

Recommendations

Recommendations for interpretation and education programs at Theodore Roosevelt National Park cover a wide range of programs and services, with emphasis on enhancing the effectiveness of all four visitor contact areas, a comprehensive new educational outreach program, and a parkwide wayside exhibit plan. Many of the recommendations take into consideration an earlier set of recommendations that came about through development of the park's 2006 Cultural Affiliation Statement and Ethnographic Resource Assessment (shared with Knife River Indian Villages NHS and Fort Union Trading Post NHS), which has been invaluable in providing American Indian perspectives.

The recommendations are presented in a framework that identifies short-term (1-3 years), mid-term (3-5 years), and long-term (5-10 years) goals (please see the Implementation Timeline, below, for details). They are designed to further define, support, and communicate the park's mission, purpose, significance, primary interpretive themes, and visitor experience goals. Implementation of these recommendations will help ensure that all audiences will have opportunities to develop meaningful connections with tangible and intangible resources and with the park's themes and stories.

Parkwide Recommendations

Enhanced visitor contact stations.

The park consists of three units (South Unit, North Unit, and Elkhorn Ranch). Each one plays a vital role in serving the park's public. The following recommendations strengthen and clarify these roles. For more details on each, please see Recommendations by Venue, below.



Painted Canyon
Visitor Center



Painted Canyon Visitor Center. The Painted Canyon Visitor Center provides a unique opportunity to reach the traveling public with the park's message. Painted Canyon represents the first encounter of the Little Missouri Badlands for people traveling west on Interstate 94, and features one of the park's few fully accessible scenic overlooks. Currently under-utilized as an interpretive venue, Painted Canyon should be reconfigured to orient visitors to the many activities and features available in the park, and to invite them to visit and experience the rest of the park. It should introduce each of the park's seven themes, and extend an enticing invitation to explore by outlining recreational opportunities.

RECOMMENDATION:

- *New interpretive media, both inside and at the overlook, to introduce themes and recreational opportunities.*

South Unit Visitor Center. This facility is host to a majority of park visitors. Exhibits are professionally designed, but do not fully address key park themes. For example, Theodore Roosevelt's role in the American conservation movement is not interpreted in the permanent exhibits, and many other key stories are missing as well. The visitor center will soon be enhanced by the showing of a professionally produced film on the park. There is a need for new exhibits that meet similar standards. Exhibits should center on the ecology of the Badlands, including geology, wildlife, and wilderness. The rest of the themes – Roosevelt and the conservation movement, American Indian traditions, Euro-American history, and the spirituality embodied in the place – will emerge from that central core concept.

RECOMMENDATION:

- *New exhibits that interpret park themes, based on Badlands ecology.*

Elkhorn Ranch. The Elkhorn is at the heart of the park’s Roosevelt story, yet its out-of-the-way location may discourage many visitors from experiencing this special place. It is interpreted with a deliberately light touch, with effective new waysides in place.

RECOMMENDATION:

- *Focus on better wayfinding, enhancing the visitor experience without adversely impacting the unit’s sense of solitude and peace, and continuing to provide alternate means of access for those who cannot visit in person.*

North Unit Visitor Center. This facility is the newest of the park’s visitor centers. Its interpretive focus is on wildlife, geology, and wilderness. It is small, but functions well at present.

RECOMMENDATION:

- *Maintain North Unit Visitor Center as it is for the time being. An update and/or revision of NUVVC exhibits will either be a long-term action item or will be outside the timeline of this plan.*

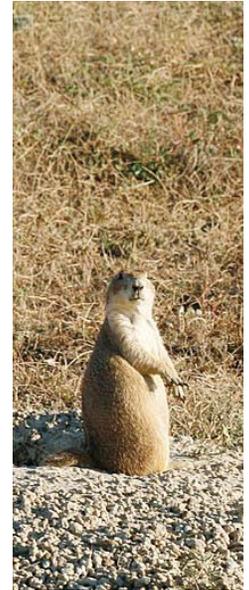
Wayside plan. The park currently features wayside exhibits of various vintages and levels of effectiveness. Except for those at Elkhorn Ranch, all are outdated. There is a need for a detailed, integrated wayside exhibit plan that interprets park themes throughout all units. Topics that are particularly suited for interpretation via wayside exhibits are geology, ecology, and habitats; cultural resources, especially historic structures; and prairie dog towns.

