

# National Park Service Director's Order #6 Interpretation and Education

## Interpretation and Education Reference Manual 6 (June 1, 2009) Chapter #4: Interpretive Planning

### **Interpretive Planning (Directors Order #6)**

*Sound interpretive planning provides an organized method for making informed choices about a park's interpretive and educational program. It can provide solutions to management problems, with the goals of encouraging preservation of park resources, and fostering increased visitor understanding, appreciation, enjoyment, and stewardship. The comprehensive interpretive planning process provides an organized method to define the park story, and will be a collaborative effort, with on-going public involvement that includes subject-matter experts to incorporate new scholarship, and partners and other stakeholders as vital participants in its development.*

This Interpretive Planning chapter is written with both planners and planning participants in mind. It includes principles, requirements, guidance, and advice. It aids us in developing a common understanding of planning language, processes, products, and outcomes. Flexibility remains the key in customizing the interpretive planning process and its products to best achieve the park's specific needs. The desired outcomes of this chapter include:

- Better plans, products, outcomes, and experiences.
- Better-informed planning participants.
- Enhanced participation on planning teams.
- Encouraging interpretation's role in other planning processes.
- Better understanding of planning participant responsibilities.
- Better information on which to base "Requests for Proposal" when using private-sector interpretive planners.
- Better ability to compete for funding.

### **Introduction**

Park planning is a vital step that links servicewide planning and decision-making to park operations. Visitor experience planning and interpretive planning are integral components of park planning. Planning efforts involving visitor experience are most effectively accomplished when interpretive planning is included from the outset to define visitor experience goals and recommend how best to provide opportunities to meet them.

Interpretive planning is a comprehensive, goal-driven process that establishes desired outcomes, analyzes how best to achieve those outcomes, and recommends specific actions while remaining flexible. Interpretive planning recommends a wide array of interpretive services, facilities, programs, and providers of those services, which facilitate opportunities to meet visitor experience goals. Interpretive planning occurs at three levels:

- The park's management documents, such as the General Management Plan and the Strategic Plan, define the overall vision of the park and address all aspects of its operation. They contain specific sections that address visitor experience, interpretation, and education. These sections are broad in scope. They describe how the interpretive program fits into the larger park management picture.
- Implementation plans implement the overall vision defined in general park planning. They provide direction for all management decisions regarding a specific park program. The Comprehensive Interpretive Plan is the implementation plan that defines the parkwide interpretive program. Consideration of other implementation plans (such as Resource Management Plan, Collection Management Plan, and other visitor experience planning) and their influence on the interpretive program should be a factor in the development of the Comprehensive Interpretive Plan.
- The most detailed level of interpretive planning involves projects and individual programs, such as preparing an individual interpretive talk, developing a parkwide wayside exhibit plan, authoring the park's page on the World Wide Web, or writing a curriculum or site bulletin. Each of these may be detailed in an Individual Service Plan.

Interpretive planning assistance is available from a variety of sources including the Harpers Ferry Center, regional offices, other parks, and private-sector contractors.

### **Policy**

Policy for interpretive planning originates in the Washington Office, Division of Interpretation and Education. Interpretive planning is addressed briefly in National Park Service Management Policies and with more specificity in Interpretation and Education Director's Order #6 (DO-6). To summarize, interpretive planning is a vital component of all general management planning, Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) efforts, visitor experience planning, resource planning, and related planning. The park's General Management Plan and Strategic Plan identify park purpose, significance, and management goals including those for visitor experience and interpretation. Implementation plans provide the detail necessary to put the recommendations of the General Management Plan and Strategic Plan into action. The Comprehensive Interpretive Plan serves as the basis for all management actions regarding the park interpretive program.

### **Basic Principles of Interpretive Planning**

As an integral component of park planning, interpretive planning follows the general principles of park planning described in Director's Order #2: Park Planning: logic, analysis, public involvement, and accountability. Additional principles specific to interpretive planning are:

- Interpretive planning is a goal-driven process. Goal-driven planning proclaims a long-range vision — a shared desired future — and thoughtfully and methodically works toward achieving that future.
- Interpretive planning is inclusive. Interpretive planning extends beyond park boundaries and seeks participation and support from stakeholders. A stakeholder is anyone who has a

vested interest in the park interpretation and education programs. By including stakeholders in discussions of the park's purpose, national significance, interpretive themes, and visitor experience goals shared assumptions and understandings are developed. This shared foundation provides a meaningful framework for the park to create an interpretive program that achieves the desired outcomes.

