

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



## Long-Range Interpretive Plan

**Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area**  
Tennessee • Kentucky



# Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area

## Long-Range Interpretive Plan

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**Front Cover:**

The National Park Service preserves the Big South Fork River (cover) in northeastern Tennessee and southeastern Kentucky that cuts for 90 miles through the rugged terrain of the Cumberland Plateau.

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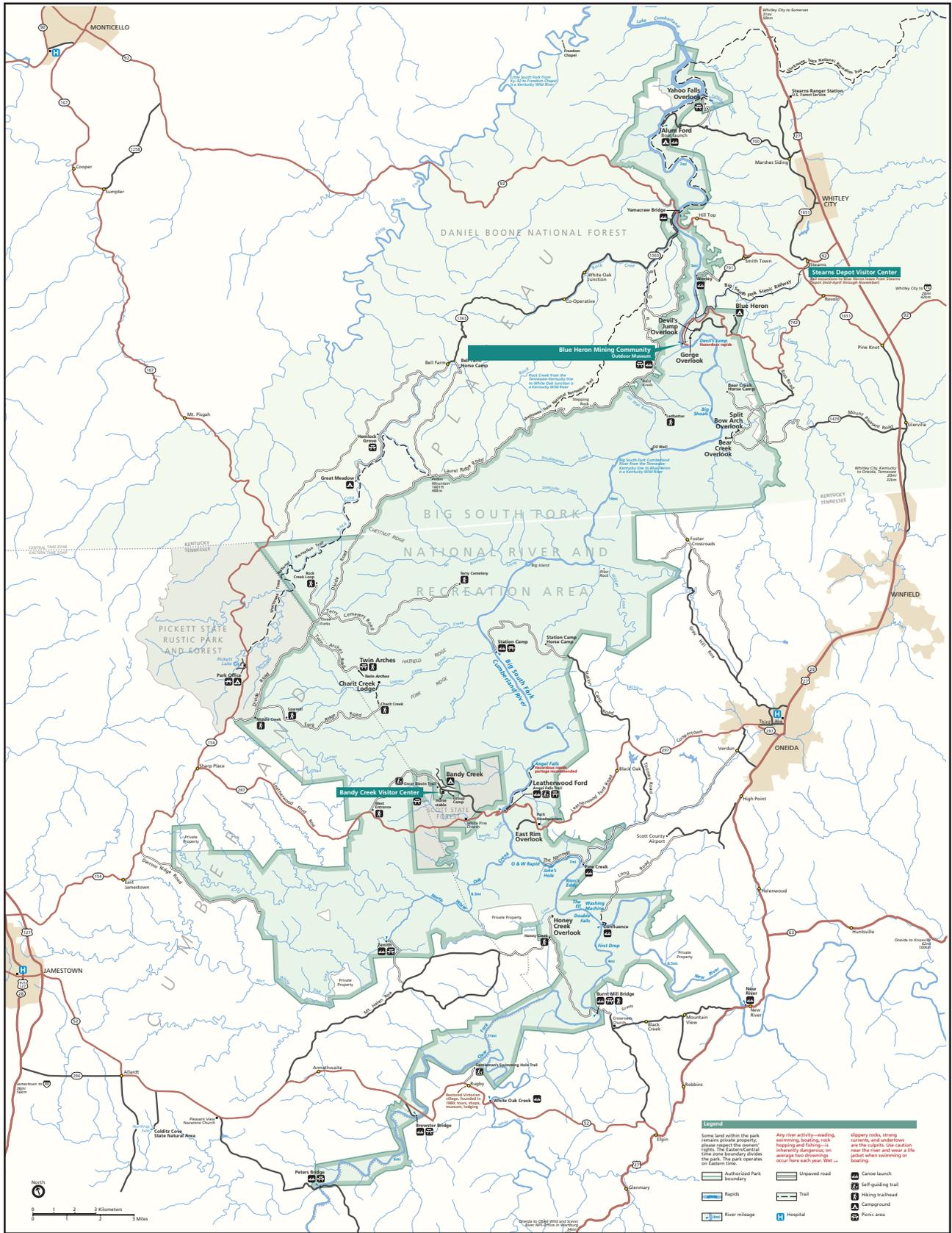
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# Park Map

Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area encompasses approximately 125,000 acres as it straddles the states of Tennessee and Kentucky.

Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area  
 United States Department of the Interior • National Park Service

# Part 1: Foundations





## Introduction

*The rugged terrain and relatively infertile soils of the Cumberland Plateau region were used as a transportation corridor and hunting grounds by American Indians who lived primarily in the Tennessee and Ohio River valleys.*

Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area\* is located in northeastern Tennessee and southeastern Kentucky in some of the most rugged terrain of the Cumberland Plateau. The free-flowing Big South Fork of the Cumberland River and its tributaries pass through more than 90 miles of scenic gorges. The park encompasses approximately 125,000 acres in six counties and two states. North and west of the park, state and federal lands protect even more land that protect a variety of wildlife habitats. Within the park, numerous creeks and streams join the erosive power of the Big South Fork, resulting in deep ravines that have been carved into the surrounding sandstone. This hydrology and other weathering processes have created an impressive array of cliff faces, arches, mesas, chimneys, and rock shelters throughout the park.

The park also contains a wide range of natural and cultural features. Because of extensive logging in the early to mid-1900s, most of the forest areas are second or third growth forests. The rugged terrain and relatively infertile soils of the Cumberland Plateau region was used as a transportation corridor and hunting grounds by American Indians who lived primarily in the Tennessee and Ohio River valleys. While traveling and hunting in today's park area, the tribes used the numerous caves and rock overhangs for shelter. Approximately 350,000 archeological artifacts have been found in the park, from American Indian projectile points to tools used by early European and American settlers.

Recreational opportunities abound for today's visitors to Big South Fork NRRRA. In the spring, the river's whitewater is ideal for rafting



In the spring, rafting conditions are ideal on the Big South Fork River.

and kayaking. On the river's non-whitewater sections, canoeing and canoe camping are available year-round. Swimming can be enjoyed at Bandy Creek Pool, one of the few public swimming pools operated by the National Park Service. Equestrians enjoy the more than 180 miles of horse trails within the park, and hikers can traverse close to 150 miles of hiking trails. Other activities include mountain biking, rock climbing, hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing; and scenic overlooks throughout the park offer breathtaking views of the gorges and surrounding region.

\* Throughout this document, the Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area is sometimes referred to as Big South Fork NRRA, Big South Fork, or simply "the park." The term "Big South Fork of the Cumberland River," when used, refers only to the river; not the park.

## Legislative Background

On March 7, 1974, Congress established the Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area (NRRA) through Public Law 93-251 (88 Stat. 43) "for the purposes of conserving and interpreting as area containing unique cultural, historic, geologic, fish and wildlife, archeological, scenic, and recreational values, preserving as a natural, free-flowing stream the Big South Fork of the Cumberland River... for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations, the preservation of the natural integrity of the scenic gorges and valleys, and the development of the area's potential for healthful outdoor recreation." Also, from Section E subsection 1, "The National Area shall be established and managed for the purposes of preserving and interpreting the scenic, biological, archeological, and historical resources of the river gorge areas and developing the natural recreational potential of the area for the enjoyment of the public and for the benefit of the economy of the region."

In the decade preceding the park's legislation, plans had been drawn to flood Big South Fork's river valley for a hydroelectric dam and power plant. However, with the unique legislative act that created the park in 1974, a partnership was formed between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the National Park Service. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers acquired the park's land, and planned and developed the park facilities. Upon completion of these tasks in 1990, the lands and facilities were transferred to the National Park Service.

When established in 1974, Big South Fork was the first National Park Service unit to be designated as both a National River and a National Recreation Area. This dual designation denoted two different management styles for the parks river gorges and adjacent plateau lands:

*The National River designation denotes a management style centered on a free-flowing river. While not designated as a National Wild and Scenic River, congress included in the legislation some of the same protection from federal or federally assisted water development projects. As a National River, development within the river gorge is to be kept to a minimum, with very limited vehicular access and limited recreational development.*

*The National Recreation Area designation indicates the area is to be responsive to outdoor recreation needs that are consistent with the protection of resource values. Dealing with the adjacent plateau, this area is designated to support a majority of the parks recreation-centered development.*

## Park Purpose

*When established in 1974, Big South Fork was the first National Park Service unit to be designated as both a National River and a National Recreation Area.*

The 2005 Big South Fork NRRRA General Management Plan (GMP) states that purpose of the park, based on its 1974 enabling legislation, is:

- To preserve and interpret the National Area's cultural, historic, archeological, geologic, fish and wildlife, scenic, and recreational values;
  - To preserve the free-flowing Big South Fork and portions of its tributaries;
  - To preserve the natural integrity of the gorge; and
  - To provide healthful outdoor recreation for the enjoyment of the public and for the benefit of the regional economy.
- The National Area contains a wide variety of habitats with associated flora and fauna of the Cumberland Plateau in a limited geologic area.
  - Large numbers and varieties of archeological, historic, and ethnographic resources, illustrating a long continuum of use, are found in the National Area, including farmsteads eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.
  - National Area waters provide habitat for a world-class freshwater mussel assemblage and are an important refuge for many endangered mussel species. Few other river systems support this level of mussel diversity.
  - The National Area provides a broad range of natural and cultural resource-based recreation and education opportunities.

## Park Significance

The 2005 GMP also states that the area's significance, which led to its establishment, is reflected in the following statements:

- Dramatic sandstone gorges, imposing bluff lines, some of the nation's largest water crafted arches, and other notable geologic formations are found throughout the National Area.
- The Big South Fork is a free-flowing river system, flowing unhindered by water development projects except as it enters Lake Cumberland.

## Park Mission Statement

The purpose and significance have been translated into the following park mission statement:

The Big South Fork NRRRA provides healthful outdoor recreation while preserving the free-flowing condition of the Big South Fork and its tributaries, the scenic, natural, and cultural values of the area, and the essentially primitive condition of the gorge.



Wild turkeys are among the hundreds of species of animals that thrive in the forests of the Big South Fork NRRRA.

## Interpretive Themes

*Through the knowledge or emotions that visitors have experienced before their visit to Big South Fork NRRRA, they are able to connect a personal meaning with its resources.*

Themes define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to our visitors about Big South Fork NRRRA. Interpretation strives to establish a caring relationship between visitors and the park's resources and values by provoking understanding and appreciation. The park's interpretive and educational programs should offer opportunities for visitors to make their own intellectual and emotional connections to meanings that are inherent in the park's resources.

### Tangible/Intangible Concepts

Tangible resources are objects and places, or people and events that once had a physical presence. Intangible meanings are the universally felt emotions, relationships, or values associated with those tangible

resources. Through the knowledge or emotions that visitors have experienced before their visit to Big South Fork NRRRA, they are able to connect a personal meaning with its resources.

The following list shows some of the park's tangible resources and some intangible meanings that today's visitors may relate to the park's resources. In February 2007, the interpretive staff of Big South Fork NRRRA started this list as first step in creating the park interpretive theme statements on the next page. The park's interpreters, partners, and media specialists should use the list below and the interpretive theme statements on the next page as a starting point when developing personal services and educational programs, and interpretive media for park visitors.

Tangible Resources	Intangible Meanings
River/rapids .....	adventure, health, life, fun, teamwork, quiet, solitude
Waterfalls.....	beauty, quiet, tranquility, serenity, power, spirituality
Trails .....	health, exercise, enjoyment, challenge
Wildlife.....	awe, reality, death, danger, survival
Fish .....	curiosity, solace
Trees .....	relief, survival, diversity
Overlooks .....	inspiration, spirituality, continuity
Geology .....	relief, discovery, sense of time, religious perspectives
Homesteads .....	family, survival, ancestors
Wilderness .....	quiet, tranquility, self-introspection
Artifacts .....	family, tools, industry, communication, language
Cemeteries .....	death, religion, faith, family, ancestors
Mineral Extraction Sites such as oil and gas sites, coal mines, etc .....	industry, economy
Rock Shelters and other archeological sites .....	family, pre-history, ancestors, survival, nomadic

# Interpretive Theme Statements

*Big South Fork NRRRA has a rich cultural history spanning approximately 10,000 years. The land has influenced human activity, but has also been affected by human presence and use.*

Themes define the park's most important ideas to be communicated to the public. They convey the tangible/intangible meanings and universal concepts inherent in the park's resources.

## 1. Rocks and River

Powerful geologic forces of sedimentation, uplifting, and erosion created features in the gorge through which the river flows, influencing the plants and animals that live there.

Sub-themes (Specific themes that can be the basis of a personal services program or media product):

- Sedimentation, uplifting, and erosion resulted in a diversity of geological features within the park:
  - Layers of sandstone, shale, coal and limestone
  - Arches, rock shelters, chimneys, and other erosional features
  - A plateau with weathered cliffs and a river gorge
  - River channel and its rapids, riffles, and shoals
- Decomposition, pressure, heat, and time resulted in the formation of fossil fuels such as coal, oil and gas
- Geology affects the quantity of water that seeps into rock layers and runs into the watershed
- Geology (along with human development and mining) affects the quality of the river's water
- Geology promotes highly fluctuating amounts of runoff water (i.e., flash floods)
- Mineral extraction has affected the chemical composition of the region's water supply
- Mineral extraction must be in balance with the park's and region's environmental health
- Religious beliefs of creationism vs. scientific explanation of geology must be dealt with tactfully

## 2. Preserving Diversity

Big South Fork NRRRA contains unique natural resources that help tell the story of the area, and must be protected and preserved.

Sub-themes (Specific themes that can be the basis of a personal services program or media product):

- The geology and geography of the area have resulted in a large and varied number of habitats
  - The area contains endangered plant and animal species, some found nowhere else on earth
  - The area contains threatened plant and animal species
- Preserving resources while allowing recreational use within the park is a delicate balance
- Park has restored some species of native fauna such as River Otter, Turkey, and Black Bear
- Non-native species pose an insidious threat to native populations of flora and fauna
- The park has the important challenge of restoring natural processes within the park
- Water has a critical role in the park's ecosystems
  - The importance of maintaining the Big South Fork as a free flowing river
  - The impacts of external influences on the park's water quantity and quality
  - The impacts of external influences on the park's flora and fauna
- others?

## 3. Land has Shaped the People; People have Shaped the Land

Big South Fork NRRRA has a rich cultural history spanning approximately 10,000 years. The land of the Big South Fork region has influenced human activity, but has also been affected by human presence and use.

Sub-themes (Specific themes that can be the basis of a personal services program or media product):

- Human settlement
  - Prehistoric American Indians
    - Use of Rock Shelters
    - Utilization of natural resources
  - Historic Settlement
    - Home and hearth
    - Men and women's roles
    - Early architecture
    - Church and Religion
    - Schools and education in home or community
    - Subsistence farming – Crops and gardening; Animal husbandry
  - Subsistence activities and local trades
    - Rifle making
    - Blacksmithing and horseshoeing
    - Fiber arts - spinning, weaving, natural dyes, quilting, and sewing, etc.
    - Basket making
    - Wood carving, wood turning, wood toys
    - Herb lore
    - Hunting and fishing for subsistence
  - Historic Communities
    - Pioneer communities, Appalachian culture
    - Mining and logging camps
    - Historic Rugby
  - Cottage Industries
    - Niter Mining
    - Long Hunters
    - Salt Manufacturing
    - Moonshining
  - Civil War -- Civilian impacts and the Home Guard
  - Industrial Revolution
    - Logging and Sawmilling
    - Coal Mining
    - Railroads
    - Oil and gas
    - Boom and Bust – isolation and out-migration
  - Creation of Big South Fork NRRRA
    - Eco-tourism
    - NPS Recreation Area versus CoE Reservoir
    - future. . .
    - NPS presence and management

Facilities

Roads and trails

Resource protection and restoration

General Management Plan

#### 4. Recreate to Educate

Big South Fork NRRRA offers diverse environmentally sustainable outdoor recreation opportunities for a diversity of people. Recreation and education are motivation for conservation.

