National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Sitka National Historical Park

Long-Range Interpretive Plan
April 2013

Long-Range Interpretive Plan
April 2012

Sitka National Historical Park
Sitka, AK

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
Washington, DC

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Message from the Superintendent of Sitka National Historical Park

Plan Highlights

The last long-range interpretive plan (LRIP) for Sitka was completed in September 2000. This plan was tied directly to the general management plan (GMP) and a gateway community plan. Since these plans were completed, many changes have occurred within the community and in visitation use patterns and levels. In addition, new partnerships with Russia have opened doors to knowledge and resources previously unavailable. During the next seven to ten years Sitka National Historical Park interpretive services will provide visitors with opportunities to increase their understanding and appreciation for the park and its resource; to engage in local education opportunities; and to protect the park resources.

Plan Recommendations:

• Exhibits in the visitor center and Russian Bishop's House are in need of upgrading, and consideration needs to be given to interpretation for children and other underserved audiences.

• Sitka's digital and social media presence needs to be expanded and improved to connect with greater numbers of virtual visitors.

• The park needs to pursue a comprehensive visitor use study.

• The historic furnishings in the Russian Bishop's House require more attention.

• The park should foster existing partnerships and explore new partnership opportunities

• The park education program needs physical space as well as more curriculum-based programming.

• The park's Long Range Interpretive Plan will be completed, implemented, and updated as appropriate.

This LRIP will provide long-term direction and focus for the interpretive program for the Sitka National Historical Park. The LRIP will describe the park's primary interpretive themes and visitor experiences, and recommend ways to facilitate those experiences through facility design, interpretive/informational media, interpretive services programs, and partnership endeavors.

Introduction

Park Background

Sitka National Historical Park is situated in the community of Sitka, Alaska, which lies on the outer shore of Baranof Island in southeast Alaska, about 100 air miles southwest of Juneau. Sitka is accessed by daily jet service from Seattle, Ketchikan, Juneau or Anchorage. Visitors also arrive by sea either on the Alaska Marine Highway or a cruise ship. Sitka is significant because of Tlingit culture, Russian and Alaskan history as well as spectacular ocean and mountainous scenery.

Sitka National Historical Park preserves historically and culturally significant sites and artifacts related to the 1804 Battle of Sitka between the Tlingit and the Russian forces, the Russian-American period in Alaska, the Alaska Native people of southeast Alaska, and connections with the Indian River estuary ecosystem.

Much of the land now in the park was originally dedicated as a public park by President Benjamin Harrison on June 21, 1890. On March 23, 1910, President William Howard Taft signed a proclamation designating Sitka National Monument, which added several tracts of land. On February 25, 1952, President Harry S. Truman signed a similar proclamation that readjusted the boundary. Public Law 92-510 expanded the designated area in 1972 and changed its designation from national monument to Sitka National Historical Park, emphasizing preservation through public ownership of an area that illustrates a part of early US history by commemorating czarist Russia's exploration and colonization of Alaska.

The park consists of two units comprising approximately 116.2 acres, including approximately 49.5 acres of tidelands that are within the authorized boundary. The Totem Park Unit (115.00 acres) includes the visitor center which houses park headquarters. This unit also contains the Indian River Cultural Landscape which is comprised of the Totem Trail, adjoining trails, the site of the historic Kiks.ádi Tlingit fort, the battleground of the 1804 Battle of Sitka, the Survival March Memorial, the K'alyaan Memorial Totem, the Russian Memorial, and the Indian River.

The Russian Mission Unit (1.16 acres), near Sitka's central business district, contains the Russian Bishop's House National Historic Landmark and two adjacent historic buildings: the Priest's Quarters and the Old School (formerly a school operated by the Russian Orthodox Church). The Russian Bishop's House is one of only four remaining examples of Russian colonial architecture in North America.

For visitors and residents alike, the Sitka experience crosses governmental, cultural, and jurisdictional lines. Most people experience the community as a whole, and the National Park Service sites are components of this whole.

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Planning Foundation

The Foundation Statement is a formal description of Sitka National Historical Park's (park) core mission. It is a foundation to support planning and management of the park. The foundation is grounded in the park's legislation and from knowledge acquired since the park was originally established. It provides a shared understanding of what is most important about the park. This Foundation Statement describes the park's purpose, significance, fundamental resources and values, primary interpretive themes, and special mandates. Staff at Sitka National Historical Park participated in a workshop in the fall of 2011 to create the park Foundation Statement (2012).

Park Purpose

The purpose statement identifies why Congress and the president established the park as a unit of the national park system. The purpose of the park is based on the enabling legislation.

Sitka National Historical Park preserves and interprets, for public benefit, a culturally and historically significant landscape that tells the story of Southeast Alaska Native peoples, signature totemic art form, the 1804 Battle of Sitka, and Russian exploration and colonization (Foundation Statement, 2012).

Park Significance

Guided by legislation and the knowledge acquired through management, research, and civic engagement, statements of significance define what is most important about the park's natural and cultural resources and values. The significance statements are used to guide planning and management decisions to ensure that the resources and values that Congress and the president wanted preserved are the first priority.

• The Battle of 1804: Sitka National Historical Park was the site of a significant major armed resistance of Alaska Native people to Russian colonization, and is now the place where the conflicts between two rich and contrasting cultures are interpreted.

• Totemic Art: Sitka National Historical Park preserves and interprets totemic art that showcases the talents and cultures of Native peoples throughout Southeast Alaska.

• Russia in the New World: Sitka National Historical Park features our nation's best example of Russian colonial architecture, the Russian Bishop's House, which stands as a symbol of the enduring influence of the Russian Orthodox Church on Alaska's history and communities.

• Museum Collections and Partnerships: Through relationships with local Tlingit clans and the Orthodox Church, the park provides museum care, while supporting the traditional use of ceremonial and liturgical objects.

• Southeast Alaska Native Culture: Sitka National Historical Park fosters the preservation and interpretation of Southeast Alaska Native culture.

• Indian River Estuary: The convergence of Indian River, the coastal resources, and the sea provides an inspiring, biologically rich environment that is critical to understanding the events that took place here.

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Primary Interpretive Themes

Primary interpretive themes describe the key stories or concepts that help visitors understand and appreciate the purpose and significance of the park. The primary interpretive themes do not include everything that may be interpreted, but they do provide the foundation on which the park's educational and interpretive program is based.

All interpretive efforts, through both personal and non-personal services, should relate to one or more of the primary themes. Effective interpretation results when visitors are able to connect concepts (intangibles) with resources (tangibles) and derive something meaningful from the experience.

The following interpretive themes are critical to visitor understanding and appreciation of the park's importance. The primary theme statements appear in bold followed by lists of supportive concepts.

The Battle of 1804: This cultural landscape preserves the memory of a major event defining future relations between Russian and Native Alaskans.

Interpretation of this theme will help visitors better understand and appreciate:

• The significance and ramifications of the Battle of 1804
• The Fort Site
• The Kiks.adi survival march
• Kiks.adi history
• Sacrifices of those who participated in this conflict (Tlingit, Russian, Alutiiq, Sugpiaq and Aleut)
• The partnership with the park that sustains living cultural connections (Tlingit Clan)
• The value of archeological evidence and oral tradition

Totemic Art: The park's collection of totemic art ensures the preservation of Southeast Alaska Native history, stories and traditions.

Interpretation of this theme will help visitors better understand and appreciate:

• The historic context and motivations surrounding the creation of this public park, and the role that key figures played in its establishment
• The role of the Civilian Conservation Corps in preserving and perpetuating Southeast Alaska Native Art
• Contemporary totemic art
• The role of Native art in promoting early tourism

Russia in North America: Russia's political, economic, and religious endeavors significantly influence the history of Sitka, Alaska and the United States.

