



Weir Farm National Historic Site

Long-Range Interpretive Plan

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Prepared by
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Weir Farm National Historic Site
Northeast Region

Harpers Ferry Center
Interpretive Planning



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Introduction

Comprehensive Interpretive Planning

The National Park Service (NPS) has a unified planning approach for interpretation and education. This approach combines planning for interpretive media, personal interpretive services, and education programs. The Comprehensive Interpretive Plan (CIP) is the basic planning document for interpretation and was adopted as part of NPS guidelines in 1995. Responsibility for creating the CIP lies with each park's superintendent. It builds on the foundations established through development of the General Management Plan (GMP).

What is a Comprehensive Interpretive Plan?

The interpretive planning process helps parks consider ideas, make choices, and set priorities about interpretation and education programming. It provides guidance to staff by clarifying objectives, identifying audiences, and recommending the best mix of media and personal services to convey park themes.

Although the CIP as defined in Director's Order No. 6 is composed of specific elements, good planning is customized to meet each park's needs and situation. The CIP is a guide to effective, goal-driven planning. It is primarily a forward-looking document that concentrates on actions needed to create or sustain a vigorous and effective interpretive program for the future. CIPs include a Long-Range Interpretive Plan (LRIP) and Annual Implementation Plans (AIP).

What is a Long-Range Interpretive Plan?

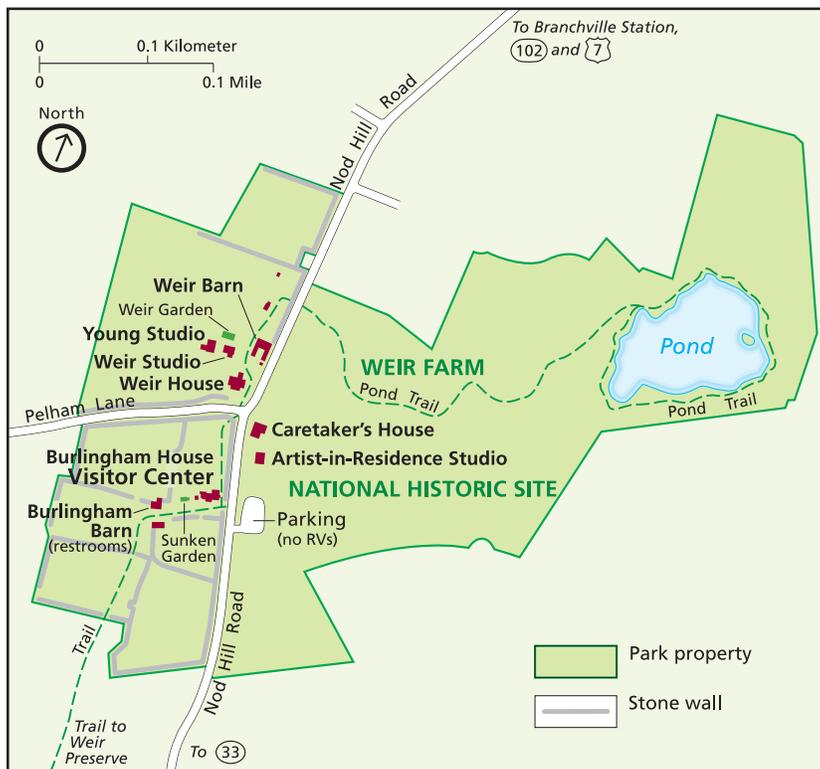
The heart of the CIP is the Long-Range Interpretive Plan (LRIP). The LRIP defines the overall vision and long-term (5-7 year) interpretive goals of a park. The process to develop the LRIP defines realistic strategies and actions that work toward achievement of the interpretive goals. The LRIP features two phases. The Foundation phase articulates significance, themes, and target audiences, and includes a brief review of existing conditions.

The second phase of the LRIP builds upon that foundation with recommendations about interpretive services, media, and strategic partnerships for the park, looking ahead to the next 5-7 years. A full text draft articulates those elements, and, after review, the LRIP is finalized.

What is an Annual Implementation Plan?

An LRIP is a critical component of the CIP, but it does not stand alone. Actions in the LRIP are divided into annual, achievable steps described in the Annual Implementation Plan. The AIP simplifies annual planning by basing implementation on the actions recommended in the LRIP.

Weir Farm National Historic Site



Foundation

Background

Weir Farm National Historic Site (WEFA), the only unit in the National Park System dedicated to American painting, was home to three generations of American artists. Julian Alden Weir, a leading figure in American art and the development of American Impressionism, acquired the farm in 1882. After Weir, Dorothy Weir Young and her husband, sculptor Mahonri Young, continued the artistic legacy followed by New England painters Sperry and Doris Andrews.

Today, the 60-acre park, which includes the Weir House, Weir and Young studios, barns, outbuildings, gardens, fields, stone walls, and Weir Pond, is one of the nation's finest remaining landscapes of American art.

The park is located in the towns of Ridgefield and Wilton in the Southwest Hills Ecoregion of southern Connecticut. It includes successional old fields, mesic successional hardwood forests, vernal wetland areas, streams, a pond, and rocky ridges.

Park Designation

Public Law 101-485

On October 31, 1990, Congress established WEFA under Public Law 101-485, 104 stat. 1171.

Section 3 of the law states that:

- 1) Weir Farm in Connecticut is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a historic site associated with major American artists and several artistic developments;
- 2) Weir Farm, acquired in 1882 by J. Alden Weir, a founder and principal exponent of American Impressionism, has been continuously occupied by working artists and their families who have maintained its significance and integrity as a historic site; and
- 3) Weir Farm, including the house, barns, studios, pond, field, and woods thereon, and the approximately 113 acres of adjacent natural areas owned by the Nature Conservancy and the Town of Ridgefield, Connecticut, provide opportunities for illustrating and interpreting cultural themes of our Nation's heritage and provide opportunities for public use and enjoyment.

From left to right: the Young Studio, Weir Studio, and Weir House at Weir Farm National Historic Site.





Julian Alden Weir was inspired to paint this small watercolor on his first visit to the farm, starting an artistic tradition still alive at Weir Farm National Historic Site over 130 years later! Julian Alden Weir, *Spring Landscape, Branchville*, ca. 1882, watercolor on paper, 5" x 6 3/4", Weir Farm National Historic Site.

Purpose

Purpose statements emerge from the language that created a park. In the case of WEFA, Public Law 101-485 cited three reasons for establishing the park:

- 1) to preserve a significant site of the tradition of American Impressionism;
- 2) to maintain the integrity of a setting that inspires artistic expression and encourages public enjoyment; and
- 3) to offer opportunities for the inspirational benefit and education of the American people.

As a park evolves and changes, it is useful to review the park's legislation along with existing planning documents and discuss whether changed conditions or new research, particularly as they relate to interpretation, suggest clarification of the park's contemporary purpose.

Participants attending a planning workshop in June 2012 felt that this LRIP should highlight several aspects of the WEFA legislation:

The role that Julian Alden Weir played in "the tradition of American Impressionism."

The opportunities that the park offers not only for study of the park's cultural and natural past but also for the on-going "inspirational benefit

and education" of future audiences.

The holistic nature of the "integrity of setting," making sure to interpret the inseparable connections that Julian Alden Weir and others forged between their art and their surroundings.

The continued inspirational importance of the park. WEFA is an active and engaging park that "encourages public enjoyment" by involving and immersing audiences in the park's stories and resources.

Significance

Significance statements provide additional insight into the distinctiveness of each NPS unit and help to place a park within national and international contexts.

These factual statements summarize the essence of a park's resources and suggest why they are important enough to be considered national treasures and worthy of NPS designation. They help identify the stories that the park commemorates, preserves, and interprets.

Based on language in the GMP and input from workshop participants, the national significance of WEFA stems from its distinctive combination of buildings and furnishings, intact landscapes, painting sites, and association with American art history. Specifically:

It was the home, workplace, and agrarian retreat of Julian Alden Weir (1852-1919), a leading figure in American art and the development of American Impressionism.

Weir Farm was a gathering place not only for Julian Alden Weir's family, but also for his artist associates.

Since the 19th century, Weir Farm has been a source of inspiration for both artists and preservationists dedicated to preserving its artistic settings.

Weir Farm was integral to Julian Alden Weir’s artistic vision of life and landscape and, because it survives largely intact, is one of the nation’s finest remaining landscapes of American art.

See Appendix 1 for additional details on the physical features of the park.

Primary Themes

Theme Matrix

The theme matrix in this LRIP identifies several stories associated with the national significance of the park. Each theme is described by a title, theme statement, examples of concepts/ideas appropriate to the theme, and examples of topics and stories that fit with each theme.

These four sections in the matrix: 1) title, 2) theme statement, 3) concepts and ideas, and 4) topics and stories allow readers with different learning styles and interests to get a broader picture of what may be encompassed in each theme.

The theme statements adhere to accepted tenets of interpretive theme construction. That is, primary interpretive themes:

Derive from a park’s purpose and national significance.

Capture and convey the meaning of a place not solely facts.

Open minds to new ideas and introduce multiple points of view.

Suggest connections, meanings, and relevance.

Link universal concepts and experiences with tangible resources.

Provide a foundation for more specific programs, presentations, and exhibits.

Are expressed in single sentences.

Concepts and ideas are written as

objectives to help managers and interpreters align personal services, exhibits, or other media with park significance. Although park interpretive themes should be relatively timeless, both the concepts/ideas and the topics/stories can be added to or changed when new information comes to light.

Because the objectives can be used for programs and media, they can save effort and eliminate the stress that comes with the pressure to develop brand-new, original themes for every interpretive program or product.

When assessing interpretive themes, the question to answer is not, “What’s missing?” In fact, there might be a lot missing and the concepts/ideas and topics/stories can only be validated if people begin to see many possibilities for other representative topics and stories that could be included under a concept.

The Essence of WEFA

Art and artistic expression are the essence of WEFA’s history and legacy. The park’s collection of exterior, interior, and sensory environments inspired several generations of artists and visitors—beginning with Julian Alden Weir and continuing today—to question what art is, how art is created, and what inspires art and sustains artistic expression.

The design and placement of windows served to unite the Weir House with the landscape. Photo: Dining Room Window © 2011 www.xiomaro.com



INTERPRETIVE THEME MATRIX

Weir Farm: A Haven for Artistic Transformation

Interpretive Theme Statement	Concepts and Ideas These are examples of the concepts and ideas that may be explored within each theme. Concepts and ideas are written as objectives.*	Topics and Stories Examples of topics and stories that could be included in this theme.*
<p>Weir Farm’s history as a creative haven for nurturing the transformation of artistic expression sheds light on how and why artistic ideas and techniques take root and mature.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the origins of American Impressionism and how it differed from European Impressionism. • Explore Weir’s evolution and success as an artist and Impressionist including other artistic styles Weir worked in and was influenced by. • Explore the role that Weir played in American Impressionism and the impact that he had on other contemporary artists. • Explain how American Impressionist art differed from other styles of artistic expression. What makes it distinctive? How was it experimental or revolutionary? • Outside of the American Impressionist circle, identify some of Weir’s artist contemporaries. • Place American Impressionism in the context of American art history. How did others react to American Impressionism? • Explore how American Impressionism reflected American society at the end of the 19th century and how the movement is viewed today. • Explore the nature of art, what is art, who decides, what survives the judgment of time. • Explore the ways that family, friends, and surroundings influence artistic expression and creativity. • Explore Weir’s relationship to his father Robert Walter Weir and his brother John Ferguson Weir and how they influenced Weir’s artistic evolution. • Discuss the intentionality of setting—the manipulation of landscapes as well as interior spaces used by Impressionists. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The agrarian ideal depicted by Impressionists. • The scale and intimacy of Impressionist art. • Weir’s artistic training and career. • Artwork of Robert Walter Weir and John Ferguson Weir. • The basic characteristics of American Impressionism. • The artistic techniques and media most used by Impressionists. • Use of the farm for subject matter. • Other Weir-related sites, Windham, for example. • Other Impressionists associated with Weir Farm. • Weir as artistic colleague and mentor. • Weir’s membership in and leadership of art clubs/groups such as the National Academy of Design, Art Students League, Tile Club, Century Club, Salmagundi Club, Society of American Artists, and The Ten. • Specific pieces of art by Weir and others that connect to the park. • Where is Weir’s art today? • Where to see art by others associated with the park.

