



HFC *on* MEDIA

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HFC wayside production manager Bruce Kaiser and wayside planner and writer Elizabeth Kerwin-Nisbet install a tactile model on a new wayside exhibit. Learn more about new tactile waysides at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park beginning on page 10. (NPS Photo by David T. Gilbert)

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From HFC's Director

I spent almost ten years as an interpretive planner for the National Park Service. I loved working with parks, learning their stories, and facilitating a planning process that helped the parks "get it done."

Planning is one of the most valuable tools NPS professionals have to help them successfully reach their long-term program goals. Plans give direction, provide a way to monitor and measure our efforts, and offer an opportunity to share our vision and get commitment for that vision from our stakeholders and staff. The core planning document for interpretation and education is the Long-Range Interpretive Plan (LRIP).

This issue of *HFC OnMedia* explores the value of stakeholder involvement in the LRIP process (see page 6). It is much easier to get multiple perspectives into your interpretive and educational products and services when the planning process includes your stakeholders and partners. Other articles help you determine when you need a new plan and how to prepare for the planning process.

Planning is definitely more than an administrative requirement; it is an enriching, educational, and enjoyable experience.

—Don Kodak

Byways and National Parks

Collaborating for a Richer Visitor Experience

by Michelle Ethun, National Scenic Byways Program

Shared Values

In April of this year, the Acting Director of the National Park Service recognized the unique relationship between America's National Parks and the America's Byways® System in a news release entitled *Parks and Byways: Connecting People and Places*. The America's Byways collection includes 125 leisurely driving routes that offer opportunities to experience history, culture, nature, archaeology, recreation, and scenery—often on a visitor's drive to or through a National Park. The opportunity to drive along America's Byways to experience our National Parks was also the subject of a feature article entitled *Discovering America's National Parks on America's Byways* (www.byways.org/stories/79380). Clearly, the National Park Service and the America's Byways collection have common values and objectives.

The question is: How can the NPS and local byways work more closely to deliver

common interpretive themes and messages, thereby strengthening the visitors' experience?

America's Byways

The National Scenic Byways Program was established in 1991 and is managed through the U.S. Department of Transportation. The byways themselves are grassroots-driven initiatives to promote, protect, and preserve unique road corridors. Byways are designated at the national level (America's Byways) by the U.S. Secretary of Transportation. Designations are based upon the significance of each byway's character-defining intrinsic qualities, including archaeological, cultural, historical, natural, recreational, and scenic qualities.

Management of America's Byways and state or tribal byway corridors is generally done through local community groups. A corridor management plan is prepared by

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Send questions and comments to David T. Gilbert either by email at david_t_gilbert@nps.gov or call 304 535 6102.

Secretary of the Interior

Ken Salazar

Acting Director, National Park Service

Dan Wenk

Associate Director, Partnerships and Visitor Experience

Chris Jarvi

Director, Harpers Ferry Center

Don Kodak

Editor

David T. Gilbert

Art Director

Robert Clark,
Office of NPS Identity

Contributors

Chad Beale
Joanie Budzileni
Walter Chavez
Bob Clark
Toni Dufficy
Michelle Ethun
Winnie Frost
David Guiney
Rick Jones
Elizabeth Kerwin-Nisbet
Mary Mallen
Peggy Scherbaum
Sam Vaughn

HFC Website

www.nps.gov/hfc

The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA™



This giant granite gateway monument for the Schoodic Byway in Acadia National Park was dedicated in December 2005. Left to right: John Kelly (Acadia National Park), Barbara Shanahan (Schoodic National Scenic Byway Chair), Ed Pontbriand (Acadia National Park), Fred Dedmon (Schoodic National Scenic Byway Committee), and Peter Drinkwater (Schoodic Byway Committee). (Photo by Jim Fisher)

the byway organization and addresses the inventory of intrinsic qualities, local desired conditions, and visitor experience needs, including interpretation and interpretive media. The plan should also tie in management plans for any adjacent publicly managed lands, such as National Parks.

One Visitor Experience

Some NPS units, like the Natchez Trace Parkway and the George Washington Memorial Parkway, are also All-American Roads or National Scenic Byways. Many byways run adjacent to or through units of the National Park System. Visitors often approach National Parks via byways, and their experience of visiting a National Park includes this approach drive. This offers an important connection between the byway and the park destination. This connection presents an excellent opportunity for parks and byway organizations to work together in providing a seamless visitor experience in telling the byway story before and after entering the park. The resources along the byway corridor may fit with the park's interpretive plan, and the opportunity to augment these interpretive messages in the gateway corridors can strengthen the visitors' impressions of the area.

Coordinated media planning along the byway (both outside and within the park) would help to provide visitors with a broader story through the use of coordinated wayside exhibits, portable electronic media, interpretive signs, Web content, marketing, and publications.

Examples of Shared Success

Many NPS sites and byways have worked together to strengthen and unify their visitor experience.