The wayside exhibit plan will identify specific locations in the park that are best suited to interpreting park themes. Geology-based exhibits offer many opportunities to interpret tangible, observable geological features. In addition, these waysides offer the opportunity to interpret traditional native views about park landforms.

Waysides centered on wildlife should interpret observable features. In addition to prairie dog towns, different park habitats can be interpreted with regard to the wildlife one would expect to find in each. The emphasis should be on the interdependency of all living things. For example, the prairie dog is a keystone species—one that has a disproportionate effect on its environment in relation to its biomass—upon which other plants and animals depend for survival. This story supports the park’s theme that is centered on wildlife, addressing the interconnectedness of all living beings.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- *Create a detailed wayside plan that interprets park themes and integrates all units. Wayside exhibits are needed in the North Unit and the South Unit, including the Painted Canyon overlook.*
- *Trailhead bulletin boards with maps, trail, and safety information for orientation, as well as interpretation, will be included in the wayside exhibit plan.*
- *Conduct a survey of geological features that will identify the most effective features/locations for wayside exhibits.*
- *Work with tribal consultants to include traditional native perspectives on*



Prairie Dog

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Longhorn steers,
North Unit



Badlands landforms alongside scientific interpretation of park geology on park waysides. Please see Appendix A, Places of Cultural Significance in Theodore Roosevelt National Park, for a listing of significant settings as identified by tribal consultants in the Cultural Affiliations Study.

- *Create wayside exhibits on park ecology that emphasize the interdependency of all living beings. Use wayside exhibits to interpret habitats such as grasslands, woody draws, and the river bottom.*
 - *Create a three-sided kiosk at the entrance to the U.S. Forest Service parking lot trailhead on the west edge of the South Unit Wilderness Area (will be completed summer 2011). Convey Wilderness/Petrified Forest interpretation, resource protection and safety messages, and wilderness orientation.*
 - *Add orientation signs/bulletin boards at other trailheads as needed.*
- *Include waysides that interpret elements of the park's history theme, such as the Long X Trail, Civilian Conservation Corps infrastructure, the herd of longhorn cattle, and Peaceful Valley Ranch.*
- Family programming.** Although families no doubt enjoy their visits to the park, additional programming would enhance parent-child bonding opportunities, support “No Child Left Inside” initiatives, and encourage participation in anti-obesity campaigns.
- RECOMMENDATIONS:**
- *Continue to make available Junior Ranger Family Fun Packs.*
 - *Increase the number of Junior Ranger Family Fun Days.*
 - *Continue to work with Theodore Roosevelt Nature and History Association to offer special events with a family focus, such as Roosevelt's birthday, the Teddy Bear Picnic, and family bird walks.*
 - *Create new special events with a family focus. For example, partner with area tribes to create hands-on programs/demonstrations on traditional native uses of natural resources.*
 - *Expand evening program offerings to include more interaction and hands-on activities for both children and their parents.*
 - *Continue to offer family hikes, but with more extensive publicity/promotion.*
 - *Investigate the possibility of offering C.A.M.P. (Camping Adventures with My Parents) programs, which teach families camping skills.*
 - *Continue to offer family-oriented items such as games and activity books for*

sale through TRNHA.

