



# BUFFALO SOLDIERS STUDY

MARCH 2019





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

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#### Legislation and Purpose

The National Defense Authorization Act of 2015, Public Law 113-291, authorized the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study to examine:

*“The role of the Buffalo Soldiers in the early years of the national park system, including an evaluation of appropriate ways to enhance historical research, education, interpretation, and public awareness of the Buffalo Soldiers in the national parks, including ways to link the story to the development of national parks and African American military service following the Civil War.”*

To meet this purpose, the goals of this study are to

- evaluate ways to increase public awareness and understanding of Buffalo Soldiers in the early history of the National Park Service; and
- evaluate ways to enhance historical research, education, interpretation, and public awareness related to the Buffalo Soldiers.

#### Project Background and Scope

Before the National Park Service (NPS) was established in 1916, the US Army was responsible for protecting and stewarding the first national parks. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, African American Army troops, who came to be known as Buffalo Soldiers, served in many critical military roles in the western United States. The Buffalo Soldiers, along with other army troops, played key roles in the development of the national park system, where they patrolled the backcountry, built trails, combatted poaching, and otherwise served in the roles later assumed by NPS park rangers.

The study explores the Buffalo Soldiers’ stewardship role in the early years of the national park system and identifies NPS sites associated with the history of the Buffalo Soldiers and their post-Civil War military service. In this study, the term “stewardship” is defined as the total management of the parks that the US Army carried out, including the Buffalo Soldiers. Stewardship tasks comprised constructing and developing park features such as access roads and trails; performing regular maintenance functions; undertaking law enforcement within park boundaries; and completing associated administrative tasks, among other duties. To a lesser extent, the study also identifies sites not managed by the National Park Service but still associated with the service of the Buffalo Soldiers. The geographic scope of the study is nationwide.

#### Study Process

The process of developing this study involved five phases, with each phase building on and refining suggestions developed during the previous phase. These phases were:

- **Phase 1: Project Scoping** — *a nationwide outreach and information-gathering effort*
- **Phase 2: Scholars Round Table** — *input from scholars and subject-matter experts*
- **Phase 3: Public Review and Targeted Stakeholder Engagement** — *additional feedback from focus groups and the public*
- **Phase 4: Evaluation and Analysis** — *a critical analysis of the current knowledge and research, interpretation and educational activities, and information on audiences and outreach efforts*
- **Phase 5: Study Findings and Priority Actions** — *a synthesis of the evaluation and analysis that led to the identification of priority actions and supporting actions for meeting the study goals*

## **CHAPTER 2: HISTORICAL OVERVIEW**

The “Buffalo Soldiers” were six, all-black army regiments established by Congress in 1866 to help rebuild the country after the American Civil War and to patrol the western frontier. During a time when the US military was racially segregated, the Buffalo Soldiers became the United States’ first professional African American army soldiers. Their experiences both reflected and stood apart from larger national socio-political contexts in which they lived, including the struggle for equality during Reconstruction and Jim Crow in America. It was within these contexts that the Buffalo Soldiers helped shape the early national park system.

The US Army assigned the Buffalo Soldiers to manage some western national parks established in the late 1800s and early 1900s, well before the National Park Service was created in 1916. In this capacity, the soldiers served as “park rangers,” stewarding some of America’s first national parks during the periods in which they were assigned. The Buffalo Soldiers’ work in managing and building the foundation of our earliest national park units helped set a precedent for park management and stewardship that continues today.

## **CHAPTER 3: PARKS AND SITES RELATED TO THE BUFFALO SOLDIERS**

The Buffalo Soldiers served as park stewards in Yosemite, Sequoia and General Grant, Glacier, and Hawai’i national parks and were associated with many western military forts and other sites, including 20 sites that are today designated units, or part of a unit, of the national park system. Additionally, the legacy of the Buffalo Soldiers is recognized at Charles Young Buffalo Soldiers National Monument, established in 2013. Outside the national park system, there are at least 37 sites associated with the Buffalo Soldiers that are listed in the National Register of Historic Places. These include state parks, historic districts, and active military bases.

## **CHAPTER 4: STATUS OF NPS HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE, PROGRAMS, AND OUTREACH ACTIVITIES**

Although historical military records provide information about the Buffalo Soldiers’ activities in national parks, more research and analysis is needed to understand their role within different and often intersecting historical contexts. These contexts include the Reconstruction and Jim Crow eras and the complicated legacy of American Indian removal from lands throughout the West. Primary source materials, such as government records, journals, memoirs and autobiographies, and personal letters and correspondence exist in archives and personal collections but are dispersed throughout various collections and are not easily accessible for research by park staff or others.

The Buffalo Soldiers history is interpreted in some manner at 20 national park units, eight of which describe the soldiers’ stewardship work in national parks. Most commonly, this interpretation is conducted through talks, reenactments, ranger-led programs, education programs, and using websites and social media. Many staff at these parks are interested in expanding these visitors programs but lack reliable and consistent information to do so. Some of these parks regularly conduct targeted outreach by hosting special events and educational programs outside of park boundaries in local schools and communities, often by working with partner organizations.

There are many opportunities to expand and improve these outreach efforts, particularly in African American communities and schools where the Buffalo Soldiers history and the interpretation of their story has the potential to be especially empowering to community members of all ages. There are also opportunities to better communicate this story to engage more audiences through websites, social media, participation in community events, and youth engagement.

## CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AND ACTIONS

“Findings and Actions” were developed from a synthesis of information gathering and analysis completed over the course of the study process.

### Study Findings

These findings are organized into five topical areas.

1. **The history of the Buffalo Soldiers in the national parks is a universal story that transcends cultural boundaries and offers a more complete understanding of US military history and the development of our national park system.**

Public feedback from the project website, social media platforms, focus groups, and other outreach was overwhelmingly positive, indicating a strong interest in this aspect of NPS history across a wide range of audiences. During outreach, the National Park Service received hundreds of comments expressing support for the study and excitement to learn the history of the Buffalo Soldiers in the national parks. The relevance of this history provides opportunities for parks to connect with diverse audiences including minorities, veterans, and visitors of all ages. Telling the stories of the Buffalo Soldiers in parks can also help to fill gaps in our understanding of US history, dispel misperceptions, and frame their service in the broader context of US history. This includes exploring difficult themes such as discrimination and racism experienced by the soldiers and the soldiers' involvement in the complicated legacy of American Indian removal from national parks and western lands.

2. **Primary source materials on the Buffalo Soldiers are scattered or inaccessible for research.**

Primary source documentation of the Buffalo Soldiers stories is known to exist in personal journals, letters, newspapers, memoirs, and muster rolls. These materials are currently dispersed, and source materials often lack organizational structure such as cataloging and finding aids. The full extent of primary source materials on Buffalo Soldiers with regard to their role in the early national parks is currently unknown, but study feedback revealed there is the potential to find more information that could help inform the current understanding of Buffalo Soldiers.

In some cases, a lack of access to primary source materials, limits research, interpretive and educational opportunities. As a result, there are major gaps of knowledge regarding the Buffalo Soldiers and their history as stewards of our early national parks, as well as the soldiers' collective and personal experiences.

3. **Historical analysis and synthesis is limited.**

No full and detailed history of the Buffalo Soldiers' service in national parks exists today. Rigorous research exploring the role of the Buffalo Soldiers in the early stewardship of national parks, and greater contributions to African American military service following the Civil War is needed for the National Park Service to effectively tell the Buffalo Soldiers story. To understand the history, further research is needed on the individuals, their roles, their communities, and their personal experiences. This new research must be understood within the broader context of American history, addressing themes such as race in the American West and transformation of the military after the Civil War. While several NPS staff are researching Buffalo Soldiers history in their local parks, there is no servicewide coordinated research program or organization dedicated to the development of scholarly research on the history of Buffalo Soldiers in national parks.

4. **Physical resources related to the Buffalo Soldiers and park stewardship are largely undocumented.**

Resources such as sites, landscapes, structures, and objects built by or associated with the Buffalo Soldiers are important because they convey the tangible history of the Buffalo Soldiers in national parks. Such resources exist today, but many have not been inventoried, or in some cases are known or documented but not evaluated for their associations with the Buffalo Soldiers in the National Register of Historic Places. Without a complete understanding of the value of these resources or their potential to contribute to our understanding of the Buffalo Soldiers, they could inadvertently be lost.

In addition to physical places and sites, cultural resources such as archival materials, records, and museum objects related to the Buffalo Soldiers have not yet been analyzed for their research potential, and their value is not fully understood by the National Park Service. Intangible resources such as oral histories from second- and third-generation descendants of Buffalo Soldiers, may hold the potential to fill in important gaps of knowledge and understanding providing information regarding the soldiers' personal lives, struggles, and achievements, as well as information about the physical resources associated with them.

**5. Broader capacity and coordination across the National Park Service is needed to accurately convey the history of the Buffalo Soldiers' military service in parks.**

Although there is enthusiasm and interest on the topic of the Buffalo Soldiers' stewardship in national parks among the general public, the ability of the National Park Service to satisfy this interest with increased park programs and interpretive materials is limited, primarily because of the lack of staffing and funding. The levels of dedicated staff time and availability, stakeholder involvement, and programming on Buffalo Soldiers history varies, but is typically not more than one or two staff among parks that currently interpret Buffalo Soldier stewardship. For most of these parks, staff time is not solely dedicated to Buffalo Soldiers programming or research. In some cases, the extent of public programming offered at individual parks is based on the personal interest of park staff but is subject to change when those dedicated staff members change positions. A framework for transferring knowledge is needed to ensure program longevity in parks where strong interpretation of Buffalo Soldiers history is happening today.

Greater institutional capacity is needed to develop a full knowledge and understanding of Buffalo Soldiers history to provide consistency and continuity in how the story is interpreted across parks. While existing NPS programs involving the Buffalo Soldiers provide significant opportunities to reach diverse groups of people, including school-aged youth, more outreach is desired.

In addition, there are opportunities for the National Park Service to improve institutional capacity by further expanding partnerships with organizations interested in Buffalo Soldiers history and to formalize these efforts as part of park operations.

**Priority Actions for Meeting the Study Goals**

The following is a brief summary of the four priority actions for meeting the study goals and addressing the needs described in the study findings.

**A. Develop and maintain an online archive to organize and share links to primary and secondary source materials.**

To address the need for increased access to primary source materials, supporting historical research, and protecting intangible resources, the development of a public archive with links to research material would help national parks share the history of the Buffalo Soldiers, provide consistency and continuity in how the story is told across parks, transfer knowledge and, ultimately ensure program longevity. The database could collect primary and secondary sources, as permissible, and include links to additional repositories. It could also provide opportunities for park staff to research and explore connections between the soldiers' activities across multiple park units.

There is a range of possible approaches to the development of such an archive or database. It could initially be established for NPS-use only for a one-time cost of \$50,000 and approximately \$5,000 annually to maintain. A more robust option to fully develop a public facing site would include a one-time cost \$500,000 and an additional annual cost of approximately \$100,000 for its ongoing administration and maintenance.

**B. Prepare a full historic context and annotated bibliography on the Buffalo Soldiers, including their stewardship of national parks.**

The development of a full historical narrative would meet the need for well-researched scholarship synthesizing the history of the Buffalo Soldiers, including their role in national parks that currently does not exist.

This effort would go beyond the scope of the brief historical narrative included in this study and would seek to gain a deeper understanding of the history of Buffalo Soldiers in parks and their connections to the broader national and regional historic contexts in which they lived and worked. Using primary and secondary sources, such as oral histories, researchers would answer questions about the lives and experiences of the Buffalo Soldiers, including their roles and activities in the early national parks, and their impacts and influences. A draft National Register Multiple Property Documentation form “African American Soldiers in the US Army in the American West, 1866-1891” has been prepared by the Heritage Partnerships Program in the Intermountain Region. This document, most recently updated in April 2016, does not substantively address the contribution of Buffalo Soldiers to stewardship of the national parks but can be considered a resource towards development of the larger proposed historic context. Funding has been secured to prepare the full historic context study and annotated bibliography.

**C. Develop a network program to leverage partnerships and provide support and technical assistance to parks, programs, and sites related to the Buffalo Soldiers.**

Currently, NPS parks, programs, and sites outside of the national park system that engage in Buffalo Soldier interpretation, outreach, and resource management do so largely independently of one another. Over the course of this study, the National Park Service developed a public facing website to link information posted by individual parks to a Buffalo Soldier subject site on nps.gov. While the Buffalo Soldiers subject site is an important first step in providing linked and organized information that can help visitors understand the broader context of Buffalo Soldier history in the national parks, more is needed to ensure coordinated Buffalo Soldier programming across the service and to leverage partnerships with related sites and institutions outside of the national park system.

Establishment of a Buffalo Soldiers network program could leverage shared leadership with local, state, and federal entities, as well as interested individuals and organizations, to educate the public about the history and significance of the Buffalo Soldiers and their early stewardship of the national parks and identify visitor opportunities to learn about this history. The network would encompass: 1) all NPS units and programs that relate to the Buffalo Soldiers’ role in American history; and 2) voluntary participation from other federal, state, local, and privately owned properties or institutions that have a verifiable connection to the Buffalo Soldiers either through educational and interpretive programs or eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

The network program would provide internal support for park and program staff, and external coordination between parks and partners. It would foster NPS capacity to implement the priority and supporting actions identified in this study such as: conducting studies and reports; disseminating interpretive and educational materials; developing travel itineraries or routes; providing technical assistance to partner sites and organizations; and linking parks with network partner organizations. The network program would manage a public interface with information about the Buffalo Soldiers that could include the online archive and communications toolkit described in priority actions A and D. The network would adopt a uniform symbol or device to represent the network and its partner sites, as well as rules for its use.

Establishing a network program would likely require Congressional action because of the program cost, which is estimated to be approximately \$500,000 annually to support one full-time GS-12 coordinator and up to two GS-11 staff duty stationed in either parks or regional offices in the Pacific West Region, Intermountain Region, and Midwest Region.

#### **D. Develop a Servicewide Buffalo Soldiers Interpretive and Education Strategy and Toolkit**

To meet the need for coordinated and consistent interpretation among NPS park units, a servicewide strategy and toolkit would provide a framework for interpretation and educational programming related to the Buffalo Soldiers across the national park system. The strategy would identify and define interpretive themes following the NPS thematic framework for a variety of parks, including parks where the soldiers served as stewards and parks primarily associated with other military service or related themes. The interpretive strategy would establish a collaborative communications strategy; provide opportunities for employees, partners and the public to find personal relevance and inspiration in Buffalo Soldiers history; develop a workforce at Buffalo Soldier parks literate in Buffalo Soldier history; and cultivate communication with our partners. A companion to the strategy would be the development of a web-based Buffalo Soldier Communications Toolkit. The toolkit would provide interpretive tools, information, and professional guidance to help interpreters and educators communicate about Buffalo Soldier history and would be expanded and updated as new resources and research emerge.

The development of the interpretive strategy and toolkit would be informed by the full historical context described in priority action B previously. The estimated one-time cost would be approximately \$150,000 to develop both a national interpretive strategy and toolkit and approximately \$25,000 annually to maintain the toolkit, depending on whether this maintenance would be accomplished by a network organization or another NPS park or program.

#### **Buffalo Soldier Study Supporting Actions for Meeting the Study Goals**

In addition to the priority actions, the study identified 14 supporting actions to further meet those goals and needs (table ES-1). The supporting actions are loosely divided into three categories: those that may require Congressional authorization (two actions), those that could be best organized at a national level by a NPS-wide program or similar (seven actions), and those that could be best organized locally by individual parks (five actions). These actions range in scale and scope from developing a grant program to support NPS and non-NPS preservation projects, which may require Congressional action; to developing nationally consistent educational and outreach materials to support park and partner programs; to developing more youth programs tailored by local parks. Please refer to chapter 5 in the study document for more detailed information about the priority and supporting actions.

**Table ES-1. Supporting Actions**

#	SUPPORTING ACTION	SCOPE/LEVEL
1	Develop interpretive or commemorative trails that represent important travel routes associated with the Buffalo Soldiers.	Congressional action may be needed to establish a nationally designated trail, while regional or local routes may be accomplished at the national or local level
2	Develop new grant program to support programs and preservation projects of sites significant to the Buffalo Soldiers.	Congressional action and/or external funding and assistance required
3	Partner with historical organizations to promote professional excellence in research, scholarship, and conduct peer reviews of historical research.	Nationally-based actions
4	Locate soldiers' letters home to enhance park/partner research and document Buffalo Soldiers' experiences in national parks.	Nationally-based actions
5	Develop an online story map illustrating the history and geography of the Buffalo Soldiers.	Nationally-based actions
6	Develop a list of research opportunities for youth.	Nationally-based actions
7	Partner with educators to develop national educational curricula and provide opportunities to bring the Buffalo Soldiers story to classrooms.	Nationally-based actions with local implementation
8	Develop consistent materials for youth and public engagement.	Nationally-based actions
9	Create NPS travel itineraries around the theme of Buffalo Soldiers history.	Nationally-based actions
10	Conduct locally place-based research to identify connections/sites in local communities and prepare case study biographies of individual Buffalo Soldiers.	Locally-based actions
11	Inventory, map, and document archeological or historical features, as well as routes created by Buffalo Soldiers during their stewardship of national parks.	Locally-based actions
12	Develop new youth-oriented programs that involve park-specific Buffalo Soldiers history.	Locally-based actions
13	Recruit volunteers to interpret Buffalo Soldiers stories in the first person.	Locally-based actions
14	Conduct Buffalo Soldier outreach programming regularly and consistently.	Locally-based actions

## **CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION**

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There is widespread interest in learning more about the history and legacy of the Buffalo Soldiers and their stewardship role in national parks. However, there are substantial gaps in our understanding of the history of Buffalo Soldiers in national parks and why it was significant then and continues to be important today. The priority actions described previously will satisfy the study goals to increase public awareness and understanding of the Buffalo Soldiers and enhance historical research, education, and interpretation related to the Buffalo Soldiers. These actions would make progress toward communicating the stories and themes related to the soldiers' experiences to diverse audiences across the country.

Additional information pertinent to this study can be found in the following appendixes, which are located in the last section of this document:

**Appendix A:** Legislation Authorizing this Special Resource Study

**Appendix B:** Scholars Round Table Scholar Biographies

**Appendix C:** Scholars Round Table and Outreach Summary – Abridged Suggestions for Improvement

**Appendix C-1:** Institute at the Golden Gate: Buffalo Soldiers Study Targeted Stakeholder Engagement Report

**Appendix C-2:** List of Facilitators, Presenters, and Participants

**Appendix D:** Bibliography of Buffalo Soldiers Publications

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

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### LEGISLATION AND PURPOSE

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The National Defense Authorization Act of 2015, Public Law 113-291, authorized the Secretary of the Interior to conduct special resource studies for eight sites, including one on the role of Buffalo Soldiers in the early years of the national park system. The relevant text of Public Law 113-291 is included in appendix A. The National Park Service has prepared this “National Park Service Buffalo Soldiers Study” on behalf of the Secretary of the Interior.

The National Park Service (NPS) conducted this study in accordance with section 8(c) of Public Law 91-383 (Section 100507 of Title 54 United States Code [USC]). This law specifies the process for evaluating potential new units of the national park system through a special resource study. However, the specific criteria that apply to sites under consideration for addition to the national park system are not applied here because that is not the purpose of the study as outlined in the authorizing legislation.

The legislation directs the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study on:

*“The role of the Buffalo Soldiers in the early years of the national park system, including an evaluation of appropriate ways to enhance historical research, education, interpretation, and public awareness of the Buffalo Soldiers in the national parks, including ways to link the story to the development of national parks and African American military service following the Civil War.”*

To meet this purpose, the goals of this study are to

- evaluate ways to increase public awareness and understanding of Buffalo Soldiers in the early history of the National Park Service; and
- evaluate ways to enhance historical research, education, interpretation, and public awareness related to the Buffalo Soldiers.

### PROJECT BACKGROUND AND SCOPE

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Before the National Park Service was established in 1916, the US Army was responsible for protecting and stewarding the first national parks. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, African American army troops, who came to be known as Buffalo Soldiers, served in many critical roles in the western United States, including protecting some of the first national parks. The Buffalo Soldiers, along with other army troops, played key roles in the development of the national park system and were assigned to sites such as Sequoia, General Grant, and Yosemite National Parks, where they patrolled the backcountry, built trails, stopped poaching, and otherwise served in the roles later assumed by NPS park rangers.

The study explores the Buffalo Soldiers’ stewardship role in the early years of the national park system and identifies NPS sites associated with the history of the Buffalo Soldiers and their post-Civil War military service. In this study, the term “stewardship” is defined as the total management of the parks that the US Army carried out, including the Buffalo Soldiers. Stewardship tasks comprised constructing and developing park structures such as access roads and trails; performing regular maintenance functions; undertaking law enforcement within park boundaries; and completing associated administrative tasks, among other duties. To a lesser extent, the study also encompassed sites not managed by the National Park Service but still associated with the service of the Buffalo Soldiers. The geographic scope of the study is nationwide.

## STUDY PROCESS

The National Park Service conducted public outreach; consulted with professionals, academics, and other subject-matter experts in and outside the agency; analyzed and compiled the results; and identified findings and prioritized actions. The study process had five phases, with each phase building on and refining suggestions developed during the previous phase. These phases include:

**Phase 1:** Project Scoping

**Phase 2:** Scholars Round Table

**Phase 3:** Public Review and Targeted Stakeholder Engagement

**Phase 4:** Evaluation and Analysis

**Phase 5:** Study Findings and Priority Actions

The following section summarizes the steps in each phase. More detailed findings from each of these phases can be found in chapter 4.