Sub-themes (Specific themes that can be the basis of a personal services program or media product):

- Water-based recreation
  - Paddling safety
  - Fishing
  - Swimming safety
- Land-based recreation
  - Horseback riding, hiking, biking, climbing, etc.
  - Minimizing impact
  - User safety
- Consumptive recreation
  - Hunting, fishing, trapping, gathering nuts and berries, etc.
  - Encourage wise use and conservation of these resources
- Recreation Skills Education (new opportunities, new educational information, classes, etc.)
- Passive recreation (picnicking, sightseeing, birding, photography, astronomy, special events)
- Volunteers – recreation as a way to preserve, conserve, and restore
- Parks-as-Classrooms - Involving local schools in resource based learning
- Many types of pre-park recreation have turned into park-related recreation. Before the creation of the park, OHV use, four-wheel drive, hiking, camping, fishing, hunting, exploring, sightseeing, and swimming were all well established forms of local recreation. Some of these past practices and uses have become inherited management and resource protection issues for the National Park Service today. Education is one key to mitigating the impact of these uses.

## Goals

*The park's facilities, interpretive media, website, personal services, and education programs provide visitors with information as well as interpretive, educational, and recreational opportunities.*

*Goals describe management's intent in offering interpretive and educational programs and services.... This section may also contain objectives that define specific outcomes for interpretive and educational programs... (DO-6, page 8)*

### Management Goals

The Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA), enacted in 1993, requires federal agencies to establish standards for measuring performance and effectiveness. The law requires federal agencies to develop strategic plans describing their overall goals and objectives, annual performance plans containing quantifiable measures of their progress, and performance reports describing their success in meeting those standards and measures.

The following long-term goals were prepared as part of the planning process required by GPRA. Annual Performance Plans prepared by the park staff establish future benchmarks for visitor satisfaction and visitor understanding. Attainment of these benchmarks is measured with annual park visitor surveys.

Long-term Goal IIa1a: By September 2011, 95% of visitors to Big South Fork NRRRA are satisfied with the appropriate park facilities, services, and recreational opportunities.

Long-term Goal IIb1: By September 30, 2011, 88% of Big South Fork NRRRA's visitors understand the significance of the park.

### Accessibility Goals

The following Acts and their amendments are the laws that apply to the federal government.

1. The Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 (P.L. 90-480) requires all buildings and facilities built or renovated in whole or in part with Federal funds to be accessible to, and usable by, physically disabled persons. Since 1968, official standards for making buildings accessible have been developed and the U.S. Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board has been created to monitor and enforce compliance with the law.



Park interpretive staff members, cooperating association sales employees, and volunteers staff the park's information desks – especially at Bandy Creek, the park's primary visitor contact station.

2. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (P.L. 93-112), as amended, is more encompassing than the Architectural Barriers Act. While the Architectural Barriers Act requires physical access to buildings and facilities, Section 504 requires program accessibility in all services provided with Federal dollars. The act itself is very brief. It states:

“No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States shall, solely by reason of disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any program or activity conducted by Federal Financial Assistance or by any Executive Agency.”

Further, National Park Service (NPS) policy mandates that interpretive programming be developed in accordance with NPS Director’s Orders 42, and that interpretive media be developed within the NPS Accessibility Guidelines for Interpretive Media (which can be accessed through this website: <http://www.nps.gov/hfc/accessibility>).

### Visitor Experience Goals

Visitor Experience Goals describe opportunities for the public and suggest how interpretation may change the way visitors will think, feel, or act as a result of their park experience. (DO-6, page 9)

The desired outcome of Big South Fork NRRRA’s operations is to manage visitor-resource interactions so that the resources will remain unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations while ensuring that opportunities exist for the widest variety of current visitors to forge meaningful connections with those resources. The park’s facilities, interpretive media, website, personal services, and education programs provide visitors with information as well as interpretive, educational, and recreational opportunities.

#### Visitor Experience Goals for All Park Visitors

All park visitors should have the opportunity to:

- easily find orientation

information on the website and within the park.

- receive information on attractions and services in towns outside the park.
- receive information on attractions and services in adjacent federal lands and state parks.
- interact with paid staff and volunteers who are professional and courteous, leaving a positive impression of the park and the National Park Service.
- understand that Big South Fork NRRRA is a unit of the National Park System.
- access the park facilities and programs given the full range of visitor abilities and disabilities.
- enjoy a variety of recreational activities that do not interfere with other people and do not adversely impact the park’s resources, share resources, and be considerate of others.
- contact park staff if they observe threats to the park’s resources (e.g., vandalism)
- safely enjoy their visit by learning about and following safety guidelines and park rules and regulations.
- find the park’s trails and trailheads, and be educated in the trail use management system.
- find opportunities for solitude and personal discovery.
- gain an appreciation and understanding of Big South Fork NRRRA by learning about the park’s natural and cultural heritage.
- discover their own personal connections to the meanings and significance inherent in the natural and cultural resources of Big South Fork NRRRA.
- receive unbiased and accurate information that includes multiple points of view.
- purchase publications and educational materials through the park’s cooperating association that will enhance their experience.
- demonstrate stewardship by using park resources in a manner that protects and

- enhances the natural and cultural resources.
- contribute to the stewardship of Big South Fork NRRRA.
- be directed to a process to access the park’s curatorial collections (for researchers) or the park’s cemeteries (for relatives) using park staff to assure protection of park resources.
- be aware of current management issues and how they affect visitors (i.e. program on mussels touches on concerns about horse impacts, food chain, and endangered species.)

- safely enjoy their visit by learning about and following safety guidelines and park rules and regulations.
- demonstrate stewardship by using park resources in a manner that protects and enhances the natural and cultural resources.
- contribute to the stewardship of Big South Fork NRRRA.

### Education Experience Goals

Visitors within educational groups should have the opportunity to:

- participate in curriculum-based education programs that include pre-visit and post-visit activities.
- use the park as an outdoor classroom and conduct educational activities on their own.
- participate in teacher-directed programs using materials and resources provided by the National Park Service.

### Virtual Visitor Experience Goals

Visitors who access information about Big South Fork NRRRA through its website on the internet should have the opportunity to:

- easily navigate the park’s website to plan a visit and/or to learn about the park’s natural and cultural resources.
- gain an appreciation and understanding of Big South Fork NRRRA by learning about the park’s natural and cultural heritage.
- print the park map, download forms, and print photos.
- contact the park through an email link.
- link to local parks, partners, and other appropriate web sites.

### Visitor Profiles

This broad description of park audiences include both actual and

potential audiences...in-park, out-of-park, and education audiences. (DO-6, page 9)

#### Annual Visitation Figures, 2001-2007

1988	613,011	1993	737,947	1998	856,480	2003	752,140
1989	730,183	1994	800,460	1999	860,224	2004	696,114
1990	794,539	1995	892,328	2000	864,200	2005	699,230
1991	860,017	1996	855,882	2001	916,948	2006	622,806
1992	752,203	1997	858,388	2002	852,873	2007	626,751

Average Visitation from 1998 to 2006 was 779,620

#### Monthly Visitation Figures, 2006 (figures below will also be in a “bar graph”)

January	35,040	April	55,444	July	71,371	October	68,290
February	27,577	May	64,532	August	46,308	November	45,025
March	39,228	June	66,240	September	68,676	December	35,076

Total “Recreation Visits” for 2006 was 622,806

## Seasonal Trends

Spring: Visitation from the general public gets busy on most spring weekends, depending on weather conditions. Many school groups take field trips to the park on weekdays from April through mid-June. When the river is high after heavy spring rains, rafters and kayakers “run” the river. “Spring break” brings a high number of backpackers – many of them college students – into the park for extended backcountry experiences. The park sponsors a “Spring Planting” special event in April each year that often attracts 1,500 people or more for this one-day event. On Memorial Day weekend, the “summer season” begins, with the park being busy most days.

Summer: Once schools close in late May, the park can be busy every weekday and weekend with general visitors and lots of recreational users. Starting in May, the park moves into its highest visitation of the year, mostly from regional visitors who camp at the park’s campgrounds and use other park facilities. For some summer visitors, Big South Fork becomes the “overflow park” for those who cannot get campground reservations at Great Smoky Mountains National Park, or if they simply want an alternative large

NPS park experience in east Tennessee. Park visitation does dip, however, in August due to the heat, humidity, insects, and students returning to school.

Autumn: After schools reopen in mid-August, weekday visitation slows but weekends get busy again after Labor Day. The annual “Haunting in the Hills” Story Telling Festival each September draws thousands of visitors, and Cultural Heritage Days are held at Blue Heron each Saturday for the month of October. September and October are the busiest visitation months of the year for Big South Fork NRRRA because of the autumn colors that peak in late October. A limited number of school groups come on weekdays from September through mid-October. The late fall and early winter season also sees heavy use by deer and boar hunters.

Winter: Generally, park visitation is slowest during the winter. Some school groups take field trips to the park on weekdays from mid-November through March to use the visitor center and other facilities. Hiking and horse use occur throughout the winter months. Some river use will occur during mild periods in the winter when sufficient water is available.



Although visitors to the Big South Fork come from around the world and around the corner (and all points in between), about half of its visitors are local.

## Analysis of Visitor Group Types

### Local Recreational Users (about 50% of total visitors)

Characteristics: People who live in the six counties in Kentucky and Tennessee that are adjacent to BISO (i.e., visitors who live within a one-hour drive of the park).

Use of Big South Fork NRRRA: Mostly sightseeing, hunting and fishing, and visiting ancestral sites/cemeteries; some camping, horseback riding, and swimming. Few go into visitor centers. Some people within this Visitor Group, like all groups, ride the Big South Fork Scenic Railway.

Issues: Many dislike the park being closed to All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs), don't understand park policies on trail closures, complain about trail conditions, and don't understand many NPS policies; some feel "disconnected" from the park and disenfranchised from park decisions. Some local residents feel disappointed that the park-related benefits "promised" for the local economy (that were forecast by the Corps of Engineers in the 1970s) have not come to pass. However, many locals with ambivalent attitudes are changing to positive feelings for the NPS.

### Regional Visitors (about 23% of total visitors)

Characteristics: People who live in non-local counties in Kentucky and Tennessee (i.e., those counties not adjacent to BISO, but about a 2-to 4-hour drive from BISO). Also includes visitors from cities such as Knoxville, Nashville, Cookeville, Chattanooga, Lexington, and Louisville.

Use of Big South Fork NRRRA: Most regional visitors come for

camping, lodging, hiking, horse use, backpacking, mountain biking, river-based opportunities, and volunteering. Most have higher education levels and incomes than local residents, and many regional visitors are "half-back" re-locators scouting/speculating for vacation and/or retirement homes in the BISO area. Some people within this Visitor Group, like all groups, ride the Big South Fork Scenic Railway.

Issues: Some disagree with the park's closure of areas to certain uses, and the park's user fees; most understand the park regulations and NPS policies used to manage Big South Fork NRRRA.

### Southeast & Midwest Visitors (about 20% of total visitors)

Characteristics: People who live in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Ohio, and Indiana (i.e., those who live about a day's drive away). Many of these visitors used to live in Tennessee or drive to Tennessee to visit relatives and friends.

Use of Big South Fork NRRRA: Most come to Big South Fork with a single activity in mind (e.g., horseback riders). Because of the distance they drive to get to BISO, many spend a 3-day weekend (or longer) at BISO. Most camp at BISO, but some use lodging in the area. Some come for family reunions. Some are older and less mobile, and visit the park while on bus tours of the area. Some people within this Visitor Group, like all groups, ride the Big South Fork Scenic Railway.

Issues: Many of these visitors know less about the park's multiple opportunities for recreation. Some are not fully prepared for their activities. Generally, they are good

about obeying the park's rules and regulations. Some heard about BISO through the Web or by word-of-mouth.

### **National/International Vacationers** (about 5% of total visitors)

Characteristics: Visitors from the United States, mostly during the summer. Of the small percentage of International visitors, most are from China, France, Great Britain, and India.

Use of Big South Fork NRRRA: Most visits are of short duration; most enjoy sight seeing and short hikes. Some people within this Visitor Group ride the Big South Fork Scenic Railway.

Issues: Most national visitors from outside the region do not understand the range of park opportunities. Many international visitors do not understand the NPS or its policies, and there are some language barriers and some cultural issues.

### **Education Groups** (about 2% of total visitors)

Characteristics: Schools and other groups from nearby counties in Kentucky and Tennessee.

Use of Big South Fork NRRRA: Mostly on-site field trips and ranger-led hikes. Some teachers bring their classes (e.g., Breakaway and Eckert groups with curriculum) to hike to some of the park's arches as an annual trip. In Kentucky, most school groups go on train from Stearns to Blue Heron. In Tennessee, most schools come into the park for on-site programs. Off-site, the park has the

special event's story-tellers to go to most local schools in September each year. Some people within this Visitor Group, like all groups, ride the Big South Fork Scenic Railway.

Issues: Lack of school system funds for field trips; lack of NPS staff to support higher levels of school use and school programs; need for a park Environmental Education Specialist; school issues with travel across state lines; school groups' desire to be entertained rather than educated.

### **"Virtual" Visitors** (not "counted" in the park's visitation data)

Characteristics: Local, national, and international visitors who "visit" the park through computers in their homes or offices via the park's website.

Use of Big South Fork NRRRA: These "virtual" visitors have no impact on the park's tangible resources. However, they do impact park staff in the time required to create, update, and maintain the park website.

Issues: The numbers of virtual visitors are growing each year; as these numbers increase, the importance of the park's website also increases. Many non-NPS websites exist that contain BISO information; many of these websites give visitors incorrect or out-dated information. Employees and volunteers at Big South Fork need to specifically recommend the NPS website. As of 2007, the NPS web system does not allow parks to track how many "hits" their park's website gets; however, there is a WASO contract in the works to install software to count "hits."

## GPRA Visitor Survey -- 2006

Each summer, Big South Fork NRRRA distributes Visitor Survey cards to selected visitors for one month, and the data is compiled by the University of Idaho as a report for the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) of 1993. Each year's survey reflects visitor opinion about park facilities, services, and recreational opportunities. The results of the 2006 GPRA Visitor Survey is summarized below. (Note:

all of the GPRA Visitor Survey results from 1998 through 2006, are available at [www.psu.uidaho.edu/vsp.profile.htm](http://www.psu.uidaho.edu/vsp.profile.htm))

**2006 Overall** quality of facilities, services, & recreational opportunities  
 Very good: 83%  
 Good: 17% (100% satisfaction: combined Very Good and Good)  
 Average: 0%  
 Poor: 0%  
 Very Poor 0%

### 2006 Specific ratings of facilities, services, & recreational opportunities

Category	Approval Ratings				
	Very Good	Good	Average	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Park Facilities</b>					
Visitor Centers	71%	19%	10%	0%	0%
Exhibits	67%	23%	10%	0%	0%
Restrooms	70%	27%	3%	0%	0%
Walkways, Trails, Roads	87%	10%	3%	0%	0%
Camp/Picnic Areas	81%	15%	4%	0%	0%
Combined Facilities:	75%	19%	6%	0%	0%
<b>Visitor Services</b>					
Employee Assistance	90%	10%	0%	0%	0%
Interpretive Programs	57%	29%	14%	0%	0%
Park Map or Brochure	73%	20%	3%	3%	0%
Commercial Services	36%	41%	23%	0%	0%
Combined Visitor Services:	71%	23%	8%	1%	0%
<b>Recreational Opportunities</b>					
Learning about nature, history	58%	33%	8%	0%	0%
Outdoor Recreation (& sites)	79%	17%	0%	0%	3%
Combined Recreation Ops:	70%	25%	4%	0%	1%

## **Comments on Visitor Surveys, 2006**

Within the GPRA Visitor Survey in 2006, the selected comments below are samples of what some visitors wrote in response to the following:

**This park was established because of its significance to the nation. In your opinion, what is the national significance of this park?**

“wildlife, plants, trees, beautiful scenery of Tennessee and Kentucky unlike any other”

“the mountain culture and the outstanding natural resources of the area”

“...history and natural beauty to be preserved for the future”

“unusual wilderness (for eastern U.S.)”