- **Acadia National Park** – Visitors approach Mount Desert Island and the Schoodic Peninsula via two byway road corridors. The byways showcase various view sheds allowing visitors to view the park's resources and build their antici-

pation prior to reaching the park. The byway also interprets the bedrock that makes up the park's geologic character. The byway organization and NPS staff worked together to provide wayside pullouts and interpretive media to help introduce and tell the Acadia story long before visitors enter the park.

- **Nez Perce National Historical Park** – Staff at the park and the Northwest Passage Scenic Byway in northern Idaho worked together to produce interpretive media and brochures that tell one unified story. Visitors to the various park sites use the byway as a travel corridor.
- **Mount Rainer National Park** – Park staff and byway leaders from the Chinook Scenic Byway in Washington worked with outside vendors to augment existing marketing materials. These materials highlight the stories told at the park, in the gateway communities, and at wayside pullouts along Hwy. 410 in the approach to the north side of the park.
- **Ohio & Erie Canalway** – NPS staff at Cuyahoga National Park and byway leaders have worked together to create a consistent marketing effort and campaign with identifiable brand and logo for the byway and park sites. Both teams have collaborated to create consistent signage and wayfinding that are seamless across the park and byway corridor.

Collaboration on Media

NPS sites often have more resources available for media planning than small byway organizations. In these situations, parks can provide technical assistance to byway organizations in areas such as media planning and design. Parks could offer information on contractors, media processes, image acquisition, editing, interpretive theory, graphic layout design, wayside site development, and accessibility enhancements.

On the other hand, the byway organizations can assist the parks by providing locations for telling byway stories at wayside sites and contact stations, including byway

New Employees at HFC

Jessica Ely

Jessica Ely began her acquisition career as Active Duty Military with the U.S. Air Force. She then continued on with the Air Force as a civilian Contracting Officer Team Lead for the Specialized flight division located at Macdill AFB in Tampa, Florida.

Jessica subsequently worked in private industry as the Federal Contracts Manager for a small 8(a) company in Tampa. In 2007 she was hired by the Army Reserve Contracting Center-East and served as the Senior Contract Specialist and Contracting Officer for the pre-award division at Fort Dix, New Jersey. Jessica has a B.S from Waynesburg College in Waynesburg, Pennsylvania.

Kerry Gastley

Kerry Gastley is a new Procurement Technician with Acquisition Management. She comes to HFC with a several years of Federal Service at the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine in the Office of Scientific Review at the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

Kerry has lived in Maryland since 1996, but doesn't consider herself a native Marylander. She has also lived in West Virginia, Massachusetts, Georgia, Alabama, Texas, Bermuda, Saudi Arabia, and Canada. Can you tell she was an Army brat?

Valeria Orlandini

Valeria Orlandini has joined the Cold Storage Project at Willow Springs as technical lead. She's a conservator of works of art, unbound archival materials, and photographs with an M.S./Certificate in Conservation from the Winterthur Museum/University of Delaware Art Conservation Program. She comes to HFC from a position as a paper conservator at the Library of Congress (2006-2009), and the McKay Lodge Fine Arts Conservation Laboratory, Inc. in Ohio (2002-2006).

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This mapboard along the Northwest Passage Scenic Byway in Nez Perce National Historical Park provides interpretation and wayfinding information. (Photo courtesy of the National Scenic Byways Program)

information on websites and byway publications, and helping the parks strengthen ties with park neighbors and byway communities. Providing for a rich and meaningful visitor experience is an outcome from byway and Park Service units working together to unify the message and the story.

Grants and Media Development

When it comes to developing media, money can often be the limiting factor. The National Scenic Byways Program is one source of grant funds for projects associated with a State or Indian tribe byway program, one of America's Byways, or a State or Indian tribe designated byway. There are eligibility categories for both marketing and interpretation. See www.bywaysonline.org/grants for the full list of eligibility categories, as well as information on who can apply. Federal land management agencies can apply, but must submit applications through their respective State DOTs. See "More Information on Byways" on page 5 for information on who to contact for assistance.

Many byway organizations have successfully partnered with NPS sites to use byway

or other grant funding sources to develop interpretive media. The April 2009 issue of *HFC on Media* featured such a project in the article titled "New Exhibits Unveiled at Great Falls Park."

Other examples include funding for the 75th Anniversary of the Blue Ridge Parkway. Byway program funds were requested to produce an educational campaign to focus public attention on the Blue Ridge Parkway's 75th Anniversary in 2010. The project is meant to enhance public appreciation for this designated All-American Road and highlight the importance of bringing families to the Parkway and preserving the heritage, culture, natural, and architectural assets found along it.

Partners in Providing Service

Harpers Ferry Center and the America's Byways Resource Center perform parallel functions. The America's Byways Resource Center, located in Duluth, Minnesota, under a cooperative agreement with the Federal Highway Administration, works with byway organizations across the country to provide technical assistance, re-

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Valeria has also worked at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Winterthur Museum, and Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum. She's worked abroad at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London; the National Gallery of Canada and National Archives of Canada in Ottawa; and at the University of Sao Paulo in Brazil.