### Phase 1: Project Scoping

In August 2016, the National Park Service initiated a nationwide outreach and information-gathering effort from members of the public and from subject-matter experts. The objectives of this initial project scoping effort were to create awareness about the stewardship role of the Buffalo Soldiers in the early years of the national park system; gather baseline information about current research and knowledge and relevant NPS sites and programs; and generate ideas from the public and subject-matter experts regarding activities and actions that support the study goals and legislation.

An outreach campaign was launched to involve NPS parks and programs; targeted organizations; individuals, including universities and subject-matter experts; and the general public to promote awareness of the Buffalo Soldiers study and invite feedback on the following questions:

1. **What are the most interesting aspects of the Buffalo Soldiers story to you?**

2. **How could the National Park Service enhance current efforts to commemorate and tell the story of the Buffalo Soldiers (e.g., interactive online maps and other information, ranger-led tours, school programs, interpretive trails, etc.)?**
3. **What is being done outside the National Park Service to tell the story of the Buffalo Soldiers (e.g., reenactment groups, Buffalo Soldiers Motorcycle Club chapters, etc.)?**
4. **Do you have other ideas or comments you would like to share with us about what can be done to enhance current efforts to tell the Buffalo Soldiers story?**

Through this initial outreach and engagement effort, the National Park Service collected diverse perspectives about the importance of the role of the Buffalo Soldiers in the national parks and ideas on how best to preserve and share these stories. In-person outreach was also conducted to raise awareness and involvement in the study and to draw a link between Buffalo Soldiers history and the National Park Service. Information and findings from project scoping are included in “Chapter 4: Status of NPS Historical Knowledge, Programs, and Outreach Activities.”

**THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**  
*invites you to participate in the*  
**BUFFALO SOLDIERS STUDY**

*This year commemorates the 150th anniversary of the establishment of the Buffalo Soldiers*

**WHO WERE THE BUFFALO SOLDIERS?**  
The Buffalo Soldiers were six all-black regiments established by Congress in 1866. Totalling 6,000, the Buffalo Soldiers helped rebuild the country after the Civil War and patrol the remote western frontier.  
According to legend, American Indians called the black cavalry troops “buffalo soldiers” because of their dark curly hair, which resembled a buffalo’s coat. Aware of the buffalo’s fierce tenacity and fighting spirit, African American troops accepted the name with pride and honor.  
On the western frontier, Buffalo Soldiers protected settlers, built forts and roads, and mapped the wilderness as the United States settled and developed the West. Although the Buffalo Soldiers are best known for engaging in conflicts with the region’s native people, they also fought Mexican and Anglo bandits, escorted stagecoaches and paymasters, and on one occasion, stood between Indian peoples and Texas militia. By the 1890s black soldiers comprised 20% of America’s frontier cavalry and performed exemplary service within the military, which remained segregated until President Harry S. Truman finally integrated the US military in 1946.

**THE BUFFALO SOLDIERS AND THE NATIONAL PARKS**  
The Buffalo Soldiers played a key part in the development of the national park system by serving in many critical roles in the western United States, including protecting some of the first national parks. Based at the Presidio in San Francisco, Buffalo Soldiers were assigned to Sequoia and Yosemite National Parks, where they patrolled the backcountry, built trails, stopped poachers, and otherwise served in the roles later assumed by national park rangers.

## Phase 2: Scholars Round Table

A Scholars Round Table consisting of subject-matter experts within and outside the agency was held in January 2017 to explore, refine, and expand ideas generated during the scoping activities described above (See appendix B for scholar biographies). The goals of the round table were to identify and fill research and knowledge gaps, better understand the stewardship role of Buffalo Soldiers in the national parks, and suggest ideas related to the goals of the study. Twelve scholars (i.e., university professors, museum directors, authors, and historians) traveled from across the United States to participate in the three-day workshop. Participating NPS staff included interpretive rangers, historians, an archivist, and the superintendent of Charles Young Buffalo Soldiers National Monument.

The following questions were sent to scholars in advance of the Scholars Round Table, and each was asked to prepare a presentation in response. Questions were intended as starting points to discuss and identify how the National Park Service could better understand the Buffalo Soldiers' activities in the national parks within the contexts of broader themes in US history and the American experience.

1. In the US Army's early stewardship of the national parks, what was the Buffalo Soldiers' role and how did it differ or reflect/coincide with the role served by other units of the army? Is there a specific reason why Buffalo Soldiers were chosen to protect national parks?
2. Did the Buffalo Soldiers shape practices, policies, or other aspects of managing national parks when the management was transferred from the US Army to the National Park Service? Did the Buffalo Soldiers impact or influence how the National Park Service was established as an agency?
3. What are some of the social, political, cultural, and economic factors, such as racism and Reconstruction, that can help us understand and tell the stories of the Buffalo Soldiers stewardship role in national parks, and did the role of the Buffalo Soldiers in national parks impact some of these dynamics?
4. Why are the stories of Buffalo Soldiers in the national parks relevant today?
5. Myths and realities of the Buffalo Soldiers: There seem to be competing narratives regarding the exceptionalism and treatment of the Buffalo Soldiers. What are some of the myths we should try to avoid? What are some of the realities and truths that we may want to further research, document, and emphasize that will help to enhance understanding, not only of the roles Buffalo Soldiers served, but also of their experiences and the meaning of their service in protecting national parks?



**6. In what ways is your park conveying the history of the Buffalo Soldiers, their role as early stewards of national parks, and their military service?**

Participants spent time identifying key themes to explore and/or key points to convey about the stewardship role of the Buffalo Soldiers in national parks, gaps in research that would increase our understanding of the Buffalo Soldiers' role and experiences in national parks, and ways that NPS parks and programs can assist others to tell Buffalo Soldiers stories. Information and findings from the Scholars Round Table are included in "Chapter 4: Status of NPS Historical Knowledge, Programs, and Outreach Activities."

**Phase 3: Public Review and Targeted Stakeholder Engagement**

In the spring of 2017, the National Park Service synthesized the ideas and suggestions generated during the first two project phases in a summary document. This document was subsequently posted on the NPS Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) website for public input. The National Park Service also partnered with the Institute at the Golden Gate (Institute) to further engage the public to provide feedback on the initial ideas. Together, the National Park Service and the Institute identified representatives from organizations with a national reach interested in advancing Buffalo Soldiers history. Participants were drawn from NPS partner organizations, educators (primary, secondary, and post-secondary schools), youth development nonprofits, black churches, and other African American organizations from the San Francisco Bay Area. Representatives from those organizations and institutions were invited to participate in a focus group held in March 2017.

The focus group was asked to: (1) provide input on the ideas generated through initial outreach and the Scholars Round Table (appendix C), (2) identify how their communities/organizations integrate Buffalo Soldiers history in their work, (3) share the types of messaging that are important for their community/organization, and (4) provide suggestions to enhance NPS Buffalo Soldiers interpretation and education.

In April 2017, the National Park Service and the Institute invited stakeholders from around the nation to attend a webinar and provide their feedback on the suggestions presented in the summary document and further refined by the focus group. Participants included scholars and subject-matter experts; representatives from African American, Buffalo Soldiers, military, and preservation organizations; and NPS staff.

See appendix C-1 for the Buffalo Soldiers Study Targeted Stakeholder Engagement Report prepared in partnership with the Institute.

**Phase 4: Evaluation and Analysis**

The results of the phases described above were compiled and analyzed by the National Park Service. The information was organized into a summary status report of current knowledge and research, interpretation and educational activities, and information on audiences and outreach efforts. Analysis of this information, found in chapter 4, identified gaps in each of these categories and provided an evaluation based on the study goals.

**Phase 5: Study Findings and Priority Actions**

Informed by results of the analysis and evaluation in phase 4, themes emerged from the information gleaned, resulting in the identification of five primary study findings. These findings informed and guided the development of 18 actions to address the gaps and needs identified in the findings. Many of these actions were drawn from the numerous suggestions and ideas put forth by the participants in the study's first three phases of outreach. Of these 18 actions, four were determined to be the most impactful for meeting the study goals and were therefore identified as priority actions. Preliminary scope and funding requirements were estimated for these four priority actions. The remaining 14 actions are described as supporting actions. Some actions would require Congressional authorization, while others could be accomplished by existing NPS parks and programs or other organizations at a national or local level. These findings and actions are described in detail in Chapter 5 and summarized in the study's conclusion.

## CHAPTER 2: HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

This historical overview describes the Buffalo Soldiers, their service in the national parks, and the contexts in which they served. This narrative briefly summarizes the current information that is available on the Buffalo Soldiers, recognizing that gaps in knowledge and understanding persist. These gaps are explored in chapter 4.

### INTRODUCTION

On May 20, 1903, just eight days after escorting President Theodore Roosevelt through San Francisco, the African American servicemen of Companies I and M of the 9th Cavalry were dispatched from the Presidio of San Francisco for guard duty at Sequoia and General Grant National Parks.<sup>1</sup> Commanding officer Charles Young led the party of three officers, 93 enlisted men, and their horses on the 16-day ride to their new post.<sup>2</sup> Upon arriving in the Sierras, Young made it clear that he and his men were taking an active role in the stewardship of the park. “You can put it down as coming from me as an officer in command of these troops that the game in Giant Forest will be protected,” Young told a local newspaper.<sup>3</sup> His men also constructed roads and trails and worked to prevent the park’s trees from being cut down. Collectively, their work, along with that of other Buffalo Soldiers at Yosemite, Glacier, and Hawai’i National Parks, helped ensure the viability of the national park idea—to protect special places for visitors’ present and future enjoyment.

1. General Grant National Park was established in 1890; the park was subsequently expanded and renamed Kings Canyon National Park in 1940.

2. Ward Eldredge, *In the Summer of 1903: Colonel Charles Young and the Buffalo Soldiers in Sequoia National Park* (Three Rivers, CA: Sequoia Natural History Association, 2003), 1–3.

3. Quoted in Eldredge, 6.

### RECONSTRUCTION

Following the end of the Civil War in 1865, the army discharged more than one-million volunteer troops, reducing the size of the Regular US Army to only 16,000 soldiers. In 1866, the Army Reorganization Act doubled the Regular Army’s ranks and designated six regiments for African American enlisted men—the 9th and 10th Cavalry and the 38th, 39th, 40th, and 41st Infantry regiments.<sup>4</sup> Although African Americans had fought in every American war since the Revolution, they were not permitted to enlist in the Regular US Army during peacetime until this 1866 legislation. The four infantry regiments were consolidated in 1869 into the 24th and 25th. These men came to be known as the Buffalo Soldiers.<sup>5</sup> They served their country as the first professional African American US Army soldiers, which afforded them an income, education, social status, and the opportunity to prove themselves as equal citizens under the law.

4. Arlen Fowler, *The Black Infantry in the West, 1869–1891* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Corporation, 1971), 3–4.

5. The term “Buffalo Soldiers” first appears in primary documents in June 1873, in a letter written by Frances Roe, the wife of Lt. Fayette Washington Roe of the Third Infantry. Quoted in William H. Leckie and Shirley A. Leckie, *The Buffalo Soldiers: A Narrative of the Black Cavalry in the West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967, 2003), 26–27. For more information, see Bruce A. Glasrud, “Western Black Soldiers since *The Buffalo Soldiers: A Review of the Literature*,” in *Buffalo Soldiers in the West: A Black Soldiers Anthology*, ed. by Bruce A. Glasrud and Michael N. Searles (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2007); “The Buffalo Soldiers,” Presidio of San Francisco, National Park Service, <http://www.nps.gov/prsf/historyculture/buffalo-soldiers.htm> (accessed December 10, 2017); Frank N. Schubert, *Voices of the Buffalo Soldiers: Records, Reports, and Recollections of Military Life and Service in the West* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2003), 47; “10th Cavalry Regiment,” The Institute of Heraldry, Office of the Administrative Assistant to the Secretary of the Army, <http://www.tioh.hqda.pentagon.mil/Catalog/HeraldryMulti.aspx?CategoryId=6668&grp=2&menu=Uniformed%20Services>, accessed November 20, 2017; “The Final Years,” Presidio of San Francisco, National Park Service, <http://www.nps.gov/prsf/historyculture/the-final-years.htm>, (accessed December 8, 2017). See the following text box for more information.

The name “Buffalo Soldiers” is thought to have originated with the 10th Cavalry and was later used to refer to all four segregated units of the army because, reportedly, Plains Indians compared the soldiers’ hair to the fur of a buffalo. Other sources say that Indians nicknamed African American regulars “Buffalo Soldiers” because of their courage and valor in combat. Still others contend it is a combination of the two because buffalo were revered by tribal leaders so any comparison between men and buffalo was considered high praise. More research is needed to determine the exact origins of the name. Evidence that the African American regulars referred to themselves as Buffalo Soldiers during this period is unknown. In 1922, a buffalo was incorporated into the distinctive unit insignia for the 10th Cavalry, and the term was adopted with pride by African American units, which remained segregated through World War II.

During the congressional debates on restructuring the postwar army, there were voices opposed to African American participation, but they were a distinct minority. At this time, Congress represented states that had stayed in the Union. Only one state of the Confederacy, Tennessee, had been readmitted to the United States by the time Congress passed the Army Reorganization Act. (All three of Tennessee’s congressmen at this time were members of the Unionist Party.) The fighting ability of African American soldiers had been scrutinized by white officers, politicians, and reporters during the Civil War. The success of African Americans in this role meant they passed “the test,” proving to skeptics that they could and would fight well.<sup>6</sup> Coming immediately after the defeat of the Confederacy and the abolition of slavery, the inclusion of African Americans in the Regular Army was part of a major turning point in the nation’s history. This coincided with three postwar amendments to the Constitution, the 13th, 14th, and 15th, that institutionalized the new status of once-enslaved African Americans as free people, citizens, and voters.

6. Frank Schubert, “The Test: U.S. Colored Troops at New Market Heights,” unpublished paper, author’s files. Black units fought in a few western Civil War battles. See Alvin M. Joseph, Jr., *The Civil War in the American West* (New York: Knopf, 1991), 371-372.

In the first several months of 1866, Congress passed the first federal civil rights law; permitted the army to protect African Americans and agents in the South; and extended the Freedmen’s Bureau, a federal agency established in 1865 to help oversee the transition from slavery to free labor.

While the creation of the Buffalo Soldiers regiments was a step toward equality in the armed forces, opportunities for African Americans remained limited. Between 1866 and 1916, the 9th and 10th Cavalries and the 24th and 25th Infantries were the only military units in which African Americans were eligible to serve. Only five African American men rose to the ranks of commissioned officers in the Regular Army. This mirrored the institutional segregation that emerged during Reconstruction and beyond.

## SERVICE IN THE WEST

The Buffalo Soldiers’ service was concentrated in the American West. After the Civil War, the United States encouraged westward settlement in earnest to expand the nation and its institutions. While the army’s presence in the West encouraged rapid settlement, it also hastened the consumption and destruction of natural resources and resulted in the US Army’s enforcement of treaties that compressed and relocated American Indian populations to reservations. As agents of the US military, the Buffalo Soldiers facilitated westward expansion and carried out the army’s policies to kill, subjugate, and displace native people. Military records indicate there were also instances, while infrequent, in which the soldiers were enlisted to prevent settlers from encroaching upon tribal lands.<sup>7</sup>

Throughout their service, Buffalo Soldiers demonstrated their dedication. For example, the 24th and the 25th Infantries held the lowest desertion rates of all frontier regiments.<sup>8</sup> In addition, between 1870 and 1890, 14 Buffalo Soldiers received the Medal of Honor.<sup>9</sup>

7. Debra J. Sheffer, *The Buffalo Soldiers: Their Epic Story and Major Campaigns*, (Santa Barbara, Denver, Oxford, Praeger Publishers, 2015), 82.

8. Historian James Leiker has noted that much of this had to do with the Buffalo Soldiers’ sense of group identity and pride. See James N. Leiker, “Black Soldiers at Fort Hays, Kansas, 1867-1869: A Study in Civilian and Military Violence,” *Great Plains Quarterly* 17 (Winter 1997) 3-17.

9. Fowler, *The Black Infantry in the West, 1869-1891*, 79.

By the mid-1890s, the army's mission shifted and expanded. During this time, one Buffalo Soldiers regiment was sent to Alaska to guard the border and prevent lawlessness following the Klondike Gold Rush, others were dispatched to the Caribbean and the Pacific to fight for the United States in the Spanish-American and the Philippine-American Wars, and still others were sent to manage our first national parks.<sup>10</sup> Their exploits influenced national debates about freedom and citizenship in the post-Civil War United States and inspired the creation of Buffalo Soldiers legends that persist to the present day.<sup>11</sup>

With westward expansion came the desire to preserve the young nation's landscape, and it helped define a new role for government—to regulate the use and prevent the exploitation of our public lands. In 1872, President Ulysses S. Grant signed legislation to create the nation's first national park at Yellowstone as a “public park or pleasuring ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people.”<sup>12</sup>

## STEWARDING THE NATIONAL PARKS

Before the National Park Service was established in 1916, the US Army was responsible for protecting and stewarding the first national parks. The army managed Yellowstone National Park from 1886 through 1918 from the year-round base at Fort Sheridan and later Fort Yellowstone at Mammoth Hot Springs. The Sierra parks, Yosemite and Sequoia and General Grant, were patrolled in the summer months of 1891 through 1913, perhaps relying on the “heavy winter snows to protect the parks during the winter.”<sup>13</sup> In addition to serving in the Sierra parks, Buffalo soldiers served in Glacier and Hawai'i National Parks. Military administration of the first national parks resulted in activities, policies, and procedures carried forward by the National Park Service upon its creation in 1916. Such activities included backcountry patrol, access improvement, wildlife protection and management (including predator control), protection of natural features (including both wildfire fighting and suppression), administrative reporting, law enforcement, and the development of a ranger force that interacted with the public.<sup>14</sup> Army soldiers also restricted American Indians from using resources and conducting ceremonies within the parks, many of which had been their traditional homelands.<sup>15</sup>

While based in Sequoia and General Grant National Parks in the summer of 1903, Captain Charles Young's soldiers<sup>16</sup> built trails.

10. During the war in the Philippines, all four Buffalo Soldier regiments passed through the Presidio. The 9th Cavalry troops remained at the post until 1904—the first African American units to be part of the regular garrison. The Presidio subsequently became a national historic landmark in 1962, before becoming an NPS unit in 1994.

11. For more on the subject of military service, citizenship, and equality, see: Frederick Douglass, “[Should the Negro Enlist in the Union Army?](#)”, National Hall, Philadelphia, 6 July 1863, published in *Douglass' Monthly*, August 1863; Christian G. Samito, *Becoming American under Fire: Irish Americans, African Americans, and the Politics of Citizenship during the Civil War Era* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009); Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); Elizabeth D. Leonard, *Men of Color to Arms!: Black Soldiers, Indian Wars, and the Quest for Equality* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010).

12. Dilsaver, 28.

13. The army also managed Mackinac Island National Park, but this was largely incidental since the park was created in 1875 around an existing army installation. After the army left in 1895, the park became a Michigan State Park. Simmons and Simmons, 33, 46–47; Sellars says the army stayed at the California parks until 1914, Sellars, 11, 48; H. Duane Hampton, *How the U.S. Cavalry Saved our National Parks* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971), [https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online\\_books/hampton/chap8.htm](https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/hampton/chap8.htm), accessed April 27, 2017.

14. Simmons and Simmons, “Fort Yellowstone,” 33–34; Sellars, 24–26.

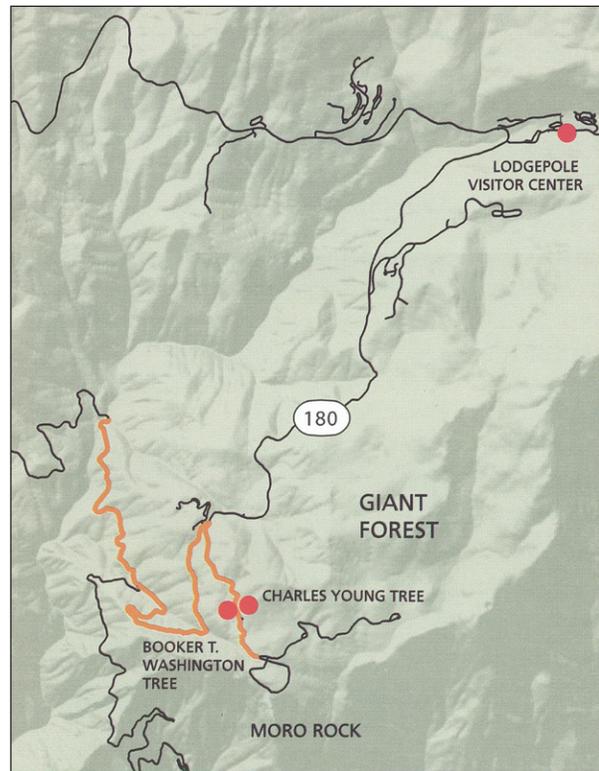
15. Mark David Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

16. Young was a captain at the time that he and his men were stationed in Sequoia and General Grant National Parks. He was subsequently promoted to lieutenant colonel in 1916 before being made a colonel upon his retirement in 1917.

Young also oversaw road construction. Appointed to be the park's acting superintendent, as these positions were titled by the army, he inspected the routing of a road to the famed Giant Forest. Although not all of the Buffalo Soldiers were involved in that road's construction, they were responsible for building several trails south of Mount Langley on the eastern side of the park. Reflecting on the various projects undertaken by the soldiers and overseen by Young, George W. Stewart, then the editor of the *Daily Visalia Delta* newspaper, was effusive: "In the matter of road, bridge, and trail building in the vicinity of Mount Whitney and 'within its shadow,' 1903 was a record year,"<sup>17</sup> Stewart wrote.