Weir Farm: A Place Apart

Interpretive Theme Statement	Concepts and Ideas These are examples of the concepts and ideas that may be explored within each theme. Concepts and ideas are written as objectives.*	Topics and Stories Examples of topics and stories that could be included in this theme.*
<p>Beginning with the ownership of Julian Alden Weir, Weir Farm continues to function as a retreat, a place apart, that now provides the 21st-century artist and visitor with a setting that nurtures inspiration, reflection, collaboration, and community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the times in which Weir lived and worked. How might the events and society of the day have influenced Weir? From what was he seeking respite? • Explore the community that developed among Weir and his artist contemporaries and the ways that they used Weir Farm for relaxation and creative rejuvenation. • Describe how Weir viewed his farm and discuss the ways that it balanced his life in New York City. • Compare and contrast Weir Farm with Weir’s studio in New York City and his property in Windham, Connecticut. • Provide examples of Weir’s own recollections of the farm as well as those of his artist colleagues. • Describe the ways that stays at the farm affected Weir, helped him to recharge, and perhaps transformed his artistic vision. • Begin to learn to see the rural Connecticut landscape through the eyes of the farm’s owners/artists and their visitors. • Compare the recorded impressions of the farm with the reality of today. What has changed and what remains the same? • Compare the farm’s interior and exterior spaces. How did the farm’s owners/artists choose to manage farm landscapes? How did they furnish their homes? What work environments characterized the studios of Weir and Young? • Encourage audiences to identify their own personal places of rejuvenation and healing. • Explore the idea that art in nature fosters deep and meaningful connections with the outdoors and benefits emotional, mental, and physical health. Visit Weir Farm and live longer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weir acquisition of the farm and his involvement in farm work/management. • Daily life and recreation at Weir Farm. • The role that Weir Farm played in the lives of the Weir family including Weir’s brother John Ferguson Weir. • The park’s cultural landscape and history of land use. • Travel to and from the farm during Weir’s lifetime. • Visits by Weir’s artist contemporaries: Albert Pinkham Ryder, John Twachtman, Childe Hassam, John Singer Sargent, and others. • The Land of Nod as a name for the farm. • Weir’s neighbors. • Weir’s daughters Dorothy Weir Young and Cora Weir Burlingham at the farm and their families. • Sperry and Doris Andrews. • NPS stewardship of the park.

Weir Farm: A Tradition of Artistic Expression

Interpretive Theme Statement	Concepts and Ideas These are examples of the concepts and ideas that may be explored within each theme. Concepts and ideas are written as objectives.*	Topics and Stories Examples of topics and stories that could be included in this theme.*
<p>Weir Farm has a continuing tradition of artistic expression and imagination built on a foundation established by Julian Alden Weir, continued by several generations of owner/artists, and preserved and sustained for future generations by the National Park Service and partners.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the tradition of artistic creation at Weir Farm begun by Weir and continued after his death by Dorothy and Mahonri Young and Sperry and Doris Andrews. • Illustrate the park’s “integrity of setting” including the preservation and restoration of the cultural landscape, historic structures, and their interiors. • Compare the ways that different artistic techniques and media have been used to depict the farm. • List the wide range of creativity evident within the park’s stories, from painting to sculpture to printmaking to landscape design to architecture to decorative arts including furnishings. • Explore what unifies the art and craftsmanship associated with the park, the influence of natural and agrarian landscapes for example. • Provide opportunities for audiences to read about the impacts that farm landscapes have had on artists in the artists’ own words. • Consider the importance of surroundings to inspiration and creativity. • Trace the evolution of art styles since the American Impressionists, particularly the art of resident artists, and how they are reflected in the art tradition of WEFA. • Encourage participation in WEFA’s creative activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weir and his contemporaries’ use of the farm for work and inspiration. • Mahonri Young’s work at the farm, his use of the studio, his sketches of the farm, his etchings, the sculptures that he created. • The art of Dorothy Weir Young. • The art of Sperry and Doris Andrews. • The artists that historically have used and currently use the park as an artistic setting. • The role the owners/artists played in the preservation of the park including stewardship of collections such as art, furnishings, and archival materials. • The Painting Sites Guide. • The skills and tools required for art. • The artistry and craftsmanship of exterior and interior spaces. • Art programs at the park today for both artists and visitors including Artist-in-Residence, Visiting Artist, Take Part in Art, and Impressionist Painting Workshops. • Other similar art sites then and now.

Weir Farm: A Palette of Light, Color, and Pattern

Interpretive Theme Statement	Concepts and Ideas These are examples of the concepts and ideas that may be explored within each theme. Concepts and ideas are written as objectives.*	Topics and Stories Examples of topics and stories that could be included in this theme.*
<p>The artistry of Julian Alden Weir and the many artists associated with Weir Farm challenge us to look carefully and observe purposefully, to focus on the palette of light, color, and pattern all around us.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the intentionality that Weir applied to his farm’s landscapes seeking just the right mix of light, color, and pattern to depict the beauty of everyday settings both outdoors and indoors. • Compare the scenes depicted in farm-inspired art to actual settings and discuss how artists sometimes manipulate perspective, light, and color for artistic effect. • Recognize similar landscapes throughout the region and similar intimate scenes—flowers and forests, family, friends, and animal companions—in daily life. • Describe the artist tools and techniques that Weir and other Impressionists used to produce their desired effect. • Encourage audiences to practice observation of surroundings; re-teach looking and seeing. • Encourage audiences to describe the natural light in a variety of settings including exteriors and interiors. • Encourage audiences to look for and identify the palette of colors that reflects the appearance of the farm during a visit. • Describe the feelings captured in art completed on-site by Weir and others. • Listen to explanations of the role that natural beauty, gardens, and rural/agrarian landscapes played in the lives and artistic inspiration of artists who have created at Weir Farm. • Connect furnishings and interiors with Weir’s artistic vision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The art and science of light and color. • The influence of light, color, and pattern on Impressionist art. • The characteristics of Connecticut’s climate, weather, changing seasons, topography, etc. • The intentional use and manipulation of both interior and exterior spaces for art. • The influence that light had on the design and construction of the artist studios at the farm. • Artist tools and techniques used to capture light, color, and patterns. • Design elements like the stars on the studio ceiling and color of studio walls, the wood and ornamentation of furnishings, and decorative arts elements. • Ways of bringing nature inside.

* These concepts, ideas, and topics are a representative, partial list. They are examples that could illustrate the concepts. They are not all-inclusive (in fact they could never be) nor are they intended to exclude any topic. A park interpretive theme is successful only if other topics and stories can be included comfortably within it.



Girl Scouts paint in the Sunken Garden with assistance from *Take Part in Art* instructor, artist Marc Chabot.

Theme Evolution

At the park's request, participants at the Foundation Workshop provided new input that led to the primary themes described above. These contemporary themes fine-tuned the themes in the 1995 WEFA GMP (see Appendix 2).

The GMP themes followed a different format—they identified primary and secondary themes and those themes tended to be more factual than interpretive. They tended to present facts without addressing relevance. Most of the themes never asked the “So what?” question. The primary difference in the expression of the two sets of themes is rooted in that search for relevance.

The themes in this LRIP supplement the importance of the park's artistic and natural heritage with added emphasis on the contemporary uses of the park. They look toward sustaining WEFA as a laboratory for art, a place apart, a home for artistic creativity, and an environment that encourages observation.

To ensure the compatibility of this LRIP with other planning documents, all of the ideas contained in the GMP themes have been included in either the significance statements or the theme matrix of this plan.

Audiences

To design the most effective interpretive programming and employ the most effective interpretive techniques, it is critical to identify intended audiences. These are both the existing audiences who actively use park interpretive programs AND potential audiences that well-planned interpretation might encourage.

The term audience is used purposefully in this document. In the 21st century, it is essential for parks to communicate with on-site visitors as well as others who have not or cannot “visit” in person.

The Internet is a powerful tool for both information and interpretation. While many will use technology as a gateway to a site or region they plan to visit, others, including some who may never see a park in person, deserve access to quality information and interpretation.

In addition, for reasons of time and budget, outreach and interpretive programming might be conducted off-site or virtually. Websites, videos and social media postings, news and magazine articles, television and radio programs reach thousands more people than will physically visit a park. Realities like on-site parking, the carrying capacities of historic structures, or sensitive environments play a role in the number of actual visitors that a park can accommodate.

Snapshot of Audience Activity

Current on-site visitation averages around 20,000 per year. Many of these visitors could be described as “local” or regional although some from outside the region visit because WEFA is a unit of the National Park System. The majority of visitors are white. Many visitors are seniors although, in recent years, families have been visiting the park in greater numbers. Since the park functions as a gateway to the Weir Preserve and Nod Hill Refuge, on-site visitors include those who enjoy

walking in nature. Park neighbors and locals visit the park regularly to hike and walk, especially with their dogs.

Based on anecdotal observations, staff feel that the number of out-of-state visitors, primarily from New York, New England, and the Mid-Atlantic states is increasing. Artists and those who appreciate art appear to be finding and visiting the park in larger numbers. The park has increased and diversified those contacts with targeted outreach.

A review of other audiences suggests the potential influence of the Internet and social media. During a peak visitation month in the spring of 2012, on-site park visitation was approximately 2,000 while the park website registered 13,000 contacts; many of those contacts went well beyond just the initial homepage.

Targeted Audiences

This section of the plan recognizes that interpretive techniques and audiences are inter-related—some interpretive tools are better adapted to, or appeal to, particular audiences.

Workshop discussions suggested that the following target audiences should receive specific attention. Planning should develop or enhance interpretive programming and media to help build the park's next generation of stewards and friends by reaching out to:

- Youth under 25 years of age.

- Educators and teachers including those involved in higher education as well as adult and continuing education.

- Underserved populations, particularly from regional cities.

- Park neighbors.

Other important potential audiences include:

- Virtual visitors who use digital and social media.

- New partners, community organizations, and artist groups.

- Audiences generally interested in art sites and museums.

- Weekend audiences who might travel from regional cities.

Groups that might become the focus of attention in the future include:

- Those interested in attending workshops and art classes.

- Those who use park trails.

- Those interested in international art sites, particularly sites related to Impressionism.

Accessibility and Audiences

The NPS is committed to developing a comprehensive strategy to provide people with disabilities equal access to all programs, activities, services, and facilities. As part of that effort, Harpers Ferry Center developed “Programmatic Accessibility Guidelines for National Park Service Interpretive Media” and made them and other resources available.

See www.nps.gov/hfc/accessibility/index.htm.

Staff, partners, and media contractors must consult these guidelines as the park revises or rehabilitates existing interpretive programming and develops new interpretive media.

In addition, in 2011, the NPS partnered with the National Center on Accessibility to identify barriers to participation by people with disabilities, make recommendations for barrier removal and improved access, and develop associated work orders and cost estimates to assist WEFA with long-term planning. The report's recommendations (see Appendix 3) either have been addressed or are in the process of being addressed.

Audience Experiences

While primary themes focus on what audiences will learn as a result of interpretive programs and media, audience experiences explore what audiences will do. What types of activities will help audiences with orientation and wayfinding? How might the design of interpretive programs and media encourage audience involvement and, as a result, reinforce key aspects of the park's themes? How can interpretation use the powerful impact of hands-on, sensory activity to send audiences home with lasting memories? How can landscapes bolster audience understanding of WEFA? How can interpretation provide audiences with opportunities to find personal meaning in the park's associated stories and resources?

Experiences that Assist with Orientation

A balanced interpretive program should make it a high priority to help orient audiences to all that the park has to offer. Specifically, to:

Provide information that helps visitors form appropriate expectations about what WEFA has to offer.

Feel safe, comfortable, and welcomed. Provide an appropriate sense of arrival.

Provide an overview of the park's

interpretive themes, set those stories into context, and link them to park significance.

As appropriate to the resource, empower audiences to experience the park on their own or provide directions for guided programs. Explain visiting options, eliminate barriers to access, and suggest how the park's landscapes and building interiors can be viewed separately or blended into a seamless narrative.

Explain the characteristics of American Impressionism and allow audiences to see examples.

Experiences that Reinforce Interpretive Themes

A balanced interpretive program also should make it a high priority to provide interpretive activities that reinforce the park's interpretive themes. Specifically, to:

Make connections between WEFA and the art created on-site or inspired by the cultural landscape.

See a variety of artists' works associated with WEFA.

Make connections between WEFA and other art sites associated with Julian Alden Weir and Impressionism.

Engage in hands-on, tactile, sensory, and fun activities that reinforce interpretive messages in memorable ways.

Encourage active involvement with and immersion in art and the creative process.

Experience the park's varied landscapes and building interiors.

Acquire accurate knowledge and up-to-date scholarship related to the park's themes.

Humanize the park's stories and introduce audiences to the many people associated with the park—past and present.

Park Rangers lead Girl Scouts in a rousing game of Paintbrush Limbo.



Use a variety of interpretive methods, media, and approaches to reach diverse audiences.

Address the varied knowledge of WEFA's likely audiences. Challenge those better versed in art history and offer more basic interpretation for others who need introductory information.

Challenge audiences to think about art and artistic creativity in the context of modern society and the contributions that art makes to the quality of life.

Experiences that Inspire

A balanced interpretive program should encourage thoughtful contemplation of relevance and the intangible meanings associated with park stories. Specifically, to:

Provide a retreat or refuge, away from intrusions, for thoughtful reflection.

Enable visitors to discover the park's cultural landscape and viewsheds, and appreciate how they change by season, time of day, weather, etc.

Challenge audiences to see their surroundings and particularly light, color, and patterns in new ways.

Encourage visits to other art sites and return visits to WEFA.

Broaden and deepen audience knowledge of and appreciation for art and the preservation of art sites.

Encourage audiences to commit to the preservation of WEFA or similar sites.