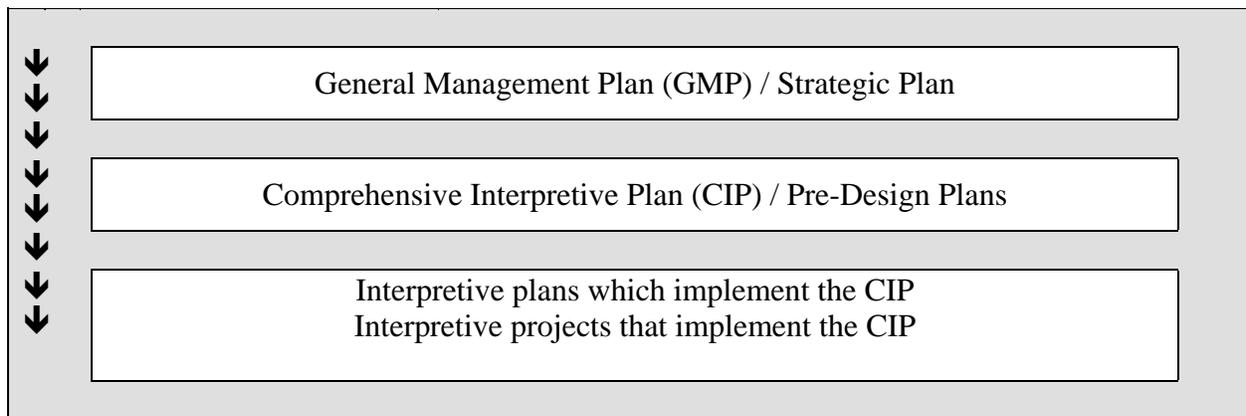
- Interpretive planning considers both park visitors and off-site publics. Effective interpretive planning considers both groups when defining desirable and diverse experiences, recommending ways to facilitate those experiences, and assuring they are accessible to diverse audiences. The term "visitor" used herein describes all people who interact with the park in a personal way, whether physically on-site, visiting remotely through virtual technology or other media, or receiving curriculum-based instruction. "Visitor" includes the concepts of "publics," "audiences," "tourists," "students," "life-long learners," etc.
- Interpretive planning describes and facilitates opportunities to meet visitor experience goals. Visitor experience goals are that subset of experiences the park most wants to facilitate. They are generally those experiences that lead to the visitors' better understanding and appreciation of park resources without significantly impacting those same resources. They include what visitors do, sense, feel, and learn (such as behaviors, sensory experiences, emotions, and knowledge).
- Interpretive planning helps the visitor forge meaningful connections to the park. Based on the foundational framework of the Interpretive Development Program, interpretive planning helps park visitors and other audiences connect park resources to the larger processes, systems, ideas, and meanings of which they are a part. Primary parkwide interpretive themes communicate those ideas and facilitate those connections. An effective theme provides opportunities to link things (the tangible) with ideas, beliefs, and meanings (the intangible). Themes are built upon the park's purpose and significance statements and are foundational to the development of the parkwide interpretive program.
- Interpretive planning applies the most effective education and communication methods. Interpretive planning recommends appropriate interpretive services, facilities, media, programs, and providers to effectively educate and communicate to diverse audiences while promoting the protection and preservation of park resources. It draws upon current educational philosophy in program planning.
- Interpretive planning is dynamic and includes ongoing assessment and evaluation. It responds to park and visitor needs and establishes a foundation for long-term direction setting, short-term problem solving, and annual program analysis. It is sustainable and supported by other park divisions. Assessment and evaluation of assumptions made in the plan should occur regularly.
- Interpretive planning is based on current research, scholarship, and critical analysis. Recommendations for personal and non-personal interpretive services are grounded in subject matter and technical expertise from inside, and external to, the National Park

Service. Such expertise includes the subjects of interpretation, education, and research related to resources, social science, and media.