In 1904, at nearby Yosemite National Park, the Buffalo Soldiers continued to build roads and provide access. They also developed something new. Under the leadership of Major John Bigelow Jr., the soldiers took an active role in promoting the ecology of the park. They constructed a 75- to 100-acre arboretum, which included 36 plants and trees labeled in both English and Latin and the first marked nature trail in the national parks. The goal, Major Bigelow later told the Secretary of the Interior, was to provide the foundation for a full-scale Yosemite nature museum and education program.<sup>18</sup> The arboretum was completed by the end of the summer. Today, it is considered to have been the first museum in the national park system. The arboretum was not a part of the Yosemite landscape for long. In 1905, the portion of land on which the arboretum sat was identified as a location for train tracks. The train tracks were never constructed, but no further work was undertaken on the arboretum or its nature trail. Both deteriorated and were eventually reclaimed by nature.

In 1910, the same year Glacier National Park was established and sixteen years after the Buffalo Soldiers had constructed a recreation camp in the area, the soldiers returned. That summer, several wildfires broke out in the Pacific Northwest and the northern Rockies.



The 1903 road that Charles Young examined is now sections of Crystal Cave Road, Generals Highway, and Moro Rock Road. Lodgepole Visitor Center includes a Buffalo Soldiers interpretive display.

In response, Company K of the 25th Infantry, comprised of 55 enlisted men, 1 sergeant first class, 1 private first class, a hospital corpsman, and a civilian teamster, was sent to Essex, Montana, directly southeast of Glacier. They served under the command of 1st Lt. W. S. Mapes and 2nd Lt. James Blyth. Many Essex residents were indifferent to the fires and provided little assistance to the soldiers. Nevertheless, the soldiers proved to be effective firefighters. They extinguished the fire in less than a month. Their service earned them the enthusiastic praise of W. R. Logan, Glacier's superintendent. "I doubt if I can say enough in praise of Lt. Mapes and his Negro troops," Logan wrote in a letter to the Secretary of the Interior. "The work performed by them could not be improved upon by any class of men."<sup>19</sup>

17. Quoted in Eldredge, *In the Summer of 1903: Colonel Charles Young and the Buffalo Soldiers in Sequoia National Park*, 14.

18. Harvey Meyerson, *Nature's Army: When Soldiers Fought for Yosemite* (Lawrence, University Press of Kansas, 2001), 237.

19. Quoted in John H. Nankivell, *Buffalo Soldiers Regiment: History of the Twenty-fifth United States Infantry, 1869-1926* (Lincoln and London, University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 134.



The red circles represent the Buffalo Soldiers' patrol posts in and around the current boundaries of Yosemite National Park. The army's early headquarters and the arboretum were located near Wawona at the southern end of the park. The roads and park boundary depicted on the map are contemporary.

The Mauna Loa trail, at what was then Hawai'i National Park, was constructed by Company E of the 25th Infantry in the fall of 1915, a year before the park was formally established. Working in teams of 20 to 30, the soldiers used 12-pound hammers to crush hardened lava clinkers into gravel. The gravel was then mixed with soil to create a finish that was used as the surface for the trail.<sup>20</sup> The soldiers' task was not an easy one. They were unable to use horses or mules to assist with their work, and they were frequently deluged with rain. Nevertheless, the soldiers completed their work in less than six weeks. Their efforts, the *Hawaiian Gazette* reported, ensured "...that anyone desiring to make the trip on foot can do so without a guide and without danger of being lost in the fog."<sup>21</sup> The trail, which begins at an elevation of 4,000 feet and continues for 18 miles, remains intact today at Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park and is used by park visitors who hike the trail and explore the area on and around Mauna Loa.

20. Martha Hoverson, "Buffalo Soldiers at Kilauea, 1915-1917," *The Hawaiian Journal of History*, vol. 49 (2015), 80-82.

21. Quoted in Hoverson, "Buffalo Soldiers at Kilauea, 1915-1917," 81.

The Buffalo Soldiers were also brought into the national parks because of their involvement in testing equipment for the US Army. One such test explored whether bicycles could add efficiency to forced military marches. To test this, the 25th Infantry Bicycle Corps rode from Fort Missoula, Montana, to Yellowstone National Park in the summer of 1896. The group consisted of eight enlisted men and one commanding officer. The soldiers reached the park in 10 days. They then spent five days exploring the park as tourists before beginning their ride back to Fort Missoula. In his official report of the trip, commanding officer 2nd Lt. James Moss noted his men's reactions to the park, as well as how they were received by other park visitors. "Soldiers delighted with the trip—treated royally everywhere—thought the sights grand."<sup>22</sup> One year later, the 25th Infantry Bicycle Corps continued their exploration, riding from Fort Missoula to St. Louis, Missouri. The unit was disbanded in 1898.

22. Charles M. Dollar, "Putting the Army on Wheels" in *Buffalo Soldiers in the West: A Black Soldier's Anthology*, edited by Bruce A. Glasrud and Michael N. Searles (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2007), 246.



**Road crew at Sequoia National Park, 1903**



**The 9th Cavalry at the fallen giant sequoia called "Monarch," in the Mariposa Grove of Yosemite National Park, 1905.**

## THE LONG REACH OF JIM CROW

The Buffalo Soldiers' experiences reflected those of young African American men during Jim Crow America. As segregated soldiers, they faced an oppressive system of prejudice both inside the US Army and out. After Charles Young graduated from the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1889, it would be 47 years before another African American followed in his footsteps. Young's summer of 1903 in Sequoia and General Grant National Parks was the last time an African American served as a park superintendent until 1971.

The threat of racial prejudice during this time may be exemplified by the purported Brownsville Raid of 1906. That August, 12 Buffalo Soldiers of the 25th Infantry were accused of murdering one Brownsville, Texas, resident and wounding another. The soldiers' white commanding officers confirmed that all of the men were in their barracks at the time of the shooting. Nevertheless, local residents, including the mayor of Brownsville, insisted that the Buffalo Soldiers were guilty. A local grand jury chose not to issue any indictments; however, that November, President Theodore Roosevelt discharged 167 soldiers without honor from the 25th Infantry. The president did so, he said, on account of a conspiracy of silence.

Secretary of War William Taft received numerous entreaties to push back against Roosevelt's decision, but Taft declined to do so. Nor did he revisit the issue following his election to the presidency in November 1908. Taft's silence ensured that these 12 Buffalo Soldiers remained ostracized. It was not until 1972 that the US Army revisited the case and found the men innocent. President Richard Nixon subsequently pardoned the former Buffalo Soldiers and gave each of them honorable discharges. By this point, all but two of the accused men had passed away.<sup>23</sup>

Although many communities' experiences with the Buffalo Soldiers were rooted in prejudice, there were positive interactions as well. Charles Young worked closely with the residents of the towns surrounding Sequoia and General Grant during his time in the parks.

23. John D. Weaver, *The Brownsville Raid* (College Station, Texas A&M University Press, 1970); Ann J. Lane, *The Brownsville Affair: National Crisis and Black Reaction* (Port Washington, Kennikat Press, 1971).



**The 9th Cavalry provided escort and security for President Theodore Roosevelt during his 1903 visit to the Presidio of San Francisco.**

By establishing relationships with the families whose land holdings fell within park boundaries, Young convinced each of the landholders to sell their assets to the federal government. It would be several years before policymakers appropriated the funds to purchase the lands, but the park's eventual expansion was due in large part to Young's work as superintendent.<sup>24</sup>

The Buffalo Soldiers also became involved in the Hawaiian community during their time on the islands. The 25th Infantry band's performance in Honolulu during the Mid-Pacific Carnival in February 1915 was acclaimed. That performance led the band to be invited to perform in Maui's Fourth of July celebration in 1916. In addition, the 25th Infantry's baseball team, "the Wreckers," competed against civilian teams and received considerable attention from Honolulu newspapers.<sup>25</sup>

24. Brian G. Shellum, *Black Officer in a Buffalo Soldiers Regiment: The Military Career of Charles Young* (Lincoln and London, University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 147.  
25. Hoverson, "Buffalo Soldiers at Kilauea, 1915–1917," 76.

In 1914, the War Department removed army troops from the California national parks. The US Army's attention turned toward Europe as the United States prepared for possible involvement in the First World War.<sup>26</sup> Two years later, President Woodrow Wilson signed legislation to create the National Park Service, a central bureau to administer the nation's parks. The 25th Infantry remained stationed at Hawai'i National Park until 1918, when they too were reassigned.

26. Simmons and Simmons, "Fort Yellowstone," 44–45.

With their tours of duty in the national parks over, the Buffalo Soldiers served in different capacities. However, they did not serve in military combat roles. When the United States entered World War I in April 1917, army officials decided not to send any of the Buffalo Soldiers regiments to Europe.<sup>27</sup> The 9th Cavalry spent the war stationed in the Philippines, while their counterparts in the 10th Cavalry patrolled the United States-Mexico border outside Fort Huachuca in Arizona. They were later joined at the fort by the men of the 25th Infantry. Despite the Buffalo Soldiers' long record of distinction, one that included a total of 23 of their ranks receiving the Medal of Honor, the Buffalo Soldiers were largely removed from positions of influence.<sup>28</sup>

One exception was a new, all-black division, the 92nd Infantry, which was established in October 1917. The division primarily served as support troops during World War I.

They did, however, see combat in World War II and were the only African American infantry division to do so. The US military remained segregated until 1948, when President Harry Truman issued Executive Order 9981, abolishing racial discrimination in the Armed Forces and eventually ending segregation in the services. Eighty years after the Army Reorganization Act of 1866 created the Buffalo Soldiers regiments, African American soldiers could now serve alongside men of other races.

## CONCLUSION

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Throughout their years of service, the Buffalo Soldiers both reflected and stood apart from larger American narratives. Their tours of duty in the Indian Wars helped accelerate patterns of westward migration that eventually remade the continent. Their deployment in the West led to the soldiers' work in managing the first national park system units and helping build their early infrastructure. Their service at Sequoia and General Grant, Yosemite, Glacier, and Hawai'i National Parks, set a precedent for park management and stewardship that continued with the establishment of the National Park Service in 1916.

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27. Sheffer, *The Buffalo Soldiers: Their Epic Story and Major Campaigns*, 175.

28. Military regulations stipulate that the Medal of Honor is awarded to soldiers who, among other criteria, “distinguish themselves conspicuously by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of their own lives above and beyond the call of duty.”

## CHAPTER 3: PARKS AND SITES RELATED TO THE BUFFALO SOLDIERS

### PROCESS OF SITE INVENTORY COMPILATION

The National Park Service conveys history through places. To identify national parks and other sites associated with the Buffalo Soldiers, the National Park Service used a three-step process—research, outreach, and review. The National Park Service conducted research and collected data to provide baseline information on where the Buffalo Soldiers served and when their tours of duty took place. Additional input was solicited through project scoping. The process of inventory compilation identified 57 sites across 25 states as having significance (as determined by the National Register of Historic Places database) and a strong connection to the Buffalo Soldiers. Six of these sites have a direct connection to the stewardship role of the Buffalo Soldiers in national parks. Twenty of the 57 sites are now included in some capacity in the national park system. The others are listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

### OVERVIEW OF NPS UNITS AND NON-NPS SITES ASSOCIATED WITH THE BUFFALO SOLDIERS

Before the National Park Service was established, the US Army was responsible for protecting the nation's first national parks. At four sites—then named Sequoia and General Grant, Yosemite, Glacier, and Hawai'i National Parks—Buffalo Soldiers served as some of the first “park rangers.” In addition to these four national parks, military service took the Buffalo Soldiers to many western military forts and other sites, including 16 sites that are today designated units, or part of a unit, of the national park system (see figure 1 for details).

The national importance of the Buffalo Soldiers was recognized with the 2013 establishment of the Charles Young Buffalo Soldiers National Monument. Charles Young, an African American soldier, diplomat, and civil rights leader, commanded Buffalo Soldiers regiments assigned to patrol the national parks. The monument preserves his home in Wilberforce, Ohio, to interpret his legacy and that of the contributions of the Buffalo Soldiers to the national park system.

The monument is directed to coordinate with Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, and Yosemite National Park to commemorate the historical ties between Colonel Young and his military assignments at those sites and the role of the Buffalo Soldiers as pioneering stewards of our national parks.

The regiments that protected Yosemite, and Sequoia and General Grant National Parks were garrisoned at the Presidio of San Francisco from 1902 to 1904, now part of Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Companies of Buffalo Soldiers had also reported to the Presidio of San Francisco on their way to the Philippines in early 1899. Today, the San Francisco National Cemetery at the Presidio is the final resting place for 450 Buffalo Soldiers.

#### Park Purpose

The purpose of Charles Young Buffalo Soldiers National Monument is to preserve and protect Colonel Charles Young's home and surrounding farmland and to commemorate and interpret his life and accomplishments. The national monument also commemorates and interprets the service, struggles, and achievements of the Buffalo Soldiers in their duty to the United States.

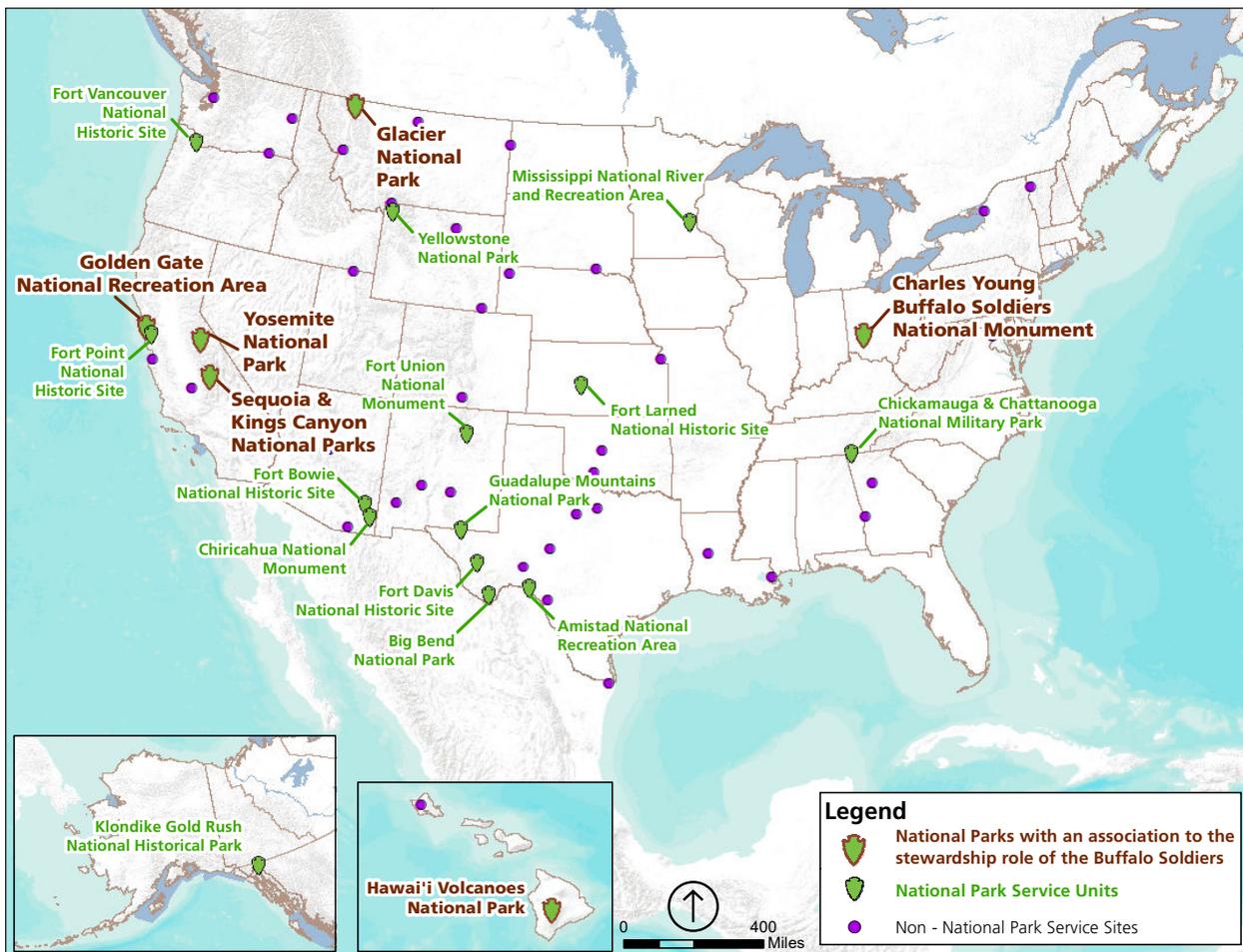


**Colonel Charles Young, 1916**

### Park Significance Statements related to the Buffalo Soldiers

1. Despite facing racial prejudice throughout his career, Colonel Charles Young was the highest-ranking African American commanding officer in the United States Army from 1894 until his death in 1922. He was the third African American to graduate from West Point and the last African American to complete West Point until 1936. His active military duties included combat commander during the Philippine-American War (1901), acting superintendent of Sequoia and General Grant (now Kings Canyon) National Parks while commanding troops of the 9th US Cavalry (1903), and squadron commander during the US Army's pursuit of Pancho Villa into Mexico in 1916.
2. The 24th and 25th Infantries and the 9th and 10th Cavalries of the US Army were African American regiments established by Congress in 1866, and they were commonly called Buffalo Soldiers by Plains Indians. These regiments provided security and order in the frontier west during the "Indian Wars," served as park rangers in Yosemite, Sequoia and General Grant (now Kings Canyon) National Parks, and fought with distinction in multiple foreign wars and campaigns.

Figure 1. Map Showing NPS Units with ties to the Buffalo Soldiers



## ASSOCIATED SITES

### National Park System Units

At least 20 units in the national park system possess a connection to the Buffalo Soldiers, and further research may identify additional connections. Of those park units, six have direct historical association with the role that the Buffalo Soldiers played in the stewardship of parks. The other 14 sites are diverse in both size and scope. They include several of the more prominent parks as well as several smaller monuments and historical parks.

**Table 1. National Park System Units with Ties to Buffalo Soldiers Stewardship**

NPS PARK UNIT	DESCRIPTION OF SITE
Charles Young Buffalo Soldiers National Monument, OH	Established in 2013, Charles Young Buffalo Soldiers National Monument interprets the legacy of Colonel Young, the one-time commanding officer of the 9th Cavalry and superintendent of Sequoia and General Grant National Parks, and the soldiers with whom he served. (Within the army, the officers in these positions were known as acting superintendents. The positions were renamed superintendent when the responsibility for park stewardship shifted from the army to the National Park Service.) The monument covers 60 acres and includes Colonel Young’s former home. This site represents the Buffalo Soldiers’ military role in park stewardship and the broader roles of the Buffalo Soldiers in military history.
Glacier National Park, MT	In 1910, Company K of the 25th Infantry was dispatched to the small town of Essex, MT, southeast of Glacier National Park, to fight a forest fire there. The soldiers also built roads, trails, and many miles of fire-guard trenches for the park during this assignment.
Hawai’i Volcanoes National Park	Company E of the 25th Infantry constructed the Mauna Loa trail at Hawai’i National Park in the fall of 1915. The 26-mile trail, which begins at an elevation of approximately 4,000 feet and culminates at the Mauna Loa summit at 13,677 feet, was completed in six weeks. Hawai’i National Park has since been split into two units—Hawai’i Volcanoes and Haleakala. The Mauna Loa trail is a part of the former.
Golden Gate National Recreation Area (The Presidio of San Francisco)	Buffalo Soldiers based out of the Presidio served in the Spanish-American (1898) and Philippine-American wars (1899-1904) and escorted President Roosevelt (1903). The soldiers who helped steward Sequoia and General Grant and Yosemite National Parks were garrisoned here. More than 450 Buffalo Soldiers are buried at San Francisco National Cemetery within the Presidio grounds. This site represents the Buffalo Soldiers’ military role in park stewardship and the broader roles of the soldiers in military history.
Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, CA	In June of 1899, a detachment of Company I of the 24th Infantry patrolled what was then known as Sequoia and General Grant National Parks. In the summer of 1903, Troops I and M of the 9th Cavalry cleared trails and built roads in Sequoia and General Grant. Colonel Charles Young inspected the route of the road to the Giant Forest, and his troops constructed a trail from Lone Pine to the Mount Whitney summit. In addition, the soldiers guarded the park from poaching and grazing. This duty was repeated in the summer of 1904 by troops A and B of the 9th Cavalry.
Yosemite National Park, CA	In June of 1899, a detachment of Co. H, 24th Infantry, patrolled Yosemite National Park. In 1903, Troops K and L of the 9th Cavalry managed and protected Yosemite. They removed sheep and cattle brought illegally to the park to graze, stocked fish in the lakes and streams, cleared trails, and constructed an arboretum and nature trail. The arboretum built in 1904 is considered to be the first museum in what would become the national park system. In 1903 during the visit of President Theodore Roosevelt to Yosemite, the 9th Cavalry troops served as the president’s escort. This was the first time in US military history that African American soldiers were so honored.

