and invested community. For the national park visitor of any age, a meaningful educational experience can establish a personal connection to nature or spark curiosity and an interest in history and cultural resources that can extend beyond the park to the home community. Such personal experiences have the potential to create life-long supporters and practitioners of conservation stewardship, benefiting not only parks and other special places, but also communities, regional landscapes, and the organizations that work to conserve and enhance them.

The Role of Civic Engagement in Making Conservation Programs Relevant

For conservation programs to be relevant to citizens across sectors, it is essential to recognize and respond to the current societal trends and changes. Attention to civic engagement principles can help to create relevancy by learning what audiences value about parks and their resources, reshaping educational and interpretive materials to address what people value, helping connect to previously underserved audiences, and addressing pertinent issues of national concern and importance.

With regard to reaching a broader public, the 2005 report, *Keeping Parks Relevant in the 21st Century*, identified four means to expand the reach of programs: working with others to tell inclusive stories; engaging in an ongoing dialogue with openness, sensitivity, and honesty; sustaining community relationships; and creating a workforce reflective of society.¹⁰

The University of Vermont, the Conservation Study Institute, and the NPS Northeast Region Office of Interpretation and Education have recently collaborated to support research to understand the most effective means to enhance relevancy. Preliminary findings from this research suggest that six interrelated themes are connected with enhanced relevancy: community involvement, inclusive interpretation and histories, NPS climate, program sustainability, workforce diversity, and media and communication.¹¹ These themes reflect numerous connections with civic engagement practice.

To address issues of relevancy and contemporary trends, the NPS and its partners are increasingly using a range of techniques to engage the public, such as:

- developing interpretive materials that are more inclusive of a diverse population;
- inviting stakeholder groups and communities to participate early on in planning processes;
- creating exhibits that address untold stories, teach sustainable practices, or discuss climate change;
- involving stakeholders in revising interpretive materials to more accurately convey the full scope of a story;
- employing state-of-the-art information technology.



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Karen Lanier

The Spectrum of Civic Engagement: Different Applications and Audiences

Applications of Civic Engagement

Today, civic engagement has become quite diversified and practitioners employ a variety of techniques and processes across a spectrum of programmatic applications and audiences as shown by the examples in this section.

In this section, civic engagement is discussed within the programmatic framework of interpretation and education, planning, and resource management.

■ 1. Interpretation and education

Through interpretation and education, the NPS and its partners have the opportunity to help people understand and appreciate the importance of natural and cultural resources, as well as the history of the nation and the many values that underlie our democracy. The challenge facing interpreters and educators is to facilitate development of personal connections with resources so that citizens find personal meaning in parks and historic sites.

The NPS Interpretive Development Program, aiming for the highest standards of professionalism in interpretation, is based on the philosophy that people will *care for* what they first *care about*. Knowing the audience and knowing the resource allow the educator or interpreter to present and discuss the material in a manner that enables the audience to develop a personal understanding of both the tangible and intangible values of the resource and a personal motivation to take action. The interpreter or educator who helps a person of any age find personal meaning in the resources of a national park, historic site, or other special area is fulfilling the goal of civic engagement.¹²

In this way, interpretation and education are processes for connecting with the public and providing information that results in learning. With planning, this can lead to the dialogue and interaction that build relationships—the core of effective civic engagement. The primary steps in setting a stage for relationship building are to:

- interact with individuals and organizations in a relevant and inclusive manner;
- present educational and interpretive materials that are accurate, authentic, and respectful of the people or cultural groups who are part of the story;
- offer materials that are accessible and relevant to contemporary audiences.

There are opportunities within this setting for a two-way exchange of information to take place, which can lead to the dynamic dialogue of civic engagement and, over time, build relationships.

Although it may not be appropriate in every instance, designing interpretive and educational opportunities for a two-way flow of information can allow the interpreter or educator to gain insights into the values held by different audiences. While offering opportunities for two-way communication may not alone build relationships, it opens the door for further interaction, especially with local schools and teachers. Such dialogue can help to clarify learning needs and identify potential educational partners, and lead to a collaborative process of program design and engagement on a deeper, more sustained level. In addition to informing the interpreter or educator, two-way dialogue is a powerful tool for engaging program participants in developing their own ideas and taking intellectual and emotional ownership of the resource and its connection to themselves and to their community.

There are many examples within the NPS of educational and interpretive programs that create opportunities for further engagement with different audiences.

Engaging with local schools

At Fort McHenry National Monument, park staff worked with Baltimore inner-city schools, the mayor's office, the park's friends group, and others to bring students to the park to learn about the meaning of "The Star-Spangled Banner." The NPS and its partners provided interpretive training to volunteers and a pre-visit orientation for teachers. The students were transported to the park on board the *Lady Maryland*, a replica Chesapeake Bay schooner, which provided an opportunity to discuss the bay as a threatened natural resource and its significance in the British naval bombardment in 1814. Through this collaboration, the NPS learned more about the needs of inner-city youth and enhanced its relationships with local schools.

Engaging with teachers to better utilize park resources

In 2005, Adams National Historical Park and area educational partners offered activities for educators and for K–12 students, including on-site activities and a week-long teacher institute. The programs focused on using the park’s historical resources and collections to foster understanding of events that helped to shape our nation and our democratic society. During on-site field trips, inner-city students, many of them first-generation Americans, participated in interactive activities that encouraged them to practice active citizenship, including role-playing such important historical events as the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Teacher institutes lasting a week or more and other continuing education opportunities offered by Adams and other parks provide opportunities to build relationships and enable teachers to make better use of park resources in their classrooms.

Engaging with the community

Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park worked with the neighboring community of Woodstock, Vermont, to develop the “Home Front Walking Tour of Civil War Woodstock.” This interpretive program takes place at sites within the community and the park, and offers a Civil War story from the perspective of the community and how it was affected by the war. The theater teacher at the local high school and her students subsequently created a unique “speakchorus” performance (a poetic dramatization) of the walking tour’s themes. Both the tour and the student performance encouraged a broader dialogue on the causes and consequences of the Civil War, including the nature of democracy and the role of compromise and tolerance in maintaining civil society.¹³ The two activities built a strong personal connection between students and their home community and enhanced appreciation of the community’s assets. These activities demonstrate the ongoing nature of the park’s community engagement as its staff continues to build opportunities for two-way dialogue into its public programs. The careful attention to relationship building by the NPS that began with park planning in the mid-1990s has led the Woodstock community to abandon its initial wariness and embrace the park as a valuable member of the community.

Engaging teachers and the community in program development

In 2005, Boston National Historical Park began developing educational programming in partnership with Discover Roxbury, a group offering programs on the culture and history of one of Boston’s most diverse communities. The project aimed to connect historic sites in Roxbury with nearby Dorchester Heights, which, having played a central role in the first military victory of the American Revolution, is home to a national monument. Because of its strategic

location, Roxbury contributed to this victory, and the partners hoped to illustrate connections between colonial Roxbury and current community residents. Boston National Historic Park and Discover Roxbury engaged local leaders, teachers, staff at historic sites, and others in the initial planning. In addition to discussing the development of pilot educational programs and opportunities for collaboration in annual commemorative events associated with Dorchester Heights, the group identified the need for more research to flesh out the contributions of people of color to this particular military event. Conducted by students at the Harvard University Extension School, the research uncovered many untold stories and identified more than 100 African American and Native American men who joined the colonial forces in Roxbury. This information led to an interactive “Roxbury in the Revolution” walking tour for students of all ages piloted in 2006, with 12 Roxbury residents trained as tour docents. Relationships between the park and the community continue to grow, thanks to the educational programs and the partnership with Discover Roxbury.¹⁴

In other situations, civic engagement has been used to tell difficult or complex stories, at times updating interpretation that presented an incomplete picture of history or told a story from one perspective when there were differing, yet valid, cultural perspectives. In situations such as these, different cultural groups can have a connection to the site in entirely different ways, with each group having its own story and perspective on what happened or what is of meaning. If the interpretive story leaves out the alternative views of key cultural groups, it risks becoming irrelevant to whole sectors of society. On the other hand, presenting the various perspectives can help people find a new or different personal connection to the site and stimulate a dialogue that leads to enhanced understanding of the site’s story and the groups that were historically involved. Another example of history that can be difficult to tell is when an untold story surfaces that requires a rethinking of what had been the predominant interpretation of history at that site.

Such situations are challenging and require patience, open dialogue, a well-designed engagement strategy and process, and sometimes skilled facilitation to work through long-repressed feelings and issues. A critical step in nurturing relationships in these instances is to engage the pertinent stakeholder groups in helping to decide key themes and stories—a step that can build or revitalize relationships and result in materials and interpretive activities that are respectful of cultural differences and experiences and relevant to these cultural groups today.

Engaging stakeholders to develop a more complete historical interpretation

Washita Battlefield National Historic Site in Oklahoma, established in 1996, is the site of an attack on a Cheyenne village by General George Custer and the 7th U.S. Cavalry. To engage the Cheyenne and Arapaho in helping to develop the new park's interpretation of events leading to the Washita attack, the park hosted a symposium that brought together the tribes and the local community (tribal and nontribal) to explore the different perspectives on Washita's history. The two-day symposium included presentations, costumed interpretations, arts-related activities, local field trips, and a dinner hosted by the local school. The symposium was so successful and informative that it was repeated in succeeding years. Through the collaboration that grew from this first event, the park was able to develop a balanced interpretation of the Washita history and the Southern Plains Indian Wars. The park also collaborated with the tribal community and others to develop the 420-mile Cheyenne Heritage Trail, which visits cultural and historic sites of importance to the tribes. The interpretation along the trail provides a tribal voice, describing the Washita events in historical context and presenting the living culture of the Cheyenne.¹⁵

Engaging stakeholders in an untold story that requires rethinking historical interpretation

In 2002, following the extensive reconstruction of Independence Mall at Independence National Historical Park in Philadelphia, new information came to light about the "President's House." This building, long gone, had served as both the seat of the executive branch during the early years of the new republic and a personal residence of Presidents George Washington and John Adams. The new information showed that the building, which had once stood in a spot adjacent to the new, about-to-be-opened Liberty Bell Center, had also been home to at least nine of Washington's African slaves—at a time when the Bill of Rights was being added to the Constitution. To decide how to tell this story, the park subsequently involved key stakeholders, the city of Philadelphia, scholars, and the public in a lengthy (and sometimes heated) civic engagement process that ultimately led to a hard-won consensus. Scheduled to open in 2010, the President's House exhibit will interpret the slavery system, African American Philadelphia, and the move to freedom—illustrated by the stories of Washington's slaves—side by side with the story of the early establishment of the executive branch.¹⁶

■ 2. Planning processes

Planning has long provided for public involvement and opportunities for public feedback. However, inviting the public and key stakeholders to participate in the early stages of planning, when they can help develop ideas and options, has only happened more recently. The experience of African Burial Ground National Monument is one such example of early engagement that began during the pre-park planning process.

