

Long Range Interpretive Plan

Obed Wild & Scenic River

National Park Service—Department of the Interior

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Part 1

Background

Introduction

Comprehensive Interpretive Planning in the National Park Service

In 1995, the National Park Service adopted a unified planning approach for interpretation and education. This approach took proven elements of interpretive planning and combined them. At the same time, responsibility for interpretive planning shifted to the parks. The Comprehensive Interpretive Planning (CIP) process became the basic planning component for interpretation and was incorporated into park service guidelines (see Director's Order 6).

What is a Comprehensive Interpretive Plan?

The CIP is a tool designed to help parks make choices, and is written to provide guidance to park staff. It helps them decide what their objectives are, who their audiences are, and what mix of media and personal services to use. Although the CIP as defined in DO 6 is composed of specific elements, it should be clearly stated that any good planning is customized to meet an individual park's needs, conditions, and situations. The CIP is not a recipe; rather it is a guide to efficient, effective, goal-driven planning. The product is not the plan, but an interpretive program that achieves management goals, provides appropriate services for visitors, and promotes visitor experiences. While it considers past interpretive programming, it is primarily a forward-looking document that concentrates on actions needed to create or sustain a vigorous and effective interpretive program for the future.

Responsibility for procuring interpretive planning rests with park superintendents and each park should update the CIP as frequently as circumstances require. It can and should evolve to address new challenges and maintain relevance to park management efforts.

What is a Long Range Interpretive Plan?

The heart of the CIP is the Long Range Interpretive Plan (LRIP). Almost everything else is tied to it. The LRIP defines the overall vision and long term (5-7 years) interpretive goals of the park. The process that defines the LRIP encourages development of targeted, realistic strategies and actions that work toward achievement of the LRIP's goals.

A facilitator works with park staff, partners, and outside consultants to prepare a plan that is consistent with other current planning documents.

Part 1 of the LRIP establishes criteria against which existing and proposed personal services and media can be measured. It identifies themes, audiences, and

desired experiences. Within the context of Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) requirements, it lists results-oriented strategic goals and poses management issues that interpretation might address.

Part 2 describes the mix of services and facilities that are necessary to achieve management objectives and interpretive mission. It identifies promising partnerships and includes an Action Plan that plots a course of action, assigning responsibilities and offering a schedule of activity.

When appropriate, Appendices provide more detailed discussions of specific topics.

The Annual Implementation Plan and Interpretive Database

The completed LRIP is a critical part of the CIP, but it does not stand alone.

Actions in the LRIP are divided into annual, achievable steps and reproduced in the Annual Implementation Plan (AIP), the second component of the CIP. Creating annual plans via this “stepping-down” of the LRIP simplifies much of a park’s annual planning process.

The third component of the CIP is the Interpretive Database (ID), a compilation of information, including interpretive media inventories, the park’s strategic plan, enabling legislation, visitor surveys, interpretive reports, and a bibliography.

Park Purpose & Significance

Park Purpose

Park purpose summarizes the reasons a particular park or park unit was included in the National Park System originally, and how that purpose may have evolved over time.

Background

Public Law 90-542, passed by Congress on October 2, 1968, established the National Wild & Scenic Rivers System. It “declared to be the policy of the United States that certain selected rivers... which, with their immediate environments, possess outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values, shall be preserved in free-flowing condition, and that they and their immediate environments shall be protected for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations.”

Public Law 94-486, passed on October 12, 1976, included a portion of the Obed River and sections of its principle tributaries (Clear Creek, Daddys Creek, and Emory River) in the wild and scenic river system, and gave the Secretary of the Interior responsibility for administration. Through a memorandum of understanding, those lands within Obed Wild & Scenic River’s (Obed WSR) boundary that are a part of the Catoosa Wildlife Management Area are to be managed jointly by the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) and the National Park Service (NPS).

The heart of river protection, and the essence of the Wild & Scenic Rivers Act, is protection of free-flowing character (existing or flowing in natural condition without impoundment, diversion, straightening, rip-rapping, or other modifications of the waterway). Managers of a wild and scenic river must protect and enhance the outstanding values of the river’s system, but not limit other uses that do not substantially interfere with public use and enjoyment of these values.

Purpose Statement

Congress established Obed WSR to preserve portions of the Obed’s free-flowing river system and surrounding area in an essentially primitive condition with unpolluted waters, and to protect the immediate environments which possess outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural or other similar values for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations.

Park Significance

Obed WSR is nationally significant because...

...it is one of the last remaining free-flowing rivers in Eastern United States.

...it supports ecologically diverse plant and animal life, including 17 state and federal endangered, threatened, and rare species and one critical habitat.

...long stretches of its rugged, generally inaccessible terrain show little evidence of human occupation and, combined with unpolluted water, represent a trace of untrammeled, primitive America.

...it has an unusual collection of sandstone gorges, natural arches, rock shelters, waterfalls, and continuous bluffs and cliff faces with natural vegetation.

...its narrow and deep gorges offer spectacular, inspirational scenery.

...its high stream gradients intermingled with quiet smooth-flowing stretches of water through rock formations suitable for climbing offer considerable recreational opportunities.

Existing Programs and Facilities (2003)

As of 2003, Obed WSR provided a variety of interpretive programs using several types of interpretive media.

Visitor Center

Obed's visitor center is located in Wartburg, TN, in a converted bank building. Exhibits touch on several of the park's primary stories—natural and cultural history, water resources, and recreational activities. A 10-minute video provides orientation. There is an Eastern National sales outlet.

Publications

Obed has a "unigrid" brochure and a newspaper, published once a year, that includes a calendar of events along with articles on activities, safety, resource issues, and partners. There is a "site bulletin" for the Emory River Nature Trail located in the park's campground.