**Table 2. Other National Park System Units with Ties to the Buffalo Soldiers**

NPS PARK UNIT	DESCRIPTION OF SITE
Amistad National Recreation Area, TX	During the 1870s, Buffalo Soldiers troops from the 10th Cavalry division as well as Seminole Negro Indian scouts engaged in military campaigns against the Apache, Comanche, and Kickapoo Indian Tribes near what was later designated Amistad National Recreation Area. Four of the Seminole Negro Indian scouts later received the Medal of Honor for their service in these campaigns.
Big Bend National Park, TX	Camp Neville Springs was established in 1885 within the modern-day boundaries of Big Bend National Park. The majority of the soldiers stationed at the camp were Seminole Negro Indian scouts. They were tasked with patrolling 150 miles of the Rio Grande border and preventing Apaches from escaping into Mexico. The camp was abandoned in 1891, but portions remain extant.
Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park, GA and TN	In the summer of 1898, awaiting their deployments for the Spanish-American War, all four regiments of the Buffalo Soldiers massed at Chickamauga National Military Park. Their ranks increased during this time, as the War Department had ordered all regiments, Buffalo Soldiers and otherwise, to have three battalions of four companies.
Chiricahua National Monument, AZ	Companies E, H, and I of the 10th Cavalry were stationed at Bonita Canyon in an area that eventually became part of Chiricahua National Monument between 1885 and 1886. Following Geronimo's surrender to the United States in September of 1886, the Buffalo Soldiers abandoned their camp. Over 50 members of Troops E and H carved their names or initials into stone blocks that they then used to make a large monument to President James Garfield. These stones are now part of the Faraway Ranch House fireplace and are a tangible connection to the Buffalo Soldiers who spent one short year here.
Fort Bowie National Historic Site, AZ	For nine months in 1891-1892, members of the 24th Infantry were stationed at Fort Bowie. Around 1886, some of the men in Troop H, 10th Cavalry, escorted the Chiricahua Apache as prisoners of war to Florida. Apache Scouts in Company I, 10th Cavalry, were stationed at Fort Bowie during the Indian Wars (late 1880s) as well.
Fort Davis National Historic Site, TX	Fort Davis was established to provide protection on the Trans-Pecos portion of the San Antonio-El Paso Road. Over an 18-year period, companies of all four Buffalo Soldier regiments were stationed at Fort Davis, which often served as their regimental headquarters. Their mission was to protect the mail and travel routes, control Indian movements and gain knowledge of the terrain. Fort Davis was also the location of the controversial court-martial of Second Lieutenant Henry O. Flipper, the first African American graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point.
Fort Larned National Historic Site, KS	Company A of the 10th Cavalry served at Fort Larned from 1867 to 1869. While at the fort, the soldiers participated in work details and guard duty and practiced cavalry drills. They were also involved in two military engagements in 1868. Company A was the last cavalry unit to be stationed at the fort before it was abandoned in 1878.
Fort Point National Historic Site, CA	The Buffalo Soldiers never served at Fort Point. Three of the regiments, however, including the 9th Cavalry, 24th Infantry, and 25th Infantry, embarked from the fort for their tours in the Philippine-American War.
Fort Union National Monument, NM	The Buffalo Soldiers of the 9th Cavalry served at the third of three forts named Fort Union (all of which were established in New Mexico Territory) from 1876 to 1881. Several campaigns against the Comanche and Apache Indians took place during this time, and it is believed that the soldiers took part in them.

NPS PARK UNIT	DESCRIPTION OF SITE
Fort Vancouver National Historic Site, OR and WA	Buffalo Soldiers from Company B of the 24th Infantry Regiment arrived at Vancouver Barracks in April of 1899. They were dispatched from the fort to the Coeur d'Alene mining area in northern Idaho to help settle a labor dispute in May of 1899. At Vancouver Barracks, they engaged in regular garrison duties, such as drilling, marching, marksmanship, maintenance, and clerical work, as well as ceremonial activities, including parades, concerts, and escorts.
Guadalupe Mountains National Park, TX	Between 1867 and 1880, several skirmishes between the Buffalo Soldiers and the Mescalero Apaches took place in what is now Guadalupe Mountains National Park. The exact locations of the skirmishes are still debated. The Buffalo Soldiers also explored and mapped much of the little-known region.
Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park, AK	In May of 1899, Company L of the 24th Infantry was dispatched initially to Dyea and later to Skagway, Alaska, two boomtowns on the fringes of "the Last Frontier." There, they were tasked with protecting people and property and displaying the American flag. The soldiers remained in Skagway until May of 1902.
Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, MN	During the 1880s, the 25th Infantry was garrisoned at Fort Snelling, within the boundaries of what is now Mississippi National River and Recreation Area. Far from the frontlines of the Indian Wars, the soldiers used their time at the fort to practice drilling and parading.
Yellowstone National Park, ID, MT, and WY	In 1896, troops of the 25th Infantry Bicycle Corps embarked on an 800-mile ride from Fort Missoula, MT, to Yellowstone National Park and back. Their ride was one element of a larger effort to test the viability of the use of bicycles in mountain warfare.

### Non-NPS Sites Listed in the National Register of Historic Places

The following 37 sites are examples of units outside the national park system that are associated with the Buffalo Soldiers. These sites were identified in the scoping process and were verified as significant using the National Register of Historic Places database. It is noted that sites listed in the National Register of Historic Places may not have been specifically listed for their association with the Buffalo Soldiers. They range from large to small and include several state parks as well as recognized historic districts and, in some cases, active military bases. It is likely that more sites with a significant connection to the Buffalo Soldiers may be discovered through additional research.

**Table 3. Non-NPS Sites with Ties to the Buffalo Soldiers**

NON-NPS SITE	DESCRIPTION OF SITE
Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park, CA	A state park commemorating Allensworth, a town founded, financed, and governed by African Americans. One of the three founders, Allen Allensworth, served as a chaplain with the 24th Infantry from 1886 to 1906.
Fort Assiniboine Historic Site, MT	The 10th Cavalry served at Fort Assiniboine beginning in 1892.
Fort Bayard Historic District, NM	Eleven companies of the 9th Cavalry were stationed at Fort Bayard from 1876 to 1899.
Fort Benning, GA	The 24th Infantry was posted at Fort Benning from 1922 until the beginning of World War II.
Fort Brown, TX	The 25th Infantry arrived at Fort Brown in July of 1906, where they suffered racial prejudice and false criminal charges from members of the nearby community of Brownsville.
Fort Buford State Historic Site, ND	Three companies from the 25th Infantry served at Fort Buford from July of 1891 until the site was decommissioned in 1895.
Fort Clark Historic District, TX	From 1868 to 1879, at least one Buffalo Soldiers regiment was stationed at Fort Clark (except during 1874), with three of the four regiments present from 1870 to 1873 and from 1876 to 1878.
Fort Concho National Historic Landmark, TX	Companies of the 9th and 10th Cavalries were stationed at Fort Concho during the 1870s and 1880s, and the 10th had its headquarters here for more than seven years from April 1875 to July 1882.
Fort Craig Historic Site, NM	Fort Craig was home to soldiers in the 9th Cavalry from the late 1860s through the 1870s.
Fort D.A. Russell, WY	The 9th and 10th Cavalries, as well as the 24th Infantry, were stationed at Fort D.A. Russell at various points from the late 19th through the early 20th centuries.
Fort Ethan Allen, VT	The 10th Cavalry served at Fort Ethan Allen from 1909 through 1913.
Fort Garland, CO	The 9th Cavalry was stationed at Fort Garland between 1876 and 1879.
Fort George Wright Historic District, WA	The 2nd and 3rd battalions of the 25th Infantry were stationed at Fort George Wright in 1909.
Fort Griffin State Historic Site, TX	In the spring of 1873, the companies of the 10th Cavalry were transferred to Texas, including to Fort Griffin.
Fort Huachuca National Historic Landmark, AZ	At one time or another, all of the Buffalo Soldiers regiments were headquartered at Fort Huachuca.

NON-NPS SITE	DESCRIPTION OF SITE
Fort Jackson National Historic Landmark, LA	The 25th Infantry was formed at Fort Jackson in 1869.
Fort Lancaster State Historic Site, TX	Company K of the 9th Cavalry occupied Fort Lancaster from 1867 to 1868.
Fort Lawton Historic District, WA	The 9th Cavalry and 24th Infantry were stationed at Fort Lawton both before and after the Philippine-American War.
Fort Leavenworth National Historic Landmark, KS	The 10th Cavalry was formed at Fort Leavenworth in 1866.
Fort McKinney Historic District, WY	During the 1880s, Fort McKinney housed at least four companies of the 9th Cavalry.
Fort McPherson, GA	In 1898, the 10th Cavalry and 25th Infantry camped at Fort McPherson on their way to embarking for Cuba during the Spanish-American War.
Fort Missoula, MT	Four companies of the 25th Infantry were stationed at Fort Missoula from 1888 until 1898. In 1896, drawing from men stationed at the fort, 2nd Lt. James A. Moss organized the 25th Infantry Bicycle Corps, the first unit of its kind in the US Army.
Fort Myer, VA	In the spring of 1891, following the completion of the Pine Ridge campaign, Company K of the 9th Cavalry was stationed at Fort Myer.
Fort Ord National Monument, CA	Following their service in the Philippines, the 9th Cavalry was assigned to Fort Ord in 1902.
Fort Pike State Historic Site, LA	Company A of the 25th Infantry was based out of Fort Pike in 1869.
Fort Randall, SD	The 25th Infantry established its headquarters at Fort Randall in 1880.
Fort Reno, OK	In the 1880s, Buffalo Soldiers and Seminole Indian scouts based out of Fort Reno played a major role in searching for and arresting those who illegally entered the Oklahoma territory.
Fort Richardson State Park, TX	Companies E, I, and L of the 10th Cavalry were based out of Fort Richardson from 1873 to 1878.
Fort Robinson National Historic Landmark, NE	Fort Robinson was the headquarters of the 9th Cavalry regiment from 1887 to 1898.
Fort Sill National Historic Landmark, OK	The 10th Cavalry constructed Fort Sill's stone buildings, and the fort became the headquarters for the regiment from April 1869 to June 1872 and from May 1873 to March 1875. It also served as headquarters for the 24th Infantry from October 1887 to April 1888.
Fort Stanton NM	Companies from the 9th Cavalry served at Fort Stanton beginning in the mid-1870s.
Fort Verde State Historic Park, AZ	Companies I and M, under the command of Major Curwen Boyd McLellan, were stationed at Fort Verde in 1885.
Fort Walla Walla, WA	Fort Walla Walla was the duty station of Buffalo Soldier troops between 1902 and 1908. It was the last home of the 9th Cavalry, which disbanded in 1905.
Fort Washakie, WY	Units of the 10th Cavalry were stationed at Fort Washakie in 1902.
Fort Yellowstone, MT	In the early 1900s, several companies of the 24th Infantry were stationed at Fort Yellowstone.
Madison Barracks, NY	The 24th Infantry was posted at Madison Barracks in 1908.
Schofield Barracks, HI	The 25th Infantry was stationed at Schofield Barracks from 1913 to 1918.

## Other Related Sites

In addition to the formally recognized sites in the national park system and those sites that are listed in the National Register of Historic Places, the study identified other potential types of sites that help tell the history of the Buffalo Soldiers. These include historic sites in African American communities connected to the Buffalo Soldiers as well as museums and institutions across the nation that interpret the Buffalo Soldiers history. Also included are potential trail routes connected to the history of the Buffalo Soldiers.

Beyond our national parks and military sites, research and identification of Buffalo Soldiers-related sites in surrounding communities can foster greater contextualization of their experiences, expanding opportunities for interpretation and outreach. Such sites exist in communities throughout California, and may exist in other communities where Buffalo Soldiers were stationed or garrisoned. An example of such a site is the AME Church in Oakland, California, that Colonel Charles Young and his wife attended while he was garrisoned at the Presidio in San Francisco. This church was founded in 1858 and is still active today. At the time Young and his wife were part of the congregation, the church was influential in lobbying for a civil rights bill. There are many other active churches connected to the Buffalo Soldiers who, along with their families, settled in San Francisco, Oakland, and Berkeley neighborhoods and in other towns throughout the California Central Valley. More research is needed to identify such sites.

Numerous museums around the nation tell the history of the Buffalo Soldiers. Connections to these sites can help national park visitors develop a greater appreciation of the broader Buffalo Soldier history and a better understanding of the connection to African American military history. Sites identified during the study process include the Buffalo Soldiers Museum in Houston, Texas, and the 9th and 10th Horse Cavalry Buffalo Soldiers Museum in Tacoma, Washington. Other sites include the African-American Museum and Library in Oakland, California, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York City, and the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, DC. Museums and sites specific to Charles Young include the Ohio Historical Society National Afro-American Museum and Cultural Center in Wilberforce, Ohio; Wilberforce University, Wilberforce, Ohio; and Omega Psi Phi Incorporated, Ohio.

## CHAPTER 4: STATUS OF NPS HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE, PROGRAMS, AND OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

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To understand the status of the National Park Service’s historical knowledge, program, and outreach activities, information was gleaned through the Scholars Round Table, additional staff research, and project scoping phase, which included a query of national park units and programs servicewide. At least 20 units in the national park system possess a connection to the Buffalo Soldiers, and further research may identify additional connections. Staff from 13 parks with a direct connection to the Buffalo Soldiers responded to the questionnaire. Staff from six other parks without a direct connection to the story, also reported interpreting Buffalo Soldier history in their parks. In all, the questionnaire identified 19 parks that currently interpret Buffalo Soldier history though not all parks responded to the questionnaire.

### COLLECTIONS AND ARCHIVES

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#### Current Status

A range of collections and archival materials pertaining to Buffalo Soldier history are known to exist in all of the stewardship parks. These repositories include primary sources, which are original sources or evidence such as an artifact, original document, record, diary, manuscript, autobiography, recording, or any other source of information created during the period of time studied. Although the extent of primary source materials on Buffalo Soldiers in national parks is currently undetermined, records known to exist include park superintendent records, annual reports, and Army correspondence that could illustrate the Buffalo Soldiers’ collective work and accomplishments. Other information sources that may increase understanding the soldiers’ stewardship include newspaper articles, city directories, and census records. Site-specific records exist, including the post returns of the 9th Cavalry at the Presidio of San Francisco. Please see “Appendix D: Bibliography of Buffalo Soldiers Publications” for a detailed list of primary and secondary sources that are currently available to NPS staff.

Historical information about the Buffalo Soldiers’ general military service is better known and documented than the information pertaining to their service in national parks. Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks collections and archives consist of photographs of the Buffalo Soldiers, including one iconic photo of the Buffalo Soldiers working to complete the road to the Giant Forest, superintendent reports, and newspaper and journal articles. Colonel Charles Young’s annual reports from his tenure as superintendent at Sequoia and General Grant National Parks are an exceptionally detailed source for information related to the Buffalo Soldiers’ work. These reports reveal how Young’s leadership shaped the physical development of the park, particularly with regard to land acquisition proposals and infrastructure work accomplished by the soldiers. Charles Young’s work protecting the park’s natural features is substantiated by these records.

In support of its successful interpretive program, “Yosemite through the Eyes of a Buffalo Soldier,” Yosemite National Park staff have conducted archival research using materials from Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks and the National Archives and Records Administration. Yosemite National Park’s collections include historic photographs and information obtained from War Department personnel records such as US Army rosters and muster rolls. The muster rolls and rosters provide information about how many Buffalo Soldiers were at Yosemite and the duration of their tour of duty. In fact, the interpretation of Buffalo Soldiers and its early park stewardship began at Yosemite when one historic photo of Buffalo Soldiers at the park was discovered in the park’s archives.

Golden Gate National Recreation Area and its partner, the Presidio Trust, maintain some archival materials related to the Buffalo Soldiers’ tenure at the military garrison.

Their collections include historical photos, newspaper articles, maps, original artifacts, materials depicting the journey that the soldiers made from the Presidio to Yosemite, Sequoia and General Grant National Parks, and a rare Thomas Edison film from 1903 that depicts the 9th Cavalry escorting President Theodore Roosevelt down Van Ness Avenue in San Francisco, California. Additionally, the Presidio features physical built resources directly related to the Buffalo Soldiers such as historic barracks and stables. The national cemetery at the Presidio contains the graves of more than 400 Buffalo Soldiers.

At Charles Young Buffalo Soldiers National Monument, the park museum collection contains artifacts and related field records from archeological surveys conducted on-site. These items are stored at the NPS Midwest Archeological Center. The park also displays collections items in exhibits that are loaned from outside organizations, such as Ohio History Connection, which houses most of the collections from the Charles Young home. The Ohio History Connection collection includes two unpublished manuscripts from Colonel Young's son and wife that are uncatalogued and not yet available for researchers. In addition, collections on display at the park are loaned from the National Museum of African American History and Culture, Omega Psi Phi fraternity, Wilberforce University, Central State University, and many smaller repositories.

Glacier and Hawai'i Volcanoes National Parks, where the Buffalo Soldiers served as park stewards, have only scant primary source materials that describe the soldiers' work and activities during their time at these parks.

### Gaps

While primary source materials, such as government records, journals, memoirs, autobiographies, and personal letters and correspondence, are known to exist, additional records could be found with more investigation. Consequently, many of these sources are not well understood and not easily accessible for research. Many records are likely in the National Archives in historic military archives. In some cases, sources that have been located are not organized or catalogued, and therefore their full extent is unknown. An analysis of their contents is needed to fully understand what information they do and do not contain.

Personal accounts specific to the soldiers' national park stewardship role are limited. Outside of Colonel Young's records, there are few firsthand records that provide accounts of Buffalo Soldiers stewarding national parks. Scholars and park staff who interpret the Buffalo Soldiers have requested support in finding additional records and assessing their research potential.

Work is underway at some parks to gather information and catalog collections. A literature review of Buffalo Soldiers in the Pacific Northwest and Alaska is desired by staff at Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park. Charles Young Buffalo Soldiers National Monument is also working closely with Ohio History Connection to identify collection items of significance. However, until collections are catalogued and available for research, park staff and other researchers do not have access to them. Similarly, collections at Hawai'i State Archives are known to be extensive but are largely undigitized and lack online finding aids. Ultimately, the lack of organization and access to collections and archives that are known or believed to exist results in an information gap that is key to developing a full and accurate understanding of the Buffalo Soldiers and their history of park stewardship.

## HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE AND RESEARCH

The outreach and information-gathering effort from subject-matter experts provides an assessment of the general body of knowledge and research available on the Buffalo Soldiers history within the National Park Service.

### Current Status

Knowledge of the Buffalo Soldiers' activities in the early national parks is limited, as are the broader meanings and impacts of their involvement, individually and collectively, across the West. It is known that the soldiers' stewardship roles in the national parks were not fundamentally different from that of other army troops at the time whereby they provided law enforcement; protected parks from illegal encroachment; prevented poaching; fought fires; and facilitated public access and enjoyment of the parks through building roads, trails, and other facilities. They also contributed to early park interpretation by developing an interpretive nature trail at Yosemite National Park.

Given the Buffalo Soldiers' role in patrolling and protecting the backcountry in Sequoia and General Grant and Yosemite National Parks, they are considered by some subject-matter experts to be among the first "wilderness rangers."

Although the Buffalo Soldiers' role as park stewards was similar to that of their white counterparts, their experiences and challenges in carrying out this important role differed greatly. On one hand, participation in the army provided the Buffalo Soldiers with legitimacy and authority that African Americans would not have achieved as private citizens. On the other, African American army soldiers still had to endure harsh conditions associated with racial prejudice and limited rights during the Reconstruction and Jim Crow eras. Further, it is not fully understood how their enforcement of the US government's policy of American Indian removal from national parks may have influenced this complicated legacy.

Some research on the history of the Buffalo Soldiers in the early stewardship of the national parks has occurred in NPS interpretive and regional programs in an effort to deepen staff knowledge about the soldiers at individual park units and to inform and develop park interpretation and education programs. Twenty-one parks and programs have conducted research on the Buffalo Soldiers to varying degrees. This includes primary research using archival records such as period newspapers, correspondence, and military service records. One park, Charles Young Buffalo Soldiers National Monument, is currently preparing a historic resource study that will include scholarly research to describe the history of the Charles Young home, the people who lived there, and associated significant events. Physical resources known to represent the Buffalo Soldiers in Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks include the former Booker T. Washington-named Giant Sequoia Tree, the Giant Forest Road, and remnants of the trail to Mount Whitney. However, the physical extent of the Buffalo Soldiers presence on the landscape has not been completely defined through research. For example, at Yosemite National Park, Buffalo Soldiers may have patrolled areas outside of the park's current park boundary, including Devils Postpile National Monument, which was part of Yosemite before 1905, as well as other adjacent areas. More resources representing the soldiers' stewardship activities may exist.

Twenty parks have used scholars, subject-matter experts, and oral history as sources of information. Six parks have used descendants of soldiers, and eleven have used other professional organizations. Most of the historical information gleaned from these efforts focuses on Buffalo Soldiers' military history, movements, and the discriminatory conditions in the United States at the time. Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park is in the process of contacting living descendants and also has conducted research using scholars, professional organizations, the National Archives and Records Administration, online sources, and army correspondence.