- *Include child-friendly interactive elements as new exhibits are designed.*
- *On the park website, incorporate trip planning information that is especially targeted to the needs of families.*
- *Send park personnel on outreach missions to events where families gather, such as fairs, festivals, and Scouting Jamborees.*
- *Expand family program offerings in the North Unit.*

Film. A professionally produced park film with high production values is in progress.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- *Review draft film script to ensure that it reinforces visitors' emotional connections to the meanings embodied by the resource.*
- *Extra film footage will be retained for future projects.*

Publications. Publications have been a mainstay in the park. In spite of the new forms of digital media now available, they remain a valuable element in park interpretation.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- *Review all current site bulletins to determine relevance to park resources, visitor demand, redundancy with other available media, and necessity before producing new ones.*
- *Create new site bulletins that can be offered in print and on the park website. Potential topics include Theodore Roosevelt's role in the*

American conservation movement, Wilderness values, American Indian culture and traditions, and park history.

- *Ensure all publications conform to NPS graphic and messaging standards.*
- *Ensure the text in site bulletins is interpretive rather than merely informational, as is appropriate for the topic and purpose of the product.*
- *Continue to offer publications on Roosevelt, park geology and wildlife, inspiring literature about nature (especially the Badlands), American Indian topics, and park history through the TRNHA. Offer journals in which visitors can record their own thoughts and inspirations about the park.*
- *Continue to revise the park newspaper to make it an effective trip planning/ orientation tool for visitors, both before and during their visits, to all three North Dakota national park units.*
- *Use the park newspaper to interpret the wilderness and orient visitors to safe wilderness experiences, including Leave No Trace principles.*
- *Continue to offer—and enhance offerings of—hiking and topographic maps of the park, including National Geographic's Trails Illustrated map of the park.*
- *Although they are no longer strictly print media, continue to issue news releases and other forms of public information in whatever format will most effectively reinforce park themes and inform the public about activities and recreational opportunities in the park.*

Recommendations

Media specialist. The media options through which parks can communicate with their audiences are expanding rapidly, along with audience expectations regarding new kinds of media. Social media, not to mention effective use of websites, have become almost obligatory communication tools. Yet the commitment to the use of these kinds of media creates additional burdens on a staff already stretched quite thin.

RECOMMENDATION:

- *Create a media specialist position that would include primary responsibility for non-personal interpretive services, including social media.*

Website and digital media. Efforts to create digital media pay off handsomely in that such products can be offered on multiple platforms, including the park website, and are easily disseminated to an audience beyond actual park visitors. Because of the rapid changes taking place in electronic media, recommendations should center on the development of digital content, which can then be adapted as new kinds of electronic delivery devices become available. Current implementation of most of the recommendations listed below is dependent upon creation of the new media specialist position recommended above, or the availability and expertise of the current permanent staff.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- *Continue to offer the existing Elkhorn Ranch podcast via the park website*
- *Continue to link via the park website*

and/or visitor center kiosk to the Dickinson State University Theodore Roosevelt Center's extensive database on Roosevelt. For more on this invaluable park partner, please see the Partnership section, below.

- *Create a geology podcast that can be experienced as an auto tour. Provide a CD-based version for visitors without smart phones and MP3 players, as well as a GPS-guided tour for use with GPS-enabled phones.*
- *Create a podcast/smart phone application to interpret park wildlife, especially the prairie dog towns. Orient users as to what to look for and use video clips to illustrate typical behaviors and the reasons behind them.*
- *Set up a Twitter feed that will allow visitors to tweet about their wildlife observations in the park.*
- *Add sections of the park website to address wilderness safety and experiences.*
- *With tribal consultation, add sections of the park website to address American Indian culture and traditions.*
- *Partner with area tribal authorities to provide web links to relevant tribal websites.*
- *Continue to post new and existing site bulletins on the park website.*
- *Begin a program of videotaping the most effective demonstrations and programs for training purposes.*
- *Create virtual tours of the Maltese Cross Cabin and Elkhorn Ranch.*
- *Consider creating a virtual tour of Peaceful Valley Ranch when appropriate.*