“...geologic formations, coal mining, cultural history”

“natural wonders”

“culture of the area and terrain”

“natural beauty and pioneer spirit of America”

“preservation of southern forest and natural rivers”

“great open space preservation”

“early coal mining; forestry”

“preservation of scenic and historical areas; to protect land from commercial and residential development”

“it preserves the area of the Big South Fork and provides visitors an excellent opportunity to view and to experience it”

“unique geologic land & wild river”

“to enjoy the beauty of the countryside – preserve history and enjoy all its phases – including riding 4-wheelers”

“preserving our nature areas .... For my grandkids”

“excellent outdoor recreational opportunities in a beautiful unspoiled area”

“...coal mining and the lives of the miners”

## Issues and Influences Affecting Interpretation

This section includes...influences and opportunities inside and outside the park...that affect interpretation and education. (DO-6, page 9)

There are issues and influences, both inside and outside the park, that affect Big South Fork's interpretation and education programs such as GMP implementation, a wilderness study, ATV restrictions, and endangered species habitat protection. Many of these are issues that the park's interpretive efforts can help park managers to solve or mitigate. Others may influence the park's interpretive programs, and managers need to consider these when planning the park's future.

## External: Issues and Influences from outside Big South Fork NRRRA

### Budget Restrictions

Budget restrictions throughout the National Park System continue to impact staffing and FTE levels here at Big South Fork NRRRA (BISO). At one time, the interpretive division had four (4) seasonal employees; now the division has only one employee who works less than the 1040 hours allowed. In addition, budget restrictions only allow the permanent seasonal employees to be funded under ONPS funds for 6 months, down from the 11 months once funded. Minimal staffing is now requiring interpretation to use Visitor Use Assistants (VUA)s and volunteers.

These restrictions have eroded the number of hours that the division can operate the visitor center, has required the closure of the Stearns Depot Visitor Center during the winter months, and has reduced the interpretive staff's flexibility to conduct personal interpretive activities. As a result, the NPS works with partners to train staff to perform some interpretive functions; for example, an Eastern National cooperating association employee helps

to staff the Bandy Creek Visitor Center when park rangers are conducting interpretive programs or not available.

## Core Operations

Big South Fork had its Core Operations evaluation in 2006 with its Implementation Plan being approved in 2007. Because the park's budget is between \$100,000 and \$300,000 in the red, reductions need to be made in FY 2007. The Core Operations Implementation Plan has a recommendation that – when the division chief's position becomes vacant – the daily management responsibilities will be assumed by the Chief Ranger. This change was implemented in 2008.

## NPS and BISO Anniversaries

The Centennial of the National Park Service (NPS) in 2016 will probably result in an increased workload that might not be funded; however, this Centennial may bring funds for seasonals.

Also, 2014 will be the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of Big South Fork NRRRA, and 2016 will be the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Big South Fork's transfer to the National Park Service. Because the timing of these anniversaries coincide with the NPS's Centennial in 2016, there may be an opportunity to coordinate these events and, perhaps, justify funding for all three celebrations.

## Servicewide Special Initiatives

The NPS Inventory and Monitoring Program: BISO is part of the Appalachian Highlands Monitoring Network which includes Big South Fork NRRRA, Obed WSR, Blue Ridge Parkway (BLRI) and Great Smoky Mountains. The network coordinator, ecologist, and data manager are located at BLRI and the hydrologist is located at BISO. This program is completing base inventories of all major natural resources, updating information on natural resource collections

associated with the network parks, updating natural resource publication information, and is developing a series of monitoring protocols to provide indicators for critical natural resources in the parks. The interpretive division at Big South Fork NRRRA needs to integrate the information and results of this resource management program into the park's interpretive programs.

Learning Centers: The Appalachian Highlands Learning Center located at Purchase Knob, North Carolina, was established to provide interpretation and education for Appalachian parks. The primary focus has been on citizen science and education, mostly for Great Smoky Mountains NP; they have provided some grant money for Big South Fork NRRRA. The park staff should look for future opportunities to increase this partnership.

### **Watershed Issues external to BISO**

Big South Fork NRRRA works closely with other federal and state agencies to address compliance and potential impacts to park resources. Specifically, park staff review actions and permits for Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) coal mining and Office of Surface Mining (OSM) permits for private coal mining. The park meets quarterly with OSM to discuss mining issues and their relationship to BISO. Also, the park regularly communicates with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on upstream permits that may affect federally listed species or federally designated critical habitat (all of the river and main tributaries of the river in BISO). Park staff members also participate in a local watershed association that is a 501c organization set up to develop watershed protection and monitoring for our basin.

The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service has written several letters to the park stating that the park is not adequately protecting endangered mussels and critical habitat at Station Camp and Big Island horse crossings. Big South Fork is presently putting rocks in the Station Camp river channel to identify the horse crossing and signs and maps are in place delineating the

crossings at both locations. Funding has been requested to harden the trail approaches and to put rocks in the crossing at Big Island. However, without adequate education and enforcement, the park is not likely to adequately modify visitor behavior and may be cited by USFWS. Work is currently underway to harden these stream crossings.

### **Internal: Issues and Influences from within Big South Fork NRRRA**

#### **Interpretive Staffing**

The interpretive division is currently staffed at a minimal level. Interpretive staff can not provide the best quality programs without adequate preparation time and internal audits.

#### **Multiple Areas of Responsibility**

Interpretive staff members are being pulled in too many different directions and can not devote adequate time to one area of expertise.

#### **Fee Demo Funds**

The current levels of Fee Funds taken in by the park versus the costs required to take in those funds leaves little monies available for park use. However, the Interpretive Division is currently using some of the Park Fee funds for this Long-Range Interpretive Plan project as well as a parkwide bulletin board/ orientation project.

#### **Cooperating Association**

With current visitation trends and financial issues facing Eastern National (EN), the interpretive division expects to see reduced support from EN. In 2007, only \$1,500 was donated by EN and that money is being used to print the park newspaper Big South Fork Visitor Guide again. EN's employee at Bandy Creek Visitor Center is often used to cover for NPS permanent employees while they give

interpretive programs or go out to local communities for Civic Engagement.

### **Volunteer Program**

There are few potential volunteers available locally because most residents struggle financially and can not afford to volunteer, while other potential volunteers do not have the education and communication skills necessary to work with the public. Most park volunteers are residents from eastern Tennessee who come to Big South Fork for the summer as campground hosts.

### **Training: (Interpretive Development Program, NPS Fundamentals, TelNet, etc.)**

There are no funds available for non-mandatory training. All of the interpretive staff members want to be involved with the NPS Interpretive Development Program (IDP), but short staffing makes involvement in the IDP difficult to accomplish. Some

interpretive staff members went to NPS Ranger Skills training (when it was held at FLETC in Georgia). Having new employees attend NPS Fundamentals training will be critical as the current interpretive employees retire over the next 10 years. The staff considers the TelNet training to be ineffective. In the meantime, general training can still be pursued at local colleges and universities.

### **Cultural Resource Management Issues within Big South Fork NRRRA**

#### **Archeology and Issues of Prehistory**

Park managers at Big South Fork NRRRA are legislated to identify and preserve archeological sites under National Historic Preservation Act; also, preservation is defined as a part of the National Park Service mission in NPS-28 guidelines. The enabling legislation for Big South Fork NRRRA specifically mentions preservation of its archeological resources two times.



Some of the park's massive sandstone arches have archeological resources scattered around and under them because American Indian tribes camped under them and nearby rock shelters centuries ago.

The park contains more than 1,400 significant archeological sites, and two of these have been determined eligible to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. More than 800 of these archeological sites were occupied by prehistoric American Indians for more than 10,000 years. Most of these archeological sites are within rock shelters found at the base of the hundreds of miles of cliff lines in the park and represent the sub-theme of “Human Settlement:

Prehistoric American Indians.” These sites provide information about:

- North American Indian Occupation: their hunting and gathering, the resources they used, their group sizes, their demographics, and their use of rock shelter sites as burial locations.
- Environmental conditions through time: the forest’s condition and composition, and the related flora and fauna.

The threats that face these archeological sites come primarily from relic collecting. The rock shelter sites are so visible after leaf fall, that they are targets of collectors who dig the sites up and, thereby, destroy most of the information that they contain. Interpretive efforts need to educate visitors about the value of archeological resources and the kinds of information that can be recovered from these sites when they are excavated professionally. Some archeological digs are done under the oversight of the NPS; however, many sites are being left alone until future archeological technologies allow for more sensitive data collection (e.g., How old is the DNA?).

### Historic Preservation

Park managers at Big South Fork NRRRA are legislated to identify and preserve historic structures under National Historic Preservation Act; also, preservation is defined as a part the National Park Service mission in NPS-28 guidelines. The enabling legislation for Big South Fork NRRRA specifically mentions preservation of its historic resources 11 times.

The park contains 21 significant historic structures; 14 are National Register eligible structures, and the other 7 have been nominated to the National Register. All 21 structures are located in the Big South Fork Rural Historic District which was submitted to the National Register under the Historic Contexts of “Extractive Industry in the BSF River Basin, 1761-1974,” and, “Agriculture and Community in the BSF River Basin, 1821-1974.” The 21 historic structures span a time range from 1820 through 1929 and are associated with historic Cumberland Farmsteads, as such represent the theme of “Early Settlement of the Upper Cumberland Plateau & Early Resource Extraction.” Many of these historic structures are associated with 5 National Register-eligible Cultural Landscapes, one National Register nominated Cultural Landscape, and 30+ contributing elements.

These historic structures and cultural landscapes provide a backdrop to the interpretation of early settlement at Big South Fork as it relates to:

#### I. Agricultural Settlement:

- Post Revolutionary Land Grants -- Salt Town/Beatty Well/Jonathon Blevins
- Community Development -- No Business/Parch Corn/Station Camp communities
- Remote Community versus Towns
- Politics & Enforcement - - Rome Boyatt saga/ Photos/Histories/ Artifacts.
- Roll of the Home Front during Civil War, 1861-1865 --Tackett Home site & cemetery/Twin Arches Niter Mine/Duck Shoals/ Photos/ Histories/Artifacts.
- Slavery -- Beatty well/ Photos/ Histories/Artifacts.
- Subsistence Farming -- Oscars/ Parch Corn/No Business

#### II. Commerce & Industry extractive settlement:

At least 23 locations provide a backdrop to the interpretation of early commerce & industry settlement. These locations include the possible National Register eligible Salt Town Cultural Landscape Beatty Well and

21 Niter Mine locations, several along Twin Arches Trail.

- Long Hunters 1780-1820s -- Charit Creek Lodge/StationCamp/Photos/Histories/Artifacts.
- Salt exploration 1818-1840 -- Salt Town/Beatty Well/Photos/Histories/ Artifacts.
- Niter Mining -- 1813-1820 & 1860-1865; Twin Arches/Slave Falls/Hatfield Ridge/Photos/Histories/ Artifacts.

### III. Postbellum Industrialization, Depression & Recovery 1865-1929 & 1930-45:

- Subsistence Farming -- Osacars/Loras/Litton-Slaven/Ranse Boyatt/ Photos/OralHistories/Artifacts.
- Logging --Stearns Logging camps/Stearns RR/Rome Boyatt Saga/Walnut Corners/Hulls Mill NW Ck./Christian Camp/ Cumberland Valley Band Mill/ Hatcher's Camp/Log Rafting/ Logging RRs/Sawdust piles/ locomotive pond (Terry Cem. Rd.) Photos/Oral Histories/Artifacts Coal Camps-Blue Heron/Worley/ Zenith/Comargo/Barthell/ Stearns RR/O&W RR/Photos/ Oral Histories/Artifacts.
- Moon shining -- East Rim to Leatherwood Ford Trail/Photos/ Oral Histories/Artifacts.
- Diversity on the Upper Cumberland Plateau --Worley/ Gernt/ Photos/ Histories/Artifacts.
- Arrival of the Rail Roads -- Southern RR/O&W RR/ Various Spur lines

### IV. Market Economy Continues to Drive Human Occupation

- Coal Mining shifting to Strip mining -- Off area effects/Photos/ Histories/ Out-Migration- Photos/ Oral Histories.
- Rise of Oil & Gas Exploration -- 1818 Beatty Well/1896 Forest Oil Co. Clear Fork, & Rugby, Joes Br/WWII exploration at Oil Well Br/Market forces (1973 OPEC)/ Opening of Station Camp Field/ Photos/ Histories/Artifacts.
- Creation of BSF & Focus on "eco-tourism" -- Photos/Oral Histories.

Threats that face the National Register structures come primarily from natural

degradation but occasional vandalism; unintentional fires; and graffiti occur from a lack of visitor understanding of the significance of the structures and their history.

Threats that face Cultural Landscapes come primarily from invasive exotic plant communities and loss or destruction of contributing elements. Interpretive efforts need to focus on educating visitors about the significance of Cultural Landscapes and the effects of allowing horses to roam across Cultural Landscapes spreading non-native seeds in manure; also, need to target illegal removal of hand-hewn blocks, boards to make benches & camp fire rings.

### Paleontology and Geology

Park managers at Big South Fork NRRRA are legislated to identify and preserve paleontological sites; also, preservation is defined as a part the National Park Service mission in NPS-28 guidelines. The enabling legislation for Big South Fork NRRRA specifically mentions preservation of its geological resources one time.

There are seven known locations where significant paleontological materials have been found.

These locations have produced numerous specimens of fossil plants which help to explain why and how this area came to be a rich concentration of coal as well as oil and gas deposits.

These fossils offer an opportunity to explain the geological processes that formed the Cumberland Plateau and how the ever constant weathering created the dissected topography that kept this area remote and difficult to settle. The hundreds of miles of clifflines here and the paleontological resources provide information about the theme of "Geological History of the Upper Cumberland Plateau:"

### Fossils & Historical Geological:

- Geological changes -- Leatherwood Ford/Worley/Photos/ Histories/ Specimens.
- Environmental conditions through time -- Leatherwood Ford/Worley
- Forest condition & composition/

Related flora/related fauna/ Photos/  
Histories/Specimens

Other Geological Resources used to  
make-

- Niter -- Twin Arches/ Photos/  
Histories/Specimens
- Gravel -- Williams Creek/Crusher/  
Photos/Histories/Specimens
- Fossil Fuels Coal -- How it is  
formed/Photos/  
Histories/Specimens/
- Fossil Fuels Oil & Gas -- How it is  
formed/Photos/Histories/  
Specimens

Threats that face paleontological sites  
are minimal. Few people collect the  
fossil resources found throughout this  
area. What is lacking, however, is a  
lack of understanding of the geological  
processes (e.g. how can we emphasize  
that something is 300 million years  
old?).