Engaging citizens in pre-park planning

In 1991, in the midst of constructing a new federal office building in New York City, the burial site of 15,000 free and enslaved Africans was rediscovered. Dating to between 1690 and 1790, the burial site disproved the myth that slavery did not exist in the North. Ten years of contentious debate about what to do with the site ensued between the federal government and the African descendant community. In 2003, recognizing the need for additional expertise in developing the site's interpretation and proposed management, the General Services Administration (which had been overseeing the building construction) asked the NPS to assume responsibility for the public outreach activities. NPS staff began a new engagement process that included small listening sessions with key individuals and interest groups and larger public meetings, all governed by guiding principles that encouraged listening and respect for all perspectives. Over a year's time, the NPS was able to achieve agreement on a memorial design and interpretive themes recognizing the contributions of Africans at that time in the city's history. The process of involving the African American community demonstrated how civic engagement can create a personal connection to a specific site and engender pride in the stories that are told, both of which help to create personal investment in a site's future. Following the park's designation as a national monument in 2006, the NPS continued to work with local partners to develop its interpretive center.¹⁷

Similar results can come from meaningful engagement of the public in developing a park's general management plan. In the past, planning efforts involved the public only after the various alternatives had been shaped. Although the public participates in these comment opportunities, the resulting plan is often "park-centric" and the process tends not to engender feelings of active, long-term investment on the part of neighboring communities. Engaging key stakeholders, community groups, and local leaders earlier in general management planning does several things. First, when local leaders and interest groups help to shape the plan alternatives, they feel an ownership in the resulting plan and an investment in the park's future. The dialogue process can also uncover common values and concerns (on the part of both the park and the community) and lead to a final plan that also benefits the community in ways that might not have been anticipated in the beginning. By engaging the community early in the process, the park

and community together can begin developing a mutually supportive relationship and a shared vision for the future that carries into implementation.

Engaging citizens in general management planning and educational planning

As New Bedford Whaling National Historical Site began its general management planning process in 1998, it invited diverse community groups, cultural institutions, and city agencies to join together as “Partners in the Park” to help develop the plan. Through the dialogue of these meetings over the course of the planning process, a sense of common purpose emerged which has continued into implementation. Partners in the Park continues to serve as a forum for discussing issues related to park operations. Park staff and partners collaborate in many activities, and the NPS has become a more active partner in the cultural life of the community. In 2005, the park and six local partners teamed up as a Partner Education Committee to develop an education plan. After reviewing the educational offerings of all the partners and comparing the content to the park’s interpretive themes, the committee recommended building relationships with local public schools, offering teacher workshops and institutes, and conducting joint marketing. As the education plan states, “when plans are...created with input from stakeholders and supporters, they establish a community vision for the future and inspire a spirit of collaboration whereby partners pull together to make the vision a reality.”¹⁸

Engaging citizens in interpretive planning

In Louisiana, when Cane River National Heritage Area began its interpretive planning process, it formed a committee that brought together 20 people representing the diversity of perspectives throughout the heritage area. The committee included people who had never before talked together about their shared and often difficult past. Descendants of slaveholders and slaves discussed how their ancestors’ history was part of a national story and why it was important to share that history. Other complex historical and cultural issues addressed included the romanticism of the Old South, local legend versus historical accuracy, and the question of which local sites and cultural groups “owned” certain stories. By creating an open environment for discussion, the interpretive planning process helped to establish trust and respect among all partners, which has carried over into other aspects of the heritage area’s work. The inclusive process has become standard practice for Cane River projects.¹⁹

■ 3. Resource management

Many parks and their partners oversee resource conservation programs that involve citizen groups and individual volunteers in helping to preserve natural and cultural resources. Programs that engage people in such work enhance the capacity of groups and volunteers to understand and accomplish conservation, and these citizen science initiatives can help to achieve important cost-effective resource conservation. Many of these programs are ongoing or long-term in nature, thus allowing for learning and relationships to deepen over time. For many volunteers, these programs stimulate an often life-long support for parks and other protected areas.

Engaging volunteers in restoration and stewardship

Golden Gate National Recreation Area partners with the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy on many initiatives. Among these are the conservancy's Site Stewardship Program, which for 15 years has enlisted volunteers from the greater San Francisco area in restoration and stewardship of the park's natural resources. These volunteers—many of them urban youth—often continue in the programs year after year and not only help the park accomplish its resource management objectives but apply what they have learned in their own communities and lives.²⁰

Beginning in 2001, the NPS established a network of research learning centers as a way to involve researchers, universities, educators, and community groups in helping to preserve and protect areas of national significance. The network has since grown to include 20 centers across the country. Although the focus of a center's programs may vary depending on the needs of its particular location, collectively the network's educational programs use diverse ways to engage learners of all ages in hands-on research activities.²¹

Engaging students in research

The Appalachian Highlands Science Learning Center helps to engage students, teachers, and community participants in the Great Smoky Mountains "All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory," a comprehensive effort of Great Smoky Mountains National Park to create a scientific inventory of the living organisms within the park. Students, most at the middle or high school level, have helped to discover hundreds of species that are new park records. In 2007, students from Cherokee High School found a species of springtail (a small, wingless soil insect) that had not been found anywhere since its first identification in New York in 1951. Great Smoky Mountains was the first park to undertake this comprehensive all-taxa approach, and this effort serves as a model for other research learning centers. The Appalachian Highlands Center also provides training in research methods for teachers and community members participating in inventory activities.²²

Since park resources often cross park boundaries, resource management can involve engaging local communities on a more regional scale and working collaboratively to protect important resources. In parks that contain considerable privately-owned land, such engagement in collaborative conservation is often essential to resource management and protection.

Engaging with the community in regional watershed management

Point Reyes National Seashore in California is a key partner in the Tomales Bay Watershed Council, an ongoing collaboration of more than 20 organizations, agencies, and local citizens who have worked since 2000 to “improve local capacity to comprehensively manage and protect the watershed.” With the park encompassing a significant portion of the watershed and some of the parkland in private ownership, the watershed council has provided an ongoing opportunity for the NPS to engage with diverse stakeholders in effective resource management and stewardship benefiting the park as well as the broader community.²³

Engaging community groups in preserving cultural resources

Cane River National Heritage Area provides matching grants to local organizations for projects that help restore historic buildings, interpret cultural resources, and conserve cultural landscapes within the heritage area boundary. The grants program has built a strong network of cooperating groups who are working together with the heritage area’s federal commission to implement the management plan, thus reinforcing relationships and expanding accomplishments beyond what the heritage area staff alone could do.²⁴



Engaging the community in preserving a working cultural landscape

Cuyahoga Valley National Park in Ohio created the Countryside Initiative in 1998 in an effort to stem the decline of farms in the valley and the associated loss of working cultural landscapes that are the park's most valued resource. Partnering with the nonprofit Cuyahoga Valley Countryside Conservancy, the park rehabilitates historic farmhouses (several of them listed in the National Register of Historic Places) that were acquired in the years following the park's establishment in 1974. Through a rigorous application process overseen by the conservancy, the farms are then leased to prospective farmers on a long-term basis. The process ensures that the farms are leased to qualified individuals and that farm practices contribute to sustainability and are in harmony with the park's purposes and NPS cultural and environmental values. The park and its partners engage local residents and communities on an ongoing basis in diverse activities that help preserve the historic farmsteads and the valley's working cultural landscape. Farmers' markets within the park feature produce from local farms, educational programs take place on the leased farms, and the farmers themselves engage visitors and provide information about the Countryside Initiative.²⁵

Building Relationships with Specific Audiences

Good relationships are based on trust, and it takes time and effort to develop and maintain relationships that will result in effective collaborative conservation. There are many instances when a park or partner may want to pursue specific relationships to achieve a certain objective or develop a particular program. It is also possible to bring people together without a specific objective in mind beyond the desire to strengthen a relationship or continue a community dialogue. This is part of the "continuous, dynamic conversation with the public" that reinforces public commitment to preserving resources.

It is worth further considering specific audiences apart from the situations and program settings just discussed, as different audiences may require the use of different civic engagement strategies and tools. Although each of the audiences listed below may already participate in some capacity in certain national parks, broader opportunities exist to engage them in ways that will spark personal connections, enhance learning experiences on both sides, or strengthen public commitments to conservation stewardship.

■ 1. Educators

Teachers are an important connecting link, not only to youth and their families but also to other educators, educational institutions, and their communities. Parks and partners can build relationships with teachers at different levels. Teachers might take their students on a virtual park visit through the internet, ask park staff to lead a presentation or discussion in the classroom, or take their classes to a park on a field trip. Each of these situations can offer an opportunity to engage with teachers on a more ongoing basis. Parks can also be proactive in engaging teachers by providing additional resource materials for use with students, enlisting teachers in a training course, or inviting them to help develop a curriculum-based program. Engaging with schools, teachers, and community education groups in ways that involve two-way interactions over time can help to ensure that any resulting programs are feasible, relevant to the school curriculum, and suitable to meet the needs of the schools and community as well as the park. These interactions—especially developing curriculum-based programs together—can facilitate a deeper sense of ownership and investment in the individual relationships, the materials, and the park as a teaching resource. The general rule of thumb for involving a target audience in planning and program development also applies to engaging with education groups working with youth and adults outside the schools.

Engaging with teachers in developing school curricula

A Forest for Every Classroom, a joint effort of Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park, the Conservation Study Institute, and other partners, engages teachers in developing curricula through a long-term professional development program.²⁶ This teacher enrichment program was developed with input from teachers, foresters, and other local stakeholders. Through the program, teachers develop standards-based curricula for their schools that integrate hands-on natural and cultural exploration with concepts of ecology, stewardship, sense of place, and civics—all focused on fostering in students a greater understanding of and appreciation for the public lands in their communities. Teachers also create opportunities for their students to interact with their communities through service learning. The program's sponsoring partners provide sustained professional support to the teachers throughout the year-long training with a series of three two-day workshops and a five-day summer institute, and in subsequent years with alumni workshops, networking, and a fellows program.²⁷ Along with four other place-based education programs and one foundation, A Forest for Every Classroom has participated in a collaborative program evaluation to assess the effectiveness of its place-based education model. This ongoing research has found these programs to be highly successful at engaging teachers and students, connecting school and communities, and increasing stewardship behavior.²⁸

Engaging teachers as national park rangers

First piloted in Denver Public Schools in 2003, the NPS Teacher-Ranger-Teacher Program provides teachers with the opportunity for a well-rounded national park work experience. It is especially designed to reach diverse student audiences who have had little or no experience with national parks. The program selects teachers to spend the summer as park rangers, carrying out such activities as developing and presenting interpretive programs for the general public, staffing a visitor center, and developing curriculum-based materials for the park. In the school year that follows, the teacher-rangers use curriculum-based lesson plans, drawing on their summer experience to bring the park into the classroom. Then, during National Park Week in April, teacher-rangers wear their NPS uniforms to school, discuss their summer work as rangers, and engage students and teacher colleagues in activities related to national parks. The program went nationwide in 2007, and in 2008 more than 90 teacher-rangers in uniform served national park visitors. There were 13 teacher-rangers in the NPS Northeast Region in 2008, and at least 16 are expected in 2009.²⁹

■ 2. Youth



Many environmental educators believe that youth become active and engaged citizens when they are knowledgeable about their environment and understand that they have the ability to make a difference. National parks and historic sites offer young people opportunities to explore both the natural world and democratic values in structured and unstructured ways. Especially for urban youth, parks can provide experiences that create a life-long connection to and appreciation for nature. Youth engagement strategies require careful consideration of program design and message as well as delivery technique. Societal trends and increasing technological sophistication need to be considered in order to reach young people and provide meaningful learning experiences. Educational programs that are place-based and offer opportunities for community service are especially effective with youth.³⁰

There are many different approaches to engaging youth directly, such as on-site class visits, after-school programs, mentoring, internships, and summer work programs, as well as indirectly through teacher enrichment and training. Youth programs need to allow for immersion so that young people can explore or use their imagination, and need to be relevant within the context of the students' own lives. Programs also need to engage youth in meaningful ways, such as to involve them in project design, provide opportunities for them to lead, allow for peer-to-peer sharing, or enlist older students in teaching and guiding younger ones. It can be helpful to use innovative technology and provide opportunities for students to create their own materials. Perhaps most importantly, youth programs need to offer a continuum of engagement and provide reinforcing experiences that can help establish long-term relationships.