### Gaps

Although aspects of the Buffalo Soldiers' work in the early national parks are understood, gaps in our current knowledge and understanding persist. Filling in these gaps will help the National Park Service better discern myths versus realities that sometimes create competing narratives regarding the exceptionalism and treatment of Buffalo Soldiers. More scholarly research on the Buffalo Soldiers is needed to support a fuller understanding of their significance and legacy in national parks within the diverse range of contexts in which they lived and worked. Research topics that warrant investigation and synthesis to fill in gaps of understanding and interpretation in parks include the following:

*Establish the extent of the Buffalo Soldiers' activities within national parks. To gain a clearer understanding of the Buffalo Soldiers' work and impact during their tenure in national parks, more research is needed to determine where they patrolled, which projects they pursued and accomplished, the areas on the landscape in which they were active, including areas adjacent to national park units today, and whether significant resources that represent this history remain.*

*Develop a complete roster of Buffalo Soldiers that were stewards of the early national parks. A complete roster of Buffalo Soldiers in the national parks, including their names, units, dates of service, and home of record would serve as a basis for further research and interpretation. This information may be derived from Department of Defense archives, war records, muster rolls in the national archives, and the work completed to date by the Buffalo Soldiers Nation Museum.*

*Identifying the names of the Buffalo Soldiers provides an avenue to identifying firsthand accounts or other related artifacts that may be in the possession of Buffalo Soldier descendants.*

*Provide context to better understand the impact of race and discrimination on the Buffalo Soldiers. The creation of black regiments in the regular army occurred as part of the transformation of the US military after the Civil War. Despite the establishment of these regiments, the military remained segregated. Clarify the following: 1) what did it mean to be a black military man in a segregated society?; 2) in what ways did black soldiers take advantage of limited options?; 3) in what ways did the role of the Buffalo Soldiers differ from other US Army soldiers assigned to protect the early national parks?; and 4) what were the socio-political dynamics and challenges that the soldiers likely faced in the parks, possibly when interacting with the public or in the local communities?*

*Provide context to better understand the Buffalo Soldiers' involvement in the Indian Wars, interactions with American Indian tribes, and their service as agents of the US Army during a time of American Indian removal in the West. Outside of the national parks, the Buffalo Soldiers' involvement in the Indian Wars furthered tensions between the US government and indigenous peoples. Within the parks, American Indian communities were removed from early park lands when the parks were established and boundaries were drawn. The soldiers assigned to manage the parks were charged with enforcing restrictions to keep American Indians from returning to their homelands within the parks. The soldiers' role within these larger contexts in the West should be explored.*

*Contextualize the troops in history through exploring their impacts and influences in their local communities. What social and economic influences did the Buffalo Soldiers have on localities and vice versa? What were their communities and social history; e.g., family community and culture? How were they impacted by Jim Crow? How were the soldiers' experiences in national parks conveyed to their families and communities at home through their letters and correspondence? Did their work in the national parks have an impact on the view of blacks in America at the time? Were there connections between black utopian towns, such as Allensworth, California, founded by Buffalo Soldier Allen Allensworth, and the Buffalo Soldiers who served in parks?*

*Document firsthand accounts about the individual experiences of Buffalo Soldiers in the early national parks. Little is known about individual soldiers' experiences of their service in parks and the effect these experiences may have had on them individually or collectively. This type of information may exist in sources such as letters home and other family personal collections or articles in local papers from the Buffalo Soldiers' home towns.*

*Research the Buffalo Soldiers' participation in military innovation and equipment testing such as the 25th Infantry Bicycle Corps 800-mile ride from Fort Missoula, MT, to Yellowstone National Park and back. Do other examples of innovation and testing involving the soldiers exist?*

*Research the potential influence of Colonel Charles Young as an early conservationist. This information would inform our understanding of Young's influence in the national parks as well as contribute to our understanding of racial and ethnic minorities' connections to outdoor recreation and nature.*

Because the Buffalo Soldiers' work differed among the parks in which they served and because so little information has been unearthed, park staff today currently lack a full understanding of how the soldiers' history in their individual parks fits into the larger picture of Buffalo Soldiers' service within national, regional, and local historical contexts. Research and analysis on the topics listed above would result in a deeper knowledge and understanding that is needed to support parks' interpretive programs and opportunities for visitor education and enjoyment.

Although scholarly research focused on the history of the Buffalo Soldiers' role in park stewardship has been limited, new opportunities to fill research gaps have recently become available through NPS partnership programs. In 2017, the National Park Service entered into a partnership agreement with the Association for the Study of African American Life and History to conduct historical research, scholarly reviews, museum/curation assistance, youth engagement, and interpretation and education projects and programs. National Park Service partnerships with universities and research institutions can provide new opportunities to engage university-level students in Buffalo Soldiers research opportunities that can help bridge the gaps in our understanding about the soldiers' role in the early stewardship of national parks.

## INTERPRETATION AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS IN PARKS

### Current Status

Aspects of Buffalo Soldiers history have been interpreted in a variety of ways in at least 19 park units within the last five years. Ten parks provide daily or weekly Buffalo Soldier interpretive programming; the rest provide programming monthly, seasonally, or on special occasions. The staff reported that reenactments, ranger-led programs, and talks, whether given occasionally or routinely, were most successful in engaging visitors in Buffalo Soldier history. Nine units of the national park system report that they have been interpreting Buffalo Soldiers history for more than 10 years.

Eight of these park units specifically interpret the soldiers' role in early park stewardship. Eleven parks broadly interpret the Buffalo Soldiers' military history in the West, possibly because more parks have direct connections with the soldier's military service than to their protection of national parks. Although some parks and programs emphasize both elements, four parks reported also interpreting Buffalo Soldiers in the context of related historical themes such as discrimination, patriotism despite prejudice, slavery, genocide of the indigenous people of the United States, and travel to particular park sites. There are also several national park units that were not visited by the Buffalo Soldiers (such as Andrew Johnson National Historic Site, Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park, George Washington Memorial Parkway and Everglades National Park) that interpret Buffalo Soldier history as well.

Examples of interpretation currently happening in the Buffalo Soldiers' stewardship parks include firsthand storytelling and reenactors, museum displays, and exhibits. The depth and scale of the interpretive programs offered by parks range widely.

- Yosemite National Park features a popular interpretive program in which an interpretive ranger adopts the persona of a Buffalo Soldier and leads visitors on an interpretive walk that tells the story of the Buffalo Soldiers at Yosemite at a personal level. Yosemite hosts special reenactment performances with staff wearing the Buffalo Soldier Army uniform in events outside of the park, such as in the annual Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena and at Hearst Castle, a California State Park.
- Golden Gate National Recreation Area features in-depth and ongoing interpretation through its exhibits and collections, ranger-led walking tours, lectures featuring authors and scholars, and outreach interpretive programs dedicated to the history of the Buffalo Soldiers stationed at the Presidio. The park engages in an annual tradition of laying flowers on the graves of Buffalo Soldiers buried in its national cemetery. Its partnerships with the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy and the Presidio Trust play crucial roles in helping park staff conduct interpretive and educational programs on Buffalo Soldiers.



**An interpretive ranger leads a visitor program about the Buffalo Soldiers' experiences at Yosemite National Park.**



**An interpretive program held at the National Cemetery in the Presidio of San Francisco, Golden Gate National Recreation Area.**

- Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks offer specialized programs involving Buffalo Soldiers reenactments and educational events, such as barbecues every evening during the summer season featuring reenactors who portray Charles Young and his wife.
- Staff at Charles Young Buffalo Soldiers National Monument have partnered with multiple organizations to identify and display archives and collections significant to the park’s history in the park and on their website. The national monument features programs for children to build awareness of the Buffalo Soldiers cavalry and to connect visitors with the history of Charles Young’s family. The park also offers traveling trunks for schools. Each trunk is stocked with period items that Buffalo Soldiers would have carried, providing third and fourth graders tangible connections to the soldiers.
- Glacier and Hawai’i Volcanoes National Parks are examples of parks with Buffalo Soldier stewardship history that only sporadically offer interpretive programs on the Buffalo Soldiers because of a lack of resources as well as historical information available to support such programs.

The most common indirect interpretive services used by parks and NPS programs are social media and websites, with 12 parks reporting that they use these platforms to interpret the Buffalo Soldiers.<sup>29</sup> Seven parks and programs use pamphlets, publications, sale items (in cooperating, association, or concession stores), museum objects, and visitor exhibits and most parks/programs used more than one platform. Examples of park exhibits include an interpretive wayside about Colonel Charles Young at Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks and a wayside in the Mariposa Grove at Yosemite National Park. Historic photographs of the soldiers have been effective indirect interpretive tools, as well as podcasts, documentary film, and videos of reenactment events and interviews with park ranger reenactors and historians. California national parks including, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Sequoia and Kings Canyon, and Yosemite feature an NPS brochure called “Guardians of California Parks,” featuring the Buffalo Soldiers in the parks.

29. These “indirect” forms of park interpretation are also called “nonpersonal services” in the National Park Service.



**Telling the story through first-person narratives has been highly effective for providing visitors opportunities to have meaningful connections with the Buffalo Soldiers as individuals.**

## Gaps

Although interpretive programming in parks occurs at varying levels, most park and program staff report keen interest in doing more. Several cited interest in hosting special events on Buffalo Soldiers as an effective method of interpretation. They described a desire for living history interpreters as part of these programs as a way to “show a story” rather than “tell a story.” Several suggested recruiting youth for employment or internships to assist in Buffalo Soldier history and interpretation. Others would like to see more services developed at their park on the Buffalo Soldiers, such as wayside panels and exhibits, improved materials such as brochures and pamphlets, and enhanced digital sources. They noted the lack of an NPS Buffalo Soldiers website.

Less than half of the parks or programs include an interpretive theme related to Buffalo Soldiers history. This may in part be because of the lack of a national or regional interpretive framework that provides interpretive themes and subthemes on the Buffalo Soldiers that parks can use to support interpretive and educational programs. Park and program staff reported an incredible need for more research on Buffalo Soldiers history related to their parks to support the development of interpretive materials and programs to more accurately tell the stories.

The general lack of awareness and understanding of Buffalo Soldiers history related to specific parks is a significant obstacle to expanding programs.

Interpreters telling the stories need training and skills in discussing, hearing, and respecting conversations about race, power, identity, discrimination, military, and activism related to the themes of the Buffalo Soldiers and African American military service. Newly available NPS training on interpretive core competencies can help interpreters develop these skills.

Because interpretation at stewardship parks has largely been the result of individual NPS staff with an interest in the Buffalo Soldiers, current efforts may cease as staff retire or leave their positions, as occurred with the Buffalo Soldier programming at Hawai’i Volcanoes National Park. The knowledge that these individuals have gained through personal research and outreach could also be lost if it is not captured centrally.

## AUDIENCES AND OUTREACH

### Current Status

Twenty parks conduct Buffalo Soldier-related outreach by hosting special events and conducting educational programs outside of park boundaries. Examples include conducting programs at local schools to pique student interest in preservation of resources or to provide field trip opportunities to the park. Park staff have participated in community-led events such as those associated with the Emancipation Proclamation. Yosemite National Park has had success in communicating the stewardship role of the Buffalo Soldiers to a national audience through many media outlets including documentaries, television interviews, and newspaper and magazine articles.

To promote awareness and relevancy of the National Park Service within African American communities, many parks and programs are working to strengthen relationships, create more relevant media, and enhance research that connects African American contributions to sites. Several parks engage with communities by promoting research on related contemporary historical themes, such as Civil War to Civil Rights, and aspects of African American military service.

The Historically Black Colleges and Universities Internship Program that is designed to link college students attending Historically Black Colleges and Universities to internship experiences at NPS sites and program offices can provide opportunities to engage youth in research and outreach activities. The program is administered by an NPS partner, the Greening Youth Foundation.

Buffalo Soldiers-related programming in parks reaches diverse audiences including minorities, veterans, and visitors of all ages and cultural backgrounds. When asked about the demographics of audiences that typically attend Buffalo Soldiers programs, 14 respondents reported that African American and/or other minority groups often attended these programs and school-aged youth were among the audience in about half of these instances. Some parks noted that hosting special events and recruiting for youth employment or internships were effective strategies for generating interest and participation from African American visitors.

Approximately one-third of parks that tell the Buffalo Soldiers story do so in partnership with external organizations. Examples include Buffalo Soldiers reenactment groups, conservancies, museums, groups that promote outdoor recreation in African American communities, and military and veterans' organizations that can identify with the military service of the soldiers. These partners most often assist with special events, reenactments, and information sharing, while also providing sponsorship, performances, and senior center visitations.

## Gaps

Park staff and external scholars alike noted that there are many opportunities to expand outreach efforts such as interpretation, research, and public engagement outside of parks and into communities. National Park Service park staff report opportunities to undertake traveling exhibits, partnering with other organizations interested in sharing the story. While social media and park websites exist, there is room to improve on services that engage more audiences. There is untapped potential to cultivate community pride by strengthening outreach to communities and African American communities in particular. Further, scholars suggested that African American-focused media outlets are not being used to invite this type of engagement.

Feedback from partners reported that current outreach with these communities has been inconsistent and does not always align with the organizational objectives of the partners as well as it could. Common outreach needs identified included consistent and easy access for educators, educational curriculum that goes beyond park boundaries, and allowing the community to support Buffalo Soldiers outreach in ways that are meaningful to them. Examples of non-academic community organizations not typically involved in Buffalo Soldiers-related outreach to date but which share historical or thematic connections include churches, libraries, local museums, and community nonprofits.

Buffalo Soldiers history currently is not incorporated into school curricula, an area considered important by some educators who provided input during the study process. Educators commented that beyond traditional storytelling in parks, project-based or experiential learning opportunities related to Buffalo Soldier history have not been fully explored. Project-based learning involves a challenging problem or question for students to solve, an inquiry process where students gather information and evidence, a reflection and critique period where students challenge the ideas and hypotheses of their peers, and a final culminating project/presentation where students share what they have learned. Other types of youth outreach recommended by educators and study respondents include "learning through service" or "project-based learning", whereby students teach other students about a topic and serve as the "lighthouse to shine information."

## CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AND ACTIONS

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### SUMMARY OF STUDY FINDINGS

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The following findings are a synthesis of information gathering and analysis completed over the course of the study process. These findings are organized into five topical areas.

**1. The history of the Buffalo Soldiers in the national parks is a universal story that transcends cultural boundaries and offers a more complete understanding of US military history and the development of our national park system.**

Public feedback from the project website, social media platforms, focus groups, and other outreach, indicated a strong interest in this aspect of NPS history across a wide range of audiences. The National Park Service received hundreds of comments expressing support for the study and excitement to learn the history of the Buffalo Soldiers in the national parks. The relevance of this history provides opportunities for parks to connect with diverse audiences including minorities, veterans, and visitors of all ages. Telling the stories of the Buffalo Soldiers in parks can also help to fill in gaps in our understanding of US history and dispel misperceptions. There is widespread interest and enthusiasm among the general public and national park visitors in learning more about the Buffalo Soldiers and their legacy in national parks through additional interpretive and educational programming. A key aspect of interpreting the Buffalo Soldiers history in national parks involves effectively framing their service in the broader context of US history. This includes exploring difficult themes including discrimination and racism experienced by the soldiers and the soldiers' involvement in the complicated legacy of American Indian removal from national parks and western lands.

**2. Primary source materials on the Buffalo Soldiers are scattered or inaccessible for research.**

Primary source documentation of the Buffalo Soldiers is known to exist in personal journals and records, letters, newspapers, memoirs, and muster rolls. These materials are currently dispersed among personal collections, small-town historical museums, and a variety of other sources. Source materials often lack organizational structure, such as cataloging and finding aids. The extent of primary source materials on Buffalo Soldiers is currently unknown, but there is the potential to find more information that could help inform the current understanding of Buffalo Soldiers. In some cases, a lack of access to primary source materials limits research and in turn interpretive and educational opportunities. As a result, there are major gaps of knowledge regarding the Buffalo Soldiers and their history as stewards of our early national parks as well as the soldiers' collective and personal experiences.

**3. Historical analysis and synthesis is limited.**

No full and detailed history of the Buffalo Soldiers' service in national parks exists today. Rigorous research exploring the role of the Buffalo Soldiers in the early stewardship of national parks and greater contributions to African American military service following the Civil War is needed for the National Park Service to effectively tell the Buffalo Soldiers story. To understand the history, further research is needed on the individuals, their roles, their communities, their personal experiences, and more. This new research should be placed within the broader context of American history, addressing themes such as race in the American West and transformation of the military after the Civil War. The broader context will allow a consistent narrative to be told across the National Park Service, while the individual stories would connect visitors to individual parks.

While several individuals within the National Park Service are conducting research about the Buffalo Soldiers in their local parks, there is no servicewide coordinated research program or similar organization dedicated to the development of scholarly research on the history of Buffalo Soldiers in national parks. A coordinating entity is also needed to establish a protocol for peer review to promote scientific excellence for research and scholarship. Partnerships with research organizations and institutions outside of the National Park Service should be used to expand research and share knowledge at the local and national level.

**4. Physical resources related to the Buffalo Soldiers and park stewardship are largely undocumented.**

Resources such as sites, landscapes, structures, and objects built by or associated with the Buffalo Soldiers are important because they convey the tangible history of the Buffalo Soldiers in national parks. Such resources exist today, but many have not been inventoried, or in some cases are known but not fully documented and evaluated for their association with the Buffalo Soldiers in the National Register of Historic Places. Without a better understanding of the value of these resources or their potential to contribute to our understanding of the Buffalo Soldiers, they could inadvertently be lost.

Physical resources known to exist in national parks include roads and trails built by the soldiers. One example is the Mount Whitney Trail at Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks that was constructed by Buffalo Soldiers under the leadership of Colonel Charles Young. Sites and landscapes associated with the soldiers' park stewardship role that lay outside the national park system include places where the Buffalo Soldiers marched and camped along their regular route between the Presidio of San Francisco and Yosemite and Sequoia and General Grant National Parks.

In addition to physical places and sites, cultural resources such as archival materials, records, and possibly museum objects related to the Buffalo Soldiers have not yet been analyzed for their research potential, and their value is not fully understood by the National Park Service.

Intangible resources such as oral histories from second- and third-generation descendants of Buffalo Soldiers may hold the potential to fill in important gaps of knowledge and understanding and provide information regarding the soldiers' personal lives, struggles, and achievements as well as information about the physical resources associated with them. As the soldiers' descendants age, it is important to record and collect these oral histories before they are lost.

**5. Broader capacity and coordination across the National Park Service is needed to accurately convey the history of Buffalo Soldiers' military service in parks.**

Although there is enthusiasm and interest on the topic of the Buffalo Soldiers' stewardship in national parks among the general public who learn about this history, the ability of the National Park Service to satisfy this interest with increased park programs and interpretive materials is limited, primarily because of the lack of staffing and funding. The levels of dedicated staff time and availability, stakeholder involvement, and programming on Buffalo Soldiers history varies, but is typically not more than one to two staff among parks that currently interpret Buffalo Soldiers stewardship. For most of these parks, staff time is not dedicated to Buffalo Soldiers programming or research. Greater institutional capacity is needed to develop a full knowledge and understanding of interpreting Buffalo Soldiers history to provide consistency and continuity in how the story is told across parks. In some cases, the extent of public programming offered at individual parks is based on the personal interest of park staff, which offers a valuable asset for visitor education today but is subject to change when those dedicated staff members change positions. In these cases, a framework for transferring knowledge is needed to ensure program longevity in parks where strong interpretation of Buffalo Soldiers history is happening today.

There are many ways the National Park Service can improve how it tells the history of the Buffalo Soldiers in parks. While existing NPS programs involving the Buffalo Soldiers provide significant opportunities to reach diverse groups of people, including school-aged youth, more outreach is desired.

In addition, there are opportunities for the National Park Service to supplement its current capacity by further expanding partnerships with organizations interested in Buffalo Soldiers history and to formalize these efforts as part of park operations.

## PRIORITY ACTIONS

Numerous ideas and suggestions were presented to the National Park Service as ways to address the study goals to enhance historical research, education, interpretation, and/or public awareness of the Buffalo Soldiers' stewardship role in national parks and African American military service following the Civil War. Based on these goals, the National Park Service evaluated these ideas and suggestions. This evaluation identified the four high-priority actions described below. These four actions are considered high-priority because they would have the greatest impact in meeting the study goals and the needs described in the study findings. Preliminary feasibility, scope, and potential funding requirements are estimated for these priority actions.

### A. Develop and maintain an online archive to organize and share links to primary and secondary source materials

To address the need for increased access to primary source materials, supporting historical research, and protecting intangible resources, the development of a public archive with links to research material would help national parks share the history of the Buffalo Soldiers, provide consistency and continuity in how the story is told across parks, transfer knowledge, and, ultimately ensure program longevity. The database could collect primary and secondary sources, as permissible, and include links to additional repositories. It could also provide opportunities for park staff to research and explore connections between the soldiers' activities across multiple park units and empower students and youth to be their own Buffalo Soldiers historian or support a variety of related history projects undertaken by the National Park Service or partners.

There is a range of possible approaches to the development of such an archive or database that could be accomplished in phases. It could initially be established for NPS-use only, using materials gathered during this study and could eventually be further developed using contract IT or partner support, archivists, historians, or museum/collections professionals. A low-cost option could be accomplished as an internal NPS SharePoint site or Google page to share information among parks and programs. Such a site could be built by an intern or temporary staff, under the guidance of existing NPS professionals, for a one-time cost of up to \$50,000. It then could be administered by a NPS central office or park staff as a collateral duty for approximately \$5,000 annually to maintain the software platform. Dedicated staff support would be needed in order to keep information on the site organized and up to date. This NPS-only site would not be accessible to external researchers without further development.

A more robust option to develop a public facing site could be created in partnership with another institution, allowing information to be shared internally and externally. This would provide greater transference of knowledge and opportunity to expand Buffalo Soldier knowledge, research, and outreach. The estimated cost of this action is \$500,000 as a one-time cost to establish the database and database literature. There would be an additional annual cost of approximately \$100,000 for its ongoing administration and maintenance.

**B. Prepare a full historic context and annotated bibliography on the Buffalo Soldiers, including their stewardship of national parks.**

The development of a full historical narrative would meet the need for well-researched scholarship synthesizing the history on the Buffalo Soldiers, including their role in national parks. This effort would go beyond the scope of the brief historical narrative included in this study and would seek to gain a deeper understanding of the history of Buffalo Soldiers in parks and their connections to the broader national and regional historic contexts in which they lived and worked. Using primary and secondary sources, including oral histories, research would be conducted to answer questions about the lives and experiences of Buffalo Soldiers, their roles and activities in the early national parks, and their impacts and influences.

Research findings would be developed into a narrative that incorporates a broader historical context of the soldiers' service in the US Army in the West, their involvement in the Indian Wars, and their relationship with the larger socio-political contexts of racism, segregation, western expansion, and others. The historic context will help to clarify realities and truths surrounding the Buffalo Soldiers through enhancing our understanding of the roles that they served and the experiences and meaning of their service in protecting national parks. It could also explore local histories such as the Buffalo Soldiers' connections to the communities where they lived and organizations in which many were involved, such as churches.

