

THE  
**FUTURE**  
OF  
**AMERICA'S**  
**NATIONAL**  
**PARKS**

First Annual  
Centennial Strategy for

# Chaco Culture National Historical Park

August 2007

CENTENNIAL INITIATIVE



**Site:** CHCU

**Year:** 2007

**Vision Statement**

Our vision for the NPS centennial in 2016, is that the experience of visitors to Chaco will be substantially the same then as it is today. That visitors can independently wander through stable, well-preserved standing architecture, examine original wood, stone and mortar, and walk through pristine sites built when Chaco was the center of a vibrant civilization that flourished in the 9th to 13th centuries. That visitors are not confined to tours nor kept away from the sites by ropes or chains and that they are able to develop their own (idiosyncratic) relationships with this place. That the dark skies enable visitors to see and understand the same celestial bodies and the same seasonal patterns that were so important to the ancient people of Chaco. Our vision includes a sustainably renovated and refurbished visitor center and appropriately functioning facilities and infrastructure. Our relationships with Chaco's culturally affiliated tribes and pueblos will have grown and deepened to both our benefits and our partnership with the University of New Mexico will have continued to develop in intellectual depth and cooperation. We will have developed additional relationships with other educational and research institutions. The park will have a professionally trained staff that is diverse, knowledgeable, and committed to helping preserve this extraordinary World Heritage Site for generations to come. And finally, many of the artifacts taken from Chaco that are not being properly curated will be returned to Chaco and added to the park's collection where they will be protected and made accessible for the benefit of a new generation of scholars and visitors.

**Park/ Superintendent/ Program Manager**

Barbara J. West, Superintendent, Chaco Culture NHP

Site: CHCU

STEWARDSHIP

Improve the condition of park resources and assets.

Restore native habitats by controlling invasive species and reintroducing key plant and animal species.

The park will continue its program of removing tamarisk and hoary cress -- invasive exotic speices -- to allow for the recovery of native riparian species. The park is the only major protected area in the San Juan Basin and serves as a laboratory for understanding how "natural" riparian systems work in this high desert environment. The major washes in the park are agrading and recovering from over-grazing in the past and continue to provide high quality wildlife habitat and demonstrate increasing biological diversity.

The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS

Complete all cultural resource inventories for designated priority resources.

In 1972, one of the NPS's earliest complete inventories of cultural resources was conducted at Chaco; it recorded some 4000 archeological sites covering over 10,000 years of human habitation. The inventory -- while remarkable for its time -- does not come close to meeting modern standards. It is our goal to update the inventory as we do condition assessments to be entered into ASMIS. Our goal would be to accelerate the rate at which the updating is done.

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Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

By the centennial, the park intends to have negotiated an agreement and land exchange among the BLM, the Navajo Nation, the BIA, the State Lands Office, and the NPS to protect at least one detached unit of the park -- Pueblo Pintado (a legislatively designated part of the park 25 miles from the park) -- and to ensure that activities that occur on the park's boundary are compatible with the park's long-term protection. The exchange may also transfer management responsibilities for at least one Chacoan Protection Site (outlier) from BLM to the NPS. The park also hopes that the agreement can result in the aquisition of the three tracts of land in the park that are not in NPS ownership. The purpose of the exchanges and agreement is in all cases the same -- to preserve and protect the landscape context that is so central to understanding the civilization that had its center at Chaco.

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Site: CHCU

STEWARDSHIP

**Serve as the Preeminent resource laboratory by applying excellence in science and scholarship to understand and respond to environmental changes.**

**Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)**

The park intends to continue its role in the forefront of American archeology through continued partnerships with the University of New Mexico (UNM) and the University of Virginia (UVa). Chaco's archives -- among the largest in the National Park Service -- will continue to be digitized and made available to the world through the Chaco Digital Initiative with UVa. Fragile documents -- field notes, handwritten reports, and other ephemera that are in danger of disintegration or substantial loss -- after digitizing are posted to the Internet where they are accessible to scholars throughout the world. In the past, the University of New Mexico operated a field school from Chaco where generations of southwest archeologists were trained and refined investigative techniques. The park and UNM would like to re-establish the practice of having students and faculty reside in the park and apply modern techniques -- ground-penetrating radar, for example -- to examine the more than 4000 unexcavated sites in the park for the benefit of students, the park, the public and the discipline of archeology.

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Site: CHCU

ENVIRONMENT

**Reduce environmental impacts of park operations.**

**Reduce the environmental impacts of park operations on air and water quality.**

The park's only visitor center, built in 1955, will be completely renovated incorporating green building strategies that will reduce energy consumption, take advantage of the solar energy that is so abundant here, and provide a bright, attractive, and comfortable space for visitors and staff alike. The renovation will maintain the building's modest exterior -- so as not to compete with the remains of the Chacoan civilization -- but will incorporate energy efficient and sustainable lighting, heating and cooling. The center's exhibits will be updated to reflect what we now know about Chaco in ways that are engaging to a variety of visitors and protect the artifacts on display.