Engaging ethnically diverse urban youth

Lowell National Historical Park is integrated into a city with a 38-percent, largely Southeast Asian, immigrant population. The park has developed a tiered youth program to connect with this ethnically diverse audience, creating multiple opportunities for middle and high school students to participate in stewardship, service, and leadership projects. Among its youth opportunities, the program offers GS-1 and GS-2 seasonal ranger positions for older students, who are trained to provide interpretive services during the summer. These seasonal rangers have brought to their work language skills and other connections to the Southeast Asian community, enabling park staff to learn firsthand about this ethnic group, and they introduced their families and other students to the park.³¹

Engaging youth through hands-on skill training

The NPS Rivers and Trails Program partners with Groundwork USA to create “green teams” to engage youth from diverse backgrounds in stewardship of their local national parks and neighborhood parks. Green teams learn about leadership, citizenship, and national parks, and receive hands-on training in skills such as restoration, trail management, and tree planting.³²

Engaging youth through internships

Boston Harbor Islands National Park Area and its nonprofit partner Boston Harbor Island Alliance offer Island Ambassadors, a paid after-school internship program for Boston urban youth. The program provides office internships, leadership development workshops, environmental education, community outreach, stewardship projects, college counseling, and outdoor recreation. During the fall semester, interns develop their public speaking, leadership, and networking skills; research the history of Boston Harbor and the islands; and develop educational programs. In the spring, they visit local community centers and after school programs, presenting hands-on activities related to environmental awareness and the national park. Examples of intern projects include monitoring a recently restored salt marsh on one of the islands, sponsoring youth groups on trips to the islands, and producing a video on their relationship to the city and the islands.

One very effective method of engaging youth is the creation of a youth advisory board or council, which can offer young people more of a voice and more ownership in projects. Roger Hart, psychology professor at City University of New York and co-director of the Children's Environments Research Group, puts projects that are child-initiated on the top rungs of a "ladder of participation."³³ This high level of engagement boosts youth confidence in being able to create change and helps build knowledge and skills that contribute to learning and to greater community involvement as adults.

Engaging youth in program design and implementation

In San Francisco, the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy offers educational programs for the community through the Crissy Field Center at Golden Gate National Recreation Area. The center established a Youth Advisory Council in 2001 to formalize youth input into the design and implementation of the center's programs for young people. In its first year, the youth council designed and initiated "Inspiring Young Emerging Leaders" (I-YEL), a youth leadership program that "encourages, prepares, and challenges young people from diverse backgrounds to address environmental and social issues in their communities." I-YEL is youth-run, operated by high-school-age interns who are paid an hourly stipend. Interns make a commitment of one year, during which time they plan and implement at least two major projects aimed at positive environmental and social change in the community. In addition, they receive leadership development training and participate in community service projects that benefit the park as well as the city of San Francisco. Beginning with nine interns in 2001, the program grew to 23 in 2007–2008. Many I-YEL interns return for multiple years and continue to work in the parks after graduating.³⁴

In 2008, funding became available through the NPS Youth Partnership Program (YPP) to engage minority urban high school students in learning about parks and in preserving cultural and natural resources. The purpose of the Youth Partnership Program is to build relationships with nonprofit and community organizations in order to engage youth.

Engaging youth through summer stewardship activities

Using YPP funds, the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor and Roger Williams National Memorial partnered with Groundwork Providence in 2008 to involve youth in stewardship activities. Twenty-five students from the city of Providence spent their summer learning about water quality monitoring and assisted with monitoring, river cleanup, and trail building in two communities along the Blackstone River. They also assisted with a site inventory at Roger Williams Memorial and, as a conclusion to the project, presented a "rap" performance at the memorial expressing their ideas on freedom of speech.

■ 3. Park visitors

Millions of Americans visit national parks each year, yet for many the connection is fleeting and does not seem to relate to their everyday lives. And there are people who never visit a national park in their lifetime. These represent opportunities lost, especially the potential for connecting with nature and learning about democracy and stewardship. The NPS Interpretation and Education Renaissance Action Plan recognizes the need to engage people to foster enduring connections to parks, to reach underserved ethnic and socioeconomic groups, to create programs in collaboration with communities and partners (rather than *for* them), and to make use of innovative, relevant technology.³⁵ For parks and partners to reach under-represented groups, open the door to engagement, and provide relevant educational experiences, it may be necessary to rethink interpretation and education programs, program design and delivery techniques, and civic engagement practice across the country.

For the national park visitor of any age, a meaningful educational experience can establish a personal connection to nature or spark curiosity and an interest in history and cultural resources that can extend beyond the park to the home community.

One approach to this challenge would be to enlist individuals or organizations with connections to the under-represented group(s) to help review and redesign interpretation and education programs to better reach these audiences. Another helpful strategy would be to identify opportunities to link or connect park programs and civic engagement opportunities to ensure that all programs are complementary and mutually supportive in their outreach and engagement.

With national parks increasingly focused on sustainability, they have great potential to serve as models of relevancy in interpretive and educational programs. For instance, the efforts in parks to increase the use of alternative energy and fuels and other exemplary environmental practices provide opportunities to showcase these demonstrations and engage visitors in thinking about how these practices apply to their daily lives. Potential ways to enhance visitor-park connections include using urban parks as portals to encourage children and families to discover national parks, hosting annual listening sessions at parks to share information and seek visitor and community sentiment, and promoting off-season visitation.³⁶ Engaging park visitors in relevant ways is at the core of all of these goals and activities.

■ 4. Communities that neighbor national park areas

The future of parks and neighboring communities is inextricably linked. Increasingly, Americans consider lands near national parks attractive places to live, and few national parks today are without neighboring communities. Some parks have seen these communities grow in ways that negatively impact park resources, and some communities are experiencing problems such as traffic jams that result from park visitation. The reality is that neither the resources nor the problems stop at park boundaries, and parks and their neighboring communities share a common future. Increasingly, parks and their partners are seeking ways to engage communities in addressing their common concerns. The key in these situations is working strategically to build long-term relationships with local leaders, officials, and stakeholders. To establish these relationships requires staff to go into the community proactively, attend community events and meetings, and seek opportunities for collaboration that benefit the community as well as the park. Engaging with schools can also help build community relationships.

Engaging with the local community in transportation planning

At Acadia National Park, the NPS was a key partner in a series of community forums held over a number of years to address issues related to population growth and tourism in the Bar Harbor region. As part of its commitment to the collaborative process, the NPS took the lead in developing a bus system, funded by multiple public and private partners, that served both the community and the park. Similarly, Zion National Park and neighboring Springdale worked together to develop a bus system that addresses the park's traffic problems and brings park visitors from campgrounds into the town.³⁷

To develop such effective relationships requires ongoing effort, not just at times when public comment is solicited or when problems arise. In fact, establishing good relationships between a park and local residents can often prevent issues or concerns from becoming problems. This is an important reason to develop community relationships even when there may be no specific desired outcome at the time.

Civic engagement in national parks, historic sites, and other special areas—done well and in a relevant manner—leads to citizens who are more historically and ecologically literate and to a more caring and invested community.

Engaging an under-represented sector of the local community

Saguaro National Park in Tucson, Arizona, created a community outreach plan by working with representatives from the community, and implemented the plan by creating a community outreach committee to engage the diverse audiences in the region. Of particular importance was the Hispanic community, which makes up 40 percent of Tucson's population but seldom visits the park. With help from the University of Arizona and involvement of the outreach committee (including Hispanic committee members), the park undertook a study of the early Hispanic homesteads on lands now within the park as a way of helping this important sector connect with its own history—now part of the park's history as well. The park also hosts an annual fiesta celebrating the rich Hispanic history and culture of the park and local area, with traditional music and dancing, piñatas, and presentations. The fiesta is well attended by Hispanics from Tucson and beyond.

When initiating planning efforts, park staff should engage community groups and leaders at the earliest opportunity, explaining the planning action to be undertaken and inviting them to help shape the alternatives that lead to the final product.

Engaging the local community in planning

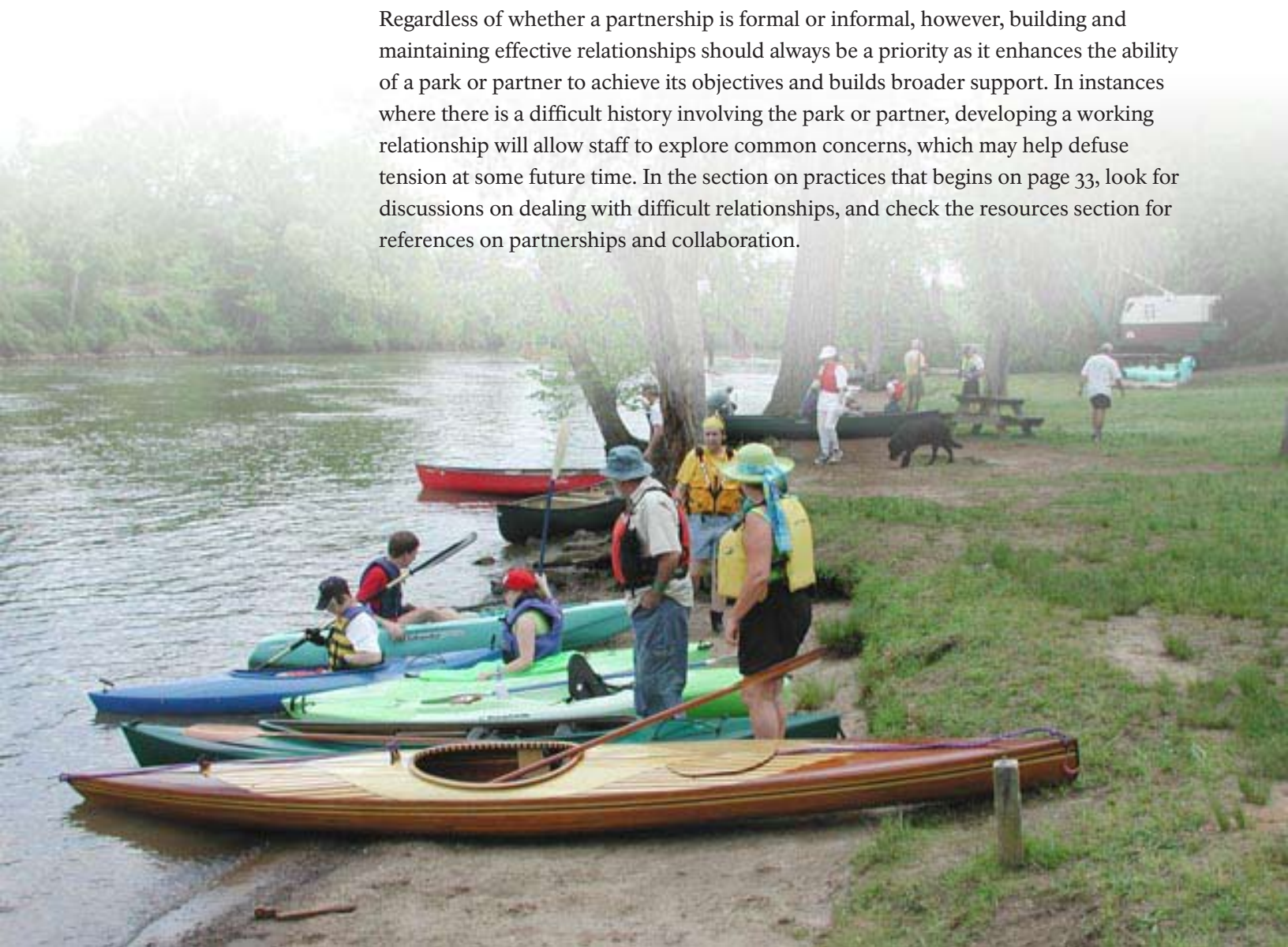
Yosemite National Park holds a community “listening session” as part of every planning activity. These sessions are part of a process developed jointly by the park and local leaders to help explain park management and engage local communities and stakeholders in planning for the future. The process has turned around a fractious situation that had grown out of the frustrations of neighboring communities that felt their concerns were not being heard by the park.³⁸

Building relationships for the long term involves a different mindset and approach from what exists in a one-time or single-purpose collaboration. Effective relationships with communities develop over time, depend upon an understanding of mutual interests and shared future, and are based on trust, respect, and reciprocity. They require good communication, transparency in operations, and shared decision making, risk, and accountability. Building these relationships is time-intensive and should not depend upon any one staff member or stakeholder or local leader, because individuals move on.