Cultural and natural resource  
interpretation are inextricably  
intertwined, from prehistory through  
the historic period. The cultural  
history is a history of the land use  
here, and the use of this area has and is  
being driven by a continuum of larger  
(global) market forces. Long hunting  
= salt making = Niter Mining = cottage  
industries & subsistence agriculture =  
logging = coal mining = oil & gas = eco-  
tourism. Still, today we find most of  
the economy in the Big South Fork area  
based on the big three: Oil & Gas, Coal,  
and Timber. With the establishment of  
BISO, a new economic opportunity has  
grown up in this area – Eco-tourism.

## **Natural Resource Management Issues within Big South Fork NRRRA**

### **The River**

Big South Fork National River and  
Recreation Area is centered around  
the Big South Fork of the Cumberland  
River. The enabling legislation  
highlights protection of the river and its  
tributaries including specifically stating  
that the NPS is to work with federal  
agencies and state agencies to protect  
the watershed because it defines the  
gorge as an area with a higher level of

protection (the National River) than  
the adjoining plateau (the Recreation  
Area).

The Big South Fork of the Cumberland  
River is the largest free-flowing river  
on the Cumberland Plateau; the river  
is biologically rich with over 70 species  
of fish and 26 species of mussels; the  
resources are regionally and globally  
significant including eight aquatic  
species and two plant species that  
are federally listed as threatened or  
endangered and depend on the natural  
river conditions to survive; the river is  
an important recreational component;  
and threats to the river include  
contaminated mine drainage within  
the park (originally 125 coal mine  
openings), oil and gas development,  
trails erosion, horse back riding impacts  
at river crossings, and external threats  
to water quantity and quality which is  
mostly wastewater, development, and  
coal mining. Resource Management  
spends a large portion of its time on  
river issues with external partners.  
Resource Management needs to work  
with Interpretation to communicate  
these issues to visitors.

### **Protection of plant communities**

The plant communities of Big South  
Fork are extremely diverse and contain  
more families of plants than even the  
Great Smoky Mountains. There are  
three federally listed plants and some  
of the most sensitive areas include  
the plants in and adjacent to the rock  
shelters, the river cobble bars, upland  
seeps, cove and riparian areas, and  
upland areas with native grasses.  
Issues include exotic plant control,  
native grass restoration, prescribed  
burning to promote fire dominated  
plant communities and native grasses,  
plant harvesting and exotic pest  
introductions. A new pest, discovered  
in Scott County in 2007, is the hemlock  
woolly adelgid. A Park Botanist  
spends a lot of time managing exotics,  
restoring native grasses, assisting  
with fire management planning,  
basic inventories, assisting the I&M  
program with protocol development,  
and reviewing projects for NEPA  
compliance (a focus of the GMP's  
implementation). Again, Resource

Management needs to work with the Interpretative Division to communicate these issues to visitors.

### **Oil and Gas Management**

Big South Fork NRRRA contains more oil and gas sites than any other unit in the NPS. There are 326 oil and gas sites in the park and approximately 20,000 acres of privately held minerals in the park's authorized boundary. The park's legislation allows for private mineral extraction on the plateau, but the gorge is protected from mineral extraction. The park is working on its first Oil and Gas Management Plan and an associated Environmental Impact Statement to be completed by 2009. Management of existing oil and gas sites and access will impact park resources and the NPS will have to accommodate access separate from the roads and trails identified in the GMP. There are 76 wells that are abandoned and the park will request money to plug wells and reclaim access roads. Eight wells are planned for plugging over the next three years. Resource management has one position that deals almost exclusively with management of oil and gas.

### **Minerals Management**

Big South Fork NRRRA contains extensive areas previously mined for coal and the impacts of past mining are impacting water quality. The nine worst contaminated mine drainage sites which are associated with historic mining have been evaluated and engineering plans were developed to treat the pollution. Costs for installing the nine systems will be between 5-10 million dollars. Funding has been requested for developing the contaminated mine drainage treatment systems and a draft NEPA document has been written. The impact of developing these treatment systems will include reopening old roads into the gorge, rerouting water courses, installing permanent treatment ponds or systems, and maintenance of the systems. One big challenge will be to integrate a treatment system at Worley while preserving portions of

the cultural history and minimizing the impact to the K&T railroad. Part of the park's legislation is to interpret the history of coal mining including Blue Heron, Worley, and the K&T Railroad. Interpretation needs to address the natural resource impacts of mining, and the public needs to be aware of the costs associated with cleaning up the environment.

### **Wildlife and Fisheries Management**

As a recreation area, the legislation for Big South Fork allows for hunting, fishing and trapping. Management of wildlife and fish populations at sustainable levels is accomplished with cooperation through state game agencies. Hunting and fishing include a significant portion of our local visitor use with fishing being the second most important recreational activity for residents from the local counties based on a recent phone survey. Observing wildlife was the number one activity. Restoration and protection of native species is a focus of resource management. Black bears were experimentally released into Big South Fork in the 1990s with support from both the TN and KY game departments. The population appears to be growing and the park is actively involved in dealing with visitor/bear issues, trash management, and the possible management of problem animals. Visitor awareness, education, and enforcement of backcountry and trash regulations are critical in providing for visitor safety and the protection of animals. Fisheries management has been minimal with recent efforts focused on inventories of fish and mussels and the artificial propagation and release of endangered mussels. BISO is funded in FY 07 and 08 to begin reintroducing mussels from mussel refugia throughout the area.

### **Geologic Resources**

The spectacular cliffs, deep gorges, and rock shelters are significant features in the park. The park's geology drives its biological and physical systems, is the basis for coal mining and oil and gas exploration, and the rugged

terrain challenges every aspect of park management. The abundance and exposure of geologic resources is an important aspect for park visitors and rock climbing is becoming a new recreational focus. The recent publication of The Dixie Cragger's Atlas, Climber's Guide to Tennessee includes 47 pages of climbing information at BISO. Presently, there is not a climbing management plan and climbing popularity will continue. Resource management has identified that there are sensitive resources associated with cliff edges, both top and bottom, and on some cliff types. Funds have been requested to do a climbing impact study to build on a recently completed study done at nearby Obed WSR.

Resource management staff spend a considerable amount of time on the compliance related to trail development and maintenance and developing options for protection of sensitive resources. One recent success story was the use of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service funding to fence off sensitive habitat for Cumberland sandwort while allowing visitor access to a large natural rock shelter known as Hippy Cave. The sandwort is thriving and visitors are still enjoying the site. Visitors need to be educated on proper trail use, protection of sensitive habitats, protection of cultural resources, leave no trace camping, and opportunities for volunteer site monitoring and volunteer trail maintenance.

### **Roads and Trails**

Development and use of park roads and trails is an important component of recreational use and administrative access for park staff. The GMP outlines the existing and proposed trails. Access to sensitive natural and cultural resource sites is encouraging damage to some areas and lack of adequate staff and funding is impacting the ability of the park to maintain high use trails, correct trail problems on steep areas and in wet areas along the river, and address hazard trees that resulted from the southern pine beetle outbreak in 2000-2001.

## Existing Conditions

*Among the beams are a number of mounted, preserved animal specimens that include a black bear, three owls, a beaver, a squirrel, three hawks, two foxes, a wood duck, a raccoon, and a wild boar.*

*This brief summary and evaluation establishes a point of departure for future personal services, media development, and facility proposals. The park's existing media should be inventoried and updated in the Media Inventory Database System (MIDS). (DO-6, page 9)*

### Facilities

#### Bandy Creek, Tennessee, Visitor Contact Station

The main visitor facility is at the park's Bandy Creek area in Tennessee, off Highway 297 and across from Bandy Creek Campground and near the horse stables. This small building was originally built in the 1980s to be a sales-and-display building for mountain culture crafts; however, soon after that idea failed, the building was converted to a visitor center. Inside this 700-sq. ft. facility are a few wall-mounted and ceiling-hung exhibits, an information/sales desk, and sales displays for the park's cooperating association, Eastern National. The building and exhibits are in good condition. There is no theater or any audiovisual components here.

Restrooms are within this building, with the restrooms' entrance doors located just outside the building's front door.

#### Stearns Railroad Depot, Kentucky, Visitor Desk

The park's second indoor visitor facility is a small, 200-sq. ft. desk/alcove within the Big South Fork Scenic Railway Depot in Stearns, Kentucky. This visitor contact station is one of a handful of opportunities for visitors in the train depot, most of whom are waiting for train rides from Stearns to the Blue Heron Mining Community (and its "ghost structures," exhibits, models, wayside exhibits, and trails) located within Big South Fork NRRRA. The Stearns visitor desk area does not have storage, quiet work space, or computer access for employees. The desk and exhibits are adequate, but the lighting (not provided by the NPS) is poor. Like Bandy Creek, there is no theater or any audiovisual components. Restrooms (which are not maintained by the NPS) are located nearby.



In Kentucky, the Big South Fork Scenic Railway brings passengers from the Stearns Depot (where the park maintains an information desk) to a train platform in the Blue Heron Community (pictured above) where visitors depart to explore this area.

## Outdoor Visitor Facilities

Bandy Creek Amphitheater -- located near the Bandy Creek Visitor Center, the amphitheater was built in the mid-1980s. It is in poor condition: its wood is beginning to decay, its wood benches ooze sap, and its audiovisual equipment (mirrored, rear-screen projection) is outdated and malfunctions. The amphitheater has no shade and it gets very hot on sunny days.

Bandy Creek Campfire Circle - - located behind the Bandy Creek Campground's B Loop, this shaded campfire circle is in good condition, but could be upgraded to add seating, electricity and AV.

Blue Heron Campfire Circle -- located within the Blue Heron Campground, this campfire circle is in a poor location: no dedicated parking, no electricity, no AV, and too many bugs.

Campfire Circles at Bear Creek Horse Camp and Station Camp Horse Camp --these campfire circles at the park's campgrounds for horses are in adequate condition, but could be upgraded.

Leatherwood Gazebo -- located next to the Leatherwood Ford parking area, this large gazebo has exhibit panels and bulletin cases. Rangers often start/present programs under this shelter.

## Interpretive Media

### MIDS Summary

Media conditions for all NPS areas are now listed in the servicewide Media Inventory Database System (MIDS); the listing of media conditions for Big South Fork NRRRA is listed in MIDS under BISO in the Southeast Region. The park's MIDS summary reflects the park's current media conditions. As of 2006, there were 87 records for interpretive media at BISO: 83 of the 87 records were for the park's Wayside Exhibits; one was for the Exhibits at Bandy Creek Visitor Center; one was for the official park unigrid brochure Publication; was for Planning (the GMP); and one was a Summary record to state that the park has no Historically Furnished areas. There are no MIDS records for any audiovisual programs at BISO; records need to be added for the park's 12 push-button-activated audio stations at Blue Heron Mining Community. The park's interpretive staff will continue to update their MIDS data when new media is installed.

### Website

The park maintains a well-developed website through the NPS Content Management System (CMS). Two Interpretive Division employees are trained in CMS and have authoring privileges.

## Exhibits

There were no exhibits in the Bandy Creek visitor facility when it was originally built for a craft shop. But in the mid-1980s, two wall-mounted exhibits were built here: one with information on the six counties around the park's perimeter that relate to the region's cultural history, and one photo display featuring resources and activities within Big South Fork NRRRA. There are also ceiling-hung panels that interpret sites nearby BISO and the park's outdoor recreation. Among the beams and upper areas are a number of mounted, preserved animal specimens that include a black bear, three owls, a beaver, a squirrel, three hawks, two foxes, a wood duck, a raccoon, and a wild boar. Generally, space is too limited within this visitor contact station for large displays.

The only exhibits at the park's Stearns Depot Visitor Desk area are a wall-mounted map and photo display, and two mounted, preserved animal specimens: a black bear and a barred owl.

Blue Heron Mining Community features many exhibits. Inside the open-air, roofed visitor facility where trains let off their passengers are more than 30 flat interpretive panels that combine historic photographs and text. There are also interpretive displays of mining equipment near the mine opening and on the tipple bridge. The Blue Heron area also has six "ghost structures" – roofed frames that show locations and sizes of historic buildings – that shelter interpretive panels, audio stations, and "artifact displays" during the visitor seasons. (Initial items purchased for use in these display cases were accessioned as museum items and were not properly protected and displayed. Recently, display items have been purchased for use in the cases which are not accessioned as museum items and are now considered only display items. Annual care for these display items requires they be removed at the end of the season and replaced in the spring of each year. These items are still exposed to high temperatures, high humidity, dirt and insect damage. Items will be replaced as necessary.)



Exhibits that were installed in the Bandy Creek Visitor Contact Station in the mid-1980s are in fair condition, but need to be replaced in the near future.

## Audiovisual Programs and Equipment

No HFC-produced audiovisual programs exist for Big South Fork NRRRA. At Blue Heron, however, a significant portion of the interpretive message is given through twelve (12) audio presentations at the sites' "ghost structures." These audio interpretive messages are composed of interviews with former Blue Heron residents which are edited and organized by themes.

Currently the audio programs are presented by individual solid state message repeaters, most of which are located at the ghost structures. These particular players are no longer supported by the HFC Depot system and will be replaced in 2008. A PMIS statement currently exists for the replacement of the entire audio system at Blue Heron with an ABAAS accessible system. While identified as a Fee Demo project, the projected cost for the project is in excess of \$100,000.00.

## Publications

Big South Fork NRRRA produces an annual park newspaper which is printed using Eastern National donation funds. Articles in the park newspaper include visitor orientation, safety, recreational opportunities, natural/cultural history, and current areas of management emphasis and concern.



When the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers planned to preserve and interpret the Blue Heron mining community in the 1970s, they built "ghost structures" to show the location and shape of the buildings that once stood in this former coal-mining community that thrived here in the early 1900s. These ghost structures contain exhibits and audiotapes of oral histories made by people who once lived in Blue Heron.

The park also has a number of site bulletins dealing with park recreational opportunities, park history, and the park's natural history. The park has a large stock of copies (enough to last for 5 years) of the free "A Guide to the Blue Heron Community" self-guiding booklet. Several other of the site bulletins and other free publications are out of print or exist in limited quantities; funding is not available at this time for additional printing. Some of these publications need to be reviewed and redesigned before they are reprinted in-house or through GPO printers.

The park also has produced a one-panel rack card for distribution at welcome centers in the region around the park. It was last reprinted in 2003 and supplies still remained as of 2007.

## Wayside Exhibits

The park has 83 wayside exhibits (according to the NPS Media Inventory Database System's records for BISO); 7 of these are trailhead exhibits and 9 are low profile interpretive wayside exhibits that were planned, designed, and installed in the mid-1980s. The other 60+ wayside exhibits are part of the indoor/outdoor interpretive panels at the Blue Heron Mining Community that were developed through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in the mid-1980s.

The park interpretive and maintenance divisions are currently working on an in-house project (using treated lumber, large-format prints, and plexi-glass covers) to plan, design, and produce about 80 roofed, bulletin board-like shelters and install them throughout the park. About 10 of these park orientation (with some local and site-specific information) panel/ shelters have been built and installed as of the summer of 2007. The project is scheduled for completion by 2008.

