

THE
FUTURE
OF
AMERICA'S
NATIONAL
PARKS

First Annual
Centennial Strategy for

Yukon - Charley Rivers National Preserve

August 2007

CENTENNIAL INITIATIVE



Site: YUCH

Year: 2007

Vision Statement

Since its establishment in 1980, the preserve has focused on establishing basic visitor services, resource protection and basic inventories, and an understanding of the natural and cultural values of this large, remote wilderness park. Even though this area is very remote, air taxis, river travel and guiding companies have helped to make most of the park very accessible to recreational users. The park is developing a reputation as a highly desirable destination for adventure travelers from around the world. We need to work cooperatively with the many local communities around park, provide basic visitor services to protect the well being of visitors, and engage the support of our many friends and partners in the efforts to preserve the values of the park.

The park also has an additional responsibility of working with living cultures that continue to carry on traditional subsistence within the park that are vital to their survival and culture. Understanding and accommodation of traditional land use practices where allowed are critical. Large tracks of land within the park boundaries are in private ownership so these relationships will become even more critical in the future as private land use decisions are made.

Future goals for the next 10 years include:

1. Better understand the natural and cultural resources and values of the park.
 - Work on the need for basic inventories of resources and monitoring of natural systems.
 - Decision making is guided by well designed and planned research.
 - Natural ecosystems are preserved and healthy wildlife populations are intact.
 - Climate change effects are better understood and actions are taken to reduce impacts.
 - Manage subsistence activities as a natural component of ecosystem processes, involving local users with management decisions and scientific research.
2. Demonstrate sustainable design, environmental leadership in park facilities. Inventory and maintain facilities to a good condition and develop additional energy and cost-saving technologies.
3. Continue to develop visitor services that will help establish this "lesser known park" as a safe and welcome place to visit, served by a professional staff that includes local residents with a diverse background of experiences and skills.
 - Provide public education on safe and appropriate recreational opportunities (new websites, outreach, backcountry orientations).
4. Develop educational programs combining traditional knowledge and western science into interpretive programs to promote protection, appreciation and understanding of the parks values. Facilitate multiple partnerships in meeting our land stewardship responsibilities, through resident participation, research and educational programs.

Park/ Superintendent/ Program Manager

David D. Mills-Superintendent YUCH

Site: YUCH

STEWARDSHIP

Provide inspiring, safe, and accessible places for people to enjoy - the standard to which all other park systems aspire.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

The Preserve's first field operational center is needed in Eagle in order to better serve visitors as well as the staff living there and who travel to work at the site. This new center would provide critical information and education for visitors prior to their travel to the backcountry of the park. Backcountry Orientations and education have been found to be very effective at reducing visitor accidents, protecting the natural and cultural resources as well as greatly enhancing the visitor's appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of the park. A recent expansion of Holland America tours to our current temporary facilities in Eagle has increased the urgency of this needed facility. Basic visitor and resource protection services will be improved by acquiring appropriate aircraft and flight time in order to better monitor and provide services throughout this 8.5 million acre park. Better collaboration with commercial operators providing visitor access will happen as a result of a slight increase in the very small staff currently providing the wide spectrum of visitor resource protection services.

The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS

Site: YUCH

STEWARDSHIP

Improve the condition of park resources and assets.

Rehabilitate high-priority historic buildings to good condition, and help communities to preserve their history through programs like Preserve America.

We will continue to work with the gateway community of Eagle and their interest in preserving the historical structures around the community and nearby areas. We will encourage private funding sources to partner with this effort and when appropriate encourage adaptive reuse of buildings in order to help preserve them.

The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS

Improve high-priority assets to acceptable condition, as measured by the Facility Condition Index.

Facilities management is a very high need for the park. The park has very limited staff with the ability manage this program and the many facilities of the park. A facility management position that would be shared with other parks in northern Alaska is proposed in an effort to professionalize our efforts in this area.

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Improve the natural resources in parks, as measured by the vital signs developed under the Natural Resource Challenge.

This is a huge task for this large and young park, but critical to successful long-term management. While some initial inventories have been accomplished, there are many critical areas that need work that have immediate direct importance for managing natural and healthy wildlife and fisheries populations as well as naturally functioning ecosystems. Population and density estimates as well as harvest studies are needed for most of the large mammals that are consumptively used by sport and subsistence hunters. Fisheries issues on the Yukon River continue to be a huge issue and improved monitoring and management is needed. Associated studies of subsistence hunting, fishing and gathering activities are also critical to meet management responsibilities.

The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS

Complete all cultural resource inventories for designated priority resources.

A new approach to studying living cultures that still exist in and around the preserve will be conducted to better understand the changing role of "traditionally associated peoples" in and around the parklands. Using these living resident cultural experts to help discover and inventory the vast areas of the preserve for archeological sites will greatly enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of archaeological inventories and help monitor

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STEWARDSHIP

Improve the condition of park resources and assets.

condition assessments. A very small percentage of the preserve has actually been studied to date.

