United States Department of the Interior

National Park Service
Booker T. Washington National Monument
12130 Booker T. Washington Hwy
Hardy, VA 24101
540-721-2094
www.nps.gov/bowa

Booker T. Washington National Monument Social Media Policy
www.facebook.com/btwnm

Contact: Betsy Haynes
Interpretive Park Ranger/Webmaster
phone: 540-721-2094
e-mail: betsy_haynes@nps.gov

Purpose:
Booker T. Washington National Monument seeks to use Social Media to augment and enhance present use of interpretive media and tools. Use of Social Media will also spearhead a more robust initiative to actively engage NPS-designated underserved and newer audiences in the venue(s) most of those audiences already employ as primary areas of socialization and communication.

Booker T. Washington NM presently utilizes a wide spectrum of traditional interpretive, educational and informational media. These include:

1) Web 1.0 (NPS.GOV)
2) Printed event calendars
3) Printed brochures and flyers
4) Printed event posters that are distributed in local communities by park volunteers
5) Press releases to area newspapers, radio and TV stations
6) Targeted phone calls to selected news staff
7) Cell phone and future iPod tour elements
8) Traditional tour signage
9) Personal services, such as park ranger-led tours and interpretive programs
10) Word of mouth by park volunteers and visitors

The park has also begun usage of one Social Media site by creating a park Facebook page.

While traditional media have been effective, a rapidly increasing number of people in our society obtain information by primary reliance on Social Media, rather than on these more traditional means of communication. If Booker T. Washington NM is to be effective in serving our changing audiences and demonstrating its relevance both as a resource and an active partner in our community and geographic region, Social Media is a vital, indeed indispensible, tool for this mission.

Goals:

Booker T. Washington NM will use Social Media to achieve the following objectives:

1) Actively participate in the Director's "Call to Action" initiative, targeting specific goals, including:

   a. Goal 10, "Arts Afire," seeking to "Showcase the meanings of parks to new audiences through… social media."

   b. Goal 16, "Live and Learn," aiming to "Provide multiple ways for children to learn about national parks….through…online resources, and educational partnerships."

   c. Goal 17, "Go Digital," seeking to "Reach new audiences and maintain a conversation with all Americans by transforming the NPS digital experience to offer….online and mobile technology, including social media."

   d. Goal 22, "Scaling Up," ordered toward "Promoting large landscape conservation to support healthy ecosystems and cultural resources," a crucial element in Booker T. Washington NM's partnership ventures in our region.

2) Promote Civic Engagement, under the definition by the Director in DO #75A, as "a continuous, dynamic conversation with the public on many levels" that is ordered toward strengthening "public understanding of the full meaning and contemporary relevance" of park resources.

3) Reach underserved audiences, including those in the 20-30 year old age bracket ("Generation Y") and teenagers, whose primary methods of socialization, communication and information gathering rely heavily, and in some cases almost exclusively, on Social Media.

4) Provide enhanced opportunities for visitors to learn about Booker T. Washington NM's and its resources, whether as a pre-visit planning tool or a stand-alone experience for "virtual visitors."

5) Provide enhanced opportunities for concerned citizens, communities and organizations to partner with Booker T. Washington NM's in concerted efforts to protect park resources, including viewshed protection and agricultural stewardship.

6) Expand educational outreach and encourage students to develop their own sense of meanings of Booker T. Washington NM's and share those with their peers.

7) Provide an easy, accessible portal to frequently changing park information.

8) Provide enhanced visitor experiences during visits to Booker T. Washington National Monument.

Audiences:

Current visitation at Booker T. Washington NM includes multiple audiences. While a slight majority presently uses Social Media, as Social Media continue to proliferate, the park must adapt to better reach

its changing audiences. Present visitation brings in families, couples, individuals and small groups, and includes:

1) Local and regional visitors from within a 2-hour drive radius of the park, a small percent of which are visiting from either West Virginia or North Carolina (owing to the park's proximity to both states);

2) Schools (almost exclusively from within a 1-hour drive radius of the park) that make use of free educational programming offered by the park;

3) National visitors;

4) International visitors;

5) "Virtual visitors" who presently use NPS.GOV/BOWA either as a pre-visit planning tool or as a stand-alone park experience.