Steve Schubart

Steve Schubart has joined HFC as the new Human Resources specialist assigned to employee relations. Steve previously worked with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) at the Department of Homeland Security, where he was an employee and labor relations specialist assigned to ICE headquarters in Washington, D.C.

Originally from Cincinnati, Ohio, Steve earned his J.D. and M.A. (Human Resources Management) from the University of South Carolina, which he also attended for undergraduate studies.

Randy Sullivan

Randy Sullivan is the new daily operations manager for the Digital Imaging Project (DIP) at Willow Springs. He's a professional photographer originally from Oregon. He received his formal training at Brooks Institute of Photography in Santa Barbara, California. After completing his BS in Commercial Photography and Scientific Photography, he went on to receive his Masters of Science in Photography as well as a Master's of Fine Art. Randy stayed on at Brooks as instructor and lab manager.

Randy has done all types of photography from sports, weddings, and portraits, and is now exploring the abstract. He has also worked for the L.A. County public defender's office as an expert witness related to photography. Randy has won several awards for his "Organic Abstracts".

Beth Trescott

Beth Trescott has joined the Cold Storage Project, a WASO funded

continued on next page

sources, and training. Harpers Ferry Center and the America's Byways Resource Center have collaborated on several media learning opportunities over the past three years by sharing expertise and assisting each other with funding and training materials. These include the "Developing Media for Interpretative Centers Course" in Alaska (2006), an interpretive media design workshop at the National Scenic Byways Conference in Baltimore (2007), Tele-Workshops on RFP development and wayside design (2008), and a session on wayside exhibits at the August 2009 National Scenic Byways Conference in Denver.

The National Park Service and the National Scenic Byways Program not only share values, but have the opportunity to share resources and build a mutually beneficial relationship among byway organizations and NPS interpretive staff. This will help provide a seamless visitor experience inside and outside our National Parks.

More Information on Byways

- Jennifer Getz, NPS Byways Coordinator (e-mail: jennifer_getz@nps.gov; phone: 202-513-7030)
- NPS Specific Byways information including grants, nominations, and Service-wide Comprehensive Call guidance on *InsideNPS* (accessible to NPS network computers only)
- Cindi Ptak, National Scenic Byways Program Manager (e-mail: cindi.ptak@dot.gov)
- National Scenic Byways (public Web site: www.byways.org; technical Web site for the byways community: www.bywaysonline.org)
- Chel Ethun, Training Manager, America's Byways Resource Center (Web site: www.bywaysresourcecenter.org; e-mail: cethun@byways.org)

HFC media specialists Betsy Ehrlich and David Guiney will introduce the new "NPS Wayside Exhibit Guide" at the 2009 National Scenic Byways Conference in Denver, Colorado, August 23-26. The guide will be available soon on the Harpers Ferry Center Web site.

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project administered by the Media Assets unit of HFC. Beth earned a BA in Art History and a BS in General Professional Interior Design from the University of Tennessee, at Knoxville. Beth's career in the museum field has included duties as a Museum Registrar, a Decorative Arts Specialist, and a Curator. She has been employed by the Park Service since 2000 at Gettysburg National Military Park, and has been involved in the collection management and move components of their new museum.

Summer Intern at HFC

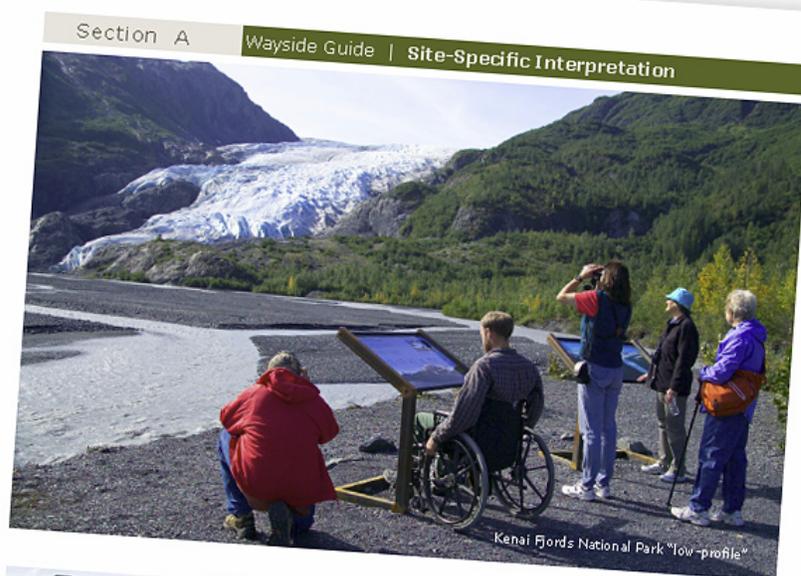
Kenneth Davis

Kenneth M. Davis is a new Visual Information Specialist student intern at Harper Ferry Center. Davis, a native of the Beacon Hill area of Seattle, Washington, studied history at Tuskegee University in Tuskegee, Alabama, where he received his B.A. degree. While a student at Tuskegee, Kenneth worked as an Interpretive Park Ranger at both the George Washington Carver Museum and Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site.

