

## Introduction

A foundation document serves as the underlying guidance for all management and planning decisions in a national park system unit. It describes the core mission of the park unit by identifying the unit's purpose, significance, fundamental and important resources and values, interpretive themes, assessment of planning and data needs, special mandates and administrative commitments, and the unit's setting in the regional context.

This foundation document was developed as a collaborative effort among park staff, regional staff, and key partners, with the assistance of NPS Denver Service Center (DSC) specialists. A workshop to facilitate this process was held February 28 to March 1, 2012, at Camp Greentop in Catoctin Mountain Park.

The primary advantage of developing and adopting a foundation document is the opportunity to integrate and coordinate all kinds and levels of planning and decision making from a single, shared understanding of what is most important about the park. A foundation document has many functions:

- It helps focus NPS efforts on protecting the most important resources and values of the park before addressing issues that are also important but not essential to achieving the park's purpose and maintaining its significance.
- It provides a basis for ensuring consistency in all park planning and decision making, and for ensuring that all programs and actions contribute to achieving the park purpose and other mandates.
- It provides a means of communicating to stakeholders and NPS employees, via a tangible document, what is most important about a park unit.
- It serves as the basis for the development/amendment of all NPS plans.
- It describes NPS policy-level conditions for key park resources and values based on laws and policies that apply to those resources and values.
- It identifies conditions, threats, and issues potentially impacting the key resources and values of the park.
- It identifies and prioritizes plans and studies that are needed for the park unit.



Ecological fieldwork on Owens Creek. NPS photo

## Elements of a Foundation Document

The foundation document will include the following elements:

### Purpose Statement

The purpose statement identifies why Congress and/or the president established Catoclin Mountain Park as a unit of the national park system. The purpose statement is based on enabling and subsequent legislation.

### Significance Statements

Guided by legislation and by more specific knowledge acquired through management, research, and civic engagement, statements of significance will define what is most important about the associated resources and values of a park unit. Significance statements help to guide planning and management decisions by focusing attention on those qualities that Congress wanted preserved and interpreted.

### Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes organize large-scale concepts related to park resources, which help visitors recognize and appreciate the purpose and significance of the park. The interpretive themes are the basis for all educational and interpretive efforts.

### Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those tangible resources and intangible qualities that are essential to achieving purpose and maintaining significance. Those resources, values, and qualities most important about the park unit could be jeopardized if they are allowed



Camp Greentop. NPS photo

to degrade. Other important resources and values are those that have evolved to be of importance for the park, but do not have the same essential nature for achieving purpose and maintaining significance. By identifying fundamental resources and values, a clearer recognition of what is most important about the park is gained.

#### **Assessment of Planning and Data Needs**

The assessment of planning and data needs identifies what park staff believe are the most important issues for the park now and likely will encounter in the future, and identifies planning priorities. The analysis and identification of important issues leads to and supports the identification and prioritization of needed plans and studies.

#### **Special Mandates and Administrative Commitments**

Special mandates are legal requirements and administrative commitments that apply specifically to the park. These may include direction from Congress or formal agreements with other public or private entities. The foundation document will identify these mandates and commitments to ensure their consideration during planning and decision making.

#### **Laws and Policies and NPS Policy-level Conditions**

This list and narrative captures the laws and policies that apply to fundamental resources and values, and the guidance these laws and policies provide, including the NPS policy-level condition of the resources and values.



Entrance sign designed to symbolize nearby Catoctin Furnace. NPS photo



Landscape adjacent to park boundary. NPS photo