This historical narrative would serve as the basis for NPS interpretation, education, outreach, and stewardship related to the Buffalo Soldiers, and would support consistent and accurate dissemination of information throughout the National Park Service. It would also become available for public use. This would be a national or NPS system-wide effort and may be possible to develop using current NPS funding levels and/or using funding from other sources. Funding has been secured to prepare the full historic context study and annotated bibliography.

**C. Develop a network program to leverage partnerships and provide support and technical assistance to parks, programs, and sites related to the Buffalo Soldiers.**

Currently, NPS parks, programs, and sites outside of the national park system that engage in Buffalo Soldier interpretation, outreach, and resource management do so largely independently of one another. Over the course of this study, the National Park Service developed a public facing website to link information posted by individual parks to a Buffalo Soldier subject site on nps.gov. While the Buffalo Soldiers subject site represents an important step in providing linked and organized information that can help visitors understand the broader context of Buffalo Soldier history in the national parks, more is needed to ensure coordinated Buffalo Soldier programming across the service and to leverage partnerships with related sites and institutions outside of the national park system.

Establishment of a Buffalo Soldiers network program could leverage shared leadership with local, state, and federal entities, as well as interested individuals and organizations, to educate the public about the history and significance of the Buffalo Soldiers and their early stewardship of the national parks. The network would encompass: 1) all NPS units and programs that relate the Buffalo Soldiers role in American history; and 2) voluntary participation from other federal, state, local, and privately owned properties or institutions that have a verifiable connection to the Buffalo Soldiers through either educational and interpretive programs, or eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

The network program would provide internal support for park and program staff, and external coordination between parks and partners. It would foster NPS capacity to implement the priority and supporting actions identified in this study such as: conducting studies and reports; disseminating interpretive and educational materials; developing travel itineraries or routes; providing technical assistance to partner sites and organizations; and linking parks with network partner organizations.

Specifically, the network program would manage an online public interface with information about the Buffalo Soldiers that would include the online archives and communications toolkit described in priority actions A and D. The online interface would expand on the existing Buffalo Soldiers subject site, and link to partner sites that choose to become part of the Buffalo Soldiers network. The network would adopt a uniform symbol or device to represent the network and its partner sites, as well as rules for its use.

Examples of NPS-administered networks that serve these functions include the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program, the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Trails Program, and the recently established (2018) African American Civil Rights Network. The National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program was authorized in 1998 to commemorate the history of the Underground Railroad as one of the most significant expressions of the American civil rights movement. Through shared leadership with local, state, and federal entities, as well as interested individuals and organizations, the program educates the public about the history and significance of the Underground Railroad; provides training and technical assistance to empower communities to document, preserve, and tell their Underground Railroad stories; and maintains the Network to Freedom, a listing of historic sites, interpretive and educational programs, and facilities with a verifiable connection to the Underground Railroad. As of 2017, this program included 574 members in 37 states, including 36 NPS units.

The Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Trails program provides technical and financial assistance to a system of more than 170 sites located within the Chesapeake Bay region. The Network tells the story of the connections between people and nature in the Chesapeake region through its historic sites and communities, trails, parks, wildlife refuges, maritime museums, and more. Each partner site in the Network contributes its own perspective on a Chesapeake component or theme so that, together, Network partners offer visitors a fuller range of Chesapeake experiences on water and on land.

The African American Civil Rights Network, a recently established program encompasses: (1) all NPS units and programs that relate to the African American civil rights movement from 1939 through 1968; (2) with the property owner's consent, other federal, state, local, and privately owned properties that relate or have a verifiable connection to such movement and that are included in, or eligible for, the National Register of Historic Places; and (3) other governmental and nongovernmental facilities and programs of an educational, research, or interpretive nature that are directly related to such movement.

Although some network programs also have financial assistance aspects such as grant programs, this priority action would not include a financial assistance component. Establishing a network program would likely require Congressional action because of the program cost, which is estimated to be approximately \$500,000 annually, to support one full-time GS-12 coordinator and up to two GS-11 staff duty stationed either in parks or at regional offices in the Pacific West Region, Intermountain Region, or Midwest Region of the NPS.

**D. Develop a Servicewide Buffalo Soldiers Interpretive and Education Strategy and Toolkit.**

To meet the need for coordinated and consistent interpretation among NPS park units, a servicewide strategy and toolkit would provide a framework for interpretation and educational programming related to the Buffalo Soldiers across the national park system. The strategy would identify and define interpretive themes following the NPS thematic framework for a variety of parks, from parks where the soldiers served as stewards to parks primarily associated with other military service or related themes. The framework would build on work underway in several parks and incorporate universal themes such as innovation, service in the face of adversity, civil war to civil rights, westward expansion and conflict, and American Indian perspectives. Under this framework, supporting subthemes could be developed at the individual park level to fit the histories at each park.

The interpretive strategy would establish a collaborative communication strategy; provide opportunities for employees, partners and the public to find personal relevance and inspiration in Buffalo Soldiers history; develop a workforce at Buffalo Soldier parks literate in Buffalo Soldier history; and cultivate communication with our partners. A companion to the strategy would be the development of a web-based Buffalo Soldier Communications Toolkit. The toolkit would provide interpretive tools, information, and professional guidance to help interpreters and educators communicate about Buffalo Soldier history.

The communications toolkit would provide parks with best practices and strategies for implementing the interpretive strategy at their park. It would include tips for incorporating the Buffalo Soldiers thematic framework into existing park interpretive strategy; developing or expanding partnerships and working with stakeholders; examples of exhibits, programs, and audio-visual media; identifying target audiences and engaging the public; and developing park-specific visitor experience objectives. An online toolkit would provide an opportunity to expand and update content as new resources and research emerge. Expertise to help develop the strategy and online toolkit could include interpretive planners, authorities in 21st-century interpretation skills, and subject-matter experts on the Buffalo Soldiers history.

The development of the interpretive strategy and toolkit would be based on the full historical context described in priority action B, above. The estimated one-time cost would be approximately \$150,000 to develop both a national interpretive strategy and toolkit and approximately \$25,000 annually to maintain the toolkit, depending on whether this maintenance would be accomplished by a network organization or another NPS park or program.

## SUPPORTING ACTIONS

Additionally, 14 actions that also meet the study goals and needs were developed from the study findings. Described below, these actions are loosely divided into three categories: those that may require Congressional authorization, those that could be best organized at a national level by an NPS-wide program or similar, and those that could be best organized locally by individual parks.

It is important to note that many of these actions would not need to be exclusively implemented by NPS programs or parks and could be accomplished by a variety of NPS partners, where funding and interests align. Partnering with others would enhance the National Park Service's capacity to implement actions that could not otherwise be accomplished under currently constrained funding and staffing levels. The level of partner involvement could vary, depending on the action and the partner. The National Park Service could do many of these actions with the assistance of current and new partnerships with outside organizations, and some actions could be accomplished entirely by partners. Partnerships could range from local park partnerships to broad NPS-wide institutional partnerships. For example, study participants reported that churches, such as local and national African Methodist Episcopal (AME) churches in particular, are an untapped resource for disseminating the history and meanings of the Buffalo Soldiers to African American communities. At a regional level, the National Park Service could partner with municipal governments or regional museums, libraries, and schools to extend Buffalo Soldier programming beyond park boundaries. To reach a larger audience, an agreement with national institutions and agencies, such as the Department of Defense or the Smithsonian Institution, could help tell the story of the Buffalo Soldiers park stewardship role through platforms such as the Smithsonian's new National Museum of African American History and Culture Museum on the National Mall in Washington, DC; the Buffalo Soldiers National Museum in Houston, Texas; and many others. Grant funding may be available through existing NPS grant programs and other vehicles to support partners in these efforts.

## **ACTIONS THAT MAY REQUIRE CONGRESSIONAL AUTHORIZATION OR EXTERNAL FUNDING AND ASSISTANCE**

### **1. Develop interpretive or commemorative trails related to important travel routes associated with the Buffalo Soldiers.**

There is potential to develop interpretive and commemorative trails or tour routes associated with the Buffalo Soldiers' stewardship of national parks. Some of the work involved in identifying sites that could contribute to a trail has already been completed by the National Park Service in previous studies. For example, research has been conducted to support potential signed commemorative routes extending from Golden Gate National Recreation Area to Yosemite and Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks in California. There may also be other opportunities for developing new trails elsewhere and at other parks, such as Glacier National Park. An interpretive trail or tour route could be linked with National Register of Historic Places travel itineraries.

Depending on the size and scope of the trail or route developed, additional funding beyond the current NPS budget may be required. While several NPS programs, such as the Office of Cultural Resources, Partnerships and Science or the Interpretation, Education and Volunteers directorates, could assist in the research and planning involved in developing trails, a collaborative framework such as the network program proposed in the priority actions, to further develop interpretive trails beyond the national park system may be required if proposed trails extend beyond the scope of existing NPS programs. Non-NPS organizations well-suited to become involved in this action include heritage tourism organizations, Buffalo Soldiers Motorcycle Clubs, regional museums, and others.

### **2. Develop new grant program to support programs and preservation projects of sites significant to the Buffalo Soldiers.**

A Buffalo Soldiers grant program could incentivize partnerships and could also serve as funding to implement research, educational, and interpretive opportunities.

The development of this grant program would require congressional authorization. The scale of the grant program could be similar to that of the Japanese American Confinement Sites Program, which provided \$1.6 million in grants in fiscal year 2017. In 2008, Congress awarded the Underground Railroad Network to Freedom network an annual budget of \$2 million dedicated for grant funding. In line with this grant program, a Buffalo Soldiers grant program could be administered under cultural resource grant programs. Congress would then set annual funding levels through legislation.

## **NATIONALLY-BASED ACTIONS**

### **3. Partner with historical organizations to promote professional excellence in research, scholarship, and conduct peer reviews of historical research.**

High-quality historical research is necessary for developing a complete understanding of the Buffalo Soldiers history as stewards of our early national parks and related contexts. The National Park Service could use existing partner agreements to work with universities and scholarly institutions to conduct research on topics related to the Buffalo Soldiers. Specific activities spelled out in the agreement could include historical research, scholarly reviews, museum curation assistance, youth engagement, and interpretation and education projects and programs. This action could be accomplished by NPS regional programs, individual NPS units, and through partnerships such as universities.

### **4. Locate soldiers' letters home to enhance park/partner research and document Buffalo Soldiers' experiences in national parks.**

Personal letters sent home by the Buffalo Soldiers were often published in black newspapers. These letters could be examined to illuminate whether or how the soldiers' work in the national parks could have impacted views of blacks in America during a time of racial segregation. Other historical themes and connections presented in the soldiers' correspondence could also be explored.

The National Park Service could work with local communities, park interns, or local universities to find the soldiers' letters home. This action could be accomplished through a coordinated national effort as well as by NPS regional programs, individual NPS units, and through partnerships with universities, history museums, or other research institutions.

**5. Develop an online story map illustrating the history and geography of the Buffalo Soldiers.**

A story map is an interactive online tool that could harness the power of maps to connect sites that convey Buffalo Soldiers history. A story map incorporates rich multimedia images, videos, and text with interactive online maps to provide an immersive experience for the audience. A Buffalo Soldiers story map could serve as a communication tool for to support education, programming, and outreach. Content added to a story map could be organized so that the main events could be quickly presented at a high level. For those in the audience that wish to know more, maps can be zoomed to site levels that expose geographically detailed parts of the Buffalo Soldiers story. In light of the geographic scope of this effort, this action could be accomplished through a national effort within the National Park Service, such as through a program under the NPS Cultural Resources, Partnerships and Science directorate or the NPS Interpretation, Education, and Volunteers directorate.

**6. Develop a list of research opportunities for youth.**

A list of research opportunities for youth using the NPS theme study and guidance for research methods and sources could be developed. The list could suggest specific research topics that the National Park Service is interested in as funding or interested partners/researchers become available. This effort could be funded and led by the NPS Interpretation, Education, and Volunteers directorate, which manages national education initiatives and supports program offices, regional offices, youth programs, and parks with educational outreach, educational curriculum development, and educational program management.

**7. Partner with educators to develop national educational curricula and provide opportunities to bring the Buffalo Soldiers story to classrooms.**

Incorporating Buffalo Soldiers history into school curricula and providing opportunities to bring this history into school classrooms is important to educators. Developing K–12 curricula that meets national standards in the history and legacy of the Buffalo Soldiers in national parks could help share the soldiers' history and build public knowledge and awareness. The fourth-grade history requirement would be an ideal place to start, while eighth grade history offers an opportunity to tie Buffalo Soldiers history to the Reconstruction Era. Aspects of Buffalo Soldier history and accomplishments can even be incorporated into curriculum for younger grades, including kindergarten. Development of curricula could be funded through the Interpretation and Education Program Fund Source and led by the NPS Interpretation, Education, and Volunteers directorate, which manages national education initiatives and supports program offices, regional offices and parks with educational outreach, educational curriculum development, and educational program management.

The National Park Service could seek to bring Buffalo Soldiers history into the classroom using a variety of programs and methods, such as the Teacher Ranger Teacher program and the Teaching with Historic Places Program. The NPS Teacher Ranger Teacher program is an extended professional development opportunity for educators from K–12 schools to learn about resources and educational materials available through the National Park Service. Teachers participating in the Teacher Ranger Teacher program have the opportunity to engage in parks and park resources, participate in a webinar about lesson planning, develop at least one lesson to be used in their classroom or school, assist the park with an education project, and increase their understanding of project-based learning. The Teacher Ranger Teacher program could be used to create connections between the National Park Service and local schools as it pertains to the Buffalo Soldiers history and the telling of their story.

The NPS Teaching with Historic Places program (TwHP) uses historic places in National Parks and in the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places to enliven history, social studies, geography, civics, and other subjects. This program has created a variety of products and activities that help teachers bring historic places into the classroom. The Charles Young Teaching with Historic Places program offers materials that could be used by other parks to bring the Buffalo Soldiers story into the classroom.

Project-based learning is a preferred teaching method of schools and community organizations where students engage with a subject matter for an extended period. The students are proactive in their learning, are given more freedom to investigate a subject on their own terms, and come to their own conclusions based on the materials and evidence provided. Project-based learning would allow youth to engage with the Buffalo Soldiers on their own terms and teach students how to analyze the history of Buffalo Soldiers, conduct research, craft hypotheses, and defend their thoughts with corroborating evidence. The student would become their own Buffalo Soldiers historians and could then teach other youth about what they have learned. The National Park Service can support project-based learning efforts at local schools through the Teacher Ranger Teacher or Teaching with Historic Places programs.

Finally, developing specific, hands-on tools for engagement with the arts such as writing, plays, media sound bites, and concessioner items such as coloring books and T-shirts could be particularly helpful to engage students.

## 8. **Develop consistent materials for youth and public engagement.**

Consistent materials to support park-based public outreach and youth programs would help engage the public and foster an understanding and appreciation for the Buffalo Soldiers story and their history in the national parks. A uniform symbol representing Buffalo Soldiers could be incorporated into patches, certifications, and Junior Ranger programs to engage people of all ages in NPS parks and our nation's cultural heritage. Programming could be implemented by a park junior ranger program or through outreach for youth programs for earning Buffalo Soldiers patches. The patches could be available on a national level or they could be designed for individual parks as a collectable item from each park that becomes part a network of sites (see "Develop a network program to leverage partnerships and provide support and technical assistance to parks, programs, and sites related to the Buffalo Soldiers" priority action above). This form of NPS-branded recognition through uniform symbols could also be developed to honor students and community members who embody the attributes of Buffalo Soldiers such as resilience or bravery. Furthermore, it could cultivate community pride by creating relevancy and leadership development with youth. A Buffalo Soldiers network program as recommended in the priority actions could serve as a national coordinating entity to ensure the consistent development and application of uniform symbols that could also be used by partner organizations.



**CHARLES YOUNG BUFFALO SOLDIERS NATIONAL MONUMENT JUNIOR RANGER PROGRAM**

**9. Create NPS travel itineraries around the theme of Buffalo Soldiers history.**

Travel itineraries could help establish an interpretive trail or auto route of park sites associated with the Buffalo Soldiers, which in turn could be linked to the interpretive and commemorative trails. This action could be supported by NPS programs, such as the Cultural Resources Partnerships and Science directorate or the Interpretation, Education, and Volunteers directorate. Non-NPS organizations that may be interested in partnering in this effort include heritage tourism organizations, Buffalo Soldiers Motorcycle Clubs, regional museums, and others.

**LOCALLY-BASED ACTIONS**

**10. Conduct locally place-based research to identify connections/sites in local communities and prepare case study biographies of individual Buffalo Soldiers.**

Research to identify the influence of the Buffalo Soldiers in local communities associated with locations where they were garrisoned or duty stationed could be accomplished by compiling existing documentation. An example would be historic ties in San Francisco Bay Area communities as a result of their tenure at the Presidio, now part of Golden Gate National Recreation Area. The inventory and analysis could be conducted by the National Park Service and/or in collaboration with local universities or scholarly intuitions. It could also be an opportunity for youth program involvement. Buffalo Soldiers interns could research connections between local communities and the soldiers stationed nearby. This action could be accomplished through a coordinated national effort as well as by NPS regional programs, individual NPS units, and through partnerships with universities, history museums, or other research institutions.

Case study histories of individual Buffalo Soldiers could create opportunities to engage with both researchers and youth populations and provide greater opportunities to communicate the relevance of the Buffalo Soldiers history to a broad range of audiences. The histories, prepared by NPS staff, researchers, Buffalo Soldiers scholars, or others, could be developed using primary and secondary sources. The histories could provide an opportunity to connect the individual person to overarching themes of Buffalo Soldiers history, such as segregation and land conservation, in addition to exploring their personal experiences and contributions such as their skills in trail building or membership in a local congregation. They could also illustrate unique aspects of the Buffalo Soldiers history such as the Bicycle Corps at Yellowstone.

Together, the biographies and place-based research could tell the overarching Buffalo Soldiers story while emphasizing personal experiences. This action could be accomplished by NPS regional programs, individual parks, and through partnerships such as universities.

**11. Inventory, map, and document archeological or historical features, as well as routes created by Buffalo Soldiers during their stewardship of national parks.**

Inventorying, mapping, and documenting archeological and historical features would allow individual park units to more fully interpret the contributions of the Buffalo Soldiers in the national parks and build on a collective understanding. Sites identified could be evaluated for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places, which would provide both formal recognition of their signification and opportunities to pursue grant assistance for historic preservation. NPS units could accomplish this action individually so that the scope of each effort would be customized to fit the needs of each park's resources.

**12. Develop new youth-oriented programs that involve park-specific Buffalo Soldiers history.**

Current programming efforts indicate that the Buffalo Soldiers history has relevance for all Americans and is one that can be used as a mirror for character development, leadership development, and historical literacy by filling gaps in history that are not currently part of national education standards. Communicating the Buffalo Soldiers' early stewardship role in national parks shines a light on the history of African American conservation, a story largely untold in current NPS youth programming. Communicating how Buffalo Soldiers history ties to national history strengthens and diversifies what parks present to the public.

Youth-oriented programs that involve the Buffalo Soldiers could be developed in several ways. One approach could be to replicate the Golden Gate National Recreation Area and Charles Young Buffalo Soldiers National Monument outreach programs at other NPS sites. Golden Gate's program brings youth to the park, where they learn about the Buffalo Soldiers history and take a field trip to Yosemite National Park. Other parks could use these examples to develop their own programs.

Another youth-oriented outreach effort could entail partnering with local schools to create a "Buffalo Soldiers Scholars" program. Under such a program, research opportunities on park specific Buffalo Soldiers history could be disseminated to partnering schools, and the students could conduct the research. NPS units could accomplish this action individually so that the scope of each effort would be customized to fit the needs of each park's community and individual Buffalo Soldiers histories and personal stories where they may be found. NPS units could potentially work with the NPS Youth Partnership Program.



**The 25th Infantry Bicyclists on top of Mammoth Hot Springs, Yellowstone National Park, 1896**

**13. Recruit volunteers to interpret Buffalo Soldiers stories in the first person.**

An interpretive program for first-person portrayals could be developed by targeting drama/art schools and historically black colleges and universities. Interpretation could happen at parks or off-site at local affiliated areas or at community events. Individual parks could provide interpretive story scripts and materials, and the program could be supported by park volunteers. National Park Service units could accomplish this action individually to connect with individuals from local communities to interpret their park's unique stories and history of the Buffalo Soldiers.

**14. Conduct Buffalo Soldiers outreach programming regularly and consistently.**

To reach the widest audiences and be most effective, Buffalo Soldiers outreach and programming should take place in a consistent manner (e.g., Buffalo Soldiers Day, Commemorating the day the black regular army was formed, Black History Month, etc.) to allow the community to become accustomed to the timing and plan for their engagement with NPS and Buffalo Soldiers resources.

An NPS educational liaison could help facilitate Buffalo Soldier programming or outreach to schools folding Buffalo Soldiers outreach into existing initiatives, such as NPS Teacher Nights or community events such as Juneteenth celebrations. Free park days are another opportunity to encourage engagement.

As part of this effort, the National Park Service could develop a set of regular public programs for telling the story of the Buffalo Soldiers in African American communities. To do so, park interpretive staff could attend existing special events and commemorations and those targeting African American media. Mobile or portable exhibits could be taken to schools, community centers, church-sponsored activities, and local civic clubs.

This action could be coordinated by individual parks to best meet the needs of their communities and local organizations and to develop a long-term relationship with these partners.

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

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To meet the purpose of the Congressional legislation authorizing this study on the Buffalo Soldiers in national parks, the study's goals are to

- evaluate ways to increase public awareness and understanding of Buffalo Soldiers in the early history of the National Park Service; and
- evaluate ways to enhance historical research, education, interpretation, and public awareness related to the Buffalo Soldiers.