After his time in Tuskegee, Davis continued his museum career as the Curator of Exhibition at the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute in Birmingham, Alabama. Here, Davis developed a strong interest in the planning and design of museum exhibits.

In the spring of 2008 Davis relocated to Philadelphia, where he was accepted into the Museum Exhibition Planning & Design MFA program at the University of the Arts. Soon after arriving in Philadelphia, Davis reconnected with the Park Service, spending the summer of 2008 as a Student Conservation Association intern at Valley Forge NHP.

Davis has completed his first of two years at Uarts and has become knowledgeable about the planning and design process, from mind mapping/brainstorming activities to design and fabrication.



Site-Specific Interpretation

An effective wayside exhibit fosters a direct and meaningful connection between visitors and the landscape. The wayside audience is outside experiencing a place first-hand. They may be focused on any number of things. A wayside must attract and focus attention on the site, not on the wayside. If the first wayside they encounter is disappointing visitors may not stop at others.

Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor "upright"

Two types of waysides

Partners Can Make a Difference in LRIP Process

Broad participation helps ensure a successful Long-Range Interpretive Plan

When San Juan National Historic Site started their long-range interpretive planning process in 2004, few people outside of the Park Service knew what that even meant. Officials from the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, local business leaders, and members of the community were unaccustomed to participating in park planning. Superintendent Walter Chavez wanted to change that.

“We felt it was extremely important to involve our partners and the local community in this planning process,” says Walter Chavez. “We really wanted to create an opportunity for everyone here to get involved.”

Mount Rushmore National Memorial

Recently, other parks have taken a similar approach. At Mount Rushmore National Memorial, Superintendent Gerard Baker was determined to include South Dakota’s American Indian community in the park’s long-range interpretive planning process. HFC interpretive planner Rick Jones recalls just how intent Baker was to involve the affiliated tribes of South Dakota in helping plan for the park’s future.

“Gerard not only wanted to include the affiliated tribes in the LRIP process,” says Jones. “He wanted to build a long-term relationship that extended well beyond the scope of the

plan. He really wanted the tribes to share in the stewardship of the park.”

The affiliated tribes of South Dakota were greatly offended when the statues of the four presidents were carved into the Black Hills. To these American Indians, the Black Hills were sacred.

“While the planning meetings didn’t solve all the long-standing problems and issues,” says Jones, “they did open up a constructive dialog. It was an important first step.”

Ebey’s Landing National Historical Reserve

While preparing for the Ebey’s Landing LRIP workshops, HFC interpretive planner Toni Dufficy wasn’t concerned about a lack of community participation. The reserve is managed by a nine-member Trust Board that includes an NPS representative, a representative from the Washington State



Wayside exhibit designer Chad Beale inspects a kiosk at Ebey’s Landing National Historical Reserve. (NPS Photo by David T. Gilbert)

Castillo San Felipe del Morro. (NPS Photo by Robert H. Clark)



Parks and Recreation Commission, three residents from the Town of Coupeville, and four residents from Island County.

Ebey's Landing is the nation's first historical reserve, created in 1978 to protect a rural working landscape and community on Central Whidbey Island in Washington State. The reserve contains 17,500 acres, 18 working farms, 400 historical structures, native prairies, two state parks, miles of shoreline, a network of trails, and the second oldest town in Washington.

The 2009 LRIP workshop included broad participation, including the mayor of Coupeville, a County Commissioner, members of the farming community, Washington State Parks, Island County Historical Society, Central Whidbey Island Chamber of Commerce, the Bed & Breakfast Association, and the town librarian. Altogether, about 30 people attended the all-day recommendations workshop.

Everyone was engaged in the planning process. Partners helped draft recommendations, worked on the LRIP implementation plan, determined priorities, and set a timetable for action items. The "team draft" of the LRIP has even been used by the Trust Board to develop their strategic plan.

"Partners are the strength of the reserve," says Toni Dufficy. "They're all deeply involved in the site's future."



San Juan National Historic Site

Designated as a World Heritage Site in 1983, San Juan National Historic Site includes Castillo San Cristóbal, Castillo San Felipe del Morro, and Fortin San Juan de la Cruz (known locally as El Cañuelo). Bastions, powder houses, and three fourths of the city wall surrounding Old San Juan are all included within the park. These magnificent fortifications were built by the Spanish beginning in 1539, and took more than 250 years to complete.

"The forts of Old San Juan are not only important historic landmarks," says Superintendent Walter Chavez, "they're a very important part of the local community." The forts are considered cultural icons of Puerto Rico and are key symbols used in all of the Commonwealth's tourism literature. Local people grew up visiting these fortifications with family and friends.

Joanie Budzileni, the park's chief of interpretation, emphasizes just how much passion the community has for the place. "Quite simply, these fortifications are their pride and joy," she says.