- Interpretive planning stresses practical strategies for implementation of the long-range vision and the actions to achieve it, including funding and management alternatives. The strategy of stressing pragmatic options weaves interpretive planning into the operational fabric of the program. An effective interpretive planning process is flexible and self-limiting — the process only considers those things that need to be considered in order to equip managers to make informed, responsible decisions.

### **Types of Plans**

Interpretive planning occurs at several levels: It starts at the general planning level and ends at the individual interpreter. It speaks as an advocate for the visitor as the park vision is being established and implemented. It is part of an interdisciplinary effort to ensure successful planning outcomes, with participation beginning at the earliest stages of all planning efforts. The graphic below represents the various types of plans and their general relationships to each other.



### **Roles and Responsibilities**

The Harpers Ferry Center, Division of Interpretive Planning has primary responsibility for the interpretive components of management and development planning. This includes General Management Plans, Pre-Design Plans, and interpretive media planning.

The park's superintendent has the responsibility for seeking planning that is most appropriate to their park's needs and to maintain its relevance once developed. The park superintendent and interpretation manager are responsible for ensuring that interpretive planners and interpreters are involved in planning efforts that are not exclusively focused on the interpretive program (such as the General Management Plan or Resource Management Plan). Interpretive considerations in General Management Plans, Pre-Design Plans, and plans for major interpretive facility design should emphasize integration with the park Comprehensive Interpretive Plan. Media planning and design is based on desired outcomes, goals, and other considerations established in relevant interpretive plans.

Comprehensive Interpretive Plans are collaborative efforts between parks and planning specialists. The interpretive planning process is more likely to be effective if the park assigns an internal lead to the planning project, as well as identification of an interpretive planner to lead the overall process.

The park's consideration of appropriate team leadership might be based on park's staff capabilities, park complexity, and funding. Any of the above-mentioned offices might facilitate the process of identifying a planner. Team participation should include representatives from all of the park's divisions as subject-matter experts. The Comprehensive Interpretive Plan is the park's plan — not interpretation's alone — and will affect all operations within the park.

## **The Comprehensive Interpretive Planning Process**

### Introduction to the Process and the Product

The comprehensive interpretive planning process addresses both a long-range vision and the short-range increments necessary to achieve that vision. It considers all personal services and media regardless of provider. It considers diverse audience and multiple perspectives, speaking to people inside and beyond park boundaries.

The process produces a Comprehensive Interpretive Plan. The Comprehensive Interpretive Plan is the strategic underpinning of the park's interpretive program. All interpretive and educational activities performed by the program are based on it and coordinated by it. It forms the overall vision and basis for decision-making relating to interpretation in the park. It is more than just an accumulation of information; it is a working blueprint from which the park's interpretive and educational future is built.

Implementation of the Comprehensive Interpretive Plan directly affects the achievement of broader park management goals. The resulting parkwide interpretive program will communicate — in the most effective and efficient way — the park's purpose, national significance, interpretive themes, and meanings while promoting the protection and preservation of park resources. It will increase visitor understanding and appreciation of the National Park System. It will help the public forge meaningful connections to the park, connections that often last a lifetime.

The Comprehensive Interpretive Plan begins with an Executive Summary, followed by these three principle sections:

- Long-Range Interpretive Plan
- Annual Implementation Plan
- Interpretive Database

The participants of this inclusive planning process are stakeholders, park management, subject-matter experts from all divisions of the park staff, the park concession specialist, media specialists, interpretive planners, and others. The term "stakeholders" refers to those groups that have a stake in how the park is managed. These interested parties often include cooperating

associations, friends groups, concessionaires, chambers of commerce, affiliated cultures, non-governmental conservation and preservation organizations, schools and universities, museums, other agencies (federal, state, local), and other park partners.

Through the comprehensive interpretive planning process, these participants establish the long-range vision of the interpretive program. This vision is found in the Long-Range Interpretive Plan. The Annual Implementation Plan and Interpretive Database support the achievement of the long-range vision.