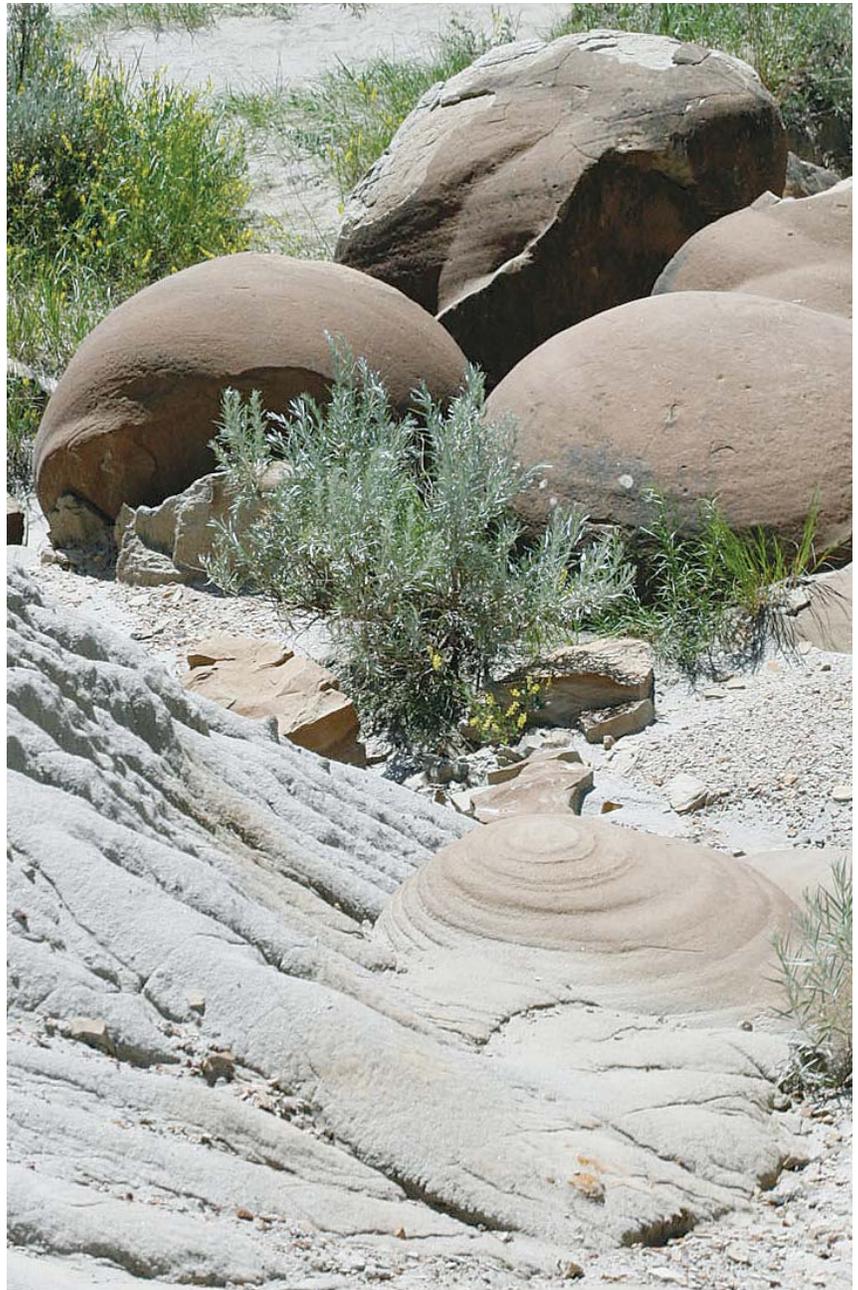
- *Add more images/galleries to the website to illustrate and interpret park geology.*
- *Create interactive bird/wildlife checklists on the website. The checklists provide visitors with their own electronic or printed checklists, as well as a way to list their observations on the website for others to see.*
- *Make available showings of Forever Wild, an hour-long production of the Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center, a DVD that celebrates wilderness values.*
- *Continually add images showing visitors enjoying the park.*

Reinforcement of NPS brand. There is a need to reinforce the value of Theodore Roosevelt National Park and the National Park Service in general. Visitors should easily be made aware of the “NPS brand” during every interaction.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- *Publications, wayside exhibits, and signs should follow the NPS Graphic Identity Program.*
- *Ensure that, when appropriate, the NPS mission is communicated to visitors.*

Incorporate NPS professional standards for interpretation into both personal and non-personal services. Work has begun to update publications to the current NPS graphic and messaging standards; this should continue. Content should undergo revision so that, where appropriate, it is interpretive rather than primarily informational. The permanent staff



is expected to achieve competency in the accepted professional standards for both personal and non-personal interpretive services; seasonal interpreters are formally trained and also encouraged to work toward competency.