To meet these goals, the study process involved evaluating information gathered from general public feedback, focused input from a variety of NPS and non-NPS subject-matter experts, and an analysis of existing sites and NPS programs. An evaluation of this information revealed these findings:

1. **The history of the Buffalo Soldiers in the national parks is a universal story that transcends cultural boundaries and offers a more complete understanding of US military history and the development of our national park system.**
2. **Primary source materials on the Buffalo Soldiers are scattered, unknown, or inaccessible for research.**
3. **Historical analysis and synthesis is limited.**
4. **Physical resources related to the Buffalo Soldiers and park stewardship are largely undocumented.**
5. **Broader capacity and coordination across the National Park Service is needed to accurately convey the history of Buffalo Soldiers' military service in parks.**

There is widespread interest in learning more about the history and legacy of the Buffalo Soldiers and their stewardship role in national parks. However, there are substantial gaps in our understanding of what the Buffalo Soldiers did at the national parks and why it was significant then and continues to be important today. Although there is enthusiasm and interest on the topic of the Buffalo Soldiers' stewardship in national parks among the general public who learn about this history, the ability of the National Park Service to satisfy this interest with increased park programs and interpretive materials is limited, primarily because of the lack of staffing and funding. Additionally, there is organizational support both within and outside the National Park Service that could be better leveraged to interpret more of the story of the Buffalo Soldiers in national parks through a variety of ways.

### **PRIORITY ACTIONS**

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The following are four priority actions for meeting the study goals and addressing the needs described in the study findings.

- A. **Develop and maintain an online archive to organize and share links to primary and secondary source materials**
- B. **Prepare a full historic context and annotated bibliography on the Buffalo Soldiers, including their stewardship of national parks.**
- C. **Develop a network program to leverage partnerships and provide support and technical assistance to parks, programs, and sites related to the Buffalo Soldiers.**
- D. **Develop a Servicewide Buffalo Soldiers Interpretive and Education Strategy and Toolkit.**

Additionally, the study identified 14 actions that also meet the study goals and the needs identified in the study findings. They are loosely divided into three types of actions: those that would likely require Congressional authorization (2 actions), those that would be best organized at a national level by a NPS-wide program or similar (7 actions), and those that would be best organized locally by individual parks (5 actions). These actions range in scale and scope from developing a grant program to support NPS and non-NPS preservation projects, which would require Congressional action, to developing nationally consistent educational and outreach materials to support park and partner programs, to developing more youth programs at local parks. Given the current deferred maintenance backlog and other budgetary challenges facing the National Park Service, funding associated with many of the identified actions may need to be found through partnerships or other external sources.

The Buffalo Soldiers, along with other army regiments, played an important role in ensuring the early success of the national park idea. The actions identified in this study would make progress toward deepening our knowledge of Buffalo Soldiers roles in the early stewardship of the national parks and facilitate NPS communication of the related stories and themes to audiences of all ages at parks across the country. These efforts will ultimately lead to a greater appreciation and understanding of the Buffalo Soldiers' contributions to our national parks and the meaning of their legacy today and for the future.

## APPENDIXES

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**Appendix A: Legislation Authorizing this Special Resource Study**

**Appendix B: Scholars Round Table Scholar Biographies**

**Appendix C: Scholars Round Table and Outreach Summary – Abridged Suggestions for Improvement**

**Appendix C-1: Institute at the Golden Gate: Buffalo Soldiers Study Targeted Stakeholder Engagement Report**

**Appendix C-2: List of Facilitators, Presenters, and Participants**

**Appendix D: Bibliography of Buffalo Soldiers Publications**

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## APPENDIX A: LEGISLATION AUTHORIZING THIS SPECIAL RESOURCE STUDY

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### National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015

(Public Law 113-291)

**SEC. 3051. SPECIAL RESOURCE STUDIES.**

(a) *IN GENERAL.*—The Secretary of the Interior (referred to in this section as the “Secretary”) shall conduct a special resource study regarding each area, site, and issue identified in subsection (b) to evaluate—

(1) the national significance of the area, site, or issue; and

(2) the suitability and feasibility of designating such an area or site as a unit of the National Park System.

(b) *STUDIES.*—The areas, sites, and issues referred to in subsection (a) are the following:

(1) *LOWER MISSISSIPPI RIVER, LOUISIANA.*—Sites along the lower Mississippi River in the State of Louisiana, including Fort St. Philip, Fort Jackson, the Head of Passes, and any related and supporting historical, cultural, or recreational resource located in Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana.

(2) *BUFFALO SOLDIERS.*—The role of the Buffalo Soldiers in the early years of the National Park System, including an evaluation of appropriate ways to enhance historical research, education, interpretation, and public awareness of the story of the stewardship role of the Buffalo Soldiers in the National Parks, including ways to link the story to the development of National Parks and the story of African-American military service following the Civil War.

(3) *ROTA, COMMONWEALTH OF NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS.*—Prehistoric, historic, and limestone forest sites on the island of Rota, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

(4) *PRISON SHIP MONUMENT, NEW YORK.*—The Prison Ship Martyrs’ Monument in Fort Greene Park, Brooklyn, New York.

(5) *FLUSHING REMONSTRANCE, NEW YORK.*—The John Bowne House, located at 3701 Bowne Street, Queens, New York, the Friends Meeting House located at 137-17 Northern Boulevard, Queens, New York, and other resources in the vicinity of Flushing, New York, relating to the history of religious freedom during the era of the signing of the Flushing Remonstrance.

(6) *WEST HUNTER STREET BAPTIST CHURCH, GEORGIA.*—The historic West Hunter Street Baptist Church, located at 775 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, SW, Atlanta, Georgia, and the block on which the church is located.

(7) *MILL SPRINGS BATTLEFIELD, KENTUCKY.*—The area encompassed by the National Historic Landmark designations relating to the 1862 Battle of Mill Springs located in Pulaski and Wayne Counties in the State of Kentucky.

(8) *NEW PHILADELPHIA, ILLINOIS.*—The New Philadelphia archaeological site and surrounding land in the State of Illinois.

(c) *CRITERIA.*—In conducting a study under this section, the Secretary shall use the criteria for the study of areas for potential inclusion in the National Park System described in section 8(c) of Public Law 91-383 (commonly known as the “National Park System General Authorities Act”) (16 U.S.C. 1a-5(c)).

(d) *CONTENTS.*—Each study authorized by this section shall—

(1) determine the suitability and feasibility of designating the applicable area or site as a unit of the National Park System;

(2) include cost estimates for any necessary acquisition, development, operation, and maintenance of the applicable area or site;

(3) include an analysis of the effect of the applicable area or site on—

(A) existing commercial and recreational activities;

(B) the authorization, construction, operation, maintenance, or improvement of energy production and transmission or other infrastructure in the area; and

(C) the authority of State and local governments to manage those activities;

(4) include an identification of any authorities, including condemnation, that will compel or permit the Secretary to influence or participate in local land use decisions (such as zoning) or place restrictions on non-Federal land if the applicable area or site is designated as a unit of the National Park System; and

(5) identify alternatives for the management, administration, and protection of the applicable area or site.

(e) *REPORT.*—Not later than 3 years after the date on which funds are made available to carry out a study authorized by this section, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate a report the describes—

(1) the findings and recommendations of the study; and

(2) any applicable recommendations of the Secretary.

## APPENDIX B: SCHOLARS ROUND TABLE BIOGRAPHIES

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### Susan D. Anderson

Susan D. Anderson is a speaker, author, and public historian specializing in California's African American past. She is a member of the board of directors of the California Studies Association and a member of the program committee of the Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association's 2017 annual conference. A former curator at UCLA Library Special Collections, her book-in-progress, "African Americans and the California Dream," will be published by Heyday Books. Ms. Anderson curated Allensworth: 100 Years of the California Dream exhibit at the California African American Museum.

### Dr. Gregory Downs

Dr. Downs is an Associate Professor of History at the University of California Davis. Professor Downs studies the political and cultural history of the United States in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Particularly, he investigates the transformative impact of the Civil War, the end of slavery, and the role of military force in establishing new meanings of freedom. Gregory Downs is the author of two monographs on Reconstruction, *Mapping Occupation*, an interactive digital history of the US Army's occupation of the South and a co-editor of a scholarly volume on the post-Civil War world. Downs also co-wrote the NPS Theme Study on Reconstruction.

### Ward Eldredge

Mr. Eldredge is a curator at Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks where he has worked since 1998. His publications include *1903 Colonel Young and the Buffalo Soldiers in Sequoia National Park* (2003) and his research led to the identification of the forgotten Booker T. Washington Tree located in Sequoia National Park. Mr. Eldredge's other publications include *Images of America: Sequoia National Park California* (2008) and include *Images of America: Kings Canyon National Park* (2009).

### Dr. Elaine Jackson-Retondo

Dr. Jackson-Retondo is the History Program Manager for the National Park Service, Pacific West Region. She has worked for the National Park Service for more than 14 years. Dr. Jackson-Retondo is a scholar of total institutions with a particular focus on 19th-century carceral landscapes. Elaine Jackson Retondo is a published author and has contributed to a number of NPS special resources studies. Her other work has included the American Latino Heritage Initiative, Asian American Pacific Islander Initiative, Japanese American confinement during World War II, Cesar Chavez and the Farmworker Movement and the NPS Mission 66 Program.

### Shelton Johnson

Mr. Johnson is a park ranger at Yosemite National Park. His career with the National Park Service spans more than 30 years. He wrote and performs a living history performance called *Yosemite Through the Eyes of a Buffalo Soldier, 1904*, which is presented as an interpretive program at the park and at locations around the country. In 2009, Shelton Johnson received the *National Freeman Tilden Award* as the best interpretive ranger in the National Park Service for his work with Ken Burns and Dayton Duncan on their documentary film, *The National Parks, America's Best Idea*, and in 2015 received a Superior Service Award, US Department of the Interior. Mr. Johnson's novel, *Gloryland*, was published in 2010.

### Dr. LuAnn Jones

Dr. Jones is a historian with the National Park Service Park History Program, Washington, DC, Support Office and was the Acting Chief Historian during the Scholars Round Table. As a staff historian, Dr. Jones specializes in oral history research methods and the history of women, labor, agriculture, and the American South. Prior to joining the National Park Service, Dr. Jones was a Professor of History at East Carolina State and South Florida University. Her publications include, *Mama Learned Us to Work* and *Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World*, which she coauthored.

**Dr. Joy G. Kinard**

Dr. Kinard is the Superintendent of the Charles Young Buffalo Soldiers National Monument, located in Wilberforce, Ohio. She has worked for the National Park Service for 19 years and is the first superintendent of the park, which was established in 2013. Joy Kinard is a scholar of African American history and culture who has studied race relations abroad in Paris, London, and St. Catherine's, Canada, as part of a Howard University Cultural Study Tour. She has contributed to numerous publications and also served as an adjunct professor in the Department of History at the University of the District of Columbia for seven years.

**Captain Paul J. Matthews**

Captain Paul Matthews is founder of the Buffalo Soldier National Museum and Heritage Center in Houston, Texas. He established the museum in 2003 with his personal collection of more than 3,000 Buffalo Soldier items collected over 30 years. The former Merck pharmaceutical division director and Vietnam Veteran is a recipient of a Bronze Star Medal and Army Commendation. Paul Williams also received the Congressional Black Caucus Veterans' Braintrust Award for his "exemplary national and community service on behalf of this country's African American veterans" and in 2006 Captain Matthews received the National Educational Association's Carter G. Woodson Award.

**Dr. William Pat O'Brien**

Dr. O'Brien recently retired from the National Park Service after more than 30 years of service. He most recently was a Cultural Resource Specialist in the NPS Intermountain Region Desert Southwest Ecosystems Studies Unit stationed at the University of Arizona in Tucson where he also was an adjunct faculty through the Southwest Center and Planning Programs. Pat O'Brien is coauthor of *The Warriors Project: Diversity and the Interpretation of American History in the U.S. National Park Service*. He also served as historian and cultural resource specialist for the National Park Service's Comprehensive Design Plan for the White House 1993–2001.

**Frederik Penn**

Mr. Frederik (Rik) Penn is a park ranger at Golden Gate National Recreation Area where he has worked for more than 23 years. Mr. Penn spent three years as a paratrooper during the Vietnam Era. He currently works in education and interpretation at the park and is a member of the Park Youth Collaborative and the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee. For the last 20 years, Ranger Penn has presented interpretive programs on the Buffalo Soldiers legacy at the Presidio; he has partnered with local libraries, local nonprofit organizations and has given presentations to schools, government agencies, and appeared in local and national television and radio programs to promote the history and legacy of the Buffalo Soldiers.

**Dr. Krewasky A. Salter**

Dr. Salter is an expert in the African American Military Experience. Founder, President, and CEO of 4K Enterprise, Dr. Salter also is a retired United States Army Colonel. His publications include *The Story of Black Military Officers, 1861–1948*. Krewasky Salter also served as an advisor and consultant for the award-winning Public Broadcasting Service documentary, *Unsung Heroes: The Story of America's Female Patriots* for which he was personally awarded the Congressional Black Caucus Veterans Braintrust Award for his role as Historical Advisor and Consultant. 4K Enterprise is in its fourth year of providing services to the Smithsonian Institution.

**Dr. Frank N. Schubert**

Dr. Frank Schubert has written extensively on military subjects, including frontier exploration, black soldiers, and military construction. He served in the US Army during 1965–1968, including one year in Vietnam, and rose to the rank of captain. Dr. Schubert worked as a historian in the Department of Defense from 1977 to 2003, when he retired as chief of the Joint Operational History Branch, in the Joint History Office, Office of the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff. He is the author of numerous books and articles including *Buffalo Soldiers, Braves and the Brass: The Story of Fort Robinson Nebraska* (1993); *On the Trail of the Buffalo Soldiers: Biographies of African-Americans in the U.S. Army* (1995), and *Voices of the Buffalo Soldier: Reports, Record, and Recollections of Military Service in the West* (2003).

## APPENDIX C: SCHOLARS ROUND TABLE AND OUTREACH SUMMARY – ABRIDGED SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

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### HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE AND RESEARCH IN THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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1. Tell the whole story of the Buffalo Soldiers in national parks and the connections with the larger socio-political context in the United States, including racism, segregation, and their roles in the Indian Wars and western expansion. Be clear about the historical periods involved.
2. Acknowledge the multifaceted intersection of race in the American West resulting from a complicated legacy that is largely unspoken. For example, the creation of a peacetime black enlistment in the Regular Army alongside the transformation of the US military after the Civil War was revolutionary and was the context in which the Buffalo Soldiers arrived in the West. Explore what it meant to be a black military man in a segregated society.
3. Understand how the Buffalo Soldiers' contributions to the parks compared or differed with those of other US Army troops at the time.
4. Discern the Buffalo Soldiers' participation in innovation and experimentation at parks such as the Bicycle Corps at Yellowstone National Park.
5. Draw connections between the Buffalo Soldiers in the national parks and people who lived in the surrounding communities. For example, what were the connections to the founding of Allensworth, an African American town in California's Central Valley?
6. Locate soldiers' letters home because these could document Buffalo Soldiers' experiences in national parks. These letters were often published in black newspapers. How did their work in the parks impact views of African Americans in America at the time?
7. Address conflicting and inconsistent ways the American Indian and US military story is told in the National Park Service. For example, how US policies that simultaneously advocated the removal of American Indians and American Indian participation in the US military created the Buffalo Soldiers regiments in the same legislation.
8. Explore how places like Allensworth, an African American utopian town, were a reaction to the Buffalo Soldiers' park stewardship taking place during a nadir of race politics.
9. Acknowledge the Buffalo Soldiers history as a nationally recognized story of excellence and its important role in the African diaspora. The soldiers took advantage of limited options and they excelled.
10. Understand the myths and realities of the Buffalo Soldiers to enhance understanding not only of the roles that Buffalo Soldiers served but also their experiences and the meaning of their service in protecting national parks. Myths can be dispelled by contextualizing the Buffalo Soldiers in history and in the community. Examples include the origin of the name "Buffalo Soldiers," which scholars note is not grounded in research. However, other scholars note that the symbolic meaning of the name has nonetheless become potent in the African American community. Further, scholars note that a tradition of mythology is part of the history of the American West. For example, the myth of rugged Western individualism is linked to the Buffalo Soldiers story because the settlers whom the soldiers were tasked to protect were not as independent as the myth would assert, but rather they depended on each other and the US Army soldiers for their protection when they traveled along trail routes and established towns in settlements in the late 19th century.

11. Research the tangible resources that were built or developed by the Buffalo Soldiers themselves. For example, the Arboretum at Yosemite National Park or portions of the Mt. Whitney trail at Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks.
12. Find ways to collect and organize primary and published sources into a bibliography and/or digital library to make them more accessible to park staff, researchers, and the public.
13. Compile the complete history of the Buffalo Soldiers in national parks based on primary resources.
14. Compile a database of the individual Buffalo Soldiers who served at national park sites. This database could fill the need for information about individual soldiers and also make it easy for descendants to research family members who served.
15. Establish a protocol for peer review to promote scientific excellence for research and scholarship.

## INTERPRETATION AND EDUCATION

### Enhancing the stories that are told:

16. Tell the whole story of the Buffalo Soldiers in its entire historical context.
17. Institutionalize the narrative of the Buffalo Soldiers in the early development of the national parks to create an awareness of the story among the general public and also within the knowledge base of the National Park Service.
18. Interpret the Buffalo Soldiers' role in national park stewardship as a way to help dispel the myth that African Americans have nothing to do with national parks.
19. Explore stories of the people behind the well-known names as a way to foster connections and relevance with underrepresented park visitors. These individual stories could be expressed within the larger context of Buffalo Soldier history.
20. Share the American Indian perspective.

### Expanding methods of interpretation and education programming:

21. Encourage interpretive collaboration between national park system units and non-NPS sites that tell the Buffalo Soldiers story.
22. Develop a story map focused on the experience of the Buffalo Soldiers.
23. Bring this story to teachers and educators. Work with them to develop curricula that meet national education standards. For example, develop the Buffalo Soldiers story as an American Story with relevance for all Americans. This is a story that can be used as a mirror for character development, leadership development, and historical literacy, which fills gaps in history that are not currently part of national education standards.
24. Develop specific hands-on tools for engagement with the arts such as writing, plays, media sound bites, and concessioner items such as coloring books and t-shirts.
25. Use social media, online applications, and webinars to share the story and have this be managed by a person dedicated to this effort.

## AUDIENCES AND OUTREACH

26. Develop new youth-oriented programs that involve the Buffalo Soldiers story.
27. Use media, events, and community gatherings to amplify the story in the African American community in particular.
28. Create a website on the theme of the "African American Military Experience" for sharing information and encouraging the public to visit parks and sites.
29. Create NPS travel itineraries around the theme of the Buffalo Soldiers story.
30. Create an NPS passport stamp series, patches, certifications, and Junior Ranger programs.
31. Engage existing NPS friends groups in outreach efforts.
32. Develop a fellowship program to support Buffalo Soldiers research and outreach within national parks.

## PARTNERSHIPS

33. Build and strengthen partnerships, enhance outreach to communities, expand stories/interpretive connections to regular park interpretive programming, create more relevant media, and focus on enhancing research that connects African American contributions to sites.
34. Create a network of institutions, organizations, academics, churches, educators, fraternities, sororities, women's clubs, African American communities, military and veteran organizations, and surrounding communities who have connections to the Buffalo Soldiers. Especially target organizations already committed to the Buffalo Soldiers such as reenactment groups. Work with them to extend the story, develop educational curricula, etc.
35. Partner with churches, both local and national, as an untapped resource and potential partner considering their networks of chaplains, historical connections to the Buffalo Soldiers, and "Green the Church" programs.
36. Develop academic partnerships to further research goals. Involve university libraries and curatorial programs. Create a consortium of universities, including historically black colleges and universities, to identify and explore potential research libraries.
37. Explore an agreement between the Department of Interior, Department of Defense, and Smithsonian Institution to tell the story of the Buffalo Soldiers for the period of 1866–1948.
38. Incentivize partnerships; for example, through a grant program.
39. Compile a database of organizations and programs already in existence.
40. Explore opportunities for NPS affiliated area designation for places with strong connections, such as Allensworth.
41. Partner with organizations that can serve as access points or intermediaries for the public or underserved audiences, such as Outdoor Afro, YMCA, Nature Bridge, Buffalo Soldiers Motorcycle Clubs, and cooperative associations.
42. Develop a site dedicated to telling the story of the Buffalo Soldiers at Mountain View Officers' Club in Fort Huachuca, Arizona.

## Overarching Suggestions

43. Identify funding sources that could support the ideas and suggestions described above such as the National Park Foundation's African American Experience Fund.
44. Develop an NPS network of sites related to the Buffalo Soldiers, similar to the NPS Underground Railroad Network to Freedom.
45. Develop interpretive or commemorative trails related to features created by or that represent important travel routes associated with the Buffalo Soldiers.
46. Develop a program modeled on the Japanese American Confinement Sites Grant Program established by Public Law 109-441 for the preservation and interpretation of US confinement sites where Japanese Americans were incarcerated during World War II.

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## APPENDIX C-1: INSTITUTE AT THE GOLDEN GATE: BUFFALO SOLDIERS STUDY TARGETED STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT REPORT

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### BUFFALO SOLDIERS STUDY COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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Findings and process for community engagement around the “NPS Buffalo Soldiers Study Scholars Round Table and Outreach Summary.” Prepared for the National Park Service under Task Agreement P17AC00098 Against Cooperative Agreement 1443 CA 8140-98-001.