The planning process that defines the Long-Range Interpretive Plan also encourages development of targeted, realistic, measurable strategies and actions that work towards achievement of the vision. These actions are divided into annual, achievable steps, and are reproduced in the Annual Implementation Plan. Consideration should be given to formatting these actions to be similar to that used in the GPRA reporting process. Creating annual workplans based on the Long-Range Interpretive Plan simplifies the annual planning and reporting process.

The length of time involved in this process varies greatly due to such factors as availability of park staff, time, and funding. The Comprehensive Interpretive Plan is should be updated by the park as frequently as park circumstances require. It is a dynamic, living plan.

The Comprehensive Interpretive plan is not complete until all three sections: Long-Range Interpretive Plan, Annual Implementation Plan, and Interpretive Database are included. Completion of these three sections ensures that resources are focused on achieving the management vision of the park. The specific components of these sections should always be customized to meet the individual park needs, conditions, and situations.

### **Interpretive Concept Plan**

An Interpretive Concept Plan can be developed for parks who share common themes or resources; parks with multiple, diverse units; parks that are involved in extensive collaborative operations with other agencies; etc. This section of a Comprehensive Interpretive Plan will unify planning efforts by identifying unifying themes, compelling stories, objectives, and shared visitor experiences. It will address overlapping themes and recommend the sites and services most appropriate for their effective expression. The National Park Service Thematic Framework publication can provide opportunities for connecting the stories of one park to another.

### **Interpretive Planners**

An interpretive planner leads the planning process. It is highly recommended that the interpretive planner be from outside the park. Although a park can perform such planning internally, an outside perspective is very helpful and often results in ideas that might not be voiced by park staff.

An interpretive planner is an experienced interpreter who is trained in interpretive planning philosophy and techniques. Desirable traits include strong skills in team facilitation, technical

and interpretive writing, problem-solving and analytical skills (including those used in evaluative processes such as Choosing By Advantages and Value Analysis), understanding of media applications, successful interpersonal relations and team building, well-developed interpretive program skills, and leadership skills.

### Initiation of the Planning Process

All planning begins with the formulation of a Project Agreement. The planner and park interpretive staff collaboratively develops the document with the active involvement of the superintendent. It is a contract between all core-group participants in the planning process. It includes what will be done, when it will be accomplished, who will do it, and what it will cost. The roles vary depending on circumstances and the abilities of the park's staff or the planner. The park superintendent approves the Project Agreement.

Interpretive planners will work with the park to collaboratively assemble a team that might include: park staff, staff from other parks, support offices, the Harpers Ferry Center or Denver Service Center planners and designers, other media specialists, subject matter experts, consultants, partners, and the public. Commitments of park staff and time, the process schedule, and funding are all negotiable.

At an early stage in the planning process, the park staff is encouraged to begin assembling the Interpretive Database. This work will advance the process while the interpretive planner and team members begin to prepare for the next steps.

### Approval

The superintendent approves the Comprehensive Interpretive Plan and subsequent revisions.

### Funding

The Harpers Ferry Center, Division of Interpretive Planning has a limited dedicated source of funding for interpretive planning which enables the Harpers Ferry planners to work on several plans each year. Funding for plans varies among regions.

## **A Comprehensive Interpretive Plan**

### Executive Summary

This brief summary highlights how the Comprehensive Interpretive Plan will achieve management's goals and desired outcomes, which may include:

- Promoting the protection and preservation of park resources
- Increasing visitor understanding and appreciation by facilitating opportunities to meet visitor experience goals
- Helping visitors forge meaningful connections to the park

- Fostering more effective partnerships
- Determining solutions to management problems

### Long-Range Interpretive Plan

The Long-Range Interpretive Plan embodies the desired future — the vision — of the entire interpretation and education program. The projected life span of the Long-Range Interpretive Plan varies with individual park needs and circumstances, and should be updated as necessary. Minor updates should be made as needed. The comprehensive interpretive planning process should be initiated anew when the gap between the long-range vision and the vision embodied in the cumulative Annual Implementation Plans widens to an unacceptable degree. It is recommended that the park thoroughly review its Comprehensive Interpretive Plan seven to ten years after the plan is produced.