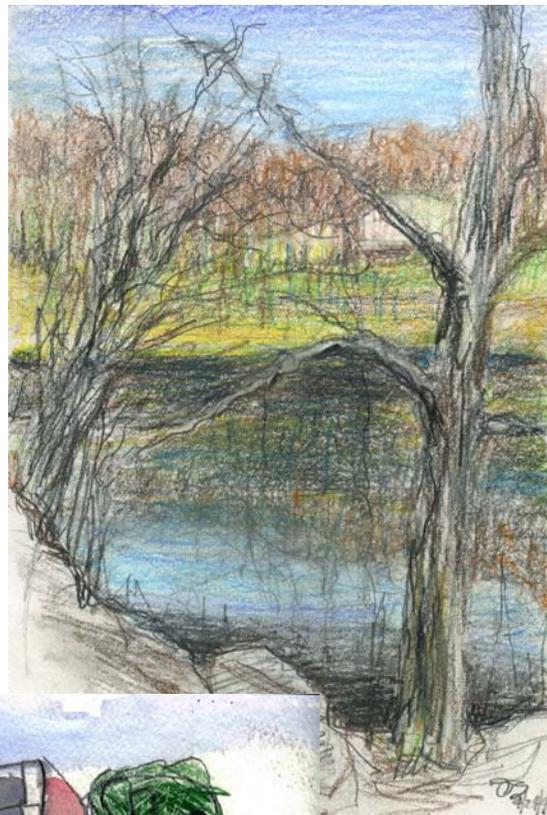
Encourage the notion that art can and should be accessible to all.

Help visitors sense and participate in the creative energy associated with the park. Encourage audiences to create something.

Encourage participation in recreation activities historically enjoyed by owners/artists such as hiking, picnicking, dog walking, etc.



A young visitor and artist participates in *Take Part in Art*.



The visitors that created this artwork are now part of the park's ongoing artistic tradition.

The Park in 2012

Summary

WEFA is located in Wilton and Ridgefield, Connecticut, approximately 60 miles north of New York City and 50 miles west of Hartford. The park is located in a residential area off a narrow, hilly road. WEFA is 60 acres and is bordered by the Weir Preserve (110 acres) to the southwest and the Nod Hill Refuge (29 acres) to the northeast. Private property and homes surround the rest of the park. Parking is very limited. The climate is cold in the winter and hot, humid, and rainy in summer. No public transportation is available. Because the Weir House, Weir Studio, and Young Studio are currently undergoing restoration and closed to the public, the majority of the visitor experience takes place outdoors in the park's preserved cultural landscape which has inspired artists since 1882.

In 2000, an LRIP was created for WEFA. Since that LRIP, many changes have occurred at the park including the end of a life tenancy agreement with Sperry and Doris Andrews, the last family of artists to live on-site, in 2005. At that time, the Weir House, Weir Studio, and Young Studio came under park management. These three buildings will open to the public for the

first time, fully restored and historically furnished, in 2013. They are the three most significant historic structures in the park, and their opening will dramatically change the visitor experience.

There are three, small, non-descript, roadside signs that lead visitors to the park from the intersection of Route 7 and Route 102. The most common visitor complaint is the need for more and updated signs directing visitors to the park.

The Burlingham Complex

Visitors begin their on-site visit in the visitor parking lot, the location of the only wayside exhibit in the park. This wayside welcomes visitors, introduces them to the significance of WEFA, and orients them with a map. Also in the parking lot, a sign lists visitor center hours and times for regular ranger-guided tours.

About half of the park's visitors (approximately 10,000 annually) start their visit in the Burlingham House Visitor Center across the road from the parking lot. The Burlingham House Visitor Center, a historic home, currently houses a visitor contact station, gallery, and museum store. The park film is shown in the gallery room which also features changing artwork

Visitors and artists alike take advantage of park grounds being open every day, year-round, dawn to dusk.



by artists historically associated with the park or by contemporary artists. This room is not an ideal location to watch the park film as it is not closed off to noise and is brightly lit. Audio description and assisted listening devices are available.

The other room houses a temporary exhibit that primarily consists of foam-core wall panels featuring historic photos or text. Also in this room is a small closet with an exhibit about the park's historic gardens. A 45-minute slideshow featuring artwork by artists historically associated with the park runs on a computer monitor. The visitor center is not handicap accessible, although the park does have temporary ramps that provide wheelchair access.

The Potting Shed, Sunken Garden, Burlingham Barn, Terraced Gardens, and Woodshed as well as lawns, fields, and stone walls also comprise the Burlingham Complex. The Burlingham Barn houses a water cooler and two public restrooms, one of which is handicap accessible. The historic Burlingham Barn was renovated and is used as a classroom, workshop, and meeting space.

From April through November, the visitor center is open Thursday through Sunday from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm.

From December through March, the visitor center is open Saturday and Sunday from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm.

Park grounds are open daily, year-round from dawn to dusk. Because many people visit the park when the visitor center is closed, they do not receive adequate orientation or interpretive media necessary for a self-guided experience. Visitor center hours are based on visitation trends and patterns as well as staffing levels and park priorities and initiatives. WEFA made the decision to close the visitor center on Wednesdays year-round and dedicate those days to youth and education programs as well as group visits. Without this dedicated day,



WEFA would not be able to engage as many underserved youth, students, and groups.

Sunken Garden and Burlingham House Visitor Center.

The museum store in the visitor center is managed by park staff in cooperation with Eastern National, the park's cooperating association. There is limited space for displaying merchandise. Currently, store inventory primarily consists of books and branded merchandise (pins, patches, magnets, mugs, tote bags, and chocolate tins). The store does not offer items that reflect the interiors of the Weir House and studios. There are no prints of artwork for sale.

The Weir Complex

An accessible visitor path leads visitors from the Burlingham Complex to the Weir Complex. Visitors must cross the road and there is no pedestrian crosswalk. The Weir House will be handicap accessible. The Weir and Young studios will not be handicap accessible. Except for the kitchen of the Weir House, all three historic structures will be historically furnished.

The Weir Complex also includes the Weir Barn, Tack House, Ice House, Chicken Coop, Corn Crib, Garden Tool Shed, Weir Orchard, Weir Garden, Corral, Arbors, Terraced Gardens, Stone Table, Adirondack-style wood fence, and stone walls.



Students get inspiration from flora and fauna at Weir Pond.

The Weir Pond

To access the trail to the Weir Pond from the Weir Complex, visitors must cross a road with no pedestrian crosswalk. The Pond Trail is the most popular walking trail on-site. It is a one and a half mile round trip walk from the visitor center. The trail is identified with colored blazes on trees. On the dam of the pond there is a sign that directs visitors to a Waterfall Walk—this leads visitors off park property and into the Nod Hill Refuge. However, this is not clear from the park map nor is it made clear in any signs. Also, there is no real waterfall to speak of, which confuses visitors further.

Guided programs in the pond area include the monthly Ponder the Pond Trail Walk (May through October) and a fall Nature's Palette Walk. Youth partnership programs with the Girl Scouts of Connecticut and Groundwork Bridgeport also use the pond area.

The Pond Trail sign is the only directional sign on park property. Without clear signage directing visitors, park maps must be as accurate and as easy to read as possible.

Personal Services

In fiscal year (FY) 2011, 40,768 visitors attended facilitated programs. This is a 39.5% increase over FY2010 and

includes visitors that participated in more than one program during their visit. It also includes visitors participating in off-site programs. Facilitated programs offered include ranger-guided tours, Take Part in Art, Junior Ranger, education programs, and special events.

Ranger-Guided Tours and Programs

In FY2011, 1,572 visitors took a tour. Regularly offered ranger-guided tours include a 30-minute Introductory Tour and a one-hour long Stone Wall Tour. Tours are provided at 11:00 am, 1:00 pm, and 3:00 pm when the visitor center is open. The 3:00 pm tour on Saturdays includes a visit to the Artist-in-Residence Studio.

In FY2011, of the 500 tours offered, 173 were attended, a 34% attendance rate. Special ranger-guided walks and talks that happen once a month or once a year require visitors to register ahead of time because of limited parking and small, indoor spaces. Special walks and talks offered in FY2011 included: The Women of Weir Farm (March, Women's History Month), Framing the Artscape (April), A Brush with War (April, Civil War Sesquicentennial), The Nature of Love (May), Ponder the Pond Trail (May-October, once a month), Poetry and Painting in the Land of Nod (August), Nature's Palette (October), America's Best Idea (October, WEFA Anniversary Tour), and Foreshadowing Fate (November).

Group Visits

WEFA welcomes a number of groups throughout the year. In FY2011, over 30 groups visited. As of July 2012, over 60 groups visited the park with an additional 10 groups scheduled through the end of the fiscal year. These groups can range in size from 10 to 60 visitors.

These statistics include school groups, but not groups visiting as part of a youth program.

There is no parking on-site for large buses or RVs, and large tour buses cannot drop-off or pick-up groups. During the week, groups are limited to five cars per group and on the weekend three cars per group. School buses or tour buses (the size of school buses) can drop-off and pick-up groups and park at the Gilbert and Bennett Community Cultural Center (about two miles away) through an agreement with the center's director.

Events

In FY2011, 779 visitors attended special events. The park does not offer a large number of special events because of capacity limitations—the visitor parking lot at WEFA holds 18 cars. A new parking lot, constructed behind the Burlingham Barn in FY2011, is used by staff and volunteers as well as for visitor over-flow parking. This parking lot holds 15 cars.

For large special events, the park shuttles visitors from the Branchville Elementary School parking lot (about a mile and a half away) to the park.

The largest annual event WEFA offers is Jazz in the Garden. This event is jointly managed by the Weir Farm Art Center and the NPS. In FY2011, 270 visitors attended. Other events are smaller-scale and typically require registration. These include Connecticut Open House Day and Connecticut Historic Gardens Day.

Community Programs

In FY2011, WEFA reached 2,843 visitors through community programs. WEFA annually participates in a number of community outreach events, including: The Big E, Ridgefield Cultural Festival, Ridgefield Summerfest, Georgetown Day, Wilton Go Green Festival, and Great Park Pursuit seasonal festivals. For these community programs, park employees and volunteers staff a WEFA tent and hand out information about the park.



Youth Programs

WEFA engages in youth partnership programs with the Girl Scouts of Connecticut, Woodcock Nature Center, and Groundwork Bridgeport.

Since FY2010, WEFA has worked with the Girl Scouts of Connecticut to transport inner-city Girl Scouts to the park. Through this partnership, underserved minority Girl Scouts have the opportunity to participate in a fun, educational field day at their local national park—which they otherwise may not have had the opportunity to visit. In FY2011, over 250 Girl Scouts from Stamford, Connecticut, visited the park, and in FY2012 over 300 inner-city Girl Scouts will visit from Stamford and Bridgeport, Connecticut. This program has been primarily funded through the Youth Partnership Program supplemented in FY2012 with additional funding from a National Park Foundation America's Best Idea Grant.

Beginning in FY2010, WEFA began partnering with Woodcock Nature Center, located about a mile from the park. On Fridays throughout the summer, WEFA staff travel to Woodcock Nature Center to offer interpretive and educational programs to their summer campers. Through this partnership, every camper is introduced to WEFA and the NPS and participates in the Take Part in

A Groundwork Bridgeport Green Team member participates in service-learning as part of a Youth Conservation Corps project.



“A Park for Every Classroom” students act out skits in a giant frame placed in one of the park’s hundreds of historic painting sites.

Art program. To date (July 2012), over 550 campers have participated. In FY2010 and FY2011, this youth partnership program was funded through park base, but in FY2012 the park received additional funding from a National Park Foundation Impact Grant. Using this grant, WEFA and Woodcock Nature Center expanded the partnership and funded camp scholarships and transportation for underserved minority youth living in nearby Norwalk, Connecticut.

Since FY2008, WEFA has partnered with Groundwork Bridgeport to fund transportation for underserved, minority high school students to participate in service-learning at the park. Every summer, a crew of 10-30 high school students works in the park

Recently inducted Junior Rangers spend the rest of their visit painting *en plein air*.



for approximately four to six weeks. They assist with stone wall restoration, trail and garden maintenance, and invasive plant removal, and participate in education programs. This summer, WEFA hired a Groundwork Bridgeport crewmember as a seasonal employee using the STEP hiring authority.

Junior Rangers

WEFA offers two Junior Ranger activities. If participants complete one, they earn a badge, and if they complete both they earn a special WEFA patch. In FY2011, WEFA inducted 1,187 new Junior Rangers.

The Junior Ranger Letterboxing Booklet directs participants to use clues to navigate the landscape and locate stamps in hidden locations. Five containers, or letterboxes, have been hidden throughout the park.

For children looking for a nature walk, the park offers the Junior Ranger Pond Pack, a backpack containing art and nature-oriented activities to complete on a hike around Weir Pond.

At WEFA, Girl Scout and Boy Scout groups can earn a special Scout Ranger certificate and patch for completing one of the above activities.

Education Programs

In FY2011, 1,582 students participated in WEFA education programs offered both on- and off-site. For school groups, WEFA offers the Art Alive! curriculum-based program consisting of a ranger-guided tour and participation in the Take Part in Art program.

In FY2011, WEFA was selected as one of eight parks in the Northeast Region to participate in the A Park for Every Classroom (PEC) pilot program. WEFA offered its first PEC teacher immersion workshop in spring 2012. Following the first workshop, the park will continue to offer professional development and support to teachers and reach out to new teachers and

schools to participate in future teacher immersion workshops. Based on staff, time, and money, PEC is the best model for a formal education program at WEFA. WEFA's lead PEC teacher also serves as the park's Teacher-Ranger-Teacher. She spent the 2012 summer assisting with youth programs and developing programs and lesson plans that will be shared with and adopted by other PEC teachers.

To offer fun, engaging, and physically active experiences, WEFA has added Paintbrush Limbo, Paintbrush Relay Races, and Giant Frames to complement existing interpretive and educational programming. During school and youth group visits, students and youth limbo under a giant paintbrush while singing the "Paintbrush Limbo" song, divide into teams and compete in Paintbrush Relay Races, and act out skits in Giant Frames placed in the landscape, typically framing historic painting sites.