Access Points with Bulletin Boards

There are five access points with interpretive information on bulletin boards—Nemo picnic area, Rock Creek campground, Lilly Bridge, Lilly Bluff overlook, and Jett Bridge.

Personal Services and Special Events

Staff and invited speakers offer programs from April to October on weekends. Attendance averages between 15-20 per program.

The park participates in several special events: River Fest; National River Clean-up; and International Migratory Bird Week.

Educational Program

Staff offer several programs for area schools. Program topics for elementary students include birds of prey, Native Americans, water quality, and the National Park Service. Park staff also discuss careers in the NPS with middle and high school students.

On-going Interpretive Projects

The park is currently involved in several interpretive projects that need to be acknowledged by this plan and completed. The projects include: a water resources exhibit and a Native American exhibit for the visitor center; an expanded web page; and a limited number of wayside exhibits.

Interpretive Themes

What are Interpretive Themes?

Interpretive themes capture the essence of a park's significance. They are a park's most important stories and represent core messages that every audience should have the opportunity to hear.

While interpretation of any park could touch upon many stories, focused themes increase effectiveness. When well conceived, they explore the meanings behind the facts. They open minds to new ideas and perhaps to multiple points of view. When linked to commonly held emotions or universal human experiences (compelling stories), themes encourage audiences to discover personal relevance.

Primary Themes

Topic 1: Water

Interpretive Theme Statement

Water created the valleys of the Obed watershed and the free-flowing, relatively unpolluted water that still tumbles down its bluffs into its creeks and rivers sustains the diversity of natural and cultural life that makes Obed WSR a national treasure.

Content

This theme focuses on the essence of any wild and scenic river—its water quality and quantity (hydrology). It explores how water creates topography including spectacular scenery, how it interacts with geologic formations, how it sustains life and, in many places like Obed, how it supports biodiversity and recreational activities. It discusses how free-flowing, unpolluted water is essential to maintaining the natural balance that currently exists in the watershed.

Topic 2: Natural Resources

Interpretive Theme Statement

The natural mosaic of the Obed is an increasingly rare window to America's past.

Content

This theme focuses on the flora and fauna of the watershed and explains how the current mix of plants and animals, with the exception of a very few exotic species, reflects the environment of 300 years ago before the period of prolonged European

contact in Tennessee. It not only explores watershed habitat, it portrays Obed's natural places as an alternative, a snapshot of another time and place. And it reconnects life and nature by discussing the value of quiet, solitude, and even darkness in the noisy, frenetic, and developed world of the 21st century.

Topic 3: Human Impact

Interpretive Theme Statement

The rugged, natural terrain of Obed WSR limited human impact and, until recently, allowed nature to accommodate the resource-related use that did occur.

Content

This theme focuses on the impact of human use or, in the case of Obed, non-use. It explores how nature managed to absorb use and remain in balance over time. It traces how the limited effect that humans had on the watershed related to its natural resources, and how contemporary recreational use is directly linked to the park's natural environment.

It also discusses how things may change now that the isolation of the past is no longer possible and the lifeblood of the watershed—water quality and quantity—is subject to outside development.

Topic 4: Wild & Scenic Rivers

Interpretive Theme Statement

Congress created a system of “wild & scenic” rivers, including Obed, to balance the development that was gradually erasing free-flowing, unpolluted rivers and their immediate environments from the map of the United States.

Content

This theme focuses on what it means to be a “wild & scenic” river. It explains why Congress created the park and the local implications and benefits of designation. It links Obed to the system of “wild & scenic” rivers as well as to the National Park System.

Audiences & Audience Experiences

In addition to the themes that the unit hopes to communicate, it is important to think about the nature of interactions with targeted audiences. What will the initial contact with the park be like? How will audiences be oriented? What activities and programs can the park provide that will reinforce its themes? How can audiences actively participate in learning? Are there ways to encourage reflection and inspiration? What will create positive memories and nurture stewardship and support?

Existing Audiences

The Obed WSR serves a variety of existing audiences and user groups including: kayakers and canoeists, hikers, picnickers, anglers, hunters, local history students, rock climbers, boy scouts, land owners, and local elementary and secondary school students. Additionally, non-governmental organizations such as Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning, Emory River Watershed Association, and whitewater clubs are part of the audiences served.

5-7 Year Focus

The intended audiences for interpretive programming can have an important impact on the interpretive programs and techniques recommended in this plan. In order to focus valuable resources of staffing and budget, workshop participants discussed both existing and potential audiences and suggested that the following groups should receive priority, in the order listed below, over the next 5-7 years.

1. Local Residents (Morgan County)

Local audiences are divided into several subcategories:

There are many life-long residents who view life primarily through a rural lens. They have always lived with and used the land and its natural resources. They live side-by-side with transplants to the area, current residents who were attracted to the area by its natural beauty and less urban life-style, but who have a more cosmopolitan frame of reference and more interest in preservation.

Among the local residents, there are many "opinion leaders" who have a significant impact on public attitude—elected officials, planners and planning boards, civic organizations, news editors and reporters, officials of government agencies, etc. These residents both make and influence public policy.

Educators and students represent the future, but they also provide a direct, immediate conduit to parents and extended family.

Interpretation for all of these local residents will focus on basic information—who the National Park Service is, what a wild & scenic river is and what it means to local communities, how Obed WSR is managed, what the park's primary themes are and how they are relevant, and how residents can be involved in both management and interpretive/recreational activities.

Communication with opinion leaders by management, resource management, and interpretive staff will be proactive with emphasis on resource-related issues.

Educational programs initially will focus on establishing NPS identity. In addition, resource-related programs will build on existing topics (birds of prey and water quality, for example) and link them to park themes, particularly when presented to older elementary or middle school students. Programming will always include hands-on activities that turn teachers and students from passive to active participants, and whenever possible include contact with actual park resources.