The Long-Range Interpretive Plan addresses both personal services and non-personal services (media). The Long-Range Interpretive Plan provides the foundation elements for the Annual Implementation Plan and should be consistent with other current park planning documents such as the General Management Plan and Strategic Plan.

## **Background for Planning**

### *Purpose*

Context is an important consideration when defining park purpose. Some of the legislative Acts and policy statements that define the National Park System and National Park Service include the National Park Service Organic Act (1916), Historic Sites Act (1935), General Authorities Act (1970), the Redwoods Act (as amended 1978), and the National Park Service Mission Statement (1997). These Acts, policy, and other legislation define the larger framework within which the individual park is managed. Once this larger framework is understood, defining the purpose of an individual park within the system is more easily accomplished.

The reasons that the park was set aside as part of the National Park System provide the most fundamental criteria against which the appropriateness of all planning recommendations, operational decisions, and actions are tested. While the mission of the National Park Service is quite broad, more specific reasons for establishing a particular park are usually stated in the park's enabling legislation. If these reasons are vague and open to interpretation, the purpose statements need to go further than simply restating the law; they need to document the shared assumptions about what the law really means. Information about these assumptions can often be found in the legislative history for the enabling legislation or in the park's historical record.

Although a park's purpose is based on its enabling legislation and expected to remain constant over the long term, it might evolve as a result of major new scientific discoveries, current scholarship, or additional legislation. Park purpose statements are located in the park's General Management Plan and Strategic Plan, but should be reviewed and refined if necessary.

### *Significance*

Statements of significance clearly define the most important things about the park's resources and meanings, based on park purpose. They describe a park's distinctive natural, cultural, and recreational resources or values, why they are important within a national or international context, and why they contribute to the purpose of the park. They create a tool that park managers can use in setting resource protection priorities and in identifying primary parkwide interpretive themes and visitor experience goals. This helps park managers and staffs focus their efforts and funding on the preservation and enjoyment of those attributes that directly contribute to the purpose of the park and that must be protected.

Park significance statements often use such terms as "largest collection," "most diverse representation," "most authentic," "oldest," and "best remaining example." Significance statements summarize the essence of the park's importance to our natural and cultural heritage. They describe the distinctiveness of the combined resources in the park including natural, cultural, scientific, recreational, spiritual, and other characteristics.

Significance statements are based on park-specific legislation, the park's General Management Plan, Strategic Plan, and expert and research reports that provide the information needed to describe how park resources and meanings compare to related meanings in the region and the nation. Like park purpose, the significance of the park might evolve over time as a result of major new scientific discoveries or current scholarship.

Rather than listing important resources and meanings, significance statements capture those attributes that make the park resources and meanings important enough to warrant National Park System designation. Qualifications for inclusion in the National Park System are described in Criteria for Parklands. This publication can provide additional insight into definitions of national significance.

### **Interpretive Themes**

Interpretive themes are the key ideas through which the park's nationally-significance resource meanings are conveyed to the public. They embody the park's stories. These statements connect park resources to the larger processes, systems, ideas, and meanings of which they are a part. The most effective themes link things (the tangible; the resources themselves) with ideas, beliefs, and meanings (the intangible). Themes help visitors forge meaningful connections to the park.

Themes are the building blocks — the core content — on which the interpretive program is based. All themes should be written as single sentences. Themes can be divided into primary park interpretive themes and secondary park themes. All primary themes are of equal value. Either level may also have sub-themes, explanatory paragraphs, or other information that further describes the scope or specificity of the themes.

### *Program Goals*

Interpretive program goals describe management's intent in offering interpretation and educational services. Goals are always derived from the park's interpretive themes, park Strategic Plan, and overall management goals. They are statements that describe opportunities for visitors and suggest how the interpretive program might change the way visitors will think, feel, or act as a result of their park experience. They are long-range and measurable. This section might also contain objectives that define specific outcomes for interpretive programs. These objectives might be educational, emotional, or skill-related.