Art Programs

Take Part in Art provides visitors with the opportunity to sketch or paint *en plein air* (in the open air) as artists have at WEFA for over 130 years. The NPS provides free art supplies every day when the visitor center is open. Watercolor supplies are provided on weekends, May through October. On Saturday afternoons a professional artist provides instruction. Sketching supplies are offered all other days. Since FY2008, over 6,000 visitors have participated.

WEFA annually offers five Impressionist Painting Workshops: two, 1-day workshops for beginning artists in the spring and fall; two, 2-day workshops for intermediate/advanced artists in the spring and fall; and one, 1-day workshop for teens in the summer. As of July 2012, over 160 artists had participated. Artwork created by artists participating in the first workshop was exhibited in the visitor center. These workshops are funded by the NPS through a contract with an American Impressionist



artist and instructor. The workshop instructor and participants have expressed a desire to exhibit artwork created during these workshops in the visitor center.

American Impressionist artist and instructor Dmitri Wright advises a student during an Impressionist Painting Workshop.

Contemporary artists exhibiting in the visitor center are encouraged to offer Gallery Talks for visitors. The park's 2012 Visiting Artist offered monthly talks for the duration of his exhibit that were well attended.

WEFA's Artist-in-Residence program is managed by the Weir Farm Art Center, a private non-profit organization, through a cooperative agreement. The program is one of over 50 Artist-in-Residence programs offered throughout the National Park System. The Artist-in-Residence program at WEFA selects artists to spend one month living in the Caretaker's House and working in the Artist-in-Residence Studio. To date, over 150 artists from throughout the United States, as well as Tunisia, Germany, Australia, and India have participated. Artists-in-Residence are required to host one reception for the public at the Wilton Library at the end of their residency. Visitors can visit the Artist-in-Residence Studio year-round on the 3:00 pm Saturday tour. The Artist-in-Residence can choose to be present in the studio at that time.

Non-personal Services

Print, digital, and social media is a

collateral duty that shifts among staff based on staffing levels and workload. WEFA has a contract with a graphic designer to assist in the creation and design of larger publications.

Print Media/Publications

The park offers the following publications:

- WEFA unigrid brochure
- Painting Sites Guide brochure
- Self-Guiding Walking Tour brochure
- Stone Wall site bulletin
- Gardens site bulletin
- Julian Alden Weir in Windham site bulletin
- Weir House Restoration: A Visitor’s Guide site bulletin
- The Art of Partnership site bulletin
- What’s Bloomin’ site bulletins (seven versions based on flowers in bloom)
- Junior Ranger Letterboxing Booklet
- Junior Ranger Pond Pack Booklet
- The Sketchbook – Official Newsletter

Some information in these publications

is redundant. Two different maps are used—the standard Harpers Ferry Center map and a map drawn by a past Artist-in-Residence. Neither map is totally accurate. The park needs one map that clearly shows and labels all buildings as well as walking paths and trails. A regional map that includes WEFA, the Weir Preserve, and the Nod Hill Refuge would improve wayfinding.

A print flyer and an e-flyer were designed to market upcoming park programs and events. Print flyers are displayed on the porch and inside of the visitor center. E-flyers are sent to the park’s mailing list using Constant Contact.

WEFA is partnering with Eastern National to create a park handbook.

Website

WEFA’s website features an abundance of pre-visit information as well as in-depth biographical information on the artists that lived at and visited WEFA. The website is currently being maintained without significant changes or upgrades until new staff receive training in how to use the Content Management System.

Park Film

The 13-minute park film “Legacy of a Landscape” is shown in the visitor center upon visitor request.

Facebook

The park is in the process of developing a formal Social Media Plan. As of July 2012, WEFA had 396 Facebook likes. Facebook posts range from informational to interpretive. Posts regularly feature images of artwork, historic photos, archival materials, and objects and furnishings from the park’s collection. The Interpretation Division manages the park’s Facebook account and posts at least once daily, Wednesday through Sunday. The Curatorial Division posts on Museum Mondays. Facebook also is used to market and promote upcoming park programs and events. The park

Visitors watch the park film in the visitor center.



created a Facebook account for Julian Alden Weir that has 112 friends.

Twitter

As of July 2012, WEFA had 720 Twitter followers. Although the park has composed 316 tweets, Twitter is not used as regularly as Facebook. Twitter is used most often to promote upcoming programs and events.

YouTube

The park is in the process of creating a YouTube account and has worked with a volunteer to create a number of promotional videos and public service announcements.

Constant Contact

Since May 2010, WEFA has designed and sent over 80 e-flyers to the park's mailing list. In FY2011, a total of 38 Constant Contact e-flyers were designed and distributed to a total of 30,073 email inboxes; 7,374 of those e-flyers were opened.

Mailing List

WEFA maintains a growing mailing list of approximately 1,000 contacts including art sites/museums, local community contacts, media/press contacts, and visitors. The mailing list is managed using Microsoft Access.

Visitor of the Month

In an effort to recognize park visitors and give WEFA a more personal, public face, the park started a Visitor of the Month initiative. Since April 2012, a visitor (or group of visitors) is selected to tell their personal WEFA story. These visitors are featured on flyers in and on the porch of the visitor center, on the park's website, and on Facebook. The park's most popular Facebook post (in number of likes, reach, etc.) announced a Visitor of the Month.

Marketing and Promotion

WEFA uses print, digital, and social media to market and promote the park

and upcoming park programs and events. WEFA also sends out news releases to the park's mailing list and posts upcoming programs and events to three online event calendars through partnerships with the Ridgefield Arts Council, the Cultural Alliance of Western Connecticut, and the Fairfield County Cultural Alliance.

Staff and Budget

Currently the Interpretation and Education Division is managed by the park's GS-0025-09 Management Assistant. This is the division's only permanent staff. Other staff include a term GS-0025-07 Park Ranger, seasonal GS-0025-05 Park Ranger, and two seasonal GS-0303-03 Visitor Use Assistants.

The Interpretation and Education Division currently has approximately 10 Visitor Service/Interpretation Volunteers that assist with staffing the visitor center, facilitating the Take Part in Art program and Impressionist Painting Workshops, and offering special guided walks and talks.

October 2011 Artist-in-Residence Merrill Comeau working in the Artist-in-Residence Studio.





A Park Ranger introduces Woodcock Nature Center campers to the NPS Mission.

Partners and Their Missions

Weir Farm Art Center

The Weir Farm Art Center sustains and promotes the legacy of American artist Julian Alden Weir and preserves Weir Farm’s historic landscape and artistic tradition through its artist residency program, educational opportunities, exhibitions, and publications, in alliance with Weir Farm National Historic Site.

Weir Preserve Stewardship Committee

Weir Preserve is owned by the Weir Farm Art Center and maintained by the Weir Preserve Stewardship Committee. The preserve consists of 110 acres of land including trails, wetlands, open fields, and stone walls contiguous to Weir Farm National Historic Site. The volunteer Stewardship Committee oversees the preserve and has developed a master plan to guarantee protection and wise use.

Eastern National

Eastern National, WEFA’s cooperating association, promotes the public’s understanding and support of America’s national parks and other public trust partners by providing quality educational experiences, products, and services to the visitors

to America’s national parks and other public trusts. WEFA manages the park’s museum store in cooperation with Eastern National.

A Park for Every Classroom Schools

The following schools partner with the park to integrate WEFA into their lesson plans: Ridgefield Academy, Rockwell Elementary, Wilton High School, Columbus Magnet School, Danbury High School, R.M.T. Johnson School, and New Britain High School.

Visiting Artist Program

The WEFA Visiting Artist, a professional artist annually selected, serves as an ambassador for the park. The WEFA Visiting Artist promotes and markets the park and its programs through their art.

Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area

The Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area exists to illuminate the diverse, rich identity of the Upper Housatonic River Valley region and to preserve and promote its historical, cultural, and natural resources.

Woodcock Nature Center

The Woodcock Nature Center has been a private, non-profit source of nature and environmental education in Southwestern Connecticut since 1972. Located on 149 acres of state-protected land, the Woodcock Nature Preserve includes a pond, wetlands, and three miles of publicly accessible woodland trails.

Girl Scouts of Connecticut

Girl Scouting builds girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place. Through its diverse range of fun, horizon-stretching experiences, Girl Scouts of Connecticut is a powerful force for helping girls develop uncommon leadership skills that serve the common good. In this safe and supportive environment, girls can explore new skills, forge lasting friendships, and

develop a strong self image—all guided by dynamic, highly trained adult volunteers.

Groundwork Bridgeport/ Groundwork USA

The mission of Groundwork Bridgeport is: “To bring about the sustained regeneration, improvement, and management of the physical environment, by empowering people, businesses, and organizations to promote environmental, economic, and social well-being.” Groundwork Bridgeport’s main goals have been to convert blighted areas of the city into gardens, parks, playgrounds, and streetscapes. The organization strives to develop environmental education, job training, self-sufficiency, and elderly assistance programs as a means of improving the quality of life for all people in Bridgeport. Groundwork Bridgeport’s programs primarily serve and impact populations in Bridgeport that are marginalized or underprivileged.

Dry Stone Conservancy

The Dry Stone Conservancy’s mission is to preserve historic drystone structures, to advance the drystone masonry craft, and to create a center for training and expertise nationwide. The Conservancy has conducted training and restoration projects for NPS personnel, including WEFA, in 20 states and has provided advice and consultations in 35 other states.

Connecticut Historic Gardens

Connecticut Historic Gardens raises awareness of distinctive historic sites and gardens within Connecticut. By pooling funding, design, marketing, and volunteer resources, the organization increases programming opportunities, offering the public experiences rich in beauty and history, and brings greater recognition and visitation to member sites.

Connecticut Art Trail

The Connecticut Art Trail is a nationally

recognized partnership of 16 world-class museums and historic sites, created to promote Connecticut’s rich cultural assets as part of a travel experience. Their mission is to increase attendance and revenue at member museums by promoting their cultural assets as part of a travel experience to in-state residents and out-of-state travelers.

Historic Artists’ Homes and Studios (The National Trust for Historic Preservation)

The National Trust for Historic Preservation, a privately funded, nonprofit organization, works to save America’s historic places. Historic Artists’ Homes and Studios is a consortium of 30 of America’s most significant artists’ spaces that are open

The historic Secret Garden not only provided the perfect spot for a picnic with family and friends, it also was the focus of countless paintings, sketches, and prints.





The stars adorning the Weir Studio ceiling are just some of the decorative arts elements visitors will see when the Weir House and studios open. Photo: Weir Studio Ceiling Star © 2011 www.xiomaro.com

to the public and serve over 600,000 visitors each year. These extraordinary sites are the intimate living and work spaces of painters, sculptors, ceramicists, photographers, and furniture designers.

Ridgefield Arts Council

The Ridgefield Arts Council is an 11-member volunteer municipal council, appointed by the Board of Selectman of the Town of Ridgefield, Connecticut, and charged with fostering and promoting the Ridgefield arts community. The council strives to connect artists with audiences and each other.

Cultural Alliance of Western Connecticut

The Cultural Alliance of Western Connecticut, based in Danbury, Connecticut, is a leader in supporting a vibrant arts and culture community in Northern Fairfield and Southern Litchfield counties.

Cultural Alliance of Fairfield County

The mission of the Cultural Alliance of Fairfield County is to support cultural organizations, artists, and creative

businesses by providing promotion, services, and advocacy.

Western Connecticut Convention and Visitors Bureau

Western Connecticut Convention and Visitors Bureau promotes the tourism industry in two of Connecticut's premier destinations—Litchfield Hills and Fairfield County.

Ridgefield Chamber of Commerce

The mission of the Ridgefield Chamber of Commerce is to promote economic vitality through member engagement, hospitality, collaboration, education, and advocacy. The chamber has been an advocate and resource for business and non-profits by advancing and promoting the economic vitality and quality of life in Ridgefield.

Ridgefield Conservation Commission

The commission keeps an index of all open spaces in the Town of Ridgefield to ensure their proper use. The commission also manages over 2,500 acres of open space including 40 areas with developed trails. The Ridgefield Conservation Commission manages the Nod Hill Refuge.

Norwalk River Watershed Association

The Norwalk River Watershed Association, incorporated in 1996, is a not-for-profit membership organization whose mission is to improve the water quality and aesthetic value of the 40,000-acre Norwalk River watershed; to encourage recreational use of the existing trails and open space; and to promote research, education, cooperation, and action on the part of the stakeholders in the seven watershed towns in CT (Ridgefield, Redding, Wilton, New Canaan, Weston, and Norwalk) and NY (Lewisboro).

Interpretive Issues

In order to develop the most effective interpretive programs and media, park staff must address issues that are closely linked to various desired audience experiences. At WEFA, those issues include the need to:

Historic Structures

Plan for the opening of the Weir House and studios; not only staffing and training but also publicity and associated special events. As these buildings open, retain a balance between interpretation of interior and exterior spaces.

Transportation and Parking

Implement one of three options identified in the Alternative Transportation Feasibility Study.

Capacity and Security

Plan interpretive programs and media that address capacity limits of both exterior and interior spaces, and that protect exterior and interior resources.

Park Neighbors

Continue to maintain proactive relationships with park neighbors and provide timely information on park activities. When possible, expand neighbor involvement and inclusion.