If interpretive staffing increases and resources allow, school programming may move gradually toward a curriculum-based model. See Appendix 2 for general characteristics of curriculum-based education.

2. Cumberland County Residents

Cumberland County is located upriver at the headwaters of Obed WSR, and is home to some of the external threats that affect the park. As of 2003, there are some Cumberland County elected officials who have expressed interest in expanding the boundaries of the park.

For Cumberland County audiences, it is important that the park take a proactive stance, helping them to understand what a wild & scenic is and grasp the pros and cons of designation. They need personal knowledge of how designation might affect their quality of life and how Obed WSR already has impacted Cumberland County's neighbor, Morgan County.

3. User Groups

There are a variety of user groups at the Obed WSR including hunters and anglers, rock climbers, hikers, and kayakers; others picnic, bird watch, etc.

For these groups, the park needs to concentrate on providing information about low impact use, resource stewardship, and safety. Users need to know how to access recreational resources and respect private land.

Goals & Issues Affecting Interpretation

The unit has many assets upon which it can build an effective interpretive program including an evocative sense of place and compelling stories.

However, like any park it faces challenges as well. Depending upon program design, interpretation can build on the unit's strengths to help solve park management problems and overcome obstacles to park/audience interaction.

In addition to the focused content, identification of targeted audiences, and delivery of certain types of audience experiences that are addressed elsewhere in Part 1, workshop planning sessions should consider the following goals and issues, and seek interpretive solutions whenever practicable.

Goals

Government Performance & Results Act

The Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA), enacted in 1993, requires federal agencies to establish standards for measuring performance and effectiveness. The law requires federal agencies to develop strategic plans describing their overall goals and objectives, annual performance plans containing quantifiable measures of their progress, and performance reports describing their success in meeting those standards and measures.

The following mission goals were prepared as part of a process required by GPRA. Annual plans prepared by the unit will establish benchmarks for visitor satisfaction, visitor understanding, and partner participation and should be consulted during the annual review of this LRIP.

Mission Goal IIa: Visitors safely enjoy and are satisfied with the availability, accessibility, diversity, and quality of park facilities, services, and appropriate recreational opportunities.

Mission Goal IIb: Park visitors and the general public understand and appreciate the preservation of parks and their resources for this and future generations.

Accessibility

NPS policy mandates that interpretive programming be developed in accordance with Director's Order 42 and the Harpers Ferry Center programmatic accessibilities guidelines in Appendix 3.

Issues

The three most important issues that the park will face over the next five years are...

1. Water Quantity & Water Quality

The hydrology of the area combined with existing impoundments and new development place unprecedented pressure on the watershed's supply of water, particularly in the summer. Continued decreases in water flow could imperil the natural balance of the watershed and pose a threat equal to increased water pollution.

2. Park Identity and Visibility

In order to advance the mission of the Obed WSR, park staff (management, resource management, and interpretation) need to open and sustain channels of communication with local residents. Actions that introduce the park to the public and stress the benefits provided by a wild and scenic river will help create dialogue. Personal contact with park staff via park programming and management meetings will help establish rapport between the NPS and local decision makers and residents.

3. Land Acquisition

Since before Congress designated Obed WSR, local residents have been understandably concerned about the impact of the park. Park staff need to actively monitor local concerns and provide up-to-date and accurate information about the park's future, including already planned land acquisition.

In addition to the three most pressing issues, park staff should begin to plan strategies that will address...

External Threats

The park's rugged terrain no longer provides a buffer to external threats like logging, mining, and oil exploration. Cooperative management and open communication are essential to park protection.

Research Needs

Little research has been completed on the park's resources. There is minimal baseline information that can be used to monitor the health of the park's resources. Interpretation and Resource Management should work closely in the Inventory and

Monitoring Program so facts from resource management programs can be park-specific rather than general.

Exotics & Resource Management

Although the park resources are remarkably unchanged over centuries, some exotic species exist within park boundaries. "Transparent management" means the park will carefully explain measures taken to control or eliminate the exotics such as integrated pest management techniques, as well as other actions related to other resource management issues.

Part 2

Actions

Interpretive Program Description

Organization

After reviewing the contents of Part 1, park staff concluded that helping local audiences understand the themes and issues related to water quality and water quantity should be the primary focus of interpretive activity over the next five years. In order to strengthen their credibility and expand the dialogue on water, park staff also decided to increase efforts designed to heighten the visibility of the NPS in the region and to educate regional residents about wild and scenic rivers and how they can benefit a community.

In the narrative that follows, a bullet indicates each action item. For reference, bulleted actions also are listed in the Action Plan toward the end of this document. Each item in the Action Plan is linked to staff or partners responsible for taking the lead on implementation and to a fiscal year or, if several steps are required, years.

Actions that Address Morgan County Residents

County Educators and Students

Park staff felt that investing in educational programming could be an effective, long-term strategy that will help local residents understand the park's water-related themes and issues.

In order to expand interpretation for schools and educators, park staff will...

- Personally contact principals and teachers at Morgan County schools that currently do not use the park for educational programs. These contacts will be incremental, beginning with 3rd through 5th grades and gradually expanding to 6th through 8th grade, if additional staff and budget become available. Teacher EE training camps could be used to involve teachers, if the park increases its permanent interpretive staff in the future.

When staff contact the schools, they will discuss existing programs and ask for feedback on how those programs could be adjusted to match classroom needs.

- Begin to adjust existing programs by placing more emphasis on water themes and issues. Again, feedback from educators is critical to making these adjustments effective. Staff will investigate ways to enlist teachers/educators as advisers to the development of new park programs or ways to use teachers to prepare and promote new programs.