■ 5. Key partner groups and stakeholders

Much of the discussion about building relationships in neighboring communities also applies to working with partner groups and stakeholders. Any partnership develops and is maintained through the relationship-building power of civic engagement—effective civic engagement results in effective partnerships. In fact many of the principles followed in building partnerships are the same as those used in civic engagement. The word “partner” is often applied, informally or formally, when the relationship becomes more collaborative and involves working together toward some mutually-held objective(s). With informal partners, the level of interaction may vary at times depending on the situation or the activity. This is often the case as well with collaborations at the community level. For a park, there may be some organizations or stakeholders who are strategically important or whose missions are more closely aligned with the park’s mission and interests. In these cases a formalized agreement, such as a cooperative agreement, may be signed that spells out the nature of the joint work and the responsibilities of each partner.

Regardless of whether a partnership is formal or informal, however, building and maintaining effective relationships should always be a priority as it enhances the ability of a park or partner to achieve its objectives and builds broader support. In instances where there is a difficult history involving the park or partner, developing a working relationship will allow staff to explore common concerns, which may help defuse tension at some future time. In the section on practices that begins on page 33, look for discussions on dealing with difficult relationships, and check the resources section for references on partnerships and collaboration.



■ 6. Friends groups and cooperating associations

The partnership between a national park and a friends group or cooperating association is different in certain ways from a park's relationship with the community or other types of partners. A "friends group" is a nonprofit organization formed primarily to support the park. It works closely with the park in various ways, such as providing volunteer services, assisting with resource management and preservation, conducting fundraising efforts, and building awareness. A "cooperating association" can serve similar functions, but its mission is more specific: to provide programmatic and financial support to the NPS in the areas of education, interpretation, and research. Also, cooperating associations generate income largely from the sale of interpretive and educational items in park visitor center bookstores. Friends groups may not earn income through sales in national parks, but may do so through online or other off-site venues, membership dues, and donations.

Friends groups and cooperating associations are guided by different policies and operate through different agreements with the NPS.³⁹ The principles for building and maintaining relationships apply to friends groups and cooperating associations just as for other partners or stakeholders and community groups. It is important for park staff and members of a friends group or cooperating association to understand each other's authorizing environment and what they each can and cannot do.

■ 7. Volunteers

Volunteers are park ambassadors, both for visitors and in their communities. In one sense, they can be considered a segment of the public, and as such can be the focus of civic engagement and relationship-building efforts by a park or partner. But volunteers can also interact with the public on behalf of the park, in some instances providing interpretive services. In this "quasi-staff" role, they need to be informed of a park's civic engagement efforts and principles, including its efforts to increase relevancy and reach under-represented audiences, and possibly receive training in how to build relationships. Volunteers would also benefit from reviewing Module 201 of the NPS Interpretive Development Program on "Identifying and Removing Bias from Interpretive and Educational Programming."⁴⁰

Engaging volunteers in telling a difficult story

In 1999, Sotterley Plantation National Historic Landmark in Maryland revised its interpretive program to focus on the daily lives and experiences of specific individuals once enslaved there. The predominantly volunteer interpretive staff was initially reluctant to talk about slavery for fear of upsetting visitors or provoking controversy. In response, site managers established ongoing training and coaching designed to build confidence, provide strategies for defusing controversies, and gain feedback. In addition, the interpretive staff (including volunteers) meets monthly to share experiences.⁴¹





Karen Lanier

Principles and Promising Practices of Civic Engagement

This section presents principles of civic engagement and then discusses promising practices that illustrate the principles at work, relating them to many of the audiences and situations described in section III.

Principles of Effective Civic Engagement

The principles of civic engagement fall into four categories:

1. Build genuine relationships.
2. Create effective engagement processes.
3. Deliver relevant programs and materials.
4. Sustain civic engagement over time.

Principles included in the first two categories establish the foundation and framework for successful civic engagement. Those in the third category help to ensure that the materials engage the intended groups, while those in the fourth help to maintain the ongoing effectiveness of engagement efforts. Together, the principles provide a general overall guide to practicing civic engagement in a range of settings. Some of the individual principles are more applicable for certain situations or audiences and less so for others.

The principles have been drawn from a variety of sources. They reflect the experience of practitioners within and outside the NPS, including people working in partnerships, community-based collaborations, and place-based education. The principles also reflect discussions at numerous NPS meetings and workshops over the past five years, many of them attended by partners, including six NER workshops held between 2005 and 2009, and a 2007 national training workshop on civic engagement.⁴² Finally, an analysis

of civic engagement case studies contributed to development of the principles.⁴³ As the understanding of civic engagement evolves over time, these principles should be periodically evaluated and refreshed as necessary.

Although grouping the principles in the specific categories implies linearity, in reality they are interconnected and work synergistically over time to create successful civic engagement. For example, maintaining good relationships contributes to an effective engagement process and is essential to sustaining civic engagement, and relevant programs and materials contribute to productive relationships. In addition, because civic engagement is about both establishing and maintaining relationships, the application of relationship-building principles is ongoing. It is important to note that the “building relationships” principles are grouped first because this work is the foundation for effective civic engagement practice.

■ 1. Build genuine relationships.

- Communicate well and often.
- Use an open and inclusive approach.
- Be honest and keep no hidden agendas.
- Work to establish mutual trust.
- Listen well, be flexible, and be responsive to the needs and concerns of others.
- Develop collaborative leadership skills (see box next page).
- Model the respectful civil dialogue and collaboration that you are seeking.
- Demonstrate the value you place on public voice.
- Develop relationships across the spectrum of communities of place and communities of interest.
- Understand the goals, expectations, and organizational culture of the people you are engaging.
- Learn about the social, leadership, and economic development issues of neighboring communities and how they impact the park or program.
- Participate in community activities and events; become a part of things.
- Go out to where people are; don’t wait for them to come to you.
- Remember that good personal relationships underlie good organizational relationships.

Collaborative Leadership Skills

The successful collaborative leader:

- operates from an integrative mindset that sees the interconnections and interdependencies;
- thinks in terms of “we” instead of “I”;
- is visionary and able to articulate that vision with different audiences;
- thinks strategically and long term, putting short-term actions within that context;
- displays an expansive rather than limiting perspective;
- speaks from both the mind and the heart;
- is sincere and genuine in working with others;
- works inclusively, celebrates diversity, and listens to all perspectives;
- is entrepreneurial and willing to take risks;
- understands that creativity needs space and flexibility to flourish;
- values collaboration and shared effort;
- seeks a shared vision and a big “umbrella”;
- works across disciplinary and jurisdictional boundaries.⁴⁴

■ 2. Create effective engagement processes.

- Provide a substantive process that engages key stakeholders, partners, and local leaders in program planning, development, and decision making.
- Think creatively and “outside the box.”
- Create win-win situations with benefits to stakeholders as well as to the park or partner.
- Be willing to share control and power.
- Engage in dialogue to generate a sense of common purpose.
- Develop a common vision together.
- Understand and respect the strengths that other players bring and use them effectively.
- Value diversity.
- Give authentic voice to the disenfranchised and disinterested.
- Leverage ideas, individual strengths, and resources.
- Share experience and understanding.
- Give equal recognition and credit for accomplishments.
- Evaluate success and apply lessons learned.
- Know where you have room to flex within regulations and how to do it.

■ 3. Deliver relevant interpretive and educational programs and materials.

- Bring key stakeholders into program design and theme development.
- Respect and seek to incorporate different perspectives.
- Create opportunities for individuals to make personal connections to the resources and the stories associated with the resources.
- Use terminology that is accessible to the general public.
- Employ contemporary media and technology.
- Demonstrate links between history and contemporary interests and needs.
- Use your site as a springboard for studying contemporary issues.
- Be open to new directions in historical scholarship.
- Create diverse opportunities for engagement.
- Train and provide support to staff and volunteers dealing with sensitive issues and themes.

■ 4. Sustain civic engagement over time.

- Build civic engagement processes into the culture of the park and its programs.
- Anticipate barriers and develop plans for overcoming them.
- Expect and prepare for change over time in issues, organizations, and people.
- Develop a strategy for dealing with transitions to ensure continuity in relationships and ongoing programs.
- Look for ways within a park to connect or link programs and opportunities.
- Encourage relationships to grow into networks.
- Be patient; give the process time to grow and evolve.
- Build milestones into your civic engagement processes.
- Build in opportunities to evaluate progress toward your civic engagement goals, and apply lessons learned to maintain and enhance effectiveness.
- Celebrate success.

Promising Civic Engagement Practices

While the principles provide an overarching framework, civic engagement takes place through specific actions. Both the actions and the underlying thinking and philosophy comprise civic engagement practice. Using the four categories of principles to guide discussion, the sections that follow take up each category in turn and describe an organizing approach and practices that flesh out the principles.

■ 1. Build genuine relationships.

Good relationships are at the core of successful civic engagement, so it is important to invest time in getting to know the stakeholder groups, leaders, and individuals who are important to your park or program. Although building relationships can be part of a specific initiative, the process of developing ties with organizations and neighboring communities can begin at any time, as it can raise awareness of a project or program, attract volunteers, increase visitation, and enhance support overall for a park and its programs. Also, while you may be seeking a relationship with a specific stakeholder organization, that relationship will most likely depend in the beginning upon a good personal relationship with an individual associated with the group.

The steps of one effective approach to establishing good relationships are to:

- identify and become familiar with key individuals and organizations;
- establish contact with key individuals and organizations;
- cultivate lasting relationships.

Each relationship will have its own time frame, so that at any one time you may be at different stages of development with different relationships.

Advice Before embarking on the steps below, be sure to coordinate with any other efforts underway or with complementary initiatives. Also, check in with management and other divisions to avoid duplicating or complicating other efforts and to understand any difficult relationships, past or present—any of which could dictate a change in your course of action.

Step 1: Identify and become familiar with key individuals and organizations.

The first action in an engagement effort is to become familiar with the stakeholders and the “movers and shakers” who are important to your program or your park. You may even want to develop a list. Include any current partners or people you work with but then think further to the range of communities of interest and place that could potentially be involved. This is the time to think expansively, even if some of the stakeholders have been difficult to work with in the past or not interested. Some questions that might be helpful in this process are:

- If you want to broaden your constituency to include more diversity (e.g., ethnic, cultural, age, gender), who can help you make the necessary contacts?
- If you are entering a planning process in the near future, whom should you involve to ensure that you are engaging the key stakeholders and the communities that neighbor your park?
- If you are developing an educational program, whom should you consult to ensure relevance and enjoyment, scholarship and accuracy, and multiple points of view?
- If you are reconsidering the interpretation of a complex historical topic, whom do you need to engage to reflect all perspectives on the topic (even if they may be conflicting)?

As you begin to identify key individuals and stakeholders that you want to engage, recognize that current contacts or people you work with can be helpful in the process of expanding relationships. You may want to visit these people first to explain what you’re doing, because good communication is part of maintaining relationships and because they may be able to identify the “go-to” individual in a community or provide entrée into an organization with which you have no current contact.