### *Visitor Profiles*

This is a description of park audiences (both actual and potential), as well as their needs, backgrounds, and expectations. It should be remembered that there really is no such thing as "the visitor." Visitors are individuals with varying beliefs, degrees, and awareness of group identity.

Describing major visitor groups such as elementary school students, family vacationers, interstate travelers, backcountry users, etc., enables planners to better identify and serve primary audiences. Audiences include those receiving interpretive services both onsite and beyond park boundaries, under-served and potential audiences. This section also includes descriptions of teachers, students, and organized groups served through park educational programs. Many factors can be taken into consideration: age, ethnic backgrounds, expectations, types of groups, frequency of visits, income, knowledge, activities, behaviors, etc.

It is incumbent upon the park to endeavor to identify and quantify these various constituencies in order to serve them to the best of the park's abilities. Visitor profiles should be based on systematic studies. Information should be kept as current as possible.

### *Visitor Experience Goals*

Visitor experience goals are derived from visitor experience statements. Visitor experience statements describe how the interpretive program facilitates physical, sensory, emotional, and intellectual experiences for visitors. These statements are transformed into goals to provide guidance in the recommendation of appropriate services. With regard to educational programs, this section also describes what educators, teachers, and students will experience when participating in the program, including preparation, follow-up, and evaluation.

Visitor experience statements can be formatted as a bulleted list, narrative statement, or a combination of the two. A combination usually proves most useful to interpretive planning efforts. Individual statements emphasize expected outcomes, are written in present tense, contain detail, and are ranked to indicate relative value. The narrative statement captures the essence of visitor experience statements, also with an emphasis on expected outcomes and written using present tense.

Universal accessibility and design is a mandatory factor when considering visitor experience and

how to provide opportunities to meet those goals. Accessibility standards and recommendations should be written into the Comprehensive Interpretive Plan to highlight these considerations.

### *Existing Interpretive Facility and Media Conditions*

Although interpretive planning uses existing conditions as a measurement baseline, where it fits into the process can vary. Some planners stress the “desired future” frame of mind. They first define the desired future condition then compare it to the existing condition. This generates actions for future media and facility development proposals. Other planners stress a more linear approach, beginning with the existing condition and working forward toward the future. They use the description of existing facility and media conditions to establish a point of departure for future media and facility development proposals. Either way, the assessment/evaluation of existing conditions is important to effective planning.

### **Support for the Program**

The items in this section are addressed from both existing and future perspectives. They, therefore, form a bridge between the Background for Planning section above and the section below, Developing the Desired Interpretive Program. The environment of an interpretive program has a history as well as a future — no interpretive program operates in a vacuum. Politics at all levels, department and agency initiatives and funding, changing values of the populace, agency policies, global and regional resource issues, etc., are all factors of the environment within which a park operates. Operational values and issues at the park level, such as reference collections, historic objects, and scientific research and its dissemination, are also important factors. The Background for Planning section above, together with this section, provide the information necessary to develop the park’s desired interpretive program.

### *Issues and Influences*

Issues and influences on the interpretive program are described in this section. Likely categories might include:

- Long-range servicewide initiatives (such as the Fee Demonstration Program, Environmental Leadership Program, etc)
- Influences outside the park
- Resource-based issues
- Internal issues

Planning and development issues within and beyond park boundaries should be identified if the interpretive program, or visitor experience, might be influenced by it. Planning specific to the park might include the General Management Plan, Pre-Design Plans, Resource Management Plan, Collection Management Plan, etc. Discussion of these issues and influences might result in proposed solutions for those issues over which the park might exert some control.

### *Interpretive References*

Interpreters and educators rely on various materials to perform their duties. These materials can be categorized:

- Reference library
- Image collection
- Interpretive collection (such as props, consumptive items)

The desired future condition of these aids, and their role in achieving the long-range vision of this plan, should be described.

### *Museum Collection*

The museum collection is an important part of the interpretive program. It provides some of the most interesting tangible resources that a visitor might see, either on-site or through remote means. It is managed by curators or those with curatorial training, and requires separate treatment from the interpretive collection. The desired future condition of the museum collection and its role in achieving the long-range vision of this plan should be described.