The primary impetus for a new Long-Range Interpretive Plan (LRIP) was an outdated planning document, a lack of effective interpretive media, and the need to improve the delivery of personal services. The park has over 1.2 million visitors annually, most of whom arrive on cruise ships.

But completed visitor survey cards found a recurring theme.

"There's so much to see here—I felt totally unprepared for my visit."

"I didn't realize all there is to see here until the end of my visit."

"I would have gladly paid for a tour had I known how much there is to see here."

LRIP planning discussion at Mount Rushmore National Memorial. (NPS Photo)

Creating a Long-Range Interpretive Plan

Long-Range Interpretive Plans (LRIPs) identify and analyze interpretation, education, and visitor experience goals and issues. Looking ahead five to ten years, the plans recommend the most effective, efficient, and practical ways to approach these opportunities. Good plans are visionary, yet practical.

LRIPs address both non-personal services—such as interpretive media and facilities—and personal services—including programs and personal contacts. They include all-important information and orientation services. The plans match interpretive media to messages to make sure they work well individually and collectively, and to ensure that key park experiences are accessible to visitors. Negative impacts on resources are minimized, and active stewardship is enhanced.

An HFC interpretive planning team is typically led by an experienced interpretive planner. Park staff are an essential component of the planning team. Other team members may include staff from neighboring parks, interpretive media specialists, subject matter experts, regional office specialists, partners, and stakeholders.

Parks who are contemplating creating a Long-Range Interpretive Plan should consider several questions before deciding how to proceed:

- Why are you planning? What are your desired results?
- What are the major issues that need to be addressed? What are the mayor goals you want to achieve?
- Do you and your staff have the time needed to attend workshops and review documents?
- How much funding do you need? How much do you have?
- Has your park experienced major changes that will

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Superintendent Chavez knew right from the start that park partners would play a critical role in helping solve these problems. HFC interpretive planner Mary Mallen worked closely with Chavez and Budzileni to assemble an LRIP team that included park management, local government and park partners, tour operators, and media specialists. Participants were drawn from across the board:

- The park management team, including the superintendent's office, interpretation, maintenance, law enforcement, visitor operations, and cultural resources.
- HFC media specialists including an audiovisual producer, conservator, exhibit designer, and wayside exhibit planner.
- Park partners including the park's Cooperating Association (Eastern National), State Historic Preservation Office, Institute of Puerto Rican Culture, Municipality of San Juan Historic District, Historian of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Puerto Rico National Park Company, Puerto Rico Tourism Company, Museum Association of Puerto Rico, Travel Services of Puerto Rico (a tour operator), and U.S. Forest Service (El Yunque National Forest).

"This team," says Mallen, "was definitely one of the most broad-based group of people I've ever worked with on an LRIP."

Feedback from partners was invaluable. Several participants highlighted a concern that the park needed to evaluate the programs and services it was providing to local residents. "It seems local people are treated as less important than the national and international visitors" was one comment.

The park achieved two important benefits by pulling together this diverse and inclusive team. First, everyone at the table had a chance to learn first-hand about the role of interpretive media in telling the story of Old San Juan, and how well-planned media

should fit together to really enhance the visitor experience. "The partners who were at the table," recalls Budzileni, "were really able listen, learn, and ask questions."

The second benefit was the park's ability to achieve quicker buy-in from all their partners. This allowed them to begin implementing many LRIP recommendations even before the final LRIP was approved. Results of the park's LRIP have included planning for a new wayfinding system, new wayside exhibits, an orientation video, a new park brochure, a new film, and new exhibits—all of which are either under development or close to installation.

"By being at the table," says Mallen, "participants were able to reach a common understanding of critical issues and needs, and identify specific recommendations to support the park's vision for interpretation, education, and visitor services."

Budzileni is still pleased with the whole process. "Because both park management and our partners were involved in the LRIP, it's much easier to refer back to it as a road map that we all agreed upon for enhancing our visitor services."

San Juan National Historic Site's LRIP should continue to guide the park and its partners with interpretive programs for the next 10 years.



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change how you serve visitors? Are there under-represented visitor groups?

The LRIP process takes anywhere from 18 months to two years to complete. Updating 10-year-old LRIPs should take less time. Distinct steps in the process include a scoping trip, foundation workshop, and recommendations workshop.

LRIP drafts are reviewed by park staff, regional staff, partners, and stakeholders. Ultimately, the park superintendent approves the final LRIP, and copies are printed and delivered to the park for distribution.

HFC has five interpretive planners working on more than 450 LRIPs for parks across the country. The planners are experienced park interpreters with a wealth of field experience. HFC also has IDIQ (Indefinite Delivery-Indefinite Quantity) contracts with four planning firms. These contractors are available for use by any park. HFC can even provide COR services at no cost to the project.

For more information contact Sam Vaughn, Associate Manager for Interpretive Planning (phone: 303-987-6984; e-mail: Sam_W_Vaughn@nps.gov).