Resource Stewardship

Continue to explain the inevitable changes that occur as landscapes grow and mature including how NPS stewardship accommodates natural change. Introduce and discuss resource management issues such as, climate change, and invasive species.

Accessibility

Follow up on the National Center on Accessibility recommendations to expand accessibility.

Archive and Exhibit Artwork Created On-Site

Develop a formal process to document and record the artwork being created by artists and visitors on-site including a digital archive that includes images of artwork and the rights to use these images in print and digital media. Develop a strategy for exhibiting visitor artwork.

Anniversaries/Initiatives

WEFA's 25th Anniversary

Promote 2015 as the park's 25th anniversary.

NPS Centennial

Participate in 100th anniversary of the NPS during 2016. Part of this initiative will be to promote the National Park System, the NPS ideal, and the role of WEFA as a unit of the NPS.

NPS Call to Action Plan

Participate in the Call to Action. Several reports over the last 10 years have provided direction for the National Park Service's second century. A Call to Action (2012) draws from three major initiatives—America's Great Outdoors: A Promise to Future Generations (2011); the National Parks Second Century Commission Report, Advancing the National Park Idea (2009); and The Future of America's National Parks (the Centennial Report, 2007).

A Call to Action charts a path toward a second-century vision by asking employees and partners to commit to concrete actions that advance the mission of the NPS. See Appendix 4 for WEFA's areas of emphasis.

Quiet Settings: J. Alden Weir in Windham, CT, 1882-1919

Connect to and promote this 2015 exhibit at the Florence Griswold Museum in Old Lyme, CT.

Interpretive Goals

Since staff and budget always have limits, it is important to focus on the park’s most pressing interpretive needs. Sensitive to that reality, park staff, at the conclusion of the Foundation Workshop, reviewed each section in Part 1 of the draft plan and decided that the WEFA LRIP should focus new interpretive efforts on recommendations that:

Provide audiences with information, in advance of an on-site visit, that builds accurate expectations for WEFA, answers common questions such as Who is Weir?, Why is it called a farm?, and Where is all the art?, and provides appropriate information on travel and arrival. Answer the question Why should I visit Weir Farm?

Explore and identify appropriate uses and interpretive media for WEFA buildings that are in transition, including: Weir House with particular attention to the use of the kitchen; Weir and Young studios; Burlingham House

Visitor Center including the main room, gallery room, and porch; outbuildings including the Weir Barn, Tack House, Ice House, Chicken Coop, Corn Crib, Garden Tool Shed, Woodshed, and Potting Shed; and park restrooms. In the process, consider operational issues such as physical capacity, staffing, security, and visitor flow through each building and the positive and negative aspects of using each interpretive medium but particularly emerging technologies.

Consider the possibility of new partnerships including a Friends group and expanded use of volunteers to enhance interpretive and educational programming.

Explore how to sustain outreach to underserved populations and the next generation of stewards and friends.

Discuss circulation and wayfinding to and around the park including the park’s trails and how they connect to the Weir Preserve and Nod Hill Refuge. Any additions to the landscape must be sensitive to the character of the park’s cultural landscape.

Develop a strategy that connects the park to exhibits elsewhere that display and interpret art associated with Weir Farm artists—past and present.

Community members participate in a stone wall workshop.



Recommendations

This section of the LRIP describes the actions that park staff, volunteers, and partners will take over the next 5-7 years, in specific targeted areas, to 1) modify existing park programs and 2) develop new interpretive media that expand the park's outreach and take advantage of the new venues available when the Weir House and studios open.

A Dynamic Document

LRIPs are dynamic documents that respond to changing conditions. Staff should revisit this plan on an annual basis and make adjustments, remove accomplished tasks, and acknowledge new projects that may have surfaced. Since viable plans need to be nimble and responsive to changing conditions, staff should take advantage of new opportunities as they arise. No plan can foresee every eventuality.

However, as conditions change, this LRIP provides a framework for considering interpretive proposals as they emerge. The Foundation section should function as a gauge against which new ideas are measured. Does a new idea, for example, reach targeted audiences, address an identified issue, or offer a desired audience experience? Does it help communicate a primary theme and reinforce the national significance of the park?

When properly used, the Foundation section provides priorities that can help move interpretive programming in a consistent direction despite changing times.

Organization of Recommendations

Although the themes, audiences, audience experiences, and issues described in the Foundation section suggest many ways to focus interpretive programming for the next several years, Recommendations is organized to reflect the priorities identified by park staff after the Foundation Workshop.

Specifically, this part of the plan focuses on actions related to the park's desire to address each of the interpretive goals listed at the end of Part 1.

Each action item included in Recommendations is bulleted in the plan narrative and then listed in the implementation chart near the end of this document. The chart identifies the fiscal year when progress is expected, focusing on the next four years while preserving other ideas for future consideration.

Notations

Some of the bulleted items are dependent on funding not yet acquired. Those actions are noted in the implementation chart.

Other actions require assistance from park partners and stakeholders. In some cases, the partner might be recruited to lead a project. The plan includes notations that identify collaboration wherever it is critical to success. The Position Management Strategy outlines the minimum level of staffing required to operate the park and provide a base level of service to the public in conjunction with the opening of the Weir House and studios.

Brevity

Within common parameters, each LRIP is adjusted to suit the needs of individual parks. Park staff decided to keep this plan intentionally succinct, with only brief descriptions of proposed actions. Details of the workshop discussions that identified these actions, including many specific suggestions from workshop participants, have been captured in meeting notes preserved by the park. Those meeting notes will provide helpful guidance as more specific plans—exhibit and sign plans for example—evolve. They should be included in any materials supplied to future planning teams.

Acronyms are used throughout the Recommendations section and within the Implementation Chart. Appendix 5 lists all of the acronyms used.

Actions

Pre-visit Expectations

Building on existing efforts, what actions can the park take to help audiences form accurate expectations about the park and park activities in advance of an on-site visit? What can the park do to answer common questions about the park and provide information on travel to and arrival at the park?

- Begin by reviewing and adjusting media used for first contact (website and Facebook, for example).

Specifically, look for new ways to highlight the visual arts and the creation of artwork. Audiences need to understand the central role that art plays in any WEFA experience.

Also, showcase the multiple facets of the park—buildings, landscapes, interiors, exteriors, trails, and activities—so that visitors arrive prepared to experience all that the park has to offer.

Historic palettes are just a few of the many artists' tools that will be on display in the Weir Studio and Young Studio.



- Improve the “art gallery” section of the park website. Begin by including more views of the park and park collections. Expand to include art in other collections related to the park’s themes and associated artists.
- As the Weir House and studios open for visitors, re-acquaint target audiences to the park (see Part 1). Create a proactive plan to advertise/market what the park will have to offer.
- Create short videos that answer frequently asked questions, help refine expectations, and showcase possible on-site or online experiences. Record the reactions of program participants and use those videos to spread enthusiasm about the park. Develop new videos (“Ranger Minutes”) and public service announcements, and post them on website and social media.
- Create a phased sign plan that addresses both internal and external signs, safety/directional signs as well as orientation and interpretive signs. The external signs will use a consistent, recognizable design that addresses the approach to the park and that considers both travelers and neighbors. See Wayfinding below for more on internal signs.
- Implement a shuttle system to the park and include opportunities to influence audience expectations, build anticipation, share visiting options, and introduce park themes using appropriate media during travel to and from shuttle parking.
- Initiate a review of existing publications paying particular attention to how the content influences audience expectations, assists with wayfinding, and addresses significance and themes. Look for ways to avoid duplication and align print media with other interpretive techniques. As a primary objective of this review,

identify the objectives for a new, hybrid map that blends the best of the existing maps.

Buildings

Explore and identify appropriate interpretive media for WEFA buildings that are in transition including: Weir House with particular attention to the use of the kitchen; Weir and Young studios; Burlingham House Visitor Center including the main room, gallery room, and porch; outbuildings including the Weir Barn, Tack House, Ice House, Chicken Coop, Corn Crib, Garden Tool Shed, Woodshed, and Potting Shed; and park restrooms in the Burlingham Barn.

- Develop a strategy to re-imagine the interior of the visitor center and how the available first floor spaces (main room, gallery, and staff office) will be used in the future. Begin by defining the functions essential to proper orientation to the park and to the park's themes.
- Consider ways to reinforce a "loop" that returns visitors to the visitor center for a final or capstone experience.
- Continue to reinforce the idea that the park's 250 identified painting sites can serve as guideposts for an on-site visit. Also, reconsider entry into the visitor center, moving the park film into the staff office, and work with Eastern National to reconfigure sales and to identify additional sales items that complement the Weir House and studios' stories and settings area.
- Increase access to the park's basic stories and orientation by developing self-directed alternatives that will be available when the visitor center is closed. Reconsider how self-guided materials are displayed and distributed. Consider technology that empowers visitors to personalize the message/ experience they prefer.
- Develop a strategy to prepare a long-term, comprehensive exhibit plan that identifies the interpretive themes, audience experiences, media, and accessibility for the: visitor center; Weir House kitchen; Weir and Young studios; Weir Barn; Potting Shed, and park restrooms. Use this planning opportunity to further humanize these park settings, enhance them with sensory components, and provide consistently accurate messaging that encourages mental engagement with park themes. Consult the Recommendations Workshop meeting notes for specific suggestions. Any media suggested should be flexible so that they can be used or not, depending on the needs of the audience and capabilities of staff.
- Develop interpretive opportunities that focus on the artistic process as well as the tools of artistic creation to engage the visitor in art creation. Make appropriate artist "tools" available throughout the park that invite visitors to create.
- Develop interpretive options (similar to the visitor center alternative) for on-site visitors who do not have the opportunity to see inside the Weir House or studios.
- Develop an operations plan and train staff for new realities— buildings, visitor flow, new media, and different audience needs.
- Develop a strategy to recruit and train additional volunteers, based on defined job expectations.
- Take steps to enliven the landscape using farm animals (dogs, cats, and chickens). Develop interpretive techniques to ensure that animals are integrated appropriately into the themes and experiences (provide opportunities to sketch on-site or focus visitor attention on the park's colors, light, and patterns).



Visitors use a Painting Sites Guide to explore the park and stand in the footsteps of artists past and present. Carole Southall Telyan, *Cora's Enchantment at Weir Farm*, 2011, acrylic, 20" x 24", Private Collection.

- Consider appropriate places/ways to add seating and contemplative spaces for visitors.

Wayfinding and Circulation Patterns

Improve circulation and wayfinding to and around the park including the park's trails and how they connect to the Weir Preserve and Nod Hill Refuge ensuring that any additions to the landscape are sensitive to the character of the park's cultural landscape and painting sites.

- As part of a parkwide sign plan, address the sign needs within the park. External signs are addressed above in Pre-visit Expectations.

Internal signs will: provide a sense of arrival that conveys the centrality of art to the park's story and suggests a visual identity for the park; help visitors safely experience all facets of the park including trails and the many painting sites; and identify/interpret park resources where appropriate.

Any signs recommended must complement other media, particularly maps/brochures, and encourage a logical sequence for a park visit, beginning and ending at the visitor center.

The plan for signs inside the

park might include: trail markers (directional as well as boundary markers); a trailhead for the Pond Trail that is visible from the road; a non-intrusive marker system to identify buildings; a non-intrusive marker system to identify painting sites; and markers that can be temporarily placed on the landscape.

Begin with an interim sign plan, prepared by park staff, that immediately addresses safety and wayfinding signs within the park. As funding becomes available, complete a comprehensive sign plan for the entire park and for road signs leading to the park.

- Experiment with a way to mark painting sites throughout the park. Use a "breadcrumb" approach that draws visitors through the landscape and helps them to approximate the viewpoint of the artists who painted on-site.
- Explore and experiment with the use of technology such as mobile applications and cell phone tours to assist wayfinding within the park.
- Widen mown paths in fields to accommodate art creation and landscape contemplation.
- Add pedestrian crosswalks to increase safety to the Weir Complex and the Pond Trail.
- Re-create Weir's portable studio, the "Palace Car," and finalize an operating plan to integrate it interpretively into the cultural landscape.

Outreach

Explore ways to sustain outreach to underserved populations and the next generation of park stewards and friends.

- Develop contacts that will help the park insert Julian Alden Weir and American Impressionism into the standards used by educators.

- Adopt a Centennial Class, evaluate, and expand the program as appropriate/feasible with available resources.
- Complete pilot of A Park for Every Classroom program. Evaluate, and expand as appropriate. Involve science and/or art educators. Work with educators to develop attractive incentives for more teacher participation, with special attention to recruiting teachers in underserved communities identified as a target audience. Continue to offer teachers immersion experiences with on-site subject matter experts, i.e., a stone wall workshop with Dry Stone Conservancy staff.
- Develop outdoor art therapy workshop series and expand to other groups.
- Develop and implement after-school programs in partnership with inner-city community centers. Evaluate and expand as appropriate.
- Coordinate artist-led youth expeditions at four national parks in the Northeast Region.
- Track return visitation by developing a coupon or ticket that the park will give to all youth who participate in park programs on- and off-site to encourage them to return with their families, friends, and neighbors.
- Develop a ladder of experiences that leads visitors along a continuum to create park stewards. For example, visit as a student and have an education experience, return for service-learning and have an internship experience, then apply for employment, become a volunteer, or donate to the park as an adult.
- Develop a program of Park Ambassadors to assist with art outreach and increase interest in

park programs and volunteering.