Interpretation of this theme will help visitors better understand and appreciate:

• The significance of the geographical relationship between Russia and Alaska
• The role Sitka played in the transfer of Alaska to the United States and the implications of the transfer.
• The historic and cultural significance of the Russian Bishop's House
• Partnerships that sustain cultural connections to both the Native community and the Russian Orthodox Church The long term effects of acculturalization

Museum Collections and Partnerships: Caring for traditional cultural property is integral to maintaining Sitka National Historical Park's relationship with the local community.

Interpretation of this theme will help visitors better understand and appreciate:

• How the park's museum collections represent new models for resource stewardship models that encourage cooperation and partnership with the local community
• Collections and liturgical objects

Indian River Estuary: The Indian River ecosystem provided a rich natural environment producing spiritual and physical sustenance for the Tlingit, and profitable resources for European colonists and Americans, all of which continue to attract residents and visitors today.

Interpretation of this theme will help visitors better understand and appreciate:

• How ecosystems functions: how they work and why (stream ecology, temperate rainforest and climate, intertidal zone and estuary)
• The traditional hunting and gathering that sustained lives
• Ecosystem integrity (water quality, air quality, allow natural processes) and the value and importance of monitoring
• Other natural processes that shape the land: geology/geomorphology (plate tectonics, volcanism, glaciation, isostatic rebound and beach processes, river and riparian processes (hydrology, etc.)
• How park resources can foster and inspire a deep connection to place
• Connection of natural resources to present and historical cultures (subsistence, world economics (i.e. fur trade, spirituality)

Southeast Alaska Native Culture: Sitka National Historical Park preserves and perpetuates traditional art and culture for visitors.

Interpretation of this theme will help visitors better understand and appreciate:

• How the park sustains living cultures through partnerships
• Clan relationships
• New ways of interpreting culture: Indian Arts and Crafts Board, Alaska Native Brotherhood, Alaska Native Sisterhood, Sitka Tribe of Alaska

Other Important Interpretation Opportunities:

• Park neighbors: the Cottage Community
• Mission 66 and the park: the visitor center, NPS planning, etc.
• The role of Alaska in the Pacific Theater during WWII

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Visitor Experience Goals

Visitor experience goals were developed as part of the desired conditions workshop held in 2012. The desired conditions articulate the ideal conditions the National Park Service is striving to attain. Desired conditions provide guidance for fulfilling the purpose of the park and for protecting its fundamental resources and values.

Visitors come to parks seeking something of personal value and relevance. Since interpretive themes address the cognitive elements, visitor experience goals outline other available opportunities that visitors should be aware of as they interact with park and area resources, staff, and other visitors.

Interpretation

• Interpretive programs at the park facilitate intellectual and emotional connections between visitors and park resources, foster understanding of park resources and resource stewardship, and build a local and national constituency.
• NPS staff will provide interpretive programs to inspire a diverse group of visitors to care about and protect the park.
• Visitors are aware of, understand, and appreciate natural and cultural resources in the park.
• NPS staff will seek opportunities to stay informed of changing visitor demographics and preferences to effectively tailor programs for visitors.
• NPS staff will continue to provide orientation for park visitors through the park's web site and other media.
• NPS staff will work with local communities and other entities to provide outreach opportunities outside park boundaries, where appropriate.
• NPS staff will collaborate with entities to provide a broad range of educational opportunities.
• NPS staff will work to build more partnerships to foster education and interpretation programs.
• Maintain the educations programs so that it meets the needs of students, teachers, and the park.
• The park will be open to expanding new interpretation and education experiences.
• Consistent with park purposes, opportunities are provided for public education, interpretation, and scientific research regarding the park's resources.

Education/Outreach Programs

• Education programs at the park facilitate intellectual and emotional connections of the

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park resources, foster understanding of park resources and resource stewardship, and build a local and national constituency.

• NPS staff will continue to strengthen the curriculum based education to address the needs of the students, teachers, and the park.

• Provide education and outreach programs that inspire a diverse group of students and community members to care about and protect the park.

• Students and the community are aware of, understand, and appreciate natural and cultural resources in the park.

• Sitka National Historical Park seeks to foster the development of a dedicated volunteer corps, to inspire more local involvement, and to create opportunities for groups to actively participate in the stewardship of their public lands.

• 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) at every national park and develop a series of fun, educational, and engaging activities culminating in the NPS Centennial in 2016.

Media

• Web-based education will be provided that inspires a diverse group of visitors, students and others to care about and protect the park.

• Interpretive media will be developed to support park purposes, significance, interpretive themes, and fundamental resources and values.

• The park will continue to have a presence on social media outlets to expand opportunities for virtual visitors and support of the park.

• Media will be created to enhance visitor awareness of the park.

• 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 we will create a user-friendly web platform that supports online and mobile technology including social media.

Trails

• Sitka NHP will provide safe and well maintained trails for public use.

• The park will complete a trails management plan to guide the management of park trails.

Visitation and Visitor Use

The following information regarding park visitors and visitor use is derived from data from a 1994 visitor survey, the GMP, the 2013 Service wide Interpretive Report, the Sitka Visitors' Survey 2006, the 2006 Sitka Visitor Industry Plan, 2010-2012 cruise ship numbers, 2013 visitor use statistics collected at the park, and discussions with park staff and partners. This information can be valuable is analyzing past and current park visitors and in developing interpretive media and programs for various audiences.

1994 Visitor Services Project

The Cooperative Park Studies Unit of the University of Idaho conducted a visitor survey at the park from July 11-17, 1993. The results were published in 1994 and are summarized below. This survey is now 20 years old, and caution should be used in applying the findings to today's visitors. Caution also is advised in comparing the results for visitors arriving at other times of the year. For complete results, readers should refer to the full survey.

The following is a summary of the survey findings:

• Visitors were often in family groups (51%) or in groups of two (51%).
• Fifty-eight percent of visitors were between 46-70 years of age; 6% were 15 years old or younger.
• Eighty-six percent of visitors were arriving for the first time.
• Most visitors (52%) spent up to one hour at the Russian Bishop's House.
• Sixty percent of the visitors stayed up to one hour at the park visitor center.
• Most visitors (67%) were not aware of the park's existence prior to their visit.
• Most visitors arrived to Sitka by cruise ship (51%).
• Most visitors (64%) walked to the park.
• The most often used source of information about the park was travel guided/tour books (36%); however, 24% of visitors stated that they had received no advance information about the park.
• Of those who visited the park, the most visited site were the visitor center (88%), Totem Trail (79%), Russian Bishop's House (65%), the 1804 battleground/fort site (60%), Indian River footbridge (46%), and the Russian Memorial (29%).

1998 General Management Plan

The following information is excerpted from the 1998 Sitka General Management Plan. Please note that this information is now at least 15 years old and may or may not reflect current conditions. This information, however, can be of value in documenting and assessing significant trends or sudden changes.

• Tourism is highly seasonal in Sitka, as for all of Alaska. Most visitors arrive from June through September, when the climate and weather are most favorable. Although tourism in Sitka is subject to predictable cyclical ups and downs, it is an important, viable segment of the local economy.
• The most important contributor to tourism growth in Sitka is the growing cruise ship industry; however, in 1997 cruise ship passengers accounted for only 20% of the park's total visitation.
• Visitation to Sitka comes in surges as the cruise ships come and go. These visitation patterns have resulted in sudden increases in both park units and have caused crowding in some areas. The presence of three or four cruise ships in port at Sitka means large numbers of visitors at a time, and no single attraction can adequately accommodate them all.
• Although most cruise ship passengers tour Sitka on their own, many elect to go on a guided bus or walking tour. Most of these tours begin at the lightering facilities and most include the park visitor center and surrounding forest as a regular stop. This results in large numbers of visitors arriving at one time which overburdens the facilities and park staff.

Ribbon cutting ceremony opening a new trail in the park.

2006 Sitka Visitor's Survey

This survey was conducted in August 2006 by Union College, Schenectady, NY for the Sitka Tourism and Planning Committee.