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Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

The current General Management Plan and associated Backcountry and Cabin Plans are now over 20 years old and out of date. Planning for the future management of the preserve will become a priority and appropriate staffing expertise will be sought in order to carefully plan and manage this park for the next ten to twenty years.

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Site: YUCH

ENVIRONMENT

Reduce environmental impacts of park operations.

Reduce the environmental impacts of park operations on air and water quality.

New facilities planned for Eagle and Coal Creek need to utilize new alternative energy technology now available. We plan to develop our facilities and power generation in coordination with nearby community facilities to reduce energy needs and share with each other benefits that are often lost with individually generated power. There are huge potential savings if waste heat can be captured and reused by the community. These communities are the process of seeking grants to capture and reuse energy that is now lost, as well as more efficiently and more cleanly generate power. These environments during the winter months are likely the most difficult to provide heat and power during the long arctic winters. Temperatures often are well below -40 degrees Fahrenheit and occasionally reach 60-70 below. It is relatively dark for 2 months of the year but the remaining ten months have ample sun and long days to make solar power a very effective source.

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Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Solar recharged electric vehicles will be used at sites where solar power is generated. This will help to decrease green house gases which are rapidly changing arctic ecosystem due to climate change.

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Site: YUCH

ENVIRONMENT

Inspire an environmental conscience in Americans.

Establish programs to showcase exemplary environmental practices and increase visitor awareness of how the practices apply to their daily lives, as measured by surveys.

Develop a program that tracks and reduces energy consumption and green house gases emission from NPS operations. Make this information available to the public to the staff and work it into public programs to help create and understanding of innovative measures that can be taken even in Arctic Environments to reduce energy impacts.

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Demonstrate environmental excellence through increased use of alternative energy and fuels at every park.

Require our two field and office locations to begin generating a portion of their energy requirements through solar or wind generators. The price of electrical generations at some remote locations has exceeded \$.90 per kWh, which makes alternative power not only cleaner but more cost effective, than in the past. These projects can be accomplished in coordination with local communities that will also benefit economically even if they are not producing alternative energy, by reducing the demand on their diesel powered generators which will reduce the cost to the residents of the community. Solar recharged electric vehicles will be used at sites where solar power is generated. This will help to decrease green house gases which are rapidly changing arctic ecosystem due to climate change.

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Site: YUCH

ENVIRONMENT

Engage partners, communities, and visitors in shared environmental stewardship.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Continue to develop alternative clean energy production with NPS facilities using solar and wind power. Solar generated electricity has been determined to be cost effective and successful and will help to reduce air and water pollution at our facilities in Fairbanks, Eagle and Coal Creek. Local utilities will purchase solar generated power or reimburse the value of that power. In Eagle wind and solar energy maybe an effective way to generate power and should be evaluated as an alternative. All of these sites use diesel generators or coal to provide most of the power.

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Site: YUCH

RECREATION

Encourage collaboration among and assist park and recreation systems at every level—federal, regional, state, local—to help build an outdoor recreation network accessible to all Americans.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

A backcountry and cabin management plan for the park will be developed that will help to provide appropriate recreational opportunities throughout the preserve. This preserve its wild and remote character and allow more people to visit many parts of the preserve by careful planning and management and dispersing use to areas that are currently seldom used. We will also continue to develop programs that will allow the visiting public to learn, understand and enjoy this remote area without needing to physically visit the site. This will be accomplished by improving our web programs, videos, radio programs and developing, picture files as well as natural sound files that can be easily visited by the public.

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Site: YUCH

RECREATION

Establish "volun-tourism" excursions to national parks for volunteers to help achieve natural and cultural resource protection goals.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Using examples of other countries around the world school programs will not just be an "outreach" program of the NPS but rather we will assist the schools in making the national park units in their area a part of the schools regular curriculum. Coal Creek Camp in the heart of the preserve can serve as an experiential center as well as learning centers in communities near the park that will provide children the exposure to learn from and experience the preserve.

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Site: YUCH

RECREATION

Focus national, regional, and local tourism efforts to reach diverse audiences and young people and to attract visitors to lesser-known parks.

Increase the number of visitors that attend ranger-facilitated programs such as campfire talks, hikes, and school programs.

A new program will be developed where local residents including elders will be an important part of the interpretive programs on Living Alaska Native Cultures, traditional and modern life-ways. The science and learning satellite programs will combine science, education, interpretation with traditional knowledge from local residents.

The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Continue to develop all employee and visitor facilities with neighboring land management agencies and partners. The Eagle visitor contact station, offices will be jointly shared with the BLM who has historical facilities in the area. We will develop formal partnerships with the Eagle Historical Society and any other local group that is interested to a collaborative approach to visitor services. The Coal Creek Camp is designed to be shared with and used by educational and partnership organizations.

The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS

Site: YUCH

EDUCATION

- Introduce young people and their families to national parks by using exciting media and technology.
- Increase the number of web hits through the introduction of advanced, interactive features that attract young people to national parks.