Below: Visitors explore San Juan National Historic Site. (NPS Photo by Robert H. Clark)

Signs your LRIP may be out of date:

- Ten years or more have elapsed since your last LRIP
- All major recommendations in your current LRIP have been accomplished or changed
- Major new developments such as land acquisition, visitor experiences, visitation, or partnerships have occurred
- Recommendations are no longer advisable or realistic based on new programs or new media options now available
- Your park is working under, or is currently creating, a new General Management Plan (GMP)
- You don't use your existing LRIP to guide your annual strategic planning
- Your latest interpretive plan is an "Interpretive Prospectus"
- Your latest interpretive plan was signed by NPS Director Stephen Mather

Problems an LRIP can help solve:

- Help your visitor experience opportunities and/or other interpretation/education/orientation services better meet park goals or visitor/community expectations
- Ensure that your interpretation/education/orientation services are adequate, current, and effective
- Ensure that park divisions and/or partners are moving in the same direction, enhancing the visitor experience
- Provide a common unifying vision that supports visitor experience and protection of park resources
- Address visitor use management and capacity issues
- Establish priorities through the development of a broad 10-year implementation plan
- Help with writing PMIS and OFS funding requests, grant requests, and other funding requests
- Can help with prioritization and organization of tasks for an interpretation division

If your latest interpretive plan was signed by NPS Director Stephen Mather, it may be out of date!

Long-Range Interpretive Plan for Herbert Hoover National Historic Site, completed in 2009.

2007 GPRA VISITOR SURVEY

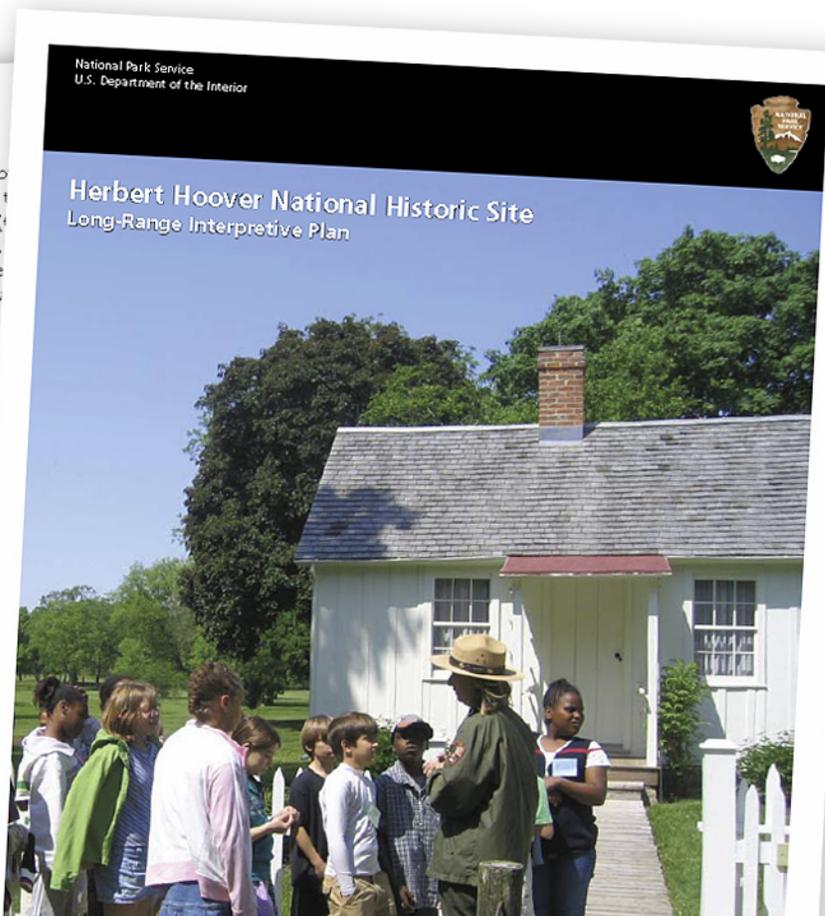
Each summer, Herbert Hoover National Historic Site distributes a report for the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) survey reflects visitor opinion about park facilities, services. The results of the 2007 GPRA Visitor Survey are summarized. Survey results from 1998 through 2007, are available at www.nps.gov

2007 Overall Quality of Facilities, Services, and Recreational Opportunities

Very good:	82%	(98% satisfaction: combined Very Good and Good)
Good:	16%	
Average:	2%	
Poor:	0%	
Very Poor	0%	

2007 Specific Ratings of Facilities, Services, and Recreational Opportunities

Category	Very Good	Good
Park Facilities		
Visitor Centers	82%	16%
Exhibits	81%	17%
Restrooms	76%	20%
Walkways, Trails, Roads	81%	17%
Camp/Picnic Areas	72%	23%
Combined Facilities:	79%	18%
Visitor Services		
Employee Assistance	85%	11%
Interpretive Programs	78%	20%
Park Map or Brochure	78%	20%
Value for Entrance Fee Paid	70%	27%
Combined Visitor Services:	78%	18%



Wayside Exhibits Feature Tactile Objects

New waysides at Harpers Ferry NHP help bring 19th century history to life

Four new wayside exhibits at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park feature tactile elements that encourage visitors to touch and feel a bit of history. The waysides are part of a series of low profile exhibits and small trail markers that introduce the story of the Harpers Ferry Armory and the archeology that was recently conducted there.