The following is a summary of the results that pertain to visitors to the park:

• Fifty-nine of the respondents were middle-aged or older (51 years +). A quarter (24%) of the respondents was between 36 and 50 years of age. Only 16 percent were under the age of 35.
• Eighty-six percent of visitors surveyed arrived by sea. The majority (70%) ar-

rived aboard large cruise ships. Nine percent arrived on Alaska Marine Highway ferries. Five percent arrived on small cruise ships (i.e. fewer than 300 passengers), and two percent arrived by private boat. The remaining fourteen percent of visitors arrived by air.

• Nearly half (47%) of those surveyed were traveling in groups of two.

• Visitors not on cruise ships stayed an average of eight nights in Sitka. Those on cruises spent an average of five and one half hours.

• For 81% of those surveyed this was their first visit to Sitka.

• Most visitors got their information about Sitka several months in advance of their trip, and the most used sources of information were: travel agents (38%), cruise lines (35%), internet (34%).

• Nearly half (45%) of visitors surveyed indicated that they had not purchased and did not intend to purchase a guided tour.

• The most popular guided tours were led by Sitka Tours and Sitka Tribal Tours (Currently the park only has one CUA, Sitka Tribal Tours).

• Sitka National Historical Park was visited by thirty-six percent of the respondents and was the most popular attraction for people not on an organized tour.

• St. Michael's Cathedral and the Russian Bishop's House were the second and third most popular attractions, visited by 30 and 24 percent of survey respondents respectively.

2007 Sitka Visitor Industry Plan

This plan contains many observations, data, and strategies related to Sitka's visitor industry. Only a few items are summarized here as they relate to this LRIP. Readers should refer to the entire document for more in-depth information and recommendations.

Data regarding visitor arrivals is particularly applicable and is summarized below:

• Cruise ship visits to Sitka have grown slowly over the last 25 years; however, scheduled visits were expected to drop by about 30,000 in 2007 and even more in 2008. This is attributed to Sitka's location (off the main travel route with resulting higher fuel costs) and the market's desire for short trips.

• The community does have the option of encouraging a higher percentage of visitors to leave the ships, or for the ships to stay longer than 5.5 hours.

• Several cruise lines are no longer coming, but the number of ships remains relatively stable.

• The number of independent travelers to Sitka has remained relatively stable.

• The number of visitors arriving by ferry has dropped steadily over the past ten years, from 18,300 passengers in 1996 to 13,400 in 2006. The decline is attributed mainly to the decreasing quality of ferry service to Sitka.

• Operators of Sitka-based culture-based businesses state that the numbers of visitors coming for cultural activities has been stable.

• Three of the strongest attributes of Sitka as viewed by members of the tourism industry are (1) the authentic quality of Sitka as a "real community," (2) the authenticity of the Native culture and the array of attractions (including Sitka National Historical Park and the Southeast Alaska Indian Cultural Center), and (3) the Russian history and associated resources.

These data sets are fairly outdated as park visitation is different than expected in the mid-2000s. The park anticipates participating in another Visitor Services Project during the lifetime of this plan.

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2013 Servicewide Report/Visitation

The park's 2012 submission to the Servicewide Interpretive Report revealed the following:

• 126,100 visitors were contacted at visitor centers/contact stations.
• 16,248 visitors were reached through informal interpretation.
• 8,782 people attended one or more of 1,649 formal interpretive programs.
• 55,983 visitors viewed interpretive demonstrations & performing arts activities.
• 112 children participated in the Junior Ranger program.
• 10,447 students engaged in one or more of 458 education programs.
• 32,571 visitors viewed the park AV program.

Summer 2013 Visitation (Updated with new data)
Visitor Center Visits 113,096
Visitor Center Conducted Tours 203
Visitor Center Tour Attendance 2,105
Russian Bishop's House Visits 13,721
Russian Bishop's House Conducted Tours 1,458
Russian Bishop's House Tour Attendance 6,942
Russian Bishop's House Education Programs 57
Russian Bishop's House Education Program Attendance 683
Visitor Center Education Programs 56
Visitor Center Education Program Attendance 1,333
Off-Site Education Programs 347
Off-Site Education Program Attendance 8,320
Number of Live Talks (Matinee) 623
Live Talk Attendance 4,115
Special Events 16
Special Event Visitors 21,020
Total Tours 1,661
Total Tour Attendance 9,047
Total Education Programs 113
Total Education Program Attendance 2,016

2013 Monthly Visitation Numbers (updated with new data)

Park Visitors

During the lifetime of this Long Range Interpretive Plan, current and future visitors to Sitka National Historical Park and Preserve include:

- Sitka community members
  - o Education
  - o Recreation
  - o Health
  - o Spiritual
  - o Cultural/Historical
- Tourists (Guided &Non-guided)
- Students and teachers from the Sitka School District
- Contractors hired by the park to assist with park projects.
- People who cannot physically or financially get to the park
  - o Virtual
- Media
- Youth Organizations
- Community organizations (service organizations)
- University Organizations
- Research
- Employees
- Government Officials (local, tribal, state, and federal)

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Issues and Challenges Affecting Interpretation

The following issues and concerns were identified by the planning team during the two workshops conducted in Sitka. The purpose of this section is to provide a baseline assessment that can be used to help justify many of the plan's recommendations.

Visitor Center

• **Exhibit lighting in the visitor is still an issue.** The previous LRIP had stated that some displays and/or text are too dim for many, especially elderly visitors. The solution was to install extra ceiling lights that would be used only during periods of peak visitation. This extra lighting is harsh and potentially damaging to some artifacts, and it is not uncommon to find these lights on during non-peak times.

• **Visitor center exhibits are static, providing no options for interactivity.** The display cases are dated and difficult to access. This is especially important because some of the loaned items must occasionally be removed for use in special tribal activities.

• **Exhibits are male centric.** The Native culture exhibits at the visitor center contain predominantly male images. Women and children are a significant and important part of Tlingit culture, but are under-represented in the current exhibits.

Totem Preservation Exhibit

• **Improvements needed for interpreting the exterior totem pole storage area.** Totem poles, too large for display in the totem exhibit room, are stored horizontally in a sheltered area at the side of the visitor center building. Few visitors ever find this display which must be viewed through a heavy wire mesh. Directional and wayside signage will help alleviate finding the display; however, improvements are still needed in the way the poles are displayed.

Russian Bishop's House

• **Russian Bishop's House exhibits are old, static, and offer no interactivity.** The exhibit cases on the first floor take up excessive space and contain lighting elements that compete with rather than focus attention to the items on display. There also is the need to present a more complete Russian story here. The park owns a very large scale model of Sitka during the Russian colonial era, but it is far too big and fragile for display in this location.

• **Historic furnishings in Russian Bishop's House need to be updated or completed.** The initial historic furnishings plan did not have the benefit of access to resources in Russia. This has now changed, and the park has formed a strong partnership with its Russian counterparts. The current historic furnishings and the potential for new ones on the first floor need to be assessed with the aid of these new resources.

• **Find ways to get more visitors to the Russian Bishop's House.** The building exterior does little to attract visitor attention and draw people inside. The new Seawalk waysides may help to attract visitors. Operating the facility is staff intensive, requiring 3-4 employees on duty at most times. Currently, visitors can only access the second floor via a guided tour, which is limited to no more than twelve people. It continues to be a challenge to get visitors to take the tour.

Battle Site

• **Need to improve how the story of the 1804 battle and survival march is told.** Although the 1804 battle and survival march may be key elements of personal services interpretive programs, the only interpretive media that interpret these events are two wayside exhibits and one exhibit case at the visitor center. Since many visitors never make it to the battle/fort site, their only opportunity to learn about the battle is at the visitor center.

Indian River Bridge

• **Visitor congestion at the Indian River pedestrian bridge.** During cruise ship visitation days, especially during salmon runs, many tour guides take people to

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the pedestrian bridge that crosses the Indian River. This is an excellent spot to view the river, but the large number of visitors and narrowness of the bridge create a great amount of congestion.

Orientation

• **Need strategies for providing information, orientation, and interpretation for different audiences, including local residents.** This would also include providing quality experiences for the many visitors who only have a short amount of time to spend (i.e. cruise ship tour groups).