# Staffing, Personal Services, and Education Programs

## Staffing for Interpretive Division

In FY 2006 the park interpretive staff at Big South Fork NRRRA had the following positions:

Position Title	Status	Grade	FTE*	Incumbent
Chief of Interpretation	Permanent	GS-12	1.0	Steve Seven
Park Ranger (Interp)	Permanent	GS-9	1.0	Howard Duncan
Park Ranger (Interp)	Permanent	GS-9	1.0	Sue Duncan
Park Ranger (Interp)	Permanent	GS-9	1.0	Sherry Fritschi
Park Guides/s	Career Seasonal	GS-5	0.5	Brenda Deaver
Park Guides/s	Career Seasonal	GS-5	0.5	Lynn Thornton
Seasonal Interpreter/s?	Temporary	GS-5	0.3	Emaryn Thompson
			Total FTEs:	5.3

\*FTE stands for 'Full-Time Equivalency' (one work-year: 2,080 hours)  
 Plus, in FY 2006, 960 volunteer hours were donated to the Interpretive Division by 73 total Volunteers-In-Parks (VIPs). These volunteer hours include duties performed in the areas of cultural demonstrations, craft workshops, and visitor center assistance.



Park interpreters in period clothing demonstrate (and, in some cases, present classes on) a variety of fiber arts skills (e.g., wool spinning, weaving, and natural dyes), historic firearms (e.g., long rifles), music (e.g., dulcimers), and horseback skills.

## Personal Services

The interpretive staff listed on the preceding page presents formal interpretive programs, primarily during the spring, summer, and fall at a variety of locations throughout the park. Most interpretive programs are ½ hour to 1 hour long, and generally target family audiences. Some informal, 10 to 15-minute-long programs are presented after being announced at the two visitor contact station's public address systems. Adult and children's programs are advertised as such. Also, impromptu music programs, skits, puppet programs, and roving contacts happen at the Stearns Depot; and "two person conversations" are programmed at Blue Heron Mining Community.

## Walks

Walks are presented randomly throughout the year. Spring wildflower hikes are popular as are summer hikes to the Twin Arches and Angel Falls. Summer "walk" offerings include geology walks, horse/nature programs, and astronomy programs (given in cooperation with the University of Tennessee's Department of Education, and volunteers). Fall tree hikes and Leaf Tag are offered in October and November. The interpretive staff continues to adapt its programming to visitor types (and their attention spans), competition/coordination from nearby parks and forests, and current technologies. Low staffing levels and some poor visitor response have limited the numbers of walks offered.

## Roving Interpretation

The park's interpretive staff spends lots of time during spring, summer, and fall giving impromptu programs, providing directions and information on topics such as GMP implementation, trail usage and signage, safety warnings, and other visitor education.

## Evening Programs

Evening programs are presented in both the Tennessee and Kentucky

campgrounds on Saturday evenings between Memorial Day and Labor Day. The evening program topics deal with a variety of natural and cultural history and recreational themes. In recent years, the delivery of the evening programs have changed from slides/visuals to "talks" without visuals because it stays light later in the summer evenings and visuals on the screen are not clear enough. The staff has found that a "hands-on" approach works better for these programs.

## Demonstrations and Classes

Big South Fork's current interpreters present costume interpretation in the areas of late 1700s firearms (long rifles) and fiber arts such as wool spinning, weaving, and natural dyes. Staff also presents classes on these skill areas as well as music (dulcimer) and horseback demonstrations.

## Special Events

The park sponsors four special events through the year: "Spring Planting" in April, "National Trails Day" in June, "Story Telling Festival" in September, and "Cultural Heritage Month" in October (on all four Saturdays in October).

## Adult Level Presentations

Big South Fork interpreters coordinate with the staff at Historic Rugby to provide Elderhostel programs at Rugby and at the park. Cumberland Falls State Park also brings Elderhostel groups to the Blue Heron area of the park for programs. Roving interpretation to adjacent horse camps is used to carry forth the parks message concerning the GMP implementation, the newly authorized trail system, and threatened and endangered species protection and preservation.

## Children's Programs

Big South Fork has a very good and successful Junior Ranger program for young visitors who visit for one day or

an extended time period. However, work has been done to revise the Junior Ranger Program so there will now be a greater level of work done by the children rather than the parents. The Junior Ranger booklet was completely revised in 2008 to include new age-appropriate activities to better involve children in the park story. In addition to the traditional Junior Ranger badge, children can now earn a Big South Fork patch.

Rangers also conduct programs for scout groups, and provide children's interpretive programs randomly throughout summer months as visitation dictates and staffing allows. These programs can cover topics such as music, snakes, trains, astronomy, and cultural demonstrations.

## Education Programs

### Ranger-led Programs

Most ranger-led educational programs occur in the spring (after schools in the area complete their state required testing) and in the fall from October through mid-November. The most common program sites are Bandy Creek, Angel Falls (where the program covers park history, geology, river/hydrology, and macro-invertebrates), Twin Arches (where the program covers park history, geology, cultural history, archeology), and Blue Heron (where

the program covers coal mining and culture.) Most programs start from these four group sites.

### Off-site Programs

Off-site visits to some schools and libraries are made throughout the school year as requested. Generally, these programs are offered to schools and libraries in the counties adjoining Big South Fork NRRRA. These off-site programs include: Careers in the NPS, Survival Techniques, Long Hunters, Wildland Firefighting, Crafts, Snake Programs, and Spinning Demonstrations.

### Curriculum Materials and Lesson Guides

In 2006, the park received a Parks as Classrooms (PAC) grant for the development of curriculum based classroom activities. During the summer, eight teachers developed activities for students in Kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. The activities will be "field tested" in the spring of 2007 and the lesson plans will then be adjusted as deemed necessary. Once finalized, these lessons will be printed and distributed to area teachers (as well as being posted on the parks web site) to train teachers to do their own on-site programs.



For many years, the park staff has organized, advertised, and presented large-scale special events ranging from "Spring Planting" (top two photos) each April to "Story Telling Festival" (bottom left) each September, to "Cultural Heritage Month" (bottom right) each October.

## Partnerships

Camps, River Rental companies, etc.)

### Individuals

Volunteers in Parks (VIP): The park's paid staff is supplemented through the Volunteers in Parks (VIP) program which provides volunteers to all park divisions. Volunteers are recruited through word of mouth, local partner organizations and publications, and NPS websites. Many VIP positions require specialized training.

- Eastern National (EN) cooperating association
- Tour Southeast Kentucky
- Big South Fork Scenic Railway and Museum
- Historic Rugby

Horse Club members: Many Horse Club members visit the park because it has more than 180 miles of horse trails. Also, a number of housing subdivisions have been built outside the park's boundary that cater to horse owners by developing horse trails in the sub-divisions that connect to the park's horse trails. Some private horse camps and some of the horse owners assist the park with trail maintenance.

### Institutions

Big South Fork NRRA staff members work (formally and informally) to network with a number of federal, state, and local agencies, some colleges and universities, and several non-profit entities.

These institutions include:

- U.S. Forest Service
- Tennessee Technologic University
- Tennessee State Parks
- Kentucky State Parks
- University of Kentucky
- University of Tennessee
- Middle Tennessee State University
- Lincoln Memorial University
- Friends of the Big South Fork
- Chambers of Commerce
- Park Concessionaires (Horse

# Part 2: Future Interpretive Program

*This part of the LRIP describes the mix of facilities and services, both non-personal (media) and personal (programs), that are necessary to communicate park themes and facilitate identified visitor experiences. (DO-6, page 9)*





# The Comprehensive Interpretive Planning Process

*...the Comprehensive Interpretive Planning process is not a recipe, but a guide to effective, goal-driven planning. . . . The LRIP defines the overall vision and long-term (5 to 10 years) interpretive goals of the park. . . . (Directors Orders 6, page 6)*

Visitor experience is paramount in interpretive planning. Indeed, most of the comprehensive interpretive planning (CIP) process involves park staffs making choices that will enhance their visitors' experiences in how they interact with the park's resources and facilities, their interpretive media, their personal services opportunities, and their education programs.

In developing this Long-Range Interpretive Plan (LRIP) as part of the Comprehensive Interpretive Planning (CIP) process, planning workshops were held to collect input from employees who work in the park's interpretation, resource management, and maintenance divisions as well as participation from park partners. Beginning with Big South Fork's newly approved General Management Plan (GMP) of 2005 as a starting point, the park staff planned two workshops

where they made important choices to help direct the park's interpretive future.

During a 3-day LRIP Foundations Workshop in March 2007, the participants revisited some GMP foundation sections (e.g., the theme statements were developed in three levels); other foundation sections (e.g., visitor profiles, issues and influences, and existing conditions) were discussed during the workshop and revised later by the HFC Interpretive Planner and park staff. The results of the Foundations Workshop and its follow-up are on pages 5 to 36 of this LRIP.

A 4-day LRIP Recommendations Workshop was held in May 2007 to develop ideas and recommendations to improve the visitor experience for park visitors through the park's visitor facilities, personal services, education



A planning team – consisting of HFC media specialists, the park's interpretive staff, other park employees, and some park partners – forged this Long-Range Interpretive Plan in the spring of 2007.

programs, and interpretive media. This workshop also included input from the park's resource management and maintenance divisions.

The results from the Recommendations Workshop are summarized on the following pages along with a chart that shows a strategy to accomplish these recommendations over the next 5 to 10 years. Later in the CIP process, the park staff will devise a series of Implementation Plans that will be based on this LRIP's implementation charts.

## Facilities

*The potential use of facilities or media for education purposes should be explored here. (DO-6, pg 9)*

### Leatherwood Ford Interpretive Shelter

During the LRIP Recommendations Workshop in May 2007, the participants looked closely at the current use of the existing shelter at Leatherwood Ford and considered its potential as a multi-use Interpretive Shelter. The workshop planning team

recommends that the park:

- Remove the existing six bulletin cases and their support posts in the middle of the shelter.
- Add new smaller benches (beyond the existing three large benches) in the shelter that would allow seating for 25 to 30 visitors or a class of 30 students.
- Develop upright waysides along the path from the parking area to the shelter (and/or on one side within the shelter) that incorporate the information currently within the existing bulletin cases and introduce visitors to the park's four primary interpretive themes.
- Develop three or four rail-mounted wayside exhibits that interpret site-specific stories that illustrate the park's primary interpretive themes.
- Develop an interpretive audio message that can be activated by one or more pushbuttons connected to an audio system with a loudspeaker mounted at the inside peak of the shelter.
- Offer regularly scheduled interpretive programs (mostly from the interpretive division, but some programs may be from other divisions' employees) on peak visitation days and seasons.



The current Leatherwood Ford Shelter with bulletin cases will be rehabilitated in the future to include benches (that can seat up to 30 visitors) for interpretive programs, a few wayside exhibits, and an interpretive audio message.

## Bandy Creek Visitor Center

This facility will continue as the park's primary visitor contact station, exhibit area, and Eastern National sales outlet. As new exhibits are planned (see Exhibits recommendations on page 49) for this facility – hopefully sometime between 2012 and 2016 – the workshop planning team recommends that those future exhibit plans consider expanding this building's indoor space by enclosing the existing back porch. An alternative to enclosing this porch would be to use it as a space for interpretive programs, and connect it to an interpretive trail leading into the woods.

## Bandy Creek "Camp Store" Building

This building, that is next to the Bandy Creek Visitor Center currently houses an interpreter's office, some storage spaces, and a large open area occasionally used for school group programs and temporary displays. The workshop planning team recommends that park management consider upgrading this building to include an exhibit space and potentially a small indoor theater (for a park film), and

use it as the park's primary Education Program facility.

## Bandy Creek Amphitheater

The workshop planning team recommends that this facility (built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in the 1980s) be torn down and allow its grounds to convert to fields and forest. However, the option to "mothball" and later renovate this facility should be considered.

## Campground Campfire Circles

In the past decade, the park staff has developed two small "campfire circles" within its primary campgrounds at Bandy Creek and Blue Heron. Each campfire circle has a small platform/stage for interpreters and wood benches that can seat about 30 to 40 visitors. The workshop planning team recommends that the Bandy Creek campfire circle be upgraded to add more seating and an electrical outlet that park staff can use to play audiovisual equipment at selected interpretive programs. They also recommend that the campfire circle



The Bandy Creek Amphitheater was built by the U.S Army Corps of Engineers in the 1980s.

at Blue Heron be moved to a different campground location that will be selected by the interpretive staff and park management team, and that this new campfire circle include electrical outlets and ground lighting for visitor access.

### **Campground Entrance Stations**

The entrance stations at the two campgrounds mentioned above (Bandy Creek and Blue Heron) and at the park's two concession-operated horse camps (Station Camp and Bear Creek) present opportunities to improve visitor contacts with park campers. The workshop planning team recommends that these entrance stations – and their associated signs – be upgraded to improve their appearance and their ability to inform and direct visitors. Details of the upgrades will be worked out between the park concessionaire and the park's interpretation, maintenance, and law enforcement divisions.

### **Restroom Structures**

Restroom facilities at the park's campgrounds and other locations (e.g., Yahoo Falls Overlook and Leatherwood Ford) provide opportunities for presenting park information to visitors. The workshop planning team recommends that the park consolidate much of the information posted on the restroom's exterior walls into an upright modular sign system (see the Wayside Exhibits recommendations page) that will be located near the front of each restroom structure.

### **Information Station at Blue Heron Mining Community**

When visitors on the Big South Fork Scenic Railway arrive at the train platform at Blue Heron Mining Community, many visitors need

more orientation and information than is provided on the train's taped message they hear en route or from the park ranger who greets each train. To provide a visible location for the individualized information that many train passengers need, the workshop planning team recommends that the park build an Information Station or a small visitor contact desk on the platform that can be staffed during each trainload's 1 ½-hour visit.

Staffing would be contingent on having two interpreters at Blue Heron when the train is there. With only one interpreter, it would be necessary to have printed materials available and make this station a self-serve desk. At least one interpreter should be roving up the trail, at the mine opening, and on the bridge. The desk could be developed as a rolling structure which could be stored when not in use or when there are not enough employees to staff this information station.

### **Visitor Contact Stations at Partner Locations outside the Park Boundary**

The park's General Management Plan of 2005 stated that the park should explore partnerships to develop four satellite visitor contact stations outside the park boundary. The workshop planning team agreed that park management should pursue cooperative opportunities in: Helenwood, Tennessee (at the Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center); Whitley City, Kentucky (at the U.S.F.S. Stearns Ranger Station); Rugby, Tennessee (at the Historic Rugby Visitor Center); and Jamestown, Tennessee (at a proposed visitor facility near Interstate 40 and U.S. Route 127). Discussions should center around indoor and/or outdoor locations at each facility where exhibits and/or wayside panels on Big South Fork NRRRA's interpretive themes might be placed.

## **Interpretive Media (Non-Personal Services)**

*This section assesses the need for interpretive media which includes exhibits, waysides, signs, publications, audiovisual programs, historically furnished areas, and mass and/or electronic media. (Directors Orders 6, page 9)*

### **Website**

An ever-increasing percentage of park visitors are web users who visit the park's website ([www.nps.gov/biso](http://www.nps.gov/biso)) to access pre-visit information. Many of these "virtual visitors" never actually come to the park, but have their needs met solely through the park's website. Other visitors contact the park via telephone or mail to ask for basic park information and orientation materials. The objective of all pre-visit contacts is the same: to help visitors make informed choices before they leave home.

To satisfy the information needs of visitors who contact the park before they visit, park staff will continue to answer phone calls and mail requests in a courteous and timely manner. To satisfy the basic and in-depth needs of those who visit the park's website, the staff will implement the following recommendations:

- Maintain the upgraded website for Big South Fork NRRRA.
- Develop a formal comprehensive website plan that can be referred to for consistency and direction, particularly in the case of staff turnover.