HFC project manager Winnie Frost, who oversaw development of tactile exhibits for the Great Falls Tavern visitor center on the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal, first suggested the idea of tactile waysides. While tactile objects are becoming increasingly common in new Park Service interior exhibits (see “Universal Design Comes of Age in National Park Service Exhibits,” *HFC onMedia*, May 2009, page 6), examples of exterior exhibits with tactile elements are relatively rare.

For Winnie Frost, completion of an extensive archeological excavation of the lower Armory yard between 2005-2008 offered an excellent tactile interpretive opportunity. During a three-year period, park archeologists uncovered over 28,000 artifacts at the site. The Armory operated from about 1800 until the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861.

“Park archeologists uncovered all these fabulous objects,” says Frost, “but no one can see them. The creation of tactile models allows visitors to touch things that were found in the ground around them.”

One grouping of artifacts reproduced for the tactile models include Civil War-era Minnie bullets, uniform insignia, a United States belt buckle, and a bugle mouth piece. Another grouping includes a bone-handled toothbrush, a carved pipe bowl, a lice comb, and a file modified into a wrench (see *photo on next page*). Two other models don’t show archeological artifacts, but feature firearm components manufactured at the Armory.

It’s important to note that the artifact groupings are not literal representations



of the locations of objects found in the ground. Each object grouping does represent a specific layer and period of time, and each object is an accurate reproduction. However, the objects were uncovered from several different locations across the site.

These two wayside exhibits feature tactile models of objects uncovered by archeologists during their three-year excavation of the lower Armory yard at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. (NPS Photos by David T. Gilbert)

HFC designer Michael Lacombe worked closely with contractor Chase Studio to ac-

curately reproduce the 19th century artifacts. Because the original artifacts were too delicate to send to the contractor, HFC photographer Darryl Herring took highly detailed photographs of each object. The contractor sculpted a model of each artifact based on the photographs, made individual wax casts, cast each object in hi-density urethane resin, and then meticulously painted each object.

Park archeologists carefully reviewed the painted objects, making numerous suggestions for improving both their detail and accuracy. The object groupings were then embedded in their base and one cast was made of the entire assembly. The final step was the application of a two-part epoxy to seal each complete model. The finished models were shipped to Harpers Ferry, where wayside production manager Bruce Kaiser affixed them to the installed wayside exhibits (*see photos below*).

The entire wayside exhibit project was funded with line item construction money totaling \$99,452. The cost for the four tactile models was \$12,300. The HFC project team included Winnie Frost (project manager), Darryl Herring (photographer), Elizabeth Kerwin-Nisbet (planner, writer, and park liaison), Michael Lacome (designer),



Tom Patterson (cartographer), and Teresa Vazquez (graphics acquisition). Text for the wayside exhibits was based on Andrew Lee's Historic Resource Study, "The U.S. Armory at Harpers Ferry", completed in 2006.

Top: A tactile model is laid on top of a wayside exhibit proof at Harpers Ferry Center. This model shows a bone-handled toothbrush, a carved pipe bowl, a lice comb, and a file modified into a wrench. (NPS Photos by David Guiney)

Above: HFC wayside production manager Bruce Kaiser and wayside planner and writer Elizabeth Kerwin-Nisbet install a tactile model on a wayside exhibit in the lower Armory yard. This model shows Civil War-era Minnie bullets, uniform insignia, a U.S. belt buckle, and a bugle mouth piece. (NPS Photos by David T. Gilbert)