- Research which Girl and Boy Scout merit badges, patches, and pins can be earned by participating in existing WEFA programs. Market this information.

Partnerships

Develop new partnerships including a Friends group.

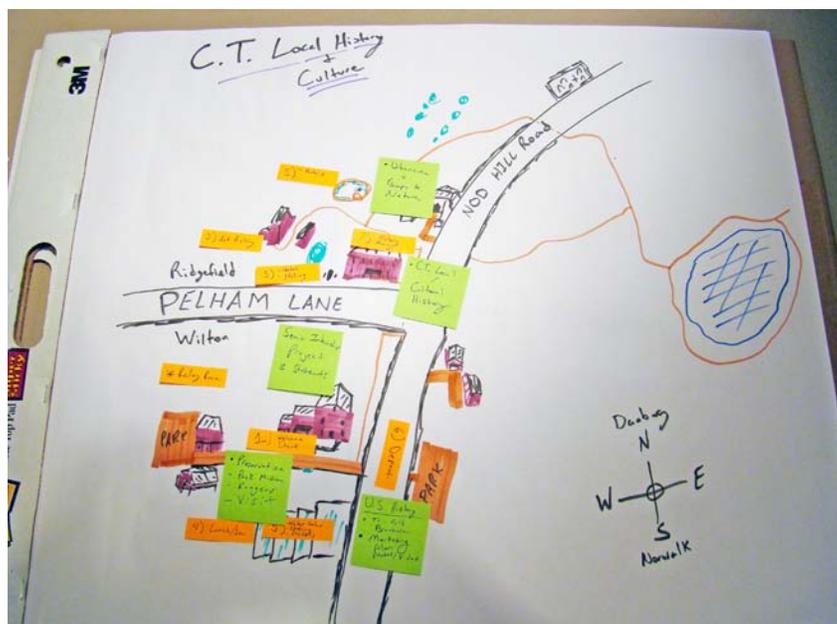
- Take proactive steps to sustain and expand collaboration among NPS visual art parks; specifically SAGA, MABI, WEFA.
- Develop a systematic, annual approach to engage park neighbors.
- Take the lead in creating a national effort to sustain and expand collaboration among NPS sites that interpret the visual arts or that have Artist-in-Residence programs.
- Develop a Friends group.
- Develop a Business Plan.

Connections

Continue and expand efforts to connect the park to exhibits elsewhere that display and interpret art associated with Weir Farm artists—past and present.

- Explore the idea of creating a

Map created during an A Park for Every Classroom teacher immersion workshop. During the 'Mapping Possibilities' session, teachers 'map-out' place-based educational opportunities available throughout the park.



shared or linked online exhibit, web, or mobile application that allows users to locate and view art beginning with the works of the Weir and Young families.

- Use social media to track and share art shows, exhibits, etc. staged by others.
- Proactively work with other art sites to identify and create sales items that can be sold at multiple venues and beyond park stores.

Expand Staff Capacity

As the park develops and the house and studios are restored and opened to visitors, the park needs to identify creative ways to sustain and expand personal services.

- Continue involvement with the Teacher-Ranger-Teacher and A Park for Every Classroom programs.
- Assess needs, write position descriptions, and develop a strategy to recruit interns.
- Maximize staff by sharing expertise across parks and region.
- Develop a strategy to increase the pool of volunteers by maintaining existing contacts and soliciting additional contacts. Set

September 2009 Artist-in-Residence Joanne Agostinelli finds inspiration in a variety of national park landscapes. In addition to WEFA, she has been an Artist-in-Residence at Acadia National Park and Mesa Verde National Park.



expectations high for training and participation. Look for incentives.

- Use Visiting Artist program to empower artists to promote and market the park and its programs through their art.
- Enter into small contracts with service providers that have specialized skills, such as artists and graphic designers, to provide interpretive programs or create interpretive products in lieu of WEFA staff.
- Arrange for local and visiting subject matter experts to provide interpretive programming based on their particular areas of expertise, i.e., Dry Stone Conservancy staff would provide stone wall workshops to teachers, youth, visitors, etc. while completing stone wall restoration projects on-site.

Implement Position Management Strategy

Since its designation in 1990, funding for interpretation and education staffing at WEFA has been on hold. Even though the life tenancy agreement with Sperry and Doris Andrews ended in 2005, public access still is limited and the park is staffed at a minimal level of service. In 2013, with the completion of multimillion dollar investment in restoration and renovation, the Weir House and studios—the park’s most significant resources—will be open and accessible to the public for the very first time. Finally opening these resources after 20 years is equal to the grand opening of a newly designated park.

Currently, WEFA does not have the minimum number of staff in the appropriate series to open and offer programs and services within the Weir Complex. The park has .3 permanent FTE dedicated to interpretation and education. The GS-0025-09 park Management

Assistant has collateral duty responsibilities as the Chief of Interpretation. All other current interpretation and education FTE is non-permanent (one GS-0025-07 term Park Ranger and two seasonal GS-0303-03 Visitor Use Assistants). Without additional staffing it will be difficult to meet public expectations and operational needs, except on a very limited basis.

The focus of new positions is to create a flexible, adaptable organization designed to take risk and try new approaches to interpretation within the next three to five year window. Looking at the visitation trends and duties, the type of versatile staff needed to engage visitors locally, nationally, and virtually, must include a minimal core that can build capacity, identify opportunities, and think strategically. For this reason, permanent interpretation staff is the park's #1 need (OFS 30778A). Based on park resources, range of services, complexity and sustainability of operations, and comparable park models in the Northeast Region, interpretation needs—at a minimum—are:

- One full-time permanent GS-0025-11 Chief of Interpretation;
- One full-time permanent (or career seasonal) GS-0025-09 Park Ranger;
- Two GS-025-05 seasonal park rangers (1039);

supplemented with other short-term positions added for staffing support during peak visitation periods including seasonal staff that mirror visitation trends.

This staffing model does not reflect an increase for the park, rather, based on comparable Northeast Region small park models, it finally establishes a program to open and operate new facilities after 20 years of prescribed waiting. The program is designed to be fluid

and conducive to change as visitor and operational needs evolve. The Chief of Interpretation and Park Ranger positions comprise a highly adaptable, creative, and productive core team which in turn can leverage and manage the talents of seasonals, volunteers, and interns. With a small and nimble permanent staff, the park can operate at a range of levels throughout the year, while working to build capacity and programming through innovation, partnerships, and new approaches to visitation.

The park already has structured a sustainable and cost effective operation based on self-directed and independent visitor programs and services that reduce the need for some types of staff. In turn, this underscores the need for specialized, technical skills in other areas such as volunteer management and partnership, change management, systems thinking, talent management, performance, diversity and inclusion, workforce enhancement, and leadership development as well as web, digital, and education skill sets.

The public has been waiting for 20 years to visit the historic properties at WEFA and there is a compelling and critical need to meet public expectations for an NPS visit and experience. Investment in core operations at WEFA provides a foundation to experiment with trends and changes in visitor services, operate the site, and meet national and regional goals for Organizational Excellence in the Call to Action Plan.

Implementation Chart

The chart that follows indicates when to expect action on Recommendations. Where noted, action may be dependent on funding, staffing, or partner assistance. Although not included in this chart, existing conditions will continue as described above. However, adjustments will be made to accommodate changing operational needs and visitation patterns. At the beginning of each fiscal year, the park will prioritize identified actions based on management goals and initiatives. This prioritized list will become the park's Annual Implementation Plan for that fiscal year. It also will inform the park's response to the Servicewide Comprehensive Call including the park's internal prioritization of projects.

Recommendations	Fund Source (s)	Responsible (Who)	Support Needed	C2A	FY2013	FY2014	FY2015	FY2016	Future
PRE-VISIT EXPECTATIONS									
Review and adjust media used for first contact.	ONPS	Interp. Chief, GS-5 Park Rangers	NERO	C2A17	X	X	X	X	X
Improve "art gallery" aspect of website. Use park holdings first, and then add other collections.	ONPS	Museum Tech, GS-5 Park Rangers	NERO, Friends Group, Partners	C2A17	X	X			
Develop strategies to use opening of the Weir House and studios as a way to re-acquaint target audiences to the park through events likely to attract neighbors and nearby communities. Plan opening event.	ONPS, EN, Weir Farm Art Center	Supt., Interp. Chief	EN, Weir Farm Art Center, NERO, Volunteers			X			
Create short FAQ and experience videos. Record the reactions of program participants. Develop series of public service announcements. Post on website and social media. Write PMIS project proposal. Post existing videos first, and then create and post more.	ONPS, PMIS	Interp. Chief	Partners, WEFA Visiting Artist	C2A17	X	X	X	X	X
Develop a sign plan for external signs. Revise PMIS project proposal.	Transportation Funding, PMIS	Interp. Chief, Resources Chief	HFC, OCLP			X			
Implement shuttle system and create interpretive opportunities using appropriate media.	Transportation Funding, PMIS	Supt., Interp. Chief	HFC, NERO			X			
Initiate a review of existing publications.	ONPS	Interp. Chief	NERO, HFC	C2A19			X		
Create a "hybrid" map. Write PMIS project proposal.	ONPS, PMIS	Resources Chief, Interp. Chief	HFC			X	X		
Provide alternate format publications such as Braille, large print, audio, and electronic publications to address accessibility recommendation. Write PMIS project proposal.	PMIS	Interp. Chief	HFC				X		

Recommendations	Fund Source (s)	Responsible (Who)	Support Needed	C2A	FY2013	FY2014	FY2015	FY2016	Future
BUILDINGS									
Develop a strategy to re-imagine the interior of the visitor center and how the available first floor spaces (main room, gallery, and staff office) will be used in the future. Provide accessible sales and services counter in visitor center. Write PMIS project proposal.	ONPS, PMIS	Interp. Chief, Facility Specialist, Museum Specialist	EN	C2A19, C2A24	X	X	X	X	
Develop a strategy to prepare a long-term, comprehensive exhibit plan for the: visitor center including porch; Weir House kitchen; Weir and Young studios; Weir Barn; Potting Shed, and park restrooms. Investigate interpretive panel replacement plan, tactile models, lighting scheme for exhibits, and virtual tour of Weir and Young studios. Revise PMIS project proposal. Complete planning and design first, then proceed to fabrication and installation.	PMIS	Interp. Chief, Museum Specialist, Facility Specialist	HFC, NERO	C2A19, C2A17, C2A24		X	X		
Work with Eastern National to reconfigure sales area and to identify additional sales items that complement the Weir House and studios' stories and settings.	EN	EN Team			X				
Develop self-directed visitor experience alternatives for use when the visitor center is closed. Write PMIS project proposal.	ONPS, PMIS	Interp. Chief	HFC, NERO	C2A17			X		
Develop interpretive opportunities that focus on the artistic process as well as the tools of artistic creation to engage the visitor in art creation.	ONPS	Interp. Chief		C2A10	X				
Develop interpretive options for on-site visitors who do not have the opportunity to see inside the Weir House and studios. Write PMIS project proposal.	ONPS, PMIS	Interp. Chief	HFC, NERO	C2A17			X		
Develop/adapt operations plan and train staff for building openings, visitor flow, new media, and different audience needs.	ONPS	Interp. Chief	NERO, Volunteers	C2A, C2A35	X				

Implementation Chart

Recommendations	Fund Source (s)	Responsible (Who)	Support Needed	C2A	FY2013	FY2014	FY2015	FY2016	Future
Develop a strategy to recruit and train additional volunteers, based on defined job expectations.	ONPS, PMIS	GS-9 Park Ranger	Friends Group			X			
Consider appropriate places/ways to add seating and contemplative spaces for visitors.	ONPS	Resources Chief, Interp. Chief			X	X	X		
Experiment with ways to enliven landscape using farm animals. Develop techniques to ensure that animals are integrated appropriately into the themes and experiences.	ONPS, PMIS	Resources Chief, Interp. Chief	Muscoot Farm, Volunteers				X		
Complete a historic furnishings plan for the Weir Barn and Weir Complex outbuildings. Revise PMIS project proposal.	PMIS	Museum Specialist	NMSC			X	X		
WAYFINDING AND CIRCULATION									
Prepare and implement an interim sign plan (in-park plan) for safety, directional, and wayfinding signs. Designate trailhead to Weir Pond	ONPS	Resources Chief, Interp. Chief	HFC, OCLP	X					X
Prepare a comprehensive sign plan for all in-park signs. Improve the sense of arrival. Coordinate with road signs outside the park. Revise PMIS project proposal.	PMIS	Interp. Chief, Resources Chief	HFC, OCLP, Towns of Wilton and Ridgefield, State, DOT		X				
Develop a technique to place visitors in the shoes of the artist and see the painting sites from the same vantage point. Write PMIS project proposal.	ONPS, PMIS, EN	Interp. Chief, Resources Chief	OCLP, EN		X	X			
Explore and experiment with the use of technology to assist wayfinding within the park. Investigate comprehensive audio described tour. Write PMIS Projects.	ONPS, PMIS	Interp. Chief	HFC, NERO				X	X	
Widen mown paths in fields to accommodate art creation and landscape contemplation.	ONPS	Resources Chief, Interp. Chief		X					X
Add pedestrian crosswalks to increase safety and wayfinding to the Weir Complex and Pond Trail.	ONPS	Facility Specialist	Towns of Wilton and Ridgefield, DOT	X					X
Re-create Weir's portable studio, the "Palace Car," and finalize an operating plan to integrate it interpretively into the cultural landscape.	PMIS	Interp. Chief, Resources Chief	HPTC, OCLP	X					X