Stakeholders/Partnerships

• **Find ways for the park, park partners, and the community to work together.** Many people interpret the park or address park themes besides NPS employees. Still other recommendations for working together were identified in the GMP and in the gateway community plan and have not yet been implemented.
• **Call to action. 2016 marks the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service.** The Call to Action is a service-wide initiative asking parks to prepare for a new century of

Education

• **Need to plan for the future of the park's education program.** Hiring a permanent education specialist should be a priority. The education program is ready to grow, and this requires more in the way of curriculum-based activities and adequate/appropriate space to conduct programs.

Miscellaneous

• **Need to better represent the roles of the Aleut people in Sitka's history.** The Aleut people were involved in some of the key events in Sitka's history, and their roles currently are not adequately portrayed in park's interpretive media and programs.
• **Better interpretation of the cultural and natural landscapes.** The rapid growth of the rain forest and the effects of isostatic rebound make interpretation of some cultural landscape elements difficult. Likewise, except for the salmon, there currently is little interpretation of the park's natural environment. The new wayside exhibits should help, but only for those who walk the trail.

Special Populations

• **Law and Policy.** Public Law 90-480, the Architectural Barriers Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 establish standards for physical access. Other regulations, laws, and standards include Sections 504 and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Director's Orders No. 42, and the Accessibility for Visitors with Disabilities in National Park Service Programs, Facilities, and Services. All newly constructed facilities, as a matter of course, will be designed for accessibility for physically disabled visitors and employees.
• **Outdated Interpretive Exhibits.** Most of the interpretive media at Sitka is old, and does not conform in many ways to current NPS accessibility guidelines and requirements. The content being presented, in most cases, is rich in terms of artifacts, display objects, photographs, artwork, and sounds. Today there are many successful techniques and technologies which can open up the waysides, AV programs, and interior exhibits to broader audiences, and can enrich the experiences of all.
• **Improving Accessibility.** Every effort will be made to provide full access to interpretive media and programs to ensure that special populations with sight, hearing, learning, and mobility impairments; visitors who do not speak English; and the elderly and young children have access to the same information necessary for a safe and meaningful visit to Sitka National Historical Park. Planning and design teams assigned to future media projects at Sitka should refer to the Programmatic Accessibility Guidelines for National Park Service Interpretive Media http://www.nps.gov/hfc/accessibility/accessibilityGuideVersion2.1.pdf (February 20012). Specific recommendations from the Sitka National Historical Park Accessibility Assessment Debriefing Report (September 2011) are listed below.

Recommendations and Implementation Strategies

The following is a description of program and media recommendations designed to further define, support, and communicate the park's mission, purpose, significance, interpretive themes, and visitor experience goals. Implementation of these recommendations will help ensure that visitors are well prepared and informed, and that they will be able to develop meaningful connections with tangible and intangible resources.

The discussion of each program or media proposal identifies its purpose, special considerations, and sometimes suggests specific means of presentation. It is important to remember that the latter are only suggestions and should not in any way limit the creativity essential during the media and program planning and design processes. On the other hand, proposals will be specific enough to provide meaningful guidance, develop Class C cost estimates, prepare or update PMIS submissions, and define the parameters within which these creative energies can flow.

At least one of the primary interpretive themes makes direct reference to the Tlingit and other Native people and their associations with the land now in the park. Another interpretive theme references relationships with the Russian Orthodox Church. It is essential that the park maintain a dialogue and active participation with tribal leaders and the Church during the planning, design, and production of theme-related media and programs.

Pre-Visit Information and Wayfinding

Pre-Visit

The park will continue to provide information and orientation through traditional means such as answering phone, mail, and email requests. Responses will continue to be tailored to specific inquiries, and pre-developed packets of material will continue to be used in handling more common requests. All printed information will contain appropriate phone numbers and addresses, including email addresses, and the park web site url.

Recommendations:

• Using guidance from the Accessibility Assessment Debriefing Report (2011), new materials should be published in alternate formats such as Braille, large print, audio, and electronic formats. All materials, including those produced by outside travel entities, will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they remain accurate, appropriate, and current. NPS Staff should keep abreast with changes in social media and use the media as an opportunity for providing visitors with information about the park prior to a visit.

Website:

In the spirit of the Director's Call to Action Initiative: Go Digital, the park will "reach new audiences and maintain a conversation with all Americans by transforming the Sitka National Historical Park digital experience to offer rich, interactive, up-to-date content."

Recommendations:

• Create a virtual tour of the totem poles. This could include general information, plus more specific data regarding their history, carving, placement, and the stories they tell.
• Create a virtual tour of the Russian

Bishop's House. This could include the history of the Russian Bishop's House plus details about how the two floors have been used over the years.
• Convert all pdf documents to an ADA format.
• Provide various types of downloadable information so that people can place material on their Ipods, MP3s, CDs, or other devices for use at home, en route, or when they get to the park. This could include making the audio self-guided tour of the park available for download, site bulletins, and the official park brochure.
• Develop virtual displays of artifacts and additional photos from the park collection. This could include items both on and off exhibit, and it could be a valuable resource for general viewers as well as researchers.
• Develop a policy and publication of resources related to visitor requests for accommodations such as audio description, assistive listening devices, and the need for qualified interpreters who are proficient in sign language.
• Improve quality and quantity of social media outreach; branch out to consider including Flickr, Twitter, etc…
• Improve the interpretive quality of all SITK's web pages. Move the emphasis from strictly informational to interpretive whenever possible.
• Improve the accuracy of all SITK's web page offerings—specifically the Nature and Science pages.
• Make the For Teachers and For Kids sections of the website more user friendly and interactive. Implementing some of these web-based recommendations may require assistance from current or potential park partners. In addition, the park should consider using VIPs, temporary or seasonal employees, or perhaps internships with area schools to implement other web-based recommendations. However, an action plan should be developed first to further evaluate, organize, and prioritize the proposals.

Cruise Ship Passengers

Since the majority of park visitors are cruise ship passengers, opportunities should be explored to provide appropriate pre-visit information on-board. While most cruise ships do not want to distribute additional literature, they may be open to showing short films over their on-board television station or in their theaters. The former would be available for passengers to view at their leisure in their rooms. Another option is to develop a film that links Sitka, Glacier Bay, and Klondike Gold Rush in a single presentation. These films, in addition to establishing a NPS connection, would help people plan their visit and not have to rely on a deluge of vendors when they arrive on-shore.

Effectively reaching cruise ship passengers and working cooperatively with cruise ship companies has been an issue for many years. The previous Sitka LRIP and those for Glacier Bay and Klondike Gold Rush all include recommendations for making better connections with this important audience. Any success will require continued communication with the cruise ship companies, the Cruise Line Agencies of Alaska, the three NPS sites, and the regional office.

Wayfinding

The park, along with appropriate county, state and federal highway departments, have evaluated the overall directional sign system and initiated a sign plan request through the Harpers Ferry Center sign program. Regional Office signing officials and Harpers Ferry Center were consulted and a directional plan for the park has been developed. Directional and entrance signing will utilize the NPS graphic identity standards when feasible. Directional signing is not only critical for people in their own (or rental) vehicles, but also for the many cruise ship passengers who tour on foot.

Recommendations:

• Visitors need to be oriented visually and geographically. It is also important for them to know where and how far key destinations are, but also how long it will take to walk to various sites.
• Adequate and appropriate signing should begin at the airport, cruise ship docks, and at the ferry terminal. 5-7 years out.

Seawalk

• Continue to partner with the community on the Seawalk plan to assist in creating a seamless transition for visitors coming into the park.

Totem Park Unit

Visitor Center Entrance, Lobby and Bookstore

Upon arriving at the visitor center parking areas, visitor attention is immediately captured by the collection of totem poles at both the upper and lower level lots. Although some visitors on guided bus tours are initially taken on the trail to the Indian River bridge, most proceed to the visitor center entrance.