### **Identity and Orientation Signs**

Before visitors can have a meaningful park experience, they need to find their way to the park, determine where the experience begins, and take care of their basic necessities. These visitor experience issues such as agency identity, wayfinding, and orientation must be addressed

before interpretation can be effective. Effective highway and road guide signs as well as pedestrian orientation and information are the first steps toward providing basic visitor experience needs.

Identity and orientation signs address several visitor experience goals. Road guide signs allow visitors to easily find and access the park's facilities and enjoy a full range of recreational activities. Coordinating signage for the park as well as its partner organizations that are involved in the visitor experience will allow visitors to have a seamless experience in the Cumberland Plateau region. Signs within the park will help visitors safely enjoy their visit by learning about and following safety guidelines and park rules and regulations.

To satisfy visitor needs for park identity and wayfinding, the staff will implement the following recommendations:

- Design a parkwide Sign Plan that identifies the park as a unit of the National Park System and provides orientation for all visitors, whether they enter the park in a vehicle, on a bicycle, on foot, or on horseback.
- Secure funding and implement the parkwide Sign Plan as described in the National Park Service UniGuide Sign Standards. The standards include Park Identity, Motorist Guidance, and Visitor Information signs. All NPS arrowhead logos should be updated to the new style.

### **Wayside Exhibits**

Most visitors to NPS areas get on-site interpretation through site-specific wayside exhibits. Big South Fork NRRRA currently has 14 wayside exhibits that were produced by Harpers Ferry Center (HFC) and installed in 1988, according to the NPS Media Inventory Database System (MIDS). All 14 waysides have screen-printed fiberglass embedded panels, and their

condition ranges from fair to poor. The park also has a few HFC-produced bulletin cases; the lexan doors on these bulletin cases are heavily crazed and need to be replaced. The design of all of the park's 1980s-era wayside exhibits is dated and does not conform to current NPS Identity Standards.

In 1994, HFC prepared a parkwide wayside exhibit proposal which identified the park's need for 56 wayside exhibits and 20 bulletin cases. In 1999, this parkwide wayside exhibit proposal was updated and revised to identify 65 wayside exhibits and 21 bulletin cases.

### Short-term Recommendations

The workshop planning team made these two short-term wayside exhibit recommendations:

- The park should submit a PMIS request (to be funded by NPS Fee Money) to plan, design, and produce the wayside exhibits proposed in the 1999 parkwide Wayside Exhibit Proposal. HFC can help the park prepare the cost estimate and include a 10 percent contingency that may be needed to adjust the number of additional wayside exhibits.
- The park should go through the HFC Wayside Exhibit Minor Rehab Program to replace those existing wayside exhibits that are in poor condition, until they can be eliminated.

### Leatherwood Ford Recommendations

Special attention should be given to Leatherwood Ford to revise the proposed wayside exhibits there. This site serves as a key visitor access area and offers an opportunity to connect visitors with important park themes and messages. Leatherwood Ford currently has a pavilion shelter that covers six bulletin cases that are set

on posts in a hexagonal configuration. These bulletin cases have no focused messages and the information is not site-specific. The pavilion also has a river level electronic gage (and this gage will remain in the future). The park staff plans to use this pavilion shelter in the future as a place to conduct short interpretive talks. Toward this end, the workshop planning team made the following recommendations for Leatherwood Ford:

- Remove the bulletin cases from the center of the pavilion. Some of these bulletin cases – with legs or wall-mounted – can be re-used elsewhere in the park.
- Create a new park orientation panel with map and re-use one bulletin case, and place them in the space between the pavilion's benches that are nearest the Muir Trailhead.
- Create low-profile, site-specific wayside exhibits and mount them on the pavilion's outside railing, directing visitor attention toward the river, geologic features, forest diversity, and recreation opportunities found in the park and, in particular, Leatherwood Ford.

### Restrooms' Recommendations

At the restroom facilities in the park's campgrounds are wall-mounted bulletin boards and regulatory signs that convey park safety and regulation information. These signs are very text heavy, unorganized, and unattractive. The park also has restroom facilities at non-campground sites such as Yahoo Falls Overlook and Leatherwood Ford. The workshop planning team made the following recommendation regarding the park's restroom facilities:

- The park should consider making the presentation of this safety and regulatory information more concise, organized, standardized, and visually compelling. By using the NPS Visitor Information Signs (VIS) system (or at least model

the design of the park's in-house-created materials after the VIS system), the park could better display this information. Use of the VIS system should limit the type and kind of information to be displayed, and confine this information to one location rather than letting it spread across the restroom's exterior walls.

### Blue Heron Community

The outdoor exhibits at the train platform and within shelters at Blue Heron Community were created by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in the 1980s before the Corps turned operation of the park over to the National Park Service. The Blue Heron site interprets a mining community and operation through "ghost structures" (which outline the footprint of former buildings), oral history audio recordings, miner/family life-size silhouettes, historic objects, and text panels. The oral history messages are very effective in helping visitors understand and enjoy the site; however, the multiple layers of interpretive media tend to overwhelm visitors who arrive by train (or by personal vehicle) who have only a short period of time to

spend at the site. Also, visitors seem to have difficulty knowing where to begin their visit or how to navigate the site.

The following evaluation of the interpretive exhibits at Blue Heron, based on observation of visitor site-touring patterns and tendencies, were made by the HFC Wayside Exhibit Planner based on a site visit in 1999 and his participation in this LRIP planning workshop in 2007:

1. The exhibits were designed with the expectation that greater numbers of visitors would visit the site than actually do. The exhibits are generally larger in scale than necessary and have many unnecessary duplicate panels.
2. Typical exhibit label length is too long and, in instances where exhibits have audio recordings, the labels are redundant.
3. The exhibits try to share too much information and often miss emphasizing site-specific content.
4. The oral history recordings are the most effective interpretive medium used on the site. They are powerful and help the site come alive. All interpretive efforts should enhance rather



The planning team made a number of recommendations for improving the existing exhibits at the Blue Heron Community's train platform and for the exhibits and audio programs in the area's "ghost structures."

than detract from this interpretive technique. In a few instances, however, such as the mine shaft exhibit, the recording is too long and should be shortened.

### Blue Heron Community Recommendations

- Replace the first *Welcome to Blue Heron* exhibit (one of five) with a National Park Service arrowhead logo and Big South Fork NRRA identification sign. This will reinforce, as visitors arrive by train or car, that the Blue Heron Mining Community is a national park area.
- The four other *Welcome to Blue Heron* exhibits could remain, although the text should change to emphasize the significance of the site, what there is to do and see, and invite visitors to learn more by entering the exhibit area.
- The orientation map exhibit should be replaced with three new exhibit elements:
  - A. A site-specific map that is three-dimensional in appearance
  - B. A new exhibit introducing the purpose and interpretive philosophy of the exhibits and ghost structures, similar to the *Blue Heron Today* exhibit
  - C. A new exhibit introducing the oral history component of site interpretation, similar to the *Oral History* exhibit. These three panels will fit in the existing orientation map exhibit frame. The existing *Blue Heron Today*, *Oral History*, and *They Knew Blue Heron* exhibits could then be replaced or eliminated.
- The two graphic panels about the saw mill and railroad that are displayed on the wall near the NPS office could be moved closer to the main exhibit area. They could be mounted on the blank wall next to the gift shop.
- The *Blue Heron Community* exhibit could be improved by revising the label copy, making it more concise. Currently, the exhibit is not accessible to visitors in wheelchairs or to small children. A redesign of the exhibit could mount the label copy on the rail outside of the enclosed glass case, making it accessible to all visitors.
- The space between the *Blue Heron Community* exhibit and the *Mining Technology* exhibits could focus on the historic overview of the site. The existing exhibits, *Railroad, Timber, and Stearns*, could be redesigned and rewritten consolidating the existing exhibit information into a more compelling and concise presentation. The three existing four-sided exhibit frames could be used to display the revised text and graphic arrangements on timber, coal mining, the railroad, and the Stearns Company.
- The existing *The Stearns Coal & Lumber Company* exhibit could be moved from the *Mining Technology* exhibit space to the blank wall in the overview exhibit space. The exhibit could be revised to serve as a timeline synopsis of the three historic overview exhibits. The intent is to provide visitors with a quick read of the site's historic significance, allowing visitors to move on more rapidly, yet be informed.
- The *Mining Technology* exhibits could be made more site-specific. The three wall-mounted *Mining* exhibits could be revised to be less general and more Blue Heron, Mine #18 specific. A new exhibit, using the *Blue Heron Today* exhibit frame, could answer the question of why the mine is called Blue Heron. It could be mounted on the wall where the *The Stearns Coal & Lumber Company* timeline is presently located. The *Mining* exhibit case could remain.

- The *Tipple Operation and Coal size and Use* low-profile exhibits could be revised. The *Tipples* low-profile exhibit could be eliminated to reduce information overload.
- The *Miner (1939)* photo exhibit could be replaced in-kind. The three duplicate, low-profile, photo-key exhibits could be replaced by one large low profile exhibit. Using one of the existing low-profile engineering drawing exhibit bases, the photo-key exhibit could be recreated, but with an interpretive message drawing attention to the site-specific nature of the miner photograph.
- The ghost shelter interpretation should be treated the same throughout the Blue Heron complex. The label panels in all the exhibit object cases should be revised to more concisely complement the oral history audio recordings. Each label should be written as site-specifically as possible, given available reference material. In those shelters where only an interpretive panel exists, the label copy should be simplified to include a title, a short quote, and concise text; graphics should be used that are site-specific.
- All the site-specific upright exhibits could be revised. Those with photographs could be replaced in-kind, with the addition of captions to further to improve their site-specific emphasis. Text-only exhibits, like the *Sandhouse*, could be revised for brevity or to strengthen interpretive content. Text with varied graphics exhibits, like the *Mining*, *The Coal Car*, and *The Shop*, could be written more concisely and compellingly, and redesigned to make the best use of existing graphics.
- A Sign Plan should be created for the Blue Heron site. All wayfinding signs and interpretive signs should be evaluated to:
  - Emphasize the park's identity
  - Enhance the overall visitor experience—learn how visitors use and enjoy the site and adjust the exhibits and wayfinding accordingly
  - Identify the most effective and essential exhibits
  - Identify exhibits that can be made effective through modification
  - Identify exhibits that can be eliminated
  - Establish a logical visitor flow pattern for viewing the exhibits
  - Establish an effective hierarchy of information
  - Maintain the existing exhibit design

### Long-term Recommendations

The workshop planning team made the following long-term wayside exhibit recommendations to be accomplished after the funding requested through the PMIS requests is approved:

- Once funding is secured for the wayside proposal stage, arrange for a Wayside Exhibit Planner and a Wayside Exhibit Designer to visit the park and – along with the park staff – review, refine, and approve (through the BISO Supt.) a parkwide Wayside Exhibit Proposal.
- Once funding is secured for the wayside planning stage, let a contract through HFC to plan, design, and prepare production-ready files for all the proposed wayside exhibits.
- Once funding is secured for the wayside production stage, let a contract through HFC to produce and ship the final panels and bases to the park (for park maintenance to install).

## Exhibits

Big South Fork NRRRA has only two designated indoor visitor contact points – Bandy Creek Visitor Center in Tennessee, and Stearns Depot Visitor Center in Kentucky. With an interpretive staff of only four permanent employees, it is difficult to staff these two facilities.

### Bandy Creek Visitor Center

Few visitors to Big South Fork NRRRA start their visit at the Bandy Creek Visitor Center. But for those who do come to this facility in Tennessee, it is their only place inside the park boundaries to get the entire park story at one location. However, the existing exhibits at Bandy Creek primarily emphasize the park's recreational opportunities and touch on the park's animal life. These exhibits do not cover the park's geologic story, barely mention the park's plants and other natural resources, and defer the park's cultural history stories to organizations outside the park.

The workshop planning team made the following long-term exhibit recommendations:

- Request funding for new exhibits at the Bandy Creek Visitor Center through a PMIS request.
- Once funding is secured, arrange for an Exhibit Planner (and/or an Exhibit Designer) to visit Bandy Creek and – with the interpretive staff – devise an Exhibit Schematic Concept Plan.
- Let a contract through HFC to plan, design, and prepare an Exhibit Plan that covers all four of the park's primary interpretive themes.
- Let a contract through HFC to produce, ship, and install the new exhibits at Bandy Creek.

### Stearns Depot Visitor Desk

The Stearns Depot visitor desk is staffed during the spring summer, and fall when train trips to Blue Heron Mining Community are available to visitors on the Big South Fork Scenic Railway. The park exhibits associated with the Stearns Depot are taken out and stored each winter.

The workshop planning team made the following long-term exhibit recommendations:

- When requesting funds for new exhibits at the Bandy Creek Visitor Center through a PMIS request, consider adding Stearns Depot in the PMIS request.
- Once funding is secured, have the Exhibit Planner (and/or an Exhibit Designer) visit Stearns Depot to devise a Schematic Concept Plan for this information desk and exhibit area.
- Attach an amendment to the contract for Bandy Creek exhibits to plan and design the NPS desk area in Stearns Depot so that they cover the park's four primary interpretive themes.
- Attach an amendment to the contract for Bandy Creek exhibits to produce, ship, and install the new exhibits at Stearns Depot.

### Exhibits in Partners' Visitor Centers

Once the exhibit upgrades in the NPS facilities recommended on the previous page are accomplished, the park staff should explore the potential for partnerships to develop four satellite visitor contact stations outside the park boundary as stated in the park's General Management Plan of 2005. These visitor centers operated by partners might include:

-- the Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center near Helenwood, Tennessee

-- the U.S.F.S. Stearns Ranger Station near Whitley City, Kentucky

-- the Historic Rugby Visitor Center in Rugby, Tennessee

-- a proposed visitor facility near Interstate 40 and U.S. Route 127 near Jamestown, Tennessee

The superintendent and park management team plan to meet with the managers of these visitor facilities and discuss the potential for indoor exhibits and/or outdoor exhibits at each location that would cover the park's primary interpretive themes. Depending on the outcome of these discussions, the workshop planning team made the following long-term recommendations:

- After the potential for exhibits has been determined, request funding (through the PMIS?) for portable exhibits for the partners who would allow space in their facilities for an NPS exhibit.
- Once funding is secured, arrange for an Exhibit Planner (and/or an Exhibit Designer) to visit the partner facilities and – with the park interpretive staff and partner's staff – devise a modular, portable Exhibit Concept Plan that can be used at multiple locations.
- Let a contract through HFC to plan, design, and prepare an Exhibit Plan for these modular, portable exhibits that cover all four of the park's primary interpretive themes.
- Let a contract through HFC to produce, ship, and install these modular, portable exhibits.

### Portable Exhibits

The park has a number of needs for portable exhibits. These portable exhibit needs include:

-- exhibits that can be transported to schools and businesses in the six counties that surround the park to

introduce the park's themes and resources, as well as promote public stewardship.

-- exhibits that can be transported to locations within the park for special events and set up under tents and shelters that interpret seasonal topics and special event themes.

-- an exhibit to be custom-made for use under the Leatherwood Ford Shelter that has tangible and low-tech interactive exhibits that interpreters can use during and between programs.

The workshop planning team made the following long-term recommendations:

- Request funding (through the PMIS?) for the portable exhibits described above.
- Once funding is secured, arrange for an Exhibit Planner (and/or an Exhibit Designer) to visit the park and – with the park interpretive staff – devise an Exhibit Concept for each of these portable exhibits and then plan, design, and prepare an Exhibit Plan for all these exhibits.
- Let a contract through HFC to produce, ship, and install these portable exhibits.