Recommendations	Fund Source (s)	Responsible (Who)	Support Needed	C2A	FY2013	FY2014	FY2015	FY2016	Future
OUTREACH									
Adopt a Centennial Class. Evaluate and expand as appropriate.	ONPS, PMIS	GS-9 Park Ranger	NERO, Wilton and Ridgefield School Districts, Educators, NPS Centennial Class Group	C2A15, C2A16	X	X	X	X	X
Complete pilot of A Park for Every Classroom program. Evaluate and expand as appropriate. Work with educators to develop attractive incentives for more teacher participation.	ONPS, PMIS	GS-9 Park Ranger	NERO, School Districts, Science and Art Educators	C2A16, C2A18, C2A31	X	X	X	X	X
Develop a strategy to include Julian Alden Weir and American Impressionism into the standards used by educators.	ONPS	GS-9 Park Ranger	State and Local Govt., Friends Group	C2A16					X
Develop outdoor art therapy workshop series and expand to other groups.	ONPS, PMIS	Interp. Chief	Albertus Magnus College, Healing Newtown	C2A6, C2A10	X	X	X	X	X
Develop and implement after-school programs in partnership with inner-city community centers.	ONPS, PMIS	GS-9 Park Ranger	Community Centers	C2A16, C2A18	X	X	X	X	X
Coordinate artist-led youth expeditions at four national parks in the Northeast Region. Revise PMIS project proposal.	ONPS, PMIS	Interp. Chief	Groundwork Bridgeport, Dmitri Wright	C2A2, C2A10	X				
Track return visitation by developing a coupon or ticket that the park will give to all youth who participate in park programs on- and off-site.	ONPS	GS-9 Park Ranger			X				
Develop a ladder of experiences that leads visitors along a continuum to create park stewards.	ONPS	Interp. Chief		C2A2					X
Develop a program of Park Ambassadors to assist with art outreach and increase interest in park programs and volunteering.	ONPS	GS-9 Park Ranger							X
Research which Girl and Boy Scout merit badges, patches, and pins can be earned by participating in existing WEFA programs. Market this information.	ONPS	GS-5 Park Rangers				X			

Implementation Chart

Recommendations	Fund Source (s)	Responsible (Who)	Support Needed	C2A	FY2013	FY2014	FY2015	FY2016	Future
PARTNERSHIPS									
Take proactive steps to sustain and expand collaboration with SAGA and MABI	ONPS, PMIS	Supt.	EN		X	X	X	X	X
Take the lead in creating a national effort to sustain and expand collaboration among NPS sites that interpret the visual arts or have Artist-in-Residence programs.	ONPS, PMIS	Supt.	EN		X	X	X	X	X
Develop a Friends Group.	ONPS	Supt.			X				
Develop systematic, annual approach to engage park neighbors.	ONPS	Supt., Interp. Chief	Weir Preserve Stewardship Committee		X				
Develop a Business Plan.	ONPS	Supt.		C2A24	X				
CONNECTIONS									
Explore the idea of creating a shared or linked online exhibit, web, or mobile applications connected to the works of the Weir and Young families. Write PMIS project proposal.	PMIS	Museum Specialist, Interp. Chief	NERO, NMSC	C2A17					X
Use social media to track and share art shows, exhibits, etc. staged by others.	ONPS	Museum Tech., GS-5 Park Rangers			X	X	X	X	X
Proactively work with other art sites to identify and create sales items that can be sold at multiple venues and beyond park stores.	ONPS, EN	EN Team	EN		X	X	X	X	X
EXPAND STAFF CAPACITY									
Continue involvement with the Teacher-Ranger-Teacher and A Park for Every Classroom programs. Write and revise PMIS project proposals.	ONPS, PMIS	GS-9 Park Ranger	NERO	C2A16, C2A18, C2A31	X	X	X	X	X
Assess needs, write position descriptions, and develop a strategy to recruit interns.	ONPS, PMIS	GS-9 Park Ranger			X	X			
Maximize staff by sharing expertise across parks and region.	ONPS	Supt.			X	X	X	X	X
Develop strategy to increase the pool of volunteers.	ONPS, PMIS	GS-9 Park Ranger			X	X	X	X	X
Use Visiting Artist program to empower artists to promote and market the park and its programs through their art.	ONPS	Supt.		C2A10	X	X	X	X	X

Recommendations	Fund Source (s)	Responsible (Who)	Support Needed	C2A	FY2013	FY2014	FY2015	FY2016	Future
Enter into small contracts with service providers that have specialized to provide interpretive programs or create interpretive products in lieu of WEFA staff.	ONPS, PMIS	Interp. Chief	MABO		X	X	X	X	X
Arrange for local and visiting subject matter experts to provide interpretive programming based on their particular areas of expertise.	ONPS, PMIS	GS-9 Park Ranger			X	X	X	X	X
Begin phased implementation of Position Management Strategy with the opening of Weir House and studios.	ONPS	Supt.	NERO, HROC, SHRO	C2A35	X	X	X	X	X

Appendices

Appendix 1

Tangible and Intangible Resources

Tangible Resources

The park contains several major structures/features:

The Weir House, circa 1765, remodeled in c.1830, and altered and enlarged at Julian Alden Weir's instruction in 1888, 1900, and 1911.

The Weir Studio, completed by 1885, three years after Julian Alden Weir purchased the farm.

The Young Studio built for Mahonri Young, husband of Julian Alden Weir's daughter Dorothy, built in 1932.

The Weir Barn, built between 1831-1835.

The Burlingham House (now the park's visitor center), built between 1765 and 1776, occupied by Julian Alden Weir's daughter Cora and her husband Charles Burlingham and enlarged in the 1920s and 1930s.

The Burlingham Barn, built sometime between the late-18th and early-19th century.

The Caretaker's House, dating to the mid-to-late-19th century.

The Artist-in-Residence Studio, a 19th-century historic garage/barn rehabilitated in 2010.

The Weir Pond and associated water control structures such as the stone-lined water channels and dam, constructed in 1896.

In addition, the park has:

Outbuildings including the Tack House, Ice House, Chicken Coop, Corn Crib, Garden Tool Shed, Potting Shed, and Woodshed; walkways and trails, gardens and orchards, rustic elements such as fencing, corrals, stone walls, arbors, gates, wells, barways, etc.; fields, hedgerows, wetlands, woodlands, and vestiges of an old wagon road.

Over 250 painting sites directly associated with a lengthening list of artists.

Collections and archives, paintings, artwork, objects, and furnishings.

Intangible Resources

These "intangibles" were used to link the fact-based significance statements with the primary stories identified as park themes and helped suggest concepts/ideas for the theme matrix:

Preservation, conservation, model

Imagination, inspiration, creativity

Reflection, healing, spirituality (relating to the soul or spirit)

Community, relationships, camaraderie, friendship, family

Escape, refuge, retreat, recreation
 Culture, what makes us who we are
 Change, transformation, revolution in thinking
 Seeing, looking, observing
 Tradition, continuity
 Remembrance, nostalgia, romanticism
 Beauty
 Perspective, color, light, patterns
 Art
 Down-to-earth scale, subtle, intimate, everyday
 Seasons, weather
 Diversity of landscape
 Intentionality

Appendix 2

General Management Plan Themes

The planning team for the park's GMP identified the following themes to guide visitor interpretation:

Weir Farm, the summer home and workplace of American painter Julian Alden Weir, became an important place in the development of American Impressionism, an art movement characterized in part by the celebration of place. Weir Farm was also a destination and inspiration for numerous artistic figures of the late-nineteenth century.

Weir Farm continues to serve as a setting and inspiration for visiting artists. In addition, it has been continuously occupied by working artists, including Mahonri Young and Doris and Sperry Andrews, who have preserved the character of the property even as they adapted it to their own needs.

To enhance visitors' understanding and appreciation of Weir Farm, the site's interpretive mission (according to the GMP) will also embrace these secondary themes:

Weir Farm was protected from development and established as a national historic site due to the foresight, commitment, coordination, and effort of local citizens (including Doris and Sperry Andrews and Cora Weir Burlingham), private organizations, and public agencies.

Artists have historically influenced environmental and conservation movements by producing images that served to galvanize political response.

The relationship of landscape and art has evolved because of technological advances (for example, premixed paints in tubes) and changing attitudes towards nature.

Weir Farm contains a variety of natural and cultural resources that illustrate several historical periods and a variety of land uses.

Paintings, sculpture, and etchings and other prints have been produced at Weir Farm, and the process of working in each of these media requires distinctive skills and equipment.

Appendix 3

Recommendations to Improve Accessibility

In 2011, a survey of WEFA by the National Center on Accessibility, identified the following actions to correct existing deficiencies and enhance programmatic, ground, and building accessibility:

Programmatic:

Provide assistive listening system to accompany park film and any future audio exhibits

Provide alternate format publications such as Braille, large print, audio, and electronic publications

Investigate interpretive panel replacement plan

Investigate captioning for park film

Investigate audio description for park film

Investigate tactile models

Investigate comprehensive audio described tour

Investigate lighting scheme for exhibits

Investigate virtual tour of Weir and Young Studios

Grounds:

Repair slope of accessible route to Weir Complex

Repair slope of accessible route from parking lot to visitor center

Investigate pedestrian crossing marking and signage from Burlingham to Weir Complex

Investigate accessible route surfacing and designation throughout park

Repair surface of accessible route from visitor center to restrooms

Designate trailhead to Weir Pond

Investigate trail accessibility improvements to Weir Pond

Buildings:

Investigate accessible route into visitor center

Investigate interior accessible route for visitor center

Repair height of brochure holder

Replace exterior door hardware

Provide accessible sales and services counter in visitor center

Repair change in level within pathway surface and Burlingham Barn entrance

Replace restroom signage

Repair accessible elements in single user restroom

Investigate accessible entry into Young Studio

Relocate wayside

Provide accessible parking

A number of the above actions have been completed. Actions not yet completed pertinent to this plan are listed as action items in the implementation chart.

Appendix 4

National Park Service Call to Action Plan

Connect People to Parks and help communities protect what is special to them, highlight their history, and retain or rebuild their economic and environmental sustainability.

Advance the Education Mission by strengthening the NPS role as an educational force based on core American values, historical and scientific scholarship, and unbiased translation of the complexities of the American experience.

Preserve America's Special Places and take the lead in extending the benefits of conservation across physical, social, political, and international boundaries in partnership with others.

Enhance Professional and Organizational Excellence by adapting to the changing needs of visitors, communities, and partners; encouraging organizational innovation; and giving employees the chance to reach their full potential.

WEFA intends to support several of the specific actions contained in the Call to Action Plan. This LRIP is mindful of WEFA's commitment and, as appropriate, will include recommendations that address the following actions cited directly from the Call to Action Plan:

#2 Step by Step

Create deep connections between a younger generation and parks through a series of diverse park experiences. To accomplish this, we will collaborate with education partners and youth organizations to create a pathway to employment with the NPS, with a focus on diversifying the workforce. We will involve at least 10,000 youth each year in a multi-year progression of experiences from education programs to internship/volunteer opportunities to employment.

#6 Take a Hike and Call Me in the Morning

Expand the health community's use of parks as a healing tool and increase citizen recognition of the value of parks to improve health and well being by establishing partnerships with health and medical providers across the country.

#10 Arts Afire

Showcase the meaning of parks to new audiences through dance, music, visual arts, writing, and social media. To do so we will launch 25 artist-led expeditions that involve youth in creating new expressions of the park experience through fresh perspectives and new technology.

#15 A Class Act

Help students develop a deep understanding of park resources and the relevance of parks in their lives through a series of park education programs. To do so, we will adopt a class of 2016 graduates (grade school, middle school, or high school) and develop a series of fun, educational, and engaging activities culminating in the NPS Centennial in 2016.

#16 Live and Learn

Provide multiple ways for children to learn about the national parks and what they reveal about nature, the nation's history, and issues central to civic life. We will

accomplish this by reaching 25 percent of the nation's K-12 school population annually through real and virtual field trips, residential programs, teacher training, classroom teaching materials, online resources, and educational partnerships.

#17 Go Digital

Reach new audiences and maintain a conversation with all Americans by transforming the NPS digital experience to offer rich, interactive, up-to-date content from every park and program. To accomplish this, create a user-friendly web platform that supports online and mobile technology including social media.

18 Ticket to Ride

Expand opportunities for students to directly experience national parks, where natural and historic settings inspire powerful learning. To achieve this we will provide transportation support for 100,000 students each year to visit national parks through collaboration with the National Park Foundation and other park fundraising partners.

#19 Out with the Old

Engage national park visitors with interpretive media that offer interactive experiences, convey information based on current scholarship, and are accessible to the broadest range of the public. To that end we will replace 2,500 outdated, inaccurate, and substandard interpretive exhibits, signs, films, and other media with innovative, immersive, fully accessible, and learner-centered experiences.

#24 Invest Wisely

Focus investments from all maintenance fund sources on high priority national park assets to address critical deferred maintenance and code compliance needs. By doing so we will correct the health and safety, accessibility, environmental, and deferred maintenance deficiencies in at least 25 percent of the facilities that are most important to park visitor experience and resource protection.

31 Destination Innovation

Accelerate the spread of ideas, encourage innovation, and inspire peer-to-peer collaboration across the Service. To achieve this we will create a network for innovation and creativity to rapidly share new insights and solve mission-critical problems using online tools such as blogs, discussion forums, and “wikis.”