Visitors enter a large open lobby area which contains numerous large Tlingit and Haida carvings. For most people the lobby is captivating and inviting. All displays and visitor services are located along the perimeter of the room, and the Alaska Geographic bookstore has been placed in the center of the room. In the southwest corner of the room visitors may speak with a ranger at the information desk. The desk is large and can accommodate multiple visitors, as well as those in wheelchairs. Nearly all major access points for visitors are labeled with routed white-on-brown signs. The signs are neatly done and consistent in appearance. All signs can be seen from most locations in the room, which makes them effective for building orientation.

Recommendations:

• The designated accessible parking spaces at the Visitor Center have deficiencies which include excessive slope and no signage.
• There is no landing at the top of the curb cut which connects the accessible route to the accessible parking.
• The restrooms contain deficiencies such as fixtures installed beyond maximum accessible reach range, the need for an ambulatory stall in the women's restroom, and the need to re-size the accessible stall in the men's restroom.
• The log benches made in-house do not incorporate back rests and at least one arm rest and do not all meet recommended seat height. The park has decided that retrofitting 20 percent of the benches in each area to include accessibility features is an agreeable solution for providing enhanced accessibility.
• There are locations along the route between the lower and upper parking lots of the Visitor Center that do not meet minimum requirements for an accessible route. The route has areas of running slope that exceed the maximum requirements for accessibility. Portions of the route are considered to be a ramp and require the installation of handrails.
• There are four picnic tables provided at the exterior of the Visitor Center. A total of two individual picnic units should be made accessible.
• As the lobby of the NPS visitor center, the space needs to orient visitors to all of the key park resources (including the Russian Bishop's House), and not just Tlingit culture.
• The front of the desk features lighted display cases, but they are difficult to view, especially when other visitors are standing in front of the desk. Recommendation could be to identify a plan for the use of these spaces.
• The shape of the room emulates the basic design of a clan house, and many of the carvings would have been used inside or outside such houses. As currently presented, visitors might not understand what they are seeing. There are few interpretive labels, captions, or identifiers for the carvings. A large carving of a frog is not identified. The carvings would have more meaning and impact if there were information and interpretation associated with them. Without disrupting the feel of a clan house, information could be provided in the form of a site bulletin, cell phone tour, etc.

Specific recommendations include:

• Having accessible publications available for visitors with a disability.
• Having a portable transmitter available for visitors going on a ranger talk.
• Providing a map of the totem locations on the cell phone tour.
• Providing an in-house device for loan to visitors who require the cell phone description technology as an accommodation for a disability.
• Making a transcript of the cell phone tour available for visitors.
• Providing text and non-intrusive audio interpretation of the Tlingit carvings, preferably in the words of the clan or house that owns them. Visitors need to know what the items are and that they are still owned and occasionally used. This would require consultation.
• Produce a tactile map for visitor orientation.

Visitor Center Exhibit Gallery

Harpers Ferry Center, in collaboration with the park and its partners, planned and designed the exhibits in the Visitor Center exhibit room in 1989. The exhibition focuses on the Tlingit at Sitka, and features images and objects related to their history and culture. For the most part, the exhibits do not interpret Russian and American history at Sitka.

This is a traditional museum exhibition which relies on images and objects to tell most of the story, supplemented by labels which identify and set some context. Although the exhibit elicits intellectual interactivity, it does not include physical interactive techniques such as flip books, touchable items, immersive settings, pushbutton activated displays, and visitor-activated AV elements.

Historic black-and-white photographs, some dating to the turn of the century, are of exceptional quality, and several of them are enlarged to make their impression even more powerful. It is possible for visitors to study the faces, costumes, and settings of these scenes to more fully appreciate the peoples being presented. Women are not equally represented in the photos. More recent color photos, again reproduced at large sizes, help demonstrate the continuity of Tlingit culture.

Artifacts help establish the concrete reality of historic sites and help visitors see historic events from a human perspective. The Tlingit artifacts are of high quality, and are displayed elegantly in artifact cases. A large central case allows elaborate costumes and regalia to be

mounted on forms, accompanied by related smaller artifacts on pedestals. The Peace Hat is a premiere object and, when not out on loan, is displayed so that it can be viewed from multiple angles. The numbers of artifacts appear to be appropriate for the size of the room, and the cases do not look crowded. The park has done a great job in collaborating with partners on the display of loaned or culturally-sensitive artifacts and images, and in monitoring conditions in the gallery. It is recommended that these efforts continue as the exhibition evolves.

Many of the items on display are still owned by various Tlingit clans and houses, and they occasionally are used in special tribal events and ceremonies. This requires the removal and replacement of items from the cases, a task that currently is difficult, sometimes requiring several people.

The room has no windows and only one opening to the lobby, so it is possible to control light everywhere except at the exhibition's entrance. The low light levels and the buffering from outside noise create a meditative environment that enhances a visitor's ability to appreciate the displays.

Interpretive panels are fairly concise and factual, and appear to be about the right number and length for the room. Most labels are white with color backgrounds. By today's standards, the labels could be more "interpretive." Some visitors may not see how the objects and images might be relevant to them.

A number of the labels are reproduced in font sizes which are too small in point size to be easily read, especially considering the low lighting in some areas.

The park has done an excellent job in maintaining this exhibition. Although decades old, it still has a fresh appearance. The park has made some adjustments where needed to display items and labels. In "The Battle of Sitka" exhibit the park has produced a new caption panel for Katlian's hammer. However; any additions or changes to the exhibition should consider lighting, displays, textual and graphic information from an accessibility perspective.

In general, options for the Tlingit exhibit gallery include:

1) The exhibit remains in place, but with substantial revisions to content and presentation. The short term changes mentioned above would be undertaken, but with some significant redesign to add some interactive elements, audiovisual elements, a new lighting system, and enhanced accessibility features.

2) Removal of the current exhibition and replacement with new exhibits. In this option the purpose of the exhibition and the themes treated could be revisited if desired. For example, new exhibits would create opportunities to expand interpretation of the 1804 battle, survival march, and the roles of the Aleut people in Sitka's history.

The Tlingit exhibition complements the studio areas that visitors will see in the Cultural Center by providing historical context, and allowing visitors to see older objects that serve as models for objects being created by Native artists.

Specific recommendations include:

• Having new interpretive panels produced in a larger font size.
• Creating an audio description of the exhibit areas.
• Improving lighting in the visitor for those with visual impairment.
• Providing some tactile experiences in the visitor center.
• Need Specific recommendation for checked out items such as the peace hat.
• New or redesigned cases are recommended to better facilitate object removal without compromising security. Investigating whether there are other ways to display artifacts besides Plexiglas cases.
• In addition to placing temporary labels indicating that items are currently being used elsewhere, some introductory statement is needed to let visitors know that many of the objects are owned and occasionally used by the Tlingit people.

Visitor Center Totem Hall

Visitors walk down the central corridor of the Cultural Center to reach the Totem Hall. Double doors at the end of the hall open into the exhibit area. The space is not climate controlled but the objects are protected by walls and a high roof.

The focus of attention in Totem Hall is the display of authentic totem poles and house posts in a protected area where they can be viewed comfortably in all weather, and with natural light supplemented by artificial light when necessary.

Exhibit panels in the room are in good condition, and feature excellent images, drawings, and label content.

There are many fine features in the existing exhibit panels. Of particular value are the tactile, three-dimensional models showing formline carving and bowl carving. These communicate much, even if visitors do not read the text.