RECOMMENDATION:

- *District Interpreters should continue working toward achieving competency*

The park’s geologic wonders include formations such as these cannonball concretions.

in all ten areas outlined in the NPS Interpretive Development Program, including achievement of available Advanced Certificates through the Eppley Institute learning platform.

Wayfinding. While visitors can fairly readily find North and South Unit visitor centers, directional signage is less effective for Painted Canyon and the Elkhorn Ranch.

RECOMMENDATION:

- *As part of the Operations Evaluation process, consider creating a parkwide wayfinding signage plan for identification and directions*

Recommendations by Venue

This section summarizes recommendations for each of the three park units. Recommendations include those for personal services and media, as well as (in some cases) logistical concerns and wayfinding. For a listing of priorities for each set of recommendations, please see the Implementation Timeline at the end of this document.

Painted Canyon Visitor Center.

Painted Canyon should orient, invite, and intrigue visitors. It should introduce park themes and inform visitors about the park's many recreational opportunities, allowing them to create an agenda based on what they can see, do, and experience in the park. Those who are simply passing by on the Interstate highway may be enticed to visit, even if at a later date, and people already planning a visit may decide to extend

their time in the park when they learn how much there is to do and see there. For many visitors, the Painted Canyon Visitor Center will set expectations for a worthwhile, enjoyable park experience.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PERSONAL SERVICES:

- *Continue to ensure that front-line staff is knowledgeable about all park venues, themes, and recreational activities and how to access them.*
- *As staffing allows, schedule a ranger rove at the Painted Canyon overlook to engage visitors in informal interpretation, answer questions, and invite visitors to experience other park venues.*
- *Continue to partner with TRNHA to fully cover visitor services during shoulder seasons, and seven days/week in summer.*
- *Seek funding to enable an NPS presence every day the center is open.*

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MEDIA:

- *Install exhibits in the Visitor Center that offer “teasers” for each of the park’s seven themes.*
- *Develop media that will convey recreational opportunities and available activities.*
- *Develop wayside exhibits as part of parkwide wayside plan to address park themes.*

RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING LOGISTICS AND WAYFINDING:

- *Create a sign plan for identification and directions that includes:*
 - *Directional orientation for each of the park units. Keep in mind that*

eastbound travelers at Painted Canyon have not yet reached the turnoff to U.S. 85 that leads to the North Unit.

- *Work with North Dakota Department of Transportation to improve directional signs on Interstate 94. The current brown signs should be revised to say “Theodore Roosevelt National Park, Painted Canyon Visitor Center,” and should include the NPS arrowhead logo.*
- *Install a wireless internet connection as NPS policy permits.*
- *Continue to use an outside bulletin board to list winter activities and winter park information.*
- *Continue to use outside bulletin boards to provide orientation and information for visitors who stop when the visitor center is closed.*
- *Continue to install a sign near the entrance in winter that invites people to walk in (road is not plowed).*



South Unit.