#35 Welcome Aboard

Create a more inclusive workplace where new employees can quickly navigate our organization to become highly productive. To do so we will implement an orientation and mentoring program for all new NPS employees that will complement the NPS Fundamentals course, use online tools, and provide individual support.

Appendix 5

Acronym Key

AIP: Annual Implementation Plan

ALPO: Allegheny Portage Railroad National Historic Site

C2A: Call to Action

CIP: Comprehensive Interpretive Plan

DOT: Department of Transportation

EN: Eastern National

FTE: Full time equivalent

FRLA: Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site

FY: Fiscal year

GMP: General Management Plan

HFC: Harpers Ferry Center

HPTC: Historic Preservation Training Center

HROC: Human Resources Operations Center

LRIP: Long-Range Interpretive Plan

MABI: Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park

MABO: Major Acquisition Buying Office

NEEN: New England National Scenic Trail

NERO: Northeast Regional Office

NMSC: Northeast Museum Services Center

NPS: National Park Service

OCLP: Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation

OFS: Operations Formulation System

ONPS: Operation of the National Park System (operating funds)

PEC: A Park for Every Classroom

PMIS: Project Management Information System is a servicewide intranet application within the National Park Service (NPS) to manage information about requests for project funding. It enables parks and NPS offices to submit project proposals to be reviewed, approved and prioritized at park units, regional directorates, and the Washington Office (WASO).

SAGA: Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site

SHRO: Servicing Human Resources Office

WEFA: Weir Farm National Historic Site

Appendix 6 – Trends in Interpretation

The Trends in Interpretation Chart was used to guide and inform this plan.

Where We've Been	Where We're Going	Why (What this does for us)
APPROACHES TO WORK		
1. Trying to do everything	Making strategic choices	Prevents people from being overwhelmed
2. Retain the old while adding on the new	Let go or adapt old practices, even ones that served us well in the past; prioritize what to keep	It's impossible to do everything; keeps up with modern demands; retains focus. May need time to grieve for old ways.
3. Subject matter expertise	Audience expertise	Know how to communicate not just what
4. Talking at people	Talking with people	Respects and involves audiences; audiences provide different perspectives; interpreters get to understand audiences
5. Produced/Static	Spontaneous/Interactive	Can be more fun/accessible/timely
6. NPS-Generated	User-Generated	Users bring relevance; happening anyway; web 2.0 is happening
7. Competition among parks (& communities)	Collaboration among parks (& communities)	Rewarded in funding; mutual benefits
8. Park as destination – “the” place	Park as one place within a larger network	Helps puts stories/places in context; connects similar themes across the service
9. Bound by tradition	Willing to experiment	Helps NPS remain relevant amid change
10. Answers	Questions	Helps explore relevance & civic issues
AUDIENCES		
11. Focus on destination visitors (who may visit once in a lifetime)	Valuing community (local people who use parks daily/weekly and have a stake in a park)	Local people have higher potential for ongoing relationships /to be park stewards
INTERPRETIVE MEDIA		
12. Site Bulletins and other paper publications	Robust web content; epublications	Accessible to millions compared to only onsite visitors; green choice
13. 28 minute orientation films	8 – 10 minute orientation films	Meet expectations and modern attention spans; gets people out to explore parks
14. Permanent media installations (Lifespan of decades)	Media with lifespan of hours or weeks (YouTube, Facebook)	Use both to complement each other/reach wider audiences
15. Interpretive writing: key skill is being “interpretive”	Interpretive writing: key skill is ability to match writing to medium and audience	Key skill is to know how to apply different writing styles, i.e. when to be interpretive (or not)
16. Interpretive writing: “wind up” to main point at the end	Interpretive writing: lead with the main point	Will lose audience before point is made
17. Interpretive writing: looooots of text	Interpretive writing: concise and to-the-point	Audiences choose not to read at all; meets audience expectations and modern attention spans
18. Obtain copyright permission for a single product	Materials that are copyright-free, or have gotten permission—including web use	Useful in repurposing content—especially for the web
PERSONAL SERVICES		
19. “Formal” programming	Self-directed learning	Provides choice to a range of visitors
20. Personal services as the default method for interpretation	Using personal services deliberately and carefully	People are the most expensive way to deliver interpretation; people have specialized skills that should be matched to their best/most strategic uses; allows for more flexible operations
21. “Informal” interpretation as a low level skill or confused with customer service	“Extemporaneous interpretation” (higher level skill that requires high levels of audience and content knowledge)	Requires extensive knowledge of audiences and resource to be tailored to each encounter
22. Formal evaluation (long-term, expensive)	Informal sources of feedback such as trip advisor and yelp.com	Uses the trove of available info to get feedback and make quick adjustments
23. “Living History” demonstrations	Theater / Vignettes	Easier to delve into difficult content

Where We've Been	Where We're Going	Why (What this does for us)
SUBJECT MATTER		
24. Science and History	Science with History	Provides context/more complete picture
25. Symposia	Outreach	Symposia tends to reach people already involved in a topic; need new perspectives/voices
FACILITIES AND PLANNING		
26. Visitor Center	Outdoor Pavilion and other flexible facilities	Increased access; going to public, not requiring them to come to you; serves visitors and local audiences
27. 10 year plans	3-5 year adaptive, flexible plans	Responds better to the pace of change
EDUCATION		
28. Curriculum-based	Common Core Standards-based http://www.corestandards.org/about-the-standards	Education is moving to standards; 45 states adopted standards (ex: HA TX NE VA WI)
29. Ranger-led education programs	Teacher-peer workshops and materials; educators create lessons using NPS content	Uses educators expertise; tailors to student needs and administrative trends
30. Fixed education program offerings	Menu of education offerings—including workshops for teachers	Educator access to experiences that match learning needs; not one-size fits all

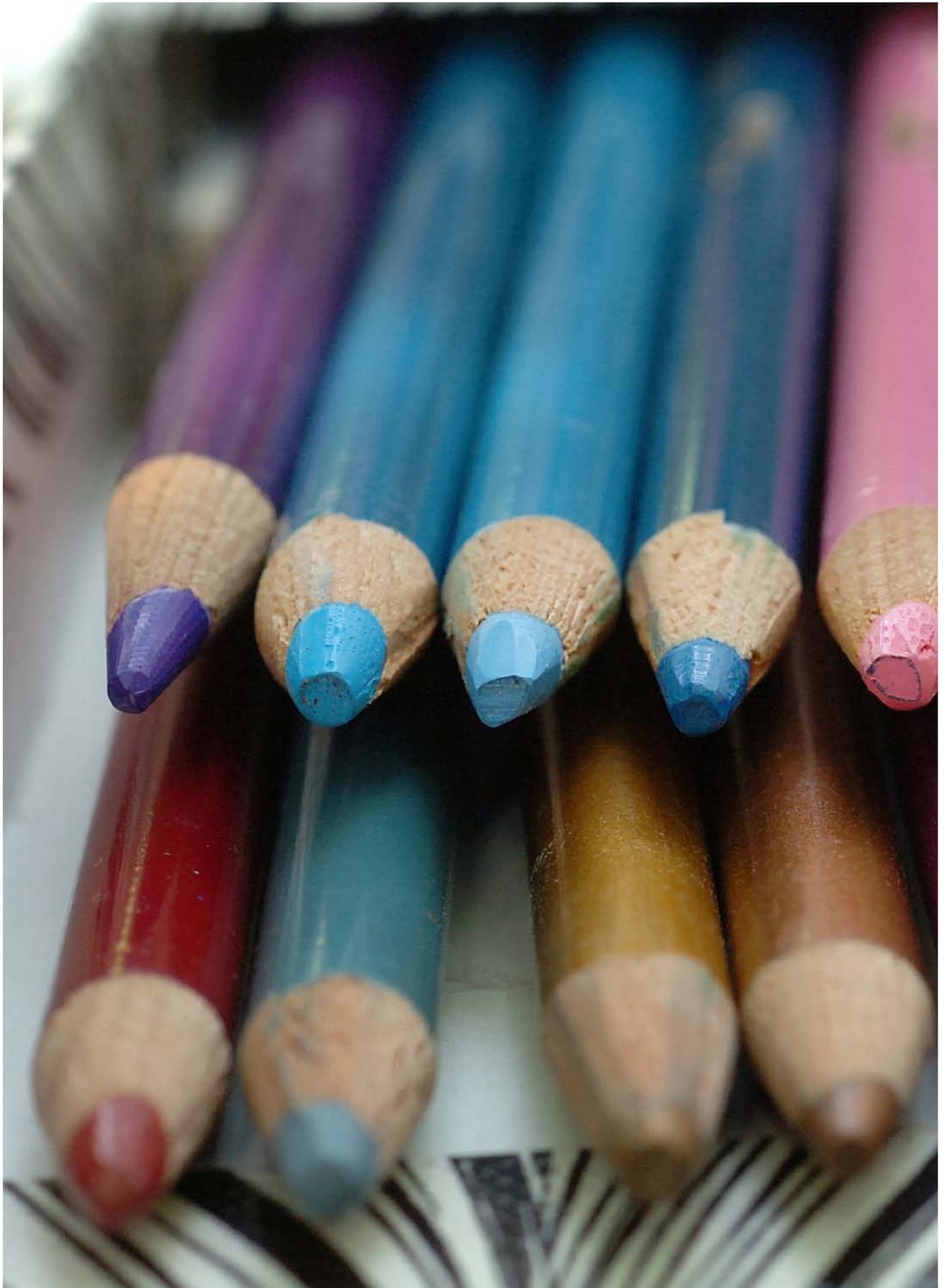
Participants

Those attending the Foundation Workshop held on June 12 and 13, 2012, included:

Name	Agency/Association
Linda Cook	NPS, WEFA, Superintendent
Cassie Werne	NPS, WEFA, Management Assistant, Chief of Interpretation
Kristin Lessard	NPS, WEFA, Park Ranger
Dolores Tirri	NPS, WEFA, Museum Specialist
Jessica Kuhnen	NPS, WEFA, Museum Technician
David Low	NPS, WEFA, Park Ranger
Greg Waters	NPS, WEFA Integrated Resources Program Manager
Bonnie Tremante	NPS, WEFA, Volunteer
Pat Hegnauer	NPS, WEFA, Volunteer; Director of Gilbert and Bennett Community Cultural Center
Cliff Laube	Past WEFA Park Ranger
Dmitri Wright	American Impressionist Artist and Instructor
Marc Chabot	Artist Instructor
Xiomaro	2012 WEFA Visiting Artist, Past WEFA Artist-in-Residence
Leslee Asch	Silvermine Art Center, Executive Director
Sue Carey	Wadsworth Atheneum, Visitor Services Manager
Anne Dawson	Eastern CT State University, Professor of Art History
Merril Comeau	Past WEFA Artist-in-Residence
Eliot Foulds	NPS, FRLA, Landscape Architect
Charlie Tracy	NPS, NEEN, Superintendent
Mary Grassick	NPS, Harpers Ferry Center, Staff Curator
Anne Kain	Neighbor
Bob Fox	Past WEFA Facility Manager
Charlie Janson	Weir Farm Art Center Board Member, Vice President
Julie Grecni	Girl Scouts of CT, Community Development Coordinator
Joanne Blacoe	NPS, NERO, Interpretive Planner
Toni Dufficy	NPS, Harpers Ferry Center, Contracting Officer's Representative
Ron Thomson	Workshop Facilitator, Writer

Those attending the Recommendations Workshop held on October 15 and 16, 2012, included:

Name	Agency/Association
Linda Cook	NPS, WEFA, Superintendent
Cassie Werne	NPS, WEFA, Management Assistant, Chief of Interpretation
Kristin Lessard	NPS, WEFA, Park Ranger
Dolores Tirri	NPS, WEFA, Museum Specialist
Jessica Kuhnen	NPS, WEFA, Museum Technician
Andrew Lowe	NPS, WEFA, Visitor Use Assistant
Adrian Zeck	NPS, WEFA, Visitor Use Assistant
Greg Waters	NPS, WEFA, Integrated Resources Program Manager
Kevin Monthie	NPS, WEFA, Supervisory Facility Operations Specialist
Michael Liang	NPS, NERO, Visual Information Specialist
Laura Anderson	NPS, MABI, Curator
Rick Kendall	NPS, SAGA, Superintendent
Pam Clasby	Ridgefield Academy, WEFA Teacher-Ranger-Teacher, A Park for Every Classroom Lead Teacher
Nancy Miller	Rockwell Elementary School, A Park for Every Classroom Teacher
Joyce Mueller	NPS, WEFA, Volunteer
Mary Price	Eastern National, New England Regional Manager
Dmitri Wright	American Impressionist Artist and Instructor
Alison Greely	Ridgefield Arts Council, Chair
Frank Meuschke	Past WEFA Artist-in-Residence
Megan O'Malley	NPS, ALPO, Chief of Interpretation
Laurel Racine	NPS, NMSC, Senior Curator
Joanne Blacoe	NPS, NERO, Interpretive Planner
Toni Dufficy	NPS, Harpers Ferry Center, Contracting Officer's Representative
Ron Thomson	Workshop Facilitator, Writer



Harpers Ferry Center
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Weir Farm National Historic Site

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www.nps.gov/wefa



A teen paints in the same spot Julian Alden Weir did over 130 years ago.