- Continue working with the annual science camp for Morgan County teachers. Get feedback from participants that will help in the development of water-related programs. Consider scheduling an additional meeting in the park with science teachers, perhaps on a weekend. Focus discussions on water-related issues.
- Identify “equipment” that would enhance water-related educational programming or educational lesson plans. Seek funding to purchase the items identified.

Long-term Morgan County Residents

Staff also recognized the importance of developing interpretive programming that will appeal to long-term adult residents of Morgan County, particularly those who grew up fishing in the park’s waterways and hunting on adjacent lands.

Since experience indicates that local residents who have lived in the area for many years are attracted to programs that relate to history and local culture, staff will...

- Double the number of summer programs (from 3-4 to 6-8) that use local subject matter speakers. Work with the local historical society to schedule joint programming. Find and use local musicians. Provide a forum that invites residents to share personal stories about the region. Develop programs that relate to hunting and fishing. Make sure that all of these programs have a connection to park themes. Make sure that new programming relates to water-related topics and issues whenever possible.
- Continue to use the park visitor center for programs. Continue to use other locations as well within park boundaries, and in neighboring state park units.
- Explore ways to videotape or preserve the content of interpretive programs offered on a one-time or occasional basis.
- Contact the staff of the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) and discuss joint programming.
- Invite more local groups to participate in park programs and special events. Prepare a list of projects that would benefit from volunteer help and match these projects to local groups.
- Develop a list of county locations willing to host the park’s water exhibit (the park has two identical exhibits, one that will remain in the visitor center and another that can circulate).

Morgan County “Transplants”

Other residents of Morgan County are “transplants,” attracted to the rural beauty of the area. Many of these residents already share the park’s conservation values and some already understand the issues faced by the park. For these residents, park staff will...

- Continue to offer a wide range of programs that address all the park’s themes and recreational use.
- Continue to use established contacts with user groups to communicate about management or resource issues.

Local “Opinion Leaders”

As with any community, certain community leaders have a significant impact on local attitudes. Because of their influence, these “opinion leaders” are an important audience for the park. Staff will ...

- Offer a new, pilot program titled “Experience your Obed.” On three Friday afternoons in September, park staff and resource specialists will meet with local leaders and introduce them to the park and park issues.
- Find funding to continue the “Experience your Obed” program in the future, assuming success in 2003.
- Continue to issue invitations for an “on river” experience to local political leaders. When possible, schedule these trips for busy periods so the nature and level of park use is evident.
- Explore ways to quantify the economic impact of the park (use the NPS Money Generation Model or work with the University of Tennessee Economics Department, for example). Park staff (management & interpretation) should consider developing a presentation that can be used with local groups to explain the economic value of the park. Develop a strategy that takes this presentation “on the road.”

Actions that Address Cumberland County Residents

Since Cumberland County occupies the headwaters of the Obed, the actions of Cumberland residents can have a significant impact on the park. As a result, park staff will...

- Develop a list of Cumberland County locations willing to host the park’s water resources exhibit.

- Investigate additional outreach to educators in Cumberland County. Develop a strategy for expanded contacts, beginning with Cumberland County science teachers. If interpretive staffing increases, plan more onsite visits to Cumberland County schools.
- Partner with TWRA and offer additional joint programming to residents of Cumberland County. If necessary, adjust the Memorandum of Understanding with TWRA to institutionalize more interpretive outreach.

As an initial step, joint programs should focus on what a wild and scenic river is.

- Develop a strategy for creating and funding an audiovisual program that focuses on water themes and issues. Specifically, explain what a wild and scenic river is, how a wild and scenic river can have a positive impact on a community or region, and focus on the issue of water quantity along the Obed.
- Adjust the park's website to include more information on what a wild and scenic river is and how it can have a positive impact.
- Develop a strategy by which management and interpretive staff can contact opinion leaders and appropriate groups in Cumberland County. These contacts will introduce the park and establish rapport. They will provide entrée for future interpretive programming or issue-based discussions.

Actions that Address Several Audiences

Several actions proposed before development of this LRIP will reach several of the park's audiences. Staff will...

- Continue to write an annual park newspaper. Articles will continue to address water themes and issues as well as other resource-related concerns, such as safety. As in the past, interpretive partners, regional land managers, and park stakeholders will be invited to contribute articles. A calendar of events will be a prominent feature.
- Develop a strategy to fund and expand circulation of the newspaper, beginning with locations managed by TWRA.
- Complete and distribute a brochure that explains what a wild and scenic river is.

- Seek funding to plan and fabricate three proposed wayside exhibits at Lilly Bluff overlook. Topics include: the watershed ecosystem, watershed hydrology, and bluff geology.
- Improve the ten-minute introductory videotape now shown in the visitor center. Make the tape more thematic, explain what a wild and scenic river is, and discuss water related issues, including why addressing these issues matters.
- Display the Junior Ranger booklet in the visitor center and announce availability in future issues of the park's newspaper.

Actions that Address Interpretation's Research Needs

The quantity of baseline information about the park's resources is currently limited, although several research and data collection projects are currently underway (a study of cliff face biota, and baseline inventories of birds, fish, mammals, reptiles, and plants in the park). Limited data, in turn, affects the ability of interpreters to talk with authority.

In order to enhance the amount and quality of information needed for interpretive programming, staff will...

- Prepare and circulate a summary of each research project as it is completed and submitted to the park.
- Place copies of all completed research projects in the park's library.
- Integrate new research into appropriate interpretive programming.
- Make sure that the scope of work for each new research project includes a summary for lay readers.
- Define a new research project that gathers information on water quantity in the Obed watershed over time. Develop a funding strategy and select a qualified author.
- Develop a strategy (perhaps using students) to review the summaries of existing oral history audiotapes for references related to water themes and water issues. Continue the project by developing a strategy to listen to the identified tapes and transcribe the contents. Finally, integrate this information into existing or new interpretive programming.

