

**INDIANA DUNES NATIONAL LAKESHORE
LONG RANGE INTERPRETIVE PLAN
FOUNDATION WORKSHOP, Day 3
March 5, 2010
WORKSHOP NOTES**

Introduction. The third and final session of the Foundational Elements workshop of the Long Range Interpretive Planning Process (LRIP) for Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore was held 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. on Friday, March 5, 2010, at the Indiana Dunes Environmental Education Center.

Difference between significance statements and primary interpretive themes. The group distinguished the two as follows:

What are significance statements? *Place-based* statements of fact that tell us why the park is special, unique, extraordinary, outstanding, exceptional or superlative.

What are primary interpretive themes? Statements that tell us why the park matters.

Participants. Participants included:

Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore
Dunes Learning Center
NPS - Harpers Ferry Center

Revised significance statements. Significance statements revisited on Day 2 were revised as follows:

1. Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore is the birthplace of American ecology, the place where Henry Cowles, the “father of ecology” described ecological succession for the first time. The park remains the textbook example of the process, with all stages of dune succession visible within a short distance.
2. Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore provides unique opportunities for observing and understanding how Lake Michigan was created and how dunes are formed.
3. Access to the lakeshore at Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore provides opportunities for understanding today’s Lake Michigan as a vital national resource, as well as a place of recreation.
4. Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore’s soaring dunes tower above Lake Michigan, creating an extraordinary visual effect.

5. The proximity of a wide variety of ecosystems, including lake, shore, dunes, wetland, bogs, fens, marshes, woodlands, climax forest, prairies, oak savannah, and rivers, at Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore provides visitors with an unusual opportunity to observe an extraordinary degree of ecological diversity within a single park.
6. Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore is an ecological crossroads for plant diversity, featuring an outstanding 1,400 different plant species within its 15,000 acres, many in unique combinations.
7. The human-altered landscape of Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore tells the story of 10,000 years of settlement and urbanization, from the earliest native people to agricultural development to urbanization to industrial development to the environmental conservation movement to restoration of natural areas to “green” conversions and sustainability initiatives.
8. Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, in effect among the first urban initiative parks, provides opportunities for millions of urban dwellers to experience outstanding and varied outdoor recreational activities, access to Lake Michigan beaches, and scenic beauty within a few miles of their homes, and marks a pioneering effort to bring national parks to the people.
9. The beauty of Indiana Dunes, shared by artists of many kinds, helped inspire people to save the park and continues to inspire artistic creativity, lift spirits, and foster stewardship.
10. The location of Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore amid industry and commerce and within an hour’s drive of the third largest metropolitan area in the country demonstrates the ongoing national struggle between the needs of urbanization, industry and conservation.

Primary interpretive themes. The group drafted the following themes:

1. Factors that include geological processes, climate, weather, and geographical location came together at Indiana Dunes to create remarkable species diversity within a variety of ecosystems, providing outstanding opportunities to appreciate the rich ecological relationships that nurture and sustain our civilization.
2. Beginning a legacy of scientific inquiry and education that continues today, Henry Cowles, a botanist from the University of Chicago, published an article, entitled "Ecological Relations of the Vegetation on Sand Dunes of Lake Michigan," in the Botanical Gazette in 1899 that brought international attention to and inspired the effort to preserve the intricate ecosystems existing on the dunes. Research at Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore is increasingly vital, helping us address current threats to our world that include human impact both locally and globally.

3. The cultural resources of Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore demonstrate a wide range of land use strategies over more than 10,000 years, revealing the dynamic relationship between humans and the environment and our changing perceptions of the value of natural environments, and guiding us to decisions that are vital to our survival.
4. Situated close to one of America's largest metropolitan areas, Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore provides a natural setting for millions of people to experience scenic beauty, artistic inspiration and recreational opportunities, reminding us of the costs and benefits of urbanization, and of our need as humans to seek renewal of body, mind and soul.
5. Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, the scene of intensive public interest and passion regarding its preservation for over 100 years, demonstrates the national struggle between the needs of urbanization, industry and conservation, reflects the historical national and state park preservation movement, and serves as both model and "cautionary tale" in the fields of resource acquisition, preservation and restoration.

Management objectives for the Indiana Dunes interpretive program. Superintendent Costa Dillon articulated management goals, objectives and desired outcomes for INDU's interpretive program. Some goals are directed outward, toward creating an impact outside the park's boundaries, while others are inner-directed, impacting the park's on-site interpretive services and their audiences.

1. Community-directed goals. The community surrounding INDU does not value or benefit from the presence of the park as it might. Support in terms of both advocacy and donations of land and money is minimal. The number one goal for the park's interpretive program is to help people understand the value of the resource, its relationship to larger issues like climate change, fitness, and sustainability, and the need for its protection.

- The park is at risk due to human impacts, including:
 - Zoning/development not designed to protect park boundaries.
 - Pollution
 - Invasive species
 - Etc.
- The park's integrity depends upon the support of the community and the region. Interpretation should be the park's best tool to communicate this message to local people, business leaders, governments and elected officials and prompt them to political and community action. Priorities:
 - Identify missing or under-served audiences; refocus priorities from in-park, curriculum-based education programs to programs that take interpretation to the people.
 - Attract local/regional volunteers who will help spread the message.
 - Foster a climate of partnering to achieve community goals (not just park goals)

- Create the park's own visitor center in order to help establish a stronger park identity, provide a focal point for community interests, and promote the importance of the resource.
- Encourage area CVBs to invest in INDU.
- Broaden the audience by placing interpreters at Chicago venues like the Art Institute, Botanical Garden, and Field Museum.
- Make the park's new "boat ambassador" a visible presence on Lake Michigan.
- Look for advertising sponsors like Coke (park graphics on Coke machines).
- Create airport exhibits to promote the park.