Specific recommendations include:

• Explore other options for replacement of background photo so not to distract from the totem poles.
• Increase height and font size of labels for visitors with disabilities.
• The Brady Panel is considered by some park staff as one of the more important exhibits in the room, and the information should be presented in a different way
• More interpretation is needed of the principal totem poles in the Totem Hall. The current identifier labels are placed very low, like plant identifiers, and they contain minimal information and no interpretation. The type, because it is small and positioned about five feet away from a typical viewer, is challenging to read, and would be inaccessible for visitors with vision impairments. It is recommended that major poles in the room be interpreted with small wayside exhibits to provide basic identification as well as some interpretation, or digitally by audio tour. The panels should provide the age, origin, category, and condition of poles, as well as any distinguishing features or associated stories. These need not be large waysides, but scaled to accomplish the stated goals, and mounted at standard wayside or museum reader-rail heights. Providing adequate interpretation of the principal poles in the room will focus attention more logically.
• Totem Hall is another potential location for cell phone tour interpretation. Audio presentations could feature local clan members, rangers, historians, carvers, conservators, or curators, each providing their unique perspectives on the poles and the cultures they represent. Cell phone audio segments are easily updated from any phone.
• The use of the glazed barrier wall and background photo mural is a good idea. The mural, due to the exposure to light, is losing some of its color components, and is getting a hazy blue appearance. When it is time to replace the mural print, it might be good to consider if a new image could be chosen which shows the poles and house posts in a more logical relation to their original settings. A fine background image might be the one used as a background in the Brady Pole Exhibit panel located near the west door of the hall. This image shows the proper location of poles along the coast and in front of the houses.
• The Sannaheit Pole exhibit, currently mounted on an easel, is quite well done in term of its content and graphics. This important artifact should not appear as a temporary display in a corner, but should be more prominent in the room.

Cultural Center

The park will continue to work towards development of a cultural center by partnering with STA and the Sitka Native Education Program. The park and Cultural Center will serve as a center for cultural preservation and interpretation. Interactive programs by Native artists and other culture-bearers provide the public with opportunities to receive traditional instruction in culture.

Recommendations:

• Visitors should be encouraged to enter the studios and interact with the artisans. It is recommended that some type of sign be developed at or just inside the entrances to the studios to identify the artist present, the hours of operation, and whether or not it is ok to take

photos. These signs would need to be changeable for use with different artists. In addition to learning about the objects being made at the Center, visitors should be made aware the Center is a year round operation and that the experience is very different between summer and the rest of the year. Visitors also should be made aware that the studios are places for education and the development of artistic skills.

• Shortly after visitors enter the hallway there should be a panel that briefly but clearly identifies the Cultural Center, its partnership with the NPS, and its role and mission. This and other signs should be in both Tlingit and English.

• Develop a cultural center site bulletin (when the time is appropriate) to discuss the relationship between STA, SNEP, and the NPS.

• Support the Student Art Apprenticeship Program.

After an agreement with STA and SNEP is reached, specific recommendations include: Need help to populate this section.

Carving Shed

The carving shed is available for special projects and reproductions of poles. Many times, however, there is no object being worked on, or the object is present but the artist is absent and there is nothing to help visitors understand what they are seeing. An interpretive display case has been added to the shed.

Recommendations:

• The structure has good potential for some permanent and/or changeable interpretive media. Permanent displays could identify the purpose of the shed and illustrate some of the past projects. Changeable media would identify a current project, the artist or artists involved the cultural significance of the item being made, and its eventual disposition. It also would be good to have one or more objects that could be rotated in the carving shed when an active project in not underway. This would ensure that people would always be able to see something.

Exterior Totem Pole Storage Area

The carving shed is available for special projects and reproductions of poles. Many times, however, there is no object being worked on, or the object is present but the artist is absent and there is nothing to help visitors understand what they are seeing. An interpretive display case has been added to the shed.

Recommendations:

• The heavy wire screen in front of the exterior totem pole storage area needs to be replaced with a barrier that provides better viewing, but retains adequate security. If visitor are to continue to have access to this area, they must have a better view and be able to take photos if they desire. The signing also needs to be improved so that visitors can actually find this display.

• Implement the wayside plan to improve signage.

• Write a new project plan based on Harpers Ferry Recommendations.

• Improve lighting of the storage area. e good to have one or more objects that could be rotated in the carving shed when an active project in not underway. This would ensure that people would always be able to see something.

Park Trails

The park is in the process of constructing new trails and improving existing trails. A wayside plan is set to go to contract in 2013. The plan would improve orientation and interpretation of Totem Trail, the Battle of 1804, the cultural landscape and the Indian River Ecosystem. While this interpretation will not reach all visitors, it can serve to supplement information on waysides, and provide it in an audio format which is accessible to visitors with sight impairments. The park may also be constructing a new bridge over the Indian River and possibley an outdoor amphitheater near the river.

Specific recommendations include:

• The park should continue to evaluate the trail system and the ability of visitors to orient themselves along the trail.

• The park should produce changeable accessible signage that provides additional information on the existing condition of each trail as it relates to accessibility.

• After the new waysides are installed, the park should study whether they are effective in helping visitors to understand the interpretive themes.

• The park should regularly review and update information provided on cell phone tours.

Russian Mission Unit

Russian Bishop's House Exterior and Entrance

Recommendations:

• One of the key issues with the Russian Bishop's House is attracting visitor attention and motivating them to come inside. The rather plain exterior of the building, although historically accurate, is not inviting and the current signing is not enough to draw people through the front door, which is usually closed for interior climate control.
• The presence of an interpreter outside or volunteer activity in the front garden does attract visitor attention and these people can often be encouraged to come inside. Staff time should include roving/informal interpretation in the front garden area when feasible.
• Clearly show that the Russian Bishop's House is part of the NPS and Sitka National Historical Park and that parkwide information is available inside.
• Consider appropriate displays, such as a cloth covered table with the samovar on it, on the front porch or in the yard.
• Consider the development of an accessible route system to the Russian Bishop's House, the Priest's Quarters and Old School.

Russian Bishop's House Orientation

The current space with the podium just inside the front entrance is adequate for welcoming visitors.

Recommendations:

• The orientation area should contain a few parkwide orientation exhibits plus exhibits providing a brief history of the Russian presence in Alaska (and other locations in North America). This is important, as many people are unfamiliar with this part of American history, and it will help set the stage for the more site specific exhibits in the rest of the building.

Seawalk

• Continue to partner with the community on the Seawalk plan to assist in creating a seamless transition for visitors coming into the park.

Russian Bishop's House First Floor

The first floor of the Russian Bishop's House contains museum exhibits about the Russian occupation of Alaska, including the fur-trading activities of the Russia American Company and the Russian Orthodox Church. These exhibits are self-guiding and currently available at no cost to the visitor. The content, level of information, and choice of objects are strengths of these exhibits.

Recommendations:

• Consider writing a PMIS project to develop a new exhibit plan for the first floor. Topics to address in the new exhibit include:

1. The current free-standing exhibits take up a lot of space.
2. The current exhibit areas are relatively dark, except for the internal case lighting, with a limited amount of light coming through windows. The relatively dark atmosphere is somewhat meditative and church-like, which can be an advantage, but it also makes it hard for visitors to see the exhibition as a whole, especially those who are visually impaired. While addressing the problem of exhibit lighting the park should also focus on other accessibility improvements such as a portable transmitter, larger font size, and improved movement through the building.
3. Visitors would also benefit if the exhibits had more interactive components. A new touchable model of Sitka should be added to the orientation area. The park presently has a model of Sitka but it is too large to fit in any of the rooms and it is also fragile. A more robust but smaller scale touchable exhibit would universally accommodate the orientation needs of all visitors (including the sight

impaired) and would provide an interactive component. Continue to allow visitors to touch the reproduction Russian possession plaque as well as a variety of furs. Seek out other opportunities for more tactile exhibits.

4. Another opportunity for interactivity would be to provide furnishings vignettes in one or more of the rooms on the first floor. These vignettes would be supplied with reproduction furnishings so visitors could interact with them. One possibility would be to furnish part of a room as a classroom with desks or tables and copies of textbooks (including both the Russian pages and translations in English). Room 9 has shadows of desks on the wall, so this may be an appropriate room for this vignette.