Actions to Address the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid

As the hemlock wooly adelgid continues to infest new areas, it is unlikely that the park will be bypassed. In order to react to and interpret infestation, park staff will...

- Develop a brochure or flyer that describes the telltale signs of infestation and that enlists park users in an effort to determine when the adelgid enters the park. Post similar information on the park's website and bulletin boards. Provide user groups with information for their newsletters and websites.
- If infestation occurs, develop a strategy for interpreting the adelgid and how the park intends to react.

Staffing & Training

Allocation of Staff

In fiscal year 2002, Obed had one permanent FTE (one position) devoted to interpretation plus 1.4 temporary FTE (two positions) for a total of 2.4 FTE.

In 2002, the visitor center required the greatest investment of FTE (roughly 57% of the total available). One quarter of the available FTE was used for formal interpretive programs and roughly 13% for education programs. Community programming, informal interpretation, website maintenance, and publications accounted for the remaining FTE (5%).

During the current fiscal year (2003), funding reduced the FTE available for interpretation to only 1.4.

Implications of LRIP Actions

The actions included in this LRIP have several implications for staffing...

- In order to expand educational programming beyond Morgan County, or to develop and provide possible curriculum-based educational programs, FTE must be returned to 2002 levels. Even assuming that the park adopts a “teach the teacher” model of program delivery, staff time will be needed to make contacts, develop teacher workshops, and prepare or review lesson plans. 2002 levels of staffing (2.4 FTE) will support .4 FTE for educational programs and the training and staff time required to develop and present new materials.
- Additional FTE (.3 FTE above 2002 levels) will be needed to significantly expand outreach, particularly into Cumberland County.

Even assuming that the park relies on non-personal services and increased cooperation with partners (TWRA) for Cumberland County outreach, initial contacts plus the preparation of new non-personal media will require additional FTE.

- Staff assigned to greet visitors at the visitor center perform critical services. They provide safety information and answer questions about land and resource issues for both the park and TWRA. They are a visible NPS presence in the community. Significant reduction in visiting hours, at this stage in the park’s history, should be avoided. However, as the park’s educational program expands, the park may want to consider setting aside certain times (days or hours) when visitation is light for scheduled educational activities.

- While some parks use volunteers to staff contact stations or offer programs, the number of volunteers in the vicinity of the Obed is limited and the staff available for training and supervising volunteers is minimal. As a result, targeted expansion of volunteer activity might be possible in continuing park clean-up events, data collection, and program delivery, but a substantial increase in the use of volunteers for visitor services is unlikely.

Action Plan

Actions to Address Morgan County Residents

Action	Who?	FY03	FY04	FY05	FY06	FY07	Funded?
Educators and students							
Contact educators	Interp.	X					Yes
Adjust existing ed. programs to emphasize water	Interp.		X				Yes
Use county science camp for feedback	Interp.		X				Yes
Consider additional meetings with educators	Interp.			X			Yes
Adjust ed. program to mesh with educator needs	Interp.			Organize input	Impl.		No
Identify equipment for water programs	Interp. & Res. M.			ID	Impl.		No
Long term residents							
Increase summer programs using locals	Interp.		X	X			Yes
Increase hunting & fishing programs	Interp.		X	X			Yes
Partner with TWRA	Interp. & Res. M.		X	X			Yes
Increase group participation in special activities	Interp & Res. M.			X	X		Yes
Explore ways to preserve special programs	Interp.			X			Yes
Circulate water exhibit	Interp.		X	X			Yes
Transplants							
Continue existing programs	Interp.	X	X	X	X	X	Yes
Use existing user groups to Circulate information	Interp.	X	X	X	X	X	Yes
Opinion leaders							
Implement "Experience your Obed"	Interp., Res M, Partners	X	Eval.& fund	X		X	No
Continue invitations to politicians	Interp.	X	X	X	X	X	Yes
Explore ways to quantify eco. impact	Managemnt team	X					Yes

Actions to Address All Audiences

Action	Who?	FY03	FY04	FY05	FY06	FY07	Future
Continue newspaper	Interp.		X	X	X	X	Yes
Expand newspaper distribution	Interp.		X				No
Complete wild & scenic river brochure	Res. M.		X				Yes
Produce Lilly Bluff waysides	Interp.				X		No
Improve introductory video	Interp.				Fund	Impl.	No
Complete Jr. Ranger booklet	Interp.	X					Yes

Participants

Audie Critchley, Protection Ranger, Obed WSR
Reed Detring, Superintendent, Big South Fork NRRRA
Nancy Keohane, Resource Management Specialist, Obed WSR
Arthur McDade, Interpretive Park Ranger, Obed WSR
Barbara Olmstead, Administrative Officer, Obed WSR
Charles Scroggins, Maintenance, Obed WSR
Kristin Stoehr, Unit Manager, Obed WSR
Amy Williams, Seasonal Interpreter, Obed WSR

Ron Thomson, Facilitator & Writer, Compass

Appendix 1

Characteristics of a Successful Visitor and Interpretive Center

A successful visitor center will...

be easy to find, accessible to common forms of transportation, well publicized, well signed, and enticing from the exterior.

make visitors feel welcome and address normal needs for physical comfort.

allow visitors to find information about interpretive media, programs, and activities quickly. It will clearly present options for basic, in-depth, and accurate information, and suggestions for visiting efficiently and coherently, including self-guided options.

present primary stories in a variety of ways that acknowledge different learning styles including interactive, hands-on interpretive media, carefully designed to reinforce the park's themes.

use AV effectively by focusing on dynamic stories with emotional impact.

display three-dimensional objects, including some that are "authentic," with direct links to interpretive themes.

provide access to the contents of primary sources like letters, diaries, news reports, and photographs in order to humanize the past, provide entrée into human emotions, and help visitors envision another time and place.

encourage thought and analysis of park themes, perhaps by stressing human emotions or by following a process linked to park themes.

help visitors answer the So what? question by exploring the legacy and continued relevance of the park.

provide opportunities for visitor dialogue, feedback, reactions, questions, and shared knowledge.

provide materials (publications, AV, reproductions) that follow-up and extend the on-site experience.

suggest links to theme-related sites, particularly in the region, encourage and facilitate visitation to these sites, and provide visiting information.

provide disabled people with access to all facilities and interpretive content (see Appendix 3 for programmatic accessibility guidelines).