2. Inner-directed goals. The interpretive program should enhance resource protection, help reduce human-impact damage, and strengthen park identity through its messaging.

- Integrate interpretation into the park's mission to protect and preserve.
- Use interpretation to strengthen park identity and the ability of visitors to orient themselves. Priorities:
 - More signage at park boundaries.
 - Improve basic information at trailheads.
 - Treat the park as a unit rather than a set of separate "franchises."
 - Plan interpretive programs/tours that reinforce the idea of the park as a whole unit (example: driving tour of dune formation or 190 years of the history of the American single-family dwelling).
 - Identify the resources and techniques the park is not using.
 - Create new media-based programs to target new audiences.
 - Identify partners to support high-tech programming.

Desired visitor experiences. Statements of desired visitor experiences describe how the park's interpretation and education program facilitates physical, intellectual, inspirational and emotional experiences for visitors. They guide the development of interpretive services that will facilitate the connections visitors want to make with park resources. The group developed and ranked a set of desired visitor experiences, but also look forward to the perspectives of "actual" visitors, whose opinions will be solicited at Saturday's (and subsequent) public meetings.

The desired visitor experiences (in ranked order) were:

- Visitors want to foster the appreciation of nature for their children (6 votes)
- Visitors want to hike through the dunes to the Lake (4 votes)
- Visitors want a safe, family-oriented place to experience a variety of beach activities – playing, kayaking, picnicking, swimming, hiking, eating -- with family and friends(3 votes)
- Visitors want to participate in rewarding educational and volunteer service experiences that allow them to contribute to something larger while learning something new about the resource (3 votes).

- Visitors want to learn about the effects of climate change and other important critical issues in an engaging way with interesting scientists or inspiration motivational speakers (3 votes).
- Visitors want to explore the park's wetlands (3 votes).
- Visitors want to swim in Lake Michigan (2 votes).
- Visitors want to exercise outside a gym: bike, swim, walk, kayak (2 votes).
- Visitors want to take a hike with a ranger (2 votes).
- Visitors want to be left alone (2 votes).
- Visitors want to experience quiet and the sounds of nature (2 votes).
- Visitors want to see wildlife easily, if they do not or cannot walk for more than one block (2 votes).
- Visitors want to see park wildlife and watch birds (1 vote).
- Visitors want to see how the dunes were formed (1 vote).
- Visitors want to share time with others while in the park (1 vote).
- Visitors want to relive their childhoods through the enjoyment of a night campground program (1 vote).
- Visitors want to see a flowering plant that they have not seen before (1 vote).
- Visitors want to enjoy the outdoors and take advantage of the recreational opportunities such as hiking, kayaking, camping, swimming, etc. (1 vote).

Other statements included:

- Visitors want to learn about historic uses of plants.
- Visitors want to take photos of scenic nature.
- Visitors want to explore and photograph the dunes.
- Visitors want to see wildlife in the park.
- Visitors want to stand on top of Mt. Baldy.
- Visitors want to run up and down the dunes.
- Visitors want to take a walk on the beach.
- Visitors want to hike in the park.
- Visitors want to learn about interesting things that they see.
- Visitors want WiFi access spots to check their email (the only suggestion having to do with support facilities).

It is interesting to note that, in spite of considerable attention throughout the three days of the workshop that was directed toward the park's deficiencies in providing information and orientation, no desired visitor experience statements addressed these issues.

Audience sets. The basis for categorizing audiences (for the interpretation and education program) lies in whether or not a particular audience requires communication in a way that is distinct from that of the general park audience. Factors to consider include the life experiences of the individual or group, level of education, learning styles, language, cultural traditions, time available for interaction, and others.

The audience sets identified for Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore are:

- General audience
- Park neighbors, local and regional residents

- Recreational
- Beach goers
- Non-English speakers
- Special needs (who should be served through the principles of universal design)
- Curriculum-based groups
- Volunteers
- Urban dwellers, including metropolitan Chicago and Milwaukee
- Under-represented audiences, including African Americans, Latinos, Asians, and those of all ethnicities and communities who live in poverty.
- People with “nature deficit disorder”
- Families

Planning for public open houses. Open houses will take place on Saturday, March 6 in Gary and at the Visitor Center to elicit public input on the workshop’s deliberations. Preparations include:

- Background information to be available to the public
 - Large map of park
 - List of stakeholder organizations who have been invited to become involved in the planning process
 - Handout: NPS Organic Act; Park legislation, mission and purpose
 - Handout: Overview of CIP process (focused on interpretation) with project timeline
 - Handouts: Significance and themes from various other parks.
 - Sample LRIP
 - Digital frame with park images
 - Sign-in sheet that asks for email addresses.
- Ways to comment
 - Large sheets of paper with the significance and themes will invite comments via large post-it notes and ask if any were missed.
 - Other sheets of paper will ask what visitors would like to do or experience in the park.
 - Another will ask “Anything else you would like to tell us?”
 - Another: did we miss any stakeholders who should be involved?
 - Comment cards to fill in at the meeting or mail in later (table and chairs for comfortable writing).
 - Email address for comments (within two weeks); automated thank-you response to all emailers.
 - Website will also ask for comments.
- All comments will be collected, compiled and posted to park website.