Advice Before you proceed, check in with management and be sure you are aware of the history of park relationships.

The next action is to analyze the key organizations, stakeholders, and individuals to understand their interests and what might motivate them to become more engaged with what you are doing. **For individuals**, this can include gathering such information as the organizations they are associated with, their involvement in local activities, and their roles as community leaders. **For an organization**, the pertinent information includes mission, vision, goals, track record, and the primary thrust of its programs. Based on this information, put some thought into where there is a similarity or congruence of interests between the park and the individual or organization, and where you see mutual benefit to a potential collaboration. These points can provide an opening for a conversation.

Important considerations

To help you in developing an engagement strategy, you may find it useful to **create a matrix of strategic considerations** (see box next page) to ensure that you're thinking most creatively and strategically. This type of brainstorming may change somewhat the focus of materials and dialogue and result in greater, perhaps unanticipated benefits to your civic engagement efforts. While relationship building is an iterative process, there should be benchmarks to track if expectations are being met. As you put together a strategy, build in opportunities to evaluate your progress.

For an organization with which the park or partner has a difficult history, in addition to gathering more general information on the group, be sure you understand the reasons for the past difficulties, and think about how to bridge these and how the organization might benefit from working together. Again, check in with management before proceeding. (See page 37 for more on this topic.)

For youth, seek to understand their world so you can communicate effectively with them. Educate yourself about youth culture; go online, read what they are reading, watch what they are watching, and listen to their music. Think about potential points of intersection between their world and experiences with nature and add opportunities for place-based learning. Also consider partnering with a group that already works with youth, and think about how access to park resources could enhance this group's programs.

Step 2: Establish contact with key individuals and organizations.

Most of the principles associated with building relationships come into play as you begin meeting with individuals and organizations. **The first action** is to prepare well for these meetings. Drawing on what you learned in your research, create a "case" for collaboration—that is, why you would value a closer relationship and the benefits. This case can include:

- your reasons for desiring a collaborative relationship;
- how you see your collaborator(s) benefiting;
- how the partnership would help you (and the community, if appropriate); and
- the outcomes you envision from working together.

Most people need to understand how participation will advance their interests or they won't become engaged, so take time to think creatively about the case for collaboration.

The next action is to meet them at their offices and talk about why you want their involvement (i.e., present your case). Engage them in a two-way dialogue, and listen well. Be responsive to their needs and concerns, and be alert during the conversation for potential mutual benefits from an ongoing relationship that you might not have anticipated. In these conversations, always be honest about what you're seeking and

Matrix of Strategic Considerations for Civic Engagement

Before developing a matrix, think through your overall objectives for engagement. You may have a specific need for broader collaborative involvement, such as a new education program or project that you want to develop, a specific collaborative initiative that you want to launch, or an upcoming planning process. On the other hand, you may be looking to develop better relationships in general with stakeholder groups or individuals in your area. If your strategy revolves around a specific engagement need, the matrix may contain different considerations than a matrix developed for a general engagement strategy focused on building relationships. The following is a sample matrix:

AUDIENCE / ORGANIZATION / STAKEHOLDER

STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS	Educators	Local Officials	Environmental Groups	Local Business Community	Local Historical Society	Etc.
Objectives for Engagement						
Focus for Engagement						
Opportunities for Engagement						
Concerns / Issues / Potential Barriers						
How to Address Concerns / Issues / Barriers						
Others to Engage in Project						
Benefits to Audience / Stakeholder						
Benchmarks / Evaluation Points						
Other Considerations						

Creating a matrix such as the one above allows you to plan strategically for your meetings with key individuals and organizations, anticipate and think through any potential barriers, and create a stronger case for collaboration. It allows you to see how you can work collaboratively with the broader community in general while at the same time integrating the various sectors of the community into specific projects as you proceed.

why: transparency and honesty are important in building trust. Always model the respectful dialogue and collaboration that you seek, whether in one-on-one meetings or in a group setting. Think about whether you need to wear the NPS uniform—it may or may not always be appropriate for the situation. Developing collaborative leadership skills (see page 31) and mastering facilitation skills (see appendix C) will enhance success in building relationships.

Important considerations

For an organization with which the park or partner has a difficult past history, careful relationship building and an understanding of the history and culture of the organization are essential. In the meeting, acknowledge past differences and be transparent about your intentions; say why the situation is different now and why you desire a better relationship. Listen well, hear them out respectfully, and keep the dialogue going in a follow-up meeting or at another venue. If necessary, enlist a neutral third party to help open the door.

Step 3: Cultivate lasting relationships.

Building good relationships takes time, so commit staff and resources to the effort and consider it an investment in the future. The mutual respect and trust that exist in an effective relationship come at a later stage, after you've demonstrated that you're seeking a genuine relationship. Communicate well and often, be open and honest, and keep no hidden agendas. Seek mutual benefits in your collaboration, and respect and trust will follow. Provide people with substantive opportunities to participate; show that you value their involvement and demonstrate how you have used their suggestions or input. Become a part of the community, and participate in community events and organizational activities—these are all part of modeling the collaboration that you seek. In certain settings it may make sense to formalize a partnering relationship, such as with a programmatic collaborator, through the appropriate signed agreement.

Important considerations

To engage **stakeholders with a difficult past history**, careful relationship building is essential. Seek opportunities to interact more informally outside of official settings. This allows you to build a personal relationship with the primary contact and to step away from the official positions that may have caused friction in the past. Also, begin building bridges before you really need the involvement of this stakeholder. If necessary, use a trusted third party or an objective facilitator to ensure the transparency of your efforts, especially in the early stages of building this relationship.

To engage youth, continually seek and establish relevance for your programs.

Show respect for young people's individuality, and welcome the perspectives they have to offer. Ask questions and really listen to their answers. Learn about the other demands on their time and tailor your schedule to their availability. Be genuine in your relationships with youth—model the trust and respect that you seek, as these are

essential to successful engagement. Build in opportunities for place-based learning and for structured and unstructured experiences to connect with the natural world.

■ 2. Create effective engagement processes.

How you interact with people, and the tone you set in your interactions, are critical to effective engagement. It is important to think through and design the dialogue process carefully, especially in instances where there are differing perspectives, a history of difficult relationships, or the potential for controversy or a demanding stakeholder audience. Even in situations characterized by strong, healthy relationships, it is still important to think through the dialogue process and anticipate where difficult situations may arise.

Effective civic engagement often involves providing opportunities for the general public or stakeholder groups to contribute in a way that is meaningful to them as well as to the park or partner. In this regard, don't overlook the opportunity to take advantage of social media to engage the public—an opportunity to think creatively and outside the box. Although this is not the traditional means of interacting with the public around issues of parks and stewardship, there is a growing segment of the population, especially youth, that engages in social media applications when seeking information.

As mentioned earlier, the relationship-building principles apply as well in designing and implementing civic engagement processes. Also, the basic engagement process and the process of program design (see section 3, beginning on page 42) are closely connected.

Step 1: Design the process.

It is essential to create a process that fosters a sense of investment and ownership on the part of the individuals and organizations that will be engaged, as this can affect their continuing future involvement. To bring about investment and ownership:

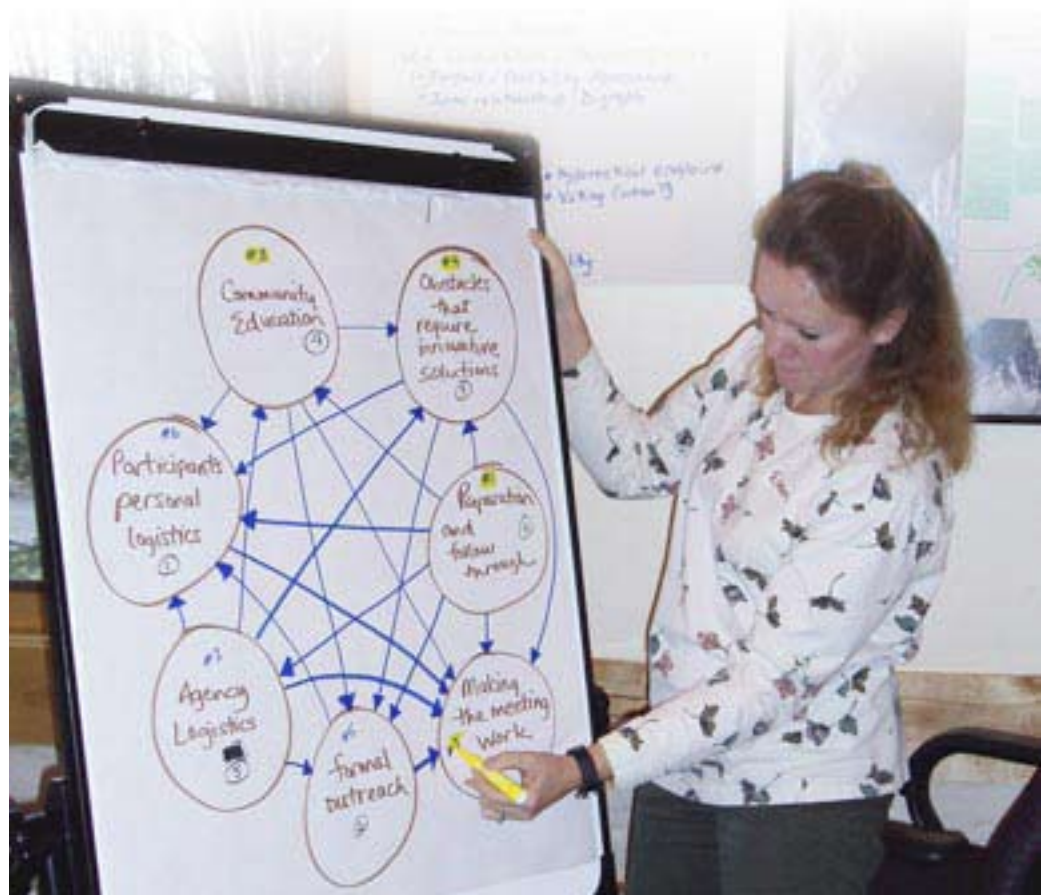
- engage stakeholders early in program design (or in GMP or other planning) and invite them to help shape the program;
- design the process so that it benefits all key stakeholders, not just the park or partner;
- demonstrate a willingness to share control and decision making (one of the most difficult principles to put into practice), and create guidelines together for how this will be carried out; and
- employ a dialogue process that helps to create a common purpose and vision.

In addition, consider the key stages of your civic engagement process and build in opportunities to evaluate your progress. Having periodic built-in checks will allow you to make any necessary mid-course adjustments as the collaboration proceeds.

Important considerations

Sharing control and decision making can be challenging. Sharing control is linked to the sense that partners share responsibility for identifying opportunities, making decisions, and resolving problems. The NPS can be a catalyst and empower others by sharing responsibility and decision making around program development and delivery. Partners may vary in their respective capacities or the resources they bring to the collaborative effort, but all partners should participate in resolving issues and making decisions related to the initiative and its mission. This is crucial to helping level the playing field, important whenever a federal agency is at the table with community groups. In meeting with such groups, consider whether the NPS uniform is necessary or advantageous. A further point is that with shared responsibility and decision making comes shared risk and accountability; shared credit for successes is also important. Putting these considerations in place often requires putting aside individual and organizational egos.

To ensure a successful collaborative process, **include all those who have a stake in the outcome**, regardless of their perspectives or their prior actions or positions. A well-designed dialogue process and a skilled facilitator will enable those involved (the NPS, partners, and other stakeholders) to discover common concerns and values and agree on a framework for moving forward. (See appendix C for more on facilitation skills.) If the engagement process is intended to resolve thorny issues or touches on a difficult past situation, then it may take more time to reach a point of common purpose, but it is definitely possible.