Appendix 2

Characteristics of Curriculum-Based Educational Programs

A well planned curriculum-based educational program will have the following six characteristics...

The program must be relevant to the resource and address the park's interpretive themes. This way the program becomes mutually beneficial to both the park and the organized group.

The program must address the learning needs of the target audience. School districts in every state are addressing education reform. Teachers need to be sure that their time is spent on helping students achieve the state required standards for learning. The park needs to work with these standards to identify the connections between resources/themes and the standards of learning. This knowledge will help the park target the appropriate grade level or levels and help to again create a mutually beneficial program that meets both park and school needs.

The program needs to be developmentally appropriate for the target audience. A one-size fits all does not work with organized groups, which are mostly school groups. It is difficult to develop a program that will meet developmental needs for grades 4, 8, and 11. A program that is too difficult will frustrate younger students; a program that is too simple will not be sophisticated enough for older students.

Many parks do not have the expertise on staff to address developmental needs and create appropriate materials and activities for students. Parks need to work with educational group leaders in the development and implementation of curriculum-based programs. Many parks have benefited from partnerships with individual schools or school districts in the development of the materials and activities for curriculum based programs.

Curriculum-based programs extend learning beyond a single experience either in a park, on the Internet, or in an outreach program in a school. Pre-visit and post-visit activities extend learning and help to incorporate the park experience into the larger context of a unit of study in the school.

Evaluations need to be conducted both in the developmental and testing phase as well as in the full implementation phase. Parks need to know what works and what does not work. In developing a program, part of

that development should focus on a plan for evaluating the program itself as well as the learning outcomes. To assist parks in evaluating their programs, they should look at *Assessing Parks as Classrooms®: A Model for Program Evaluation* and go on-line to review the *Social Science Surveys and Interviews in the National Park for the National Park Service: A Guide to NPS and OMB Approvals*. Both of these tools will help parks think about why evaluation is necessary, what evaluation can inform, and how evaluation will help to improve a program.

For additional information about curriculum-based programs, parks can review *Programming for School Groups: An Interpreter's Guide*. In addition, Reference Manual 6 for DO 6 will have an Education Chapter. This document is scheduled to come out for field review in FY03.

Appendix 3

Programmatic Accessibility Guidelines for Interpretive Media

All new interpretive programming will be developed according to the "Guidelines for Interpretive Media" finalized in June 1996 by the Accessibility Task Force at the NPS's Harpers Ferry Center.

Statement of Purpose

This document is a guide for promoting full access to interpretive media to ensure that people with physical and mental disabilities have access to the same information necessary for safe and meaningful visits to National Parks. Just as the needs and abilities of individuals cannot be reduced to simple statements, it is impossible to construct guidelines for interpretive media that can apply to every situation in the National Park System.

These guidelines define a high level of programmatic access which can be met in most situations. They articulate key areas of concern and note generally accepted solutions.

Due to the diversity of park resources and the variety of interpretive situations, flexibility and versatility are important.

Each interpretive medium contributes to the total park program. All media have inherent strengths and weaknesses, and it is our intent to capitalize on their strengths and provide alternatives where they are deficient. It should also be understood that any interpretive medium is just one component of the overall park experience. In some instances, especially with regard to learning disabilities, personal services, that is one-on-one interaction, may be the most appropriate and versatile interpretive approach.

In the final analysis, interpretive design is subjective, and dependent on both aesthetic considerations as well as the particular characteristics and resources available for a specific program. Success or failure should be evaluated by examining all interpretive offerings of a park. Due to the unique characteristics of each situation, parks should be evaluated on a case by case basis. Nonetheless, the goal is to fully comply with NPS policy:

"...To provide the highest level of accessibility possible and feasible for persons with visual, hearing, mobility, and mental impairments, consistent with the obligation to conserve park resources and preserve the quality of the park experience for everyone."

NPS Special Directive 83-3, Accessibility for Disabled Persons

Audiovisual Programs

Audiovisual programs include motion pictures, sound/slide programs, video programs, and oral history programs. As a matter of policy, all audiovisual programs produced by the Harpers Ferry Center will include some method of captioning. The Approach used will vary according to the conditions of the installation area and the media format used, and will be selected in consultation with the parks and regions.

The captioning method will be identified as early as possible in the planning process and will be presented in an integrated setting where possible. To the extent possible, visitors will be offered a choice in viewing captioned or uncaptioned versions, but in situations where a choice is not possible or feasible, a captioned version of all programs will be made available. Park management will decide on the most appropriate operational approach for the particular site.

Guidelines Affecting Mobility Impaired Visitors

1. The theater, auditorium, or viewing area should be accessible and free of architectural barriers, or alternative accommodations will be provided. UFAS 4.1.
2. Wheelchair locations will be provided according to ratios outlined in UFAS 4.1.2(18a).
3. Viewing heights and angles will be favorable for those in designated wheelchair locations.
4. In designing video or interactive components, control mechanisms will be placed in accessible location, usually between 9" and 48" from the ground and no more than 24" deep.