The preserve will greatly enhance it's website by providing sounds as well as imagines from the area. Natural sounds can be linked with still and video images to provide a more realistic and informative high-quality program that will make the website more interesting to a wider audience. This approach will work well for natural and cultural programs. Stories from the people and different cultures living in the area would be made available on the site. A well trained and experienced web master will be hired to focus on this project and coordinate the organization of the site. They will work with subject matter experts from the staff and Universities and communities that will provide material for the programs and provide similar services to other associated parks.

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Site: YUCH

EDUCATION

- Promote life-long learning to connect generations through park experiences.
- Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

The Coal Creek Camp will allow local community members and scholars explore "place based education" through an experiential method. This program will occur at remote this location in the heart of the preserve and could involve families, people of diverse cultural backgrounds, local indigenous people, as well as scientist from different disciplines. The evolution of this program will be documented and disseminated through publications and lectures with the objective of preparing the next generation of conservationists and scientist in their approach to the natural world and communities. (See Centennial Challenge Project)

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Site: YUCH

EDUCATION

Impart to every American a sense of their citizen ownership of their national parks.

Increase visitors' satisfaction, understanding, and appreciation of the parks they visit.

The Science and Learning Center in Coal Creek will also serve as a satellite center of the Murie Science and Learning Center in Denali National Park will bring together a wide diversity of scientist, local Alaskan residents, students, park visitors and staff. The camp has been recently restored and is now available for groups to conduct educational programs and provide work space for visiting scientist, traditional knowledge experts and others. The facility could be used as a base for smaller groups to travel out into remote areas of the park to conduct field based programs and research. Arctic environments and climate change, indigenous traditional knowledge and cultures would be a focus of this center. (See Centennial Challenge Projects for additional details)

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Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

The building of the preserves first permanent visitor contact station and office in Eagle will greatly enhance our abilities to connect people with the preserve. It will:

- Increase the number of visitors that attend ranger-facilitated programs.
- Increase volunteer hours and invite participation of the community and its organizations.
- Provide opportunity for visitors to understand and appreciate the purposes for which the preserve was established and find inspiration, health and wellness.
- Provide space for displays and exhibits, trip planning and backcountry orientations, interactive interpretation with ranger staff, and the installation and utilization of multi-media technology.
- Accommodate school and youth groups and provide junior ranger opportunities.
- Provide office and workroom space for interpretation and website management

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Site: YUCH

PROFESSIONALISM

Be one of the top 10 places to work in America.

Meet 100 percent of diversity recruitment goals by employing people who reflect the face of America.

Additional programs will be developed to recruit, train and mentor local high school students and University of Alaska students as well as others to work for the preserve and the NPS. The organization will be structured to accommodate an intake and career development program especially for Alaska Natives and local residents from communities around the park. The preserve will fully engage and develop a partnership with the University of Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program, recently established at the Anchorage campus that reaches out to most rural villages. Utilizing the Collateral Duty Special Emphasis Program, encourage employees to act as coordinators and take a leadership role by participate on workgroups.

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Attain the highest employee satisfaction rate of all federal agencies, as measured by Office of Personnel Management surveys.

Develop specific Alaska parks training program for all employees that will help promote a common understanding special responsibilities specific to Alaska parks. More specialized training in specific areas can all be provided to employees that require a higher level of understanding or detail in certain areas. This could include the spectrum of skills needed to safely work in various Alaskan environments, cultural training, subsistence, access and a long list of Alaska specific responsibilities. Specialized training could also allow for an aircraft pilot intake program that continually trains pilots for future aviation needs, with mentor pilots located in specific areas of the state to train employees in specific region areas. Backcountry travel and survival training could also become a standard part of the employees training program for both rangers and resource staff that need it. Investing in this type of specific training for employees not only helps provide a healthier workforce but allows for personal growth and over job satisfaction.

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Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Provide basic housing and office needs for employees located at remote duty station where appropriate facilities are not available. This is a basic human need anywhere in the world but in the extremely cold environments of northern Alaska this is a basic need that is essential. We have been able hire some very tough individuals that have been able to endure some extremely difficult living situations but eventually most people tire of the stress and

Site: YUCH

PROFESSIONALISM

Be one of the top 10 places to work in America.

either have problems or leave if they are able to move to another location. As mentioned in the vision statement this part is still a young park and these basic needs are still a work in progress.

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Site: YUCH

PROFESSIONALISM

Make national parks the first choice in philanthropic giving among those concerned about environmental, cultural, and recreational values.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

In order to strengthen partnerships with groups that are interested in helping, the preserve will work at introducing more potential donors to this little known part of Alaska. Experience has proven that when people are exposed to the wonders of this remote part of Alaska, they (usually) become the best advocates for the protection and support of the programs. The experiential and learning centers mentioned previously are great venues to allow potential supports to fully appreciate and support the park and its programs. Devoting more time and energy to this will effort will greatly enhance philanthropic giving. (see Educational sections for additional details)

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