In designing a process **to engage youth**, take a look at Hart's ladder of participation.⁴⁵ Consider having a youth panel or group that can act as a sounding board, provide advice, and help you stay grounded (see the I-YEL example on page 22). Include youth in project selection, design, and planning, and provide an array of opportunities to allow continuing participation as they learn and build leadership and analytical skills. Be flexible and provide opportunities and/or a choice of projects that offer challenges and involve risk-taking. Use the technology they are using. Pay attention to their social needs and allow ample opportunity for interaction. Above all, trust youth—they are capable, responsible, and intelligent.

Using Social Media as a Tool for Engagement

With the explosion of digital technology that facilitates interaction and sharing of information online, a new set of civic engagement tools is beginning to emerge that can supplement the more traditional forms of interpretation and education. Whatever the name applied—social media, social networking, Web 2.0—these applications offer two-way communication that can greatly increase the number of participants in a dialogue. Using such tools provides an opportunity, with issues of national scope, to engage a national audience. As these tools increasingly become part of our lives, they will come to play an integral role in how we interact with others in many settings.

As an example, blogs can provide a forum and generate discussions among a worldwide audience at little cost beyond time. In one instance, participants in a small planning meeting set up a microblogging site devoted to the topic at hand. The blogged comments were displayed in real time on a large screen at the front of the room. A second, silent conversation began, and soon spread beyond the boundaries of the room to others online who were interested in the same topic. Before the meeting ended, comments from a national audience began to appear on the screen and attendees discussed and incorporated a number of the comments, creating in the end a far richer set of findings.

These tools are available now. Using social media together with the more traditional methods of interpretation and education can enhance civic engagement and provide a means to engage large numbers of people and new audiences.

Step 2: Implement the process.

Once implementation of a civic engagement process begins, other principles come into play. Thinking “outside the box” also applies to ongoing implementation. For example, the concept of “leveraging” is most commonly applied in a financial sense, but it can relate to aspects of civic engagement as well, such as leveraging the personal connections of stakeholders, organizational strengths and resources, and even ideas. Think creatively about how to leverage every aspect of the network of people and groups being engaged for the benefit of the overall collaboration.

In addition, create a setting in which diversity is valued; look for opportunities to give voice to different perspectives, and allow for sharing experience and understanding. As with the early stages of relationship building, it is important to model the collaboration, the values, and the tone of the dialogue that you seek. Offering staff training in cultural competencies could be very helpful for employees who interact with diverse populations.

Consider developing principles to guide the dialogue during meetings (see box on next page for one example). For NPS staff, seek flexibility whenever possible in regulations, but be open and up front in sharing constraints that may stem from regulations. In such situations, partners or other stakeholders may be able to accomplish certain things that parks cannot. As you move forward with the civic engagement initiative, give equal recognition and credit for successes and celebrate them. Take time to reflect on your progress (both what’s going well and any impediments) in order to better understand the civic engagement process and to adjust what you’re doing, if appropriate. Create opportunities for the group to evaluate and modify the process as a whole as well.

Important considerations

Staff **training in facilitation and mediation skills** can contribute greatly to successful engagement. (See appendix C for pointers on facilitation.) A good staff facilitation team can often handle much of the dialogue process in situations where participants know each other well and are on good terms. However, in certain other situations, such as when the dialogue will be focused on challenging issues or when difficulties are anticipated with certain stakeholders, outside facilitation may be necessary for success. A skilled, outside facilitator is often perceived as objective and having no stake in the situation, which tends to provide a more level playing field, and can usually find areas of agreement among stakeholder groups, even in polarized situations. Training in mediation can also help to surface common values in a highly polarized environment.

Principles to Guide Dialogue in the African Burial Ground Meetings

In the formal public meetings held by the NPS to decide how to memorialize and manage the African burial ground discovered in New York City (see page 14), guiding principles were acknowledged at the beginning of each session:

- Participate fully.
- Listen to learn and understand different perspectives.
- Question to clarify and test assumptions.
- Disagree without being disagreeable.
- Keep the discussion focused.
- Strive for consensus and equal voice.
- Honor the past, be grounded in the present, and think toward the future.

■ 3. Deliver relevant interpretive and educational programs and materials.

Programs and materials are tools for civic engagement, whether aimed at the general public or specific audiences or intended for interpretive, educational, planning, or outreach purposes. Please note that the following discussion is not about how to develop interpretive or educational programs, but about considerations for ensuring effective civic engagement as part of program development and delivery.⁴⁶

Step 1: Develop the programs and materials.

Programs and materials need to be relevant and appropriate and of interest to the audience, and they should facilitate a personal connection to the natural and cultural resources of a park or historic site. Investigate models of place-based education; although they are effective with all ages, they are especially valuable in engaging youth. In developing programs and materials for the general public, use accessible terminology, especially when conveying scientific concepts. Create a range of opportunities for engagement to address different audiences and learning styles, including interactive or hands-on activities. Although people of all ages enjoy a hands-on approach, it is especially useful for engaging youth. Telling stories (and encouraging others to tell stories) is very effective with both young people and adults.

If the content is historical, consider whether there are differing perspectives that should be incorporated. Ensure authenticity of voice and content. Track new directions in historical scholarship and consider alternative ways to reach under-represented audiences. To boost relevancy from a different standpoint, consider how the park's

history or mission relates to contemporary interests and conservation needs, or whether the park can provide a model for sustainable practices. Then link the program content or interpretive materials to these interests or needs, and build in opportunities for two-way dialogue that also encourages people to consider how this applies to their own communities. Don't shy away from addressing difficult topics; instead, consider different ways to facilitate a respectful discussion of the issues.

Enlist advisors (e.g., partners, community members, scholars) to assist in program design or to test the content of materials for relevancy to under-represented audiences or to contemporary concerns. Focus groups can be helpful when designing programs, but NPS staff should check first on agency policy regarding their use.

Important considerations

In developing youth engagement programs, consider a sequence of programs that offers continuing, more focused opportunities for youth participation, fosters increasing levels of commitment, and provides choices related to challenge and risk-taking. Hart's ladder of participation (first mentioned on page 22) shows various degrees of youth participation that in part reflect age and experience. Having youth advisors helps to provide a sense of ownership and cultivate skills and self-confidence, but once you ask them to play this role, keep them in the loop, provide meaningful leadership roles, and offer opportunities for reflection and modification. There are many possible approaches to program design for engaging youth. You could:

- develop programs with different seasonal elements;
- incorporate opportunities for place-based learning;
- create programs that students can grow with and tell their friends (and families) about;
- make the programs relevant to their lives and their culture;
- link a local sense of place with broadening horizons;
- tailor experiences to students' individual learning styles;
- provide them opportunities to explore their individual strengths and aptitudes, including their technological skills;
- involve male and female mentors in the program;
- bring community members into the project to work as equal partners with students;
- offer ample opportunities for social interaction.

You might also consider formats to expand the impact or reach of a youth program:

- Build in opportunities for service learning in local communities that address a real community need. This offers youth a sense of belonging to something of value and helps to demonstrate that they can indeed make a difference.
- Partner with youth-serving organizations through a train-the-trainer model.

Step 2: Deliver the programs and materials.

Today's advanced communication technologies offer increasingly diverse opportunities for reaching audiences than in the past. (See box on using social media on page 40.) So think creatively about the many options available for groups and individuals to learn about your park or program, whether in person or virtually. For example, interpretive materials can be podcast, "vodcast" (i.e., with pictures), or used with cell phones. Ask older youth participating in optional non-classroom programs to talk with and recruit their friends. In addition, any staff members or volunteers involved in delivering an interpretive program that includes difficult or potentially controversial material should receive training and support. (See the discussion on Sotterley Plantation on page 28 for one such example.)

Important considerations

In working with youth, it is important on a personal level that you:

- listen to them, clearly demonstrate respect, and avoid lecturing or "parenting";
- meet youth where they are—physically, mentally, emotionally, and experientially;
- take nothing for granted, and avoid the assumption that they already care about NPS resources or the environment; help them build their care;
- model a process that allows each individual to participate;
- understand that older youth have greater social needs;
- continually seek to learn from the students you work with;
- understand how your programs can transform participants' lives and make use of this information in engaging other youth.

Logistically, in working with youth it can be helpful to:

- always have food on hand;
- include games, ice-breakers, and fun in regular meetings;
- test incentives such as a free iPod or stipends (if appropriate) to attract participation;
- offer side enrichment opportunities, such as a hiking trip or a behind-the-scenes visit to another park;
- consider supervision and safety issues;
- provide adequate program staff and training, and be prepared to coach them.

■ 4. Sustain civic engagement over time.

With engaging the public increasingly seen as key to fostering understanding of conservation and building a diverse base of support, it is important that civic engagement be ongoing, not something that is done intermittently or tied to a specific program or planning process. The practices that follow help to knit together the various activities and programs of an organization, a park, or a collaboration to sustain civic engagement over time.

Step 1: Develop an integrated strategy.

An important reason for viewing civic engagement in an integrated way is to embed it into the culture of an organization (or a park) and its programs. Look for ways to build engagement into all programs and to connect efforts among different programs. Provide opportunities for all staff to learn about civic engagement techniques, and offer skill training where needed. In this way, everyone embraces it as part of doing their jobs.

Developing an integrated strategy and linking efforts and activities can allow synergy to develop between different programs or civic engagement initiatives, whether within an organization or a park, or among a broader set of partners. With a collaborative effort, this integrated approach can enhance overall capacity because of the different strengths that partners bring to the effort. If the group also develops a common vision for the effort, what starts out as a collection of relationships among individuals and stakeholder organizations can over time become a robust network working to advance specific shared objectives.

Moving beyond informal relationships to a collaborative network can lead to greater cohesion within the community, broader engagement, and increased support for what the park and its partners hope to achieve. Although networks themselves require additional management considerations (see box next page), they can increase the sense of common purpose, further strengthen relationships, build capacity, and over time accomplish a great deal more than originally envisioned. The networks that have developed over time in some national heritage areas provide good examples of what can be accomplished in this regard.⁴⁷

Step 2: Provide continuity and support over time

It is important to acknowledge up front that civic engagement is a long-term, ongoing strategy requiring time and patience as the process grows and evolves. Provide periodic training to staff and volunteers and plan time to reflect on lessons learned. Build civic engagement milestones into programs and planning processes to assist with evaluation efforts. Celebrate with stakeholders and partners when you achieve a milestone. At the same time, recognize that change is inevitable on all sides. Issues and concerns shift, organizations evolve, ad hoc initiatives end, and people move away or take on new

Build and Manage Networks

Using an intentional networked approach involves, in part, engaging diverse partners and stakeholders in ways that build a sense of common purpose and ownership in the ongoing collaborative work. In the most effective networks, more and more partners align their efforts directly with the initiative's goals and mission over time. The approach to leadership in networks is distinct from many other management settings. Some of the considerations include:

- manage through influence rather than control (i.e., where decision making and risk taking are shared across multiple partners amid a climate of mutual trust, respect, and transparency);
- assign responsibility for the key role of “network facilitator”;
- engage partners through initiatives that catalyze further partner action and involvement;
- embrace an integrated, cross-cutting approach whereby projects address multiple goals (which expands your potential stakeholder audience);
- adopt a collaborative leadership style (see box on page 31);
- apply lessons learned to ongoing management in order to improve the network.