The South Unit Visitor Center is the park’s most prominent indoor interpretive venue.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PERSONAL SERVICES:

- *Continue to offer tours of the Maltese Cross Cabin*

- *Continue to offer interpretive talks and evening programs on Roosevelt’s Badlands experience and the conservation ethic that he developed while ranching there.*
- *Continue to offer formal interpretive programs on park history and wildlife.*
- *Increase invitations to guest lecturers on topics such as Roosevelt, park history, and wildlife.*
- *Increase the number of guided hikes, ranger programs, and guest speakers on park geology and the Wilderness.*
- *Create an artists-in-residence special event: invite painters, photographers, videographers, sculptors, potters, etc., to share their artistic impressions of the Little Missouri Badlands.*
- *Develop special programs that give people tools to express their impressions of the park: poetry, photography, journaling, etc.*
- *Develop special programs that address cross-culturally the power of place as embodied in the Little Missouri Badlands.*
- *Offer guided tours that focus solely on experiencing the park through the senses.*
- *Offer wildlife caravans at dusk that include spotting scopes and other props and address park wildlife and their habitats.*
- *When staffing allows, assign rangers to rove where wildlife is either visible or most likely to be seen, (prairie dog towns always; bison and other species occasionally as appropriate) to interpret animal habitat and behavior.*
- *Increase the number of guided bird walks.*

Roosevelt’s Maltese Cabin in its original location, 1883-4

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- Offer downloadable podcasts/smart phone application on park wildlife and habitats—especially prairie dogs.
- Present special programs with park subject matter specialists, for example, cultural and natural resource managers.
- Continue to ensure that front desk personnel can answer questions about typical wildlife habitat and where to look for wildlife.
- Continue to offer onboard interpreters for bus tours as staffing allows.
- Continue to offer ranger-led hikes into the designated wilderness area by the interpretive staff.
- Offer orientation to the wilderness experience through front desk information and printed materials.
- Work with horse concessioners to improve interpretation of park themes during guided trail rides.
- Work with tribal representatives to present guest speakers, lecturers, performers, and demonstrations that interpret American Indian culture and traditions related to the Badlands (formal, scheduled day programs and/or campfire programs).
- Increase winter program offerings as staffing allows.
- Offer ranger-led interpretive hikes to the buffalo jump site.
- Invite guest lecturers to speak on the history of the Badlands.
- Invite story-tellers to interpret the history of the Badlands.
- Increase the number of Junior Ranger Fun Days.
- Continue to work with TRNHA to offer special events with a family focus, such as Roosevelt’s birthday, the Teddy Bear Picnic, and family bird walks.
- Create new special events with a family focus. For example, partner with area tribes to create hands-on programs/demonstrations on traditional native uses of natural resources.
- Continue to offer family hikes, but with more extensive publicity/promotion.
- Investigate the possibility of offering C.A.M.P. (Camping With My Parents) programs, which teach families camping skills.
- As staffing allows, offer off-site programs on park themes to special interest groups.
- Create a Night Sky Program to be offered at regularly scheduled times. (Note that these can be offered in early evening in winter, but are subject to weather-related road closings and extremely low night-time temperatures. Also note that darkness falls much later in summer: 10 p.m. or even later at summer solstice).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NON-PERSONAL SERVICES:

- Develop new museum exhibits on the ecology of the Badlands, including geology, wildlife and wilderness. From that core, the rest of the themes emerge: Roosevelt and his conservation ethos, the sense of spiritual values, American Indian culture and traditions, and the history of travelers through and settlers in the area of the park.
- Include child-friendly interactive elements as new exhibits are designed.
- Continue to offer the new park film on a regular schedule.

- *Create a low tech way (for example, a map with post-it notes or a magnet board) for visitors to record wildlife sightings in the visitor center.*
- *Expand, improve, and refresh touch tables for wildlife specimens: bones (especially skulls), pelts, and molds of animal tracks for children and visitors with vision impairments.*
- *Continue to maintain geology touch table with geological specimens.*
- *Offer virtual tours (via website or in visitor center) of the Maltese Cross Cabin and the Elkhorn Ranch for visitors who are unable to access the actual resource.*
- *Continue to make Junior Ranger Family Fun Packs available.*
- *Continue to offer family-oriented items such as games and activity books for sale through TRNHA.*

Elkhorn Ranch.