Guidelines Affecting Visually Impaired Visitors

1. Simultaneous audio description will be considered for installations where the equipment can be properly installed and maintained.

Guidelines Affecting Hearing Impaired Visitors

1. All audiovisual programs will be produced with appropriate captions.
2. Copies of scripts will be provided to the parks as a standard procedure.
3. Audio amplification and listening systems will be provided in accordance with UFAS 4.1.2(18b).

Guidelines Affecting Learning Impaired Visitors

1. Unnecessarily complex and confusing concepts will be avoided.
2. Graphic elements will be chosen to communicate without reliance on the verbal component.
3. Narration will be concise and free of unnecessary jargon and technical information.

Exhibits

Numerous factors affect the design of exhibits, reflecting the unique circumstances of the specific space and the nature of the materials to be interpreted. It is clear that thoughtful, sensitive design can go a long way in producing exhibits that can be enjoyed by a broad range of people. Yet, due to the diversity of situations encountered, it is impossible to articulate guidelines that can be applied universally.

In some situations, the exhibit designer has little or no control over the space. Often exhibits are placed in areas ill suited for that purpose, they may incorporate large or unyielding specimens, may incorporate sensitive artifacts which require special environmental controls, and room decor or architectural features may dictate certain solutions. All in all, exhibit design is an art which defies simple description. However, one central concern is to communicate the message to the largest audience possible. Every reasonable effort will be made to eliminate any factors limiting communication through physical modification or by providing an alternate means of communication.

Guidelines Affecting Mobility Impaired Visitors

1. Exhibit space will be free of physical barriers or a method of alternate accommodation shall be provided.
2. All pathways, aisles, and clearances will meet standards set forth in UFAS 4.3. Generally a minimum width of 36" will be provided.
3. Ramps will be as gradual as possible and will not exceed a slope of 1" rise in 12" run, and otherwise conform with UFAS 4.8.
4. Important artifacts, labels, and graphics, will be placed at a comfortable viewing level relative to their size. Important text will be viewable to all visitors. Display cases will allow short or seated people to view the contents and the labels. Video monitors associated with exhibits will be positioned to be comfortably viewed by all visitors.
5. Lighting will be designed to reduce glare or reflections, especially when viewed from a wheelchair.

6. Ground and floor surfaces near the exhibit area will be stable, level, firm, and slip-resistant. (UFAS 4.5).
7. Operating controls or objects to be handled by visitors will be located in an area between 9" and 48" from the ground and no more than 24" deep. (UFAS 4.3)
8. Horizontal exhibits (e.g. terrain model) will be located at a comfortable viewing height.
9. Information desks and sales counters will be designed for use by visitors and employees using wheelchairs, and will include a section with a desk height no greater than 32 to 34 inches, with at least a 30 inch clearance underneath. The width should be a minimum of 32 inches vertical, with additional space provided for cash registers or other equipment, as applicable.
10. Accessibility information about the specific park should be available at the information desk and the international symbol of access will be displayed where access information is disseminated.
11. Railings and barriers will be positioned in such a way as to provide unobstructed viewing by persons in wheelchairs.

Guidelines Affecting Visually Impaired Visitors

1. Exhibit typography will be selected with readability and legibility in mind.
2. Characters and symbols shall contrast with their backgrounds, either light characters on a dark background or dark characters on a light background. (UFAS 4.30.3)
3. Tactile and participatory elements will be included where possible.
4. Audio description will be provided where applicable.
5. Signage will be provided to indicate accessible rest rooms, telephones, and rest rooms elevators. (UFAS 4.30)

Guidelines Affecting Hearing Impaired Visitors

1. Information presented via audio formats will be duplicated in a visual medium, either in the exhibit copy or by printed material.
2. Amplification systems and volume controls will be incorporated to make programs accessible to the hard of hearing.

3. Written text of all audio narrations will be provided.
4. All narrated AV programs will be captioned.
5. Allowance for Telecommunication Devices for the Deaf (TDD) will be included into information desk designs.

Guidelines Affecting Learning Impaired Visitors

1. Exhibits will avoid unnecessarily complex and confusing topics.
2. Graphic elements will be developed to communicate non-verbally.
3. Unfamiliar expressions and technical terms will be avoided and pronunciation aids will be provided where appropriate.
4. To the extent possible, information will be provided in a manner suitable to a diversity of abilities and interests.
5. Where possible, exhibits will be multi-sensory. Techniques to maximize the number of senses utilized in an exhibit will be encouraged.
6. Exhibit design will be cognizant of directional handicaps and will utilize color and other creative approaches to facilitate comprehension of maps.

Historic Furnishings

Historically refurbished rooms offer the public a unique interpretive experience by placing visitors within historic spaces. Surrounded by historic artifacts visitors can feel the spaces "come alive" and relate more directly to the historic events or personalities commemorated by the park.

Accessibility is problematical in many NPS furnished sites because of the very nature of historic architecture. Buildings were erected with a functional point of view that is many times at odds with our modern views of accessibility.

The approach used to convey the experience of historically furnished spaces will vary from site to site. The goals, however, will remain the same, to give the public as rich an interpretive experience as possible given the nature of the structure.

Guidelines Affecting Mobility Impaired Visitors

1. The exhibit space should be free of architectural barriers or a method of alternate accommodation should be provided, such as slide programs, videotaped tours, visual aids, dioramas, etc.