### Audiovisual Programs

Big South Fork NRRRA does not have an audiovisual program (i.e., "park film"), as the park does not have a theater or other dedicated space for a parkwide overview. However, the Blue Heron Mining Community in the Kentucky area of the park interprets much of their history through twelve (12) audio presentations at the sites' "ghost structures." These audio messages are composed of interviews with former Blue Heron residents which are organized by themes.

Besides visiting and recommending audiovisual improvements at the Blue Heron Community, the workshop planning team addressed a number of other audiovisual issues in the

park and made the following long-term audiovisual observations and recommendations:

### **Station Camp Horse Camp (and all park campgrounds)**

During discussions at Station Camp Horse Camp (that included discussing visitor information needs at all the park's campgrounds), a need was identified for information to be delivered to visitors via recorded audio from a central location. The HFC Audiovisual Equipment Specialist gave the workshop planning team the following options, information (including advantages and disadvantages), and recommendations for delivering this information (Note: Before this Team Draft LRIP goes to Final Draft LRIP, the park staff needs to choose which of the following options they want in the Final LRIP.):

#### Option 1: Audio Stations at the Park's Restroom Facilities

The workshop planning team considered the future installation of an audio system in many of the park's restroom facilities, with the speaker over the restrooms' porch area and with the equipment in the facilities' middle storage room. The audio message's primary purpose would be to interpret the events that led to the park's creation; this audio message would support the orientation map and interpretive panels to be created for each restroom facility. A new option being considered for implementation in 2009 is the use of podcasts as a lower cost alternative.

**Information:** Although the restroom facilities are generally within 60 feet of some camp sites, the design and installation of such an audio system should minimize the potential auditory intrusion into nearby campsites and adjacent areas. Audio emanating from one or more loudspeakers at the restroom should have a nominal level of no more than 86dBA at 12" (= typical city street noise <sup>1</sup>) from the loudspeaker. This will allow the

level to diminish to 50dBA at 50' (= conversational speech at a distance of 1M <sup>1</sup>). The level at approximately 8' (recommended minimum distance for vandal resistance) will be approximately 75dBA. (= loud domestic radio <sup>1</sup>) The system should also include restrictive elements such as the ability to restrict replay of the message for 1-2 minutes after its last play, and a timer mechanism that would make the audio message unavailable between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m.

**Advantages:** Available to all visitors who visit the park's restrooms (i.e., just about everybody), especially those who are waiting for a friend or relative who is using the restroom a little longer.

**Disadvantages:** The systems are prone to vandalism (and repair costs), can be targets of mischief (playing the message repeatedly), and some noise intrusion into adjacent areas is inevitable.

### **Station Camp Horse Camp (and all park campgrounds)**

#### Option 2: Recorded Message Handout/s

The workshop planning team also considered creating compact discs (CDs) and cassette tapes (limited) to tell the "creation of the park" story as well as other park messages (stories, interviews, etc) that could be included as separate chapters on the recording. These CDs could be distributed at a variety of park locations to visitors so they can playback the messages at their convenience and within their vehicle.

**Information:** Other park messages (stories, interviews, etc) could be included as separate chapters on the recording.

**Advantages:** This method would provide visitors with a tangible memento for visitors to take home and, perhaps, share with other potential visitors.

**Disadvantages:** Not all visitors will have the playback equipment necessary to listen to the message; a continuing

investment is required in maintaining a stock level of the recordings.

### Option 3: an FM Broadcast (RF)

An additional method for disseminating the recorded information without audible intrusion is broadcast via short range FM Radio transmission.

Information: This system would be installed in as central a location as possible within the campground. This would assure an even distribution of the signal throughout the vicinity. The system might be solar powered. Equipment would be enclosed in unidentified cabinetry on a pole or tower which would also support the transmission antenna and solar panel.

Advantages: This method will allow visitors to listen to the recorded message inside their vehicle or on portable radios.

Disadvantages: More expensive than the other methods described above; some visitors may not have operable FM radios, or decide they don't want to adjust their radio to the FM station.

Recommendation: (to be determined by the park staff)

### **Leatherwood Ford**

During discussions at Leatherwood Ford, a need was identified for information to be delivered there to visitors via recorded audio from a central location. The HFC Audiovisual Equipment Specialist gave the workshop planning team the following information and recommendations: When possible replacing the existing orientation and bulletin boards under the shelter at Leatherwood Ford, one or more pushbuttons to start the message playback should be included. The pavilion at Leatherwood Ford is not near any camping area; therefore, an audio station located there should not prove intrusive to adjacent areas given proper design and level setting.

However, these systems are prone to vandalism and can be targets of mischief (playing the message repeatedly), noise intrusion into adjacent areas, and repairs due to vandalism.

- The system should include a compact, surface-mounted speaker inside shelter's peak.
- The speaker assembly should be enclosed inside a heavy-gage, expanded, stainless steel housing with tamper proof hardware to protect the speakers from vandalism and/or theft.
- The system should include restrictive elements such as no replay for 1-2 minutes after its last play, and the system should be made unavailable between 10:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m.

### **Bandy Creek Amphitheater**

Because the park staff has decided to discontinue use of (and possibly tear down) the amphitheater at Bandy Creek, the existing electronics and audiovisual equipment should be surplus.

- If the park staff decides to eventually replace the amphitheater, they should obtain the design services of either Denver Service Center or a nearby (Knoxville, Nashville, Memphis, Lexington, Louisville) architectural firm that has expertise in designing outdoor performance venues. Collaborating with these groups will maximize the effectiveness of choices for a new structure for outdoor presentations.
- The park staff might also contact two or more NPS areas (e.g., GRSM, BLRI, SHEN) with similar services and visitor demographics and who have successful amphitheater operations.

### Former Headquarters Facility

The room specified during the site visit is small, and appears to be poorly ventilated. The park staff should consider demolition of the wall between this room and the room adjacent to it doubling the size of the space. An HVAC professional should be consulted as to the best means of ventilation for the combined space with the door closed. Additionally, one of the two remaining entrances should be eliminated.

An audiovisual system with multiple uses and a ceiling hung video projector can then be installed in the space for presentation to visitors and/or park staff of various orientation and informational video programs as well as computer imagery such as MS Power Point.

### Blue Heron Mining Community

During discussions at the Blue Heron Mining Community, park staff said that the existing pushbuttons are not always easy to see by visitors. Although the park staff would like to relocate buttons near the steps or entry of each ghost structure, it is recommended that a single button be added to each location in the position desired. Start buttons can operate in parallel configuration (i.e., start from either location). Also, the existing button 'stations' should be repainted *fire engine red*.

Further, it is recommended that the existing long audio messages in these ghost structures be assessed by an audiovisual producer/director for beneficial content. Recommendations can be made from a report resulting from such a review.

For audio stations that are too loud, these stations should each be measured for their individual acoustic output (peaks). Physical distances between adjacent audio stations should be measured. Then each station's maximum volume level should then be set so as to interfere as little as possible with adjacent areas based on the measurements. (Sound level is reduced by 6dB each time distance is doubled from the source).

Ambient audio systems could be installed for the Tipple and other sites. Such systems are fairly simple to design and install. Heavy machinery such as might have been used in the tipple generated a great deal of noise with a fairly wide acoustic bandwidth. In order to represent such sounds accurately, loudspeakers of generous proportions and several amplifiers with considerable output power will be required. The estimated cost for an Ambient System at the Tipple is \$50,000 including COR Services.

### Accessibility

#### Captioning

- The NPS Audiovisual Accessibility Initiative for Visitors with Disabilities was distributed October 20, 2006. The initiative requires all audiovisual presentations be captioned, audio described, and equipped with hearing assistance devices. Captioning for indoor audiovisual programs may be accomplished by either displaying the captions directly on the image of a video presentation or by means of a caption display panel for use in audiovisual presentations or audio only presentations.
- Providing captions for an audio station located outdoors will require fabrication of a custom stainless steel enclosure with a viewing panel in front. The enclosure will need to be vandal proof, ventilated (while remaining vandal proof), and include access points for power and signal cables. Additionally a video player will required to support the captions.
- Equipment necessary to upgrade an audio station to provide captions includes a media player, weather proof video display, weather resistant handset, cabinetry to secure the video display. An 8.4" inch (diagonal measure) standard

definition video display, rated NEMA 4 for outdoor use and operating on 12VDC is available. Add to that a flash media based audio/video playback device that also operates on 12VDC. The player will provide ample audio level for a loudspeaker and/or handset. Cost for such an assembly is detailed below. Not included is cost of a structure or cabinet in which to house the station equipment.

EQUIPMENT COSTS:		
a)	Weatherproof 8.4" Video Monitor	\$1623.00
b)	Digital Video Player	\$ 450.00
c)	Flash Media (4gb)	\$ 50.00
d)	Weather resistant telephone handset	\$ 104.00
e)	Fabrication materials	\$ 100.00
f)	Assembly labor	\$1110.00
g)	Production Costs (addition of captions)	<del>\$2500.00</del>
		\$5937.00

These figures do not include a power source: either commercial power through a 12VDC power supply or a solar panel with batteries.

### Hearing Assistance

- In addition to captioning, hearing impaired visitors are also served by Hearing Assistance Systems. Hearing assistance is a method by which the normal audio signal of any given audio program is delivered through a small acoustic transducer (loudspeaker, headset, earphone, etc.) which is then placed by the user as closely as desired. Hearing Assistance is provided through a visitor's telecoil equipped hearing aid or by using personal listening devices such as handsets, headphones, earbuds, sound wands, etc. available at each audio or audiovisual station. The signals sent via either method are an amplified version of the main program.
- Telecoil equipped hearing aids receive audio signals transmitted by means of an inductive loop system. The loop is a single wire that circumnavigates or encircles

the area within which the message is to be heard. This may be an area in front of a single exhibit or an entire room. Such loops will work outdoors as well as indoors.

- Many installations include wired audio devices such as handsets or wand type listening devices. These devices are usually connected to a small audio amplifier (less than 10 watts output) that reproduces the normal audio of the audiovisual program.

### Audio Description

- Audio description is most often provided through personal listening devices such as handsets, headphones, earbuds, sound wands, etc. Recent audiovisual exhibits are being recorded with an alternate sound track which includes both the primary audio program and the audio description recording. The primary and alternate programs are usually selected by separate Visitor operated pushbuttons.
- Visitors with vision loss must be made aware of the availability of these services.
- In an indoor situation a brief attraction audio loop can provide the information verbally (e.g., "An audio described version of this message is available by pressing the square button directly to the right of this information station" (potential annoyance) or similar instruction perhaps in Braille on associated text panels.

## Publications

Visitors typically use publications in two ways: for information and orientation during their visit, and for in-depth interpretation following their visit. The majority of on-site publications are free-of-charge, with the primary one being the park's NPS unigrid brochure. To help upgrade the park's free publications program, the interpretive staff should take the following actions:

- Request that HFC redesign the park's NPS unigrid brochure. Although the park map on the back side of the existing brochure needs only a few minor updates, the brochure's front needs a major redesign for the following reasons:

-- The park's themes have been updated during the LRIP planning process to cover the park's geology (through its "Rocks and River" theme), its plant and animal resources (through its "Preserving Diversity" theme), its cultural stories and resources (through its "People Shaping the Land" theme), and the park's recreational opportunities (through its "Educate to Recreate" theme). These four themes now have a balance in the park's redesigned unigrid brochure.

--The brochure's cover photograph has been replaced. The previous cover photo shows the Big South Fork of the Cumberland River near its confluence with Lake Cumberland as seen at the Yahoo Falls Overlook. This image shows the river where it is greatly affected by the "pool levels" of Lake Cumberland, and the existing cover shows an un-natural looking river at "low pool." Another horizontal photo has been taken where the river is wild and turbulent

and where the park's bluffs are more prominent.

--The brochure's previous photographs emphasized the use of the river in the park; this was appropriate when the park was first created in the 1970s. However, over the past 30 years, use of the river has decreased (especially on the southern end where whitewater conditions are good only in spring) while expansion of the park's hiking trails and horseback-riding trails has greatly increased the land-based use of the park. Photos in the redesigned brochure reflect that change in the recreational uses of the park.

- Purchase or lease new computers and printers to print park's Site Bulletins in color.
- Upgrade the design and content of the park's Site Bulletins (e.g., River Guides).
- Develop new Site Bulletins on park resource management issues (e.g., bears, trees).
- Maintain a supply of the park's Rack Card and distribute it to venues outside the park.
- Revise the park's Jr. Ranger Program booklet, using the new kit as a model. (accomplished in 2008)
- Reprint the park newspaper using Eastern National funds once a year.
- Print the Blue Heron Hymnal book through Eastern National funds as a sales item.
- Develop a "Behind the Scenery" book through Eastern National or KC Publications.

## Personal Services

### Interpretive Staff

Big South Fork NRRRA's interpretive staff consists of three full-time permanent Park Rangers (interpreters), two career-seasonal Park Guides (interpreters), and one or more seasonal Park Guides; all were under the direction of the park's Chief of Interpretation. These employees present interpretive programs, provide roving contacts, staff the visitor centers, plan and support special events, and perform a myriad of other interpretive duties.

However, when the current Chief of Interpretation retired in 2008, the park's Core Analysis results determined that the park will not refill this position. During the Recommendations Workshop, the planning team came up with the following considerations:

- A recent Core Operations recommendation has placed Interpretive staff under the Chief Ranger creating a new Division of Visitor Services.
- Management has re-described one of the Park Ranger interpreter (GS-9) positions to a "lead" Interpreter (GS-11), Branch Chief position (currently in place) that will provide technical supervision and day-to-day guidance for the interpretive staff.
- Recommend that park management use some of the GS-12 savings to return the park's two career-seasonal employees to a full 11 months working in the Interpretive Division.

### Personal Services and Education Programs

- Provide training and opportunities for employees from other park divisions (protection, resource management, and maintenance) to present short interpretive talks.

These 10- to 15-minute talks could be presented in the Leatherwood Ford shelter and would feature topics with which other divisions are familiar (e.g., water safety, archeology, preservation).

- Provide stipends for resource-related subject-matter-experts to present public seminars and for craft persons demonstrating and teaching traditional crafts.
- Plan for additional (temporary) staffing at Big South Fork NRRRA that may be part of the National Park Service's Centennial Initiative. Check with the Southeast Regional Office for more information and updates on the status of this potential staffing opportunity.
- Request – through the Southeast Regional Office – that a Volunteer Program/Special Events coordinator position to be established at Big South Fork NRRRA. Also, request through the Southeast Regional Office for an increase in the park's Volunteer-In-Parks (VIP) funds.
- Request – through the Southeast Regional Office or the Parks As Classroom program – that an Education Program coordinator position to be established at Big South Fork NRRRA.



The park will continue partnering with the Big South Fork Railway to bring thousands of visitors from Stearns, Kentucky, to Blue Heron Community each year.

## Partnerships

Big South Fork NRRRA’s interpretive staff and park management will improve the following partnerships as described below:

### Eastern National Cooperating Association

Eastern National (EN) has been the park’s officially recognized cooperating association since 1972. The association’s purpose is “*assisting or advancing historical, scientific, educational or interpretive work. . . .*” The association sells a variety of publications and other educational items. The association also hires a part-time employee at the Bandy Creek Visitor Center who assists with some interpretive functions. Over the next five to ten years, the park will seek to

improve this partnership by working to expand the Association stock at the bookstore, expand the number of park related sales items and work towards the writing of a Story Behind the Scenes type book for the park.