Booker T. Washington NM also continues to encourage better awareness in local communities of the existence of the "National Park in their backyard." Many in our local communities are not aware of our presence, or that the park is even part of the National Park Service.

Underserved audiences we seek to reach with greater effect include, but are not limited to:

1) At-risk school districts in both urban and heavily rural areas, as well as minority and low income school populations, which combined make up perhaps 5-10% of local area schools;

2) Elementary and middle school students who are not necessarily able to visit the park or who use the Internet and Social Media as pre-, during- or post-visit educational resources;

3) High school students whose curricula do not usually include our park's themes and resources but are readily connected.

Implementation:

Initial research for a park Facebook page was done by the park webmaster in 2010, and the park's Facebook page was created by the same Interpretive Park Ranger in 2010. Presently, the same Interpretive Park Ranger, Betsy Haynes, serves as the manager for the park's Facebook page. An Administrative Support Assistant, Melissa Johnson, has come on board as Co-Webmaster and will be assisting Ranger Haynes with the social media sites. Ranger Haynes checks the page weekly for content and accuracy and removes any erroneous or inappropriate content. Ranger Haynes also posts information and photos for recent or upcoming events.

The park's page, www.facebook.com under Booker T. Washington National Monument, has approximately 133 fans, and individual event postings have been followed by up to 200+ individuals. The "Info" part of the page provides a direct link to NPS.GOV/BOWA, and includes rules for page use.

At present, park's Facebook page serves as an adjunct Web presence for the park's NPS.GOV/BOWA page, with the latter being the park's primary Web presence. All special events are posted at NPS.GOV/BOWA first and foremost, with additional event postings provided on Facebook. Event postings there regularly include links back to NPS.GOV/BOWA.

Posting of calendar and news items, as well as event and park photos, will continue after approval under the Interim WASO Social Media Policy (12/15/2012). Ranger Haynes will serve as primary ranger for this, with Admin. Support Assistant Johnson serving as a back-up. During the summer season, visitor and event information will be posted on a weekly and sometimes daily basis, as appropriate. During the other three seasons, which include the park's Harvest Time Festival, Christmas Event, and Juneteenth event information will continue on a similar schedule.

Further steps to be taken include:

1) Finalizing approval under the Interim WASO Social Media Policy (12/15/2012).

2) Working with NER Regional and SAWS staff to continue ensuring NPS.GOV/BOWA upgrades and providing accurate and reliable information for all "virtual visitors."

3) Working with park interpretive staff and other divisions to establish longer-tem social media projects such as "ArtiFacts," "Photo of the Week," and "Ranger Stories" elements.

4) Continue monitoring of the park Facebook page on a weekly basis to catch and remove any phishing scams, spam, links to virus or spyware, or otherwise inappropriate content as based on the terms of the DOI/GSA.gov user agreements. This "Comment Policy Language Warning" can be found on INSIDE.NPS/WASO Website, at:
http://inpniscsfern1.nps.doi.net:7000/sites/Web/Documents/Social%20Media/NPS%20Comment%20Policy.txt

5) Observe and assess feasibility and usefulness of expanding Booker T. Washington NM's Social Media presence to include Twitter and YouTube, especially as tools for disseminating park information in a timely manner (primarily Twitter) and as a venue for students to interact with park resources and share their park experiences (primarily YouTube).

Evaluation:

After the initial approval, the park will evaluate the benefits of the use of Social Media at the beginning of every month for a period of six months. After that period, the park will evaluate the benefits of the use of Social Media once every 6 months (once at the end of the fiscal year and at the midway point).

Tools such as Facebook's "Insights" application will be used to measure how many people shared news and event items posted. These statistics can then be compared to NPS.GOV/BOWA web statistics provided by Ominture (or other future statistics tools provided), looking at usage data for corresponding "Calendar of Events" and "News Release" items. While "virtual visitor" usage of the park's Facebook page for events information is not expected to eclipse events information provided through NPS.GOV/SARA, correlations will be sought and analyses made for most effective strategies in the Facebook environment.

Anecdotal evaluation will also be conducted/continued by informally asking park visitors how they found out about the park and its activities and events.

Park Websites:
www.nps.gov/bowa

Superintendent Approval:

Signature

8/22/12
Date

Carla Whitfield
Printed Name