Well-functioning networks rely on sound relationships, good communication, trust and respect, transparency in network operations, and ultimately shared responsibility and accountability.⁴⁸

commitments. Develop a plan for dealing with such change to ensure continuity in relationships and to share the knowledge and learning that develops over time. This should include discussing civic engagement as part of new staff (or new partner) orientation.

Step 3: Anticipate barriers

Similar to planning for the continuity of civic engagement efforts, anticipate potential barriers to successful engagement and create a plan for overcoming them. For example, stakeholders in the private sector often do not understand the bureaucratic constraints that government agencies deal with. Learning about each partner's authorizing environment (and sharing yours) helps to avoid misunderstandings later on. Often, collaborating organizations—especially nonprofits—are able to take the lead in certain situations or act more quickly than a governmental partner can. For NPS staff, seek flexibility in agency regulations, but also share with your partners the constraints that you have and discuss how they may affect your collective efforts.



Bo Hoppin

Closing Thoughts

As the NPS and its partners approach the second century for national parks, there is an opportunity—and a challenge—to engage people across the nation in the conservation of our natural and cultural resources. The NPS and its partners have the opportunity to help Americans of all ages recognize the importance of these resources by reinvigorating their connections with the land and landscapes that surround them. Indeed, this latter task is critical if we as a nation are to protect the richness and integrity of our heritage and achieve a deeper, more widespread understanding of the historical complexity and values of our democracy. The key to these important challenges lies with effective civic engagement.

It is essential that today's practitioners of conservation and historic preservation become skilled practitioners of civic engagement as well. As more agencies and organizations embrace civic engagement and build supportive, respectful relationships, the commitment to protect the resources and the democratic values of our nation will continue to grow. By engaging the American public, we can over time pass along to future generations the fullness of our collective heritage, a sense of a national community, and a legacy of exemplary stewardship.

Appendix A

Civic Engagement Resources and Publications

This appendix lists resources on line or on DVD that have been compiled or produced by the NPS, and a reading list of books, publications, and other documents.

■ Websites, Other Web Resources, and DVDs

Benefits of Place-based Education

<http://www.nps.gov/mabi/forteachers/upload/Benefits%20of%20PBE.pdf>

This report from the Place-based Education Evaluation Collaborative provides an overview of an evaluation of six place-based education programs representing nearly 100 schools in 12 states. The findings show that place-based education helps students learn to take care of the world by understanding where they live and taking action in their own backyards and communities.

Civic Engagement Bibliography

<http://www.nps.gov/archive/civic/resources/bibliography.pdf>

Developed by the NPS Northeast Region for the civic engagement website, this 27-page bibliography is an extensive listing of books, articles, and other publications current through 2002. Items are arranged by the following categories: Background/Context for Civic Engagement, Confronting Contested Pasts, Engaging Communities, Interpreting Violence and Tragedy, Museums/Sites and Social Service Roles, Museums' Civic Function, and Nuts and Bolts.

Civic Engagement Community Toolbox

<http://www.nps.gov/nero/rtcacoolbox/>

Developed by the NPS Northeast Region Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA), the toolbox focuses on the nuts and bolts of improving communication and increasing community involvement in projects, and includes advice on cultivating partnerships and working with stakeholder groups.

"Civic Engagement—Woodstock's Civil War: A Speakchorus."

This 52-minute DVD chronicles the development of the "speakchorus" production described on page 11 and explores how a national park can work with the local community to create new venues for exploring heritage and creating public dialogue. The DVD is available by emailing stewardship@nps.gov.

Director's Order #75A on Civic Engagement and Public Involvement

<http://www.nps.gov/policy/dorders/75a.pdf>

Do We Have All the Pieces? Strengthening the NPS through Civic Engagement

This national TEL (Technology Enhanced Learning) training course, presented in 2007 by the NPS Office of Equal Employment Opportunity and the NPS Supervision, Leadership, and Management Training Program, is available on DVD by contacting stewardship@nps.gov.

Evaluation Research to Support National Park Service 21st Century Relevancy Initiatives

For a PowerPoint presentation and accompanying narrative of this ongoing doctoral research being sponsored by the NPS Conservation Study Institute, NER Interpretation and Education Program, and the University of Vermont, see the quick links on the Institute's website at <http://nps.gov/csi>.

Exploring the Real Thing

<http://www.nps.gov/nero/teachers/>

This website presents a guide to national park education programs in the Northeast Region, searchable either by park or by curriculum-based programs on a state-by-state basis.

Forest for Every Classroom

<http://www.nps.gov/mabi/forteachers/forest-for-every-classroom.htm>

This website provides information on this collaborative place-based education program, including links to curricula and program evaluation reports.

National Park Service Civic Engagement

<http://www.nps.gov/civic>

This website is in the process of being updated, but nevertheless offers good general background on the evolution of civic engagement within the NPS. Newsletters, case studies, and other resources from the Northeast Region's Civic Engagement Initiative are also available.

National Park Service Conservation Study Institute

<http://www.nps.gov/csi>

This website contains information on the Institute's programs on collaborative conservation, including on community engagement, 21st-century relevancy, and leadership; also available are links to Institute publications and a PowerPoint presentation and accompanying narrative on evaluation research of NPS relevancy initiatives.

National Park Service Partnerships

<http://www.nps.gov/partnerships/>

This website contains information on partnerships, including how-to's, publications and other resources, and a database of case studies.

NPS Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance

<http://www.nps.gov/rtca/>

This website of the RTCA program contains information on the collaborative assistance provided to community partners across the country to help conserve rivers, preserve open space, and develop trails and greenways.

Parks as Classrooms

<http://www.nps.gov/learn/pac.htm>

This website contains materials created through partnerships between NPS rangers, interpreters, and education specialists and educators and other partners. These materials are appropriate for both on- and off-site learning.

Promise of Place

<http://promiseofplace.org>

This website provides information and resources related to place-based education, including curriculum and planning tools, research and evaluation, and stories of place-based education in action. The website is a project of the Center for Place-based Learning and Community Engagement, a collaborative initiative of Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park, the NPS Conservation Study Institute, and Shelburne Farms.

Teaching with Historic Places

www.nps.gov/history/nr/twhp/

This website contains products and activities to help teachers bring historic places into the classroom, using properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

■ Books, Reports, and other Publications

American Association of Museums. *Mastering Civic Engagement: A Challenge to Museums*. Washington, DC: American Association of Museums, 2002.

American Association of Museums. *A Museums and Community Toolkit*. Washington, DC: American Association of Museums, 2002.

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Appendix B

Timeline of Civic Engagement Policy and Initiatives within the National Park Service

■ 2001

Publication of *Rethinking the National Parks for the 21st Century*

The National Park System Advisory Board recommends better serving all Americans by encouraging the study of America's history, practicing sustainability, encouraging collaboration nationwide, and improving institutional capacity through enhanced workforce diversity and training.⁴⁹

■ 2001–2002

National Workshops: The NPS and Civic Engagement

The first workshop, initiated by NER, convenes park managers, resource specialists, public historians, scholars, and museum professionals in New York City to discuss how national parks can become centers for civic engagement.⁵⁰ A second workshop in Atlanta brings this dialogue to the Southeast Region.

■ 2002–2006

Northeast Region Civic Engagement Initiative

The NER begins a series of meetings that include 12 “Preserving Memory” seminars, which explore challenges that arise in interpreting America's heritage and are attended by superintendents, program managers, and park partners. A website, a small grants program, case studies, newsletters, and a civic engagement bibliography are all products of this initiative.

■ 2003 and 2007

Director's Order #75A on Civic Engagement

D.O. #75A, signed in 2003 and renewed in 2007, articulates the NPS commitment to having all units and offices embrace civic engagement as “the essential foundation and framework for creating plans and developing programs.”

■ 2005

NER Conference: Keeping National Parks Relevant in the 21st Century

This meeting opens a dialogue on issues related to diversity and the relevance of national parks and programs in the Northeast Region. Two task forces are created: one to engage new audiences and communities, and the other to promote diversity in the workforce.⁵¹

■ 2005–2007

NER Workshop Series on Civic Engagement

As part of the NER civic engagement initiative, the NER Office of Interpretation and Education, the Conservation Study Institute, and partners sponsor four day-long workshops across the region for NPS interpretation and education staff and partners. Two of the workshops focus on principles and practices, and two emphasize facilitation skills.

■ 2006

National Meeting: Scholars Forum

The National Park System Advisory Board's Education Committee convenes historians, sociologists, and NPS leaders to discuss civic engagement, the place of national parks in the nation's educational system, and how NPS commitment to education can strengthen civic awareness and stewardship in America.⁵²

Publication of *Interpretation and Education Program Business Plan: Helping People Enjoy, Care About, and Care for National Parks*

This plan reviews past and current operations of the Interpretation and Education Program and identifies agency-wide strategies to strengthen interpretation and education, and reaffirms the importance of civic engagement as a strategy for remaining relevant in the future.

Publication of *Interpretation and Education Renaissance Action Plan*

This NPS-wide plan states that changing demographics and societal trends present challenges to future stewardship of resources and intangible values in national parks. It identifies civic engagement as one of five action areas.

Interpretation and Education Evaluation Strategy and Summit

The NPS National Education Council and partners develop a strategy to ensure that education at all NPS levels is relevant, engaging, and effective. The summit convenes NPS employees, stakeholders, and evaluation experts to discuss creation of a culture of evaluation within the NPS.⁵³

NER Transitional-Management Assessment Program (T-MAP) Report on Civic Engagement

Based on more than 30 interviews, a team of superintendents and senior program managers recommends options to sustain civic engagement efforts at the park and program level in the NER.

■ 2007

National TEL Training Workshop: “Do We Have All the Pieces? Strengthening the NPS through Civic Engagement”

This interactive workshop is the first agency-wide training on civic engagement. It is presented by the NPS Office of Equal Employment Opportunity as its annual diversity training program and by the NPS Supervision, Leadership, and Management Training Program.⁵⁴

Centennial Initiative

This national initiative celebrates NPS accomplishments during the agency’s first 100 years. It also provides a means for envisioning a second century of working “in partnership to preserve parks, while reconnecting adults and children to the outdoors, history, and culture.”⁵⁵

■ 2008–2009

Civic Engagement Workshops: Principles and Promising Practices of Youth Engagement

Two workshops—held in April 2008 and March 2009 and organized by the NER Office of Interpretation and Education, the Conservation Study Institute, and partners—address the principles and practices of civic engagement for the youth audience. They also provide tools and strategies to help parks increase their success with youth engagement activities.

Appendix C

Techniques for Effective Facilitation

Ensuring creative dialogue and successful group engagement during a meeting often hinges on providing a safe, secure, and nonjudgmental environment. It is the facilitator's role to create this setting. Some suggestions for achieving effective facilitation follow.⁵⁶

■ 1. Your Presence as a Facilitator

- Act in a respectful manner.
- Listen actively and well, with genuine interest and an openness to others' ideas.
- Be warm, positive, and enthusiastic.
- Be aware that your facial expressions and body posture tell a story, so keep an open, positive expression and pose and make eye contact with participants.
- Be relaxed and wear comfortable clothing and shoes.

■ 2. Your Role as a Facilitator

- Work as a team with your scribe and support each other's efforts.
- Help participants feel comfortable, welcome, and included.
- Involve everyone; balance the group's participation.
- Draw people's thoughts out, but try not to single anyone out or embarrass anyone.
- Encourage the sharing of ideas among group members.
- Seek diversity; welcome different opinions.
- Recognize the validity of all points of view (this is especially difficult, but essential, when you privately disagree with the speaker).
 - act nonjudgmental and treat participants' ideas without bias (positive or negative)
 - listen actively; show interest in everyone's statements and opinions
 - do not criticize or praise any particular idea
- Manage the process; focus and refocus the conversation on the tasks at hand.
- Stay on schedule and ensure that high-priority tasks are met.