5. Another potential area for a furnishings vignette or visitor interactive would be in the kitchen where a large barrier protects the area where the stove once stood. The barrier here seems superfluous. If the wall needs to be protected in this room, it should be covered with Plexiglas, which is the way these features are treated elsewhere in the house. An image of the stove could be placed on the wall to show visitors what it looked like. With the barrier removed, this space could be used for some other visitor interactive. Alternatively, the stove that originally occupied this space could be reproduced.

• Education Space: The staff should identify a space that can accommodate a school class.

• A small cooperating association sales area is recommended. It would carry mostly items directly related to the Russian Bishop's House and the Russian Colonial period.

Russian Bishop's House Second Floor

Upstairs at the Russian Bishop's House are fully furnished rooms that are available to visitors only on guided tours during the summer (cruise ship) season. Visitors must purchase tickets for tours, which are held every half hour and are limited to 12 visitors per tour. At other times of the year, free tours are available by special arrangement with park staff.

The two primary issues surrounding the historically furnished rooms are staffing and accuracy. It is felt that an inordinate number of staff is required to run the Russian Bishop's House compared to the number of visitors that see it. Also, staff question the completeness and accuracy of the historic furnishings installed in the late 1980s.

The Russian Bishop's House used to have much larger visitation for many years after it opened, probably because touring the upstairs was free and self-guiding. At that time, two rangers staffed the upstairs, one in the reception room and one in the chapel. However, after a few years staff became concerned that the resource was in danger of overuse.

With no limitations placed on the number of visitors allowed upstairs, as many as 35 people sometimes crammed into the reception room at one time, resulting in visitors being crowded off the pathway carpet and finding it difficult to view the objects in the rooms.

To try to control this situation (and also coinciding with the introduction of fees in parks), the park decided to restrict the upstairs to guided tours of 12 people each and to charge a fee for the tour. The result has been a large reduction in visitation to the upstairs. Part of the reason for this reduction is the requirement of the fee.

Sitka's visitation is driven by the cruise ship schedule (approximately 90% of Sitka's visitors in the summer are from cruise ships). Many cruise ship passengers (estimates varied as to the percentage) book packaged tours of Sitka. The rest of the passengers who are touring Sitka on their own (by foot) are trying to pack many activities into their day. Many are probably discouraged from taking a guided tour of the Russian Bishop's House by the idea that they will have to interrupt their itinerary to backtrack to the house later in the day.

One goal of this LRIP is to propose a satisfactory compromise between these two extremes. This compromise would avoid the overuse and overcrowding of the furnished rooms that might lead to resource damage (including a greater potential for theft) without resorting to small guided tours that are labor intensive and serve the needs of only a small number of visitors.

This might be accomplished by returning to self-guided tours but limiting the number of people allowed upstairs at any one time. One way to restrict the number of visitors is to continue to charge a fee to visit the upstairs, although the park may want to consider lowering the fee slightly or providing a "suggested donation" box instead. Another (or additional) way to control the visitor flow would be to show visitors the AV

program and "pulse" them upstairs at the end of each showing. Since much of the tour information is currently given by rangers downstairs, the AV program is a much more efficient way to impart this introductory information. Visitors can view the 25- minute introductory film (about 25 at a time), then be pulsed upstairs. Since even on guided tours visitors seldom spend more than about 15 minutes touring the upstairs rooms, this system would ensure that no more than 25 people are upstairs (spread throughout the rooms) at any one time. Using this system, as many as 100 people can tour the upstairs rooms in an hour (without overcrowding), instead of the 24 that can be accommodated on guided tours (a four-fold increase). Guided tours can still be provided at set times during the day; however, most visitors will view the introductory exhibits and film downstairs, then proceed upstairs to tour the rooms at their own pace. Providing both guided and self-guided tours meets the needs of visitors who would like an in-depth tour as well as others (especially families with children) who prefer to move through the rooms more quickly. Providing introductory information by a film presented to visitors who are comfortably seated assures that everyone will receive the same basic message.

If the park chooses to return to self-guided tours of the upstairs, sturdier, but less obtrusive barriers should be installed to insure the safety of the objects. These, in conjunction with electronic security where appropriate and stationing of rangers in both the reception room and chapel (for security and interpretation) should provide sufficient protection for the objects. Also, each room on the tour should be identified in some way. This could be by numbers keyed to a handout, identification signs in each room, or small interpretive panels that provide additional information and/or images. There also is the option of using cell phone of other non-intrusive electronic messages to supplement the interpretation.

(Maybe Sue can volunteer to review these two paragraphs) In addition to changes in the way visitors tour the furnished rooms, it is recommended that the Historic Furnishings Report (HFR) be revised. The author of the current HFR, which was written before the dissolution of the USSR, states that no assistance could be obtained from Soviet historians. In the last few years, contacts have been established with scholars in Russia, especially in the areas of Siberia closely associated with the colonization of Sitka. Records of the Russian-American Company are now accessible, and some have been translated. All critical previous translations used in the 1986 HFR should be checked for accuracy by a translator familiar with 19th century Russian language and material culture. Contacts should also be made with native Russian historians of the material culture of the Russian Orthodox Church and with native Russian specialists in decorative arts.

One of the goals of this research, in addition to checking the accuracy of the current furnishings, should be to attempt to fill out the rooms with smaller objects. Objects may need to be purchased or borrowed from Russia. Establishing contact with museum professionals who have responsibility for similar furnished structures in Russia will enable researchers to obtain information on Russian material culture in the mid-19th century. These museum professionals might also be able to suggest sources of reproduction items or provide prototypes for reproducing if reproductions are required either because originals are unavailable or the object would be vulnerable where displayed.

Education Program

While the indoor spaces will still be necessary, there is a need for an outdoor space where students can engage

in a wider variety of activities, including those that may be messy. Because of the rain forest environment this would require a shelter of some type. Some options include:

• Using the Regalia Room, a portable tent, or the porch at the visitor center.
• Use the proposed amphitheater near Indian River once it is constructed.

Currently most teachers call the park and tell the education specialist what type of program they would like. Many teachers want programs related to the Russian Bishop's House as the resource ties directly to Alaska history studies. Few requests are made for programs related to the 1804 battle or totem poles. The park web site has one curriculum-based program titled Russian Abacus Curriculum that is aimed at students in grades K-5. This program, which can be downloaded, also is a part of the Alaska Region Park Wise program, a collection of education resources about Alaska's national parks.

The park web site also offers general information about scheduling a field trip, provides a list of topics that can be addressed by guest speakers at area schools, and advertises the availability of traveling trunks which can be picked up by teachers at the Old School and "Beach Discovery Packs" which can be obtained on loan at the visitor center.

With the pressure of decreasing school budgets and more stringent curriculum requirements, many teachers need strong justification for talking their students on field trips. The park can help by working directly with educators, Tlingit leadership, SNEP, the cultural center, and others to develop theme-related education programs and lesson plans that clearly meet local, state, and national curriculum standards. Materials developed can be made available in hard copy and via the Internet to be used by schools and home schooled students through Alaska and beyond. Park staff should expand opportunities for classrooms to participate in distance learning.

It is recommended that the park education specialist periodically attend workshops held by area schools to learn more about their operations and to share information about the park and its programs. Conversely, the park should develop educational workshops to include area educators and others in developing some of the materials mentioned in the previous paragraph and to train teachers in how to use the park to meet their needs.

Other recommendations for the park education program, some of which can relate to items mentioned above, include working with the park curatorial staff to provide virtual artifacts on-line to support curriculum-based education programs and to aid researchers, and developing adult and family-based programs.

Specific recommendations include:

• Education coordinator is the primary contact for SNEP education programs and student art apprenticeship program
• Promote the traveling trunks on website (salmon, basketry, Russian History).
• Hit all primary interpretive themes in all the different education programs.
• Assist STA abd SNEP with development and management of a new Cultural Center in the park's demonstration arts studio.
• Develop the Junior Ranger program into a program for all ages of children and create a digital version. Evaluate the efficacy of the Junior Ranger program.
• Promote distance learning opportunities through virtual tours and field trips.