### *Research*

All effective interpretation and education efforts are based on research. Access to up-to-date research is critical to an effective interpretive program. Collaboration among interpreters, educators, historians, ethnographers, sociologists, scientists, and park staff is vital to a unified approach to park management. Research should also contribute to the efforts to identify “untold stories” within the park. Research should include evaluation of media and personal service effectiveness. The desired future condition of research and its role in achieving the long-range vision of this plan should be described.

## **Developing the Interpretive Program**

In addition to the elements in Background for Planning above, the following considerations should be addressed in the planning process:

### *Audiences*

Although most of the personal and non-personal interpretive services will communicate effectively to most of the audiences — especially if the principles of universal design and access are employed — there are always some audiences that are under-served, or could be served more effectively, or are potential audiences. For example, audiences that do not speak or read English may benefit from a universal safety sign, but might need a translation of a site bulletin to understand its more complex message. This section builds on the Visitor Profiles section above but targets those audiences for which universal design may not be wholly effective. This section also describes the audiences for educational services and programs, defining those that are served by the “main” program and those which might benefit from more tailored education and

communication strategies. This additional step beyond the Visitor Profiles section provides the targeting information for the communication of primary parkwide interpretive themes.

### *Locations for Interpretive Opportunities*

Personal and non-personal interpretive and educational services are provided at specific locations: onsite, beyond park boundaries, schools, in a virtual realm, etc. This section describes potential and existing locations for communication with the public. How visitors prepare for their park experience, what they do in the park and where they do it plays a part in deciding where to provide various interpretive and educational services. Together with considerations of resource needs, these factors form the basis for determining how best to communicate directly to visitors, on their terms, while promoting protection and preservation of significant park resources.

### *Personal and Non-Personal Services*

Personal and non-personal services together describe the methods used by the interpretive program to communicate primary parkwide interpretive themes to visitors. Personal services include any activity conducted or performed by one person for others. Non-personal services (media) are those activities not involving personal contact with visitors, such as museum exhibits, wayside exhibits, publications, audio-visual programs, mass and electronic media, study guides, workbooks, educational kits, traveling exhibits, etc.

This section describes in detail the role that personal services and media play in communicating primary parkwide interpretive themes to visitors and providing context to the overall visitor experience. Personal services and media also communicate vital safety messages, information and orientation, identify the park as a unit of the National Park System, and convey information on the National Park Service mission. This section may describe the desired outcomes of these communication methods and contrasts those outcomes with the existing condition. Cost estimates for existing and future personal services and media might be identified.

This section considers audiences that are found onsite and beyond park boundaries. It also considers interpretive and educational services provided by non-National Park Service providers, such as concessionaires, cooperating associations, and universities. Messages should be coordinated regardless of provider so visitors hear consistent information. For example, when a story is presented and it includes multiple perspectives, there should be some consistency when other service providers present the same story from those same perspectives. This will engender greater understanding and appreciation of the park and the National Park System.

Cooperating associations may provide personal and non-personal services to visitors. These services are integral components of the park's interpretive program. In an effort to maximize the efficiency of both, the cooperating association's Scope of Sales Statement should be collaboratively developed between the park staff and the cooperating association. Decisions made regarding media that the cooperating association will sell should be based on communicating the park's primary parkwide interpretive themes to diverse audiences. The role played by the cooperating association should be referenced in the park's desired interpretive

program as a part of the overall mix of services. (For additional information and examples, please see Reference Manual #32: Cooperating Associations.)

### *Staffing and Funding*

An analysis of the desired interpretive program, visitor experience goals, and program goals establishes annual and projected budgets. Needs regarding training opportunities for employees for both interpretation and education should also be addressed. In addition, this section identifies alternative management and funding strategies, and a strategy for acquiring funds for projects.

### *Partnerships*

Interpretive partnerships are those relationships with entities inside and beyond park boundaries that provide support for the interpretive program. Partners include cooperating associations, friends groups, concessionaires, other park divisions, other agencies, schools, and other educational institutions and associations.

