



A Forum for Interpreters, Educators, and Volunteer Managers on the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail

Trail Talk Minutes

Tuesday, March 23, 2010

1:00 pm CST

I. Introductions

Trail talk began with introductions of Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail (LECL) hosts:

Karla Sigala, Interpretive Specialist, karla_sigala@nps.gov

Jill Hamilton-Anderson, Education Specialist, jill_hamilton-anderson@nps.gov

Nichole McHenry, Volunteer Program Manager, nichole_mchenry@nps.gov

II. Trail Talk Purpose

The purpose of Trail Talk is to connect interpreters, educators, and volunteer professionals to each other so they can learn from each other, share ideas and resources, and build relationships. It is also to weave places and people together along the National Historic Trail. Trail Talk will also be used as a conduit for information dissemination regarding policy changes, administration needs, and grant or other funding opportunities.

The Challenge Cost Share Program (CCSP) has been a prominent and beneficial funding program for partners of the National Trails System. Congress has legislated funds through this program to better serve Trail partners since 1995. Funds distributed by the CCSP have helped partners develop programs, protect natural resources, hire seasonal staff, improve infrastructure, educate school children, and commemorate historic events. These funds reached a peak during the bicentennial commemorations of the Lewis and Clark Expedition and have been significantly decreasing thereafter. There is a high probability that no funds will be allocated to this program in FY2011 (Oct. 1, 2010-Sept. 30, 2011) and perhaps in the foreseeable future. Trail staff has been working to find other sources of funding for Trail projects and Trail Talk will be a mechanism to communicate these opportunities.

Partner Comment: The CCSP has been a great program, especially for small sites and museums; Who do we contact to show our appreciation and support for this program?

We suggest that partners contact:

Mark Weekely, Superintendent
National Park Service
Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail
601 Riverfront Drive
Omaha, Nebraska 68102
402-661-1806

mark_weekely@nps.gov

LECL has evolved after the bicentennial years. There is now a team of professionals from varied disciplines available to assist partners through their expertise. This direction was chosen after a thorough agency audit determined that the best way to meet the needs of partners in the future of decreasing grant funds is through its people. The Trail is in the process of creating a formal assistance program from which Trail partners can request the time and expertise of the staff. However, we are working on informal ways as well. Trail Talk is an informal way to assist partners by providing a conduit for communication.

III. Participant Introductions

Participants also had an opportunity to introduce themselves, where they are located, who they represent and to share what their biggest accomplishments and challenges have been.

Common to participants was a cut in funding for operations, infrastructure and/or for programming, causing hours of operation to be reduced, staff to be laid off, general maintenance needs to be postponed, interpretive and educational programming be offered less often.

Major accomplishments included strong relationships with a partner group and successful annual events that bring several hundred people to the sites. Special events could not be possible without the partnerships. Partners bring a committed volunteer membership and fundraising abilities that many state or other government sites cannot do.

Special events at your site can be placed on LECL's website calendar. If you would like your event on our calendar please send the particulars to Jill at jill_hamilton-anderson@nps.gov; our website does allow for one downloadable document, so if you have a flyer for the event you can send that as well.

A couple of notes from this discussion:

- If you have artisans at your event who have anything to sell and you want to keep the "sales" aspect out of the presentation, find out if your retail outlet will sell artisans items on a consignment basis for the artisan. Things to consider:
 - Review the items for accuracy, appropriateness, and mission effectiveness prior to being offered to the public
 - Offer the item several days before, during, and after the event

- Have a cut-off day for the artisan to get items to the retailer so the artisan isn't showing up last minute with items
- Arrange in advance how to handle the sales, payment to artisan and inventory so cashiers know what to do
- Have conversations with your neighboring Lewis and Clark sites, other cultural sites, and tourism bureaus to find out if there is a possibility of pooling resources for advertising of events, coordination of events, transportation to and from events; brainstorm ways to connect with your community and the greater Lewis and Clark Trail.

See how this is working around the country mainly through National Heritage Areas (<http://www.nps.gov/history/heritageareas/>), but not always:

- <http://www.blueridgeheritage.com/heritage-history>;
- <http://www.essexheritage.org/maritime/index.shtml>
- http://www.southernliterarytrail.org/trail_towns.html
- <http://www.bostonhistorycollaborative.org/literarytrail/overview.html>
- Sometimes these relationships are difficult to cultivate and maintain, particularly across state borders; LECL hopes to be able to assist with fostering these relationships, especially with Lewis and Clark sites.
- Friends groups and Foundations are a critical asset to sites, particularly with volunteer staffing and fundraising; some events can be entirely funded by community organizations like banks, local branches of corporations, long-time family businesses in a community, or a community foundation

IV. Participant Expectations

We asked participants about their expectations for *Trail Talk*. What is it that made you pick up the phone and join us today? Some expectations were:

- To know that we are not alone
- To get connected to the greater Trail
- To network and talk and share
- To meet interpreters and educators on the Trail
- Share programming ideas
- To find out about the technical assistance available to us
- To eventually meet in person, maybe once a year as a Trail-wide working meeting

V. Trail Talk Structure/Guest Speakers/Trail Notes

The remainder of *Trail Talk* was dedicated to sharing how *Trail Talk* will be structured, which may change, based on YOUR needs and expectations, but preliminarily will be:

- monthly calls
- there will be an agenda posted on www.nps.gov/lecl/parknews/trail-talk

to download before the call

- meeting minutes will be available one week following the call from the website as well
- when guest speakers are scheduled, there will be a bio of the speaker and topic of discussion on the website
- there will be an opportunity to share concerns, challenges, successes on every call
- *Trail Notes* will be a time during the call when there will be updates from the Trail headquarters:
 - Comprehensive Management Plan- a vision for administration of the Trail for the next 15 years
 - News from the National Trails Office
 - Project highlights
 - Program visitation numbers request
 - Volunteer happenings
 - Volunteer hours request
 - Newsletter article requests
 - And other tidbits

***Volunteer hours and programming numbers are essential to support funding requests, to justify technical assistance, to document the on-going work and public outreach at your sites to the Washington Trails Office, to show how popular a particular program is, to show a need for more staffing, etc. Many of you collect these numbers anyway; we ask that you pass them along to us. Right now this collection is the only formal recording needs the Trail has, but we anticipate these other statistics will become more formal in the near future.*

*****We really want YOUR input on Trail Notes....what do YOU want updated every month? EMAIL us!**

Finally, any future topics for discussion for an expert in the field to come visit us as a guest speaker...what are YOUR thoughts? Our brainstorming list includes:

- Cultural Interpretation techniques
- Teaching with American History Grants
- Curriculum-Based Education Programs
- Reaching out to broader audiences, under-engaged audiences
- Program Evaluation
- Connecting Trails to Parks Program
- Bookstore Product Development
- Volunteer Management
- Friends Groups and Foundations
- Community-Based Stewardship
- Heritage and Eco-Tourism
- Toolkits for Trails

THANKS to everyone who participated in the call and to those who meant to!