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Site: CHCU

**ENVIRONMENT**

Inspire an environmental conscience in Americans.

Establish programs to showcase exemplary environmental practices and increase visitor awareness of how the practices apply to their daily lives, as measured by surveys.

The park currently recycles glass, #1 and #2 plastics, and aluminum, as well as cardboard. As practicable, we will add other recyclables and will provide information to our visitors on the efficacy of such practices for the park and their daily lives.

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Demonstrate environmental excellence through increased use of alternative energy and fuels at every park.

When the visitor center is rehabilitated, we will use alternative energy -- solar, primarily -- to enhance our environmental sustainability and the demonstrate best practices to the public. We will strive for at least a LEED Silver rating for all our facilities.

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Serve as a model for energy efficiency, under Executive Order 13423, by ensuring Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards.

We will strive for a LEED Silver rating for the visitor center rehabilitation which should be completed by the Centennial year.

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Site: CHCU

**RECREATION**

Encourage collaboration among and assist park and recreation systems at every level--federal, regional, state, local--to help build an outdoor recreation network accessible to all Americans.

Rehabilitate over 2,000 miles of trails within or connected to national parks, including trails accessible to those with disabilities.

To the extent possible given the archeological resources that Chaco preserves and protects, the front country trails of the park will be made wholly ADA accessible by 2010.

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Site: CHCU

RECREATION

- Establish "volun-tourism" excursions to national parks for volunteers to help achieve natural and cultural resource protection goals.
- Increase annual volunteer hours by 100 percent, from 5.2 million hours to 10.4 million hours.

The park's volunteer hours are already "very above average" according to the 2006 NPS scorecard. Our ability to accommodate additional volunteers is limited by the park's isolation and the absence of near-by communities and housing. That notwithstanding, we hope to increase the number of volunteers in our site steward program (operated in cooperation with the NM Department of Historic Preservation), in our archeo-astronomy program, and in formal volunteer groups like the Sierra Club, NM Volunteers for the Outdoors, Landmark Volunteers and Wilderness Volunteers. The newly established Friends of Chaco are also ready to recruit additional volunteers.

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Site: CHCU

EDUCATION

- Cooperate with educators to provide curriculum materials, high-quality programs, and park-based and online learning.
- Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

In cooperation with Crow Canyon archeology center, NASA, and several volunteers, the park plans to have completed curriculum-based, age appropriate materials for school children in New Mexico, Colorado and on the Navajo Nation by the time of the Centennial. The curricular materials will be available to teachers and students online and will serve as preparation for trips to the park. NASA has been particularly helpful in developing curriculum materials that highlight the relationships between indigenous people of the Americas -- Maya and Navajo, among others -- and the people who built Chaco. We hope to build on the award-winning, "Traditions of the Sun," Internet program for the Centennial.

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Site: CHCU

EDUCATION

- Introduce young people and their families to national parks by using exciting media and technology.
- Increase the number of web hits through the introduction of advanced, interactive features that attract young people to national parks.

The park has 2 outstanding online resources -- "Traditions of the Sun" developed in cooperation with NASA that features Chaco's archeo-astronomy program and "Clay, Copper and Turquoise" which features artifacts in the Chaco Collection at the Hibben Center at the University of NEW Mexico. Both allow online learners information that is otherwise difficult to access. For the Centennial, the park hopes to add interactive features and associated Podcasts to both and to make the Chaco Digital Initiative (digital archives developed with the help of the University of Virginia) available to scholars and the public alike.

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Site: CHCU

EDUCATION

- Promote life-long learning to connect generations through park experiences.
- Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

A significant number of irreplaceable artifacts were removed from sites in Chaco Canyon prior to its designation as a national monument in 1907. Many of these artifacts are scattered in small museums or private collections where they are not being curated to appropriate museum standards. For the Centennial, now that the park has a world-class curation facility at the Hibben Center at the University of New Mexico, the park will seek the return of those museum objects and archival materials to NPS management which will allow them to be seen in meaningful context and to be publicly accessible. Few things are more valuable in helping people to understand the culture that flourished at Chaco than the pottery, jewelery and objects of every day life, many of which are not in NPS custody.

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Site: CHCU

PROFESSIONALISM

Promote a safety and health culture for all employees and visitors.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

The park is committed to a culture of safety for all our employees and volunteers. To commemorate the centennial, we will prepare additional interpretive materials to assist our visitors in understanding the importance of safety to their enjoyment and experience at Chaco.

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Site: CHCU

PROFESSIONALISM

Model what it means to work in partnership.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

The park intends to nurture and expand its existing partnerships with the Navajo Nation, the University of New Mexico, the University of Virginia, the State Historic Preservation Division, ICOMOS (the US International Committee on Mounuments and Sites) and the Friends of Chaco to all our mutual benefit and to the benefit of our visitors and supporters.

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