### U.S. Forest Service

When staffing levels permit, the park will investigate the possibility of providing a uniformed presence in the Stearns District Ranger Office of the Daniel Boone National Forest. The park service personnel would be available to assist Forest Service staff in providing visitors approaching the park the information they need to plan a safe and enjoyable visit in the region.

This would be in support of the concept of satellite contact stations as presented in the park’s General Management Plan.

## **Friends of the Big South Fork**

The Friends of Big South Fork need to become a viable and working organization focused on providing support for un-funded park based projects. To date the Friends have provided little real support for park projects. The park needs to aggressively work with the Friends to make them a true friends group, or sever their relationship and let the Friends continue their evolution into a regional tourism organization.

## **Chambers of Commerce**

The park will continue its membership and active participation in the area's Chambers of Commerce organizations. Maintenance of such active memberships allows the park to continue the dissemination of relevant park management information to the adjacent communities. Staffs of area Chambers of Commerce should be included in park orientation and training sessions.

## **Park Concessionaires (Horse Camps, River Rental companies, etc.)**

Park interpretive staff will investigate the possibility of including park concessionaire staff in any interpretive training and park orientation. As staffing levels permit, park staff will work with horse camps the back country lodge and adjacent horse camps continuing the roving interpretation and to ultimately provide evening interpretive programs on a regular basis.

## **Big South Fork Scenic Railway and Museum**

The park currently has a very strong and good working relationship with the Scenic Railway. The park will continue to provide staffing and support when possible as the Railway works to develop new rider options

into the park. The park will continue to operate a visitor information desk in the Railway Depot and as budget and staffing levels improve will increase the coverage.

## **Historic Rugby**

Within existing staffing limitations, park staff will provide interpretive assistance with several special events held yearly at Historic Rugby. Park staff will investigate and if feasible, initiate a cost recovery fee interpretive program which will apply to programs given at Historic Rugby and for other park partners. Park staff will also work with staff at Historic Rugby to involve them on a regular basis with the evening interpretive programs given at the Bandy Creek Campground.

## **State Parks**

The staff at Big South Fork NRRRA and the staffs of the region's state parks in Tennessee and Kentucky will continue to work together to support each other's interpretive programs and special events. The staff at Big South Fork will also work to involve these state parks on a regular basis with the evening interpretive programs given at the NRRRA's campgrounds.

## **Library Needs**

The park's library consists of approximately 300 volumes of hard-bound books, with other material in the form of periodicals, bound and unbound reports, binders of other papers/reports, and a host of other reference materials (Possibly 1000 documents in total). Plans are to get the entire library cataloged by 2010 with the cooperation of the NPS Library Program will begin with staff efforts in 2008. In support of this endeavor, a library scope of collection has been drafted. In addition to park staff, a volunteer will assist with the cataloging.

- Recruit a Volunteer-In-Park to receive NPS Library cataloging training and begin the process of finalizing the cataloging of the entire library.
- Use existing volunteers to finalize the cataloging of the entire library.
- Finalize a library scope of collection.
- Acquire a broader base of reference material including new information on area's pioneer and homestead history, and update other reference materials.

### Collection Needs

- The park has more than 580,000 objects in its museum collection that includes specimens, archives, objects, images, and artwork. While approximately 250,000 objects are housed at the Southeast Archeological Center, the park retains possession and curatorial/storage responsibility for an additional 330,000 objects in the collection. Current storage capability for the on-site collection is inadequate, and we are also unable to properly store oversized objects having provenience, such as an historic grinding wheel from Oscar Blevins' farm and a corn planter from the Burke fields. The park needs additional storage space and greater environmental controls. Optimum levels for preservation of museum objects would best be met through the installation of a separate HVAC system for the collections storage areas.
- To bring Bandy Creek Visitor Center to environmental levels that meet requirements of museum collection needs, changes need to take place, such as placing UV filtering material on clerestory and other windows, maintaining lower temperatures within the structure, and installing new exhibit cases equipped with security features, as well as the ability to control the humidity within the case. New exhibit cases with built-in

environmental controls as well as security features would allow the Park to place some objects on long-term exhibition (archaeology, geology), and others (historic metals, wooden objects, and ceramics) could be rotated with minimal damage to artifacts.

- Develop planning for acquisition of appropriate collections storage facility. This would be best accomplished by working with Cumberland Gap National Historic Park and Obed Wild and Scenic River to consolidate collections storage for three parks into one location.
- Provide public access to digital images of collection items through internet access or on-site terminals. Museum collections should be displayed through the Museum Management Program's website <http://www.nps.gov/history/museum/treasures/index.htm> for researchers. Photo and archival collection needs to resolve existing privacy and copyright issues. Individuals requesting direct access will need to fill out the researcher request forms as per Museum Handbook II.

### Research Needs

The park's Superintendent and Resource Management staff members suggest the following:

Prehistoric research needs

- Complete the Archeological Overview and Assessment so that the Interpretation Division can convey to the BISO visitors the value and potential of the archeological resources here and thus foster visitor understanding and support in reporting unlawful activities.
- Archeological research to define the prehistoric use of the Upper Cumberland Plateau over the

last 11,000 years. This long-term human occupation of the Big South Fork area is under-represented in the park's interpretive efforts.

Cumberland Plateau including cliff and rock climbing, fishing for food to sport, hunting for furs to food to sport, rise of ORVs, rise of BSF as a destination for horse back riders, mountain bikers, etc.

#### Historical research needs

- Genealogy information should be made available to the Public in a single database for BISO settlers and families, including cemetery research.
- Research on former historic communities: Zenith, No Business, Station Camp.
- Collect historic accounts (stories) of people who lived, worked, or visited the Big South Fork area before creation of the park.

#### Natural Resource research needs

- Research is needed to document natural system changes from the Pre-Columbian past as a result of early settlement, logging, coal mining; and the decline of the American Chestnut.
- Research is needed to document the effects of non-native plant and animal introductions like multiflora rose, mimosa, Japanese spirea, tree of heaven, kudzu, Japanese honeysuckle.
- Research if needed to document the NPS efforts at ecosystem management and restoring Black Bear, Turkey, Muskellunge, River Otter, Fresh-Water Mussels, and native Grasses.

#### Social Science research needs

- The park needs to enter a PMIS request for funding to participate the Park Studies Unit, Visitor Service Project . The in-depth information provided by such a study would allow park management and interpretive staff members to develop programs and services which truly match visitor expectations.
- Complete the Administrative History of the creation of the National Area.
- Research is needed to document the recreation history in the Upper

## Implementation

*Actions, divided into annual, achievable steps are reproduced in the Annual Implementation Plan (AIP)... (DO-6, page 6)*

The measure of success of any plan is the extent to which it is implemented. Initial implementation strategies need to be both realistic and flexible. The charts on the following pages outline an initial blueprint for the park's interpretive programs. Because funding opportunities and priorities often change, park managers may need to adjust the implementation strategies to adapt to changing conditions.

The park interpretive staff and key park partners should meet each year to draft an Annual Implementation Plan (AIP) for each new fiscal year based on funding opportunities and coordination with other projects.

## IMPLEMENTATION CHART / FACILITIES

PROGRAM	TASK(S)	SHORT-TERM 2009, 2010		LONG-TERM 2011, 2012		OUT-YEARS 2013, 2014	
Leatherwood Ford Shelter	Remove bulletin cases; add smaller benches with the large benches.	X	X				
	Offer interpretive programs on peak visitation days and seasons.	X	X				
Bandy Creek	Expand this building's indoor space by enclosing the back porch. (request funding)	X				X	X
	Upgrade the "Camp Store" as the park's Education Program facility. (request funding)	X				X	X
Campgrounds	Tear down the Bandy Creek Amphitheater and restore its grounds.	X					
	Add seats and electrical outlets to the Bandy Creek campfire circle.	X					
	Move the campfire circle to a new location in Blue Heron Campground.		X				
	Upgrade entrance stations and signs at campgrounds and horse camps.			X			
Blue Heron Mining Community	Post information at restrooms within an upright modular sign system. (request funding)	X				X	X
	Build an Information Station at the Blue Heron train platform.	X					
Partner Locations outside the Park Boundary	Pursue agreements (for BISO-related indoor and/or outdoor exhibits) with partners in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helenwood, Tennessee (at the Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center)</li> <li>• Whitley City, Kentucky (at the USFS Stearns Ranger Station)</li> <li>• Rugby, Tennessee (at the Historic Rugby Visitor Center)</li> <li>• Jamestown, Tennessee (at a proposed visitor center near Interstate 40 and U.S. Rte. 127)</li> </ul>	X	X	X	X	X	X

Cost estimates for facilities can be provided by Denver Service Center in a separate document.

## IMPLEMENTATION CHART / INTERPRETIVE MEDIA (NON-PERSONAL SERVICES)

PROGRAM	TASK(S)	SHORT-TERM			LONG-TERM		
		2009, 2010	2011, 2012	2013, 2014	2009, 2010	2011, 2012	2013, 2014
Website	Maintain the upgraded website for Big South Fork NRRRA.	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Develop a comprehensive website plan to assure its consistency.	X					
	Use the NPS counter on the website to track the hits it receives.	X					
	Expand the website's links for the park's "Nearby Attractions."	X					
Identity/Orientation Signs	Design a parkwide Sign Plan that assures its identity with the NPS.		X		X		
	Implement the Sign Plan as described in the NPS Sign Standards.					X	X
Wayside Exhibits	Request that HFC replace the park's damaged wayside exhibits.	X					
	Submit a PMIS request to fund 1999 Wayside Exhibit Proposal.	X					
	Develop waysides for the Leatherwood Ford shelter and vicinity.				X	X	
	Develop VIS (Visitor Information Signs) for all park restrooms.				X	X	
	Upgrade outdoor exhibits at Blue Heron Community train station.						X
	Secure funds for a Wayside Exhibit Plan based on the 1999 Proposal.						X
	Plan, design, and prepare production-ready files for all park waysides.						X
Secure funds to produce Wayside Exhibits via contract through HFC.							

Cost estimates for Interpretive Media can be provided by Denver Service Center in a separate document.

## IMPLEMENTATION CHART / INTERPRETIVE MEDIA (NON-PERSONAL SERVICES)

PROGRAM	TASK(S)	SHORT-TERM			LONG-TERM			OUT-YEARS		
		2009, 2010	2011, 2012	2013, 2014	2009, 2010	2011, 2012	2013, 2014	2009, 2010	2011, 2012	2013, 2014
Bandy Creek Visitor Center	Request funds via PMIS for new exhibits at Bandy Creek Visitor Center.	X								
	HFC and/or IDIQ contractor to devise an Exhibit Schematic Concept Plan.		X							
	HFC and/or IDIQ contractor to plan, design, and prepare an Exhibit Plan.			X						
	HFC and/or IDIQ contractor to produce, ship, and install the new exhibits.					X				
Stearns Depot Visitor Desk	Include Stearns Depot Visitor Center to the PMIS request for new exhibits.	X								
	HFC and/or IDIQ contractor to devise an Exhibit Schematic Concept Plan.		X							
	HFC and/or IDIQ contractor to plan, design, and prepare an Exhibit Plan.				X					
	HFC and/or IDIQ contractor to produce, ship, and install the new exhibits.						X			
Modular Exhibits in Partners' Visitor Centers	Request funds via PMIS for modular NPS exhibits for partners' visitor centers.	X								
	HFC and/or IDIQ contractor to devise a modular, portable Exhibit Concept Plan.		X							
	HFC and/or IDIQ contractor to prepare an Exhibit Plan for these modular exhibits.				X					
	HFC and/or IDIQ contractor to produce, ship, and install these modular exhibits.						X			
Portable Exhibits	Request funds via PMIS for portable exhibits for selected park buildings.	X								
	HFC and/or IDIQ contractor to devise a portable Exhibit Concept Plan.		X							
	HFC and/or IDIQ contractor to prepare an Exhibit Plan for these portable exhibits.					X				
	HFC and/or IDIQ contractor to produce, ship, and install these portable exhibits.						X			

Cost estimates for Interpretive Media can be provided by Denver Service Center in a separate document.

## IMPLEMENTATION CHART / INTERPRETIVE MEDIA (NON-PERSONAL SERVICES)

PROGRAM	TASK(S)	SHORT-TERM 2009, 2010		LONG-TERM 2011, 2012		OUT-YEARS 2013, 2014	
Audiovisual Programs	Plan an information system using recordings from a central location.	X					
	Develop an interpretive audio system for the Leatherwood Ford shelter.		X	X			
	Surplus the AV equipment as the Bandy Creek amphitheater is torn down.	X					
	Re-locate the audio pushbuttons at Blue Heron Mining Community.	X	X				
	Request that HFC redesign the park's NPS unigrd brochure.	X					
	Purchase or lease new computers and printers to print park's Site Bulletins.	X					
	Upgrade the design and content of the park's Site Bulletins.	X					
	Develop new Site Bulletins on park resource issues (e.g., bears, trees).		X				
	Update and reprint the park's Site Bulletins and booklets on other topics.	X					
	Maintain supply of park Rack Card and distribute to venues outside the park.		X				
Publications	Revise the park's Jr. Ranger Program booklet, using the new kit as a model.	X					
	Reprint the park newspaper using Eastern National funds once a year.	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Print the Blue Heron Hymnal book through Eastern National as a sales item.			X			
	Develop a "Behind the Scenery" book via Eastern National or KC Publications.						

Cost estimates for Interpretive Media can be provided by Denver Service Center in a separate document.

## IMPLEMENTATION CHART / PERSONAL SERVICES

PROGRAM	TASK(S)	SHORT-TERM 2009, 2010		LONG-TERM 2011, 2012		OUT-YEARS 2013, 2014	
Interpretive Staffing	Hire a new Chief Ranger with a strong background in Interpretation.	X					
	Consider placing the interpretive staff under the Chief of Resource Mgmt.	X					
	Re-describe a Park Ranger interpreter (GS-9) position to a "lead" Interpreter (GS-11).	X					
	Bring the career seasonal employees to an eleven month tour-of-duty.	X					
Personal Services and Education Programs	Train employees from other park divisions to present short interpretive talks.	X					
	Provide stipends for resource subject-matter-experts to present public seminars.		X	X	X	X	X
	Plan for additional (temporary) staffing at Big South Fork NRRRA.	X		X	X	X	X
	Establish a Volunteer Program/Special Events coordinator position.		X	X	X		
	Request that an Education Program coordinator position be established.					X	X

Cost estimates for Personal Services programs to be compiled by Big South Fork NRRRA Admin staff.

## Planning Team

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### Big South Fork NRRA

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Steve Seven	Chief of Interpretation
Howard Duncan	Park Ranger - Interpretation
Sue Duncan	Park Ranger - Interpretation
Sherry Fritschi	Park Ranger – Interpretation
Lynn Thornton	Park Ranger – Career Seasonal
Brenda Deaver	Park Ranger – Career Seasonal
Juan Gomez	Chief of Maintenance
Tom Blount	Chief of Resource Management
Tom Des Jean	Archeologist
Phyllis Traybold	Community Planner

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### Southeast Region

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Don Wollenhaupt	Chief of Interpretation and Education, MWRO
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### Harpers Ferry Interpretive Design Center

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Jack Spinnler	Interpretive Planner (Team Captain)
Terry Lindsay	Wayside Exhibit Planner
Ed Boutte	Audiovisual Equipment Specialist
Paul Koehler	Exhibit Production Specialist (consultant)

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### Park Partners

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Donna Tompkins	School Teacher, Oneida Special School District
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