2. All pathways, aisles, and clearances shall (when possible) meet standards set forth in UFAS 4.3 to provide adequate clearance for wheelchair routes.
3. Ramps shall be as gradual as possible and not exceed a 1" rise in 12" run, and conform with UFAS 4.8.
4. Railings and room barriers will be constructed in such a way as to provide unobstructed viewing by persons in wheelchairs.
5. In the planning and design process, furnishing inaccessible areas, such as upper floors of historic buildings, will be discouraged unless essential for interpretation.
6. Lighting will be designed to reduce glare or reflections when viewed from a wheelchair.
7. Alternative methods of interpretation, such as audiovisual programs, audio description, photo albums, and personal services will be used in areas which present difficulty for the physically impaired.

Guidelines Affecting Visually Impaired Visitors

1. Exhibit typefaces will be selected for readability and legibility, and conform with good industry practice.
2. Audio description will be used to describe furnished rooms, where appropriate.
3. Windows will be treated with film to provide balanced light levels and minimize glare.
4. Where appropriate, visitor-controlled rheostat-type lighting will be provided to augment general room lighting.
5. Where appropriate and when proper clearance has been approved, surplus artifacts or reproductions will be utilized as "hands-on" tactile interpretive devices.

Guidelines Affecting Hearing Impaired Visitors

1. Information about room interiors will be presented in a visual medium such as exhibit copy, text, pamphlets, etc.
2. Captions will be provided for all AV programs relating to historic furnishings.

Guidelines Affecting the Learning Impaired

1. Where appropriate, hands-on participatory elements geared to the level of visitor capabilities will be used.
2. Living history activities and demonstrations which utilize the physical space as a method of providing multi-sensory experiences will be encouraged.

Publications

A variety of publications are offered to visitors, ranging from park folders which provide an overview and orientation to a park to more comprehensive handbooks. Each park folder should give a brief description of services available to the disabled, list significant barriers, and note the existence of TDD phone numbers, if available.

In addition, informal site bulletins are often produced to provide more specialized information about a specific site or topic. It is recommended that each park produce an easily updatable "Accessibility Site Bulletin" which could include detailed information about the specific programs, services, and opportunities available for the disabled and to describe barriers which are present in the park. These bulletins should be in reasonably large type, 18 points or larger.

Guidelines Affecting Mobility Impaired Visitors

1. Park folders, site bulletins, and sales literature will be distributed from accessible locations and heights.
2. Park folders and Accessibility Site Bulletins should endeavor to carry information on the accessibility of buildings, trails, and programs by the disabled.

Guidelines Affecting Visually Impaired Visitors

1. Publications will be designed with the largest type size appropriate for the format.
2. Special publications designed for use by the visually impaired should be printed in 18 point type.
3. The information contained in the park folder should also be available on audio cassette. Handbooks, accessibility guides, and other publications should be similarly recorded where possible.

Guidelines Affecting Hearing Impaired Visitors

1. Park site bulletins will note the availability of such special services as sign language interpretation and captioned programs.

Guidelines Affecting Learning Impaired Visitors

1. The park site bulletin should list any special services available to this group.

Wayside Exhibits

Wayside exhibits, which include outdoor interpretive exhibits and signs, orientation shelter exhibits, trailhead exhibits, and bulletin boards, offer special advantages to disabled visitors. The liberal use of photographs, artwork, diagrams, and maps, combined with highly readable type, make wayside exhibits an excellent medium for visitors with hearing and learning impairments. For visitors with sight impairments, waysides offer large type and high legibility.

Although a limited number of NPS wayside exhibits will always be inaccessible to visitors with mobility impairments, the great majority are placed at accessible pullouts, viewpoints, parking areas, and trailheads.

The NPS accessibility guidelines for wayside exhibits help insure a standard of quality that will be appreciated by all visitors. Nearly everyone benefits from high quality graphics, readable type, comfortable base designs, accessible locations, hard-surfaced exhibit pads, and well-landscaped exhibit sites.

While waysides are valuable on-site "interpreters," it should be remembered that the park resources themselves are the primary things visitors come to experience. Good waysides focus attention on the features they interpret, and not on themselves. A wayside exhibit is only one of the many interpretive tools which visitors can use to enhance their appreciation of a park.

Guidelines Affecting Mobility Impaired Visitors

1. Wayside exhibits will be installed at accessible locations whenever possible.
2. Wayside exhibits will be installed at heights and angles favorable for viewing by most visitors including those in wheelchairs. For standard NPS low-profile units the recommended height is 30 inches from the bottom edge of the exhibit panel to the finished grade; for vertical exhibits the height of 6-28 inches.
3. Trailhead exhibits will include an accessibility advisory.
4. Wayside exhibits sites will have level, hard surfaced exhibit pads.
5. Exhibit sites will offer clear, unrestricted views of park features described in exhibits.

Guidelines Affecting Visually Impaired Visitors

1. Exhibit type will be as legible and readable as possible.
2. Panel colors will be selected to reduce eye strain and glare, and to provide excellent readability under field conditions. White should not be used as a background color.
3. Selected wayside exhibits may incorporate audio stations or tactile elements such as models, texture blocks, and relief maps.
4. For all major features interpreted by wayside exhibits, the park should offer non-visual interpretation covering the same subject matter. Examples include cassette tape tours, radio messages, and ranger talks.
5. Appropriate tactile cues should be provided to help visually impaired visitors locate exhibits.

Guidelines Affecting Hearing Impaired Visitors

1. Wayside exhibits will communicate visually, and will rely heavily on graphics to interpret park resources.
2. Essential information included in audio station messages will be duplicated in written form, either as part of the exhibit text or with printed material.

Guidelines Affecting Learning Impaired Visitors

1. Topics for wayside exhibits will be specific and of general interest. Unnecessary complexity will be avoided.
2. Whenever possible, easy to understand graphics will be used to convey ideas, rather than text alone.
3. Unfamiliar expressions, technical terms, and jargon will be avoided. Pronunciation aids and definitions will be provided where needed.
4. Text will be concise and free of long paragraphs and wordy language.