The park should identify current partners, potential partners, and those partners that the park considers essential to the interpretive program. For essential partners, the park might describe the partners' current, and potential, contributions to the interpretive program. The park should also identify (for each of these groups) how each party benefits from this relationship. Partners may provide interpretive and educational services, fund-raising activities, staff, or facilities for interpretive activities. Parks enhance a partner's prestige or standing in the community.

### *Recommendations*

The planning process will generate recommendations regarding new or existing personal services programs, media, and facilities. These recommendations may include alternatives, an analysis of long-term costs, and other factors upon which managers may make informed decisions. Recommendations should accommodate both strategic and tactical needs. All recommendations should be outcome-driven, defining how the desired interpretive program will achieve the park's management goals and interpretive mission.

The discussion of recommendations should occur at that place in the particular planning process where it is most relevant, where the thinking and justification is easiest to follow. A value-based method of analysis may be used to decide among alternatives. Once an alternative is decided on, these decisions should receive the appropriate level of documentation.

### *Development Schedule and Action Plan*

This schedule lists those actions necessary to complete all three sections of the Comprehensive Interpretive Plan. This section should identify obstacles, actions to overcome them, responsibilities, and target completion dates. Performance of these actions continues the comprehensive interpretive planning process and results in the Comprehensive Interpretive Plan.

After the Comprehensive Interpretive Plan is approved, this section may transform into a long-

range Action Plan listing those future actions that will ultimately result in the achievement of the desired interpretive program. Although some of this information will already be represented in the desired interpretive program, the Action Plan will provide additional detail such as specific obstacles, actions to overcome them, responsibilities, and target completion dates. This long-range Action Plan should be updated annually to reflect those actions that have been accomplished, and any actions which need to be modified or added.

### Annual Implementation Plan

The Annual Implementation Plan is based on the Long-Range Interpretive Plan. This is a critical element of the Comprehensive Interpretive Plan: It links the Long-Range Interpretive Plan to the annual operation of the program. The description of the interpretive program will be very similar to the desired future program found in the Long-Range Interpretive Plan. The only difference will be that the actions that are not going to be achieved in the coming year will not be represented.

This is an operations document completed in accordance with the park's fiscal cycle. It reinforces other annual park management documents such as the park Strategic Plan and associated Annual Work Plan. It should contain the following:

#### **Summary of Annual Plan**

This section is an executive summary of the park's interpretive program for the coming year. It is a narrative overview of programs and other activities and should be no more than one page in length. This should be all that anyone should have to read to attain a basic understanding of what interpretation and education plans to do and why. It is often supported by a graphic overview of the interpretive program.

#### **Analysis of Current Program**

This analysis reviews the successes and failures of the past year's program as a basis for planning for the coming year. Factors to be considered would include outcomes achieved, audiences served, interpretive and educational objectives achieved, resource objectives achieved, costs, and linkages to park-wide management goals. It might contain an analysis using data gathered for the Servicewide Interpretive Report.

#### **Management Issues Facing Interpretation**

This section is a brief summary of the current issues and concerns (resource management, maintenance, safety, special anniversaries, change in local school district curricula) which interpretation and education need to address in the coming year. This information should be compared to the Issues and Influences section; if these issues are long-range in nature, they should be added to the Issues and Influences section if not already described therein.

### **Annual Work Plan**

The Annual Work Plan includes the existing program plus those actions (transitional elements such as identified individual services) that will be added/modified/deleted from the program in the coming year. It identifies how the park's interpretive program will operate this year and identifies obstacles, actions to overcome them, responsibilities, and target completion dates for the transitional elements. Performance of these actions implements the Long-Range Interpretive Plan on an annual basis. The desired interpretive program and the Action Plan in the Long-Range Interpretive Plan should be updated to reflect the actual accomplishment of these actions. By updating these sections, the long-term vision remains accurate and relevant to operations.

This same information directly supports the GPRA Mission Goal IIb (Park visitors and the general public learn and understand the purpose and significance of parks.) and can be duplicated in the park's GPRA Annual Performance Plan. Consideration should be given to formatting the Annual Work Plan to be similar to that used in the GPRA reporting process. Work plans are submitted annually to the superintendent.