Personal Services

A variety of personal services activities will continue to be an essential component of the overall interpretive program at Sitka National Historical Park. The park currently provides a good range of programs that attract large numbers of visitors. Current programming should continue and expand to include all of the interpretive themes as outlined in the new Foundation Statement. These programs have the advantage of being inspiring, versatile, alive, and tailored to the needs of individuals and groups. An interpretive staff presence helps with the protection of fragile resources. Interpreters, whether behind an information desk, roving, leading a tour, giving a talk, or conducting a living history demonstration are the best of all interactive tools in enabling visitors to experience, understand, appreciate, and make personal connections with resources.

The diversity of the park's overall interpretive program presents almost limitless opportunities for both standard and innovative activities. Keeping within the parameters of the interpretive themes and visitor experience goals, park staff should continue to be given a high degree of creative freedom to explore and experiment with new programs. This will help to maintain a creative edge and attract new and returning audiences. Roving interpretation is important at Sitka, and it is recommended that the park consider staffing strategies that allow for staff at key locations such as the river, downtown (i.e. Building 29), Castle Hill, etc.

Interpretive programs can provide more in-depth discussions, respond to individual interests and questions, and reinforce the NPS presence in Sitka. Formal and informal interpretive training is critical, and all park interpreters (including seasonals) should complete training offered by the Eppley Institute. The National Park service has 100 series modules of the Interpretive Development Plan (IDP) which is available for permanent and term employees.

Training also can benefit other businesses and organizations that provide interpretation at the park, or which relate to park themes. It is recommended that cooperative training programs be developed to ensure that as many service providers as possible possess the resource knowledge and interpretive/communication skills that will result in more effective, accurate, and meaningful programs for visitors, and possibly increased rewards (i.e. larger tips) for tour guides.

Since personal services interpretive programs are relatively easy to change, the activities should be evaluated on a regular basis to modify and improve the success of the program The evaluation also should insure that there is a good balance in where programs are given, einsuring that activities are conducted in places where visitors are present.

Personal services interpretive programs also are most easily affected by changing budgets, management styles, and the comings and goings of individual interpreters with special skills. Because of the need to retain flexibility, few specific personal services recommendations are presented in this document.

Publications

It is recommended that the park periodically review all of the public literature and the web site for needed corrections and updates.

The park also should review some of its key research and management documents to see if any could become potential sales items and help reach specific audiences.

Specific recommendations include:

- Keep current relevant publications for sale in the bookstore.
- Promote the Alaska Geographic identity to brand and explain mission.
- Go digital, promote free publications online.
- Explore potential for EBooks available to download, two possibilities might include reprinting those titled "Most Striking of Objects" and "Early Views."
- Update the park unigrid map
- Harpers Ferry Center should be utilized to assist with the design and production of the park unigrid brochure and Russian Bishop's House brochure to large print.
- The primary park brochures should be translated to Braille and made readily available at the Visitor Center. In addition, each of the primary park publications should be made available in electronic format and audio.
- Signage should be displayed at the information desks at the Visitor Center announcing the availability of the brochures in alternative formats.

Library and Collection Needs

Continue to maintain library collection to ensure it is in accordance with the scope of the collections statement. Maintain the library and vertical files and consolidate vertical files into a usable format. Train all staff on the system of accountability to ensure library collection remains organized and easy to use. Acquire new books for the library when funding is available.

Research Needs

The interpretive division needs to continue working closely with the resource management staff to keep up to date on research activities and results. Resource management specialists should be encouraged to present regular briefings on projects to the entire park staff, especially interpreters. Agency and contract researchers also should be encouraged to produce executive summaries and programs that translate research results for park staff and the public. Interpretive staff should identify research and information needs to the resource management staff as well.

Sitka National Historical Park needs to learn more about its actual and potential audiences: Who visits? What are their motivations, expectations, and satisfaction levels? What can be done to increase visitor stays and interaction with park resources? Who doesn't visit and why? How do answers to these and other questions vary from season to season? Many other visitor service providers (including the cruise ship companies) would be interested in what we learn, and in turn, they may be willing to share some of their data.

Research also is important in the development of specific media and programs and will be planned as part of all substantial media projects and specialized programming. For example, front-end evaluations would query potential users of programs, facilities, and media before products and activities are developed. This type of research is targeted so that practical use can be made of the results. Formative evaluations would be conducted during conceptual design, and would test inexpensive mockups of interpretive media and programs before fully investing in final products. Summative evaluations are valuable in helping to determine the effectiveness of final media, facilities, and programs—i.e. whether the intended themes are being communicated, if people actually make use of the information, or if visitor behavior is affected.

Specific recommendations include:

- Find funding for a Visitor Services Study.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the new waysides after they are installed.
- Build in evaluation procedures for all new exhibits at the Russian Bishop's House, the Visitor Center and the historic furnishings at the Russian Bishop's House.
- Consider ways to evaluate the effectiveness of seasonal training.
- Consider ways to evaluate web-based products and the effectiveness of social media.

Staffing Needs

[Park staff will need to complete this section of the LRIP. This section should identify realistic staffing needs (in addition to existing personnel) for fully implementing the recommendations in this plan. This can be accomplished by reading through the document with an eye to what staff would be required to complete and maintain the various proposed actions. Be aware that staffing needs can be satisfied in a number of ways. In addition to paid NPS employees, volunteers, interns, employees from other agencies/institutions, etc. can be used to perform some tasks; however, relying solely on volunteers to conduct specific programs for example is rarely successful. If desired, I can provide examples of how others have completed this section. There are no firm rules regarding how to do it; the best way is what works for you.]

Implementation plan

The plan for implementation will be developed during staff workshop in July Possibly divide it into ongoing, short-term 1-3 years, mid-term 4-6 years, long-term 7-10 years.

Sitka National Historical Park: Priorities by Interpretive Service	Ongoing	Short-term (1-3 years)	Mid-term (4-6 years)	Long-term (7-10 years)

Planning Team and Consultants 2013

Sitka National Historical Park

Randy Larson, Superintendent
Becky Latanich, Chief of Interpretation
Carin Farley, Chief Ranger
Michael Trainor, Chief of Maintenance
Dusty Kidd, Administrative Officer

Alaska Regional Office

Carin Vadala, Outdoor Recreation Planner
Sitka National Historical Park

Randy Larson, Superintendent
Becky Latanich, Chief of Interpretation
Carin Farley, Chief Ranger
Michael Trainor, Chief of Maintenance
Dusty Kidd, Administrative Officer

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Sitka National Historical Park

Mary Miller, Superintendent
Greg Dudgeon, Former Superintendent
Sandy Snell-Dobert, Acting Superintendent
Ralph Jones, Chief Ranger
Clarence Wadkins, Park Ranger
Gene Griffin, Chief, Resources Management
Kristen Griffin, Park Historian
Sue Thorsen, Museum Curator
Randall Rodgers, Chief of Maintenance
Kristi Neilson, Education Specialist
Julia Rosborough, Administrative Officer
Geof Smith, Biologist
Ramona East, Museum Specialist
Bonnie Brewer, IT Specialist

Park Partners and Consultants

Gail Johansen Peterson, Executive Director, Southeast Alaska Indian Cultural Center
Charlie Skuctka, Jr., Metal Artist, Southeast Alaska Indian Cultural Center
Sandy Lorrigan, Sitka Convention and Visitors Bureau
Bob Medinger, Sitka Historical Society and Museum
Peter Gorman, Sitka Historic Preservation Commission (and Seasonal Park Interpreter)
Ray Wilson, Kiks.ádi Clan Leader
Woody Widmark, Sitka Tribe of Alaska
Helen Dangel-Lorrigan, Sitka Tribe of Alaska
Pauline Duncan, [she listed herself as a "guest"]

Harpers Ferry Center

Carol Petravage, Historic Furnishings Planner
David Guiney, Interpretive Media Institute
Paul Lee, Interpretive Planner

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Sitka National Historical Park
103 Monastery Stree
Sitka, AK 99835