The Elkhorn is in many ways at the spiritual heart of the park’s Theodore Roosevelt story. Park management has elected to keep interpretive media at a minimum to preserve that special sense of place.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PERSONAL SERVICES:

- *As staffing allows, offer guided tours in season, either as regularly scheduled programs or as special events.*
- *Present special programs with park subject matter specialists.*
- *Offer guided tours that focus solely on experiencing the park through the senses, such as a sunrise wildlife watch, poetry reading, or other*

contemplative activity to help visitors connect their experiences of the site with its significance.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NON-PERSONAL SERVICES:

- *Continue to offer the Elkhorn Ranch podcast via the park website.*
- *Improve map of the Elkhorn Ranch; make it more detailed for use on the site bulletin and at the trailheads.*

RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING LOGISTICS AND WAYFINDING:

- *Partner with landowners to improve wayfinding signs that direct visitors to the site, including from Interstate 94.*

North Unit.

The North Unit receives fewer visitors than the South Unit, but it offers many features that are unique within the park.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PERSONAL SERVICES:

- *The interpretive program offerings in the North Unit should encompass all of the park’s interpretive themes.*
- *Continue to offer guided hikes, ranger programs, and guest speakers on various natural and cultural history topics and the Wilderness Area.*
- *Create an artists-in-residence special event; invite painters, photographers, videographers, sculptors, potters, etc., to share their artistic impressions of the Little Missouri Badlands.*
- *Offer guided walks that focus solely on experiencing the park through the senses.*
- *Offer wildlife caravans at dusk that include spotting scopes and other props*

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and address park wildlife and their habitats.

- *When staffing allows, assign rangers to rove where wildlife is typically visible to interpret animal habitat and behavior.*
- *Offer guided bird walks.*
- *Present special programs with park subject matter specialists.*
- *Continue to ensure that front desk personnel can answer questions about typical wildlife habitat and where to look for wildlife.*
- *Continue to offer onboard interpreters for bus tours as staffing allows.*
- *Create a Night Sky Program to be offered at regularly scheduled times. (Note that these can be offered in early evening in winter, but are subject to weather-related road closings and extremely low night-time temperatures. Also note that darkness falls much later in summer: 10 p.m. or even later at summer solstice).*
- *Continue to offer park ranger-led hikes into the designated wilderness area by interpretive staff.*
- *Offer orientation to the wilderness experience through front desk information and printed materials.*
- *Expand the current interpretive focus on wildlife and wilderness to include geology, Theodore Roosevelt, and other aspects of the park's cultural history.*

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NON-PERSONAL SERVICES:

- *Create a low tech way (for example, a map with post-it notes or a magnet board) for visitors to record wildlife sightings in the visitor center.*

- *Offer downloadable podcasts/smart phone application on park wildlife and habitats -- especially prairie dogs (North and South Units).*

Educational Program

Theodore Roosevelt National Park has an outstanding opportunity to create a comprehensive educational program based not only on curriculum-based educational experiences at the park, but on an extensive network that is already in place for distance learning. The opportunity is outstanding for the following reasons:

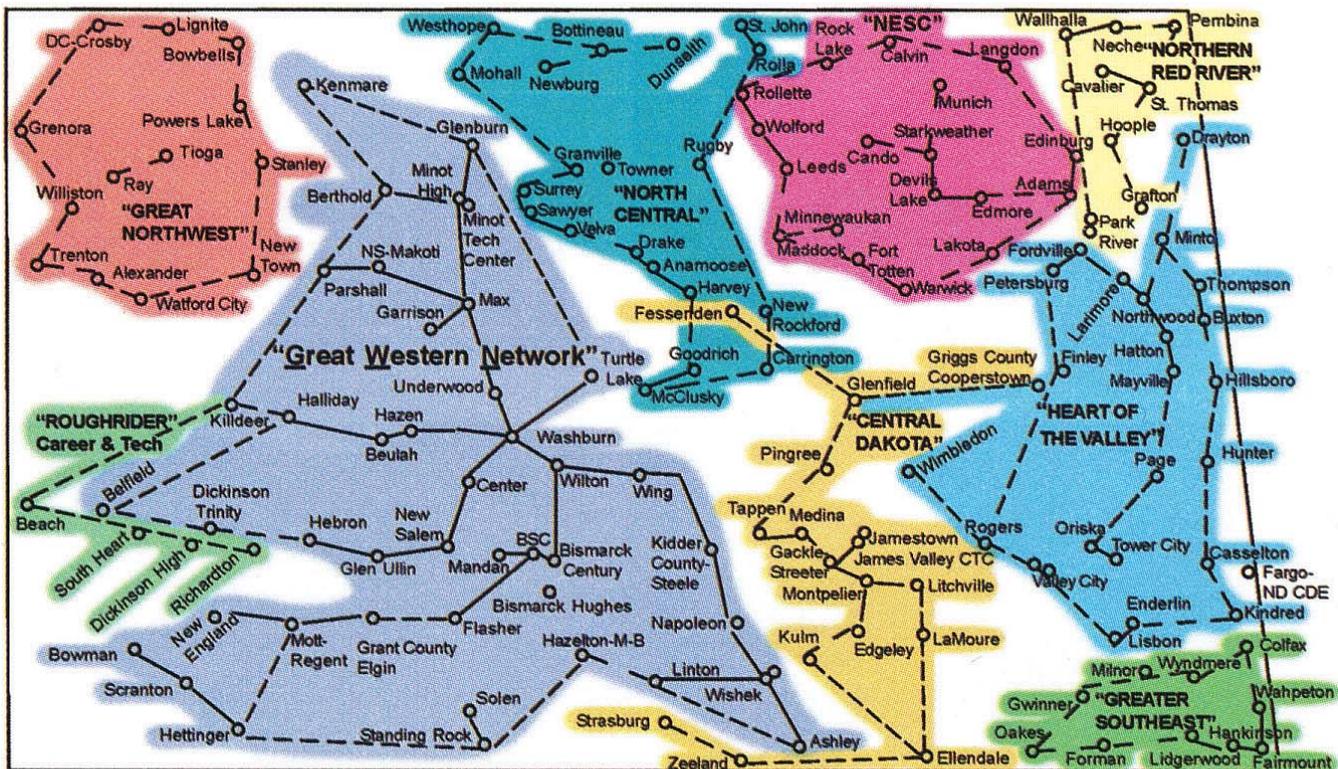
- *Because rural North Dakota's towns and schools are distant from one another, the state has established an interactive network for ITV, or interactive television, provided by nine ITV consortia that connect schools with video, Internet and other applications via the state's telephone companies and Dakota Carrier Network (DCN). The network for distance learning is already in place within the state. (See Figure 1 for a map indicating the statewide network of consortia.)*
- *National Park Service initiatives call for an increase in the use of technology and distance learning, and the park has already acquired distance learning technology that is ready to be deployed.*
- *The park's interpretive themes are a perfect fit across social studies, life science, and earth science curricula for North Dakota fourth graders.*
- *Park interpretive themes also address curriculum elements for second and*

third grade (earth science), fifth grade (social studies and life science), sixth grade (earth science), seventh grade (life science), and eighth grade (earth science). Please see the following table, *Theodore Roosevelt National Park, Potential Curriculum-Based Programming By Grade Level*, for more details on the match between park themes and North Dakota curriculum requirements.

- *The Theodore Roosevelt Center at Dickinson State University is an able partner in teaching about Roosevelt and his time in the North Dakota Badlands. The Center is already working on a survey of Roosevelt curriculum materials and lesson plans for teachers.*

- *Tribal representatives involved in the park’s Cultural Affiliation Study strongly recommended engaging K-12 students from tribal schools in the park’s educational programs, including exhibits and interpretive materials. They recommended that tribal school teachers be included in development of K-12 educational programs, and that tribal elders be engaged in helping to create curriculum based on native culture and traditions.*

Figure 1: North Dakota statewide network of ITV Consortia



Nine ITV consortiums serve North Dakota’s schools.