■ 3. Your Tasks as a Facilitator

a. Focus on the content

- Begin by being sure that everyone is clear about the agenda and the task(s) you are setting out to do as a group.
- Gently but continually focus and refocus the discussion to keep people on the subject.
- Ensure that the scribe records people's thoughts as you heard them, capturing the detail of each person's comments; if in doubt, check with the speaker to see if the scribe's recording is accurate.
- Ensure that the scribe writes down the key points of each person's contribution; this reinforces an individual's sense of being heard and valued, and increases the chance that her ideas will be used.

b. Guide the process

- Clearly understand the meeting agenda and expectations for the process so that these goals can be met.
- Know the time allotted to the meeting along with the agenda, and honor them both.
- Be sure participants understand the process you will use; this will enable them to work with you and not against you.
- Make sure people understand and agree with the "ground rules" for discussion; if necessary, provide a gentle reminder to abide by them.
- Only speak as much as is absolutely necessary; stick to guiding the process so that the focus will be on the content of the discussion, not on you.
- Maintain subtle control of the group; let conversations flow, but keep them within boundaries so that the group stays on topic.
- Stay aware of the energy level of the group; watch for, and respond appropriately to, such nonverbal clues as facial expression, posture, involvement, and tone of voice.
- During discussions, help participants come to agreement when possible, and ensure that all conclusions truly reflect group consensus, not simply majority opinion.
- Relax and enjoy the people and the process.

■ 4. Suggestions for Effective Facilitation

a. Hints on presenting material

- Remain neutral about the material; never be an advocate for a project or point of view.
- Help the group to understand (this may be their first opportunity to listen to and understand the concepts).
- Be prepared (participants will respond positively if you clearly understand the material and can deal with it with skill and confidence).
- Don't play "the expert"; let the group know that your job as facilitator is to moderate and guide the discussion, not to lead them to any pre-established conclusions.

b. Hints on encouraging involvement

- Bring enthusiasm with you; prepare for facilitation by doing activities beforehand that energize you, such as exercising, enjoying a cup of coffee, or singing your favorite song.
- Make sure you are involved (if you are enthusiastic and engaged in the process, participants will likely be as well).
- Remain neutral about the material but positive about the process; exude confidence and assure people that their hard work will pay off.
- Depersonalize the issues; keep the focus on the exchange of ideas and not on the people (once ideas are on the flip chart, they belong to the full group).
- Welcome variety, diversity, and disagreement (some of the best outcomes emerge when two seemingly opposite concepts come together in a new idea).
- Let ideas grow, and assist the process of refining and developing them; encourage participants to test and build off each other's ideas (a simple idea can become vibrant and creative with discussion and input from the full group).
- Be positive, appreciative, and accepting; thank people for sharing their thoughts and feelings with the group, as this encourages involvement more than anything else.

Endnotes

- 1 See appendix B for a timeline of civic engagement activities between 2001 and 2009.
- 2 For more on Robert Putnam and his work, see the website, “The Saguaro Seminar: Civic Engagement in America,” at www.hks.harvard.edu/saguaro/index.htm.
- 3 See <http://www.apa.org/ed/slce/civicengagement.html>.
- 4 *Standards of Excellence in Civic Engagement: How Public Agencies Can Learn from the Community, Use What They Learn, and Demonstrate that Public Knowledge Matters*, pages 6–7, available at <http://archive.theharwoodinstitute.org/ht/a/GetDocumentAction/i/6131>.
- 5 Director’s Order #75A, page 1; available at <http://www.nps.gov/policy/dorders/75a.pdf>.
- 6 *Standards of Excellence in Civic Engagement*, page 12.
- 7 See page 11 for description of this civic engagement project carried out by Boston National Historical Park and Discover Roxbury.
- 8 See Louv citations in the publications list in appendix A.
- 9 From McCullough’s delivery of the 32nd annual Jefferson Lecture in the Humanities in May 2003 at the Ronald Reagan International Trade Center, available at <http://www.neh.gov/whoware/mccullough/lecture.html>.
- 10 The report, *Keeping National Parks Relevant in the 21st Century*, based on a conference of the same name, is available at http://www.nps.gov/csi/pub_resources/pub2.htm.
- 11 Research in progress by Rebecca Stanfield McCown (Conservation Study Institute/University of Vermont doctoral fellow). A PowerPoint presentation of the preliminary research findings and an accompanying narrative are available at <http://www.nps.gov/csi>; this research is ongoing and updates will be posted as they become available.
- 12 See www.nps.gov/idp/interp/.
- 13 For more, see <http://www.nps.gov/mabi/planyourvisit/upload/causesandconsequences.pdf>.
- 14 For more information, see <http://www.nps.gov/bost/forteachers/roxbury.htm>.
- 15 For more, see <http://www.nps.gov/archive/civic/casestudies/washita.pdf>.
- 16 For more, see <http://www.ushistory.org/presidentshouse/index.htm>; see also <http://www.nps.gov/index/presidents-house-forum.htm>.
- 17 See <http://www.africanburialground.gov/report/chapter3.pdf> for a summary of the public outreach activities leading to draft management recommendations; see also the DVD of the 2007 national TEL (Technology Enhanced Learning) training workshop, “Do We Have All the Pieces? Strengthening the NPS through Civic Engagement,” available by contacting stewardship@nps.gov.
- 18 For more on Partners in the Park, see <http://www.nps.gov/archive/civic/casestudies/nebepartners10-18.pdf>; the education plan is available at http://www.nps.gov/nebe/forteachers/upload/nebe_ed_plan.pdf.
- 19 For more, see *Shared Legacies in Cane River National Heritage Area: Linking People, Traditions, and Landscapes*, page 26, available at http://www.nps.gov/csi/pub_resources/pub2.htm.
- 20 For more about the Site Stewardship Program and other volunteer programs, go to <http://www.parksconservancy.org/our-work/>.
- 21 For more on the research learning centers, see www.nature.nps.gov/learningcenters/.
- 22 For more, see http://www.nps.gov/grsm/naturescience/upload/ahsj%20newsletter%202_reduced.pdf; see also <http://www.nps.gov/grsm/naturescience/pk-homepage.htm>.
- 23 See *Learning To Be Better Neighbors: Case Studies in Civic Engagement between National Parks and Neighboring Communities*, page 22, available at http://www.nps.gov/csi/pub_resources/pub2.htm.
- 24 See *Shared Legacies in Cane River National Heritage Area*, page 29.
- 25 See http://www.cvcountryside.org/Website/countryside_initiative/pdf_files/2008%20RFP/CVCC%202008%20RFP.pdf; see also <http://www.nps.gov/cuva/parknews/packard-doubler.htm>.
- 26 Other partners include Green Mountain National Forest, Shelburne Farms, and the Northeast Office of the National Wildlife Federation.
- 27 See <http://www.nps.gov/mabi/forteachers/forest-for-every-classroom.htm>.
- 28 See <http://www.nps.gov/mabi/forteachers/upload/Benefits%20of%20PBE.pdf>.

- 29 See <http://www.nps.gov/learn/trt/>.
- 30 See http://promiseofplace.org/documents/benefits_of_pbe-peec_2007_web.pdf.
- 31 For more information on Lowell's youth programs, see <http://www.nps.gov/lowe/parknews/spindle-city-corps-year-round-program-underway.htm>.
- 32 See <http://www.groundworkusa.net/>; see also <http://www.nps.gov/nrcr/programs/rtca/>.
- 33 See Hart's ladder of participation at <http://www.freechild.org/ladder.htm>; see also <http://www.hort.cornell.edu/gbl/greenvoices/ladder.html>.
- 34 See <http://www.parksconservancy.org/our-work/crissy/programs/inspiring-young-emerging.html>; see also <http://www.crissycorkboard.info/iyel/aboutus.htm>.
- 35 See *Interpretation and Education Renaissance Action Plan*, page 6, available at <http://www.nps.gov/interp/renaissance/low-resolutionieactionplan.pdf>.
- 36 These ideas are part of the Centennial Initiative, the agency-wide effort to identify goals and actions for the NPS in its second 100 years; for more, see <http://www.nps.gov/2016/>.
- 37 See *Learning To Be Better Neighbors*, page II.
- 38 For more, see the DVD of the NPS TEL training workshop, "Do We Have All the Pieces?" available by contacting stewardship@nps.gov.
- 39 See Director's Order #20 for guidelines on agreements at <http://www.nps.gov/policy/dorders/dorder20.html>.
- 40 Module 201 is available at www.nps.gov/idp/interp/201/module.htm.
- 41 For more, see http://www.nps.gov/archive/civic/casestudies/sotterley_final_inserts.pdf.
- 42 For more on these and other NPS civic engagement activities, see the timeline in appendix B.
- 43 The case studies analyzed included those on the NPS civic engagement website at <http://www.nps.gov/archive/civic/casestudies/index.html> and those included in *Learning To Be Better Neighbors: Case Studies in Civic Engagement between National Parks and Neighboring Communities*, available at http://www.nps.gov/csi/pub_resources/pub2.htm; see also http://www.nps.gov/partnerships/case_studies.htm.
- 44 Adapted from *Collaboration and Conservation: Lessons Learned from National Park Service Partnership Areas in the Western United States*, available at <http://www.nps.gov/csi/pdf/westerncollaboration.pdf>.
- 45 See note 33.
- 46 For more on developing effective interpretive or educational programs, see www.nps.gov/idp/interp/.
- 47 Reports that discuss engagement efforts and networks in the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor, and Cane River National Heritage Area are available at http://www.nps.gov/csi/pub_resources/pub2.htm.
- 48 Adapted from *Shared Legacies in Cane River National Heritage Area*, page 59.
- 49 See <http://www.nps.gov/policy/report.htm>.
- 50 The report of the New York City workshop is available at <http://www.nps.gov/archive/civic/about/civic.pdf>.
- 51 The report, *Keeping Parks Parks Relevant in the 21st Century*, is available in pdf format at http://www.nps.gov/csi/pub_resources/pub2.htm.
- 52 The report, *Scholars Forum: The National Park Service and Civic Reflection*, is available in pdf format at http://www.nps.gov/csi/pub_resources/pub2.htm.
- 53 The *Service-wide Interpretation and Education Evaluation Strategy* and the summit report, *Learning Together: Proceedings, Evaluation, and Applying Lessons Learned*, are available in pdf format at <http://www.nps.gov/interp/evaluation>.
- 54 A DVD of the TEL broadcast is available by contacting stewardship@nps.gov.
- 55 See <http://nps.gov/2016/>.
- 56 The suggestions in this appendix have been adapted from materials presented at a 2007 "Community Dialogue Facilitation Skills Workshop" sponsored by the Conservation Study Institute and the Northeast Region Office of Interpretation and Education; for more information, contact stewardship@nps.gov.

Information about Our Cooperators

Quebec-Labrador Foundation / Atlantic Center for the Environment

QLF / Atlantic Center for the Environment is a nonprofit organization based in Ipswich, Massachusetts. Its mission is to support the rural communities and environment of eastern Canada and New England, and create models for stewardship of natural resources and cultural heritage that can be applied worldwide. QLF defines stewardship as efforts to create, nurture and enable responsibility in landowners and resource users to manage and protect land and its natural and cultural heritage.

<http://www.qlf.org>

Shelburne Farms National Historic Landmark

Shelburne Farms is a membership-supported nonprofit environmental education center, 1,400-acre working farm, and national historic landmark on the shores of Lake Champlain in Shelburne, Vermont. Its mission is to cultivate a conservation ethic by teaching and demonstrating the stewardship of natural and agricultural resources. <http://shelburnefarms.org>

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