#### Background

The National Park Service (NPS) is conducting a study about the Buffalo Soldiers during the early years of the national park system, including an evaluation of appropriate ways to enhance historical research, education, interpretation, and public awareness of the story of the Buffalo Soldiers’ stewardship roles in the national parks.

To date, the study process has focused on a nationwide outreach to gather information from members of the public and subject-matter experts from both in and outside the National Park Service. Additionally, a Scholars Round Table, consisting of both NPS and non-NPS subject-matter experts was held to identify and fill research and knowledge gaps, better understand the stewardship role of Buffalo Soldiers in the national parks, and suggest ideas related to the goals of the study. Ideas generated during the outreach activities described above were explored, refined, and expanded during the Scholars Round Table and are included in a document titled “NPS Buffalo Soldiers Study Scholars Round Table and Outreach Summary.”

The Institute at the Golden Gate (the Institute), in partnership with the National Park Service, facilitated a focus group in March and a national conference call in April to discuss and refine the initial ideas generated through public outreach and the Scholars Round Table. The full summary document, as well as a numbered and abridged list of suggestions from that outreach, was provided to each participant (appendix C). The focus group consisted of local organizations with a national reach or representative of Buffalo Soldier stakeholders across the United States.

Participants were largely of NPS partner organizations, educators (primary, secondary, and post-secondary), black churches and other African American community organizations, and youth development nonprofits.

The Institute and the National Park Service then collaborated in facilitating a conference call to receive broader national input on the outreach summary ideas and suggestions. During the conference call, the National Park Service provided an overview of the study purpose and the ideas and suggestions under consideration. The Institute shared the feedback on the initial ideas gleaned from the focus group meeting. A broad range of individuals, organizations, and institutions with an interest in the Buffalo Soldiers were invited to participate in the national call. Approximately 30 people attended, many of whom were NPS park and program representatives with an interest in the Buffalo Soldiers and the study (appendix C-2).

From these two conversations, the National Park Service and the Institute learned that there was strong support or agreement around the initial ideas reflected in the outreach summary and opportunities to refine or combine ideas. The Institute has identified five core proposals to refine or help implement the ideas summarized in the “NPS Buffalo Soldiers Study Scholars Round Table and Outreach Summary.” The proposals in this report are intended to align the outreach summary’s suggestions with stakeholders’ requests for interpretation, research, and public awareness. These five proposals are:

- Incorporate project-based learning instruction techniques.
- Empower students and youth to become Buffalo Soldiers historians.
- Understand the significance of the Buffalo Soldiers in the historical context.
- Weave outreach into all the Buffalo Soldiers Study recommendations.
- Cultivate community pride with Buffalo Soldiers history.

The section below captures the feedback from focus group and national call participants regarding the initial ideas and suggestions presented in the “NPS Buffalo Soldiers Study Scholars Round Table and Outreach Summary.” Several ideas and suggestions from that summary document were discussed and are referenced in call-out boxes in the corresponding sections below. A complete list of ideas and suggestions from the “NPS Buffalo Soldiers Study Scholars Round Table and Outreach Summary” can be found in appendix C.

### **Incorporate Project-Based Learning Instruction Techniques**

Educators that participated in the focus group discussion expressed the importance of incorporating Buffalo Soldiers history into school curricula, an idea that was emphasized in the outreach summary. The fourth-grade history requirement would be an ideal place to start, while eighth grade history offers an opportunity to tie Buffalo Soldiers history to the Reconstruction Era. It was also suggested that even Kindergarten-age children could have a curriculum connection.

Educators expressed the importance of “framing” the history in a way that African American students can relate to. One focus group participant discussed showing before and after pictures of local reservoirs to their students to frame the effects of the California drought. Others suggested framing in conjunction with project-based or experiential learning. Project-based learning is a preferred teaching method of schools and community organizations where students engage with a subject matter for an extended period of time. The students are proactive in their learning, are given more freedom to investigate a subject on their own terms, and come to their own conclusions based off the materials and evidence provided.

### **Suggestions (from appendix C) that could include project-based learning (not exhaustive)**

- 18. Interpret the Buffalo Soldiers’ role in national park stewardship as a way to help dispel the myth that African Americans have nothing to do with national parks.** Suggestion 18, which challenges myths and stereotypes of African Americans and national parks, lends itself to rigorous, prompting questions.
- 16. Tell the whole story of the Buffalo Soldiers in its entire historical context.**
- 19. Explore stories of the people behind the well-known names as a way to foster connections and relevance with under-represented park visitors. These individual stories could be expressed within the larger context of Buffalo Soldier history.**
- 20. Share the American Indian perspective.** Suggestions 16, 19, and 20 could be modified to support a dynamic inquiry process where students seek diverse perspectives and learn how numerous societal factors impacted Buffalo Soldier history.

Although project-based learning can take many forms, the core elements of this teaching method remain constant. All project-based learning should contain a challenging problem or question for students to solve, an inquiry process where students gather information and evidence, a reflection and critique period where students challenge the ideas and hypotheses of their peers, and a final culminating project/presentation where students share what they have learned.

For example, focus group participants and the principal from a minority majority middle school, emphasized building in questions to prompt curiosity, dialogue, and ultimately, student-led and student-crafted activities. The principal noted that students of all ages could handle the complex history of the Buffalo Soldiers and that the complexity of the Buffalo Soldiers story makes this subject academically rigorous. He also recommended that the National Park Service interpretation incorporate rigorous, prompting questions—a key component of project-based learning.



Many of the ideas from the outreach summary could easily be included in project-based learning. For example:

- Ideas that focus on exploring a variety of perspectives, encouraging creative activities (writing, plays, or visuals), and/or culminating in projects or presentations that more explicitly name project-based learning and key elements of project-based learning—prompting question, inquiry process, reflection/critique and final project—within these applicable suggestions.
- Ideas that encourage co-crafting Buffalo Soldiers curriculum with community partners and academic institutions could also encourage designing project-based learning opportunities.
- Ideas that revolve around creating a network and database to share information across organizations could include project-based learning resources and opportunities in these databases. The websites NPS’s “Teaching with Historic Places” and PBS’s “History Detectives” are good models of sharing resources for project-based learning.

Project-based learning would allow youth to engage with the Buffalo Soldiers on their own terms and also teach students how to analyze the history of Buffalo Soldiers, conduct research, craft hypotheses, and defend their thoughts with corroborating evidence. The National Park Service, through enhanced support of project-based learning, could teach students about Buffalo Soldiers and, perhaps more importantly, could teach students how to be Buffalo Soldiers historians.

Participants to the national conference call also emphasized the importance of incorporating Buffalo Soldiers history into school curricula. They suggested the National Park Service host or provide the platform for teacher workshops; offering credit to teachers and allowing others to take the lead on content. They encouraged collaboration with Historically Black Colleges and Universities, the Department of Education, and others in the workshops. Conference call participants also recommended tapping into existing NPS programs that support teachers in historical educational objectives such as, “Teaching with Historic Places Lesson Plans” as well as making use of “NPS travel itineraries” related to the Buffalo Soldiers.

## **Empower Students and Youth to be Their Own Buffalo Soldiers Historian**

Focus group participants expressed the value of learning through service for youth and students. One example was provided by the Hunters Point Family. This organization teaches youth to teach other youth. They provide information to youth so that they can become the teachers, an approach consistent with the oral tradition of passing down stories and history in the African American community. Students and youth become the “lighthouse to shine the information” using visual material and other hands-on materials.

The importance of engaging university-level students in Buffalo Soldiers research resonated with participants of both the focus group and participants in the national conference call. During the focus group discussion, a professor from San Francisco State University’s Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism, requested additional support in engaging higher education institutions. She advocated that college students have increased access to Buffalo Soldiers research opportunities and recommended NPS staff or staff time be devoted to outreach with universities. Such outreach efforts could range from a simple form letter addressed to relevant university departments to an online platform for undergraduates to search for and submit Buffalo Soldiers oral history or primary resources. It could also be facilitated using existing NPS agreements with colleges and universities. The professor suggested undergraduate students could be a valuable resource in finding more Buffalo Soldiers research materials, if only there was more awareness of the research opportunities available and more streamlined/transparent ways of engaging with Buffalo Soldiers history. The Buffalo Soldiers Resource Study should encourage better partnership with academic institutions to cultivate more Buffalo Soldiers historians.

While many of the initial ideas from the outreach summary included partnerships with educators and more opportunities for student-led and/or community-sourced Buffalo Soldiers research, the professor’s advocacy for her students highlights the importance of connecting research with outreach. She suggested that the National Park Service devote more resources to publicizing research opportunities so that communities know these opportunities exist.

Currently, many of the outreach-related ideas focus on disseminating existing Buffalo Soldiers information to the community. This could be modified to include outreach regarding research opportunities as well as research findings.

National conference call participants also noted the potential in tapping graduate students to research the history through dissertations and theses as suggested above, and further suggested partnering with universities to create a repository of materials and information.

### **Suggestions (line item number taken from appendix C) that empower students to be Buffalo Soldier historians (not exhaustive)**

12. Find ways to collect and organize primary and published sources into a bibliography and/or digital library to make them more accessible to park staff, researchers, and the public.
13. Compile the complete history of the Buffalo Soldiers in national parks based on primary resources.
14. Compile a database of the individual Buffalo Soldiers who served at national park sites. This could fill in the need for information about individual soldiers and also make it easy for descendants to research family members who served.
15. Establish a protocol for peer review to promote scientific excellence for research and scholarship.
36. Develop academic partnerships to further research goals. Involve university libraries and curatorial programs. Create a consortium of universities, including historically black colleges and universities, to identify and explore potential research libraries.

## Understand the Significance of the Buffalo Soldiers in the Historical Context

Participants of the focus group and the national conference call emphasized the importance of documenting the significance of the Buffalo Soldiers in their proper historical context. Some focus group participants specifically stated that fully understanding the significance of the Buffalo Soldiers can help overcome the barriers that prevent youth from connecting to the legacy of the Buffalo Soldiers. Students need to understand the context to understand the question, *What is the significance of the Buffalo Soldiers?*

The discussion of ideas pertaining to historical knowledge and research was most robust during the national conference call discussion that included NPS scholars, as well as scholars from other institutions and organizations. Conference call participants contributed a number of suggestions, both specific and broad, to further the study objective to identify ways to increase historical knowledge and research related to Buffalo Soldiers stewardship in the early years of the national park system. One suggestion was to develop a formal request for proposals to ensure that Buffalo Soldier history is documented in its full context. One participant emphasized that any historical research study or context should describe the interaction between the Buffalo Soldiers units that were assigned NPS stewardship responsibilities in comparison to those that were assigned to direct military conflict. Another participant expressed that the Buffalo Soldiers existed prior to the creation of the National Park Service and that limiting their story to just stewardship could limit the full understanding of their roles and contributions to American history.

The importance of acquiring primary source materials to support research, knowledge, and education was a topic of interest. One participant suggested accessing the State of Wyoming 1910 Census, which has the entire listing of Buffalo Soldiers and their wives identified by troops. Another participant suggested that the National Park Service form a partnership with Ancestry.com to help identify and make public individual genealogical and related primary sources for Buffalo Soldiers as a special feature, which may be viable. Ancestry.com has the capacity to retain such archives and make them publicly available.

Suggestions (line item number taken from appendix C) that could be used to tell the whole story (not exhaustive)

1. Tell the whole story of the Buffalo Soldiers in national parks and the connections with the larger socio-political context in the United States, including racism, segregation, and their roles in the Indian Wars and western expansion. Be clear about the historical periods involved.
2. Acknowledge the multifaceted intersection of race in the American West resulting from a complicated legacy that is largely unspoken.
3. Understand how the Buffalo Soldiers' contributions to the parks compared or differed with those of other US Army troops at the time.
5. Draw connections between the Buffalo Soldiers in the national parks and people who lived in the surrounding communities. For example, what were the connections to the founding of Allensworth, an African American town in California's Central Valley?
7. Address conflicting and inconsistent ways the American Indian and US military story is told in the National Park Service. For example, how US policies that simultaneously advocated the removal of American Indians and American Indian participation in the US military created the Buffalo Soldiers regiments in the same legislation.

## Weave Outreach into all the Recommendations

A concern raised by some participants was the current lack of consistent involvement of the National Park Service in communities of color. Current involvement was described as piecemeal. Using media, events, and community gatherings, as was suggested in the outreach summary, could amplify the Buffalo Soldiers story in the African American community. The focus group participants provided suggestions to refine the initial ideas regarding outreach by suggesting solutions that met their own organizational outreach objectives. Some common outreach needs identified were: consistent and easy access for educators, curriculum that goes beyond park boundaries, and allowing the community to support Buffalo Soldiers outreach.

**Consistent Community Outreach and Educator Access.** Community members and educators suggested that Buffalo Soldier outreach and programming happen in a consistent or predictable manner (e.g., Black History Month). The focus group also suggested folding Buffalo Soldiers outreach into existing initiatives or events that happen consistently/annually, such as NPS Teacher Nights or community events such as Juneteenth celebrations. Free park days are another opportunity to encourage engagement. The National Park Service should allow the community to become accustomed to the timing and have a generous amount of time to plan for their engagement with the National Park Service and Buffalo Soldiers resources. Providing an NPS educational liaison was suggested to facilitate educational opportunities in schools.

**History and Curriculum that Goes Beyond Park Boundary.** Almost all of the focus group participants requested Buffalo Soldiers education and interpretation that could be hosted by community groups/educators outside national park sites. The focus group wanted the flexibility to incorporate service learning opportunities and other learning objectives before their visit. Educational programming happening outside the park allows partners to set the stage to best utilize a visit to their local national park site. For example, one participant suggested creating connections to the local community to reveal the layers of history that exist in the neighborhoods and with families.

He suggested asking questions and researching subjects such as, “Who did the Buffalo Soldiers marry?” Explaining information would likely lead to interesting connections. For example, in San Francisco, Buffalo Soldiers had community connections to the Pullman Porters.

**Community Supported Outreach.** Many participants wanted opportunities for their students or community to spread the word about Buffalo Soldiers. Some suggested allowing students to be trained to do peer-to-peer education on Buffalo Soldiers; others suggested NPS support for community organizations (e.g., libraries and museums) to host traveling exhibits.

**Suggestions (line item number taken from appendix C) that could more explicitly weave in community outreach (not exhaustive)**

26. Develop new youth-oriented programs that involve the Buffalo Soldiers story.
27. Use media, events, and community gatherings to amplify the story in the African American community in particular. Suggestions 26 and 27 could add language that supports curriculum outside park boundaries and consistent, predictable outreach.
31. Engage existing NPS friends groups in outreach efforts.
32. Develop a fellowship program to support Buffalo Soldiers research and outreach in national parks. Suggestions 31 and 32 could be combined so that NPS friends groups (and their partners and communities) supporting NPS outreach could also benefit from the fellowship program.

## Cultivate Community Pride

In the focus group, cultivating community pride was frequently mentioned in relation to a variety of suggestions for improved interpretation, research, and public engagement. A representative from youth program “TYEL,” at the Crissy Field Center in Golden Gate National Recreation Area, described how the Buffalo Soldiers story in the history of Yosemite has resonated with youth in their program. The focus group proposed that the National Park Service use their cachet to honor students and community members who embody the attributes of Buffalo Soldiers, such as resilience or bravery. They wanted students of all ages to receive NPS-branded recognition for their Buffalo Soldiers-related accomplishments—contributing to Buffalo Soldiers research or becoming a Buffalo Soldiers peer-to-peer educator. Some suggested a Buffalo Soldier-specific Junior Ranger badge. Others liked the idea of the Buffalo Soldiers “pledge” that young visitors make at the Buffalo Soldiers Museum in Texas. They expressed a desire to showcase their students’ Buffalo Soldiers-related presentations and service learning on NPS platforms.

Since some form of pride cultivation was almost unanimously requested from the focus group, the National Park Service could be more explicit in expressing this community need. Doing this would ensure that these suggestions, should they be implemented, would maintain the correct tone and emotional draw.

The focus group participants from community nonprofits and churches (not from academic institutions) referenced pride more frequently. Tapping into community pride was referenced as useful for creating relevancy and leadership development (with youth).

Suggestions (line item number taken from appendix C) that could be used to cultivate pride (not exhaustive)

27. Use media, events, and community gatherings to amplify the story in the African American community in particular.
28. Create a website on the theme of the “African American Military Experience” for sharing information and encouraging the public to visit parks and sites.
30. Create an NPS passport stamp series, patches, certifications, and Junior Ranger programs. Suggestions 27, 28, and 30 could recognize pride as one of the reasons to create media/events/ gatherings/merchandise geared toward the African American community. These suggestions could also note how these items/events cultivate pride. For example: “Create an NPS passport stamp series and patches to acknowledge progress. Use certifications and Junior Ranger programs to create ceremony that recognizes student achievement.”



## Summary

From these two conversations, the National Park Service and the Institute learned that there was strong support or agreement around the initial ideas reflected in the outreach summary, as well as opportunities to refine or combine ideas. The Institute identified five core proposals for refining the ideas summarized in the “NPS Buffalo Soldiers Study Scholars Round Table and Outreach Summary.”

Many of the suggestions compiled in the “NPS Buffalo Soldiers Study Scholars Round Table and Outreach Summary” already partially meet or have the potential to meet suggestions for improved Buffalo Soldiers interpretation, research, and public awareness. This report captures refinements to existing ideas and suggestions to implement them, largely through adding stakeholder-identified needs to the suggestions using their own terminology. This is a straightforward way of incorporating the voice of NPS partners, friends groups, educators, and the African American community.

Based on the discussions held through the focus group and the national conference call, the Institute recommends weaving the feedback from the educators and community organizations into the study recommendations. At the very least, the Buffalo Soldiers Study should embed the participants’ word choice to preserve the intended meaning and context. Specifically, the National Park Service should adopt the phrase “project-based learning” so that educators can easily recognize this popular teaching method. Community-sourced terminology in the suggestions could increase the NPS’s fluency in discussing public and stakeholder desires for Buffalo Soldiers interpretation and education.

Based on the feedback received through these outreach efforts, the Institute suggests that the study prioritize and incorporate the five proposals outlined in this summary (project-based learning, empowering students, understanding the history and its significance, weaving outreach into all recommendations, and cultivating community pride). This would mean highlighting suggestions or a combination of suggestions that most closely align with these proposals or that address multiple community and stakeholder needs.

These places of overlap that represent suggestions sourced from scholars, historians, and NPS staff and reflect communities’ preferences are where the largest opportunities for impact lie. The National Park Service could give their staff and colleagues a head start in their own community engagement process by highlighting these suggestions.

To the credit of the outreach results identified in the “NPS Buffalo Soldiers Study Scholars Round Table and Outreach Summary,” many of the suggestions were in proximity to what the stakeholders identified as needs. This summary report had suggestions that were accessible to a variety of park sites and partners so there was flexibility in how many of these suggestions could be implemented. However, the stakeholders requested their needs be more visible and explicitly stated. The summary report has the hard task of having suggestions that are not too prescriptive, but that also clearly identify the attributes and processes that most benefit educators, the African American community, NPS partner groups, and other stakeholders.

## APPENDIX C-2: LIST OF FACILITATORS, PRESENTERS, AND PARTICIPANTS

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### Facilitators and Presenters for Outreach Meetings

Elyse Rainey, Institute of the Golden Gate, Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy

Barbara Butler Baunsgard, National Park Service

Tara Pettit, National Park Service

Elaine Jackson-Retondo, National Park Service

### March 24, 2017, Focus Group Participants

Allison Ambrozy, Director of Outdoor Programs, YMCA

Vanessa Carter, Science Program Administrator, San Francisco Unified School District

Mike Essien, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Academic Alternative Middle School Principal, San Francisco Unified School District

Nik Kaestner, Director of Sustainability, San Francisco Unified School District

Casey Passmore, Environmental Science Center, San Francisco Unified School District

Kate Rennie, Green Academy Coordinator, San Francisco Unified School District

Ernesto Pepito, Crissy Field Center, Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy

Christy Rocca, Crissy Field Center, Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy

Mary Maya, Heritage Program Education Specialist, Presidio Trust

Jeff Weik, Associate Director of Heritage Program Education, Presidio Trust

Theresa Baker, African American Explorations

Rev. Dr. Ambrose Carroll, Green the Church / Church by the Side of the Road

Marlee-I Mystic, Hunters Point Family (Community Center), Environmental Programs

Rik Penn, Interpretive Ranger, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, National Park Service

Nina Roberts, PhD, San Francisco State University, Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism

John William Templeton, Western Addition / Fulton Street Culture Center

### April 20, 2017, National Call Participants

Kristjana Eyjolfsson, The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula, Montana

Jackie Jones-Hook, Buffalo Soldier Museum Tacoma, Washington

Krewasky Salter, Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture

Calvin Mitchell, Smithsonian National Postal Museum

Omar Reed, Oklahoma Historical Society, Fort Gibson Historic Site

Tokey Boswell, National Park Service

Martha Crusius, National Park Service

Lonnie Davis, National Park Service

Will Elder, National Park Service

Patrick Gregerson, National Park Service

Clayton Hanson, National Park Service

John Heiner, National Park Service

Meagan Huff, National Park Service

Elaine Jackson-Retondo, National Park Service

Lu Ann Jones, National Park Service

Turkiya Lowe, National Park Service

Kristen Maxfield, National Park Service

Westby Mize, National Park Service

Reginald Murray, National Park Service

Ginny Reams, National Park Service  
Reed Robinson, National Park Service  
Amanda Rowland, National Park Service  
Libby Schaaf, National Park Service  
Amanda Schramm, National Park Service  
Brian Schwieger, National Park Service  
Eirik Thorsgard, National Park Service  
Dora Veracruz-Martinez, National Park Service  
Lorenzo Vigil, National Park Service

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