

Centennial Challenge News Release



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First centennial project coming to Fire Island: Wayside exhibits at Kismet, Fire Island Pines and Watch Hill

(Patchogue, New York) – By the end of 2008, visitors to a few parts of Fire Island will be welcomed by new exhibit panels as they disembark the ferry. Fire Island National Seashore’s proposal for the National Park Service Centennial Challenge was selected for funding. With matching grants from the communities of Kismet and Fire Island Pines, and the volunteer community at Watch Hill, the seashore will be embellished with informative new wayside panels. Currently there is little information about Fire Island National Seashore in the communities within park boundaries. The three new displays will provide an orientation to this unit of the National Park System, and will include a panel with community- specific history and information.

“I am excited that our partnership project at Fire Island National Seashore has been chosen and funded at the beginning of the National Park Service Centennial Celebration program,” stated Acting Superintendent Sean McGuinness. “We look forward to eventually working with all seventeen of the communities within the boundaries of the park. Projects like this help expand the understanding and appreciation of the unique qualities and rich heritage of Fire Island.”

National Park Service Director Mary A. Bomar said, “With the nearly \$25 million Congress has appropriated and nearly \$27 million of matching commitments from our park partners, the Centennial Initiative today moves onto the landscape and into people’s lives. It’s a great day for the National Park Service and a great start for improvements at Fire Island National Seashore.”

The National Park Centennial Initiative is a 10- year program to reinvigorate America’s national parks and prepare them for a second century. The initiative includes a focus on increased funding for park operations plus a President’s Challenge: up to \$100 million a year in federal funds to match \$100 million a year in philanthropic donations to the National Park Service.

“This is how we put our Centennial goals on the ground and it’s quite a beginning,” Bomar said. “We have 110 programs and projects involving more than 130 individual, public and non- profit partners benefitting 76 national parks in 38 states and the District of Columbia.”

Fire Island National Seashore’s project, which will cost \$21,000, involves the design, fabrication and installation of a three- sided NPS wayside exhibit panel at each location: Kismet, Fire Island Pines and Watch Hill. Representatives from the two communities and from the Friends of Watch Hill are

providing photographs and narratives to help tell their story. Fire Island's NPS staff is reproducing content for the remaining panels, which depict general park orientation and the natural, cultural, and recreational resources the park offers. "This is the beginning of a wave of enhancements that should help make Fire Island America's premiere national seashore by 2016," said McGuinness. "With community support and public appreciation, we can become an outstanding example of mutual respect, shared vision and stewardship of fragile coastal resources."

While Fire Island National Seashore's first Centennial Challenge project is relatively small, Director Bomar has said, "We really have to get cracking. Many of our parks have a short construction season for the brick and mortar and trail projects and our rangers will need to quickly integrate new programs for the rush of summer visitors who arrive in a few short months."

The **National Park Centennial Initiative** provides a framework for the National Park Service to engage the public in its mission. Its goals and strategies will embrace new constituents and gain support from a broad array of public and private partners to ensure America's national parks continue to thrive into the next 100 years.

Fire Island National Seashore's budget this year was increased by \$330,000 as a part of the NPS Centennial Initiative program. Additional seasonal lifeguards, interpreters, visitor protection and maintenance staff are being hired for the summer. This program will enable managers to expand park programs and facilities on Fire Island National Seashore properties. The leadership of the Friends of Watch Hill, Fire Island Pines' Fund in the Sun Foundation, and community members from Kismet have come forward to get the ball rolling on other parts of Fire Island, through the Centennial Challenge program.

Centennial Challenge programs and projects for 2008 elsewhere in the United States include:

- Lewis and Clark National Historical Park where park rangers and staff will adopt the Class of 2016, today's fourth- graders, and bring them into the park for special programs several times a year until they graduate from high school.
- Nine national parks across the country will embark on a national effort to discover and catalog all plant and animal life in the national parks – technically speaking, they will conduct *all taxa biologic inventories*.
- Upgraded and new interpretive trails at San Antonio Missions National Historical Park, Valley Forge National Historical Park, Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park, Hagerman Fossil Beds National Monument, Point Reyes National Seashore and other parks.
- Water quality enhancement, restoration of endangered mussels, reintroduction of Trumpeter Swans and wetland habitat learning experiences for visitors at Buffalo National River.
- Creation of the Institute at the Golden Gate to Advance Preservation and Global Stability, Golden Gate National Recreation Area in San Francisco.
- New or expanded Junior Ranger programs at many national parks.
- Expansion of ranger interpretation at the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park and the George Washington Memorial Parkway with new technology including podcasts and videocasts.

For a complete list of the 2008 National Park Service Centennial Challenge projects and programs please visit www.nps.gov/2016. For more information about Fire Island National Seashore and its Centennial Initiative program, visit the park's web site at www.nps.gov/fiis.

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