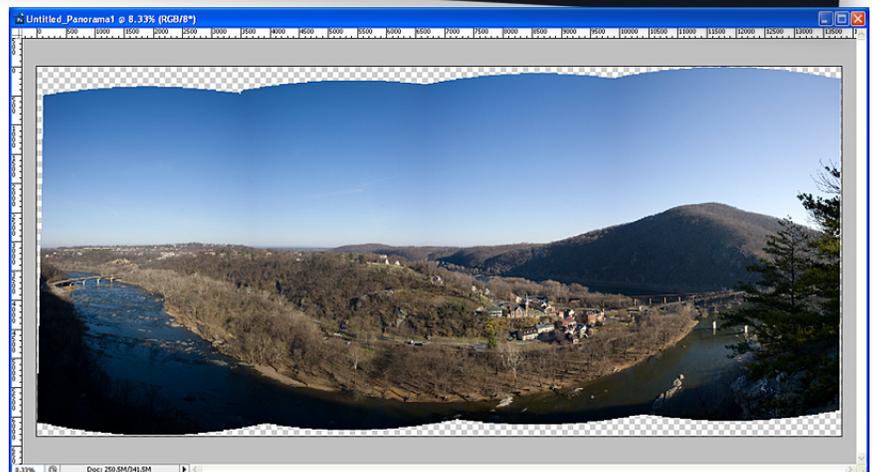
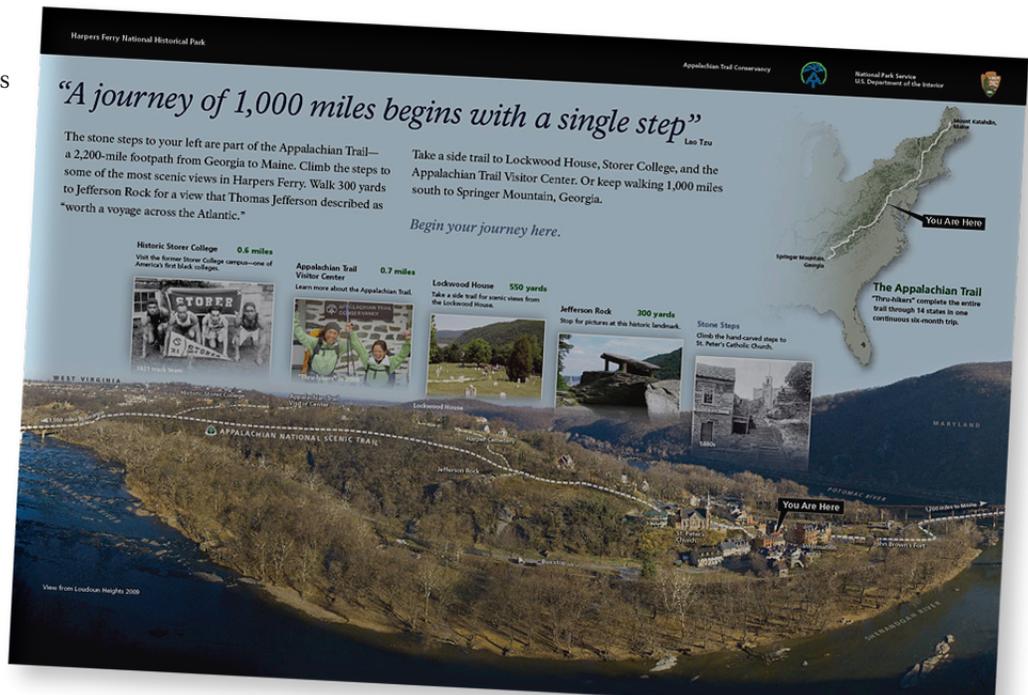
"A journey of 1,000 miles begins with a single step"

A new Appalachian Trail wayside exhibit and several wayfinding signs at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park were dedicated by West Virginia Governor Joe Manchin on June 11, 2009. The entire project was funded by a grant from the West Virginia Department of Transportation. The new wayside exhibit sits at the foot of the Stone Steps in Lower Town Harpers Ferry—a perfect spot for inviting park visitors to explore a small segment of the Appalachian Trail.

"That's the whole idea," says wayside writer Elizabeth Kerwin-Nisbet. "The park felt that too many people were missing the significance of the Appalachian Trail." The Trail passes right through the town's historic district. "The new wayside," according to Kerwin-Nisbet, "should help raise awareness of Harpers Ferry as a place for hiking, not just a town known for its history."

The project was a private-public collaboration between the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), Appalachian Trail Park Office (ATPO), Harpers Ferry NHP, and Harpers Ferry Center. The ATC's Laurie Potteiger initiated the project and secured the funding. Elizabeth Kerwin-Nisbet brought the parties together and secured HFC technical support. HFC sign program manager Bob Clark took the stunning panoramic photograph for the wayside (see sidebar on right).

HFC designer Chad Beale stitched together Clark's photos and worked with ATC designer Kathleen Mallow-Sager to create the wayside layout. Beale then cleaned up the final layout, making some last-minute typographic changes and adjustments. Kerwin-Nisbet, who works for both Harpers Ferry NHP and HFC in a shared position, wrote the text and oversaw reviews by park staff and staff from ATPO.



Creating the Panoramic Photograph

HFC's Bob Clark took a bracketed series of four vertical photos of Harpers Ferry in RAW format using a leveled tripod from Loudoun Heights at 8:00 a.m. on March 23, 2009. Clark used a Sony Alpha DSLR-A900 digital single lens reflex camera with a Sony Zeiss 24-70mm f2.8 large aperture lens. The camera features a full 35mm frame-sized Exmor CMOS image sensor with a whopping 24.6-megapixel resolution.



Wayside designer Chad Beale took Clark's four RAW photo files—each one about 37 MB in size—and created the panoramic image by stitching them together using Photoshop's "Photo Merge" feature (above). Beale color corrected and sharpened the final panoramic image, carefully adjusting the color saturation.

The panoramic photo serves as a stunning backdrop to the new Appalachian Trail wayside exhibit.